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Kristeva and Loewald on Selfhood and the Potential Aptitudes of Parenthood

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Abstract

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As the psychoanalytic story of the infant's maturation is often told**,** the only way to become a proper 'part' of the world or 'make it' as a member of society is to submit to the Oedipal threat of mutilation and contemporaneously relinquish the primordial intimacy of the 'mother'-infant dyad. My objective is to identify and defend a more hopeful, tender story of the infant's inevitable movement from the maternal origins of existence toward the discovery of alterity, or of the world's remainder. I employ Kristevan and Loewaldian theory to identify the plausibility of pre-Oedipal to Oedipal fluidity whereby both the 'maternal' and the 'paternal' harmoniously function to prompt the infant's wish to identify with 'personhood' and the 'rest' of the world. I defend the tripartite argument: first, that the maternal and paternal operations aren't antithetical but, rather, enjoy a certain continuity; second, that the paternal threat of castration isn't the *sine qua non* of the Oedipal configuration; and third, that a uniquely Kristevan-Loewaldian account of maturity is able to pave the way for the infant's potential to carry the function of the 'maternal' forward.

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Introduction

Is the child an individual yet?
—Donald Winnicott, *Babies and their Mothers*

Among the many insights made by psychoanalytic theory is the acknowledgment that the infant isn't brought into the world with the inherent capacity to be a part of it. Nobody is brought into the world as a 'self': we're not born with the recognition of ourselves as a delimited human 'persons.' We're delivered at birth only into the plenitude of the mother-infant dyad—into a world undifferentiated. Born into this dyad, the infant doesn't take anything—the mother, in particular—to be distinct from itself but, rather, takes what it recognizes as the uniformity of itself and the mother to comprise the world as a whole. We're lucky enough to grow larger, stronger, and smarter; we slowly learn the ways of that 'great big world' of heterogeneity that lies beyond; and, with the necessary help, we someday get to become a part of that world: we get to bear a sense of 'personhood,' lead lives of our own, and engage in relations with others, or be a 'social' being. Only the infant's discovery of society—or the reality that the world is, in actuality, other—is the dawn of that infant's recognizable position in the world as a social-relational-individual 'human being.' What does it take, then, to discover the world's alterity and relatedly, if not synonymously, our singularity within?

While there's no shortage of published psychoanalytic theory that suggests just how it is that we transition into the vast world of alterity and selfhood from the infantile lack thereof, two parts to the infant's story are always certain**.** If we're to be raised out of infancy into life as perceptible individuals or people in the world, we not only have to be nurtured for our survival and growth, but we have to be prompted to take ourselves in the direction of that 'outside' world. In two significant ways, then, we need the parents' help; to be more

exact, we need the parents' devotion. Somebody loves you enough to keep you alive: to hold you, to nourish you, to nurture you, to make sure that you make it, period. Somebody also loves you enough to make you a person: to prepare you and teach you what it takes to make it on your own in the world. Without love, nobody makes it anywhere.

Despite the reality that a majority of families don't resemble the nuclear unit, the former 'somebody' is oftentimes taken to be a *female* mother who's the caretaker and homemaker, the latter 'somebody' a *male* father who's the family's breadwinner and figure of authority. Psychoanalytic theory, however, recognizes that the 'mother' and 'father' are merely parts to be played, and that they're played by one man and one woman is never a necessity: rather, psychoanalysis says that there's only a 'maternal' and a 'paternal' *function* to be taken on by a mother and a father *figure*. There's neither the intrinsic bond of 'womanhood' to the maternal nor of 'manhood' to the paternal, although—while not slated to be explicitly explored in this thesis—the patriarchal impact of the continued use of the words 'maternal' and 'paternal' is, of course, plain. According to most psychoanalytic narratives of the 'self,' the infant's move into personhood necessitates only that what we take to be the 'maternal' and the 'paternal' *functions* are carried out to completion, although the answer to whatever 'completion' may entail varies across psychoanalytic accounts. The 'maternal function' is predominantly thought to be the responsibility—to lean on the language of Donald Winnicott—to 'hold': to hold the infant's weak head up, to nourish it, to help it grow stronger and more capable, to prepare the infant for the point at which a move into the 'real' world and, therefore, individuality is realizable. Winnicott writes: "for my part, I am contented to use the word hold, and to extend its meaning to cover all that a mother is and does at this time." The 'paternal function' is predominantly thought to be the responsibility to 'socialize' or to 'civilize': to prompt the infant's discovery of and movement into sociality, civilized life, or that 'real' world where we interact with and relate ourselves, as individuals, to others.

What distinguishes the former from the latter function might already start to register as a bit ambiguous. Where does maternal ‘preparation’ end and paternal ‘prompting’ begin?

No matter the potential (read: likely) overlap, it’s necessary for the infant’s development that, to some extent, the crux of the two traditional functions be consecutively performed: we can’t possibly carry ourselves through the world before we’re strong enough to hold up our head. If it’s only logical that the ‘paternal’ function proceeds from the ‘maternal’ function, it’s also incontestable that the work of the former, in order to triumph itself, is always reliant upon the work of the latter. In other words, the later enactment of the paternal function is invariably dependent on the prior enactment of the maternal function. At work in the tradition of psychoanalysis is the deleterious train of thought—one that I’d like to part with entirely—that regards the work of the maternal as *merely* preparatory for the significant work of socialization, and to regard socialization as *entirely* paternal. Although not always, and certainly not by a number of psychoanalytic feminist theorists, we quite often associate the paternal function only with the cultivation of the individual and, therefore, society or civilization, while we associate the maternal function only with ‘domesticity,’ or anti-social ‘care’ work. It's as though psychoanalysis, while novel in the acknowledgement of the parental entity’s status as purely a ‘function,’ would prefer to grant greater or total cultural significance to the work of the *father* figure. Said otherwise, even when the ‘father’ isn’t a *man*, psychoanalysis continues to permit that ‘paternity’ be more valorized than ‘maternity.’ Levels of education may serve as a useful analogy: while a high school diploma is necessary to get into a university, it’s often only the university degree that gets the average job-seeker in the ‘career’ door; accordingly, we judge the degree to have a greater impact on the advancement of society than the diploma.

What tends to buttress the aforementioned point of view is the belief that the two functions are antithetical to one another. Underlying such a story, in other words, is the

premise that the paternal function is unalike—antithetical to—the maternal in intent and operation, and the acknowledgment that ‘the duty of the mother figure is only and purely to do *this*; the duty of the father figure only and purely *that* often finds expression in Sigmund Freud’s theory of the pre-Oedipal into post-Oedipal organization of the infant’s psyche, marked by the passage of the Oedipus complex. In the Oedipal configuration, the father’s posture intervenes in the mother’s pre-Oedipal relation to the child; the result of the father’s intervention being the triangular mother-father-child relationship that’s indisputably necessary to the infant’s identification with sociality or the ways of society.

As the mother-infant union becomes transformed in light of the child’s newly-triangular relation to the mother *and* father, however, the ‘paternal’ function is thought to *overturn* or eclipse, from that moment forward, the consequence of the ‘maternal’ function on the infant’s development. Of course, the child must continue to be fed, taken care of, etcetera, after the father prompts the infant’s transition into individuality and the ‘civilized’ world, but what is significant to the child’s traversing the Oedipus complex is that they must alter, as a result, their psychical relation to the figure of the mother, performer of the ‘maternal’ function. Freud’s Oedipal father, a disciplinary figure, prompts the infant’s transition into society by way of the castration threat, the fantasized threat of punishment brought about by the infant’s want of the mother as the ‘lover’ when she already ‘belongs’ to the father. In the child’s acknowledgment of the father’s threat of punishment, they relinquish their intimate unity with—cut libidinal ties to—the pre-Oedipal mother and reluctantly, if not compulsorily, internalize the Oedipal father’s proscriptive authority, that which, imperatively, bears the character of reality; the Oedipal father’s demand prompts the child’s identification with the standards or ‘norms’ of conscious thought and behavior incumbent to function as a ‘civilized’ being in general society.

In view of the traditional story of the Oedipal configuration, to be later explained in further detail, if it's truly the case that we obtain solely from the father figure the help necessary to identify with and, accordingly, be a part of the external world, then not only does the mother figure carry zero cultural significance (related, again, to the idea that the motherly character is only meant to prepare for the father's more 'important' work) but because the child's movement into society or the 'outside' world necessitates a shift in identification from the pre-Oedipal 'mother' to the Oedipal 'father,' the child's 'socialization' or shift into individuality involves the infant's separation from the mother figure. Convention says that we can't remain in a dyadic relation to the 'anti-social' maternal function, or related to what lacks the character of sociality, if we're to become a member of human civilization. Freud admits to the fact that we're heartbroken by the pain of relinquishing our libidinal intimacy with the maternal character. We once thought the mother and ourselves to be one—not only one, but the *only* one, as the baby takes the mother-infant unity to be *the* world—and the lack of identification with the mother is felt as the lack of a part of ourselves. However, to shift into civilized society as a 'person,' discover our individuality in the world only by way of fear as prompted by a threat, and to abandon the intimate unity of the maternal-infant dyad, together, create a particularly sad story of the journey into life in the world, what it takes to 'become,' and the passage of humanity's lifetime. It's the objective of this thesis, then, to identify the possibility of and defend a more joyous story of the way in which we enter into the 'external' world and a lifetime of sociality, a story in which parental functions needn't be antithetical to one another but, cooperatively, prompt the infant's active want to discover the world and itself as a part of it.

In my first chapter, I present the work of Julia Kristeva on the part that the pre-Oedipal 'mother' plays in the infant's shift toward society. Kristeva ascribes to the maternal character the fated capacity to, however partly, socialize the infant and, in doing so, entitles

maternity to cultural significance in the assumedly ‘paternal’ cultivation of civilization. Not only is it the responsibility of the maternal function’s enactor to ‘hold,’ but the nurturance of ‘holding’ is, itself, the necessary first introduction of the infant to the ways of society. In my second chapter, I present Hans Loewald’s original reconfiguration of the Oedipus complex that pertains to Loewald’s theory of infantile ‘parricide,’ whereby the crux of the complex is the infant’s ‘urge for emancipation,’ or want of liberation from is felt as a purely *parental* authority. According to Loewald, the reaction-formation of the child’s super-ego is not merely or solely the internalization of the father’s authority, but both the child’s emancipation from their hitherto submission to the authority of a joint ‘parental’ function, and the child’s aspiration to atone for their want of individuality.

In my third chapter, I present the observations of mine that I take to underpin, in a variety of ways, that aforementioned story of the infant’s more-hopeful discovery of the world: one, that the ‘maternal’ and ‘paternal’ functions are harmonious and continuous in intent and operation; two, however boldly, that the fantasy of castration—punishment, broadly—isn’t a necessity to the infant’s development, as the infant’s being prompted to identify with society doesn’t require it; and three, that there’s a uniquely Loewaldian-Kristevan account of maturity appreciable**,** whereby Loewald’s theory of ‘atonement’ and reconfiguration of the incest prohibition pave out the infant’s capacity to carry forward the work of the *chora* as a transmutation of authority.

