The Bonds of Love: Looking Backward

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In giving this brief account of the development of and influences on the book I hope to make it possible to see its location in a particular moment of not only psychoanalytic history but also the social and intellectual history of my generation. I delineate the influence of specific individuals, but more important, the way in which I was located in a number of transformational movements and disciplinary currents: the German student movement and the critical social theory it embraced, feminism and its particular way of revising psychoanalysis, infancy research and the transformations it brought to psychoanalysis, relational analysis and the changes in clinical practice. I also try to give some sense of the direction in which the book pointed me, where I see the main continuities with current thinking. Inasmuch as The Bonds of Love (1988) was an effort to bring together all these currents to think about a specific set of problems, it seemed right to me to mainly fill in the story of those tributaries and leave others to carry forward their own thinking about those problems in light of the present.

A BOOK IS WRITTEN IN A SPECIFIC HISTORICAL TIME

I finished the Bonds of Love (1988) manuscript shortly after I became pregnant with my second son, having written it in the period of 6 years after I had my first. I was on the fourth or fifth rewrite, meeting with my editor, when I joyfully recognized the telltale nausea. I had also just completed my analytic training at New York University (NYU) Postdoctoral a year before. Although motherhood and psychoanalytic practice were central experiences in writing the book, the themes of Bonds of Love span an arc of 2 decades in which the discovery of both feminist and psychoanalytic thinking changed my approach to the world and my own life. At various points on this arc I could plot my engagement with, in order of discover, critical theory (aka the critical social theory of the Frankfurt school, with its twin peaks of Hegelian Marxism and Freudian thought), psychoanalysis, the insights of de Beauvoir, the practices of women’s liberation, clinical psychoanalysis, and motherhood.

The beginning of Bonds of Love (1988) as a theoretical work I can trace back all the way to 1967, in Madison, WI, where I took to my typewriter after reading de Beauvoir. This was the outcome of a lucky moment when a few stalwart young women insisted our first women’s group read The Second Sex (de Beauvoir, 1949) once the majority of women, having come only to “support our boys” in resisting the draft, had decamped in fear lest we create trouble with men. We remaining had the audacity to insist on the glimmer of an idea—that the oppression

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of women and even our very own oppression—mattered. Fired up about some common indignity we were subjected to at the time, I pounded out a manifesto on my typewriter (it was deemed helpful for girls to learn touch typing so they could work as secretaries while their husbands attended graduate school). The manifesto encapsulated my new Beauvoirian understanding of the way all famous dualisms of Western history were organized around the opposition of male and female, and all masculine sides of the polarity were valued while all feminine were devalued. The idea of split complementarities functioning along gender lines was emergent in our collective feminist consciousness; though commonplace now, such ideas felt utterly radical, risky, and exhilarating.

Although a subsequent 4 years of studying critical social theory in Frankfurt gave me the tools for developing ideas about binary oppositions, I found there no validation, no awareness of the reproduction of the binary in Freud; quite the contrary. Returning home I made the subject of my dissertation the failures of both Freud and critical theory— their implicit denial of the need for recognition, intersubjective process and the problem of paternal authority, which was fully ego syntonic for them. To write such a thesis it was necessary to return to the United States, where feminism was in full swing and I could find an unconventional home in the graduate department of sociology at NYU, where women’s studies was just being introduced.

At NYU, as before in Madison, although immersed in critical theory and psychoanalysis I still turned to de Beauvoir for insight into recognition, the other, and the gender binary. So upon graduation it was not accidental I became involved in organizing an international conference on feminist theory, a tribute called The Second Sex: Thirty Years Later. The Institute for the Humanities at NYU, started by my mentor Richard Sennett, was supporting the conference and also my trip to Paris to interview de Beauvoir, which I took together with Margaret Simons, a philosophy student who was convinced that de Beauvoir, not Sartre, had developed certain key ideas about the Other. Although de Beauvoir demurred at Simons’s direct questions, when I asked her whether the problem of “recognizing the Other,” which was addressed in her earliest writing, She Came to Stay (de Beauvoir, 1943), was specifically her contribution she replied with alacrity, “Oh yes, that was my problematic!”

