THE BONDS OF LOVE

Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination

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recognition to the other, and to rediscover the lost tension between self and other. This tension, a fragile balance, to be sure, can only be sustained through the lived experience of recognition, the meeting of separate minds. I have argued that the longing for recognition lies beneath the sensationalism of power and powerlessness, that the unrecognizable forms often taken by our desire are the result of a complicated but ultimately understandable process—a process which explains how our deepest desires for freedom and communion become implicated in control and submission. From such desires the bonds of love are forged.

CHAPTER THREE

Woman's Desire

The discussion of erotic domination has shown how the breakdown of the tension between assertion and recognition becomes associated with the polarization of gender identity. Male and female each adopt one side of an interlocking whole. This one-sided character of differentiation evolves in response to the mother's lack of subjectivity, with which the girl identifies and the boy disidentifies.

This chapter will focus on woman's lack of subjectiv-
ity, particularly sexual subjectivity, and on the consequences of the traditional sexual complementarity: man expresses desire and woman as the object of it. We will explore why woman's missing desire so often takes the form of adoring the man who possesses it, why women seem to have a propensity for what we may call “ideal love”—a love in which the woman submits to and adores an other who is what she cannot be. To do this, we will have to turn back to the Freudian world of the father, where women are defined by the lack of what men possess: the very emblem and embodiment of desire, the phallus. In Freudian theory the phallus simultaneously signifies power, difference, and desire; and as bearer of the phallus, the father represents separation from the mother. Moreover, the father's power and the male monopoly of desire are constantly justified on the grounds that they are the only route to individuality.

Naturally, I question this justification; but a convincing argument against it requires us simultaneously to acknowledge and criticize the father's power. As we reconstruct how the initial relationship to the father informs desire, we will also deconstruct classical psychoanalytic theory, in particular, the idea that woman's destiny—her lack of subjectivity—is determined by her lack of a penis. As I will demonstrate, it is not anatomy, but the totality of a girl's relationship with the father, in a context of gender polarity and unequal responsibilities for childrearing, that explains woman's perceived "lack." Finally, I will suggest a possible alternate mode of representation to challenge the hegemony of the phallus as the sole embodiment of desire.

THE PROBLEM OF WOMAN'S DESIRE

Perhaps no phrase of Freud's has been quoted more often than "What does woman want?" To my mind, this question implies another: "Do women want?" or better yet, "Does woman have a desire?" By this revision I mean to shift attention from the object of desire, what is wanted, to the subject, she who desires. The problem that Freud laid before us with all too painful clarity was the elusiveness of woman's sexual agency. He proposed, in fact, that femininity is constructed through the acceptance of sexual passivity. According to Freud's theory of feminine development, the little girl starts out originally as a "little man." She loves her mother actively until she discovers, in the oedipal phase, that she and mother both lack the phallus. She becomes feminine only when she turns from the mother to her father, from activity to passivity, in the hope of receiving his phallus; her effort to get the missing phallus leads her into the position of being the father's object.

For Freud, woman's renunciation of sexual agency and her acceptance of object status are the very hallmark of the feminine. And though we may refuse his definition, we are nevertheless obliged to confront the painful fact that even today, femininity continues to be identified with passivity, with being the object of someone else's desire, with having no active desire of one's own.

At times we are shocked by how much the reality of woman's condition differs from what we, in our minds, have long since determined it should be. Even the more modest demands for equality that we take for granted have not been realized. So it was when two psychologists, one of them the mother of a newborn boy, strolled by the hospital nursery to peer through the glass at the other newborns. Of course each bassinet had a pink or blue label proclaiming the swaddled baby's sex, which would otherwise be indecipherable (what confusion might that bring!). But astonishment overcame them when they looked at the first pink label. Expecting to find the counterpart to the blue one, which proudly announced, "I'm a boy!" they found instead, "It's a girl!!" Further examination forced them to confirm what they at first refused to believe: all the boys were "I" and all the girls were "It." The infant girl was already presented to the world not as a potential "I," but as an object, "It." The sexual difference was already interpreted in terms of complementary and unequal roles, subject and
object. The aspect of will, desire, and activity—all that we might conjure up with a subject who is an "I"—was assigned to the male gender alone.

Freud cautioned against the easy equations of femininity with passivity, and masculinity with activity, yet he did in the end conclude that the circuitous path to femininity culminates in the acceptance of passivity. If our received idea of femininity excludes activity—that to be a woman is to be unable to say, "I want that"—is it any wonder that many have agreed that the phallus stands not just for male desire, but all desire? Thus Juliet Mitchell, who accepts Freud's understanding of feminine passivity and male desire, proposes that we must logically also accept the singularity of the phallus in representing desire.* Only by acknowledging the power of the phallus, she argues, can we finally uncover the origins of woman's submission, the deep psychic roots of patriarchy.

Admittedly we have no female image or symbol to counterbalance the monopoly of the phallus in representing desire. Though the image of woman is associated with motherhood and fertility, the mother is not articulated as a sexual subject, one who actively desires something for herself—quite the contrary. The mother is a profoundly desexualized figure. And we must suspect that this desexualization is part of her more general lack of subjectivity in society as a whole. Just as the mother's power is not her own, but is intended to serve her child, so, in a larger sense, woman does not have the freedom to do as she wills; she is not the subject of her own desire. Her power may include control over others, but not over her own destiny. We have only to think of the all-sacrificing, all-perfect, and all-knowing Agnes who waits patiently while David Copperfield marries foolishly, is widowed, and finally chooses her to be the angel-mother who will oversee his domestic bliss. Woman is to accept the abrogation of her own will, to surrender the autonomy of her body in childbirth and lactation, to live for another. Her own sexual feelings, with their incipient threat of selfishness, passion, and uncontrollability, are a disturbing possibility that even psychoanalysis seldom contemplates.

In any case, once sexuality is cut loose from reproduction, a goal the era of sexual liberation has urged upon our imagination, womanhood can no longer be equated with motherhood. But the alternative image of the femme fatale does not signify an active subjectivity either. The "sexy" woman—an image that intimidates women whether or not they strive to conform to it—is sexy, but as object, not as subject. She expresses not so much her desire as her pleasure in being desired what she enjoys is her capacity to evoke desire in the other, to attract. Her power does not reside in her own passion, but in her acute desirability. Neither the power of the mother nor that of the sexy woman can, as in the case of the father, be described as the power of a sexual subject.

If woman has no desire of her own, she must rely on that of a man with potentially disastrous consequences for her psychic life. For Freud, woman is doomed to envy the embodiment of desire that will forever elude her, since only a man can possess it. Desire in woman thus appears as envy—perhaps only as envy. And indeed, we know that many women enter into love relationships with men in order to acquire vicariously something they have not got within themselves. Others try to protect their autonomy by resisting passionate involvement with men: because their sexuality is bound up with the fantasy of submission to an ideal male figure, it undermines their sense of a separate self. As Jane Lazarre describes in On Loving Men: "There's a connection for me between the ability to feel autonomous, to feel confidently creative, and a fear of certain kinds of love. The love especially when it includes passionate sexuality, undermines my ability to be myself, pulls me away from open channels, reawakens in me:

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*For the mother the phallus represents her lack, what she desires for her completion; for the father it represents what he has and is and does. Thus it stands for both male and female desire.
desire to succumb to the ferocious power of my father's needs." Insofar as a woman's desire pulls her toward surrender and self-denial, she often chooses to curb it altogether.

Let us acknowledge the partial truth of Freud's gloomy view. The equation of masculinity with desire, femininity with object of desire does reflect the existing situation; it is not simply a biased view. Woman's sexual agency is often inhibited and her desire is often expressed by choosing subordination. But this situation is not inevitable; it has come into being through forces that we intend to understand and counteract. We do not need to deny the contribution of "nature" or anatomy in shaping the conditions of femininity; we have only to argue that the psychological integration of biological reality is largely the work of culture—of social arrangements that we can change or direct.

Contemporary psychoanalytic feminists have gone some distance toward uncovering the work of culture underlying the feminine condition. They have argued that the cultural institution of women's mothering is the key factor in gender development. In opposition to Freud, they argue that girls achieve their gender identity not by repudiating an initial masculinity, but—since children inevitably identify with their first caregivers—by identifying with their mothers. The feminist position relies on the theory of core gender identity which shows that children consolidate a fixed unalterable sense of gender in the first two years of life, well before the onset of the oedipal complications Freud described. It also shows that maternal identification is the initial orientation for children of both sexes. As we saw in the preceding chapter, girls sustain the primary identification with the mother while boys must switch to an identification with the father. This analysis of early gender identity has, in America at least, largely replaced Freud’s view that maternal identification is not truly feminine, that only the penis wish and the passive love of the father are feminine. It has also led to the revaluation of the mother, whose influence Freud neglected.

The idea that little girls develop their femininity through direct identification with the mother is quite persuasive and well documented. But it does not address the other problem that penis envy was meant to explain—the absence of woman's desire. Certainly the little girl whose femininity is formed in the image of a desexualized mother may well feel this lack of an emblem of desire. But this only shifts the problem back a generation. To what, then, do we attribute the mother's lack of sexual subjectivity? Where does absence of desire originate? Why does femininity appear linked to passivity? And why do men appear to have exclusive rights to sexual agency, so that women seek their desire in men, hoping to have it be recognized through the agency of an other?