Chapter One: Rhythm of Your Heart

> [The mother] knows extremely well what the baby's needs are. You will understand I am not simply referring to her being able to know whether the baby is or is not hungry, and all that sort of thing; I am referring to innumerable subtle things, things that only my friend the poet could properly put into word.
> —Donald Winnicott, *Babies and their Mothers*

> during those early, dearest days
> i did not dream that you had
> a large life which included me
> for I had a life
> which was only you
> —Maya Angelou, *Mother*, *A Cradle to Hold Me*

As the story of alterity and self-discovery is told by the psychoanalytic tradition, one's 'sense of self,' or perception of oneself as a human 'person,' doesn't exist at birth. Life begins in the indefinite and undifferentiated plenitude of the universal mother-infant dyad: the primary caregiver's role, or the 'maternal' function, is to nourish, hold, and safeguard the weak and dependent infant; the infant doesn't recognize that anything is 'other' than it. Often thought is that, as the later addition of a third entity to the mother-infant dyad, it is only the father figure's role, the 'paternal' function, to authoritatively introduce the infant to reality, to lay down the law, and to prompt the infant's identification with the ways of society. Julia Kristeva, however, puts forth that the preparation and introduction of the infant to society begins earlier, or before the entry of a 'paternal' third party. Kristeva's body of work notably transforms the mother figure's role in the infant's transition into society, the external world, and a life of individuality. As Kristeva relays it, the mother figure's duty, or the maternal function, is not only to hold and nourish the infant but, at the same time, to steadily introduce the infant to the ways of civilization. Kristeva's 'maternal' plays an explicitly social

part in the infant's civilization and consequently parts with psychoanalytic tradition: rather than the momentary responsibility of the lone father figure, the mother figure's role is also to shift the infant into the external world. In this first chapter, I relay Kristeva's theory of the part that the maternal function plays in the infant's shift toward the external world, or society.

Sigmund Freud's story of the Oedipal situation—whereby the father's entry first makes triangular that preliminary mother-infant dyad—is the most conventional portrayal of the father's duty to civilize the infant. By way of the father's authoritative intervention, the infant realizes that it isn't omnipotent; that the mother won't instantaneously satisfy the infant's every want for the duration of a lifetime:

> The little girl likes to regard herself as what her father loves above all else; but the time comes when she has to endure a harsh punishment from him and is cast out of her fool's paradise. The boy regards his mother as his own property; but he finds one day that she has transferred her love and solicitude to a new arrival. (Freud 1924)

It is the father's relation to the mother that blocks the satisfaction of the infant's wants; the infant reluctantly recognizes that the mother's adoration doesn't 'belong' only to it and that the mother's solicitude must be shared.[1] Introduced to reality by the father's interference, the infant begins to regard itself as distinct from the mother's plenitude and acquiesces to the reality of others in the world.

Jacques Lacan largely espouses the Freudian position but posits that, rather than the father's actual physicality, it is the 'father' as a figure, or symbol, that's significant to the infant's socialization. Lacan takes the infant, prompted by the universal Oedipal discovery of the mother's lack and her 'belonging' also to another, to submissively turn toward "the name

[1] Sigmund Freud, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love,* trans. James Strachey (London, Hogarth Press, 1950), 186-197.

of the father," and signified by the name or concept of the father is the authority of language and reality's law.[2] Infants submit to society's jurisdiction—or, to put Lacan's position simply, move into the 'Symbolic order'—only to cope with and attempt to communicate the realization that the mother's devotion isn't to them alone. In continuity with a traditional account, only the arrival at the triangular site of the Oedipal marks the infant's first internalization of the ways of society and movement into 'subjectivity' or selfhood.[3] If, however, such a story is the reality—that it is properly the father figure's function (or the 'name-of-the-father,' the bearer of reality's authority) to propel the child into society, and the primary caregiver's role to nurture, to nourish, and to hold—then the mother figure doesn't play a part in carrying the child into civilization. In other words, the maternal function is inconsequential to the infant's movement into the social, 'real' world.

Kristeva rejects the idea that we make it as individuals in the external world only because of the paternal function. Instead, Kristeva's theory is that, by way of the maternal function, the infant already begins to learn the ways of society and the methods of the subject before the entrance of a third 'paternal' party. Identifiable throughout Kristeva's corpus is a tripartite story of the pre-Oedipal mother-infant relation and maternal function. In what I take to be their logical and chronological order, I present the story's parts below. I begin with the semiotic *chora*: Kristeva's early theory of the rhythmic infantile headspace, orchestrated by the maternal function, in which the infant first learns to regulate and express itself while still in the mother's plenitude. I consider, then, the Kristevan theory of abjection:

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[2] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 67.

[3] I'd like to note that I'm familiar with the argument that Julia Kristeva misreads Jacques Lacan's multiplex theory of the paternal function and that of the maternal-paternal relation. Gavin Rae, for example, makes the sound case, in the paper that I cite in my thirty-first footnote, that Lacan's theory of the paternal function is "multiple" and "bound to and expressive of" the maternal function. By 'traditional,' I do not mean to disregard the case made for Lacan's nuance. However, for the purposes of this chapter, I won't further explore the Kristeva-Lacan comparison. Regardless of the actual similarity of Kristeva's theories to Lacan's, I proceed only from what Kristeva takes to be the case.

the idea of the infant's first maneuver to individuate from the primary caregiver, a movement effectuated and regulated by the same *chora* of the maternal function. I finish with Kristeva's theory of the infant's transitional 'imaginary father,' whereby the later discovery of triangularity through the maternal function prompts curiosity in the infant about civilization.

i. Kristeva's Semiotic *Chora*

Kristeva draws on Plato's *Timaeus* to elaborate a theory of the '*chora*,' the realm wherein "discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such."[4] The *Timaeus* is a Platonian dialogue that explores the origins of the universe and the potential genesis of 'being' as such. A fragment of Plato's *Timaeus*, on the idea of the arguably nebulous '*khōra*' as the medium of origin, reads:

> What power must we conceive that nature has given [the *khōra*']? It is the receptacle and as it were the nurse, of all becoming…[it] receives into it all material things: we must call it always the same; for it never departs from its own function at all. It ever receives all things into it and has nowhere any form…we may liken the recipient to a mother. (Timaeus, 49a-50d)

Ancient Greek '*khōra*,' signified in English translation by '*chora*,' is Plato's reference to the 'receptacle' or container of the universe. It depicts the domain wherein "the universe comes to reside," it is the space from which everything that 'is' must first spring.[5]

A 'receptacle' may be taken to be inert, as if the *khōra* itself doesn't participate in the formation of the universe but is merely the recipient of it. Plato, however, likens the '*khōra'* to both the universe's 'mother' and 'nurse.' As a developmental space, the *khōra*'s character is cultivation. In its capacity to cultivate

[4] Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 25.
[5] Noëlle McAfee, *Julia Kristeva* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 19.

or 'birth,' the *khōra* is particularly womb-like; it is precisely the place to 'become' in. And a mother's womb, humanity's birthplace, is far from idleness or inertia. Only by way of the mother's womb is any fetus able to flourish. In the *Timaeus,* then, Plato ascribes to the *khōra* a motility:

> And in the nurse of becoming…she is filled with powers that are not similar nor equivalent, she is at no part of her in even balance, but being swayed in all directions unevenly, she is herself shaken by the entering forms, and by her motion shakes them again in turn. (Timaeus, 53a)

Constant and spontaneous activity constitutes the *khōra.* It—or 'she,' to Plato—is dynamic in its cultivation of the universe. Motility is evidently the consequence of the *khōra*'s amorphousness as it adapts and converts to the heterogeneity of that which it births. It is chiefly the *chora's* motility, or capacity for spontaneous movement, that Kristeva pedestals and augments in the adoption of Plato's theory.[6] Kristeva proposes that "though deprived of unity, identity, or deity, the *chora* is nevertheless subject to a regulating process."[7] Kristeva takes the *chora's* dynamism, however 'uneven,' to always be ordered. It "effectuates discontinuities by temporarily articulating them and then starting over, again and again."[8] Regulation and order, for Kristeva's *chora*, subsist in the eb and flow of repetition. Kristeva is most curious about the *chora*'s "ruptures and articulations (rhythm)," but not as a rhythm that introduces the universe to itself.[9] Kristeva's *chora* begins to introduce, instead, the human infant to itself.[10] In particular, Kristeva takes Plato's *chora* to be the primordial articulation of the infantile psyche. Rather than the womb of the universe, the *chora* is

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[6] From this moment in the text onwards, I begin to style Greek '*khōra'* as *chora* in continuity with Margaret Waller's translation of *Revolution in Poetic Language*.
[7] Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* 26.
[8] Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* 26.
[9] Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* 26.
[10] Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* 26.

where the infant's psyche first resides; it is the first 'headspace,' inhabited by the infant.[11] In this headspace, the infant expresses energy. Per Kristeva, the infantile expression of energy is the articulation of the Freudian instincts, or 'drives. It is the energy of the drives that is manifest in the motility of the infantile *chora.*

Psychoanalysis insists that the infant is from birth onwards always inevitably 'driven.' Freud's conception of '*Trieb*,' often translated from Freud's German into English as both 'instinct' and 'drive,' designates the universal orientation of the individual's psyche toward the satisfaction of desire. A 'drive' may be defined as a "dynamic process [that consists of] a pressure (charge of energy, motricity factor) which directs [the] organism toward" some object or end. Freud tends to clarify satisfaction, or pleasure, as the release or elimination of tension.[12] Pleasure is acquired in the acquisition of the drive's object, whereby the psychical energy invested in the object becomes released, or, more precisely, the object becomes 'de-cathected.' 'Cathexis' describes the charge or attachment of energy to a psychical object or idea. We're oriented by the instincts in the direction of the objects that gratify what they desire. 'Instincts' are "alongside external excitations, from which the subject may take flight…internal sources of a constant flow of excitation which the organism cannot evade."[13] Whereas I may withstand the influence of external stimuli on my behavior, I can't circumvent the force of the instinct—it can't be evaded. Unable to be destroyed, the energy, impetus of the instinct, persists in the psyche. It's in the *chora*, in Kristeva's view, that the infantile psyche is first able to exercise the flow of its instinctual energy.

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[11] McAfee, *Julia Kristeva,* 35.
[12] Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," in *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works,* trans. James Strachey (London, Hogarth Press, 1957).
[13] Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973), 214.

Upon its birth, the infant is only a hedonist. It experiences "a realm of plenitude…a oneness with our environment…the infant comes into being without any borders."[14] It is a mother's relation to the infant, a mother's care, that enables and sustains the infant's sensation of plenitude: "at first the child is born into a realm of plenitude, a fullness that it feels in its mother's embrace, in having all its needs met even before they are recognized as needs."[15] Until the first formations of the infant's ego, or conception of itself as a unity, the infant is pure 'id,' instinct unbounded and unrestrained, "the great reservoir of libido."[16] At birth, "the pleasure principle…reigns unrestrictedly."[17] Domination by the pleasure principle denotes the whole of the infant's psychical activity as directed toward the release or discharge of tension; the accomplishment of which is the acquisition of satisfaction or pleasure. In other words, the psyche is, at first, only instinct. Nothing is manifest preliminarily but the urge to maintain constant and instant gratification.

