Theorising the Gift through Visual Culture

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University 2004
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship of the gift and its resistances to meaning. The ambiguous and unstable meaning attributed to the gift is examined via critical theory, particularly within the methodology of Derridean analysis. Derridean deconstruction operates as an analytic process that mirrors certain features of the gift and these features are utilised to investigate the visual in terms of the gift as a system of giftness, hence an economy of exchange. Giftness is claimed to function as a sliding quality of meaning that contributes to the instability of discursive exchange with respect to the gift. Selected Foucauldian and Kristevan concepts are employed to devise a typology of gifts and discursive practices in terms of the image. The spatio-cultural qualities of giftness are discussed; certain gifts creating forms of resistance and disruption through disguising representations. Such disruption operates within a type of space that can be seen as socio-culturally defined and played out through various textual orders.

The relationship between subjectivity and the gift is questioned from a psychoanalytical viewpoint. It contemplates the interpersonal qualities between pleasure, play and the gift as circumstances of exchange in subjectivity, also looking at how pleasure and play operate in terms of the subject and the gift. Finally, the analytic situation of transference and countertransference is read as a discourse of the gift relationship and a form of gift exchange (between analyst and analysand as giver and receiver).
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Introduction: On Giftness

The term ‘giftness’ that is used throughout this thesis draws on certain parameters of distinction. Any interaction with the gift via processes of exchange, production and construction inevitably deal with ‘grasping’ and ‘determining’. John D. Caputo states,

To ‘think’- in a sense a little like Kant and a little like Heidegger – the gift is, accordingly, to direct oneself at something disproportionate, at the disproportion of the impossible, while leaving the possible – the proportionate, properly graspable objects – to other determinate operations, like perception, science or intuition. That is a distinction that parallels, up to a point, Heidegger’s distinction between thinking and philosophy (grasping) and Kant’s distinction between thinking and conceiving (determining).

(Caputo 1997:163)

What is at the heart of these distinctions are means of interpretation. In using this neologism, giftness, I wish to highlight the abstract quality of the gift and its inherent instability that exists within gift interpretation in general.

Giftness addresses the transcendence of the gift. If Derrida is correct in his recurring claim in *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (1994c), that there can never be a pure gift, then there must always be giftness – something that is both part of, and separate to, the gift. Derrida sees the gift and all thoughts of gift as “impossible thing[s]” (Derrida 1994c:10). Any examination of the gift must be performed within the context of such Derridean legacy. Part of this legacy is the idea that as soon as the gift becomes possible, it becomes impossible, acknowledging that the conditions of interpretation and representation surrounding the gift are of equal significance in determining its problematic status, “[t]he impossible gift then is one in which no one acquires credit and no one contracts a debt. That in turn requires that neither the donor nor the donee would be able to perceive or recognize the gift as a gift, that the gift not appear as a
“gift” (Caputo 1997:163). This is the paradox that exists in, and through, the gift aporia, something besides the irreducibility of gift and debt. This paradox is giftness. On one level this appears to be suggesting that giftness is equitable to the ‘essence’ or ‘core’ of the gift. However, in keeping with Derridean methodology, there can never be an essence prescriptive of giving. Instead if there is an essence to be sketched, then it is in the same manner as Derrida, in that the gift never realise its status, its function or its moment. If giftness is not the essence of the gift, it is the crux by which interpretation and recognition hangs. It is the contentious element of the gift that declares simultaneously, ‘here is a gift that does not exist’. By pursuing this term and chasing a workable definition, we are at risk of simplifying the wonderful, paradoxical instability of gifting. The aim of the thesis is not to arrive at a finite definition of giftness; indeed this is seen as the anti-thesis. Rather the thesis engages with a range of issues, specific to gift, that have been looked at previously, but not within the scope of giftness. At the primary level, these issues are developed through two fundamental rationalities - causality and circulation. Causality is viewed as what elements and situations cause giftness or create moments of instability and disruption. Circulation is taken to mean the continuation of economy, the cycle of and movement of the gift from giver to receiver and the on-going sense of return, obligation and cultural acknowledgment of what it means to give a gift, return a debt and contribute towards giftness. This thesis views these two terms as co-dependant.

Looking at the various adumbrations of giftness helps to contribute to the analysis of causality and circulation, albeit, via indirect ways. It is important to note that the following list is not prescriptive, but merely a guide to highlight what can be considered of the gift as inherent in giftness:
a) the condition of instability in the act of exchange (abstraction)

b) the condition of representation (paradox and double bind)

c) the condition of cultural interpretation (play prior to value & exchange)

d) the condition of investment and power

Issues of corporeality bind the gift to the giver and debt to receiver. Within the physical exchange of the gift between people, there is a range of gifts being given, as well as the primary object. There is denial of relationality and responsibility. The gift desires altruism and invests in a masquerade of generosity, attempting to prove and certify its existence, and further its circularity. Receivers combine gift giving with a sense of generosity and the acknowledgment of debt. Caputo states,

A gift does not belong to the circle of presents (presents) or among the presents exchanged within certain circles of friends. You can never get a gift (don) on your birthday or Christmas … But the gift (don) if there is one, eventuates in the excess of the moment, the Augenblick and, breaking looks from the closed circle of friends, heads out for the tout autre (Caputo 1997:162)

The term giftness attempts to address these excesses of the gift; the excesses of gift discourse, gift space; gift relationship; and gift investment. Derrida claims that “the gift is another name of the impossible … we never encounter it, we never know it, we never verify it, we never experience it in its present existence or its phenomenon” (Derrida 1994c:29) and this is why giftness is used to highlight the escapable aspects of the gift. The gift’s possibility and impossibility are issues born from causality and circulation, which continually arise and dominate much of Derrida’s theorising of the gift. This problematising of the presence of the gift and its participation in exchange is a large component of giftness. Giftness seeks to work through and distinguish those features of the gift and gift relationships that function due to instability and disruption.
In one sense this thesis is part of this rendering of an account of the simulacrum of the gift. “Even if the gift were never anything but a simulacrum” writes Jacques Derrida, “one must still render an account of the possibility of this simulacrum and of the desire that impels toward this simulacrum. And one must also render an account of the desire to render an account” (Derrida 1994c:143). If Derrida’s words appear to tremble under the weight of figuring the gift, then this thesis also acknowledges the seeming impossibility of defining, articulating, and positioning the gift. Such trembling is commonplace in the studies of the gift; much work has been spent on explaining the difficulties of definition and announcement of the gift than on the gift itself. What Derrida articulates as the simulacrum of the gift can be seen resonating in many accounts from the textual to the analytic.

Part of the difficulty is that the gift, for all its demands of presence and cultural determination, is located beyond any signifying practice, including (paradoxically) the discourse of the gift itself. Giftness, thus, is tied not to the object or act or event that comes to represent it, but in complex relationships. The gift is a heterogeneous signifying practice that compels without ever really satisfying. Hence we see other equally complex relational orders and processes (such as debt, exchange, value, commodity, ownership, and so on) evoked, hinted at, presented, and alluded to whenever the notion of the gift appears.

One reason why Derrida describes the gift as a simulacrum, and calls for a need to account for it, is this quality of fluidity. The gift cannot be fixed, rendered stable and concrete. Acts of gift giving may well involve countless manifestations of gifts, but giftness is the quality that evokes the desire and need to produce such objects. To
render an account of such a complex process is beyond the realm of any single study; and the scholarship of the gift, with all its interdisciplinary force, acknowledges this.

To exemplify giftness we must resist always referring to cultural conceptions of gift situations, for example where no literal gift is given, the mutual form of exchange and socio-cultural responsibility is still present and attached. The abstract quality of giftness is a consequence of causality or the action of the gift – the event process and situation. The thesis addresses the complexity of this instant in terms of the image, analysing the processual relationship of the gift with particular emphasis on subjectivity. Giftness is part sacrifice, as when the gift is given away it is no longer a gift. There is a ‘giving away’ of the event, of the object and indeed the sense of generosity. In what can be interpreted in a quasi-Barthesian frame, in the death of the giver is the birth of the receiver. The circularity of the gift is apparent within this context, and it is one of the claims of the thesis that this circularity and causality can be illustrated through visual culture – more specifically within the investment in the practice of viewing as it involves an exchange of subjectivities.

Within the literature that has dealt with gift analysis, one finds two prominent theoretical approaches. The first includes research that has actively surveyed and engaged in the manifestation of the gift usually via production or modes of exchange, largely contextualised as anthropological (see for example Mauss 2002, Benveniste 1969, 1971, Cheal 1988, Douglas 1990, Bourdieu 1977, 1997, Gregory 1982 to name a few); the second includes research by those theorists who have made significant contributions to issues that are central to a speculative consideration of the gift, for example what surrounds the process of giving (such as Derrida 1994c, Gasché 1972,
Cixous 1986, 1989, Caputo 1997, 1999, Marion 1998, Horner 2001). This speculative nature is the primary approach adopted here. As such the work of Michel Foucault, specifically his reading of discourse, his discussion of social spaces (as well as Henri Lefebvre’s contribution for example, 1993), and outlining of power are used as theoretical models to work through some of the ideas of the gift and visual culture. Derrida is crucial in part because his gift analytics occupies a recurring methodological concern in a great deal of his writing; and the whole deconstructionalist enterprise enables us to engage in issues of fluidity of meaning and understanding. These theorists perhaps invite themselves into such a study as this and their legitimation can be left to more specific issues within the chapters themselves.

Chapter one discusses the gift in terms of presence and interpretation. The specific aim of this chapter is to contextualise the use and understanding of giftness as it relate to the gift, and how it is to be understood for the remainder of the thesis. The hermeneutic processes attached to both the gift, and gifting, are multifarious and require examination of moments of instability present in the act of interpretation and meaning. This chapter establishes that the most fundamental quandary of the gift is its hermeneutic position. If there is a gift, if a gift is ever given, if things are given away, the hermeneutics of the gift must be discussed. Giftness operates as the common denominator to all that is reducible to the question of the gift. The gift’s givenness, its beingness, its objectness – these are elements that can be ascribed to giftness. The gift and the systemic processes of gift production, reception, debt and exchange, exist in a constant state of conflict to the fundamentals of reading competence. Another main concern of this chapter is the acknowledgment of this thesis’s debt to Derrida, both in
terms of subject derivation but also the methodological approach, if only for the basic reason that a Derridean logic is readily applicable to the questions discussed here, primarily instability and discursive exchange, the gift and giftness.

Chapter two engages with Derrida’s specific contribution to the analytic discourse of the gift. Although, as stated, much of the methodology of the thesis can be attributed as Derridean, and indeed this approach is implicated throughout the thesis, this chapter is more overt in identifying his direct contribution. However, this is not strictly a summation of Derrida on the gift. Instead the emphasis is on the visual in terms of the gift. This chapter looks at how deconstruction operates in terms of the image and vice versa. This chapter also develops the idea of the deconstructionist qualities of the image. This will be done in terms of four attributes – the viral, the limit, the double, and spectres.

Chapter three returns to the fundamental structure and unity of the gift - that it is based upon relations between subjects. Michel Foucault’s analysis of power and subjectivity is developed in terms of investment and how the gift is influenced through such relationships of power. In this sense, it is possible to emphasise the complexities that arise through inter-subjective relations, particularly gift exchange, and those between subject and image.

In chapter four, the gift’s condition of instability is further examined in terms of discourse, with reference to Foucault’s ‘statement’ and Kristeva’s semiotics. If one of the driving discourses of the gift is its discursive practice of giftness, looking at how the gift is enunciated is highly significant. If we can recognise a gift and giving, and
also acknowledge its problematic status, we must also be able to see a discursive practice of giftness. The relationship between subject and image is investigated to see if we are able to read this investment as a gift relationship within the context of giftness, that is when giftness operates as an instable and challenging element to discursive exchange in visual mediums such as film, painting, television, art and photography. An examination of the gift aporia in this thesis is directed towards a subject’s investment in the image. What transpires between subject and image is akin to what circulates between giver and receiver, on the basis of investment. On this basis, the present configuration of giftness is utilised in terms of the image. This chapter addresses the semantic instability that exists within the discourse of the gift. It is argued that giftness highlights, and contributes to, such instability within the discourse of gift representation and presentation. The positioning of the subject is also argued as an unstable relationship within non-verbal communication – that can be exemplified through gift exchange and examples from visual culture.

Chapter five looks at Lefebvre’s conception of social space. The gift is discussed with regards to the three spatial moments that Lefebvre specifies – spatial practice, representational spaces and representation of space. This is to illustrate how the gift occupies and resists social space, and how space is disrupted by the gift. The issue of disruption is furthered by examining the gift via various typologies of space, such as the carnivalesque and utopic. The reason for choosing these exemplars of space is to display the gift’s (and indeed, giftness’s) capacity to function within varying forms of space.
The focus in chapter six shifts the direction of the thesis to a concentration on the relationships, associations, and connections of the gift in terms of pleasure and play (from a psychoanalytic perspective). These are discussed with specific regards to the positioning and formation of subjectivity. It is in this section that the issue of paradox and the double bind is analysed with reference to giftness. The gift is such an intersubjective paradigm that its fundamental operative process leads to the situations where the subject creates or forms certain typologies of subjectivity. The focus here is how pleasure and play operate in terms of the subject, and how the subject relates to the gift through the dynamics of paradox.

Chapter six takes the Freudian relationship between analyst and analysand as an example of the playing out of the gift. This approach allows the aporetics of the gift to be viewed within a ‘practical’ framework and continues the reflection on Derrida’s paradox of the gift as impossible. It also develops the different perspective and examination of exchange present in this thesis. This chapter looks at the difficulties of causality and circulation attributed to the gift to the image. More specifically, the relationship between giver and receiver is likened to the relationship between subject and receiver. However, to read such a parallel within such this binary is contrary to the speculative aims and ambitions of this thesis. Instead the aim here is to develop the theoretical configuration of the gift – particularly the problematics of giftness – and investigate certain features of visual culture. It should be noted that this endeavour will not engage in the visual representation of the gift. The reason for this is laid down in the first chapter of the thesis. The simulacrum of the gift, and the compulsion to render an account of it, constantly leads us to the fluidity of hermeneutic values of the gift. This means that the gift is particularly useful in
negotiating some of the complexities in viewing investment in the image as a form of exchange, how the image operates in context of subjectivity, and how certain signifiers come to be seen as meaningful (that is, have social value and operate as units of exchange).

The idea of giftness, which will emerge from all of this analysis, can be illustrated in the resonance of Derrida speaking on Foucault. He states,

The point is to analyze not simply behaviours [of the gift], ideas [of the gift], or ideologies [of the gift] but, above all, the problematizations in which a thought of being [giftness] intersects ‘practices’ and ‘practices of the self’, a genealogy of practices of the self through which these problematizations are formed.

(Derrida 2001:87)

It is this Derridean genealogy and of the practices of the gift from notions of space, play and paradox, virus, discourse, subjectivity, and power (to name a few) that will allow an investigation of giftness.
1. Configuring the gift

1.1 Interpretation and the gift

1.2 *Glissement* and giftness

1.3 Interpretation and Identification: Polysemy

1.1 Interpretation and the gift

The gift presents us with a particular set of difficulties and issues in terms of its relationship to interpretation. We can argue that by considering the interpretation of the gift, we can engage in certain aspects of interpretation itself. This thesis seeks not to interpret the gift or perhaps even the idea of different types of gifts (although both of these will inevitably become part of the discussion). Instead, the aim here is to set up interpretation as a model through which certain codes read certain signifiers within, outside and in-between the system of exchange, using the gift and ‘giftness’ of discursive (and other) practices as they involve the exchange of subjectivities in the process of communication as the central motif. By positing the gift as a nucleus through which several codes flow, interpretation becomes a system amongst systems and shifts from an overriding determinant of the argument to a supplement¹ that

¹ The notion of the supplement here refers directly to Jacques Derrida's argument in *Of Grammatology* (1976). Derrida problematises the supplement via a double function. Firstly, the supplement is seen as an addition, “[it] adds itself, [as] a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude” (Derrida 1976:144); and also as something secondary and therefore not as important, “the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance … The sign is always a supplement of the thing itself” (Derrida 1976:145). Derrida claims these differing elements of the supplement can never be separated and that the supplement disrupts any sense of origin. If giftness is to be aligned with a Derridean sense of supplementarity, then it must be viewed within the context of danger. In *Of Grammatology* (1976), Derrida refers to Rousseau’s conception of the supplement as a dangerous addition as it “adds itself from outside as evil and lack to happy and innocent plenitude” (Derrida 1976:215). This particular conceptual figuring of the supplement offers something for how we view and read the relationship between giftness and the gift. Kaja Silverman in *The Subject of Semiotics* (1983) states that supplementarity is “the compensation through proliferation on the part of the signifier for a signified which can never be made fully present. It demonstrates that meaning is never anything but a slippage or displacement from one term to another” (Silverman 1983:37-38). Quite clearly the logic of the supplement helps to work towards the logic of the function of giftness as the transcendental signified of
furthers the awareness of the functions and fragments of the gift. Two key principles of the thesis are presented here: that the idea of the gift enables us to examine certain aspects of interpretation; and that the gift presents certain moments of instability in the act of interpretation and meaning. The thesis explores the inherent instability involved in the act of discursive exchange predicated on the exemplar of the gift. That is, that the gift – and the systemic processes of gift production, reception, debt and exchange\(^2\) – exist in a constant state of conflict to the fundamentals of reading competence.