The emphasis in contemporary feminism on the identity women gain from their mothers tends to gloss over the problem of desire. One strand of feminist politics holds that we can only avoid sexual objectification and passivity by giving up on sex altogether. This rejection began with attacks on pornography, but it often extended to an excoriation of all heterosexual activity and many forms of homosexual activity, until not much was left uncondemned. In the effort to extricate women from the status of sexual object, feminism runs the risk of leaving all sexuality behind.

The puritanical tendencies within the feminist movement are often linked to a tendency to elevate the desexualized mother whose hallmark is not desire but nurturance. The "gentler sex" is thus exalted by the proponents of an essential feminine nature. The result is a simple reversal of idealization, from father to mother; it is a position that ends up glorifying the sexual deprivation to which women have been subjected. In reclaiming the mother's importance, there is a tendency to give unwitting support to this reactive idealization of the feminine. Certainly it is important to revalue what has been women's domain; but feminist theory cannot be satisfied with a simple reversal that leaves the terms of the sexual polarity intact. For the same reason, it cannot be satisfied simply with conquering men's territory for
women. The task is more complex: it is to transcend the opposition of the two spheres by formulating a less polarized relationship between them.

The idealization of motherhood, which can be found in both anti-feminist and feminist cultural politics, is an attempt to redeem woman's sphere of influence, the power of the apron strings. However, it pursues this end by idealizing woman's desexualization and lack of agency. This attitude toward sexuality preserves the old gender system, so that freedom and desire remain an unchallenged male domain, leaving women to be righteous but de-eroticized, intimate and caring, but pleasureless. And it fails to understand the underlying force of desire that ratifies male power, the adoration that helps to create it ever anew.

**PENIS ENVY—THE CAUSE**

But what are the unconscious sources of that desire? Whence comes that adoration of male power? Let us look more closely at that persistent challenge to the feminist argument—penis envy.

For Freud, as we have seen, the little girl begins as a "little man," and only becomes feminine when she turns from the mother to the father in search of a penis. Actually, Freud offers several explanations for why the little girl drops her mother in favor of her father: the little girl turns to love of her father as a refuge from her penis-less state, now wishing to be the passive object who can receive his phallus; she turns to her father because she has no knowledge of her own organ, the vagina, or of its potential for active sexual gratification; she rejects her mother in anger and disappointment for not having supplied her with the essential organ. In any case, she enters her oedipal conflict, propelled by the great discovery of the "lack" she shares with her mother. The mother becomes the depriving (even castrating) figure, and the father, the figure of desire.

The early critics of penis envy, like Karen Horney, questioned the need of so complicated a process to explain the change. Would not the little girl feel an inner impulse toward heterosexuality, toward loving her father, even without the wish to get the phallus vicariously for herself? Horney disputed the idea that true femininity develops only through penis envy; that the narcissistic rather than erotic motive is the only basis for woman's sexuality; that woman is only motivated to get the phallus, not to give or express something of her own. All of these issues were debated at some length in the twenties, and were then taken up again in the second wave of feminism. For the moment, let us focus on Mitchell's response to Horney's challenge. It fails, she says, because it counters the theory of penis envy with the claim that femininity and heterosexuality do not need to be explained, that they are innate. This view denies Freud's fundamental insight that women are made, not born, that femininity is a complex creation of unconscious mental life. The assumption of innate femininity takes us away from the psychological and cultural roots of our sexual life, and ironically (for Horney was concerned above all with the influence of culture on the psyche) returns us to biology.

Mitchell, I believe, is right to say that we must acknowledge the power of the phallus and its hold on the unconscious. She has argued well that male power cannot be divorced from its roots in the prerogative of the father and his sexual dominion over women. But Mitchell is misled by her idealization of Freud. By following him so faithfully, Mitchell, too, winds up equating the father's power with his possession of the phallic-lute instrument of separation, the thing that comes between mother and child, forcing the child out into the world and forbidding the stagnation of incest. Thus for Mitchell, as for Freud, it is inevitable that woman should covet this emblem of power and desire, that she should reject her mother in favor of her father. As Mitchell sums up, "She makes the shift from mother-love to father-love because she has to, and then with pain and protest. She has to, because she is without the phallus. No phallus, no power—except those winning ways of getting one." But Mitchell cannot tell us, as Freud could not, why the phallus and the father have this exclusive
power, this monopoly on desire, subjectivity, and individuation. She forecloses the possibility of answering this question by seeing the oedipal world, the world in which the mother “has no absolute strength” and the “father is truly powerful,” as the whole world.18

But we have already elucidated why the oedipal world is not the whole world. We have seen that differentiation of self and other begins in infancy and evolves in preoedipal conflicts; so does the assumption of gender identity—long before the oedipal “switch” from mother to father. Current psychoanalytic thought gives far more attention to preoedipal life than Mitchell’s analysis would indicate: and there the mother’s power and its impact on the child appear in a different light.19

To take just one example, the French analyst Janine Chassegut-Smirgel has demonstrated that Freud’s description of woman as castrated and powerless—a catalogue of lacks—is the exact opposite of the little child’s unconscious image of the mother. While the little boy may consciously represent the mother as castrated, clinical evidence reveals that unconsciously the boy sees this mother as extremely powerful.20 She does not appear lacking a sexual organ; rather her vagina is known and feared for its potential to re-engulf the boy, whose little penis would be far too small to satisfy it. (As an illustration of this fear, consider a three-year-old boy who, shortly after inquiring in detail about his mother’s genitals and how babies are born, became panic-stricken at the end of his bath when the plug was pulled: he now feared that he or his toys could be sucked down the drain.) The girl, too, sees her mother as powerful and her wish for her father’s penis signifies the desire to “beat back the maternal power.”21

The meaning of the penis as a symbol of revolt and separation derives, then, from the fantasy of maternal power, not maternal lack.* For psychoanalysts like Chassegut-Smirgel who have moved away from the strict oedipal view, the father is not powerful simply because he has a phallus, but because he (with his phallus) represents freedom from dependency on the powerful mother of early infancy. In the preoedipal world, the father and his phallus are powerful because of their ability to stand for separation from the mother. The phallus, then, is not intrinsically the symbol of desire, but becomes so because of the child’s search for a pathway to individuation.22 The difference is simply between attributing the power to the phallus and attributing it to the father—the symbol of power versus the actual bearer of power.

In Mitchell’s view, the father is still, as it were, attached to the phallus, which, in itself, represents sexual power and the ability to enforce separation. In the other view, conversely, the symbolic power of the phallus develops as an extension of the father’s power; the phallus is not a thing in itself which the girl envies the moment she realizes she hasn’t got one. This is the position I wish to elaborate. I recognize, of course, the phenomenon that Freud called penis envy, but I interpret it as an expression of the girl’s effort to identify with the father as a way of establishing the separateness that is threatened by identifying with her mother.

Chassegut-Smirgel’s idea that the phallus serves to “beat back the mother” grasps the double nature of the father’s power to represent difference: it is a defense against the mother’s fearful power and it is an expression of the child’s innate striving to individuate. But there is one problem with this idea: it implies that the establishment of independence from the mother has a predominantly hostile and defensive coloring. This antagonistic picture obscures the positive side of

*Chassegut-Smirgel and her colleagues have stressed the child’s conflict with the intrusive, controlling mother of the anal period.23 Certainly the mother they have in mind, the mother of discipline, cleanliness, and toilet training, who subjects the child’s body to her rule, necessarily arouses revolt (however unconscious). I have observed that women preoccupied with the penis wish frequently describe their mother as controlling, physically intrusive, and sexually restrictive. In American psychoanalytic writing we less frequently encounter an analytically controlling mother than a “narcissistic” mother, who impedes separation because she fantasizes the daughter as an extension of herself—an orally controlling mother, shall we say, indulgent, overinvolved, but oblivious.
becoming independent in the relationship with mother—becoming a more active partner in (affectionate) interaction with her. The striving to individuate is not just an expression of hostility toward dependency; it also expresses love of the world. Whether hostility or love predominates depends largely on the circumstances in which the child grows up.

The fantasy of dangerous maternal omnipotence may well be intensified by specific conditions of mothering (widespread in much of Western society) that trap mother and child in an emotional hothouse and make it difficult for either one of them to accomplish separation. This is the context in which the father and his phallus become a weapon for the embattled self struggling to differentiate. But as we have seen in the analysis of erotic domination, using fire to fight fire—using the fantasy of one omnipotent parent (or organ) to subdue the other one—does not solve the real problem of differentiation, which is to break out of omnipotence altogether. We must find a form of differentiation that does not involve exchanging one master for another.

Chasseguet-Smirgel, having identified the deep unconscious roots of phallic power in fear and envy of the mother, believes she has hit bedrock. But feminist critics draw a different conclusion about the relationship between paternal and maternal power. They do not accept the inevitability of defensive differentiation; rather, they see the necessity of challenging the existing gender arrangements.

CHOOSING THE FATHER

Once we take the view that the father—not the phallus—is the locus of power, we may scrutinize more critically the daughter’s relationship to him.

Let us consider the experience of a woman who was a “father’s daughter,” who as a child used her identification with her father to achieve liberation from a controlling and intrusive, although demeaned, mother. Lucy was a successful professional woman, a lawyer like her father, and the eldest of three girls. She sought help in dealing with the painful end of a long marriage to an older man who she felt had completely controlled her. She consciously saw her submission as an extension of her relationship to her father, whom she adored yet vaguely resented. In Lucy’s recollections, which are quite vivid, the antithesis stands out between her father, the active, desiring subject, and her mother, the restrictive prohibitor of desire.