Gratification for the infant is, at the start, instant and constant. In that inceptive period of the infant's life, the breast is readily available at nearly every moment. A newborn may depend upon the primary caregiver's gratification as the caregiver, in turn, gratifies their dependence; the infant is unaware of its fantastical desires as distinct from a reality in which those desires are gratified by an 'other,' in particular, by the mother figure; they lack the slightest clue that "satisfactions are attained in the real world."[18] In the preliminary absence of reality's identification, the pure flow of instinct felt by the infant would altogether destroy it—if not for the mother figure. Instincts, or impulses, are always at first "oriented

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[14] McAfee, *Julia Kristeva,* 45.
[15] McAfee, *Julia Kristeva,* 33.
[16] Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,* trans. James Strachey (London, Hogarth Press, 1921).
[17] Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* trans. James Strachey (London, Hogarth Press, 1923): 25.
[18] Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis,* 380.

and structured around the mother's body."[19] In the cathexis and de-cathexis of great quantities of energy, it is only the "infant's tactile relation with its mother," or the caregiver that holds and supports its dependent body, that stabilizes the infant's psyche.[20] As the infant slowly grows in size and ability, nourishment at the breast and other kinds of contact by the caregiver occur routinely and, as a result, orchestrate and regulate a rhythm for the infant's instincts. "In this way," Kristeva states, "the drives…articulate what we call a *chora*…[a] totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is…regulated."[21] As the mother or primary caregiver consistently breastfeeds, bathes, holds, caresses, and comforts—regularly cares for—the infant, drives become "patterned in significant, affectively charged" ways.[22] It is the regular, patterned cadence of the holder's care that facilitates the infant's stability and capacity to flourish in the motility of the instincts. Without the rhythm of the *chora*, the infant couldn't manage the abundant flow of energy felt at birth onwards. As the mother's solicitude, or the maternal function, is "the ordering principle" of the *chora* and furnishes the infant's psyche with rhythm, the function generates the rudimentary ability of the infant to regulate itself. In the ability to release energy at intervals, the infant begins to prepare for reality's control over satisfaction, where the instantaneous gratification of omnipotence is obsolete.

Kristeva most importantly finds "in this rhythmic space" of the infantile *chora*, the very process "by which significance is constituted."[23] In the *chora*, the infant uses sound and gesture in order express themselves. Infants tend to babble, murmur, and coo with a cadence, they variously intonate their noises, they constantly make chaotic physical

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[19] Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* 27.
[20] Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* 25.
[21] Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* 25.
[22] Alison Stone, "Against Matricide: Rethinking Subjectivity and the Maternal Body," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 27, no. 1 (2012): 5.
[23] Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* 26.

gestures.[24] Sound, intonation, cadence, gesture: these sorts of articulations, the infant's first, are necessarily "drive-related and affective."[25] As aforementioned, the discharge of energy is first patterned by the mother's facilitation of the *chora's* order; she regulates and, in part, encourages release in the form of rhythmic expression. Kristeva considers the infant's primordial expressions to be the discharges of the energy of drives; they're rhythmic, melodic, and motile. Kristeva describes this original sort of expression to be of the 'semiotic' form. By 'semiotic' expression, Kristeva refers precisely to the **"**drive-related and affective meaning…whose sensory aspects are often nonverbal (sound and melody, rhythm, color, odors, and so forth)."[26] Always engaged in by the infant before they breach subjectivity and the use of language, the 'semiotic' form of expression, a product of the maternal function, is "previous and necessary to the acquisition of language, but not identical to language."[27] It is distinct from but the obligatory predecessor to the infant's capacity for the 'symbolic' sort of signification that is to come.

Only because the infant practices, in the semiotic *chora*, this preliminary sort of communication, Kristeva contends, is the later individual's use of language possible at all. Kristeva states that it is "the maternal function [that] manages to mark out the child's path toward signification."[28] Signification, the necessary act whereby the subject is able to convey what is meant by them to the rest of society, is a two-fold process: it is always both 'symbolic' and 'semiotic.'[29] 'Symbolic' signification is the learned and literal use of words to reference "thoughts and things," it's necessarily how a subject may share what they mean

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[24] McAfee, *Julia Kristeva,* 20.
[25] Julia Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul,* trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 104.
[26] Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul,* 104.
[27] Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* 29.
[28] Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul,* 109.
[29] Kristeva's 'symbolic' is distinct from but similar and related to Lacan's theory of the Symbolic.

with the rest of society.[30] It is only able to be learned, however, in a gradual way: "Kristeva's fundamental claim is that to move…to the symbolic does not entail a [hasty] jump into language, but requires a gradual movement" from the semiotic form.[31] Slowly but surely, the infant shifts from gesture and sound to referential verbalization. Kristeva reckons that the child who says 'woof' to signify a dog represents a developmental midpoint: the child's reference to the dog's noise indicates the nascent ability to denote some object in the world, but the child has yet to master the articulation of the word 'dog.'[32] Kristeva also writes that "although originally a precondition of the symbolic, the semiotic functions within signifying practices" and, similarly, that "the regulation of the semiotic in the symbolic…is inherent in the operation of language."[33] If a person's voice is "devoid of the usual rhythms and modulations that [ordinarily] infuse" it, or if they speak without emotion, we often don't take what is conveyed to be genuinely meant; the typical subject's use of language, then, isn't bereft of the semiotic's expression.[34] Signification is the activity of the subject; insofar as the act necessitates the use of Kristeva's 'semiotic,' the infant's first expressions in the semiotic *chora* develop it for life as a subject in society before the transformation of individuation is complete. By way of the maternal function's fabrication and modulation of the semiotic *chora*, then, the infant is already taught a significant bit about the subject's behavior before it's properly a part of society.

ii. Abjection

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[30] McAfee, *Julia Kristeva,* 13.
[31] Gavin Rae, "Maternal and Paternal Functions in the Formation of Subjectivity: Kristeva and Lacan," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 46, no. 4 (2019): 419.
[32] Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* 43.
[33] Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* 69.
[34] McAfee, *Julia Kristeva,* 15.

In the rhythm of the *chora*, a particular kind of motility arises that Kristeva terms 'abjection.' Abjection, says Kristeva, is the process whereby the infant, at a point relatively but not directly after birth, begins to expel the physical substances that flow from the mother's body to itself; and it does so because it finds them to be unpalatable.[35] Material readily 'abject' to the infant could include, but isn't limited to, the mother's breast milk or formula that's spit up or regurgitated after ingestion, vomit, excrement, and the infant's saliva. Similarly, while not tangible, the infant may also avoid a mother's hug or attempt at embrace.[36]

Kristeva ventures that the infant repudiates these manifestations of the mother's nourishment because the infant is rudimentarily able to regard them as 'something that is not 'I,'' even before the infant's idea of 'myself as 'I'' is understood: "the abject has one quality…that of being opposed to 'I.'"[37] Kristeva writes: "'I' am not but do *separate, reject, ab-ject.*"[38] A fixed 'self' is yet to emerge in the infant's psyche, but already the infant wants to protect itself against what it thinks is not 'it.' Abjection is the infant's rejection of what is 'other' before the discovery of the mother figure's alterity in the Oedipal situation. Whatever the infant wants to abject is always "a 'something' that [the infant does] not recognize as a thing."[39] As Kristeva states, abjection already takes place without the constitution of "one subject [or] object," it is a "pre-object-al" relation for the infant.[40] Before the discovery of a proper 'object,' the infant begins to understand the existence of something in the world external to itself. In other words, the infant's initial movement to abject the materials of the

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[35] McAfee, *Julia Kristeva,* 35.
[36] McAfee, *Julia Kristeva,* 46.
[37] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1.
[38] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 13.
[39] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 2.
[40] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 12.

mother is the result of the first discovery that some entity in the world—the mother figure, although she's not acknowledged yet as such—is distinctly 'other' than it. Our repudiations of the bodily substances that link us to the primary caregiver are, as Kristeva writes, "our earliest attempts to release the hold of the maternal entity even before existing outside of her."[41] Very early on, in reaction to the discovery of alterity, the infant begins to shift itself away from the environment of plenitude first felt in the primordial mother-infant dyad.

It is the abjection of the mother, "our separation from her," that is necessary "in order to become individualized, to take objects, to enter language, to become good citizens of the family and social world" but the infant can only accomplish abjection, a rejection of the maternal function, by way of the maternal function's help.[42] Stone states that the infant's "abjecting movements are regulated *by* the maternal *chora.*"[43] Infants expel the caregiver's materials by way of that incorporation-expulsion rhythm inculcated by the *chora*'s regulation of the instincts. Our infantile moves to excrete, vomit, spit and whatever else are the modulated results of the mother's care. Kristeva indicates that the maternal function is the governance of the infant by a preparatory kind of order or law: "to be sure, if I am affected by what does not yet appear to me as a thing, it is because laws…govern and condition me…that order, that glance, that voice, that gesture…enact the law for my frightened body."[44] In the facilitation and modulation of abjection, the maternal function introduces authority to the infant and, therefore, also the first impetus to shift in society's direction.

iii. Identification with the Imaginary Father

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[41] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 13.
[42] Deborah Caslav Covino, *Amending the Abject Body*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 21.
[43] Stone, "Against Matricide," 5.
[44] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 10.

Kristeva insists that any sharp or abrupt transition from life in plenitude to life in society is implausible for the infant. Rather, the infant's transition from omnipotence to civilization, or transition from non-selfhood to selfhood, must take place over a notable period of time—a period that extends beyond that of the traditional Oedipal situation and, instead, begins in the primordial domain of maternal plenitude. Part of the transition period that Kristeva portrays, and that Rae describes as the product of "a distinct intermediary function," is the infant's identification with the figure of the 'imaginary father.'[45] It is roughly after the infant's preliminary abjection of the mother and before the ultimate advancement through the Oedipus complex that the infant is in need of the imaginary father's intermediary function.

Kristeva takes the infant, as aforementioned, to abject the mother at a point when "the mother is not-yet-object and the child is not-yet-subject…the child in this abject relation to its mother is not yet separated from [the mother] but is no longer identical to her."[46] Before the advent of the Oedipus complex, then, the infant is in the state of subjectivity whereby it is not-yet-subject, but almost. Kristeva thinks that as a not-yet-subject, the infant isn't ready to bear the father's threat. If it simply did so, the infant's leap from the freshly-fraught relation to the maternal function into total alignment with the authority of the father function would result in the loss of any tie to the maternal: the father's threat doesn't provide any reason for the infant to stay in relation to or identification with the mother figure. Winnicott writes that it is first "from the baby's point of view [that] there is nothing else but the baby, and therefore the mother is at first part of the baby. In other words, there is something here which people call primary identification."[47] In the primordial time of

[45] Rae, "Maternal and Paternal Functions," 421.
[46] Kelly Oliver, "Kristeva's Imaginary Father and the Crisis in the Paternal Function," *Diacritics* 21, no. 2 (1991): 48.
[47] Winnicott, Babies and their Mothers,

plenitude, the infant takes itself and the mother to be one and the same; the total loss of one's intimate relation to the mother would be, then, the painful loss of a part of oneself. As "the problem is that the mother was *abjected*, not *objected*, and so never became the object that would allow the source of loss to be identified," the infant's melancholy toward the loss of the mother would be beyond tolerable.[48] Kristeva's curiosity, then, is whether or not the infant's only step after abjection is the final transition into subjecthood by way of the Oedipal father's threat. If this is truly the case, wouldn't the infant become a subject that's merely miserable and always afraid? Kristeva, instead, presents a pre-Oedipal motivation that is at the infant's disposal in the infant's transition into society. Kelly Oliver writes that "the move from pre-[society] to [society] is not purely motivated by a castration threat or sense of lack."[49] Rather than wait for the father figure's threat, Kristeva takes the infant to be motivated first by the maternal function in order to seek out the 'symbolic,' society, or civilization.