There are many complexities attached to the gift separate to any discussion of its existence. The instability of meaning, and within the interpretive act, finds particular concentration within the discourses that surround the gift, and for this reason it is the gift that has been chosen to function as metaphor in this thesis. I believe that visual culture is predicated on similar unstable discourses, especially concerning the interpretative act, and for this reason it is used as textual example. As the gift occupies such a peculiar (and particular) position in terms of interpretation, it potentially provides a type of reflexivity that will allow an examination of the gift, if for no other reason it locates giftness as a term that neither exists outside (or comfortably within) the system it participates in establishing. In the preface to *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak states, “[H]umankind’s common desire is for a stable center, and for the assurance of mastery – through knowing or possessing” (Spivak 1976:x). Spivak is directly discussing the relationship between a preface and the body of the text, questioning the idea of a preface, its function and the stability of its identity in response to that of the book. As Spivak notes in Derrida’s reworking of the preface, this search for meaning, “becomes open at both ends. The text has no stable identity, no stable origin, no stable end. Each act of reading the “text” is a preface to the next.”(Spivak 1976:xii). This desire for direction, for return, for the knowledge of a journey’s path is a further desire within the discourse of the gift. Strongly attached to this “desire for a stable center” is a firm idea of one’s identity and contributing subjectivity. Positing giftness as supplement establishes that despite this desire for fixed meaning and fixed passage, their will always be instability and uncertainty, especially where possession and interpretation (and indeed interpretation of possession) is concerned. Certain similarities are present between’s Spivak’s articulation of the book and the gift, with regard to the act or circumstance of discursive exchange. It is the slippery nature of not being able to clearly and fixedly determine categories of subjectivity within a gift economy that correlates to Derrida’s idea. As Spivak puts it “[E]conomy is not a reconciliation of opposites, but rather a maintaining of disjunction. Identity constituted by difference is economy” (Spivak 1976:xlii).

\(^{2}\) Mauss’s potlatch is an apt example of these aspects of the gift and will be referred to later.
interpretative act. This is not because the gift provides some sort of insight into interpretation, but rather because it continually questions the act of interpretation.

What is central to the gift is a level of ambiguity that continually challenges our capacity to make sense of it. A good example of this sort of critical reflexivity of the gift can be seen in Pierre Bourdieu's works *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) and *The Logic of Practice* (1992). In these he argues three points where his approach to the gift departs from the established sense. They can be summarised as the insertion of time in the process of gift and counter-gift, with an attendant quality of uncertainty; the formation of *habitus* through the agent; and the relationship of the gift to a specific logic of an economy of symbolic goods. Most significantly – and it is a point that binds all these others together – is the notion of ambiguity, “[t]he major characteristic of the experience of the gift is, without doubt, its ambiguity” (Bourdieu 1997:231). If this is the case, and the gift is inevitably invested with ambiguity, then it would seem that any encounter with the gift (and all the relationships involved in such a process) one encounters a struggle with interpretation. Such a struggle operates at many levels, and part of the agenda here is to try and map out some of the ways in which these heterogeneous processes come to constitute the gift itself. This in turn will allow a new sense of interpretation.

Of course a significant part of such processes and instabilities originate from the social contexts of the gift and acts of interpretation. The gift constantly demands that

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3 Robyn Horner asks in *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida and the Limits of Phenomenology* (2001), “[o]f what, then, does the gift consist? It would seem that the gift is the object that passes from one to another. Or does the true gift consist in the givenness? Does the gift-object serve only as a conduit for a certain excess: an excess of generous intention on the part of one who gives, and a recognition and acceptance of that excess on the part of the one who receives?” (Horner 2001:1-2).

4 Bourdieu goes on to argue: “[o]n the one hand, it is experienced (or intended) as a refusal of self-interest and egoistic calculation, and an exaltation of generosity – a gratuitous, unrequited gift. On the other hand, it never entirely excludes awareness of the logic of exchange or even confession of the repressed impulses or, intermittently, the denunciation of another, denied, truth of generous exchange – its constraining and costly character (“a gift is misfortune,” the Kabyles say)” (Bourdieu 1997:231).
it be linked back to inter and intra subjective contexts, and yet it cannot ever escape
the *habitus* of its social life. Quite simply, the gift requires the culturally organised
principles of exchange, debt, reciprocity, as well as the semiotic codes of
representation. Perhaps one of the most profound aspects of Marcel Mauss’s *The Gift:
is the recognition that the phenomenon of the gift has been around for a long time, but
its processes are quite different in modern cultures. This is summarised nicely in
Shapiro’s essay on Nietzsche and the gift when he states:

> Mauss argues that gift-giving, exchange and potlatch are totalistic phenomena
of archaic cultures that cannot be understood in terms of the individualistic
and economistic categories of modern rationality. The practices connected
with the gift, its exchange and circulation are unnameable within a social and
economic order assuming the priority of private accumulation and possession;
in such a context the gift is an occasional matter, an exception reserved for
holidays and special events rather than the very nerve of communal life
(Shapiro 1997:275)

This results in an attempt to read the gift as a site of signification that necessarily
resists such interpretative gestures, and which is located within shifting social
contexts that alter its whole operational force. The concern here is therefore twofold.
It is not just a simple reading of the gift, but also a figuring of the gift as it reveals its
interpretive resistances.

This is no small task, and in order to keep within the scope of this thesis a number of
limitations will be established, allowing the discussion to focus on certain issues and
ideas. A key part of the analysis will be on the issue of pluralism, of
contrapunctualisms and polysemes. In short, the thesis is concerned with the
difficulties of interpretation as they unfold within the context of the gift, and of how
the gift itself can be seen as an incitement to the instability of interpretation.

*Interpretation*, within this atmosphere, should not be misconstrued as a tool to re-read
or re-interpret a set of theories or ideas, rather it must be located and used as a conceptual framework that engages with theories and, much like deconstruction, opens up their spaces of difference for further understanding. From this perspective a certain type of lineage is tracked: from hermêneia, our moment of the hermeneutics of the gift - and two of its foundational aspects – analixis (the unfolding) and anaptuxis (opening). This is the interrelationship of the gift as it unfolds and opens up interpretation and at the same moment, is unfolded and opened up by the act of interpretation.

The other, further, limitation placed on this study is that the examples used will be drawn largely from the visual. This is done to emphasise the other aspect of the thesis, which is theorising the gift through visual culture. The aim here is to locate and understand heterogeneous practices that surround the gift through visual representation. There is a marked difference between the literal representation of giving (for example, a film scene of presents being handed out on a Christmas morning) and analysing representation as a gift – which is not a concern for this thesis. What is examined is how one might employ the gift to understand its transcendental ‘giftness’ via visual cultures. An essential part of this is the relationship between the visual signifier and its signified, or the social conception of the visual and how (the process) it is imagined. The key aspect to such a relationship is the spectator or observer. It is the exchange of spectator positioning that occurs within visual culture that is read as a gift relationship, particularly in the sense that giftness is not seen and not tangible. Spectatorship, or representation, is not to be understood as a gift. It is the investment in the image, which is subject to similar discursive, socio-political and socio-cultural instabilities, that reflects a gift economy.
This is a type of Hegelian *Vorstellung*, in which one places a sense of the visual representation and at the same time the idea of imagination (which necessarily includes the act of imaging). In this sense the *anaptuxis* is visual cultures as they operate within systems of production, exchange, debt, and giving. What is it, for example, to give the image (or to be given as an image)? What sorts of debts are incurred when we become the spectator of an image? And, perhaps most significant of all, what are the instabilities, the disruptions, that occur within the process of interpreting visual culture that may be demonstrated through the gift?

Clearly, even in the delineation or questioning of the gift - what is involved in a gift, what happens in the giving, what comprises the gift – there is inescapable instability within the discourse and discursive practices that make up ‘the gift’. To address this instability I use the term giftness, instead of givenness (which Jean-Luc Marion uses), in part to adhere to the metaphor of the gift but also in part to illuminate the complexity of theorising a notion that through its existence defies such an approach. There is instability prior to the giving of a gift as well and this is another reason why I use the term giftness. Horner questions the possibility of separating the givenness from the gift-object and in doing so, also calls into question the widespread remit of the word ‘gift’.

It is common to speak of such gifts as friendship, although there may be a degree of imprecision in their definition … Imagining such gifts as forgiveness, friendship, love, or inclusion, it is interesting to note that the same manner of freedom and generosity that would characterize what has been called ‘the excess’ also necessarily characterizes each of these particular gifts.

(Horner 2001:2)
The instability of the discursive practice of the gift is further exemplified through distinguishing between terms of presence, particularly with respect to giver and receiver subjectivity. What dominates the conception of the gift is its status as an object interpreted as a present, or a signifier that demarcates a holiday, a celebration or a festival. This usually happens in the form of presenting a gift-object and such a literal manifestation of giving, that it placing an object into the possession of another helps to draw attention to the distinction of levels of presence as well as exchange and subjectivities relative to the gift. There are other layers of interpretation in spite of the presence of the gift-object completely based around the agency of the subject, such as the difference between receiving and accepting, or indeed between offering and presenting. This distinction is highly significant as it clarifies the adumbration of the gift that is the focus for this thesis. The relationship between giftness and the gift rests far more on (and is shaped by) assumption, in terms of what is presented, or what exists within the event. There is a phenomenological aspect to this differentiation, particularly in light of Horner’s claims, and for the concerns of this thesis, it is the inability to determine the origin (indeed it is a Derridean approach to question any form or pretence of origin) of the gift, which questions the security of the interpretation of the gift.

Evidently, the instability of the given (or giftness) is overriding with regards to interpretation and helps to situate Jacques Derrida’s concerns with the possibility/impossibility of the gift, particularly as the relationship between the gift and the given (or giftness) is manifold and unstable in its connection. Horner claims that there are two conditions of possibility attached to the gift – freedom and

5 “[A] gift is a given, although a given may bear some or even no relation to a gift” (Horner 2001:4).
presence. What is missing from this delineation is the fundamental premise on what these two conditions of possibility are based – the instability of discursive exchange. Horner has identified that the gift must be conceived and defined within the remit of presence and further, a presence that involves acceptance and receiver as well as presentation and the given. While she claims that the gift and the given need not be relative, it is apparent that in stipulating ‘freedom’ and ‘presence’ as conditions of the gift’s possibility, a connection to exchange of subjectivities has been established.

In designating freedom as one of the primary conditions of possibility of the gift, there is instability in the practice of gift giving. Something so transcendental and as subjective as freedom suggests that the event, the handing over of the gift, lends itself completely to misinterpretation of intent and the receivership of what is being given. One of the interesting aspects of gift practice is that so much is focused on the handing over of the gift-object, debating its implications and even its existence, despite its secondary importance to ulterior intentions. When we give a gift there is always the possibility for a strong urge and desire to give generously, to give without getting something in return. However this is not always the case and even within the most altruistic of moments there is the implication of ‘me’ and it is unavoidable given that gift giving cannot occur outside some form of economy or without two people.

Within a Derridean approach, the conditions for the possibility of the gift are the conditions and problematic for the impossibility of the gift, where freedom and presence are connected to the issue of economy and exchange. An example may prove useful here, using this first question – what is it to give or be given as an image – as a specific case. Perhaps one of the most obvious examples of the given image is the
portrait. From the photograph to the commissioned paintings of artists one of the most
common gifts of the image involves this rendering of the subject in the visual. To
continue with this Hegelian line, one can note his example of the *tableaux vivants*,
which he evokes in order to work towards his theory of the Ideal in the aesthetic:

It is one thing for the artist simply to imitate the face of the sitter, its surface
and external form, confronting him in repose, and quite another to be able to
portray the true features which express the inmost soul of the subject. . . . So,
for example, in our own time what has become the fashion, namely what are
called *tableaux vivants*, imitate famous masterpieces deliberately and
agreeably; and the accessories, costume, etc., they reproduce accurately; but
often enough we see ordinary faces substituted for the spiritual expression of
the subjects and this produces an inappropriate effect

(Hegel 1998:431)

Hegel’s point – on the Ideal – is not central to the discussion at hand; however it is an
interesting example because it shows a sort of layering of qualities of the image. For
Hegel the *tableaux vivants* are agreeable and do not represent or contain quality (as an
eexample, he positions Raphael’s Madonnas opposite these imitations). Hegel’s
distinction is one made in terms of aesthetic qualities, yet what is more notable is the
presence of the gift-process.

The rendering of the beautiful women as the image in the *tableaux vivants* functions
as a declared imitation (of famous paintings). The portrait, then, is given in the spirit
of copying rather than within an aesthetic domain. The inappropriate effect is part of
the consequence of this reproduction, and yet it must also be a part of the gift
production. The imaging of the subject into a famous painting is a type of transitional
gift.° That is to say a gift that operates precisely on the transition of one status to
another. In this example the inappropriate effect (that is, the loss of the aesthetic Ideal
in Hegelian terms) is the cost of the gift of making the image. One can extend this to

° The idea of the gift and (Winnicott’s) transitional objects will be developed later in the thesis.
include all forms of representation. In what amounts to a fortunate (for this thesis) confluence, one finds in Derrida’s *Memoirs of the Blind* (1993) a reference to a different Raphael – that of the angel. Derrida’s Raphael can be employed to stand alongside Hegel’s Raphael at this moment, and demonstrates this aspect of the gift and representation. As Derrida states, “whether it be in writing or in drawing … the thanksgiving grace (*grace*) of the *trait* suggests that at the origin of the *graphein* there is debt or gift rather than representational fidelity” (Derrida 1987:30). At the heart of representational systems there operates gift and debt before any sense of *vraisemblance* or verisimilitude. There are two gift productions at hand. The first is the rendering of the subject into an image. So powerful is this that forsaking the aesthetic Ideal is not considered a problem. The second is this idea that debt and gift precede representational fidelity.

Here one encounters the first issue of figuring the gift’s relationship to code systems, and the hermeneutics of such a process. The gift, as a system of exchange, is one where disruption and instability are not solely recurring features, but often requirements as well as consequences. The exchange process operates within a code structure of sliding and shifting signifiers and dynamic contextual placings. Without such open-ended attributes, giftness risks the loss of its operational spaces. Of course this quality is not unique to the gift – after all, polysemic signs and codes are an integral part of any ‘language’ system. The issue at hand here is the promulgation and function of such polysemic elements within the gift, and the particular ways in which giftness is bound to such qualities. Before we move to a more specific discussion of this attribute of the gift, it is prudent to consider two examples of codes that function

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7 This reference to Derrida’s *The Truth in Painting* will be taken up later in the thesis.
in terms of the gift’s dynamic processes. These examples are more representative than inclusive and are given initially to illustrate how codes function, in order to manage the free play and open-endedness of the gift.

Looking to Derrida’s work on the gift offers significant considerations of resistance to the configuration of the gift within economic terms. Below are some examples from the few main works from which much of the literature on the gift and this economic context has derived from are acknowledged.

**Potlatch**

Primarily it is from Mauss’s *The Gift* that a great deal of contemporary discussions of the gift has stemmed. His initial question, “in primitive or archaic types of society what is the principle whereby the gift received has to be repaid? What force is there in the thing given which compels the recipient to make a return?” (Mauss 2002:1) lead him to suggest that a gift economy is responsible for certain social hierarchies and is formed via systems of exchange that operate to maintain such distinctive social cohesions. Mauss’s main interests dealt with the deception of the presentation and representation of the gift. In *The Gift*, he states:

> [w]e intend in this book to isolate one important set of phenomena: namely, pretations which are in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but are in fact obligatory and interested. The form usually take is that of the gift generously offered; but the accompanying behaviour is formal pretence and social deception, while the transaction itself is based on economic self-interest (Mauss 2002:1).

This particular interest and consideration of the gift, and gift practice, has fuelled many of the responses both for and against Mauss’s research. Many economic and aneconomic discussions regarding the gift have resulted from Mauss’s work, leaving
much discussion about the transcendence or phenomenalism of the gift to other
disciplines (most notably the theolo-phenomenologist Jean-Luc Marion 1991, 1998,
1999; Derrida 1994, 1995). For Mauss, gift-based economies are an integral part of
maintaining socio-cultural hierarchy and are looked in terms of outlining a future
economic anthropology.

Mauss’s work is concerned with three main parts: the exchange of gifts and the
obligation to reciprocate; the extension and implications of this economy; and the
continued existence of these values in ancient systems of law and within ancient
economies. These Maussian considerations of the gift as split into three main
categories: to give, receive and reciprocate, make up the potlatch – what Mauss refers
to as a total phenomenon as it involves all levels and aspects of the social structure
(from religious to the family). Non-participation within the potlatch holds great
consequences, refusal sometimes resulting in loss of face and physical punishment.
Mauss states that objects that are exchanged during the potlatch possess *hau* – a spirit
or power that makes the gifts circulate. This spirit forms part of the causality, where
such circulation of objects is framed as spiritual both in origin and in nature. The
power/spirit (*hau*) of these objects possesses a wealth in itself, as it signifies a type of
productivity that is attached to religious level and societal rank. One example is the
copper objects that are given a name, a value and individuality. The giving of such
*hau* is part of the continuous economy of the potlatch where objects come to signify
the self or the generosity of the giver. The *hau* of the gift is connected to the respect
and courtesy of the event – what could be read as the giftness. Through giving, the
giver also gives of him or herself because he or she is indebted to him/herself as
participant of the community and event of the potlatch. The giver is part causality and
circulation. This is one example where instability as giftness is related to an aspect of the gift’s phenomenalism and not simply the gift-object. There is also the issue of spirit (that is taken up via a different perspective with Hegel’s *geist-gift* later in this chapter) that pertains to giftness. Within the process of giving and within the acts that surround the gift, there are elements that depend on intangible components such as acknowledgement, sacrifice, guilt, generosity and so on. Embedded in all these things is a form (or forms) of spirit to do with representing benevolence, kindness or etiquette, and such transcendental aspects that belong to the discourse of the gift inevitably leave their imprint or trace in giftness. Georges Bataille offers an alternative perspective of economic consideration for the gift, not completely within the interests of this thesis, however a brief discussion is necessary.