In one session Lucy discussed a dream of having something rubbery between her legs which she must squeeze when she has to put on the brakes while driving in a car. She associates to images of both father and mother. First she thinks of the rubbery thing as a penis, then as a diaphragm. She mentions a childhood dream in which she was attacked by a man with a knife. Then she associates to the recollections that she has often brought up of her mother interfering with her masturbation. She then returns, on the theme of humiliation, to remember how her father would tease her while swimming, ducking her head and splashing her until she was in tears and enraged. He would persist just a little too long, until she was upset, and then laugh at her. She recalls how he would mock her mother until, in silent protest, she left the room. She then veers back to a memory of her mother expressing disgust at the behavior of two teenagers caught having sex in the park. Then she thinks of pressing her legs together to control her urine flow, as her mother had taught her, and thinks again of the rubbery thing, this time as the rubber panties a child wears over diapers to keep them from leaking. Here is a not uncommon female constellation, involving resentment of maternal prohibition complicated by a fear of paternal intrusion.*

*This is, of course, a classic oedipal constellation; what I am emphasizing, however, is the preoedipal roots of this configuration: the girl repudiates her mother and identifies with her father in the interest of escaping maternal control, but this preoedipal solution leaves her without maternal protection from the threatening genital fantasies inspired by the oedipal father.
In her first description of her problems, Lucy had talked about her difficulty with being female, her sense of exclusion from the female bonds in her family, her preference for male friends, and her sense of being like her father, whom she loved a great deal. Her mother had told her two things about her infancy: that when she was still in the crib Lucy would masturbate frequently and her mother would stop her from doing it; and that when her mother tried to hold her she would squirm away. She could remember being severely reprimanded by her mother when she found her at the end of a nap with her hands between her legs. Reflecting on these recollections she said, “Maybe that’s where I got the idea of not wanting to be a girl.” The central point of this statement, I think, was that she did not wish to be like her mother, who rejected sexuality and desire in favor of control and self-control: she did not wish to be her, to be close to her and therefore controlled by her. If she were a boy and could disidentify with mother, she would not have to repress her sexuality, she could have her pleasure and autonomy. A boy who experiences humiliation by his mother will turn to his father and strive to be like him—free of mother’s control.

By wishing to be a boy, Lucy was pursuing a similar strategy.

The child’s struggle for autonomy takes place within the realm of the body and its pleasures. Thus, the mother who does not experience her own will and body as sources of pleasure, who does not enjoy her own agency and desire, cannot recognize her daughter’s sexuality. But in turning away from such a mother to her father, the girl is often faced with the dilemma that he will “hold her down,” force her to submit, humiliate her with her femininity, demean her. She fears he will treat her as she has seen him treat her mother. Virginia Woolf has described such a daughter’s passionate struggle with her father in To the Lighthouse:

For no one attracted her more; his hands were beautiful, and his feet, and his voice, and his words... his saying straight out before every one, we perish, each alone, and his remoteness... But what remained intolerable, she thought... was that crass blind-

ness and tyranny of his which had poisoned her childhood and raised bitter storms, so that even now she woke in the night trembling with rage and remembered some command of his; some insolence: “Do this,” “Do that,” his dominance: his “Submit to me.”

Lucy’s core fear was the fear of violation and intrusion, a fear that was expressed in vigilant attempts to maintain her privacy in her family and a preoccupation with “finding a space” for herself in adult life. Both her mother’s control and intrusion, and her father’s seduction and domination, appeared to coalesce in this fear. And yet, the basic direction that Lucy had chosen throughout her life was to reject her mother in favor of her father, as an object not only of love but of identification. He was the one with the exuberance, the agency, the excitement, and the desire that Lucy was trying to protect in herself from humiliation and prohibition. His recognition of her as his favorite child, his letting her be like him, was crucial.

Lucy had unequivocally made the choice to beat back maternal power with paternal power, to find liberation in the father. But to do this she was always having to struggle against her father—his command of and contempt for her, her mother, and women in general. Lucy’s choice had led her to a common daughter’s dilemma: How to be a subject in relation to her father (or any man like her father)? How to be like her father and still be a woman? Her identification of femininity with submission, exemplified by her mother, had prevailed in her marriage and left her confused about her identity afterward.

Lucy’s dilemma suggests how problematic it is for a woman to identify with her father as a mode of separation when the father—mother relationship is one of inequality, when the mother is not a subject herself, but is nevertheless a power over her daughter. This use of the father is a solution that is part of the problem. It leads to that recurrent split between autonomy and sexuality that is so visible in the lives and the politics of women today.

Despite the drawbacks, however, there is no doubt that Lucy drew
a certain strength from paternal identification. Under the circumstances, she chose the parent who would provide her with a sense of personal power. But again, if we understand this choice only as an attempt to beat back the mother, we still do not have the whole story about desire. We still need to understand what is so erotic about this paternal power. Let us turn to that point in life when the father becomes the image of liberation from maternal power, when he becomes the one who recognizes and embodies desire.

THE MIRROR OF DESIRE

Recent research and theory now concur that gender identity develops in the second year of life and is well established by the third—much earlier than Freud thought. The child’s awareness of the difference between mother and father, now reformulated as gender difference, coincides fathfully with rapprochement. It is this conjunction which shapes the symbolic role of the father and his phallus.

Briefly, this is what I propose: what Freud called penis envy, the little girl’s masculine orientation, really reflects the wish of the toddler—of either sex—to identify with the father, who is perceived as representing the outside world. Psychoanalysis has recognized the importance of the boy’s early love for the father in forming his sense of agency and desire; but it has not assigned a parallel importance to the girl’s. This early love of the father is an “ideal love”: the child idealizes the father because the father is the magical mirror that reflects the self as it wants to be—the ideal in which the child wants to recognize himself. Under certain conditions, this idealization can become the basis for adult ideal love, the submission to a powerful other who seemingly embodies the agency and desire one lacks in oneself.

The idealized father solves the paradox of the rapprochement phase, the paradox of the child needing to be recognized as independent by the very person he depends upon. The father’s power derives not only from the fact that he is big, but also that he represents a solution to the child’s inner conflict. As we saw in our discussion of recognition in chapter 1, rapprochement is a vital transition point in psychic life.* It can be seen as the great fall from grace, when the conflict between self-assertion and separation anxiety brings forth an essential ambivalence. In rapprochement the child first experiences his own activity and will in the context of the parents’ greater power and his own limitations. This power relationship—and the realization of his own helplessness—comes as a shock, a blow to the child’s narcissism. The child’s self-esteem must be repaired by the confirmation that the child can do real things in the real world. The child also seeks to repair it through identification, a particular kind of oneness with the person who embodies the power one now feels lacking.

But—note well—in my view this identification is more than just a compensation for a perceived loss. The child is also becoming conscious of will and agency, of being the one who desires. The child wants more than simple satisfaction of need. Rather, each want expresses the desire to be recognized as a subject: above and beyond the thing itself that is wanted, the child wants recognition of her will, of her desire, of her act. Nothing is more characteristic of this phase than the reiteration of the word “want.” Where the fourteen-month-old said “banana” or “cracker” and pointed, the twenty-month-old says “Want that!” uninterested in naming the object itself. Recognition of this wanting is now the essential meaning of getting what you asked for. The child’s tendency to feel that her ego is on the line every time she asks for some paltry thing often mystifies the parent. But this insistence only becomes stronger in each new phase of self-assertion.

*Because of the many issues that converge at this point this phase is gradually assuming the theoretical status of a “rapprochement complex,” vying in theoretical importance with the Oedipus complex. When, in rapprochement, the father first begins to represent freedom, separation, and desire, this is not simply an earlier version of the Oedipus complex. The father here is not a restrictive authority, not a limit to the child’s desire, but rather a model for it, whereas the oedipal father is both.
When the child has a tantrum over which shoes she will wear, the urgency stems from the need to be an agent who can realize her own plans, intentions, and mental images. The rapprochement phase, then, inaugurates the first in a long series of struggles to achieve a sense of agency, to be recognized in one’s desire.

This understanding of rapprochement offers a great insight into the problem of woman’s desire. What is really wanted at this point in life is recognition of one’s desire; what is wanted is recognition that one is a subject, an agent who can will things and make them happen. And at this very point, where desire becomes an issue, the realizations of gender difference first begin to take hold in the psyche. Now each parent may represent one side of the mental conflict between independence and dependence. And the child will articulate this difference between them symbolically—especially the father’s difference from the mother. Here begins the child’s relationship with the father that has been added to explain the power of the phallus. It is a relationship that—in theory as well as practice—continues to be dramatically different for boys and girls.

Long before this symbolic consciousness of gender begins, the father is experienced in his total physical and emotional behavior as the exciting, stimulating, separate other. Fathers’ play with infants differs from mothers’: it is more stimulating and novel, less soothing and accurately tuned. Fathers often introduce a higher level of arousal in early interaction—jiggling, bouncing, whooping. The father’s novelty and complexity, as opposed to the mother’s smoother, more contained play, have been characterized as an aggressive mode of behavior that “fosters differentiation and individuation.” Fathers, whether it is because of their greater sense of bodily separateness, or their identification with their own fathers, tend toward such exciting play. Thus, from the beginning, fathers represent what is outside and different—they mediate the wider world.