While organizing the tribute de Beauvoir, I was simultaneously writing the first essay called “The Bonds of Love,” bringing together the problem of recognizing the other with sexual domination. It must have seemed a strange combination of interests to someone who didn’t know about the dazzling reach of Frankfurt critical theory into psychoanalysis, early socialization, Weber’s critique of Western rationality, and Hegelian-Marxist theories of social domination. I met with Dan Stern to talk about doing infancy research (he was incredibly supportive and wanted to come to our reading group on Lacan’s mirror stage). And at the same time I was obsessed with the work of Dinnerstein (1976) and Chodorow (1979, 1980) on the pervasive nonrecognition of the mother’s subjectivity. Had I known then that I was actually capable of writing my way through the problems that were shaping up in my head, I could have been confident enough to enjoy this amazing confluence of disciplines. As it was, I felt more like a person running with bags from one airline to another in a different terminal than one with an organized itinerary.

The connection I was trying to make involved more closely linking up the de Beauvoir/Dinnerstein ideas around woman as subject to Hegel’s organizing presentation in the Master and Slave chapter of The Phenomenology of Spirit (1807), so influential for the French existentialists. Somehow I got to feel that Winnicott was the passageway between terminals.
THE BONDS OF LOVE: LOOKING BACKWARD

Having studied Hegel in Frankfurt, in turn, I had felt a shock when reading Winnicott’s (1971) “Use of an Object”: when I asked my friend who had studied there with me to read it, she too spontaneously remarked, “It’s just like Hegel.” Feeling supported in my audacious impulse to make such an unlikely connection, I proposed that surviving destruction was exactly what the slave could not do for the master who did not recognize his subjectivity. This must have led by association to Story of O and thence to the insight that one whose subjectivity is not realized cannot return the recognition of subject to subject, so that the master is never satisfied. This latter idea was then reinforced as I found a translation of a small article by Bataille (1976) on the master-slave dialectic, which helped complete the picture.

It turned out later that none of these links save that between Hegel and Winnicott were a stretch. For instance, it was revealed later that Dominique Aury, who wrote Story of O under the pen name Pauline Reage (De St. Jorre, 1994), had indeed been part of the Parisian milieu that Kojève (1969), teaching Hegel, was taking by storm. And what of the oddity that a British psychoanalyst with not the slightest hint of Hegel in his bones could arrive at a similar problematic of omnipotence? But then again imagine an entirely different outcome: an analyst who survives destruction of the object? It seems to me one of those moments that, if we are lucky enough to be exposed to genuinely different disciplines and traditions, we can recognize the homologue in two entirely unlike forms, sameness despite difference. Such bridging of difference, in my view, was exemplary of the way to not only deconstruct but also radically reconfigure oppositions that might otherwise lead to impasse.

Even with all this intellectual background, there could have been no Bonds of Love (1988) without the help of Manny Ghent. As my analyst, Manny not only introduced me to Winnicott, he also made the meaning of recognition poignantly clear: the vivid difference his profound attunement and understanding made in facilitating the distinction between the “internally conceived” and the “objectively perceived” object, a difference we have now come to formulate as a shift in self-state. Manny taught me about (and later gave me an early draft of) his version of the difference between submission and surrender (Ghent, 1990), ideas that suffused what I wrote about the alienation of recognition. The idea of alienation as opposed to a pejorative view of perversion—meaning that otherwise unshareable mental anguish and emotional pain are expressed in an alienated or disguised form—was novel in psychoanalysis then (excepting Khan, and in a less explicit form in self psychology). This perspective shaped my life and work; it was one I felt in my bones: that behind the shameful, the abject, the fearful lie buried needs and longings; we do not simply structurally reject normativity—as psychoanalysts we look beneath to what cries out for our recognition.

Equally important, I felt that Manny recognized and seemed able to identify with my outsider intellect. For all the influences I shared in common with my generation, there was a perspective on those ideas that was rather uncommon—a perspective that came from growing up Red, with parents who had been until my early childhood part of a movement for social justice that in their eyes was in many ways successful though ultimately compromised (by Stalinism and other Communist tragedies). Their perspective included always seeing things through the double lens of what is and what potentially could be as well as the continual negotiation of reality in our alternative culture and the reality outside. As many in their cohort read The God that Failed (1949) and muddled over what went wrong with their ideal while others steadfastly hewed to the party line, my parents continued to believe not in the Communist Party as God but in human beings who could retain some agency by keeping some positive relation to ideals even when
terrible miscarriages occurred in practice. For them the tragedy of European communism was weighed in the balance against the gains of the Communist participating in the labor movement, the struggle to secure rights and needs, perhaps above all the agency that people were given to act on their own behalf. My father's joy was to revisit Gallup, New Mexico, where he helped lead the miners' strike and hear from a miner's wife that of course she recognized him after 30 years, the strike was the most important event of her life. The value of giving everyone the power to transform the conditions of their own lives, to create that agency together with others, was in our family life paradoxically inseparable from the sense of trauma and persecution that came with McCarthyism. Both sides inspired me to look for a different perspective on the social struggles of my generation: one that was more psychologically introspective and emotionally in touch yet preserving the values of rejecting social conformity and oppression.