*Economy*

If Derrida resists the temptation to reduce all the phenomena of the gift to an economic discussion, then Bataille fractures the conceiving of economy, identifying two layers: restricted economy and general economy. In *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy* (1988), Bataille states that a restricted economy refers to those systems where whatever matter is expended (for instance gifts or meaning), an expectation of return on that expenditure determines how that 'transaction' is performed and understood. His definition of a general economy, one that Bataille favours, is one where no matter what the terms of expenditure (gifts or meaning) no return is expected regardless how the transaction was made. Horner states, “Bataille argues that economic growth cannot be separated from loss, that unconditional

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expenditure, which has no end in itself, is inevitable. No system can escape this loss; all organisms are structured in a way that there is an excess of energy for which we cannot take account” (Horner 2001:6n). To conceive of an interrupted and unchallenged economy is faulty. An economy must incorporate the excessive, the challenge and the potential for disruption which suggests two things – that there can be no origin from which the economy begins, and secondly, that there can be no end due to these forms of disruption. It further suggests that a general economy must always include a sense of endeavour to meet these excesses if it is to escape a restricted economy.

For Bataille, the aim of a restricted economy is to deny its heterogeneous practice. His interest in primitive economies (specifically those based on various forms of gift exchange, ritual expenditure, potlatch and human sacrifice) possessed a common commitment to ‘non-productive expenditure’ of energy and goods. Alan D. Schrift states in his introduction to *The Logic of the Gift: Towards an Ethic of Generosity* (1997), “[t]his overturning [of economic principles] will make possible a different economic logic, one based on the unproductive expenditure of excess that defines the workings of a ‘general economy’” (Schrift 1997:5). Bataille reads the gift in the context of alternative systems of value and other economies. Indebted to Mauss, Bataille considers the various gift relations and different resulting forms of exchange. He explores the potlatch, which he believes to operate on the dynamic of unproductive expenditure based on rivalry and competition within hierarchies and the ways these constitute systems of value in which calculation is based on the capacity to lose rather than the capacity to accumulate. Thus giftness can be seen as part of the
general economy as it reflects the intentions of the gift when it fails but also when it succeeds.

At one level, Derrida’s *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (1994) is a reference point where much discussion of the gift and giftness is derived from and worked through in response to these conceptions of economy. However, there is another level at which Derrida operates in this dissertation. It is the process and style of Derridean reasoning that provides much of the contextualisation of the material. Where Derrida is not directly the concern or content of a chapter, the approach highlights my debt. It is a contention of this thesis to use the term giftness to indicate the instability of discursive practice of the gift and within the circulation of giver and receiver subjectivity. In this manner, it is tempting to read giftness as a defining tool, as a term that operates within such deconstructive ways. To identify giftness as this, to single out one term for function and label is not the intention of this dissertation, and does highlight a limitation of this thesis. If giftness is viewed as a tool of deconstruction, workable within a deconstructive discussion of the gift, within a framework of resistance and questioning, then it is to function like Husserl’s ‘critical dismantling’. It is to function under erasure (Spivak 1976:xiv). To use an example, if only to elucidate the operation of giftness rather than align its importance, Peter Brunette and David Wills

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9 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s translation of Derrida’s methodology of ‘sous rature’ is especially relevant to the gift as it is a topic that has particular specificities of familiarity. There is the general familiarity of what a gift is, how we give it and what the cultural codes of giving are. The other level of familiarity occurs within the questioning and theorisation of the gift that appears in many different works and across disciplines. Giftness is a term that must be conceived and read within the context and ramification of ‘sous rature’ because of its close association with the practices and ‘givens’ of gift giving. As Spivak states, “[i]n examining familiar things we come to such unfamiliar conclusions that our very language is twisted and bent even as it guides us. Writing “under erasure” is the mark of this contortion” (Spivak 1976:xiv). For the remainder of the thesis, it is my intent that the term giftness is read as one that continuously resists easy classification, continues the problematic of the gift and challenges all the familiarities we hold and understand of the gift – especially the roles of giver and receiver.
discuss Derrida’s lexicon establishing the “strategic resistance to logocentrism’s will to truth and centrality of meaning” (Brunette and Wills 1989:11) commonly read as deconstruction’s toolbox. They claim, “it must be said, the moment it is written, that this new lexicon is not a new lexicon but a series of words written under erasure, attempts to move toward a new conceptualization without at the same time imposing a new set of hierarchical truths” (Brunette and Wills 1989:12). Giftness is used to identify moments of instability, the drive of these acts of instability, and to denote the impetus for shifts in subjectivity (the exchange). Giftness is the transcendental other of the gift. It is too obvious to read debt as gift’s other. Instead, and in accordance with Derrida’s thinking, it is the double of the gift – giftness – that is its other. One caution that must be made and sustained throughout the reading of this thesis is that while giftness may illuminate some practices surrounding the exchange of subjectivity and the gift, there are enough important limitations to its function that prevent it from operating as a ‘key term’. So within this context, the following examples are specified and separated/distinguished in order to explain their theoretical and methodological significance, applicability and resonance to giftness as claimed here. In some ways giftness works in the manner of these terms, in others only in their legacy, in their invitation to read things in this way. These terms are also used as critical examples of the relationship the gift to giftness.

*Giftness as aporia*

Simply put, an aporia is a challenge to easy classification, easy definition, or easy resolution. Derrida believes the gift reflects aporetic qualities, “[the gift] is always defined in the paradoxia or rather the aporia of what is without being, of what is never present or what is only scarcely and dimly … Such is the aporetic effect – the ‘what
does not pass’ or ‘what does not happen’” (Derrida 1994c:27-28). Derrida’s resistance to the economy of the gift is based on the instability and volatility that surrounds its interpretation. When he states, “we could translate this into other terms: these conditions of possibility define or produce the annulment, the annihilation, the destruction of the gift” (Derrida 1994c:12) he is articulating how the context of economy impedes the gift. By interpreting it, acknowledging its existence and locating it within a spectrum of circularity, and by identifying its causality, the gift has been ‘annulled’ and ‘destroyed’ via interpretation. Part of this interpretation is conceiving where the gift has come from, who it is come from, why it has come from. It returns us to the instability within interpretation and the questions that surround the intentions of the gift – why does the gift always hide something?10

The part of the aporia that is most significant here is the ‘non-passage’. Where Derrida states, “here the [aporia is] impossible passage, the refused, denied, or prohibited passage, indeed the nonpassage, which can in fact be something else, the event of a coming of a future advent, which no longer has the form of the movement that consists in passing, traversing, or transmitting” (Derrida 1993:8 *sic*), he is setting up the difficulty of the aporia as resting within the limit of making sense – of being able to clearly establish the definable boundaries of a problem. In terms of the gift, this is very relevant as part of the process of investing in the gift is caught up with the interpretation of the gift as well as the giving and the receiving. It further illuminates the instability of giftness that confronts an interpretation of the gift, in the sense that part of the gift is the giver’s intention and/or the receiver’s gratitude. The gift represents an intention, whether it is genuine or insincere, which becomes a part of the

10 The resistance that rises to this idea is an indication that what the gift hides must always be negative. There is no such implication here – rather that it is simply one’s inability to clearly and wholly know all the gift is offering results in something (positive or negative) being hidden.
gift that is given away. This is an example of the relationship between the gift and
giftness that identifies such an integral aspect of gift interpretation that rests on the
instability within its discursive practice. There are cultural codes to operate within,
such as the knowledge of the obligation to say thank you for a gift that you may not
be truly thankful for, and further to continue the charade of pretending that it is liked
and graciously appreciated. Or, alternatively, giving a gift to someone you don’t
really want to give a gift to, but do simply because it marks an occasion.

Christopher Norris works through the etymology of aporia in *Deconstruction: Theory
and Practice* (1982), stating, “[c]learly the concept of aporia occupied a suspect, even
sinister, place in the system of traditional rhetoric ... In Derrida’s hands it represents
the nearest one can get to a label or conceptual cover-term for the effects of différance
and the ‘logic’ of deviant figuration” (Norris 1982:49). The linking of giftness as
aporia has been briefly highlighted here so that throughout the rest of the thesis
certain considerations regarding the structural aspects of the gift (such as literal
examples of the giving of gifts) will be put to one side, so as the more problematic
relationship between subjectivity and giftness can develop. Indeed, to echo Norris’s
words, “[t]he explanatory props of ‘structure’ are always available when thought tries
to ignore the question of how its own regulative concepts are brought into play”
(Norris 1982:50). Subsequently, it is the quality of aporia that is exists throughout the
remainder of this thesis rather than any direct engagement.
The first example involves the naturalisation of the status of the gift. That is, the ideological function of rendering the cultured (gift) into the seemingly natural (gift). The sense of generosity that is attached and indeed intrinsic to any notion of the gift is a clear example. Generosity is something that is positioned as natural because it is located as part of the human spirit. This can be termed the coded process that results in the *Geist*-gift. Hegel’s sense of ‘*Geist*’ comes from *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977). The original term is retained due to its multiple meanings. *Geist* comes from the German language, comprising all the meanings of spirit, mind, soul and esprit present in English. In German there exists no distinction between spirit and mind. *Geist* is used to denote both. *Geist* has been translated both as spirit or mind (see *Philosophy of Spirit, Phenomenology of Mind*), and so for my purposes here I will retain the original German word. There is also the added benefit of retaining other dualities present within *Geist*. For Hegel, *Geist* operates at both individual and collective levels – much in the same way as the gift. This myriad of duality is interesting in an explication of the gift as it reflects so many gift qualities that remain non-verbal in the language of the gift but are paramount within socio-cultural gift-exchange. *Geist*, as sense of spirit, is invested in humanity and that can be applied to the concept of the gift particularly in light of its individual and collective relativity. This highlighted element of the composition of the gift helps to illustrate the process of naturalisation that produces the sense of generosity as a part of subjectivity. It can be traced back to its Enlightenment origins in terms of this version of gift as *Geist*; but clearly its status has been tested and altered since then. However that which has been termed *Geist*-gift should not simply be seen as part of the humanist project, or the
Modernist reclamation, or even the postmodernist struggles with fragmented subjectivity. *Geist*-gift marks that part of the coding process that locates the gift in terms of its relationship to subjectivity, no matter what the ideological, textual, or socio-cultural agenda might be. So despite any changes to interpretations and representations, the idea of the gift being linked to subjectivity remains. The *Geist*-gift stands for those gifts (and code structures) that link the gift to subjectivity – from the humanist project of generosity of the human spirit to the Freudian idea that ego-centric and id-driven subjects are only capable of gifts to the self. What joins these two seeming opposites is the common feature of the gift’s relationship to the subject. It is the *Geist*-gift that bonds the gift to the giver, which ties the gift production to the cultural order.

This has a certain resonance in Mauss’s idea of the moral issues of the gift. For him one of the enduring qualities of the gift (that is, what constitutes the gift in itself) is how it bonds the subject to the gift through a moral order. Towards the end of *The Gift* Mauss states, “[a] considerable part of our [that is, Mauss’ contemporaries] morality and our lives themselves are still permeated with this same atmosphere of the gift, where obligation and liberty intermingle… The unreciprocated gift still makes the person who has accepted it inferior, particularly when it has been accepted with no thought of returning it” (Mauss 2002:83). This illustrates one of the ways in which the instability of meaning operates within the gift because what is so often at stake is a moral ordering of things. As with the example of imaging the subject in terms of the gift, this moral bond ties the giver and receiver of the gift through a deeply embedded social order. This order is not necessarily transparent, and certainly not always
foregrounded within the gift itself. This moral attachment makes the gift a volatile signifying practice.

Another, related, code structure to this idea of the Geist-gift is derived from this idea of the naturalised status of gift and giving. The codes through which the gift signifies are highly ‘naturalised’, and at one level there can be an acute iconic relationship between giver-gift-receiver. The two examples given above – the giving of the subject as an image in the portrait and the moral connection of gift giving – in different ways offer ways in which this naturalisation process takes place. The moral issue of a gift is not engaged with each time one is given or received, just as the aspects of the gift are not questioned in every portrait one encounters (be it in an art gallery or a personal photo album). Of course it could be argued that the reason why these do not take place is because there is a more primary edict happening – the object of the gift itself. Yet the Geist-gift, it is argued here, can only exist if aspects such as these are present. Their seeming absence (or invisibility) is due to the naturalisation process by the codes involved. In one example, the production of the gift is the rendering of the subject in the portrait; but it is the coding of ‘portraiture’ that disguises the gift. In the other example, it is the seeming act of generosity of gift giving that disguises the underlying moral code of obligation and debt. Mauss’s examples in the sections entitled “Moral Conclusions” and “Conclusions for Economic Sociology and Political Economy” are revealing in this aspect. They show the continuation of certain practices into recent (that is Mauss’s) times where to break the ritual of the gift is to disturb some social and/or moral law.\textsuperscript{11} The origins of such rituals may well be lost,

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{11} For example Mauss refers to the giving of an egg at a birth, or the attendance of an entire village at a wedding breakfast. To break such traditions reveals a breaking of a moral order: “If anyone stayed away [from the wedding breakfast] it was a very bad omen, a foreboding, proof of envy, and a sign of bad luck” (Mauss 1990:84).}
and often the actions will be carried out with little or perhaps even no knowledge of their significance. This in turn becomes a type of naturalised process where the significance of the gift giving operates below the surface of the gift itself. To understand this more fully the idea of *glissement* will be taken up.

1.2 *Glissement* and giftness

The gift is coded by cultural contextualisation. This produces a non-verbal but highly circulated socio-cultural and socio-political conceptualisation of gifts and gift giving that I refer to as giftness. Its separation and definition as an individual system arises from the inscription of particular meaning(s) to form a 'site'. Using the gift as an example, the system of giftness becomes a site for exchange and, through consequence or intent, possession and ownership, debt, and so on. The heterogeneity of codes within these systems is generated from the cultural sphere of meaning. Meaning located within any signification system is constructed from the difference between the composing elements. The system of the gift works on highly complex and elaborate arbitrary codes of deferral and difference. This system of the gift appears at its most unquestionable, most hidden, when it performs under two different terms of the exchange process. It works despite its different codings as these various codifications are contained within the meta-system of exchange, wherein both parties acknowledge the differences and overlapping between their individual code systems, the meanings produced by each, and how these meanings relate and contribute to the overall implications of the gift. Thus the 'meaning (s)' of the gift is/are arrived at through difference.
For the ‘natural’ aspect of the gift, and arguably any sign system, the first encounter with coding is the cultural construct of illusion. The code's primary duty is to set up an apparatus for meaning to occur. It sits between the signifier and the signified as a conduit for all meaning to flow. The code is not what separates the signifier from the signified, but what directs interpretation and identification between both. Meaning is not fixed here - the code is only a pipeline for signification to travel through. Multiple codes create potential for meanings to arise due to differing interpretations, yet this expanse of possible meaning and potentiality needs direction and contextualising to be realised. It is at this junction where Lacan’s idea of the point de capiton\(^{12}\) becomes important with regards to the 'fixing' of meaning. This point de capiton is the point in any system where the reading of codes produces an interpretation and identification (Lacan 1985).

A strict set of codes is not outlined here. Instead a system emerges where a set of codes are taken up and used to interpret and contextualise cultural phenomena – for the concerns of the thesis, it is argued that giftness participates in this discursive process of coded communication. In a sense this is an argument where heterogeneous codes appear to elucidate the defining concept of a system, such as giftness because of its difficult categorisation. It is because of the differing parts of any signification system that meaning can be produced. Without this difference no definition can occur. No distinguishing one against another; no vehicle or avenues for interpretation and identification. One starts with a signifier, a code and a signified,\(^{13}\) and a meaning –

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\(^{12}\) The French term is retained here as its English equivalent ‘quilting point’ or ‘anchoring point’ does not reflect or address the technical precision the original provides.

\(^{13}\) This is not to imply some version of a historical progression, or even a causal relationship between signifier, code and signified. Codes can ‘predate’ signifiers, and signifiers can emerge before codes.
sign - is produced. This is however not enough to create a system, or meaningful space for a site of cultural contextualisation of a specific concept (giftness). Carrying on with the premise of an unchanging material signifier, heterogeneity is effected through the interpretation of the signifier with respect to its placing in a socio-cultural context. Codes begin to multiply as more than one interpretation emerges (and interpretative gestures draw on more and more code systems).

It begins with a seemingly homogeneous coding order of signifier, code, and signified, in the production of the sign. However this meaning is heterogeneous because of the possible interpretations that can be formed with respect to the sign itself and the sign in relation to cultural contexts. This then returns to an assumed homogeneity (signifier, code, signified) under the construction of a meta-heterogeneity, as once a signifier is read through a specific code, there can never be one signified. Excepting formal sign systems, the code functions as a splitting mechanism that shatters the homogeneity of the signifier. This manipulation of spaces within sites, and sites within systems, is realised by moving beyond the primary use of interpretation - as a model through which concepts are re-read - to a more self-reflexive approach, where interpretation becomes part of the cultural phenomena itself, thereby positioning giftness in a open forum. By this I am referring to giftness as a system through which heterogeneous interpretations are made. For example, giftness is a concept that, due to its self-reflexivity, belongs to both the debt and the gift – the intact discourse of the gift. Giftness does not only comprise part of the gift. It is an omnipresent code within its own system that creates the two sites of gift and

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Eco, in *A Theory of Semiotics* (1976), speaks of ‘overcoding’ and ‘undercoding’ as versions where a new sign appears that requires a shift in coding processes. This is the order that is being discussed here.
The giver interprets giftness through different signifiers than the receiver. Whilst it may be the same sign that is being interpreted by the giver and receiver, the disposition of the gift is to invert giftness via its surrounding codes. As a result there is a necessary part of the gift that is never hidden - it operates flamboyantly and tries to subvert its giftness through such ostentation. This self-reflexivity challenges the typography of the gift and sees it more as an interlocuting system of larger issues - for example, gift giving and guilt, reparation and/or debt.