Playfulness is, of course, not absent in mothers, but it is more often eclipsed by their function as regulator. Mothers are more likely to be found quieting, soothing, nursing, stabilizing, containing, and holding the infant. Still, it has been observed that whatever her style of play, when the mother is the parent who comes and goes, she is the “curious-making” outside parent. We shall have to await the results of current changes in parenting to see what happens when the father is the primary parent and these elements are reshuffled: for example, when the father stays home but his play is aggressive and novel, when the mother is the outside parent, yet soothing and holding. Perhaps parents will ultimately integrate the aspects of holding and excitement. At present, however, the division between the exciting, outside father and the holding, inside mother is still embedded in the culture.

No matter what theory you read, the father is always the way into the world. In some contemporary delivery rooms, the father is literally encouraged to cut the umbilical cord. He is the liberator, the proverbial knight in shining armor. The devaluation of the mother that inevitably accompanies the idealization of the father, however, gives the father’s role as liberator a special twist for women. It means that their necessary identification with their mothers, with existing feminity, is likely to subvert their struggle for independence.

The asymmetry of the father’s role for boy and girl toddlers, the fact that little girls cannot as readily utilize the father in their separation from the mother or defend against feelings of helplessness, has, with few exceptions, been accepted as inevitable in psychoanalytic literature. The observation that little girls in rapprochement become more depressed and lose more of their exploratory enthusiasm than boys, is noted by Mahler as a fact of life. According to Mahler, the boy succeeds in escaping the depressive mood of rapprochement by virtue of his “greater motor-mindedness,” his pleasure in active, aggressive strivings. In light of little boys’ well-known fascination with motor vehicles, we might call this the tendency to *vroom vroom vroom* their way through rapprochement. But this activity is a symptom, not the cause of the boy’s success in denying helplessness or the little girl’s depressed confrontation with it.

Feminist theorists explain this difference by noting the mother’s greater identification with the daughter, and her greater willingness to
bolster the son's than the daughter's independence.\textsuperscript{35} This is doubtless true; but it is equally important to observe that boys resolve the conflict of independence by turning to someone else. This other is conventionally the father, though most any male substitute or symbol will do as the other object of identification. Ernest Abelin, who observed the toddlers in Mahler's study, argued that the father plays this role more for the boy than for the girl. Recognition of himself in the father is what enables the boy to deny helplessness, to feel he is powerful, to protect himself from the loss of the grandiosity he enjoyed in the practicing phase.\textsuperscript{36} When the boy is not actively playing daddy, he flies about, announcing his new name—Superman.

Paternal recognition thus has a defensive aspect; with it the child denies dependency and dissociates himself from his previous maternal tie. The father's entry is a kind of \textit{deus ex machina} that solves the insoluble conflict of rapprochement, the conflict between the desire to hold onto mother, and the desire to fly away. The child wants to solve this problem by becoming independent without the experience of loss. And the "solution" to this dilemma is to split—to assign the contradictory strivings to different parents. Schematically, the mother can become the object of desire, the father the subject of desire in whom one recognizes oneself.\textsuperscript{37} Separation-individuation thus becomes a gender issue, and recognition and independence are now organized within the frame of gender.

This is the point where the distinction between subject and object, the I and the It, acquires meaning. Abelin postulates that in this phase, excitement is no longer felt as emanating from the object ("It is so attractive"). Desire is now a property of the self, one's own inner desire ("I desire it").\textsuperscript{38} And the father now becomes the symbolic figure representing the I who "owns" desire, desire for the mother.*

*Although this account of the father's role gives greater weight to object relations than to the genital difference, it still assumes a heterosexual, two-parent family. What about the fact that a large proportion of the children in our society do not grow up under

In the boy's mind, the magical father with whom he identifies possesses the omnipotence that he would like to have. Recognition through identification is now substituted for the more conflictual need to be recognized directly by the primary parent on whom he feels dependent. The boy can enjoy the fantasy that he is being the father toward the mother, and not her helpless baby; he can now see himself as part of a triangle, rather than a dyad; he becomes conscious of himself as acting like father toward mother. And the mother has only to confirm his fantasy, acknowledge his identification, see him as her "little man." She has only to say, as did one mother to her two-year-old, "You and Daddy are as alike as two peas in a pod," to which the boy fervently replied, "Say it again, Mommy!"

The images of separation and desire are thus joined in the father, or more accurately, in his ideal. Presumably, the father has been experienced by both boys and girls as the original representative of excitement and otherness. Now, as the child begins to feel the wish and the excitement as his or her own \textit{inner desire}, he or she looks for recognition from this exciting other. While the child doubtless seeks recognition from both parents at this time, the exciting father is the one the child wishes to be \textit{like}. Desire is intrinsically linked, at this point, to the striving for freedom, for autonomy, but this striving is
realized in the context of a powerful connection. The wish to be like the father, the identificatory impulse, is not merely a defensive attempt to defeat the mother—it is also the basis for a new kind of love. ⁴⁰ I suggest we call this identificatory love.

Identification now plays a central role in recognition and desire. “Being like” is the chief means by which a child of this age can acknowledge the subjectivity of another person, as the well-noted phenomenon of parallel play implies. The element of pleasure in another is gained through likeness—“We are both drinking juice from blue cups.” For the toddler, “being like” is perhaps second only to physical intimacy in emotional importance. The father’s subjectivity is appreciated through likeness—“I am being Daddy.” Loving someone because they are different—object love—has not yet come view. Loving someone who is the source of goodness is already well established—“I love you; you give me food.” But the first form of loving someone as a subject, as an admired agent, is this kind of identificatory love. ⁴¹

In the boy’s story, identificatory love is the matrix of crucial psychic structures during rapprochement. The strong mutual attraction between father and son allows for recognition and identification, a special erotic relationship. ⁴² In rapprochement, the little boy’s “love affair with the world” (of the earlier practicing stage) turns into a homoerotic love affair with the father, who represents the world. The boy’s identificatory love for the father, his wish to be recognized as like him, is the erotic engine behind separation. The boy is in love with his ideal, and through his ideal he begins to see himself as a subject of desire. Through this homoerotic love he creates his masculine identity and maintains his narcissism in the face of helplessness.

I regard the identificatory, homoerotic bond between toddler son and father as the prototype of ideal love—a love in which the person seeks to find in the other an ideal image of himself. In rapprochement, the child who is beginning to confront his own helplessness can comfort himself with the belief in parental omnipotence. ⁴⁴ In this parental power, he will seek to recognize the power of his own desire; and he will elaborate it in the internally constructed ideal. The father-son love affair is the model for later ideal love, just as the conflict of rapprochement between independence and helplessness is the model conflict that such ideal love is usually called upon to solve. And underlying both identificatory love and ideal love is the same desire for recognition.

THE MISSING FATHER

The little boy’s identificatory love for his father is the psychological foundation of the idealization of male power and autonomous individuality. This idealization remains untainted by submission as long as the wonderful, exciting father says, “Yes, you are like me.” The route to becoming the I who desires leads through identification with him. Thus, I believe, for women, the “missing father” is the key to their missing desire, and to its return in the form of masochism. By reconstructing the way in which the father is missing for the girl, we begin to uncover an explanation for woman’s “lack” that goes beyond penis envy.

The psychoanalytic discussion of the father-daughter relationship has been notably thin compared to that of boys and their fathers. ⁴⁵ The common psychoanalytic line on sexual difference is that the boy has love for the father in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. ⁴⁶ For Freud, this love serves to explain the mass identification with and the surrender to the ideal leader. As we shall see, woman’s search for identificatory love likewise often leads to submission.
one love object (the mother) and the girl has two (must shift from mother to father). But at times it appears as if the boy has two and the girl has none.66 When we turn to the little girl's story, we find no coherent explanation of the elements of gender, individuation, and paternal identification. Either the father's importance to the girl is ignored (as in maternal identification theory) or he is no more to her than the possessor of the penis she wants (as in classical theory).

Roiphe and Galenson have been the leading contemporary exponents of the idea that toddler girls suffer from penis envy.67 They claim to notice the same signs of depression in eighteen-month-old girls that Mahler noted—subdued mood, withdrawal, decline in curiosity and responsiveness toward others—but they attribute it to the new genital awareness rather than to separation issues. The girls they observed attempted to emulate their fathers, appropriated his objects ("stealing" his penis—which, they failed to observe, boys do as well), and variously expressed the wish for a penis. Roiphe and Galenson conclude that Freud was right, penis envy does structure femininity. The evidence, they argue, points to an "early genital phase" in which girls suffer from feelings of castration, a further proof that the genital drive is the main force behind gender development.68 I am willing to credit their evidence that toddler girls display considerable interest in father and penis, just as earlier critics of Freud did not deny that penis envy was readily observable.69 But why do girls want the penis? And is their awareness of lack the main cause of girls' depression? There is no question that the symbol is important, and that it will go on to be more so. But what does it represent?

I interpret the desire for the penis as evidence that little girls are seeking the same thing as little boys, namely, identification with the father of separation, the representative of the outside world.69 What Galenson and Roiphe see as evidence of a castration reaction I see as a roadblock in the toddler girl's separation from mother and identification with father. But to see the situation this way one must first assume that girls do, in fact, need their fathers, an idea that escapes Galenson and Roiphe altogether. Why not assume that girls are seeking to identify with their fathers and thereby find recognition of their own desire? Little girls in this phase express the wish for a penis, I suggest, for the same reason that boys cherish theirs—because they see it as the emblem of the father who will help them individuate. Like boys, in their anxiety over separating from mother they are looking for an attachment figure who will represent their move away from infant dependency to the great outside. This figure is the father, and his difference is symbolized and guaranteed by his different genitals.

