RELATIONSHIP IN THE FIELD OF DESIRE

Part One

WORKING THROUGH CONDENSATION
AN IMAGINARY COSMOGONY

Part Two

THE TOURIST AND THE TOURIST TOUT

© Jann Dark (B.A. Hon’s)

Doctor of Creative Arts
March 2006

University of Western Sydney
I would like to thank the University of Western Sydney for its support over the duration of my studies, both in my undergraduate and postgraduate study. Special thanks go to Professor Raja Jayaraman and Terry Hayes for their perceptive and supportive supervision.

Thanks also go to the lecturing staff and technicians within the Fine Arts Department, who have supported my work.

I would like to thank Sudhakar Dalvi and his family for their generosity and time. Thanks to Ellen for her support over the years and my fellow students who have contributed towards the development of my work.
This thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree at this or any other institution. The work presented in this thesis is to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - date - -
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
# Table of Contents Part One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations Part One</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents Part Two</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations Part Two</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface (to Part One)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1</strong> Passion as Foundation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2</strong> Tantra</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3</strong> Cosmogony</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunyata</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aniconic Stones</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caves</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bija</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kama</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 4</strong> &quot;Sudhakar Dalvi Speaks&quot;</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filmography and Videography</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Works</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Illustrations  Part One

Fig 1  Jann Dark. “Aniconic stones” Photograph ..... 58
## Table of Contents Part Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1 The Connecting Pair</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Desire</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Histories and Conceptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Desire</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalism Desire and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fascination</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potent Fascination</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2 Sources of Repression</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalism</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationalisations of Capitalism</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo–Liberal Capitalism</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3 The Imaginary and the Real</strong></td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character 1: The Tourist</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If Laura went to India</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra luggage</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part Two con’t,

Character 2: The Tout ......................... 96
Sudhakar ............................................ 96
Imran and Asoka ................................. 108

Chapter 4  The Field ................................. 113
The Tourist and the Tout ....................... 114
Touring and Touting .............................. 123
Working the Field ................................. 127
The Problem of Fascination .................... 134
Playing the Roles of Fantasy .................. 142
Freedom and the Western Woman .......... 156

Conclusion ........................................ 192
Enabling .......................................... 195

Bibliography ....................................... 199
Filmography ....................................... 205
List of Illustrations Part Two

Fig 1  Killer Jeans advertisement ...................... 187

Fig 2  Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. 1780–1867
       “The Odalisque and Slave” 1839 ............ 191
ABSTRACT

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part One, entitled “Working Through Condensation” describes a type of practice, Part Two, entitled “The Tourist and the Tourist Tout”, unravels and explores what was discovered through that practice.

The intersection of two personal discoveries have been formative in my art practice. The first relates to the Indian Hindu and Buddhist concept of formlessness found in certain Tantric cosmogonies. This began, for me, an interest in the phenomenon of emptiness as an ontological awareness of how “art” or “creativity” happens.

The second event was the hearing of a phrase, which I call a found phrase. The phrase, “working through condensation”, suggested a metaphorical tool for conceptualising my practice, through an analogous use of the process of condensation. I was struck by a similarity between my own conception of the above found phrase and Tantric cosmogony.

In Part One of this thesis, I develop a link between elements in Tantra cosmogony, the found phrase and the Situationist Internationalist practice of dérive as a basis for practice. This thesis has been largely constituted by three research journeys to India, where the conception and results of this practice unfolded.
Part Two is the consequence of the pathway laid down by the practice I outline in Part One. Here, I focus on two groups of people whose relationship with each other, compounded by inequity, is both symbiotic and antagonistic.

How relationship forms in desire, is central to the exploration of the encounter between the tourist and the tourist tout in India. This thesis attempts to challenge the theoretical/ideological separation between conceptions of desire developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and historical materialist inquiry, using both disciplines together to see what a certain relationship looks like. The contention here is that capitalism becomes organic in us and we express its forms, its concerns and aspirations, in our relationships with each other. This limits our potential for both awareness of and understanding of relationship between each other and the world.

What occurs in the relationship between the tourist and the tourist tout indicates the tensions between the processes of belonging to community and self as an Indian, and the powerful incision of representations of Western hegemony, that the tourist themselves come to embody. It shows at the point of close to intimate contact how the narratives of economic and social hegemonies play across the spaces of “other”.
PART ONE

WORKING THROUGH CONDENSATION
AN IMAGINARY COSMOGONY
PREFACE

Part One of this thesis attempts the development of an imaginary creative system based on making a connection between certain aspects of Tantric creation myth and what could be identified as Western orientated conceptions of art practice. It has been necessary in the interests of ensuring a degree of veracity and consistency in relation to my research of Tantra to read both Indian and Western researchers widely. I have included Western conceptions of related subject matter to add depth to the research and to show the differences and similarities in relation to Indian and Western ideas about creation. Part One is divided into four chapters, with an Introduction.

Chapter one positions the research, into a particular theoretical background to contemporary practice, from which the research into Tantra and the explication of the found phrase can be viewed.

The second chapter is a short introduction to what Tantra is, with an acknowledgment of the misunderstandings and misuses of Hinduism generally in regards to Orientalism.
In the third chapter I will develop the metaphoric relationship between the found phrase “working through condensation” and three components of Tantric cosmogony: formlessness, sunya, the seed word, bija; and desire, kama. I will also briefly discuss the use of condensation in psychoanalytic process.

The fourth chapter explores the relationship between the creative component of my thesis, the videos Sudhakar Dalvi Speaks, With and Fascinare, with the written work, and contextualises the video work within contemporary film and video practices.
INTRODUCTION

1

Some important words: *The personal, the story, chance, the unknown, being unknowing and going looking. Dérive, drifting. Relationship, friendship and love. The Foundling.*

There are three interweaving aspects to this thesis, which in turn relate to the making and the content of the accompanying video works. Interweaving to be understood as an image of french knitting, where a single thread is passed through a hole in such a way that it emerges as if it is a braid of three separate threads.

The first thread creates a special space to make a work from. This space is grounded in privileging the personal and is based on a way of practicing that has its genesis in the Situationist International practice of *dérive* and in the possibilities of emptiness. This space is concerned with beginnings. This beginning is not something of origin or an original thing, but an illusion of a beginning that holds a sense of presence.

The second thread is concerned with what happens in that prepared or provided space, expressed in terms of a collaboration between my affected response to the found phrase “working through condensation” and an exploration of a predominantly Hindu Tantric
creation cosmogony. It is the way in which the work happens that is of concern here; of finding a language that can illuminate the internal and external actions that confide to make an image. This is a language that attempts to make an opening that can travel through understanding into connective imaginings, that will provoke a desire to create, to meddle, to transgress limitation.

The third thread relates to the importance of the personal and lived experience and forms the material used in the creative component of this thesis. This involves the meeting of a person who becomes a catalyst for the eventual video work. Occasionally italicized sections occur throughout the text that are personal or anecdotal. This is an expression, within the thesis, of an emotionally qualitative and hermeneutic “disruption” of the academic form, that will provide other windows into the esoteric material. The lived life story stains the esoteric imagining. It is precisely this stain that is the seed of the esoteric. This is echoed in the Tantric notion that samsara (life, the wheel of everyday existence) and nirvana (enlightenment, escaping the wheel of life) are not separated. That the stains, the dirt, the sensuality and the discomforts of living in the body in the community are to be embraced, even indulged, in order, within the Tantric ideal, to reach self understanding and sat cit ananda, eternal bliss, a subjective state of total unity with all in existence.

Lying within these three parts of the thesis, lying within the space created, is the phenomena of finding. The found “thing”, the “foundling”, that holds a yearning, a love, an intrigue or a fascination. The thing that emerges from experience, from out of living that incises itself, for whatever reason, on my consciousness.

In this movement and space of finding is the motion of
wandering, wanderlust, drifting. Taking on an aspect of vagrancy or almost sloth; connecting with the seemingly vague, the deliberate limitation involved in withdrawing from being definitive. This withdrawing is an opening to the confined space of my body and its evanescent, evaporative senses that create an ether like connection into the world around me and at the same time receives the world.

Deliberately letting go of intention, but placing myself within the restrictiveness of a situation I can withhold or contain energy into a place where the visual, haptic, tactile understanding and responses to experience can make their connections. This is a space of both emptying and filling.

The video work for this thesis evolves out of the deliberate placing of myself in this space of drift. In that space a relationship is found that is both carried by empathy, friendship and complicated by fascination. What is this fascination? Something that wants to be found out and connected with. Something that exists, between two, that can extend us into more than just one person. Or fascination at the level of seduction, which the word contains as a suggestion in its meaning:

One could maintain that before having been produced the world was seduced, that it exists, as all things and ourselves, only by virtue of having been seduced.¹

What lies hidden in the dazzle of fascination, is power. It may be expected that the word has something to do with light, but no, its etymology probably derives from a cluster of Greek and Latin words whose meanings are to do with authority, sorcery and bewitchment.

In regards to fascination’s ability to seduce we find the symbol of power used by the Roman magistrate in the fasces, a bundle of sticks with an axe concealed inside. The Latin word fascinare, to “enchant”, “bewitch”, “charm”, comes from Greek words meaning “witchcraft”, “sorcery”, and “to speak”. The Latin words fasciate and fasciated mean “bound with a band”, “to swathe” or “grown together”. The most powerful derivations seem to be the combinations of the words to “bewitch”, “bind”, “swathe” and the hidden axe. Out of fasces, grew the word Fascism.² The power of fascination then, occurs around the combined actions of power concealed and the bundle or the swathe. Concealed power is seductive, the bundle is a sense of collectivity, power in numbers, all belonging to something secretive, to only those gathered around the source (power).

Out of the chance meeting comes the possibility of speech, the saying of words, that through our imagining around words, brings a life into a form that can be seen. Whereas much of my previous work stayed within the process of the unformed intuited sensation evolving into an unspoken image or contained movement, this video work is concerned with the revelation of speech, the proffering of relationship and story. As in Nicolas Bourriaud’s conception of “relational aesthetics”, relationship through the prism of personal experience forms the “mental background” to this thesis and the video work that is part of this thesis.³ The video becomes the condensing of an experience of someone met. Through its own combined action of intense light, vibration and restriction (tamas) it condenses energy to

make an effusive form. The mirage effect and affect of congealed color, intensity, staining for a moment a space or a surface.

2

The focus of Part One of this thesis is to attempt to put into words an experience of the minute, unfoldings that can make a work. An internal/external or social/psychic event, that I call a creative hinge, can both nuance and provoke the desire to create. The creative hinge that interpolates the body of the personal with the medley of the social, takes its birth as a revelation from the found phrase, “working through condensation”.

There is a continual crossing over, or braiding, as I suggested above of the story and the esoteric. A string of interconnecting occurrences start with the discovery of a phrase and the ability to conceptualize process: the experience of a malaise, a sense of restriction, the desire to travel, a meeting, resulting in relationship. These occurrences form a condensation that provokes the eventual video work. Condensation as the action that evolves an image or the desire to create is not linear, but acts on the mind and the senses kaleidoscopically, or as something rounding and fluid that continuously crosses into and back over itself; to make it three dimensional and questioning of itself so that it can lift off, into image or word. It is a combined psychological and kinaesthetic, even, on a creative level, psychosomatic, response to experience. The meeting between myself and the Indian hawker Sudhakar Dalvi, who is touting for the tourist’s custom, occurs at the level of the pragmatic and chance or the force of a combined need beginning to articulate itself
as the edging or a manifestation of desire. The ensuing fascination envelopes the pragmatic and the everyday experience into the possibility of a layer of life suggested by an immanent/connective event that becomes a creative hinge.

The creative hinge acts as a message, it both, shows and is what excites attention. That combination of showing and being what it shows is indicative of its force as an uncompromising need for expression and eventual understanding. The word hermeneutics derives both, from the God Hermes, who in Greek mythology, invented language and was the divine messenger of the Gods, and the Greek word hermenuein. Hermeneuein means to interpret. According to Bruce Krajewski it, “is that exposition which brings tidings because it can listen to a message.”

Hermes delivered the oracles, the words of destiny, often ambiguous riddles using confusing juxtapositions of imagery, like dreams or visions. In ancient Greece, columns with the bust of Hermes on top were called Herm or Herma and were used as signposts or boundary markers. The creative hinge as an immanent/connective action/sign, as the action precipitating imagination, is a hermeneutic act, because it is a listening. It listens to the formations of condensation. It is the movement of creative action as it occurs at a psycho/physical level, at the formative level, before expression.

I use the word hermeneutic because although much of this writing approaches an immanent edge it also draws on those vagaries which exist within the story that earth, slip in and muddy the

---

in dwelling. In this sense of the word, I use it, as Wilhelm Dilthey does, as a way to show possibilities of interpretation that reveal social and human patterns as the “external expressions of human experience and activity”,\(^5\) that disrupt or compel narratives. This suggests a personal subjectivity that elucidates the experience of the text or cultural practice from a personal basis.

Connectivity and immanence are meanings that I use together, asking the reader to try and sense the actions of these words as combined. Tantra could be described as immanent and transcendent, because the transcendent experience of \textit{sat cit ananda} (bliss) or the arousal of the \textit{sahasrara chakra} above the crown of the head in Kundalini yoga, is entirely and continuously, dependent upon the experience of concentrated innerness; of Being in the Body, in matter. But this concentrated innerness can only transcend into its idealised joy through the process of connecting, breath to air, body to surface (world), the material.

The phrase “working through condensation” was used by a local parish priest in South Australia to describe the transcendental experiences of worshippers when the damp plaster walls of the church seemed to show the Virgin Mary.\(^6\) But perhaps because this phrase results from an occurrence where the wall reveals Mary, Mary becomes embodied, the transcendent is earthed.

Immanent/connective refers to a body based practice, that grounds the transcendent striving for “enlightenment” or \textit{sat cit ananda} in everyday living, in the present. Joy is in the present, in the

body. The Tantric cosmogony acts in metaphoric relation with the unraveling of the found phrase, “working through condensation” as I bring it to ground, to the body, to cohabit with the vagaries of Hindu Tantrism. This is the immanence of the personal which must confront itself in the material.

The personal story lies behind all theory and philosophy. The personal story challenges hegemonic control of the making of history, and the pervasive and overarching media of film and television. The superficiality of tourism and its use of an impersonal aesthetics of difference is also questioned by the personal. By this I mean the aesthetic of the cultural “other” as a picture, as representing a flavour of a culture, the exotic templating of individuals within and because of their difference to the dominant world-view of the onlooker.

A method that looks for the entanglements, the gray areas, the other sides to the material used, questions the separation of either choosing to write about the social and political or choosing to write about what could be loosely termed spiritual or esoteric. As if these two facets of human experience are unquestionably theoretically opposed and cannot exist within the same body of work. I am interested in the way they can entwine, in the ways they inform each other and the ways they oppose and are in conflict. This is precisely the action suggested by the metaphor for creation I am building. The embodied process of the condensing of experience is the groundwork for the marriage of the personal experience of living which engages the conflicts of the experience of self with the pressures of the social. The performance artist, Joanna Frueh, in
her book *Erotic Faculties*, writes in support of what she calls “erotic scholarship”:

...elucidation and evocation are not mutually exclusive; elliptical writing is not superficially visionary or utopian, for it conveys the reality of inconclusiveness and logical evaluation cannot serve as the only means of interpreting thought.\(^7\)

That “inconclusiveness”, is the very area where the hermeneutic finds itself, as the thing, the aspect of something that falls through the nets of categorizations within the text. It is a sensual, feeling/sense based experience that evolves the intellectual. From Freuh again, on the etymology of the words sense and sentence, sentiment and sentience which share:

...the latin root sentire, to feel, perceive, sense. To entirely distinguish intellect from the senses is a mistake. Through intellect a person discriminates and evaluates, but she does so through sense and the senses as well. Sense and the senses are erotic faculties that aid intellection, spawn sentiment(ality), and inspire sentences that seduce the soul—and—mind—inseparable—from—the—body.\(^8\)

Frueh suggests that we may be looking for a relationship between the political and what she identifies as the spiritual, which I refer to as the immanent/connective. This would be a relation of equals which would result in bringing the body (she refers to the feminine, but I extend it to the human body), back into “a state of comfort, which is the lost homeland of the body.”\(^9\) It could be both a political act and an act of claiming the immanent/connective. She calls on the notion of “body consciousness” which would result in

---

\(^8\) Ibid., p 12.
\(^9\) Ibid., p 114.
perceiving the “body as a base of knowledge.” Mind is in the body experience. Knowledge wrought through sensual experience may not always be comfortable, however, which would suggest one reason why humans set up systems and dogmas against the full experience of the body.

The erotic that Frueh speaks of is one of a “state of arousal” over the “richness” of life. This is an erotic, it could be argued, that is knocked out of the child to adult and replaced by a fear or “erotophobia”, which could be identified as a fear of ambiguity, of those things that fall outside of the categorical, the planned and the known. There is a fear of spiritual experiences in the body or a fear of anything that falls outside of the experience of learning that is unplanned. This is a fear that could extend to the social or political. It would be a fear that hides behind, and takes solace in, the dogmatic of any spiritual or political persuasion.

Fear of the ambivalent is a fear of the unknown. The occurrence of ambivalence is the opening to a deeper understanding of life. The ambiguous and the ambivalent are like “body conscious” questions that the dogmatic would rather not here. Ambivalence questions hegemonies.

In an article on the role of ambivalence in the work of the Argentinean artist Diego Reboredo Ferrari, Nikos Papastergiadis reminds us of folkloric wisdom that does not deny the presence of ambivalence. The Tantric practice of working with the ambivalence and vagaries of desire could be likened to such an acceptance.

10 Ibid., p 114.
11 Ibid., p 2.
There is a point at which the acceptance of the ambiguous or ambivalent can cause the collapse of the "boundaries of otherness", as subjection and objecthood dissolve. For Peggy Phelan, "It is the attempt to walk (and live) on the rackety bridge between self and other – and not the attempt to arrive at one side or the other – that we discover real hope." Real hope lies not in being rigidly self and not in being or setting up rigid others, but is found by being in relationship with the dynamics of the connections that transform, dissolve and reform self and another.

There is a danger in this as well, continuing the hermeneutic ploy from above, and that is the ambivalence inherent in political non-speak, or ambivalence hidden within clichés, in order to avoid the truth.

Dogma demands an absolute and predetermined fit between the sign and its interpretation. The power of this absolute fit colludes with the promises that truths and errors are always fixed. Reassuring as it may be, the security of this symmetry rests on denials and exclusions.

This is why the flexibility of the personal is needed. From Paul Ricoeur, "Reflection is blind intuition if it is not mediated by what Dilthey called the expressions in which life objectifies itself."

A famous precedent to this approach is the notion born out of feminist politics that the personal cannot continue to be separated...
from the public and the political. Suzanne Lacy likens “the personal is political” to a *koan* that feminist and political artists kept in their minds, in order, she says, “to maintain the value of private experience and personal expression...”¹⁷ What I am attempting in this paper is the construction of a creation cosmogony as an act of claiming a space for personal experience as an expression/production of the relational.

Chapter 1

PASSION AS FOUNDATION

One way to make art is to ground it in personal experience. This might sound overly obvious; that is, that all art is personal. What might differ, is the degrees by which the material and content of the work is shown as pertaining to the artist or an issue. Or, on the other hand, the level of adherence to a form which might dominate through which the personal is channeled, in a way that is not overtly made to be seen as connected to the artist, but universalized.

What do I mean by a “personal” form of working? At its extreme point it is where the artist, performatively gives their account of a life experience in such a way that the personal experience is seen to operate starkly in partnership with what is external but effective on the artists life. This draws into consciousness the relationships between the institute, state and the individual, focussing the markings of the institutions of the state into the body.

The overtly personal has come to be an objective of feminist and political artists from the late sixties and early seventies throughout the world, as a means of countering hegemonic systems. It
was necessary to break with certain art styles which had come to be unwittingly associated with hegemonic systems, precisely because they could be universalized and interpreted as purely aesthetic, hovering above the personal issues of people living within troubled and repressive societies. Whatever the political affiliations and concerns of the artist may have been, their work due to its form, was easily de-contextualised or re-contextualised or as indicated above began to exist outside of a lived context, in a disassociated aesthetic realm. This of course is only because such a form of practicing was privileged over others, which had the effect of silencing other ways of practicing art. One example of this is the institutionalisation, of Abstract Expressionism in the 1960s, sometimes referred to as High Modernism. That entry into the academic eventually stole its bid for emotional and expressive freedom and turned it to an adjunct of state power or silence. This paper is concerned with ways of keeping in contact with the personal voice, and finding a way of presenting it that allows the voice to be heard between or above the psycho babble of commodifications. The dangers for art as for all social life, always lie in the establishment of hegemonies, whatever their political or aesthetic denominations. Showing the “personal” came to be the way to express and value the lives of woman and marginalized peoples and to show the impact of political forces on people.

Alan Kaprow devised a series of aims for an art practice that would attempt to side step the commodification of art. One of these was the practice of a “situational” based art that would “break the barrier between art and life”. What he called “happenings”, would influence and converge with the concerns of Performance art, video art, installation and site-specific work. He saw that the “line between

art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps indistinct as possible.” Importantly for this study:

...the source of themes, materials, actions, and the relationships between them [Happenings as well as other styles of art] are to be derived from any place or period except from the arts, their derivatives and their milieu.¹⁹

This way of working necessitated for the most part a flexibility in form. The medium used no longer came to be associated with degrees of skill or life long use and traditional mediums gave way to a more direct use of objects, materials and bodies associated with the feeling or ideas to be expressed. There is a crossover into something more akin to documentation or documentary and individual testimony. It also, it could be argued, gave rise to an imperative to become more sensitive to oneself and others in order to understand the way social forces shape our relationships with self and other. It became important to speak about feeling and emotion and to directly connect these to the body as the experiential site within and on which social systems operated. This often resulted in a way of making art that directly involved the body of the artist and other bodies and involved relational work; work that explicitly dealt with and provoked relationship between people.

The early work of Carolee Schneemann is indicative of this approach. In particular her 1975 work, Interior Scroll, in which she slowly unravels from her vagina a folded scroll that she reads. The scroll is a conversation between a male and female filmmaker, in which the male filmmaker informs her of her irrelevance, according to him, while she stands her ground and ridicules his presumptions of superiority. Schneemann says of this work, “this image seemed to

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 22.
have to do with the power and possession of naming the movement from interior thought to external signification...\textsuperscript{20}

This was an attempt to break down the intellectual structures that modernism had grown on and propagated. Briefly, those intellectual structures are based on a system of separating and classifying according to abstract, objectifying “scientific” hierarchies that are politically advantageous to both Western and Western orientated political systems, within the arena of colonialist aggression, patriarchal systems, capitalism and the centralized economic and political systems of communist states. Objectifying all information, forcing thought and presentation of thought into a paradigm that distances it from the speaker and the listener; denying the subjective and the personal to certain groups; universalizing, splitting content from form, form from context or content from context are all ways of creating a system that has the potential to stifle the voices of individuals and compel the hold of hegemonic systems over peoples lives.

A practice of art showing or speaking personal experience in an explicit way attempts to challenge hierarchical and marginalizing systems. In a work simply titled \textit{Untitled} (2002), the Mumbai artist, Shilpa Gupta, visibly hung her nightdress stained with menstrual blood on the rooftop balcony of her home in a crowded Mumbai suburb. This work confronts the still influential prejudice and fear around women’s bodies and menstrual blood in India today. \textsuperscript{21} Menstrual blood in this instance is the \textit{creative hinge}, a material that holds deep and conflicted social and personal meaning.


Of course, in the community and the Indian Hindu home, art has always been and still is an integral part of religious practice. This aspect of Hindu life: the importance of ritual and the symbolic, is powerfully expressed in the political practice of *Satyagraha*, (insistence on truth). Mahatma Gandhi’s peaceful and symbolic form of protest is an emotionally charged response to community oppression.

Since the mid 1980s, the people of the villages that line the Narmada River in central India have been sitting in *Satyagraha* against the damming of the river and the subsequent drowning of their history and their livelihoods. Sitting in *Satyagraha* for these people is literally sitting for up to 36 hours in water, as the dammed river rises up over their homes and farms. By physically confronting the reality of the dams, putting their bodies in its way, they place a powerful “aesthetic frame” around their protest which, for a while, slowed the building of the dams and caused the World Bank and some international financiers to withdraw from the project.  

The modernist experiment became heavily reliant on change and innovation and developments in art history, seen in a linear perspective as an ever expanding growth towards newness in style, as if new style was at all times the most important stress, as a commodifiable object.

To counter this constant abduction of art into the arena of the commodity and its attendant depersonalization, it is necessary to step outside the boundaries of one’s practice. One way is to allow a

---

merging of life and art in such a way that formulations of the predictable in living and art practice are dispensed with as much as possible.

This becomes especially important, due to an ironic development that has grown out of a late 1970s art movement concerned with pulling art practice back into relationship with issues effecting community. This resulted in a situation where known issues, or what Suzanne Lacy calls “subject–orientated art”, threatens to overlay direct experience and become the guiding principle, rather than a more exploratory and experiential, embodied practice. For Lacy:

...the body exists at a juncture between one’s inner and outer lives—the place where psychological and social phenomena meet in a physiological embrace—and is an instrument that measures the exchanges between the self and others.

The danger in “subject–orientated art”, according to Lacy is that it begins to predetermine people and issues into types of social identity and may in the end silence individual and community voice. This is precisely the point at which art becomes commodity, either as an intellectual or material exchange. The premise I am making here is that the experiential and embodied practice will unearth material that is unconsciously repressed or socially discouraged, in such a way that through an emotionally disruptive or charged affect, will reveal new understandings; “subjectivity is made possible through empathic absorption.”

---

24 Ibid., p 150.
25 Ibid., p 151.
26 Ibid., p 150.
Quoting Arthur Koestler, Garoian, stresses the importance of empathy in art making:

The fluid boundaries of the self as represented in the unconscious mind, confer on it the gift of empathy – *Einfuehling* –\(^{27}\) of entering into a kind of mental symbiosis with other selves. Empathy is a nicely sober, noncommittal term for designating the rather mysterious processes which enable one to transcend [her] his boundaries, to step out of [her] his skin as it were, and put [her] himself into the place of another.\(^{28}\)

Putting oneself in a strange place, without plan may be one method of challenging the known. The aim of challenging the known is not to discover new styles, but new knowledge and understandings. Chance becomes a player and through this the possibility of tapping into the personal unknowns of the artist and finding new relationships with others to learn from: How will I be in this situation? What will happen? Who will I meet? Through the personal unknowns I discover new signs of what I am and how my life is inscribed within the world. I learn and gather new stories about myself and others so that I am always working out of relationship with life and experience.

In 1957 Guy Debord described the Situationist International practice of *dérive* (to drift), as, “...a passional journey out of the ordinary,” that “must be extended to all known forms of human relationships, so as to influence the historical evolution of sentiments like friendship and love.”\(^{29}\)

---

\(^{27}\) Note: *Einfuehling* means empathy.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., p 149.

\(^{29}\) Debord G, quoted in Stiles K and Selz P.1996, p 705.
Dérive as a practice has its origins with the Dadaists and Surrealists. The Dadaists used everyday and ordinary materials with deliberate arbitrariness to unsettle notions of social order. The Surrealists elevated chance and "wanderings of the imagination" to the status of serious methods to reveal the reality and desires of everyday life. To live without goal, to make art that challenged the necessity for meaning and the intentional, to promote everyday domestic materials to the status of art, to look for situations of spontaneous desire, to ramble in the streets without aim, as Breton described it, was to partake "of the wind of circumstance". These were serious provocations of their times which challenged the notion of art as a rarified and elite cultural practice, separate from ordinary life and ordinary people.

Dérive, was the means by which the Situationists' practiced what they called psychogeography, also a practice of the Dadaists. This entailed strolls through the city, "a technique of locomotion without goal." In other words, with no destination, but the actual streets. Dérive and psychogeography are an active form of research that involves looking for what is hidden in the streets and lanes of the city. What is hidden are what the Situationist, Ivan Chtecheglov, called the "forgotten desires" of the people. These can present themselves as "images of play, eccentricity, secret rebellion, creativity and negation." The search was for:

...images of refusal, or for images society had itself refused, hidden, suppressed or recuperated, images of

31 Ibid., p 59.
32 Ibid., p 58.
33 Ibid., p 61.
nihilism, or freedom that society had taken back into itself, co-opted or rehabilitated, isolated or discredited.\textsuperscript{35}

In this way dérive sought out evidence of and encouraged instances of the “playful creation of all human relationships”.\textsuperscript{36} It was a search for new understandings and encounters with people that would both reveal the effects of capitalist, spectator society and find ways to undermine its control, that is to establish relationship to a place or people that attempts to step outside the organised and alienated identifications with the spectacle. The provocation of \textit{drift} as something aimless, is in fact full of intent and that is to go beyond the known, or off the track or drop the schedule, or the plan that may only serve to continue the society of the spectacles mirage hold over the individual.

The intentions of dérive can bear some relationship to the actions of the formless within Tantric cosmogony and practice that I will be developing later in this thesis. The point of connection is through \textit{desire}. Looking for and developing or following their desires was extremely important for Situationist activity as it was for their whole social critique bound within Debord’s \textit{Society of the Spectacle}, Vaneigem’s, \textit{The Revolution of Everyday Life} and Chtcheglov’s \textit{Formulary for a New City}.

Chtchetglov, a visionary whose ideals became socially incompatible, was eventually incarcerated.\textsuperscript{37} For him:

\begin{quote}
...it has become essential to bring about a complete spiritual transformation by bringing to light forgotten
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{\textit{\textsuperscript{35}Ibid.}, p 5.}
\textsuperscript{\textit{\textsuperscript{36}Plant, S. 1992.} p 59.}
\textsuperscript{\textit{\textsuperscript{37}Ibid.}, p 61.}
desires and by creating entirely knew ones. And by carrying out an intensive propaganda in favour of these desires.\textsuperscript{38}

Vaneigem believes in the power of the desire to create; that this desire expressed in play and love has the potential to withstand the alienation of the Spectacle.\textsuperscript{39} This is despite his recognition that the Spectacle plays on these very desires; the aim is to continuously work to maintain autonomy over desire and use it outside of or to subvert the Spectacle through its play on desires.\textsuperscript{40} In some sense this comes very close to the way desire is used within Tantric practice and certainly its position within Tantric cosmogony as the catalyst for the creation of the world. Like the practice of dérive which is predicated on allowing space for desire, so the formless within Tantric practice is the place where the autonomous desire lies. It is an attention to the detail of living which accepts the feelings of the body and emotion and the feelings of desire.\textsuperscript{41}

Who can gauge the striking-power of an impassioned daydream, of pleasure taken in love, of a nascent desire, of a rush of sympathy? Everyone seeks spontaneously to extend such brief moments of real life; everyone wants basically to make something of their everyday life.\textsuperscript{42}

The first sentence in Debord’s \textit{Society of the Spectacle}, claims that life in modern society is entirely \textit{spectacle}. “Everything that ever lived has moved away into a \textit{representation}.”\textsuperscript{43} This society has come about through the alienation inherent in mass industrial production and entertains itself according to the imperatives of capital

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p 61.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p 62.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p 63.
\textsuperscript{41} Note: I will explain the place of desire in Tantric cosmogony in Chapter Three.
\textsuperscript{42} Plant, S. 1992. p 63.
\textsuperscript{43} Debord, G. \textit{The Society of the Spectacle}, Black and Red, Detroit, Michigan. 1973. par. 1
productions, which is the requirement of a “pleasured” or distracted workforce doing dissatisfying work that is fragmented into parts of a whole, which the worker has no control over. “The spectacle... is simultaneously the result and the project of the existing mode of production.”

The spectacle is the play of media, film, television, the distraction of entertainment on a mass scale which becomes the reward for boring repetitive work. Alienation from the means of production makes the purchasing of commodities the only way that the individual can partake in the chain of production. The simulations of the spectacle both augment and appease the sense of alienation caused by estrangement from the means of production. Relationships between people are commodified, their bodies and their emotions. The whole life process of human need and survival is woven into this spectacle, so that lives are lived through a representation of life. There is a sense in Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* that our lives are lived for us, through mass media. The spectacle is there to distract and compensate through simulation or representation the thwarted desire for autonomy, for self regulation. The commodity as spectacle, has attained the “total occupation of social life.” A pleasured or distracted workforce is manipulated by a fetishisation of commodity.

The created desire for the commodity and the spectacle, however, contains for Debord the possible subversion of the “society of the spectacle”. The realisation of the dependence of the society on the economy entails a realisation of the dependence of the economy on the society. The worker then becomes a “subject”, an “I”. Through

---

44 Ibid., par. 6.
45 Ibid., par. 42.
this transformation autonomous desire is retrieved, the desire for control over production: “the direct possession by the workers over all the moments of their activity.”

Dérive is part of this subversion, the realisation to go against the imperative set up by the “society of the spectacle” that accepts the reward (commodity) in exchange for alienating work. The realisation of *I as subject to myself* is the space for desire which liberates through seeing self in relationship to a polity of possibility.

Recently I have been alerted to the possibility that dérive may be considered anti research or anti academic and therefore questionable, to some, as a legitimate practice within the academic field. This has led me to wonder about what it could be about dérive that might be objectionable.

One possible answer may be the conflicted position of the stranger and wanderer in human societies. Dérive conjures the nomadic, who have throughout human history been perceived as a threat to social traditions and stability. They carry at once a mystique of adventure, a fear of the unknown and represent change and difference. They don’t necessarily attend to a dominant society’s institutions and often have their own parallel institutions and culture. Repressed desire may play a significant part in sedentary societies’ perception of the wanderer as mysterious and fearsome. To drift is to loosen constraints that rule bound and hierarchical societies place on desire. Desire excites, corrupts, interferes and displaces order.

Dérive is a threat because it will not fit within the academic order. It is the research of experimentation based on disorientation,

---

46 Ibid., par. 53.
circumstantial and chance meetings. Its methods and refusals may undermine structures necessary for the functioning of capitalism. The academy is uncomfortably dependent upon capitalist interest and support. Dérives wander and wonder, creating flash-points of contention between the academic and art.

As practice, dérive can also be an internal locomotion, a kinesthetic wander, through feelings, memories, imagination and snatches of words that arise in half sleep states. In this sense it is a research of psycho/physical dimensions located in the experience of the body as “inner” ecology within its environment.

Partaking of the “wind of circumstance” being perhaps “outside the pale” is a provocation against the orderly, goal orientated, intentioned life style that is heavily enforced within the pedagogic and worker orientated society we live in. Deliberately drifting, steps outside the spectacle. Spectacles are orchestrated and planned and non-participatory in the sense that participation is mapped out. They require punctuality. Taking a walk for the sake of the walk, for the sake of being in, and in the street, in a detailing observational way, is moving into a crack, a gap between the ordinary and expected. One then might meet with something, that being unplanned, takes on a sense of wonder, a surprise connection, a gift, the specialness of the individuality of personal experience. This is being in and making relationship as a participant.
Chapter 2

TANTRA

He told me that in Ellora the Rajneesh people would come from Poona.\textsuperscript{47} The Western sanyasins, (Bhagwan’s revenge) landed like strange white and orange birds at the small hermitage caves above the falls, and proceed to practice their sex Nirvana.\textsuperscript{48} Increduous, young Indian village boys and men would watch as the secretive sculpted erotic play depicted in hidden recesses in the nearby Kailash cave temple, came to life.\textsuperscript{49} He was offended. A young European women sunbathed naked on the rocks. He went to her and said, “Put your clothes on. You are not in Goa.”\textsuperscript{50}

Before continuing it will be necessary to give the reader a short background to Tantra, to dispel misunderstandings that have arisen because of the way a very selective understanding of Tantra

\textsuperscript{47} Note: Controversial Mid 20th Century Indian guru. Popular with some members of the Western counter-culture movement. Supposedly based some of his teachings on Tantric practice, “free love” and guilt free sex.

\textsuperscript{48} Note: Sanyasin: monk-hood, renunciation.

\textsuperscript{49} Note: Kailash Temple: The largest and most elaborate and famous of India’s cave temples, with large areas for worship and antechambers and balconies carved out of a single piece of rock.

\textsuperscript{50} Note: From the candidate’s diary. Goa is in Southern India. A seaside resort, where Western tourists have been accused of behaving with no respect to local custom and morals.
has developed in the West. Popular Western interest has focussed on sex and enjoyment of sex. This has some basis, sex plays an important role in practice in some Tantric traditions. However, as Hugh Urban points out, it is usually used in India more as a source of power or energy rather than in its Western manifestation, as a means to enhance sexual enjoyment or challenge Christian and Western taboos on morality and the body.\textsuperscript{51}

There is evidence of secretive ritual practices that challenge social taboos in India, around bodily pollution and caste restrictions, sexuality and adultery, incest and cohabiting with the dead. Either as actual practice or symbolic tools for practice, these transgressions illustrate a generalized idea that the Tantras as practice do not shun the body or the emotions and especially desire, as I will show later. There seems to be a challenge or at least a disregard, for social rules. In order to gain through understanding, control of the senses and a sense of unity with the world, there is a deliberate engagement in what could be called “muck-rolling”, celebrating, indulging in all levels of sensual experience from the ecstatic and sublime to the gross.\textsuperscript{52}

The selective interpretation I am referring to is the taking of the practice of ritualised sex, so important to Tantra as a symbol of the act of Creation and reworking it to fit a very nebulous Western notion of free sex, that in its most populist form is predicated on an emotionally alienated commodification of sex and women.\textsuperscript{53} There are, however, historical records of Tantric ritual (those that are often


\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., pxlii.
referred to as the left handed school) that detail the use of women and girls as vehicles for the enlightenment of the male participant.\textsuperscript{54} Many of the Tantric texts, while worshipping the feminine, either in the form of an image or a real women, focus on the enlightenment of the male. The texts only speak of the benefits to the man and almost have the sense of discarding the woman after use. The combination of this aspect of Tantric text and the projections of the early colonialists may have led to some Indian scholars’ dismissive attitude to Tantra.

Personally, the use of women as vehicles for male “enlightenment” makes the reading of this aspect of the Tantras very difficult. From the point of view of this thesis the misogynist material that can occur in the Tantras has to be acknowledged and then refused while the useful aspects can be reclaimed.

Early European writing about something called Tantrism, a Western substantive of the sanskrit word Tantric, appeared in the early nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{55} The shadowy French missionary Abbe Dubois, in his study of Hinduism, describes and condemns a practice he calls Sakti Puja, which involved sexual worship as outlined in a Tantric text.\textsuperscript{56} The English missionary, William Ward, was equally appalled, if not fascinated, by transgressive sexual practices.\textsuperscript{57} Dubois and Ward’s exposition of Tantra was widely read throughout England and Europe and may be partly responsible, for the misunderstanding and prejudice that developed around the subject

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p 231.
\textsuperscript{55} Urban, H. B. 2006, p 93.
\textsuperscript{56} Dubois, J. A. \textit{A Description of the Character, Manners and Custom of the People of India: Their Institutions, Religious and Civil}, Higginbotham and Co, Madras, 1879, p 128.
\textsuperscript{57} Urban, H.B. 2006. p 93.
of Hinduism and Tantra. Their books informed writers and scholars who were to have cultural and political influence on how India was perceived, represented, colonised and governed by England. These people included the journalist and historian James Mill. It is widely accepted that Mill’s ideas about the Indian mind and society, formed the basis for the way policy for the occupation of India was generated. In Mill’s History of British India, the influence of Dubois and Ward can be clearly traced, especially in his interpretations and conclusions about Hinduism. He echoes claims found under titles in Dubois’ work, such as “Disgusting Religious Orgies” and “Intoxification and Indecency”. Wards summations on Hinduism are substantially quoted. “…to know Hindoo idolatry as it is, a person must... follow the Brahman through his midnight orgies...” Mill concludes that the Hindu “picture of the universe” is “gross and disgusting”, where “…all is disorder, caprice, passion...” Finally on morality:

...a religion which subjects to the eyes of its votaries the grossest images of sensual pleasure ...which ascribes to the supreme God an immense train of obscene acts ... which pays worship to the Yoni and the Lingam, cannot be regarded as favourable to chastity.

The missionaries claim of the use of sexuality in religious ritual supported Orientalist narratives about Indian decadence. However, as Urban argues, it also connected with a growing interest in sexuality, its “aberrations” and the notion of sexual liberation in Victorian

59 Ibid., p 8.
63 Ibid., p 329 and 230.
64 Ibid., p 365.
England. The link between Tantra and sexual “practice” has been regurgitated by different English and European writers, adding their own refinements, until the word Tantra has become synonymous with sex in popular media today. In the early colonial era self righteous disgust allowed the discussion of the unallowable because it was couched always in indignation and could be ultimately blamed on the “native”. Now it is apparent that what was partly being written about was the content of Western sexual fantasy that, in focussing on rare obscure texts and practices, fascinated and challenged European attitudes to sex and the body. That these texts were taken literally may have surprised Indian scholars. Dragged from their obscurity they were postulated as a measure of the barbarism of the Hindus. They provided a useful tool in the overall context of Orientalism to justify missionary activity and colonial occupation and prejudiced scholarship of the Tantras and Hinduism. They also may have stimulated debate about sexuality in the West.

Some Orientalists and Indologists expressed genuine interest and admiration for Hindu belief, custom and philosophy. Their texts however, were not taken seriously. With the advent of a policy driven by conservative, evangelistic utilitarianism, from the late eighteenth century onwards, there was no use for sensitive studies of Hinduism.

Throughout the writing below I will elaborate the practice of the Tantras. Here I will simply give a summary of what they are generally recognized to be. The Tantras like the Vedas provide ritual and religious instruction for practice, along with explanations as to how the world began. Richard Lannoy describes the Tantras as “a system of

---

languages designed to achieve expansion of knowledge." Erotic ritual, poetry, philosophical and speculative text, along with painting and sculpture, make up this language, a charged "semantic" of a "verbal and pictorial corporeal".  

The Tantras are generally considered to be younger than the Vedas and the Upanishads. Tantric practice become quite widely established from the fifth century AD onwards, having taken certain aspects of older traditions and developed them into more complex ritualized and embodied practices. Of particular concern is the function of kama or desire in Tantra as the basis for creation at all levels of existence and the importance of the word, (in sanskrit, Vac), as the creative seed syllable from which the world bursts. The imaginary cosmogony of the Tantras is a ritualized, visionary one in which the macrocosm as the universe is seen to energize and reside within the human body as the microcosm. In other words the human body as the microcosm contains and is expressive of the macrocosm of the universe. So rather than building a theory of the universe that exists independently of themselves, a cosmogony is imagined and constructed that echoes the psycho/physical experience of living in the body. This involves "the constant establishment of correspondences between humans, rites and the cosmos, and in their cosmic as well as human aspect of energy." This energy is developed in Tantra as Kundalini Yoga. This is a practice that energizes the human body by embodying, during

---

70 Ibid., p 32.
meditation, the imaginary cosmogony, through visualizations of color, shape, breath and word.\textsuperscript{73}

*Kundalini* in sanskrit means “coiled up” and is also referred to and represented as a serpent or snake. Kundalini is energy and is always referred to as feminine or *shakti*, which when awakened by meditation and visualizations or certain yogic practices, combined with the saying of seed words, known as *bijas*, will ascend through the body. This ascent will begin at the *chakra* (energy centre) at the base of the spine and push through as a powerful force, six more *chakras*, culminating with the penetration of the *sahasrara chakra*, known as the transcendent *chakra* or place of *ananda* (pure bliss). The arousal of this *chakra* results in the union of *Shiva* (male) and *Shakti* (female) as the primal parents of the world, this results in the sense of the universe within the body, a non-dual state, a sense of the interconnectedness of all things and beings in the world.\textsuperscript{74}

It is important to note that there is contention over the extent of the influence of Tantric practice on Hinduism, both in India and abroad. According to some writers it did spread to most other areas of Asia and has greatly influenced and been influenced by mainstream Vedic Hindu practices, particularly Shaivism. There are regional and local variations, within India and crossovers into other religious practice, most importantly Buddhism and less well known, Sufism and Jainism.\textsuperscript{75} Most of the sources used in this study come from research concentrating on the Kashmir Shaiva Schools. These schools place the deities *Shiva* (male) and *Shakti* (female) as the symbolic representation of the primary parents of the universe.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p 24.
\textsuperscript{74} Mookerjee, A. 1982. p 12.
\textsuperscript{75} Feuerstein, G. 1998. p xi.
If a distinction was to be sought between mainstream Hindu practice, it would lie in the Tantric concentration on rituals involving yoga, the centrality of desire and sexual energy as a transformative force in *sadhana* (practice), the breaking of taboos to do with caste and purity during *sadhana* and the prevalence of the worship of female energy or Shakti. There are local variations throughout India, where other differences to mainstream Hinduism occur, but for this study, some generalizations need to be made, in the interest of brevity.

As indicated above Tantra has been adopted and changed by Western interests as a vehicle for sexual liberation and social change. According to Urban, in a recent study, this is in contrast to its predominantly conservative use in India as a means of personal worship.\(^{76}\)

It is important to acknowledge that by linking in this thesis the notion of formlessness with Debord’s dérive and situating a discussion of desire in Tantra along with Western theories of desire, I also engage with the potential for a socially liberational interpretation of Tantra. There are, however, Indian writers and practitioners who have seen in Tantric practice the possibility that personal liberation and social change could be synonymous. K. Mishra who I cite later in this text interprets Tantra as potentially liberational from the inequities of the caste system.\(^{77}\) Bhagwan Rajneesh, in his early writing also sees Tantra as a form of personal liberation that challenges conservative Indian society, especially in relation to sex.\(^{78}\) Urban himself, in an

\(^{76}\) Urban, H. B. 2006. p 84.


earlier book, writes of the Kartabhajas of colonial Bengal. These were a Tantric sect that formed secretive societies made up of poor, low caste or casteless groups. They established a society within a society that disregarded caste, gave women greater autonomy and provided a place of refuge against the economic upheavals of colonialism.\textsuperscript{79}

Chapter 3

COSMOGONY

One afternoon in Sydney, while I was half listening to a program about religion on the radio, I heard the phrase “working through condensation”. My experience of this phrase as a metaphor for how an art work evolves, has an echo in the cosmogony of the Indian religious and esoteric discipline known as Tantra. In the following writing I will describe the process of “working through condensation” as a creative act and its connections to another use of the word condensation in Twentieth century cultural practice. I will explore the link between this found phrase with the creation system or myth used in Tantric writing and practice. The words I use to describe my response to this found phrase metaphorically hinge with that used in Tantric cosmogony. Images of transformation: heat, desire, seeds and liminal spaces, darkness or nothingness evolving to form. It is important to honor the thing found, this spark, and let it continue its revelatory pathway.

When something fascinates it has a hold that is enigmatic. Bundles of feeling and emotion surround a core that both radiates and attracts. The core source, (power) is partly hidden, suggested,
inviting a search. Humans like to hunt out that which is concealed. As Baudrillard suggests, seductions, as the possibilities that are concealed, lure us into creation.

The core source of power is the axe, in the Roman *fasces*, a dangerous instrument. While the bundles of sticks individually are fragments, either brittle or green, the axe is sharp, bludgeoning, it is a violent symbol. Fascination could be taken as a warning or an alerting to consciousness, that something complex, not clear, multifaceted exists that both seems and is outside of us, but affects in such a way that it is clearly in us and enters us. Something of us resides within the source, centre, axe. Fascination compels. It is a beginning energy. Interestingly it is often held within metaphor, analogy and metonym as it is expressed by the artist, the seer or the politician. It is a condensing of a bundle of experience, impression and desire.

The compelling of fascination can lead close into obsession, to the limits and boundaries of self, to a point of merging, indistinct identity and possession of the other as self. It moves into compulsion, something that might be felt as an original moment, a birth moment, a desired eclipse of self into an other. A central pulse; in this extreme it can be a dangerous place where independent interpretation and conceptualisation is impossible and dissolves to an irrelevance. Everything becomes fused around a point, node, *creative hinge*, “grown together” bands of sinewed parts that both hide identity or lose identity.
Sigmund Freud called this process of fusing, condensation. Fascination, compulsion or compel, as *pellare* (French) to drive, both make condensation and are a result of condensation. Condensation, is made up of con *com*, *together*, and *densus*, thick, dense and *ation*, “denoting action, process, state or condition”. For Freud it designates that process by which the unconscious functions around dreams and the interpretation of dream imagery and metaphor. Hinsie and Campbell describe its meaning in psychiatry as referring to “the process by which an idea is made to contain all the emotion associated with a group of ideas”. Dreams are a collection of emotional experience fused around an outstanding image or a person. Freud also uses condensation to describe the process of dream work, whereby a dream facilitates a myriad of connecting feelings, thoughts and ideas; these are the condensations of the dream.

In applying the phrase “working through condensation” to a creative practice, I extend its use to a part conscious and seemingly, part accidental, unconscious process, outside of a therapeutic use, into one that is more linked to everyday life. In this way it functions as a connecting bridge between intuition and understanding, between unrealised desires, fears, influences, experiences and knowledge. It is a phenomena of living as human, to be tapped into as a centre of energy for self relationship. Laplanche and Pontalis describe its action as one that is both created by a self censorship or induced censorship and as an attempt at displacing censorship.

---

80 Klein, E., Dr. 1971. p 153.
84 Laplanche, J. and Pontalis, J.B. *The language of Psychoanalysis*. Karnak Books,
Both metaphor and metonymy are used as a way of expressing something that cannot be spoken outright. Roman Jakobson in his essay on aphasia (inability to express ideas) and what it reveals about the use of expressive language, categorizes Freud’s process of condensation, as it occurs in dreams, as metonymy.\(^{85}\) Metonymy, unlike metaphor which is based on the similarity of things, gives meaning through an association or contiguity between things that may be very different, but when combined create an idea or image. Some writers categorize metonymy as an expression using part of a whole.\(^{86}\) Freud and Carl Jung don’t seem to make a distinction between metaphor and metonymy \(^{87}\) and later, Jacques Lacan realigned condensation with metaphor and displacement with metonymy.\(^{88}\)

The *creative hinge* could be either or both, metaphor or metonymy. The process of forming that hinge (condensation) is associative, based on touching that which can not be expressed directly or literally. The contiguous is a bodily experience. It is my assertion that the unconscious leads through a visceral, kinaesthetic process in unfolding forgotten knowledge or connections or experience. In this case metaphor and metonymy work together as a corollary of each other. “Working through condensation” is a metaphor for the process of creation, but the process it refers to could combine both metaphor and metonymy. The first is descriptive simile, the second requires the use of combinations of parts of material or elements to create meaning, a meaning that is layered, connective and perhaps contradictory.

\(^{85}\) Berger, A.A. 1995. p 89.
\(^{87}\) Ibid., p 73.
\(^{88}\) Ibid., p 75.
The personal discovery of the *found phrase*, provided a window into a way of describing what takes place when I have a creative idea and put it into practice. As the writing above suggests, the process is predicated on fascination and desire, either for a material, an image formed in the mind or a person, a word or a sound.