Lacan discusses an 'anchoring point' in Écrits: "what I have called the 'anchoring point' (point de capiton), by which the signifier stops the otherwise endless movement (glissement) of the signification" (Lacan 1985:303). It is at this point where meaning is 'fixed' in the wanderings of the signified. For the concerns here this is the slippage of giftness and the site of exchange. Lacan's argument is relevant here primarily because of the nature of this site. These point des capitons are the places of interpretation and momentary identification. Literally, point de capiton refers to the buttons on a couch, and Lacan uses this term to contextualise sites of meanings within language. The couch represents a system and its heterogeneous codes; the upholstery representing the ultimate materiality in signifiers. The point de capiton is the point where one interpretation and identification is made within a code. Initially it represents the primary interpretation and identification, yet concurrently infers a secondary point de capiton – that where the codes of interpretation and identification intersect. As the buttons on a couch hold the material in place to complete a piece of furniture, these point des capitons hold sites together in a system of meaning, by coordinating its codes.

What is being argued here feeds into the fundamental part of the thesis, in that the sites of gift and debt are concurrent. They function like a rotating sphere – two parts of the one whole.
Giftness captures the 'endless movement' of codes of exchange, debt, reciprocity, possession, and so on. It is a system wherein the subject reads a signifier through many codes simultaneously rather than one code at a time, or solely one code. In a normative signification system, the code through which a signifier is read - interpreted - potentially produces the subsequent codified signified. For example a signifier read through a code of the gift produces a gift-related signified. If a wrapped up box with a ribbon around it is presented to me I will interpret it as an action of giftness and identify it at the primary level of its materiality - as a gift. This box now occupies the space of the material signifier within the site of exchange. What glissement provides is a structure that disrupts this normative signification system. This glissement accounts for the dynamics of meaning and the non-equivalence of a signifier to a single signified, or even a limited set of signifieds. Whilst this suggests that glissement is a model that propagates misrecognition, non-identification and chaos, the function of the point de capiton is to arrange the array of potential meanings through fixing them within certain codes, and situating these codes within systems. Within each and every site of exchange, there are heterogeneous spaces - levels that encapsulate codes through which signifiers are read. Glissement creates the potential for heterogeneous meaning, however point de capiton fixes spaces for these potential meanings to be interpreted and identified. Glissement is the elemental axis for self-reflexive giftness. Through glissement's shifting of signification, it allows giftness to be posited within the system of exchange instead of outside it or on top of it. The gift operates as glissement, primarily because it assists the shift within signification and the instability of gift (and discursive) practice. Referring back to the metaphor of the couch, giftness does not become part of the material, nor the button on the couch
covered in material. It is part of the thread – further, it is in the thread that contains the couch. The same material on a chair or bedspread forms another site and indeed another signification system. Thus *glissement* is an anarchic structure which turns the essence of a system – in this case giftness – to be within its site. Yet this does not happen within a moment of simultaneity. The result of this disordered ordering is the self-reflexivity of a site. Arguably, the capacity for *glissement* is in every code structure, signification systems, and sub-divisions thereof, yet what is important to recognise is that through the intersection of identification and interpretation does this self-reflexivity occur most. *Glissement* not only creates the spaces within sites for self-reflexivity, but its characteristic of ‘endless movement’ enables creation of spaces within space. Drawing on Barthes' diagram helps to illustrate this polysemy further.

### 1.3 Interpretation and Identification: Polysemy

What emerges from Barthes' diagram (see figure 1.1) is the polysemic nature of the sign. If this diagram is read as an example or template for all signs then what becomes clear are the levels that exist within each site. Here, the points of identification and interpretation function on all levels but in different capacities for different meanings. The breakdown provided here creates a methodological working through of any signification system. Barthes relates this diagram (as metaphor) specifically to culture as myth, yet it can be viewed as generic, and thus is applicable to the gift. Barthes's main argument is that myth as system is pre-constructed. This is indicative of the polysemy within the sign as the pre-construction of the myth system is attributed to a "second-order semiological system." (Barthes 1993:114) This layering effect highlights the individual function of the signifier, the signified and the sign. On the
first layer, the signifier and signified are operating at a denotative level, where the concept and image perform the fundamental identifying and interpretation of the sign. The ideological value of the sign has not yet been engaged. It is just at the point of substitutes that the sign is concerned with here. Continuing with the tri-dimensional diagram, this substitutionary action of the sign progresses to a more culturally embedded meaning where the initial level acts as signifier for the next. In terms of the point de capiton, it is the next button on the couch, yet this next button adds to the next, and lets the subject into the 'larger picture' of the couch. It is here that the connotative level of the sign is found.

At this point the gift and the cultural order surrounding its site of exchange relates to the sign. The gift's meaning and place in the cultural order is part of a much deeper and profound interpretation and identification. The identification that occurs here is not of the material gift but rather part of the interpretation of the gift functioning as giftness within the cultural order. Note that it is important which process happens first. To identify a sign (and its relativity) a method of interpretation has to occur first. When Derrida argues that for a gift to exist it cannot be recognised, he is arguing at the most fundamental level of signification (Derrida 1994c). A gift is identified through interpreting its materiality - the paper and ribbon, or perhaps a simple presentation of an object. Derrida's argument is engaging with the greater directive of interpretation. It is at the second level of Barthes's tri-dimensional diagram that Derrida's contention works. Through identification and interpretation the gift enters into a semiological order where it is "reduced to a pure signifying function" (Barthes 1993:114).
Giftiness reveals one of the fundamental aspects to this relationship, that is: to interpret is to identify and to identify is to interpret. Despite appearances, these are not the same processes reversed. Each method produces different systems and codes, using different signifiers and signifieds to effect different signs. Deciding which is the 'right' process with relation to the gift - for example, does one interpret and then identify; does one identify and then interpret - is to misread the capacity for "endless movement" within the signification system of the gift. The possibilities of different avenues of identification and interpretation signify the principal investment of glissement within any system of signification, specifically with regard to the gift.

Such questioning begins to appear inevitable once glissement has been positioned within a significatory site. Interpretation and identification begin to separate and function not symbiotically but individually with relative codes running between them. This suggested apparatus is to locate it as two systems that have the potential to operate on their own, and to highlight their capacity to deliver meaningful signs within a system regardless of other sites.

By segregating these two particular sites - no significance of order is intended at this moment - viewing their individual function then relating them symbiotically and non-symbiotically - they become an example of a vehicle for glissement and point de capiton. The meanings produced by the interplay between interpretation and identification use the same site - that of giftness - but they occupy different spaces. Glissement is the disruptive force that creates the heterogeneity of spaces and in doing so contributes to the formulation of a habitus of the gift. Its constitution of endless movement of signification carries the potential for it to split spaces within a site(s).

Point de capiton anchors these split spaces not to confine them, as limiting is not part
of what the *point de capiton* does, but to keep the propulsion of shifting meanings constant by ordering the spaces within a site.
2. The Parasitology of the Gift and the Force of Spectres

2.1 Parasitology/Virology

2.2 The Torment of Internal Drifting: Terrorism, Containers and the Gift

2.3 At The Limit

2.4 On the Double

2.5 The Gift, The Spectre and The Mirror

There are two primary aims in this chapter. The first is to explore some of the ways in which Derrida can be brought to bear on the issue of giftness. This can never be a complete analysis (which would amount to a thesis in itself); rather the strategy is to examine some of the ways in which Derrida’s ideas on deconstruction operate as analytic processes that are in some ways mirrored in certain features of the gift. To this end the chapter will look at some of these analytic processes in terms of the gift, both within Derrida’s own terms (that is, his own words on the gift) and as a larger issue of deconstruction as a philosophical operation or activity. The second aim of the chapter is to utilise ideas from Derrida to elaborate giftness through looking at the visual. Once more there must be limitations, and what is developed here is much more a sense of how deconstruction can be used to investigate such ideas, rather than a fully formed analytic moment. At the heart of these aims is the idea that deconstruction reveals just how central giftness is to the image; indeed it will be argued that the image can be read within a system of gift giving and taking, and hence an economy of exchange. Finally, this chapter looks to how deconstruction operates in terms of the image and the impact of the image on deconstruction. To this end this section develops the idea that the image possesses deconstructionist qualities. This will be done in terms of four attributes – the viral, the limit, the double and spectres.
One of the most seductive - and dangerous - strategies of bringing someone like Derrida to a study of visual cultures is to take up some of the dominating terms and work them into a study of the image. So, for example, Derrida's term, *différance*, might be used to explore differences and deferrals in the image. However the problem with such an approach is that it runs the risk of eliding the real sense of what is going on in Derrida's work. Most of the applications of Derrida’s complex terms are unusual here, however certain insights can be made if the terms are worked through the texts, in this case that of the visual and giftness. With this in mind the proposal here is to attempt to capture some of the flavour of Derridean deconstruction by taking up some recurring themes and applying them to issues of the image and the gift. The diagram below represents how we might progress through this, moving through four interconnected themes: parasitology and virology, limits and borders, the double, and the trace. The diagram in one sense moves 'downwards', from the broadest sense of deconstruction as a parasitology, through to a very specific issue within deconstructionist texts - that of the trace. The diagram also moves 'sideways' towards connected terms and ideas before we encounter some possible examples. These include the metaphor of the virus and rupture as deconstructionist techniques/processes and from these the two examples of terrorism and symptom. At the next level we find issues about limitations and boundaries, exemplified this time through the frame and transgression. The third level deals with the double, with the examples of reflexivity and the uncanny, which in turn are connected to the final level of the trace with its sense of spectres.

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1 The undetermined nature of meaning is, as it were, one of the consequences of this ‘system’ of meaning. However, there is a more ambitious aim in *différance*, namely the replacement of Heidegger’s system of positivities (beings) [if governed by its abstraction Being] by an ‘assemblage’ of relations under the ‘still metaphysical’ generality *différance*. 
2.1 Parasitology/Virology

Derrida once responded to an interviewer's question (regarding his work and communication) with the following:

I often tell myself, and I must have written it down somewhere - I am sure I wrote it somewhere - that all I have done, to summarize it very reductively, is dominated by the thought of a virus, what could be called a parasitology, a virology, the virus being many things. ... The virus is in part a parasite that destroys, that introduces disorder into communication. Even from a biological standpoint this is what happens with a virus; it derails a mechanism of the communicational type, its coding and decoding. On the other hand, it is something that is neither living nor nonliving; the virus is not a microbe. And if you follow these two threads, that of a parasite which disrupts destination from the communicative point of view - disrupting writing, inscription, and the coding and decoding of inscription - and which on the other hand is neither alive nor dead, you have the matrix of all that I have done since I began writing.

(Derrida 1993: 3)

In this beautifully succinct passage Derrida indicates the two aspects that typify all of his work - the disruptive and the liminal status, expressed in these terms as that of neither living nor dead.

It is easy to see why Derrida's works can be taken to be inherently destructive or negative when he admits that of primary interest is this issue of the disruptive. However it is important to recognise that deconstruction (indeed any aspects of Derrida's themes and techniques) is not about the destruction of ideas and systems, but a genuine attempt to come to terms with them. It is significant to remember, for example, that the term deconstruction has its origins in Heidegger's Destruktion, Husserl's ‘critical dismantling’, and Hegel's Aufhebung. These terms carry within them not a negative sense of destruction, but of rebuilding, of growth and change, of
shifting orders. Hegel’s *Aufhebung*, for example, has three ‘meanings’ to it: to cancel, to preserve, and to lift onto a higher plane. It is never simply a matter of destroying the ideas, but exploring their trajectory, their methods, and processes, and how they function. The original meaning, and intent, for all these terms is not to destroy but to alter. Take, for example, this passage from *Of Grammatology*:

> The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabitating those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure...

*(Derrida 1976:24)*

For Derrida, it would seem, the most effective way of understanding and altering a system of thought is to be within it, rather than external to it. This strategy is very well known in many guises.

So why does Derrida choose the negative analogy of the virus for his work? Recall that the first quality Derrida specifies for his virology/parasitology is that it "introduces disorder into communication", and that it disrupts destination.¹ This sort of enterprise is most markedly demonstrated in works such as *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (hereafter *The Post Card*), where we witness, through an extended analysis of the love letter and psychoanalysis (especially Lacan’s and Freud’s), the idea of the disruption of communication and meaning. One of the key aspects that Derrida develops in *The Post Card* is the *lettre en souffrance* (the lost letter, or one held in abeyance). Derrida's theme is one of the letter that does not, and cannot, arrive at its destination. This is not a failure of a particular type of letter, but

¹ Derrida also uses the theme of the parasite within a different context – that of painting – in *Memoirs of the Blind*. For example, “… you can hear them resonating all on their own, deep down in the drawing, sometimes right on its skin; because the murmuring of these syllables has already come to well up in it, bits of words parasitizing it and producing interference” (Derrida 1993:39).
the idea that no letter - no sign - ever arrives at its intended destination because of the disruptions to the communication process; or, perhaps more accurately, every sign has the potential to become a sort of *lettre en souffrance* through this technique of deconstruction.³ Part of Derrida's technique is to expose and work through this sense of non-arrival for all systems of meaning and interpretation. The structure of the letter is premised on what Derrida’s terms a mishap. The *lettre en souffrance* cannot arrive as its composition allows for fragmented delivery, meaning that the letter’s destination is never arrived at, rather it is in a state of constantly arriving.

So even when we seem to have a hold of the letter - that is, in effect, to have understood and gained meaning from something - for Derrida it will always contain within it non-arrival, a multiplicity of arrivals in other places. Elsewhere Derrida states, "a letter does not always arrive at its destination, and from the moment that this possibility belongs to its structure one can say that it never truly arrives, that when it does arrive its capacity not to arrive torments it with an internal drifting" (Derrida 1987a:489). This idea of the torment of internal drifting will now be taken up in terms of the visual, and through this can be developed the idea of the viral gift.

### 2.2 The Torment of Internal Drifting: Terrorism, Containers and the Gift

After September 11 2001, when the Bush administration declared 'war on terror', images belonging to two very different orders were constructed but both were directed at a very specific target with deliberate intentions. The first of these were the images

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³ The three key texts on this are namely Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'"; Derrida's *The Post Card*, and his paper 'For the Love of Lacan'. In passing the *lettre en souffrance* are those letters that have failed to be delivered; and the additional meaning of *souffrance* - suffering - works particularly well for Lacan in his reading of the Poe short story and the anxiety of the Queen.
of the terrorists themselves, the second of various Western leaders and public figures with Islamic people and cultural artefacts. These were the intended destinations of these images/letters, for a war on terror, not the West against Islam. The internal drifting of the two sets of images is contained precisely within their juxtapositioning in the world's media, and the torment was precisely the danger of not linking the two in the intended manner. Behind all of this was one of the most profound elements of political life, that of the sense of the benevolence of government and its protection of the people. The letter of this ‘gift’ was the ever-watchful government securing the population. It was important for this letter's arrival (the winning over of the public mind and sympathies; the sense of benevolence) that the images of the terrorists be seen as evil, but not as external. The force of the 'war on terror' lay in the internalising of the fear that acts of terrorism could continue to take place. Significantly this fear was generated in many Western countries as if it were something new, whereas the truth is that many of these countries (such as Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Germany) have had a long history of terrorist activities within them. However, running parallel to this was the idea that internalised Islamic culture (in the US, in Britain and so on) is good. This was further mirrored by the highly simplifying notion of good Afghanistan people against the bad Taliban regime. Any slippage from reading the images in this way - that is, the internal drifting - would lead to an ambiguity of meaning. This affects a reading of terrorist as en souffrance - held up and yet to arrive, as well as the cause of suffering. This is the sense in which all terrorist acts operate, in this constant state of arriving.⁴ In this sense the viral gift, contained in the attempts to control the image and its readings, is a version of a certain type of giftness. This is the gift as

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⁴ One can parallel Bateson’s threat with this state of non-arrival as discussed in section six.
aporia. Contained within the discourse of the gift in terrorism and its opposition (in this case governments of certain countries) is the overflow of meaning.

This thesis is not directly concerned with the actual politics of the images, and if possible, the difficulties of the histories and ethics of such a situation are put to one side in order to stay focussed on the idea of reading images of terrorism in terms of non-arrival. For both terrorists and those who fight them are caught up in the same struggle of the image. As Umberto Eco once pointed out, the difference between the criminal (such as the bank robber) and the terrorist is that the latter needs to be recognised and seeks the exposure of the media, whereas the bank robber will always try and keep his/her identity a secret. This is why terrorist groups and those who oppose them (almost inevitably governments) compete for control of the image, fearing and acknowledging the internal drifting of arrival and non-arrival. Terrorism is a particularly good example of the vying for interpretive power in the image, as well as revealing just how much the image conveys beyond the words that surround it. After September 11 2001 (even the date has now become a self-standing sign) the image of the fundamentalist terrorist was so emphatically entrenched in the world media that it could evoke very specific responses. Yet competing with this are the two forces of the internal drifting - the need to construct an image of non-terrorising Islam for the West, and the need to assert the absolute sense of danger in the terrorist.

A remarkably similar process is apparent in the terrorist's construction of the image, including how much slippage is involved in the manifestation and interpretation of those images. The targets on September 11 2001 were chosen as much as images by the terrorists than for any other single reason, more perhaps than as politically or
strategically damaging. The Twin Towers were already established images, existing in so many of the visual representations of New York (and synecdochically, the USA), and the terrorists would have known that their acts would be captured in a variety of media. This construction of the image is how the terrorist attempts to control the internal drifting of the message, and the world's media, by replaying and reproducing those images, attempts to reconfigure them in a directly oppositional way. The difficulty of course - and this is an 'of course' added by deconstruction - is that this internal drifting is not only a fundamental part of any act of communication, it is also essential. Deconstruction does not create such internal drifting, such moments of indecision and complication in the sign, but it does work to expose them and to acknowledge their existence.