One consequence of female mothering is that fathers often prefer their boy infants; and, as infants respond in turn to parental cues, boy infants tend to form an intense bond with their fathers.51 The father recognizes himself in his son, sees him as the ideal boy he would have been; so identificatory love plays its part on the parent's side from the beginning. The father's own disidentification with his mother, and his continuing need to assert difference from women, make it difficult for him to recognize his daughter as he does his son.52 He is more likely to see her as a sweet adorable thing, a nascent sex object.

Consequently we see that little girls often cannot or may not use their connection with the father, in either its defensive or constructive aspects (that is, to deny helplessness or to forge a sense of separate selfhood). The father's withdrawal pushes the girl back to her mother; the consequent turning inward of her aspirations for independence and her anger at nonrecognition explain her depressive response to the rapprochement conflict. Thus little girls are confronted more directly by the difficulty of separating from mother and their own helplessness. Unprotected by the phallic sign of gender difference, unsupported by an alternate relationship, they relinquish their entitlement to desire. It is tempting to counter this deflation by emphasizing the girl's capacity for sociability or for future motherhood, a rationalization that has some truth.53 But alas, we know that many girls are left with a lifelong admiration for individuals who get away with their sense of omnipotence intact; and they express their admiration in relationships of overt or unconscious submission. They grow to idealize the man who has what they can never possess—power and desire.
Although the psychoanalytic theory of female development has not yet recognized the importance of the missing father, clinicians have begun to realize the girl’s equal need to identify with her father and the consequences if he is unavailable for such identification. Galenson and Roiphe actually come rather close to uncovering the real issue. Cindy cites a case in which a little girl was deeply depressed by her father’s unavailability; they conclude that “the missing element…was not simply his phallus; it was in great part the excitement and erotic nature of their relationship, which had earlier been attached to the father in toto and now was identified as emanating from his phallus in particular.” This change of focus from the exciting father in general to his phallus in particular is precisely what happens when the father himself is “missing”—that is, when he is absent, not involved, or offers seduction rather than identification. The girl struggles to create the identification with him out of whole cloth: and the symbol thus takes the place of the concrete relationship of recognition that she misses.

I conclude that the little girl’s “lack” is the gap left in her subjectivity by the missing father, and that this is what the theory of penis envy presumed to explain. The fact that girls, like boys, seek a relationship of identificatory love with the father also affects our explanation of another aspect of female development that puzzled Freud. Repeatedly he came back to the question of why the little girl “switches” to her father in the oedipal phase, a shift Freud could only explain as the girl’s narcissistic desire to gain the penis for herself. It is now possible to transpose this explanation as follows: the preoedipal girl’s identificatory love becomes the basis for later heterosexual love; when the girl realizes she cannot be the father, she wants to have him. Thus we can agree with Irene Fast’s theory of gender differentiation, which suggests that boys and girls alike (ideally) go through a phase in which they play out their identification with the opposite sex, after which they are able to renounce it and recognize it as the prerogative of the other. This recognition, coupled with the preceding identification, enables the child to feel heterosexual love, love of what is different.

If the renunciation takes place too soon, however, without full identification, it is compromised by repudiation or idealization.

This point has particular relevance for girls; since, as we know, the girl’s identification with the father is typically refused, her love is commonly tainted by envy and submission. We know that on the level of daily life, when the desire to identify goes unanswered, envy takes its place. Envy is often a signal of thwarted identification. The longing for the missing phallus, the envy that has been attributed to women, is really the longing for just such a homoerotic bond as boys may achieve, just such an identificatory love. This is why there are so many stories of woman’s love being directed toward a hero such as she herself would be—the wish for discipleship, serving an idol, submission to an ideal.

This desire for a homoerotic bond may also illuminate the female masochistic fantasy which Freud found among many of his patients. In this fantasy, reported by Freud in his famous essay “A Child Is Being Beaten,” the woman witnesses or overhears a child being punished by a father. Invariably, the child, with whom she identifies, turns out to be a boy. In my view, it is the woman’s wish to be like the powerful father, and to be recognized by him as like, that the fantasy simultaneously punishes and gratifies. The more common variety of adult ideal love, a woman’s adulation for the heroic man who rejects love for freedom, can also be traced back to this phase of life, and to the disappointments a girl usually suffers.

But would it be possible for the girl to make what is not hers represent her own desire? Could an identification with the father allow her to make desire and agency her own? The girl’s wish to identify with the father, even if satisfied, leads to myriad problems under the present gender system. As long as the mother is not articulated as a sexual agent, identification with the father’s agency and desire will appear fraudulent and stolen; furthermore, it conflicts with the cultural image of woman as sexual object and with the girl’s maternal identification. It will not jibe with what she knows about her position in her father’s eyes. And once the relationship between father and daughter
is sexualized, attachment to him becomes a barrier, rather than an impetus, to the girl's autonomy.58

It is possible, however, that in a context of different gender arrangements, the girl's identification with the father and symbolic appropriation of the phallus might well be constructive. To envision such an alteration we must reject the assumptions underlying the psychoanalytic account of early gender development. These are: that mothers cannot offer their daughters what fathers offer their sons, a figure of separation and agency; that little girls do not need such a figure because they might just as well remain identified with the mother of early attachment and merging; and that fathers cannot offer their daughters what they offer their sons. These assumptions are, at best, no more than descriptions of our culture. I believe that, given substantial alteration in gender expectations and parenting, both parents can be figures of separation and attachment for their children; that both boys and girls can make use of identifications with both parents, without being confused about their gender identity.

These assertions are unfortunately still controversial. Their premise is that in the preoedipal phase gender and the associated identifications are quite fluid. There is still room for oscillation between mother and father.59 Female and male identifications are not yet perceived as mutually exclusive, and little boys are still concerned with establishing an identification with mother, as little girls are with father. As toddlers begin to realize their difference from mother, they often seek reassurance through similarities. Indeed, whether the child emphasizes similarity or difference will often depend upon what the mother emphasizes. The child's desire is to have both: mother and father, sameness and difference. Thus if the mother emphasizes attachment, the child will strive for difference and insist on wearing father's clothes; if she urges separateness, the child may insist on his similarity to her and wear her clothes.

In my view, toddler boys and girls are struggling equally to maintain identification with both sexes, to keep both parents available as objects of attachment and recognition. Optimally the identification with both parents allows the child to assimilate much of what belongs to the other—identification is not yet limited by identity. In this phase, gender identification is much less rigid than the oedipal organization that comes after it: cross-sex identification can coexist with same-sex identification; sexual identifications have not yet hardened into polarities.

I am not suggesting that gender can or should be eliminated, but that along with a conviction of gender identity, individuals ideally should integrate and express both male and female aspects of selfhood (as culturally defined). This integration already takes place in the constant alternation of identifications in early childhood and can subsequently become a basis for understanding the other as well as the self. When this crossover is permitted at the appropriate time, individuals do not grow up confused about their gender identity; rather, they can be flexible in their expression of it. In the individual's mind the gendered self-representation coexists with a genderless or even opposite-gendered self-representation. Thus a person could alternately experience herself as “I, a woman; I, a genderless subject; I, like-a-man.” A person who can maintain this flexibility can accept all parts of herself, and of the other.*

What, then, hampers the crossing over and alternation of gender identifications? Why is the border closed between the genders? Feminist theory concludes that the derogation of the female side of the polarity leads to a hardening of the opposition between male and female individuality as they are now constructed. The taboo on maternal sexual agency, the defensive mode of separation where the father is used to beat back the mother, the idealization of the father in

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*In other words, the core sense of belonging to one sex or the other is not compromised by cross-sex identifications and behaviors. The wish to be and do what the other sex does is not pathological, nor necessarily a denial of one's own identity. The choice of love object, heterosexual or homosexual, is not the determining aspect of gender identity, an idea that psychoanalytic theory does not always admit.
identificatory love, and the confirmation that dependence and independence are mutually exclusive poles rather than a unified tension—all serve to devalue femininity. As we shall see in chapter 4, the idealization of the father and the devaluation of the mother constitute a profound split that has infused the culture at large, and shaped our very notion of individuality.

The problem of woman's desire has led us to the missing father. But to restore this father means to challenge the whole gender structure in which mother and father have mutually exclusive roles. Although I have stressed the girl's need for her father, this father can be used satisfactorily only by a girl who also draws a sense of self from her mother. The "real" solution to the dilemma of woman's desire must include a mother who is articulated as a sexual subject, one who expresses her own desire. When mother and father (in reality and as cultural ideals) are not equal, the parental identifications will necessarily oppose each other. As we have seen, the toddler's experience of split between a holding mother and an exciting father begins as a way of resolving the conflict between dependence and independence. This split can be repaired only when each parent sustains sexual cross-identification and provides an example of integration rather than complementarity. Under such conditions, the child's tendency to split the paradoxical elements of differentiation would not be reinforced by the gender arrangements. The parental relationship would stand for integration and the sustaining of tension, rather than its breakdown into inequality and one-sidedness. It would offer children an ideal of separation and difference that is not defensive, a way out of the sexual power relationship in which one side is devalued and subordinated to the other.

**WOMAN'S QUEST FOR IDEAL LOVE**

The failure to appreciate the importance of identificatory love in the father-daughter tie has led to many psychoanalytic misunderstandings of women. In the original Freudian account, the girl's paternal identificaton and her sense of agency were not positive contributions to her attainment of womanhood, but obstacles to be removed. Her active longing to be like the father was, when it remained influential, a neurotic masculinity complex. It had to be superseded by the passive longing for the father—for his phallus, and his baby. The fragility of this passive sexual identity, which is without its own sense of agency and sovereignty, is all too clear to us. Furthermore, the conflict between the identificatory love that enhances agency and the object love that encourages passivity is replayed over and over in women's efforts to reconcile autonomous activity and heterosexual love.