Of course this position of not throwing out the baby with the bathwater would not have been satisfying without the ability to actually analyze what goes wrong when people uncritically embrace ideals. The perspective I believed Manny shared and encouraged was that attachment to ideals could be both dangerous and redemptive, but even ideals that took form in perverse and painful expression could be redeemed by understanding the desire and aspiration that lay beneath. This idea of redemptive critique, as well as all the writing I did in relation to the problems of critical theory and feminism, were equally supported and influenced by my then husband Andy Rabinbach, who as a German intellectual historian was deeply immersed in, among others, the ideas of Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch that pointed in this direction. And so the idea of the alienation of recognition could be used not only to analyze how domination can be linked to precious ideals but also to imagine a different, more complex path to liberation. This perspective allowed me to write Bonds of Love (1988) in light of what I felt were the miscarriages in feminism (as representative of radical social movements generally) and psychoanalysis while trying to redeem them both. When the conference The Second Sex: Thirty Years Later transformed itself before the organizers' chagrined eyes into a manic celebration of feminist political correctness and normativity, I turned my attention more fully to the psychoanalytic questions I was exploring in the early version of "Bonds of Love" to understand how victims can perpetuate their victimhood by becoming stuck in the complementarity of doer and done-to. As the Ms. magazine feminists largely followed the position of the antipornography movement, seeing themselves as victims of the sexual revolution, only a small minority were interested in that other side, the power of desire (see Snitow, Stansell, and Thompson, 1980). But of course, that was the side that favored the exploration of our psychic complexity and resistance to the traditional identification of femininity with a sacrificial motherhood an idealized view of nurturance and clean sex—it was the side of "no more nice girls." That side, of course, was the one I hoped to ground by radicalizing psychoanalysis as well.

BABIES AND BEYOND

Saving the baby while throwing out the bathwater, as I said, actually demands exacting analytic work. This is a deceptively simple admonition that leads to a distinctly complex enterprise. Part

1I have written in more detail about Andy Rabinbach's influence on my work in "Andy Rabinbach as the Inspiration for a Work of Feminist Theory" in New German Critique (2012).
of the work of that analysis involved, for me, life and study with real babies—the other trajectory that was so important in writing the book. Establishing within American psychoanalysis the position of infancy as well as the importance of the mother was a new enterprise in the 1980s, and the arguments in *The Bonds of Love* (1988) reflected, in part, a decade of immersion in research on infancy (and motherhood). The discovery of the interpersonally active infant—more than a bundle of disorganized drives declared unsuitable for psychoanalytic understanding by orthodox analysts of the time—constituted a kind of revolution in psychoanalytic thought. Infant capacities for social engagement and differentiation far outstripped the kinds of primitive ego actions Freud attributed to earliest life, for example, hostility to the impingement of the outside world. In particular the studies of early communication confirmed the idea of primary intersubjectivity, a position first developed by Trevarthen (1977, 1980) and then taken up with some differences by Daniel Stern (1985).

Trevarthen, it seems, read Habermas (1968) and so adopted his use of the term “intersubjectivity” for lack of a better word. My use of the idea of intersubjectivity, prior to the encounter with infancy research, was rooted in Habermas, whose book (*Erkenntnis und Interesse* [Knowledge and Human Interests]) was eagerly awaited in Frankfurt in 1968. The book explicated the move that took critical social theory from the Marxian idea of human beings as producers of their world to that of communicators. It was here I heard the term “the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding” for the first time and sat in seminars on socialization, communication theory, and George Herbert Meade. Coincidental with this paradigm shift was the German students’ enthusiastic resurrection of the historical texts of a psychoanalytic pedagogy that were wiped out by the Nazis. They looked to the writings of Freud’s socialist followers who set up clinics and nursery schools in Vienna and elsewhere, their imagination seized by the undertaking of radically changing childrearing and overthrowing a legacy of punitive and authoritarian parents. Hoping to repair their own personal traumas of abuse and deprivation as well as to reform an unreconstructed educational system, they set to work on creating an alternative system of early childhood education, nursery schools and kindergartens. So along with those readings of poorly mimeographed reproductions of Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, Sigrid Bernfeld, and Vera Schmidt, my first work with babies, four of them ages 13–20 months, began in 1969.