Before this line of deconstruction and the visual is continued with, two other examples of the viral gift will be discussed. If this first one - the vying for the political consciousness of the population by different groups (governments and terrorists) through control of the image – illustrates the necessity of a viral gift for the political environment of a culture, and then the following examples will both support and differ from this line. The concern here is to develop a gift that is so completely internalised that it cannot be separated from the health of the organism (such as the ideological function of morals and ethics to the actual biological manifestations in something like symbiosis), and yet this can be seen as a viral existence. By this is meant the idea that certain aspects of the gift, like the function of deconstruction within philosophy, come to question, and be questioned, the aspects of positivity and negativity; and at the same time they are an integrated and essential part of what has come to be brought into question. With this first example of terrorism there are many
cases where the *idea* of terrorism is used for political gain by a government; it has become a viral gift. This is also the case for any terrorist act. The rhetoric of both government and terrorism is to position their acts and deeds as gifts of freedom and knowledge. This might become clearer through further examples.

Perhaps one of the most obvious, and earliest, example of the viral gift is the Trojan horse, which has become symbolic of cunning rather than treachery and remains a cautionary note on accepting gifts. Rather than focus on this more obvious example of the viral gift we can look to Epeius, a less well remembered player in the story. Both Homer, in the *Iliad*, and Euripides, in *The Women of Troy*, attribute the design of the horse to Athene, but it is through Epeius that the plan is made, “[E]peius, a Phocian from Parnassus, made to Athene’s plan that horse pregnant with armed men, Called by all future ages the Wooden Horse, and sent it to glide, weighty with hidden death, through the Trojan walls” (Euripides 1954:83). Yet the character of Epeius is far from favourable, “and though a skilled boxer and a consummate craftsman, was born a coward, in divine punishment for his father’s breach of faith… Epeius’ cowardice has since become proverbial” (Graves 1975:331). His cowardice was so great that he had to be forced to go into the belly of the horse. His presence was necessary as “he alone knew how to work the trap-door” (Graves 1975:331). In many ways Epeius represents the viral gift more than the horse itself. His presence is absolutely necessary for the trick to work, for the horse to be built and for the armed men to operate yet he is the greatest coward amongst them. This is the recurring theme of the viral gift – that it holds its contradictions and opposites within itself. As the discourse for anti-terrorism contains within itself the need (real or imagined) of terrorism, the wooden horse was crafted and operated by its antithetical other, that of the cowardly and weak.
These two examples are made clearer by a third, once more premised on a seeming contradictory status and linguistic turn. Derrida, in working through Lévi-Strauss’s introduction to Mauss’s *The Gift*, points out that there is embedded within the praise a level of critique. This critique, too far from the central point here to go into detail, is based on the relationship between (or historical development of) social anthropological studies and language. Derrida goes so far to say that it is due to Mauss’s theories on the social significance of language that language became such a central aspect of study in structuralism in France in the 1960’s. Derrida excludes himself, it would seem, from such a history but does include Lacan’s famous statement, ‘the unconscious is structured like a language’. This must certainly be due to what Derrida describes as the hegemonic institution of structuralism in France (see, for example, Derrida 1994c:78). Derrida goes on from this point to work through a point from Benveniste’s article “Gift and Exchange in Indo-European Vocabulary” (‘*Don et exchange dans le vocabulaire indo-européen*’) in *Problems in General Linguistics* (1971). Derrida, via Benveniste, illustrates what seems to be an essential feature of the gift:

…Benveniste begins with that verb from the root *dô* – which means ‘to give’ in ‘most Indo-European languages’. But at the heart of this certainty concerning an assured constant an uneasiness arises when it is established that the Hittite verb *dâ* signifies not to give but to take. Since it is difficult to believe that the Hittite *dâ* is a different verb, one is prompted to wonder whether the ‘original meaning’ of *dô* was not ‘to take’; this original meaning would have been maintained in Hittite or even in certain composites such as the Indo-Iranian *a-da*, which means to receive. But that still leaves the question of how ‘to give’ could have come from ‘to take’…Benveniste then

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5 This critique is very much a questioning of Mauss’s study and, for Derrida, “may still poison the vibrant generosity of the tribute” (Derrida 1994c:73).

6 It is noteworthy that Derrida also sees the influence on Foucault, Barthes and Althusser. See *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (1994c) especially pages 75-78.
proposes to resort to syntax rather than semantics. Dô would ‘properly’ mean, he says, neither to give nor take ‘but either one depending on the construction’

(Derrida 1994c:78-9)\(^7\)

This lengthy quote illustrates a whole range of issues for the study of the gift and, notably, for this sense of the viral. Derrida is deconstructing Benveniste’s idea by allowing precisely this quality of giftness to stand and yet be questioned. (Although to be fair to Benveniste he does in fact argue this point in his work. In a footnote to the same essay Benveniste admonishes certain practices of exclusion by etymologists as they “…often refuse to admit these opposed meanings or try to retain only one, thus rejecting obvious parallels and spoiling the interpretation” (Benventiste 1971:42)).

This is a prime example of \textit{sous rature} as there are two positive signifieds ‘buried’ in the same signifier.\(^8\) The viral gift, it is argued here, operates \textit{sous rature} by allowing the status of gift to be asserted and questioned simultaneously. Once more the correction to the gift as aporia is evident here.

Before this line is developed further it is important to draw out some of the other key aspects of Derrida’s analysis. He quite rightly feels uncomfortable with Benveniste’s line regarding syntax and semantics (as does Benveniste himself). Derrida then proceeds to argue something perhaps more exacting. His argument out of this paradox of giving and taking as coming from the same root is to show that all language is premised on this same sense of doubling and oppositions, and the reason for this is nothing less than the gift itself, “…first of all that language is as well a phenomenon

\(^7\) An alternative explanation can be found in Freud’s observation of the splitting of terms into their opposites in early languages. Remnants in Latin ‘succus’ (juice) and ‘siccus’ (dry); in German ‘stimme’ (voice) and ‘stumme’ (voiceless), are some examples.

\(^8\) Derrida deals extensively with the concept of \textit{sous rature} in \textit{Of Grammatology}. 
of gift-countergift, of giving-taking – and of exchange” (Derrida 1994c:81). So it is not so much that there is a certain conflict within ‘language’ that makes/allows the gift to contain its opposite, rather it is because of the phenomenon of the gift that makes language contain its opposites.

This returns the thesis back to Mauss, for it relocates the social structure of ‘language’ as a gift based process. For Derrida, it would seem language is impossible except as a gift system of exchange. This helps to explain the visual examples that have been used so far (if we regard the visual as a ‘language’ system in itself). This raises one of the recurring ideas for the thesis, that of the slippage of signifiers and signifieds (meanings) within the gift process. This has been indicated in the section on glissement and Lacan’s concept of the point de capiton, but it is worth revisiting within this context. Derrida locates one strategy (from Lévi-Strauss) for negotiating the seeming contradiction of giving and taking within the same signifier as part of a slippage process:

Dans la logique de cette discussion, Lévi-Strauss thématise ce concept de ‘signifiant flottant’, de ‘contenu symbolique supplémentaire’, cet appel des linguistes au ‘phonème zero’ qui viendrait résoudre toutes les contradictions produites par le recours aux notions primitives de hau, de wakan, d’orenda ou de mana, comme forces mystérieuses inhérentes à les choses (Derrida 1991:102)

(Signifiant flottant, it is noteworthy, carries with it not only the sense of floating but also of a debt). However Derrida does not see this quality of floating or the supplementary content, or even the linguistic turn of the zero phoneme as fully explaining this phenomenon. Does this cast his idea of the gift and language (in terms

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9 Elsewhere he states, “[p]erhaps first of all, however, one must ask oneself, in a manner that is in some way absolutely preliminary: What is the relation between a language and giving-taking in general? The definition of language, of a language, as well as of the text in general, cannot be formed without a certain relation to the gift, to giving-taking and so forth, having been involved there in advance” (Derrida 1994c:79-80).
of exchange) as a contradiction to the Lacanian *glissement* of the sign? The answer to
this is both yes and no. There is a contradictory notion here – indeed there must be –
because even though Lacan’s model is an attempt to map out the processes of the
signifier in terms of the unconscious (hence *glissement* can be tracked back to Freud’s
model of the dream-work utilising condensation and displacement to escape
repression) it is still concerned with the language of the unconscious. This can be
taken to mean both the unconscious operating like a language, or the capacity for the
psychoanalyst to read the unconscious language system. Either way what holds is the
sliding process between exploring and fixing involved in understanding meaning.
Similarly the zero phoneme, or the *signifiant flottant*, does help to explain how a sign
can contain its opposite without collapsing into meaninglessness.

However Derrida’s point is essential to this study of the gift and the visual because it
offers an extra dimension. Part of the problem for Derrida with something like the
*signifiant flottant* is that it is a strategy (for someone like Lévi-Strauss) to explain the
‘mysterious forces’ of particular (cultural) utterances (such as *hau* and *mana*). Derrida
is more intent in offering up the gift as an explanation for all language systems and
processes, or at the very least in observing how the gift is a necessary function in such
a deconstruction of language as social phenomena. It is argued here, however, that
this is not in contradistinction to Lacan’s version of the sliding signifier. Part of the
gift of such *glissement*, for example, is the sense of pleasure and play.10 So, for
example, terrorism and government agencies vie for the control of the signifier in the
image, but the real power base (of exchange and debt, of the sense of generosity, and
ultimately in the determination of meaning) lies in the mechanisms of slippage, of

10 This is taken up in section four of the thesis.
supplement, and aporia. Rather than control the image it is more essential to control the ways in which it slips around. One way to affect this involves commencing with the initial understanding that the language is based on the gift process. Contained within such an understanding is the essential aspect of debt. In this sense, communication, and specifically language, become systems of debt as much as exchange.

2.3 At The Limit

This series of points raises the difficult issue of deconstruction's capacity to analyse (the image or any other form of the sign), for it questions how one is supposed to perform such a deconstruction. To understand precisely what is involved in this difficulty it is important to distinguish between two models of analysis. The first is perhaps the most obvious version - that is, a system of tools is brought to bear on the problem or issue and through them we make sense and produce interpretation. But strictly speaking it is not possible to perform such a process with deconstruction. For deconstruction is not about taking up a text (be it an image or a document, an utterance or a cultural process) and applying various processes of analysis; rather, it is the transformation of that text through deconstruction. In this sense the whole series of images that emerge from the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack are deconstructions of the original images of two buildings in the New York skyline. The images of the Twin Towers are transformed into a rupture of terrorism and counter-terrorism, the West and Islam, and so on. In this we witness how deconstruction (as an act of analysis as well as the production of a text or series of texts) is the product of a new image out of the old, a rending of the seemingly seamless so that it becomes an
altogether different version of itself. To this end deconstruction becomes a meta-discourse, for it starts precisely with the idea that there must be exchange within its own language system. Deconstruction, and by this is meant Derrida’s entire work, is the gift of analysis because it allows itself this status of the open exchange, of giving and taking.\footnote{Once more this is too far away from the central issues, but it is noteworthy that many of Derrida’s works are written in a style of exchange. See, for example, \textit{Memories of the Blind} (1990), sections of \textit{The Truth in Painting} (1987b), \textit{Glas} (1986b), and \textit{Droit de regard} (1989). In such ‘dialogues’ Derrida opens up the language, showing the operation of exchange over a series of ideas.} This enfolding of the analysis with the subject of analysis is the viral metaphor that Derrida evokes to summarise his work.

The second attribute of deconstruction's methods and systems to be considered here is how they are always positioned at the limit. Derrida once described his method of analysis in the following manner, "[I] try to keep myself at the limit of philosophical discourse. I say limit and not death, for I do not at all believe in what today is so easily called the death of philosophy (nor, moreover, in the simple death of whatever - the book, man, or god, especially since, as we all know, what is dead wields a very specific power)" (Derrida 1987b:6). So the limit is vitally important for Derrida. It does more than simply designate the extremity or the end point - it is the very marker that allows deconstruction to exist. Part of the project for deconstruction is precisely to find the limit of a discourse, and for the concerns of this thesis this means finding the limit of the image, and how the image can help us find other limits in terms of the gift. These will be taken separately, even if in reality they are usually closely linked.

Determining the limit of the image is complex, in part because what actually constitutes an image varies enormously. The cinematic and the painterly are constituted of images, but to assert a sense of limitation for either of these would look
quite different. However there are a number of aspects that can be approached not quite in the spirit of universals, but at least within the sense of deconstructing the image. The following are suggestions and the list is far from complete - but it will at least give a sense of things. The limit of the image and giftness can be seen to include: diachronics, synchronics, exhaustion, and problematising. The strategy here will be to indicate how these are reflected in Derrida's works, and how they might be used in the analysis of the image. It is important to bear in mind that what all of these elements represent is the image in crisis, of how it is positioned in such a way, of how it functions, through a challenge to itself and the context from which it emerges.

*Diachronics and Synchronics*

The visually represented gift presents us with a number of interesting aspects in terms of the diachronic and synchronic aspects of deconstruction. If, as has been argued throughout this section, deconstruction is an analytic process that mirrors the gift, it should be possible to witness these processes in the gift itself. In one way this will be demonstrated throughout the remaining part of this chapter, however a simple example may help show the sorts of interconnections that are being specified here.

There is a small, perhaps almost insignificant scene in *The Godfather II* (Coppola 1974). The young Vito Corleone, having just lost his job at the store, wanders down the street, an isolated yet hardly lost figure. He is then seen entering the small room of his home where he places a pear on the table. His wife picks it up with the exclamation “What a lovely pear” and then the scene fades.

The deconstructive diachronics of all three Godfather films are complex (even within a sensibility of the Classic Hollywood narrative style), and *The Godfather II* is
particularly interesting in these terms. Here is a film that stands between the temporal progression of the first and third film, and yet in itself continually slides between at least three temporal orders: the ‘past’ of Vito, the ‘present’ of Michael, and the parallel past/present of Michael’s memories (of particular note is the closing scene where Michael remembers his brothers before both of them, and their father, are dead. In effect *The Godfather II* both unites and fragments the narratives and histories of past and present; in doing so it reveals one of the key motifs of the trilogy – that of the inescapable force of one’s actions and ethics on the past and future. This motif is shown again and again in the films. Note, for example, the baptism scene in the first of the films, where the montage switches between the images of the baptism of Michael’s child to the brutal slaying of the heads of the other families. Innocence and guilt are of the same order in the world of the Corleone, just as the past and future are of the same order across the whole narrative of *The Godfather II*.

What is of greatest significance here – what is, in effect, being designated as the architectonic of these temporal orders – is the way in which the gift can be seen within the overall structure. To submit a deconstructionist reading of all this it is possible to move from the innocent gift of the pear to the diachronics of the narrative that allow it to carry such weight. Vito places the pear, without words, on the table; he is now without employment and has a family. This gift of the pear for him symbolises that no matter how extreme the circumstances the family will always be cared for.\(^\text{12}\)

These are precisely the same sentiments that are shown through the violent history of

\(^{12}\) The pear is such an interesting piece of fruit in this sense. In Dutch painting the pear was always a symbol of fidelity and marriage. There is an old Italian tradition that the family would plant a pear tree for the birth of a girl (an apple for a boy) and bury the after-birth at the base of the tree (see, for example, Frazer *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (1936)). In this sense it is not a fruit of temptation or of exotica, it is the familiar, the home. Within this tradition it can also be seen as part of a gift that has a sacrificial root. The gift of the pear tree (along with the gift of the after-birth) is part of the life of the child.
the Corleone family. Vito’s gift of the pear thus becomes the image at the limit of the trilogy. It marks the very moment that the powerful Corleone family begins; in effect it marks the birth of the Godfather, for from that moment on Vito becomes more powerful. He also becomes more present in the social order. In a series of quick scenes it is established that Vito is respected and admired on the streets. So just as all acts of violence and guilt are directly tied to an ethics of the family in the trilogy, everything can be brought back to this moment of the gift of the pear. And because this gift originates from a (potential) crisis of subjectivity, it can be seen as the viral gift. It signifies care for the family, but it is a stolen item. In this way it is both good and evil, and beyond both. It thus contains the sense of opposition that has been developed throughout this thesis in terms of the defining attribute of the gift. Furthermore, it marks, in this particular instance, the formation of the diachronic image at the limit.

The same can be argued in terms of the synchronic aspects of this gift of the pear. Unlike the close-up or freeze-frame that were discussed above, this scene does not ‘distort’ time and narrative. However if the gift of the pear can be seen as the moment when the Godfather comes into presence (develops his subjectivity as it were) then all time is channelled to this single moment. The three orders of time mentioned above (past, future, and present/past-future) are conflated into this moment. Of course this is not to say that this scene comes to stand, diachronically and synchronically, for all events (in many ways it mirrors other events shown, such as the slaying of Vito’s family in Italy, his isolation in New York – all of these can be seen as root causes to his life of crime). However it does hold within it the limit so important to a deconstructional analysis. In this sense the gift of the pear is a synchronic moment,
and it does indeed offer a moment in time that explains all past and future events. Read in this way other key moments of the trilogy are gift-like and contain this opposition of guilt and innocence, family care and violence. What may seem like a contradiction to the outside stands perfectly legitimately to the members of the Corleone family. (This sense of contradiction is clearly located in the role of Kay, Michael’s wife). What does happen to the gift, however, in such a containment of oppositions, is that it becomes something that cannot be refused.