In fact, the girl's need for identificatory love in the rapprochement phase has been obscured by the father's reappearance in the oedipal relationship. But this later relationship to the father involves very different aspirations. In rapprochement, the girl's wish is to be recognized as like the father and to share his subjectivity, will, and desire; in the oedipal phase, the girl's wish is to be united with the father as love object. Too often, in psychoanalysis, identificatory love has been mistaken for oedipal love.

We are not yet sure what would happen in oedipal love if the girl has already formed a strong identificaton with father as well as with mother, has been recognized by both parents as like. Nor do we know what it would mean for the girl to perceive her mother as a sexual subject who desires her father, or to perceive her as the active, exciting agent in relation to a man or another woman. We do know that as things now stand the identification with mother and father—the strivings for femininity and sexual agency—often clash irreconcilably. At times one is even tempted to define femininity by this irreconcilable conflict.

The thwarting of an early identificatory love with the exciting outside is damaging to any child's sense of agency, in particular to the sense of sexual agency. Such early disappointment may well lead to relationships of subordination or passivity—with or without sexual enjoyment. Unfortunately, this solution has the cast of normalcy for
women. But we must note that women seek a form of reparation in these relationships. They are drawn to ideal love as a second chance, an opportunity to attain, at long last, a father-daughter identification in which their own desire and subjectivity can finally be recognized and realized.

In some cases, a woman’s search for her own desire may take the form of extreme self-abnegation. *Story of O* describes O’s satisfaction in complete self-annihilation. But even in the more common form of masochism—adult ideal love—woman loses herself in the identification with the powerful other who embodies the missing desire and agency.

Simone de Beauvoir analyzed this function of ideal love in great detail. Here she quotes a patient of Pierre Janet, the nineteenth-century physician of nervous illness, who expressed this mixture of self-abnegation and wish for transcendence quite eloquently:

“All my foolish acts and all the good things I have done have the same cause: an aspiration for a perfect and ideal love in which I can give myself completely, entrust my being to another, God, man, or woman, so superior to me that I will no longer need to think what to do in life or to watch over myself. . . . How I envy the ideal love of Mary Magdalene and Jesus: to be the ardent disciple of an adored and worthy master; to live and die for him, my idol. . . .”

De Beauvoir comments that “Many examples have already shown us that this dream of annihilation is in fact an avid will to exist. . . . When woman gives herself completely to her idol, she hopes that he will give her at once possession of herself and of the universe he represents.”

The belief that the man will provide access to a world that is otherwise closed to her is one of the great motives in ideal love. It is not difficult for women to give up the narcissism of the absolute self, but to find another path to the world, they often look for a man whose

will they imagine to be untrammeled. So George Eliot describes the fate of Dorothea in *Middlemarch*:

“We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier for her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conceive . . . that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference.”

Dorothea is described as a would-be Saint Theresa, whose “ideal nature” demanded “some illimitable satisfaction, . . . the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self.” Lacking the social means to such transcendence, Eliot says, the ardor of such women is dissipated, alternating “between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood.”

Thus in ideal love, as in other forms of masochism, acts of self-abnegation are in fact meant to secure access to the glory and power of the other. Often, when we look for the roots of this ideal love, we find the idealized father and a replaying of the thwarted early relationship of identification and recognition. Often, too, we find that the parental constellation reveals a split between the missing father of excitement and the present, but devalued, mother. Take the predicament of a young woman photographer, Elaine, who was obsessed with a man who had left her, and whom she couldn’t get over. Elaine saw her lover explicitly as her ideal. She understood that he was the person she wished to be—creative, adventurous, unconventional. Through the many projects they worked on together, she was able to experience him as the vehicle for a “love affair with the world.” Now, in her daydreams, they travel to exotic and dangerous places for their work. He, like an older brother, takes the lead, and she insists on doing everything he does. She rejects the trappings of femininity, dresses like
a boy, performs feats and has adventures with him. Here, the homo-
erotic identification emerges with particular clarity. In her mind she
is still proving herself to her lover, still trying to live up to the
independence she thinks he embodies. Her lover was vital to her, she
often said, because of "something to do with freedom. He was the only
one who recognized my true self. He made me feel alive."

Elaine perceives her aspirations and ambitions as thwarted by both
parents, each in a sex-stereotypical way. Her mother, who had many
children, was weak and ineffectual, wholly without ambition for
herself or her children, and especially unable to help or support them
when it came to "anything we did outside." Her father was very much
removed from the family — distant, angry, judgmental, and impatient
with children and wife, involved in his work and frustrated with his
lack of success. Although Elaine reports that now he is occasionally
proud of her work, she is more often wounded by her father’s refusal,
in adulthood as in childhood, to acknowledge her accomplishments.

Elaine believes that her mother was valuable to her children when
they were little, as a source of comfort and soothing, but that she was
discouraging and devoid of any excitement or spark—which is what
Elaine thinks most important in life. When she identifies with her
mother or sister she feels weak or ill, and despises herself. Moreover
she is terrified by the depths of self-abasement her sister reached in her
own attempts to please or provoke her father. As a result, Elaine refuses
to invest the therapist with the power to help her, readily admitting
she fears it would mean devotion to an idol. At the same time she
expresses contempt for any soothing or comforting, dismissing it as the
debilitating sympathy her mother used to offer. In both cases, she is
afraid of losing her will altogether.

Elaine’s memories suggest that her mother offered support in a way
that discouraged separation: she withdrew her attention as soon as her
children began to crawl away from her, returning it only when they
had fallen or acutely needed her care. In this case the mother’s anxiety
about separation led not to intrusive hovering but to a withdrawal of
holding the moment the child ventured away. Her care did not extend

into the wide world; her care, in fact, demanded renunciation of it.
Thus Elaine became the sort of child who, by the period of rappro-
chement, becomes clinging and fearful in overall mood, making only
occasional disastrous forays out of the mother’s orbit.

I suggest that such a person hopes in a masochistic relationship to
overcome her clinging helplessness and separation anxiety even as she
simultaneously expresses and gives way to it. Such a person is likely
to seek a "heroic" sadist to submit to, someone who represents the
liberating father rather than the engulfing mother. This ideal love
solves the problems posed by the frustration of desire and agency, the
rage at nonrecognition, by offering an avenue of escape and providing
a figure of identification.

Elaine’s assertion of masculine peership with her ideal lover, with
its thrill of homoerotic attraction, shows how male gender identity and
the search for one’s own desire converge. The failure of the idealized
father of rapprochement to provide a recognizing response is often a
pivotal issue in a girl’s self formation. This idealized figure is main-
tained internally even though the real father may increasingly reveal
his faults and weaknesses to the child, because he remains the symbol
of the means of escape and self-realization. But attention to the father-
daughter relationship should not cause us to ignore the implications
of the mother-daughter dyad, or to de-emphasize the importance of
the mother. Elaine is a woman who feels profoundly damaged as a
person, in part because of her mother’s helplessness and ineffectuality
which, in her own eyes (and in the eyes of her internalized father),
she cannot overcome. Her tremendous rage at her mother for being
unable to withstand the attack she would like to visit upon her
reinforces Elaine’s sense of powerlessness. The maternal “omnipo-
tence” she is fleeing is actually the mother’s weakness and inability to
survive and struggle. Identification with this helpless mother is particu-
larly insupportable. Unleashed activity, aggression, desire, would
threaten not merely separation but also maternal destruction. Over and
over Elaine complains that her mother goes to pieces, becomes vague
and helpless, at the slightest confrontation.
Elaine is suffering from a lack of maternal holding as much as from a lack of paternal recognition. She regards both her anger and desire as highly disturbing, even monstrous, and would willingly surrender them to a powerful male who could “hold” them. As we saw, the rationally controlling and sadistic other is wonderful by virtue of his ability to withstand destruction. In the most common fantasy of ideal love, the one so frequently found in mass-market romances, a woman can only unleash her desire in the hands of a man whom she imagines to be more powerful, who does not depend upon her for his strength. Such a man, who desires but does not need her, satisfies the element missing from both mother and father, the ability to survive attack and still be there. In this sense the ideal lover actually provides a dual solution, containment and excitement, the holding environment and the road to freedom—the joint features of both the ideal mother and father.

The need for an object who is truly outside and survives attack is crucial to the fantasy of ideal love. The boundedness and limits within which one can surrender, and in which one can experience abandonment and creativity, are sought in the ideal lover. The search for more benevolent authority figures also reveals the need for such reparative experiences. Elaine’s description of the “good teacher,” for example, is a case in point. The good teacher is one who provides you with structure and allows you the freedom to immerse yourself in your own imagination, to explore, even make mistakes, until you can finally express your own vision. She adds that when you have got it right, the teacher recognizes that rightness with you. It is worth noting that Elaine’s image of desirable authority is not the (oedipal) authority of judgment, with its possibility of condemnation. The controlled abandon that is associated with creative expression is only possible in an atmosphere in which understanding has been purified of judgment.

Elaine’s account of the good teacher seems to fit with Winnicott’s description of the holding environment as a context for the child’s transitional experiences, the beginnings of play and creativity, where the flow of recognition helps the child find what is in him—or herself, rather than vicariously in the other. This finding it in the self much more closely approximates the direct recognition a child needs (“You did it all by yourself!”) than does the alienated search for recognition through submission in ideal love. As in the transference to the therapist, the relationship with the teacher may allow for a discreet opportunity to reproduce a holding environment, to create open, transitional space where play and self-exploration are possible.

