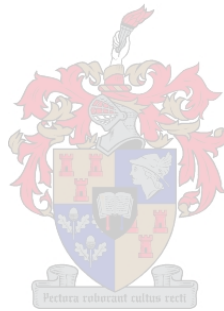


***The space in-between:
psychoanalysis and the imaginary realm of art***



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***Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in the subject of Visual Arts
at the University of Stellenbosch***

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:.....

Date.....

Abstract

This investigation uses an object relations psychoanalytic framework to explore ways that art embodies both social and personal meaning. The relationship between the non-verbal experience of art and the pre-verbal realm of infancy is explored and linked to bodily, perceptual and inner forms of non-discursive knowledge which are of value for the subject. The study investigates how this inner experience is related through art to language and representation as aspects of external experience.

The study argues that these two dimensions, the inner/bodily and the outer/linguistic, are held together in the art object which, as metaphor, is a conjoined structure that embodies the maternal and paternal realms in paradoxical and dynamic interplay. The art object, which elicits imaginary and phantasied responses from the viewer, serves both the self (through presentational symbols) and social needs (through representational symbols), thus allowing the creation and communication of new meanings.

Opsomming

Hierdie ondersoek gebruik 'n psigoanalitiese raamwerk om die wyses waardeur beide sosiale en persoonlike betekenis deur kuns gestalte kan kry, te verken. Die verhouding tussen die nie-verbale ervaring van kuns en die voor-verbale wêreld van die jong kind word verken en met liggaamlike, perseptuele en innerlike vorms van nie-diskursiewe kennis wat vir die subjek van waarde is, gekoppel. Die studie stel ondersoek in na hoe hierdie innerlike ervaring, deur kuns, verband hou met taal en uitbeelding as aspekte van uiterlike ervaring.

Die studie voer aan dat hierdie twee dimensies, die innerlike/licgaamlike en die uiterlike/taalkundige, in die kunsobjek bymekaargehou word, wat, as metafoer, 'n saamgeslote/verbonde struktuur is wat in paradoksale en dinamiese samespel gestalte gee aan die moederlike en die vaderlike wêreld. Die kunsobjek, wat die verbeelding en fantasie by die kyker ontlok, dien eie (deur gestalategewende simbole) sowel as sosiale behoeftes (met behulp van voorstellende simbole) en laat dus toe dat nuwe betekenis geskep en oorgedra word.

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I am grateful to Beauty Makhasi and Elisabeth Adams for their help in caring for my children. I would like to acknowledge the profound inspiration that James and Imogen have given me as I have struggled with being both a 'good enough mother' and with writing 'the dreaded masters'. Finally, this journey would not have been in any way possible without the unstintingly generous and unconditional support of my husband Brett.

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Preface

This thesis is one of two inter-related elements of the MA (Visual Studies) degree, and explores the theoretical context for practical research in painting which provides the other component. Thus the relationship between theory and practice is mutually imbricated, with each informing the unfolding of the other.

My research project originated from personally meaningful and varied philosophical questions. These included the desire to understand: the processes of psychic structuring and what is meant by the self or subject; how this sense of subjectivity may be visually represented internally and externally; the relationship of preverbal childhood experience to art; how the claiming of subjective experience through art or psychotherapy (involving language and symbolisation) creates opportunity for transformation; how artworks may be defined; how they create meaning for the artist and the viewer; and the implications of the above for the process of painting.

Variations on these questions fascinated me throughout my undergraduate degree in fine art in the 1980s, and have continued to do so in my subsequent work with functional craft objects, and through my current experiences of mothering and undergoing psychoanalysis. In my research project, this has resulted in an attempt to demarcate the conceptual and practical space that objects as varied as my children's drawings, my private jottings or working sketches and my finished paintings occupy. In seeking to find a way of thinking about these varied objects, I have grappled with creating my own conceptual working space. I have thus been concerned to personally and socially situate my creativity.

I began psychoanalysis in 1997 and have found it to be an intense and transformatory experience. This therapeutic encounter has focused on the way that

areas of personal difficulty are symbolised and communicated, and on how they mediate and determine my sense of subjectivity. Visuality has emerged as a key motif in the therapy and has reinforced my interest in the nature of symbolic expression which is outside verbal language. Thus visuality and the allied motifs of illusion and image/ining have become important to my research. Significant outcomes of the psychoanalysis have been the increase in my dream activity, the exciting resurgence of more metaphorical and creative ways of thinking, and a growing desire to produce images.

My decision to enroll for the Visual Studies master's programme was made in order to extend the personally significant material that emerged through analytic therapy into the field of art-making and to grapple with my creative inhibition. This involved exploring what I was doing when I made images, questioning why they mattered to me and considering how they might matter to anyone else. An important aspect of this enquiry was whether it was possible or necessary to distinguish between objects that were satisfying to the maker but that did not achieve the status of art, an investigation undertaken in spite of challenges to the concept of art which fields such as cultural and visual studies open up.¹ In formulating a response to these concerns, I therefore wished to investigate possible ways of delimiting the art object from a psychoanalytic perspective, particularly those which concerned its social function. The relationship between inner vision, outer reception and the art object became significant to me.

I began my practical research with an investigation into how subject matter may be generated and an allied search for appropriate form and content. My conflicts about appropriate subject matter and the social relevance of art first emerged when I was an art student during the state of emergency in South Africa in the 1980s, and resulted in my highly ambivalent response to my own work. I felt tyrannised by a sense of accountability to an object observed from life, yet could not allow myself to

¹ In his book *The Domain Of Images* (1999b:54), James Elkins refers to the way that definitions of art can exclude interesting and complex questions about other visual signifiers, and he uses the word 'picture' in place of art in order to 'attend to a variety of images without impaling them on a single insistent question'. I have taken the opposite approach. In isolating the fine art tradition of painting as a small area within the vast terrain of artefacts which contemporary visual studies currently investigates, I have sought to demarcate a space for making which, once established, can then be integrated with the wider paradigms which visual studies opens up.

animate or create images drawn from my imaginative world, fearing that they lacked authenticity and relevance. I now understand this as a lack of ease in moving between my inner world of phantasy and the outer world of the actual. This unease was also manifest in my relationship to the medium of paint itself; I would experience great frustration at my inability in allowing the paint to 'live'. Trying to bring an image out through greater articulation, evidenced in the need to have clearly bounded outlines around the forms of my paintings, would result in the same deadness.

In the master's programme, my practical research has involved actively engaging with these inhibitions through a process of 'thinking with' (Meltzer cited in Glover 1998:http://www.human-nature.com/free_associations/glover/index.html) the art work rather than about it, and by working with methods that favour chance and the imagination rather than processes which favour control and empirical observation.

The kind of '*play work*'² thus validated through the master's programme has resulted in a shift comparable to that which I have experienced in the therapeutic encounter and has allowed me to situate my experience as a painter. Through my varied experiences of psychotherapy, making images, and reading, both psychoanalytic and art theory, I have come to understand that meaning is never fully determined and that it is through the fluid interplay between the unconscious and conscious modes that 'aliveness' is manifest.³ I have come to recognise painting as a privileged signifier of unconscious experience, evident in the play of unintended relationships between formal elements, as well as through its nature as a material process which allows shifts in the way that meanings arise. A psychoanalytic account of art making, as that which involves differing modes of experience existing in tension through paradox, affords me the possibility of not foreclosing the seemingly contradictory or undetermined aspects which art making entails and has thus provided a form of containment for the anxieties which inhibit my creativity. Contemporary art theory has allowed me greater understanding of the nature of the visual language that I

² *Play work* is a term used by Christopher Bollas (1993:46) 'to honor the to-and-fro of work and play, of reflecting and experiencing' that psychoanalysis involves. I consider this process analogous to that of making paintings.

³ Chodorow (1999:261) suggests that the concept of psychic aliveness is a core dimension of the vision of subjectivity held by many psychoanalysts, in particular Donald Winnicott (1974).

employ, and to become more conscious of varying strategies for expressing internal experience and engaging viewer response.

In 1999 I gave birth to my son James, and in 2001, while involved with my Masters' Degree, my daughter Imogen was born. I have been profoundly moved and fascinated by the emergence of their two selves, and how this unfolding reflects aspects of the process of individuation and self representation that I am concerned with in psychotherapy. My experience of mothering has contributed a fundamental dimension to my sense of self. It has also given me a privileged experience of the preverbal nature of infancy and the beginnings of childhood symbolic expression in language acquisition, mark making and drawing.

My research is based on an investigation of relationships between psychoanalysis, art and childhood experience. Common to my interest in them all is a concern with ways that the self is articulated and interpreted, particularly those aspects which are not communicable in words or which remain just outside consciousness.⁴

⁴ E. Wright (1994:1) suggests that this is the dominant emphasis of psychoanalysis.

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Introduction

'I'm not going to change the world', [she] said resignedly, ' ... but at least I can say what I think in my thesis' (Coelho 2000:131).

'Why,' said the Dodo, 'the best way to explain it is to do it' (Carroll cited in Phillips 1988:38).

Aims of the research

My research project explores the interface between aesthetics and psychoanalysis as frameworks concerned with the meaning of art and of subjective experience, respectively.¹ To this end I aim to investigate how the art object acquires and conveys meaning in both the social and the personal realms.

The capacity of painting, as non-verbal and material form of communication, to manifest the somatic and to allow for areas of thought and feeling that are outside the discursive mode is an allied area that I explore. This will be correlated with my investigation into ways that painting represents subjectivity and enhances self experience for maker and viewer, as well as with how it makes possible the intersubjective creation of meaning.

Thus through both the making of paintings and the shaping of theoretical questions, I aim to provide a psychoanalytically based account of art as personally significant and socially relevant. In so doing, I hope to forge a

¹ I acknowledge conversation with Anya Subotzky (2005), for suggesting that psychoanalysis may be understood as a discipline broadly concerned with theories of the self or subject, while my understanding of this discipline as a theory of personal meaning is attributable to Nancy Chodorow *Power of Feelings* (1999:13). My concern with social and private meanings echoes that of Ellen Handler Spitz who, in *Art and psyche: a study in psychoanalysis and aesthetics* (1985:10), identifies this area as one of the core themes she explores.

conceptual and cultural context in which I may not only creatively exist, but also socially contribute.

Problem statement

I use a psychoanalytic framework and methodology, problematising this in order to explore ways that art mediates between the inner and the outer realms.² I highlight the relationship between the non-verbal experience of art and the pre-verbal realm of infancy and link these to bodily and perceptual kinds of non-discursive knowledge which are of value for subjective meaning and which are constitutive of inner experience.³ I investigate how art links this inner experience with language and representation as aspects of external experience.

I argue that these two dimensions – the bodily or inner and the linguistic or outer – come together in the structure of the art object which is akin to metaphor. I suggest, following the clinician Kenneth Wright in *Vision and separation between mother and baby* (1991:163,177), that metaphor may be understood in terms of both the preverbal and bodily, as derived from the maternal realm and the linguistic and cognitive, as derived from the paternal realm⁴, as manifestation of the interplay between two-person and three-person relational structures. I suggest that the art object, like metaphor, is a *conjoined structure* which serves the self (by embodying experience through presentational symbols), as well as social needs (by communicating experience through discursive symbols), thus holding the possibility of affirming both personal agency and interconnectedness in maker and viewer.

I postulate that it is the imagination, as well as unconscious phantasy, which is brought into play in the creation and apprehension of the art object as metaphor. Moreover, I suggest that both the imagination and the particular way that

² The notion of art as mediator between the psychic realms of inner and outer is a central concept in the interdisciplinary field of aesthetics and psychoanalysis (see Arieti 1976:233-4; Case & Dalley 1992:133; Milner 1950:151; Spitz 1985:10; Winnicott 1974:3;16).

³ The following psychoanalytically informed writers have explored the notion of art as strengthening of subjective experience: Milner 1950:116; Szollosy 1998:<http://psychematters.com/papers/szollosy>; Winnicott 1975:46,247; Wright, K. 1991:103.

⁴ In order to avoid essentialist notions of the maternal or paternal realms, it is necessary to understand that these modes of signification exist as moments in which, as Juliet Mitchell suggests, 'one is sometimes lodged' (Mitchell cited in Nixon 2005:8), rather than referring to some specific historic moment in the life of the individual to which we wish to return.

metaphor itself operates lead to the destabilisation of established relationships and thus allow for the creation of new meanings.⁵

In exploring the above concerns I trace two trajectories through the circuit of production to response. The first is the growing capacity for symbolisation in the infant and what this may mean for the adult artist or viewer in terms of a sense of aliveness⁶ and the construction of private and social meanings. My concern is thus with the shifting experiences of fusion or separation between subject and object which both infancy and art involve, the formation of symbols taking place in the space which exists between subject and object.⁷ Separation allows the creation and use of symbols, by permitting reconnection with the absent object through representation. It is this process of infantile joining and separating through symbols which the influential British pediatrician and clinician Donald Winnicott suggests, in his important study *Playing and Reality* (1974), provides the basis for the later adult realm of culture.⁸

The second trajectory traces the relationship between unconscious bodily experience and conscious thought in the circuit between artist and viewer. I argue that the artist's relationship to her medium involves both unconscious bodily phantasies,⁹ as well as the imaginative and conscious use of visual language, and that these modes, also reflective of fusion and separation between subject and object, are paralleled in the subsequent aesthetic experience of the viewer who moves from bodily absorption with the work to conscious cognitive interpretation.¹⁰ My concern is therefore with the shifting interplay between the

⁵ My understanding of the imagination and of metaphor is based on the work of Degenaar 1986:17; Fletcher and Benjamin 1990:30; McAfee 2004:13; Ricoeur 1976:51; Rycroft 1968:51-53; Segal 1991:101-109; Wright, K.1991:160. Rycroft (1968:51-52) importantly distinguishes between the imagination as a secondary process phenomenon and phantasy as a primary process phenomenon.

⁶ Chodorow (1999:261-262) reflects a core tenant of psychoanalytic thinking, namely that 'a key element in the process that creates and expresses aliveness is the capacity for symbolisation'.

⁷ See Wright, K (1991:89-109).

⁸ See Deri in *Symbolisation and Creativity* (1984:29-60) for her discussion of the bridging-over function of symbols.

⁹ See Ehrenzweig (1967); Klein (1940;1930); Maclagen (2001); Milner (1950; 1960); Nixon (2005); Segal (1991); Stokes (1963); Wollheim (1987).

¹⁰ The idea that aesthetic experience involves movement from fusion to separation is discussed by Handler Spitz (1985: 139).

bodily and the cognitive as manifestations of variations in self experience and psychic boundaries.

In tracing these trajectories, and in my broader framework, a central concern is problematising seeming dualities between inner and outer, fusion and separation, the unconscious and consciousness, the maternal and paternal and, as overarching construct, the bodily and linguistic. I will argue that the art object, through holding seeming paradox in dynamic tension without collapsing either element in favour of the other, offers a 'third way' (Ogden cited in Chodorow 1999:265) which enhances the capacity for the simultaneous construction of both non-linguistic and linguistic meaning. I suggest that this ability to create, interpret and experience the art object is allied to enhanced subjective and intersubjective ways of being. I thus investigate whether art can reanimate what has been described by Michael Szollosy (1998:<http://psychematters.com/papers/Szollosy>) as the depersonalisation and erasure of subjectivity in contemporary culture.

General orientation

Within the multiple fields of psychoanalysis I have chosen to work within the broad area of the predominantly British object relations school. This places emphasis on the dialogical, pre-verbal and somatic relationship between mother and child as the key determinant in the structuring of psychic experience (Sharf 2004:38). According to the object relations framework, it is out of this matrix that our affective experience and our capacity for internal and external perception arise (Keylor 2003:216). I have chosen this area as it is the framework that is used in my therapy, it is concerned with non-verbal bodily experience, and it emphasises relatedness to others as a fundamental component of subjectivity.

Although I locate myself within a predominantly British object relations framework, I draw on writers from outside this tradition where necessary. Following Handler Spitz in *Art and psyche* (1985:12), I consider psychoanalytic theory a mutually imbricated field with multiple areas of theoretical overlap. I use the work of the ego psychologist Ernst Kris, in *Psychoanalytic explorations in art* (1952:255,264), for his definition of the art object. I also use the work of post-structuralist psychoanalyst and theorist Julia Kristeva, in *Powers of horror: an essay on abjection* (1982) and *Desire in language: a semiotic approach to literature and art* (1980), for her ideas concerning interplay between the preverbal

experience of the subject and signification in language. I draw on the relational psychoanalytic theorist and clinician Jessica Benjamin, in her study *Recognition and destruction* (1990). Benjamin extends the work of the object relations school in order to conceptualise the basis for intersubjective relating, which I will link with an understanding of the artist's relationship to his medium as symbolic of 'otherness'.

My exploration of the interface between aesthetics and psychoanalysis and how the art object embodies meaning involves an allied exploration of the subject, which Teresa de Lauretis suggests, in her book *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (1984:160), is fundamental to any theory of culture. Johanna Drucker notes, in *Theorising modernism: visual art and the critical tradition* (1994:108,148), that post-modernist¹¹ or constructionist notions of the subject emphasise the ways that human beings are socially inscribed and are critical of the psychoanalytic stress on the interior realm of experience. She states:

Most importantly for the visual arts, the subject does not preexist or exist independently of a formation through symbolic systems. Thus visual art ... cannot be characterised as an *expression* of an existing self, but rather, [as] elements of the ongoing *formation* of the subject through representation. The concept of subjectivity is also premised on the idea that knowledge is mediated through representation which is always historically and culturally specific (Drucker 1994:109).

Her view is supported by the critic Victor Burgin who suggests, in *The End of Art Theory* (1986:41), that there is no 'essential self which precedes the social *construction* of the self through the agency of representations'. As representation is considered to involve making use of knowledge which is always contextual, contingencies around the art object and its capacity to produce meaning are foregrounded. For Drucker (1994:109-161) this means that the production of

¹¹ I draw here on the definition provided by theorist Kay Souter (2000: 349), who links with the term 'postmodernist' diverse contemporary writers who have been influenced by 'crucial social, psychoanalytic, and philosophical theories' (Souter 2000: 349) and who share a common approach which includes: the eradication of the hierarchy between high and low culture; an engagement with power relations; an assertion of the constructedness of text and reader; and an acknowledgement of the way that social structures, bodily practice and cultural forms inscribe the subject.

subjectivity through creativity should be understood as a cultural, rather than aesthetic, phenomenon. 'Constructionist' accounts which consider the subject's relationship to representation¹² thus problematise an object relations psychoanalytic view of art. Some theorists, notably the critic Elisabeth Wright, whose views are expressed in her book *Psychoanalytic criticism: theory in practise* (1984:91), consider the object relations framework to be ahistorical and acontextual.

Attempts to bridge the seeming divide between relational and constructionist accounts make necessary considerations of the theoretical compatibility between the predominantly English versus the predominantly French schools of psychoanalysis (Keylor 2003:211-242). In her study *Psychoanalytic Aesthetics: The British School* (1998), Nicola Glover, has conceptualised the difference between them by suggesting that the British favour a notion of psychoanalysis as a corporeal theory of meaning with an emphasis on the maternal, while the French, their approach exemplified through the work of the post-structuralist and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan,¹³ emphasise the psychic structuring of the social subject through language and an emphasis on the paternal.

In problematising the seeming divide between an object relations and constructionist approach, I wish, like many contemporary theorists, to formulate a framework beyond the binary split of the Cartesian model.¹⁴ Thus in my

¹² My understanding of the relationship between subjectivity and representation is based on a reading of the following theorists: Drucker 1994:109-161; Eagleton 1983:164-8; Hall 1997:15-61; Jacobus 1995:121-152,173-204; Klein 1930:724-739; Kristeva 1980:281-286, 1984:15; Nixon 1995:70-92; Segal 1991:31-48; Wright, K. 1991:130-138. I have struggled with what Mary Jacobus (1995:131) has described as 'the difficult crossover' between Klein's notion of projective identification and Kristeva's account of signification as the basis for the emergence of symbols and language (see also Wright, E. c1984:83). The complexity of the framework has suggested the need for a deep reading of post-structuralist theory and semiotics that is outside the scope of my project. I have, however, tried to achieve a working understanding of the way that post-structuralism problematises the infant's relationship to language due to my concern with the relationship between infancy and art, and my conception of art based in part on understanding it as akin to language as theorised by Bal and Bryson (1991); Bal (1996, 1998), Elkins (1999).

¹³ A dominant figure in contemporary cultural thinking, Lacan suggests that the subject is the result of determining structural systems rather than being an agent of effect at their epicenter. So, too, in language; the subject is 'spoken' through language, culture and law. For Lacan, the unconscious is full of repressions which the conscious mind cannot know, is heterogeneous, and continually threatens the stability of consciousness. The symbolic order – the term Lacan uses for the range of symbolic practices occurring within a social context – is responsible for the way that individual subjects are constituted. Of these symbolic practices, verbal language is dominant but visual representation is also significant (Atkinson 1999:108; Drucker 1994:111; Schneider Adams 1993:5).

¹⁴ I have drawn on both psychoanalysis (Chodorow 1989:162; Chodorow 1999:3) and aesthetics (Arnold and Iversen 2003:7-8) as frameworks which problematise this split.

exploration of the art object as embodiment of both the maternal and the paternal realms, I am concerned to locate the subject as *both* a corporeal and linguistic being¹⁵ who is located in what psychoanalysis terms the 'oedipal situation'.¹⁶

Kristeva is, like Lacan, part of a post-structuralist tradition concerned with the awareness of those forces which come to operate upon an individual – 'culture, history, context, relationships and language and how these mediate and determine a sense of identity' (McAfee 2004:2). Kristeva is concerned with the relationship between a Kleinian concept of infantile bodily experience and a post-structuralist view of representation or what she terms the semiotic and symbolic, respectively; in her book *Desire in language: a semiotic approach to literature and art* (1980), she describes the animating and disruptive power of the semiotic for the subject. I consider that Kristeva's emphasis on the oedipal situation may be linked with that of the object relations clinician Hannah Segal (1991:96), who suggests in her study *Dream, phantasy and art*, that art arises out of an acceptance of the relationship between the parental couple.

For Kristeva, the subject is a speaking being (a *parletre*) who is constituted through language and signifying processes, yet is also a 'strange fold' of interrelated concerns, 'a place where inner drives are discharged into language, where sexuality interplays with thought, where the body and culture meet' (McAfee 2004:1). Kristeva understands sexuality and thought to interact in the psyche interdependently, rather than as dualisms, and asserts that the bodily experience of the infant continues to affect the signifying processes of the adult (McAfee 2004:29,88). This site of interconnectedness between the realms of experience she considers the locus of language, an expression of the way that the speaking being discharges its psychic and physical energy through the symbolic means at its disposal (McAfee 2004:89).

¹⁵ My focus on integrating the views of object relations and constructionists theories is shared by other theorists: Rheta Keylor (2003: 239) writes in her paper 'Subjectivity, infantile Oedipus, and symbolisation in Melanie Klein and Jacques Lacan' that: 'Theoretical bridges are being built between contemporary Kleinians and Lacanians, with the promise of a marriage between a deeper and broader understanding of both dyadic and triadic relations'.

¹⁶ My use of the term 'oedipal situation' is based on the wish to distinguish it from the oedipal complex, which I understand as a Freudian concept of psychosexual development. I refer to the earlier phase in which acknowledgment of the father initiates a three person relationship, enlarging the previous dyadic relationship between infant and mother. It is understood that, due to the way the father as third person opens up this relational space, symbol formation, including that of language, occurs (See Wright, K. 1991:111-126,134; also Segal 1991:46-47,57-59,67-68,96).

Noelle McAfee, suggests in her work *Julia Kristeva* (2004:90), that Kristeva's notion of the self is of one 'always in process and heterogeneous', mediated and impacted upon by others and occurring in an 'open system' (2004:41). Writing in her paper 'Constitutive dialogues: working through the body' (2002:109-112,114,117-118), Louise Parsons suggests that Kristeva's framework of the subject thus offers a theoretical understanding of the contingent which allows for the possibility of dynamic transformation. Parsons considers that situations of fragmentation and dedifferentiation offer a potential site for the emergence of new meanings, which is located at the cusp between the unconscious or unthinkable and patriarchal authority. In Kristeva's framework this site is where the materiality of the existing symbolic system is brought into play and exposes its own repressions.

Parsons suggests that creative thought therefore lies in the way that established codes and boundaries are transgressed, rather than merely in the way that they reflect existing social realities. Art is understood as an active form of making which more than manifests either the internal or the external realms; it is an expression of what Kristeva terms the subject-in-process,¹⁷ who moves between an experience of wholeness and fragmentation, consciousness and unconsciousness, the body and representation, or, in Kristeva's terms, the semiotic and the symbolic. I will argue that this movement is reflected in the art object as a structure which holds corporeal and linguistic symbols in dynamic interplay, expressive of both personal and social experience. In her understanding of the subject as created in a realm between inner subjective experience and the outer world of representation, as well as in her allied notion of the infusion of body and mind, I identify with Kristeva's work. I wish to position myself as an artist in 'the space between' which she, like Winnicott before her, conceptually offers.