Such ‘offers’ are fundamental to the gangster genre in cinema, and are part of the cultural reading of such films and characters. The gifts from Tony Soprano (in *The Sopranos*) not only cannot be refused, but also are given within an atmosphere that makes readily apparent that this is a gift of a totally different order. The amount of debt that is incurred from such a gift originates from the ethical value of blood and violence. These gifts declare their oppositional status at the very moment (that is, synchronically) they are given. The exchange value is often far higher than the value of the gift itself. Vito does not offer his wife this order of the gift in the pear, but all other gifts attain this status. In a totally different way, and yet one that can be connected here, the value of the body is something that has always been tied to the gift. As Benveniste puts it,

> ‘*[value]* is characterized, in its ancient expression, as a ‘value of exchange’ in the most material sense. It is the value of exchange that a human body possess which is delivered up for a certain price. This *value* assumes its meaning for whoever disposes of a human body, whether it is a daughter to marry or a prisoner to sell. There we catch a glimpse, in at least one part of the Indo-European domain, of the very concrete origin of a notion connected to certain institutions in a society based on slavery.

(Benveniste 1971:43)

The gangster genre works in a very similar way of valuing the body in terms of ownership, gift-exchange, and debt.
A criticism that seems to be a recurring part of deconstruction's existence and operation is that there is a danger of pushing its analysis to the extreme, thus producing nonsense. One of Derrida’s primary interests is pushing to exhaustion a concept or term, not to make it seem like nonsense, but to test its limitations and possibilities. This necessarily includes the limitations of interpretation and the possibilities beyond the known. This theme and framing of exhaustion is found in many of Derrida’s works, its challenge is to the systems of meaning, as they exist to produce some sense of truth. So often this allows his work a sense of opposition - which he seems to conjure out of a proposition the exact opposite of what the reader might be expecting.

One of the effects of such a strategy is this sense of exhausting the text. The terms of this idea here must be derived from an interest in seeing how deconstruction can exhaust the image, and how an image can be seen as a type of deconstructive exhaustion. Both of these critical ‘flows’ will be interpreted in terms of the gift. In both senses the general idea is that things are pushed to their limit, in order to find some sense of the limit. This raises an immediate problem, for how is a limit supposed to be defined? What constitutes the limit of a gift or debt? It is not important that a concrete, universal limit is found - in fact nothing could be further from the case for deconstruction - rather the issue is the action of investigating such limits. Deconstruction would assert that it is the function of the text to explore the idea of limits (as Derrida implies when he claimed that there is no, or very little, literature –
that is, there are few literary works that actually test the limit of literature and language; Derrida uses James Joyce as an example of an author who does), even if such limits are impossibilities in themselves. This is very much along the lines of Derrida's ideas on the centre and the margin. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida states that the centre is ultimately just another margin for another (falsely perceived and constructed) centre.\(^\text{13}\) It can be claimed here that any limit is really just another centre which has its own limits elsewhere. Likewise the limit of the gift – what exhausts the gift – is found not in its manifestations, or even in the parameters of its cultural moments, but rather within the social order that defies giftness.

The gift is particularly suitable to the concerns here, for so much of it is dealing with the flux between the transcendental and sacrificial, as well as the problematics of representation (and representational systems). The gift, as cultural process, is an exemplar of these two orders, and its very presence (through the systemics of gift production and enactment) must always operate within the shadow of this tension between transcendentalism and the sacrifice. The presented gift, like Derrida’s notion of the image that emerges from the transcendental, is a sacrifice in terms of the intended (and received). Once given, the gift can no longer contain the transcendental and must conform (even in the most simplistic of ways) to the *trait*. To understand this connection it is important to recall a central idea in *Memoirs of the Blind*,

> The heterogeneity between the thing drawn and the drawing *trait* remains abyssal, whether it be a thing represented and its representation or between the model and the image. The night of this abyss can be interpreted in two ways, either as the eve or the memory of the day, that is, as a reserve of visibility (the draftsman does not presently see but he has seen and will see again: the aperspective as the anticipating perspective or the anamnesic retrospective), or else as radically and definitively foreign to the phenomenality of the day. This

\(^\text{13}\) See Derrida *Of Grammatology*, especially the section ‘The Essay on the Origin of Languages’. Derrida's concerns are with Rousseau, and how the Enlightenment contributed to the idea of a centre that in effect produces meaning and a site for interpretation.
heterogeneity of the invisible to the visible can haunt the visible as its very possibility

(Derrida 1990:45)

This line is useful at two levels here. It is a remarkably interesting take on the relationship of the image to its absented others, and therefore offers an insight into the system of representation and the image. Similarly, it is possible to take what Derrida states here and apply it to the process of the gift (within or external to its visuality).

The significance of the first term for our concerns here is the haunting of the visible by its possibilities. Note that Derrida emphasises the processes of invisibility and otherness – his is a schema of the foreign, the reserve, and the abyssal. In other words this is the image that is not figured by what is encountered, but precisely by what is not. This, it is argued here, is also the quality of the gift. The heterogeneity of the hauntings of the gift is not simply that which could have been given (the alternative signifiers of the gift that exist in the paradigmatic processes of giftness), but also the phenomenality of the gift system. So the gift given is a syntagmatic presence that is haunted by the other gifts not presented; it is also that signifier (that image in this context) that operates as a gift because it finds itself within the system of the gift. Under another systemic order this same signifier can cease to be a gift and become something entirely different. However, and this is absolutely essential to what is being argued throughout this thesis, the gift is ‘unique’ because it contains this opposition at all times. If there is a haunting of the gift it is this sense of the opposite. Of course part of the reason why this is so, is that the gift system necessarily invests those signs
with opposition. The gift is to give and take, receive and owe, make absent and present, pay back and collect, originate and return.  

Returning to the overall theme of exhaustion, it is possible to see how Derrida, by employing these terms, explores the limitations of representation. Through shifting his focus from the struggles of representation in painting, to how representational systems overall force us to engage in a number of paradoxes involving what something is and what we actually see, the possibilities of representing something and the sacrifices that meet our eye/gaze can be opened up. In this way any attempt to represent something – every image in effect – is an exhaustion of the possible. Similarly, every gift is the exhaustion of the potlatch, and at the same time the preservation of the system of exchange. Through exhausting the specific, all gifts allow the processes of value to be sustained. This is not simply because the image fixes the representation, or that the gift defines the value and exchange, but also because ways of representing, and looking, become determined and predetermined just as ways of giving are established within social and psychical systems. This is why Derrida describes the event that is the moment, between the transcendental and the sacrificial as that which “provides drawing with its thematic objects or spectacles, its figures and heroes, its pictures or depictions of the blind” (Derrida 1993:41). In a sense this is the compromise of representation and the gift, as it works its way through the impossibilities of the transcendental and the demands of the sacrificial. It is also the space and mechanism which allows a visual culture. Without these two it would not only be impossible to represent, but also impossible to understand the representational.

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It is noteworthy that Derrida makes the following comment in *Memoirs of the Blind*, “… the thanksgiving grace of the *trait* suggests that the origin of the *graphein* there is debt or gift rather than representational fidelity” (Derrida 1990:30). Such a contrast between gift/debt and representational fidelity suggests that the image and gift operate within a site of crises and paradox rather than complicity. This is a key idea of the disruptive gift.
processes or even what is being represented. Both the transcendental and the sacrificial become the defining paradoxes of the limits to representation, including, of course, the representation of the gift and what the specific gift itself comes to represent (love, debt, repayment, fidelity, and so on).

2.4 On the Double

There are many varieties and versions of the double in Derrida's works. In fact it recurs with such regularity that it quite possible to argue that it is one of the fundamentals of deconstruction. In order to understand why this is the case this section will firstly consider what Derrida seems to be evoking when he deals with the double, and then looks to how deconstruction's theorising of the double can be used to analyse another feature of visual culture in terms of the gift. As with the previous sections in this chapter the thesis will avoid considering the obvious examples in Derrida's works, and in doing so attempt to extend the idea of the double across a range of material.

One of the fundamental aspects that needs to be understood in this context of the double is that for Derrida it is rarely, if ever, a case of simply the double (or doubling) of something. There are many reasons for this, but at its core there is a primary theme that runs throughout Derrida's works, and one that can be traced back to the earliest (phenomenological) writings. If one of the core aims of deconstruction is to reveal and dismantle the primary terms of reference in a particular epoch then it must do so with a reflexive eye. It is one thing to devise a strategy to reveal sense making and rule governing processes, but it is another thing to not see your own system falling
into that same status/trap. In other words, deconstruction's attempt to expose the rules of meaning generating systems could place itself precisely in that same position - of generating a different set of 'rules' about how meaning is generated. To safeguard against this deconstruction must have a healthy level of self-reflection - it must observe itself as it attempts any form of analysis. This is precisely why so much of the writings of deconstruction seem so convoluted; it observes itself as a philosophical system attempting to disentangle all the issues of philosophy.

In this way deconstruction cannot be the double of the current systems of meaning, it must exist somewhere else. In these terms it is interesting to see how Derrida positions *différance* within a group of thinkers that includes Nietzsche, Saussure, Freud, Levinas, and Heidegger (see, for example, Derrida 1973:130). Our epoch (which includes this list), Derrida points out, is one of *différance*. All of these theorists share this attribute of critical self-awareness, of a misgiving for their contemporary order's ways of thinking, and a desire to reformulate them beyond a straightforward alternative. *Différance* sees that every sense of meaning operates on a process of differences and that all resolutions of meaning should be, and necessarily are, deferred. Meaning itself becomes a dynamic process where production overtakes resolution as the primary force. In this way it is possible to see how *différance* is not Derrida's double of a theory of meaning, but another term altogether.

*Différance* is one example of many of Derrida's resistance to binary oppositions (the fundamental structure of Western thought that gives us the divisions of good and evil,
male and female, day and night, and so on). Derrida provided strategies to think outside of the binaries including what he called the third term\textsuperscript{15}:

the \textit{pharmakon} is neither remedy nor poison, neither good nor evil, neither the inside nor the outside, neither speech nor writing; the \textit{supplement} is neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor a complement of an inside, neither accident nor essence, etc.; the \textit{hymen} is neither confusion nor distinction, neither identity nor difference, neither consummation nor virginity, neither veil nor unveiling, neither the inside nor the outside, etc.; the \textit{gram} is neither a signifier nor a signified, neither a sign nor a thing, neither a presence nor an absence, neither a position nor a negation, etc.; \textit{spacing} is neither space nor time; the \textit{incision} is neither the incised integrity of a beginning, or of a simple cutting into, nor simple secondarity...

(Derrida 1987b:43)

Here we have a list that reveals much more than a set of terms. Notice how Derrida ends many of the listings with an 'etc.' - even in his examples there is a sense of so much more than can be contained in the terms. One gets the impression that no matter how long the list of terms became (of the neither/nors) there must always be a sense of a furthering. Notice also how the list given by Derrida starts with some relatively straightforward binaries (remedy/poison, inside/outside) but quickly collapses into more complex relationships that might not appear as opposites ending with 'incised integrity of a beginning/secondarity'. Derrida does this to demonstrate not only the instability of the binary oppositions, but also the difficulty of even working in terms of the binary. Finally, notice how this list of terms (\textit{pharmakon}, \textit{supplement}, \textit{hymen}, and \textit{gram}) works across divisions of opposition so that what Derrida achieves is a sense of deconstruction beyond the terms and into the ways in which meaning is constructed.

\textsuperscript{15} Certain resonance is noted in this idea with Lacan’s third time. Both invite a position beyond the established, perhaps even beyond the comfortable.
This is the case where we find Derrida's engagement with these terms, for example, the *pharmakon* in *Dissemination*; the supplement in *Of Grammatology*, the hymen in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Style* all carry with them this sense of not just containing their own opposites, but of acting as moments of deconstruction. It will take us too far afield to pursue this much further, but just as a final point of illustration it is important to realise that in Derrida's list are embedded references and illusions to more and more ideas and arguments. Take, for example, the hymen. Derrida's deconstructional point of neither veil nor unveiling is a reference to Nietzsche's veil/unveil effect (*Schleier, Enthüllung, Verhüllung*) (see, for example, Derrida 1979: 51) of the truth as woman/woman as truth. So this becomes enfolded in Nietzsche's complex arguments about truth and illusion, and Heidegger's commentaries on this. In other words beyond the binarism of the doubling, is this style of thinking which flows on in the 'etc.' of such lists.

What, then of the double of the gift in these terms? The double function of the gift has already been noted in various ways in the thesis. In no small way this has been defined here as an essential aspect of the gift and the gift-exchange process. The other feature of the double that is revealed through this deconstruction of the double is that there must exist a double to the gift. This is distinct from, yet attached to the idea that the gift contains its own (oppositional) double. Hence it is possible to speak of the *pharmakon* of the gift in terms of remedy/poison and gift/debt; and at the same time look towards a double that the process of exchange is derived from. In these terms the gift’s double is not debt (which is contained within it) but a different semiology that is positioned external to such processes. One of the primary processes of this double semiology is exchange itself. The double of the gift is the exchange system itself. This
would seem to suggest a typology, and this is, to a certain extent, the case. In as much as the gift cannot exist without its double of exchange, so the same can be said of any form of exchange; that is, that it can only exist within a sense of gift-debt. The reason why this can be seen as part of the doubling process is that it is quite possible to have an exchange system that appears to operate outside of the gift-debt frame. However it is argued here that the process of the double is always present, even if it often passes unobserved. For example, it is unusual to speak of the penal code as one based on the gift. Yet it is precisely within the sense of exchange (a crime is ‘exchanged’ for prison time, the prisoner is said to have a debt to society that must be paid, and so on) that social orders construct punishment. Such an exchange system is the gift’s double because even though the punishment may never be described as a gift (to the social order, to the ‘victims’ of crime), such notions of exchange and debt can only really work if the semiology of the gift operates as a double to this.

It is possible to speak of the double and the gift in another way, this time more visually derived. The next part of this chapter will look at a version of the double, the visual, and the gift in terms of spectres and mirrors, arguing further this idea of the exchange system as double, as well as looking to other, different versions of this phenomena.

2.5 The Gift, the Spectre and the Mirror

By using some of the terms that Derrida uses to define the status of spectres in texts, the doubling of the gift can be viewed from another perspective. In a sense it goes against the spirit of the spirit because spectres should always resist positions that
make them tangible, concrete, or simply rendered visible. By its very definition the spectre inhabits a space that is neither living nor dead, neither present nor absent. Texts that attempt to represent spectres and spirits illustrate that there is an encounter with something that lies at the heart of the problems of representation noted above. Spectres even resist the middle ground between the transcendental and the sacrificial.

In this way it is possible to employ such figures to make sense of an aspect of *différance*. Derrida states, "*[d]ifférance is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each element that is said to be 'present', appearing on the stage of presence, is related to something other than itself but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element*" (Derrida 1973:142). Derrida is aiming for something more than the haunting spectre, but the status he is articulating does fit them. This idea that to operate in terms of *différance* is to necessarily contain within itself elements of the past and a possible future relation is what determines the threat of these figures. They must operate in terms of *différance* because the threat they bring is continually deferred and their status to others (the living) is always determined through difference.

It is also worth noting that Derrida himself engages in the figure and concept of the spectre. We see it extensively in *Spectres of Marx*, underpinning sections of *The Gift of Death*, and in key sections in *Politics of Friendship*. It is noteworthy (although once more it can be signalled here for it would take the thesis too far from its primary concerns) that these are all central works in Derrida's writings on political philosophy. It is an interesting reflection on Derrida, perhaps, that when he engages in the political (something many have called on him to do for some time) there is an evocation of the
spectral. There is one more feature of the spectre from Derrida that needs to be considered before moving on to some implications for the gift, and then on to the related topic of mirrors. The spectral breaks down the opposition between self and other because it questions the processes employed to maintain those distinctions. In the horror and slasher film genres the aspect that so often allows the threat to take place is the connection between the spectral and the central character (often a woman) - it is because of what she is that the figure from another realm can exist and continue to return. The spectral simultaneously challenges the order of spaces (and time) and asserts them (the white middle class suburban world is defined as such because it contrasts so sharply with the world of spectres and mutilated killers). This means that the figure of the threat and potential victim become reflections of one another. One of the central themes in *Memoirs of the Blind* is the self-portrait, and Derrida figures this in quite a curious way. He argues that the extreme examination required in the self-portrait exerts a type of analysis quite unique in representation, and the consequence is one of ruin, "[r]uin is the self-portrait, this face looked at in the face as the memory of itself, what remains or returns as a specter from the moment one first looks at oneself and a figuration is eclipsed. The figure, the face, then sees its visibility being eaten away" (Derrida 1993:68). Apart from the recurring themes of the past and future, the other striking thing about this passage is that Derrida ties the self directly to a sort of spectralisation. It is as if self-reflection is not possible unless it is inhabited by a spectre. This is because the self-portrait, like the spectral, contorts the sense of presence and absence, as well as the present and past/future.\(^\text{16}\) The self-portrait, by its very nature, allows the vision of visibility to be eaten away.

\(^{16}\) Here we are reminded of Barthes' sense of the *punctum* - which is the spectrely presence, and status, of the photograph.
Figuring the gift within all of this can be done at a number of different levels. One of the most overt would be to note the spectral qualities of the gift itself. This would be to argue that the object chosen as the gift is a type of haunting of the ‘real’ gift being made; this ranges from the straight-forward (tokens of love standing for true love, ever-lasting love, absolute fidelity) to the heavily disguised (which is in some ways the anthro-political agenda of Mauss’ entire study of the gift). In such a reading the gift occupies the third term in as much it is both present and absent in the moment of exchange, it both represents and can never totally represent the underlying thematics and semiotics of the relationships involved. This is all to do with the spectral quality of the gift. The spectre of the gift, in this sense, is giftness, in that much of what directs the economy of the gift comes from the shadow of intent and assumption.