The grounding of intersubjective theory in the study of infancy represented a whole giant step beyond that perspective, of course, wrapped up as it was and long remained in Freudian drive theory. But even with the compelling change brought about by object relations and Winnicott, infancy research electrified me. What awesome possibilities it seemed to open up, is what I felt when I first encountered the work of Stern (1974a, b) and Beebe (Beebe and Stern, 1977) in 1978. Face-to-face play was the primary illustration of how mutual recognition is possible so early! Discovering Trevarthen’s use of intersubjectivity and its subsequent use by Stern completed another unlikely circle between critical social theory and infancy studies. As it now seemed that all roads were leading to recognition and intersubjectivity, somehow I had to get them all on the same map.

So now it was actually possible to show how early mutual impact occurs in microanalysis, how active babies engage with mothers in a form of mutual recognition and intersubjectivity—and yet there was something missing on the map. None of the work considered the mother’s subjectivity even in discussions of mutuality. All of the work I encountered was done from the standpoint of the infant, as though the mother were simply the answer, the interlocking gear, in relation to the infant’s endogenous structure and needs. Her existence as a separate person was
somehow subtly ignored, as if the conflict with her own needs and subjectivity were a nonissue if she was good and devoted enough. The question of what would make it possible for a parent, an adult of either sex, to give that kind of attention and devotion guided my first research question. What did mothers need to be able to do this? Dan Stern was warmly encouraging about pursuing this line of thought, and Beatrice, whom I reencountered in my 1st year of training at NYU Postdoctoral Psychology Program, gave me the chance to explore these kind of questions with the mothers in her study while I helped with the staging and coding of the Ainsworth Strange Situation, measuring infant attachment at 1 year.

The attempt to be equally preoccupied with what infants and mothers need, to hold in mind what did an infant need and what do I now as a mother need to meet my baby’s needs, sprang from a tension that was defining in my generation of feminist struggle—as one sees in writings like Jane Lazarre’s (1976) *The Mother Knot*. But it was to be equally crucial for the evolution of relational psychoanalysis. By embedding this tension between mother and baby within psychoanalytic theory and an understanding of complementary dynamics the effort was to make mutual recognition into a container for something much more complex, indeed the origin of so many later dilemmas of intersubjectivity: negotiating the sticky compromises and paradoxes of a dyad in which there is mutuality but asymmetry, identity of needs but conflict of needs, deep attunement but also difference. For my sensibility the profoundest inspiration of feminist theory was the search for a perspective that transcends the either/or of needs and un locks the impasse that leads to domination—the Hegelian struggle to the death for recognition in which only one can live, the other must die—to show how there can be two subjects in one relationship, neither one subjugating the other, neither having to coerce or defend themselves from the other. In other words, I was determined to have mother and baby “live” in the same theory and so bring together feminism and the psychology of infancy.

The initial conceptual solution to this impasse was to shift from the then prevalent developmental dynamic in which a child separates from mother—shedding her, as it were—to the idea of an engagement in which there is a tension between each partner acting/impacting the other and each recognizing the other’s action. A dynamic balance that so easily goes awry, that even at its best the process of mutual accommodation is characterized by conflict and more often by breakdown and restoration of recognition. This idea of breakdown and recognition is, interestingly, an idea quite similar to Tronick’s (1989) rupture and repair, published in the same year. From this developmental perspective on the inevitable tension of recognition, the necessity of restoring it after breakdown, a very different view of clinical process emerges as well—but it is one I could not yet elaborate, only intuitively sense.