Kristeva thinks that the infant's motivation to find what may lay beyond the mother, in the 'external' world, is born of none other than the mother's love. In *Tales of Love*, Kristeva writes:

> Different from the…clinging mother, [the loving mother] is someone who has an object of desire; beyond that, she has an Other with relation to whom the child will serve as a go-between. She will love her child with respect to that Other, and it is through a discourse aimed at that Third Party that the child will be set up as 'loved' for the mother. 'Isn't he beautiful,' or 'I'm proud of you,' and so forth, are statements of maternal love because they involve a Third Party; it is in the eyes of a Third Party that the baby the mother speaks to becomes a '*he*,' it is with respect to other that 'I am proud of you' and so forth. (Kristeva 1987, 34)

In those kindhearted remarks that the mother makes to the infant, the infant first makes the discovery that there is a world beyond itself and the mother. "When the mother speaks

[48] Rae, "Maternal and Paternal Functions," 420.
[49] Oliver, "Kristeva's Imaginary Father," 46.

lovingly to the child, the child imagines some vague other figure as the address of this speech."[50] When it hears (or, so it believes, overhears) the mother's voice, the infant thinks how 'there must be some other in the world that my mother loves.' It is the mother's other that the infant imagines, the vague 'third party,' that, to Kristeva, is the figure of the imaginary father.[51] It is designated as a 'father' because the figure is a symbol of reality; Kristeva, in this theory, doesn't alter psychoanalysis's traditional association of reality with what is 'paternal.' However, because the imaginary figure functions to represent the totality of reality, it is the figure of whatever may be of importance to the mother aside from the child: employment, education, and anything else. Oliver writes that "the postulation of the imaginary father allows the child to imagine that the mother desires an Other, not 'I.'"[52] In the infant's discovery of the imaginary father, it is able to imagine itself as part of the world's alterity, but in the marked absence of the Oedipal threat. In the infant's act of the imagination, a "first 'ternary structure'" arises in the psyche: infant-mother-other.[53] Because it is the caregiver's vocalizations that prompt, for the infant, the imagining of a third party with which to identify itself, Kristeva's theory of the imaginary father ought to be regarded as a part of the traditional maternal function, or that role to care, hold, and to nourish. It is by way of the maternal function's later intermediary capacity, then, that 'triangularity' and, therefore, a path to life in society, dawns for the infant's psyche in a way that doesn't first threaten it. While the infant's move toward society is inevitably prompted, at first, by the

[50] Stone, "Against Matricide," 6.
[51] Julia Kristeva's concept of the 'imaginary father' is indebted to the Freudian conception of the 'father of one's personal pre-history,' found primarily in Freud's *Ego and the Id* (1923, 31). Freud's 'father of prehistory' refers to the infant's pre-Oedipal vague cognizance of a 'father' or form of authority beyond that precedes the infant's identification with the actual 'father,' or the father of one's life history.
[52] Oliver, "Kristeva's Imaginary Father," 55.
[53] Stone, "Against Matricide," 6.

function of the ‘maternal,’ what necessarily takes place for the infant in the formal triangularity of the Oedipal situation is next to come.

Chapter Two: Who's Your Daddy?

Life is made of so many partings welded together.
—Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

In the previous chapter, I numerously use the phrase 'mother figure' for a reason. It's certainly not the case that a mother-father pair is a requisite to raise a child—in fact, far from it: the gender or sex of the parent that implements either function is insignificant, and one parent may play the role of two. What it may mean to be either a women who's a mother or a man who's a father, in psychoanalysis, is not a given; the only imperative for the infant's development is that the maternal and paternal 'parts' are successively played by mother and father 'figures.' It's the 'what' of parenthood that's important to the infant's development, and not the 'who.' Hans Loewald writes that "it is of no importance…[that] roles may be less well defined, or even reversed, that the mother may to a large extent represent authority and reality demands rather than the father."[54] Kristeva's theory of the early mother-infant relation emphasizes that the character of the 'maternal' is, in fact, that of a 'function,' or role to be played: "the maternal operates as a function that, in principle, can be performed by both men and women."[55] We ought to think, then, only of the primary caregiver—whoever is by and large responsible for the infant's survival—as the enactor of the maternal function; and to 'enact' the maternal function is to nourish the infant, to feed it, and to lovingly care for it so that it may grow.

Winnicott, relatedly, depicts the infant's mother figure as that character necessarily in charge of "environmental provision."[56] As Kristeva's work conveys, it is precisely because of

[54] Hans Loewald, "Ego and Reality," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 32, no 1. (1951): 11.
[55] Kelly Oliver, "Julia Kristeva's Feminist Revolutions," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 8, no. 3 (1993): 105.
[56] Winnicott, *Babies and their Mothers*, 25.

that first ‘maternal’ nurturance—in the form of the *chora* and the imaginary father—that the infant slowly discovers the ways of society and what it takes to be a subject in the world. Not only for Kristeva, but for Winnicott, also, is the mother figure’s function to lovingly shift the infant from that original state of omnipotence toward society; of that aforementioned maternal responsibility to ‘hold’: Winnicott writes:

> Here is the basis for what gradually becomes, for the infant, the self-experiencing being. All this is highly tenuous, but repeated and repeated adds up to the foundation of the capacity in the baby to feel real. With this capacity the baby can face the world, or (I should say) can go ahead with the maturational processes. (Winnicott 1987, 7)

Inevitably and indisputably, the mother figure’s devotion to the infant first prompts it to ‘face the world’ of reality. If, however, the maternal function is truly ‘social,’ and may civilize the infant to at least a certain extent, then what *does* come to pass in that triangular configuration of the Oedipus complex? What is the ‘Oedipal’ necessity for the infant’s development? In this second chapter, I convey the position of Hans Loewald in “The Waning of the Oedipus Complex,” a reconfiguration, or enrichment, of Freud’s traditional Oedipus complex. In particular, I present Loewald’s novel theory of infantile ‘parricide,’ whereby the genuine crux of the Oedipal configuration is the infant’s ‘urge for emancipation,’ or want of liberation from a ‘parental’ authority.

While my project primarily employs Loewald’s contributions to the understanding of the Oedipus complex, I begin my second chapter by expounding Sigmund Freud’s original Oedipal conception as background. I explain the infant’s transition into the Oedipus situation by way of their want of the mother, and I explain what Freud takes to be the explicit role of the Oedipal father—that is, to prompt the infant’s fantastical fear of the threat of castration, a fear that finds its resolution in the child’s yielding to paternal authority and the formation of

the ‘super-ego.’ Next, however, I eagerly turn to Loewald’s theory of ‘parricide’ in “The Waning of the Oedipus Complex” where the reaction-formation of the child’s super-ego is chiefly the emancipatory revolt, although ambivalent, against a sort of ‘parental’ authority, both ‘maternal’ and ‘paternal’ in character. Loewald’s ‘parricide,’ the child’s both ‘murder’ and usurpation of parental authority, is not only the individual’s key to self-responsibility, and portrays the onset of our individuality, but prompts our lifelong atonement for separation and a path to maturity.

i. Freud and the Oedipal Situation

Sigmund Freud first poses the watershed idea of the infant’s Oedipus complex—though he doesn’t yet refer to the configuration by that name—in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In the landmark text, Freud famously remarks that a dream is always ‘the fulfilment of a wish,’ a ‘wish’ that is first infantile in nature. At a certain point in the course of development, children begin to wish for a particular sort of sexual satisfaction that’s incompatible with the cultural organization of civilization. Our wish is incestuous: we want to have, as a libidinal—love, sex—object, a parent that’s of the same ‘sex’ or gender; we might also want to rid ourselves of whatever parent may be in the way of the acquisition of that want. In “Material and Sources of Dreams,” Freud writes: “it is as though—to put it bluntly—a sexual preference were making itself felt at an early age: as though boys regarded their fathers and girls their mothers as their rivals in love, whose elimination could not fail to be to their advantage.”[57] As children, we’re taught that we can’t possibly hope to fulfill our sexual want of the parent in ‘civilized’ life. We’ll make various attempts at the fulfillment of that wish through substitutes, such as our selection of sexual partners in adult life, but always to our

[57] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2010): 274.

unrealized disappointment. In the content of the dream, however, the dreamer's 'uncivilized' infantile desires enjoy the unrestricted freedom to make manifest their aims.

Freud proposes the psychosexual theory of infantile development, in which the infant transitions through a total of five stages: the oral, anal, phallic, latent, and genital stages.[58] The 'stages' of psychosexual development name the erogenous zone central to the infant at that time; they refer to the bodily apparatus by way of which the infant or child, at that period, endeavors to satisfy the sexual instincts.[59] While the preliminary 'oral' and 'anal' phases of infantile development correspond to the infant's early relation to the mother—to the infant's incorporation of the mother's milk and expulsion of bodily excrement—the third, 'phallic,' phase—related to the genitals—is "contemporaneous with the Oedipus complex."[60] When they're in the 'phallic' stage of psychosexual development, children begin to grow interested in the act of sex and the genitalia involved.

Before the infant's parental situation becomes explicitly triangular—or, in other words, before the actual onset of the triangular Oedipal configuration—the child, at first, is still comfortably in that primordial dyad with the mother figure, or parent who played the part of the maternal. In Freud's theory, it is only with the arrival of the 'phallic' stage that the child moves from a pre-objectal or semi-objectal relation into a purely and properly objectal relation to the world around them. Now, at the 'phallic' stage of sexual development, it is at this time that the "whole of the [child's] sexual currents have become directed towards a single person in relation to whom they seek to achieve their aims."[61] At this point, then, the infant bears the fantasy of the 'incestuous tie' to the enactor of the maternal function: there's

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[58] Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," in *A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works*, trans. James Strachey (1905): 187.
[59] Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," 181.
[60] Sigmund Freud, "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," In The Ego and the Id and Other Works (London: Hogarth Press, 1961): 174.
[61] Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," 199.

a strong erotic attachment to the mother. As Loewald writes, “the very same person with whom there has been a pre-object-al bond prior to and continuing into the Oedipal phase, [for the child] this very same person now becomes an object of sexual desire.”[62] It is the child’s inevitable sexual want of the very individual who first nurtures them that sets the Oedipal complex in motion.