A similarly complex concept of the subject is offered by Chodorow in her book *The power of feelings* (1999:5). She opposes the view that subjectivity is determined only through discourse, asserting rather that 'subjectivity is equally shaped and constituted from inner life', thereby understanding that it is comprised of both intra and interpsychic experience. Central to her notion of this inner life of

¹⁷ John Lechte (1990:27) suggests that Kristeva's subject-process is equally comprised of semiotic and symbolic elements, and that 'the subject is also a rhythmic reverberation in the symbolic, a reverberation which is connotative of *both union with, and separation from, the mother* [*italics mine*].

the subject is the understanding that it is the processes of unconscious phantasy and projection which create subjective meaning (1999:245). Chodorow (1999: 240) asserts that psychoanalysis not only describes *how* the subject creates personal meaning, but goes beyond this by having 'a vision as well as an understanding of subjectivity'. Fundamental to this vision is the idea of the subject as embodied, creatively manifesting 'psychic aliveness' (1999:261) and capable of moving between psychic states of separateness and fusion (1999:260).

Souter (2000:341,346), writing in 'The products of the imagination: psychoanalytic theory and post-modern literary criticism', endorses the view of the subject as contingent, relational and shaped through social forces. Souter suggests that relational psychoanalysis, while acknowledging the cultural and linguistic environment, emphasises the 'felt experience' of selfhood and thus asserts a notion of the subject formed through both relationships and discourse (Souter 2000:345,350; see also Chodorow 1999:239-274).

Szollósy, writing in his paper 'Winnicott's potential spaces: using psychoanalytic theory to redress the crises of postmodern culture', considers a relational psychoanalytic approach to place emphasis on the ontology of self. He reflects that many object relations clinicians describe pathological splitting in their analysands – 'of sign from referent, ... of subject from object, and perhaps with the most tragic consequences, of psyche from soma'. This phenomenon of splitting is a manifestation of what Winnicott terms 'depersonalisation', describing the subject's inability to realise embodied experience which results in compliance and a lack of creativity in living (1998:<http://psychematters.com/papers/szollósy>).¹⁸ Chodorow (1999:262) suggests, following Winnicott (1974), that when phantasy is split off and does not change it is experienced by the subject in terms of concrete symbolisation. This is another term for what the Segal (1964:76) terms 'symbolic equation', where the 'symbol is equated with the original object, giving rise to concrete thinking'. It results in a kind of deadness which means that the subject is unable to create a rich inner world.

¹⁸ Winnicott (1975:244) suggests in his paper 'Mind and its relation to the psyche-soma' that the early integration of mind and body provides the basis for the individual to later experience the living body and that this feeling provides the core of the *imaginative self* (italics mine).

Winnicott (1974:118,121) suggests that creativity expressed through intersubjective cultural play is one of the means through which this sense of psychic erasure may be shifted and embodied subjective meaning reclaimed. Szollosy highlights the fact that for Winnicott (1974:118) this area of play is found 'on body experiences' and takes place in 'embodied space'; Szollosy (1998: <http://psychematters.com/papers/szollosy>) therefore highlights play as that which is 'inscribed on the body'. He considers that this emphasis on the corporeal nature of play is fundamental to conceptualising a notion of the subject as an integrated psyche-somatic being and as counter to the depersonalising tendencies of post-modernism.

This theoretical positioning of the subject as embodied, comprised of both inner and outer realms and formed through relationships, is where I situate myself and my research: I will explore the ways that this concept of subjectivity may be actualised through play and symbolisation. Chodorow (1999:271) suggests that symbolisation allows experience to be 'interpreted, absorbed, and actively created'. This, she asserts, fosters '...a sense of continuity for the subject by helping to link elements of psychic reality and the sense of self into an alive 'I'. Thus I explore the implications of symbolisation for my adult experience of the pre-verbal, the bodily, and the unconscious, the retrieval of which has resulted in my greater sense of subjective meaning and aliveness.¹⁹ I explore how 'creative making' (Parsons 2002:110), of meaning and of art, can speak to, symbolise or enhance this capacity for articulating subjective meaning and aliveness. I wish to understand this for both myself as producer and for others as viewers who participate with me in the joint construction of meaning that art invites.²⁰ It is to the scope and nature of this research that I now turn.

Scope and Nature

Handler Spitz (1985:ix) suggests that the interdisciplinary area of psychoanalysis and art involves three core areas of concern to aesthetics, namely: creativity, interpretation, and the nature of aesthetic experience. I situate my research in the areas she has outlined and use psychoanalytic theory in three ways: as a source

¹⁹ In tracing this trajectory I share with object relations theorists the assumption that early infancy is the basis of the psychic structure, and therefore a continuous and profound dimension of adult subjectivity. (See Chodorow 1999:4; Keylor 2003:216; Segal 1991:24; Sharf 2004:42).

²⁰ The notion of the viewer/reader as a co-constructor of meaning through interaction with the art object is proposed by reader response theory (Holub 1984: xii).

of reference which is a direct stimulus to creative making; as a form of analytic methodology which is used to interpret my own images; and as a theoretical framework through which to conceptually locate my concerns regarding aesthetic experience. In examining the contribution of psychoanalysis to aesthetics, I concur with Wright (1984:5) who notes that psychoanalysis provides a highly illuminating account of creativity. I consider that in addition, psychoanalysis provides key insights into the nature and function of the art object and into metaphor, evidenced during signification, interpretation and aesthetic experience.

As the central idea explored in my thesis I will postulate that the art object, as previously mentioned, is structurally akin to metaphor, both drawn from and embodying the maternal, yet also drawn from and expressing the paternal realm. In order to frame my assertion theoretically I turn now to the definition of the art object as symbol provided by the art historian and psychoanalyst Kris, and the definition of metaphor provided by Kenneth Wright (1991:177). I do this here in order to underscore Kris's definition, which I will use as a working construct throughout my thesis when developing the two core trajectories outlined above. How this may be linked to Wright's definition of metaphor will be taken up in detail in Chapter Two.

Kris (1952:254) considers the important feature of the art object to be its communicability as symbol. He understands this to result from the transformation and compression of the psychic experience of the artist and considers that it may result in multiple associations for the viewer. Critically, in order to be experienced as art, the symbol must trigger a shift from secondary or rational thinking to primary process or unconscious experience²¹ in the viewer. However, this is not sufficient – Kris (1952:256) suggests that aesthetic distance must also be present – the form and content must be so fused that the work is neither too close (neither propaganda nor magic) nor too distant (over intellectualised or incomprehensible). Thus the art object involves changes in the viewer of both

²¹ Primary process thinking is characteristic of the unconscious and the infantile – it refers to free flowing energy which uses the mechanisms of displacement and condensation to move between ideas (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973:339; Rycroft 1968:138). Where primary process thinking refers to the unconscious and the infantile, secondary process thinking refers to conscious thought which operates according to the laws of logic and grammar (Rycroft 1968:138). See also Kaya Silverman (1983:61-62,64) who states that the unconscious 'seeks to disintegrate logic and thwart cognition', with 'sensory and affective values' pre-empting logical thinking.

psychic distance and psychic level, and is full of ambiguity that can be interpreted in the context which the work itself creates (Kris 1952:243-250).

Wright's concept of metaphor is highly illuminating for my understanding of the relationship between the preverbal world of infancy and the non-verbal realm of art. This is due to his emphasis on metaphor as a conjoined structure which holds together two elements in dynamic interplay – the sensual and the linguistic (Wright 1991:163) – and his attribution of these elements to the maternal and paternal realms, respectively (1991:177). In my thesis I extend Wright's concept to postulate that the sensual/maternal and the linguistic/paternal realms may be correlated with not only the realms of inner and outer, fusion and separation²² but also with primary process thinking and aesthetic distance. I consider that this makes it possible to link Wright's definition of metaphor with Kris's definition of the art object and thus suggest that metaphor is structurally akin to the art object.

My thesis will explore a notion of the art object as that which allows free interplay between these seemingly divergent realms and as a manifestation of psychic creativity, relying on mute bodily articulation, as well as representation in order to communicate meaning. I consider that conceptualising the art object in this way allows for the fact that both private or bodily and social or linguistic meanings may *simultaneously* arise in the viewer.

Understanding that the art object is partly comprised of shared linguistic symbols raises questions concerning how it communicates through formal means and with how interpretation occurs. I concur with the semiotic theorists Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson who suggest, in 'Semiotics and art history' (1991:188-190), that a psychoanalytic analysis of the art object may be problematic. They favour a semiotic approach to art which emphasises the social construction of signs, and consider that where psychoanalytic interpretation is not integrated with semiotics, it is mostly based on analogy which results in arbitrary and allegorical readings leading away from the semiotic signifier towards an uncertain, external referent. As I am concerned to account for the specific ways that the art object communicates socially and linguistically, I will thus investigate supplementing a psychoanalytic approach with a semiotic one for formal analysis of the art object.

²² It is in the process of separation from the mother that the infant conceives of the outer world, while the experience of fusion with the mother can be correlated with the infant's inner world (Glover 2003: www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap2.html).

However, I will also consider the usefulness of phenomenological and reader response frameworks in my wish to account for the way that art manifests the subjective, the bodily and the dialogical aspects emphasised in the object relations approach.²³

In Chapter One I will draw on the ideas of the clinician Melanie Klein, founder of the object relations tradition, to establish psychoanalytic constructs concerning the infant's corporeal experience and inner world of phantasy, which are understood in part to be characterised by aggressive impulses.²⁴ The implications of Klein's ideas for my subsequent discussion of painting as embodied corporeal experience will then be explored by referencing theorists who are influenced by her work.

Jacobus explores the work of both Klein and Kristeva in her book *First things: the maternal imaginary in literature, art and psychoanalysis* (1995), through her investigation of their work from a semiotic perspective. I reflect Jacobus's understanding of children's drawings as those which signify the means of separating from, as well as symbolising, the maternal body. This delimiting of self through mark-making may be related to Kristeva's notion of 'abjection', described in *Powers of horror: an essay on abjection* (1982) as a process whereby the subject establishes bodily and psychic boundaries through disavowing what is repugnant to the self. I link her concept of abjection with painting as a process of self definition. I refer to the theorist Peter Fuller, author of *Art and Psychoanalysis* (1988) who is also concerned with the relationship between bodily boundaries and painting, which he investigates using an object relations perspective.

The notion of painting as that which evokes unconscious bodily phantasies in the viewer is taken up by Adrian Stokes in his works *Form in art* (1955) and *Painting and the inner world* (1978), as well as by Anton Ehrenzweig in *The hidden order of art: a study in the psychology of artistic imagination* (1967). My focus in this chapter will be on Stokes' central notion of materials as 'other', as well as his idea

²³ This is the strategy suggested by Handler Spitz (1985:xi).

²⁴ I do not explicitly work with Klein's ideas on art but rather with how her psychoanalytic constructs have been taken up by later theorists. Klein's significant works on art are 'Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and in the Creative Impulse' (1940) and 'The Importance of Symbol-Formation in the Development of the Ego'(1930) (Wright, E. c1984:82-84; Wright, K. 1991: 82-84; Glover 1998: <http://www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/ch2.html>), where she explores the genesis of symbol formation and the importance of phantasy as the basis for all engagement with reality.

of the artist's aggression towards her medium. In her article 'Bad enough mother' (1995) and her book *Fantastic reality: Louise Bourgeois and a story of modern art* (2005) Mignon Nixon also uses a Kleinian understanding of aggression in her consideration of the artist's relationship to her medium. In my exploration of art as unconscious somatic experience I will link Stokes' and Nixon's ideas with the work of Benjamin. In 'Recognition and destruction: an outline of intersubjectivity' (1990) Benjamin considers recognition of, and aggression towards, the mother to be the basis of intersubjective relating. I will postulate that the artist's experience of her medium, subsequently re-experienced by the viewer, involves both recognition of the medium's 'otherness' and phantasies of destruction towards it.

The capacity of paint to stand for those aspects of experience which are outside discursive thought is explored by Elkins in his book *What painting is: how to think about oil paint using the language of alchemy* (2000). I link his ideas to a realm of unconscious phantasy termed by Christopher Bollas (1987:4) the 'unthought known'. I also relate Elkins's notion of painting to that of David Maclagen (2001:37-45), as articulated in his paper 'Reframing aesthetic experience: iconographic and embodied responses to painting'. Maclagen investigates abstraction in order to consider how the materiality of paint affects the viewing body through unconscious phantasy. I consider Maclagen's notion of abstraction may be understood in terms of the sensual component of metaphor articulated by Kenneth Wright and outlined in my problem statement above. This link between painting and the body is also extensively referred to by Marion Milner in *The Suppressed madness of sane men* (1987) and *On not being able to paint* (1950). Milner focuses on the interplay in the making process between unconscious phantasy and the artist's experience of fusional bodily states, while in his book *Painting as an art* (1987) Richard Wollheim too explores what Glover terms 'painting as the body', developing a notion of painting as metaphor and as a 'corporeal theory of pictorial meaning' (1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/ch7.html). Chapter One thus proposes that painting as materiality and abstraction may symbolise primitive and unconscious bodily states and the means of differentiating from that which Jacobus (1995:iii) terms 'the maternal imaginary'.

The growing space between infant and mother and the implications for symbolisation and the art object are taken up in Chapter Two through my discussion of Winnicott's work (1974). I explore Winnicott's linked concepts of

'paradox', 'potential space' and 'the transitional object', and their implications for subjectivity, creativity and culture (see Winnicott 1974:xi-xiii,1-30,47). Following Kenneth Wright, who provides the theoretical basis for this chapter, I investigate the similarities and differences between the transitional and the art object as symbols and I examine their varied capacities to communicate private and social experience as problematised by Handler Spitz (1985:151-153; see also Wright, E. c1984:96-97). I explore the potential space and its link to play, creativity and the movement between unconscious states of fusion and separation through my further discussion of the ideas of Kristeva in *Desire in Language* (1980), Milner (1950) and Ehrenzweig (1967). Thus I investigate the notion of creativity as paradox, involving both fusional bodily response and the more separable state of cognition.

Chapter Three is concerned with ways that subjectivity may be represented through the art object, extending the scope of Chapter Two through a comparison of visual and verbal symbolic language. As previously stated, I will suggest that the art object is akin to metaphor, basing my understanding of metaphor on the work of Kenneth Wright (1991) whose work also provides the basis for this chapter. I will postulate that the art object is comprised of conjoined presentational/maternal and representational/discursive symbols which embody both the pre-oedipal and the oedipal situation, and that the art object as metaphor may therefore be understood as a means of representing preverbal and unconscious, as well as linguistic, experience. I will reflect that it is the interplay between these two areas of experience which allows them to hold potential for transgressive forms of social communication in which new meanings can be made.

The interplay between these modes may also be understood in terms of the artist's simultaneous experience of unconscious bodily perception and the conscious use of language, which I consider to occur as she shifts from maker to first viewer of the work, as described by Wollheim (1991:101). I will reference the work of Elkins, who, in his study *The domain of images* (1999), reflects the current divide within art history concerning the relationship between art and language, suggesting that 'pictures' are comprised of both purely visual and linguistic elements (Elkins 1999b:58). I consider that Elkins' work may be read to support the notion proposed in this thesis that the art object is a structure comprised of both sensual and discursive elements.

Chapter Four explores interpretation and aesthetic experience in terms of the viewer's response in order to consider how this may be related to the way that the art object acquires social meaning and strengthens the capacity for intersubjective relating. I will reflect, following Bryson, Michael Ann Holley and Keith Moxey in *Visual Theory Painting and Interpretation* (1991:1-2), that contemporary art theory is broadly divided between two key approaches. These emphasise art as either socially consensual representation, in the constructionist account which Stuart Hall (1997:6) suggests is allied to a semiotic approach, or as a phenomenological, psychological interaction between work and viewer. I will suggest that phenomenological accounts of art are concerned with describing the unconscious, corporeal or maternal component of the art object, which is the site of the fusional aspect of aesthetic experience and which may be linked to Kris's conceptualisation of the art object as that which triggers primary process thinking in the viewer.

I will postulate that constructionist and semiotic accounts of interpretation which rely on the reading of shared codes may be related to that aspect of the art object which is derived from the paternal realm and which communicates through linguistic, discursive symbols. I will suggest that this aspect may be correlated with a more separable cognitive response and related to Kris's notion of aesthetic distance. My discussion of aesthetic experience will thus reference Spitz's notion (1985:139) that it spans both fusional and separable states, and will lead to my suggestion that interpretation may usefully draw from both phenomenological and semiotic approaches, and be integrated with a relational psychoanalytic framework.

My discussion of a semiotic approach to interpretation will be based on the work of Bal and Bryson (1991), Bryson (1991) as previously referenced, and Bal's work in *Reading art?* (1996) and *Looking in: the art of viewing* (2001). My discussion of the phenomenological approach will be based on the work of the theorist Michael Podro, in his book *Depiction* (1998), his chapter 'On imaginary presence' (2000), and most importantly, his chapter entitled 'Kant and the aesthetic imagination', in Margaret Iversen and Dana Arnold's significant book *Art and thought* (2003), as well as on Wollheim's account of the viewer's apprehension of the art object as articulated in his chapter 'What the spectator sees' (1991) and 'In defence of seeing-in' (2003).

In the final chapter, my own work, which is concerned with the constitution and representation of self through painting, will be examined in the light of the concepts explored throughout the thesis. This will include a discussion of my material processes as a concern with establishing bodily and symbolic boundaries, as well as with establishing surfaces which invite both haptic and optic modes of looking in the viewer as articulated in the work of Laura Marks, in *The skin of the film: intercultural cinema, embodiment and the senses* (2000), and in the work of Colin Richards (2005). Through my desire to reflect bodily, unconscious and non-verbal experience in my work, I will reflect my focus on the material nature of paint as a matrix²⁵ out of which representational elements may be drawn, as signifier of the mute and the bodily and expressive of the 'unthought known'. I will also discuss the process of generating subject matter and the iconography I employ, reflecting that I seek to produce images which are 'true' to both my internal and external experience, and which are derived from both unconscious and conscious modes of working.

I will conclude by suggesting that art is capable of symbolically bridging the multiple paradoxes between the inner and outer realms. Holding this paradox allows creative interplay between seeming dualisms and fosters a sense of meaning in the self. This interplay is one of fluid movement between differing modes of self experience, symbol use, primary and secondary process thinking, bodily and discursive thought. Thus art fosters the oscillating movement between fusion and separation and the imaginative identification between self and other which Chodorow (1999:239-274) suggests characterises healthy self experience, as well as providing symbols of experience which simultaneously reflect both private and intersubjective meaning.

My use of the Harvard method throughout this thesis is based on the guidelines provided by Marlene Burger in *Reference techniques* (1992). References in the text to Kenneth Wright are distinguished from references to Elisabeth Wright by the use of his first name or by the use of their initials where appropriate.

²⁵ Wright K., (1991:263) elaborates on the etymology of *matrix* and *pattern*, noting that *matrix* is related to the Latin word for womb and closely related to the word mother, while *pattern* is derived from the Latin word for pater or father. 'Matrix is a term that refers directly to maternal origins, to original or basic material, which becomes formed into something more differentiated and patterned through contact with some paternal agency'. The notion of the maternal as the ground of being, similar to the materials of the artist which provide the ground out of which the figural elements emerge, is explored throughout my thesis.

Chapter One

Art and the body

Our present, current experiences have intensity and depth to the extent to which they are in communication (interplay) with the unconscious, infantile experiences representing the indestructible matrix of all subsequent experience (Loewald cited in Chodorow 1999:239).

Art of whatever kind bears witness to intact objects even when the subject-matter is disintegration. Whatever the form of transcript the original conservation or restoration is of the mother's body (Stokes cited in Wright c1984:85).

Orientation

This chapter will investigate psychoanalytic conceptions of the infant's bodily experience, the inner world of phantasy objects and how these ideas may inform an understanding of art. Klein (1924,1930), and later writers¹ who extend her focus on the primitive world of the infant, place emphasis on the infant's unconscious internal phantasy towards the mother's body as the basis for signification through symbols, and as an archaic dimension of adult subjectivity. I will explore their ideas in order to investigate the concept of 'painting as the body', where the sensuous and the

¹ These writers include Segal (1964,1991); Wollheim (1987,1991,2003); Stokes (1955,1978); Nixon (1995,2005).

unconscious are considered powerful impulses which are symbolised through the art object, thus informing the material processes of making and viewing.

In addition, I will also refer to Kristeva's notion of the semiotic chora and the creative subject-in-process² as one who exists through the interplay between the maternal or semiotic and paternal or symbolic realms and thus occupies the oedipal situation. I will do this to frame the argument developed throughout the thesis that the art object embodies both realms and the oedipal mode of being.

The body, unconscious phantasy and the realms of inner and outer

The relationship between the body and the mind was referred to by Sigmund Freud who said: 'The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego' (Freud cited in Wright, K. 1991:1). In the context of Freud's work this referred directly to the bodily drives of the infant. In the object relations sense, it refers to the way that the self, socially constituted through the first interactions with the mother, is structured by this bodily relationship (Wright, K. 1991:55,109).

Klein's focus on 'creatively, even poetically, imagining the phenomenology of the infantile mind' (Keylor 2003:217) led her to suggest that in the early months of life the infant has no basis for differentiation, as its mode is one of fusion and perceiving itself as one with the mother. She considers that the resulting unconscious phantasies towards the mother's body form the basis of the infant's psychic structure and that, where these derive from a notion of the mother as threatening and all powerful, they are destructive and sadistic in nature (Wright, E. c1984:81).

Unconscious phantasy is based on the processes of introjection (taking in of external qualities from objects and attributing them to the self) and projection (projecting parts of the self into an object).³ Klein's concept of unconscious phantasy is central to her

² See Oliver 2002: xviii.

³ The definition is drawn from Segal's work (1964:126) *Introduction to the work of Melanie Klein*. Klein theorises this 'part object' relating through her formulation of the paranoid-schizoid position as one where the infant fears retaliatory persecution for its attacks on the 'bad' breast or else idealises the all-satisfying 'good' breast. She considers that when the infant can perceive the mother as both good and bad it can take up the depressive position, where it mourns the aggressive impulses of its fantasised attack and wishes to make reparation (Wright 1984:81). This ability to move between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions is dependant on the use of symbols, with which phantasy is invested.

articulation of an inner and an outer psychic world (Case and Dalley 1992:78). It is the mechanism of unconscious phantasy which delimits these worlds, mediates between them, and infuses them with content. Klein described these realms in the following way: as 'a complex inner world, which is felt by the individual, in deep layers of the unconscious, to be concretely inside himself' (Klein cited in Glover 1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap2.html). In Klein's framework it is due to symbol use and the creative capacity that this bridging of inner and outer realms occurs. Her concepts of inner and outer realms, the mediating role of symbols reflective of the personal and the social, as well as the notion of bodily phantasy, are important constructs which will be drawn on throughout my thesis. Klein emphasises the link between the body and phantasy by recording that: 'unconscious phantasy has its roots in bodily processes – phantasy itself is inextricable from our corporeality: our physical sensations, bodily processes out of which the ego is formed' (Klein cited in Glover 1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap2.html).

The linking of the body and phantasy in Klein's thought is highlighted by Nixon, who writes in her paper 'Bad enough mother' (1995:73), that 'Klein places at the centre of her model not the unconscious, but [ph]antasy – [ph]antasy understood not as a work of the unconscious mind, but as a bodily operation'. This emphasis on the corporeal nature of unconscious phantasy is central to my notion of painting as in part a non-cognitive bodily process.

Integrating Klein's work with some contemporary thought

Klein's work has been explored by a number of contemporary psychoanalytic and cultural theorists⁴ who feel an affinity with her assertion of the maternal, the corporeal and the preverbal realms as core elements of psychic experience. They have extended Klein's emphasis on the pre-verbal world by variously linking her ideas with the work of Lacan, with semiotics, and with current ideas concerning

For Kleinians, the depressive position and the allied concept of reparation are fundamental to creativity, while the unconsciously experienced interactions between the infant and the mother are the basis for all implied relationships in art. The separation of infant from the mother is paralleled by the relationship between an artist and her medium, the viewer and the object – the creative act is understood as a repetition of the separation process (Wright 1984:82,84).

⁴ See Jacobus (1995:146); Kristeva (1987); Nixon (1995:2005).

embodiment. As my concern is to explore the link between the inner and personal with the outer and social, as manifest in the art object, I have located myself within this challenging area of research.

In her book *The maternal imaginary* (1995:129), Jacobus focuses on Klein's understanding of signs as unconscious phantasies manifest in children's play, language and drawings. Klein theorises these as attempts to delimit the maternal body, exploring what Lacan called 'the cartography ... of the mother's internal empire' (Lacan cited in Jacobus 1995:194). These signs both provide the means for the child to distinguish between inner and outer and symbolise the experience of this separation (Jacobus 1995:182). Thus the difference between the symbol and the thing symbolised initiates and characterises the play between signs (1995:133), with material image making a manifestation of this. Jacobus (1995:200) suggests that we can therefore think about drawings as 'the mother's formation, deformation, and reformation with the "magic gesture" of sign-making as ... the drawing, redrawing, and crossing of lines'.