Essentially, understanding this process is focussed around the analogy of condensation as a gathering phenomena created by both a restriction and an agitation. Restriction, as containment; activity, as varying degrees of agitation. Condensation as a metaphor rests on the natural process of water heating in a container and forming droplets or steam gathering on a cold window, or the restriction of light through a lens of a projector to shape light into form. Later in the thesis, I will describe the process of sound, word, to light, to form, in Tantra cosmogony, as one requiring, both restriction, *tamas* (sloth) and *shakti* (action). The idea, as *creative hinge* or fascination, builds or forms or condenses within its containment, on the “wall” of consciousness. The containment as the physical is cool or dense, allowing for the collection of condensation. The containment is the natural restriction of material and practice, the restrictions of form, of the world and of matter. Within that restriction, as a paradox, is the possibility of no form, the formless in sanskrit, *sunyata*, of nothing.

In Tantra the formless is the containment of practice, the edge, balanced juxtaposition of Being and non-Being from which desire, *kama*, as autonomous joy, *sat cit ananda*, propels Being, into being with another, to bring the world into existence. In the imaginary built around “working through condensation” there is a liminal, preverbal space that I describe as a place of suspension, slippage or misdemeanors. This is before condensing takes place. Suspension
could be experienced as an apprehension that is found in the formless, a burgeoning space, from which a slippage, an accident can occur at the level of intuition. This is a yearning time, very much like the pre-formed space of the universe described in the following Rig Veda creation hymn:

In the Principle, darkness concealed darkness.
Undifferentiated surge was this whole world.
The pregnant point covered by the form matrix,
From conscious fervour, mighty, bought forth the One.

In the Principle, thereupon rose desire,
Which of consciousness was the primeval seed.
Then the wise, searching within their hearts perceived,

Condensation is the desire being made visible. In the analogy of condensation this is the drop, (in sanskrit bindu, energy point, the cause of form, becoming bija, seed) manifesting the idea, the image, the fascination, the creative hinge. In Freud’s use, this is the dream and the interpretation of the dream material, engaging with the enigmatic, spinning out of and within the obsessive, the driven or compulsive.

The creative hinge could be likened to what Morton Reiser describes as a “nodal image”, that, through the process of condensation, comes to rest as representative of a cluster of inter connective feeling, meaning and memory. It holds fascination and compels engagement and is an opening to a possible unraveling, towards understanding. The creative hinge is a swollen place, like the bindu and sunya in Tantra cosmogony. It could be a relation to Gilles

---

Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s “desiring machine”, but it is much more delicate and specific in its structure and its actions. Delicate and precise, a hinge connects. The creative hinge provides the movement to the collected condensation. The condensation is swung into view by the mechanical possibilities of the hinge. A door, a window, the closed container of the wall, citta, is functionless without the hinge. The hinge is a shakti/shiva manifestation in Hindu terminology. The “desiring machine” is a gross social instrument. The creative hinge is more domestic in size, more intimately connected to everyday movement at its most basic function and that is, passing through barriers, entrances, exits; pushing through from one space to another. The hinge accomplishes this task for us.

The first human contact with a hinge motion is the confluence of hinge actions in the body, walking, and brushing through long grass, the grass bends to our bending knees or through thick scrub, brushing aside branches. The hinge is the point of fascination, a collection point. The hinge depends on use action, passing from one state to another. It might also be a relation to Deleuze and Guattari’s “body without organs”, in that it provides the action for escaping organization. It is that capacity to connect, to run out, run away, be distracted or come in closer. The hinge, however, is not anti-production, it is facilitative. But its core point of being is focussed first on fascination; desire exists within its flows. Something gets caught, collected, touched by and onto a hinge, something specific that suggests, demands, seduces us into a new space. We swing through a barrier, that is the moment of transgression. We transgress across into a once divided or unknown, abandoned space. The creative hinge is this type of social connection.

92 Ibid., p 11.
I became fascinated by his story. By his face. By his difference. He became fascinated by my story, my face, my difference.93

Hinges occur throughout this thesis. They are the stones, the seed words and others you might find.

“The body without organs” repels organisation. This is in defense against the calcification of the body into bits and parts. For the body to meet with its entirety, the organs as positions of authority, have to soften into their mucous, into the fact of their liquidity. They are not stones, they are red with soft red blood. This is the function of the hinge, allowing softness and permeability, for things to flow through. The hinge is an exchange point and therefore can go against the restrictions of guilt, debt inscription and social “no go” areas.

In the mid eighteen hundreds the British developed a bullet that would travel through the barrel of a gun faster. It was to be coated with animal fat before being inserted into the gun. It helped spark the Indian mutiny, one of the first acts of resistance by the Indians against their colonisers. The Hindus thought the fat was cow, the Muslims thought the fat was pig.94

In a sense the fat on this bullet became a hinge, a point of exchange. The anti-British saw it as a potential rallying point to gather all the resentment against the coloniser. Hindu and Muslim united against the British, resulting in an extensive increase of support for the independence movement.

93 Note: From the candidate’s diary.
It might be said that this is not about fascination and desires, but it is. The image of the bullet smeared with the fat of an animal, either sacred or profane, is compelling, riveting and will not let go of the mind. In an ironic twist to this, the present Indian Government has named its nuclear missiles after Gods and heroes in the Vedas, like Ram or Agni.\textsuperscript{95} Here is an "oil" that is a good spiritual lubricant, for the easy assimilation of destruction and violence, into the electorates agreement.

The phrase “working through condensation” through its metaphoric action spawned a containment for a practice, which in the words of Papastergiadis, is an “energy for beginning”:

To find the beginning is as much an invention as an excavation. In this sense discovery is not a return journey, but the forward search of an initiation point. The power of discovery is thus found in the confirmation of knowing how to go on. Beginnings are sources of energy.\textsuperscript{96}

I will unfold the similarity between my own brief “imaginary” of “working through condensation” and the writings on Tantra by Indian and Western researchers. These writings and translations could be described as verging on the “imaginary” themselves. They are the interface between processes of interpretation loaded with their own cultural expectations, some Western influenced and others Indian, as they attempt an explanation of a practice that is hugely varied and often shrouded in deliberately obtuse language and secrecy. The academic interface that is constructed between Tantra and the reader who is once or twice removed from the language of origin, starts to play more convincingly into the hands of fantasy or the


\textsuperscript{96} Papastergiadis, N. 1994. p 19.
imaginary than “fact”. This process itself is more revealing of the researchers than the actual thing named “Tantra”. I take it as a story within a story of research. The story within or the story to the side of what is presented being as interesting and revealing as the thing constructed for our perusal.

Imagination is the key word here. Imagining condenses ourselves, our experiences and our desires into an action, a fantasy or a phantasy. It is a mirroring and a mirror. It is an attempt to create an image for the intangible and invisible forces that operate on our lives. These imaginings formed myths out of which the people of India have lived their religion. Myth here refers to, in the words of Julius Lipner, not fable or fabrication, but “a vehicle of enactment for individual or community through living symbols of story or narrative”. The living symbol can also refer to the entanglement of the natural world and its phenomena with transcendent/immanent experiences that could be called enlightenment, moments of altered or acute consciousness and imaginings of the creation of the world; “...life has a more or less transparent potential to reveal the sacred rituals”.

The Kama Kala Vilasa, a Tantric creation hymn, employs imagery that echoes this. In the description of the beginning of creation, known as the Mahabindu, “the contracted form of the Shakti”, can be seen “on the citta-wall of consciousness when the rays of the sun which is the supreme Shiva are reflected in the spotless mirror which is Reflection.”

98 Ibid., p 171.
100 Ibid., p 151.
101 Ibid., p 151.
Mirroring and Reflection, with a capital R, is an extraordinary image of reflection being both something that we can do and something that exists, according to this creation myth, as an entity in the world to look into, as if we could look into ourselves within the consciousness of the world and looking into ourselves is looking into the world. Reflection is a place to be in, and it is within this place reflection, that the world is created. The “citta–wall of consciousness” suggests the inside of the mind, the curve of the world or the sky and the insides of a house. Citta in Sanskrit means mind or consciousness. The image that the above verse creates is one of inside; that creation is taking place within an inner environment that we could recognize as ourselves and simultaneously in an outside environment that could be in the sky where the sun is shining. It creates imagery and feeling that is kaleidoscopic and multi dimensional; an expansive visceralness. Consciousness which is known to us as inside us, has a wall, the wall (surface) of our brain or walls that exist outside us. The phrase could be described as having the effect of creating the feeling of creation within the readers body as if it takes place within the body and the world simultaneously, which is one of the central messages of Tantra: that the world, the cosmos exists within the living body.

Bindu is the contracted form of Shakti. Shakti is the female principle, in Hinduism she is the active principle of the divine couple, Shiva and Shakti. Contracted she may produce the biju. Biju, is a sanskrit word that means seed, a biju is a seed word. Shakti is the waiting condensed drop/seed that will explode to form the world. Bija is also a type of word used as a mantra to arouse the image and sensation of a deity, in the practitioner or worshipper, sadhakar, (male) sadhiki, (female). The found phrase “working through condensation” is a seed as well as those foundlings that fascinate or resonate, which act as a creative hinge. What I am concerned with
here is the language and imagery used to describe creation. How this imagery locates itself in the body, our senses and what it provokes in us. This type of imagery is suggestive of unfoldings, transference's and the transmutations of phenomena.

Contraction is an energy, it has possibility, like a seed, that waits for the right amount of warmth, that could be focus or concentration or being found, before it unfolds. The sun warms the containment of consciousness; the sun is heat and desire, in whose presence consciousness can reflect on itself. So creation is an internal, a psychological event that mirrors the fecundity of creation in the world. The imagined religious aspect of creation of the world in a beginning time is based on the principles of union and desire: wanting to meet with or be with someone or something, to be something else. There is an overwhelming sense of the human body folding into and out of the world with a desiring countenance. What this suggests to me is a certain type of self-power. It projects, through imagination and desire, the desire for relationship. This becomes transgressive when it wants the freedom to express unconditionally.

My starting reference for an exploration of the connection between Tantric ideas, speculations about the nature of creation and my own interpretations of the metaphor condensation are taken from the writing of Ajit Mookherjee. Mookherjee’s interpretation of Tantra does not seem to be considered by academic writers about Tantra, whose discussion veers towards a very Western philosophical style and mostly eschews a discussion of the experience of Tantra practice. Mookherjee’s writing resonates the experience of a practitioner which is why for my purpose, his interpretation is so important as a beginning place to comprehend this complex practice.
In this chapter I am attempting to explore an intuited link between the way I practice, how I practice, what I notice about myself when I am engaged in making a work and the Tantric imagining of the process of creation in the world. Mookerjee uses three words or phenomena that occur in Tantric practice that connect to “working through condensation”. They are the formless, in sanskrit, sunya, the bija or the seed word, and desire, kama.

These three elements are important “stages” in the process of creation, as well as for meditative and religious practice. Their use for the Tantra artist is to invoke an image of a deity. Sunya, bija and kama as creative phenomena suggest a possible similarity with my own practice. The difference obviously is that I am not invoking divinity, I am invoking in simplistic terms my “unconscious” or something unknown to me or looking or listening for something. The grounding word for this process is desire, and will begin with a fascination for a material, an idea or a person. It is a desire to play, to form another relation with something of myself, that will then take on a life outside of myself.

The process may start with a sense of emptiness, either unconsciously or deliberately, which I relate to the formless that Mookherjee speaks of, as the starting point of all creation. It may be partly known to me, this something that I wish to form. Or there is a desire to make something happen. There is a sense of a current opening, which can only happen between the two seemingly opposite experiences of intense focus and of letting go. Or in other words an intentionality, balanced or juxtaposed, with a consciousness of emptiness. I sink or am taken, into a fascination or a sense of desire for a material, a story or a person. That desire acts like a seed, that gathers the energy or holds the energy of something to be realised.
The *Heart Sutra*, an important Buddhist invocation originating from Sanskrit, suggests something of this paradox in a famous line, “form is emptiness, emptiness is form.”

Below I will outline these aspects of ritual practice and the stages of creation that appear to relate to my own cosmogonical imaginings. Ritual practice and the imagined cosmic creation are entwined along the same visual trajectory. I have decided to use both Buddhist Tantric and Hindu Tantric sources in regards to the formless as they have similarities, but there are differences, which I will endeavor to point out to the reader. Ajit Mookerjee freely draws from both Buddhist and Hindu Tantric practice. There is a school of Tantric practice that in fact is said to be an amalgam of Buddhist and Hindu Tantra which I will refer to later in the text. The cross over that occurs within that particular school may be indicative of the first early development of Tantric practice as originally an amalgam of Buddhist and Hindu ideas.

Lopez describes, in his book on the Buddhist sutras, the practice of the *sadhana*s (Tantric texts outlining ritual practice) as the “embodiment and enactment of a world”. That world is “the fantastic jewel encrusted world of the mahayana sutras (or the horrific world of the charnel ground)”. The *sutra*s are in this case, Buddhist texts, which according to Lopez, are meant to be read in conjunction with the practice of the Tantric sadhanas. The sutras are the philosophical, often cryptic background to the ritual practice of the Tantras.

103 Ibid., p 92.
104 Ibid., p 92.
105 Ibid., p 92.
The derivation of the word *sutra* is to sew. Interestingly for this study, the word *sutra* when translated into Tibetan means *condensation*. These derivations are immensely important to focus on as visual aids, in the alienation created by working from translated text for readers who have no connection to the original language. Derivations provide a way of understanding the processes involved within this practice. The word *Tantra* is derived from words that mean to weave and expand and so creates texture. We can think of the *Tantras* as creating body to the *sutras*, through the use of ritual. The *sutras* being “a thread that runs through, providing continuity and connection”. This small complication of the *sutras* is an attractive adjunct to the visual imagery I am building, of connective and transforming states held within the metaphor of condensation, and the stages of preparation of the *sadhakar* outlined above; *sunyata*, emptiness; *bijā*, a seed word; *kama*, desire; *ananda*, bliss.

The *sutras*, as the binding thread, need the *Tantras* for ecstatic or enstatic expansion. The thread runs through, perhaps tripping on a catch in the material or pulling the material into a “shocking”; the thread as an instrument of “writing”, “events”, binding and joining one piece to another to form something “wearable”. Making something wearable could be likened to the building of a method that is a containment for a fascination. The method of working builds itself as a response to the function of the fascination, as it becomes clear; the weave of threads cross into each other to make, heaviness, bulk, something to be unpicked or traveled through with the eye and body

---

106 Ibid., p 90.
107 Ibid., p 90.
108 Note: enstatic (enstasy) is a word used by some writers instead of *ecstasy* to describe *Tantra* practice. En = near, at, in, within. Stasis (stasy) = standing still.
(fingers) and understood. Something that is multi layerd. This condenses into a metaphor for the possibility of intense engagement, detail and relational connection.

Mookerjee briefly describes the preparation that the artist undertakes before beginning to work as follows:

He/She invokes the hosts of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with offerings of flowers, real or imaginary.

He/She “realizes in thought the four (infinite) modes of friendliness, compassion, sympathy, and impartiality”.109

He/She meditates upon sunyata, emptiness.

He /She calls the seed word bija, that is the word associated with the identity of the deity to be depicted in order to identify him or herself totally with the deity.

He/She calls the dhyana mantra, a mantra that defines or describes the divinity which will provoke an image or “reflection” that the artist will then use as the source for the image she or he is to create.

The first and in fact all of the steps to creating an image of the deity involve visualization and imagination. The first and second is a visualization involving the compassionate, as Buddha and the bodhisattvas are entities of compassion. The important image here is of “offering”. Offering is an opening. It also suggests that the artist is not alone and that the wherewithal to create is not an isolated event. So there is an acknowledgment of connecting into the world of creation; the world of the past, present and future, something beyond and outside that is called in or recognized as being within as well.

Flowing on from this, is the calling up of empathetic relation to all life. So there is a sense of creating for another and in that case invoking relationship. I will be exploring three key aspects of Tantric practice, two that are detailed in the above description of the preparations of the artist, that is sunyata (emptiness, the formless) and bija, the seed word. The third not specifically mentioned above, but suggested in the invocation of the deity, is that of kama, desire which is recognized as the central force around which creation of the universe and sadhana, spiritual practice, occur within Tantra.\textsuperscript{110}

\section*{SUNYATA}

\textit{“By the Fire of the Idea of the Abyss.”} \textsuperscript{111}

\textit{“Inability to tolerate empty space limits the amount of space available”}. \textsuperscript{112}

In Hindu Tantric cosmogony, creation evolves from a featureless, formless void. This void is the “ground state” from which the universe emerged, but it is also the continual companion of worldly existence. It is not just a beginning way back when the universe began, but a constant component of creation and decreation.

\textsuperscript{110} Note: Sunyata, bija, vac (speech) and kama are all important elements that occur across all Hindu philosophical and religious schools. I focus on Tantra because of the centrality of kama (desire) and because, generally speaking, Tantra is the practical aspect of Hinduism, Tantra is practice, ie, meditation, yoga, visualisations and ritual art, as well as having developed various philosophical applications regionally, across India.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p 14.

as it evolves in all its possible forms. Formless and form comprise the dual state of living, something there and nothing there is the tension lived with.

Emptiness, the formless, the void is a central philosophical component in Buddhism and Hinduism as a part of practice. In Hinduism, particularly in Tantra, formlessness is both the ground state of practice and creation and as *mahasunya*, often referred to as the Absolute, the goal of practice. In most schools of Buddhism there is no Absolute in the sense that it is conceived within Hinduism as a deity.\(^{113}\) There is no God or Goddess in Buddhism that is responsible for creation, whereas in Hinduism there is a vast pantheon of deities, that have influence not only on creation but on all aspects of life. However, the issue gets more complex in Hinduism as in many instances one could read the Absolute in the Hindu Vedas or the Tantras as a secular phenomena, because the Absolute is interpreted in terms of self.

The word *sunyata* (emptiness) is a sanskrit word, and is used both in Buddhist and Hindu Tantras. In Buddhism the “void or the indescribable is the real nature of things”.\(^{114}\) Conceptual thinking is illusory. Nothingness is a state that needs to be cultivated in order to see the real nature of existence. Seeing by not seeing. Whereas, in the Hindu Tantras, the formless is where all things evolved from and will return to and is a component of practice, most importantly, as the holder of shakti/shiva energy as life/creation potential. It is where form evolves from. Concept thinking does appear to play a

---

\(^{113}\) Note: In the populist versions of Mahayana Buddhism (Tibetan) there are deities. This is a departure from the original aims of Buddhism as a secular reform movement away from the extravagant excess and hierarchies of Vedic Hinduism. see Lannoy, R. 1971. p 34.

part in the different practices that fall under the Hindu system, evident in the way they distinguish themselves from each other, in either the predominantly non-dual forms of Tantra and Advaita Vedanta or the dualist systems of Madhvacarya Vedanta and Patanjali Yoga.\(^{115}\)

The Hindu and Tantric cosmoginists saw the fecundity of emptiness, that out of this emptiness grows a desire for union. There is a desire to not live within the split between something not there and the possibility of something. That tension provokes an action and without that tension no action would result. The union of desire and the formless is the basis of creation. But the formless has to be acknowledged it cannot be ignored or smothered.

In Tantra cosmogony the formless is male as non-creative and the active form is female, both possibilities are held within the formless and unite to create the world. Both form and formlessness are also said to reside within every human body. In his description of the ritual practiced by the Tantric artist as preparation before creating, Mookerjee describes one of the seven steps of preparation as a meditation "upon the emptiness (sunyata) or nonexistence of all things “for, 'by the fire of the idea of the abyss, it is said, there are destroyed beyond recovery five factors' or ego-consciousness".\(^{117}\)

Reading this statement in terms of the *creative hinge* I spoke of above, the abyss holds the possibility of creation because the contemplation of or the entering into a formless state of mind creates a tension, a space for union. But most significantly it is the tension of cessation of thought that brings awareness of a possibility, which then

\(^{115}\) Ibid., p 127.
creates the feeling of desire, which is either allowed to form into action or to dissipate. The profound paradox of contemplating emptiness; that there is “non existence of things”, provokes an alternative space of comprehension of relationship with the world, that is a declassifying, less inclined towards hierarchical thinking. My interest in the formless as a mode for creative work occurs out of this implied letting go of preconceptions, plans, systems, so that the possibility of something arriving or appearing to me in a “true” form is more realisable. A true form could be identified as “true” because it resonates with an intensity and so the assumption is that these strong feelings (fascination, desire, horror, empathy) hold within them the key to something that is pertinent to my or another’s experience of life. It signals something that is not clearly understood by me, but which is acting as a signal towards the need to understand something, to embody its implications. This is an area of practice that is encountered as both outside of and a challenge to ideals of morality or “fact”.

The formless also follows the relational and fluid suggestions of the Situationist International practice of dérive, as an independent looking. If understood in terms of Georges Bataille’s entry of formless (Informe) in his alternative dictionary, the formless, according to Rosalind Krauss, is the inevitable “waste” product of the homogenising generalities of the Western institution.¹¹⁸ This waste product is the social deviante, which Bataille relates to the informe, or formless, what Krauss sees as acting as a “de–classing”,¹¹⁹ a transgression across binary or oppositional systems of thought. Krauss writes of the formless in relation to Bataille’s notion of informe, as having,

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p 252.
“...its own legacy to fulfill, its own destiny – which is partly that of liberating our thinking from the semantic, the servitude to thematics...”\(^{120}\)

A “servitude to thematics", I take to be akin to the making of subject orientated art outlined above that concerns Lacy, as a form of institutionalisation of themes that increasingly come to operate outside of personal experience. Within art history and critical analysis, art and its practices can be reduced to a modicum of their origins, layers of representations and implications. In this sense the theme, the theory, the subject become spectacle and thus disempowered and disempowering.

The Sanskrit meaning of the word Tantra is to expand or extend. It is also associated with loom and warp, so to weave. The Sanskrit word \textit{tan} means to expand or spread; the word \textit{tantrin}, “that which is made of threads”\(^{121}\) and the word \textit{tanoti}, "to stretch or weave" and also refers to rituals to do with sacrifice.\(^{122}\) Tantra consists of rituals that consistently weave the body of the practitioner into the macrocosm. Extrapolating from this, we can think of it as both an expansive and connecting system of "speculative patterns" that form an integrative “creation” system.\(^{123}\) It is a patterning of existence that extends the human body and Being beyond the boundaries of self into the life of the entire universe so that according to Mookerjee "...man [woman]\(^{124}\) can no longer be a measure of all things", but “is integrally bound with the life of all created things...”\(^{125}\) The bases for this expansion and connection is the formless.

\(^{120}\) Ibid., p 252.  
\(^{121}\) Lopez, Donald, S. 1996. p 91.  
\(^{122}\) Ibid., p 91.  
\(^{124}\) Note: my addition [inbrackets]  
\(^{125}\) Mookerjee, A. 1983. p 34.
Fig 1. Aniconic stones by the Narmada River. Omkareshwar, India. (Photograph by Jann Dark 2001)
ANICONIC STONES

Throughout India, particularly in the villages and rural areas, there are small shrines built around a river stone, that has been painted orange. (see, Fig 1) Usually they are dedicated to a goddess, sometimes they are clothed, which is an attempt by the villager or worshipper to identify and make a likeness, but often just the stone suffices. In his book The Speaking Tree, Richard Lannoy identifies these stones as aniconic images, the formless representations of a deity. My interest in them hinges on the conjunction of the word aniconic, and their amorphous, but blazing presence.

Usually they are simply river stones, sometimes they are roughly shaped, but they are never explicit. Lannoy associates them with Tantra, as representative of an Indian desire to "plumb the mystery of formlessness." He claims that these stones have the function of "modifying the worshippers state of mind." They suggest that the formless holds an important function not only in the more abstract speculations of Hindu cosmogony but also in the process of worship, by the people, of their Gods and Goddesses. They may provide a preparatory space, a reminder of their connection to anotherness in space, their ultimate inseparateness from that space. The stone could be likened to the orange bindi worn above the nose between the eyebrows, by Hindus, as representative of the bindu, (drop) that

127 Ibid., p 29.
creates the *biju*, or seed word that explodes into the formation of the universe. So the connection between body, world and creation is maintained.

Meditating on these formless stones (emptying the mind) is a preliminary to visualizing deities as part of the process of meditation. Manoranjan Basu describes the process of the Yoga practice *Kundalini*, as one in which the aspirant experiences a flutter, the first vibrations, *spanda*, of energy, *prana*, the heralding of the rise of Kundalini in the body. This vital energy is linked to the female energy of shakti which "owes its origin to the great void" known variously as "mahasunya, darkness, negation, nothingness".\(^{128}\) It is interesting to note that Roland Barthes connects darkness and the unknown to desire and desire as a vibration:

> Most often I am in the very darkness of my desire; I know not what it wants... I enter into the night of non-meaning; desire continues to vibrate (the darkness is transluminous), but there is nothing I want to grasp.\(^{129}\)

Energy is to be found in the formless; in nothingness; in a deliberate suspension of thought or knowing:

> ...a place where nothing can be postulated or characterized either as *sat* (existence) or as *asat* (nonexistence); the state is even prior to any sort of revelation or illumination, *prakasa*.\(^{130}\)


\(^{130}\) Basu, M. 1986. p 588.
Basu uses the word "inconscient" after Sri Aurobindo, to give some literal handle to a state that is "nothing". Interestingly this is another word for unconscious, but could be read without the Freudian/psychoanalytic overlay by taking note of the in instead of the un. The in would suggest a state of in-ness, involvement, inside-ness, in-conscious; whereas un suggests an uninvolvment at the level of unknowing, undoing or lack or underneath. The formless is an involvement, an inside, a preparation of space even though a blank, with the paradoxical outcome of pregnancy.

Looking at the orange painted stones, I feel an awareness of space/time opening inside the body, a resonating that begins to act as a sound. The stones seem to sound in the solar plexus or even from within the whole core of the torso and radiate out. Could this be the affect of merging subject and object, a non–dual state? Is this the state of remembrance of connectedness to the unsure sureness of our relationship to the earth. This resonating happens through the whole body and creates a sensation of skin touch and desire, like a spreading out to the world and contracting into the body, simultaneously. Yearning is another word to describe this state, leaning into an angle that is both falling and held. It is the moment of between repeated and repeated for as long as one holds the concentration. Desire and energy reside within the formless.

Formless presence in an unrepresentative form suggests a deliberate ploy to provoke a process of internal visualization and feeling of “another” presence within oneself, what Lannoy describes as a "mysterious otherness" which is all the more powerful the more amorphous and unrepresentative the stones are. That other presence

---

is an as yet unseen potentiality, that has the swelling sense of desire, which precipitates action and belonging and connection. As an internal process of reciprocal projection the stones provoke a space of wavering identity, an opening to a more “seeing”, “hearing” that focuses mind and feeling in the body at the level of emotional awareness and identification. The reason it can do this is because the stones resonate a sense of contradiction within us. The form, is “made” or “happened” or “framed”, in such a way as to excite a slippage in perception, perhaps as anxiety, between seeing something and not seeing something. This possibility of unsureness is the result of framing the stone, painting it orange, in other words bestowing attention on it, focussing on it and then worshipping it as a god or goddess without giving it a recognizable or graspable form other than what it is.

For Lannoy the stones are "a translation of a reality, a presence situated beyond the domain of what can be expressed in form." The murti (sculpture) stones seem to function similarly to the “abstracted” personifications of Tantric art, although ancient in comparison to Tantric theory, as functioning as a means of producing a "psycho-physiological state of enhanced receptivity."  

The stones also have a more abhorrent history and provocation that questions this interpretation and consequent disavowal of the religious and political implications of the superstitions around worship in Hinduism. This is the precise point of confrontations within and

---

132 Note: Some Tantra art has an abstract looking quality. These are quickly executed paintings based around meditative experiences usually depicting chakras (energy centres in the body) as circular shapes and snake like lines or channels depicting kundalini (energy rising in the body). See, Mookerjee, A. Tantra Art: Its Philosophy and Physics, Ravi Kumar, Basil, Switzerland, 1983.

133 Lannoy, R. 1971, p 29.
between the cultural and religious manifestations of the ideas discussed in this paper and the reality on the ground in the village in India. A story from Sinha illustrate this.

A young Indian girl is taken by her Grandmother to a Goddess temple and told to worship the stone set up to represent the presence of the Goddess Yellamma. The girl scoffs and says, why should she worship a stone! The Grandmother is angry with the girl and extremely fearful that there will be some punishment. The girl comes down with a sickness. To appease the goddess her mother and grandmother suggest to the father that the girl be given in service to the temple. The father is outraged as he knows that this will destroy the life of his daughter; she will become a temple prostitute and be used by any passing religious official or local land lord. She will then, once she is deemed no longer virginal or perhaps after her first child, be sent away to fend for herself as a social outcast. In the minds of her maternal parents, however, she will have absolved them and herself of the Goddesses anger.134

We can imagine the importance of summoning compassion before encountering sunyata. Carl Jung identified idleness, which from a utilitarian Western view could be conflated with formlessness or emptiness, as psychologically dangerous. “Idle dreaming is the mother of the fear of death”135 and quoting La Rochefoucauld, Jung agrees, that indolence is the “most ardent and malignant” passion.136 Idleness is an anchor that can “arrest the largest vessels; it is a calm more dangerous to the most important affairs than rocks

136 Ibid., p 195.
and the worst tempest." The contemplation of emptiness must be embodied within compassion. But if the formless is considered worthless, as mere idleness and lack, then, as something damaged, stunted, it will have no space for compassion. It will self blame and castigate itself out of awareness. The damage is done by how this notion of emptiness is conceived, not by an inherent danger in sunyata. However, the dangerous may also be what is needed, as a transgression, across into different ways of seeing.

The Indian philosopher, J.N Mohanty makes the point, in response to a suggestion that sunyata could be the basis for an egalitarian politics, that compassion in Buddhism establishes “a value, a norm”, without that what would sunyata be? He says “where is its [compassion's] place in the idea of sunyata?” My immediate answer to this is that sunyata is intrinsically an embodying experience, and as such, an experience of non-separateness, and so has the potential for empathetic connection.

In the West the formless has come to be associated with abjection, something lacking, without value. The formless is seen as without body. There is a rationalised, sharply believed distinction between something there and something not there, in contrast to the Heart Sutras instruction quoted above, “Emptiness is Form; Form is Emptiness”. What lies beneath this difference of perception? Is the Buddhist and Tantric instruction a way of maintaining embodiment; a way of maintaining connections? Bataille's theory of the informe, as it is seen in the West, is that it operates as an unwanted deviant

138 Ibid., p 175.
from the management of logical social institutions based on exclusions. The formless according to Bataille acts:

...to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm.\textsuperscript{139}

The formless has no rights in the Western system of utilitarianism and excluding constructions of difference, comparisons and competitions. Who else suffer inequity? Wanderers, asylum seekers, the unemployed, people without form. “...affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit.”\textsuperscript{140}

In Chris Markers 1982 film \textit{Sunless}, the fictional letter writer, Sandor Krasna, despairs of the West's insensitivity to the formless. He says, as he does as the Japanese do, honoring the unsent letters or the journey not taken, “I took the measure of the unbearable vanity of the West, that has never ceased to privilege being over non–being, what is spoken to what is left unsaid.”\textsuperscript{141}

Earlier in the film, however, he seems to fall into that arrogance himself and declares that the people of Cape Verde in Africa are a people of nothing, of emptiness, as the discards of colonialist intervention, both essentialising a people in terms of Western notions of cultural value and using nothingness or the formless in terms of an inherent lack.


\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., p 31.

What a contrast to the Hindu Tantric notion of the formless, as holding the potential for life, for the entire universe; as great Mother and Father whose joyous sexual union, not only brings the world into being, but is symbolic of all moments of happiness and enlightenments, within the individuals life. Contemplating the formless, the emptiness of all things seems to be a leveling, aimed at mitigating an over indulge in self as separate from the world, “there is no sense of the subjective distinguishable from the objective.”\textsuperscript{142} There is no \textit{other} as separate from or alienated from self.

At the beginning of this chapter I mentioned a Tantric sect that straddled both Hindu and Buddhist Tantra. Vaishnava Sahajiya apparently flourished between the 16th and 19th centuries in Bengal. Vaishnava denotes the worship of Vishnu, but in his Krishna form. \textit{Sahaja} refers to the basic tenet of this sect, that of being “born together” with the “finite, the infinite, the phenomenal and the nominal reality.”\textsuperscript{143} The word has come to be associated, as the group themselves has, with “spontaneity” or “naturalness” “...all denoting the indivisible reality.” “...beings are born out of \textit{sahaja}, live in \textit{sahaja}, and again vanish into \textit{sahaja}.”\textsuperscript{144}

It may seem a leap to associate the formless with spontaneity, but I think it is a leap worth pursuing. The formless within Hindu Tantra holds the unrealised energy of Shiva and Shakti, their union is described as a spontaneous desire for an other, to be with or to become, which then creates the world of form. As indicated above contemplating emptiness would seem to engage desire which arouses

\textsuperscript{142} Basu, M. 1986. p 588.
\textsuperscript{143} Feuerstein, G. 2000. p 45.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., p 45.
spontaneity. As I have described above there is a tension created by emptiness, which could be likened to an apprehension as immanent becoming, which then evolves into action (connection) that is motivated by the desire to implement the desire, to make it the world, to fill the world with desire. It is a preparation for complete identification with another, a deity or an object or phenomena of reality. Taking this to its extreme, as I have also suggested could be dangerous.

In Kashmir Shaivism this spontaneity is called spanda, which evolves from joy, ananda. Spanda is an active creative movement and literally means vibration. Here I am rather contentiously conflating ananda with kama, which to some Hindu scholars would be unacceptable. The desire I am writing about in this paper is a desire to create, a catalyst for the making of art. In a Freudian sense this would be a sublimated desire, for Deleuze and Guattari, it is productive, as I will discuss in Part Two of this thesis. It is a desire contained within the structure of a frame work of representation, either as symbolic form or as real, but which doesn't necessarily guarantee ethical application or even transparency of intention. However, it is a structure that has the potential to either reveal itself, ourselves to each other or be there for scrutiny. It is a structure for “acting out” that which may otherwise go unseen or unexpressed in such a way that may have the potential for damage and which cannot be contained.

Kama creates ananda, the two have a force that provokes action, shakti out of spontaneity. The Kashmir Shaivist position on this is that the world as illusion (Mayavada) as it is seen in the Advaita Vedantic Mayavedic philosophy is a mistake. Advaita has, over the centuries of Orientalist study, been presented quite wrongly as the
representative philosophy of Hinduism. Kamalarka Mishra sees a connection between the power that this philosophy developed, due to its connection with the Brahman caste, and the “want of proper leadership” in India. This occurred from the middle ages onwards and resulted in a continued “degeneration” of Indian society. This, he argues, is why India became a “slave” country under foreign domination. It was only when the philosophy of Moksa (selfrealisation) and its relationship to Dharma (morality) and kama was re-examined by Gandhi, Vivekananda and Aurobindo, that “liberation” became an option. For Mishra, “Indian society has been in perpetual need of social reformation and cleansing of the dirt accumulated in the name of the Vedic varnasrama dharma.” Varnasrama dharma refers to the caste system.

The basic difference between Advaita Vedanta and Tantra (apart from the important distinction involving the Tantric rejection of caste) is around the notions of action as creative power shakti and lila as play. In Advaita, Brahman as Consciousness or Self is inactive; the world is illusion and is superimposed onto Consciousness, which remains inert. In Tantra the world is an active, shakti, manifestation or transformation, lila, of Shiva/Shakti, Brahman or Self, though still a projection of an illusion. In Advaita all action is Karma, which Mishra describes as a “voluntary effortful action that arises out of some lack or want.” This is a view of action and creativeness as intrinsically flawed and unable to achieve anything positive in the world. In Advaita there is no notion of the Tantric spanda, as a manifestation of joy that is positive, that can make change that is beneficial to humanity.

146 Ibid., p 387.
147 Ibid., p 388.
Through its elevation of spontaneous potentiality held within the formless, which is the acceptance of unity in opposites, Tantra practice encourages a connective and active relationship with the world.

CAVES

Sanskrit word for cave is “guha”, from the root “guh” to conceal, to keep secret and mysterious. The caves are an inside. They are of the earth, some huge, can hold or sleep 200 people, (135 feet long by 50 feet wide). Dug out of massive cliffs with a two centimeter wide chisel. Little chisel worrying marks, intimate, persistent, every space touched of the (her/his/Its) great insides. A great Love. Mother. Getting back into the earth. Ajanta and Ellora caves excavated between the 2nd century BC and the 10th AD. Used for shelter in the monsoon rains. Nothing more “inside” than a cave. Earth womb. Nurturing, intimate, confronting. Pitch black, body defying spaces. The caves design: simplicity to extremes, entering the maha-sunya, an intensification of senses through limitation. Framed in the earth the macrocosmic world, depicted in murti and painting, of the great sagas of the Buddha or Hindu pantheon; another way to intensity, overwhelming the senses. A theatre, sharply defined away from the noise and explosive life of the jungles, the dust of the plains or

150 Ibid., p 31.
distraction of the towns. Inside the caves time condenses into no time, the moment condenses into the self as no-self. The caves are a theatre for merging, belonging. Every movement and sound, a flight, amplified, by the simpleness and hollowness of the cave and framed within crushing, indestructible, weight, bulk.\textsuperscript{151}

Lannoy's description of the affect of being in the ancient man-made caves of Ajanta, could be seen as expressive of Tantra connectivity. The Ajanta caves are Mahayana Buddhist, which has a strong connection to Tantric practices. Describing the Ajanta frescoes, Lannoy speaks of a style of painting that gives a, "felicitous rendering of tactile sensations normally experienced subconsciously. These are felt rather than seen when the eye is subordinate to a total receptivity of all the senses."\textsuperscript{152} He calls this phenomenon a "unified field awareness" which he claims is prevalent in non literate societies.\textsuperscript{153} This way of seeing is simultaneous, sensuous, "the Ajanta artist is concerned with the order of sensuousness, as distinct from the order of reason",\textsuperscript{154} the visual experience being in the Ajanta frescoes totally different from the fixed perspective of the Western renaissance image. "Everything is foreground, everything is simultaneous, existing in the Eternal Present." Lannoy calls simultaneity a "tactile mode of perception" which is "the flash of truth which sees the apparently unrelated as ultimately interconnected", this "is finally known, not by the mind, but by a coordination of mind and body."\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{151} Note: From the candidate's diary.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., p 48.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., p 48.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., p 49.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., p 49.
Later in the same chapter he uses the word "synaesthesia"\textsuperscript{156} to further describe this all encompassing experience of the frescoes, as provoking a merging of the visual with sound and touch. This unity of sense experience may derive from within the experience of formlessness, \textit{sunya}, provoked by the spaciousness of the caves. As Lannoy points out, \textit{sunya} is not empty, not, “negation, but inexhaustible potentiality.”\textsuperscript{157}

It is possible to connect the experience of the aniconic \textit{murti} stone with that of the affects Lannoy experiences looking at the Ajanta frescoes. Carmel Berkson writes, that the Buddhist caves of Ajanta and Ellora, “reflect metaphysical interpretations concerning the nature of the Buddhist \textit{shunyatta} (sunya)”\textsuperscript{158} The \textit{murti} stone, without the distraction of representation beyond itself as simple stone, powerfully evokes sensations of mind/body connectedness, of a space within the body that is a wordless pregnancy.

According to Alistair Shearer the word \textit{murti} comes from a Sanskrit word that means crystallization.\textsuperscript{159} Coming into moment and presence is the purpose of Tantra. It is also the preserve of an older form of Hinduism still practiced in Bali. There the shrine’s throne is empty of any form of the deity, it waits for the presence of the deity to descend during puja.\textsuperscript{160} This suggests a crystallizing of formlessness, primarily concerned with \textit{connectedness}. Perhaps to a moment of simultaneity and synaesthetic experience, in which presence is felt through or against the paradox of nothingness.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., p 50.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., p 50.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p 91.
Formlessness, as a structural component of Hinduism and esoteric practices like Tantra, also plays a pivotal role in a dissenting medieval offshoot of Hinduism called Bhakti, in particular a sub-branch called Nirguni Bhakti. Nirguni means worshipping a deity who is "without qualities or attributes", but can also refer to the yoni lingam in Hindu temples, which is the aniconic representation of Shiva/Shakti. Bhakti means intense devotion, practiced at the level of a relational love, almost romantic love or sexual desire for a formless deity. Nirguni Bhakti is worship without relying on or using an image as representation. The Bhakti movement eschewed the caste system and positioned divinity as identical to an immortal soul within the body. There is some disagreement as to whether the Bhakti movement could be described as a political protest, but definitely in some parts of India, it set itself up as an alternative to Brahman Hinduism. In their book on women's writing in India, Susie Tharu and K. Lalita describe the Bhakti movement as having been "called a peoples revolt against the domination of the upper castes and the lifeless ritual of Vedic Hinduism practiced by the Brahman priests."

What was the importance of worshipping without using representation? Why invoke formlessness? What does representation do? Did there come to be a perceived relationship between representation and political and religious dominance? Is the function of the formless to keep the practice centered on an individual or personal experience, which nurtures the integrity of each individual, as in relation to the universe and nature as the expression of divine love or enstasy? The popular story that Buddha instructed his

---

162 Ibid., p 4 and 10.
“disciples” to not make images of him suggests a suspicion of a possible connection between reliance on the iconographic and a loss of integrity of practice. As if he believed that the contemplation of a representation of his form would precipitate an alienation from the practice. Both the Nirguni Bhakti movement, Tantra and Buddhism were expressions of disagreement with exploitative social divisions, monarchy and the ostentatious material wealth of Vedic Hinduism. Islam too has placed great importance on the aniconic representation of deity and in its more orthodox manifestations, even the representation of people is not allowed.

There are, up to around the third century, no depictions of Buddha in Buddhist temple art. The seat carved in stone relief, where Buddha would later appear, is empty in early representations of him. Kanoko Tanaka in his study of the absent Buddha in early Buddhist art, suggests that this absence “is a monumental space” of emptiness which served as a “memory picture” of the presence of the Buddha in the past.\(^{164}\) Perhaps this “memory picture” acts as a reflection also. Emptiness invites reflection or more importantly, a reflective projection. Ultimately, what is projected into the empty seat of the Buddha and onto the aniconic stones is the self. A space is provided for “self-dramatization”,\(^{165}\) where the viewer can imagine them – selves in the seat, which is empty. This becomes a self augmented by or entwined within its inextricable relationship to everything else occurring within space. Another form outside of oneself, becomes self, so then, what is and where is, Self? What the representative images of either Buddha or the Gods and Goddesses of Hinduism carry, is their relationship to text and dogma. They are the eroticised and

\(^{165}\) Ibid., p 36.
emotive illustrations of the principle stories of Hinduism or Buddhism. The deities represented become an authority, a story, they become spectacle, above and beyond and possibly control the desires of the lonely sadhakar / sadhiki.

The stones seem to connect to a more fluid, perhaps originally animist interpretation. They centre the worship of deities on the earth or the river or the mountain, to a place where people pass or walk over everyday, often in the countryside well away from the large temples. In Ellora village, Maharashtra, there is a stone under an archway that was just showing from under the dirt. It measured about ten centimeters across. Every other day it began to have ghee (clarified butter) and oil poured on it and flowers placed over it, with the red mark of the bindu dotted at its centre. The bindu is the point, the drop, the indivisible one, the point of entry into mahasunya, as the moment of simultaneous creation and destruction. I use the word fluid because the stones seem to carry different meanings for different people. Some people in the village called the stone a boundary marker, others called it the Goddess or Mother and another told me it was being marked because the body of a dead person had been carried over it, on its way to cremation.

The resonance of these stones make a link into Western Twentieth century art movements like minimalism or the markings of Pollock or Tapies. A sort of immanent pre–text language. The Indian sculptor Anish Kapoor works with the void. He says:

The void is not silent. I have always thought of it more and more as a transitional space, an inbetween space. It’s very much to do with time. I have always been interested as an artist in how one can somehow look again for that very first moment of creativity where everything is possible and nothing has actually happened. It’s a space of
becoming...'something' that dwells in the work...that allows it or forces it not to be what it states it is in the first instance.\textsuperscript{166}

The process of relating to the stones, I connect with the emptying of thought associated with Buddhism and Hindu meditation, but also a reminder of land and human body together. The stone has a presence, as living as our own presence and enhances presence.

It is this idea of an "enhanced receptivity" which so interested me and which I related to the metaphor I have written to above, called “working through condensation”. It has become part of my experience as an artist that form arises out of a state that seems akin to formlessness. This emptying is a component of certain dance and theater traditions in Asia as well, notably Japanese Butoh and Noh theater. It is this personal adherence to this state that makes the task of rationally and objectively outlining my artistic intentions so difficult.

Void, nothingness within Tantra cosmogony is the holding space of the seed of the creation of the world in the form of shiva/shakti or the first un–struck sound. For an individual person it is felt as a space, it is something in itself. In deliberately not focussing on any one phenomena, but the possibility of nothingness, I feel fullness. An expansiveness without the clutter or the meaning value of image or word, but a psycho–physical interconnectedness between body and world, that rests in and of its own experiential worth, its own pleasure, desire or even possibly displeasure, fear. There is an anxiety that Lannoy speaks of in relation to the affect of the stones,

he speaks of a link between the "sacred and the dangerous". The anxiety of something framed but not represented.

Something there but not spoken of or seen or understood. A feeling of gap, unclaimed perceptive space. Un-proclaiming itself does this anxiety or desire or both, eventually make a form? Does this space of "enhanced receptivity" in its tension of formless to form or formless from form provoke an image, a word, a sound, a foundling expression? Within the Tantra creation cosmogony it would seem that the void is potent with the desire or will to create.

It is worth pausing to consider the generally accepted fact of the discovery of the Zero in India, which modern mathematics is based on. There would be no calculus without the idea of zero. Within Hindu cosmogony Zero is not nothing but according to Lannoy can be equated with “bindu, ‘dot’, ‘seed’, ‘semen’” as “an unlimited entity, the productive point of potentiality.” The word sunya coming from sunyam (Void) also means Zero and Nirvanam from which nirvana (enlightenment) comes. Sunyam means “swollen” or “excessive”. So it moves away from the mathematical to a speculative and philosophical engagement with Being. It is a “meditation on the paradox of the maximum potential contained within an irreducible minimum.” As swollen nothing, it personifies the Hindu observance of the coincidence or relatedness of opposites as balance. Lannoy writes that the “momentous” discovery of the Zero:

...was preceded by centuries of speculation on the idea that nothing was a kind of thing. ...by reason of its coincidentia, the Zero refers to a plane higher than that of

---

168 Ibid., p 344.
169 Ibid., p 344.
empirical reality, of the flux of things, while signifying the point where empirical reality dissolves into transcendental reality.  

The dissolving is its grounding. I would not designate “lower states” or “higher states”. It is transcendent in that it dissolves the definition. It, the Zero, is not higher or above the earth, the merging effect and affect of the paradox is to bring it to the material of the body, seed, semen or to unite the transcendent nothing, with the earthed, “the flux of things”; universal trust and connection in earth as Ourselves. “Sunya the earlier term for Zero, connotes the point at the outer reaches of what either language or art can state.” This is not a transcendence but a merging with the enigmas of Being. It is also worth pondering the extraordinary but taken for granted notion of emptiness as possible, that in the world of abundance, how was the notion of emptiness perceived. The sudden loss of something, disappearance, death and the corresponding sense of loss within, an empty hole inside me. A place to fall into at night, terrifying, or a place to suddenly drift into and float, pleasurably unattached, while lying on the ground listening to the world. The way humans experience life in the world is the way we imagine creation of the world. The empty place has a great fecundity about it. Where something could happen. The formless that holds the seed, bija which is shakti (energy) and shiva (consciousness) is reflected and activated in and by shakti.

---

170 Ibid., p 344.
171 Ibid., p 344.
BIJA

I first heard about him from a friend in Bombay. She said his name. I forgot it. When I met him I didn’t make the connection and it took me two weeks before I could remember and say his name. He heard my name once and remembered it. Later he told me that to learn English when he was younger, and still now, in that process, “You say me very well. Then, I memory to my mind and repeating all the two, three hours, because is good to talk.”

The seed word is the creative hinge in the process of condensation. The way sound evolves according to the Tantras, needs to be understood as a metaphor for the complex process that is the gathering of fascination into a hinge in the process of condensation. It is not just about sound, but the crisis, the struggle to bring form into the world.

The process of creation is precipitated by desire which expresses itself through vac (speech, sound) as the saying of a word known as the bija or seed word; the making of a sound. In the Vedas, Vac is the creative force. Vac is related to cow and so feminized, she is the “ancestral queen”, the “firstborn” and the “womb and support of the entire universe.”

Note: From the candidate's diary.

involves a primordial space of nothingness out of which develops \textit{spanda}, vibration into a sound, out of the sound comes light and color which then creates form. In his book on Kashmir Shaivism, Swami Lakshman describes a state in which the aspirant is “traveling in the kingdom of \textit{vak}” called \textit{paravak} which is “soundless sound which resides in your own universal consciousness.”\textsuperscript{174} When the aspirant or the \textit{sadhakar} or \textit{sadhiki} has come to be in complete universal in-ness he or she can “come and go” in this sound and also travel “in other sounds”, as well.\textsuperscript{175}

The aim of the system of Tantras known as the Trika System (Kashmir Shaivism) is to achieve subjectivity; rising from “individuality to universality”. This is known as in-ness.\textsuperscript{176} It was in this state, according to Trika legend, that Shiva gave birth to the Tantras that are specific to Kashmir Shaivism. The manifestation of the Tantras from the Being or in-ness of Shiva are described by Lakshman as a series of movements he calls “illuminating energy”. I will briefly outline and quote from this description because I think it conveys very well the connection between the Tantric idea of how a thought comes into being and the Tantric imaginary of all creation. Remembering that Shiva is the world and also that Shiva refers to Shakti the feminine and in one branch of Kashmir Shaivism (The Krama School) the feminine as Shakti initiates Shiva and Shiva is her disciple. Shiva should not be read as just a male God, he is also referred to as the Self.\textsuperscript{177} He is represented as half male and half female and is incomplete, attributeless with no energy \textit{nirguna}, formless, without the Goddess or the feminine principle known as Shakti, \textit{saguna}, form.\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., p 41
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., p 132.
\textsuperscript{177} Basu, M. 1986. p 433.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., p 74.
Shiva felt the presence of the Tantra, but it was unformed, residing in Shiva's “innermost speech” paravak, the place that is the sound of no sound as “the one breathed breathlessly.”

The second movement of illuminating energy occurs within the second level of speech, known as pasyanti, here the Tantras remain undifferentiated, but have moved to the position of will but remain “visible only to intuition”. Some writers might use the word desire instead of will here, but not Lakshman, who makes a sharp distinction between the two.

The movement into the third layer of speech, known as madhyama vak, renders the Tantras “differentiated” and “manifested internally only in thought but not in words.” Becoming differentiated suggests the beginning of an action of a desiring or willing into a form; into a relationship that will eventually become separate.

In the fourth layer, the Tantras emerge from the speech level of vaikhara vak from “his five mouths in differentiation as words, sentences, and verses.”