The longing for a holding environment and open space reminds us that there is a mother who is not fled but sought. She is the holding mother who can support excitement and outside exploration, who can contain the child’s anger and frustration, and survive the storms of assertion and separation. The search for the subject of desire—the ideal father—is part of a broader search for the constellation that provides not only the missing father but a reconciliation with the mother who acknowledges this desire (a crucial preview of oedipal tension and resolution). In Elaine’s history we see the need to escape a mother who engulfs—albeit with weakness and passivity rather than with intrusive control. But this need to escape is constantly at war with the need to turn back to the mother and complete the struggle for recognition—the struggle to the death for the life of the self.

In part, all of this refers simply to the mother’s ability to deal with the child’s aggression, to let the child struggle with her. (Often what interferes with this struggle is the fantasy of “mother’s good daughter,” who will never leave mother, who will never hurt her, who will never be selfish or greedy.) The mother who can absorb and appreciate, and still set limits to the child’s excitement and aggression, is the other subject who is sought in the recognition struggle. She is the one the child wants to get through to; getting through to her allows escape from the bubble of the isolate self. For women, then, failures in the struggle for recognition cannot be fully repaired by using a male identification to revolt against the mother. Women must, in addition, confront the paradoxical requirement to simultaneously separate from and identify with the mother.

Let me summarize the discussion so far. Starting with the psy-
choanalytic feminist perspective on early gender development, we have reappraised the significance of preoedipal experience. By shifting our focus from the oedipal to the preoedipal stage, we were able to explain the "masculine" aspirations of girl toddlers—their tendency to identify with their fathers as well as with their mothers—as a legitimate avenue of psychic development. While masculinity no longer appears to be the original orientation of both children, it does remain associated with strivings toward difference—toward the outside world, toward separateness—which are just as important to the girl's sense of agency as to the boy's. For girls as well as boys, the homoerotic identification with the father informs the image of autonomy. Thus we have traced the experience of recognition into a new development, that of identificatory love.

But when identificatory love is thwarted in childhood, it becomes associated with unattainable yearning and with self-abasement. Opportunities for assertion and recognition later in life often do not suffice to undo this tendency toward submission. What this means is that when identificatory love succeeds in toddlerhood, accompanied by the pleasure of mutual recognition, then identification can serve as a vehicle for developing one's own agency and desire. But when identificatory love is not satisfied within this context of mutual recognition—as it frequently is not for girls—it later emerges as ideal love, the wish for a vicarious substitute for one's own agency. It takes the passive form of accepting the other's will and desire as one's own; from there it is just a step to surrender to the other's will. Thus we see in ideal love a "perversion" of identification, a deformation of identificatory love into submission.

Behind ideal love we have seen the problematic early identification with the father. But this identification is only part of a whole complex that also includes the need for a mother who survives the rapprochement struggle. The problem of woman's desire points again to the special difficulties of resolving the paradox of recognition, all of which stem from the gender division: the fact that the mother is not the active subject of desire for the child and that the father is that subject, the liberator. For the daughter, the constellation of a mother lacking subjectivity and a father who possesses it presents an especially difficult choice. Even when the daughter receives her father's blessing—even with his recognition—resolving the identification with each parent is a difficult task. She must try where her mother failed: to synthesize subjectivity and femininity.

The gender division that now exists does not allow for reconciliation of agency and desire with femininity. Any vision of change must challenge the fundamental structure of heterosexuality in which the father supplies the missing excitement, "beats back the maternal power," and denies the mother's subjectivity because it is too dangerous.

But the intractability of this structure suggests that the organization of parenting alone is not the sole foundation of the gender division. After all, the idealization of the father as the representative of the outside world seems to operate as powerfully (or nearly so) even when the real parents do not reinforce it. It remains active as a shared longing, joined to the cultural representation of desire. As long as the father stands for subjectivity and desire at the level of culture, woman's desire will always have to contend with his monopoly and the devaluation of femininity it implies. In effect, the father's image subsumes that of the feared mother; once we see St. George with his sword drawn, no one has to point us a picture of the dragon. We are therefore left to wonder whether there is not another way of representing desire, untouched by that sword.

A DESIRE OF ONE'S OWN

Let us return to the symbolic significance of the phallus, its power to represent desire and liberation. We have seen that the phallus acquires its power as a defensive reaction to maternal power and as an element of excitement that contrasts with her holding and containment. But
the question remains: What alternative to the phallus is there? Mitchell argues that there is none, and that until patriarchy is overcome there is no other way to represent desire, difference, or separation. Is she right, or can we discern the rudiments of another way of representing desire—woman's desire—even in the midst of patriarchal culture?

One response is to offer a female representation of desire derived from the image of woman's organs, a representation at the same symbolic level as the phallus. But this strategy faces two problems: first, we have already seen that such representation actually derives its force from the total gestalt of the parent bearing those organs. If the maternal figure is a source of fear, that fearfulness will color her organs as well. Reasserting the symbolic value of the female organs is simply a reversal of the previous denigration; it defies but does not resolve the problem. Woman's sexual subjectivity is expressed through her body, of course; and so it is in women's interest to reclaim and know their bodies. But we are talking about representation, and in a culture in which the representation of the body is organized and dominated by the phallus, woman's body necessarily becomes the object of the phallus. As we know, woman's body is endlessly objectified in all the visual media. The element of agency will not be restored to woman by aestheticizing her body—that has already been done in spades.

The second problem is that the symbolic level of the psyche already seems to be occupied by the phallus. The symbolic unconscious discovered by psychoanalysis represents life chiefly as a process of bodies doing to or being done to by other bodies, and the phallus is the principal doer (or done to, in the case of castration anxiety). Thus, for example, the phallus symbolizes both difference from the mother and desire for reunion with her. And, similarly, castration symbolizes the absence of all power and desire. In this world, woman's body, too, is defined in relation to the phallus, and is not represented by its own symbolic structure; thus, for example, the active mother is "phallic," or women are characterized by their absence of phallic or masculine structures.

Simply finding a female counterpart to the phallic symbol does not work; it is necessary to find an alternative psychic register. Here I suggest we return to the concept of intersubjectivity to see how it might lead to a different representation of desire. The phallic mode of representation really corresponds to what we have called the intrapsychic mode, which includes the whole constellation of using the father as a vehicle for separation, and internalizing him as the representative of agency and desire. Once phallic representation has developed, it organizes the processes of internalization and identification that make up intrapsychic life—life within. The intersubjective dimension, on the other hand, refers to experience between and within individuals, rather than just within. It refers to the sense of self and other that evolves through the consciousness that separate minds can share the same feelings and intentions, through mutual recognition. Its viewpoint encompasses not simply what we take in from the outside but also what we bring to and develop through the interaction with others—our innate capacities for activity and receptivity toward the world. This sense of self later meshes with symbolic structures, but it is not, as internalization theory would have it, created by them. And since this experience of self is not identical with the well-known symbolic structures, we may speculate that it has its own way of being elaborated in the mind.

The mode of representing events intrapsychically is not adequate to convey intersubjective experience. It does not articulate the idea of recognition, nor does it distinguish between real and imagined, or inside and outside. It does not distinguish between you as an independently existing subject, and you as a fantasy extension of my wishes and desires; between I as independently existing and desiring, and I as the incorporator of your wishes, agency, and desire; between my withdrawal into private fantasy and our sharing a mutual fantasy and so recognizing one another in it. In the intrapsychic mode—the level of subject-object experience—the other's actual independent subjectivity is not relevant. So if we are going to discover woman's independent
desire—a desire that does not have to be represented by the phallus—we should consider the intersubjective mode where two subjects meet, where not only man but also woman can be subject.

Since there is no systematic theory of this alternative to the phallic order I must simply propose an exploration. My premise is that recognition of the other is the decisive aspect of differentiation. In recognition, someone who is different and outside shares a similar feeling; different minds and bodies attune. In erotic union this attunement can be so intense that self and other feel as if momentarily “inside” each other, as part of a whole. Receptivity and self-expression, the sense of losing the self in the other and the sense of being truly known for oneself all coalesce. In my view, the simultaneous desire for loss of self and for wholeness (or oneness) with the other, often described as the ultimate point of erotic union, is really a form of the desire for recognition. In getting pleasure with the other and taking pleasure in the other, we engage in mutual recognition.

Understanding desire as the desire for recognition changes our view of the erotic experience. It enables us to describe a mode of representing desire unique to intersubjectivity which, in turn, offers a new perspective on woman’s desire.

I suggest that the intersubjective mode of desire is expressed in spatial rather than symbolic representation.70 Winnicott frequently described the relationship between self and other in spatial metaphors: the space that holds us and the space in which we create. Intersubjective space, if we translate into Winnicott’s terms, begins with the holding environment between mother and baby and expands into the transitional area, the child’s area of play, creativity, and fantasy.71 The transitional space is suffused with the mother’s protection and one’s own freedom to imagine, discover, and create.