Thomas Ogden writes that the Oedipus complex is the intense web “of intrapsychic and interpersonal parent-child relationships.”[63] It’s precisely “the experience of painful disappointments.”[64] In our discovery and want of the mother figure as a person, we come into contact with another: the ‘father’ figure; the parent who carries out the ‘paternal’ function. We want the mother to ourselves, but we discover that ‘dad’ is also there. We find the ‘father’ to be the mother’s other and we’re devastated as a result: we want ‘him’ gone—murdered, in fact—and out of the mother-child picture. It is incredibly painful for the child to discover that, in actuality, “he is not desired by the mother in the way that his initial unity with the mother led him to believe he was.”[65] Oftentimes, when you’re in love with someone, you’d prefer that they, too, be only in love with you. When children make that sorrowful discovery of the mother’s other, we’re also made aware that the father figure is, in fact, not to be ‘gotten rid of.’ Instead, it is our want of the mother that must be relinquished. We’re warned of the reality that the incestuous desire isn’t acceptable: we’re told by the father that ‘the mother is already mine; you’ll have to find someone else someday.’ In the mother-father-child conflict, we’re find the prototypical threat of punishment: the threat of

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[62] Hans Loewald, “The Waning of the Oedipus Complex,” *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 27 (1979): 765.
[63] Thomas Ogden, “Reading Loewald: Oedipus Reconceived,’ *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 87, no. 3 (2008): 652.
[64] Freud, “Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex,” 173.
[65] Rae, “Maternal and Paternal Functions,” 420.

castration.[66] We fear that if we don't abandon our lustful regard for the mother, the father is going to 'castrate' us; the threat of castration being that the father is going to either damage or amputate our genitals. At the same time, we experience guilt at the fact of our wish for the father's death. Additionally, it's irrelevant to the Oedipal configuration as to whether or not the threat is spoken aloud. Ogden writes that "whether or not actual castration threats are made, the threat of castration is present in the mind of the child as a 'primal phantasy,' a universal unconscious fantasy that is part of the make-up of the human psyche.[67] Ashamed of our fantasy, we imagine the threat in any case. As "for Freud, the father is a hostile figure who has to be fought or submitted to," the "threat of the hostile reality [of castration] is met by unavoidable…submission [by the child] to its demands, namely, to renounce the mother as a libidinal object, and to acknowledge and submit to paternal authority."[68] Children, both in the midst of guilt at the fact that they want their father dead and fearful that the father's threat may turn into reality, relinquish the mother as the wanted object of their libido and submit themselves, reluctantly, to the father's demands.

As claimed by Freud, the child's discovery of the mother's other is the child's first discovery of the actual authority that governs the world of reality itself: the Oedipal father "is seen as the representative of the demands of reality."[69] It can't be belabored "how strongly for Freud the concept of reality is bound up with the father."[70] When the child yields to the father's demands, they yield to reality's demands. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud writes of the world exterior to the mother-infant dyad:

> Here the aim of satisfaction is not by any means relinquished; but a certain amount of protection against suffering is secured, in that non-satisfaction is not so painfully

[66] Freud, *Ego and the Id*, 58.
[67] Ogden, "Reading Loewald," 653.
[68] Loewald, "Ego and Reality," 11.
[69] Loewald, "Ego and Reality," 11.
[70] Loewald, "Ego and Reality," 11.

> felt in the case of instincts kept in dependence as in the case of uninhibited ones. As against this, there is an undeniable diminution in the potentialities of enjoyment. The feeling of happiness derived from the satisfaction of a wild instinctual impulse untamed by the ego is incomparably more intense than that derived from sating an instinct that has been tamed. (Freud 1930, 78)

Freud's Oedipal configuration is a re-configuration of the infant's pre-Oedipal relation to satisfaction. Now, the child can no longer anticipate instantaneous gratification, as they did in the mother-infant dyad. While the maternal function may frustrate the infant's quest for complete satisfaction, the role of the paternal function is to entirely alter the intent of the child's quest; we must accept the reality of incomplete satisfaction—the very reality of reality. By way of our fearing the hostile father figure's punishment, we reluctantly acknowledge that we can't, in fact, 'have it all.' Reality is where we're expected, if not required, to be reasonable in our behavior and rational in the anticipated gratification of our desires. In the child's acknowledgment of the castration threat and formation of the super-ego, they internalize the "knowledge that [their] fantasies will not be allowed to be played out in reality."[71] In reality, for the majority of cultures, the act of incest is a taboo that's outright unacceptable to carry out. If we want to make it as a part of the external world, we must yield to the cultural ways—the prohibitions—of whatever society it is that we inhabit.

Our fear-driven and guilt-ridden adherence to the demands of the father persist in the psyche, for Freud, as the forged 'psychic structure' by the name of the super-ego:

> The child, for fear of punishment in the form of castration, relinquishes her sexual and aggressive strivings in relation to the Oedipal parents and replaces those [strivings]…with parental authority, prohibitions and ideals, which form the core of a new psychic structure, the super-ego. (Ogden 2008, 653)

[71] Ogden, "Reading Loewald," 656.

Because children substitute their conscious Oedipal desires with the structure of the super-ego, the super-ego is the resolution to or "heir of the Oedipus complex."[72] Our super-ego, a reaction-formation of the child's identification with authority, corroborates the complex's decline, and "comprises the prohibition [that] you may not be like this (like your father)—that is, you may not do all that he does; some things are his prerogative."[73] It is the obedient 'conscience' of the psyche that plays a necessarily inhibitory role.[74] Freud speaks also of the 'ego-ideal,' often if not always, synonymously with the super-ego.[75] Our formation of the 'ego ideal' is, just as it might sound, the creation of our ego's 'ideal.' Not only does one yield, throughout their lifetime, to the Oedipal father's prohibitions, the individual always strives to imitate him. We take the Oedipal father, to the extent that he represents what's right and proper in thought and behavior, as who we ought to emulate if we want to carry ourselves through the world as 'good' social beings; however, to the extent that the internalized father is an 'ideal' version of ourselves, it constitutes a perfection we can't hope to attain; we can never measure up, but are always left with a felt inferiority. In view of the Freudian Oedipal configuration, then, and the fact that "the super-ego retains the character of the father," it is the function of the Oedipus complex to prompt the child to submit to the authority of reality and civilization.[76] For Freud, for the duration of a lifetime, we carry in the psyche that Oedipal fear and threat of punishment that's necessary to be a part of reality or a member of civilized society.

ii. Loewald's Oedipal Configuration

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[72] Freud, *Ego and the Id*, 36.
[73] Freud, *Ego and the Id*, 34.
[74] Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, 145.
[75] In *The Ego and the Id*, in particular, Freud explicitly writes synonymously of the 'ego-ideal' and 'super-ego' as a capacity of the mind.
[76] Freud, *Ego and the Id*, 34.

In "The Waning of the Oedipus Complex," Loewald's departure from or development of Freud—a rewriting of the cause of the complex's complexity—begins with Loewald's wonder as to whether or not the infant's Oedipal configuration is definitively mastered, or 'destroyed,' in the formation of the superego.[77] Loewald writes of the "relinquishment of oedipal object cathexes and their substitution by identification with parental authority, which forms the nucleus of the super-ego" and "sublimation of the libidinal strivings of the complex" that Freud speaks of, but only to note that, for Freud, the mastery of or movement through the Oedipal complex ought to result in the "destruction and abolition of it," a 'destruction' that amounts to the repression of the event in the child's unconscious.[78] Loewald, however, is committed to the belief that "no matter how resolutely the ego turns away from it…in adolescence the Oedipus complex rears its head again, and so it does during later periods in life."[79] Rather than 'destruction,' then, Loewald considers a 'waning' of Oedipus: the child's unconsciously carrying forth that tenacious Oedipal configuration. On that which we carry forth, Iris Levy writes: "that which is primitive can never be wholly destroyed…there is nothing irrevocable in our archaic past—we can speak only of the ebb and flow of various transmutations and transformations of developmental sequences."[80] Loewald is adamant: we haven't yet satisfied the question of the Oedipal resolution.

Loewald's formulation reinterprets that which is thought to put into motion, at least in part, the Oedipal configuration: the infant's guilty urge to eliminate. Loewald thickens the traditional Freudian "conception of the Oedipal murder" into the novel theory of 'parricide.'[81] While, for Freud, we wish to just eliminate whoever it is that intercepts our intimacy with the

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[77] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 752.
[78] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 753.
[79] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 752.
[80] Iris Levy, "The Fate of the Oedipus Complex: Dissolution or Waning," *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 4, no. 1 (1995): 7.
[81] Ogden, "Reading Loewald," 655.

mother, Loewald doesn't think that either Oedipal parent is spared: we want to—have to—kill them *both*, or *all* off. Relatedly, and importantly, Loewald refuses to distinguish the wish to murder the mother figure from that of the father figure; Loewald, instead, takes the two to be synonymous. Loewald thinks that both the 'maternal' and 'paternal' figure bear the joint responsibility to rear the infant and, therefore, bear joint 'authorship' of the infant: "it is the bringing forth, nourishing, providing for, and protecting of the child by the parents that constitute their parenthood and 'authority' (authorship) and render sacred the child's ties with the parents."[82] For Loewald, there's only the 'parental' Oedipal function. It's presumably the case that, from Loewald's point of view, Oedipal mothers and fathers are figures of authority in equal fashion.[83] In fact, Loewald writes that "in a patriarchal society, the murder of the father, patricide, is the *prototype* of the crime…for Freud, the father was the foremost provider and protector, as well as the castrator if his authority and predominance were challenged."[84] For Loewald, then, our Oedipal urge to 'murder' isn't the result of any sort of reaction to the father's interference in the intimate mother-infant dyad. Instead, the infant reacts to what is purely felt as the joint parental force of Oedipal authority. Loewald, in other words, grants authority to the initial figure of the mother.

Loewald describes the reaction to parental authority as the infant's 'urge for emancipation': "in the course of what we consider healthy development," the "active urge for emancipation comes to the fore."[85] It is because of the infant's 'urge for emancipation' that it endeavors to commit what Loewald calls 'parricide.' As Ogden writes, 'parricide' is the infant's "revolt against parental authority and parental claims to authorship of the child."[86]

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[82] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 754.
[83] It ought to be noted that while Freud heavily associates 'reality' with the figure of the father, Freud speaks numerously of a 'parental' authority.
[84] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 754.
[85] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 756.
[86] Ogden, "Reading Loewald," 655.

We want to defy the very authority that, by Loewald's definition, 'nourishes, provides for, and protects.' As Iris Levy writes, "Loewald alters Freud's passive idea of castration (something being *done* to the child) to the active urge for emancipation, which includes doing something to the parent."[87] Loewald's 'urge for emancipation' is, in a way, the reversal of hostility: in the felt reaction to authority, it's the child with the 'urge' to act. In the child's act of revolt, the child 'wrestles,' to use Loewald's language, authority 'away' from the parents. We identify the parents as our caretakers and, by way of our 'parricide,' we acknowledge the want to take care of ourselves. We don't want to abandon that authority altogether; we want to take the parent's authority over. 'Authority,' of course, isn't something tangible to take—Loewald speaks of the psychical 'transmutation' of the part played by or place of authority in the infant's psyche. When we wrestle away that authority, we modify, we appropriate, we 'transmute' the parent's authority into something of our own: self-responsibility.