The Indian poets responsible for this imagining show a profound sensitivity to the movements of creation, of feelings thoughts and ideas within the human psyche and naturally also deduce that as in the human psyche, so creations happen in the natural world. There is no doubt that the movement of seed into a
plant can be likened to the formation of an idea or an image in the mind. The mysterious formation of words seen in the growth of a child and the mystery of when words began and how, provides fecund ground for the imagination, something to wonder at, as is creation itself.

Speech is perceived as being able to exist as no sound, as an unformed feeling which elaborates into an idea as it develops through gradations of movements into spoken sound and formed words and this is also how the universe began and how all phenomena continuously resides in and leaves the world.

The process of an idea begins with no sound, a void. It is a process that involves silence, not knowing. The feeling of a pre-word apprehension or understanding before something is put into words is an experience common to everyone, but has been treated as negative, that such a state must be passed through as quickly as possible to produce the word, the sentence, the ever needed meaning, the truth. The pre-word state is the place of creation, linking to a primal edge of self, which dissolves into everything. It may be the place to find what really needs to be said, the pre-word state is the place of insecurities, hurts, loss, the place of strong emotions that have remained unidentified or unsayable.

In the above sense the *bijā* is, in the process of “working through condensation”, the *creative hinge*. The seed word is a mantra used to invoke energy or awareness, sometimes referred to as seed syllables. The well known Om is a seed syllable and is said to be the original sound from which all other seed syllables developed from. The *creative hinge* is the thing seen, felt, touched or heard that won’t go away, that insists. The word *bijā* is also important as one of
the elements of the first “primordial sound” and is the source of the universe of form. Shakti as the *saguna* (form) and creative attribute of Shiva, who is the formless attribute of Shakti, moves out of the formless towards light or knowledge, and is then taken with the desire to create. This forms the *bindu*. The *bindu* bursts causing “an inchoate volume of sound”¹⁸³ the origin of all sounds, letters and words and out of these come, in the “ethereal regions, air from touch, fire from color, water from taste, earth from smell.”

The *Bindu* is like a seed, bursting and spreading three distinct but orchestrated layers of itself; *bindu*, partaking of the “nature of Shiva or *janna*” (knowledge); *bija* as Shakti; *nada* acts as the relationship between *bindu* and *bija* or Shiva and Shakti, and is the “stimulator and stimulated”.¹⁸⁴ The *bindu* literally in Sanskrit means *drop*; drop of water or probably semen or the central originating *point* as something condensed and something pending and falling. Feuerstein, using a different source from Lakshman, describes a process where consciousness again unites with light or “lucidity” to form a sound, a “vibratory source point”.

Feuerstein’s source is the Sharada-Tilaka-Tantra.¹⁸⁵ In this poem, consciousness is feminine, as Shakti uniting with lucidity to bring about the birth of the *bindu*. Shiva is not mentioned until after the *bindu* is formed, as part of the *bindu*. Some schools of Tantra place Shakti as the supreme deity or holder of consciousness. Energy and lucidity create the most subtle sound known as *dhvani*. Lucidity is here meant, as its layered meaning of both light, seeing and *hearing* as clarity of understanding and transparency. From this initial subtle

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p 74.
sound develops further gradations, to nada adding inertia (tamas) to the dynamic and the lucid. The addition of tamas has the effect and affect of creating a valve, an objection, something that alerts consciousness.

From this beginning of the audible is an entity that is more restricted still, nirodhikta. From this part of the process comes the vibration which is bindu from which the universe erupts. Increased lucidity and energy restricted by inertness as tamas makes the pressure needed to bring out a sound. Tamas manifests as sloth, lethargy, apathy and indifference in the human body and yet the restriction of these feelings is needed to bring about, ultimately, form. This description images a musical instrument, and the formation of the mouth. There is a valve or aperture to bank or condense energy so it can be shaped. The opening of the mouth is the bursting bindu, the interloping of body with universe. I become a person through the process of sound, the world rings its creation in sound from no sound to form and solidity. The restriction or the valve is the struggle of the limitation of my body as separate from the world. I work against my restrictions. This is the containment that can collect the condensation and activate the creative hinge. It is the struggle for something sensed to emerge from an inert state which is the contradiction of itself as nothing, but something there. The “fat Zero”\textsuperscript{186} The results of this restriction is the condensation of an image or an idea on the reflective containment of mind or inside eye.

The use of tamas or inertia also suggests the combining of opposites and eventually the disappearance of the illusion of

\textsuperscript{186} Lannoy, R. 1971. p 344.
opposites as unrelated entity. So that really there are no opposites or if there are, they will be contained within each other. Here, the concern is with the combination of opposites and what that achieves. In the Tantric view the engagement of opposites results in a subjective transcendence of duality through the relational identification of self with others and world.

In the development of the Hindu cosmogony of no sound, to sound, to word, to form, the space of the fecund Zero as the formless or nothingness is acknowledged. The thesis I am presenting may have to contend with the word bound truth seeker whose attachment to the objective has desensitized their ability to see before words, desensitized their ability to experience on or within the peripheries of definitions. They may inhabit the institutionalized world of explanation, where they believe in the logical, rational use of words as the only marking or containment for experience and “truth”. The peripheral is not perceived as it floats across the senses unidentified in unworded sounds or marks or displays. As if words are the only language. But even the word can be reduced or enhanced to the peripheral of its own meaning and freed to con-sort across the boundaries with other sense perceptions. The unformed knowledge existed before the word. The bedrock source is found within the unfathomable, which can only be interpreted or suggested. Hence begins the transgressive world of illusion, seemings and play. So within this paper there is an internal struggle between the adherence to the word as truth, making sense, and the word as play aligning itself to the slipperiness of peripheral transgressions. Bija as the seed is indicative of a process where something plays on the senses, attracts attention, creates a pull or a distemper leading towards an act of will or desire to make something happen.
I arrive one morning to cook my breakfast at the gas stove on the floor in her kitchen, to find her still curled up, head covered, on the mattress on the floor. There is a hushed tension in the house. He tells me everything is fine and to go and cook my breakfast. The children are very quite. They tell me later that there was a big family fight over how little the children are going to school. He became crazy with anger and hit her after she stopped him from bashing his son with an iron bar.

The next day I noticed that he had big blisters on the fingers of his right hand. He told me that the evening before he went out into the fields, built a small fire and put his hand in, to burn the hand that had hit his wife, so he wouldn’t do it again.\textsuperscript{187}

In his introduction to Sir John Woodroffe’s translation of the Tantric creation verse Kama–Kala–Vilasa, Krishnaswami Aiyer writes:

At the beginning of creation, God the ever changeless Being desired to be an ever changing seeming. The Absolute Being took on the role of relative becoming. This desire and its fruition brought on the entire universe of name and form. The subject self conceived of itself as an object of its own cognition. The 'I' became the 'this'. This initial desire

\textsuperscript{187} Note: From the candidate’s diary.
impulse responsible for the creation of the world is given the name Kama. The desire–full supreme entity is known as Kamesvara (male) and his active desire is Kamesvari (female). The entire universe is the outcome of the union of these two primary parents.\textsuperscript{188}

Krishnaswami uses the image of a person standing in front of a mirror looking at their reflection as an analogy to describe the action that created the universe. He calls the original self seeing person, the true being and the reflection, the "evanescent seeming".\textsuperscript{189} The imagining is, that at some point human consciousness began to see how it could replicate itself as a reflection, reflect on itself and play with "seemings" or roles of itself.

The Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal defines moments of theatre as that instance when humans reflect on themselves as dichotomous or capable of seeing themselves, seeing themselves. In theatre as in all creative life, humans exist within a triadic relationship of the “observing – I, the I – in – situ, and the not – I, that is, the other.”\textsuperscript{190} In Boal’s work with his company and method called the “Theatre of the Oppressed”, he uses desire as the medium through which we can discern our oppression and our liberation. Through exploring our desires we can see and imagine a different way of living or we can see what our desire or lack of desire does to us and each other. Liberation from oppression begins with recognizing our desires.

\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., p 4
In Boal’s method the actor takes up the story of an audience member and must “live the desire of their character”.\textsuperscript{191} The desires create the dramatic action and bring about a “point of crisis”,… “where a choice must be made”,\textsuperscript{192} or there is a moment of realisation of the truth of a situation. In “working through condensation” a “point of crisis” is also reached, which I have called a \textit{crisis in desire}; a moment of compelled wanting that precipitates an engagement with \textit{another} in the form of a material, an image or a person, which in turn can focus into a creative work. This \textit{compelled wanting} is a dialogue between myself and myself through another. The other, becomes a foil or a restriction, \textit{tamas}, a question to myself, an opportunity to know myself. It is fascinating that Boal uses \textit{crisis} as it is understood in the Chinese characterization of the word, which means both “danger” and “opportunities.”\textsuperscript{193}

The moment of creation or the moment of enlightenment or self knowledge in Tantra, as in the more ancient Vedic cosmogonies of the Hindu philosophical schools, involves the word desire, \textit{kama}. These moments are always associated with words like heat; \textit{tapas}, bliss; \textit{ananda}, play; \textit{lila}, the most pragmatic word used in this context is will, \textit{iccha}. As expressed in a poem in the Rig Veda, the world came out of an “undivided oneness” where there was no:

\begin{quote}
...death, nor immortality then. There was no distinguishing sign of night nor of day. That one breathed windless, by its own impulse. Other than that there was nothing beyond.
\end{quote}

\textit{R.V.10.129.2\textsuperscript{194}}

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., p 58.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., p 59.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., p 59.
Again the aniconic or formless is sensed as being or holding possibility. The action of desire on the individual could be likened to an *undivided oneness*. This suggests the strange connection between sunya and desire. Desire as a signaling and singular force of focus begins a tension, that in the analogy of both Tantric cosmogony and “working through condensation” is heat or *tapas*:

The law of heaven and truth were born,
Of conscious fervour set on fire.
From this came stillness of the night,
From this the ocean with its waves.  R.V 10.190.1.\(^{195}\)

Paraphrasing Richard King’s interpretation of the above verses; The undivided oneness is composed of darkness and water and becomes energized by the power of heat, *tapas*. The word *tapas* symbolizes a variety of interconnected meanings. Primarily it refers to heat. It can be practices of austerity which creates a “psycho-physiological heat”\(^ {196}\) within the body, through the practice of yoga; the ritual sacrificial fire used in *pujas*, (ritual worship) the heat of sexual desire and the heat of cosmic creation. As with *tamas* (restriction), in the formation of words, there is a transformative action, involving, in this case, fire, as a means of condensing, suggested by the heating of water. The man in the story at the beginning of this chapter uses heat to change his desire from violence to care. Olson describes the same verse from the Rig Veda as expressing a time when:

An all pervading darkness enveloped water and that one (*tad ekam*), a single neuter principle without another. By means of the power of heat, the single one was born within

\(^{196}\) Ibid., p 202.
the primordial darkness and watery expanse. Once the single one was animated, it experienced desire (kama) which became the initial seed of the mind.\textsuperscript{197}

The Tantras, according to the ancient teacher Abhinavagupta of the Kaula school (Kashmir Shaivism), place desire as a positive and central component of practice. Allowing for the experience and the provoking of desire shows the way to feel eternal bliss, ananda, which unfolds to the point of liberation which is to achieve an idealised state of non-separation or non-dual being, “an essential union of knower, known, and knowing”.\textsuperscript{198}

The metaphysical bases of the Kaula system is that the androgynous Shiva/Shakti deity represents the macrocosmic vibratory source of the universe through desire which is located as microcosm within every human. As such allowing for the capacity for humans to experience the universal desire of and for creation and ultimately and ideally, to live in communal enjoyment and bliss in everyday life. Unlike other schools within Hinduism and Buddhism desire is not according to most Tantras, something to detach from because it will hinder the goal of enlightenment, but an “emotion in which the infinite is manifested.”\textsuperscript{199} So desiring becomes a means of achieving a sense of connection to the world.

A distinction is made, however, between types of desire. Desire is to “to be eliminated only if it is desire “for” akanksa, rather than desire “to” iccha.”\textsuperscript{200} The desire “for” seeming to be indicative of material gain, an easily exhausted external gain, singularly object

\textsuperscript{197} Olson, C. 2002. p 75.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., p 93.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., p 94.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., p 94.
orientated, that passes. The desire “to” is an active and creative internal desire that is self fulfilling, in relationship with others and the world. The pivotal point of desire as the creative force is the union of Shiva/Shakti or “I in fullness”. The point of “I in fullness” is the moment of realizing “enjoyment of consciousness”. This is also known as kama-bindu.

“I in Fullness” is the aim of the dérive and not the aim of the spectacle or the advertising company, although they play on this desire for fullness, but not to create autonomous fulfillment but arbitrary and fleeting fulfillments that create more desire, that are eternally unsatisfied.

Desire or kama is a stage to a desire free of lust called mahakama, the great Desire. The aim is to develop a “body of ecstasy” through either the actual practice of sexual intercourse with a partner or to internalise the process entirely within the individual through Kundalini yoga or meditation. Whichever process is used the aim is the same, to achieve the union of the male and female energy within oneself. This practice is symbolically carried out in the religious ceremonies at Shiva temples all over India with the anointing and washing and offerings made to the stone yoni-lingam. The yoni, being the female organ as the vulva, Shakti, and the lingam generally seen as the male organ, representative of Shiva. The ceremony can be astoundingly erotic and sensual in its detail of washing the two stone organs, pouring scented oil or ghee (clarified butter) milk or curd over them and placing the leaves and flowers of the chrysanthemum on top and around them.

---

202 Ibid., p 464.
A poem from the Bengali Tantric poet Manulal Misra gives us an idea of how desire is transmuted:

Within the Thousand petaled lotus, the name of Perfect Conjugal Love is inscribed.  
White, blue and yellow, this love is like milk.  
If one can retain the seed, lust will be conquered.  
The seed like milk is mixed with lust.  
But if it becomes free of lust, I'll enter the gate of erotic play! [vilasa]  
The cause of this amorous play lies within the power of lust itself;  
The secret of Sahaja [path to liberation] love is a strange new kind of devotion!....  
When desire [kama] becomes free of desire [akama], the Great Desire [Mahakama] arises; Engaged in this Great Desire, I'll reach the eternal realm!^{203}

This poem at first might suggest a denial of the body through the withholding of seed, but another way of reading this is that the withholding of seed is a way of maintaining the joy. The joy then becomes associated with love and not lust. This poem is about more than sex and love between partners, however. It suggests a way of being in desire as a way of life. This is suggested by the seemingly paradoxical lines that if the seed can be “free of lust, I’ll enter the gate of erotic play” and “the cause of this amorous play lies within the power of lust itself”. So this energy is used, maintained, but channeled via itself, into a means to be connected, in conversation with others and the world. As the poem states at the beginning, its intention is to establish “perfect conjugal love”, which can be found in the layering of a “thousand petaled lotus”. A “thousand petals” seems to be a metaphor for detailed intimacy and engagement. It suggests an image of searching through these layers of petals. “Conjugal”, implies the relationship is shared. The “thousand petals” also refers

^{203} Urban, Hugh, B.2001. p 146.
to the sahasrara chakra, (in sanskrit, thousand),\textsuperscript{204} which is the last chakra in the process of Kundalini situated above the crown of the head. Usually represented as a lotus, it is symbolic of the union of Shiva and Shakti, as the moment of the attainment of sat cit ananda or non-dual perception.

One of the greatest ethical concerns in Indian philosophy has been the dichotomy between “the good”, morality or dharma and the pleasurable, desire and lust. According to Mishra, Tantra has attempted to solve this problem by taking the Hindu notion of moksa (self-realisation, knowledge or liberation) and reinterpreting it as a synthesis of dharma and kama.\textsuperscript{205} Self knowledge leading naturally to liberation can only be achieved through an understanding of desire and its relationship to morality. This understanding can only occur within the elevation of desire to its full potential as an experience of self. The ideal is that joy, ananda is the true self, which naturally fulfills its desires in an ethical manner, without causing harm because to cause harm is to suffer. This “true” self is obstructed by maya (ignorance), which is defined by Mishra in his exposition of the theories of the ancient Kashmir scholar Abhinavagupta, as a sense of duality, the sense that there are others as intrinsically separate from and different from oneself, that need to be either rejected or subjugated.\textsuperscript{206} This is the closing down of the joyous self and the desire to be creative.

This suggests that desire, as it exists within maya, is stunted into forms that are dependent on substitutions that are materialist or consumerist, that don’t fulfill and don’t create anything beyond their

\textsuperscript{204} Mookerjee, A. 1982. p 44.
\textsuperscript{205} Mishra, K. 1993. p 304.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., p 301.
consumption. Western thinkers like Jacques Lacan might rename this desire as *pleasure* or *need*, forming around an intrinsic *lack*. This is a desire that attempts to fill a wound inflicted by an attitude of othering. This othering is paradoxically one that exists as a function of a projection of an unacknowledged self. In this sense, the other is the self, but is banished as an intimate blind spot that can at the same time, exist very close to the self.

Desire can act to breakdown or break into such blind spots, via processes of fascination or obsessions which can be dangerous and involve projection. Other ways could be by following Boal's methods, as opening a space for the expression of desires or the Tantric focus on the arousal of an autonomous desire. But for this to be able to happen, a different awareness or understanding of desire would have to develop. Desire would have to take up a prominent position in our social field. This would entail in the first instance permission to feel it and to express it. As with formlessness or emptiness in Western philosophy, desire has been viewed as a difficult subject, dangerous, precisely because, as with the formless, it presents as paradoxical and unruly to both definition and containment within any framework; “…when I hear the word “desire” I pull out my gun.”

Some philosophers in the West have placed desire as central to life in a way that recognizes its need for validation as a creative force and a means for self understanding. Baruch Spinoza in his *Ethics*, positions desire as “the actual essence of man, in so far as it is conceived, as determined to a particular activity by some given modification of itself.” However, it can be fairly safely argued that

---

desire and desiring have been the site of much repression, both in India and in the West. The desires of the subjects, the people, are always political. Desires are manipulated. Political oppression or socially and collectively agreed upon repressions, always occur around desires and affect desires. So, for the Tantras to place kama at the centre of practice, is both a risk and a provocation. To place desire at the centre of art practice is also a risk and a provocation, both for the artist and the social constructions that the artist lives within. Desires transgress the normal and open to a more vociferous expectation of life. What might hinder these expectations is the clash with social structure, the structure within the subject and without. With or without a social change to the attitudes to desire, desire will and does transgress its limits continuously, but the results will be dependent upon the nature of the restrictions to the expression of desire.

The desire I speak about, that has the potential to transform, is an idealised desire. As it is expressed in the Tantras as the seed of the mind or the seed of the universe, it is untroubled by corruption. Most importantly, it is foundered on desire for the other, as the notion of an internal partner. It is a child's desire whose expressions have been perfectly mirrored. In real life we have to work with the corruption of this child's desire, unthread, untangle, spread out its (their) actions, extend the reach of our understanding of this subverted, repressed, alienated, imposing, defeated and ecstatic Being.

This idealized notion of desire is very close to a desire that Deleuze and Guattari have hope for. Judith Butler describes this
desire as a “more original, bounteous desire.”\textsuperscript{209} Deleuze and Guattari refute the Lacanian notion of desire as lack and see lack as “created, planned and organized through social productions.”\textsuperscript{210} Desire as I have suggested above is repressed within a system that posits the specter of scarcity (lack) as a necessary adjunct to the functioning of capitalism. Deleuze and Guattari see this functioning of capitalism and the theory of the oedipus complex in psychoanalysis, as working glove in hand. Developing on from this it is possible to see that the oedipus complex has been universalised and naturalised as normal or inevitable and not seen, in political terms, as being a result of an imposition of lack as a means of control.

The fear of the father in the private (alienated) nuclear family, is a training ground for the necessary fear of similar castrations of personal power in the structures of capitalist exchange that dominate society. In other words, stepping outside the psychoanalytic paradigm, it is more to the point that the unnatural rule of the father or the mother over the child's desires creates the oedipus complex. Deleuze and Guattari see Oedipus as a functionary of capitalism, “born in the capitalist system”,\textsuperscript{211} but played out or rehearsed in the separated and private family. Desire is forever caught in this web of “daddy-mommy”\textsuperscript{212} pleasing, approval or disapproval. Desire becomes a lack of itself, only possible through the approval of a power outside of the individual.“We are all little colonies and it is Oedipus that colonizes us.”\textsuperscript{213}

\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., p 205.
\textsuperscript{211} Deleuze, G. Guattari, F. 1984. p 265.
\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., p 265.
\textsuperscript{213} Ibid., p 265.
Child sexual abuse or incest, either overtly acted out or covertly threatened, is the agent that “transports” capitalism, from which the oedipus complex has taken root, as the child/adult struggles to wrest, reclaim control of its own desires back from the parent by inflicting the same power relations on further offspring or over others in social life. Present society, in capitalist or capitalist/communist societies, is based on an old fear of incest. The child fears being raped or overwhelmed by the desires of the parent and/or state institutions. Subsequently, the child needs to constantly appease those in control, mediating and repressing his or her own desires by placing the containment of desire into an outside body, thus becoming empty of autonomous desire.

In this sense the child/adult is not safe to express desires, never gets to express them or has their desires manipulated or invaded, so desire becomes a place, a feeling of danger. Under these circumstances the contemplation of sunya would become difficult or impossible, empty space, as receptor to the messages of autonomous desire, is not possible. This is the corruption of desire and where the crisis in desire originates in “working through condensation”, as a compulsive insistence to break a repression or a blind spot, through allowing fascination as a creative hinge to act as messenger. Without this occurrence desire continues to be effectively controlled and subjugated into varying levels of either sexual or emotional violence, against oneself or another or as consumerist need or pleasure, in which place it is free to express itself and continue its engagement with itself as lack.

---

214 Ibid., p 267.
215 Ibid., p 201.
He told me. She and he, husband and wife, have sex quickly, then separate, they don’t lie together. This is because in their caste understanding, the male will lose his power. The wife gets up very quickly and goes about her housework and he goes and washes.216

Deleuze and Guattari’s theories of desire could be in some agreement with the productive and regenerative potential of desire and the notion of an uncorrupted desire, found within the Tantras. Mishra also sees desire as repressed and turned against itself. Tantra he says, “is an attempt to break the false barriers of the individual and society”.217 These barriers in particular, relate to caste, which Mishra sees as destroying Indian society. Caste has involved elaborate systems of exclusion and prejudices against certain members of society, cruel oppression and body pollution laws that put shame into the experience of the body. As in the West desire has been subjugated by social and economic forces.

In this case, in order to break this control over desire, transgressiveness comes into play. Lila as the creative play of Shiva in the nataraj, his dance of creation, is the symbol of this potential in Tantra. If we accept that desires should be explored, should be freed, then we need a containment for the safe expression of desire, an expression that won’t harm. As in sunya we need compassion, that is bringing desires into the containment of the body in relationship. The container is a practice and practice must be in relationship. The very idea of practice brings containment, but not necessarily an awareness of relationship. It is the limitation involved in bringing ideas into the physical world as manifestations, that provide the containment. Those limitations are the logistics of physicality, cause

216 Note: From the candidate’s diary.
and effect and the affected sites created by representation. Practice cannot be imposed. Capitalism and Oedipus is a practice that is imposed and becomes habit or somnolence, which threatens the relational potential of practice. A relational practice of desire and what it can do, is a practice of questioning the spaces we are in.

Tantra is distinguished from Vedic Hinduism and the Oedipalization of the psyche in capitalism by its focus on the expansion of awareness through an exploration of the senses. It places the body as the locus of practice. The way to salvation or awakening is through the senses; the way to manage personal power is by understanding desire or lust rather than denying these forces and the way to understand the universe is held within the body, "All things and all events lie within this microcosm of the human body. The creative and destructive feelings within the body, are considered sacred material by some Tantrics. There are, in some schools certain practices, known as the "principle of reversal", that deliberately go against social (caste) rules, and expectations.

What happens in the world because of or indifferently from human agency is also part of the body. In this way of positioning the relationship between human and world, there can be no disowning of responsibility in the relationship between self and world or self and other. The world is self and the other is self. This ancient Indian, Hindu tradition is known as dehatattva, the human body as the microcosm contains the macrocosm and all its elements. Creation in the world is reflected within the human body.

The importance of *dehatattva*, lies in its connectiveness. There is no false, deranging separation that is inherent in the oedipalized capitalism that Deleuze and Guattari reveal. It can be imagined that in dehatattva, existence would not be one that resulted in alienation, oppression or repression of emotions and desires. It is difficult to imagine this. How, if it became predominant, would it change us and the way we desire? Oedipus as the mainstay of capitalism could not survive such a way of relating, as Oedipus is not based on equal exchanges of power. Desires get trapped, broken diverted and corrupted. It is also apparent that without an ethical base like dehatattva, trusting in desire could be no guarantee to an end to the oppression and repression of desire. So desire is in need of a containment, a practice that is connective, but that is fueled by desire itself. Desire could become a conversation with self and other and the world if it is contained within a connective matrix that positioned the personal and the public as interconnected, the spiritual and the political in dialogue and money, as capital, as public property. Desire can be a guide into the possibility of understanding self and others as in relationship, rather than as a broken pornographic assemblage of commodities.
Chapter 4

SUDHAKAR DALVI SPEAKS
WITH
FASCINARE

In this chapter I will speak to the video works that accompany this thesis. They are Sudhakar Dalvi Speaks, With and Fascinare.

The imagination that pictures, researches and seeks to engage in the transformation of all substances belongs to the alchemical minds of the scientist and the artist, both of whom approach the philosopher’s stone.\textsuperscript{219}

And not just the “philosopher’s stone” but, the situation of lives. The curious process that precipitates or launches the transformation that Kristine Styles identifies above, is something to do with fascination or love or desire for something. The desire is, to take something or someone who fascinates, and wrought this fascination and its material form into something that transforms it as close as possible to the mysterious connective seed that aroused the fascination in the beginning. That fascination leads into a relationship that will deliver

new understandings and sensitivities. Perhaps eventually the connective seed will be understood and be capable of articulation.

The importance of this not-understood connective “seed” buried in the fascinating, is that it is predicated on the human/animal ability to respond as action first. This ability allows for a constant stream of serendipitous, spontaneous, interpersonal creations of situations, that may not occur if plans are made and rigidly followed or if only overly logical or rational sorts of knowing are sought. This is the value of the practice of dérive, as Debord says, “We must try to construct situations, that is to say, collective ambiance's, ensembles of impressions determining the quality of a moment.”

If we drop the word “try” and replace it with “allow” or at least augment it with “allow” and then focus on “collective ambiance's”, “ensembles of impressions” and “quality of moment”, we get close to the guiding pulse in the video work Sudhakar Dalvi Speaks and that is relationship. Allowing relationship is what, “collective ambiance”, “ensembles of impressions” and “quality of moment” are doing. On a personal level my work has gone out beyond the boundaries of my experience of self and focussed on a person whose life details have become as important as my own.

The work approximates a portrait. It is an attempt to do as Debord asks of us, “to multiply poetic subjects and objects“, an “essentially transitory” task. However, I have caught them on video to be as echoes to the relationship behind the video. The video is

\[221\] Ibid., p 706.
passing also, in the way that those moments passed, which will fill us with the desire for more such moments. This desire, our wellspring and connective potential.

When Sudhakar Dalvi speaks his conscientiously learnt street English, he re–teaches me the value of each of my taken for granted native words. He refashions them with a poetic abidance to his own native languages, and the English words gem like importance, as symbolic of his need to survive. Each word or phrase has been repeated like a mantra until its meaning can carry him into relationship with his chosen means of survival. The words he learns take on the importance of the word as the sound that brings the world into form in Tantric cosmogony. Vac, carries his survival. The chosen means of survival is the foreigner who comes to look at his place, the world heritage listed caves of Ajanta and Ellora.

The importance of this lies in friendship and love’s revelation of how things are. The playful invocation of the foreign word led to friendship and survival and understanding of another’s situation. In this way the local “native” is no longer an exotic spectacle for the detached tourist, but some one to be in relationship with. And then other relationships between us/me and them /him reveal themselves. In this way we come to realise that relationship is what lies congealed and hidden beneath the seamless mould of the spectacle of tourism.

Going back to Styles quote above, we can perceive the “transformative” in relationship, as the will to playful creation and the desire as the bija or seed word, and as connective creative hinge in its condensing of intensification in contained space. Relationship takes on a space of containing, of something being held for detailed experience. The transformative in Tantra happens through the
visionary practice of relating a desiring capacity that will bring about
the creation of the universe, to the same desiring capacity in the
human body; using this energy to achieve sat cit ananda, which is
the bliss of connectiveness, of relationship. Beginning to see
connections, we can listen to the stories of someone's life and
understand our relationship to another life.

Sudhakar’s life is shown to you through the use of a video
camera, which is a machine of representation. The machine displaces
the person from a “real” place and represents the person as more
belonging to the machine and the viewer’s environment. Through this
machine we try to see a relationship. We can sense being in
relationship with this person. We can also see that the machine begins
to show another relationship despite our intention. Because the
machine is both an instrument of relationship and also a potential
hider or secluder of relationship, of what really goes on. This
machine, first the video camera then the editing tool and then the
larger machine that is conglomerately, culture/economics can create
us as spectators or it is possible to use the machine against itself, and
disrupt the misleading smooth interface between viewer and machine.

Awareness and understanding relationship has become
marginal in the overriding interest of capital gain. Relations between
people become prescribed and limited by competition. Debord sees
the abandonment of competition as essential for the disruption of
spectacle.222 Sudhakar's life in relationship to the foreigners and
tourists he meets, who come from rich technological places inside and
outside India, is unwritten, unspoken, unacknowledged. This is also
the concern of Fascinare, shown in the scene where two men are

climbing and balancing on precarious bamboo scaffolding, repeatably moving up and down, high above the traffic. This scene cuts to the axe in its formation as *fasces*. Here I intend to invoke both the too often unacknowledged complicity of the West in the maintenance of poverty and the peddling of desire, the creation of fascinations that cut across the desires of both Indians and the foreign tourists who visit India.

During a radio interview about the melding of a capitalist economic system into communist China, the interviewer asked about the effect this would have on the Chinese people. The Chinese economist answered, “Some people will fall in the river and get carried away.”

The video, *Sudhakar Dalvi Speaks* attempts to show the relationship between Sudhakar and the machine. By the use of rough editing I remind you that the machine is always there, never hidden by the techniques of editing that can make us forget where we are and who we are. The video camera is hand held, allowing the breath and the body of the person behind the camera to always be apparent. The machine then can also be seen as representative of another machine, that of the economic forces that carry him, that move through his life.

Sudhakar and his words get caught in an interminable revolving complacent, blue screen that mocks his continuous thinking of how many rupees are needed to survive, how much his mother made then and how much she makes now. This revolving, impersonal blue is only picked up by the intersection of three machines, the video

223 Note: From the candidate’s diary.
camera as eye, the video player and the TV, not able to be seen by
the human eye directly, but metaphorically revealing the strands of
indifference that run through relationships in capitalism. The folding
screen of subverted technology suggests something in his environment
we don’t see, something inside him and outside him that threatens to
drown him, obliterate his skin life, human thereness. He could be a
statistic that “falls in the river.” Sudhakar talks about his struggle to
survive, his adaptations to the “machine” of the society he is in. Within
that adaptation he fashions situations which give him material
sustenance, but also emotional sustenance through friendship and
relationship within the very structure that threatens to annihilate those
carens.

The clink and mistakes of machine failure serve to avoid and
deny a smooth uninterrupted, lying transmission, as if there is no gap
between him and us. The glitches in material sets up relationship
between us and him as looking and being seen. I refuse the
smoothing editing that offers a seamless interface between the
life/moment of the viewer and the captured life/past and the life
moment of Sudhakar and the people around him. In this way I hope to
establish relationship. I hope to show his relationship to us.

Experimental and unorthodox ways of presentation are used,
such as the absence of image or sound, the deliberate use of machine
transmission imperfections, as emotive affect. There is a deliberate
denial of narrative where the imagery does not coincide literally with
the words spoken, but asks the viewer to employ an emotional or
allegorical reading of what Sudhakar is talking about. An example of
this is when Sudhakar speaks about how he likes to walk in the
mountains or visit friends. In this scene I use an image of “fire-writing”
with the lights at night to the sound of bells to suggest his attempt to
create enjoyment in his life. The experimental in this video is used in a subordinate position to the main subject, which is Sudhakar speaking. The purpose of this video is to show a person speaking. I have followed the prompting of Gayatri Spivak’s question “Can the Subaltern Speak”? The aim was to give Sudhakar agency. The question remains as to how successful I have been or if in using this medium, it is really possible. Do I just re-enforce my own agency and does he need my help anyway, he no doubt already has “agency”?

On the bridge over the Narmada River in Omkareshwar a young man asks me to video him. He is alone. I say to him, I cannot give this to you. He said it doesn’t matter. He signaled to me to turn the camera on, and posed, his head high, looking proudly around, at the temples and the old dharemsalas. He then looked sternly at me and preemptively told me to turn the camera off, said thank you and left.

Again in Omkareshwar at a temple a man asks if I can video him. His friends gather round and look intently into the camera. Everybody waits, looking. An unease develops or a question, a suspicion about the time it should take or who is in control of the machine. Then someone says enough. Later they take a photo of me, with them.

In Ellora Village at the time of an Adivasi (Tribal people) Goddess festival. The woman, whose shrine this festival is to take place at, has asked that I come and video their festival. She never asks me for a copy. I realise later, as happens many times, the video camera is symbolic of a place of power. To be on or in it, somewhere, is perceived to be part of the power relations of TV and social representation.224

224 Note: From the candidate’s diary.
The video material for *Sudhakar Dalvi Speaks* was gathered without a definite plan, responding to invitation and the development of my friendship and association with Sudhakar and his family. It was not until I saw two film and video works by Agnes Varda and Eija–Liisa Ahtila, that I began to see how I could construct the imagery that I had collected.

The first work to consider in relation to my work is Varda's *The Gleaners and I*.\(^{225}\) Varda, in her own account of the making of her film, admits to a random wandering method of gathering, gleaning, which she also alludes to briefly in her film. She calls the film “a wandering road movie” and adds that “Films always originate in emotions.”\(^{226}\) She becomes fascinated with some people she sees, bending over going through the trash, the leftovers at the end of market day, concerned, she develops relationship. The films primary sense is one of relationship, not just between the filmmaker and the people she films, but the gleaners relationship with society, which then reframes the relationship between the gleaners and Varda as representative of the gradations of power and opportunity. Varda has the power to represent. The film shows levels of personal agency and power and how people manage agency and power within a social and political system that is based on conflict and competition.

Ahtila’s\(^{227}\) work is based on research into peoples lives or instances in peoples lives. They are short vignettes that mix a narrative with imagery that usually follows the story of the person

---


represented. Her films focus on a personal experience that is told by the person concerned, represented by an actor. They play around the edges of fiction and documentary and exemplify the redemptive power of telling the personal or showing the personal. There is no sense of development, however, which starkly separates her films from mainstream cinema. The scenes of personal experience exist as a moment or a situation, we are neither discouraged or encouraged in the contemplation of these events by any sort of resolution to the story. This has the effect of keeping the characters represented and their situations very close to us, because we cannot escape into a cinema-scape or simulacrum where we lose touch with the personal. Ahtila’s films have the affect of touch.

The work of Varda and Ahtila, occupies a particular space within contemporary art practice that focusses on the personal and relationship, sometimes using performance art and crossing art with documentary or film. That is, taking the medium of performance, film or video and subverting it into a fine arts frame work by employing different ways of using time. Often this will involve using real time, limited editing and not constructing a story through time, but presenting a vignette or a moment in time. The “characters” become more personal to us either because they speak directly to us or they are paradoxically kept at an emotional distance and form symbolic representations of aspects of our own lives.

The paradox here is that although mainstream cinema depends on and manipulates an emotional identification with the characters it does not engage the personal in such a way that identifies the viewer with their own personal life within the political and the social. This happens in much of mainstream cinema because of the presentation of time as rounded off into a story line that has an
end, a resolution, a happy, victorious or redemptive conclusion for the characters. At the end of this journey the audience leaves affected and wanting more escape, rather than leaving and seeing the world and each other with new or questioning eyes. This mode of representation, is not empowering. It creates a sense of wanting more, a sense of lack. The films of Varda and Athila promote a sense of relationship, they encourage us to see ourselves in relationship with ourselves and each other and the societies we live in, they do not present a sharp distinction between reality and the film.

A quintessential performance that stands as a benchmark for this cluster of work that plays around the personal and relationship is Linda Montano and Tehching Hsieh’s 1983–84 performance in which they tied themselves to each other by an eight foot rope for twelve months. During this time they were constantly in each others presence, but never touched each other. Relational work or aesthetics, for Bourriaud is one that places art within the realm of “inter–human relations which they represent, produce or prompt.”

The performance was called One Year Art/Life Performance, expressing the concerns of the artists to find ways to “connect art with life”. For Hsieh, the idea grew out of his concerns with the struggle that human beings share in life and how survival can only happen through humans living cooperatively together, but that this becomes a struggle through our desire for freedom. In his words “we become each others cage.”

---

230 Ibid., p 704.
One Year Art/Life Performance draws our attention to relationship. It reminds us of our connection to relationship as a vital function of living. The video Sudhakar Dalvi Speaks is a first stage towards a work about relationship. It attempts to engage the viewer in another person's life, but without allowing the viewer to escape the reality of the breakdown of relationship implicit in the distancing of technology, that technology representing the powers that can shape, form and distort Sudhakar's life.

In this work I have deliberately stayed with Sudhakar's story as a mark of respect for him and his struggles in life before I develop the work into one about our relationship. This future work will be more about my conception of our relationship and the wider social and political influences that inform and impinge on our relationship.

Two recent video works by the American artist Mary Lucier and the Finnish artist Veli Grano are worth noting in relation to the video work presented for this thesis. Both works focus on an individual who speaks about themselves and subtly suggest a relationship between the artists and the person videoed, which in turn invites the viewer into relationship with the subject of the works.

In a work called Migration (2000), Mary Lucier has videoed the fantastic gesticulation and miming of a deaf/mute man as he attempts to relate his story as a Sudanese refugee in Kenya and the United States. The work consists simply of this man talking. Similarly in a recent show at Art Space, Sydney, two works by Veli Grano, Kirsti (2002) and Meet You in Finland Angel (2003) concentrate on

---

an individual in *Kirsti* and two individuals, a married couple in *Meet You in Finland Angel*. Both of these films show the people involved talking about themselves.

These works frame the personal and personal experience. The group show at Art Space was called *Empathy*, indicating the tenor that the work was placed within. Intimacy would be another way to describe the action of these works. The simple point is the focus on a person that may otherwise go unnoticed. Perhaps this is also an expression of defiance against a conglomerate, multinational and increasingly concentrated media that regulates what we look at and who, televised in from places far removed from our own experience. The obvious process behind these works; that is of a meeting between the video maker and the people in the video, favours spontaneous, serendipitous experience, real life events and excursions into fantasy and wondering. All are resulting from a meeting with someone that has perhaps fascinated, but definitely impacted on the artists lives. There is a need, these works seem to be saying, to acknowledge our relationships, our connectiveness, the need for sensitivity to the experience of each other.

The video *Sudhakar Dalvi Speaks* has grown out of a fascination for a person and the way he works. This fascination, if examined, will reveal layers of relationship that concur with questions of identity and the relationship between self and other as constructed within social and political landscape. These considerations are taken up in the videos *With* and *Fascinare* that conceptually belong with Part Two of this thesis. *With* evolves a simple visual equation that asks the viewer to condense a group of images. It provokes the viewer to work at/be imaginary, and make long and multiple connections: “resuscitation”—one white hand grasps squeezes, pumps the wrist of
its opposite hand—bird in the sky—tree felled—birds call—\textit{with}—Indian man singing a song to you, like your a child, with love—resuscitation.

\textit{Fascinare} attempts to construct a layered narrative that deals with poverty and financial insecurity and the confluence of that reality with tourism and the signs of particular types of westernisation in India. Western things, ways of living have taken on a sort of talisman for many Indians, as a status symbol. In this instance it is the white woman who represents the West. Yet like all attempts at explanations this is too simple. The people from the West come to visit and gaze in wonder at India, there is a vulnerability about this innocence. They are vulnerable because they are unaware of the lie in that innocence. They can be indifferent in their innocence, but also “in love” and fascinated with India. Running through the surface issues of tourism and poverty are seams of desire, fascinations, pulling bodies together, wishing for self and life in each others eyes.

Both \textit{With} and \textit{Fascinare} try to distill the influence and creation of the desires and conflicts formed out of the combined affects of social and political forces that shape human lives. These works, including \textit{Sudhakar Dalvi Speaks}, work in opposition to a “backlash against socially engaged art practice”, that is a growing trend in contemporary art practice.\textsuperscript{233} The aggressive promotion of corporate internationalism, demanding a homogenized culture, conceals questions to do with the loss and damage to cultures and lives under Western hegemony. The issue of poverty is glossed over, particularly concerning India. Over the moral and ethical implications of the West’s

\textsuperscript{233} Fusco, C. \textit{The Bodies that were not Ours and Other Writings}. Routledge, London, 2001. p xv.
use of cheap labour in India and the inequitous arrangements implicit in North/South trade relations, Western tourists travel through India for enjoyment.
CONCLUSION

In Part One of this thesis I have attempted to draw an analogy between a personal experience of making art as expressed in my response to the found phrase ‘working through condensation’, Tantric cosmogony and the Situationist International practice of dérive. Working within this metaphoric imaginary of the relational there is the implication that there are certain transformative phenomena of a personal nature that are analogous to natural processes in the world. The movement of the personal, combined with the relational in sense, feeling, emotion into ideas, concept and image has an imaginary application to the natural world. Tantra positions human creativity as inseparable and embodied within the imagined/believed process of a divine creator who creates the world by imagining a partner to form relationship with. Form can only arise out of a desire for another, or as Bourriaud defines this process, “form is the representative of desire in the image”.

The bases for this experience is the personal as a fine attunement to Being or Self in relation to the world; that is the world of nature and the world of other people. This fine attunement is achieved through the creation of a space that I have likened to the Situationist International practice of dérive and as a containment, that I

have spoken about in the analogy of condensation. This is a space
where there is room for the collection of impression, sense, emotion,
without the encumbrances of socially prescribed rationalities or
modes of behavior. Social mores or expectations, attitudes of the
correct way to live and be are challenged in the space of dérive and
containment, in order to find personal and social experience.

The rationale behind this approach to practice is to salvage
these moments of personal experience that are drowned, obliterated
by the noise of capitalism that increasingly introduces mechanisation
into human relations. This is a noise that is based on fear of scarcity,
producing a fear of ostracism and a fear of each other. The personal
remains trapped within the private not able to produce itself as
relational. Bourriaud wonders if it will be “possible to maintain
relationships between people outside [of the] trading hours” or as
machines take over those human tasks, “which once represented so
many opportunities for exchanges, pleasure and squabbling.”

The space I speak of gives greater latitude for phenomena like
sloth, expressed in Tantric cosmogony as *tamas*, (restriction), voice,
 Desire and the formless; as precise necessities for the creation of
the world. There is an appreciative opening to the phenomena of *desire*
as a creative force and also in this sense all emotion as being
expressive of the human freedom to have dignity. That is the dignity
involved in the right to feel and express emotion as opposed to an
oppression of feelings, that impacts on the ability to desire
respectfully, both of ourselves, others and our environment. The
inexplicable, the paradoxical, as the formless, *sunya*, is also welcome
in this space, as a vital formative element to Being and creation. Both,

---

235 Ibid., p 9, 17.
as I have said, as a leveling, as Krauss suggests a “de-classing”, a de-emphasis of the individual as centre of the universe and as an opening to receive messages.

It is in this space, set up for receiving, for listening to messages, that the creative hinge occurs, the phenomena that in Tantra is the bija or seed word. The creative hinge compels, sets up a desire, elicits a wanting and a warning that begins an action of transformation through, tapas, heat. The space begins to form out of a condensing of experiences, a resolve, an image, word, concept or a form that can be related to, that can be seen or heard beyond the isolated individual or the indeterminate space. This is the formation of relationship as connectiveness. Relationship occurs within the space and then emerges, which is a sort of birth; as a countenance, a look, an aspect of living, something that speaks, Vac, and begins the life of two and more. The life of two and more, is the basis for art, involving communication between artist and material, sound, feeling, person or between artist and audience. “All form is a face looking at us.”

Transformation happens through the actions of two, as a partnership in the making of something that reminds us of the possibility of union.

Differences are excitations for relationship and transformation, as the bringing together of self and other to make a new link, a connective seed that goes on reproducing itself, as further possibilities of understanding and difference. Duality, as a notion of being separate and uncommunicative, exists as only something that will excite the possibility of connectiveness and relationship. For Bourriaud, artistic practice is situated within the process of “relations

---

between consciousness."²³⁸ The concern here is with the possibility of encounter, what Bourriaud names, quoting Louis Althusser, a "materialism of encounter"; random meetings indicative of an essence of human kind as trans-individual, creating each other within social relations that are historical.²³⁹
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Dubois, A. J. *A Description of the Character, Manners and Custom of the People of India: Their Institutions, Religious and Civil*. Higgenbotham and Co, Madras, 1879.


Fusco, C. *The Bodies that were not Ours and Other Writings*. Routledge, London, 2001.


Olson, C. *Indian Philosophers and Post-modern Thinkers: Dialogues on the Margins of Culture*. Oxford University, New Delhi. 2002.


FILMOGRAPHY and VIDEOGRAPHY

Films


Video


advaita vedanta: Non–dual school of Indian philosophy found in the Vedas.

akanksa: Expectancy, mutual affinity between words, syntax.

ananda: Joy, bliss.

aniconic: Not iconic. Idol or symbol not shaped in human or animal form.

asat: Nonexistence.

bhakti: Devotion through personal love of a deity.

bija: Seed word. Mantra. Shakti.

bindu: Drop. The cause of form in Kashmir Shaivism. Meta– physical point of energy (shakti) about to manifest.

Brahman: Ultimate reality, the ground of the universe, beyond words or description. That, that is and that, that is not.

chakra: Energy centres in the body utilized during Kundalini Yoga. Literally, wheel.

cit: Knowledge.

citta: Consciousness, mind.

dehatattva: Body truth. The macrocosm in the microcosm and the reverse.

Note: This Glossary, has been compiled, unless otherwise indicated, from Grimes, John, A. A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy. Sanskrit - English. University of Madras, Madras. 1998.
dharamsala: Place of rest for pilgrims.
dhārma: Morality, the law, right way.
dhvani: Word, suggested meaning, sound or noise. The soul of poetry. Theory of poetic suggestion, containing a number of divisions that vary from clear meaning to suggested to no meaning.
dhyanā mantra: A chant or prayer to summon a deity.
iccha: Will.
janna: Knowledge.
kala: Time.
kama: Desire, pleasure. One of the four values of life.
Kama-bindu: Intense point of desire. Creative potential.
Kama kala vilasa: A creation hymn detailing the moment when desire brings the world into being.
Kamesvara: Male aspect of androgynous Shiva.
Kamesvari: Female aspect of androgynous Shiva.
Kashmir Shaivism: Schools of Shiva worship originating in Kashmir, known as Tantric; The Trika, the Kramer, and the Kuala schools.
koan: A riddle and aid to meditation used in Zen Buddhism. Susan Lacy uses the word more in the sense of a mantra or a touchstone for memory.
kundalini: Type of meditative Yoga that focuses on the union of male (Shiva) and female (Shakti) energy.
līla: Divine play.
linga: Aniconic representation of Shiva, using either a stone cylinder or a river stone. Sometimes interpreted as the male sexual organ.
madhya-vaka: The middle point of speech before formation into words at the level of thought.
mahābindū: The great moment of creation.
mahasunya: The great void. The Absolute.
mantra: Sacred word, phrases and hymns.
maya: Illusion, principle of appearance, marvelous power of creation.
moksa: Liberation.
murti: Sculpture.
nada: Cosmic sound approaching manifestation.
nataraja: Shiva in the dance of the creation and destruction of the universe.
nirguni: Without attributes or qualities.
nirodhikta: Cessation. Negation.
nirvana: Extinction, perfection. the great peace.
paravak: Soundless sound. Illumination, inner light.
pasyanti: Speech at the level of intuition.
prakasa: Shining, luminous.
prana: Life breath, vital air.
puja: Collective or individual religious ritual, worship.
sadhaka: Student of philosophy or religion, aspirant.
sadhana: Self–effort. Religious or philosophical practice.
sadhiki: Female aspirant, student.
sadhu: Holy man, saint, virtuous, good.
saguna: Having attributes, form, qualities.
sahasrara chakra: The chakra at the crown of the head.
samsara: Empirical existence; the wheel of birth and death.
sat: Existence.

sat cit ananda: Existence, knowledge and bliss. The three components of enlightenment.
Shaivism: A Hindu religion that follows Shiva as God or the Supreme reality.
shakti: Manifest energy. Female counterpart of Shiva as active energy. Shiva being inactive without her influence.
shiva: Male counterpart of Shakti in Tantra, as immanent. Auspicious. Infinite reality, symbolised by the Shiva lingam. One of the gods of the trinity that represent three powers of nature, creation (Brahma),
maintanence (Vishnu) and destruction (Shiva). Shiva performs the Nataraj (dance) which represents both the attainment of bliss through self realisation and the subsequent merging with Brahma as creation.\textsuperscript{241}

\textit{spanda}: Vibration or self–movement. Also a name for Kashmir Shaivism. Movement from unity to plurality of the world.

\textit{sunya}: The void, non–being.

\textit{sunyata}: Void, emptiness, the formless.

\textit{tad–ekam}: Identity, empathy, unique, one without a second.

\textit{tamas}: Restriction, sloth, inaction, inertia.

\textit{tantra}: Religious practice focussing on ritual. “Teachings that affirm the continuity between spirit and matter.”\textsuperscript{242} Focus is on desire in some Tantric schools of practice.

\textit{tapas}: Heat, austerity, concentrated discipline.

\textit{vac}: Word or speech.

\textit{vaikarika}: The first joyous development of the intellect.

\textit{vaikhara–vak}: Speech as sound, fully formed.

\textit{varmasrama dharma}: The caste system and its laws.

\textit{vedas}: Hindu religious texts. Including the Rig–Veda and the Upanisads and the Bhagavad–Gita.

\textit{yoni lingam}: The aniconic representation of Shiva/Shakti in union.

\textit{yoni}: Aniconic representation of Shakti, using a carved stone in the shape of a horse shoe with a channel and spout, for liquid used during puja, to run off. Sometimes referred to as the female sex organ, the vulva. Rounded or egg shaped river stone painted orange.