Such a perspective on the spectral characteristic of the gift includes the qualities of exchange, debt, instability, and power that haunts the gift and all those engaged in its production and reception. The spectral gift mirrors the systems of subjectivity because it sets up mirroring processes, once the giver has given the gift away; their sense of giftness adjusts to the new subjectivity of expectant receiver. This is a theme that recurs throughout this thesis.

Another way of looking at this is the idea of the relationship between the spectre and gift, particularly in terms of death. In some ways this is the primary theme of Derrida’s *The Gift of Death*, and it is noteworthy that this is the theme that he uses to discuss religion and ethics.\(^{17}\) In other words it is within the context of gift and debt that

\(^{17}\) It is important to note that Derrida does this in a reflexive manner, acknowledging that this book of his exists not out of a sense of obligation, of duty, but in order to reflect on the difficulties of doing such a thing. As he notes, “[p]hilosophers who don’t write ethics are failing in their duty, one often hears, and the first duty of the philosopher is to think about ethics, to add a chapter on ethics to each of his or her books…” (Derrida 1996:67). Yet Derrida goes on to say that this is far from straightforward, and philosophers run the real risk of missing the ‘most common and everyday experience of
that Derrida places notions of sacrifice, the debt of and to the state (especially in terms of the death in custody of the human rights advocate and philosopher Jan Patočka), and death itself. Gift in the terms here is woven into the dynamics of sacrifice and social responsibility. Two passages illustrate this well; the first is from Patočka, and the second from Derrida:

Responsible life itself was conceived in that event as the *gift* of something that, in the end, while having the characteristics of the Good, also presented the traits of something *inaccessible* to which man is forever enslaved – the traits of a mystery that has the last word

(Patočka in Derrida 1996:30)

Let us emphasize the word ‘gift.’ Between on the one hand this denial that involves renouncing the self, this abnegation of the gift, of goodness, or of the generosity of the gift that must withdraw, hide, in fact sacrifice itself in order to give, and on the other hand the repression that would transform the gift into an economy of sacrifice, is there not a secret affinity, an unavoidable risk of contamination of two possibilities as close one to the other they are different from each other?

(Derrida 1996:30-31)

Here we find the absolute political economy of the gift, for this is the gift as it is located within the need to do good, to perform the Good, not simply as the social order determines it, but in the Hegelian sense of the Good as a conceptual order beyond the social. Primary to this is the subject as social agent, the subject who performs the sacrifice through the gift. This particular sacrifice is the spectral because it must operate both within and outside of the established (social) orders. This is why Derrida emphasises the gift that must withdraw. This is also the construction of the Good as it formulates a social order with responsibility. For Derrida this is the responsibility of philosophy, however for the concerns here it must also include the responsibility”. Let us not shirk from this, for *The Gift of Death* is one of Derrida’s most personal of works. The entire second half of the section entitled “Whom to Give To: Knowing Not to Know” is working towards Derrida’s highly personal statement of himself as philosopher in a world where millions starve.
presenting (that is the actual formulation as well as the representational systems involved) of the gift within the (social) order. This will also include the systems of exchange, and so value, debt and all such processes.

An idea that is central to *The Gift of Death* is that of *mysterium tremendum* – the frightening secret to make you tremble (Derrida 1996:53). One of its central attributes here (for this thesis as well as Derrida’s analysis) is the gift of death, which necessarily includes the knowledge of death and acts of faith. In part this is the excess of the moment, where the something is beyond knowledge and comprehension. And in part it is the gift caught up in the moment of self-reflexivity,

> What is it that makes us tremble in the *mysterium tremendum*? It is the gift of infinite love, the dissymmetry that exists between the divine regard that sees me, and myself, who doesn’t see what is looking at me; it is the gift and endurance of death that exists in the irreplaceable, the disproportion between the infinite gift and my finitude

(Derrida 1996:55-56)

In this we witness Derrida discussing something remarkably similar to what was considered earlier in this chapter – the interplay between the transcendental and the sacrificial – only here the tensions are witnessed in terms of the infinite and finitude. This of course ties in with the Hegelian theme of eternity and the Eternal. This all takes place within a framework of self-reflection (the layerings are manifold here), which is a good point at which to turn to the issue of mirrors.

*Mirrors*

Reflection is one of the corner stones of philosophy – it is what philosophy defines itself as doing. There are whole systems of thought, and fiercely contested debates, about the degree and type of reflection (and in this is included reflexivity) that should
be included in any system of thought.\textsuperscript{18} The two concerns here must be with how deconstruction operates in terms of the mirror – that is, the act of reflection – and how the gift can sometimes function within this sense of reflexivity. The first of these is fundamentally about how Derrida attempts to get the philosophical discourses to reflect on themselves, and in so doing make his readers, and philosophy in general, more reflexive in the approach to the ideas. This methodology of Derrida’s allows the reader to work within a moment of reflection. This is the tain of the mirror; it is the behind of the mirror that we do not see, but without it there can be no reflection of the image.

When we find moments of mirroring in an image there are a number of consequences that can occur. One is a sort of declaration of technique; a show within the image that such a thing can be done. Dutch still life paintings are good examples of this, because what the tiny aspects of reflection (on bowls and jugs, cups and in water) perform is a sense of the life-like, but also a demonstration of the skill of the painter. In other words we find combined within the single image both a denial of the artifice (the replication of the real) and a claim of it (the technique of the artist him/herself). Another possible consequence is that the whole discourse of the image is interrupted, perhaps even broken. These are the moments of reflection when the illusion of the text is arrested and the spectator is reminded that they are actually looking at something (which then returns their gaze). The direct address to the camera in cinema, the photographic moment that reveals the camera (the pseudo-sexuality of Helmut Newton’s images for example are so formulated that their sexuality becomes reflexive

\textsuperscript{18} An excellent summary of this situation, and Derrida’s own position within it, is to be found in Rodolphe Gasché \textit{The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection}. 

of a particular type (phallocentric) and era), and the use of mirrors in painting are all examples of this.

It is possible to note the function of this in the gift. They are textual forms that return the line of thinking to the opening ideas in this chapter, for they have a certain parasitology attached to them. So often these mirrors do not sit on the same plane of existence as the rest of the objects in the image, but render visible, to be consumed by the spectator, the dynamics of the image. Deconstruction is the tain behind the ideas, drawing moments of reflection on the thing itself (be it an image or a definition of truth) and the participation of the spectator. “Deconstruction” says Derrida, “does not consist in passing from one concept to another, but in overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the non-conceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated” (Derrida 1986:329). All of the ideas that have been looked at here – from mirrors and spectres to limits and viruses – are part of this process of overturning the conceptual order. What then of the gift in terms of mirroring and self-reflexivity? Like deconstruction’s relationship to philosophy, the gift has a facet of not being visible as a gift. Or, to put it another way, there is a certain aspect of the gift that allows it to declare ‘giftness’ but not seem to be reflexive. Yet all gifts must, at some level at least, contain this reflexivity. This can be as straightforward as the gift seeming to reflect aspects of the giver or receiver, or it can be as complex as the systems laid out by Mauss. Indeed, it can be argued that Mauss’s whole anthropological study is a reflexive moment on the gift (which includes the idea that the gift reflects/mirrors the social order). In these terms it can be argued that Mauss articulates the gift as reflexive of the cultural order (that is, how cultures operate within exchange systems reflects wide aspects of their socio-cultural, ethical,
political, and even textual, life). A key aspect of the gift is this process of reflexivity and self-reflexivity. It is made manifest at the most denotative level (the signs of gifts) but functions throughout the entire exchange order. The gift itself will often disguise this reflexivity (that is one way it ensures its continuing existence as a gift), but at another level this mirroring is always present. Once more we encounter the idea that the gift contains its opposite, this time in terms of self-reflexivity and denial of the apparatus.
3. Relationship of Investment: Power and Gift

3.1 Subject Exchange and Investment in Visual Culture

3.2 Bodies and Gifts: Image analysis of power relations through investment

In this section, Foucault’s analysis of power and subjectivity is developed in terms of investment and how the gift is influenced through such relationships of power. In this sense, it is possible to emphasise the complexities that arise through intersubjective relations, particularly gift exchange and those between observer and image. The image provides a generous domain as an example of cyclical giving, taking, and return, particularly with respect to, and in terms of, investment through power and subjectivity. To argue this is to acknowledge the complex relationship that exists between the image (and the visual) and various kinds of theorisations (including those by Foucault).

3.1 Subject Exchange and Investment in Visual Culture

Everyday images of culture, bodies, and life help to form our conscious sense of what it is to be regarded as visual. As subjects, our consciousness is not attentive to the forms and typologies of investments that are made in or as part of visual culture. In viewing paintings, reading literature, watching films, we are engaging with other images and forming investments of power, continuously interacting within systems of exchange and shifting subjectivities. The system of exchange that transpires between the image and the subject-as-observer reflects the exchange in subjectivity between giver and receiver. This is not arguing that
spectatorship is a gift, rather it is suggesting that the exchanging of subjectivities revolves around, and is dependent on, issues and relations of power within any interaction regarding the image and establishes a connection with the gift and gift exchange. The relationship between subject and image has been chosen as example and parallel for the relationship between giftness and the gift because of its similar insecure and uncertain discursive practices, and the subsequent questioning of subjectivity within the processes of communication.

The primary edict of power for Foucault was its investment and manifestation through relationships, and in particular the formation of subjectivity. Foucault was not primarily interested in analysing or critiquing power; as for him power (as a freestanding socio-cultural force) did not exist prior to an interactive relationship. Rather, it was the subject, more specifically, the construction of human beings into subjects that was his main research objective. The effects and machinations of power only being realised and ‘activated’ once a power relationship has been constructed and engaged with. Frow notes that this is also how the gift relationship is effected, “[g]ifts are precisely not objects at all, but transactions and social relations. It is only in these terms that it is possible to speak of a gift economy, in the sense of an order governing transactions and the chains of debt and return that flow from them” (Frow 1997:124). Read this way, it becomes possible to view the gift via the subjects involved and to further conceive of their positioning (giver and receiver) as a system of exchange that is modified by power.¹ Foucault viewed power as a technique or mechanism to be used in working out why and how we become subjects, “[m]y objective, instead,

¹ This sense of power and the gift is precisely what is evoked in Derrida’s *The Gift of Death*. The notion of social responsibility as gift necessarily contains aspects of power.
has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects. My work has dealt with three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects” (Foucault 1983a:208). By claiming that a subject invests power in an image, by forming a relationship with it, a discursive practice evolves where the subject, as observer invests in the determination of meaning from the image. What is of interest here is how these power relations are produced and why they are produced to create certain subjectivity with specific reference to any image. Whilst some of the visual examples discussed will have the gift as their content, it is the subject’s investment of power in the image that also reflects a gift relationship. It is argued that the subject’s investment in the image is an investment, made on similar ground to that of the giver and receiver in the gift. It is the exchange of subjectivities that occurs within visual culture that is of significance here.

In order to use power as a tool to analyse the subject and how we become subjects, Foucault suggested a new economy of power relations:

> It consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point … Rather than analysing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analysing power relations through the antagonism of strategies

(Foucault 1983a:211)

It is worth adopting this approach to look at what power relations are involved in visual culture, by looking at various oppositions such as resistances to power relations, or any attempts that are made to separate aspects that comprise power relations. As a result, more is discovered about power relationships, their function, and effect, instead of merely outlining certain circumstances and
situations where power operates. This is especially important and relevant for any gift exchange as it maintains a focus on the interaction of exchange and its systemic structure. In only identifying what power relations are and what typologies exist; little is highlighted about the subjects involved in any form of investment, particularly with respect to the gift, and any subjectivity produced by them. Additionally, this method of analysis emphasises the most fundamental aspect of all power relations; that is, how power is practiced and exercised within a relationship. Directing this towards the image, this section aims to sketch out what aspects are involved in forming types of power relations and essentially the significance this has for the subject. Looking for the inter-relationship and interaction that exists between subject and the image is essential to the examination of how power relations between the two are constructed, played out, and contested. Investigating this relationship as a system of exchange and subjectivity assists in determining a typification of the relationship/s present with gift exchange. It takes into account the role of power and its contribution to one of the primary structures of the gift, that being the investment in subjectivity as either giver or receiver. In this we find Mauss’s sentiment where he argues that an aspect of the gift is part of the person/s that participate in gift exchange and are subsequently directed towards a system of exchange that deals with the shifting subjectivities of giver and receiver.

Another link between visual cultures and the gift relationship with respect to power can be found in the characteristics of power. Looking at such elements of power is not to ignore other facets but rather to regard more closely how power is used between people to influence and adapt their actions in specific relationships.
Characteristics of power are uncovered through analysing the subject’s struggle with forms of power and this is taken up in the following section.

*Questioning the status of the individual: Struggles of Power*

Foucault’s examination of power is complex and involved, as what ultimately drives his analysis is a new definition of an already socially current concept. His reappropriation of the concept of power provides redefinition and reshaping so that the result is a different agenda contained within the same term. One of the ways in which he achieves this is through discussing what his version of power is not, and he does this through attacking what he terms ‘power struggles’. These power struggles oppose and resist power through criticising it as a tool – what Foucault calls a ‘form of power’, not particular establishments or social classes – although this is not to deny that forms of power exist within these domains. Commonalities between these struggles circulate around the issue and status of the subject, such as the notion of the subject as individual, the concept of individualisation and the effects of power specific to subjection. This analysis of the characteristics of power can be linked with the gift in terms of struggle as it echoes Foucault’s conception in that it is premised on the theme of that which contains its opposite. Many arguments concerning the gift – particularly Derrida’s – define the gift through what it isn’t. Instead, and this is conceptually very significant, it is done so through the formation of the subject. Gift exchange revolves around relations with people and on this basis is completely concerned with the issues of the subject and power as an investment. As the gift’s fundamental paradox lies in it containing its opposite, Foucault’s categorisation of struggles in terms of power and the subject offers a more centred perspective
on how the subject comes to invest in power as well as how such an investment in power relations bears on gift exchange. This viewpoint concerning the gift also brings together two of the main themes that are argued in this thesis – the gift containing its opposite and the gift as a system of exchange. In involving the issues of power and subjectivity with investment we find the alignment of opposition and exchange in that opposition becomes that which is exchanged. It is worthwhile suspending this for the moment and look towards Foucault’s typification of power struggles. This, in turn, will allow an examination of how opposition is exchanged in terms of the gift and giftness.

Foucault summarily identifies aspects of struggles as those “which question the status of the individual … struggles against the ‘government of individualisation’ … struggles against the privileges of knowledge … struggles revolve around the question: Who are we?”(Foucault 1983a:212). Struggles then deal with the various effects of the exercise of power and are primarily concerned with attacking any form of power that attempts to govern the individual and prevent him/her from becoming a critical subject. Viewing these power struggles from a different perspective suggests that the subject resists not only a prescription of individuality from the state but also resists the seduction of such conformity and homogeneity that the totalisation of the subject yields. In terms of visual cultures, the subject-that-observes struggles against the seduction of the image – the seduction of being placed, of being told how and what to view. The current popularity of ‘real life’ television programmes attests to a viewer demographic succumbing to such a seduction of the image. From Survivor to Temptation Island to Big Brother, each television programme prescribes viewing places for
the home viewer through constructing a strict narrative out of the power relations that develop between the game show participants. These programs are not designed for the critical subject, instead they rely on the seduction within the image - being told what is meaningful is easier than critically assessing it for oneself. Thus power struggles are comprised of two sides, both centred on the creation of a particular subjectivity. Mauss’s point regarding “the dissoluble bond of a thing with its original owner” has a certain resonance in that it identifies one of the main struggles and functions in the formation of subjectivity of giver and receiver. In recognising the ‘indissoluble bond’ that exists between giver and receiver, Mauss also (perhaps inadvertently) identifies gift exchange as a process and structure through which power relations help to form subjectivity through a ‘struggle’ of seduction in addition to an investment in the subjectivity of the opposite.

Foucault never argues seduction as a typology of struggle, or as a characteristic of power, but this is precisely what is happening within systems that exchange positions of subjectivity, as seen between subject and image, and within gift exchange between giver and receiver, where subjectivities struggle with the investment in a relationship that is based on paradox. Take for example when you see a photo of yourself that you quite like. Part of your pleasure is derived from the seduction of the image – you are seduced by this particular captured image (as compared to those photographs where ‘it’s not a good photo of me’). In this photo, there is an investment in what others may find attractive or desirable. At this level there is an exchange of subjectivities – you are assuming
another perspective – similar to the assumption that is made in the selection of a gift (why else would a gift be chosen?).

In order for the gift to be given and signal exchange, its value must be noted (culturally) as seductive in the sense that the giver wants to give it and the receiver wants to accept it. This seduction surrounding the gift in exchange is the basis for why investment in power relations is seen as a struggle as predominantly what is seductive is not the gift but the promise of further gifts and exchanges. The subjects (giver and receiver) engage with the seduction in these power relations with the knowledge that once an investment has taken place, the relations will shift and alternative power relations will form. To explicate this web of relationships further, it is necessary to work through Foucault’s typification of struggles.