Jacobus suggests, however, that a key problem with Klein's work for theorists who work with semiotic methods has been her lack of theoretical articulation regarding the relationship between the unconscious and language. She considers Klein's literal understanding of symbolic processes to have been enhanced and extended by the work of Kristeva (1995:130-131) who sought to integrate Klein's work with both her own linguistic perspective and the views of Lacan in order to understand 'pre-meaning and pre-sign' operations (Spector 1988:60).⁵

For Kristeva, Klein's inability to adequately account for the oedipal relationship as constitutive of language acquisition was the source of her theoretical 'lack' (Jacobus 1995:147-148). In addressing this weakness and thereby synthesising Klein and Lacan's frameworks, Kristeva suggests that, in what Lacan terms 'the imaginary' and she terms 'the semiotic' realm, 'the archaic inscription of the father' is the basis for

⁵ Keylor (2003:215) suggests that the differences between Klein and Lacan may be understood thus: Klein's formulation of the infant's world may be seen as that of unconscious phantasy and the intrapsychic, while Lacan's concept of the unconscious was a social one, which he understood to result from the impact on the infant's psyche of language. Klein emphasised the content of unconscious phantasy, while Lacan emphasised the structure of the unconscious itself.

the shift in the infant's perception that the mother is all powerful (Kristeva cited in Jacobus 1995:147). She considers that this perception of the 'Third Party' by the infant allows a space in which the movement from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position is achieved, accompanied by the shift from 'symbolic equivalences' to symbolic representation as linguistic signs (Jacobus 1995:148) in what she terms 'the symbolic' realm (Kristeva cited in McAfee 2004:16-17).

In her paper 'Subjectivity, infantile Oedipus, and symbolization in Melanie Klein and Jacques Lacan'(2003:236), Keylor reflects that for Lacan the infant is able to perceive difference due to its questioning of what lies beyond the mother's desire for it. In the subsequent identification with the 'archaic or imaginary father' it takes up language. When the context is one of duality, Lacan suggests that the symbolic is 'crushed'. 'If one confines oneself to an imaginary relation between objects, there remains only the dimension of distance to order it' (Lacan cited in Keylor 2003:236). It is the triangular space which allows not only distance but also difference.

Kristeva's formulation of the oedipal relationship is central to my project and forms the basis of my ability to link her thought with that of the British object relations tradition. She suggests that the oedipal realm of the imaginary father opens up a space which is the source of language, including both specifically verbal and also visual signification. I consider Kristeva's notion of this oedipal space (akin to the one that she opens up herself, theoretically) to be allied to that which Kenneth Wright establishes in his description of the infant's movement from a two person to a three-person relationship, which I will discuss further in Chapter Two.⁶

In drawing from Kristeva's application of Klein's ideas, I use her notion of the inter-relationship between the semiotic (site of the maternal) and the symbolic (site of the paternal)⁷ in the oedipal realm. The oedipal realm, thus conceived, links in dynamic

⁶ A telling illustration of the difference between the French and the British is Kenneth Wright's (1991:15-16,271-272) description of the shift in the infant from a maternal or two-person to a paternal or three-person structure which he considers in terms of the relationship between vision and consciousness, as well as through language acquisition. He describes this in terms of looking from within and looking from without, rather than, in Lacan's conception, as a process which leads to an illusion of a fictive unity, which implies fundamental alienation from the self.

⁷ Kelly Oliver notes in *The portable Kristeva* (2002:xiv) that Lacan's notion of the Symbolic should not be confused with Kristeva's – Lacan refers to the 'entire realm of signification', while Kristeva's symbolic is only an element of that realm.

interplay the object relations emphasis on the inner or bodily with the post-structuralist emphasis on the outer or linguistic realm. Segal, a colleague of Klein's, also explicitly links art with the oedipal realm in her book *Dream, phantasy and art* (1991:96). For Segal (1991:100), creative activity as a function of the depressive⁸ position involves the necessary recognition of a triangular situation in which one is not merged with the object but separate and excluded from it. My discussion will now return to Kristeva's notion of the semiotic in order to expand on this concept and thereafter link it with the work of other theorists who highlight the corporeal aspects of painting.

Kristeva's semiotic or imaginary realm

In her conceptualisation of the semiotic or imaginary realm and its relation to language, Kristeva extended Plato's notion of the '*chora*' (Kristeva cited in McAfee 2004:19). This is an archaic site which involves ideas of both the container and the producer, the universe prior to existence which Kristeva combined with the term the semiotic. She states: '[T]he semiotic chora is the space in which the meaning that is produced is semiotic: the echolalis, glossolalias, rhythms and intonations of an infant who does not yet know how to use language to refer to objects' (Kristeva cited in McAfee 2004:19). The point at which the child enters the oedipal relationship is a moment that Kristeva has termed the 'thetic break' (Kristeva cited in McAfee 2004:21). This is the point of origin of both the child's entry into language, and towards subjectivity. The child is now at the threshold of the symbolic, of using language in an orderly way – using grammar, syntax and language as a sign system. 'The thetic phase' Kristeva claims, 'marks a threshold between two heterogeneous realms: the semiotic and the symbolic' (Kristeva cited in McAfee 2004:22).

Yet for Kristeva, the semiotic or imaginary is never superseded, nor is it a lost area of experience. It is possible to find residual evidence of it in psychoanalysis, in the affective disruptions which characterise the semiotic mode of signification (McAfee 2004:24,37), and I will argue, in painting. Thus, following Kristeva, I consider that it is the free interplay between the maternal, imaginary or inner and the paternal,

⁸ The view of art as derived from the depressive position was taken up by Lacan. In his book *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1959-60), he acknowledged the Kleinian view of art as symbolic reparation for imaginary damage to the maternal body, but insisted that this view should be extended beyond the scope of the private and enter the realm of social recognition (Levine 1985:203).

symbolic or outer realms that painting, as manifestation of psychic creativity, is to be located (see Keylor 2003:234;239).

Allied to the above understanding of the subject, Kristeva articulates the concept of 'abjection' which she suggests is the basis for self-differentiation and subject formation – the abject is both the infant and 'the body of a maternal stand-in, the Kleinian not-yet object' (Jacobus 1995:144). She theorises that a means to self-differentiation lies in the ways that the borders of the infant are experienced through its relationship to objects: 'The abject is an impossible object, still part of the subject; an object the subject strives to expel but which is ineliminable. These ingested/expelled "objects" are neither part of the body nor separate from it' (Wright E 1984:197-8).⁹

Painting as the body¹⁰

Painting may be considered an equivalent process to that of abjection. During the making of paintings, ego boundaries may both dissolve and strengthen (see Spitz 1985:142; see also Kris 1952:253) in a manner analogous to expelling or eliminating from oneself that which is other. This creating and re-creating of boundaries is a process of defining the 'I', which McAfee suggests (2004:45) is one of the fundamental concerns of psychoanalysis. The boundaries of self are understood by Kristeva to be constantly under threat but also maintained through abjection (Kristeva referenced in McAfee 2004:45-47),¹¹ with their fluidity holding dynamic potential for change in self-constitution.

The interchange between artist and the fluid medium of paint may result in a sense of reciprocity between maker and material. Fuller, in *Art and Psychoanalysis* (1988:211-213), considers this to allow a re-working of primitive infantile experience, akin to giving back to oneself a highly important kind of responsiveness. He suggests

⁹ The notion of abjection involves a particular relation to the skin (Subotzky 2002), analogous to paint in the way it defines both surface and depth (Richards 2005).

¹⁰ The heading for this section is taken from Glover (www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap7.html)

¹¹ Kristeva considers that experiences of abjection, as states which exist on the periphery of consciousness, evoke in the adult the archaic memory of presymbolic infantile life (McAfee 2004:49). Such experiences are therefore a continual aspect of adult life, rather than regressive.

that the artist's interaction with the medium is akin to the facial reflection which the mother provides for her infant as the basis for self recognition and containment, a process described by Winnicott (1974:132) as 'mirroring'. Winnicott suggests that if the mother cannot manage this mirroring function adequately, then '... perception takes the place of apperception, perception takes the place of that which might have been the beginning of a significant exchange with the world, a two-way process in which self-enrichment alternates with the discovery of meaning in the world of seen things'. In providing this mirroring function and allowing the experience of apperception, painting may thus strengthen the sense that one has something of subjective worth which may be valued in the outside world (Milner 1950:156,159).

In her consideration of art as manifestation of infantile experience, Segal postulates that creativity includes acknowledgment of aggressive impulses and their possible effect. She reflects Stokes's description of the way that art making begins in *The invitation in art* (1965). She writes: 'The marble has to be cut and hammered; clay has to be pummeled Once the first line has been ... drawn something flawless has been infringed and it has to be made good' (1991:93). Segal's view of the nature of artists' activity is echoed by Wollheim, who describes the effects of art in the following way: 'The phantasies they stir are those which assure us that we have the power to restore, to remake, to rebuild, that which we have damaged...'(Wollheim 1987:347). In her paper 'Bad enough mother', Nixon (1995) also focuses on aggression as manifest in the material process of art. She identifies a number of devices that are used by artists who work from the realm of infantile phantasy and include techniques of scratching, cutting, fragmenting, pouring, as manifestations of the intensity of the drives, 'inside-out construction and of multiplication, splitting and conflation ... or alternatively of stitching, wrapping, and polishing that affect the repair of damage inflicted through aggression' (Nixon 1995:91).

Segal too focuses on the material process in her consideration of the artist's relationship to reality. She suggests that the artist is acutely aware of her inner world but at the same time is able to distinguish between this and outer reality.¹² The relationship to outer reality is expressed through the use of her medium – 'the artist

¹² Segal (1991:96) considers that it is this ability to distinguish inner from outer reality that differentiates creativity from delusion.

must have an outstanding reality perception of the potential and of the limitations of [her] medium, limitations which [s]he both uses and tries to overcome' (Segal 1991:95-96).

For Stokes, the relationship to materials was of great significance. One of the most important aspects of his work was the suggestion that the quality of the art object results from the extent to which the 'otherness' of the medium has been recognised by the artist (Wright 1984:90). In this process of engaging with materials, unity with the object alternates with a sense of its separateness (Wright, E.c1984:89,91; Maclagen 2001:42). In his book *What painting is: how to think about oil paint using the language of alchemy* (2000), Elkins observes that in terms of its unpredictability paint holds the potential for wonder within it, and he notes that 'painters watch their paints very closely to see what they will do'(2000:193). I consider that he confirms what Stokes has highlighted – the autonomous nature of paint as symbolic of a kind of otherness. I consider in their emphasis on aggression towards materials as representative of otherness, the above theorists reflect a significant convergence with current psychoanalytic ideas concerning intersubjective relating and it is to these ideas that I now turn.

Painting and intersubjectivity

Benjamin, writing in 'Recognition and destruction' (1990), theorises the basis of intersubjective relating. Following Winnicott, she suggests that this results in the shift from perceiving the other as object to recognising the other as like subject (Mitchell 1999:181-183; see also Chodorow 1991:266-267). Part of this process of recognition involves the infant's phantasies of destruction towards the mother. Winnicott asserts: 'The self is first made real through recognition by the mother, and the object is first made real though destruction by the infant' (Winnicott cited in Phillips 1988:131). For Winnicott it is aggression which 'creates the quality of externality'. When this destructiveness is not damaging to either parent or self, external reality is experienced as a distinct and sharp contrast to the inner world of fantasy. The consequence of this process is not only reparation or restoration of the good object, but a sense of the other.

In applying Benjamin's ideas to art making, I postulate that the artist's experience of her medium, subsequently re-experienced by the viewer, involves both recognition of the medium's otherness and phantasies of destruction towards it, manifest in the material embodiment of the art object and its resultant form and content. The experience of making and viewing art, involving both separation and connectedness, may thus lead to greater capacity for intersubjective relating *at an unconscious and somatic level*.

Paint and unconscious bodily phantasies

Considerations of the material nature of the painting process also involve questions concerning the way that this material communicates. Elkins (2000:2,96,98) describes the sensuous qualities of paint and draws attention to its particular properties and thus its unique capacity for conveying meaning:

[M]eaning does not depend on what the paintings are about: it is there at a lower level, in every inch of a canvas. Substances occupy the mind by invading it with thoughts of the artist's body at work(Elkins 2000:96).

Emotions cannot be excluded from our responses to paint: these thoughts all happen too far from words to be something we can control. Substances occupy the body and the mind, inextricably (Elkins 2000:98).

Elkins (2000:3-4) questions whether painting itself makes possible certain kind of thoughts that are specific to it, when he asks: 'What is thinking in painting, as opposed to thinking about painting?' I am particularly interested in what this enquiry raises about the relationship between thought, cognition, verbalisation and other possible kinds of knowledge which may be located in the body. Elkins (2000:5) suggests that 'painting is an unspoken and largely uncognised dialogue, where paint speaks silently in masses and colours and the artist responds in moods'. This notion of how painting communicates corresponds with Susan Langer's (1963:250) idea of art; she suggests that 'In art, maker and beholder share the comprehension of an unspoken idea'.

The capacity of paint to convey what Elkins (2000:5) terms 'liquid thought', I consider comparable to Bollas's (1987:32) notion of 'the unthought known' as that which is derived from infantile experience. Bollas's term refers to that which is 'known, but not yet thought' (Bollas cited in Chodorow 1999:252). Critically, this refers to what is not represented in language, the experience of which may be triggered through cultural ... "evocative objects" that elicit self-enriching projective identifications of meaning' (Bollas cited in Chodorow 1999:253). Again, Bollas's ideas may be correlated with what Elkins (2000:100) describes, when he refers to the ambiguity of sensation beyond words as that dimension which makes paintings so interesting. Elkins (2000:101) continues this insight by reflecting that conscious reception is not the dominant mode in responding to paint. I consider that what he attempts to locate is the notion of painting as corporeal phantasy and it is to this concept that I will now turn.

As stated previously, the distinguishing feature of British psychoanalytic aesthetics may be considered its grounding in a *corporeal* theory of aesthetic value and pictorial meaning (Glover 1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap7.html). Writing in his paper 'Reframing aesthetic experience: iconographic and embodied responses to painting' (2001:42), Maclagen considers that using Klein's insights has given us an understanding of 'flexible bodily idiom'. Maclagen suggests we can understand the formal aspects of painting in terms of such elements as coherence and incoherence, chaos and order, and how these refer to bodily states and processes.

In *Form in art*, first published in 1955, Stokes, a former analysand of Melanie Klein's, shares with Ehrenzweig, author of *The Hidden Order of Art* (1967), the understanding that our bodily experience is the basis for all relationships with aesthetically valued cultural objects (Wright 1994:85; see also Maclagen 2001:40) Both Ehrenzweig and Stokes offer a theory of art in which they are concerned to account for its sensuous features (Wright c1984:92; see also Maclagen 2001:42). What I consider interesting about Stokes' conceptualisation is the way that he uses the 'metaphoric resonance' of object relations concepts to inform his understanding of the production and response to art, considering that it is 'corporeal inner objects' which are the subject of abstract painting. His use of phrases such as 'internalised

body imagery, inscapes and bodily landscapes' (Maclagen 2001:43-44) are highly evocative and redolent of Klein's writing.

Maclagen proposes an extended reading of painting based on Stokes' work. He suggests that painting manifests a 'kineaesthetic repertoire' involving such subliminal bodily responses as, amongst other aspects, proprioception, muscular tension and blood pressure. His view corresponds strongly with my concerns in painting: how to represent what it means to occupy a body from the inside, and the ways this may be linked to the unconscious and the enhanced experience of subjectivity.

Fuller is also concerned with the relationship between the body and painting. He suggests that the articulation of space, which results in the evocation of oscillating bodily responses of separation and fusion, is a particular concern in modernist painting and an important feature of aesthetic experience (Fuller 1988:166;171). In examining certain contemporary paintings, he describes the experience as both a bodily sense of oneness with the work and a conflicting sense of separation from it. Fuller considers that this is evoked through a contradictory experience of the paint as skin and surface (which delineates a boundary between self and other) and a contrasting illusion of depth. The viewer's sense of separateness from the pictorial space is thus challenged, arousing feelings which disrupt his '*continuity of being*' (Winnicott cited in Fuller 1983:234).

Fuller's notions of the threatening nature of illusionary space and its implications for bodily response correspond with those of the influential British clinician, writer and painter Milner who refers, in her book *On not being able to paint* (1950:30-32), to the apprehension of pictorial space as reflective of our self definition, which involves the negotiation of self/other relationships. A further aspect of our earliest bodily experience which is manifest in painting is the premotor visual sense of the infant, which Kenneth Wright suggests, provides an experience of a vague field out of which objects such as the mother's face come into focus (1991:61-62) and which I consider may be evoked in certain figure ground relationships in painting.

Maclagen (2001:40) suggests that differing mental states reflect different kinds of representation; unconscious phantasy and allied primary process thinking do not rely

on logic, manifesting instead what Ehrenzweig has called 'articulate form', and Donald Kuspit has referred to as 'the structure of unintelligibility'. Maclagen (2001:38) suggests a phenomenological approach which sees the relation between body and mind as interlinked, citing Sewell who states: '[T]he body mates with forms no less than the mind does'. Maclagen suggests that accepting the notion of embodied response to paintings involves a greater engagement with materiality, rather than using an iconographic approach to respond to representational aspects (2001:37). He considers it an approach particularly suited to exploring the somatic element in abstract painting, which reflects contemporary concerns with the inner world of the artist and with the formal elements of art making (2001:41). He suggests that subjective embodied response involves the imagination or phantasy, which is often diffuse or inarticulate (2001:40).

I concur with Maclagen's reading and consider that abstraction, although also located in a specific tradition of contemporary western art which cues a cultural reading, lies very close to Segal's notion of symbolic equation. This implies that the experience of abstract painting may stand in a literal, as well as figurative, relationship to the process of separating out from a matrix of being. I consider that this locates abstraction at the site of Kristeva's abjection in a temporal sense,¹³ which Jacobus (1995:144) suggests precedes identifying with an object, 'where what I incorporate is what I become, where *having* amounts to *being*'.¹⁴

Milner has contributed important insights regarding the role of the painter's body in the process of painting. She uses the phrase the 'concentration of the body' to describes a state of proprioceptive body-self awareness, one which she suggests is best termed 'body presentation', as distinct from body representation or body image (1987:240). Milner refers to a state of self awareness that allows a kind of inner rhythm to emerge during creative processes. She considers that this arises due to the interplay between the ego function of attention and the wider scope of unconscious phantasy, which results in the discovery of repressed material and a

¹³ Spitz (1985:153) refers to the notion that an aesthetic sense may involve a developmental trajectory. I postulate, as discussed in this chapter, that abstract painting refers to extremely primitive experience.

¹⁴ In terms of Kenneth Wright's (1991:163) notion of metaphor involving both the corporeal and the linguistic in dynamic interplay, I consider that abstraction manifests far greater weighting towards the corporeal.

feeling of active contact with a 'primary body awareness' (Milner 1987:235). Accessing this 'ground of being' can be achieved by directing a wide focus within – which contrasts with the narrow kind of attention that the discursive nature of verbal thought involves (Milner 1987:237). She suggests that the resultant experience provides an intense emotional response to the outer world (Milner 1987:236).

Milner quotes Stokes, noting his interest in modern artists who were concerned to 'realise more directly, a highly important human capacity; that is the non-symbolic direct sensory awareness of their own state of being alive in a body' (Stokes cited in Milner 1987:236-7). For her this draws from the inner images of the other who cared for us in infancy and is, for me, synonymous with Bollas's (1987:33) notion of the mother's idiom as the infant's first aesthetic experience. He describes it thus: 'This first human aesthetic informs the development of personal character (which is the utterance of self through the manner of being rather than the representations of the mind) and will predispose all future aesthetic experiences that place the person in subjective rapport with an object' (Bollas 1987:33). Milner suggests that an ability to oscillate between a boundless sense of the body and one which embodies an integrated whole is an important aspect of psychic health. She quotes Khan who locates the site of this experience as 'a pre-stage of infancy ... an undifferentiated matrix of energetic potential structure' (Khan cited in Milner 1987:238).

Wollheim (1987:305) suggests that one of the ways that painting acquires meaning is through the pictorial metaphor of the body. He considers that unconscious phantasy is the psychic mechanism through which this metaphor is transmitted to the viewer, while the shared experience of a human body allows the viewer to experience this in a meaningful way. Thus he links metaphorising and affective experience through unconscious phantasy (Glover 1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap7.html). Wollheim identifies a number of elements which contribute to this experience of painting; I am particularly interested in his notion of the surface of paint as a kind of skin and the painting itself as a kind of container ... 'like a body' (Wollheim 1987: 315).

Wollheim (1987:348) discusses the work of the painter Willem de Kooning and suggests that he puts into his paintings, which act like containers, sensory elements beyond that of sight, particularly the element of activity.

The sensations that de Kooning cultivates are ... the most fundamental in our repertoire. They are those sensations which gave us our first access to the external world, and they also, as they repeat themselves, bind us for ever to the elementary forms of pleasure into which they initiated us De Kooning ... crams his pictures with infantile experiences of sucking, touching, biting, excreting, retaining, smearing, sniffing, swallowing, gurgling, stroking, wetting. These experiences ... extend across the sense modalities, sometimes fusing them, sometimes subdividing them: in almost all cases they combine sensations of sense with sensations of activity. And these pictures ... remind us that ... these experiences invariably posed a threat. Heavily charged with excitation, they threatened to overwhelm the fragile barriers of the mind that contained them and to swamp the immature, precarious self (Wollheim 1987:349).

Wollheim suggests that de Kooning conveys the archaic character of the sensations through the paint itself, while the subject is represented by the box-like shape of the frame, similar to the simplicity of the fragile rudimentary self. De Kooning sets up a play between the marks and the edge of the support, which regulates the paint. Wollheim (1987:350) elucidates: 'It is the turbulence of sensation that brings home to us the control that the self endeavors to exercise over it', continuing, 'It comes to metaphorise the body under the most archaic conception that exists of the body and its workings. It antedates anything we have so far had to consider'. Wollheim considers that de Kooning's paintings metaphorise the body as locus of sensation and emotion, and that de Kooning achieves a particular quality of intimacy in his paintings which is due to the exploitation of differing drying times in his materials. He reflects: 'This process, repeated layer upon layer, produces a kind of localized

spotting and cracking of great delicacy, which at its most intricate, simulates the palpitating, mottled breast of a very small bird' (Wollheim 1987:350).

Wollheim considers the metaphorising of the body by de Kooning the most significant feature of his work and considers that this eclipses readings in terms of the interplay between figuration and non-figuration. He characterises de Kooning's paintings as 'semi-figurative' – in which representational content lies between the non-figurative and the figurative (1987:352). This locus I consider to be the border of the potential space between intelligibility and unintelligibility, the site of oscillation between 'muteness' and 'voice' which Jacobus (1995:130) refers to as 'the cusp of ego and instinct'. It is this locus which I wish to explore as a painter.

Summary

In this chapter I have made reference to the psychoanalytic concepts of bodily phantasy and the use of symbols as those which mediate between the realms of inner and outer. I have drawn from the concept of symbol equation, where the symbol and the object symbolised are felt to be synonymous (Segal 1991:41,43). I have used this to argue for a concept of unconscious bodily phantasy as an important component of painting, where materials are understood to stand in a very close metaphoric relation to the mother's body and where the states of fusion and separation are represented. In addition, I have drawn analogies between painting and aspects of intersubjective relating. I therefore argue that it is materiality, the matrix and ground out of which we separate ourselves and our representations, that provides the corporeal and unconscious dimension to painting. I have suggested that abstract painting in particular may represent very primitive infantile experience and equivalences for the emergence of symbols, with which begins the infant's nascent shift from merger to differentiation.

The increased space between infant and mother and the consequent shift in symbolic activity that accompanies it will be taken up in Chapter Two. I will explore how the art object as symbol, as that which echoes and re-enacts the separation from the matrix or ground of the mother's body, may be linked to the infant's transitional object. I will postulate that the infant recreates this relationship, in first the

transitional object as protosymbol and then, as adult, in the art object as both protosymbol and fully developed representational symbol.

Chapter Two

Art and the space between

On the sea-shore of endless worlds children play
(Tagore cited in Winnicott 1974:112).

To be visible is to be present: to be absent is to be invisible The function of painting is to fill an absence with the simulacrum of a presence ... the main task of painting has been to contradict a law which governs the visible: to make what is not present 'seen' (Berger 1985: 212).