Tronick’s (1989) formulation seemed to me a dramatic conceptual breakthrough, confirming how we could see basic patterns of all interaction in infancy and confirming the unformulated knowledge behind the idea of mutual recognition as something that necessarily breaks down. The fact that mothers and infants benefit from the process of recreating a state of mutual regulation after mismatching and dysregulation offers an entirely different perspective on what it means to be “good enough,” to grow, to heal. Mutual accommodation and correction become the name of the game, thus giving the lie to the burdensome and arrogant idea of the analyst’s interpretative truth, correct technique. In a sense, it provides the cornerstone of any theory of therapeutic enactment, any idea of moving from separation to reunion, opening up the way resilience and attachment are built on imperfect unions. It thus truly shifts the understanding of recognition versus destruction, showing that both members of the dyad, and the relationship itself—the third
upon which it is based and which is its space—must survive collapse or breakdown. Of course, it is crucial to appreciate that repair, in many cases, means recognition of distress by the caregiver, the most important predictor of secure attachment in infancy (Beebe et al., 2012), and by extension by the therapist who may himself or herself have caused the pain.

**MUTUALITY AND CLINICAL PRACTICE**

So although Bonds of Love (1988) posits the possibility of mutual recognition, in fact it sees it as a precarious business. Yet somewhere along the line, it seems that a version of this concept of mutuality was transferred whole cloth to the clinical situation and taken to mean, in effect, that Benjamin believes the patient must recognize the therapist (Orange, 2010a, b) or that recognition is only a matter of Hegelian collision and not of maternal attunement to early needs (Benjamin, 1999; Reis, 1999). In actuality, when I wrote the book and for some time after I was a rather conventional object relations analyst influenced by self psychology as well.

Yet the issue of whether recognition was mutual did become somewhat thorny in relation to self psychology insofar as it charted empathy as a largely one-way process. Kohut’s ideas of mirroring and empathy bore some resemblance to the idea of recognition, Stern and other psychoanalytic infancy researchers embraced self psychology, yet there were important differences between the two approaches. For instance, the idea of mirroring, Stern (1985) contended, was inadequate to capture the mutuality of face-to-face play, the necessary level of discrepancy between expectation and event. Even misattunement had to balance out attunement to create an element of difference (Beebe and Lachmann, 2002). However, speaking more broadly, I noted in self psychology the failure to grasp how developmentally important is the capacity to enjoyably give recognition, which evolves as one is secure that one is indeed recognized by the other. Although eventually I think self psychology found a way of coming to grips with the problem of difference and the meaning of my sense of recognition became more evident (see Orange, 2010a, b), it initially seemed to miss the idea that when the other survives destruction, this means more broadly that the other takes care of oneself and that the patient is released from enmeshment in the other’s needs; the safety of nonrestitutory survival means that the uncontrollability and unpredictability of the other can become a source of joy. In my assessment the lacuna in appreciating the importance of a capacity to recognize and thus fully engage (and enjoy!) a different other subject reflected a gap in realizing how our sense of agency and power come from giving and not merely from receiving.

Although Bonds of Love (1988) appeared just as we were getting the relational track at NYU off the ground, and I might have thought intersubjectivity theory could be a basis for relational analysis, I had no idea what that would mean practically. I had only unformulated knowledge; we studied with analysts like Bollas and MacDougall (by far the most expansive personality in mainstream analysis), who both used their subjectivity to reflect on the process, but their way was just a beginning, a crack in the patina of orthodoxy. What it meant to practice relationally was just beginning to appear on the horizon, and I did not see myself as defining clinical theory in direct terms. I was highly aware of the way patients might fear exploitation, how forms of disclosure or demands for mutuality might interfere with the patient’s need for holding of very early or disorganized selfstates, in other words, block the positive aspects of “regression” to dependency.
Thus my sense of mutuality was initially more cautious: that affect attunement and sharing of emotional states could be a basis for mutuality inasmuch as we feel a sense of mutual recognition when we attune to our babies and they "recognize" us by calming down or brightening up. Of course, this sensibility was already a departure from what was at that time called "being a real analyst," maintaining Freudian neutrality and being a blank screen. In addition to the primary intersubjectivity of attunement, state-sharing, what I would now call the rhythmic third (Aron, 2006; Benjamin, 2011), my original sense of how the analyst was recognized was primarily in terms of "survival of the object," the analyst as a subject who truly exists outside the patient's control, can take care of herself and need not be vigilantly managed or minded by the patient. I distinguished between the patient recognizing our outsidersness, being a subject who acts independently and above all responsibly, from being a person, a defined fleshed-out subjectivity, which could be overstimulating or frightening.