It's the inevitable want to wrangle authority out of the parent's hands and into the child's grip that, to Loewald, prompts the reaction-formation of the child's superego. When we, ourselves, shoulder the responsibility of our livelihoods, we transform parental authority into the structure of the superego: "the superego embodies the child's successful appropriation of parental authority which is transformed into the child's capacities for autonomy and responsibility."[88] Our 'urge for emancipation,' the revolt against parental authority, is the child's want to be responsible to themselves—it's the want of self-agency in the world, the want of one's sense of individuality: "responsibility to oneself within the context of authoritative norms consciously and unconsciously accepted or assimilated from

[87] Levy, "The Fate of the Oedipus Complex," 9.
[88] Ogden, "Reading Loewald," 659.

parental and societal sources is the essence of superego as internal agency."[89] Children don't want to own up to the parents anymore; they'd prefer to answer to themselves. The self-responsible superego, or the child's want to hold themselves accountable to their actions, is evidence that the child's murder of the parents managed to take place: 'I've rid myself of your rule over me; I'm my own ruler now.'

In the traditional theory of the Oedipus complex, the mother figure must be relinquished by the infant as a 'libidinal object''—or the choice object by way of which the infant covets gratification of the instincts—as a result of the father figure's threat of castration. Loewald, however, depicts the infant's figures of the Oedipal parents to be interchangeable to some extent and, therefore, the infant in the Oedipal configuration bears a sort of libidinal bond to—a strong affectionate warmth towards—both. An infant's act of 'parricide,' then, or the renunciation of parental authorship, undoubtedly involves the severing of existent intimate, emotional ties to both parents: "not only parental authority is destroyed by wrestling authority from the parents and taking it over, but the parents, if the process were thoroughly carried out, are being destroyed as libidinal objects as well."[90] While parricide requires the joint abandonment of both—or however many—parents in the infant's psyche as libidinal objects, Loewald identifies what is uniquely at stake in the infant's relinquishing the libidinal bond to the mother. Loewald might identify the actuality of a joint parental authority, but to the extent that the mother figure's part is primordial, or played first, Loewald acknowledges that there's more at stake—more to be gained—in the infant's libidinal abandonment of the sacred mother: only 'she' is emblematic of the 'incestuous object relationship.' Loewald writes that "incestuous object relations are evil…in that they interfere with or destroy that sacred family bond…and not simply in the sense of

[89] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 760-761.
[90] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 756.

rivalrous exclusion of or triumph over the third party.[91]" By 'destroy,' Loewald speaks to the way that the want of the mother—as object—perverts the distinction between a "unity anterior to individuation" and a differentiated libidinal object.[92] Ogden writes to explain: "in incest, differentiated, object-related sexual desire is directed toward the very same person (and the very same body) with whom an undifferentiated bond (which we hold sacred) existed and continues to exist."[93] Said otherwise, incestuous ties to the mother warp the distinction of unity and difference. When we 'want' the mother, we're not 'in the wrong' because "it represents a challenge to the father's authority and claim to the mother, as the Freudian Oedipal configuration contends, but because "it destroys the demarcation between a fused form of mother-object relatedness (primary identification) and a differentiated object relatedness with the same person."[94] Incestuous desire needn't sublimated because we're fearful of the father figure, but because, if the fantasized act becomes reality, the infant's ability to distinguish unity from distinction becomes perverted, and so does the capacity to later cathect or take a normal, non-incestuous love object. Said otherwise, the infant's cognizance of unity versus independence must be preserved in the psyche if we're to lead a normal life as we engage with others. If children manage to carry out the act of 'parricide,' however, and break the libidinal bonds to the parents, children also manage to preserve the innocence of that bond of unity, the "innocence of primary narcissistic unity."[95] The libidinal 'evil' of incest is resolved when 'parricide' takes place. Loewald's Oedipal configuration demonstrates that we 'murder' a particular sort of relation to the mother in order that a more *sacred* bond is able to remain intact.

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[91] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 756.
[92] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 754.
[93] Ogden, "Reading Loewald," 661.
[94] Ogden, "Reading Loewald," 662.
[95] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 764.

In the child's quest for individuality, they wish to be responsible only to themselves, but they're inevitably and contemporaneously guilty about their doing so. In the quest for self-responsibility and agency, anything and everything related to the child's dependence on the parent's authorship must be deserted: "we destroy [the parents] in regard to some of their qualities hitherto most vital to us." Because of the purity of the bond, parricide is felt by the child to be "a crime against the sanctity of such a bond."[96] Given that it's felt by the child to be a crime, the "killing off the parents as libidinal objects and usurping their power necessarily arouses guilt" and, according to Loewald, that guilt is dealt with by way of the quest for atonement that's contemporaneously felt.[97] At the same time that the child, in the reaction-formation of the super-ego, entirely splits themselves from that bond to the adoring, jointed parents, the child begins to atone or make up for that separation. Loewald locates the child's lifelong act of atonement in the superego itself: "self-responsibility at the same time is the restitutive atonement for that crime."[98] Ogden writes to explain Loewald:

> As I understand it, the organization of the superego represents an atonement for parricide in that, at the same moment that the child murders the parents (psychically), he bestows upon them a form of immortality. That is, by incorporating the child's experiences of his parents (albeit a 'transmuted' version of them) into the very structure of who he is as an individual, the child secures the parents a place, a seat of influence, not only in the way the child conducts his life, but also in the way the children conduct their lives, and on and on. (Ogden 2008, 659)

It's as if the child says to the parents 'I know I've killed you, so I'll carry you with me. You'll live on, but only as I do.' Of course, to the extent that we're individual agents in the world, we're entirely indebted in the possibility of that agency or responsibility to the parents. In other words, without their authority available for usurpation, we'd have nothing to become.

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[96] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 754.
[97] Levy, "The Fate of the Oedipus Complex," 9.
[98] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 761.

We atone for our murder of the parents by immortalizing them in exactly who it is that we become—individual people who move through the world by themselves. It's in this sense that the committing of 'parricide' by the infant is, for Loewald, ultimately a 'loving act': "underneath or mingled with destructive aggression, there is also a more or less violent, passionate appropriation of what is experienced as loveable and admirable in parents."[99] Likely the only of its kind, Ogden writes of psychological parricide as a 'loving murder.'[100] It is our wish to kill the parents that enables us, at the same time, to carry them forward as something new: as ourselves, as novel people in the world. We become something of our own in light of who the parents are and what they do for us—as individuals, their nourishment, their care, their 'authorship' is our creation. Distinct from Freud's conception of the ego-ideal as the super-ego's constituent, whereby the offspring's imitation of the internalized parent is sought out but always unattainable, Loewald establishes that the infant that's able to break away may not only live up to the expectations of, but surpass in quality the goodness and virtue of those parental entities that raised them. By way of the Oedipus complex, we're gifted with the ability to become the improved versions of our parents.

Loving in the face of murder isn't the child's act alone, as the 'loving' aspect of Loewald's 'parricide' theory is twofold: the parent's authority can't be wrestled away in the infant's quest for individuality if the parents won't let the crime of 'parricide' occur. Parents must *let* their children 'kill' them. Loewald writes that "parents resist as well as promote such destruction no less ambivalently than children carry it out. What will be left if things go well is tenderness, mutual trust, and respect—the signs of equality."[101] If the child's

[99] Ogden, "Reading Loewald," 656.
[100] Ogden, "Reading Loewald," 655.
[101] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex," 757.

developmental urge is to be responsible to themselves, the responsibility of the parent is to let that urge play out. As “parricide…is a necessary path to the child’s growing up, his coming to life as an adult who has attained authority in his own right,” the ‘loving’ parent is the one with the infant’s greatest advantage in mind.[102] Parents ought to love their children not only enough to take care of and protect them, but also enough to let their children let them go. To truly love anyone besides yourself is a selfless act; parents ought to love their children enough to let those children become their ‘grown’ equals. To love your progeny, I think, is to want them to be the better version of yourself.

[102] Ogden, “Reading Loewald,” 658-659.

Chapter Three: A Tale of Two Functions

How to say something new on a well-worn subject?
—Donald Winnicott, *Babies and their Mothers*

i carry your heart with me (i carry it in
my heart) i am never without it (anywhere
i go you go, my dear; and whatever is done
by only me is your doing, my darling)
—e.e. cummings

As a tradition, psychoanalysis is quite adept at observing the dark side of humanity. However aptly, psychoanalytic theory often characterizes humanity's maneuvers through the inevitability of other and self-destruction, painful lack, and other traumatic varieties of devastation. Nonetheless, I take psychoanalytic theory to already bear just as great a potential to also demonstrate the beauty of humanity's ways. Prompted by my belief that to be devastated at the discovery of the world and threatened into the recognition of one's singularity couldn't be the only worthy story of humanity's development, I indicated at the outset of my project that my intention was to fortify a more joyous, loving story of the baby-infant-child's journey into the world: that the parents, as characters, may alternatively prompt the infant's wanting to actively obtain, rather than begrudgingly acquiesce to, a life of sociality. It is what I take to be the joint ability of their work to uphold a favorable story of selfhood that prompts me to bring Kristeva and Loewald together.

In the work of Loewald and Kristeva, I identify the robust, continual pre-Oedipal to Oedipal story of development whereby the roles played by 'mother' and 'father' figures aren't necessarily antithetical in operation but, rather, might work together to prompt the infant's *wanting* to become a part of the world. I articulate a tripartite set of observations that I take to substantiate the optimistic story of the becoming self-to-be: one, that Kristeva's

theory of the *chora* paves the way for Loewald's 'parental' function, and that the functions are truly dependent to the point where there's closest to a 'continuum' of the responsibility to hold and to socialize; two, that the paternal threat of castration isn't the *sine qua non* of the Oedipus complex, but that the discovery of triangularity and sociality may purely be by way of the infant's wanting to do so; and three, that Loewald's theory of 'atonement' and reconfiguration of the incest taboo together pave the way for the infant to carry forward, as a vestige in the psyche, the work of Kristeva's semiotic *chora*.

i.

In the first section of this chapter, I contend that Kristeva's theory of the semiotic *chora* paves the way for Loewald's notion of a joint or purely 'parental' function. In my introductory remarks, I mentioned the perceptibility, in psychoanalytic theory, of that train of thought that takes the necessary 'maternal' and 'paternal' characters to be antithetical in the developmental work that they intend. If someone was to vaguely imagine what it is that distinguishes 'maternity' from 'paternity,' it might not be long before the typical binary begins to emerge: 'mother as body, father as world; mother as protection, father as instruction, mother keeps you alive, father shows you how to live.' Relatedly, given that we take the paternal function's ascription of authority to permit a child to prosper or, at least, persist as a member of society, the 'maternal' function is taken to be of secondary significance to the 'paternal' in the cultivation of civilization. Mothers reportedly only *prepare* their child to encounter the consequential function of the father; their motherly work lacks the cultural import to do otherwise. Not only that, but to the extent that the onset of the 'paternal' function is, by convention, thought to shift the infant's psychical identification from the pre-Oedipal mother figure onto the Oedipal father figure, it's as if the paternal, rather than the maternal character, is *victorious* in the infant's psyche. Maternity constitutes the past;

paternity constitutes the future. What I'd like to make obvious is the extent to which both the work of the 'maternal' and a 'paternal' function depend on and relate to the other's work in such a way that, in actuality, there's able to be what's closest to a holding-to-socializing 'continuum' of purely *parental* responsibility.