Orientation

In this chapter I extend Klein's notion, established in Chapter One, of the infant's intrapsychic, internal world as one of unconscious bodily phantasy where the self and the object world are experienced as synonymous. I do this through an exploration of the separation process between infant and mother. My chapter is divided into two distinct but related areas of investigation. The first is the suggested correspondence between the transitional object and the art object as symbols. The second is the nature of creativity as playful negotiation between opposing elements which occurs in potential space (Winnicott 1974:112-129). The emphasis in this chapter is thus on that which mediates between.

Winnicott's potential space of paradox and the transitional object

Winnicott (1974) considers that when born the infant's experience is one of fusion with the mother whom it perceives as part of itself. This sense of fusion derives from the initial almost total adaptation by the mother to her baby. It allows the infant the magical illusion that it has fulfilled its own needs and created its own universe. Winnicott suggests that this magical illusion or omnipotence is the source of all later creativity in the individual, allowing the sense that that which it creates is valued. It is the basis for the authentic 'true self', rather than the compliant 'false self' which results from meeting the demands of an outer impinging environment too early. (Winnicott 1974:120). Gradually, the infant learns to distinguish 'me from not me' through growing failures of the mother's provision in accommodating its needs, resulting in its disillusionment. It is this which allows a growing awareness of the mother as separate being and the opening of a space occurs between them; Winnicott (1974:126-129) terms this the potential space. He understands this to be the space out of which creativity and symbol formation arise and as such the locus of cultural experience. The potential space is considered analogous to the space that exists between the painter and his medium, the viewer and the artwork, and the analyst and analysand (Glover 1998:<http://www.human-nature.com/freeassociations/glover/index.html>).

Winnicott (1974:xi-xiii,1-30,140) further suggests that the potential space is filled with the transitional object of the infant. This object represents an intermediate zone between self and other in which internal fantasy and outer reality are both tested and shaped, and the loss of fusion and security with the mother compensated for. The reality of inner self and outer other are both accommodated and accepted through the transitional object. The transitional object and potential space thus involve a series of paradoxes (Winnicott 1974:104) between self and other, inner and outer, phantasy and reality, which must remain unresolved. This irresolution or paradox remains necessary throughout life – it is a never achieved accomplishment. The capacity to tolerate the ambiguity this irresolution evokes allows for enhanced and multiple ways of experiencing – it is understood as evidence of psychic health and creativity (Winnicott 1974:77); the strengthening of this capacity has been suggested as one of the primary outcomes of psychotherapy and aesthetic experience (Milner 1950).

The significance of the transitional object for my research is as precursor to the artwork in that it is both a symbolic internal construct and a real object which mediates between inner and outer (Spitz 1985:145), or as Winnicott states, both a '*subjective object and [an] object objectively perceived*' (Winnicott cited in Spitz 1985:146). This ability to mediate between subjective and objective experience, as proposed by Winnicott, is a useful point of departure in exploring its similarity to the art object and it is this which I shall investigate in the discussion to follow.

Following Case & Dalley¹ (1992:85-88,133), I consider that Winnicott's concept of the potential space is of use for aesthetics in its formulation of a 'third way' where paradox is held open (Winnicott 1974:16,62,104) and where the separations between self and other, inner phantasy and outer reality are 'commingled'. In this chapter, as in my theoretical understanding throughout the thesis, I make use of the conceptual tool which Winnicott thus provides by considering the potential space as a site of play for making – both meaning and art – involving dynamic interchange between internal representations which are idiosyncratic and outer representations which are fixed.²

The transitional object and its link to aesthetics

It is as symbol that the transitional object and the art object can mediate between inner and outer. As symbols, however, the transitional object and the art object function in differing ways. Exploring their features exposes the divergence between the 'protosymbol' of the transitional object and the art object, and this results in the problematisation of Winnicott's implied correspondence between the two. In my critique of Winnicott's implicit link between the transitional object and the art object to follow, I will note the distinction between 'presentational symbols' and 'discursive symbols' as formulated by Langer (Langer cited in Wright, K. 1991:250-251). She suggests that presentational symbols are characterised by the direct or iconic way in which they present the object that they stand for, while discursive symbols are characterised by the indirect or discursive way in which they connate this relationship

¹ See also Wright, E. c1984:92; Wright, K. 1991:70-74; Spitz 1985:24; Glover 1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap6.html

² See Chodorow 1999:4; Gombrich cited in Spitz 1985:151; Wright 1991:75.

(Langer cited in Wright, K. 1991:250-251). Following Kenneth Wright, I will correlate the protosymbol of the transitional object with presentational symbols, and the symbol proper with discursive symbols. Integrating the above understanding with the definition of the art object as proposed by Kris, I will postulate that it is the proto/presentational symbol which triggers primary process thinking in the viewer, and the developed discursive symbol which allows the additional dimension of aesthetic distance he proposes. I will conclude that the art object is a conjoined structure of both presentational and discursive symbols.³

In support of this hypothesis, I will describe those features of the transitional object which provide the basis for considering it a proto/presentational symbol (Wright, K.1991:72,91-93,238-263), accounting for part of the features of the art object (see Wright, K. 1991:251). I will then describe the features of the developed/discursive symbol. Based on this discussion, I will extend my argument through consideration of Winnicott's notion of the potential space as site of dynamic paradox, suggesting that the conjoined structure of the art object involves movement occurring within the proto/presentational symbol itself, as well as between the proto/presentational and the developed/discursive symbol. Thus I hope to establish that the art object simultaneously holds open and sustains the tension between the protosymbolic/presentational and the developed /discursive symbol, functioning in a manner which Wright (1991:25,256) suggests 'looks back' to the function of the transitional object and 'forward' to the function of linguistic objects.⁴

Winnicott's concept of the transitional object has been widely taken up by cultural theorists who necessarily emphasise different elements as useful for the study of aesthetics and subjectivity.⁵ The application of the transitional object to aesthetics has dominantly assumed art to be located in the maternal or dyadic realm between mother and infant⁶ I consider that these theorists have not sufficiently located art in

³ See Wright, K. (1991:25,256)

⁴ This argument is based on the way that Wright (1991:251) describes metaphor.

⁵ See Spitz (1985); Schneider Adams (1993); Grolnick and Barker (1978); Szollosy (1998).

⁶ I consider Glover (1998); Spitz (1991); Fuller (1980); Bollas (1978;1987) and Wright K. (1991) to locate art in the dyadic realm.

the interplay between the maternal and the triadic or paternal realm, which is where, following Kristeva and ah Segal, I consider art to be situated.

I suggest that locating art in this intermediate realm necessarily opens up the relationship between art and language; language being derived from the paternal realm of fully separated symbols (Wright, K. 1991:245-246). I consider that when art is situated in the dyadic realm it refers to creative experience which is meaningful to the individual who participates in it, but it does not necessarily provide an intersubjective or communicable experience as problematised by Spitz (1985:150). I postulate that when the relationship of the art object to language is considered, it exposes the differing status of the transitional object and the art object, manifest in their differing emphasis on subjective experience, on the integration of form and content, and on their communicative potential. This difference in status I shall explore further below.

Problematising the transitional object as art object

As detailed earlier, after the phase of near total adaptation by the mother which affords the infant magical illusion, the mother's task is to gradually disillusion her infant. This provides the basis on which an individual self is initiated (Macaskill 1982:305), a self who must, 'In giving up his sense of magical omnipotence ... learn to function in reality' (Winnicott cited in Spitz 1985:145). It is due to this loss that the 'protosymbol' of the transitional object is created (Spitz 1985:146). Kenneth Wright (1991:104) states: 'The transitional object is both a memorial to the lost unity with the object and an attempt to reinstate it *in effigia*'. It is through the infant's linking of the internal construct (the baby's image of the absent mother) with the objectively real material substance that an original object is created, one which is imbued with imaginative and subjective meaning (Wright, E. c1984:92). It is the first act of symbol formation, a *trans-forming* of reality, although it is not yet a symbol proper, but rather a 'protosymbol' (Wright, K. 1991:72).

For Winnicott (1974:14) the crucial issue concerning the transitional object was that it represented an in-between area of illusion that would not be challenged. He states: '... it is a matter of agreement between us and the baby that we will never ask the question: "Did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without?" The

important point is that no decision on this point is expected' (Winnicott 1974:14). This emphasis is a crucial one in differentiating the transitional object from that of the art object. The transitional object is realised largely through the mother's collusion with the infant's illusion, although it is one she does not share herself. In contrast, through the fusion of form and content, the viewer accepts and participates in the illusion⁷ that the artist creates.

The transitional object allows the infant the ability to occupy two realms simultaneously – the inner world of phantasy and the outer world of reality, but it is more closely an expression of the infant's internal communication (Wright, K. 1991:252). The art object is also derived from both internal experience and outer reality (Spitz 1985:21-22), yet the private idiom of the artist is reliant upon articulation within the realm of language to achieve social communicability.

This capacity for social communicability is the basis on which we value art (Spitz 1985:143; see also Segal 1991:109). I consider that Winnicott's lack of clarity around ways that the art object differs from the transitional object to be manifest in his idea that 'only if an artist make[s] claims on us for our acceptance of the objectivity of his subjective "phenomena" would we deem him mad' (Winnicott cited in Spitz 1985:143; see also Wright, K. 1991:73-74). This reveals Winnicott's bias towards the subjective world and it is this which is problematic about the application of the transitional object to the aesthetic realm. If we cannot accept the objectivity of the artist's subjective phenomena, then he has failed to transform them into a socially shared object – we do not need to ask of the artist 'did you make this or was it found?', because it is both subjectively made and found in social language. We accept the artist's subjective phenomena because the art work integrates the veracity and life of the artist's inner experience with the language through which it is articulated and it is this language which we subsequently use to 'read' it. The artist thus creates for the viewer an emblem of the fit between subjective internal experience and objective reality, which is what Winnicott (1974:14) termed illusion.

⁷ This should not be taken to imply that the art object is illusionistic or mimetic, rather that it creates a symbolic reality whose terms the viewer accepts.

I thus consider the art object to be evenly poised on the cusp of potential space between subjective reality and objective reality, while the transitional object is located more closely towards the subjective sphere, occupying the potential space of shared illusion which exists between the infant and the mother. The implications of these ideas will be explicated throughout this and the following chapters.

The transitional object as proto/presentational symbol.

Kenneth Wright (1991:237) describes how the infant abstracts patterns from out of the sensual matrix of experience, with the mother's face possibly providing him with his first and most important template. In the path of development, this and other patterns are 'loosened' from the originating object by the infant and become symbols or signifiers which represent the object *in absentia* (Wright 1991:239). The separated pattern can then be used independently in other contexts – the manifestations of this more sophisticated use are evident in play and later in metaphor (Wright, K. 1991: 248).

It is the application of the separated pattern in other contexts which is the important distinction between symbol use proper and the 'protosymbolic' use of the transitional object. The pattern of the protosymbol cannot be used in contexts outside that of the transitional object and is restricted to the recognition of those features which resemble the pattern-features of the mother. It is these pattern-features which are used by the infant to imbue the transitional object with meaning in its capacity as substitute during her absence (Wright, K. 1991:240,247-248). The process of separating the pattern from the object, of which the transitional object is the first experience, results in the subsequent development of more fully separated symbols and initiates a process which leads to the later capacity for abstract thought (Wright 1991:242).

Of critical importance to the argument I develop throughout this thesis is the following concept formulated by Kenneth Wright. He suggests that presentational symbol (or non-verbal symbolic form) is akin to the protosymbol of the transitional object, because of the shared and distinguishing manner in which both presentational symbol and the transitional object as protosymbol shift between fusion with the object itself and the separable experience of representing it (Wright, K. 1991:253). In

addition, and in contrast to the transitional object, the art object also refers to the more fully separated discursive symbol – it is this which is used by the subject in contexts beyond that of the transitional object, allowing the subject to explore and to know the world (Wright 1991:251).

The interplay between the object itself and the symbol of it which presentational symbols involve (Wright, K. 1991:253), represents a movement between symbolic equation and symbol proper (Wright, K. 1991:72). I consider that this may be seen in the relationship between the medium and the figurative elements in painting, with the artist's materials standing for the object itself, and representational elements standing for the symbolised components. These ideas bear obvious relation to Wollheim's notion of painting as metaphor, discussed in Chapter One; his formulation in turn may be linked to Podro's (1991:163) description of the perceptual process termed '*disegno*'. Podro considers this process to operate when viewing paintings – it involves separating out the 'what' of the imagery from the 'how' of depiction (Bryson et al 1991:7).

The protosymbol and self representation

In discussing the transitional object as a kind of protosymbol, Wright considers it from the point of view of being a self-created symbol, as opposed to one which is given by the other from outside. He considers that this makes it fit the subjective experience of the self very closely; comparable to the way that the symbiotic relationship with the mother was orientated to 'magically' fulfilling the baby's needs (Wright, K. 1991:103,275). He suggests that, in contrast, the outwardly derived symbols of culture do not have this aspect of adaptedness, but require the molding of the subject to external reality. The child creates the pattern of the object from within the dyadic relationship and this pattern is derived from his own experience (Wright, K. 1991:270). It is only when taking up language that the possibility exists of a dissonance between the preverbal pattern of the self and the world of the other. This outer symbol is imposed on the subject, rather than arising from a pattern out of which the symbol is formed (Wright, K. 1991:274).

One of the primary ways that we experience ourselves as, firstly, subjects, and then as objects is through the look of the other (Wright, K. 1991:24,27,35-36,112).

Experiencing ourselves as subjects is derived from moments of fusion with the mother (which may be characterised as looking from within), while our sense of ourselves as objects is derived from separation from her and the father (and may be characterised as looking from without). If there is dissonance between our sense of ourselves as subjects and the view of ourselves as objects, then depersonalisation may result (Wright, K. 1991:24,25,29), resulting in compliance and a split between psyche and soma.

Finding places where both senses of self experience may exist is important for psychic well being and creativity. Kenneth Wright states: 'There is a meeting of two subjectivities and neither of them collapses' (1991:34). It is suggested that the art object may offer one such place through which a subjective sense of self is offered to the world (Milner 1950:155). I consider, following Kenneth Wright, that the aspect of the art object which is comprised of the protosymbol (akin to the transitional object) refers to the subjective pattern of experience resulting from the relationship with the mother and that this provides a '*... centre of indwelling presence*' (Winnicott cited in Wright, K. 1991:272). Thus the art object makes available to the subject objectified forms derived from his inner life (Wright, K. 1991:251).

The description of the art object as described above will be extended in the following chapter through a discussion of the relationship of the art object to language and its particular correlation with the structure of metaphor. I will now continue to explore the nature of creativity as a manifestation of playful making in Winnicott's potential space of paradox, a process which involves movement between fusional and separated states.

Creative making as playful paradox

Where Klein worked with the role of play in symbolically bridging the gap between phantasy and reality (Segal 1991:101), Winnicott's emphasis shifted to the role of illusion in creating an intersubjective structure of play (Wright 1994:92). Art and play, both of which take place in potential space, are seen as jointly concerned with elaborating, expressing and symbolising inner unconscious phantasies and translating these into outer reality through a process of externalisation which requires one to actively 'do' through muscular discharge (Parsons 2002:109; see also Segal

1991:101). This notion of play is affirmed by Glover who states: 'Like play the intermediate character of the work of art ... links the world of subjective reality with that of objective reality - harmoniously fusing the edges of each without confusing them' (Glover 1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap6.html).

Both the symbols of the potential space and of the cultural realm are linked to the capacity for play (Spitz 1985:146) – art making as a form of play allows each of us the following: to experience relief from the burden of differentiating self and other (Winnicott 1974:15); to challenge parental or social authority (Kristeva in Wright, E. c1984:99); to *recreate* our sense of self (Parsons 2002:109-110); and, to explore the world (Wright, K. 1991: 248-9). Play, like art, is reflective of both merger with and separation from the mother (Wright, K. 1991:249, 287) and is linked to the establishment of boundaries.

Kristeva understood play to originate at the juncture of body and mind and to exist through 'unorganized pressures of desire' in the chora (Kristeva 1980:281-286). The sensation of tension and subsequent release from it creates a situation in which the infant comes to laugh, and play is manifest in this sensation of moving from fear to rest. The mother may allow the infant disillusionment but this is eased with laughter and the child is granted play in the creation of meaning. Wright (1984:99) suggests that this use by Kristeva of Winnicott's potential space is radical in that it suggests a site from which to challenge parental language. This reading of play suggests that the experience of playful making is an embodiment of the way that imaginative processes can destabilise and illuminate existing systems of signification through which the self is constructed (Parsons 2002:109).

I consider play and the experience of art both to be forms of uncognised thought – a form of imaginative making in which we grope uncertainly after the 'unthought known'. In this sense, both play and art may occupy a potential space between the body and the mind, manifest in the shifting movement between presentational visual symbols and representational discursive symbols.

The creative process and alternations in fusional and separable experience

Object relations theorists suggest that it is fusion with the mother which allows the infant the capacity for creative play (Wright, K. 1991:247,252) and that this is the result of 'the *illusion* that there is an external reality [which] corresponds to his own capacity to create' (Winnicott 1974:13). It is understood to result in a sense of personal agency (Wright, K. 1991:75), to foster a love of reality (Rycroft 1968:47), and to allow trust that one can find an existential home in which to dwell (Wright, K. 1991:252; Milner 1950:155), all of which result in a sense of life as meaningful for the subject (Winnicott 1974:76). The retrieval of these possibilities may be the primary impulse behind art making (Wright, K. 1991:261); my experience of the process of creative play has resulted in the important outcome of validating and strengthening my sense of subjective meaning.

Allied to the object relations concept of play as movement in the separation between subject and object is the notion of shifts in psychic and somatic boundaries. The experience of bodily fusion, derived from the infantile experience of merger with the mother, has been understood by clinicians and theorists as an important aspect of creative living (Spitz 1985:148; see also Chodorow 1999:242). It is suggested that this state of 'oceanic oneness' (Milner cited in Glover 1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap6.html) is a necessary site of enriching and renewing the self throughout life. Fusion as a dimension of creativity and aesthetic experience has been differently emphasised by art theorists, and variously understood to allow: 'regression in service of ego' (Kris 1952); dedifferentiation, 'primal sensing' and primary process thinking (Ehrenzweig 1967); and a 'two way journey' between inner response and outer stimuli (Milner 1978); as well as unconscious and bodily thought (Milner 1950,1978).

The capacity for experiencing both fusion and separateness is also understood as a necessary and ongoing manifestation of psychic creativity within the adult. Milner suggests that the recurring experience of 'oneness-twoness' gives the world a sense of meaning (Milner cited in Eigen 1983:6; see also Glover 1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap6.html).

[nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap6.html](http://www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap6.html)).⁸ It allows and enhances the capacity for flexible and adaptive living (Stern in Spitz 1985:155; see also Wright, K. 1991:334); the art object is understood to both strengthen and facilitate this alternating experience (Spitz 1985:140). Kenneth Wright (1991:54) uses the phrase 'founding and forming' to discuss basic mental processes which are akin to those of creative making and which occur throughout life. Founding is the way that the prima material or basic substance is laid down, while forming has to do with delineating forms out of this matrix.

In her classic work on creativity and aesthetic experience *On not being able to paint* (1950), Milner explores her concern with issues of fusion and separation and the related question of boundaries as central to creativity, themes which she took up in her painting. Milner (1950:35) understands her inhibition in making paintings as reflective of her struggle to align the boundaries between inner and outer reality. She concludes that there are two dominant modes of experiencing reality: one which is the common-sense world of outline and bounded objects, and the other a world of flux and unboundedness. Milner (1950:42) understands the unbounded as closer to the true nature of experience, which involves fusion between self and other.

The challenge, however, in experiencing such a state of fusion is in combining the relaxation of external ego boundaries without an accompanying loss of self, since during infancy fusion not only affords a sense of omnipotence but also total dependence and vulnerability with a chaotic perceptual field of overwhelming stimuli and sensations (Spitz 1985:149). Milner considers that the artist needed to allow the experience of fusion or oneness, essential to all creative work and symbol formation, through materials. She suggests that this represents not only a hypothetical return to a state of fusion with the mother, but also one pole of creative experience which involves the dynamic movement between fusion and separation, and she thus locates the site of creativity as '*a place before one has found a love to lose*' (Milner cited in Glover 1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap6.html).

⁸ Stokes (Glover1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap6.html) also referred to this sense of fusion with the art object in his book *The invitation in art* – yet stressed that it must be balanced with a sense of 'object otherness' for full aesthetic experience to occur.

Through her practical investigation Milner focused on the way that drawing and space involve touch and connectedness, not only the separation that perspective implies. She describes her experience in the following way:

It was as if one's mind could want to express the feelings that come from the sense of touch and muscular movement rather than from the sense of sight ... it was almost as if one might not want to be concerned ...with those facts of detachment and separation It seemed as if one might want some kind of relation to objects in which one was much more mixed up with them than that (1950:24).

She contrasts this need for fusion with her subject with the pictorial convention of outline, a counter to the potentially threatening nature of imaginative activity, and manifestation of a kind of 'emotional need to imprison objects rigidly within themselves' (1950:32).

The relationship between fusional states and creative making is also explored in the work of Bollas, who draws on the infant's experience of merger with the mother to explain adult aesthetic experience. In his book *The Shadow of the Object* he articulates a notion of the 'first aesthetic' (1987:32): that which is experienced by the baby and results from the way that it is cared for by her mother. The state of fusion is 'the most profound occasion when the nature of the self is formed and transformed by the environment', due to the way that the mother modifies the infant's experience. Kenneth Wright (1991:20-21) is even more explicit by suggesting that it is the mother's face which provides this first experience of creative transformation and he links this idea with Fuller's suggestion that it is this *sur*-face which painters seek to reanimate and transform.

In using Winnicott's theoretical framework, Milner (1950) works to clarify issues relating to the intentions of the painter and the nature of creativity in which both the demands of the inner world and the outer can be realised. She understands creativity as a basic condition of subjectivity. Michael Eigen, writing on her work in his paper 'Dual Union or undifferentiation? A critique of Marion Milner's view of the sense of

psychic creativeness', (1983:416) notes that for Milner: 'If a heightened sense of subject-object union is an illusion, then it is an essential one because it helps to give life meaning and is valued for its own sake' (Eigen 1983:416). For Milner, creativity involves fluidity in terms of the boundaries between the self and the world, and a temporary experience of fusion. It involves de-differentiation not only of subject/object but also between conscious and unconscious thinking. Milner considers that this active surrender of conscious control can feel to the rational ego like a kind of death. This concept of the death of the ego is highlighted by Milner in her examination of western art and her own work. She identified motifs of tortured or dying gods, which she understands as significant for the creative process. Her ideas are taken up by Ehrenzweig (1967:176) who regarded these images, which he terms 'poemagogic', as functionally important. He sees them as both inducing and reflecting the creative process – involving the 'death' and 'rebirth' of the ego. Both Milner and Ehrenzweig share a common understanding that a necessary component of creative experience is the 'poetic intuition' of the ego during which discursive, rational thought is suspended (Glover1998:www.human-nature.com/free-ssociations/glover/chap6.html)

In his writing about creative experience, Ehrenzweig (1967:19) stresses the importance of 'primal sensing'. He considers that primal sensing allows the ego to 'de-differentiate' or 'decompose' in order to get rid of existing categories which no longer fulfil the need for instinctual satisfaction. The de-differentiation process results in the artist's loss of connection with reality and resultant fragmentation, which is similar to the paranoid-schizoid phase suggested by Klein. This is followed by a manic-oceanic phase where the creative individual makes a 'receiving womb' to contain and integrate the fragmented material. It is the 're-experience of a primal sensing state which enables the artist to integrate the fragments within the flux of experience, on an "unconscious undifferentiated level"' (Ehrenzweig cited in Wright, E c1984:86-89). I consider that Ehrenzweig's sense of this integrative process may be linked to the work of Bollas, who suggests that an aesthetic object is a transforming object, one which appears to offer the subject a space where fragments of the self can be integrated by a 'processing form' (Bollas 1987:33).

Summary

In this chapter I have problematised the application of Winnicott's transitional object to aesthetics, suggesting that the transitional object as protosymbol, drawn from the maternal realm, accounts for one component of the art object. I have suggested that this component is distinguished by the way that it moves between symbolic equation and symbol proper, and that this is the basis on which it triggers primary process thinking and fusional corporeal experience in the viewer, as well as representing subjective experience for the artist/maker. I have noted that in addition the art object also comprises a fully separated or discursive symbol, which makes social communication possible and which accounts for the quality of aesthetic distance. I have suggested that the art object embodies the dynamic tension of paradox between these two components. I have also focused on the nature of creativity as play, which involves the irresolution of paradox, as well as alternations in fusional and separable bodily experience.

In the next chapter these ideas will be extended through a discussion of metaphor, which, following Kenneth Wright, I will suggest is a linguistic structure comprising both corporeal and discursive elements derived from the interplay of the maternal and the paternal realms. This will be linked to a consideration of the art object's relation to language and the difference between visual and verbal symbols.

Chapter Three

Art as dialogue between

In British psychoanalysis ... there was not so much a return to Freud, as there had been in France with the work of Lacan, as a return to Mother (Phillips 1988:10).