However, I did (and do) strongly believe that this inhibition was not an exact parallel to how we needed to be as mothers or parents. Again, I took it that gratitude as a subjective experience was the intersubjective correlate of recognition, the child recognizing the parent's loving intent or action. In addition, it was very clear to me that knowing the parent's mind was something many patients felt lacking in their upbringing. Hence, I believed part of the mutual accommodation with children was more explicitly giving them the opportunity to understand their parent; knowing where she was coming from would give them more agency and strength in the relationship. Lew Aron (1996) did adapt the ideas about recognizing maternal subjectivity and mutuality in developing a clinical theory of mutual knowing in psychotherapy, stressing how the patient wants to know and get into the analyst's mind. But Aron was also careful to stress asymmetry along with mutuality, which made mutuality in practice seem less dangerous. This seemed to me, as it still does, a crucial tension; further it implies (a point I was first able to articulate in thinking through with Aron) the need to be connected to the third as a principle of interaction.

This appeared to me gradually, a decade after the book, as the idea of the third (Aron and Benjamin, 2000; Benjamin, 2004, 2011) as what we surrender to, a mutually created choreography that survives rupture and creates a sense of lawfulness. Rupture and repair could be described as a dyadic movement, an overarching process of the third that choreographs both partners. This movement creates new relational patterns or expectancies in both; in responding to these expectancies each creates recognition in self and in the other. This sense of shared expectancy can occur within an asymmetrical relation of giver and receiver of nurturance—a fact that may serve to clarify the essential point that mutual recognition is not based on identical or symmetrical experiences but rather is a relational movement that can encompass a great deal of difference or asymmetry in identities as well as complementary roles.

How mutuality works therapeutically is another story, one that required the development brought about by many other relational thinkers. Certainly the idea of rupture and repair helped to underpin the position that collisions and negotiations, now stressed by relational clinical theory (Pizer, Bromberg, Slochower), need to occur and are not simply an unavoidable by-product of our being human. The viewpoint that in some sense we are all equal, the mutual identification which rejects the idea that we are healthy people curing sick people (a delusion named by Racker, 1968) informed the new relational sensibility. Steve Mitchell (1993, 1997) embodied this sensibility and pointed the way toward learning to recognize the impact of our own subjectivity on the treatment and consciously use our own subjectivity in direct interaction. With his leadership, the project of realizing a form of mutual knowing in practice and reflecting
IDENTIFICATORY LOVE

Although I find much to expand the idea of recognition from 25 years ago, most of it seems in accord with what I think today. Reading back over Bonds of Love (1988) regarding gender is a very different experience, for me at least, perhaps because so much of it is an argument with theories that now have gone into the dustbin of history. Object relations theory so thoroughly outpaced sexual instinct theory that the idea that what is missing is the relationship to father rather than the phallus seems simply to have been incorporated in the dominant practice, at least in North America, where interpretations of penis envy as a "thing in itself" have become rather rare (although my German analyst in the late 1960s did believe this, much to the detriment of our relationship). However, although the outdated villain of penis envy may have been vanquished by our current thinking that anyone can have anything, and many of us want the symbolic overinclusiveness obscured by the rigidity of old oedipal theory, my "discovery" of homoerotic identificatory was an important by-product of that argument, which really remains fresh for me.

The idea that girls could only get the father's penis by having his baby felt emotionally wrong not only because I saw babies as a desideratum in their own right, as Horney (1924) argued. What felt right was that girls would want to use the father in the traditional way that was described for boys in the literature of that time: as a figure of identification who supports separation from mother, as the coming-and-going parent, as the one who represents the outside world, and so on. There were other ways to have a phallus. As a tomboy, I wanted to throw the ball the right way, which was not the girl way; as an adolescent, I wanted to challenge my father's politics and in that sense be his oedipal "son" as well as his daughter. Why shouldn't girls do what boys did?
But this quickly led to a reconstruction of what was then in the literature about the boy’s pre-oedipal love of the father as well, starting with Freud. There appeared to be something in this love quite different from oedipal love, which was based on the strict separation of being and having and thus on the taboo of having the like object—the separation that institutes heterosexuality. I felt sorry for my Freudian instructor who told us how his toddler boy came running to greet him at the door as he came out of the elevator crying, “Out, out!” and thought the boy wanted to be left alone (stuck inside where he had been all day) with mother—I was pretty sure that, like my toddler boy, he had wanted his father to take him outside.