As we saw in chapter 1, this transitional space (especially its earliest manifestation, what Sander called “open space”) permits the important experience of being and playing alone in the unobtrusive but reassuring presence of the other. In the relaxation of this space it is possible to know one’s impulses (drives) as coming from within, to know them as one’s own desire.* Winnicott often quoted a line of poetry from Tagore to express the quality of the holding environment and the child’s transitional area: “On the seashore of endless worlds children play.”72 The image suggests a place that forms a boundary and yet opens up into unbounded possibility; it evokes a particular kind of holding, a feeling of safety without confinement. As we saw in the face-to-face interactions of mother and infant, the early representation of self and other evolves in part through a play of distance and closeness, a shifting of spatial boundaries between two bodies. When this play is successful, it is as if both partners are following the same score. The “dance” becomes the mediating element between the two subjects, the movement in the space between them. It is this quality of “in-between” that so often recurs in the spatial metaphor.

Spatial representation and feminine experience were, of course, linked by Erik Erikson in the idea that girls are preoccupied with “inner space.”73 But Erikson understood inner space simply as the receptive and passive half of a phallic dual unity. Viewed this way, reclaiming inner space comes uncomfortably close to accepting anatomical destiny. If feminists are not to ignore the importance of the body in shaping our mental representations, they must read such metaphors differently. Winnicott offered the beginning of such a different reading.

In a brief discussion he once suggested that the two psychic modes corresponded to gender lines, that the classic intrapsychic view of oral and anal stages “arises out of consideration of the pure male element,” whereas the “pure female element has nothing to do with drive.” It has rather to do with “being,” which forms the basis of “self-discovery

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*Ideally, in the psychoanalytic process, analysand and analyst are able to create a transitional space, in which the line between fantasy and reality blurs and the analysand can explore his own inside. The analytic relationship then becomes a version of the space within which desire can emerge freely, can be felt not as borrowed through identification but as authentically one’s own.
... the capacity to develop an inside, to be a container.\textsuperscript{74} For Winnicott the idea of containment implies not passivity, but the ability to hold oneself, to bear one's feelings without losing or fragmenting oneself—an ability crucial to introspection and self-discovery. This "inside" is the internal version of the safe transitional space (open space) that allows us to feel that our impulses come from within and so are authentically our own. Being able to let go (to rely on the other's holding) is usually seen as the active side of sexual subjectivity, while holding is seen as passive. But this is not entirely true: for the sense of authorship is dependent upon having an inside (holding oneself); without it, desire becomes depersonalized, mere drive. One is "driven," not responsive to the other or to oneself. The ability to hold oneself gives to every act its authority, its purposefulness in regard to the other, its authenticity for the self.

Feminist psychoanalysts have begun to reconceive inner space in just these terms. Thus Donna Bassin, who sees inner space as a metaphor of equal importance to "phallic activity and its representations,"\textsuperscript{75} emphasizes holding and self-exploration as the active sides of receptivity, as something women might do for themselves. Bassin's argument focuses on the spatial images women poets often employ to express the sources of creativity. But these images can also be used to convey the genesis of sexual desire.

I have found that the spatial metaphor repeatedly comes into play when women try to attain a sense of their sexual subjectivity. For example, a woman who was beginning to detach herself from her enthrallment to a seductive father began to dream of rooms. She began to look forward to traveling alone, to the feeling of containment and freedom as she flew in an airplane, to being alone and anonymous in her hotel room. Here, she imagined, she would find a kind of aloneness that would allow her to look into herself.

The significance of the spatial metaphor for a woman is likely to be in just this discovery of her own, inner desire, without fear of impingement, intrusion, or violation. Of course, as we saw in chapter 2, erotic violation may satisfy the wish to be known, to be penetrated, as a way of being discovered. Certainly, woman's desire to be known and to find her own inner space can be, and often is, symbolically apprehended in terms of penetration. But it can also be expressed as the wish for an open space into which the interior self may emerge, like Venus from the sea.

Gilligan and Stern have observed that many adolescent women are preoccupied with solitude. They discuss the themes of solitude and desire in their relation to the myth of Psyche; they cite the Apulian version of the myth, which describes the young woman's sexual awakening and self-discovery.\textsuperscript{76} Psyche is carried by the wind and laid in a bed of flowers; there she is left, gradually to awaken in a state of benign aloneness. By contrast, in her former state, when she was universally adulated for her beauty, Psyche felt as if she were dead. It is only when she is freed from this idealization and objectification that Psyche can experience a true sexual awakening, first alone, and later in her desire to see and recognize her lover, Eros. The idea that sexual desire arises in a state of aloneness—open space—may seem a paradox. But as we have seen, this state offers the opportunity to discover what is authentic in the self.

The idea of open space is important for understanding not only the genesis of woman's sexual desire, but also her experience of sexual pleasure. Let us consider the well-known difference between male and female sexual pleasure. A contemporary psychoanalyst, Noel Montgrain, argues that women often experience the intensity of sexual stimulation as "dangerous, fragmenting and destructive"; that for a woman, mastering sexual excitement "is more difficult [because] she cannot link it to an external organ that would localize it in space and would allow some control of its duration"; and that this lack of anatomical anchoring has "a correlative effect at the symbolic level. ..."\textsuperscript{77} The assumption here is that it is only possible to control anxiety (hold oneself) through a symbolic and physical focus of sensation. Woman's problem is that her desire is not "localized in space," that she lacks the phallic agency of control.

I am tempted to reverse the terms of Montgrain's conception of
woman's problem—to see her sexual grounding in intersubjective space as her "solution." The relationship itself, or, more precisely, the exchange of gestures conveying attunement, and not the organ, serves to focus women's pleasure and contain their anxiety. Women make use of the space in-between that is created by shared feeling and discovery. The dance of mutual recognition, the meeting of separate selves, is the context for their desire. This facet of the erotic relationship is not articulated in the phallic symbolism of genital complementarity. Psychoanalytic valorization of genital sexuality has obscured the equal importance to erotic pleasure of the early attunement and mutual play of infancy. When the sexual self is represented by the sensual capacities of the whole body, when the totality of space between, outside, and within our bodies becomes the site of pleasure, then desire escapes the borders of the imperial phallus and resides on the shores of endless worlds.

At this point the reader might object that my argument ends up reestablishing the sexual polarity, at best altering the terms somewhat in favor of women. Given the pervasiveness of the sexual polarity, it is inevitable that any exploration of women's experience will pass through the language of the old dualisms. Indeed, it may not be possible to map previously neglected areas of experience without accepting a moment of reversal. But we need not remain there. I am arguing here for simultaneity and equality, not exclusion or privileging of either male or female experiences and capacities. I believe that individuals can integrate the gender division, the two sides of which have previously been considered mutually exclusive and the property of only one sex. I suggest that, ideally, an individual's relationship to desire should be formed through access to a range of experiences and identifications that are not restricted by rigid gender formulas. Thus girls should get what boys get from their father; and girls and boys should get it from their mothers as well—recognition of agency, curiosity, movement toward the outside. Consequently, I do not think that women should discount the world of phallic, symbolic functioning in order to celebrate their own sphere, nor do I think they should embrace the male world at the expense of denying the experiences that are part of the female world. By the same token, I believe that men should—and many do—have access to the intersubjective experience of space, for it is essential to the most various forms of recognition and creativity. The point, then, is not to invalidate the dominant mode of representation, but to challenge its privilege in expressing, and so circumscribing, desire. Having argued for the intersubjective self and its representations apart from the intrapsychic self, I must also stress their coexistence.

In this spirit we can value both traditional figures of infancy—the holding mother and the exciting father—as constituent elements of desire. As we have seen, holding and the space created by it allow the self to experience desire as truly inner; so it is not merely the recognizing response of the exuberant, exciting father that ignites the child's own sense of activity and desire. The mother's holding, or containment, is equally important.

As we have seen in the analysis of ideal love, women often seek their desire in another. The masochistic fantasy of Story of O is about being released into abandon by a powerful other who remains in control. Now we see how closely that search parallels and substitutes for the search for a desire of one's own. The ideal lover's power calls forth the freedom and abandon that are otherwise suppressed; he offers an alienated version—an "ever-ready look-alike," as Ghent calls it—of the safe space that permits self-discovery, aloneness in the presence of the other.78

Too often, woman's desire is expressed through such alienated forms of submission and envy, the products of idealization. This process of alienation works, in part, through the transformation of recognition from the concrete intersubjective mode to the symbolic phallic mode, in which recognition is not subject-to-subject but occurs through identification with the ideal; and the erotic relationship is organized into the complementarity of active and passive organs, subject and
object of desire. Yet even then, the underlying wish for recognition of one's own desire remains.

Of course, this transformation from direct recognition into identification—a defensive process, the basis for self- alienation—is an unavoidable development. And it has its beneficial side when it occurs at the appropriate time in early childhood. Indeed, it is precisely because women have been deprived of early identificatory love, the erotic force behind separation, that they are so often unable to forge the crucial link between desire and freedom. The value of early identificatory love thus cannot be denied. But it reveals its negative side clearly when it takes the form of an opposition between mother and father, emphasizing freedom from a powerful mother, under the aegis of paternal power. Feminist theory aims to expand the idea of freedom to, offering a view of erotic union as a tension between separation from and attunement to an other. In the sustaining of this tension, I see an expansion of that space where subject meets subject. The phallus as emblem of desire has represented the meeting of subject and object in a complementarity that idealizes one side and devalues the other. The discovery of another dimension of desire can transform that opposition into the vital tension between subjects—into recognition between self and other self.

The Oedipal Riddle

The route to individuality that leads through identificatory love of the father is a difficult one for women to follow. The difficulty lies in the fact that the power of the liberator—father is used to defend against the engulfing mother. Thus however helpful a specific change in the father's relationship to the daughter may be in the short run, it cannot solve the deeper problem: the split between a father of liberation and a mother of dependency. For children of both sexes, this split means