Orientation

Much contemporary critical theory is concerned with the seemingly problematic relationships between language and representation, word and image, the verbal and the visual, cognition and intuition, and with what these relationships may mean for visual art (Elkins 1999:84). As a theoretical framework, psychoanalysis in particular works with the limits of the verbal as a mode of symbolic representation and with how this impacts on internal and social communication and a sense of subjective meaning (Wright, K. 1991:261; Wright E., 1984:1). My investigation into the way that the art object mediates between the social and personal involves understanding the boundaries of these relationships and considering whether a mutual construction and communication of meaning is possible. Language, as the means whereby representations become shared and exchanged (Hall 1997:4), is thus the focus of this chapter.

Many contemporary cultural theorists (Hall 1997:18; see also Silverman 1983:24) understand language to include visual signs of shared social significance. My discussion of the art object and metaphor will be based on the work of Wright, whose influence on my thinking is evident throughout the thesis. As Wright fails, however, to link language with visual representation his conception of linguistic structure therefore remains exclusively verbal. I consider that this prevents him from making the link between his own description of the structure of metaphor and that of the art

object. Wright, therefore, understands the art object as a maternal symbol deriving from a dyadic relationship, while I consider that although drawn from the ground or matrix of the maternal, it is comprised of the interplay between both maternal and paternal symbols derived from both dyadic and triadic relationships and that it thus corresponds to his description of metaphor. It should be noted that the concept of metaphor used as my central argument reflects his thought (Wright, K. 1991:159-172,174-183), while the correlation of metaphor with the art object reflects mine.

The paternal realm

Not only the infant's relationship with the mother, but also his growing awareness of the other as father¹ affects the nature of symbolic activity. Following Wright (1991), I consider that the proto/presentational and developed/discursive symbols may be considered in terms of their originating psychic relationships, and I thus locate the proto/presentational as a dyadic, maternal symbol derived from the infant-mother relationship, while the developed/discursive symbol I understand as a triadic, paternal symbol. Locating these symbols in relation to the pre-oedipal or oedipal situation, respectively, means considering the differing possibilities that each symbol holds for communication. I will link Kris's suggestion concerning the capacity of the art object to trigger primary process thinking with the maternal aspect of the art object, while his notion that the art object simultaneously involves aesthetic distance I will consider in terms of the paternal dimension of the art object.

Wright (1991:262) suggests that the art object as metaphor involves interplay between a sensuous and a linguistic element, which subverts the ordinary use of language. He considers that the proto/presentational element of metaphor, which is close to maternally derived experience, is able to represent self experience very closely. The developed/discursive aspect, located in language as a paternally derived social code, is able to communicate social shared meanings with clarity. I will, therefore, suggest that the art object as conjoined structure of both proto/presentational and developed/discursive symbols is able to both represent the self and communicate socially. It does so in a manner which allows both personal

¹ In terms of the significance of the actual father in the oedipal situation, Oliver (1993:86) notes that for Kristeva, 'It is not necessary to call the terms ... "mother" and "father". She says that we could just as well call them "X" and "Y"'. The emphasis is on the father as reflective of otherness. (See also Wright, K. 1991:113).

agency and social interconnectedness, and it results in a form which has transgressive potential for the creation of new meanings.

Symbol formation and language

The ability to form symbols is a developmental achievement and one which takes place as the infant begins to separate from the mother. Symbols are the basis for communication both internally with the self and externally with the other. They are needed in order to relate to meanings, rather than to objects. While a sign is drawn from the same field as that which it represents, a symbol is drawn from a differing field – that of meaning or expression. It does not refer directly to the object represented, but rather to a concept of it (Wright, K. 1991:89-90). Thus it is the absence of something that is the basis on which a symbol can be formed – the imaginative recreation of that object is what the symbol achieves. The symbol is a new kind of object, which can be used to convey or hold the ‘re-presentation’ of the object within the mind, which is the space of abstract thought. In order for this to happen, the infant must be able to separate from the object, and move off from it mentally in such a way that it can be contemplated. It is the separation between infant and mother which initiates this process (Wright, K. 1991:93).

Wright (1991:105,134) considers that it is paternal prohibition of the infant's desire for merger with the mother which creates a space in the infant's mind in which first the visual image, then the concept, and finally the word of the object can be held. The internalisation of this prohibition results in the oedipal situation, which marks a shift from the dyadic or two-person relationship to the triadic or three-person one (Wright, K. 1991:120,130,263; see also Keylor 2003:214). It is the triadic relationship which leads to the creation of the space in which this abstract thought and signification may take place (Wright, K. 1991:134,111-126; see also Segal 1991:95). It results in the thorough separation between subject and object which is the basis for language acquisition – the infant becomes capable of detaching the signifier from the first sign (the mother) and reattaching it to other signs (Wright, K. 1991:259,263; see also Keylor 2003:227).

The child thereby enters the social world of language (Lacan cited in Keylor 2003:227; see also Wright, K. 1991:130) in which words not only bridge the gap

between the object and the physical separation from it, but also rely on this difference in order to convey shared meanings, reuniting the thing and the word in a manner analogous to that suggested by the Greek word *symbolon*² (Wright, K. 1991:134). Wright (1991:134) states his belief that '[language] exists only within the precarious gap for meanings that difference and separation of the object guarantee'.

When the relationship between the sign and the object is governed by agreed upon codes, it results in symbols being used as language. Language, which includes both visual and verbal signs, allows the representation of private internal thoughts to become shared in the external world through socially consensual meanings (Hall 1997:18). The relationship between verbal signs or words and what they refer to is arbitrary and taught by the culture into which the infant is born. Visual relationships are also taught (for example, a red traffic light may mean stop) but there is a closer or iconic relationship between many visual signs and what they signify. Thus verbal and visual signs provide differing ways of relating to reality (Iversen 1986:85).

Presentational pictorial symbols and representational linguistic symbols

For the developing infant, in contrast to the visual relationship which links a characterising pattern and a real object, and which arises through searching and recognition, the relationship between words and objects must be culturally learnt and acquired. The word has a differing status from that of visual objects – it may be understood as more abstract representation (Hall 1997:20; see also Wright, K. 1991:244). This marks an important difference between verbal and visual symbols.

Wright (1991:197) asserts in this regard:

As development proceeds, the verbal-symbolic comes to overlay and almost obscure the visual roots of consciousness, and we come to equate consciousness with verbal apprehension. Although such an equation has an approximate truth and may be pragmatically useful, it obscures all the earlier

² The word symbol is based on the Greek word *symbolon*, and refers to the two halves of a broken object, which were fitted together as a means of identifying the members of a religious group (Wright 1991:138).

developments that paved the way for verbal-symbolic apprehension and makes it difficult for us to relate to forms of consciousness other than the verbal.

The relationship between linguistic and pictorial symbols is complex, and has led to the problematisation of discursive language as the dominant model for understanding non-verbal symbolic forms; Elkins suggests in *The Domain of Images* (1999b:55) that the discourse surrounding this issue has provided some of the most interesting writing on art in the past century. The differing kinds of representations which non-verbal and verbal symbols allow is a matter taken up by Langer, who suggests in her book *Problems of Art* (1963:124-139) that visual art is a symbolic form of sensual and evocative presentation which translates the patterns and feelings of human experience. Its purpose is to *embody* those forms (Wright, K. 1991: 250). Langer's view is shared by Segal who suggests that 'form, be it musical, visual or verbal, can move us so deeply because it symbolically embodies an unconscious meaning. In other words, art embodies and symbolises and evokes in the recipient a certain kind of emotion of a pre-verbal kind' (Segal 1991:81).

Langer regarded visual or presentational symbols as superior to discursive symbols in certain respects: in the level of detail they convey, in their direct representation of sensuous material; and in the way that they objectify patterns of feeling by recreating them in other forms³ (Wright, K.1991:251). This contrasts with the manner that language as more fully separated symbol 'talks about' experience. I will explore the link between visual and linguistic symbols further in this chapter, but will focus now on the different ways that presentational and discursive symbols reflect self experience.

Wright suggests that presentational symbols are the basis of self knowledge and internal communication, rather than outer communication with others.⁴ Their purpose

³ Iversen (1986:85) suggests that iconic images are too close to their objects to have the character of thought and language.

⁴ In this emphasis, Wright is in disagreement with Kris (1952:243), who considered art to be that which is *intended to communicate*. The views of Wright and Kris may be integrated if one shifts Kris's formulation thus – a condition of art is that it involves communication with an audience, but this may be a byproduct of what is firstly a private, internal communication by the artist. Segal (1991:109) also considers art to be a communication with others, as does Ernst Gombrich (Spitz 1985:151).

is to provide continuity of self experience and orientation in the outer world and they are thus highly valued by the self (Wright, K.1991:251; Winnicott cited in Wright 1991:253). Wright (1991:252) claims of this objectification:

It is an objectification that serves the needs of the subject to grasp, and make available to himself, that which he has sensed and wants to preserve and perhaps to use. It is a means of preserving and holding onto something of personal value rather than a means of saying something to another.

I suggest that it follows that the aspect of the art object which is comprised of presentational symbol is able to communicate subjective experience. The realisation of the internally meaningful process which the art object embodies results in an emblem of this experience for the artist who made it (Milner 1950:43) which may be subsequently valued by others (Segal 1991:97).

The 'speechless want' of the inside needs to be linked with the word from outside, as the two means whereby the self may be represented (Wright, K. 1991:139). While spoken language allows for communication which closes the gap between social subjects, it also imposes the external world of the other as the preexisting linguistic symbols are already determined (Chodorow 1999:251; see also Keylor 2003:227). Keylor elucidates: 'In addition, as he [the child] learns the linguistic rules of signification ..., he learns to use associative chains of signifiers (word symbols) to remove himself further from knowledge of the signified, which then remains unconscious. The more the child enters this realm, what Lacan termed the Symbolic order, the greater the potential for his alienation from himself' (Keylor 2003:227).

The dissonance between the subjective sense of self and the way this is reflected in language, resulting in ways that the 'the subject is spoken rather than speaking' (Wright, K. 1991:260; Keylor 2003:227), may be redressed through art and poetry which allow us to retrieve what is lost by not being expressed through verbal language (Wright, K. 1991:160,261). In metaphor, language is adapted and becomes a more presentational form or maternal mode which is closer to subjective experience (Wright, K. 1991:263). The artist, in constructing forms of subjective

experience uses the symbols of social language and is involved in a kind of play between self and other, inner and outer which results in the creation of new forms for both self and society.

Metaphor

The most significant aspect of Wright's discussion is the link he draws between the structure of the presentational symbol and the structure of metaphor; I consider it possible to correlate these in turn with the structure of the visual art symbol. My discussion will first map out the structural correspondences between presentational symbol and metaphor. I will then explore the possibility of correlating these structures with those of the art object.

As discussed previously, Wright suggests that presentational symbol is akin to the protosymbol of the transitional object in as much as it 'looks back' to the subjective pattern of experience with the mother – and importantly, and in contrast to the transitional object – in that it also 'looks forward' to the more fully separated symbol of representation which the subject can use to know the world (Wright, K. 1991:251). That aspect of the pattern which has been detached from the protosymbol aspect is used for possessing and recognising objects, while the pattern which has been detached from the more fully separated aspect can be freely transferred from object to object and is used to yield knowledge in the world (Wright, K. 1991:248). Wright (1991:256) puts it thus: 'This form is drawn, now toward the [representation] and a signifying existence free of the object, now toward the object and a continuing existence in the realm of things'.

Winnicott called these kinds of first symbolic patterns transitional symbols – Wright (1991:253) terms them maternal symbols (due to their reliance on the mother for their inauguration and because of their close relation to her body as matrix). What I regard as highly significant is the movement that Wright describes between the object itself and the symbolic representation of it, and the slippage between one mode of experiencing and the other. This conforms very closely to my experience of the process of painting which will be discussed in Chapter Five. It also links very closely to Podro's description of aesthetic experience which I will relate in Chapter Four.

Wright (1991:164) asserts that ‘... metaphor is a structure of [representation] that, through bringing us into contact with sensuous images, enables us to conceive of a meaning we have sensed’. Metaphor is the interplay of two terms, which may be understood as the literal and the figurative (Ricoeur 1976:46) or the linguistic and sensual (Wright, K. 1991:163). It entails the creation of evocative images in a process bound by clearly demarcated rules. These are that the image must reflect something which is central to that which the linguistic element represents and/or that the user must relate to these images in specified ways. The user becomes imaginatively involved in establishing the relationship between the two terms of the metaphor until a meaningful connection is found ‘that is both obvious and surprising and common to both’ (Wright, K. 1991:177,176-179).

The imaginative entry into this relationship between the images must not allow the user to forget that they are participating in a symbolic and not actual activity. In order to arrive at an understanding of the relationship between the two terms of the metaphor it is important that the metaphor is not approached at the level of concrete thought, but rather that the user submits to the central rule – which is that the only relevant issue is the relation of the two terms to each other. The aim of metaphor is to generate new meanings from the interplay between its constituent elements.

One of the means to meaning in this art is a certain relationship of images: what might be called a coupling of images, though the coupling may include more images than two. One image is established by the [representations] which make it sensuous and vivid ... Another image is put beside it. And a meaning appears which is neither the meaning of one image nor the meaning of the other nor even the sum of both but a consequence of both – a consequence of both in their conjunction, in their relation to each other (MacLeish cited in Wright, K. 1991:173).

The interplay of oppositions between linguistic and sensual elements is reflective of both the paternal and the maternal realms (Wright, K. 1991:160,163,171), which are brought together in order to create something new (Ricoeur 1976:50). In this way it is

possible to conceive of the metaphor or art object as compensation for oedipal loss – it symbolises the work of internalising this emotional reality and, as a result, a new meaning or product is born (Wright, K. 1991:177,180). I consider that Segal's (1991:95) description below of the internal relationship of an artist to her oedipal situation may be correlated with the experience of metaphor:

It is a restoring in one's internal world of a parental couple creating a new baby. I found it very moving in analysing a certain inhibited artist to see the shift from a narcissistic position, in which the artistic product is put forward as self-created faeces, with a constant terror that one's product will be revealed as shit, to the genital position in which the creation is felt to be a baby resulting from meaningful internal intercourse. And the work of art is then felt as having a life of its own and one which will survive the artist.

The subversive potential of metaphor is that it allows us to undo the prescriptions of language (Wright, K. 1991:161). It allows the exploration of what is unfamiliar by bringing an unknown thing into relation with an already known linguistic object, which involves a 'carrying over' from one place to another (Wright, K. 1991:161). It is particularly suited for articulating imaginatively that which we do not yet know we wish to say, and is perhaps the only way to give form to inner feelings which cannot be seen (Wright, K. 1991:163). Metaphor involves a certain tension,⁵ in which the sensual features of the metaphor may draw the user in the direction of a bodily experience of fusion, while the linguistic feature may pull the user towards the distanced mode of abstract thought (Wright, K. 1991:180).

The novel form of metaphor results from the new relationships which have been established and permit new information about reality to become available (Ricoeur

⁵ See Spitz (1985:18,22). She reflects that an important dimension of the art object is that it embodies tension. (Segal 1991: 93) offers a similar view by suggesting that tension underpins the creative process. She considers that this is conveyed to the viewer's unconscious and results in the need for the viewer to complete the work internally. She suggests that there is a need for traces of incompleteness to be visible in the work itself. I consider that both abstraction, and the evocation of haptic response in the viewer, openly invite such participation.

1976:50,53). In this function, metaphor is akin to the imagination, which is the means whereby old patterns are broken down and new ones established (Degenaar 1986:17; Rycroft 1968:51-52). Metaphor evokes associations in the user which may remain unconscious. While it is a process that involves secondary process thought, it is closer to the primary process than ordinary language (Wright, K. 1991:175,183). Wright's description of metaphor would thus seem to correspond closely to Kris's definition of the art object as that which triggers primary process thinking in the viewer, yet still retains aesthetic distance. I consider that the sensual features of the art object as metaphor may be correlated with the primary process component of his definition, while the linguistic features correspond to the element of aesthetic distance which he proposes.

In his discussion of the ways that paintings convey meaning in *Painting as an art* (1987:37), Wollheim considers that painting involves pictorial metaphor and that, in this, it shares the following three elements with linguistic metaphor. Firstly, neither pictorial nor linguistic metaphor requires that the constituent elements of the metaphor lose their normal meaning; secondly, neither pictorial nor linguistic metaphor requires a pre-existing link between what is metaphorised and the elements that convey the metaphor; and, thirdly, both forms of metaphor are aimed at re-presenting what is metaphorised. Wollheim (1987:308) also emphasises the improvised nature of metaphor which both linguistic and pictorial metaphor share. Suggesting that the difference between linguistic and pictorial metaphor lies in the way that the former pairs a new element with what is metaphorised, while painting metaphorises itself, resulting in the painting acquiring a global property of corporeality, he states: 'What is paired with the object metaphorised is the picture as a whole' (Wollheim 1987:307). I consider that what he refers to here is the kind of slippage between the symbol and the object symbolised which Wright suggests characterises the protosymbol.

Kristeva, through her discussion of the poet Nerval, also explored the radical potential of metaphor. She considered that in his use of metaphor, in which one term is used in place of another, Nerval, like all poets, is able to sublimate potentially destructive energy. For Kristeva, Nerval's writing provided him with a temporary release from his melancholia. She explains: 'It can thus be understood that the

triumph over melancholia resides as much in founding a symbolic family ... as in constructing an independent symbolic object' (Kristeva cited in McAfee 2004:72). In her reference to metaphor as a 'symbolic family', Kristeva would appear to confirm Wright's conception of metaphor as reflective of an oedipal situation.

My understanding of metaphor and the art object is underscored by my reading of the work of Wollheim (1991:101). Wollheim thought that the artist was the first viewer of her work – moving between awareness of the work from 'without' and thereby, I suggest, taking up a stance of more distanced looking, reflective of the paternal mode – as well as observing from 'within', which I consider compatible with a maternal mode. In his analysis of the way that this process affects the bodily experience of the artist as viewer, Wollheim suggests that the paintings have a dual content – that of the experiences that the painting gives rise to, as well as that of the associations of the experiencing subject. He remarks: '[T]he self is set over and against the sensations that it contains' (Wollheim 1987:349). Glover understands Wollheim to suggest that the artist expresses, through both the materials and the activity of painting itself, particular affective states, 'as well as his own thoughts about these' (1998:<http://www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/ch7.html>). I consider that Wollheim's work reflects an understanding of painting as both unconscious bodily 'maternal' symbolic activity, as well as discursive 'paternal' symbolic activity, and consider that the interplay between these activities is akin to the interplay of metaphor as described above.

The description by phenomenologist Maurice Merleau Ponty, referred to above, of a 'speechless want' that 'gives itself a body and knows itself by looking for an equivalent in the system of available significations' (Merleau Ponty cited in Wright, K. 1991:138), may be correlated with Wright's suggestion that 'the objects of our attention in thinking may be dimly sensed forms which we apprehend somewhere in the depths of our bodies' (Wright, K. 1991:136). Following Bollas's description of maternal care as the first aesthetic, I suggest that the non-linguistic proto/presentational aspect of the art object, in its relation to the transitional object as substitute for the mother, allows us access to the 'unthought known', as 'what we have not yet been able to think' (Arnold and Iversen 2003:6), where the mind is free from the burden of cognition (Podro 2003:65). I will consider the relationship between

this kind of bodily knowledge and its relation to cognitive knowledge in the next part of my discussion which is concerned with the relationship between the 'purely visual' (Elkins 1999b:56) as a phenomenological occurrence, and the linguistic as an element of visual art making.

The art object as metaphor

I suggest that considering the art object as metaphor provides a means of understanding the relationship between visuality and language. Writing in *The Domain of Images* (1999b), Elkins suggests that contemporary theorists of art are internally conflicted between wanting a concept of pictures as either purely visual phenomena or else 'as substitutes for writing' with clearly communicable meanings. He suggests that most theorists hold both ideals simultaneously, wanting the image to be both 'pure' and legible. For Elkins (1999b:56), the reason that this duality has characterised the most interesting visual analysis in the modern era is because of the lack of insistence 'that picture can be both inside and outside of articulable meaning'. He explains:

[T]hose propositional or linguistic aspects of pictures are balanced by awareness of elements that cannot be well described in language. Much of current art history is polarized by the difference Pictures are seen to be uncertain mixtures of linguistic forms and elements that are inenarrable or even unnamable (Elkins 1999: 58).

Elkins uses Wittgenstein's picture theory in *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (1997) and Nelson Goodman's *The Languages of Art* (1976) as exemplars of the desire for determinate meaning. He suggests that Wittgenstein wished to demonstrate that pictures were propositional or logical, yet was 'utterly entranced by the mysteries of pictures, their glassy silence ... the two possibilities [playing] back and forth'. Elkins (1999:56-57) also considers Goodman's work to reflect the same ambivalence, wanting to understand the way pictures create meaning through structure, yet still responding to their 'dense' visuality.

Wittgenstein's conceptualisation of pictures as image and 'model' (Wittgenstein cited in Elkins 1999:60) suggests that logic operates *in* pictures, which Elkins regards as a radical insight because 'it places these nascent logical forms in the heart of pictures rather than imagining them as a pole towards which pictures might incline, or from which they need to be rescued' (Elkins 1999:63). This leads Elkins to conclude that Wittgenstein's writing offers a concept of pictures as *both* visual and linguistic⁶. He notes that Wittgenstein made a distinction between the 'picture as a fact in its own right (an arrangement of blobs of paint on canvas, without any associated meaning) and the picture as a picture (a fact that depicts something, a possible state of affairs)' (Elkins 1999:81).

In building his argument for pictures as the embodiment of combined visual and linguistic elements, Elkins also refers to the work of historian Erik Stenius, who suggests that pictures show 'internal structure, reflective of both showing and saying' as well as external 'states of affairs' (Stenius cited in Elkins 1999:64). 'Showing and saying are', Stenius advances, 'intriguing concepts for contemporary visual theory They are the signs of a true fusion of the intuitive and fragile nonverbal, nonlinguistic sense of "picture" and the occasionally counterintuitive and often relentlessly determinate readings that insist on pictures "propositional logic"' (Stenius cited in Elkins 1999:65) Elkins' reading of Wittgenstein and Stenius I consider to confirm the proposition of this thesis regarding the art object – a conjoined presentational and representational symbol in a structural relation akin to that of metaphor, involving showing and saying, pure visuality and discursive language in its communicative function.

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the shift from the dyadic maternal realm to the triadic or paternal realm which results in the infant's acquisition of language as fully separated or discursive symbol. I have reflected that metaphor is a structure which holds both the protosymbol or corporeal, as well as the symbol as language in dynamic interplay, akin to that of the oedipal situation. I have suggested that the

⁶ Elkins (1999:58) refers to this component variously as verbal, propositional, logical grammar or linguistic. The terms I use to describe this aspect of the art object are linguistic (see Hall 1997:18) and discursive.

function of metaphor is to bring private and social symbolic forms into a new relationship, which allows for the creation of novel meanings. This psychoanalytic notion of metaphor has been linked with a consideration of the art object's relation to language, understood to comprise both pictorial and discursive elements.

This relationship between visual form and propositional language will be further discussed in the following chapter through examining aesthetic experience and the allied experience of bodily fusion or separation which the art object evokes in the viewer. Examining how meaning is created around the art object will involve the exploration of divergent approaches to interpretation, namely phenomenological, as well as constructionist and semiotic methods of visual analysis. I will suggest that these are concerned with the inchoate, material proto/presentational and the discursive developed/presentational aspects of the art object, respectively.

Chapter Four

Art and the interplay between realms

What kind of knowledge do works of art provide? Is this knowledge different from other kinds of thought? (Preziosi 1998:63).

Important objects, it would seem, always have a dual character (Chodorow 1999:269).

Orientation

I have focused in preceding chapters on the value of making for the subject. Yet if the internally redolent act of painting is to have any purpose outside that of personal satisfaction, it must exist in the cultural realm and fulfil a function which is socially meaningful and psychically useful (Lippard 1983:8). The desire to understand the relationship between the personal and the social aspects of image making informs this chapter which is concerned with how the artwork may be received and interpreted through viewer response. My exploration of these concerns will involve examining the nature of aesthetic experience and investigating certain contemporary approaches to interpretation.

This approach draws from that suggested by Handler Spitz (1985:ix) who considers that an object relations framework correlated with phenomenological and reader response criticism is a useful way of addressing the nature of aesthetic experience and viewer response. I have extended Spitz's framework in order to consider

interpretation (in which the viewer seeks to make meaning from the encounter) as a constituent aspect of the aesthetic experience.

Some contemporary approaches to aesthetics and interpretation

Aesthetics may be understood as a field whose purpose is defining the experience of art (Turner 2000, s.v. 'aesthetics'), involving considerations concerning the nature of the art object and viewer response. Reader response theory suggests that meaning results from an interaction between the work and the subjective viewer and 'the experiencing of the work as this process unfolds' (Holub 1984:155). This model of interaction between work and viewer corresponds to the dialogical interchange between self and other which object relations theory articulates as the basis for the creation of both private and social meaning through aesthetic experience.