\textsuperscript{242} Feuerstein, G. 1998. p 2.
LIST OF WORKS


3  *Fascinare*  Video, (2005–06) 33 mins.
RELATIONSHIP IN THE FIELD OF DESIRE

Part Two

THE TOURIST AND THE TOURIST TOUT

© Jann Dark (B.A. Hon’s)

Doctor of Creative Arts

March 2006

University of Western Sydney
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1  The Connecting Pair</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Desire</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Histories and Conceptions of Desire</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalism Desire and Fascination</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potent Fascination</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2  Sources of Repression</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalism</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationalisations of Capitalism</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo–Liberal Capitalism</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3  The Imaginary and the Real</strong></td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character 1: The Tourist</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If Laura went to India</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra luggage</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Character 2: The Tout .......................... 96
Sudhakar ............................................ 96
Imran and Asoka ................................. 108

Chapter 4 The Field ................................. 113
The Tourist and the Tout ...................... 114
Touring and Touting ............................. 123
Working the Field ............................... 127
The Problem of Fascination ................. 134
Playing the Roles of Fantasy ............... 142
Freedom and the Western Woman ......... 156

Conclusion ............................................. 192
Enabling .............................................. 195

Bibliography ........................................... 199
Filmography .......................................... 205
List of Illustrations Part Two

Fig 1  Killer Jeans advertisement ....................... 187

Fig 2  Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. 1780–1867
       “The Odalisque and Slave” 1839 ............. 191
ABBREVIATIONS

BJP ............ Bharatiya Janata Party. Extreme right wing communalist political party in India.

CASA .......... Centre Against Sexual Assault. Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne, Victoria. Australia.

CPDR ........... Committee for the Protection of Democracy. Mumbai, India.

IMF ............. International Monetary Fund.

RSS ............. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Indian political party of the extreme Right.

SANLAAP.....  (Dialogue) An Indian project for women, working with the victims of sex slavery and human trafficking.

WTO ............ World Trade Organisation.
INTRODUCTION

In Part One of this thesis, I used condensation as a metaphor for creation. Condensation occurs in enclosed spaces that constrain energies. The containment that imposes constraint produces different forms out of the limits placed around energy. These spaces I imagined as the limitations involved in practice. There is another form of limiting space that occurs and that is the social and political in its varying manifestations, from direct physical control to the pervasive social and cultural hegemonies that flow out of clusters of cultural expressions that form in public and private institutions.

Part Two of this paper is concerned with a type of social silencing that I identify as the denial of relationship. The denial of relationship is a type of punishment and way to extend social control. This activity directly circulates within the intimate spaces between people as a form of control administered by people on each other.

This environment of limitation condenses responses. Here I wish to acknowledge my “birth” into this understanding as one that arises out of personal experience.

My journey and desire for India was, in part, precipitated by a sense of “malaise” as I briefly acknowledge in Part One. That “malaise” was in fact a sense that my capacity to “belong” was becoming difficult to maintain. Through barely understood formations
of cause and effect, I found myself outside of relationship. My reaction to this was to move into a new space and as will become apparent, I chose a path often travelled by disaffected Westerners.

[the] will to playful creation must be extended to all known forms of human relationships, so as to influence, for example the historical evolution of sentiments like friendship and love.¹

This quote by Guy Debord cited in Part One, forms part of the bridging link into Part Two of this thesis. The other link is desire. Relationship and desire become the key concerns in the following writing which explores the relationship between two groups, usually considered to be quite disparate although in contact with each other. These two groups are the tourist and the tourist tout as they encounter each other in India.

The study of the relationship between the tourist and the tourist tout is circumscribed by an opening question about the challenge to the possibility of relationship posed by the practices inherent to late contemporary capitalism. It suggests that in order to abate this possible loss, there is a necessity for a synthesis between conceptions of desire explored in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s, Anti-Oedipus² and an extension of Karl Marx's theory of historical materialism into a relational practice that accounts for the processes of desire. The primary concern of this thesis is that capitalism and in particular contemporary capitalism, discourages an awareness of relationship between people and between people and institutions.

The contention here is that capitalism's overriding goal for exponential profit depersonalizes the relationship between the worker and the employer, which has the effect of establishing this form of relationship as a primary model for all other relationships. This process becomes endemic in us, we feel it as natural and we express its forms, that is, its concerns and aspirations, in our relationships with each other. This actually threatens our potential for meaningful relationship, awareness of and understanding of relationship between each other and the world.

Part Two of this thesis emphasizes a practice of relationship as one that takes a bold look at itself and how desires act to inform relationship. In being relational it seeks to understand what the relationship is, what it does, how it works and what influences are brought to bear on it? I am concerned with the following two broad areas. Firstly, how does the relationship between the tourist and the tourist tout sit within the relationship between the developed world and the third or developing world; and secondly, how does it operate and inform us about the nature of postcolonial society and what we all inherit from the recent colonial past? The massive communications, between groups of people and nations, that we call cultural practice, are conflicted with vested interest that can shield our awareness of relationship between and resulting from global forces and subjects. Part Two of this study focuses on a particular relationship as an attempt to trace the lines of connections, the sources of desire through wish or need that reflect the influences of these huge cultural forces. These cultural and social elements pull the relationship between the tourist and the tourist tout into being.

The relationship is envisioned as a field, in part, already constructed for the tourist and the tourist tout to walk into, but also
something that they make together, reinvigorate and challenge. In order to remain faithful to a practice of relational awareness the unpacking of this field necessitated an interdisciplinary approach. Accessing different theoretical areas can substantially allow for a more comprehensive understanding of what the relationship is. What is found inside the field? There are vestiges of colonialism, Orientalism and tensions between westernisation/modernisation and tradition. There is global capitalism and its hegemonic cloaks, that act as lures, promising vague notions of freedom. This imagined freedom is a subterfuge for both the localized Indian enabling of Western neocolonialism and those lost souls of the “West” who are searching for a spiritual home in India. Not least, there is also the unfairness of poverty as it confronts the laissez-faire of the tourist. All this has created an overarching framework that provokes questions that occur across different theoretical disciplines. These include: Marxism and its post World War Two developments, broadly summarized as the concerns of neo-Marxism or Western Marxism, the psychological, as psychoanalysis and its detractors and a sociological/historical approach to the way an individual life encounters the hegemonic overlay of different ideologies, and how ideologies filter through into the social and the cultural to be played out, very often, by an unsuspecting cast.

In Chapters One and Two I explore the relationship between desire and capitalism and capitalism’s propensity to either engage in relational connections or to actually run counter to the forming of relationship. I will outline the way desire has been conceptualised and how those conceptualisations affect the way we form relationship. In Chapter Two, I suggest that the conflictual positions that desire theories and historical materialism have to each other as to their social and political efficacy, has been unhelpful and in fact damaging
to the effort to counter the negative effects of an increasingly deregulated capitalism.

In Chapters Three and Four I provide a detailed description of who the tourist and the tout are in relation to this thesis. The tourist is female and very often white, bearing in mind that in India “white” does not necessarily designate European or Western, but could be Japanese or South Korean. The tout is the local person who tries to make a living in some way, out of the tourist, as hawker of tourist paraphernalia, rickshaw driver, commission agent or unofficial guide. What this study particularly focuses upon is the relationship between a minority group, the tourist tout, or in postcolonial terms, the subalternate group, and the tourists, who are representatives of hegemonic societies. In Chapters Three and Four, I concentrate on two such characters who meet in the field of tourism, a field of desire, where their attempts at relationship operate within historical and contemporary forces that press the relationship they can have into particular types of shapes.
Chapter 1

THE CONNECTING PAIR

In an article on the processes of complicity that fold black Americans into certain types of white stereotyping; a compliance that inhabits/invades and in his view, disempowers black activist movements in the United States of America, Robert Reid-Pharr argues that the body in its production of desires, its fascinations and seductions “produces a philosophical caveat.”\(^3\) He cites a quote by Judith Butler, which I will reproduce here:

> The Body is the blindspot of speech, that which acts in excess of what is said, but which also acts in and through what is said.\(^4\)

Taking this a step further, the body also acts in excess of what is thought, understood and known about one’s self, hence the **warning**, that Pharr places within the “performance” of resistance, survival and the struggle for autonomy and power. The projected script, the stereotyping invades the struggle and turns the serious


work of creating change into a performance. The “blindspot” is the way desire will inhabit and invest in relationship and introduce its own discursive narrative into the intentional. Pharr ends his essay with a warning about seduction, which is a necessary warning. But that roving desire, and the way it forms or breaks relationship, is also an important narrative indicator of what the relationship is.

Part Two of this thesis is concerned with how a relationship is complicated by this blindspot. It suggests that the repression of both desire and relationship is what creates the propensity for the body, as an underhanded agent, to dissemble text and surface discourse. It proposes that desire and relationship as interconnected life phenomena, are degraded, repressed and separated during the processes of social production inherent in late capitalist systems. This thesis contends that capitalism is an exploitative system and that any legislated public policies that arise out of democratic processes happen in spite of capitalism. Social or socialist democratic systems have developed parallel to capitalism and have, through Government intervention and public opinion and expectations, maintained a check on capitalist development.

---

5 Note: In the context of this paper, social production, should be understood from a Marxist perspective as the relations between people intersected, conflicted by, the value that is placed on the commodity in capitalist production. This is complicated by the amplification of culture in late capitalism, which for some has become the dominant form of capitalism, (Frederic Jameson, Postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism. Duke University Press, Durham,1991) That capitalism becomes cultural is not surprising and simply echoes Marx’s thesis that humans are shaped by the dominating forms of the means of production. However, there is considerable resistance to capitalism in cultural practice as well as a growing protest movement rejecting global corporate capitalism, which Jameson’s thesis tends to gloss over.

6 In this thesis the term late or contemporary capitalism refers to the period that begins in the early 1980’s and continues till the present day. This period is broadly characterized by a shift from a Keynesian economic style that favoured strong Government and civil control on business to an increasingly deregulated world market. See, Korten, C.D. When Corporations Rule the World. The Other India Press. 2000. p 64.

7 Note: The collapse of the Russian Soviet communist system and the adoption of free market economic policies by the Chinese have undermined the public sector emphasis inherent in social/socialist democratic systems of Government.
A desire as acquisitive, focussed on consumption only, is encouraged, through forces implicit within the exploitative capitalist system, to operate outside of relationship. This results in diminishing opportunity for relationship in Western styled late contemporary capitalist societies. Relationships between people and society are not being considered as important factors during the making of social and legislative policy by Governments.

The intended meaning of the word relationship here is as both a connection between people and most importantly as an awareness of relationship, a focus on the process and presence of relationship: what it is, why it is, how it works and what it does? In this sense I am defining relationship as the potential container of an awareness of the quality of connections between people, events and the world. Awareness is a key word here. If there is no awareness can there be relationship? Perhaps there can be relationship without awareness, but what use would it be. The lack of awareness for the protagonists concerned, diminishes the potential for understanding. The relationship becomes one of association, superficial or just simply blind, unseen and unknown. Awareness itself presupposes a level of consciousness and a double sense of on the one hand connectivity and on the other, something else that allows for a position of individuation, something that could be described as degrees of wariness and separateness, the possibility of autonomy, independence and even a sense of aloneness.

Relationship is the state of being related. It is a position that one person holds with another or that events or situations hold with each other or with groups of people or with one's self. Relationship has four meanings based on relate, related, relation and relationship, which are all germinal to the meaning placed on this word in this
thesis. Relate is telling or communicating something of oneself to another or of some event to another and being able to understand a situation or a person; related is seeing things in connection to each other; relation is being in kinship (shared respect and care) with an another person or people. This is the hub of human existence, in fact all existence. Without it, it would be impossible to imagine a life or a world. To feel outside of relationship is a feeling of immanent death, of life being impossible.\(^8\) Being able to relate is an awareness which is vitally important in the configurations of a personal experience of relationship. The awareness and therefore experience of relationship allows for the possibility of understanding and then the possibility of action. Without awareness there is no relationship, without relationship there is no understanding. The lack of all the above will result in a vacuum, a place open to corruption, to cruelty and thoughtlessness.

The loss of relationship is evident in the sustained attack on public space driven by neo-liberal economic so called economic rationalist theories, which place profit above all other considerations.\(^9\) The rationale supported by the World Bank has been that only privatization can diminish poverty, despite compelling evidence that this is not happening.\(^10\) Privatization, in the form of the selling of

\(^8\) Note: The hermit may be pushed out for some reason, in which case they are denied relationship. Or the hermit may choose to live on the fringes, in which case they are still in relationship, because their choice to be a hermit fulfills their own particular need and is done with a degree of awareness.


\(^10\) Note: Susan George, among others, has shown a clear correlation between the combined effects of debt and structural adjustments; privatization, market liberalisation and free trade, imposed by World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation, on continued if not growing poverty. see George, S. *A Fate Worse than Debt*. Penguin, London, 1989. Joseph Stiglitz has clearly deplored the role of privatization in the increase of poverty in Russia, post perestroika: see Stiglitz, J. *What I learned at the World Economic Crisis*. The New Republic, April 17, 2000. www.global.org/soc econ/bws-wto/wbank/whatilearned.htm (14/11/05)
public institutions to multinational corporations, is the frightening loss of agency both for national identities and the individuals that once made up a public sphere or a polity. Every aspect of a person’s life becomes glued to considerations of profit in monetary terms and the spending of that profit on commodities. Another disturbing trend is the substitution of Gross National Product as an indicator of overall well being for all peoples of a nation. The word distribution or any notion of a right to expect fair distribution are rarely alluded to.

It is both as an inevitability and a necessity that relationships are restricted and connections are not made, to enable this neo-liberal project to work. A good example of the benefits to the economic rationalists of the loss or control of relationship is the internal working practices of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). These secretive practices have now been well documented by angry members of developing nations who find that they are either not informed of, or barred from meetings where decisions are made that effect their countries economies. In *Power Politics in the WTO*, Aileen Kwa reports how a Geneva based ambassador from a developing nation complained that proper records of meetings were not being made or kept. It was not possible to find records pertaining to certain issues, especially where there had been substantial differences between members:

Someone coming in 10 years from now will have no idea of the history of an issue... This is very important because when my successors come they will have nothing from the past to help them understand the present.

---

12 Note: In Kwa’s report, interviewees have requested that their names not be cited, due to fears of recrimination.
Relationship exists within exploiting capitalist systems, but only in the form of relationships that benefit the exercise of making profit and extending business opportunity. All other types of relationship, friendship, relationships of compassion and care, have become subservient to the making of profit and the establishment of economic hegemonies. This has, in part, enabled the establishment of vast pools of wealth, power and influence into the hands of a minority. The much touted, but never sufficiently explained, “trickle down effect” is the only nod that the economic rationalist will give to the thought of consequences and thus the only acknowledgment of a relationship that exists between the making of wealth and the making of poverty. The diminutive word “trickle” is both an admittance and an acceptance of the inevitability of poverty in the economic rationalist system.

At the beginning of this chapter, I positioned desire as a companion to relationship and stated that both suffer degradation under late capitalism. Why is it important to link relationship with desire? Is it possible to think of desire outside of relationship? Desire can move in waves of forces that shatter relationship as much as it can precipitate relationship. Just as capitalism can set desire free it also controls and manipulates our desires in such a way that the notion of being free is questionable. Certainly vast numbers of people are not free under the weight of the desires of some. The unleashing of desire without a concomitant attention to relationship is dangerous. If relationship is characterized by being in a state of understanding and awareness, then the attempt to distill experience into such a phenomenon as a pure desire, turns desire into a potentially destructive force. Desire has to be held in relationship. Capitalism loves an unthinking desire, an unrelational desire, a desire for itself
alone, one that could be characterized as a want, a craving, for possession and possessiveness.

Following on from this it becomes necessary to look at the ontological connection between desire and relationship, at how relationship moves into view from within desiring processes. This recognizes that desire was and is a catalyst for all relationship at some time, even if the original moment of desire has dimmed or disappeared from memory. Then the formations and the potential for the expressions and actions of desire becomes paramount for the possibility of relationship. The presence of desire with relationship, hugging into each other, may actually precipitate awareness, the loss of that connection, diminishes relational awareness. Is it too simple to state the equation between desire and relationship as: desire is the “I” and relationship is the “we”? Something gets in between, breaks the connection either fueling desire to unlimited levels or repressing desire, so there can be no hope for the sense of separateness needed for awareness or there is such a sense of being alone that there can be no relationship. Desire as an activity both within the individual and society is the basis for all potential, experienced as something we determine as either good, bad or indifferent.

Can relationship also act as a balance to desire, so that the self is augmented or contained by another. Remembering that relationship is dependent on awareness; relational awareness becomes a container for desire, which itself has been made by desire. So desire makes a containment for itself and it is the relational potential of this containment that makes a society, the polity, the tribe, the Kingdom, culture, art. Desire makes anti-relational spaces in capitalism, or any hierarchical system, that are like cells, they are relationships with a
minus attached, for the possibility of subtraction of relationship when that relationship is no longer financially lucrative or useful.

Desire is shaped and makes certain shapes of the relational as a containment for itself. Desire is always making holding spaces, vessels and channels that amoebic like can cross into each other. So what happens if we say that relationship diminishes or that desire and relationship can get stripped away from each other, that desire exists in some form separated from the awareness of its containment in relationship. Is this the real nature of the headless creature, resurrected by André Masson, the acephalus.¹⁴ Not stripped of passion, but of the capacity for relationship.

There is no holding support, no ground for planting, “all that is solid melts into air”.¹⁵ There is some other activity taking place that has displaced the process of containment or sped it up so much that it cannot be grasped. It is perhaps a “quantifying axiomatic” of desire as Deleuze and Guattari call it.¹⁶ The real relationship is with money, with the moment of exchange. An acquisitive desire that is contained within money, that becomes normal, a truth. Outside of that containment are the hollow streets of any central business district, marooned, either side of the trading hours. The accumulative has replaced the awareness of relationship and has become a

¹⁴ Grant, I H. in the introduction to, Lyotard, J. F. Libidinal Economy. Trans. Grant, I H. Indiana University Press, 1993. p xxvii. Note: In ancient Greek mythology, the acephale were headless humans. A drawing of the acephale by Masson appears on the cover of the first edition (1936) of the periodical Acephale, edited by Masson, George Bataille and Pierre Klossowski. For Bataille, Masson’s acephale, with its head as a skull residing in its genitals was a liberation: “Man has escaped from his head as a convict from a prison. He has found, beyond himself, not god, who is the prohibition of crime, but a being unaware of the prohibition. Beyond what I am, I run into a being who makes me laugh because he has no head…. In one eruption he unites birth and death.” from, Chadwick, W. Myth in Surrealist Painting 1929-1939. University Microfilm Imaging, Research Press, Michigan, 1980. p 57.

¹⁵ From Karl Marx quoted in, Berman, M. All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity. Verso, London, 1999, p 89.

truth/normal, a stand-in for awareness. This is a transcendent economy that transcends relationship, moving out and away, more fleeting, less visceral, forging ahead, “challenging forth”, overarching big “world pictures”, away from matter, the containment of relationship, which begins to be felt like a restriction. Despite this freedom, such an economy finds itself confused, lost and alienated desperately seeking material forms outside of itself to compensate for the loss of relationship.

Thus conquest. In his Libidinal stage, Lyotard only wants desire or thinks it is only ever about desire, which is why he finds himself on the “circumference” from where he can only “act as if I loved…” 17 This is where, for him, the real love is, what he calls “exteriorities”, the outside or the far away, that can be played with:

Hence voyages, ethnology, psychiatry, pediatrics, pedagogy, the love of the excluded: enter, beautiful Negresses, charming Indians, enigmatic Orientals, dreamers, children, enter my work and the spaces of my concepts. All this is theatre; it is the white innocence of the West in expansion, base cannibalistic imperialism. 18

So what happens to the self and other selves in this formation of consciousness? How can a collective sense of relationship survive in such an atmosphere?

Desire and relationship are concerned with potential, with birth and creation. The importance of grounding desire in relationship lies in creating a consciousness of consequence, care. Desire is not only an individual affair. Individualism in late Western capitalism has

18 Ibid., p 14.
become so private and so primary as a personal goal, that it has allowed for the development of a situation where the alienation and potential disempowerment of the individual is always immanent, paradoxically leading to isolation.\textsuperscript{19} The loss of collective attention and involvement makes for a very private loss of agency. So that individualism in its isolation becomes a misnomer for something that is in fact quite the opposite to an ideal like the “freedom of the individual”. Along with the focus on the individual, the term relationship is restricted into sex, love/romance, family and friendship. It also has become a private concern for the individual.

In an interview about his essay, \textit{The Corrosion Of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work In the New Capitalism}, Richard Sennett says:

\begin{quote}
...A regime which provides human beings [with] no deep reasons to care about one another cannot long preserve its legitimacy.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

According to Sennett the practice of downsizing and deregulated working conditions, known as “flexibility” will have and are having serious consequences for workers. It is producing a society where trust and commitment cannot develop between people, because there is simply no time and no sense of security in working life. If the worker constantly feels the threat of being fired then eventually the stress of that fear will undermine their sense of worth and care for the work they do: “If you have very short term, superficial relations with people, you are never going to develop trust.”\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Karl Marx’s concept of alienation is important for this study and will be dealt with in Chapter Two.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 12.
Relational work, relational practice, reinstates the phenomenon of relationship with desire as a potential for collective connection and action. The retrieval of stronger connections of relationship between each other in communities is not the only answer to social injustice and inequality. Human expressions like compassion and care, love and respect and as above the capacity to make commitments and feel trust are also needed. But as we can see in the above example, capitalist design attacks the very foundations of the potential for a sense of justice by limiting the possibility of relationship. This is also evident in the constant attacks on the union movement, unionized labor and student unionism. Workers unions are concerned with attempting to create a culture of mutuality, responsibility and commitment. In other words, a sense of relatedness to each other with common goals against a potential common adversary.

Concomitant with the loss of relationship is the much more insidious and shadowy repression and manipulation of desire. Without desire as a matrix fluid, that charges the flow of connections, relationship cannot exist. It is because the flow of desire is castrated and blocked in social productions that relating becomes restricted. Blocking the potential for relationship, limits desire.

If desire is repressed in capitalism then it is equally changed. Deleuze and Guattari contend that desire is repressed and that desire is operating everywhere. Desire is corrupted and manipulated; The Seduction. How easy it is to be seduced, especially if one has a need! Desire taken out of its relational containment becomes an alienating need, which pits humans against each other and turns humans into commodities for each other.
Desire as an internal, self-satisfying contentment. Or desire as a voracious, self-serving lust, or as a vehicle for connection and creativity. Is it need and want as well as some pure ontological experience, resulting in epiphany? It is all these things, because it is subjective. We cannot decide for a person, that their need is less of an urgent desire, than someone’s desire experienced as an un-needy self contained euphoria after doing yoga. However, it is possible to say that the fears of scarcity, such as, the need for food, for shelter, for love, is the place where the manipulation of desire takes place. Where desire is degraded from its potential for self fulfillment and connection in relationship to others.

WHAT IS DESIRE

I have attempted to define relationship as an area of kinship dependent on a certain type of awareness that is bounded by care and compassion. This relational awareness acts as a container for desire, but not as an enclosed space, more like a cup. I see it as a gesture for positive goodness that we can construe as natural, in so far as we know that universally the mother’s love for her child is not easily destroyed.

Desire is more difficult to define because of its subjectivity. And why bother to define it, more important is to look at how it occurs and how it changes meaning, because if anything desire can be associated with change and with movement. Desire is powerful within us, so much so that religious and philosophical practices have grappled with the best way to restrain, channel and control it. It overwhelsms and forces action. It can be conjugal with power. It often situates itself
beyond the reach of social codes of morality and laws. The subject of the breaking of these codes through the overwhelming force of desire is the subject behind most cultural production. It can be joyous and immensely painful or a mixture of the two. It can be understood to be a life force that is naturally autonomous in the subject, but gets subverted, adjusted or demoted into needs or pleasures. It can also be understood to be synonymous with social productions, both created by and creating the polity, which flows into and around the human subject, not existing in the human subject until the moment of connection with the social.

Desire can also be trapped in the sexual, in lust, in the activity of continual procurement of other sexual bodies, desire in this way commodifies the world. How much desire’s genesis, its energy or its survival is connected to sex is an important component of all desire theories. The repression of desire suggests the repression of sexuality and the body. The repression of physical sensation, the castigating of the body and its desires for pleasure limits and controls relationship.

A possible affect of this is that desires become latent, through repression, hidden away, disused pieces of sensation like old and forbidden clothing, condensed forbidden connections that can only escape through a metamorphous into fascinations, which is the way desire will escape repression.

Desire is a contentious inhabiter of human emotions that we sense and designate animal, based on a perception of the spontaneous actions of the ecology we live in. It is the capacity of desire to overwhelm, to take control of our minds, our bodies, that places desire as something that seems separate from us, that links us to the world, to animals, the earth, the weather. We see ourselves and
our desires mirrored in the world. It is concerned with partnership, with the bringing together of more that one. The power of that need rules us, quintessentially expressed in the attempt by the Tantric yogi to find the partnership of two autonomously, thereby achieving the ability to manifest desire independently and use it as a source of joy leading to an idealised state of enlightenment.²²

Desire gets corrupted. Desire cannot be received, the psychic ground for it has not developed, in its place are duplicates, placebos, prosthetics, like a need or a pleasure, an addiction, obsessions, fascinations, perversities, masochism, sadism. Desire must be controlled, conquered, desire is the devil speaking, the snake, the temptress. Desire is a trickster that will bring unhappiness and will destroy us. These are some of the conceptions of desire that humans have formulated in their attempt to live with this force, this marauder that transgresses and smashes our borders, the careful and meticulous constructions of subjectivity.

I will briefly outline some of these theories now to show how desire has been culturally manipulated and how it is seen as a liberator. To show the ways that desire has been conceptualised.

THE HISTORIES AND CONCEPTIONS OF DESIRE

Starting with a Hindu hymn from the Rig Veda, desire is set as an entity that exists outside the poet/writer, as a goddess to be prayed to, seen as an almost separate entity that animates all creation in the world. So here an emotion experienced subjectively is externalised as a free forming and creative agent in the universe:

That milch-cow, O Desire,
whom the priest poets call the resplendent,
Speech is said to be your daughter;
by her keep off those who are my enemies;
let breath, cattle, life desert them.

You are superior to (any) that blinks (lives) or stands (is inanimate)
You are superior to the ocean, O desire,
O Passion! You are superior to them, ever mighty;
To you, Desire, we verily do homage. A.V. 9.2. vss 5, 19–25.23

As discussed in Part One, the cultivation of a desire that is not acquisitive, but autonomous within the self, is central to practice in the Hindu Indian tradition, that has come to be collectively called Tantra. These are deeply, embodied, sensational types of practice.24 Tantric practice as it has been understood since the colonial era in India is probably the most radical exposition of the freedom of desire

and sexuality that exists, linked, as it is, to a religious and philosophical practice. There are accounts of tribal societies in India with open, unashamed and un-restrictive attitudes to sex and desire.\textsuperscript{25} It is probable that Tantra, in its focus on desire as a well spring of \textit{moksa},\textsuperscript{26} which is dependent on the union of male and female, owes its tradition to the tribal people, even though the liberal attitude to desire is limited to religious practice amongst devotees and not expressed in the wider society.

Other Hindu traditions will not use desire to “tame” desire, but attempt to educate or reformulate desire through practices of austerity, denial and philosophical injunctions, much in the same way as early Christian practices of penance.\textsuperscript{27}

So what seems to form here is an opposition that is, on the one hand a view of desire that does not position it as an essentially acquisitive phenomenon, as in Tantra, but as something shared and autonomous, essential for life and self awareness. The other position sees desire as mostly problematic, destructive and acquisitive, shameful, originating in greed for instance and processes it through a system that is repressive and controlling, using laws of family and state, the rules of caste and religion in India and rules of church and state in Europe. These rules govern the behaviors of men and women, economically, physically, their sexual relationships, marriage and the rearing of children.

Scott Lash cites the definition of desire, offered by the Shorter Oxford Dictionary as:

\textsuperscript{25} Guha, R. \textit{Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin, His Tribals and India}. Oxford Press, New Delhi, 1999. p 95.
\textsuperscript{26} Note: \textit{moksa} means liberation.
\textsuperscript{27} Feuerstein, G. 1998. p 226.
the fact or condition of desiring; that emotion which is directed to the attainment of possession of some object from which pleasure or satisfaction is expected; longing, craving; a wish.\textsuperscript{28}

Here we see the predominant interpretation of desire echoed in the vernacular. From Plato through to the admonitory obstructions to desire in Christianity (shame), there is a tendency for desire to be pathologised as something that connotes a lack.\textsuperscript{29} For Plato it is acquisitive and productive.\textsuperscript{30} For Freud desire, during childhood is trapped in a struggle with the oedipus complex. “Normal” development will see the demise of desire into a state of latency or repression. Desire is not associated with self preservation and is “hungry” or object focussed.\textsuperscript{31}

More unclear is how Marx places desire. Needs are paramount in his thesis of historical materialism. However, if Marx’s notion of “species being” is taken as a natural need for humans to be productive, to be creative and that alienation from the means of production, causes human suffering, then there is reason to believe that Marx would see desire as not essentially acquisitive only, but associated with a need to produce, not as lack, but as a productive, creative emotion.\textsuperscript{32}

The French psychoanalyst Lacan, has had a profound and deep influence on cultural and theoretical debate in the last half of the

\textsuperscript{29} Deleuze, G. Guattari, F. 1984. p 25.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p 25.
Twentieth century. His entire psychoanalytic philosophy is based on the question of desire. He continued, through his interpretation of Freud and the development of his theories of the split-subject, the mirror stage and the formation of the subject as one of *manque-a-etre* (want-to-be), the modernist process of dismantling the whole subject. According to Lacan “we are defined by our desires and lack, and not through wholeness”.³³ Desire operates and creates the split subject at the level of the unconscious. The split subject only experiences desire as wanting-to-be. Desire occurs endosomatically, inside the split subject. This makes desire central, in Lacan’s view to the understanding of the subject and of culture, sexuality, meaning and interpretation.³⁴

Running counter to this idea, was the work of the maverick Freudian psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Reich who constructed therapeutic practice around the possibility of an autonomous desire linked to an unrepressed sexuality, that did not equate with the populist counterculture’s misreading of his theories as one of sexual permissiveness, but as a sexuality of integrity. “Reich was the first to raise the problem of the relationship between desire and the social field......”³⁵ For Reich sexual health would give us the whole “man”, a “man” that could not be politically manipulated. This is a very different being from Lacan’s subject, who is socially and culturally arranged into a *split* or *manqué* through the encounter with the Other at the mirror stage. The question is how much are Lacan’s theories, like Freud before him, an uncritical reenactment of the effects of the dominant economic system and its influence on culture? In other

³⁴ Ibid., p 20.
words is it an expression of the repression of desire as naturally inherent, a universalist interpretation, which does not factor in the whole system, especially that of economic history and how desire is made in that system?

By the mid twentieth century desire began to be theorised as the primary player in the development of the socius. What happens to desire within the individual at the hands of the state has a profound effect collectively on the state. It is our attitude to desire and in the thesis of Wilhelm Reich, our attitudes to sex, which play out in repressive politics. Wilhelm Reich is credited as being the first person to attempt a critical synthesis of Freudian psychoanalysis with Marxism in the first half of the Twentieth century. The Frankfurt school was to follow with the work of Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm in particular.

**CAPITALISM DESIRE AND FASCINATION**

Desire occurs at the formation of space between things, events and the body. The space in between is formless, a sensation of pause that is felt, interpreted, as emptiness, lack, but that can be a receiving space of potential and fullness. Part of the function of society as a structure of control is to do away with the formless or the pause.

Desire gets locked into a negative lack where fear, need, hunger and want torment it, almost forming desires opposite. They occur within a complex that is fixed, determined and imposed by an outside language of instruction, a system of compelling coercion, structured around scarcity. There is no sense of the fullness of
emptiness, pause or of a space of potential, there is only a fixed web like set of preordained tasks that are carried out with a socially determined belief in an outcome. The process is not exploratory, creative, it is dogged and endured for the ends alone. This is not relationship, this is a preordained relativeness. Relativity is a normalizing process, that distracts the process of desire in its fascination and discovery of the world and in its ability to understand the horror of its own alienated works.

A focus on outcomes diminishes the possibility of relationship, connectiveness, and the necessity of it. It only requires relative or equivalent conjugations necessary for the end result. In Anti-Oedipus, Deleuze and Guattari use the word “connection” to denote an encounter of unrepressed desires in which production can happen, in contrast to “conjugal synthesis”, which are “the joining of a pair of processes in such a way that production ceases.”

Lacan’s theories of the split subject could be seen as an illustration of the trauma of modernisation and more specifically of capitalism. But what about Deleuze and Guattari’s free and bounteous desire of connectivity, which then goes on to create more desires. What happens in between these creations of desire. Is it just desire all the time or does some other thing happen as well? Where is relationship in this meeting? If we are not whole and stable subjects, we are desire, but are we not also relationship? What does it feel like to say “I am relationship”? What are the consequences of saying “I am desire” and what are the consequences of saying “I am relationship”?

According to Deleuze and Guattari in their book *Anti-Oedipus*, economic structure and social production is both fueled by and created by desire and re-creates desire.\(^{37}\) Within this process there are desires that wish to transgress an economic or social structure, to change it? There seems to be the potential within humans for an autonomous desire or an other desire. This is a connective, relational desire that will not be limited. In repressive societies it is connectivity and relationship that are limited, in all societies these repressions occur in some way. This sets up a need for continual transgression and this transgression involves “articulating the relations connecting seemingly disparate events and phenomena” as “a necessary and unavoidable part of effective knowledge of the real.”\(^{38}\)

If I say desire is relationship, I draw attention to the first instance of the birth of desire as in the child, which happens at the moment of conception and then proceeds as the child, as the seed of desire, resides within its relationship with the mother in a symbiotic relationship, the origin of all relationship and desire. This is the fluid space of the womb, of touch and connection. Here there is both emptiness and fullness. The womb as both container and child holds the experience of the history of potential that contained form within the formless.

Desire is coextensive within the relationship of mutual support formed in the womb that has to confront the social at birth. Desire does not necessarily occur at the social. The social contains all manner of deviations, derivations and substitutions of desire along with the potential for the expression and development of desire. The


neglect of the Mother, the Womb and the Child is too obvious in Deleuze and Guattari’s \textit{Anti-Oedipus}. Similarly, the potential of relational awareness, relationship as a thing that will occur with desire, is assumed, in a way that under capitalism or other hierarchical systems, perhaps should not be assumed.

From the fact that the child’s brain is developing in the womb and that we as humans are the sum of our experiences which shape the brain, it would seem obvious that the relationship of the child to the womb space of the mother is the first experience of joy, desire, and relationship. Perhaps this is as close as we can get to finding a reason to believe that there is an autonomous desire, which through the process of being in society, is repressed and subverted. In fact it is now being suggested by psychologists that it is possible, by using electro magnetic imaging, to directly observe how childhood trauma or neglect can effect the development of the brain in such a way that the capacity for emotional attachment is reduced.\textsuperscript{39} The child learns a pattern of withdrawal from relationship that is caused by a battering of the psyche from outside of itself, when used as an equivalent subjectivity of the parent, adult, or more powerful other. This occurs when children become a threshing floor for the unresolved feelings of the parent, through incest, sexual repression or insecurity. Poverty, fear and war impede the capacity for relationship and connective desire in the child. The child, growing into adult, learns only relative and equivalent forms of relationship and desire. Not a connective desire.

This discovery of how childhood experience forms the actual physiological development of the brain and its future capacities, could be analogous to the way capitalism influences society, the individual and the development of relationship and desire. Drawing on these recent discoveries by neuro psychologists, it is not too far fetched to suggest that the social environment being enacted by contemporary capitalism, that Deleuze and Guattari define as based on a fear of lack and scarcity, can effect our capacity for relationship. Now well suited to a life of commodification (the balm against the ever present threat of scarcity), the training is complete. The learning is of fear and power rather than desire and relationship. And as Perry points out, even for a child that grows up in a loving and supportive environment, interaction within the social, outside of the family will be an experience of violence, through television and the encounter with the educational institution.⁴⁰

Society can be an experience of hierarchy and control, creating a type of thinking that is binary and excluding, with the emotions of guilt and fear as motivating forces. According to Bogue in his reading of Anti-Oedipus, Deleuze and Guattari conceive desire as “coextensive with natural and social activity, an unbound free floating energy.”⁴¹ that gets locked out and repressed. The experience of the subject moves from a soft, amorphous floating into a hard, formed, restricted and rigid environment.


In *Anti-Oedipus*, the movement of capitalism within the social and within the psyche is one that uses the innovative, productive force of desire, but then turns against the free expression of desire by imposing power and control via the manipulation of capital, labour and surplus value.\(^{42}\)

Deleuze and Guattari work from a Marxian view of capitalism. Through the fear of scarcity, capitalist ideologies are able to propagate the myth that capital creates labour and that only capital and the having of capital can satisfy desire, which has been formed as a lack.\(^{43}\) This is a movement into slavery through commodification.

Desire must be repressed and the worker taught to repress their desires because desire is intrinsically relationship orientated. Under capitalism relationship must be controlled, directed in certain ways to benefit the accumulation of surplus which is the power base of capitalism. Desire is then corrupted, mutated into simulations and equivalence's that are based on a fear of lack, a belief in an intrinsic lacking, which can only be overcome through the engagements of power, either directly or through association.

The relational, connective of desire is converted into a fascination with power. Power being one of the only forms of expression permitted. Power or no power, strong or weak, healthy or sick, winner or loser, aggressor or victim; *opposites* are the social mapping of capitalism. *The haves and have-nots, rich and poor, powerful and powerless.* Those who lack, victims, losers, the have-nots are forced into “playing” the power game.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., p 12.
Desire, according to Deleuze and Guattari is set free or “de-territorialized” by capitalism but then reclaimed or “re-territorialized” by the use of power for the exclusive benefit of the control of capital and surplus.\textsuperscript{44} I give to you and I take away at the same time. Deleuze and Guattari do not seem to make a distinction between industrialization, technological development and capitalism. Industrialization and technological development are the agents that free desire through their potential to meet human needs and reduce labour hours. Capitalism is that economic organisation that uses despotic practices of control to limit and control who benefits from the development of industry and technology by repressing desire. The distinction between the work, consisting of labour and its methods, industry and technology, and capitalism, must be made to deter the use of Deleuze and Guattari’s thesis for repressive and right wing agendas.\textsuperscript{45}

All social relations under capitalism are reduced to commodity relations. Desire is “re-territorialized” into prisms of equivalence. Primarily, Deleuze and Guattari claim this happens within the private oedipalized structure of the family. Only that which is like that, which I have experienced in my family can be coded as desire-full, even if it hurts me.

Deleuze and Guattari see the problem of the conceptualization of desire in the West as being one that positions desire as a lack.

\textsuperscript{44} Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 2004. p 37.
\textsuperscript{45} See, Stivale, C.J. Pragmatic/Machinic: Discussion with Felix Guattari. (19/3/85) at www.gpc.edu/~mnunes/guattari.html#p1.6 (16/10/03)

Note: The French right wing politician, Michael Noir, has used elements of Anti-Oedipus “as the organising model for a new rightist thought.” Similarly Richard Wolin in his The Seduction of Unreason: The Intelectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism, Princeton University Press, New Jersey. 2004; on the issue of human rights and postmodernist thought, re Felix Guattari and Levi Strauss.
Along with this occur two more errors, the law and the signifier. They describe these three as “dragging a theological cortege behind them”, which are “insufficiency of being, guilt, signification”. I am nothing without you/it. I am here for you to fill me and define me.

What we call emptiness as a lack or a negative space, cannot exist, on an emotive level, without the simultaneous occurrence of fullness. I am full of loss. If we go back to RD Laing we will find his simple answer to pain, grief. The more you try to avoid it the worse it gets, in fact it is full. The loss is full as soon as it is most definitely lived, felt. In Lacan, Freud and Plato, the experience of lack is made into a negativity, a wrong, a sin, a fear, a guilt. “An incurable insufficiency of being”. In the interests of maintaining power, the capitalist system must avoid the sensed or suspected cohabitation of desire and emptiness. These two dangerous places in the human psyche, must be locked into both the law and a strict defined meaning and signification, as separate.

For Deleuze and Guattari, psychoanalysis aids and supports the project of capitalism, through its repression and pathologising of desire as “merely the production of fantasies”. Psychoanalysis does this by building a private individual who negotiates a fallacious separation of space called the public and the private. The private individual has a private part of the brain or being space called the unconscious that has to be understood, worked out, whose meaning must be found out. Paramount in the operation of this unconscious is a process named by Freud as the oedipus complex, which although

---

49 Ibid., p 25.
called a complex is considered by psychoanalysis to be unavoidable and natural to all human experience.

The oedipus complex is predicated on a fear and competition between the son and the father, for the attentions of the mother. For the daughter it is a rejection of the mother in favour of the father for the sign of his power, the penis. Both the girl and the boy castrate themselves for this power and are in fear of castration. The boy through a process of taking on a struggle to obtain and usurp power from what he fears (lack) and so becoming the fear and in so doing inheriting a simulation of power that can never be safe or good enough. The girl castrates herself by rejecting herself (and her mother) in favour of her father who becomes a sign of power that she can only possess through an unconscious fantasized incestuous involvement.

What for Freud was the inevitable relations of a family is for Deleuze and Guattari a process that happens through the estrangement of the family from the public, the elevation of the Father as the sole Head of the family and the breaking down of the family into a restrictive unit of Mother Father Children, an “analytic imperialism”. This is a structure that favours capitalist production by producing an individual overladen with guilt, an unstable sense of being, whose desires are trapped within the signifier/signified contraptions of the creation of meaning, the expectation, requirement of meaning, both self meaning and social meaning. Meaning is held within the theatre of Oedipus, a “classical theater” which for Deleuze and Guattari disempower the great discovery of psychoanalysis, that desire is production, by trapping it in a “new brand of idealism”

50 Ibid., p 24.
which could only be represented in expressions of myth, tragedy and dreams. Action is continuously threatened, subsumed beneath the representational, television fantasies. The material Real relationships are veiled.

The development of Fordism in the United States is a good example of this process. In Fordism the family structure and the way it functions becomes an important component and extension of the workplace structure. Nuclear is favored over extended, in order to maximize dependency on the need for a job, for money and products. The aim is to Isolate the family making it more dependent upon the factory complex in order to meet its needs and its desires. This reduces the potential for both self autonomy and communal cooperation.

The oedipus complex is still relevant, but not as Freud was coerced into re-conceptualizing it, as a natural process of socialization within the family that the individual must overcome through a process of adaptation. The oedipus complex is a system of repression that occurs through the fear of invasion, psychic or physical. In the family this is incest, outside the family this is played out through the fear of rape, violence, exclusion and failure.

Freud abandoned his initial theory that neurosis developed very often through a process of incest within the family or of sexual assault through a trusted family friend. In doing so, he sidestepped what could have been the basis for a social revolution in the sexual relationships between men and women and family. The opportunity to question the role that sex plays as a form of repression of women,

---

51 Ibid., p 24.
men and children in society, was delayed. Instead he internalized the role of incest and sexual assault in neurosis. These feelings of betrayal, invasion, fear or betrayal or actual reports of sexual assaults were not to be taken as based on anything that had physically happened, but as signs of a complex, that Freud named Oedipus.\textsuperscript{52} 

This perpetual internalization of affect, away from their social causes back onto the individual as a complex or neurosis, suits the requirement of capitalism for a continuation of despotic rule that will run underneath the laissez-faire, the “freedom” for innovation, democracy and communism\textsuperscript{53} that are the masks of capitalism; the enabling masks. The affects of living in the social, work too close to the surface and may be easily seen, if it were not for the compelling pull of psychoanalysis into the depths of the private mythical. Mainstream psychiatry carries this role on now with the use of increasingly sophisticated drugs that manage emotions rather than look for social causes.

The fundamental purpose of \textit{Anti-Oedipus} is to bring desire out from under the repressed, the unconscious, the fantasy, the dream and oedipus, into the daylight as a force of production that is operating over and within every surface and depth, every interaction; that desire is all social production. “We maintain that the social field is immediately invested by desire..... \textit{there is only desire and the social and nothing else}.”\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{53} Note: Communism as it occurred under Stalin (and after) could be seen as a State run or Totalitarian capitalism, as it developed rigid hierarchies of control and wealth, it was not the equitable society, envisioned by Marx. If we examine his conceptions of communism neither the Soviet or Chinese systems lived up to the idea.
\textsuperscript{54} Deleuze,G. Guattari,F. 1984. p 29.
In order to see desire free of the mist of its conceptual histories, Deleuze and Guattari image desire as a production that aligns it more with a machine, it is essentially collective and social even at the level of the individual. It would seem from their conceptualisation that this desire is autonomous, (but not fixed or stable) that it exists somewhat like desire in certain Rig Veda verses or in Tantric cosmogony as a central life force that brings and connects the world into consciousness. It is not a utopic vision, however, because it places desire as responsible for all social productions and so for the turning of socialist revolution into totalitarianism and democracy into Fascism. “Social production is purely and simply desiring production itself under determinate conditions”,\textsuperscript{55} conditions of governing bodies, conditions of repression, over arching social institutions that determine lives and desires and the enactment of power. Due to this collective nature of desiring production, as Deleuze and Guattari see it, no institution can be seen as separate from another, and as such psychoanalysis and capitalism work glove in hand.

As outlined above Oedipus came about through a moment of crisis for Freud, a backtrack into officialdom, perfectly illustrating a corruption of desire, a paranoiac and despotic engagement of desire, that Deleuze and Guattari speak of. This is the desire that represses itself but is also productive. An avenue is closed off and so desire must find a crack, a turnaround that will look new. “The real is not impossible; it is simply more and more artificial”.\textsuperscript{56} In this case the “newness” is an entrenchment of an unspoken social code, we will use sex to repress those that we do not want to kill, because we need their support. Oedipus. \textit{You will desire your Mummy and Daddy, no}

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p 29.
\textsuperscript{56} Deleuze, G. Guattari, F. 2004. p 37.
that is not Mummy and Daddy desiring you— it is you, always your problem. “That’s what you wanted isn’t it?” So Oedipus which had been there all along in the wings, takes full stage, clothed finally in officialdom, given power, effectively blinding the Western world to its Real emotional history.

*Anti-Oedipus* is not an ethics of desire, but a demystification of desire, how it works as both corruptive and repressive of itself and as an energy that escapes repression. It is a descent from the utopic into what they call the Real. Desire is not trapped in the Symbolic as in Lacan’s thesis, but is entirely in the Real, in the material and the biological. In unlocking desire and letting it out into the whole social field, they trample on psychoanalysis, which closes desire into a system of lack and fantasy.

Desire as Deleuze and Guattari see it, is a productive force. The conception of desire as lack and fantasy, as acquisition, dematerializes or disembodies desire into something out of reach, yearning, a perfect synthesis for the creation of insecurity in relationship with the world, that has the effect of preparing a playing field for despotic and capitalist power. It fastens desire to objects outside of the body. In psychoanalysis desire moves from acquisition into production but only as productions of fantasy. Desire is thus further dematerialized or disembodied into a realm of pathology, as the product of Oedipus or other complexes. This isolates desire from

---

57 Ibid., p 130.
58 Note: In Lacan all psychic energy is structured by language and held within the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic orders. Desire originally surfaces in the Imaginary, but through the Oedipal process becomes constrained within the Symbolic. Libido (desire)occurs only in the Symbolic and Imaginary as metonym. The Lacan Real is the unspeakable; what exists before or resists representation, pre-imaginary and pre-symbolic. see Lash, S. 1990. p 66.
the social and an awareness of relationship between the complexities of an individual and the social.

Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, situate desire totally into the social as interchangeable forces. Desire is not only personal. It puts desire in a similar relation to Marx’s mind/consciousness and need, existing and being created by the means of production in the social world; “the connection of the social and political structure with production.”61 The purpose of this theory of desire could be seen as a warning that will dispel any naivety about the potential of desire to destroy its best intentions. But there is also the suggestion that a desire that is autonomous and central to the social field also has the potential of introducing an embodied desiring that collectively and individually fortifies without only having to rely on external satisfactions.

How does desire exist in the social as Deleuze and Guattari see it? As production that is material, that is Real.62 They have based this on something that psychoanalysis had failed to consider and that was psychosis and the schizophrenic. “A schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst’s couch.”63 What is happening to desire in the schizo? It cannot be coded into Oedipus, it won’t situate itself into a family, it won’t admit to a problem and will

---

62 Note: Their conception of the Real, as production, is to some extent aligned with Marx’s concept of what is real, ( in that they say desire is production and exists within the real)except that Marx seems to make a distinction between the real active material production, making material things and works of the imagination, speculative philosophy, morality and religion which are entirely dependent upon the Real life process of economic production and its affect on our thinking. For Deleuze and Guattari the world is not something we represent as separate, representation is as productive and material as making an object or the economic productions of a society. see for Marx, *German Ideology*. Kamenka, E. (ed) p 169-170. and for Deleuze and Guattari, Colebrook, C. *Understanding Deleuze*. Allen and Unwin, Australia, 2002. p 50-51.
not present a fixed personality or even bother to attempt to make one. “There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together.”

In describing the process of schizophrenia, Deleuze and Guattari see a hint at a way desire operates, when it is unblocked, when it is unrepessed. This way is an undivided oneness with process. The day is not divided into eating, working, playing, sleep, not divided or segmented but exists in inter-connective flows between what is in the body and what is outside. Consumption is also recording and both are production and so the distinction between production, distribution and consumption is merged into all production. “There is no such thing as relatively independent spheres or circuits...”

Capitalism has segmented the process of desiring production into parts of itself, segmenting the individual and the society into functions. In Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of a schizo delirium of desire there are no boundaries between processes and everything is production. The pain, distress, frustration felt in the body is production as much as making the dress or the shoe or sewing up the football and that production of pain begins its own process of synthesizing connections running counter too or along (conjugations) with the capitalist structure, that propagates the myth of autonomous, separate parts. This myth is not just capitalist, but a potential in any highly bureaucratized system, where every part (person, natural world) forming a coded segment of a whole, which cannot, except under strictly formulated ways, cross into and communicate or act

---

64 Ibid., p 2.
65 Ibid., p 4.
across the whole social field. The myth acts powerfully on the individual introducing internal configurations making a capitalist being.

The loss of power to distribute what one makes is the loss of relationship and the repression of desire. One crucial moment is taken out of production, desire, which only exists to move through spaces forever changing them, the moment of recording, of speaking is also removed, reducing actions to conjugations. The only connections possible is through consumption, the only relationship possible is through consumption, which is carried out with the voraciousness of revenge. The relationship between the Tourist and the Tout, that I will be developing in the last two chapters of this thesis is indicative of this consumption as revenge. If I can’t move there I will move to here, there is a gap here. The chance of finding an un-exploitative position is almost impossible. The last ditch effort for a freedom is through fascination, to become enchanted, grabbing a part, something seemingly insignificant, that will go unnoticed, a private encounter.

Sherry Turkle in an article on French Anti-psychiatry describes Anti-Oedipus as presenting us “with an image of a world where complexity and fluidity seem to defy language and its structure”.\textsuperscript{66} This is a perfect analogy to use for the way desire operates in us. Desire challenges structures, meaning, belief, it fragments us. It is the caveat, the “blind spot of the body”.