What is intelligible as desire itself would be other than what Freud assumed in describing the love object. Certainly this early father love did not jibe with the idea of the negative oedipal, being as the mother is to the father. I came up with the not so euphonious term “identificatory love,” a homoerotic love, meaning love of what is seen as or wished to be “like.” This relation of mirroring, twinning, subject-to-subject desire for recognition and love of the “‘like subject’ would differ from the oedipal love of the other (whoever it might be, same or opposite sex, whatever felt like that otherness). I still see this powerful desire, which I think matches up with what Ken Corbett (2009) has noted in his little boy patients, who seem to be focused not on wanting Mommy but to be big and strong and bigger and stronger than someone whose power they respect.

These thoughts began with an early draft of “Woman’s Desire,” which started by asking why women seemed preoccupied with the language of autonomy rather than desire, why unlike men self-assertion appeared not to be equated with being the subject who says (like the rapprochement boy), “I want that!” It seemed that for boys, homoerotic identificatory love formed the sense of onesself as subject of desire. But this identificatory love requires recognition in return, the father who says, “I can see myself in you, recognize your desire as my desire.” What happened to girls? Did they miss this personally or was it simply not culturally available?

In the years since I’ve noted the continuous appearance of this identificatory love in the transference as a homoerotic (whether with same or opposite gender) desire or longing for recognition, which is often missed because it is in fact not the same as conventionally conceived transference love. Among other ways it differs from that erotic transference is that we believe it is possible, may necessary, to meet the need for mirroring, for mutual idealization and recognition, to empower and share in the development of joyful grandiosity and to counter the past, often traumatizing deflation and shame of feeling not big, not powerful, of having been helpless to gain the attention and recognition of the outside parent. And for a long time, the homoerotic identificatory needs were missed in the transference; despite self psychology having openly embraced everyone’s need for idealization and mirroring it missed its gender and erotic aspects; on the other hand there were constant catastrophes in Freudian analyses as the need for mirroring and mutual idealization was denigrated along with homosexuality, the need for recognition missed, as the analyst tried to retain the phallic position of knowledge as power.

But how does this notion of identificatory love of the father remain relevant for understanding masculinity once we affirm (or rather once I restate what I am often rebuked for—not emphasizing the obvious explicitly enough) that the figure of attachment and separation excitement need not be so split; that mothers can be exciting as well as safe; that fathers can nurture; and that—at a social cost to be sure—boys can be girly, girls boyish, moms dads, dads moms, and everybody everything (or nothing) while anatomy and destiny too can be reversed?
In short, when we incorporate the ideas that have been expanded by queer theory, what is left of identificatory love?

Identificatory love, I think, still gives powerful meaning to the idea that being recognized in one’s loving desire to be like the other is as crucial as being safely attached to the source of goodness. Rejection of that need for recognition can be withering and crippling.1 When what was traditionally the paternal figure, the exciting separation figure, is unavailable, disdainful, shaming, belittling, rivalrous—whether because frightened of his own erotic feeling for the child (boy or girl) or envious of the baby’s gratifications with mother—this rejection intensifies the split between being mom’s baby and dad’s son/daughter. The rejection of this need for identificatory love in girls also poisons the well of desire and subjectivity and leads to a submissive form of ideal love in both women and men, both clinically (read some old cases and see how much the opportunity to recognize identificatory love was missed!) and in and out of the transference. The dearly missed Ruth Stein (2010) argued that the trauma of his father’s contemptuous rejection led Mohammed Ata to his self-immolating ideal love of God the father and his violent assertion of the power to destroy others. In traditional culture, paternal contempt for the little boy’s bond to the mother generated the dissociated but powerfully spoiling patriarchal denigration of woman. The ensuing exaggeration of the oedipal split between being and having is a marker of the fault line of gender, which it does more than merely regulate; it produces perverse and destructive forms of desire in the futile effort to escape its shameful clutches.

Judith Butler (1995), in her idea of gender melancholia, showed how identificatory love was perverted into the boy/man’s thought “I never loved him, I never lost him”; he wouldn’t be caught dead being what one wants to have/possess. But my focus here is on the terrible consequences of frustrating the (as it were) premelancholic, primary identifications as an emotional tie—a major part of the love that was “never lost.”