The theorists Bryson, Holley and Moxey argue in their book *Visual theory: painting and interpretation* (1991:1-2), that there are two core approaches to those representations termed art. These are: representation refers to an essence – there is a phenomenological, perceptual experience common to all subjects and aspects of art are, therefore, transhistorical, involving a psychological interaction between the artwork and the viewer which is timeless, or – representation is conventional, is defined by the historical contexts of making and viewing, and involves interpretation and acknowledgment of social difference with the form or visual structure of the artwork also subject to the processes of ideology. This view concerning the divergence in approaches to art interpretation is endorsed by Alex Potts. Writing in the important contemporary volume *Critical terms for art history* (1996:27), he suggests that:

Thinking about the way works of art come to signify in modern culture thus involves negotiating between the complex mediations governing any signifying process and reversions to a mythic immediacy in which the work of art momentarily seems to confront the viewing subject as an autonomous presence embodying its own meaning.

Bryson et al (1991:8) consider that these two broad trends in interpretation are exemplified in phenomenological accounts which emphasise private and sensory

experience, and in semiotics, which emphasises the linguistic, social character of art as a form of sign production. They assert that the principal difference between the semiotic and the phenomenological approach lies with the way that the viewer's interaction with the artwork is theorised; for semioticians, interaction with the art object leads to interpretation, while for phenomenologists the viewer's response relies on recognition through identification. In their book *Art and thought* Arnold and Iversen (2003:7) reflect a concern with this kind of split between interpretive frameworks and suggest that it makes the reception of art problematic. They cite Michael Podro as attempting to bridge a divide such as the one they describe. For Podro (1998: 27) however there is incompatibility between the phenomenologist and the semiotic approach. He asserts that in the semiotic approach seeing and imagining are understood as two separate functions. I consider that working with the notion of the art object as proposed in this thesis, as a conjoined symbol comprised of both corporeal and linguistic elements, offers a way out of this theoretical *impasse*, so that rather, these seemingly divergent approaches may be understood as supplementary.

I find support for my view in the work of Bracha Ettinger, who writes: 'Art can ... generate thought, not because it is intellectual, but because it conjugates the relations between the corporeal, sensory, perceptual, affective *and* cognitive dimensions of the subject' (Bracha Ettinger cited in Pollock 2003:136, italics mine). In order to understand, and thereafter to integrate the contributions of both perceptualism and semiotics, I will now consider the differing emphases of each, focusing on the way that they theorise the nature of the viewer's interaction with the art object.

The phenomenological account of viewer response

Bryson et al (1991:6-7) suggest that the phenomenologist or perceptualist approach is exemplified in the work of Wollheim and Podro. Wollheim considers that the viewer participates in the artist's experience of observing her work and this is part of the experience of reception. Both artist and viewer have the same perceptual capacity for 'seeing-in'. This involves the joint apprehension of both the marks themselves and what the marks represent, which Wollheim termed 'twofoldness' (Wollheim in Bryson et al 1991:6-7). Thus universal perceptual ability is the basis for the common reading.

For Wollheim what is significant is the manner in which we can perceive, through identification and unconscious bodily phantasy, the intentions of the artist. (Glover 1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap7.html).

Podro shares Wollheim's emphasis on perceptual experience and in focusing on the artist's production of the artwork traces a continuum between this and the viewer's subsequent experience (Bryson et al 1991:6-7). He explores the 'dual aspect' of representation (akin to Wollheim's 'twofoldness') where marks both depict the subject matter and act as surface. In making, there is a continuous process of feedback between the image and the artist. 'The medium and the artist's thought within the medium, are mutually involved and implicated' (Bryson *et al* 1991:7). The image unfolds through the interactions between the subject matter, the medium and the artist's response as he makes. (Bryson et al 1991:7) suggest that Podro sees this interplay between medium and content as similar to the unity of viewing the work (both mark itself and mark as representation simultaneously experienced). There is no independent iconography which is separate from the medium or the act of making.

Bryson et al (1991:7) consider that in analysing the viewer's experience, both Wollheim and Podro are interested in the unity that this involves, with the way that the depiction and the medium are inseparable and with how their apprehension forms part of the same phenomenological experience. Wollheim's term 'twofold' thus refers to the way that the medium and the subject matter are mutually informing while Podro names this organic interaction between them '*disegno*'. (Podro cited in Bryson et al 1991:7). The concept of *disegno* proposes that some new thing has been produced – something which requires a different kind of recognition from that produced in ordinary looking. Podro considers that we use a special kind of attention to recognise the subject and the role of the medium in creating this representation and his use of the *disegno* thesis thus proposes an aesthetic realm which transforms ordinary experience and is outside of it (Bryson et al 1991:7).

Both Wollheim and Podro are concerned with the relationship between the material nature of art, which is transformed through the artist's unconscious phantasy, and the viewer's subsequent re-enactment of this process which occurs in viewing the art object; and therefore with an account of art which is 'grounded in the reciprocity

between inner and outer worlds' (Glover 1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap7.html). In his work *Depiction* (1998:28) Podro asserts that it is the interplay between medium and the content which results in the particular nature of the art object and accounts for the basis of the viewer's subsequent engagement. He suggests that when viewing painting, we occupy 'a hinterland' between 'literal objectivity' and the kind of recognition that painting elicits, and that this involves the particular response of the imagination (Podro 1998:28).

For the semiotician Norman Bryson (1991:65), the phenomenologist account of art, which he rejects, stresses 'image-making entirely in terms of ... secret and private events, perceptions and sensations occurring in invisible recesses of the painter's and the viewer's mind'. In his chapter titled 'Semiology and visual interpretation', he suggests that the essentialism of the phenomenological and perceptualist approaches results in ahistorical accounts, where culturally and historically defined power relations remain unaccounted for. He stresses, too, that semiotics reveals interpretation to be arbitrary and vested, and that this feature remains invisible in the phenomenologist/phenomenological account. It does not ask whose interests the aesthetic realm serves (Bryson 1991:2,4,8). Bryson (1991:65-66) elucidates:

In place of the transcendental comparison between the image and perceptual private worlds, stand the socially generated codes of recognition; and in place of the link, magical and illogical, that is alleged to extend from an outer world of things into recesses of inwardness and subjectivity, stands the link extending from individual to individual as consensual activity, in the forum of recognition.

I question Bryson's rebuttal of perceptualism. I consider that he fails to engage with the idea that the art object results from the integration of a specific process of material engagement between the artist's subjective reality, involving unconscious bodily phantasy, and the medium. I find support for my view in the ideas of Elisabeth Wright (c1984:5), who asserts that 'the work of art, is a form of persuasion where bodies are speaking to bodies, not merely minds speaking to minds', and in the ideas of Marks (2000). Writing in *The skin of the film, intercultural cinema, embodiment,*

and the senses (2000:152), she considers that the concern with perceptual and sense experience is not an essentialist regression but rather manifests the desire to '*find culture within the body*'. For Marks (2000:146), as for Wollheim and Podro, a problematic aspect of semiotics is that it does not take into account the embodied nature of visual experience. It is to the semiotic account that I will now turn.

Semiotics as an interpretative method

Semiotics, which studies and interprets the social construction of signs and their meanings (de Lauretis 1984:167), is considered by many contemporary theorists to be the most useful tool available for interpreting artworks. Like reading itself, a semiotic approach to the art object has meaning as its desired outcome. In the semiotic account, Mieke Bal states that this results from interpreting (attributing) regulated by rules (codes) applied to signs by the agent of attribution (subject or viewer). This she sees as occurring in a socio-historic context (the frame) which limits the possible meanings of the work and in which the social context of reading is more important than the concept of the originating artist (Bal 1996:28). It is the structural relationship between signs (syntax) which, in reading images, have related meanings which are more than the constituent individual elements (Bal 1996:32,37). For Bal, interpreting signs and their meanings thus implies entering an area between art history and semiotics, where iconography expands towards intertextual readings. In this process, the meaning which results from attributing signs involves the interaction of other cultural processes in the reading of the artwork.

In their specific consideration of the relationship between semiotics and psychoanalysis expressed in the seminal paper '*Semiotics and Art History*' (1991), Bal and Bryson suggest that as psychoanalysis is a way of reading the unconscious and its relationship to representation, it may be understood as a semiotic theory. They consider that applying psychoanalysis to the study of visual images assumes that traces of the unconscious are visible in art.¹ Bal and Bryson (1991:189) propose

¹ As noted earlier, Bal and Bryson (1991) critique a number of methodologies which have been developed in this regard, suggesting that the most commonly used is the analogous model where correspondence is assumed between the processes and products of art and the practices of psychoanalysis. It is not that the work does not have an unconscious component or that there is no correlation possible between the visual cues and the psychoanalytic symptom, but rather that the analysis of the work relies on a psychoanalytic rather than visual analysis (Bal and Bryson 1991:15).

a term for a model of psychoanalytic interpretation which they call the hermeneutic model, which is based on a Lacanian approach. This model does not use psychoanalytic *content* to inform a reading of the work, but rather draws upon psychoanalytic *concepts*, such as repression, semiosis, and the subject which it uses descriptively. It is concerned with the forms that traces of the unconscious take in artworks; in condensation and displacement as evidence of psychic censorship, and in the relation between coherence and incoherence in images. Bal and Bryson (1991:89) define condensation as that which occurs when a sign refers to other meanings, whether inconsistent or even unrelated – two versions are represented simultaneously, one of them often disavowed. They suggest that condensation and its allied concept, displacement, concern semantic complexity and multiple meaning, and regard displacement as particularly useful for illuminating a hidden dimension to an obvious meaning (Bal and Bryson 1991:189). Bal and Bryson further suggest that that the hermeneutic method can provide material on the artwork which may be read in relation to more commonly read semiotic interpretations (1991:189). The psychoanalytic hermeneutic extends the more obvious interpretation and thereby gives it greater depth, nuance and ideological significance.

In his introduction to Bal's work *Looking in: the art of viewing* (2001:4), Bryson suggests that in her approach to the analysis of art-works she attends to what is marginal, overlooked or repressed. Bal herself states that in the approach she adopts, the unity of interpretation may be destabilised by attending to the detail in art-works, but that this destabilisation involves difference which is critical to the meaning of the work. She considers that where art history has traditionally suppressed these differences, the semiotic methodology opens them up (2001:40). In her articulation of a semiotic approach, Bal (2001:39) suggests that reading art is subjective but not idiosyncratic. She acknowledges that the 'I'-'you' interaction between the viewer and the work allows something personal (Bal 1996:34,39), yet

They assert in this regard: 'Psychoanalysis is now not the informant but the informed discipline. Art becomes a document and an illustration' (1991:15). I share their unease with this approach. I consider that the psychoanalytic concept of counter-transference is able to redress this. This involves the viewer/analyst identifying the work's unconscious content through attending to the way that the art object elicits his own repressions. I consider that this is where the semiotic and object relations account could be further integrated.

does not go so far as to say that it is the imagination, or unconscious phantasy which elicits this response

For both Wollheim and Podro, the semiotic approach fails to address the affectivity of the viewer's engagement with the art object and, in addition, allows the linguistic meaning to be assimilated by the pictorial one (Glover 1998:www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap7.html). Iversen, contributing to the book *The new art history* (1986), also problematises this aspect of the semiotic account. She asserts that unlike verbal signs which are arbitrary (having no relationship between the sound and the meaning of the word other than the socially agreed convention), visual signs are motivated. She asserts that semiotics, which she considers to be linguistically based, is unable to completely account for visual signification (Iversen 1986:85).² I consider that the above concerns about the semiotic account of the art object may be understood in terms of the fact that it addresses only one of the two components of the art object as conjoined symbol, which I suggest, as stated throughout my thesis, to be comprised of both corporeal and linguistic elements.

While I regard semiotics as a highly useful approach, which provides a specifically visual analysis to the art object through its particular attention to iconography and its consideration of the often subliminal ways in which the relation between the art object and the viewer is structured, I consider that the approach has limitations which need to be addressed. I have found no reference in Bal and Bryson to the idea that a specific psychic state in the viewer is brought into play through the process of engagement with the material properties of the art object, and allied to this, no emphasis on the imagination or on phantasy as a determinant of the way that meaning is constructed. I consider that in their analysis, Bal and Bryson acknowledge that the text has an unconscious, but do not account for the experience of unconscious or somatic experience in the viewer. The most significant possibilities that the semiotic account holds open for transforming the viewer's experience thus

² Bal and Bryson rebut this, considering that semiotics makes available both a theoretical framework and analytic tools which are supra-disciplinary. They assert that, although evolved primarily in relation to literary texts semiotics can thus be used to analyse objects drawn from any sign system and does not need to exceed the domain of the visual in this methodology (Bal and Bryson 1991:3; see also Bal 1996:25).

seems to be through an analysis of power relations and an analysis of the repressions in the text which are undertaken at an intellectual level.³

In contrast, and as discussed throughout the thesis, an object relations psychoanalytic view places emphasis on the interior realm of the subject as an important dimension of the way that engagement with the art object occurs, placing emphasis on *both* inner *and* outer experience, the personal and the cultural (Chodorow 1999:2). Spitz (1991:xi) states: 'Psychoanalysis has, from the beginning, taught that, when we look out, we see in fact what is already also within, the finding being always a refinding'. I consider that accepting the pervasiveness of subjective experience and imaginative phantasy as a dimension of the way we relate to the social domain makes it necessary to include these aspects in any account of the art object and find evidence of this orientation in the views of Wollheim and Podro. I suggest that the art object does elicit a particular state – that of the aesthetic attitude – in the viewer, even if this attitude is historically and culturally framed.⁴ It is to a consideration of the ways in which the art object as symbol may elicit this response in the viewer that I now turn.

The nature and form of the art object

In her discussion of the art object, Langer (1957:139) suggests that its significance lies in the fact that it does not refer us to what is outside of itself; its meaning cannot be grasped except through its particular and sensuous form. She asserts that the specific nature of this form is that it is imbued with feeling, stating: 'And this is the function every good work of art does perform. It formulates the appearance of feeling, of subjective experience, the character of so-called "inner life", which discourse – the normal use of words – is peculiarly unable to articulate' (Langer 1957:129,133). Her ideas find support in the work of Stokes. He considers that the nature of aesthetic form results from the specific way in which it externalises the artist's inner world (Iversen 1986:127).

³ Ernst van Alphen's attempt (1992) to account for the affective quality of Francis Bacon's work through the use of a semiotic analysis is an interesting extension of this approach.

⁴ See Moxey (1994:37) who reflects the view of the semiotician Jan Mukarovsky. Mukarovsky holds that aesthetic value depends on the intersection between the cultural values with which the work was made and those of culture that subsequently interact with it.

Rose, writing in *The Power of Form* (1980), also asserts that form itself carries meaning. He considers that aesthetic form results from the integration of both primary and secondary processes, reflected in the form of the art object. He states: 'The ambiguity of aesthetic form thus reflects the mind's double system of processing, in which two frameworks of orientation ... operate concurrently' (Rose cited in Spitz 1985:21).

In his considerations of the art object, Kris (1952) also drew attention to this quality of ambiguity, devoting a chapter to its discussion. He considered that the significance of ambiguity was that seemingly contradictory responses could not only coexist, but also evoke and sustain each other (1952:249), and that this resulted in a quality of tension in the art object (1952:257). For Kris, this tension or ambiguity is an important source of stimulus to aesthetic response by the viewer, involving both bodily reactions in the viewer as well eliciting primary process response (1952:259).

The art object and the viewer's imaginative engagement

In considering the relationship between the artwork and the viewer, Spitz (1985:139) suggests that the artist and the audience are involved in similar activities: the viewer must be capable of responding imaginatively, while the artist needs to act as his own first audience in order to create.⁵ Kris (1952:39) endorses this opinion of the viewer's role in creating meaning with his understanding of art as '... an invitation to common experience in the mind, to an experience of a specific nature' (Kris1952:39). He describes a circular process consisting of three stages: 'recognition, identification with the work, and then identification with the way in which the work was produced. To participate we must to some extent change roles.' (Kris 1952:56) He continues: 'We started out as a part of the world which the artist created; we end as co-creators: We identify ourselves with the artist.' In the following quotation may be seen the emphasis that Kris places on the active role of the viewer in engaging with the art object. He states that:

Communication lies not so much in the prior intent of the artist as in the *consequent re-creation by the audience of his*

⁵ This corresponds to Wollheim's (1991:101) notion of the artist as first spectator.

work of art. And re-creation is distinguished from sheer *reaction* to the work precisely by the fact that the person responding *himself contributes to the stimuli for his response* (Kris1952:254, 1st& 3rd italics mine).

I consider that in this emphasis Kris underscores that which Wollheim and Podro emphasise, namely, namely, that the imagination, which is not governed by social codes alone, is a crucial element in how images are apprehended. This involves an ability to actively engage with the materially present object (Podro 1998:5,28). Podro argues that, in respect of the art object, this imagining is not limitless, or unchecked through association or projection. Rather, the projections are allowed inasmuch as they relate to the work's own terms or to the tradition the work evokes (Podro 1998:5). Kris too suggests that the art object can be interpreted from within the context created by the work. Art works which endure, he states, will allow 'as high a degree of interpretability as is compatible with containing within themselves their own sources of integration' (Kris 1952: 264).

Aesthetic experience

In her discussion of aesthetic experience, Spitz (1985:137) suggests that, however this interaction is defined, it takes place in a strange realm 'between reality and fantasy' (Grolnick and Barker cited in Spitz 1985:137). She considers that during aesthetic experience the distance between the viewer and the work is subject to movement and variability. This variation spans sensual fusion with the artwork, involving total bodily absorption, to more distanced or cognitive response resulting in self-awareness (1985:139). These different modes of relating to the artwork, characterised by philosophers as responding to the work either from within or without, I consider to be linked to the dyadic mode of fusion and the paternal mode of separation, respectively. I therefore concur with Spitz about this movement which she suggests is a temporal one, possibly reflective of the viewer's capacity for concentration. However, and as an important difference, I also consider the states of fusion and separation to occur *simultaneously* and at the initial moment of aesthetic experience. I consider that this involves not only the concurrent states of embodied and unconscious response in which the inner world of phantasy dominates, but also conscious, cognitive and linguistic response; and that the particular psychic way of

being thus evoked is part of the numinous significance of aesthetic experience, as well as the basis on which it affirms intersubjective relating.⁶

The notion of aesthetic response as that which involves both bodily fusion and cognition is echoed by Fuller who, in his consideration of aesthetic emotion, states: 'Here ...sensuous activity ... seems to be prior to (*or at least apart from*) conceptual activity' (Fuller 1988:199 italics mine). For Bollas (1978:394), aesthetic experience is characterised by 'deep rapport between the subject and object'. The aesthetic moment is a 'caesura in time when the subject feels held in symmetry and solitude by the spirit of the object ... and is characterised by its self sufficiency, its enclosing function⁷ which prevents us from moving onto either cognition or applied effort (Krieger cited in Bollas1987:31). This experience of the aesthetic, which seems to conflate time and space so that subject/object 'achieve an intimate rendezvous', he considers essentially wordless. The moment is characterised by an intensity of feeling in the subject and the 'non-representational knowledge' of being held by the object, which inspires this feeling (Bollas 1987:31). Bollas suggests that these moments derive from the earliest experience of infant mother fusion, giving us a unique source of pleasurable emotion, and 'a heightened sense of reciprocal structure', a feeling of oneness with the world (Bollas cited in Spitz 1985:140).

Aesthetic experience may therefore involve the temporary erasure of our sense of inner and outer distinction, both of ourselves and of the ways we categorise experience. Spitz (1985:150) suggests that during aesthetic experience to temporarily forego one's boundaries, tolerating ambiguity, paradox, and the experience of potential space. It becomes possible to create, either through making oneself or through participating by viewing artworks. I consider that this fusional dimension of aesthetic experience results from entering the work at the level of both unconscious bodily phantasy and the imagination. I assert that it is due to the

⁶ I refer here to Benjamin's (1990) concept of the simultaneous need for connectedness and separation as a dimension of intersubjective relating.

⁷ Although Bollas suggests that this prevents us from moving onto 'either cognition or applied effort' (Krieger cited in Bollas1987:31), I do not consider it to invalidate my notion of the aesthetic moment as both perceptually and conceptually based. As Podro suggests, these are held in tension in such a way that they hold the viewer in a sustained act of imaginative recognition.

particular structure of the art object, as argued, that this particular kind of psychic experience, involving the contiguity of both the corporeal and cognitive, occurs.

My understanding of aesthetic experience, and how it is comprised of both a discursive and a perceptual element held in interplay is informed by Podro's view of aesthetic experience⁸ as articulated in his chapter 'Kant and the aesthetic imagination' (2003). His earlier theoretical stance has become more complex, so that his notion of viewer response may seem to account for the discursive or conceptual element as problematised by Bryson et al (1991:1-73). Podro (2003:64-65) suggests that aesthetic experience results from the harmonising of both sensory and conceptual faculties. He reflects that in cognition the concept dominates the object, while, in aesthetic experience, the imagination holds the object while understanding is sought. He asserts that aesthetic experience is thus not only sensuous, but is an interplay between both sensuous reception and understanding (Arnold and Iversen 2003:3). Due to the richness of his thinking and the way in which it so directly supports the argument of my thesis concerning the art object as a conjoined structure, his work is discussed in greater detail below.

Aesthetic experience as both corporeal and discursive experience

Podro (2003:51-70) examines Kant's 'Critique of Judgment' in order to examine aesthetic experience. In working with Kant's ideas concerning aesthetics, he suggests that not only an empirical judgement about the object is involved. Aesthetic judgement is to be understood rather as a way of considering the object itself through externally derived perception, whilst experiencing a simultaneously operative reflexive process of engagement with it through the internal ordering of the mind (Podro 2003:55,56). This involves different possible ways of seeing the object and one's own relation to it – it is both reflective and reflexive. Aesthetic satisfaction results from the interplay between understanding and the imagination (Podro 2003:54-56).

⁸ Although Podro (2003:51-70) makes reference to the term aesthetic judgement rather than aesthetic experience in his argument, I consider that he is concerned with the same phenomenon that informs my discussion.

Podro draws on Kant's distinction between intuition (perceptual cognition) and understanding (conceptual cognition). He suggests that our intuitive relationship to an aesthetic object records its characteristics and that this initial awareness is differentiated from, or merged with, other characteristics which result in a new gestalt. A conceptual relationship in contrast, not only records the initial characteristic but also links these in discursive thought to other linguistic concepts – that is, it engages with the object at the level of discursive judgement. Understanding manifests itself in discursive thought, while the imagination manifests itself in intuition (Podro 2003:56-57). Aesthetic judgement requires synthesis between these two modes. Critically, it also requires that the relation between this synthesis and the object itself be satisfying.

In this discussion, Podro (2003:56-57) emphasises the role of the imagination in aesthetic experience. It is the imagination, which is 'the capacity to elaborate what we see or think into some more extensive awareness', (Podro 2003:56) that mediates between perceptual information and the ordering process of the mind and so integrates them. In aesthetic judgment we experience a reciprocal relationship between our imagining and the external world, and beyond this, we experience the aesthetic object as a manifestation of our own thought. Podro (2003:61) seeks to characterise the distinctive phenomenology of aesthetic judgement (as opposed to perception of ordinary objects) and suggests that it lies in something to do with the 'perceived structure of the object as we finally resolve it'. Thus aesthetic judgment perceptually involves: sufficient discontinuity between aspects of the aesthetic object so that the interplay between these differing aspects results in neither the loss of their separateness nor the loss of the viewer's need to 'adjust between them'; and the way that these two kinds of interaction with the object (the interplay and the adjustment) both remain constitutive of the interest in making the judgement (Podro 2003:60-61).

Podro suggests that, for Kant, when imagination and understanding are involved in free interchange, the mind has a certain quality of independence in terms of the object under scrutiny. This sense of independence comes from our sense of being able to offer something to the perception of the object, in contrast to a sense of the object as suitable for need fulfilment. Aesthetic experience/judgement here is

analogous with the fit between the subject and the world. It confirms or symbolises that the experience of freedom (resulting from contributing our creative input or imagination) is compatible with the world of external appearances (Podro 2003:62).

In imagination, we have a sense that we have transformed perceptual matter, while cognitive judgement suggests that the world is determined. The intuitive configurations evoked by the aesthetic object are sustained beyond empirical understanding as representations of the mind and not just as sensory perceptions. The mind is able to 'reflexively reflect' without the obligation of cognition and we are thus freed from the burden of understanding and feel aware of a reciprocal attunement between the object and ourselves. These freedoms that imagination allows (the independence in respect of the object, the relief from cognitive understanding, and the sense of attunement and fit) are extended by the artist into a wider sense of imaginative freedom. This wider sense includes the philosophical and transcendent ideas of human freedom and the nature of existence beyond what is intellectually knowable (Podro 2003:66).