POTENT FASCINATION

Fasces, is Latin for the bundle of sticks with an ax concealed within that was carried before the Roman magistrates, as a symbol of authority and power. The collective is controlled by violence, the threat of being cut off or cut up. Through repression desire becomes fascination and degrees of fascination. Desire as a connective potential for relationship becomes frightening, a threat.

Another way to look at this is that desire is in fear of its nemesis, power. Fascination is desire looking into or being consumed by its corrupted self or the potential for its corruption. This is the desire of Michel Foucault, the subject that is always subjected to a desire that is “historically produced and regulated.”

Be-witchment, enchantment, is a use of power that is more interested in power over than in relationship. Seduction and fascination are the coercive vehicles of commodification. The search for pleasure and security against the threat of lack also enable commodification. Pleasure and security are safer than fascination and seduction, but without fascination and seduction, without the insertion of power into desire, the state wouldn’t hold, the father and mother (oedipus) wouldn’t rule and capitalism would lose its engine. Fascination works into the obsessional, it is metonymic, focusses and excludes, cuts up and separates. It is possible, it is obsessiveness more than schizophrenia, that is the psychological mirror of capitalism and that schizophrenia is

an attempt at an escape route, the inability to compartmentalize, that refuses to construct hierarchies of value, objects and desires.

Another potential of fascination, like the potential of the runaway innovativeness of industry, technology, is the ultimate connectivity of fascination through its compelling to touch, to seek out. The danger in fascination is that, unlike pleasure, it is a desire surrounded by or surrounding a core phantom power. This power is not understood and has been mythologized beyond recognition and out of reach, often of language and consciousness.

Marx identified the capitalist myth, that capital produces labour, hiding the reality that labour produces capital. Another myth: that the father mother, rightfully and numinously hold power over the child as opposed to the real situation that the child passes, through coercion, its autonomy over to its parents, giving them power. The coercion within the family and in the workplace only exists through the threat of lack as the social signifier. This process must be mythologized for lack to maintain its power. Capital must be seen to be that which is created by wealth and not labour. The father, as patriarch, must hold a numinous position within the family. The thing that we give power to, begins to hold an autonomous power over us, as if we have no control over it, as if it is intrinsic to that thing. This is the source of fascination, its peregrinations, and it is sourced through lack and has the quality of a revenge on lack.

The word, peregrinations, has a latin source that refers to foreign, forming an interesting link to the German “wanderlust”. Fascination has more light in it than obsession or addiction and moves differently, even though it may arise from the mistaken conception of self and desire as lacking, it moves in with what it has become taken
with and wants to become like that thing. Obsession and addiction are stuck places in the self, continuously reemphasising the social, through some part that stands in for a whole, that fills/empties, over and over, without any movement. It may be possible to see a joining point between the loss of relationship that the conceptualization of desire as lack in Western culture has precipitated, and lust, foreign, wandering and fascination. The frustration caused by the unbelonging inherent in lack, will force a restless searching for something new. The prior relations that a tourist may form with an India of the imagination figures itself naively as “the real love” with “the far away” exteriorities “to be played with”. While those on the receiving end of this love, might experience it as closer to Lyotard’s “white innocence of the West in expansion, base cannibalistic imperialism.”

The moment of fascination then is a double edged sword. The potential of *compel* in fascination is founded on these words to do with binding, swathing, filling holes, something that is grown together and pulse, to drive together, to shake, to swing, to tremble, to wield and quiver. This physical disruption of the body is fascination as *caveat*.

When the individual begins to incorporate the uses of fascination as an addictive process of maintaining power and excitement, she/he balances sharply on the edges of the myth. The hidden power, the mythologized power hovers as a place to look into. There is the potential for it to be delineated, exposed, because the individual now operates more and more in personal communion with this mythologised power, subverting its power for their own use, using bits of it. So what had been personally corruptive but socially obscured to the individual through the processes of a mythical universality, becomes first a source of power and then through coming
into relationship, a process of individuation. The source of the power becomes recognizable, familiar and finally divested of its control. Then she or he clashes with the second tendency of capitalism which is the requirement of the control of the workforce; the repression of desire. The workforce must not be personally creative beyond the needs of the production of capital. The individual begins to see the possibility of a desiring capacity beyond that of buying “things” into that of becoming a producer and manufacturer of their own desires.⁶⁸

Obsession, fascination, inspiration are all words (emotions) that in mainstream psychiatry alert the profession to a possible illness, along with depression, which has come to be associated with the repression of anger. These emotions threaten to push the individual beyond the consumer needs pleasures met balance, making them less manageable and therefore less productive economically. Fear and pleasure, as two poles synthesized in the individual by the organic affect of capitalism to hold them to the consumerist/worker mold, is disrupted by obsessiveness or fascination, which could be seen as the repressed desires surfacing (the return of the repressed). When this begins to happen in a capitalist (or communist) society Fascism becomes necessary. The state must catch hold of fascination and redirect it away from the personal and back into the collective. Desire through its enmeshment with power resulting in fascination must somehow be turned against the individual who will agree to repress their desires and associate themselves with the collective (myth) will. And because capitalism has broken the community or at least threatens it, anything that offers a collective sense or feeling can

be used to woo the individual into repression and so, cyclically, back into the fold of capitalism. This is why a clear understanding or critique of desire as a prism of potentialities, of many splintering, corruptive and liberating parts must be understood.

Always thwarting the possibility of an engagement with a desire that is not manipulative, is the neglect of relationship both as an awareness and as a social space. What begins to inhabit social space is something quite mundane, an emotion that Rukmini Nair has called a “verbal monolith”. In her book *Lying on the Postcolonial Couch*, Nair identifies *indifference* as the subjective key to understand the way the colonial administration in India at its human, ordinary, day to day level, managed (controlled) on an emotional level, the ethical and humanist dilemmas of administrating oppression. She suggests that indifference “as a linguistic strategy of conquest” still inhabits the bureaucracies of postcolonial India.\(^{69}\) Independent India inherited and maintained the British administrative system and its modes of operation, enshrined as she says in the horrible official mantra “As per rules.”\(^{70}\) I would like to borrow this word *indifference* and place it within my argument about the loss of relationship, and suggest that it is the overriding sentiment of neo–liberal capitalism. If there is loss of relationship, then indifference, both as monolith and a monologue, is the feeling, the sensation and the mode of practice that will replace it. And in this system, fascination is dangerously placed as either the possibility of fascism or the potential for relationship.

In this chapter I have tried to show both that relationship cannot be assumed, but must be considered as a practice of awareness and

---


\(^{70}\) Ibid., p xv.
also cannot be assumed to exist concomitantly with desire. Relationship can only occur with awareness. Desire need not be conceptualized as solely acquisitive, concerned with needs only, but can take a qualitative role in the liberation from capitalist thought frames like consumerism and judgments of individual worth based on monetary wealth.

However, this process is problematised by the occurrence of repression, which makes access to a non acquisitive desire difficult. It can then only be found within a fascination, the body as caveat being a function of fascination, that alerts consciousness to something more dangerous in the process of desiring. Desiring has been compromised by the interpretation of it as lack or a need, only. Here, I suggest that fascination can play a role in excavating desire from underneath the repressive power that turned desire into a complicit functionary of capitalism.

In the following chapter I will concentrate more specifically on the way that certain theoretical fashions of the late twentieth century may have enhanced capitalism’s propensity to discourage relationship. I will then focus on key aspects of capitalism which I see as the source of the loss of relational awareness.
Chapter 2

SOURCES OF REPRESSION

In her book, *Ludic Feminism*, Teresa L Ebert suggests that capitalism has created an ideology of the individual who is “unique, autonomous” and naturally “competitive and in conflict with others.”\(^7\) Capitalist ideology foregrounds this view of humanity rather than presenting human history as one of cooperation and relationship.

According to Marx’s theory of historical materialism, a society’s driving force, its engine, is based on its economic structure, how it produces. The Real is not a transcendent state processed in the imagination.\(^2\) It is material and exists empirically in the processes of production, the division of labour and the distribution of wealth.\(^3\) Historical materialism aims to demystify social and economic process and show the relationship, “the connection of the social and political structure with production.”\(^4\) But what leads to that structure and then how is that structure maintained, if not through the operations,

\(^{7}\) Ebert, T.L. 1996. p 61.
\(^{3}\) Ibid., p 163 -168.
\(^{4}\) Ibid., p 169.
the complex nuances of desire. Desire plays out its complexities at levels of coerced attenuation, compulsive extravagance or as an opposition to material social productions, through the connecting and breaking of relationship. Desire and relationship are repressed and then fragment, morph, into substitutive behavior and turn in a cycle of repression, on itself and others.

My study focuses on a relationship as an attempt to trace the lines of connections, the sources of desire through wish or need that pull a relationship into being. The relationship occurs within a field already laid out with objects, beings, imaginary and remembered, perceived reality, impressions and expectations. The field also contains forces that stream in as invisible phantoms, like colored gasses that float across our sight of each other and stain the way we see each other. These are historical and contemporary, all mixed up and are the result of decisions made by people and institutions impersonal or personal, far away from us or near. These effects and affects gather around us like phosphorescence and signal to each other across the divides created by our separateness.

Positioning desire as the basis for economic structure, social organisation and all human life does not mitigate the value of a historical materialist view of social practice and transformation. Rather it deepens the argument for a materialist engagement with the goal of human and ecological emancipation from oppression. Following the route of desire’s transformations and manipulations is crucial to an increased sensitivity to relationship with the other and the self and ultimately will lead to the understanding of, and confrontation with power. Social transformation cannot come about without this work
taking place collectively and individually. I will use the definition of historical materialism offered by Ebert who I have quoted above. In her words:

A historical materialist critique is not simply immanent ....but connects variously seemingly autonomous social practices to one another and to the global economic situation, thereby producing a historical knowledge of social totality.75

This approach to the study of a relationship is relational, it looks for the connections within localities, small and intimate, out to larger, national and international, forces that shape the local. The study of desire and relationship within an historical materialist fold brings two theoretical adversaries together. It is generally perceived that the rise of the so called desire theories in the mid Twentieth century sounded the death knell for historical materialism as a viable method of social critique.76 In this thesis I will attempt to challenge the theoretical/ideological separation between desire theory and historical materialist inquiry, using both disciplines together to see what a certain relationship looks like.77

From the point of view of an historical materialist like Ebert, post–structuralist desire theories are an elitist Western middle–class undertaking for those who are far removed from the afflictions of economic insecurity and poverty. She implicates the discursive practices of difference, desire and the local/immanent as having acted as a convenient detour that has diverted attention away from

75 Ebert, T. 1996. p 7.
77 Note: I am not concerned here with Marx’s theory of historical development as it occurs as part of the theory of historical materialism. I am emphasising the inter-relational processes of economic structure.
the effects of economic inequality. The connections between cultural practice, poverty and economic forces have been dispersed, in her view, through the refusal to consider “totalising” interpretations.\(^78\)

Ebert severely critiques desire theory. Her use of the word *immanent* in the above quote indicates her suspicion for the Deleuzian assumption of the efficacy of immanence, alone, as a useful philosophical grounding for political or social awareness or action. Claire Colebrook interprets Deleuze’s immanence in the following way. In order for social change to take place:

...we need to begin from a mobility, flux, becoming or change that has no underlying foundation, which he (Deleuze) refers to as the ‘plane of immanence’.\(^79\)

I interpret this plane of immanence to be a place where judgments or hierarchical thinking do not take place. This relates to Deleuze’s insistence that we must change the way we think before we can hope to “transform life”.\(^80\) Ebert admits the importance of immanence, perhaps interpreting it as a process of being grounded in material conditions as they effect the personal, but she stresses that the process must move out to look at connecting issues of economic forces and their effect on social and economic inequality.\(^81\) Deleuze has created, it would seem, from one perspective, an ontological space, thus using it completely differently from Ebert. Deleuze’s use of the word almost situates itself back into what Marx repudiated in Hegel and other mystical philosophers, as a philosophy of being that desires transcendence.\(^82\)

\(^78\) Ebert, T. 1996. p 49.  
\(^80\) Ibid., p 50-51.  
\(^81\) Ebert, T. 1996. p 13.  
Historical materialism is concerned with the relationship between social institutions, economic structures (capitalism) and the individual in the interests of building an overall view, the correct interpretation from which to critique and change either through legislation or revolution, economic structures, that in the view of historical materialist critique, shapes the polity. Desire theories question the possibility in different intensities and from varying aspects, that any challenge to capitalism or any oppressive regime, is possible without an awareness of the affects of desire. Indeed, Michel Foucault believed that any organisational or collective stand against capitalism would only result in further repression's of desire “as a servant of power.”  

The historical and theoretical bases of the perceived necessity to factor in desire, arises out of the challenge to the enlightenment faith in the fixed or whole subject. This challenge began with Freud's concept of the existence of the unconscious and the overwhelming function that drive, wish or pulsion, usually characterised as desire in its many forms, has within the subject. The subject can no longer be seen as in complete control and in-knowledge of themselves. The decentered, unconscious subject, according to postmodernist theory, is the true state of the human self. However, historical materialism should not be seen in contradiction to desire theories in all interpretations. Louis Althusser, in a radical rereading of Marx, has suggested that Marx’s theory of the historical materialist conditions of economic development actually show that Marx did not believe that humans have complete agency in the production of their society, but inherit the conditions upon which they must act.  

From around the late 1950s serious disenchantment began to develop amongst European supporters of the Russian Communist Party and the organisational bureaucracy in the Soviet supported Western European Communist Parties. The invasion of Czechoslovakia and the revelations of defectors like the writer Alexander Isaevich Solzhenitsen, hastened a growing concern for human rights violations in the Soviet countries. The events of May 1968, the student uprising and the strikes and occupations of factories and the subsequent deal brokered by the French Communist Party with the French Government, which many of the strikers of the New Left felt disenfranchised their aims, may also have contributed to a profound cynicism for the efficacy of social action and organisational politics. This is the moment when desire and the Marxism espoused by the French Communist Party began to part company. Desire began to become something more than need, want or wish. The structuralists and historical materialists could not admit this rampage of an un-dialectical, discursive and contesting youngster, that wanted to implant bourgeois notions of spontaneity, the body, somatic philosophies and dérive (drift) into the revolution.

The corruptions of power and the repression of desire and the way they operate across all ideological positions, began to concern theorists like Foucault, Marcuse, Lyotard, Fromm, Deleuze and Guattari. Fissures began to appear between those that supported collective social action by forming organisations to fight oppression and those that believed that changing the mind, the way we think and the way we think about desire and power, was the only way to end oppression. Some like Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm and Felix

86 Ibid., p 275.
Guattari saw a practice of social activism as based on both action and self awareness as important. As I have shown above, Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, challenged traditional conceptions of desire as lack and needs based. It was Foucault, however, who dominated the debate and his ideas about power and desire have become entrenched in academic and educational circles.

Foucault’s concern was to discursively understand power and how it could corrupt in his view, any social organisation and at the same time be dangerously creative and positive. The criticism that is leveled at Foucault from Marxists and Critical Theorists who believe in the importance of social action and resistance organisation, is that Foucault's ideas have encouraged inaction, apathy and a sense of hopelessness that has weakened collective action. The popularity of Foucault and his influence is immense. But for some like Marshall Berman, Foucault has encouraged a “deep pessimism” to develop; a pessimism that sees no reason to protest, encouraging a cynicism, which according to Berman has acted as a “world historical alibi for the sense of passivity and helplessness that gripped so many of us in the 1970s.”

Desire theories and power have became central to theoretical debate in universities across Europe, United States and Australia since the late 1970s. Here was something quite radically different from, the usual Marxist, radical verses capitalist, conservative debate. This was a turn inwards, away from the collective of action into a collective of self-searching. This is an important point for this study, because ironically and tragically it might be possible to see how capitalism entrenched itself, through an emptying of social space that was

---

encouraged by the theories of some of capitalism’s most serious adversaries. At this point began the degrading of the collective and relationship. Berman again, puts it like this:

The eclipse of the problem of modernity in the 1970s has meant the destruction of a vital form of public space. It has hastened the disintegration of our world into an aggregation of private material and spiritual interest groups, living in windowless monads, far more isolated than we need to be.89

This problem of modernity for Berman is the struggle of the individual against the dehumanizing and splintering forces of modernisation, which is intimately and totally connected to the forces of capitalism. For him attention has shifted from this struggle which involved a sense of the collective in human society to a focus on the local and the abandonment of anything that looks like a meta-narrative. The problem with this, is that, insidiously the micro-narrative begins to isolate and encourage the very fracturing of human connection and awareness that modernity was struggling with and critiquing. Furthermore, there has been an overwhelming acceptance of capitalism as the only possible form of human economy. Its acceptance is part of a belief that European and Western interests and ideals are everyone’s interests and ideals, despite all the rhetoric against meta-narratives, which capitalism, and the assumptions that its stewards make, surely is.

It is hypocritical to accept capitalism and then argue against meta-narratives. It is possible to keep one’s eye on the whole with ones feet in the local. This is actually the way relationship proceeds. The most local we can get is what we name individual. In that space

89 Ibid., p 34.
we also exist as part of the lives of a group of other people, who we
influence and who influence us. We need to take care of ourselves for
ourselves, but also for the group, because our contribution is
important for the life of the group. We have to be conscious of the
well-being of the group, as that too will effect our well-being. This
simple example shows how relationship will be found only in an
awareness of meta-narratives and the local, together, as
interconnected streams of human thought and experience, which can
check for imbalances, “generalisations and vague totalities”⁹⁰.

Systems of interlocking, inter-flowing repressions and excess,
largess, excitement, freeing movements of extravagance. Is this what
desire theories have led to, in this way, via this route of our attempted
rebirths, organisations and self-actualisations, a re-empowering of
capitalism? How to understand that the greatest anti capitalist
institution in the world, communism, has effectively sided with the
capitalists against desire, community and relationship? Power and
desire united in the commodity, winging on ecstatic consumption, off
set by starvation, scarcity and fear in the “body nations” where the
freedoms of the developed world, the “brain countries” as Richard
Rosecrance delineates it, are maintained.⁹¹ Desire is let loose and
channeled into the forces of imperialism, this process is maintained
by a fear of lack and of the other, who becomes synonymous with
lack.

A sense of a collective, struggles in contemporary Western
society. A collective is not apparent in the streets or in any public

⁹⁰ Ibid., p 33.
space on any normal day. There is a collective of buying, however, but that is a private and solitary pastime, punctuated with moments of connections over the small warm sense of power that happens when you know you can afford something and can reach an agreement with the sales person.

Those supporting capitalism never lost sight of their own universalist ambitions. The whole world must become capitalist. As theory unraveled the processes of life under the influence of capitalism, to understand how it controls us, makes us and how we succumb, capitalism appropriated this spirit of exploration, for its own ends. In the words of the Australian Labor party politician, Lindsay Tanner, the revolution of the 1960s often strayed too close to something like a fashion statement:

Although often clothed in trendy chic left wing garments, at its essence this revolution represented a profound triumph for individualism and atomisation.⁹²

Perfect circumstances for the advent of a commodity lifestyle. If we think of the years post 1968, they represent a time in human history, for those in the developed nations at least, of an incredible increase in the possibility of choice. Gradually, as different social movements for the rights of citizens, feminism, blacks and minority groups and gay rights, began to successfully result in protective legislation, society became a little more open and more free. It was possible for people to make choices that before may have resulted in them being socially ostracized. Choice gave a sense of freedom along with a level of more widespread affluence, again in the developed nations, never experienced before. These choices are

extremely important developments and achievements but they have occurred alongside an extreme surge in the level of commodification, which has added another layer to a sense of freedom and choice.

The emotive words freedom of choice and “human/individual” rights seem to get tangled with the choices involved with buying commodities. There is a sense that the commodity and the process of buying becomes an expression of freedom, a right, and takes on a value that is almost ethical. As an example, the invasion of Iraq as an ethical position, freeing the Iraqi people, glides smoothly into a perceived right for Western economic interests to rearrange the Iraq economy as a private business opportunity for international corporations. This process happens over the top of a sinister devaluation of human autonomy and relationships between humans, through the constant undermining of organisations, like unions for the collective protection of workers rights and public institutions, such as hospitals and schools that are based on universal access through a universal taxation system. These systems are based on an original collective agreement that we can make each others lives better by sharing in the contribution of money for the benefit of everyone, and that this would make our society a better place to be in.

The emphasis on choice and freedom played out by neo–liberal economics has begun to undermine this collective understanding. The possibility of individual freedom from any responsibility is subtly being conveyed through the major vehicle of neo–liberalism, advertising. It is obvious that this narrative has become one of the major “texts” of our lives in present capitalist time. The tragedy is that the increased personal choices of previously ostracized and oppressed members of the community has occurred within an economic system which is unsustainable. What we all have to fear is that these freedoms will
become the ones to suffer in a backlash if political, economic and ecological systems have to adjust to the consequences of an unsustainable economic system.

This system of capitalism with its emphasis on exponential growth, cannot as is becoming clear now, be sustained by the environment or human resources. The economic policy and the heady rush of modernisation with its emphasis on the constantly new and constantly changing, share an oversight, almost at the level of a mistrust, and that is the tendency to ignore relationship. In his book *Crowded Lives*, Tanner focuses on the stress of late capitalism, of neo–liberalism, on human relationships. Capitalism is always moving away from sustained relationship, the constant advertisement of something better, somewhere else, the emphasis on choice, puts enormous pressure on the ability to focus on relationship:

The fact that the aggregated impact of millions of individual choices produces negative consequences for some people rarely troubles those making the choices, because the connection between individual choice and social outcome is remote.  

The process of being aware is almost redundant as the pace of change, the shortness of attention on any one thing, subject or object does not require absorption or understanding at any deep level. Awareness as a process of seeing connections, need never develop. This loss of awareness that the understanding of relationship can bring will result in not being able to see what is coming let alone understand what is happening in the present. Tanner suggests that the denial of human relationship is a human rights issue. It is a loss

---

93 Ibid., p 34.
94 Ibid., p 36.
of “speech” for the individual. Without relationship within a community there is very little agency. Freedom becomes money, the ability to spend. So many shared human activities are now only possible through the process of buying. We are tightly held in an embrace that is parasitic on our capacity to organise collectively.

So the first important point to make about the way capitalism oppresses desire and relationship is through its ability to appropriate desire and relationship to their vital encumbrance, power. Capitalism uses power and oppression, but with the lubricating aid of desires and needs. Lash interprets Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of desire as one where the body becomes an “object of competition, for whose control the active forces of desire and reactive forces, mobilized by capital, engage in struggle.”

Deleuze and Guattari’s practice of immanence, the "essence of difference" and the freeing of desire from lack, are an invitation into an examination at micro level, at the level of human being and interaction, of the ways that activists for social change can avoid undercutting the potential to successfully, collectively organise. By this double activity of awareness of desire and the way that it is corrupted by power and disconnects from relational awareness, social activists, can build relationships within organisations that avoid re-implementing destructively, the characteristics of the very power bases that they are attempting to change. In this way I see this work, the work with power and desire as the necessary basis for collective action, and as the necessary basis for a historical materialist understanding and examination of social and economic life. The seeming contradictions between these two practices are where the

---

95 Lash, S. 1990. p 64.
efficacy of their practice in tandem will be found. The tendency, especially for Western thinking, to iron out differences and contradictions is a problem that disconnects practice from theory and is perhaps the basis for the ascendancy of capitalism.

Now I will turn to examine this reactive force that struggles over the body. What are its justifications and rationalisations? How does it use the capacity for desire to control and destroy relationship?
CAPITALISM

Capitalism in varying manifestations, has a long history. It is not necessary, for the purposes of this paper to outline that history. However, it is important to define it as I am claiming that it is, in its present manifestation, destroying relationship and repressing and subverting desire.

The Shorter Oxford English dictionary definition of capitalism is simply, “the condition of possessing capital; a system which favours the existence of capitalists.” And Capitalists are those who have “capital available for employment in reproductive enterprises.”

Marx’s definition is more nuanced. For him the capitalism that we know today “grew out of the economic structure of feudal society. The dissolution of the latter set free the elements of the former.”96 The previously bonded labourer was then available to be hired in the factories of the industrial revolution. This new “free” worker is the result of political, economic and industrial forces that were intent on the privatizing of land, the result of which forced large numbers of people off the land and into the cities and towns. These land seizures were carried out by wealthy landowners and the aristocracy.97 The most famous of these was the eighteenth century “enclosure of the commons” acts in England, which effectively destroyed the long tradition of holding land in common for all to have the opportunity to

97 Ibid., p 476.
use. The worker is freed from bonded labour or slavery, but also importantly, free from his or her own ownership or use of common land. It is the “process of divorcing the producer from the means of production”.  

In India the British introduced the legal right to own land, known as the land settlements, as a way of strengthening their colonial control. Previously, in Hindu India, land could not be owned, but only used by the farming caste. There is something very similar occurring in India today in the rural farming community and has been since the Green revolution, as small farmers are forced off their land due to debt and the privatization of water. (Or they are committing suicide, as they know that there is no where for them to go.) The controversial Narmada River Dam projects have also forced large numbers of self-supporting, mainly tribal people off their land.

---

98 Ibid., p 463.
99 Note: Introduced first in 1793 in Bengal and thereafter spread through all of British controlled India. It is difficult, if not impossible, to summarize the effects of this process because of different traditions of land usage and caste rules in different localities. The British implemented the land rules differently in different localities according to political advantage. In some cases it made the plight of the peasants worse than before colonisation. In other cases, it is claimed it actually improved the prospects of low caste or untouchables, to have the right to own land for the first time. See Kumar, D. Colonialism, Property and State. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998. p 3.
100 Note: The controversial Green revolution was a program of agricultural reform, developed by the United States and World Bank, (1960s) that encouraged Indian farmers to change from a predominantly organic way of farming to one of a high use of artificial chemical pesticides and fertilizers, tractors and high yielding hybrid seeds. As Vandana Shiva, Robert Bohm et al, have pointed out, only the wealthy landowners could afford the much higher cost of farming that entailed, making it very difficult for poorer or smaller landowners to compete. Shiva has focussed her attention on the potential loss of tough drought resistant indigenous varieties of rice and other grains and the tragedy of environmental destruction, loss of soil quality and poisoning of farm workers using dangerously high levels of pesticides. On the other side of the argument, it is claimed that the green revolution has increased food output and lessened the severity of famine. See Shiva, V. Monocultures of the Mind: Biodiversity, Biotechnology and the Third World. Third World Network, Penang, Malaysia, 1997 and Bohm, R. Notes on India. South End Press, Boston, MA. 1982. p 142-143.
Capitalism depends upon unattached, alienated groups of people with no means of self-sufficiency. The enclosure of the commons resulted in the destruction of villages, of whole communities and the breakup of large family units and the loss of a particular type of skills-based relationship to the land, centered around self-sufficiency.  

For Marx, capitalism is an economic system based on exploitation. His basic equation for this exploitation is MCM. Money, surplus capital, purchases raw materials and labour, which creates a Commodity, which makes a profit. How does it make a profit? By using labour as a commodity itself. The worker is divided into a product that works for themselves, undertaking “necessary labour”. This keeps them alive, so they can then be “free” to work as “surplus labour” for the profit of the capitalist. The threat of starvation for the landless worker and what Marx called the “Industrial Reserve Army of the Unemployed”, are the means by which the capitalist system manipulates the “free” worker and the labour market, into accepting the low wages that enable the making of profit.

In this thesis I am concerned with the effect of capitalism on human desire and relationship. The process of exploitative labour practices, summarized above, produces for Marx the symptom of alienation. Wolff marks out four basic ways that alienation occurs under capitalism, according to Marx.

104 Ibid., p 73.
105 Ibid., p 76.
The first is alienation from the product. The worker does not own and has no control over what they have made, and they then have to go and buy what they made. Collectively, the effect of this is a process of mystification and domination. The commodity is what holds value, not the worker or the work that has made it. We do not understand the products we produce, we may understand parts of it, but generally we are mystified by what we own. The market is difficult to control, stock markets crash and depressions occur. Our way of producing gets away from us and dominates us, adversely affecting everyone. So the worker and their production, what they produce, seem to be in competition with each other.

The product dominates us through the alienating processes which the capitalist has designed to produce the product; factory or office work that is repetitive. This is the second form that alienated labour takes.

The third form of alienation for Marx is the loss of our “species being”, a term he has taken from Ludwig Feuerbach. For Feuerbach our “species being” is an essence that we will recover when we can give up the alienating process of projecting power onto a religious idol and realise our connections to each other in community, what is known as Feuerbach’s radical humanism. For Marx the loss of “species being” occurs through the exploitation of labour, which causes humans to create religion as a solace. Humans are essentially productive, creative and communal, but capitalism uses this productivity exploitatively for the benefit of a few and in doing so robs humans of their essence or “species being”.

106 Ibid., p 18.
This loss of our sense of connection to “species essence” leads to the fourth form that alienation takes under capitalism and that is the loss of awareness of community. The commodity becomes the centre of community, buying becomes a social activity and money along with its lack, no money, becomes a social signifier, the possession of money becomes meaning, value and validity:

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour.\(^\text{107}\)

The commodity fetish for Marx, grows out of the same terrain as the propensity for humans to create religions, what he calls, “the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world.”\(^\text{108}\) Alienation is a term also used by Hegel and Fichte to describe the process whereby the human mind finds its power and self-knowing by projecting power onto an external being or object, *Entausserung* (externalization, alienation) which can then appear as independent and dominate the mind, *Entfremdung* (estrangement).\(^\text{109}\) It is this projection of the self into an object that is the basis of Marx’s ideas around commodification and the power of the commodity, except that he sees it not as a condition only of the mind or self-knowing, but the historical condition of human “subjugation to social idols, ends and institutions he (humanity) himself has created.”\(^\text{110}\) For Marx religion is necessary because life is so difficult. His notion that with equitable


\(^{108}\) Ibid., p 447.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., Kamenka, (ed), notes. p 559.

\(^{110}\) Ibid., p 559.
working and social conditions the need for religion would disappear is considered utopic by some and by others as a very narrow conception of what religion is.

For this thesis, however, the idea of alienation as an organic affect on the human psyche is important when considered in tandem with the Freudian (et al) idea of repression, both, roughly, sharing historical time in their conceptions. Alienation is, as Marx delineates it, a process that confronts the worker with the necessity of repressing certain aspects of themselves. The fetish is a desperate affect of alienation and repression, the result of loss and apprehended in the breakdown of human relationship like violence, incest and addictions of various types, from the gluttonous to self-imposed starvation. A component of addiction is fascination and fascination is held in the fetishization of something. In the complex of the fetish and alienation there is a lost power, or more accurately a displaced power onto a fetishized object or subject, the projected power of Hegel's *Entausserung*. Ironically, for those who fall headlong into the mire of an addiction, relationship could be found through the process of fascination/fetish and alienation. The forces that whirl around the phenomenon of alienation all repress desire, the predicaments they create, like the fetish, fascination, these extreme emotions, are like the antidote or the defence that could eventually lead back into kinship.

As I have suggested elsewhere in this thesis, fascination with its hidden core power could lead into an understanding of that power. Power grips a repressed desire, the desire is enclosed within power. Confronting that power will see it wither and the original desire can then be felt. And perhaps that desire has something to do with freedom, which explains the hold that the commodity has over us and
the hold that neo-liberal policy or ideology has over the emotion of freedom. The commodity becomes an alternative for desire. The commodity becomes powerful as it steps between the consumer and the producer. The commodity holds the consumer’s desire and is the veil that hides the real relationship between the consumer and the producer, the worker who made the product.

This is the struggle over the body between desire and capitalism that Deleuze and Guattari suggest, that I have cited above. It is also the genesis of their claim that capitalism both frees and represses desire; works on desire, manipulates and controls it. It is possible to find relationship, *kinship*, in a capitalist system, but only within an opposition to capitalism. Relationship will always be in conflict with capitalism. Relationship in the capitalism described above will also be in conflict with desire. This is the intimate psychological impact of capitalism. Relationship is subverted in capitalism, into a relationship via capitalism, this is the only possibility for a relationship which is not in conflict with capitalism. The group that supports capitalism, will only be in relationship with each other through capitalism, through their ability to pay to belong to the group, because it will be dependent on a collective agreement that wealth is the most desired result of a life and the wealthy the most successful and deserving of praise, attention and power. They have the alienated relationship of the courtesan without seeing it, but the courtesan can see it. Those that don’t support capitalism are in relationship through their opposition to capitalism. Capitalism still can degeneratively form the centre of the opposition’s relationships with each other, unless care is taken.
THE RATIONALISATIONS OF CAPITALISM

Here the main focus will be on present day and recent rationalisations in support of capitalism, which could be termed a postmodern period. However, very briefly I will outline modern rationalisations that our present day has inherited.

There is no doubt that capitalism as it developed claimed a special and exclusive relationship to rationalism and modernity. Central is the notion of the free individual, who began to discard mythologies of the Christian church, breaking away from the moralities of the church, but carefully, under the guise of a tough populist philosophy of rationalism and the rights of the individual and a scientific approach to living. Inherent in this was a sense of the superiority of humankind and in particular men and the European man. Goodness became tangled up with a Right, which allowed for broad breaches of Christian ethics, as had always happened, but now a new justification was found in this sense of superiority based on science and rationalism. The new science of Darwinism and natural selection, threatened the notion or possibility of a single omnipotent creator. It was possible after Darwin to think logically and rationally that there was no God.

It is the populist interpretations that have developed out of enlightenment philosophy and science, attaching themselves to old Christian chauvinism's, that have provided the rationalisations to a system that in Marx’s words is a “shameless direct, naked
exploitation.” “Shameless and exploitative”, yes, but naked and direct, not always perceived as such; for many, the rationalisations, another word for ideologies, sheltered both the victim and the perpetrator from the reality. Other popular words were progress and industry. The popular conception of the “protestant work ethic” contributed many willing hands to what became a frenzy of development. Superiority over nature, the glorious visions of man conquering nature, celebrated and promulgated in literature and art, fostered a strong belief in the right to colonise and the right to take from nature with no restraint. Marx also followed this creed, while acknowledging the exploitative goals of colonisation, he saw colonisation as a necessary process to free Africans and Indians and others from despotic indigenous rule, and become part of the global struggle of the proletariat against capitalism.

**NEO–LIBERAL CAPITALISM**

It is interesting to note that most of the above rationalisations have re-emerged in the last thirty five years with greater emphasis than had existed post World War Two. In fact, the economic conditions of the world today are quite reminiscent of those that existed in the last half of the nineteenth century and leading up to 1929. This is particularly apparent with the situation of world debt and the general climate of deregulation in regards to lending and borrowing, that exists at the present time.\(^{111}\) The rationalisations that have been used since the 1980s debt crisis reflect a concerted attempt to deregulate

currency, markets and labour. Deregulation of course, means to remove restrictions to trade and the movement of money around the globe put in place to protect the interests of the economies of sovereign nations, especially recently decolonised ones. Deregulation of labour means breaking down labour laws and reducing the influence of unions, that were put in place to protect workers.

Again the rights of the individual seem to be central to the belief that capitalism is the best social and economic system we could have. The rhetoric of economic rationalist and neo–liberals all revolve around individualism, although there have been times in the eighties for instance, in Australia where politicians began to exhort Australians to be less individualistic and more “asian” as an attempt to try and get Australians to accept lower working conditions so that we could emulate the economic boom that was happening in Asia.113

Most of the words used to rationalise capitalist activity are misnomers. They all play on the notion and the sentiment of freedom. It has always been difficult, if you understand the oppressive feeling of worker alienation, to come to terms with the stated beliefs and the contradictions inherent in the ideals of the founding liberals, who were, two hundred years ago advocates of freedom of speech, religious tolerance and equality before the law as well as free trade114 and capitalism.115

113 Note: It was never clearly explained what being “asian” meant. Proponents of this idea seemed to be working on the assumptions of the stereotype that Asians are less individualistic than Western people, and that Asian workers, unlike Australian workers, were prepared to accept lower working conditions for the benefit of their nation.
114 Note: The contemporary ideal of “free trade” is contentious in relation to actual international economic practice. For a recent analysis of the real state of free trade see Devinder Sharma on the Hong Kong Ministerial of the World Trade Organisation, Dec. 13 - 18, 2005. Much ado about nothing. www.indiatogether.org/2005/dec/dsh-hongkong.htm (27.12.05)
In a bastardization of the ideas of Adam Smith, economic rationalism or neo-liberalism, as it is known in the United States and Latin America, is:

...a doctrine that says that markets and prices are the only reliable means of setting a value on anything,... that markets and money can always, at least in principle, deliver better outcomes than states and bureaucracies.116

Neo-liberals misuse two of Adam Smith’s basic ideas: keeping Government out of economics and allowing the market to set the price. Smith’s anti-Government stance has to be seen in the context of his time, a time when Government was quite draconian and anything but democratic. At the time that he was writing it was common for corporations and Government to form destructive partnerships against small businesses. Smith saw the small business as the hope for a just form of capitalism based on a natural development of small market economics.117 Neo-liberals ignore the fact that Smith disliked corporations and domineering monopolies. They displace Smith’s anti-Government and state interference ideas inappropriately into contemporary circumstances, and degenerate Smith’s ideas into a simplistic placard, using once again, an emotive word like freedom. Susan George cites a perfect example of this way of thinking that epitomizes the emphasis on freedom. A businessman defines globalization:

I would define globalization as the freedom for my group of companies to invest where it wants when it wants; to produce what it wants, to buy and sell where it wants and

to support the fewest restrictions possible coming from labour laws or social conventions.\textsuperscript{118}

The Australian sociologist Michael Pusey sees the word freedom as a misnomer for a dangerous level of what is really a state of dependency:

\begin{quote}
Economic efficiency is measured by the dependency and helplessness of national populations upon markets over which they have less and less control.\textsuperscript{119}
\end{quote}

Other rationalisations that we commonly hear, along with that of freedom, are: wealth will “trickle down”; people are basically self-serving and can only be content with a situation of competition; “free trade” is the only way to maximise profit and benefit the greatest number of people because it will create jobs and spread goods around the world. Human progress and economic growth and wealth are commensurable. Growth is always good. The amount consumed and the amount of wealth accumulated is a measure of success and this is rational. As in the early days of modern capitalism, rationalism plays an important part. On the use of rationalism as a measure of the validity of neoclassical economics, Pusey states, that any policy can only be rational if it structures in the relationships that it has with other aspects of life, like the reality of limitations.\textsuperscript{120} That is, limits to resources and human capacity, moral issues and other social and human needs and circumstances. According to Pusey, the type of rationalism claimed by neo–liberals is totalitarian and forms a direct counterpart to the state communism that existed in the Soviets

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{118} George, S. 2004. p10.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.,15.
\end{footnotesize}
because it “assumes its own self-sufficiency and sets itself against the very limitations that could ever make it rational, socially constructive, and in short, intelligent.”121

Another notion used to support neo–liberal economics is that of the “inevitability of historical forces”.122 This gets conflated with what human nature, naturally is, with a nod in Darwin's direction. Relativism and inevitability might serve each other well here.

When taken together, what do these rationalising words and concepts amount to? Rationalism, Progress, Growth, Natural, Human nature, the Individual, Freedom. There is nothing about relationship or kinship in this, there is no acknowledgment of limits. It is a simplistic and self serving interpretation of humanist and enlightenment thought.

In this chapter I have suggested that Marx's theory of historical materialism could be extended to include Deleuze and Guattari thesis of desire in Anti–Oedipus, which they emphasise as the major social force, either productive or in its repressed configurations as destructive. Desire is always aiming for production even out of a repressed state, which I have figured as the function of fascination. I have briefly looked at the way capitalism effects our capacity to build relationship and maintain it by using Marx's theory of alienation and the fetish as important and viable explanations as to how capitalism subjectively affects relationship with self and others. Capitalism shapes us, a process I have described as an organic affect. It makes relationship that exists outside of awareness and a desire that is devoid of a sense of consequence. Under capitalism life becomes a process of consuming with very little connection to or

121 Ibid., p 16.
understanding of how the products we buy are made or who makes them and under what conditions. Capitalism appropriates the emotive expressions of the movements that occur in opposition to it and turns them into fashion statements, as Tanner has suggested. Which in the end means that we, as a majority, allow ourselves to be distracted by the theatres that surround the focus on the continuous creation of wealth.

One such distraction could be the theatre of travel. In the next chapter I develop two characters who illustrate the shapes of the affect of capitalism. The tourist and the tourist tout are the quintessential protagonists in the theatre of capitalism. Both play out the acts of possession and dispossession that course through the layered influences of global capitalism. Possession and dispossession referring to the material lack or having of wealth and opportunity and the emotional affect of capitalist life, the entrapment of desire in fascinations, fixations, the confusion of person for commodity and being unable to see or feel the difference.

The chapter begins with a meeting that not only changes the protagonists involved but, also changes the style of this paper into a relational and qualitative exploration of an actual relationship. The imaginary and the real slide and marble into each other and fantasy and fascinations play out, projecting out of their various containment's of repression and hope.
Chapter 3

THE IMAGINARY AND THE REAL

In 1957 the Tunisian author Albert Memmi published a book called *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, a portrait of the two colonial protagonists who play out the roles of colonisation.

Here I will borrow Memmi's approach. The characters whose portraits I am developing are different, although I will argue, they are perhaps not born of, but occupy an uneasy relationship via the potential for a slippery similarity, to the coloniser and the colonised. These postcolonial characters are the tourist, and the tourist tout. Why the tourist tout? The genesis of this thesis lies in a scene witnessed at a tourist site in India.

In a roadside dhaba (eating house) two Italian tourists, male and female, are finishing their meal. Standing around them are three young Indian men talking to them. Their voices are lively and excited as they hover over the Italians in a deferential way, searching through the warm air with their questions and comments and listening eagerly for the answer. The young Italian women is infected by their

---

excitement and her mannerisms show it. Her voice carries a rush of inflections. Words lift themselves out of the mundane and fly on extended meanings of themselves. The young men delightedly follow and catch her words as if playing a game with a ball, that they will bounce back to her. The balls are syllables of a shared foreign language, spun with light and electricity.

The atmosphere in this dingy dhaba with its dirty walls and smell of spiced oil, is suspended suddenly, as if all life and time had gathered there. The level of energy around the small group reaches a culminating pitch. The world breaths on a moment, the air is liquid with an intense yearning. The man opposite me leaps up as if stung and almost runs to the table where the group has gathered. The Italian woman has become the total centre of an undivided focus, her words, not their meaning, but their inflection in feeling, are to large for the night, they have overstepped their mark in what is meant to be. There is a look of consternation on the young Italian mans’ face. The couple stand to leave and the energy has no where to go, only out into the night with the departing tourists or it falls back into the monotone drone of insects and traffic along the highway. All who are involved feel the moment slide, the sudden wave of collective enchantment has gone.

To say that the above scene fascinates is not enough: it is beautiful, it is human life and relationship and connection at its most poignant and fragile. Within seconds it was over, only to reverberate within the hearts of all involved and yet, like many beautiful things it is dangerous because it is flying on desire. For a moment, something: desire, love, lifted itself above prejudices and the preconceived ideas that people form about each other and showed another possibility for human relationship. But it could also be seen as pathetic, the “touts”
were strung out by and lost control over a Western tourist. And what was exciting them, and the young woman so much? What does the Western or foreign tourist hold to bring out such a response? After that scene and the tourists go off into their life, what are the touts left with?

The context of this scene has many layers: tourism, black/white, male/female relationships, poverty and wealth and history, the history of colonialism and the question and possibility of postcoloniality. The context resides in the young men who have become so enchanted and the young woman, who was also enchanted. What I want to understand here is this enchantment. Its uses, what surrounds it and where it comes from.

The young men involved in this scene are, with the exception of one who is a waiter, what are commonly called touts. They work as hawkers, selling tourist paraphernalia, jewelry and calcite stones or crystal, as they call it and old coins from the ancient fort in the next town. They also work, unofficially, as guides and will direct tourists to hotels and will sometimes collect a commission from hotel owners. They are only just tolerated by some and actively encouraged by others. In this thesis it is the activity of touting with tourists that I am interested in, which can occur across different professions, such as the people I have concentrated on in this paper: hawkers, guides and rickshaw drivers.

At first the above scene might seem a banal or even an immature occurrence to be so concerned with, but looking beneath that first reaction, it is possible to discern something that is pertinent to the condition of postcolonial India. It raises questions about the postcolonial status of India or perhaps any previously colonised state
in the world today. That “enchanted” scene also raises questions about the relationship that the Western or foreign tourist, who is travelling in a postcolonial state, has to the people that she or he meets and it raises questions about the play of inequalities and how we surrender to, live with and ignore the implications of those inequalities.

What is so interesting and valuable about Memmi’s book, cited above, is that it moves beneath the overarching discourse of colonial politics and history into the personal, individual manifestations of colonialism, how it makes people and how almost as if following a role, they then begin to make each other. This is the real history of the world, how or the way we make each other and the fact that we do make each other. Each of the relationships that we have are a creation that is influenced by countless other creations that often we are not aware of or only dimly so. These creations stretch between the benign to the catastrophic in great re-perpetuating waves. Grand narratives, like capitalism, and dogmatic fundamentalist ideologies, including certain manifestations of Marxism, shield us from the reality of how we make each other. In capricious contradiction to its intentions, the postmodern emphasis on the other as culturally plural and the abandonment of the big picture, combined with the power structures that organize large groups of people in all aspects of their lives, contributes to the possibility of forgetfulness; the forgetting of relationship and the learnt dysfunction of indifference to each other.

Following on from Memmi’s example, this and the following chapter will focus on the relationship described above; it will attempt to convey the “spell” of enchantment and the relationship that ensued after that first meeting. The reason for attempting to write about a relationship from a critical base is to sensitize awareness of
relationship and to bring the relational to the forefront of consciousness through the act of exploring details of interconnecting life issues. It is an attempt to break the habits of disassociation and indifference carried on presumptive and prejudiced thinking. To that end it is both an exercise in relationship and the discovery of a relationship; it is the demonstration of a way of being aware of relationship, a phenomena of life that the writer contends is under threat. This threat is not new to human history, but its prevalence now has something more unique about it than in the past, and that is its pervasiveness. It has greater potential for the destruction of human life and the environment due to technological power welded to a fundamentalist globalization of capitalism.

The relationship is envisaged as existing within a field that the protagonists create as soon as they connect. It is the bundles that they carry with them that create the field and that field, as we have seen above, carries a fascination. The tourist and the tout connect over the inequitable, inconsistent and conflicted world wrapped in these bundles, that they as individuals inherit. Their relationship is not based on similarities, on smooth shared experiences and histories. The relationship filters through a history of conflict and their attraction to each other is finding excitement and mutuality through difference and so the potential for the dissolving of the abstracted, denied other is immanent. Their respective societies will work against them and they will face various degrees of alienation. It is in this way that the tourist and the tout in relationship show us the world and the states of play between different places, lives and understanding.

In this chapter I will develop two characters, one as the tourist, who is female, Anglo-Saxon, and the second as the Indian, tourist
tout, who is male.\textsuperscript{124} The characters will be built from a collection of characters from literature and films, tourist advertisements, social and historical material and personal testimony and experience gathered from participants, who I have interviewed for this study. In Chapter Four I will explore what I call the field, that the tourist and the tout create together and there I will define the two protagonists more closely. However, here I will briefly describe what I mean by tourist and what I mean by tout.

The tourist is, for this study, a person who is travelling independently, in such a way that she is available for the approach of the tout. The character I develop as the tourist could be white and Western, but she also could be Japanese or South Korean. The tout could be a rickshaw (took-took) driver, a hawker, a homeless person living on the street or an unofficial guide. Touting is something that either is the mainstay of their work, but more often it is an extra or added pastime when the opportunity presents itself. For instance, a proprietor of an e-mail cafe in Aurangabad told me one story of a rickshaw driver he knew. This man was not so interested in the small fares he received by taking people from A to B, the more lucrative earnings began when he was able to befriend a tourist and preferably a woman. Equally attractive, was the possibility of forming a sexual relationship, no matter how brief. This man did eventually marry a Japanese woman who then took him to Japan to live with her. For the purpose of this study this rickshaw driver is touting. However, it is important to say very clearly that I am not making a moral judgment about the work of the tout or his resulting relationships with tourists.

\textsuperscript{124} Note: In this thesis the Indian tourist touts whose stories I have used, are Hindu and Muslim. The touts would not identify themselves in caste groups voluntarily. Identity is expressed in their religious groupings only.
As I will try to show in Chapter Four, the relationship is multidimensional. What is so interesting here is the way that individuals connect and potentially destabilize the meta-narratives of their cultures. For this reason I write to the contradictions and accordingly, in the following portraits of the two protagonists, I create a hotchpotch of experience that reveals the characters as being as, multidimensional as the field that they create together. But they do share something quite definite in all the difference: they both exist within a capitalist economy that is, at base, predatory. The degrees of that predacity differ in their experience of it only.

It is the “outsider space” that the relationship between tourist and tout in India create that is of concern here. That “space” is in a precarious balance within and between various cultural and economic formations.

CHARACTER 1: THE TOURIST

In David Lynch’s film *Fire Walk With Me*, Laura is a young woman who is compelled into a dangerous sexual relationship with a group of men who meet in an isolated cabin in the woods, on the outskirts of an American town. Despite having a relationship with a young man who cares for her, she cannot give up her liaison with the dangerous characters that inhabit the forest, who threaten her autonomy and her life. The film reveals the source of this split or conflict as a sustained incestuous relationship with her father, whose

---

identity Laura is psychologically shielding herself from, by creating/seeing a character that is not her father, as the perpetrator. He climbs into her room at night via a ladder, as if coming from outside of the family home, as a stranger, giving her the opportunity to fabricate a different character or to believe that it is all a dream or a fantasy. She begins to realise that it is her father.

This knowledge has nowhere to go. Even her therapist who had placed Laura's experience into dream and fantasy, is so shocked by the revelation of what is really happening, that he can't do anything. This is powerfully symbolised in the film by his inability to get out of his house, even though Laura herself has just before opened the door and fled in panic. Laura’s relationship with her therapist seems invaded by the same dissolution of boundary that has happened between herself and her Father, when in their shock over the true nature of Laura's dream world, they begin to kiss as lovers. Laura is scripted into a role, her sexual territory has been marked out for her. She cannot have sex with those that respect her, that would remind her of the contradictions in her relationship with her father, who loves her, but abuses her. She can only have sex in territories that are specifically marked out for sex, where drugs and alcohol, create an environment that diminishes any contradictions, variabilities and differences. Moreover, the film seems to suggest that even those who "respect" her, show through their inability to help her, that they impose an equally restrictive role on her. She can only be, either a whore, drug addicted maladjusted teenager or a good, healthy, clean future wife, consenting to the American ideal of teenage romance.

What I want to emphasize here, is that Laura is trained to inhabit a sexual space that is secretive and that is a market place. She sells herself for drugs and the comfort she finds in diminished
reality and the power she feels is the only place that desire can be felt. This secretive market place is supposedly sharply delineated as different from the life of a normal schoolgirl, characterized in her best friend and her other boyfriend, James. However, that normal world’s display of powerlessness and entrapment in detail and fantasy, plays a role of acquiescent approval. What we then see in Laura is a young woman slowly awakening to the realisation that she is cornered as victim. If she talks the truth to her father about their relationship, she faces his wrath. The rest of the community, her school, her friends and her mother are unable to intervene, giving the father and his slide into fantasy, complete control.