Kristeva's theory of the *chora*, that earliest psychical space inhabited by the infant and formed by the mother figure's care work, first demonstrates the extent to which the infant can't, in reality, be taught the ways of the world solely through father figure's socialization. The maternal function, while distinct in the capacity to hold, already bears a 'social' capacity. It is the mother figure's routine nourishment that cultivates and regulates a rhythmic environment—the *chora*—for the infant's psyche. By way of the *chora's* rhythm, the infant is taught to pattern and, subsequently, regulate the energy of the instincts. If the infant wasn't bound, at birth, to the absolute necessity of being held, it couldn't encounter the rhythm of orientation toward the mother figure**.** It's humanity's time in the plenitude of the infantile *chora* that necessarily prepares that population for reality's obstruction to satisfaction, where gratification is no longer instantaneous, if not obsolete. The grown individual's regulation of the drives is the result of the mother figure's nurturance. While the work of the Freudian Oedipal father might be to demand that the child *must* regulate their quest for gratification—the 'why,' it's the work of maternal function to first grant for the infant the very *ability* to do so—the 'how.' Not only is it the responsibility of the maternal function's enactor to 'hold,' but the nurturance of 'holding' is, itself, the necessary first introduction of the infant to the ways of society. It is because the infant discovers first from the maternal a bit about how to be a part of the world that the function to 'hold,' at once, always bears the capacity to 'civilize,' and to the extent that the mother figure regulates, 'she' herself—a character—is already a preliminary social act, the work of which is to be *built upon* by the paternal, rather than *overturned*.

The ‘semiotic’ character of Kristeva’s *chora* is, perhaps, the most glaring confirmation of the mother’s initial introduction of sociality to the infant; a necessary and invaluable introduction only to be *further* compounded or built upon by the paternal function. Semiotic expression, that signifying capacity facilitated by the *chora*, is the infant’s introduction to the world of meaning. It's that ‘semiotic’ method of expression that depicts the infant’s babbling, murmuring, cooing and the like; the first intonations and gestures of the human being; articulations permeated by affect and embodiment, every articulation the expression of the patterned energy of the drives. Although not identical to the sort of language that we’re want to associate with ‘civilization’ and the ‘civilized’ human—that creature who puts their trust in the referential linguistic significance of words in order to clearly express themselves, or who utilizes the ‘symbolic’ method of signification—semiotic expression is invaluable to the human person’s ability to lead a meaningful life. ‘Invaluable’ not only because we wouldn’t be capable of ‘symbolic’ signification without it, as the acquisition of language is gradual (acquisition is a continuum), but also because, despite the direct or explicit character of true ‘meaning,’ it’s the vitality; the embodied and affective quality; the *felt* nature of ‘semiotic’ expression that makes any ‘literal’ meaning worth our comprehension. Signification, Kristeva contends, is necessarily a two-way or two-step process; without the semiotic current running always running through symbolic language, not much spoken would be worthy of listening to. It's the mother figure’s facilitating the infant’s capacity for ‘semiotic’ signification that invaluably instructs the infant on how to pleasantly be among others in ‘civil’ society. Given the integral role of semiotic expression for signification, the infant could never otherwise ‘make it’ in the social-relational world; the paternal role alone can’t provide this preparation for sociality.

Another theory of Kristeva’s, ‘abjection’ locates a ‘maternal’ form of authority in the regulatory capacity of the semiotic *chora*. ‘A particular kind of motility,’ *abjection* describes

the infant's expulsion of the physical substances that relate it to the maternal body's nourishment (milk, vomit, excrement), but the infant's 'abjecting' mechanism is regulated by the maternal *chora* itself—it is regulated by the same rhythm that patterns the expression of the drives.[103] Kristeva contends that it is by way of the infant's abjection, the infant's regulated move to reject a felt relatedness to the mother's body, that the infant recognizes a preliminary alterity about the mother. By way of the infant's orientation towards the mother's body, the infant is able to know what is 'not I' before it knows what 'I' is. It's by virtue of the mother's regulation of the infant's abjection that the mother figure already moves the infant from the familiarity of plenitude toward the metaphorical arms of reality—she motivates, in the infant, a shift toward the world; again, she 'civilizes.' The father figure needn't 'rip' the infant from the mother's metaphorical arms in order to introduce reality to that infant; by way of the regulation of abjection, and abjection's introduction of alterity, the mother figure already begins to prepare the infant for a discovery that's bound to take place—the discovery that *she* doesn't belong to it.[104]

Distinct from the Freudian theory of the mother's 'becoming an object,' whereby the mother's—the bottle or breast's—intermittent disappearance frustrates the infant into the discovery of the mother figure's alterity, Kristeva's theory of abjection demonstrates the 'maternal' responsibility to establish, in the infant, the ability to actively discover the

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[103] To the extent that excrement is a constituent expulsion of the infant's abjection, likewise is 'abjection,' a constituent mechanism of the *chora*, significant to the reconfiguration of the infant's relationship to satisfaction. See "'Anal' and 'Sexual'" by Lou Andreas-Salomé (1916) for more on the relation of anality to the prohibition of satisfaction.

[104] As a theory central to Kristeva's perceptions of motherhood and subjectivity, I find it necessary to address 'matricide,' that potential elephant in the text. I choose not to touch on the Kristevan concept of 'matricide' as it figures in Kristeva's work—in the 1987 (French edition) text of *Black Sun*, in particular—because of my sense of the concept's misogynistic overtone. As is evident, I prefer the Loewaldian conception of a feasibly-neutral 'parricide' instead. I don't consider it to be within the capacity of this thesis to both explicate and argue against Kristeva's violent 'murder' or separation from the 'maternal' alone.

mother's alterity, rather than be passively frustrated into that discovery.[105] If one were to think back to the Freudian threat of castration, catalyzed by the Oedipus complex that's contemporaneous with Freud's 'phallic' stage of psychosexual development, the infant must already take the mother to be a libidinal or cathect-able *object* in the world if it is to 'desire' her. Kristeva's abjection, then, is the path to the infant's discovery of the mother as 'object'; the Oedipal father's role is not to introduce the infant to the mother's object or person-hood, but only to introduce 'himself' as a person or object for the infant's discovery and contemporaneous consideration. Hence, it's the case that the Oedipal father figure's cooperation with the initial work of the maternal function is necessary in order to prompt, for the infant's psyche, the threat of castration. Ought to be evident, then, is the parental continuum: the mother figure prompts the infant to discover her as an 'object' in the world so that, in time, the father figure might be able to do the same.

'Abjection' may also be acknowledged as a preliminary iteration of 'parricide,' Loewald's theory of a child's urge for emancipation from 'parental' authority as the crux of the Oedipus complex. Given that Kristeva characterizes the infant's abjecting movements as the infant's first urge to fend off what isn't 'I' from what is, it's in abjection that, by way of the mother's regulation, the infant is taught the primordial urge for separation and, perhaps, the want of individuality. In abjection, the infant 'wrestles' itself away from the figure of the mother in the repeated repudiation of bodily substances; it was by way of the *chora's* regulation that the infant first underwent the 'urge for emancipation' from whatever was felt to be 'not I.' Loewald's 'parricide,' then, might be the child's secondary, stronger urge for emancipation—secondary because the 'maternal' prompted the longing first; stronger, in some measure, because the urge is one that's already been felt.

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[105] Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," 222.

It's perhaps the case that the strongest evidence of a maternal-paternal 'continuum,' rather than antagonism, can be observed in Loewald's conceptualization of a purely 'parental' function in the reconfiguration of the Oedipus complex. Loewald draws together the role of the mother and father—considers a distinction of the 'paternal' from 'maternal' characters to be irrelevant or peripheral—but certainly not by accident. Loewald writes that, in part, it is the 'bringing forth' and 'nourishing' a child that constitutes a parent's authority. As it's undeniably the function of the *maternal* to 'nourish' and 'bring forth,' then the maternal, for Loewald, is tantamount to the paternal as a bearer of 'authority,' or that capacity to civilize. As a matter of fact, it's as if the 'paternal' presence, for Loewald, would be the subsidiary addition of authority to that of the existent 'maternal' source. Said otherwise, the father figure's function would be just to *join* the mother figure in the administration of 'parental' authority, and it would be the work of both figures to jointly prompt the Oedipal urge for emancipation felt by the infant. In view of Kristeva's theory, then, the triangularity of the Oedipal situation would more accurately be the shift from 'maternal-infant-reality' to 'parental-infant-reality.'

ii.

In this second section of the chapter, I argue for the infant's discovery of sociality purely by way of the optimistic want to do so, prompted by the parents, rather than as the consequence of the Oedipal father's threat. Humanity's dawn of awareness, always, is the infant's realization that the world is truly 'other.' Before the onset of Oedipal triangularity, however, even as the mother figure begins to frustrate the infant's quest for gratification, the infant remains in that domain of 'maternal' plenitude. It's certainly the case that the infant begins to discover the alterity of the world by way of the mother figure's weaning—the mother is always the first 'other.' However, as a *point* in the infant's development, the

discovery of the mother's alterity isn't sufficient to prompt the infant's shift into the 'real' world: wouldn't we prefer to stay in the plenitude and, although frustrated, the satisfaction of the mother-infant dyad? It's essential, then, that the infant discover a 'world of other' lying *beyond* the mother. When the infant uncovers that the world is 'other' beyond the mother, how does it react to the discovery of general alterity in such a way that it's led to identify with it? What prompts the maturing infant to acknowledge themselves as the instance of a singular 'other' among many?

Comprehensive and long-investigated as a theory, the Oedipal threat of castration is the aforementioned question's most conspicuous reply. In the theory of the castration threat, the infant is made out to be a 'self' or subject solely through anxiety and fear. We're forced from the safety and relative comfort of that initial discovery of the mother as the only 'other.' With the Oedipal father's entry, the infant discovers that not only is the *mother* other, but *for* the mother, there's *other* others, and with that discovery comes devastation and fear: I'm devastated by the fact that my mother's adoration isn't my personal belonging, I'm fearful that I'll be maimed, mutilated as the consequence for my wanting my mother to myself. I abandon that love of mine for my mother, and I submit myself to the life of inhibition. I take the Oedipal father's word to be reality's law; I order myself, as 'he' ordered me, to adhere to what is 'acceptable,' 'proper,' and 'right.' I begin to move through the world by my lonesome and in fear of retribution. I come to acknowledge myself as 'other' but do so only because of my Oedipal obligation to find reality as the only alternative to a lifelong unity with my mother. I might someday find myself in pleasant relations with the 'real' world, I might enjoy the passage of my lifetime as a 'person' in society—but I'm always plagued by my Oedipal grief at losing my omnipotence; at the discovery that I can't have everything. Reality is the world of dread and demand; I long, my whole life, for my original intimacy with the mother.