Summary

I consider it possible to correlate Podro's description of aesthetic experience with both Kris's understanding of the art object as that which involves primary process thinking and aesthetic distance in the viewer, as well as with the idea advanced throughout the thesis that the art object is a conjoined structure, akin to metaphor, comprising corporeal and linguistic symbols held in dynamic tension. I suggest that the response he identifies of intuition may be linked with the maternal or wordless aspect of the protosymbol/presentational aspect of the art object, while that of understanding refers to the paternal aspect of the proper /discursive symbol. As a means of substantiating my argument I suggest that the accounts which both Wollheim and Podro provide of aesthetic experience confirm Kenneth Wright's description of the protosymbol. Their descriptions of 'seeing in' and '*disegno*', respectively, describe the way that the protosymbol involves the constant shift between perception of the ground and the symbol of this perceptual field itself.

I assert that the perceptualist account of the art object accords closely with the basic tenets of object relations thought concerning the dialogical interplay between

subjects. Moreover, I consider that in its emphasis, it is dominantly concerned with the protosymbolic or presentational aspect of the art object. I suggest that the perceptualist emphasis on the corporeal aspect of the art object may be integrated with the discursive semiotic approach, and that the tension of holding these two frameworks in play replicates something of the tension which the art object itself embodies. I reflect that the fluid movement which aesthetic experience elicits between self and loss of self, inner and outer, holds the possibility for imagining the world anew. In this lies its transgressive and redemptive potential.

Chapter Five

Self re-presentation: on becoming able to paint

Because the image is a kind of tightrope walk between what is called figuration and abstraction. It will go right out from abstraction but will really have nothing to do with it. It's an attempt to bring the figurative thing up onto the nervous system more violently and more poignantly (Bacon cited in Sylvester 1980:12).

... perhaps all artists and poets are thus engaged in a *project of retrieval* – an attempt to regain from the Other that which has been overlain by language and thus lost by not being spoken (Wright 1991:261).

Scope of works referenced

My work is discussed through considering the material processes which I explore, as well as through semiotic and phenomenological readings of my imagery. Due to space constraints the discussion does not cover the entire corpus. I note that I have visually referenced the following artists: Pierre Bonnard, Joseph Beuys, Willem de Kooning, Francis Bacon, Phillip Guston, Louise Bourgeois, Marlene Dumas, Nancy Spero, Vivienne Koorland, Penny Siopis and William Kentridge, although my discussion does not reflect the specific ways in which their influence is manifest in my work.

Link between my theoretical understanding and my practical work

In this chapter I engage in two related activities: firstly, the illustration of my earlier theoretical argument through my practical work, and secondly, the examination of my own work through the application of theory. Theory and practice are thus mutually informing, manifesting the dynamic interplay between conscious and unconscious searching, realising and reflecting which the processes of conceptualising and art making involve.

As discussed, a psychoanalytic account of subjectivity and of creativity stresses the need for conscious and unconscious experience to exist in mutual interplay (Chodorow 1999:1-2,239-274) and suggests a reading of painting as manifestation of this and other forms of dialectical interplay (Winnicott 1974; Milner 1950). Understanding the nature of creativity allows my growing trust in what Ehrenzweig (1967) terms 'the hidden order of art'. In my practical work I seek to embrace the improvisatory nature of paint as a medium, trusting that the unconscious significance of the image-making process will emerge upon subsequent conscious reflection.

Conceptual underpinning of my practical work – representing self through the body

My practical investigation, like my theoretical research, has revealed itself as a concern with the production and representation of subjectivity. The movement between experiences of fusion and separability within the self which the creative process involves, as discussed in Chapter Two, is manifest in my practical work as a concern with boundaries and surfaces, visible in the interplay between, and delimitation of, abstract and figurative elements and figure ground relationships which are 'excavated' through the material process. This results in two distinct emphases in my paintings: firstly, evocations of bodily phantasies (see figures 12-21,24,26-30), and secondly, emblematic depictions based on dream images or specific emotional states (see figures 22,23,25,49-54). Even when not directly referred to, my work thus references the body as metaphor for the self. It does this by bringing together notions of the body as both seen and felt.¹

¹ See Miller cited in Langerman 1995:8.

Examining the body from this dual position reflects my central theoretical concern with the capacity of the art object to hold seeming opposites in dynamic tension.² The interplay of paradox is explored in my work through investigating both material processes and the development of a personal iconography, which I consider broadly expressive of the maternal or semiotic and paternal or symbolic realms, respectively. In considering the ways that my paintings communicate, I am thus concerned with the interface between illegibility and legibility. This interface – the cusp of the potential space – is the site where destabilisation between discrete modes occurs. The destabilisation may occur between the unconscious and consciousness; self and other; ground and figure; image and word; between making paintings and theorising about them. In locating my work at this site, I seek to create both latent and explicit meanings which have multiple possible levels of association and which trigger both unconscious and conscious experiences in the viewer, thus evoking the simultaneous experience of primary and secondary process response which Kris asserts as a feature of the art object.

Subject matter

In my search for resonant subject matter and a personal iconography, I have developed a working method which is analogous to that of the free association method of psychotherapy (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973:169). Free association is a clinical technique which uses the spontaneous articulation by the analysand of any thoughts which arise in order to find unconscious associations. My use of this process involves the exploration of unconscious, bodily and cognitive responses to inner and outer stimuli, embracing and exploiting ambiguity as a core dimension of creative practice.³

² Ogden (referenced in Keylor 2003:236) suggests that it is the disintegrating nature of the paranoid-schizoid position which allows movement and counter-poses the stagnation of the depressive position: 'a healthy dialectic between these mental capacities is essential for creativity and change; over idealization of the depressive position ignores the dialectical tension between the positions that is needed for a healthy balance of integration and disintegration'. As the paranoid-schizoid position has been linked with dyadic relationship with the mother and the depressive with acceptance of the oedipal situation involving the father, I understand Ogden to refer here to the necessity for creativity of dynamic interplay between these realms, which is manifest in the experience of making paintings.

³ In this process, I identify with the interests of the sculptor Louise Bourgeois, whose work I have referenced in my practical research. Nixon (2005:272-273) suggests that she is concerned to actively nurture the 'creative power of ambivalence'.

I seek through the mediums of painting and collage to represent interior feelings or dreams, finding correspondences between these states and either imaginary or pre-existing visual references. Pre-existing visual references are either drawn from life observation or found in sources such as photographic reproductions (see figures 20, 21). These varied references and sources include the body, my son's drawings, domestic objects and organic and mechanical structures. Thus my creative process, which reflects the movement between inner phantasy and outer reference, embodies the concern in my theoretical research with the interplay between unconscious and conscious modes of thinking. As my images are structured through the processes of initial references, physical making, obliterating and reordering, meanings which extend the original impulse are brought into play.

I consider my enhanced capacity to work in this way to derive from a greater ability to shift between alternating states of fusional experience and separable experience without fearing a loss of self. Formerly, when painting, I would experience great difficulty in exploiting the liveliness of paint and the edges of the objects I represented were highly controlled.⁴ In seeking to animate the work, I would frequently use thinners to obliterate a painting after its completion; this would result in something less forced and more evocative in the marks that remained on the canvas. I was very concerned with veracity and actuality, fearful that losing the link to reality which observed elements implied might result in my work being solipsistic and of no social relevance. I could not allow the free interplay of imagined and observed elements.

In contrast, the practical work done during this thesis, as discussed, reflects a movement from the copying of outer stimuli to the generation of internally derived images. The following quotation is therefore resonant for me: 'The trouble with recognizable art is that it excludes too much. I want my work to include more. And "more" comprises one's doubts about the object, plus the problem, the dilemma of recognizing it' (Fineberg cited in Henderson 1997:25). The images which result from my research feel more 'true' to both my internal and external experience. The shift in my working process means a far greater reliance on the imagination, as well as

⁴ Milner (1950:32) reflected on the pictorial convention of outline, which she understood as a counter to the potentially threatening nature of imaginative activity, as a kind of 'emotional need to imprison objects rigidly within themselves'.

movement between intuitive and cognitive modes of working. The resultant images reflect my desire to establish a relationship with the viewer inviting of a process of mutual and subjective engagement. This is in contrast to the kind of relationship which Marks (2000:190) is based on the viewer's entry into an illusion.

Material processes

In my practical work, the material qualities of various media are investigated for their abstract qualities. These media include charcoal, ink, paint, stainers, varnishes, wax, pigments, paper and cloth and premixed commercial paints. Analogies between these materials and bodily fluids provide a basis for exploring the boundaries of both my own and the viewers' subject-body in a process akin to that which Kristeva termed 'abjection' (Kristeva cited in Langerman 1995:37), as discussed in Chapter One.

I began my research into material processes with charcoal and pencil drawing (see fig 1), but this was too close to writing to allow for dynamic and unplanned shifts in making or self representation. I then used cloths and staining techniques to apply viscous substances, which meant working with their inherent capacity to run, smear, splash, pool (figures 7-54), experiencing the 'otherness' of the medium in a manner analogous to that described by Stokes (1963). This resulted in exciting forms or textures on the surface to which I could respond by adding new elements. This dialogue was akin to the mirroring process between infant and mother, as evoked by Milner (1952:92) in her paper 'The role of illusion in symbol formation', where she writes: '[T]he sight of a mark made on paper provokes new associations; the line, as it were, answers back and functions as a very primitive type of external object'. The resultant images felt closer to expressing subjective experience than those I had previously made.

Extending this concern with materials, I combined the differing drying times of oil- and water-based mediums in order to produce a varied and evocative substrate which I consider suggestive of the fragility of the body (figures 43-54). The use of these media was extended to include collage and encaustic wax painting as a means of animating and enriching the surface, resulting in a tactile, three-dimensional substrate. The process of creating a heterogenous surface was furthered through the

investigation of silk-screening as productive of a differing kind of mark-making from that of painting (figures 44, 47, 49, 51, 52, 53), one I consider to represent 'the symbolic' realm through its quasi-mechanical nature.

In contrast to my need to variously build up and thereby enrich the surfaces of my work has been the opposed activity of obliteration as a means of losing the clarity of the image and of animating the substrate. As discussed in Chapter One, Nixon (1995:91) suggests that gestures such as these reflect the intensity of aggressive infantile bodily phantasy, which may lead to a subsequent desire to repair the damage inflicted. My working process involved the unconscious use of bandage-like cloth, and packaging tape as methods of joining and creating surfaces, evident in the following works (figures 22, 23, 24, 25, 43, 48, 50). In addition to a reading of this use of material as reparative, I consider that wrapping and binding may also reflect a need to re-establish the boundaries of a more fully separated sense of self after cycles of fusional activity which lead to their erasure. Thus my use of methods which act to bind and cohere my surfaces may be read as elements evocative of both reparation and demarcation.

I have employed commercially available domestic substances, including blackboard paint, white PVA, universal undercoat, wood stains and varnishes, which can be understood as the use of ready-mades. In her book *Art and Psychoanalysis* (1993:188), Laurie Schneider Adams suggests that the artist's ready-mades are akin to the infant's transitional object, in that they offer a pre-existing form which is then imbued with significance. An example of this symbolic investment in pre-existing materials is evident in my use of stoep paint. Its colour, thought to be derived from the original use of animal blood as a means of colouring settler floors,⁵ has been exploited for the original reference to blood and the allied associative potential of its viscous, fluid quality (figures 20, 27-30). The humble nature of these practical domestic materials has afforded me greater freedom of expression than artist oil-paints, which I have found overwhelming due to their seductive potential for easily creating substance and colour, and which result in my paintings becoming 'tight' and

⁵ I have been unable to verify this anecdotal information which was conveyed to me in conversation with the painter Nicolaas Maaritz.

overly controlled. Working with ready-made paint allows a kind of carelessness, an ability to use it in more energetic and less considered ways which facilitate and reflect the expression of freer bodily energy.

Working constraints

Certain 'rules' were established as a containing element in my free exploration of subject and material processes. Colour was limited to earth based, tonal hues. Through its manifestation in dream images, red established itself as an important colour, extended into my paintings for its personal and cultural associations of passion, power, aggression, blood, life energy. After initial works on randomly sized formats, set sizes were used as another kind of given element, which prevented the number of creative choices from proving overwhelming. I based my choice of scale on that which I felt I could sustain energetically, and also on my desire to engage the viewer from a relatively close vantage point which would involve his moving into the 'body space' of the artwork in order to read the image, particularly its surface qualities. Substrates of various kinds of paper, board, and fabric were chosen for their resilience, absorbency, and their suitability for the uninhibited exploration of materials.

The ability of a surface to elicit differing experiences of looking – either 'haptic or optic' – in the viewer is discussed by Marks (2000:127-193). According to Richards, (2005:13), these differing responses are triggered through the tension between the materiality of an image and its iconographic elements. This concern with differing kinds of looking has retrospectively manifested itself as an important area of development in my practical work. I consider that haptic forms of visual experience may be broadly correlated with the maternal realm of dyadic and intimate relationships, while optical visibility may be linked to the paternal realm of social communication.⁶ The implications of these visual modalities for my work will be further discussed below.

Although I apply constraints to my working process, the need to subvert preconceived ideas emerged. For the image *Dream/Mark/Edge* (figure 23), my three

⁶ Wright, K. (1991: 61-62) characterises very early experience as that of touch, while later experience, that of separation, is characterised by him as visual.

year-old son worked with me on stretching the paper. What was originally conceived of as the technical means of holding down the substrate became an important metaphor for the extension of conceptual and physical boundaries which the element of chance opens up; I found his use of the paper tape evocative and aesthetically satisfying and I decided to retain it as an element of the image. This initiated a process whereby tape became an important marker of edges, where the boundaries of format and image were simultaneously contained and allowed to extend.

Use of my son's creative making has been made throughout my work (evident in his mark making in the panel titled *Cradle/Pelvis* (figure 49), in the inclusion of his graphic motifs in my images (figures 18,49,50) and in my claiming of his drawings which I enlarged and then used as given surfaces in what may be read as a playful inversion of the 'found-as-transitional object' (figures 2,3,12,13). I have used my son's images as signifiers of his position in relation to the symbolic realm of language and as manifestations of the disruptive force of Kristeva's semiotic. As previously discussed in chapter one, children's mark making may be read as a symbolic means of separating from the mother and entering the world of shared language: Mary Kelly suggests, in *Imaging Desire* (1996:55,205), that 'prewriting' is a form of sublimated desire, the child's alphabet an anagram of the maternal body, while Griselda Pollock (2005:54) suggests, that early writing by the child represents, rather than placement, a kind of play.

In addition, the set formats of the boards I worked on resulted in unplanned triptychs. Through working on these similarly sized formats simultaneously, I found that single images could run over onto a sister format, and a dialogue between references that held a close relation to each other could be pursued. Information could be conveyed in relays and the mimetic nature of painting within a single frame from a single vanishing point thereby undermined. I discovered subsequently that associations between paintings in the individual groups of triptychs could also be read through the body of work as a whole. The linking of visual concepts, such as sacrum, pelvis, cradle, scale, in a kind of rhythm, means that the iconography plays back and forth through observable congruence between shape, scale and texture over several works and results in a subjectively identifiable formal vocabulary (figures 47, 49, 50, 51). The potential to read the triptych format as symbolic of triadic relationships is

another unforeseen element with metaphoric reference to the theoretical work which only became manifest upon subsequent reflection.

I consider that my use of painting and silk-screening can also be read in terms of the maternal and paternal realms, respectively, which I correlate with broad tendencies in twentieth century art, as identified by Drucker (1994:122). Drucker suggests that these tendencies may be seen, on the one hand, in the expressive, and on the other, in the conceptual. The expressive, which refers to the somatic realm, reflects individuality and subjective sensibility, manifests internal energy and activates forms and materials with these energies (see also Burgin 1986:34); the conceptual, which is intellectual, uses form with reduced expressive quality, is unromantic and anti-subjective. Silk-screening in my work stands as a metaphor for the conceptual, the symbolic, and the given order of social language.

The interplay between the technical processes of printing and painting may be considered a form of collage, an intersection between the ready-made symbol akin to the transitional object in view of its pre-existing status, and the artist's production of more subjective symbols. In collage, the juxtaposition of diverse features results in the interchangeability of elements which suggests the possibility of constructing new formal relationships. Collage may therefore be read (Langerman 1995:24) as a metaphor for the possibility of change and perpetual self realisation by the 'subject-in-process'. In addition to the associations articulated above, I consider that my use of collage also provides a means of uniting both written textual and visual elements, and stands for the dialogical interplay between the linguistic and the sensual which metaphor involves, the bringing together of which is a central concern in my research.

Reading of individual works through discussion of iconography and material process

The interpretation of my practical work follows the act of making the images and manifests my privileged position as both producer and first interpreter. This process illustrates the implications of viewing from within and without, synonymous, I have argued, with the maternal and paternal realms, respectively. In my theoretical research I have problematised the dominant use of semiotics as an interpretative

tool due to the way that it fails to account for subjective, unconscious, embodied perceptual response in the viewer. In order to redress this, I use both a semiotic analysis and a method of association to uncover meaning in the work which is akin to dream interpretation. Using both methods means using visual cultural codes, as well as allowing subjective resonance and thus results in readings which I consider apposite to those Bal (1996:39) alludes to in her discussion of the interpretation process as personal, but not idiosyncratic. I have also supplemented these approaches to the iconographic content of the work with a phenomenological reading of materiality and surface, as that which variously evokes haptic or optic modalities in the viewer. I shall now turn to the discussion of my work through these approaches.

Triptych I (figures 43, 44, 45)

This triptych originated from a desire to convey the specific mental state of shame which is most directly represented in the third panel titled *What the body remembers* (figure 45). Through the method of free association and collage in which seemingly disparate references are brought together, I juxtaposed this with the second panel which represents an iconic image of a male figure, titled *What the body represents* (figure 44). These are further linked to the first panel *What the body anticipates* (figure 43), which was a result of the free exploration of material processes. In the third panel I used wax, initially as a means of adhering strips of cloth to the board, and subsequently as an element in encaustic painting. The importance of this medium for my work is discussed further in relation to the last images of the triptych series (figures 52, 53, 54).

Panel I – What the body anticipates

In the first panel the picture plane is organised spatially into horizontal bands, resulting in a top area akin to a shallow shelf. The seated torso which occupies this shelf-like space illustrates the way that one's intentions may shift through the making process as my original impetus for this image was a cross-section engraving of a woman's abdomen depicting her unborn foetus. I had thought that the foetus was the element of visual interest, but observed after making the painting that the significant element was now that of the torso's dismembered legs. This shift of interest from the original point of reference is a secondary kind of displacement: I read the dismembered legs as a metaphor for female castration, of a girl child who lacks

mobility. This reading is emphasised by the text which reads inconclusively: 'I would like', as an expression of unrealised desire and female passivity.

The remainder of the surface is covered with non-referential marks, through which I wished to signify muteness and unintelligibility, as well as with cloth which is used to create a tactile substrate. The bottom left hand section of the painting is filled with a shape articulated in brown paint. This I understand as an attempt to represent my early experience of perceiving the total imprint of paragraphs on a page, which, as a child, I understood to comprise the act of 'reading'. This passage of paint is overlaid with a marks akin to a 'structure of unintelligibility' (Kuspit cited in Maclagen 2001:40), and in combination they are intended to convey the passage from infancy as mute, non-verbal realm to the later childhood experience involving language acquisition and gender construction. The fragment of printed cloth in panel one which conveys the same markings as that of the male figure in panel two marks a passage to reading the body as diagram, sublimating the lived sensual experience of the body with that of apprehension through learnt codes.

Panel II – What the body represents

The central panel opens up a breathing space between the other two panels. This is evocative of a literal space between one image and the other and of the kind of internal psychic space that I am concerned to open up through psychotherapy, in which paradox can be tolerated. The central panel also acts as a space in which the representation of infantile experience in panel one, echoed by the experience of the shamed adult woman in panel three, may be read in relation to the iconic representation of the male in panel two. The male figure whose back is turned from the viewer is thus the Other, against whom these representations of the feminine are read.

Panel III – What the body remembers

The third panel repeats the horizontal demarcation of space across the top section evident in the first, and combines this with a vertical division of space below it. In this third panel the top shelf or space has been vacated by the torso figure, who is now differently represented in each of the two frames below. The space thus articulated suggests that the figures occupy differing temporal and spatial situations. Painting as

an act of mimetic copy offering a window onto an observed world is thus rebutted. The barely visible small figure on the left evokes a garden statue, a female figure who ejects water from her mouth in an act that mimes a small boy urinating and thus demarcating boundary. This metaphor is underscored by the circle of cement which can be read as another kind of demarcation of boundaries. In contrast to the playful quality of the female statue and the sense of movement which it implies is the figure of the adult woman on the right who is immobilised by the shame that causes her to cover her face, as if turned to stone. The stone-like substance out of which the small girl statue is cast is thus echoed, providing a subliminal associative link between the two figures. The woman's stance is suggestive of a state of psychic immobility, of a lack of dynamic movement which would offer the figure a way out of her impasse. The possibility of redemption for this adult figure seems to lie in reclaiming the subversive potential of the small girl statue's lively character, a paradoxical overlay of dynamism within immobility. The work therefore establishes a link between a particular experience of shame in the adult woman, and its precursor, in a primitive sense, of bodily shame in the girl child. In this, the distanced iconographic reading involving the discursive visual reading of codes is offset against the embodied surface as material. The bodily engagement of the viewer, elicited in a manner like that described by Richards (2005:14), is thereby sought; it is a means of allowing empathic response to the shamed figure.

Triptych II (figures 46, 47, 48)

Panel I – Bodily response

This image was born out of free exploration of paint used in a highly fluid way. Case and Dalley (1992:104) suggest in *The Handbook of Art Therapy* that paint as a medium is suited to the emergence of unconscious material due to the way it flows and merges, allowing the manifestation of spontaneous images which are outside conscious intention. This capacity was exploited, and resulted in the image of the woman who appears to be crawling out of the frame of the painting or across the mattress-like support on which she crouches. Her facial expression is ambiguous – and she could be either taunting or grimacing. Initial areas of thin paint, such as the black stain at the top of the panel, have been offset against areas of thick wax encaustic. The encaustic serves to embody the figure, and resulted from my extending the use of beeswax through the addition of tempera pigments while

painting; I improvised what I needed by literally forming the paint on the surface of the board while the wax was warm and malleable. I consider this use of encaustic to manifest what Richards (2005:34) describes when he writes that paint may be conceived of as simultaneously 'object, sign and surface'.

My use of wax as a medium which involves 'boiling down and melting' (Milner 1952:187-188) may be understood as a concern with obliterating boundaries and thereby reshaping or reconfiguring self experience. Wax as a medium is mutable, and metaphorically expresses my concern with the body/psyche as fragile and vulnerable to outer elements. My use of it may therefore be linked with attempts to go beyond the representation of appearance, resulting in a refiguration of the body due to the way that the raised surface interferes with mimetic representation⁷ and thereby holds the possibility of eliciting haptic response in the viewer.

Marks (2000:185) indicates that the kind of engagement which is evoked through the haptic response may draw the viewer into an oscillating movement, between representation as surface and materiality as depth experience. Griselda Pollock (2005:59,48) suggests that the complex interchange between subject and surface can disrupt or initiate different kinds of looking or forms of spectatorship, while Richards (2005:34) suggests that this kind of process offers new ways of knowing or feeling. Marks (2000:184) states: 'The ideal relationship between viewer and image in optical visibility tends to be one of mastery, in which the viewer isolates and comprehends the objects of vision. The ideal relationship between viewer and image in haptic visibility is one of mutuality.' Haptic visibility, she writes, does not isolate and demarcate objects but is 'simply co-present with them' in a manner which is more intimate (Marks 2000:164,170). She suggests that in contrast, optical representation allows greater distance between perceiver and object and thereby allows the perceiver to project himself into the object (Marks 2000:166,188).

This painting which is constructed so that both the surface and the iconography are asserted, I consider able to elicit the simultaneous response of haptic and optic modalities in the viewer. The resultant shift in viewer identification between intimacy

⁷ See Henderson (1997:42).

and distance may afford an ambivalent relationship to the iconographic elements of the painting. Thus the association between the fleshed figure and the set of tools which lie beneath her is ambiguous – the viewer may be unsure whether the tools represent the figure's repressed thoughts, due to their vertical shapes and implied movement upwards, or whether they represent some kind of evidence, laid out on a surface marked like the ledger of a book. The torn image on the right, made by my son, was included for its evocative shape. Associations with shame and judgement are further elicited through the visual connection between the page-like surface and the stain of black ink above the figure, evocative of the phrase 'blotting one's copy book'. The interpretation of the imagery which is reflected here emerged after the unplanned process of making.