There is a contradiction in the secrecy of her sexual liaisons and the placement of her sexuality in a market place. There is also a fantasy world, an imaginary world and a supernatural world that explodes into what is conveyed as the real world and acts on it. The film shows this construction of a “real world”, the school, Laura’s home life, her mother as powerless under the onslaught of the fantasy world of the father. But the fantasy is more aligned to the market place, to what is to be bought and sold, to the placement of value. The fantasy and the market place work together, the father’s actions are condoned by market place values. We must return to the image of the therapist banging on the inside of his own door, as if begging the world to let him out of fantasy and dream work into the world outside. In the world outside, “his” fantasy works run amuck and enable the forcers of value created by capital, in other words, the complete surrender to market value that encourages the father to consume his daughter as a commodity. In one scene where Laura is high on cocaine, she giggles to her drug dealer friend, “I am a muffin.”
The Trojan princess Cassandra is given the ability for prophecy by the god Apollo in exchange for his sexual rights over her. When she refuses him, he curses her with a denial of voice, so that she can see the future, but cannot speak her mind and no-one will listen to her. The English writer Sara Maitland\textsuperscript{126} in her interpretation of the Greek myth Cassandra, likens Apollo’s curse to the practice of commissurotomy, a medical procedure, where sections of the right and left hemispheres are separated in an attempt to control epilepsy. Cassandra experiences this as a splitting that carries all the way down through her body and leaves her unable to speak her own mind or perhaps even connect her feelings to reason or her actions to emotion.

Like Laura, Cassandra has also been designated as a sexual territory. When she refuses to fulfill this service, she is relegated to a position of illness in her society. In this place she has little agency, in the sense that she cannot speak what she knows and understands.

\textbf{IF LAURA WENT TO INDIA}

Both the woman in these stories are suffering from a split that has occurred from an experience of violence at the hands of a trusted person and an authority figure. The world-view of the perpetrators takes precedence over the autonomy and experience of reality that the women know. The experience of these women has become one of \textit{grooming} (dressage) and is implicitly condoned at an unacknow-

\textsuperscript{126}Maitland, S. \textit{Angel Maker: The Short Stories of Sara Maitland}. Henry Holt, New York, 1996. p 228.
ledged level of social law. The woman have been initiated into the world of what Marx called the “appearance forms” of reality. In Marx’s interpretation, ideology is a set of ideas that color or adjust reality in such a way that will benefit the economically dominant group in society. They have stepped into an ideology that positions itself between what their eyes see, what their bodies feel, what their emotions tell them and the way they conceptualise their experience. That ideology, living in a distilled form in the psyche, coursing through the blood stream, is Oedipus and other such theatres, that alienate through an emphasis on lack; the individual believes that they are at fault and that they have to prove themselves to society. Laura’s therapist could only conceptualise her stories/dreams of seduction as fantasy, when they become real his power collapses and he himself is sucked into the vortex of desire created by Laura’s promotion as a product.

For Laura and Cassandra the experience of rape and incest transmutes from pain and degradation to an experience that is condoned and endorsed as pleasure and excitement. The only way to live is to maintain this excitement that risk taking can create in order to obey the imperative demand of the ideology that says do not experience the reality, which may lead to revealing the reality. The two women live on an edgy excitement of abuse and experience it as love. Those that are loved, harm and so love is only recognised on those terms. Life then comes from outside of herself in the form of

127 Note: Grooming is used to describe the process that a perpetrator, usually referring to cases of incest, child sexual assault or rape, uses to manipulate the victim into a state of trust and acceptance of the abuse.
129 Note: Lack refers to Deleuze and Guattari’s rejection of conceptualisations of desire that only see desire as arising out of situations of want, wish or need. Capitalism conditions desire as lack by the manipulation of the fear of scarcity.
risky excitements and fascinations. There is something they know and need to speak but the split caused by Apollo’s curse has severed the connection necessary to bring the physical act of speech together with what is known.

So the pathway established out of this experience of grooming is one that always leads away from possible revelations of the experience of the personal, into engagements with blocks of ideology that exist within institutions or that are instituted within society. Then as Marx suggests, these ideologies begin to change society or more explicitly they manage our actions and our desires. And because in a capitalist society among the elite basic needs are no longer the focus of daily living, it becomes possible and necessary to live in a world of ideas detached from the knowledge of struggle for basic needs that is experienced by the majority of people; quietly rationalising poverty. This shapes a certain type of mind, a type of life experience that lives as a consumer paradoxically on experiences that operate more at the level of entertainment. So while many individuals struggle to survive, the dominant ideology that favours the economically secure and lures, *taunts* the economically insecure, is one of living a life of carefree excess and experiencing every possible form of entertainment that culture/s can provide.

The dominant ideologies of 20th century capitalism fracture into a hegemonic kaleidoscope that Louis Althusser might call a “lacuna discourse”. There are themes, like equal rights, democracy and freedom that hide the real relations of power that exist between private property and economic production. “The individual is interpellated as a free subject in order that he (she) shall submit
freely..."

Late capitalism is more akin to a theme park, as the form that living a life should take and one of the most opted for rewards for hard work is to travel into foreign lands, to other places. “Other” being seen as different from “ourselves”. On the surface there is nothing wrong with this fascination for seeing and being with and experiencing other cultures, but the massive contradictions in economic equality, which make it possible for a dominant class and impossible for most other people, reveals another aspect. Behind this interest for the “other”, the “different”, is a powerful economic machinery for which certain ways of seeing, ways of thinking of self are supporting its, the machines, agenda and that is one of limitless profit and unrestricted access to labor and resources.

Paramount in supporting this agenda are ideologies that create blind spots, that limit the experience and knowledge of relationship. What is the link between the experience of the two women at the beginning of this chapter and the character created for the theme park life? One woman is engaged with simulations and seeing the world as themes, as a means for escape and both cannot speak their experience. The women have been groomed by their encounter with a dominant ideology, to discount their own feelings by practicing rationalisations and equating themselves with the power that has stolen their autonomy. In their extreme form they are the progenitor for the theme park human. They form a double helix that is the consumable product and the consumer.

130 Althusser, L. “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.” in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays. Brewster, B. (trans) NLB Press, London, 1971, p 169. Note: Althusser extended Marx’s theory of ideology by introducing the idea of interpellation. Individuals become social subjects by this process of interpellation(hailing) by answering to the call through the function of ideologies that are imaginary relations of the real social relations. These ideologies are the ‘vehicles’ of state power, enabling non-violent control over people. These ideologies are born out of class struggle, between social classes. See, Althusser, L. 1971. p 145 - 173.
I have set up an extreme case of repression for my Western female character. It is not unrealistic, however, as one in six woman experience sexual abuse sometime in their life.\textsuperscript{131} Cassandra and Laura are figures of cultural amnesia, a formation that suggests that the Foucauldian cliché “knowledge is power” does not cover all scenarios. Knowledge can only be powerful if the social space for that knowledge is provided.\textsuperscript{132}

Out of Cassandra and Laura another character is formed. She is born out of their dilemma, the unbelieved and the split object, she is the boredom of self estrangement, the struggle to find safety from the malignant unspeakable knowledge that insinuates itself between herself and the possibility of loving. Catherine in Sophie Cunningham’s novel \textit{Geography}, discovers the sexual excitement of travel. “Just getting on a plane made me want sex.”\textsuperscript{133}

In \textit{Geography}, Cunningham chronicles Catherine’s obsessive relationship with Michael, who is fearful of sex with relationship, their desire for each other exists outside of relationship. Catherine for seven years cannot give up this love, intensely sexual, which can only exist in a space that is maintained and managed as impersonal and noncommittal. These intense sexual experiences pull her outside of herself, something that she experiences as religious and spiritual. It becomes apparent, however, as the story proceeds, that a more urgent need is there. Underneath the bravado of indulgence, there is great confusion: the loss of loved fathers and a history of being used

\textsuperscript{131} Some estimates are worse: One in three woman have been sexually abused as children and one in six men, in Australia. see, CASA House, Royal Women’s Hospital. Sexual Assault Statistics. www.rwh.org.au/casa/info.cfm?doc_id=4004 (16/6/05) This is an epidemic.

\textsuperscript{132} Note: I am not suggesting in these characterisations that incest and sexual abuse only happen in the West.

sexually by older men as she was growing up. “I was used to feeling anxious at home, for no reason I could articulate.”\textsuperscript{134} For her, Michael is “some exciting but ravaged future place, a place where I could become something new.”\textsuperscript{135} But the more she pushes for relationship, the more vague and absent he becomes, he can only say “I love you” when she or he is leaving. In increasingly frequent cycles of leaving, breaking and coming back together again, their love making becomes more violent. Catherine's religious feeling of enchantment and fascination focussed entirely on Michael, begins to shatter, it has nowhere to go, there is no temple place in her relationship with Michael.

The narrative construction of the book moves between the past and the present and moves geographically between continents. Catherine's past exists in Australia and America and her relationship with Michael moves between the two. The present is in India, which is her country of salvation, where she finds true love, “…..it was in America that I fell in love, but India that changed everything.” In America she had “good sex but in India my spirit was touched.”\textsuperscript{136} In India she can “untangle” the confusion between sex and her spirit. Cunningham never really makes it clear to us how India can do this for her character. It is implied in the narrative that we should understand this, drawing on a common stereotype, an imbedded social understanding that spirit and India and self-renewal, just naturally go together. India is the necessary culture for the fermentation of her new self and a new relationship, that she finds with another Australian woman called Ruby. This happens over the top of India, floating through Kerala's backwaters, India seeps in, works its magic and bad relationships are over. The combination Catherine and Ruby is good.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p18.  
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p114.  
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., p 4.
But what if Laura, Cassandra and Catherine didn’t find Ruby in India? In the worse case, she might find herself as Jess, falling into the hands of a cross between enigmatic guru and murdering thuggee.\textsuperscript{137} This is a character that Bharati Mukherjee in her book, \textit{Leave it to Me},\textsuperscript{138} may well have based on the infamous Charles Sobhraj.\textsuperscript{139} Mukherjee chronicles the fallout of the white innocent hippy movement in search of a spiritual home and its confrontation with a pragmatic evil forged in the theatre of desires and betrayals of French occupation in Saigon. Debbie/Devi is the daughter of this Saigon born father masquerading as Indian Hindu Guru and Jess, a junked out loveless American teenager who loses herself, in her “Guru’s” gaze. Together they abandon their child in a village north of Delhi.

Debbie/Devi, their daughter, grows up to have her own life, which we cannot be concerned with here, but her mother may well be Laura or Cassandra or Catherine, fumbling their way through a Western fantasy in India rocked, swayed and betrayed, by themselves, when their naivety and need meets with the hungry. At some time she might find herself wandering into a popular tourist place, like Goa or Varanasi or Ajanta or Ellora, where a certain niche will exist, a sort of indigent professional service that has sprung up to cater for the lost, the needy, confused, the fascinated and addicted, and also, more positively those that are looking for deeper connections and closer understandings of India.

\textsuperscript{137} Note: Thuggees were a clan of robbers in Northern India, who would engage in robbing travellers by charming their way into the travellers confidence. They always murdered them by strangulation and were very efficient in disposing of the bodies. See, Roy, P. \textit{Indian Traffic: Identities in Question in Colonial and Postcolonial India}. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998. p 41.


\textsuperscript{139} Note: Charles Sobhraj has been accused of twelve murders of Western tourists across Asia in the 1970’s. He claimed to be engaging in anti-western imperialist work! He spent twenty one years in prison in India and was re-imprisoned in Nepal in 2004, for life. See, Thompson, T. \textit{Serpentine}. McDonald Futura Publications, London, 1980.
EXTRA LUGGAGE

The character I am building is made up of a set of characteristics that resonate into paradigm’s, histories and ideologies that she carries and walks through. They form a sounding board that communicates with particular resoluteness when she moves into a field that has been colonised by her own ethnic (Anglo Saxon) group. This colonisation coincided with the development of ideologies based on a “science” of racial groupings and differences that was vested with moral meaning, certitude's and justifications beneficial to the process of colonisation. She is white, Anglo-Saxon and born into a land that has itself been colonised recently by her forebears. From an early age even though she senses belonging as her relationship to the land there is a foreboding of not belonging.

As we have seen above, she herself has been colonised or “groomed” into an ideology of repression that conditions her desire. She has been inculcated into a repressive sexual territory, roughed up for her own good, so she knows what is what and can then carry on the “good work” of detached, unknowing adherence to an ideology of economic and cultural dominance. She does this through “play”, ideologies of freedom and rights and personal autonomy and the “world of the imagination”, her “oyster”. Out, over there she can enact her freedom; that freedom that she thought she could have, that was supposed to come, here, but has not. So it is a case of running to the oppressed, the bound, that we bind to have our freedom, by comparison, so we can still believe in our freedom and our rights.
So what is the stuff of this world to be played in? The imagined can be planted anywhere and gone to and activated. The economically restricted can only dream in their imagination, but they struggle to make it a place to get their bodies into. The rich arrive at the imagined destination and begin to plant their seeds of the imagination. Sometimes it is a struggle. There is a disagreement over what imaginary is right and should be given “reality” status. But what got the tourist there, what fueled the imagination, what idea? An idea of the exotic? A need for wealth and then a taste for the exotic that enveloped the wealth. Recently an acquaintance, who was planning a holiday to India, said to me that it would be “nice to go somewhere exotic for christmas”! The Orient and in particular India, became a taste. A type of taste among many possibilities. This is what our character has a taste for, the Orient and in particular India. She experiences a yearning, a desire, and a sense of commonality, which gives her a sense of place, of belonging.

The sense of belonging as alluded to above is a shared damage. She unconsciously is drawn to the horror of India, a type of aesthetic, the decay, the color of it, the chaos, the human drama, the starvation and human degradation because it anesthetizes her own fear of annulment and isolation. This attraction to the beautiful horror and devastation is wrapped up in an old idea of the exotic adventure, the quest. The two, the horror and the nebulous, subjective, pleasurable exotic converge into a repressed erotic.

So play takes on a negative aspect. It becomes something, more adjusted to a sense of fracture, of not belonging, of loss. It is a form of distraction, an act of running away. She moves onto dangerous ground where she has hidden from herself the fact that
she is running away and cloaked her actions in a desire that is compensatory rather than complimentary.

The need for the exotic; Lord Curzon’s “necessary furniture of empire”, the act of pillage and theft that colonialism was, had to be shrouded in among other things, a taste for the different, as an interest, which developed along with the ensuing habit of ethnography, a way of detached observation. A little bit of anthropology, ethnography and adventurism plus a lot of disguised sex resulted in a pot-purée called exotica; a European colloquialism redolent with fantasy.

Shrouding the crimes of colonialism in ideologies was particularly important as a foil for the possible interference of ideals developing in enlightenment Europe about the “rights of man”. Especially when we consider the antislavery movement developed at the same time as the British were firmly establishing themselves in India. But is the idea of the exotic an ideology? Is it too misty and subjective to be called an ideology or is that precisely how an ideology gathers its power to conceal real relationships?

---


141 Note: The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was formed in Britain in 1787. Officially Britain abolished slavery throughout her colonies in 1833, except in Sri Lanka and in some areas of India. see, Oldfield, J. Dr. *Protest and Reform: British Anti-Slavery*. Society and Culture. www.bbc.co.uk/history/society_culture/protest_reform/antislavery_02.shtml (12.1.06)

In 1860 slavery was abolished in India; legislated as a criminal offence. However, bonded labour, sex slavery and other forms of low paid coercive work practices still exist in India today. See, *The small hands of slavery: Bonded Child Labor in India*. Human Rights Watch, 1996. www.hrw.org/reports/1996/India3.htm#P167_10594; also see, *Companies perpetuate child labour in India*. One world South Asia, India Committee of the Netherlands, 2005. //southasia.oneworld.net/article/view/121426/1/ (12.1.06)
The exotic is the entertainment side to what Thomas Metcalf refers to as an “ideology of difference” that allowed Britain to contain the growing contradictions inherent in a demand for a civil society based on equality and democracy at home with the exploitative and inequitable practices of colonialism. The exotic fantasy world of the East, part of the landscape of every British and Europeans’ childhood, was the emotional scaffolding upon which difference could be construed as intractable justification for imperial dominion. Metcalf points out that Britain had a long history of rationalising imperial conquest as a civilizing process; difference began to automatically take on the shade of inferiority. The fantasy of the exotic supported the notion of difference, blinding through a sort of commodification of the East, the West from the moral, ethical problems of colonialism, its cruelties and destruction of indigenous industry and livelihood. These ethical problems could be broadly expressed as the growing expectation in Britain, by the British people, for a liberal and democratic parliamentary process based on the rights of citizens to vote for governments of their choice. That ideal of equality, expressed as I have pointed out above, in the campaigns for the abolition of slavery as well as the abolition of child labour and the growing workers union movement.

One could argue that the type of colonialism that Briton developed in India, the introduction of British civil law contradicted by imperial dominance, was a dress rehearsal for the way that international capitalism would come to operate post World War Two. This would be administered through the organs of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade

143 Ibid., p 2 - 3.
144 Ibid., p x.
Organisation, all sanctioned, if not always in agreement, by the United Nations. Difference is no longer necessarily always inferior, but is still a conceptual support for the project of the exotic as an economic enterprise. But now what is the relationship between tourism, the promise and practice of the exotic and the world economic system?

Is it possible to connect the act of travelling as a tourist with the economic excursions of multinational companies, as attempted in the film *Mexico*? As a tourist it is not possible to arrive in Mexico or to see it as anything different from Toronto, where the narrator of the film has come from. The more he tries to escape from his life and Toronto the more Toronto and the self he is running from confronts him, as he finds recreations of himself and his own culture everywhere in Mexico. Mexico is overwhelmed, according to the makers of the film, by Western imperialism, aggressive multinational companies and an impending free trade agreement with the United States of America. Its “exotic” nature is regurgitated through entertaining fragments of itself, as performances for tourists. The narrator is like, “King Midas, everything you touch turns into Toronto.”

The exotic melts. It no longer fully exists at the moment that relationship begins; at the moment of arrival it begins to shatter, as our physical presence has to negotiate unimagined details. The exotic is a “picture place” or a “picture idea”. It contains a fantasy of sensual license and excess, a freedom to experience without the encumbrances of responsibility. It is a selective experience, as all works of the imagination. Each individual garners his or her idea of the exotic from a cocktail of cultural material. These ideas are a reflection of representations of, in this case, India.

The exotic is something like pornography; it takes parts of cultures and uses these parts to satisfy the users sensual and erotic proclivities. The effect of this is a blinding and covering up of other aspects of the culture/society that if understood, might render the consumption/playacting of the exotic ethically less palatable. Like all associations based on usury, there is limited or no relationship. The user is engaged only with their own fantasy, the sense of relationship, the fact of relationship eludes them.

So getting back to our character, she is to some extent an actress in this charade of the exotic. Like the embittered and chronically indifferent mother in Mukherjee’s *Leave it to Me*, she has taken for granted an idea of cultural and moral rightness inherent in the Western idea of self, especially the white Anglo/European American self. She comes from a culture that has denied its own wrongdoing and is not in any dialogue with the negative aspects of its culture. There is a belief in a natural, inherent goodness and being right and living the right way. This has created a blind spot and a naivety of self and others. She believes in her right to play and becomes blindly obsessed with an Asian trickster who seamlessly embodies her need/fantasy of the exotic. Or more happily and less dangerously she meets a tout who will, for a fee, guide her not only into a degree of understanding about Indian culture, but will show her that the construction of other in her exotic fantasy is none other than herself.
CHARACTER 2: THE TOUT

The people I focused on are rickshaw drivers and hawkers. In addition there are the unemployed, ex-college students and people who have been retrenched from long held careers and not been able to find other work. Many of these people come from poor rural backgrounds and make their way to tourist destinations because, either there is no work for them on the farm or they consider the work too hard and unrewarding. The following are the stories of three touts from the Ellora and Ajanta Caves area.¹⁴⁶

Sudhakar

He starts with the intimate connection to earth, there is no cushioning floor bed or mattress to shield his body from the reality of the earth he was literally born on. He was born into someone's hands, cupped in the trough of his mothers shins for his bath and lay swinging in a rope cradle, hung from a tree or a roof, for his bed. The earth becomes his “big” mother and during times of adult inebriation his deeply religious feelings for his mother, the earth, who saves him, who “catches him when he falls”, becomes the subject of long emotive monologues. So he knows the spikes of grasses and hardness of

¹⁴⁶ Note: All the touts I spoke to in regards to this work were men or boys. There were no female touts in the rural areas where I was based. In Mumbai there are young woman who attempt to befriend tourists. For safety reasons I decided to not get involved closely with anybody touting in large cities. The world heritage listed Ellora and Ajanta Caves are in the state of Maharashtra. The closest large town is Aurangabad.
stone, the dryness of soil or wet of mud, the difference of hair of his mother's and that of a goat and the different sounds of mother, father and animal. Things crawl on his body, like insects and flies, and he is nuzzled by the animals his family are taking care of. He knows all this from a very early age and soon it will be in conjunction with hunger and uncertainty, separation and the need to make connections, the life saving need to be able to make connections and win people's attention, friendship and loyalty.

Sudhakar thinks he was born around 1960, he has no birth records. His early memories include living on a farm in a field in a grass hut and going with his sister and father to collect firewood in the forested hills around the farm. He helped his father and mother in their work on other people's farms. For a time they lived in the lane ways of the village, with no roof over their head. He remembers that his clothing came to him as second hand, from “rich” people. At the age of about six or seven his father had a long illness of about nine months, which may have been typhoid. At this time his mother supported the family. His elder brother worked at the local Tourist home in Fardapur, which provided the main accommodation for tourists coming to visit the Ajanta Caves.

So what was the atmosphere politically and socially that Sudhakar was born into? In the first decade of his life, the second decade of India’s independence, Sudhakar experienced a protracted famine, which resulted in food shortages (1960–1966) and then a devastating drought from 1970 to 1973, during which time there was no rain over much of the Deccan. His parents struggled with the effects of a famine and food scarcity. According to the Aurangabad Gazetteer of 1977, 1,399 villages around Aurangabad suffered from
scarcity and low rainfall between 1960 and 1966. Sudhakar relates how there was not enough food to go round in the family. He began to frequent the local tourist home restaurant where he either worked washing dishes for a meal or did a small job for a tourist.

Because of the unemployment that accompanied the famine the state Government of Maharashtra began a public works program that included the building or repair of tanks (lakes or village ponds) in the worst effected areas, this included a tank in Soegon district, where Sudhakar and his family lived. Sudhakar remembers vividly, working on this tank with his Grandmother somewhere between the age of 9 and 11. Along with his Grandmother he carried stones balanced on his head, for 250 grams of corn flower and palm sugar per day.

He remembers at this time that he would spend much of his time with his father’s mother. His Grandmother became a source of comfort and support for a child with a tenuous sense of security in the community that surrounded him. His attempts at going to school were cut short when he could no longer tolerate the bullying about his low caste and the teasing about his broken clothing. He directed

148 Ibid., 401.
149 Note: Sudhakar calls himself a Maratha, a proud reference to the fighting forces of the eighteenth century Hindu King Shivaji, who defeated the Muslims in Maharashtra. Marathas also fought the British (The East India Company). I refer to caste reluctantly and only to indicate that it did play a part in shaping Sudhakar's early life. Although caste still plays a role in Indian life in the area of marriage and certain family traditions (and continuing cases of inter caste violence), as an indicator of social status and rights, it is largely ignored by low caste people. Many people refuse to identify themselves by their caste. The Aurangabad Gazetteer of 1977 lists the castes of the area. There are many branches of caste occupations, high and low, which attach Maratha to their caste name. I am making an informed assumption about Sudhakar’s caste, based on my reading and my observations about the way he is treated by people I know to be upper caste and his background, the work his father and mother did and their family traditions.
his wrath at one child who received a rock in his head. The teacher of the school was dealt the same treatment when he punished Sudhakar by making him stand in front of the class, bent over, with a large river stone balanced on his neck. Sudhakar fled to the mountains and stayed there until his Grandmother came to coax him home. Inter-caste bullying was and still is prevalent in India. During India’s first elections in 1951, upper caste Hindus killed low caste Hindus who displayed the temerity to allow themselves to be elected into local councils.\textsuperscript{150} Low caste Hindus believed the rhetoric of the newly written Indian constitution which stated that any Indian citizen could “hold the highest offices of state”, and that, “Justice, social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and of opportunity...” was the right of every Indian citizen.\textsuperscript{151}

His last job before leaving his home town was to herd buffaloes for a man who owned a tea–stall on the highway that ran past the town. This work finished when the man gave him left over food that a customer did not eat. Sudhakar punished the man by herding his buffalo into the mountains the next day, which left the cows dry when they were next milked. Not long after this Sudhakar took some money from the till and, deciding that his birth place could not sustain him, left for where his elder brother had gone to live, in the village of Khultabad, above Ellora. He was 11 or 12 years old.

In the first twelve years of his life Sudhakar saw starvation. Adults, children and babies grew daily thinner and then passed away.


\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., p 83.
It is possible that two of the six daughters that his mother had, also died in this way. In the telling of this early history nobody speaks in details, they don't want to remember the shame of poverty, of not being able to keep the children alive, of having to subtly suggest to their children that they need to go and find food for themselves. Slowly the body becomes an embarrassment as it dwindles and loses control. The insult felt, the sense of being marginalised and becoming invisible as the family begins to sink and fray from the stress of hunger and want, while others in the town remain healthy and alive. This is a wound never closed; this isolation. Sudhakar's parents were agricultural workers who owned no land, and so they are the first people to suffer in a drought, the drought cancels their employment and their reason for being and cancels their labor/life value. When they talk about their life they cannot get past this time, they cry, all memory falls into this pit of human degradation and shame, living in poverty, witnessing human indifference, that abuse.

Sudhakar at this time also observed a curious thing, that of wealthy Indian and especially Western tourists coming to see the local tourist sites, who seemed untouched by the destitution that he was witnessing around him. The local tourist home housed a different world, brighter, and one where he could be of interest and where he could make some money. This world floated above his world, it held immense promise for him and gave him a sense of a future and other places.

India is moving through her second decade of independence at the time of Sudhakar’s birth. There has been a great change in the thinking of all low caste people like Sudhakar and his parents. They are aware that the old traditional rules of caste hierarchy are no longer sanctioned by law, but there is tension and resistance to this
change all the way up and down the caste system. The ruling Congress party under Jawarhalal Nehru was dominated, especially at the state level, by the rural rich, which made it very difficult for Nehru and his sympathetic congress ministers, who began to legislate rural reforms, to successfully see the reforms put into action.\textsuperscript{152} Pragmatism in favour of maintaining power began to override a politics of integrity.

The ideal that accompanied the Congress party through the independence movement, that independence would also improve the life of the Indian peasants, the low caste and untouchable, dissolved into power struggles, corruption and the idealist and chauvinist communalist movement. The Hindu, anti-Muslim communalist movement had long been an accompanying shadow both inside the Congress party and in opposition to Congress, even at times aligning itself with the British, against the independence movement.\textsuperscript{153} Communalist politics would start to take centre stage when the authorities allowed the destruction of a Muslim mosque in Ayodyha by Hindu extremists, which then precipitated a series of inter communal clashes and reprisals, leading to tragic and horrific results in the anti-Muslim riots in the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat in February 2002.

Sudhakar lives in two worlds, a world of old traditions and the world of democracy, of the idea that everyone is equal. These worlds confusingly cross, interconnect and digress in unexpected ways. Sudhakar learns both subservience and defiance in relation to these two worlds. Both contain tendencies that are either divisive, aggressively communalist, individualistic and materialist or

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., p 86.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., p196.
conciliatory, focussing on the collective and empathetic towards the other. None of these selves can be aligned exclusively with modern or traditional India, but can be found in either, depending on the political or social catalyst at hand. The outstanding effect of the legislation of equality in the constitution is that of being a man for himself and not anyone’s servant. This new sense of himself has to struggle against centuries of repression and oppression. How does he deal with that space there inside him that is waiting to be kicked, that almost betrays him and makes him look up to his past tormentors and try to impress them all at once. The British, as the colonisers, in his mind are almost not there, even though they only very recently left the country. They exist already in his mind as old almost mythical enemies portrayed in films only, secondary to the fraught relations with his co-religionist, upper caste tormentors.

What Sudhakar learns is, in his words, that “Western people give more”, and that is where to get money from. Tragically, this perception is learnt close at hand to another story. Gita Mehta remembers touring through Maharashtra at the time of the 1970s drought. She visited a village where woman were patiently picking datura from wheat sent as aid from the United States. Datura is poisonous for humans, the Americans had sent cattle feed!¹⁵⁴ Was this story told throughout the villages? Did Sudhakar hear it?

The cause of poverty in India is a conflicted issue. Foreign investments and interests can contribute to the destruction of traditional lifestyles. The World Bank has supported the contentious Narmada River dam developments.¹⁵⁵ As well as the privatizing of

water in rural India.\textsuperscript{156} There is the loss of village water supplies in Goa, due to the impact of tourist hotel swimming pools. Coca-Cola is accused of guzzling village water supplies and there are an increasing number of free trade areas (known as Special Economic Zones) where employees working for foreign companies are discouraged from having access to trade unions.\textsuperscript{157} These are serious issues that suggest a neocolonial relationship exists between Indian working people and international banking institutions, foreign business and corporations. These institutions and businesses all take advantage of low wages and corruption in Government and State organisations.

It was during the drought of the late 60s, into the mid 70s that Sudhakar learnt how to tout his trade as a tourist hawker. This was all innocently learnt out of the necessities created by hunger, and the Western tourist taught him how to do it. So while Nehru and later, Indira Gandhi were trying to negotiate a place for India in the economic and political world, Sudhakar, one of the countries poorest citizens was also trying to learn a place for himself in a world of scarcity.

By the age of six, Sudhakar is working at the tourist home in Fardapur. The tourists are coming to see the Ajanta caves. First he is washing dishes. As he gets older he is carrying luggage and generally running errands for tourists. He learns that they are speaking a different language called “engrez”. He realises after receiving money from these people that he should learn the language, as some of the waiters have done, who can speak to these people and get


more money as a result of making friends. Sudhakar is a beautiful brown skinned child, with a magnificent smile and big black eyes, who laughs a lot, he easily attracts the attention of the tourists. He has a shaved head with a plaited pigtail at the back, a hair style that his father insists on. He says he began to say, just “yes and no”, “yes and no”, not knowing what was being said to him. This caused a lot of laughter. He had found his way in. Occasionally someone would take the time to talk to him and he began to learn. He developed a routine which started with the word “hello”, then “where are you from”? then “which place you go”? then “what you do in your country”?

Two French photographers come to Fardapur and set up camp. They stay for a month. Sudhakar meets them everyday at eight in the morning and spends the whole day with them, going to the caves. He is about nine or ten. They take his photo. They give him new pants, new slippers and a new tee-shirt. Everyday they give him one or two rupees, which he takes home to his parents. After one month he has made thirty rupees. He says he feels that “white people are very good people, very nice people.” He begins to see that with this work he can make as much in a day as he makes in a week doing other work. He can get new clothes, something he has never experienced before, he might get a meal or two, soft drinks and snacks and he has the experience of being enjoyed and the centre of attention. His “job” could mean carrying something for someone, or just acting as a guide to show the way or translating. Mostly, it seems his value is in simply who he is, that he is local, authentic, he is human contact, he is much more than the sights, the souvenirs, he is a living breathing culturally-imbedded experience of the place. He can stave off or mitigate the tourists sense of being an outsider. He becomes a friend, depending on the level of sincerity and connection, that is reached in the relationship. But the tourist always leaves, and
he is left behind. To keep the “job” sincere is the hardest thing. But in the early years it is still so much about discovery for him, that the difficulty of being left is soon got over and the difficulty of sincerity is not yet encountered. Tourism is really taking off and many people come to India and to the caves, so there is always a new person to meet.

Sudhakar is beginning to spend more time away from his family. He often sleeps at the job place to keep his position there, so he is there first thing in the morning when the boss arrives. He can sleep almost anywhere, on the floor or the ground. He sometimes sleeps in the mountains with his grandmother, other times with his family, then at the chai shop where he is working, on the highway, or at the local Tourist home where he will sleep in the garden under a tree. That way he is ready. This is a habit he will never lose. His facility to belong, to quickly become a part of somewhere or someone has something to do with this ability, he can blend himself into anywhere, home is everywhere, where ever he needs to be. Family has also extended to include strangers. He lives in the world of human relations, he seeks engagement.

By the time he is twelve, Sudhakar has already made three decisions, to learn English, to leave his home place and go to another town and to not go to school, but earn his living from working with tourists. He does all three. When he leaves Fardapur the drought is into its second year. People are desperate, many people are leaving their villages all over Maharashtra and heading for the cities. From Fardapur they might try to go to Aurangabad, but Aurangabad runs out of water and so they walk to Bombay. Bombay becomes a huge outdoor camp. One out of every seven inhabitants in Bombay is living
on the street. Sudhakar catches a bus with the money he took from the till. He does not say goodbye to anyone. Is the bus crowded with people leaving, are there columns of people walking along the road? There is tragedy; people are leaving their birthplaces, many for the first time, some will never go back. They are leaving homes, family and land behind. Does Sudhakar look into the faces of desperate people? What does the world feel like? A starving world, dry and unsustaining. The dry thin earth of Fardapur hanging in shrouds of dust in the air. But Sudhakar is excited, he is doing what the tourists do, leaving.

Sudhakar goes to a small town where his oldest brother is living, called Khultabad, which sits above the Ellora caves. From here he quickly sees what he has to do. Unlike in Fardapur and Ajanta caves, there is no one selling stones, crystals (calcite) and jade at Ellora. First Sudhakar climbs up into the mountains and collects pieces of jade and any crystal he can find. An old Muslim man is selling old coins found in the nearby medieval Dhalatabad Fort. He shows Sudhakar where to find the coins. Slowly he makes enough money to catch a bus back past Fardapur to the place where he can buy crystals. In this way he is the first person to sell crystals in Ellora and his living begins. His crystal business and for awhile a chai and pan shop form the basis of his business, but like the guide in R.K Narayan’s novel, he discovers another talent and interest, one that connects to his first experiences of relationships with foreign tourists in Ajanta when he was a child. There is a lot to be made both financially and as a sort of emotional fortification, enjoyment, excitement, love, by getting into a relationship, a friendship with a

tourist, male or female, old or young. He becomes an unofficial guide for the tourist, who does not want to pay for a government guide at the caves.

By the time I meet Sudhakar he is in his forties. He and his wife have a family of four children, and a small house of their own, but his crystal business has slowed. There are many more hawkers selling crystal and other tourist paraphernalia at the caves, there are too many and they frighten the tourists away. He has known many tourists and spent much time with different sorts of people. At night he drinks the locally made “wine” in the village. He says drinking helps him sleep and forget his problems and the pain he feels in his body. He smokes ganja (marijuana) when he can. He has lived through some major family traumas and near death health problems. He consistently has no money and lives on small amounts of borrowed money until he earns enough from a tourist to pay back the debt. He struggles with a feeling of being bad. He has known the experience of power and pulling himself out of the situation he was born into. He has felt the glory of his body and his health and experienced the thrill of being attractive. He has watched people become infatuated with him, both men and woman and want to give him their time and their money. He has deep feelings of love and friendship for some people and never forgets them. He keeps their letters and their photos and the small things they give him, a money purse, a scarf, a shirt, he keeps them, even if they are broken old shoes. His house is filling up with these things. Some people come back to Ellora to visit him.
**Imran and Asoka**

Imran’s father was a diamond cutter in Mumbai who became ill and had to retire to Ellora where his wife and children lived. The father could not work any more. His mother made clothing and Imran worked in the mornings as a hawker at Ellora caves and went to school in the afternoon. Unlike Sudhakar, Imran managed to stay at school. He is a younger generation of hawkers who moved into an established “industry” at the caves and was to some extent, along with others his own age, taught the protocols of hawker practice and supported by the older hawkers, like Sudhakar. Being Muslim he will have had to negotiate his way through the anti-Muslim prejudice that is inherent in the social and political domination of Hinduism. Generally, relations in Ellora between Muslims and Hindus remain friendly. They work together in the caves and the shops, known as “encroachments” (illegal structures) with only faint warnings of discord that become apparent in privately uttered criticisms of each other, exchanged between co-religionists.

When he was seventeen he became friends with an English woman who gave him the money to continue his studies so that he could become a guide. He studied Japanese and German and learnt English while working at the caves. He now claims to have a good business as a tourist guide, predominantly working for Japanese tourists.

Imran has a European girlfriend who visits him once or twice a year. He plans to marry her and move to Europe. He is now twenty three. He has his own motor bike. He has cultivated a particular personal style, and speaks with an accent unlike anything heard in Ellora, a sort of mix between Indian and American/European. The
local people are confused about his accent, they don’t understand why he speaks differently, even though he was born and grew up with them in the same place. There is a sense that Imran does not place himself in Ellora any more, even though he lives there. He seems to be perennially waiting to get a visa to leave, waiting for his European girlfriend and waiting to get married. When she comes, they leave and travel together around India and when she returns home, he returns to Ellora.

Unlike Sudhakar, who has a very firm relationship with his place and his traditions and carries out his relationships with tourists by inviting them into his traditions, Imran seems to be moving away from his place in his mind. When speaking to him there is an unsteady feeling that he is living in a future place that he has fabricated for himself, far away from Ellora.

Imran’s relationships with Western women, some of them sexual and his very public relationship with the European woman he expects to marry has, he says, made it difficult for him if he wants to marry an Indian woman. Local village families might be wary of his taste, as they would see it, for Western women, which could interfere with the happiness and stability of the marriage.

Imran is in quite a vulnerable position. His sensitivity and understanding towards women, something he claims to have learnt from his friendships and sexual experiences with Western women and his love for the European woman he hopes to marry, has placed him in the position of an outsider in his own community. He does not always trust that his European girlfriend is faithful to him. His relationship with her has given him a certain kudos and notoriety, but she may just be using him for her own pleasure, as he says, many
Western women do, in their relationships with the hawkers. Imran’s sexual and emotional experiences represents the sort of change that increasingly gathers pace in India’s large cities, where young men and women are breaking out of the restrictive sexual mores of their parents generation. In village India, however, this change is slow to happen. Imran’s experience still exists in tension with the traditions of village India.

Unlike the much younger Imran, Asoka from Fardapur, Ajanta, has established a very secure situation for himself. Leaving his wife and small family behind in his village, he travels to Goa every year for three months in the tourist season. Most of his years earnings are gathered in Goa where he “scouts” for tourists while also selling his crystals and stones along the beaches. There, he also has a long standing relationship with a Western woman who has occasionally helped him financially, so that he can return to Fardapur with money to improve his families situation.

The three people whose stories I have told have been relatively successful at surviving through their trade with the tourists. Now, however, there are many more hawkers. Increasingly they are young men who have been unable to fulfil the future that a college education was supposed to give them. Unluckily for them, the tourist authorities, particularly in Ellora and Ajanta, are making changes that will make it difficult for the hawkers and the touts to access the caves and the tourists as they were able to do previously.

Note: “Scouting” is a term that Imran says is used by the hawkers that refers to looking for tourists to have sex with and make money from in the process. He says that it is not really prostitution because the hawkers only go with a tourist that they feel attracted to and like enough to feel desire and so enjoy themselves.
Large Japanese loans to upgrade and maintain Buddhist monuments in India are having serious repercussions for the hawkers of Ajanta and Ellora. The sites are now being cleaned up and cordoned off, in the case of Ellora, with a huge fence and in the case of Ajanta, by pushing the hawkers out of the immediate cave environment where rent was cheap or nonexistent into an ugly and expensive shopping complex, which most cannot afford to rent. The caves are now controlled solely for the tourists benefit and no hawker is allowed in. The flexible system that existed before allowed local people to make a living and also encouraged more contact between tourists and the local people. There was an opportunity for local people to play a role as custodians of their culture as well, by acting as unofficial guides, inviting tourists into the villages and their homes and giving tourists the opportunity to understand the lives of village Indians. The resulting sexual relationships that sometimes occur, may not be considered by everyone to be desirable, however, the opportunity to form relationships with tourists, has provided an income for the hawkers, in some situations resulting in life long friendships and a means of support for whole families in the village, support they may not get from anywhere else.

It would seem that out of the large sums of money directed at the caves, nothing has been put aside to help the local communities cope with the loss of employment at the caves. The tiny and very poor village of Lenapur, high in the hills above Ajanta, is a case in point. With no water except river water, which exposes the villagers to water born diseases like cholera, little electricity and no telephones, no road access and no medical services, these people are now cut out
of employment at the caves. Their lives have become even worse than before and as a community they are struggling to survive.\textsuperscript{161} The result of the Japanese grants and the way they have been managed has given large tourist organisations more access to the tourists and taken access away from local people. The relationship I am exploring in this thesis may soon be a thing of the past, in regards to the Ajanta and Ellora hawkers who are touting for the tourists custom.

\textsuperscript{161} Choudhury, C. What’s missing from the Ajanta pictures. The Indian Express, 10/8/04. www.indianexpress.com/full_story.php?content_id=52738 (12/11/04)
Chapter Four

THE FIELD

In this chapter I attempt to describe the relationship between the tourist and the tout by envisioning a field as a way to get into as deep, and as intricate an experience as possible. In using the word deep I realise that I also need to imagine space. Both words have been employed as frames to describe the interactions of social and cultural material. Field has long been the place in which research was carried out on people and environments. However, recently the objectifying approach of the study of the other in the field has been questioned for its one dimensionality and potential for discrimination arising from unacknowledged subjective presumptions on the part of the researcher. What is the field and who is in it and who is out of it, have become important questions. Here the field refers to the whole subjective encounter of the tourist with the tout. Subjective here strongly implying the experiences of the researcher, from which this paper has arisen. Positioned within that subjective encounter are

\[162\] Note: This thesis is limited to a focus on the foreign tourist, who is coming from the developed world and is white and female. Some issues I discuss may be pertinent to other tourists. It should also be understood that the character I have described as the tourist is, at many important Indian monuments, hugely outnumbered by Indian nationals travelling to enjoy their heritage. Pilgrimage has a long and important history in India.
THE TOURIST AND THE TOUT

To define the tourist and the tout we soon learn, as the following writing will show, that beneath official designations and validations the tourist as a distinct entity as someone different from the tout does not always or only thinly exists. Tourists deliberately going to Asian or North African destinations on sex tours for instance are actually entering the field of touting in the sense that they go as tourists, but have, to different degrees, a hidden or sometimes quite open agenda to procure sex. Here the distinction between tourism and touting begins to merge.

Clarification is needed about what I mean by tourist. Because the beginning of the word is tour, the tourist for this research is necessarily someone who is travelling through and around a country, to look at things and to engage with the place and perhaps the people. There are different levels of engagement within this definition, which could separate the tourist from the traveller, the traveller being in closer connection to place than the tourist who is travelling on a pre-booked tour in a tour bus completely closed to the inhabitants of the country they are travelling through. These people will not be in the running for a relationship with someone who is touting. They will encounter the hawkers, but the hawkers will have no chance to upgrade their work to more interesting and lucrative levels. So for this study I will use the word tourist to designate those that actually do
tour around in such a way that is an independent travelling through and making contact with the place. The people on pre-booked and arranged tours are not going to fall within the area of this study.

International tourism was made easier by colonialism in India, and the military conquest and subjugation that it entailed. Tourism after independence flows on, uninterrupted, as if nothing had happened. The colonial white occupants go home, but the tourists keep arriving. So who is the tourist in this situation? The tourist is someone who can travel on savings who has enough surplus to engage in an activity that makes no money for themselves. The Western tourist no longer dominates the tour companies and travel agents booking lists. It is interesting to note that the term Westerner amongst the hawkers and unofficial guides touting their wares at Ellora Caves, covers Japanese and South Korean or almost anyone who is travelling and not Indian. Among these people the term Westerner has come to also mean tourist and potentially wealthy, almost as if in their understanding of geography, anything outside of India, is West of India and West is not only a geography, but a state of wealth, possibility, privilege and opportunity. And as Sudhir Kakar puts it, the West being synonymous with modernism, is also a state of mind.

\[164\text{Note: This is a stereotypical understanding of the term Westerner that Indian hawks and touts have. If they are old enough to remember, they know that it is not always correct. During the 1960's and 70's, the hippy phenomenon sometimes showed another side to the Westerner in India. It was possible, pre Russian invasion of Afghanistan and pre overthrow of the Shah of Iran, to hitch to India from Europe. Many people experimented with going native. Some lost or sold everything for drugs and ended up on the streets begging. Today there are still reports of visa-less foreigners living in isolated mountain regions of Himachel Pradesh, not necessarily poor, often wealthy, due to drug dealing and growing. However, it needs to be stated that just by being able to fly to India today, identifies the foreign tourist as wealthy for the street hawkers and others who may be touting.}\]
\[165\text{Kakar, S. “Shamans, Mystics and Doctors”. in, The Indian Psyche. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996. p 5.}\]
After Independence the tourist in India walked into a country both flushed with triumph but devastated by the shared guilt of horrific communalist violence, sparked by the partition of India to create the new country of West and East Pakistan. It would have been a country of a meticulously run public service with an old English charm as the tourists would no doubt have encountered Indian civil servants who had been trained by the English. The tourist for the Indian person could be representative of a threat, still palpable, of the West and are carrying for every Indian who sees them a cortege of memories and associations to do with colonialism, Western economic dominance, notions of superiority, decadence and freedom.

The innocence of the tourist as a “pure” and “uninvolved” outsider is strongly challenged by the persistent presence of poverty in India, a reminder of the fact of their economic advantage, if not dominance. It could be argued that the ideal of tourism has its roots in a sort of humanist activity, intimately constructed within colonial interests. It is based on a sense of largesse, linked to enlightenment notions about the development and improvement of the Self. Anti-colonial critics such as Franz Fanon, have pointed out the use of “other” as constituting an essential difference, from which the Western person can construct a hegemonic Self, as part of the humanist process. Tourism proclaims a right to go outside one’s own space and into another’s. It also can have another side to it and that is a sense of something missing at home, a frustration with one’s own place. In the same way that it was perceived to be economically necessary to colonise, it also began to be necessary to place one’s self into the space of the other, either through the use of imaginative

---

works about the other or by actually visiting. Both activities were used as complimentary prophylactics for the enhancement of the self, soul and spirit.

In the eighteenth century The Grand Tour, for young British male aristocrats, was an expected initiation into manhood and society. By the nineteenth century this grew into what could be called a rite of passage for women and men from the upper classes in England and Northern Europe, in particular. At first the tour took in Europe only, then began to spread down and East into the colonised areas of Africa and the Orient, Arabia, Palestine and India. Ostensibly it was meant to be a way of becoming “civilized”, but as has been well documented now, there were, as there is today, far more urgent issues at stake and that put simply was the tensions of and between sex, identity and social expectations. Travel began to permit a process of de-civilizing, under the guise of the Tour.

In the West, there was growing antagonism between the individual and social institutions. Colonialism facilitated processes of intense industrialization, organizing a level of civic and legal controls in hegemonic societies that clashed with new understandings and expectations around individualism. Industrialization demanded a conformity too restrictive for growing numbers of people. This process was deemed civilizing or civilization building. But this notion of a civilized individual, and even to some extent their hegemonic status, begins to dissemble itself in the colonies.

The combined affects of the freedom to be despotic, as a member of the colonising nation, the expectation and narrative of the exotic with the existence, in India, of some very different social mores, such as more flexible and less regulated legal and civil systems, allowed truant tourists far more latitude for the expression of their desires; such desires that would be condemned at home. For example the English writer E.M. Forster found it far easier if not ever really satisfying, to be a homosexual in the colonies, both in Egypt and in India than in England. It was, as it is today, possible for even the moderately well off in the West, Japan or South Korea to escape to and enjoy, more congenially welcoming environments, that need the tourist dollar. The irony is that the very system that the Western tourist benefits from, at the expense of the poor both at home and in the colonies and now in the third world, creates a living space, that for various reasons is found to be intolerable or necessary to get away from for a time.

The wounded, the bored and frustrated and those that want to play around with a despotism not allowed at home can go off and find a “playground”, to rediscover their thwarted selves and their repressed sexualities. This can apply to the Grand Tours of the eighteenth century right through to the hippy phenomenon of the counter culture movement in the sixties and still today. In her study on contemporary sex tourism, Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor found that white and black American women tourists enjoyed both the anonymity and the power they had over their sexual relationships with local black men in Jamaica who are working in the “informal sex industry”. While in the United States they might for social reasons avoid relationships

with black men or they might actually find it difficult to attract men at home, in Jamaica they found they were sought after and could indulge their fantasy within the privacy of a holiday.\textsuperscript{170}

Contemporary Western, Japanese and South Korean travellers come to India to define themselves, still as a form of quest, to hone their ability to survive. The incredulous, excited and almost buccaneering spirit of their talk conveys that India, among other developing nations, is still a place to test oneself on and “freedom” is still the magic ingredient. In her latest film \textit{Bride and Prejudice}, Gurinder Chandra has a black African female singer, at a rave in Goa, sing (in English) “India sets me free”, the song is also repeated at the close of the film.\textsuperscript{171}

The tourist undergoes sanctioned travel prevailing upon belonging to a social system that they are clearly the beneficiaries of. The tout is trying to shave off some of this right that the tourist carries with them and have it for themselves. This “right” is a very authoritative right. Relationship with the tourist becomes a thing of kudos for some Indians who are working with tourists. However, the tourist is shrouded in an uncomfortable shadow. They are there as an emissary from the past and caught in the present, as a performer in an ambiguous process of what could be called neocolonialism.

The tourist occupies a very strange place in the world. They are in a sort of limbo, not anywhere, and therefore blameless and unaccountable, precisely because they are on holiday. The liminality


of tourism carries with it the possibility of crossing borders beyond the physical into the psychological, to be another person. Travel is capable of precipitating a suspension of judgment. It is this dreamscape that the touter glides in on. Being in that liminal space, however, is founded on a privileged position. If the travel is precipitated by loss of place, of sovereignty, of belonging and is carried out in stealth or as an accepted refugee there is no sense of liminality, even though there is a crossing. These situations are too mired in loss and un-belonging. The liminal is dependent on a right and choice to be lost or out or between place. The distressed traveller is no longer in a liminal space, liminality requires an almost emotionally neutral position.

In the Lonely Planet Guide book on India, the description of touts is that they are a nuisance, but “touts do have a use though”. Of course in the guide book, which is only concerned with successful travel for the tourist, there is no sense that the touts exist beyond the way they impact on tourists. There is nothing of their lives or the circumstances that led them to the work that they do. But touting and tourism may actually be more related and entangled than previously realised both as activities and perhaps even in the etymology of the words themselves. Obviously the tout and the tourist occur in the same spaces. It is easy to say that the tourist attracts the tout, but is it also possible to say that the tout is a result of the tourist, who in another incarnation was the colonial official on a tour of duty and now as I have suggested above is a sort of mascot for the West, a personable export that advertises the benefits of Western styled capitalism and society. The tourist made the tout and both the tourist and the tout are the offspring of a previous and ongoing purpose.