Given that the infant inevitably moves from that first binary relation to the mother figure into the world that lies beyond, is it possible that, in doing so, the infant might be spared the sensations of fear and devastation? In what way might we make our way into the world because of our motivation to do so, rather than because of a threat? I think that Kristeva's theory of the 'imaginary father,' a first triangular configuration prompted for the infant's psyche by the mother, is a partial key to the optimism of that aforementioned alternative story. Described by Gavin Rae as 'intermediary', the logico-temporal origin of the imaginary father is beyond the onset of abjection but before the emergence of the Oedipal configuration.[106] In other words, when the fantasy of the imaginary father first arises, the infant is weaned by the mother to the point at which the 'mother' as other is known, but the mother's *others* aren't. Now, at this intermediary stage of Kristeva's, the infant's fantastical mind is ripe to not only hear but also interpret the mother figure's loving voice. Listening to the mother's 'I love you,' 'I'm so proud of you,' and the like, the infant doesn't take itself to be the addressee of the mother's compliments. Instead, the infant fantasizes that 'some vague other figure' is the recipient of the mother's kind words. In the infant's fantasy of some 'other figure,' it first imagines the presence of another in the world beyond the mother: someone or something that's not 'I,' and that's also the object of the mother's adoration. Not yet at the Oedipal stage where the desire ought to be relinquished, the infant would like to remain the object of the mother's love, as the mother is to it. In wanting to remain tantamount to it, the infant fantasizes about joining whatever 'it' is in the external world that the mother adores besides itself. In other words, the infant imagines that it shifts into that 'place beyond' and forever continues to be loved by the mother. Kristeva contends that, in the fantasy of the imaginary father—or imaginary other-besides-the-mother—and by way of

[106] Rae, "Maternal and Paternal Functions," 421.

wanting to retain the mother's love, the infant moves to identify with what is a *third* term. To the extent that the infant begins to shift from the mother-infant twosome into identification with the imagined 'third pole,' a term representative of reality, the infant is prompted *by* the mother—by the mother's love—to discover what lies *beyond* the mother. Critical to the triangularity of Kristeva's theory of the imaginary father is that instead of being threatened into identifying with reality, infants pursue the identification of their own accord.

It might be argued that, while it is the case that the infant pursues the identification itself, it only does so because, once again, the infant imagines a source of competition, or a threat to its 'claim' on the mother's love. I want to regard, however, the infant's fantasy with a bit more optimism: it's not that the infant thinks 'now I have to go out into the world if I want to be loved,' but rather 'I *get* to go out there, into that great big world, and *still* be loved by her.' Kristeva's theory of the imaginary father describes a way for children to internalize a kind of identification with society not because they have to, but because they want to. Relatedly, rather than my discovering society only because I'm being forced, by way of the Oedipal father's threat, to abandon my love for my mother, Kristeva's theory depicts how I'm first motivated to discovery sociality for myself, before the father's entry altogether, just because of how much I love my mother.

Kristeva's theory depicts the viability of the infant's active shift into society before the Oedipal configuration, while Loewald's theory of 'parricide' can be employed, I think, to envision the next part—the properly 'Oedipal' part—of the infant's story. In a similar vein to Kristeva, Loewald's reformulation of the Oedipus complex is another alternative Oedipal triangulation. According to Loewald, the principal motivation for our movement through the Oedipal configuration is our 'urge for emancipation,' our desire for agency, or genuine 'selfhood'—to be one's own authority. In Loewald's theory of the Oedipus complex, the 'urge for emancipation' is not the infant's reaction to the felt authority or threat of the father

figure**,** but rather to what's recognized as the 'joint force' of a purely *parental* authority—authority that's felt as ought to be repudiated in order to become one's own person. Said otherwise, to the extent that they both say 'No' at some point, the infant encounters the 'mother' and 'father' figures as tantamount 'parental' entities. Loewald's Oedipal triangle isn't comprised by the points mother-infant-father, whereby the infant moves from the mother to identify with the father, but by *parent(s)*-infant-reality, whereby the child repudiates the control of the 'parental' totality in order to develop its own agency. While the infant's want of emancipation and 'liberty' is prompted by the felt sovereignty of the parental unit, I take it to be the case that, for Loewald, the sovereignty in question isn't threatening—to the extent that it doesn't directly prompt the fear of mutilation—instead, it prompts only the infant's wish and move to actively revolt. Loewald's Oedipal configuration necessarily bears the character of prohibition—the infant must still be told 'No'; but the result of the encountered 'No,' for Loewald's infant, isn't the fantasy of castration. Rather, the 'No' is encountered as the infant's urge to act or 'call' to action.

iii.

In the third and final section of this chapter, as the closing fruit, I present what I take to be a jointly and uniquely Loewaldian-Kristevan account of the child's maturity and reconfiguration of the incest taboo. Unquestionably, the proscription of the infant's incestuous desire is a developmental necessity. A total cultural taboo, likely that most invulnerable to criticism, the yearning for incest is a want that doesn't make it into the conscious of civilization. Incestuous desires have to be censored, relinquished into the unconscious, if we're to becoming 'beings' tolerated by the social-relational world. We abandon the want to be incestuous when and if we'd like to live at least a somewhat pleasant and contented life. Civilization takes incest to be taboo for whatever reason and,

therefore, to make it as people and parts of civilized society, we come to terms with the fact that the want isn't welcomed.[107] On account of the traditional Freudian story, the immorality of incest stems from the challenge that the urge poses to the father's (to reality's) authority and the father's claim to the mother. It's chiefly prohibited, for Freud, because it conveys opposition to the order of reality.

Loewald, however, presents what I take to be the most preferable replacement to Freud's account of why it is that incestuous desire is regarded as 'taboo.' As per Loewald, there's a superior reason for the infant's relinquishing that forbidden want of the mother other than 'because the mother already belongs to the father.' Loewald reckons the incest taboo to be the vehicle through which we're able to preserve the maturing child's capacity for or the integrity of the particular and critical distinction in the psyche of 'difference' from 'unity' or 'uniformity.' Incest presents a source of psychical perversion to the extent that we take, as the object of our desire, the very person that we took, at a point and in a way that we consider sacred, to constitute ourselves. To reiterate, and to quote Loewald once more, that which encounters perversion in the act of incest is "the 'sacred' innocence of primary narcissistic unity."[108] When accomplishment of the act is averted**,** the incest taboo triumphs at preserving the sanctity of original unity. According to Loewald, the impediment to incestuous action is 'parricide' itself, whereby the libidinal ties and, therefore, incestuous ties to the mother get severed in their entirety. As the child severs libidinal ties, they not only empower themselves to enjoy 'proper,' or non-incestuous object relations in the future, but they also preserve the "undifferentiated bond (which we hold sacred) [that] existed and

[107] I say 'whatever' in respect to the existent abundance of proposed explanations, evolutionary and otherwise, for the incest taboo, and not 'whatever' as in 'it's likely arbitrary.'
[108] Loewald, "Waning of the Oedipus Complex, 764.

continues to exist."[109] In what ways might that bond 'continue to exist'? In other words, how is it that the post-'parricidal' self-agent brings that sacred unity forth into the future?

In Loewald's theory of atonement as a constituent consequence of 'parricide,' or the infant's usurpation of authority owing to the 'urge for emancipation,' Loewald accounts for the tender way in which we might carry the Oedipal mother-father figures forth as permanent, eternal entities in the psyche. Appropriation of the parents' authority by the child manifests as the formation of the 'super-ego,' the alteration to the structure of the psyche representative of 'internal agency' or self-responsibility. In other words, we commandeer parental authority in order to create, out of it, something for ourselves that enables our independence and 'agency.' However, to the same degree that the super-ego is evidence of parricide, it is simultaneously the structure of atonement. Guiltily remorseful for the crime of 'parricide,' Loewald says, given our doting bond to the Oedipal parents, we atone for that murder in the very structure of the super-ego. In our usurpation of authority, we internalize, although in a transmuted fashion, the *parents* themselves. We 'atone' insofar as we restitute, in the psyche, the parents to their original place of authority. Given that it is their instruction—the content of their parenting—that we take over, in the implementation of our self-responsibility, we secure a lifelong 'seat of influence' for our Oedipal parents.

If it's truly the case that "oedipal object relationships are internalized in the process of super-ego formation" or, in other words, that we reverently grant the Oedipal parents a governing position of permanence in the psyche, and it's *also* the case that, by way of Loewald's parricide's severing the infant's incestuous tie to the mother figure, the sanctity of the original mother-infant uniformity that 'we carry forward' remains intact, we likely carry forward in the psyche, as a vestige, the work of the pre-Oedipal mother just the same. I

[109] Ogden, "Reading Loewald," 662.

want to imagine that there's not only a 'capacity internalized' of the strictly Oedipal variety, but to the extent that the capacities bestowed upon the 'self-to-be' by the semiotic *chora* are abundantly executed for the duration of a lifetime, that we moreover grant the 'properly' pre-Oedipal mother just as significant a seat of authority in the atoning psyche. We don't abandon—we couldn't possibly abandon—what we're first taught of sociality's significance by the mother figure when immersed in plenitude: the discovery of the regulation of satisfaction, the semiotic method of signification, the prompting of the preliminary discovery of alterity. What I take to truly be at stake in the incest taboo, in safeguarding the sanctity of original mother-infant intimacy, then, is the capacity to carry forward the integral work of the *chora* as another vestige of parental authority. In my second chapter, a clarification of Loewald's "Waning of the Oedipus Complex, I explained that, for Loewald, 'by way of the Oedipus complex, we're gifted with the ability to become the improved versions of our parents.' In truth, it's also—if not only—by way of the pre-Oedipal mother figure's devotion that the infant is granted the capacity to grow into something greater. We're individuals only to the extent that we're the assemblage of childrearing remnants, and only by way of those remnants are we able to transcend the greatness that raised us—if we're lucky enough to be raised by greatness—into something greater.

Conclusion

To raise a child, I think, is likely the hardest, and when done with unconditional love, the most beautiful responsibility in the world: there aren't many acts more selfless than that of devoting oneself to bringing another 'self' into the world. Besides a renewed capacity to cherish humanity's goodness, what comes from a cognizance of the fact that the function to hold and the function to socialize might work together in the end? In light of the chief objective of my project, to identify and defend, against a tradition, the happier—happiest—version of the infant's discovery of the world and want of a life of sociality, there's a particular potential implication that I'd like to briefly suggest for consideration. It's pertinent to wonder whether, or in what way, the explicitly 'paternal' function is a necessity to the infant's development at all. To the extent that, for both Loewald and Kristeva, the *maternal* is primary in both a responsibility to hold and prompting the infant's discovery of society, is there the category of a 'paternal,' a 'fatherly' function in its own right, or is 'paternal' socialization merely—to subvert convention—a 'socializing' subsidiary, a secondary continuation to the *more* important capacity of the mother's function to hold? Why does *reality* bear the character of *paternity* when we're so indebted, in the midst of our sociality, to *maternity*? Kristeva spoke in a 1984 interview with Rosalind Coward to say that we might just as rightly term the Oedipal figures 'x' and 'y,' rather than as 'mother' and 'father' figures.[110] I think that I'd prefer the letters 'a' and 'b.' It might just be the case that mothers are, in fact, the most important people in the world. How wild it is to think, then, of how little society tends to value them. It is the 'hand that rocks the cradle [that] rules the world,' after all.

[110] Julia Kristeva, "Julia Kristeva in Conversation with Rosalind Coward," Desire, ICA Documents (1984).

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