Panel II – Found title: weighing and wanting

This image, which depicts a heavy scale in the bottom section of the painting and an indistinct rendition of figures above, borrows from the artist William Kentridge its title and the dominant visual reference of a scale. It is a literal and metaphoric representation of indecision, as a state in which one holds balance between two equally strong counter opposing forces, making reference not only to the paired bodies within the panel but also to the images in panels one and three. My use of silk-screen has ensured that the figurative element of the scale may always be returned to, a visual armature which can be refound, even after the processes of blurring and smearing and writing over which painting entails. Klein understands the need for reproducibility in image making as a defence against ambiguity. She states: '[T]he urge to make an exact reproduction of the object links with the uncertainty about internal happenings and objects, which contributes to the obsessional need to cling to exact descriptions, be it by writing, drawing or other means' (Klein cited in Jacobus 1995:39).

I consider that silk-screening as repeatable motif has provided a means for me to access this need for certainty, and in so doing has afforded me greater freedom within the painting process itself. The certain demarcation implicit in the repeatable silk-screened image has allowed me to take greater risks with paint as uncertain boundary, to risk losing the image in paint completely. The separation into two distinct material processes each of which allows for differing expressive needs to be

met – silk-screening as manifestation of separability and paint as fluid source of erasing boundaries – has allowed me to hold greater ambivalence towards the subject, instead of forcing an image to resolve contradiction within a single rendition of the subject-matter. I consider this process analogous to Winnicott's (1974:104) notion of sustaining creative paradox between seeming opposites. Thus the use of medium is aligned with the content of the work.

Panel III – Shame faced

A male figure occupies a stage-like space, and is flanked by two vertical divisions which could be curtains, through which two arms appear. The title sets up a narrative and conceptual expectation in the viewer, and the central figure is, therefore, assumed to be the one who is shame-faced. The mask-like face of the figure is red, as is his hand. An association is thereby set up between the hand, possible source of the shame, and the face of the figure. The bowed legs of the figure indicate physical unease and position the viewer so that the point of engagement is at the feet, historic site of abasement, thus eliciting an empathic response to the suggested humiliation as conveyed. A further example of visual displacement is evident in the sketched depiction of the microphone on the right – reminiscent of the recording devices used in a press conference – a device which adds to the sense that the figure is being publicly exposed. The microphone is shaped like a penis, the sight of which we are denied as the figure covers himself with his hand, in a gesture similar to that used in depictions of Adam throughout Western art history, thereby underscoring the visual suggestion that the source of the shame is sexual. It is through further association and displacement that we then attribute to the hand covering the genitals and by extension the genitals themselves, the property of redness like the hand on the right. This serves to heighten the suggestion that the image concerns sexual shame.

Richards (2005:18) suggests that the gesture of a pointing finger signifies touch or the haptic modality. In the painting under discussion, the two pointing fingers both literally and metaphorically touch the naked figure that appears pushed into a staged arena by the anonymous arms which contain him. The arms, obviously representing more than one figure, are clothed and suggestive of authority, while the vulnerability of the central protagonist's state is reinforced through his lack of covering. The body

of the central figure has been painted in wax that has been visibly scored and marked, as if flayed, thereby extending the reference to ignominy.

This painting manifests the way that the artist may set up contradictory experiences of both empathetic and distanced response for the viewer through differently orchestrating the haptic and optical registers. The surface of this painting is highly tactile and the image has been literally modelled out of raised encaustic which invites a haptic reading, while the space that the central figure occupies is a fairly naturalistic one which lends itself to an optical and iconographic reading as provided earlier. It is only upon close examination that the viewer can discern the packaging tape on the right hand side as a collaged element, as that which is intended to subvert the optical or literal reading of the space through an assertion of the picture plane. Richards (2005:14) suggests that if the viewer is placed in an unstable relation to the differing experiences of haptic and optical looking within a single image, displacement in the perceptual process can occur. In the context of the image under discussion, I consider that the shift in the differing perceptual registers results in ambivalence towards the figure: is he victim or perpetrator? The relationship between the male figure in panel three and the female figure in panel one is conveyed as highly unstable, even violently ambivalent.

Triptych III (figures 49, 50, 51)

Panel I – Cradle/Sacrum

Each of the paintings in this cycle was made separately and, only subsequent to this process, put into relation with the other panels. The mood of these paintings, which is much lighter than those of the other triptychs, is due to the subject matter – the imaginary representation of a pre-birth baby. The first image shows a sacrum, which has been screen printed onto a white ground. Below this is a ground of crayon marks drawn by my son, which I appropriated for the work. The image was based on a personally significant dream, which had as its central image a cradle-like scale. This motif has become important to the development of a personal iconography, the evolution of which can be seen in this cycle. The sacrum has not been placed in relation to the red ground beneath it due to the sense I wished to convey of its spatiality, the source of the bodily sense of movement and the rhythmic rocking that it affords the uterine child.

Panel II – Sacrum/Fulcrum

This image shows an infant's head, clown-like in her stylisation. She rests on the fleshy muscle that lines the sacrum, on which, it is suggested, the foetus may bounce during its uterine life. The curlicue shape to the left of the infant's head references the ovaries as place of origin, as well as providing an irreverent association with a cell-phone earpiece. This reference, as well as the image of the plug painted by my son, which I included as a found object, alludes to the waiting life outside the womb which, the image suggests, has already made its presence felt in the supposedly hermetic uterus.

Panel III – Scale/measure

The final image in the triptych series is of a scale, which repeats in the dimly formed weighing pan that rests on the base, the shape of the sacrum. The repetition is carried not only visually but also through the titles, so that an association is set up between the cradle, the sacrum, and the scale. The link is thus made to a cradle as place of measurement, site of assessment and control. These associations are ironically made due to the comic-like 'face' that the scale and the plug suggest.

Triptych series IV (figures 52, 53, 54)

These panels resulted from my wish to make my own silk-screened images, in order to have a personally significant 'alphabet' of ready-made forms, reflective of those visual motifs I found evocative. I wished to combine the processes of painting and collage, making the collaged element itself conform more closely to my subjective needs. I understand this as a desire to bring the given, the textual and the outer into closer relationship with the personal.

Panel I – Muteness/mutability

The first panel of this triptych comprises text, which has been silk-screened and then worked over with wax so that the underlying image is almost obliterated. This image is a representation of my early experience of apprehending the total shape of a printed page in a book as described earlier. I consider that reading and verbal language may operate not only as a means of communication but also as sophisticated defences, which I am concerned to redress through the non-verbal act

of making paintings. In this image, the text operates visually, as a wall of words which represents demarcation, through which the subject is defined but also rigidly kept out. It refers to the notion that while language allows us access to a social world of shared and communicable meanings, it also involves the loss of subjective and diffuse bodily experience.⁸

My use of wax in this regard is significant. In reflecting on the symbolic nature of heat and melting as elements of creative work, Milner suggests that it manifests a concern with the materialisation of the symbolic itself, with 'burning off some of the real qualities of the symbol' (Milner cited in Nixon 2005:205). My work with this medium, involving warmth and viscosity, cooling and hardening, may thus be understood as metaphor for softening the boundaries between the semiotic and symbolic realms. Nixon (2005:206) reflects that Milner understands this kind of interest in malleable materials as a concern to 'soften up' and come to terms with reality, and also as manifestation of the relationship between symbolic representations and bodily phantasies. I consider that she refers to something similar to that described by Richards (2005:16) when he reflects that '[p]assive medium becomes passionate materiality'.

Panel II – Cultural edifice

In my search for source material I set myself the limiting condition that the images which I used in the silk-screens had all to be taken from books which I owned – they could not be sourced from 'outside'. I found myself drawn to images found in encyclopedias that I had collected. These encyclopedia's were replacements of ones that I had owned as a child – it felt highly significant that they were in the same editions, even though the information, being thirty years old, was probably out of date. I regard them as talismans of some earlier and important nodes of experience. Many of these books refer to ancient civilization, particularly to Greek culture.

One of the images I selected was of a Greek temple. I found the stacked stones visually congruent with the image of stacked books which I had previously painted (panel three, figure 54). This in turn resonated with the childhood experience of apprehending the shape of printed words on a page as described above. The stones

⁸ See Wright, K. (1991: 261); Wright, E. (c1984:1).

have come to represent words for me, with the barely visible column of the temple symbolic of culture and the phallus. This motif was retrospectively linked with the previously painted fluted leg of the bedside table in panel three. This image was executed as a silk screen in order to underscore the content, which was a concern to represent the acquisition of language as the basis of civilization. In contrast to the later over-painting, which uses the somatic and unique gesture of the artist as a subjective handwriting, the process of silk-screening results in an anonymity of mark making suggestive of the impersonal nature of social language.

Panel III – Bedside reading

This panel, the first painted in the triptych, is conceptually linked with the other two in its reference to books and reading as activities which are highly structuring of my experience. The image is an imaginative recollection of my bedside table which is often piled high with books, and is a result of an intense exploration of materials, including collage and wax encaustic. The highly worked surface conveys something of the density of the multiple texts that are within the books. The lamp acts to demarcate the viewing space as one within the circle of cast light, thus positioning the viewer in a very close relation to the bed and the books, as if they are occupying it. The image is intended to convey something of the sensual and private pleasure, possibly the act of self- isolation that reading often involves.

Shifts in self representation

The images that are referenced in the visual illustrations as numbered below show movement in self representation from the earliest works to the final triptych panels.

Figures 1 and 2 depict self representation through externally observed and fairly conventional self-portraits; these shift in figure 3 to a representation which is more reflective of internal and archaic experience.

Figures 4 and 5 express ideas of self based on drawings of heads found on Roman coins – the Janus figure faces both inwards and outwards, while the other expresses a triangular relationship. The motifs were not consciously sought and their resonance with the theoretical component of my work only emerged two years after their completion.

Figure 6 and 7 depict a male figure and a self portrait, which although externally observed, seem to suggest an interest in inner structure and a freer use of materials.

Figures 8, 9, 10 and 11 show my growing desire to make imaginary images which have a quality of the archaic.

Figures 12, 13 and 14 show an image in which I used my two yearold son's drawing (which I understand to represent his emergent self) as a substrate, a painting in which I worked over another of his drawings in order to reflect my own sense of bodily proprioception, and an image of a dream in which I was concerned to articulate figure and ground, image and material.

Figures 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 are images which extend the idea of proprioception into the realm of internal objects where phantasies of the mother's body predominate. The bases for the works were either dream images or the attempt to represent the experience of occupying a body from the inside.

Figures 20 and 21 combine found objects as collage materials with imaginative elements, reflecting an interest in the interplay between the real or concrete and the phantasied. I consider that they reflect my growing capacity to tolerate paradox as an aspect of the creative process.

Figures 22, 23 and 24 show both the use of tape or bandage as metaphor for the psychic processes of binding and establishing boundaries and the emergence of text as a visual and conceptual element.

Figures 25 and 26 combine the use of binding and collaged elements with internally imagined forms.

Figures 27, 28, 29 and 30 are imaginary representations of occupying a body from within.

A trajectory of self representation, derived initially from actual external observation and concluding with images drawn from inner imagining, is thus complete.

Conclusion

A prayer for good governance, even for joy
(inscription on Hylton Nel ceramic figure).

I began my research by examining the relationship between the non-verbal world of art and the pre-verbal world of infancy. I was motivated by the desire to rescue what is left over from language and our experience as adult speaking beings, that which I felt art and psychoanalysis may direct us to. Rather than allowing me an understanding of art as the return to the pre-verbal, my non-verbal/pre-verbal enquiry exposed the need for nuance and integration in my thinking. For example, the conceptual limitations of considering art as either pure image or as purely visual text became apparent¹. My research was thus concerned to locate a theoretical space in which these and other seeming dualities could be integrated. The dominant divide that emerged in the contemporary literature on art, which I understand to parallel that which exists between the object relations and post-structuralist traditions, I consider to be between the status of the bodily and the linguistic. I had thought my research would involve 'proving' the importance in art of the infantile realm of fusion and its relation to the maternal but postulate, through my own creative practice and through my reading of theory, that art manifests *both* this *and* a state of separateness which implicates the paternal, both a mute bodily sense and the 'spoken' articulation provided by language.²

In order to arrive at this conceptualisation, I had to understand the relationships of infant/mother and infant/mother/father (which psychoanalysis articulates in terms of the dyadic or two-person and the triadic or three-person, respectively) as structural

¹ See Mitchell 1994:246 for the problematisation of this relationship.

² See Fletcher and Benjamin (1990:26-28).

models. I could then understand that structural definitions of the art object as symbol³ and of aesthetic experience⁴ correspond to the *joint* structure of both the dyadic and triadic relationships. The structures under my investigation – the psyche, the art object, and its particular relationship to metaphor, and aesthetic experience – have modelled a ‘third way’, where dualisms are held in dynamic tension but not resolved in favour of either component. This third way speaks of the creative potential of paradox (Winnicott 1974:xii,16) as a kind of psychic intercourse (Segal 1991:95; Wright 1991:263) which produces a new reality. It also speaks of the conditions under which symbolisation, art making, agency and social connectedness occur (Winnicott 1974: 15,114,116; Milner 1950:107).

I began to make links between these concepts by applying a working definition of the art object. This definition, suggested by psychoanalyst and art historian Ernst Kris (1952:255-256), postulates that the art object is a symbol which triggers primary process thinking in the viewer, yet also has aesthetic distance. I found it possible to apply Kris’s definition of the art object by linking the concept of the dyadic/maternal realm with primary process thinking and the triadic/paternal realm with aesthetic distance, as a kind of secondary process thinking. I could therefore conceive of the art object as a composite of conjoined maternal and paternal symbols. I could then explore the particular ways that each aspect manifests itself in the experience of art by the following means: more clearly separating out the relationship between the body and materiality in abstract painting; considering the implications of art for the concept of intersubjectivity; understanding the relationship between verbal and visual language; and examining the constituent elements of aesthetic experience. I could also use this framework to frame my central enquiry into art’s role in creating subjective meaning and social interconnection through corporeal ‘maternal’ presentational symbols and discursive ‘paternal’ symbols as manifest in metaphor.

My subsequent exploration of the above themes coalesced around one dominant idea. This was that, in art, the outer, determined and social nature of language as paternal structure is imaginatively deconstructed and repatterned through the

³ As defined by Kris (1952:255-256); see also Deri (1984:252).

⁴ As defined by Podro (2003:3).

maternal element of materiality, resulting in original poetic and metaphoric structures which allow new private and social meanings to be formed. The resultant self-created, idiosyncratic and private use of language as structure and as symbol speaks of a capacity for magical creativity, primary process thinking and fusion.

This 'primary creativity' is theorised as the source of all later creativity in the individual, allowing the sense that that which it creates is valued and is the basis for a meaningful sense of subjectivity or the authentic 'true self' (Winnicott cited in Phillips 1988:127). This is in contrast to the 'false self' which results from adapting through compliance to the demands of an outer impinging environment too early and a split between mind and soma. The relationship of the false self to language may be understood as such: language offers social opportunities in terms of our ability to communicate with others, but it prescribes possibilities that are not necessarily consonant with our subjective experience. Language then stands for the myriad other ways in which a form of compliance, an erasure of subjectivity, may result in our being socially present but lacking a sense of psychic agency and aliveness.

I therefore consider that the ability to create the poetic or metaphoric structure of the art object is linked to and confirms subjective agency. Art represents a way of (re)-finding, retrieving a sense of personal idiom through which to speak the self. It uses the language of the social or three-person structure, but draws from moments of fusion and the primary process which come from the realm of the two-person structure. It is in the interplay between these two modes of being that both a sense of social connectedness and aliveness or personal agency is found. I thus consider that through the art object the artist creates and makes socially available his subjective idiom.

This process of articulating subjective idiom through the art object involves the exploration of the difference between the material itself and what the artist wishes it to symbolise. This exploration is realised through actual and phantasied gestures of aggression towards the medium, which may stand for a kind of otherness. The manner in which the artist combines highly developed sensitivity towards the medium with recognition of its otherness is akin to the experience of the infant in the process of separating from the mother, resulting in a capacity for intersubjective relating. This capacity results in a greater awareness and appreciation of reality by the infant, as

well as in an appreciation of the other as like subject. I postulate that the articulation of the artist's subjective idiom may evoke a corresponding experience in the viewer.

My understanding that the experience of the artist and the viewer are in certain respects comparable led to an exploration of aesthetics and interpretation. Thus I problematised the *scope* of the common experience – with whether the viewer is involved in reading an image which uses shared social codes, with universal bodily apprehension or with a sense of fictive unity with the image.⁵ It also led me to consider the allied nature of aesthetic experience. I conclude that the viewer's aesthetic experience of the art object encompasses the bodily states of fusion and of separation, as well as movement between these modes. Following Michael Podro (2003) I understand this movement to be comprised of two elements. Firstly, an oscillation between fusion (intuition) and separation (understanding) sustained by the imagination within the aesthetic moment, with this moment experienced by the viewer as one of fusion; and secondly, a secondary progression in time along an axis from affective merger with the art work to the subsequent cognitive desire for interpretation through discursive language. These correspond to the experience of the work 'from within' (synonymous with the dyadic structure) and 'without' (synonymous with the triadic structure).

I conclude by suggesting that art fosters the oscillating movement between fusion and separation and the imaginative identification between self and other which characterises healthy self experience. *Thus: the art object may be defined as an object which comprises an internal structural relationship between presentational and representational symbols in which both are held in dynamic tension, evoking the imagination of maker and viewer in the construction and reconstruction of this structure, and involving the simultaneous experience of primary process thinking and psychic distance, which is manifest in both bodily and linguistic response.* In response to the question 'Does art think?' framed in *Art and Thought* by Griselda Pollock (2003: 129-155), I suggest it addresses that which we have not yet been able to think but know in our bodies; that which we can think through language

⁵ See Silverman (1983) for a discussion of the subject's visual structuring as theorised by the discourse of 'The Gaze', also Olin (1996:208-219); Bryson (1983).

(comprised of both verbal and visual representations); and the imaginative *movement* between these two realms.

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Fig 1. Self presentation (2001). Charcoal, black and white ink, white PVA on fabriano paper, 42.5 x 59.



Fig 2. Self presentation (2001). Black and white ink, white PVA, tempera pigment on plan print, 61.5 x 85.5.



Fig 3. Self presentation (2001). Black and white ink, white PVA, tempera pigment on plan print, 61.5 x 85.5.



Fig 4. Janns/ two faced (2001). Black PVA paint on recycled Cartridge, 30 x 42.



Fig 5. Triad (2001). Black PVA paint on recycled cartridge, 30 x 42.



Fig 6. Interior form: from behind (2001). Bootpolish, varnish, 46 x 64.



Fig 7. Interior form: facing self (2001). Woodstain, 46 x 64.



Fig 8. Instinctual energy (2001),
Woodstain, 29.5 x 42.



Fig 9. Dark figure (2001). Woodstain,
29.5 x 42.



Fig 10. Small figure from above (2001).
Woodstain, 29.5 x 42.



Fig 11. Working through (2001).
Woodstain, 29.5 x 42.



Fig 12. Body/ space I (2001). Black and white ink, white PVA, tempera pigment on plan print, 61.5 x 85.5.



Fig 13. Body/ space II (2001). Black and white ink, white PVA, tempera pigment on plan print, 61.5 x 85.5.



Fig 14. Body/ space III (2001). Black and white ink, chalk, charcoal, 64 x 91.



Fig 15. Pestle (2003). Dilute stoep paint, 64 x 92.



Fig 16. Cusp (2003). Dilute stoep paint, 64 x 92.



Fig 17. Inside us (2003). White PVA, woodstain, tempera pigment, red stoep paint on pressed paper board, 62 x 93.



Fig 18. Nest (2003). Varnish collage, wax crayon, black paint, 46 x 64.



Fig 19. Immovable grief. Like a stone. Varnish and charcoal, 64 x 92.



Fig 20. Hidden desires (2003). Stoep paint, collage, 64 x 92.



Fig 21. Hard/soft (2003). Charcoal, newspaper collage, 64 x 92.

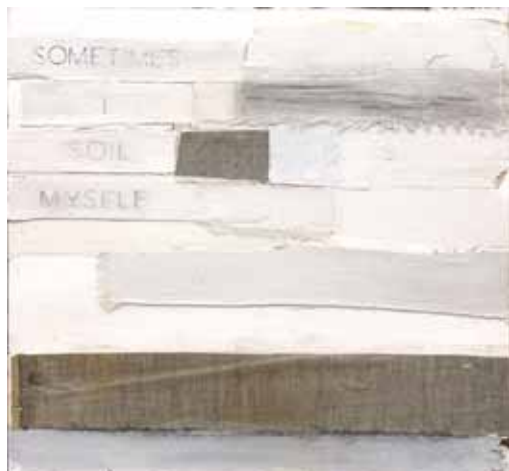


Fig 22. Omnipotent dream (2003). Fabriano paper, white PVA, tape, paint, newspaper, ballpoint pen, collage, 27.5 x 25.5.



Fig 23. Dream/ mark/ edge (2003). Brown liner card, oil, white PVA, packaging tape, type-writer ink, 45 x 7 x 61.



Fig 24. Inner Landscape (2001). Brown liner card, charcoal, ink, collage, packaging tape, 115 x 60.



Fig 25. Bad dream (2003). Sheeting, newspaper, collage, fabric strip, woodstain, white and black PVA, red stoep paint, 36.2 x 41.



Fig 26. Inner landscape II (2003). Newspaper collage, fabric strip, woodstain, white and black PVA, red stoep paint, acrylic glaze, black and white ink, shoe polish, 1030 x 1080.



Fig 27. Shrapnel (2003).
Sheeting, white oil paint, red
stoep paint, white tempera
pigment, 31.5 x 63.2.



Fig 28. Inchoate form (2004). White PVA,
woodstain, tempera pigment, red stoep
paint on pressed paper board, 62 x 93.



Fig 29. Incubus (2004). White PVA,
woodstain, tempera pigment, red stoep
paint on pressed paper board, 62 x 93.



Fig 30. Scaffold (2004). White PVA,
woodstain, tempera pigment, red stoep
paint o pressed paper board, 62 x 93.



Fig 31. Free association 1 (2004).
Woodstain, beeswax, tempera, 30 x 24



Fig 32. Free association 2 (2004).
Beeswax, woodstain, tempera pigments,
charcoal, cardboard, 30 x 24.



Fig 33. Free association 3 (2004).
Beeswax, woodstain, tempera pigments,
charcoal, 30 x 24.



Fig 34. Free association 4 (2004).
Beeswax, woodstain, tempera pigments,
charcoal, 30 x 24.



Fig 35. Free association 5 (2004).
Beeswax, woodstain, tempera pigments,
charcoal, 30 x 24.



Fig 36. Free association 6 (2004).
Beeswax, woodstain, tempera pigments,
charcoal, 30 x 24.



Fig 37. Free association 7 (2004).
Beeswax, tempera pigments, 30 x 24.



Fig 38. Free association 8 (2004).
Beeswax, tempera pigments, 30 x 24.



Fig 39. Free association 9 (2004).
Beeswax, woodstain, tempera pigments,
charcoal, 30 x 24.



Fig 40. Free association 10 (2004).
Beeswax, woodstain, tempera pigments,
30 x 24.



Fig 41. Free association 11 (2004).
Graphite, 30 x 24.



Fig 42. Free association 12 (2004).
Beeswax, woodstain, tempera pigments,
30 x 24.



Fig 43. What the body anticipates (2004). Oil/ water based beeswax, varnish, woodstain, tempera pigments, paper, silk screened cloth and sheeting, 62.5 x 95.



Fig 44. What the body represents (2004). Stoep paint on board, 62.5 x 95.



Fig 45. What the body remembers (2004). Oil, water based beeswax, varnish, woodstain, tempera pigments, paper, silk screened cloth and sheeting, 62.5 x 95.



Fig 46. The Cusp of ego & instinct (2004). Oil, water based beeswax, varnish, woodstain, tempera pigments,



Fig 47. Weighing and wanting (found title) (2005). oil, water based beeswax, woodstain, tempera



Fig 48. Shame faced (2005). Oil, water based beeswax, varnish, woodstain, tempera pigment,

paper on primed board, 62.5 x 95.

pigments, silk screened paper on primed board,
62.5 x 95.

paper, packaging tape on primed board, 62.5 x 95.



Fig 49. Cradle/ sacrum (2005). Packaging tape, crayon on manilla board, silkscreen ink on prepared board, 62.5 x 95.



Fig 50. Sacrum/ fulcrum (2005). Oil, water based beeswax, varnish, woodstain, tempera pigments, collage, cloth and paper on prepared board, 62.5 x 95.



Fig 51. Scale/ measure (2005). Varnish, woodstain, tempera pigments, silkscreen on prepared board, 62.5 x 95.



Fig 52. Muteness/ mutability (2005). Oil, water based beeswax, varnish, woodstain, tempera pigments, paper, cloth on primed board, 62.5 x 95.



Fig 53. Cultural edifice (2005). Oil, water based beeswax, varnish, woodstain, tempera pigments, paper, cloth on primed board, 62.5 x 95.



Fig 54. Bedside reading (2005). Oil, water based beeswax, varnish, woodstain, tempera pigments, enamel paint, paper collage on primed board, 62.5 x 95.