Kabbani in her book *Europe’s Myths of Orient*, states rather didactically, that all travel is an expression of hegemony, “The claim is that one travels to learn, but really one travels to exercise power over land, women, peoples.”\(^{173}\) Obviously this is not true, as much travel is also about the loss of sovereignty and belonging.\(^{174}\) All tourism, however, could be described as a form of dominance over the space that is converged on, if that place absolutely needs the presence of tourists, in other words their money. The various weaknesses or strengths of the currencies being exchanged will greatly effect the relationship that the tourist has to the place and the existence of touts. The relationship of tourist to tout is antagonistic in the sense that the two spring out of a power relation that is conflictual, that is inequitable, but can also be symbiotic when the law, social traditions or the cultural fabric of what is considered to be conventional, becomes too restrictive. In Law the tourist is recognised as having an official right to exist. The tout is dealing at an unofficial level where power exists in the underhanded precisely because, in different intensities, transgression wishes to partake of the tour. The tout is dealing in desire, both their own and the tourists.

A familiar trope of the person touting is that they have “fallen in love” with the tourist. This should not be read as only a cynical form of manipulation, as his and more infrequently her need to survive is tightly enmeshed in the potential relationship with the tourist. In India the person who is called a tout may not think of him or herself in such terms, but simply as being in love and fascinated with those who could save him or her. Touting and making friendship become synonymous, as a passage through a perilous space of capitalist and


\(^{174}\) Note: I am referring to refugees and asylum seekers who have to leave their country of origin because of war, persecution or economic hardship.
semi-feudal inequities without resorting to what would strictly be considered criminal and therefore morally untenable for the person touting. This would apply to the street people and the unemployed, who have no recourse to a main profession like a rickshaw driver or a hawker and so are squeezed into a very narrow field of operation. In the layers of relational possibilities that come into play during the process of touting, soliciting can merge and become indistinguishable from feelings of solicitude that both the tourist and the tout may feel for each other.

Above I use the word *interesting* to describe what the tout does. The tout provides a service that makes travel in India more interesting. In this sense they become a sort of *guide* and precisely because they are unofficial, they provide a more authentic experience. Of course the potential danger of the “stranger” is always present in these encounters, but this is precisely one of the most important aspects of this relationship. The question of trust, the struggle for trust in human encounters and relationship, our desire for such a thing as a “common humanity”, the hope that we can find similar values in a perfect stranger, these are the powerful human dilemmas that are brought to life in us through the relationship with the tout. So the person in the form of the hawker or the rickshaw driver who stands before the tourist and offers more of himself, as guide, or the euphemos and undisclosed content of the possibility of friendship, is touting himself on the wares of what it is to belong, be loved, be needed, to understand, to care and to trust. The insidious side of the relationship is always there, that this is only for money, if he had a job he would not be doing this, if he earned enough money at his profession he would not be there, waiting for the tourist.
TOURING AND TOUTING

The dictionary (Shorter Oxford) definition of a tout is one that acts as a “thieves scout” or “one who solicits custom”. Touting is a surreptitious or secretive looking, gazing, peering, trying to ascertain information about something. From the French, tout can refer to a “successful result in games.” The game element in touting is the undisclosed careful observation of one’s “foe” in order to pre-empt and find an opening to a relationship. Here again, there is an interpolation of the word game with the game of touting, the foe as game and also being game as risk taking, something potentially of interest to both the tourist and the tout. This interpolation of the word is another pointer to the way touting and touristing merge. It is then similarly irresistible to posit the elemental of the performative that can be found overlapping in the words tour and tout. The game as performance and the performance as game. Tour not only having being linked to duty but also to the performing artist or the sports person, (the hunting tour) who goes on tour.

An early meaning of tour is a “turning around” or a “revolution” and tors, (Greek) from which the word has developed, is an instrument for describing a circle. We use the image of the circle when we say, “He got round me” or when we describe the triumph of a hunt, the “prey is circled”. There is the sense of being mesmerised by circular motion, coerced. Words are spoken in a circular way when we are trying to convince someone of something. The circular argument
becomes self-contained, self-referential and impenetrable. The circle is whole, complete and contains the universe in Hindu cosmogony. The tourist, for the tout, will carry this notion of wholeness and wholesomeness. The tout encircles the tourist to get close to the tourist, using words and inference about possibilities for future relationship.\textsuperscript{175} The aim is to form a relationship that is “special” and closed to others who may be offering the tourist similar merchandise.

The tourist is in a similar position to the tout in their dispossession in place. Both are strangers in different senses. The tout has been made stranger in his or her own place by dint of being financially outside the system or perhaps not outside, but demoted. The way the tout will get back in is to have money and/or the protection of a customer. The tourist chooses to be stranger, outside the system superficially, but actually very much in the system, in a performance as a major operative of the system, as a demonstration of the power of this system.

The tourists liminality, drift and wandering, is a sign for the tout, that therein is a space to be entered. Both the tout and the tourist are partners in an unequal embrace. The tout is the one asking, at the bottom of the socio/economic pile, but will use the powerful tool of emotion. He or she will begin to embody the tourist through emotion, but the tourist may remain blissfully unaware, trapped in the liminality and power of money, the constant flow of privilege and security, between the exchange of giving money and receiving something in return.

\textsuperscript{175} Note: The “future” in this context, could be for the tout, the next two hours, the whole day or week or month, depending on how long the tourist stays. Many tourists regularly return to India and established relationships with local people, particularly in locations like Ellora, Ajanta, Goa, Kovalam and Varanasi to name a few.
The tourist may also enact the narrative of the Western, civilized saviour who is no longer an anonymous cog in a wheel, when they can feel the restorative balm of doing good; giving a bit to the poor. The potentially corrupting power associated with this, slips neatly beneath the sense of feeling good about rescuing. The tout is working with desire, the tourist is floating in the liminal space, created by surplus, which has been created by capitalism where desire can exist free of the usually concomitant restraints of capitalism for awhile. The tourist is on holiday. This is the blameless state, the innocent, the beautiful, for the hawker or the rickshaw driver or the street child. In a study on child prostitution in Delhi, a thirteen year old boy who washes cars in the street, was recorded as saying, on seeing foreign tourists, that “(he) loves the colour of their skin and their smiles, specially the women are very beautiful.”

But the system operating behind them is not blameless or innocent, although it may be beautiful. Touting exists in an economic system which requires preemptive thinking, judging, easily leading to trickery, sleight of hand, dishonest influence and competition. Touting will exist at all levels in such a system of economics and will only differ by degrees in relation to necessity and to the degree that some activities that could be designated as touting are given official judicial sanction and so blameless and labeled as legitimate. At all levels in a capitalist state in which the aim is to get something, the ability to tout becomes a successful tool. If we link touting to the strategies of capitalism as the very activity that capitalism runs on, (somehow the capitalist has to sell things that a person may not need or can get somewhere else), then touting becomes one of the major modes of relational connection under capitalism.

176 SANLAAP. A Situational Analysis of Child Sex Tourism in India. European Union and Group Development. www.world-tourism.org/protect_children/ p32. (3/10/05)
If examined closely many relationships between people under capitalism exist in relation to a shared desire for equity. In this way, money, having it or not having it influences the type of people we form relationship with. The things we have, the economic social level at which we move in, is one of the things we use, what we tout with, in order to attract and fit in with others. When our relationships are formed at this level we are touting and the relationship will be extremely unstable and conflicted and perhaps superficial.

The short film *Rays Male Heterosexual Dance Bar* beautifully depicts this aspect of interpersonal relationship in the big end of town, where intimacy and friendship are a means to an end and sacrificed easily in the struggle for survival. In this film a young unemployed, but obviously corporate man, meets with an older man who takes him to a bar where only suited business men meet. They dance, cheek to cheek, while discussing business arrangements and deals. The atmosphere is openly seductive with all the parrying and coquettishness associated with the goal of seduction. The young man is passed around, complimented, stroked and constantly danced with, until finally the biggest man in the room woos him into a position in his business. He leaves with the big boss, with a look of something approaching a rosy post-coital bloom on his face.

The tout in India who is an outcast of the system, who is openly touting, whose touting is not officially sanctioned by law, is getting scraps. He or she does not easily inherit and benefit from the rewards of capitalism. So what is left to them is pure touting, a place outside of or to the side of the law. These touts are working in a space buried deep inside the very primal impulses that capitalism manipulates and

---

influences in all of us, desire, fascination, guilt and need, the vulnerable stems of our wounds. In this way they become curious guides, showing us down to the bedrock of our estrangements. You have, I starve.

**WORKING THE FIELD**

The tout stands not far from the entrance to the lower caves, he watches her approach. He has learnt about the new Western tourist from the young man who has just shown her to a hotel. Already it has been noted that she is disorientated by the strangeness and did not know where she was going. It has been noted that she is alone. That she might be friendly, but she didn’t give baksheesh. Perhaps she does not understand about payment yet. Her probable age has been noted and her clothing, whether strictly Western, new, neat, clean, dirty or something pseudo Indian hippy or is she wearing Indian clothes, like the salwar kameez or even a sari. This might be summed up in a couple of key words. Is she bhangari, not friendly, no money and bad character and dirty or is she partaka, very hard girl. Or is she approachable and having money. The man who is selling whatever he can, his crystals and stones or his time will have learnt all of these things and is now waiting for her.

Unobserved his gaze is very intense. If you saw it you might feel threatened, it is animal, predatory and possibly sexual. He is looking for a way into her awareness, a way for an approach. This means that he has to learn something, just from looking, about this person. The tout’s intense observation might also attract the other person, who

---

178 Note: Indian term for a gift, alms, tip or bribe.
is going to be filled with the feeling of intensity, the feeling of power this naked and potentially vulnerable act of baring the soul will give. The attention may translate as warmth. His body might shimmer with the warmth of his attention. This intensity may even help her to ground herself in the new unfamiliar space, so she will not translate it as threatening, but as a welcome.

Baring the soul is like darshan, the religious Hindu experience of completely giving oneself to the God or Goddess or the guru. The chest opens the body is limp, empty. Suddenly there is nothing but a vessel, there is no intention and no self, only a mirror. This is similar to what follows the moment of intense looking, that look that wants to get inside and inhabit the recipient. The tout descends suddenly into darshan which becomes the moment for the power of projection, the tourist can than project herself into his body and unknowingly sees something of herself, thinking that it is him. Then she can feel like she knows something of him and he will understand her.

The experience becomes religious, not just sexual or about money, it becomes powerful beyond the merely material, although the materiality of the body and the senses is the sensate basis for the experience, for the power. The method is to lift the encounter beyond the banal, beyond its initial intention, into something that is God given, transcendent, special, the world, the stage, a big universe feeling, Oceanic. It is the moment of love, the glorious sun, the moon and the fish caught, struggling on the wet sand.

Relationship is established, connection, one has become two, almost without her awareness, even though she thinks nothing has happened, or she thinks she is above it. The encounter has comforted her, she is feeling more at home. This is a place she can now move in
with confidence because he has forced her into connection, she can no longer be trapped in the illusion of her separateness. That separateness which is the lost feeling, that she so clearly displayed when she got off the bus. He will become numinous for her. His name will gather meaning beyond a name. It will startle her. His surroundings, the surroundings, which when she arrived, were there for her exploration as a tourist, will become his surroundings that she becomes acquainted with, through him. The surroundings will not easily let her in, in her estimation, almost unaware of herself, the surroundings are full of fearsomeness for her, alien. She begins to be aware of other parts of herself that she did not know or had forgotten. An extraordinary newness is about to happen. He seems to be moving her into this, through the land that he introduces her to.

She is now in the process. There is in this, a power they both feel. He watches her, she watches him, watching her, she begins to expect it. Or she senses the danger and cuts the acquaintance quickly, she sees a predator. A judgment, a summing up of the potential risk is taken, for some tourists, the risk is too high, others see a way of managing the risk or see the risk as a fear, that belongs with a prejudice or a set of rules or even morality, that need not be obeyed in this situation. For some the sense of risk is simply a limitation that gets in the way of the possibility of understanding another or the transgressive fantasy of owning another. Some see no risk, but simply an invitation. Others may be looking for risky experiences, risk being for some, an important part of the enjoyment of travelling.

The ambiguous nature of the relationship can be tolerated. There is the selling of something. The tourist is engaged in an invitation into friendship with the possibility of buying something, an
object, time or a body. All this is wrapped into a relationship. The importance is to form the relationship. Hawkers, or rickshaw drivers, who are touting, will try to make friendships with Western tourists. Friendship is the ground work that has to be established. Emotional connections and the sense of personal responsibility that builds on relationship, is the desired result. The tout is weaving an ancient, beautiful and dangerous craft.

That craft depends upon the use of desire buried in the exchange of money, that propels the transaction into a seductive power, the fascinating combination of desire and power, the entwined web and structure of each that is passed across the spaces of other. It is playing around with the mystic narratives of the commodity fetish, turning self into commodity, an offering of body and place, which become the promise of a privileged possession.

The Western tourist approaches India from within a maze of complex cultural, historical and economic forces. Like a grid, it is something that is worn, inhabited, a code, something that is looked out of, a shaping of the eyes that form perceptions. It is a way of seeing that may be augmented to different degrees by an awareness of this “extra luggage” that is carried into India.

The tout also looks out at the tourist with a set of cultural, historical and economic codes, that similarly give a certain cast to the act of looking at and receiving the tourist. These two protagonists that I am exploring in this thesis carry a culture with them, which when they meet creates a field that they will inhabit together. The field they encounter between them may cause them to either reject or accept relationship. If they accept the relationship what will it look like? Is it possible to visualize this relationship?
The field is laced with desires that shape and are shaped by historical and contemporary forces. When a meeting takes place it configures a form that Guattari has termed an “ecology of subjectivity”, an environment, a landscape of the personal mutations and modifications of those historical and contemporary forces. In the field, the person is distilled into layers of visions and colours that are the expectations, prejudices and myths that blend across a subjectivity inhabited and created between us. We walk through these fields. What is the nature of this ecology, what state is it in?

How much is the tourist tout contained within a different coding to that of the tourist, when he goes to the temple and receives the markings of Shiva on his forehead and wears it all day, as Deleuze and Guattari describe it, “consigning his whole body and his organs and their exercise to the collectivity.”

He then stands in that place inhabiting his traditions and then in other economies that will not present a stable grounding for traditions, his or any other. This other economy will use his traditions for its own ends, but not for the sake of its philosophies or its binding of community, its rules of family, caste and religion or for the sake of the security of the individual within the collective. His traditions are useful as a “picture” for sale. He presents himself to this fickle, lawless world of the tourist, the coming to look at, to see, to experience. He presents himself to the desires of the tourist, who themselves are walking in a field of themselves, as yet undiscovered. Through their encounter they may find themselves with other formations of self that they had not seen or understood before. The tourist tout can open a gate for the tourist into his world, but for

\footnotesize{179 Goodchild, P. 1996. p 151.}
\footnotesize{180 G, Deleuze and Guattari, F. 1984.}
him it necessitates a decoding, where he will suspend aspects of his traditions and customs and break social village rules.

In order to operate in this relationship with the Western tourist that is not bound by his social rules, how much does he encounter a strange new fear? Where are the guarantees that will make his work beneficial for him, how does he gage a possible success? Without a code of practice deeply embedded in a tradition, like the traditions of his caste, religious and village/family collective, how does he proceed with establishing relationship in the free and groundless world of the tourist? How does he cross over? But perhaps the crossing over has been provided for him, the route set out already. It is clearly not a completely original moment.

The long period of colonial conquest that his country has just fought itself out of, is the precedent for his own innocent decisions. This history places the relationship between the tourist and the tout on ambivalent ground. His country men and woman had been engaging with their colonial rulers for some time. Furthermore there is a serious question coextensive with that previous history of colonialism and that is that one type of colonialism finished and another type began. The suffix “post”, as an ending, is contentious. After independence Nehru struggled and on the face of it succeeded, in his lifetime, in maintaining India's independence through a stance of nonalignment in the cold war.\(^\text{181}\) He attempted to maintain friendly

\(^{181}\) Note: Nehru refused to support the Americans during the Korean war and supported new and emerging nationalist anti-colonial movements and Governments, forming in 1955, a non-aligned group with Indonesia, Yugoslavia, Egypt, China and Vietnam and some African states. Although the structure of India's large public sector bore some resemblance to the socialist state controlled system of the Russian Soviet State, there was a powerful private industrialist sector, fully supporting Nehru's non-alignment stance. see, Ali, T. 2005, p 97 - 101. India also in the same period received grants and loans from the World Bank and from the 1960s implemented the Green revolution at the suggestion of the World Bank and the American Government, as a means to reduce poverty.
relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union, although Indian relations with Russia became quite close during the leadership of Nikita Khruschev.\textsuperscript{182} It was clear that colonialism would not just disappear with independence, but that it might try on another face and that would be through economic, trade and financial pressure from the West.

Initially, Nehru nationalised some industry and restricted foreign investment and imports, but from the 1960s foreign investment steadily increased, “with an increased reliance on foreign aid”.\textsuperscript{183} The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, are the means by which a changed form of colonialism began to take hold in India, aided greatly by internal corruption. So in this sense the pathway for the tourist tout is set. The tourists presence opens it, following sharply on the removal of the \textit{gora} as members of the colonial race. Poverty and need opens it and within those more gross and obvious signals are the vehicles of desire and fascination. Neo-colonialist capitalism needs a vehicle, that vehicle is desire in all its permutations of wants and needs and the more shadowy occurrence of fascination. Fascination becoming the mask of the needs of both the tourist and the tout, of the wounds of alienating hegemonies, of poverty, the unexpressed and inexpressible needs, synonymous with lack, that undesirable failure, symptomatic of a hurt that is not accessible to language because it is blocked out as undesirable, as shameful to admit.


\textsuperscript{183} Bohm, R. 1982. p 140. Note: According to Bohm, the Americans through their influence in the World Bank were able to achieve almost dictatorial influence over Indian economic policies in the late sixties. This included forcing India to modify its trade relations with North Vietnam, devalue the rupee and buy American agricultural surplus at inflated prices, an agreement that was tied to continuing American aid, that India depended on. Bohm, p 144.
THE PROBLEM OF FASCINATION

Ashis Nandy in his 1983 book *The Intimate Enemy*, with some irony cites Kiernan, who places India in a realm that is and has “always been a separate world, hard for any outsider *Eastern or Western*, to penetrate.”\(^{184}\) The difficulty in *penetration*, may well arise from the confusion of trying to form a relationship with a mirage of one’s own making and at the same time conform to Western ideals of scientific and objective rationalism, when it comes to observing the “native”. But why does an Easterner or an Indian also have problems understanding India? Either because Kiernan is conforming to a typical Orientalist fantasy of the inherent immutability of the East, which even the Easterner cannot fathom or and perhaps as well as, because some westernized Indians themselves began to believe the constructions that the coloniser began to make about their cultures and disengage themselves to some extent from their traditions.\(^{185}\)

Nandy goes on to say what happens when an attempt is made to penetrate an impenetrable culture. Keep in mind, however, what this word *culture* might mean or what it is. It may not refer distinctly to anything really Indian, but be as much an idea of India created by an historical and political process. Nandy uses the word in its singular form, whereas India now and especially at the time of which he is writing, was not an homogenous country with one culture:

---


\(^{185}\) Ibid., p 79.
Such a culture becomes a projective test; it invites one not only to project onto one’s deepest fantasies, but also to reveal, through such self-projection, the interpreter rather than the interpreted. All interpretations of India are ultimately autobiographical.\textsuperscript{186}

The English and others in their wake became fascinated with their colonial subjects. (The sentiment was often felt to be close to a Love for India; India as an amorphous, conglomerate being, experienced as an internal emotive and personal relationship.) Fascination, for the person who is fascinated is both a movement towards freedom and being bound at the same time, as I have suggested in Part 1 of this thesis. It can also be both an opportunity for some power on the part of the person who is the recipient of someone’s fascination or bind that person into the representations being made of them. In that sense it is quite a dangerous and unmanageable emotion or perhaps it would be more accurately termed, a \textit{drive}. It has the potential, like an obsession to either maim or destroy its host, what it feeds on, or come to an understanding that is inter-subjective and not based on a split between self and other. (The supposed innocence of engaging in processes of understanding, however, can be dubious, as I will later show.) For the person who is fascinated, the identity of the host is confusing. Fascination is the point at which the imagined other and the self lock so that awareness of another as separate from self, who falls outside of what is imagined of them, becomes almost impossible. Then the host in this process of a fascination, is both self and the other. Fascination feeds itself on the imagined relation with the other within the person who is fascinated as well as on the person who is the one who fascinates. Both could become each other’s, other.

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., p 79.
In a straightforward attack and usurpation of the resources of a country, the attacker leaves with their bounty and need not involve themselves further. If the host is the whole body of India then destruction will benefit the needs and rationales of colonialism until the situation exhausts itself, till resources and energy cannot sustain the situation any longer, but this is clearly a wasteful and short-term prospect. It would be far better to temper the situation of destruction, which under the East India Company involved continual wars with Indian Kings and tribes, with something that was perceived to be understanding and knowledge. But this has to be controlled, the possibility of love, or fascination, must be controlled within an institution, which can direct this love into an “understanding” a “knowledge” that will not interfere with the colonial enterprise; and so Orientalism. It is well documented that Curzon, among others understood the importance of the official establishment of Oriental Studies as a means to entrench British interests in India. What Curzon paternalistically called “our capacity to understand”\textsuperscript{187}

The language that Curzon used in the early nineteen hundreds reveals an insidious aim to manage India through establishing a relationship with India, albeit, in a very controlled way. Notions of understanding the culture, “their customs, their feelings, their traditions...”\textsuperscript{188} are hedged within a utilitarian agenda as a necessary part of the “equipment” of Empire. The colonial experience then began to involve, not just a concern with the production of wealth, but within that and in keeping with new liberal ideas about the “rights of man”, the self as a thing to be developed, built, made, came to be an important expression of what it meant to be English or European. The colonial enterprise for Curzon, who is politically legitimizing the mood

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., p 214.
and the attraction to the Orient and the exotic, becomes synonymous with the development of the self. Is this how fascination creeps into what is in reality a situation of aggressive theft?

The Orient becomes something to build a self out of. The construction of the self and the salvation of the self becomes synonymous with travel, with what Said calls a “geographical appetite”. This blend of liberalism and the enlightened individual, incises a smooth un-disruptive and misleading “moral neutrality” into the processes of imperialism. For Curzon the study and knowledge of geography becomes not only essential for the process of building and maintaining empire, but also as “part of the equipment that is necessary for a proper conception of citizenship, and is an indispensable adjunct to the production of a public man.” Imperialism becomes, in D.C. Somervell’s beautiful quote, “a sentiment rather than a policy; its foundations were moral rather than intellectual..” Is this how it escapes notice, so that the tourist can glide relatively easily through the distressed spaces of the dispossessed, without feeling responsible in any way? The feelings of the colonial representative also become worth commenting on in this new configuration of the self in Empire. Again Curzon is giving license to the possibility of enjoyment in the colonial service. After famously describing the creation of a School of Oriental studies in London, as “the necessary furniture of Empire”, he goes on to say:

189 Note: The Western imaginary of the Orient as an exotic fantasy place, precludes separate nations and their possible differences, such as the great differences between the Arabic world, South Asia and Northern, South and South East Asian countries. For this reason it should be understood that when I use the word Orient I am referring to the imaginary place of Orient built into the Western imagination.
191 Ibid., p 216.
Those of us who, in one way or another, have spent a number of years in the East, who regard that as the happiest portion of our lives, and who think that the work that we did there, be it great or small, was the highest responsibility that can be placed upon the shoulders of an Englishman... etc. etc.

What I am attempting to suggest here is that by recording the emotions of the self into the processes of colonialism; legitimizing self construction through the work of colonialism, there is an underhanded license given to the process of becoming fascinated. There is evidence of some awareness of the potential for the disruptive nature of this drive. As far back as 1800 the East India Company began to actively discourage relationships of marriage between English officers and Indian woman. This was due to, as they saw it, possible disadvantages to the success of the colonial process that intimate and conjugal relations between Indian women and English officers of the company might bring.

The Imperialist agenda becomes embedded in a “relationship” circumscribed by political expediency with the colonial subject, effectively obscuring real intentions, but also allowing for the disruptive possibilities of desire and fascination. In fact using desire and fascination as part of the vehicle of colonialism, but also providing some small part of the fuel for a growing rejection of colonialism both in India and at home. The power of mimicry to enhance the hegemonic reach of colonial control into the psyches of the oppressed, but also invest a disruption to that control, has been well documented. The first by Frantz Fanon and the second more

193 Note: My italics.
194 cited in Said, 2001, p 214
contradictory function of mimicry by Homi Bhabha. Mimicry runs on multiple expressions of power over the other and on fascination and desire for the power of the coloniser.\textsuperscript{196}

Orientalist (Indologist) scholarship in India relied both on the imaginary and fantasy in its interpretations of Indian culture and based those interpretations within Eurocentric paradigms, for example, the writing and ideals of the journalist and historian James Mill and the German Indologist Max Muller.\textsuperscript{197} There is a story that Max Muller advised his European Indology students never to go to India, for fear that the real experience would destroy the ideal constructed around their study of Indian antiquity. Indology did not just involve a purely imaginary construction on the part of the English or the European, based as it was on the formations of Indian society as the British and the Europeans experienced it in broad terms. It was the way those observations were written about, employing metaphors that gathered immense social and cultural meaning for the West in both its imaginary of India and the West's construction of self, that provided the metonymic power of Western discourse about India.\textsuperscript{198}

As the construction of European self unfolded in the othering of India and Indians were encouraged into the educational institutions of England, Indian intellectuals themselves began to embody the othering of themselves that was projected onto them and to certain degrees, began to mimic the English. So like the Indian intellectual

\textsuperscript{196} Roy, P. 1998. p1-2
\textsuperscript{197} Inden, R. B. Imagining India. Basil Blackwell Pub, Oxford, 1990. p 7 - 48. Note: Neither J. Mill or M. Muller ever visited India. See, Inden p105 and 45, respectively. Both had strong affiliations with the East India Company and wrote hegemonic texts that tutored the officials of the British Empire in India and the general public.
\textsuperscript{198} Note for a close discussion of the role of metaphor in Indology, see Inden, footnoted above.
and religious leader Vivekananda, who agreed that Indian men were effeminate, (a “nation of women”) they themselves began to reiterate English critiques of the Indian man.\textsuperscript{199}

Uncomfortably situated within this process, academic and scholarly relationships between Indians and Westerners began to occur. The relationship between Romain Rolland and famous Indian activists, thinkers and writers, like Mahatma Gandhi, Ananda Coomaraswamy and Rabindranath Tagore is one such situation.\textsuperscript{200} Rolland greatly admired the philosophies of the East and saw in them a solution to what he saw, as the imprisonment of the West in technology and a materialistic capitalism. To the Indian writer and poet Rabindranath Tagore, Rolland stated that:

In Europe we feel we are imprisoned in a cage...there is a tendency for our whole life to degenerate into a huge mechanical organisation.\textsuperscript{201}

And later in the forward he wrote for Coomaraswamy’s \textit{The Dance of Shiva}, in 1924:

There are a number of us in Europe for whom European civilization no longer suffices (we) have had to confess its inadequacies and its limited arrogance. We few look towards Asia!\textsuperscript{202}

Similarly amongst the Europeans, Americans and Australians I spoke to who are living and travelling in India today, phrases like, “I

\textsuperscript{199} Roy, P. 1998. p 115.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., p 59.
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid., p 59.
feel more alive in India” are common. India is a part of us, it has become the internal space for our psychological utopias.

Rolland was a “staunch critic of Eurocentric superiority” and supported and encouraged the importance of what came to be known as an East/West dialogue. He supported both Tagore and Coomeraswamy’s call for a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultural assets and their rejection of Western imperialism and materialism.

The question of how much Rolland falls within Said's definitions of what Orientalism is, cannot be explored here. Said does not mention Rolland, who problematizes the association of Orientalism with Imperialism. It is this more complex relationship of admiration or infatuation with India that comes to be more dominant closer to the moment of independence and then on into the postcolonial period, and it is this complexity that I an concerned with here.

Orientalist scholarship at times ambiguously occurs within a self criticism on the part of the European. There is a sense of loss and strong disenchantment with home, with a concomitant ideal or fantasy about India, almost throwing the self onto India as a place to be saved, where real life can be found, where the answers to the problems of the self can be worked out. And if Orientalism is a tool of empire, then imperialism itself is implicated in the problem of the dissatisfaction and criticism of self and home.

---

203 Ibid., p 60.
204 Ibid., p 59.
PLAYING THE ROLES OF FANTASY

Historically, organisations like the popular Theosophical Society, that in part formed itself around, and eventually was discredited by J.Krishnamurti, have this sense of seeing India and Asia as a place for the salvation of the European soul. What happened to Krishnamurti in his childhood and early adult life, could be seen as an individual and personal parallel to the effects of colonialism in India. In a perfect example of the processes of Orientalism, Krishnamurti is imagined to be the next Messiah and seen as a world saviour. He, however, had to be westernised, so that he could relate to and speak with authority to the Western world. To do this, the then president Annie Besant, and fellow Theosophists virtually abducted Krishnamurti and his younger brother. They discouraged them from using their own language and traditional practices and inculcated them into the strange spiritual menage of Theosophy.

Abduction, is a justifiable description of Besant’s behaviour. Krishnamurti’s father, tried unsuccessfully to sue Besant for the custody of his children. The Theosophists effectively destroyed the relationship between father and son. The process of Western education was not successful. Krishnamurti could not or would not succumb to a university education in England. However, his relationship with his Theosophist tutor, C.W Leadbetter, may have been educative in the area of power and its abuses, something that

---

206 Ibid., p 36 - 37.
Pupul Jayakar, only slightly hints at. This tutor had been accused of having sexual relationships with young boys in his care in a number of countries. Eventually, Krishnamurti frees himself from farce and declares there is no leader of the world or world messiah and he certainly is not it. What makes this story more poignant is that Krishnamurti’s father, as a member of the theosophists, had begged the organisation to give him employment in order to solve his serious financial problems.

Theosophy was a product of that ambiguity that existed in the relationship between the colonialist and the colonised. There were many educated and Western educated Indians in the Theosophy movement. Theosophy was one example of a European intellectual movement that Raymond Schwab has termed an Oriental Renaissance, during which time Asian philosophical, mystical and religious texts began to influence the ideas of European intellectuals like, Jung, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Emerson and Hesse among others. Translations and interpretations of Indian texts like those of the Sanskrit scholar Max Muller and Sir John Woodroffe were widely read in Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century and onwards.

In its most extreme situations the potential tragedy of fascination, like desire, always feels genuine, even if what is wanted

---

207 Ibid., p 23, 36 and 47.
208 Ibid., p 83.
211 Note: For a list of the writing of Muller, F. M. (1823-1900) see bibliography in Inden, R. 1990. p 280-281.
212 Note: Woodroffe (1865-1936) was an English lawyer who became, in 1915, the chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court. Studied and translated Sanskrit and Hindu Philosophy, in particular the Tantric/Shakti system. Lectured in Indian philosophy at Oxford University after retiring from the bench. Gave public lectures on Yoga and Hindu philosophy. His books include The Garland of Letters, The Serpent Power and Introduction to Tantra Sastra.
is felt to be wrong in some sense, there is a struggle between that feeling and a feeling of the absolute rightness of being fascinated or being in desire for something. Very often being fascinated is so consuming that there is no sense of the political undertones, inherent in the process, that are held so close to the personal. In the case of Orientalism, fascination and desire are institutionally taken over and managed with the ulterior motive of smoothing the way for further pillage. But in the West we have managed to shield ourselves from the reality of this relationship and overlook the connection between desire and fascination in the processes of imperialism. In his book on Orientalism, Ziauddin Sardar places a “politics of desire” at the centre of Orientalist scholarship. In his words, Orientalism, “codifies Western desires into academic disciplines and then projects these desires into its study of the Orient.”

Fascination is being used against the very thing that it desires. It sets in motion the displacement of the surrogate self onto the Oriental, a self that has been institutionalized into a love that thinks it is genuine, but is actually being used against those that it loves. This love is the “lovely lie” recognised at the end of the 1993 film M. Butterfly, set in 1960s China, in which a mediocre French diplomat falls in love with a Chinese opera singer during her/his rendition of Puccini’s Madam Butterfly.

The persona of the French diplomat dramatically changes under the influence of his love for the oriental woman. His new found self confidence impresses his superiors and they give him a promotion. He passes on spurious intelligence information to his own department

---

while unwittingly giving up important information to his Chinese lover, who he believes is completely under his thumb and not capable of deception. He is fascinated with “her” as a construction of his own fantasy. At the end of the film he is forced to recognise who she really is and admits that what he loved was the lie, his own fantasy of who she was, not the man mimicking a desirable woman.

However, this is not just his construction, this is the field that he has walked into. It is interesting that the writer of the play and the script for the film, David Henry Hwang, has created the diplomats character as a “lack luster” boring person, who has lost interest in his life. In his fascination for his lover he discovers new energy and in his own eyes, he is transformed. But his lover is playing a part for him which “she” can easily improvise around his obvious prompting, his presumptions and self aggrandizements. The diplomat is a figure who can only live through someone else he can have power over. Without being able to exercise power over someone the life goes out of his existence. It is an interesting conundrum because it suggests that the representative of the Orientalist Westerner, that person who is close to the scene of the political confrontation with, and attempted manipulation of the Orient, has a very dissatisfying relationship with both themselves and their own culture.

The diplomat’s disaffection suggests the disaffection of large groups of young Westerners who descended on India during the late 1960s and the 1970s, in search of the answer to their own dissatisfaction with their culture. The West has failed in its imagination of itself in some vital way and always looks outwards either for an enemy to bolster its belief in its own institutions or for a “teacher”. The Orient becomes a place to harvest a culture and to imagine oneself into. It is this unconscious aspect of Orientalism which drags
the unsuspecting, naive Westerner, into its orbit, and provides the tout with an entry into relationship with the tourist.

What is lacking in the West, Europe, England and America? For Rolland, as we have seen above, it was the structuring and classifying of life into semblance's of a machine, so that a sense of life as a freedom or a spontaneous expression was lost. For Rana Kabbani it was something to do with sex:

The Orient of the Western imagination provided a respite from Victorian sexual repressiveness. It was used to express for the age the erotic longings that would otherwise have remained suppressed.¹¹⁵

The Orient was also an unwitting agent provocateur for the repressed sexuality of the West. In India the proliferation of erotic imagery openly and unabashedly situated within the sanctum of the religious, is an obvious place to find the inspiration for such an unleashing of the controls placed on sexuality in the West. This is a transgression that still fascinates the Western mind. The Platonic mind/body split yearns, once it has seen the possibility, to reconfigure itself in an elysium idol.

Kabbani describes this as a “hostile imagination”, the East becomes a place of “sexual license”, a place for the rebellious to run to. The Orient “shimmered with possibilities”, as a “sexual space, a voyage away from the self, an escape from the dictates of the bourgeois morality of metropolis.”²¹⁶ She cites the traveller and writer Richard Burton, as a rebel, who in his writing, recreated the East as a pornographic space for the pleasure of a growing clientele in Europe.

---

²¹⁶ Ibid., p 67.
and England. She describes Burton as a man of Empire, going to the colonies with the authority of British military domination, taking with him his doppelganger, “the rebel who longed to escape from authority of all kind”, who craved for a freedom that he could not have at home. This aspect of Burton's character, his wildness and his inability to accept authority over him at university, plus his use of disguise, to try and pass off as a native, makes him in Kabbani’s words, “a forerunner of the modern hippy.” When a child, Burton’s mother lectured him about the “virtues of self-denial” in front of a cake shop window. Burton smashed the glass and ran away with an apple puff.\footnote{Ibid., p 47.}

Can we blame him or them, however? Contemplate the cruelty of being told to perceive the world in terms of anti-pleasure and of self-denial. Burton's story shows a particular type of wounding. On the one hand, he finds his freedom in India, it was the place of his first sexual experience, but on the other hand he is there working for the military and economic domination of India. He can accept this position of his subservience to authority only in a place where he has, as a member of the colonising race and force, authority over the native. Only on the body and land of the colonised both physically and through creating a narrative about the other based on a selective observation entwined with his own imaginary, can he rebel against his own society. That rebellion he hides by placing all his disclosures about the sexual habits of the Orient firmly at the feet of the Oriental, so in a sense he never really rebels. Like so many rebels, he simply escapes, only to reconstruct himself within a pornography that is as alienating as the society he is trying to run away from. In this way the coloniser colonises themselves along with the colonised. The coloniser
loves, admires takes an interest in those that he or she also subjugates, in the back room. This “love” is an invitation for the colonised as well, who learns to love and admire those who are in control. There are wounds that certain Western travellers to India are trying to escape.

The Orient as a woman waiting to be “explored” was a familiar Western metaphor to describe the excitement of discovering new lands.\textsuperscript{218} Sara Suleri has noted the homo-erotic subjectivities of subordination and control permeating and confusing colonial relations, that lay beneath the official language of heterosexual fear for the safety of the English woman in India.\textsuperscript{219} Another layer to the personifications of desire within the subjectivity’s of power, is the unthinkable that the Indian male may be an attractive alternative for the Western woman and that it may have something to do with his maligned ability to be what the British designated as effeminate, but what the woman herself might read as sensitive. This reading will be enticingly set against and mixed with an old perception that there is a mysterious danger inherent in the Oriental.

These various expressions of the spiritual and sexualised narratives of colonialism, Besant’s messiah, the diplomat’s love, Burton’s tales of sexual adventurism, all circle the European fascination with and dread of despotism. The interpretation of Indian traditional society as despotic played an important role in the development of colonial ideology for the British. Oriental despotism defined the English in view of themselves as different from the Indian

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., p 67.

and also provided the rationale for imperialism, as the only way to manage a despotic race, who in their political development, the British defined as inferior.²²⁰

How much do these narratives play over and over in the Western psyche, creating a compelling brew of fear and attraction? This story permeates black/white relations in India, both pre-independence and today. Do these configurations of desiring India still find expression and can the tout avoid them? He may find them useful, to play back at the tourist or he may find them to be unavoidable, a set field for him to walk into. The following writing attempts to describe how the tout negotiates a space for a relationship between himself and the tourist and what is happening when the tourist and the tout meet.

The tourist tout must establish a connection of desire. He places himself within a field of desire. It is an offering of relationship. The codes of practice that define and construct his relationships in traditional Indian society amongst his own people may inform the establishment of relationship with the Western tourist, but he must also use emotions in such a way that take him outside of the usual rules of his society. Emotional readings are needed to perceive the signals from the tourist that will indicate to him a point at which or a way that he can form an attachment. Through these readings desires will be ascertained. He will answer to these desires as best he can. He will present himself as someone available and he will construct himself to dovetail with the tourist’s needs as seamlessly as he can.

He waits in the tourist field for someone who may want to transgress that boundary between tourist and local, who wants to step outside of their private/collective world of the picture-view, of sites, someone who wants to immerse themselves deeper into the site, to be marked by it and mark it. Or it might be someone who is lost and affected deeply by the predicament of not belonging, only mitigated by the beginning of exchange and a chance finding. Before that, the tourist can float in the field of their imaginary. Or they might hang onto the fields of prefabricated constructions desperately as they start to shift and dislodge.

The marking brings the tourist closer to the place, but still an outsider who occupies a realm of a marginal elite, that can combine elements of the despot, coloniser, suspicious transgressor of laws who is above the family/village and caste laws, to a certain extent. The foreigner still occupies a picture place in tension with the belonging that exchange brings.

The tout deals with these tensions, this desire of the tourist to immerse him or herself in his culture or the tourist’s imaginary of his culture. With these impossible and possible and unknown and known wants, that may affect a shift in self on the part of the tourist, he has to fashion something livable for the tourist, a relationship that will safely hold them in their untenable circumstance of stranger and keep them close to him for as long as possible so that they don’t slip off back into fully picture-view imaginary. He has to keep that imaginary occupied and grounded in reciprocal relationship with himself. He must be careful that the picture-view that the tourist brought with them is not collapsed altogether without anything to replace it. He must establish a sense of belonging, and reciprocal responsibility with the tourist, who then will begin to replace the picture-view with a
sense of connection and belonging out of exchange with the people and the place.

The loss of innocence that may result is a realisation that the tourist occupies a space that is potentially despotic because they have more money than the tout. The encounter in the fields of desire between the tout and the tourist shapes this awareness, but the fact of despotism is carried with the Western tourist into India. It is wrapped, sheltered, within or behind, notions of individual rights and freedoms and democracy, it is a hidden dialogue concealed in their belief of selfhood. It is a marking that occurs through an unequal position of economic power, which has allowed the developed world to justify the hypocrisy of maintaining both a social contract based on individual autonomy, equality and rights of the citizen in the developed world and a virulent capitalist system of economics that dominates the development of the economies of the third world.

This despotism is not necessarily recognised until confronted within the field from which it has gained its power, the place it has had power over, that is on the ground of the previously colonised and the still marginalised within the processes of global neocolonialism and local inequalities. The despotic, however, is displaced onto the Indian, this fantasy, that India is a despotic place surreptitiously re-enforces a desire for the Westerner to be despotic, there is an imagined and not so imagined, but real license for despotism. Despotism also translates itself into watered down versions, like the notion that India can set one free, as expressed in the film *Bride and Prejudice* or feeling more alive in India, as expressed by some travellers. The terrible implication is that despite the highly visible human tragedy of poverty in India, it is somehow possible to feel more alive and free in India.
The combined effect of the tourist's economic superiority and an often inept and corrupt law enforcement system, has resulted in the growth of a child sex industry in India, sometimes run by foreigners and definitely used by foreigners.\textsuperscript{221} In a study on the child sex industry based around Agra, Delhi and Jaipur, a “guide” told the researchers “that many foreign tourists ask the guides to be their homosexual partner for the trip.”\textsuperscript{222} The tout working around the tourist spots, the child hawkers, the guides and the rickshaw drivers are all potential targets and participants in this relationship.

A young Muslim man I spoke to who sells stones and garnet necklaces, described both his “friendships” with a male European tourist and a female tourist in very ambivalent terms. There was the sense that the male tourist was seen as desperate and pathetic by this young man and his friends. The female tourist, who is in her sixties, who he refers to as his girlfriend, he does not like anymore. He says he does not understand why he liked her. If he has sex with these people he claims he pays for everything because he is very rich, from selling his jewelry. There was a sense of bravado about his sexual relations with both male and female tourists. The male tourists invitation to this young man and his friends, to come and visit him in Goa, may well be taken up but, he and his friends will not stay with him for long, he said, they will go to another place and have a party together. The young man will take some boyfriends and if they want to have sex with this man they can. He wanted me to understand that he was in control and that he found these people pathetic. I noted what seemed like his intention and attempt to get close to me,

\textsuperscript{221} Murphy, P. \textit{Australian to Face Sex Charges in India}. at, www.news.com.au August 18, 2005.
\textsuperscript{222} SANLAAP. \textit{A Situational Analysis of Child Sex Tourism in India}. European Union and Group Development. www.world-tourism.org/protect_children/ p18. (8/8/05)
however, I also had the feeling that he was telling me tales in order to impress or even insult me in a very subtle way. When I asked him if he liked Western or foreign people he said, “No, they are selfish people.”

The interest and attraction to the despotic has a long history in Europe’s fantasy of the Orient. This young man displayed a beguiling mix of the dependent child and the despotic man, precisely the characterisation so prevalent in Orientalist and colonial texts about the Oriental. A role and a form of merchandise to entice the tourist, the young man has perhaps understood very well some of the psychological mysteries of the European’s interest in being in India. There is, as well, the possibility that this role is not so foreign or imposed contemporarily as is supposed, but perhaps dove-tails very nicely with certain types of male gender constructs that are profligate in India today. Two roles, propagated by Bollywood and the Hindu right, converge for Indian men, a macho sexuality that is controlling if not violent with the popular belief that this out of control sexuality is a man’s birth right and the male as perpetual child to a universal mother. The female’s role is always as Mother and more broadly, as enabler for the man, a situation which some have claimed in extreme cases of over-attachment, can keep some Indian men in a state of semi-childhood all their lives.223

There is a direct correlation between the fantasy and being fascinated. Fascination is the “manna” or the “soma” that fantasy needs for its energy. Fantasy is the narrative construction around something that fascinates and perhaps fantasy is the actual defense against what fascinates, a way of removing the physical tactility

inherent in fascination. Becoming fascinated is potentially a vulnerable moment, what we have become fascinated with has power over us. Building a story around the object of fascination is an attempt to control the fascination, paradoxically still using what fascinates, going to it, looking at it, getting into some sort of relationship with her/him, but observing carefully the “rules” that the fantasy has implied or imposed in its narrative construction, so that fascination remains contained within an imaginary of the other. The fantasy weaver removes themselves from that which fascinates, thus safely avoiding relationship:

It is perhaps in the fantasy that one has to look for the secrets of political domination and its mechanism..... Fantasy is not some realm of pure ideas and representations, for it ultimately relies on enjoyment, the stuff that irretrievably sullies the supposed ideal purity; it is the mechanism of ‘production’ and canalization of enjoyment, and in this way it may hold the key to our status as subjects – both political subjects and subjects of desire – and to our practices. 224

Fantasy may well do all the above that Dolar suggests, however, it is, despite of or even because of enjoyment, that fantasy definitely remains the stuff of pure ideas and representations. It is true that the pure idea may be sullied, not however, by enjoyment, but by another process more close to fascination, perhaps, when the desire to posses infiltrates the lofty tower (all in the mind) of the fantasy. Wanting to touch, have it, consume, may break open the fantasy. Fantasy is an out of body experience which can become untenable once it has evoked touch. It is a matter of a gradual gradation, the more touch, the less fantasy.

The fantasy reveals a desire for power over something fearsome or forbidden, that needs to be controlled, that cannot be touched. According to Dolar the fantasy of the despotic Oriental:

... lays bare – unguardedly, in a sort of 'naive', immediate and outspoken way which has subsequently become obfuscated – the economy of enjoyment that necessarily accompanies modern structures of the social and the status of the subject; it sticks to them as their reverse side.225

Without this private/public fantasy of enjoyment the modern state and the status of its subjects will collapse. This is the enjoyment of being fascinated by an idea of a dangerous and titillating despotic other. Without that other that we have projected ourselves onto, our belief in our system of democracy will teeter, the fact of our own despotism will overwhelm us. The fantasy of the East, or the fantasy of anything, has become part of the equipment of the political constructions of capitalism.

The tourist enters the place of the despot veiled in an illusion of democracy and the purity of “rights” and trapped in a fantasy about the other. Denial being at the core of such a fantasy the innocence can so easily and sweetly turn to a revelation of power, “never felt so alive and so free”, deludes, and suddenly the despot has come home. The tout angles in on this configuration, into the tourists elopement with the denied inner other. Almost riding on the crest of this wave of power, the tout further seduces the tourist into their fantasy of the other as despot and the tourist self as a redeemer, by becoming dependent. The tout has caught, hooked, the tourist on their Orientalist underpinnings, their imperialist heritage, like an under-

225 Ibid., p xi.
garment, unknowingly worn, but deeper than this is a fragile need, that has never been spoken, hidden beneath and substituted by the pornographic longings of the despot.

The relationships of subservience so ingrained within Indian culture through the caste system and the history of colonial domination connect, light up these unknown unacknowledged points of dialogue and synthesize a different relationship, a relationship that the tourist will experience as new. But is it? Perhaps it was there all along and may even be why the numinous other–fantastic is so powerful, why the picture–view has such a hold, pulling the tourist into India. Living in representations. But I am writing this as if the tout is conscious of this, the tout may be as caught in their position in the world as the tourist is, both are moving through their internal roles.

**FREEDOM AND THE WESTERN/FOREIGN WOMAN**

Many years ago in Turkey I first saw the way white women are drawn into the imaginary for the consumption of those living East of Europe. Not only in the West was the huge breasted blonde woman currency for epiphanic male desire. In Turkish comics the white blonde was also the apotheosis of lust, she crossed borders easily. The growing influence of Western and in particular, American culture, reaching into non–western cultures after the second world war via television and film, showed a particular type of image of the white woman.
Up till now I have mostly concentrated on the representations of the Indian and India that the tourist travels with. But what has the tout, himself understood about the Westerner and how the West represents itself and in particular the Western woman?

As has been clearly shown by Edward Said and others, the West manages representations of the Orient for Western and Oriental consumption. The hallmark of these imaginary constructions are their tendency to focus on negative differences when it came to (or comes to) instances where imperialist or colonialist policies needed to be justified. On the other hand, running underneath, beside and entwined into this negative strand of representation, was another type of Orientalism which actually admired, was fascinated by, learnt from and appropriated certain aspects of Indian culture. As we have learnt through the work of Freud and particularly Carl Jung, the displaced self, the projection, is potentially dangerous in human interaction and probably partly, also the basis for the accumulated human relations that congeal into Culture. With this in mind, the dangers of projection, the mechanics of projection hold important implications in the relationship between the tourist and the tourist tout, and in the wider historical memory, between the Indian and the figure of the coloniser. Eventually projections turn back on themselves and mirror their source.

A prevailing colonial perception of Hindu and Indian culture was that it was despotic, as noted above, and morally licentious. Much

---

226 Note: It must be noted that both Freud and Jung read Indian, Hindu philosophy. The deeper implications of Karma could have direct application to Jung’s theories around the Projection.

227 Note: For instance the notion of the rightness or righteousness of democracy; what does that become when it is imposed?
interest was taken in Indian sexuality and its supposed practices as we have seen, for instance, with Richard Burton. Now, however, that perception has turned and we see that a common understanding of the Western person in India, particularly a Western woman, is that she is amoral and sexually promiscuous and that Western economic intentions are despotic. These perceptions existed pre-independence as well and bolstered the independence movement. A further colonial perception of Indian men was that they were uncontrollably sexual and attracted to Western women. Indian men were commonly falsely accused of raping English woman. There was a sense of great outrage when it became clear that English women were themselves displaying untoward interest in Indian men.228

It becomes apparent that via the mechanics of projection and counter projections sexuality becomes a carrier of colonial tensions, but sex also constantly muddles and thwarts the attempt to fix Indian and English/Western relationships and notions of identity into static hegemonic positions, which is the aim of the projection. It is clear that the Indian was used as a screen or a field for the development of English sexuality and for the projection of Western sexual fantasy. Such a projection can still form a basis for the Westerner’s fascination with India. But this unruly sexuality perhaps does as much to undermine hegemonies than uphold them. Fascination meets fascination and insists on the creation of an original desire. Hegemonies insist on static ideas.

Hegemonies tend to fear difference, miscegenation and sexual diversity. In recent times the fear of miscegenation amongst Hindu nationalists (fundamentalists) has reemerged and become a staple of

228 Note: These tensions form the basis of E.M Forster's book A Passage to India. Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1979.
their propaganda in their insistence of purity of “race”.\textsuperscript{229} The main concern is with the mixing of Hindu with Muslim blood, but also any dilution of Hindustan, is frowned upon. Any relationship between the Western tourist and the tout attracts attention in places where the Hindu nationalists hold sway, like Varanasi and other important Hindu religious areas. Indian men accompanying Western women will be asked to explain their relationship to the Western women, to the police or even to complete strangers who hold no official position.