Everything that came after Bonds of Love (1988), written in the crucible of the 1990s, reflected a much greater sense of that instability, overinclusiveness, and mix-and-match relation to gender (as reflected in the later writings of Aron, Bassin, Dimen, Goldner, Harris, and Layton, among others). The idea I took from Fast (1984) that the overinclusiveness of the oedipal phase needs to be renounced seemed self-evidently wrong and gave way to the idea of a post-oedipal phase in which gender becomes unconventional and transitional (Benjamin, 1995). Yet the oedipal structures and rigidity remain alive in the culture—as contemporary political battles to retain rights we achieved in the 1970s make clear. The oedipal structure includes Freud’s ambiguous equation of femininity with passivity—a real appearance, in other words one that gets embodied in the culture even when we no longer see it in terms of lacking the reified phallus. What if, as Freud’s own story suggests, the repudiation of homoerotic identificatory love between fathers and boys was constitutive of the fear of passivity, the repudiation of identification with the mother and the projective creation of the feminine? Speaking structurally, what if fear of as well as shameful need for the father underlies fear/hatred of woman? What if men’s traumatic relationship to passivity, as originally codified in psychoanalysis, is only now being questioned and reconsidered? These were questions I was able to take up 10 years later in deconstructing Freud’s view of femininity as the “daughter position” (Benjamin, 1998). As mindful as we need to be of the extreme asynchrony of different parts of contemporary society, I believe we still need to review and deconstruct Freud’s theory as a credible reflection of patriarchy whose fragmented and unstable persistence continues to define many of our political woes.
PSYCHOANALYSIS (OR ITS OBJECT) NEVER LOSES ITS COOL OR ITS HOT

Psychoanalysis, even its antiquated form, just cannot seem to lose its relevance. As if we needed any proof of the persistence of patriarchy, passivity and submission are not gone from the discourse of the feminine. Is Story of O still relevant? According to Katie Roiphe in Newsweek (2012) the new fascination with sadomasochism is merely a matter of enjoyment, albeit perplexing to feminists. Why, she ponders and asks researchers (alas, no psychoanalysts) is Fifty Shades of Grey, far more poorly written than Story of O, a bestseller among young mothers and executives? Because they want to surrender control, lose themselves. Feminist theory is purportedly flummoxed by this phenomenon or that of the highly popular show “Girls,” with its male sadist character who directs the actual director, Lena/Hanna, to be his slave. It is incumbent upon us to note that although something has changed to allow this on television, not enough has changed to allow lesbian sadomasochism, which was a movement in the 1980s, to be worthy of Roiphe’s mention. And so we must also sadly note that in popular culture, the heterosexual trope of male activity, female passivity is still untouched by queer theory’s hits to the reigning discourse of anatomical destiny. How is it possible to have ignored that vast outpouring of feminist theorizing liberated from the moralizing constructions of the 1980s in whose shadow I wrote about sadomasochism? In actuality, we psychoanalytic feminists are armed to the teeth with dangerous theory and outfitted to the nines with our explanations—we just can’t get a date with mainstream media.

There are, now that successive generations of feminist thought have come into their own, more contradictions now than the simple controversy about “pornography or heterosexuality, good or bad?” that defined the narrow milieu of the 1980s. On the one side the academic importance of queer theory, of understanding gender as a regulatory discourse and as performance, on the other side the compelling social fact that the more gender is cut up, the more it hydralike multiplies. This multiplication suggests that the components of masculinity and femininity are far more malleable than supposed, but this malleability does not trump, rather cooperates with, the need for socially mediated bodily intelligibility, which often revivifies traditional gender meanings within new combinations. In the private clinic and in public expression, psychocultural structures and contents, though shifting, remain oddly recognizable, make selves intelligible, and remain embedded in our collective mind as our history. As myth and kinetics they offer a language of what we can have and be, our traumas and our desires, our losses and longings. I quoted Foucault as saying power not only represses, it “produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (Foucault, 1980, p. 119.) Whereas the focus on regulation and prohibition offers insight into shame, the focus on gender as shaping powerful versions of “this is me” or “is this me?” opens up the contents of desire and longing—contents that are in some sense historically transmitted and perhaps partially alien to the self that embodies them.

In Bonds of Love (1988) I defended the possibility of sadomasochism as play, rather than as simple domination, against the then prevailing heterosexual feminist discourse. I saw this play as an incarnation of the historically shaped imagining of desire that could be either concrete or symbolic, shutting down or liberating. The language psychoanalysis invented to open up those contents originally was so organized by the oedipal binary as to be punitive, but the postoedipal world of play can still make great use of psychoanalytic language to break free of the punitive, to unlock desire produced in a world of subjects who are at least partially knowable to each other. This is all the more true when we use psychoanalysis “with culture in mind,” with a grasp of
REFERENCES


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