The police preside almost anarchically over two types of Law, either using the official Indian Penal Code or local traditional laws, which may have more in common with the ancient laws of Manu.\textsuperscript{230} The police will sometimes attempt to impose the guilt around miscegenation and the possibility of adultery onto the tourist and the tout, along with their obvious role in protecting the tourist from danger. Underneath the excuse of protection, the inquiry into a private relationship, also suggests a fundamental disapproval, of miscegenation, modernisation and westernization and particularly, feminism as well as jealousy and the potential to manipulate the tourists ignorance and extort money.


\textsuperscript{230} Bhattacharji, S. “Laws on Women”, in Bagchi, J. (ed) Indian Women: Myth and Reality, Sangam Books, London, 1995.p 28 - 32. Note: The Manu Samhita, an ancient text outlining rules of social behavior for Hindus. They can be very draconian in relation to woman's rights. Laws on adultery under Manu favored the husband in all instances. Adulterous woman were severely punished. Today the Indian penal codes definition of adultery is only one where a married woman has an affair with either an unmarrred or married man. “Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) perceives a consensual sexual intercourse between a man, married or unmarried, and a married woman without the consent or connivance of her husband as an offense of "adultery". A sexual link between a married or unmarried man and an unmarried woman or a divorcee or a widow, therefore, does not come within the ambit of "adultery". It also holds the man and not the (adulteress) "wife" of another man, who has been unfaithful to her husband, solely responsible for the sexual liaison. IPC, it seems, views "adultery" as an invasion of the right of the husband over his wife and therefore puts it under Chapter XX: "Of Offenses Relating to Marriage"." see, Adultery in the Indian Penal Code: Need for a Gender Equality Perspective, by K.I. Vibrate. at, http://www.cebciindia.com/lawyer/articles/2001v6a3.htm (3/9/05)
To begin to understand how the white woman may be perceived by the tout it seems necessary to understand how he has learnt to understand the role of women in his own society. What are the roles that he would expect an Indian woman to play? The stereotypical configurations are the dutiful daughter, who will do as her father tells her, the wife, epitomized as Sita, dutiful only to her husband and the ever loving Mother, who is both dutiful and powerful and formidable in her love for her sons. Motherhood in traditional India is the greatest attainment an Indian woman can achieve and in this sense the woman who is a Mother is deeply respected and the sanctity of her role is fiercely protected. These roles constitute what a good woman is and require her to be, as one educated village woman described it to me, without character. She must present herself, especially to strangers as a smooth totally unruffled pool of water, as a mirror for the men of the family to gaze into and see an honorable reflection of themselves.

For an understanding of how emotionally volatile the issue of keeping women safely ensconced in their family roles is, it is necessary to go back to pre-independence India and the debates about Indian masculinity. A common colonial criticism of Indian men was the claim that they were effeminate and weak for being so, and

231 Note: I need to acknowledge, due to lack of space that I have not included specifically Muslim roles for women. I have focussed on the stereotypical roles of women as they have been represented in Indian popular cinema, while these are generally perceived to be based on Hindu customs, it can safely be assumed that Muslim attitudes are to some extent similar.


233 Note: This is an upper-caste stereotype of the role of women, portrayed in the major and most popular Hindu texts like the Ramayana and the Maharbarata, and Hindi films. Amongst the extended family I know, who do not identify themselves as high caste, this is basically the ideal that they follow, except that the women are very robust and quite dominant within their expected roles. Just as the upper caste practice of dowry has spread to the lower castes so may upper caste conceptions of the role of women also influence the lower castes, especially if they aspire to raise themselves as equal to the upper castes.
that India was a feminine country that needed the guidance of British masculinity. This provoked a reaction amongst the more militant and aggressively Hinduvatta sections of the Nationalist movement, which resulted in a campaign to revive Indian maleness as distinct from femaleness. This was in direct opposition to Mahatma Gandhi's attempt and strategy to revive femaleness in maleness as a desirable and distinct power that construed the Indian as superior to the brute masculine English.

Charu Gupta identifies in late colonial India, a connection between the “reconstruction of patriarchy” and the “emergence of aggressive forms of Hindu organisation and ideology over the same period.” Women were expected to conform to the role of “guardians of the race”. They must live up to the expectations of a dominant masculinity that claimed superiority over them, in order to strengthen the nationalist cause. Even though the Mother as Shakti (female power) represents country and is “revered as a vital force in society” it will only be so, if she and those who represent her conform to the traditional values of womanhood.

The configurations between women and power in India is increasingly paradoxical and perhaps always has been. In the Hindu scriptures cosmic power resides in Shakti, as female power. There is an understanding and acceptance that all women in Hinduism have this power and may use it. Women in Indian public life hold socially

235 Ibid., p 1.
236 Ibid., p 8.
237 Ibid., p 4.
influential positions. Operating alongside this are extreme traditions and beliefs that oppress women.  

Men also must conform to a masculinity, which could not include homosexuality. Indian national identity and the success of independence in the eyes of the nationalist movement became dependent upon a heterosexual masculinity, that in recent years has become increasingly sexually aggressive. As an illustration of this and the lasting effects of the "nervousness of masculinity generated by colonialism" is the link made between boosting a sense of male pride and strength with the recent development and testing of nuclear bombs in India. Amrita Basu reports on the Bharatiya Janata Party’s abiding campaign of masculinization of the Hindu, during their term of office:

India declared its manhood last Spring by blasting five nuclear devices. “It had to be done,” said the outspoken Hindu nationalist leader Balasaheb Thakeray, “we had to prove that we are not eunuchs”. Picking up on the sexual subcontext, a cartoon in a leading Indian newspaper depicted Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee propping up his coalition government with a nuclear bomb. “Made with Viagra,” the caption read.

The Indian sexual scene at present is extremely confusing, if not hypocritical. Male desire is subjected to a barrage of highly suggestive sexualized media, (but still considerably controlled, when actual physical contact is concerned), in which, women are free
to dress provocatively and behave provokingly. The country is awash with the erotic and the pornographic at various levels. This fantasised sexuality that occurs over the body of the woman, is performing some sort of social role, a demented and desperate grasping of Hindu identity, expressing a fear that the encroaching world will annihilate Hindu identity unless it is masculinized sexually and aggressively to prove ownership. On the other hand, in real life, women in the majority of cases, especially in rural India, live very traditionally contained lives, with the expectation that they are virgins at marriage and will base their lives around the family only:

The attempts at forging a cohesive Hindu identity were made by privileging unity over difference, by the constant containing or minimizing of other identities.

The connection of the desire for successful decolonisation and successful nation building with a masculinity that defines itself upon women maintaining a fixed subordinate position, places Indian masculinity and nationhood in a precarious position with a very limited range of possibilities. In this formation of self how will the Indian male, see the alone female Western tourist?

The women who fall outside of family, in society and in the popular media are the courtesan, the prostitute and the vamp. The Courtesan, has a role to entertain men, to look after their emotional and physical needs, outside of their marriage. She was traditionally a dancer and an entertainer, but was not a prostitute. Very often she

---

Note: In the large cities of India this is now just beginning to change, although a recent comment by a prominent actress that “an educated male should not expect his bride to be a virgin” sparked angry and violent demonstrations in Chennai. see, Radhakrishna, G.S, et al, Whose a Virgin these days? The Telegraph, Calcutta, India. (4/12/05) www.telegraphindia.com/1051204/asp/others.html (5/1/06)


Gokulsing and Dissanayake. 1998. p 78.
was supported by one man only and in a long term relationship with him that was socially acceptable.

Colonialism and Western ideals of morality, have introduced a constraint on these sorts of relationships. Today, the bar girl and dancer may also be expected to work as a prostitute. In the villages the prostitute is known as the “town wife”, and has in the recent past been accepted as having an important role to play, particularly in the sexual education of boys. Social mobility is more possible for village prostitutes as well, it is not necessarily a downward spiral. Anecdotally, I know of one retired prostitute from the village of Ellora who has married and had children, having made enough money to buy a house and attract a husband. However, more distressingly young female children can still be sold or given to a temple under the auspices of a god or a goddess and will often end up in prostitution. As represented in films, however, the prostitute has a very ambiguous status.

The Vamp is a popular female villain in Indian films. She is associated with westernization and modernity. She is unfaithful and refuses to play by the rules and is only interested in her own pleasure. She does what she wants, drinks, smokes and wears scant clothing. She is often associated with Western women. In Indian film the vamp is very often played by a woman of mixed parentage, like the famous Anglo/Burmese actress Helen.²⁴⁶ She will usually have a Western name, like Mary or Rose. Gokulsing and Dissanayake point out an interesting contradiction in respect to the vamp in Hindu society and the cinema which it is representing and shaping:

Indian cinema is a product of cultural modernity and it has accelerated the process of modernity in India as few other media have. Yet the woman who chooses to identify herself with modernity is almost always portrayed as decadent and punished for it.  

Much is made of the vamp in Bollywood films. The dance routines play around the loquacious potential of any woman to become a vamp. The sexual fantasies of Indian men popularised in the media, construct their narrative support on the body of the vamp. Not on the wife. In village India there is a common saying, “A wife is only a wife for five minutes, after that she is mother, sister and daughter.”

It would seem that the Vamp in the Indian film imaginary actually springs into life as a result of the influx of the modern Western independent woman coming into India in the latter part of the colonial period. If she did exist in some form before the influences of modernity, it may only have been as a demon, such as the churel, a seductress who “strikes impotent any man who has intercourse with her.” The churel is the ghost of a dissatisfied woman, whose desires were never met.

Western women came to India as prostitutes during colonialism and today there are probably Western women working in Mumbai and other large Indian cities as prostitutes. The hawkers and touts talk about Western women tourists, independently selling their bodies to fund their travel through India. I have seen some evidence of this in

249 Ibid., p 56.
Pushkar. The prostitute, concubine or courtesan, however, have a recognised and tolerated role, they are part of the system.

The vamp is not a prostitute, although she may use men for money. It would seem what defines her, is her independence, her aloneness, she is for herself. She has been a powerful underground character that has defined morality for Indian society for some time, certainly since independence. The vamp has functioned as the line that a woman does not cross if she wants to maintain her position of respect and safety in society. Yet she also exists as a form of entertainment in film, which is the place where her character has been developed and to some extent given a place to breath. For this to have occurred means that she is wanted or needed partly, as I have suggested above as a deterrent, but also as a source of sexual excitement.

The Hindu God Krishna’s favourite erotic playmate, Radha, who despite being married to a mortal man, is never rebuked for her relationship with Krishna, may provide a space for the existence of the vamp in film. Like Radha, all the vamps in Indian films are famous for their dancing and singing. In the figure of Radha there could be a tacit acceptance for relationships outside of marriage for both Indian men and women.²⁵¹

However, the great difference between the vamp and Radha is that her identity opposes traditional roles for women and although she has a sexual role, it is a role that perverts Indian ideals of morality, insuring that she never enters the Family, she is always on

²⁵¹ Note: This is controversial, as the orthodox interpretation of the relationship between Krishna and Radha according to the Vaisnavas, is one of a god and his devotee. Vaisnavas worship Vishnu, Krishna being an avatara (descended from) Vishnu.
the outside. The repression of female sexuality, may result in boring sex, for the creation of children only. Is the image of the vamp (or Radha) needed to cross over into that “five minutes of being a wife”, being sexually available for the husband? For the wife it becomes “work”, but the imagination is useful. The vamp that appears in nearly every Bollywood film may well also play her part in the arousal of both the husband and the wife in many filial encounters across India. So in this way even the vamp has a place, an important but largely unacknowledged role to play.

The vamp could be a very healthy addition to the sexual pantheon, especially for women in India. It is a role that in a sense defies the Father. The psychological effects of father worship for a women could result in a very debilitating type of sexuality that is incestuous by nature. Much has been written about the incestuous nature of the Mother Son relationship in Hindu India. Little has been written, to my knowledge, about the relationship between father and daughter and the injunction on the daughter to see her husband as a father, a brother or a child. The vamp may cut across these hindrances to the possibility (if it is in fact possible) of an individualized sexuality, that can begin to exist outside the pressure of family.


253 Note: This supposes that Freudian notions of and discomforts about incest are universally natural or normal. According to some theories, because Indians are not so concerned with individuality, sexual expression or feelings are more fluid and not demarcated as essentially sexual, but fuse easily with feelings of love and responsibility. This is not suggesting that incest is acceptable in India. See, Bhaskaran, S. Made in India: Decolonizations, Queer Sexualities, Trans/National Projects. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004. p 100 - 101.

254 Note: Recently it has been noted that the vamp is beginning to disappear from Bollywood films, although I have seen some recent Indian films where she still weaves her hypnotic and dangerous seduction, wreaking havoc on men's lives.
The white woman appears for the rickshaw driver or the hawkers in another form and that is as the star protagonist in pornographic films. One hawker described to me how he saw, in the mid seventies for the first time, what he called a “blue movie” that had been imported from the West into India. It is common for the young men of the villages to see these films. Now they involve women and men of colour and all nationalities and can be accessed easily on the internet in India. Another hawker spoke candidly about how Western women are associated with different sexual practices and behavior, such as being more aggressive and expecting a level of enjoyment that, he said, the village men do not understand or anticipate in their relations with Indian women.

Some village men are disgusted with certain practices that they, curiously associate with Western women only, like cunnilingus, despite its representation in sculptural form on temples such as Khajuraho. One hawker who had worked for a long time with tourists and made a direct living out of his friendships with tourists told me that when he was young the older men would warn him not to have sex with Western women, as they were so hot that the penis would be permanently damaged; the churel mentioned above comes to mind. Another source told me of his experience of knowing a European woman who travelled with a “small animal like a rat”, that performed specific actions of petting for its mistress.

The hysteria around sex and the women who will or might do it, is fueled also by Indian women adopting a Western style performance of the erotic, such as the young actress Deepal Shaw’s travelling

255 Note: Built between the 9th and 12th Centuries, the Khajuraho Hindu and Jain temples in Madhya Pradesh are famous for an abundance of sculptural forms, most of them erotic, that have been sculpted into the architecture of the buildings.
school girl act called Baby Doll. India’s Sunday Express details her performance in Bhopal, not a big city, where six thousand men have come to watch her dance, dressed in a skimpy school uniform (by Indian standards) at a local school.256

In direct contrast another great and powerful image that surrounds the women of India is the Goddess in all her forms, especially as a saviour for the poor man and his family. This cannot be stressed enough in relation to the touting Hindu rickshaw driver and the hawkers at tourist destinations. An Indian man I know who had a close and mutually supportive relationship with a European writer who he worked for her in her field of research, describes her as “his Durga”. The propensity for the low caste, poor and economically marginalised to deify and enact their religious passion for their gods and goddesses into their actual life relationships, is profound.257 Indira Gandhi, India’s third Prime minister, was often referred to as Shakti.258 The role of the powerful, potentially violent female goddesses in Hinduism that press upon the psyches of Hindu men and women, have been variously interpreted and understood. The powerful goddess is seen by some as a projection of the sexual terror that men feel about their own desire for women, the projection of boys in fear of the sexual frustration of their mothers’ “all consuming love” and the expression of a necessary balance between destruction and creation. It has been suggested that the Goddess gives the Indian Hindu woman the right to express anger, to make demands and be strong.259 It has also been suggested that the

257 Kakar, S. In Shamans, Mystics and Doctors. 1996. p 4 - 5.
Goddess myths are used against mortal women as a form of containment. Shakti power was used symbolically by the nationalists in their fight against colonialism. Indian women, as Mother, were heralded as vital transmitters, protectors and producers of Hindu culture, but not themselves, able to step outside of gender and caste roles.²⁶⁰

Now we have the field that the female Western tourist walks into. When she is alone, in the eyes of those watching her, she is not alone. She walks with a pantheon of feminine possibilities. Is she a mother, is she a daughter, is she a prostitute or is she a vamp? She is most definitely in traditional India an aberration and different. Her role is ambivalent. But she is also by the fact of her association with the hegemonic West or her status as foreign tourist, protected to some extent from the difficulty a resident Indian woman would face, if she decided to travel alone and live like a tourist.²⁶¹ The having of money of course makes anything possible almost anywhere in the world. However, the effect of the pressure of difference on the sense of self and the way a relationship will form between the tourist and the tout is what I am concerned with here.

For the hawker or rickshaw driver who is touting, the white woman is a prize. She has money, she could make him a lot of money if it were possible to get into the right relationship with her. She has an aura, a magic. Every white woman is a potential blonde, she will carry that mystique, that imaginary. She is the perfect bundle, the

²⁶¹ Note: Now, young Indian women who have grown up outside India in the West are returning to India to travel, sometimes alone. Middle-class and wealthy city born women are also travelling alone in India as tourists. Both these phenomena are relatively recent and still unusual. My concern here is with the perceptions that the tout has grown up with, that have influenced his ideas about women.
embodiment of a fantasy come real. Indian men fuck their fantasies of salvation from a dreary, slavish existence, on the body of the white woman. The rickshaw driver, sitting for up to twelve or even sixteen hours in a noisy, exhaust flooded vehicle, will cherish the memory of a love affair with a white woman, who may pay him double or triple for his time. There seems to be little shame in this relationship for the Indian man, there is humility and the thrill of transgression.

Does the tout, the rickshaw driver, the hawker rebel against the tyranny of his own culture on the body of the female Western tourist? She becomes his enabler. He can parade his acquisition in front of his social superiors with impunity. And for her part the female tourist is safer with a low caste, poor man. He will never do anything that will cause her to seek help, to protect herself against him, because he has no money to buy his way out of a legal problem, as a richer man could.

In two recent Indian films, The Bollywood film, Lagaan and the British funded film Bend it Like Beckham, white women act as enablers for the principle characters who are Indian, the first is a male and the second a female. What happens in Lagaan is especially interesting because of its historical placement in colonial India (1893) in a fictitious garrison town.

During a drought the despotic British Captain Russell, makes a deal with the villages under his control, to play a game of cricket that they have to win in order to avoid paying tax. His sister, seeing the

---

unfairness of her brothers actions, offers to teach the Indians how to play the game. In doing this, she enables them to win and avoid both the tax and the humiliation that the Captain was obviously most interested in achieving. She, however, also falls in love with the Indian hero of the story, a love that remains unrequited for the rest of her life. The relish with which this is conveyed, at the end of the film, is unmistakable. She goes home to England and never marries, but remains “Bhuvan’s Radha” forever. Bhuvan himself marries his village sweetheart, thus protecting the purity of the Hindu “race”.

It is fascinating to watch the seductive phantom of Radha move across the two main female characters of the film, the Indian and the Western. Radha remains within the boundaries of the respectable, where as just for a moment, the Western female displays the possibility of the vamp, the misleader of good Hindu men away from their traditions and roles, into debauchery. In this way the vamp is almost a coloniser, associated as she is with westernization and modernisation. The white woman in Lagaan seems to fit more sympathetically with the role of the courtesan than the vamp, who is the woman in Indian film who the hero turns to when his life is in chaos. There may be sex in this relationship, or not, as is the case with Lagaan.

The courtesan, the vamp and the Western woman seem to act as a liminal space for the Indian man, a place of respite, to take refuge in or help him solve a problem. The white woman in the film Lagaan takes his side also, against her own people. The implication is that she is more attracted to the Indian man and India than her own men and country and that Indian men are more powerful and sexually more attractive than white men. Some scores, some pay backs, are settled for the indian man through the Western white woman.
In *Lagaan* there is a reversal of the role of victim for the Indian, both through the process of winning the cricket game and in the favored treatment given by the white sister. Sex also figures in this reversal, even though she and the hero had no sex, the possibility can be imagined and anticipated by any person who sees the film. The white woman represents the vulnerable body of the coloniser, owned by India’s tormentors, but obviously not exclusively because she willingly, can change sides. She shows that there is no need for a rape, a common fear and accusation leveled against Indian men during colonial times, but is actually desirous for relationships with Indian men. This is a marvelous coup for the Indian male because just by the force of his natural intelligence, strength and charm will he win, in direct contrast to the brute force that the English need in order to impose their desires. It is a common belief amongst the rickshaw drivers and others who are touting for the favours of Western tourists that white men are not very strong sexually.

Historically, the relationship between Indian men and Western women shows a similar transgression that takes place in the film *Lagaan*. A number of famous women activists married or joined forces with Indian nationalist in the fight for independence, in direct opposition to the Raj. Agnes Smedley and other committed feminists and socialists, found a great feeling of empathy with the Indian struggle for autonomy, by relating it to their own struggle and opposition to patriarchy and capitalism.264

The white woman's presence during colonialism “problematizes important issues of gender and race, of feminism and nationalism.” This is especially true of the white woman who takes an independent stance from the Raj, who attempts to distance herself from the inhumane and imperialist agendas of the Raj. The independent Western women who supported the nationalist movement, many of whom were unmarried and lived unrestricted and unrestrained by family, also presents a concept of womanhood previously unheard of in India. Only Goddesses could move with such freedom.

Western women, such as Orientalists and devotees of Gurus, who supported the independence movement and praised Indian customs, were often appreciated by pre–independence Indian society. Western women who fell outside of this respectful or adulatory relationship, supporters of the Raj, or social critics like Catherine Mayo, who may not have supported the Raj, but were critical of aspects of Indian traditional society, were viewed with much suspicion by the nationalist, independence movement. Depending on how she placed herself, she was the decadent “white female devil”, or she was a “white goddess”. The Indian nationalist movement demonized Western women as part of its propaganda, depicting them very similarly to some discourses about the West today, either Islamist or Hindu:

The stereotype of the white woman was that she was not much better than a prostitute – immodest in dress and indulging in drinking, dancing, smoking and promiscuous behavior.

265 Ibid., p 8.
266 Ibid., p 8.
Western women in India find themselves, uncomfortably situated on a border between respectability and the “bad” woman. There was a high degree of hypocrisy, of course, in the objections of the nationalist movement to women of bad character. It was not only in the West that prostitutes existed and were used. But in India these roles are clearly demarcated. What the Western woman does is blur the boundaries between respectability and the bad. The point about this here is that the white Western woman will still find herself dealing with these perceptions about her today. And it is the white woman, not the the white man, who is viewed with the most suspicion, but also with a highly charged erotic interest. However, now in contemporary India, Indian women are beginning to blur these boundaries themselves. A stark difference is emerging between what is acceptable in the city and what is not acceptable in the countryside.

The following tragic event epitomizes this difference in attitudes between the city and the village. In early 2005 a young woman, from a middle-class background, was raped by a policeman in a middle-class area of Mumbai. Along with the horror and media attention this rape aroused, due to its circumstances, it happened in broad daylight, inside a police checkpoint and the victim was middle-class, there was another more local discussion about respectable clothing. In the village where I stayed the women tended to blame the girl because she wore a blouse with no sleeves!

The perceptions that the tout will have of the Western white woman in her collision with Indian society arises out of these historical relationships, that are reworked in film and television dramas. The gor (white person) in hotels in Mumbai are often called upon by Bollywood scouts, asking if they would like to experience first hand a role in a Bollywood film or television series. Often these roles, bit
parts as extras, use the white person as a sign of depravity, as with the vamp character indicated earlier, or the white actor will play an evil character. It is a sort of sly, but good humored trick on the part of the Bollywood casting agents. Most often the tourists have no idea what their actual role is and what they are really being called on to represent. These representations of the Western character by Indian media, thrown out to a mainly Indian audience world wide, muddy the good, humane, righteous Christian image that the West would like to portray itself as. But, of course the West muddies its own image in the eyes of the South Asian viewer.

In the West there has been a general, although not uncontested, acceptance of free sexual expression as something synonymous with democracy. Freedom and the right to create an independent self identity, lubricated by sex, is steadily making its way into Indian media as well, although similarly resisted by sections of Indian society. The white Western woman when she enters India, reflects the social and political hypocrisies that are structured around gender definitions and roles in India. She, as tourist, enacts, in her semi-commodified state, the placement of sex as a language that runs through capitalist interventions. So in this way we can see the powerful way that sex and desire actually acts as a carrier of culture and cultural change and as a political provocateur, upsetting traditions and both entrenching and destabilizing hegemonic conditions. When her seductive body is used in advertising, she could be seen as an agent for neocolonialist intentions by Western consortiums to manipulate Indian desires for Western materialism; collusive with the kudos that being white has in India. Her freedoms, sexual, physical and mental, also contribute to

Note: Desire here refers to its relationship to sex, acquisitive desire (commodified), and the desire for change and the freedom from tradition.
the destabilization of patriarchal control over women's lives in India, as Indian women want to have the same opportunities.

The white Western woman is often seen in the background of Bollywood and Indian films. In Mira Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding*, during a party scene, before the wedding, there is suddenly and inexplicably a blonde, slender white woman sitting in Western clothing amongst the more traditionally clothed Indians. She is never introduced to us and she is never seen again in the film! Similarly, although with a very different agenda, the toxic film *Jism* (Body) enacts the usual concoction of the vampish Sonia, (the use of the Western name suggesting, Eurasian or half caste) embracing a “good” man in a sexually parasitic relationship and destroying him and herself in the process. The almost mythical intensity to the beauty that imbues and surrounds the two Indian protagonists is contrasted with the inclusion, in the background, of less glamorous Western female tourists.

Another history, largely unexamined in relationship to India is the period between the 1960s, lasting in its greatest intensity into the late 1970s. This period has variously been called the counterculture movement or the hippy movement. India’s role as a place for self discovery continued into this period as the younger generation of the sixties explored the possibilities of self in a land of profound differences to their own countries. The ideals, beliefs and assumptions that they brought with them, that consequently influenced their behavior, often clashed with the social mores of

---


Indian society. The section of Indian society that most often came into contact with the young or not so young traveller moving across the country on a small budget, are the poorer Indian, the rickshaw drivers, hawkers and people running cheap hotels and those who worked around or in these places that the tourists congregated in.

The assumptions that the tourists bring with them and the resulting behavior will colour the perceptions that the tourist touts form about Western people, and in particular, Western women. The major ideal and assumption was probably that of notions of freedom. If we could talk of a Western persona, if there is such a thing, then the ideal of freedom would make up a central plank of Western identity. The process of modernisation and modernity involves a constant breakdown and challenge to tradition, with the overriding emotional impetus behind that process being an ideal of individual freedom. The ideals that are enclosed within the word freedom could be summed up as notions of sexual freedom and freedoms of choice and association and the freedom to construct a self of one’s choosing. More unacknowledged freedoms implicated the Western traveller in the potential offered by Western capitalism and society to assume an attitude of superiority and right, as the blameless and innocent. The notion and ideal of Individual freedom is what capitalism and neo-liberal economics rest on. It is to the individual that they speak, in contrast to a collective or a community, and yet it would seem that what the “hippy” was looking for, like many other Europeans before them, was an escape from the alienating experience of a society based on individualism.

The escape itself, however, is fused with an ideal of individual freedom, a notion that does not hold the same emphasis in traditional village India or the slum areas of large towns where the tourist touts
will be living\textsuperscript{270}. In these places the emphasis on a sense of commitment to the family, its values and its survival is very strong. This is not to say that Indians are not individuals, but that freedom and the individual are not necessarily idealised and co–joined in the same way as they are in the West. I emphasize the word individual as an idealised conception that the West has of its self. However, especially in relation to the lives of women in India, a focus on individual freedom as a concept, would, in many sections of Indian society, be highly contentious, unimaginable and undesirable. In fact it could be seen as a sentence of social alienation for a woman.

Immediately, the process or the possibility of escape from their own society into a freedom that might be available in India, for the Western tourist, is thwarted unless their ideal of individual freedom is examined. For that to happen the Westerner would have to give up self as they understand it. The degree to which the Westerner does

\textsuperscript{270} Note: I need here to state clearly that “individual freedom” is very different from the use of the word ‘freedom’ as it is associated with the independence movement (the Quit India campaign) of colonial India. I also need to alert the reader to the complexity and contentiousness around the debate about the relative position of the individual in relation to the strength of community, in India. Does community come first or is there and has there always been the possibility for a notion of individual self, as separate from community traditions? The idea that there was no place for the individual in Indian society was a common trope of Western and Indological conceptions of India. In opposition to this reading, the presence of the yogi, the sadhu and even the Bhakti worshipper could be posited. Comparatively within the differing, but nevertheless systematic organisation of the social, that exists and existed in both Europe/England and in India, it could be claimed that there was and is no great difference to the propensity of individualism. All systems press on, shape and limit people in their actions. However, similarly to the growing contradictions around sexual freedom today, when Indian film is compared with life outside the cinema, the male, and in more recent films, female protagonist, in many Indian films, is a rebel who is trying to break out of traditional conceptions of their social roles to do with status, caste or gender. These would include the films I have already cited, “Bend it Like Beckham”, “Bride and Prejudice”. Vinay Lal cites older films as showing a process where the rebel or the outsider is viewed sympathetically, pitting himself against authority, but nevertheless, in the process of redemption, is often drawn back into community, without really changing community. In the idealised world of Bollywood there is no “other”, except the vamp. see, Lal, V. “The impossibility of the outsider in the modern Hindi film”. in, Nandy, A. (ed) The Secret Politics of Our Desires: Innocence, Culpability and Indian Popular Cinema. Zed Books Ltd, London, 1998. p 228 - 259.
not or has not understood their constructions of self becomes apparent when confronted with where the self is placed in traditional India. Even taking into account postmodern claims of the destabilization of the self, the West still constructs a self that is cumbersome and over-burdened with notions of individuality and freedom when faced with the collectivized constructions of self that exists in village India.

Similar to Rolland's complaint in the early twentieth century, the counterculture movement wanted to find ways to live outside of (to transcend) the materialistic “nightmare” that, for them, modern society had become. Bohm identifies the counterculture in the United States as a “sociological phenomenon born out of a major disturbance in the national consciousness”. This “disturbance” was created by a dissatisfaction with the alienation caused by the lack of “meaningful relationship” inherent in modern work practices and as he suggests, demoting human relationship and value to “property ownership” and the “capacity to consume”. Locked inside their modernist notions and expectations of individual freedom, the counterculture looked for an alternative and for some, that translated itself into the pre-technological. “Third World underdevelopment had romantic precedence over First World overdevelopment.”

Bohm uses the word “dispossessed” to describe the emotional state of those who identified themselves with a dissatisfaction with modern, Western, capitalist, life and turned to India for salvation. A curious word. It suggests more than just disquiet or anger over the way life was lived in the West. It suggests some sort of disenfranchisement, loss of power or a perception of powerlessness,

\footnote{Bohm, R. 1982. 197- 198.}
\footnote{Ibid., p 197.}
(lack). As if something had been taken away from them. The capacity or potential to form resistance seems to have been passed up as an alternative to putting up with or accepting the situation at home and the only way out was to escape into notions of liberating the mind and soul from within. India then became synonymous with that “within”. India for these people is not a country but a state of mind. India is an “idea”.

The Western tourist’s own place is a state of mind they want to reject and from that stance of rejection they move into an imaginary space that they perceive as revolutionary as liberating, without realising that its a space already well furnished by passed inhabitants. I am interested in this state of mind that seems to suggest a disengagement with the actual physical world and wonder if it is synonymous with commodification, the way that in capitalist societies everything can at some stage become a commodity. It is clear that commodification is not only about objects, in fact the object is only half of what a commodity is, it is as much a thing of the mind, of the imagination, of the emotions and desire as it is a physical thing. The person moving into India with this imaginary of India, as metaphysical space, is coming to build a new self, or believes they are a new self in their capacity to reject their own culture. Yet they have no connection with the land, they move outside of family and from an Indian point of view they are visitors and outsiders, family being the most important social unit in India. Ironically, the only place this person will occupy in India is the market and they will stay in the market, the very place and relationship they were trying to run from at home.

273 Ibid., p 199.
The state of not belonging is obviously what distinguishes the tourist from the Indian. But the tourist feels a state of belonging in their imagination and assumes it as a right.\textsuperscript{274} And that imaginary, the idea of India, though coloured by individual predilections, is a massive construction that exists in the collective cultural imaginary of the West and is supported by the capitalist processes of commodification. The tourist industry in India uses that imaginary to attract tourists to India and often openly supports the rights of the tourist to do as they want while paying lip service to the problems and complaints of local people adversely affected by tourism. Bohm cites the issue over nudity on Goa’s beaches, in which local Indian women bitterly complained to their local Government, but to little avail.\textsuperscript{275}

However, problematizing the stark differences around personal identity formation between Western and Indian, are the processes of modernisation that the Government of India, under Nehru, decided would be the direction that India took. Inherent within that process of modernisation there will be a tension between a collective-based society structured around family, caste and religion and the global to local nexus of capitalism with modernisation as its driving force. The tourist is another arm to that confrontation between collective traditional India and the individualistic influence of modernisation. The tourist and especially the female tourist who forms a relationship with the Indian tout, brings the complexities of the meeting between the traditional and the modern into the personal. The process may create new tensions or more intense

\textsuperscript{274} Note: It could be said that tourists, to a greater and lesser degree collectively form a transient and loosely connected community in India amongst themselves. In places like Goa or Kovalam, (Kerela) tourists come back every year to escape the European winter, they stay in the same hotels or flats and form relationships of different kinds with local people. Sections of the local population become involved and dependent on that community, both economically and personally. The state and tension of belonging and not belonging shifts.\textsuperscript{275} Bohm, R. 1980. p 187- 188.
confusions for the tout or it may increase an awareness and understanding that can contain and manage the differences that will surface in the relationship.

What the female tourist has is a freedom of movement far greater than the freedom most Indian women have at present. The community outrage amongst villages along the coastal areas and beach resorts of Goa at the scant clothing and sexual habits of Western tourists has been well documented. Bohm describes how local Indians walking along a beach in Goa watch two American women sitting naked at the edge of the sea. The tourists ignore the Indians, which curiously turns the Indians into tourists and the tourists into those that belong.276

This process has become part of the Indian tourist’s itinerary; going to India’s beach resorts to see the foreign women in their bikinis. Large groups of men walk together along the beach, they stop and stand huddled together, gazing at a near naked woman lying sun baking on the beach. The response of the Indian is variable, for some there seems to be an acceptance and a sense of appreciation or satisfaction, for others there is still an element of cultural shock. There is the issue of morality and surprise that any woman could be lying doing nothing for so long and very often alone, an experience quite outside that of most Indian women. It might be useful to pause and question whether this thing I am calling “freedom” would be considered a freedom in India, in contrast it may be seen as an imposition placed on Western women by their culture that to be accepted they have to dress and behave in a particular way. The West as a culture of excess imposes a notion of freedom that is actually an alienation, an imposed isolation, subsumed or hidden by excessive

consumption that involves an untrammeled, desperate and continuous production of desires. This may be how we are seen by some Indians and particularly those from rural India.

The performance that the tourists play out in the spaces inhabited by the local village people has the quality of myth or of Bollywood film, where the normal rules of society are thrown off. Western women look available, they are often unmarried and seem to be passed around or willingly go from man to man. The white woman can get away with it, she can come and go as she likes. She has another law and is under another law. She represents a coveted fantasy come true. Somehow she is a woman who can be screwed without the dilemma of the moral issues around ruining a woman or the pollution issues of being with a woman outside of caste. She has no visible family and so no “father” to answer to. This is how she becomes another country for the tout with a different law. She also becomes the possibility for a different future and the possibility of going to another country to live and have a more prosperous future.

In the beach resort of Kovalam, in Southern India, the beach boys who hire out beach chairs and umbrellas for the Western tourists, are also looking for a woman they can establish a relationship with. The primary aim is to get out of India and into either Europe or the United States of America or into Japan, preferably as a husband. In the Buddhist retreat village of Bodhgaya, Bihar State, there are reports of the local guides marrying Japanese tourists, sometimes as a second wife.

The white woman and now women coming from Asian countries like Japan or South Korea, carry this aura of freedom for the rickshaw driver the hawker and the guide who are touting. For them, a relationship with a white woman is an opportunity to be free of traditional village and family constraints. For the white woman such a relationship offers the possibility for a greater degree of control over her relationship with a man. What he wants to do is experience the freedom she can offer him. Ironically she has come to find a freedom in India, that she cannot feel at home, this is what India is supposed to hold for her and embodies for her. Where her freedom is of course is in her ability to travel unproductively, to travel on surplus. The freedom is in the surplus money she carries with her. The relationship she has with India is part mirage, it is really a relationship with the freedom offered to, or obtained by her, through her relationship to an economic hegemony. It is out of her placement within that hegemony that she is in relationship with India. This is how the tout sees her for what she really is and this is his relationship with her.

The tout may see other things however, which will question the assumptions of her freedom. The Western white woman offers him a freedom through the representations of herself that precede her in her travels. She herself finds she is wading through assumptions about who she is and what she will let “you” do, that have accumulated in popular perceptions, encouraged by Western and Indian media, in all its forms from film, advertising and pornography and pre-independence propaganda. And the agency with which she chooses to travel alone to India, transposing the rights she has at home, onto India, also precedes her, as a history entwined with colonialism. Her assumed right to rebel and stake out her freedom in India precedes her and clashes with the roles expected of Indian women. These perceptions that the tout will have, as we have noted
are conflictual between an image of the white woman as nurturer, accessed through the occurrence of a powerful Mother cult in India, with, as expressed in the film vamp, a seductress, dangerous and capable of an evil influence over men. But these representations don’t begin and end in India, they flow into India as part of the process, imperative or coercive (corrosive), apparatus of modernisation.

The white woman has been placed into a specific and special role in this process. As she arrives in India, she moves into an economic zone where she carries symbolic imagery that represents wealth, privilege, power, but as representative of these things she herself takes on commodity status, she is what can be held and possessed if one were to have all these other things. She comes with certain commodities like cars or household appliances or perfumes or clothing. In this way she is one of the vehicles, a vehicle of fascination, fascination being necessary for the establishment of a powerful selling point, through which Western influence and trade can seem attractive. She becomes the creative hinge that I described in part one of this paper.

In an advertisement for a clothing company called Killer Jeans, a young Indian man lies on his back on the floor, side on to us, he turns his head and looks at the viewer, his eyes and the languor of his body have the affect of someone whose desires have been satiated. (Fig.1) In his right fist he holds a handful of the long blonde hair of a young white (or made to look white) woman. She could be dead. Her head rests on his shoulder her torso disappearing off to the right hand side of the image. Other parts of her body appear, more alive and more provocatively, in different sections of the image.
Fig: 1 Advertisement for Killer Jeans by Kewal Kiran Ltd, India, 2005.
What this advertisement is selling is the jeans that the young man is wearing along with the kudos that these jeans will give him and in this instance that involves something attractive about having the company of or having the control over this white woman. The overall image has something of a jump edit about it. Three scenes suggest the following. The first is the clichéd scene of the young man holding the woman's hair. He has power over her, she has given her power to him, he may have had to fight her or compel her to surrender in some way. Behind this scene there is another, where the same young woman stands powerfully holding a sword in front of her that descends from directly in front of her crutch to the floor, suggesting that she is dangerous, and has power. It could be argued that the power is phallic and not her own, that she has usurped masculine power or that the sword is a sign that she is coercible, the sword is her own surrender as a sign to the impending male domination. Off to the left she appears again, also the lower half of her body, this time lying down with one leg bent, knee pointing to the ceiling. Here she may be submissive, the raised leg indicating availability.

It would seem that the creator of this image has designed it so that we read it backwards and see it as a story, like a film. It intends to engage the imagination and suggests the ambivalence and disquiet in India about westernisation and modernity. In this image the Western white woman is both attractive in her individuality and dangerous, especially as a potential destabilising influence on the traditional role of women and family in India. The young man has to tame her as the primary threat to his traditions. In an article on the mediating and balancing role that Bollywood films play between tradition and narcissistic westernisation and modernity in India, Madhu Kishwar states:
People in non-western cultures feel threatened by this kind of individuality because it undermines traditional institutions, especially the family.278

There is, however, a concomitant desire for modernity here, represented by the wearing of a pair of jeans. Jeans have long been a very popular status symbol in India and a sign of being modern and powerful. Very few young men will happily agree to wear the traditional lungi or dhoti. Possessing a Western woman has the same sort of kudos about it, representing sexual power and control. There is also another reason why the Western white woman and not a young Indian woman is used in this scene. It would be sacrilegious to the sacred ideal of Indian womanhood to suggest that she is available to the young Indian man in this way. It is possible to stage the white Western woman in this role because this is how Western media, especially in advertising will represent women. Representations of white men are also used to sell Western orientated products, white skin itself, being another conveyer of superiority and status. But the woman in a system of authoritative patriarchal, heterosexuality, is the more powerful carrier of desire.

So as the Indian man or woman dreams of or buys these Western type of commodities as opposed to Indian objects, how much is this acquisitiveness or the dream of it, folded into the fantasy of association with or having sex with the Western woman, how much is the kudos of having Western or modern things inferred in a specific desire for a skin colour, or even interpolated into a revenge for the Indian? The interests of Western and foreign hegemony in India with its use of the white woman in advertising problematizes the possibility

of a white woman achieving anything other than a superficial relationship with India or Indian people. The use of her image precipitates a quagmire of preconceptions where her self or any notion she may have had of herself will have to struggle to maintain itself. So her potential to be free in India is created by the actual power of her rights as a Western or foreign tourist and limited by the types of representations of her that have influenced the attitudes of her host.

These representations, these roles and scenes that she finds herself placed in, acting in, are the imaginaries of her forebears. The fact of the drama comes home, when she discovers that her freedom to look at India comes with the price that she herself is under intense scrutiny and speculation. Speculation and interest suggesting far more than a detached position on the part of the tourist tout, she is merchandise. Her freedoms are curtailed by her freedom. The place that she finds herself in merges into such environs as the languorous danger of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’ *Odalisque with Slave*. 1839 (Fig 2) This scene has not only jumped into Indian imaginaries, they are still her own, although she may never know it; they lie beneath the edifice of Western democracy. The white woman entices you into the market, she will help us to make you desire what we want you to desire. Recall Reid-Pharr’s warning, at the beginning of Chapter 1, about desire’s complicity to pull us back into disempowering relations; an insulted desire that wants to prove itself. And you the tout, are you the black man standing at guard looking towards the door, waiting for the master to arrive or will you become the master and dwell in the master’s room with the master’s mistress? It does not matter which you decide for as long as you *both (all)* remain in *that* room you will always have a master.
Fig: 2 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. “Odalisque with Slave”, 1839, Oil on canvas. Fogg Art Museum
CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to pull the description of a type of practice into its relational ramifications, the way it both confronts and colludes within political and social paradigms. The practice of “working through condensation”, which I have positioned as a practice of dérive, gathers through a process of desire, attraction and fascinations. It pulls into its circumference the numinous value of sunyatta, bija and kama. The process began with the realisation of the Hindu/Buddhist perception of the formless. My own interpretation of sunya gave permission for a certain awry, erratic confusion to exist, the experience of indeterminate hours on some days, when forthright intentions slip away at the behest of a glowing or glowering apprehension.

The formless gave a containment to this process. The practice of alertness to condensing imagery out of a formless space may have precipitated the propensity for fascination, distilled it or simply opened a space for awareness of it. Fascination looms as a herma (sign post) or a caveat, as I have positioned it in this thesis, mostly associated with repressed or thwarted desires. All along I have been aware that this might be quite wrong: to relegate fascination with the repressed and sick. But my defense is that it seems to move from a compressed or condensed space; only a tiny aperture could give such force, into a dangerous glory of discovery. Fascination could be a cold
desire reflecting the impersonal in relationship, impersonal because the self is projected too strongly into what is fascinating. Fascination can also lead, as I have tried to elucidate, to an understanding, as it forces its way into relationship. In this process what fascinates, in the case of this thesis, persons and their place, will again place a limit on the fascinated. Being fascinated will devolve into its source, away from what fascination projected itself onto, back into its desires, in other words my desires will become plain to me.

The understanding I have reached is predicated on the acceptance that there are histories of the self, stored away, that under the right circumstances will make themselves known. The process of becoming fascinated can play a part in this knowing. This knowing, that is self reflective, uncomfortable and confronting, is the beginning of an understanding that takes the self beyond its immediate gratification and looks into its contributions within the relational processes that involve the political and social formations that I/we live in.

From this point, desire along with its repressed manifestation, as fascination, is what needs to be understood. If relational awareness is the possible outcome of the mess that fascination can produce, then how do we position the importance of relationship and relational awareness within the processes of desire and how it acts within the social and the political? What role does and should relationship play in the social and what place does relationship have in the formations of our desires?

The Freudian conception of condensation as imagery gathering in dreams, a process that seems to be beyond the control of the dreamer, leads to a realisation of desire as a constant destabiliser of
intention. This laissez-faire desire needed a containment more suited to the social atomizations of capitalism. The containment of relationship that developed, was one that would not interfere with questions about the ethical and community value of the voracious capitalism of the late 19th Century. Psychoanalysis fitted itself nicely, out of expediency, as the form of cure best suited for the fractured individual, adrift from social relations in community. And desire must be repressed.

Developing, in stark contrast to the burgeoning middle-class discovery of desire as neurosis, were formations of collectivity gathering around the oppressed and exploited people of the working classes. Here relationship and desire tend towards the collective, a most frightening thing. This collective consciousness that Marx drew into his theories of capitalism, that demythologized the notion of an inevitability of the power of capital over the power and desires of labour, led to another containment of relationship. This is a collective relationship predicated on the varied material conditions of human existence and an awareness of class struggle.

I have argued that desire contained within an awareness of relationship, could enhance a new role for historical materialist practice. Relationship must be aware and not just gratuitous, also not just satisfying a need to belong. An autonomous desire developed free of/and in spite of the attempted persecutions of authority, will enable understanding. Combined with the connective assertions of a practice like historical materialism, which looks at the effect of productive practices on human relationships, awareness of desire could put new life into collective projects resisting oppression and exploitation. The possibility of an autonomous desire needs to be believed in, a self making desire, distilled out of the sensate joy of
one’s own body. Then perhaps the lustre promise of capitalism that depends on assuaging all the divided lacks, will have less entry points. Equally the sacrifice of integrity in exchange for the desperate need to belong may also lose its grip on individuals.

The divisiveness of capitalism throws desire out of relationship; the last two chapters of this thesis concentrate on that affect. By commodifying each other in the struggle for survival, we become for each other brief enabling points of arrival, enabling points of departure and enabling points of belonging for as long as is necessary. For each other the tourist and the tourist tout both enable and struggle against each others constructions of self and other, forged out of the social and economic systems that they live within.

**ENABLING**

As I have argued above the white woman can act as an agent for change in the imaginary of the Indian man. This can be perceived in certain films and in the desires of the tourist tout, the rickshaw drivers, the beach boys in Kovalam and the tourist hawkers and guides. However, in her imaginary, India also functions as an enabler, a place for change and sometimes epiphany and as Said and others have argued, Orientalist and Indological scholarship is itself an enabler as an edifice behind which occurs the Western constructions of self.

The cycles of enabling function around degrees of alienation from one’s own place, degrees of difficulty in having agency in the self that has been construed out of the process of creating aliens.
Alienation exists as the outcome of creating someone else as alien, to pit one’s self against, and not be like, to be in opposition to. This process inhibits relationship, as sections of disowned self that are projected out onto another, result in lost possibilities, less potential for understanding of self and little possibility of making connections with others. In Chapters One and Two of Part Two, I have tried to show that capitalism depends upon this process of lost or limited relationship. Alienation in the Marxist sense, of pitting worker against worker and replacing human relationship with relationships of fetish for an object, forms the basis for this loss of relationship and the concomitant creation of others or aliens as social glue.

The fantasy and the compulsive fascination moving into fetishism are the dysfunctional pathways for desire in an alienating system. But, here I hesitate for though they may well be pathological outcomes of capitalism, they are nethertheless a saving spark of life that will force relationship to happen in an oppressive environment. And as I have argued, this has the potential for a disabling of capitalist power as an edifice of the self. This self constructed out of denied shards of an imagined other, falls, and what is left, what exists beneath that edifice, confronts the other in the self and meets the Real. The Real being that, that leads into relationship, the connective. Your eyes are like my eyes, they don’t look the same, but like mine they look out and have a feeling, the same as your skin, your hair, your excitements, your loss and your pain.

What I have attempted to show is something that occurs on the margins and only under particular conditions. It is those conditionalities that I have been concerned with. The pathways laid down, that accidentally lead into an intimate and estranged relationship between the tourist and the tourist tout, are not meant to
result in connection. But through desire, need and fascination, operating within the processes of condensation and dérive, with their penchant for transgression, relationship happens. A mimic relationship to begin with, one that is stained and accused with that perception, but that acts through and dislodges the imperatives that were in the field. Those imperatives are those whose intentions are more concerned with rejections, limits and restrictive demarcations of association.

Enabling fascinations and fantasy imagined whole ecologies of self, a place to be made whole. This hope forms around the travelling self going out to look for the well rounded and belonging self. And therein lies the possibility for something new. There is more depth to this relationship than this thesis would suggest, surely there is some possibility of originality between these two as they recognise and confront those structures that would separate them. Awareness (recognition) of those alienating imperatives creates the space needed to slip between them, to outwit them with intimacy. There are other recognitions more difficult, that are confined, constrained, within the imperatives of survival, that they don’t speak of, that can shatter the attempt at trust. Those difficult recognitions see the terrain of other, the terrain of the alien, shuddering within the boundaries of the controls of wealth verses scarcity, nestled down beneath the glorious, excited, gift and discovery of new relationship.

The relationship between the tourist and the tout pulls into its orbit all those constructions that create the conditions of our separations, our conflicts, and the desires that seek life in such a tragedy of illusion and the deluded. These two will have to deal with it. The relationship that they form reflects the character of relationship under contemporary global capitalism. Through their relationship they
will see their world, they will suffer their world more acutely, because they have refused their allotted place to some extent. Although that place is echoed in the relationship, always for the relationship to survive they have to move through with the awareness of separating pulls, forces, alienations of the incumbent economic power structures that they move in. The needs, the deprivations of that economic power structure force a type of relationship, the intimate/estranged relationship I spoke of above.

Within the transgression of the relationship are other layers of transgression. One disobeys the social mores, refuses the comfort of like with like and so appears as something discordant, but another layer of/to the transgressor may use the attraction of risk, the attraction of buying a person, using the power of having surplus to purchase on the fears of another, that person’s (the tout’s) deep desire for survival laced within the desire for the tourist. The transgressive is only transgressive because it moves into the forbidden space of the other, enjoying precisely that delineation of otherness. Belonging and survival are the twin concerns of the tourist and the tourist tout. So again transgression balances precariously on the possibility of relationship of awareness, care, compassion or dips into a desire that will eventually devolve into the denial of relationship, as we become commodities for each other.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


George, S. Another World is Possible If... Verso, London, 2004.


Jameson, F. Postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism. Duke University Press, Durham,1991


Kakar, S. *The Indian Psyche*. Oxford University Press. New Delhi, 1996.


Kumar, D. *Colonialism, Property and State*. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998.