Foucault identifies three types of struggles against the domination, exploitation, and subjection present in any imposition of power. While Foucault does not relate these forms of power struggles specifically to the image or the gift, they are concerned with the discourse of the subject and creation of subjectivity. It is this perspective that is of interest in viewing gift exchange as a relevant discourse of power relations. Its economy structures can be examined to look at how the subject interacts with the gift on the basis of exchange, specifically with respect to issues of management and governmentality. Foucault’s analysis allows the positions of giver and receiver within gift exchange to possess a primacy, rather than being dominated by the process of gift-object exchange. By focusing on the subjectivities exchanged within gift giving, the connection drawn with visual
cultures emerges with more clarity as its manifestations of power relationships are quite similar. By avoiding a specific analysis of the constructions of power within particular examples of gift exchange, the focus is maintained on how the subjectivities involved are manifested, formed, and exchanged through relations of power. This in turn allows us to think about power, the gift, and the image purely in terms of the subject. The reason why this works so effectively within the parameters of a Foucauldian analysis is that the discussion of the gift (and giftness) emphasises the impact of the subject (and the formation of subjectivity) in exchange and the causality of the gift economy. A different typology of exchange found in the image and a visual culture allows the impact of the subject to foreground the struggles. Below the typologies of struggles, as identified by Foucault, are discussed with respect to the connection between gift, image, and subject.

1. Dominance

The subject has to struggle with the dominance of the image. The image here can be taken to mean, a photograph, a film, an advertisement, or even a mental image – such as in the remit of Charles Sanders Peirce’s interpretant. The image

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[2] The three triads offered by Charles Sanders Peirce in Collected Papers (1931) provide a workable template to discuss the relationship between the gift and giftness within a semiotic framework. Peirce’s theory has particular relevance because of the emphasis on the referent – something that clearly exists within the discourse of the gift. The object that denotes the gift dominates much of the economy, yet at the same time, can have little to do with the other levels of exchange, specifically the act of discursive exchange. The initial triad presented by Peirce is made up of, the ‘sign’, the ‘interpretant’, and the ‘object’. “A sign … is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground…” (Peirce 1931:135). The gift is the sign that stands to somebody for something, and as Kaja Silverman points out, “[t]he sign which indicates the play of meaning
within this model corresponds fairly closely to Saussure’s signifier in at least one respect: it is a
form capable of eliciting a concept. In another respect – its representational qualities – it would
seem quite different … Peirce’s sign often either resembles or adjoins the object” (Silverman
1983:15). Within this scope, the gift functions as the sign that adjoins the object and that elicits a
concept – giftness, which operates in the place of the interpretant. Silverman states that Peirce
attributes this transcendental concept, interpretant, to the sign to identify the potential of
exchange by virtue of being replaceable, “the interpretant is nothing but another representation to
which the torch of truth is handed along; and as representation, it has its interpretant again”
(Peirce 1931:171). Most of the instability within the act of discursive exchange stems from the
continuous cycle of repetition regarding the interpretation of the sign. By emphasising the
interpretant within this triad, Peirce addresses that a significant and directing aspect in the act of
communication and signification is existential. Fundamentally, exchange is managed and
manipulated by intent or desire. The importance of Peirce’s work, for the concerns of this chapter
and indeed the relevance to the discussion of the image, rest on the applicability of the
relationship between sign, interpretant and object and the relationship between gift, giftness and
giver/receiver. It helps to stage the challenge giftness presents to the stability of signification in
the discourse of the gift, particularly, “the connections the system establishes between
signification and subjectivity … and the emphasis it places on the endless commutability of the
signified, upon the capacity of the signified to generate a chain of additional meanings”(Silverman 1983:25). Peirce’s interpretant is the element of the initial triad that is
unstable. It cannot be measured or be categorised. Consequently, a large part of instability within
discourse, discursive practices and exchange stems from the mental interpretation of the
interaction or relationship between sign and object. Giftness, as the transcendental signified of the
gift, mirrors and embodies this instability, as it is the element within the discourse of the gift that
connects sign to object and continues the economy. To adopt Peirce’s term, for the purposes of
giftness, places the focus on perception, where the perceiving of some ‘thing’ (object or sign),
transforms the perceived ‘thing’ into a mental representation, or interpretant. Each ensuing
perception/interpretation of the ‘thing’ becomes recognition, subsequently forming new
interpretation and clarification of the mental representation. Peirce states in Writings of Charles
S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition (1982), “[w]e are capable of understanding representations
only by having conceptions or mental representations, which represent the given representation as
a representation” (Peirce 1982:323). The interpretant works on the condition that it also involves
the consciousness of its reality is a representation. Built into discourse or systems of signification
then, are the fracturings of representation. What transpires are multiple moments of varied
meanings, varied interpretations and varied exchanges based on implicit heterogeneity. The
interpretant illustrates a double layering of signs, as a layer of signs and a layer of meta-signs.
The result is that meaning derived from signification and representation becomes more and more
unstable as the mental representations (of the interpretant) seek stability of meaning from the sign
and object. The key consequence of Peirce’s theory for this dissertation is the instability that he
establishes within the initial triad through the introduction and function of the interpretant. It is
the relationship between the interpretant, sign and object that creates the instability as there can
be no uniformity between each production of meaning. The resonance for the gift and giftness is
that each connection (or moment of exchange) according to the Peircean triad, produces a
meaning that can only be made in the mind of the giver. The question of the gift is complex
because involved within the term ‘gift’ are number of exchanges that occur. Principally, the
exchange of the object, the exchange of subjectivity and the exchange of intent are the most
nominal forms. Peirce’s ideas assist the separation of these convoluted exchanges that are present
within the discourse of the gift (as a process of communication, as exchange between
subjectivities) as he distinguishes between practicality and impracticality that is of interest here.
Peirce states, “we have direct experience of things in themselves. Nothing can be more
completely false than that we can experience only our own ideas … Our knowledge of things in
themselves is entirely relative” (Peirce 1931:73). An important question that rises from this
negotiation of representation is the validity of reality. Peirce believes that signification can
legitimately represent reality, yet this is not something we can discern for ourselves. As is seen in
the work of Derrida, the problematic status of an object such as the gift is subject to rigorous
questioning in terms of ‘purity’, (Derrida 1994c). The second triad that Peirce constructs looks to
identify the various signs we interpret. He stipulates three elements, the ‘icon’, the ‘index’ (or as
‘indices’) and the ‘symbol’. The gift operates at all three levels within this triad, but it is the
indexical sign that is of most interest here, especially pertaining to giftness. The icon has a closer

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dominates through the privilege of the institution-as-state; ‘state’ here meaning the prevailing conditions and mitigating factors that aim to individualise a subject. Within the realm of visual culture, the state can function as those physical places where images are viewed or engaged with and the conceptual frame in which any image is viewed formed. The art gallery states – ‘this is art’, the cinema states ‘this is film’; the dominance of these images stemming from the autocratic and managerial discourses the institution-as-state establishes and practices. This form of totalitarian discourse is purported by the social order and is strengthened through a continuation of lack of rebellion and resistance from society. Within each visual medium there are images that contest the medium itself. Not only is the subject struggling against the dominance of the image but the images are struggling against other images. For example, David Lynch’s *Mulholland Drive* (2002) defies conventional linear narrative and character development to produce a film that, in form, radically differs from other films. Yet much of the film’s content and plot lines are markedly similar to other Lynch films, particularly in terms of narrative spacing, double characters and an integral involvement with the ‘underbelly’ of American idealised life.3

*Mulholland Drive* was originally intended as a pilot for a new television series, and holds many similarities with *Twin Peaks*, Lynch’s previous television series.

In particular the character of Naomi Watts is templated on Sheryl Lee’s character, Laura Palmer. *In Twin Peak’s* Lynch uses Sheryl Lee to play both Laura Palmer and her cousin Madeline, as he does in *Mulholland Drive* where Naomi Watts plays two characters – Betty Elms and Diane Selwyn. This undermines the concept of double identity through exploiting issues of representation. Investing power in this type of image, as well as the montage, is to recognise its difference and liminal positioning compared with other films. Ironically to invest in a film like Lynch’s is to be seduced into his world of disorder and unrest while at the same time allowing one’s subjectivity to be governed by it. The two characters in *Mullholland Drive* operate as mirrors of the other. In this sense theirs is a subjectivity almost entirely based on exchange. Moreover, this exchange system is invested in power and powerlessness (the capacity/incapacity to act, the loss and acquisition of knowledge and memory, and so on). What this mirroring performs, in its exchange system, is a form of giftness. One woman offers the gift (of memory, care, power, knowledge) to the other in order for both of them to gain a hold on subjectivity. Thus, this is the giftness of the mirror as an investment in power.

Mainstream cinema (which necessarily includes Hollywood, but by no means is exclusive to it) dominates through its central (and normalising) social discursive position as firm representation of attitudes present in phallocentric Western culture. These films seek no criticality from their audiences, there are no spaces invested by themselves for creative interpretation, instead these films seek a compliant investment of power from the individual. In terms of the image as state, these films seek the reflection and support in the maintenance of dominant
ideology from its governed individuals. The governed subject who enjoys these films enjoys resting in the folds of dominant culture and is seduced by images that enforce it.

Seduction by the image is not always a negative process and is not limited to banal representations of right wing culture. Likewise, the example of painting in the Renaissance period, specifically lovers of Crivelli, Botticelli, Mantegna, and Tura form an investment of power in these images that reflects a subjectivity that locates them in proximity to these images. This form of investment is also made in response to the seduction of the image, but to a different effect. The image remains meaningful through recognition and subscription to its discourse. The more the image is interpreted as being important and powerful in its given visual (and social) field, the more seductive it becomes and the less it is met with resistance. In this way an investment of power serves to strengthen the seduction of the image and ultimately its totalising form. This is not to suggest that individuals of society are ineffectual and weak-minded, but rather to highlight and expose those investments of power in an image are heterogeneous. Being fond of a particular type of image doesn’t necessarily negate other typologies of images being attractive, or that images found attractive binds you steadfast to a solitary subjectivity. What it indicates is an investment of power along these seductive lines produces a reflective mode of subjectivity that responds to the dominance of the image with minimal resistance. In this way, the power struggle with dominance is a fundamental component to the formation of visual cultures.
Returning to the gift, the importance of outlining and discussing Foucault’s typologies of power struggles is to emphasise not the power hierarchies that potentially exist within a gift economy but to illustrate that every aspect of the discourse of the gift, especially the process of communication between giver and receiver and their subsequent exchanges of subjectivity, is constantly questioned and volatile. Some dominating forces active in gift-giving are the cultural codes that determine gifting etiquette, that prescribe specific discursive practice that identifies and defines a subject as ‘giver’ or as ‘receiver’.

It is worthwhile keeping in mind Foucault’s intention in outlining a series of struggles that ‘attack’ certain forms of power such as dominance, in that their purpose lies in questioning the status of the individual. On this basis, struggling against dominance as a form of power highlights the particular type of investment that the subject produces in order to form and position a specific subjectivity. It is the categorisation that dominance instills on the subject with regards to their formation of subjectivity that is of interest here. In terms of the gift, the subject is dominated through the imposition of complying with the identity of giver or receiver in that as giver (or as receiver) the subject must conform and act in terms of giving and receiving within the laws of gift exchange. They are controlled through their investment in giving, just as the receiver is controlled and dependent on their investment in receiving. In addition as a further manner of compliance, the subject must invest in a power relation specific to exchange that recognises their status as giver in order for the receiver to recognise them as the giver. Foucault argues that two meanings to the word subject exists, “subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and
tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (Foucault 1983a:212) and both definitions are present within gift exchange. The paradox that presents itself in this investment is that the subject, to engage within gift exchange, must allow a certain degree of subjugation to occur in order for the gift to be exchanged, yet (and this will be discussed in further depth in the other power struggles) concurrently resists such a suppression of free identity (the visual example here is the characters in *Mullholland Drive*, but clearly this is a much broader issue). The system of exchange as it appears here is born from resistance and compliance.

Not all forms of domination are struggled with in regards to investments of power. Read differently, a strong, Western culturally ubiquitous image like the Crucifixion of Christ demands a higher level of resistance. The image of Christ in church compared to the image of Christ on a children’s Easter cartoon or the Renaissance section of the National Gallery, London, asks for a different type of investment of power from the subject. In church, commitment to (and engagement with) the image of Christ is fundamental to the faith and livelihood of the religious individual. Here the individual seeks a conscious domination formed through inviting Christ into their life specifically to control it and guide it. The crucifixion functions as a synecdoche for particular religious denomination and as such, an individual refusing to subscribe to the prescribed viewing position that such an image suggests is to greater define their subjectivity as critical observer. In Dali’s *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, we are

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4 Horner discusses Husserl’s idea of intentionality, within the context of Levinas’s explanation, stating “for Husserl, intentionality is ‘what makes up the very subjectivity of subjects’. He then indicates that the types of objects toward which intentionality is directed can be different” (Horner 2001:47). This is especially relevant here as it foregrounds the importance of
shown to exist underneath the dominance and ubiquity of religion. The cross and the body of St. John dominate the picture through their foreboding size – they are larger than they should be both in terms of scale and in terms of cultural significance. In investing in this image, the subject participates in, and on one level forms, a relationship that depends on giving and taking. Does the subject take from the image or give to it? The answer to this question is both. The subject structures their subjectivity on multiple levels in response to this image and in doing so reflects that an investment of power in a relationship is a system of exchange - circular and continuous – especially as an image such as Dali’s never ceases to question the status of its viewing subject.

Power relations are effected and maintained through their invisible practice and deficient self-reflexive apparatus in socio-cultural ‘state’ places, like cinemas, art galleries, as well as in cultural situations of overt forms of exchange such as Easter, birthday parties and Christmas. Power relations operate as expressions of powerful ‘truths’ that are part of the construction of the discourse of the image or the discourse of the gift. This form of domination is social in that within the power struggle of dominance, the subject resists and opposes a homogeneous social positioning that seeks to unify all individuals into a governed position. Within visual cultures, to meet all resistances and struggles of forms of power, the subject-that-observes, as a critical thinker, produces a mirror or a considered

intentionality in the gift object but also within the value and desires attributed to giftliness. In a religious context this is significant and highly important as the relationship between God and the subject is premised on the whole idea and ambiguity of the gift. Life after death is the gift from God, if you believe in him.

Later in this section, the relationship between subject and image is read as invitation and as refusal.
form of investment in the image.⁶ They imagine the image on their own terms and oppose its seduction. The image – whether it is painting, film, or television – is seen not for what it is, but what it is for the subject. The ‘subject-that-observes’, as opposed to a ‘seduced subject’, does not want to be dominated by the image; but if the individual is seduced by the dominance of the image, their investment of power takes the form of reflection. The subject-that-observes does not want to be exploited by the image through any form of social dominance that the image constructs. If the individual is seduced by the social positioning of the image, they choose to reflect it by investing a typology of power that affirms and seeks to solidify the image’s place and relation to the state (whether the state be cinema, art or popular culture). The power struggle of dominance is hard to work through precisely because its mechanics demand a lack of questioning from the subject in order to operate successfully. In order for power to dominate, the subject needs to be dominated via seduction, but this does not always occur. As a subject-that-observes, investment into any mode of communication or signification, especially visual cultures, is based on a critical approach to power.

The subject is not necessarily seduced by the image and is able to adopt a critical perspective regarding the image, as well as their interaction with it, their investment of power forming a different form of reflection. The individual as a subject-that-observes is, in response to the image and its ‘state’, reflecting freedom from the type of individualisation that the image as government prescribes.⁷ The image is appropriated and reviewed via the desire of the subject.

⁶ Once more it is important to see this as not merely reflection, but within the context of Derrida. In this way the mirror and investment is linked back to giftness.
⁷ There is a certain resonance in this conception of freedom and subjectivity in Horner’s discussion of Levinas where the question of subjectivity is asked in terms of origin. In becoming
The subject-that-observes’s discovery within this investment is not the answer to ‘what are we?’ but is a refusal of the management and governing that constructs a viewing status when the image asks ‘what are we?’ Part of the function of the visual in cultures is to allow a struggle with forms of power, and thus becomes an investment of power born from struggle.

The subject seeks to move away from any strict sense of categorisation regarding individuality and formation of subjectivity, their struggle against a domination of power opposing is the idea that there are any fixed subjectivities, especially those of giver and receiver. In investing in a power relation, the subject must acknowledge that their formation of subjectivity will occur through opposition, yet is necessary if the roles of giver and receiver are to be questioned and worked with in terms of the circulation and process of gift exchange. It is not a complete analysis to analyse the function of the gift through its exchange as object, and not the exchange regarding the respective positions of giver and receiver. In examining their relevance and significance as subjectivities within a process of exchange, the rules, the regulations, and the traditions of the practice of the gift can be critiqued in terms of power – how the economy of exchange operates based on an investment of power and an investing in power.

2. Exploitation

Forms of exploitation that separate individuals from what they produce

conscious of our subjectivity we lose our freedom. Horner states, “Levinas’s answer is that it is my responsibility for the Other that makes me unique. Prior to my consciousness, prior to my freedom, and in my utter passivity, the Other invests me with subjectivity by calling me to my responsibility. I only become I in responding “Here I am” to the Other who calls” (Horner 2001:68).
Domination of the subject is a social struggle; the image dominates and seduces the individual via the state strategies of management and government. The struggle that the subject-that-observes is faced with is the consequence of their investment of power. To be dominated is to be seduced and remain as a governed individual in relation to the image. To become a critical and subject-that-observes in a power relation with an image, or visual cultures in general, is to refuse the constructed viewing position and remain at a distance. This distance is part of separating the individual from what they produce.

In separating each struggle the aim is to found a cogent understanding of what types of investments of power exist, what ends they serve and the consequences that arrive from them. They are not mutually exclusive, and as Foucault points out, “in history you can find a lot of examples of these three kinds of social struggles, either isolated from each other, or mixed together. But even when they are mixed, one of them, most of the time, prevails” (Foucault 1983a:212). The subject, in order to oppose the traps of power and knowledge produced through epistemes, continues to make these investments as their opposition is also directed at the hidden power relations that are imposed on formations of subjectivity. Foucault offers the example of secrets as hidden power relations, another example being the cultural practice of ignoring what the receiver is really receiving – not the gift but its opposite. This is a clear example of separating the subject from what they produce as it necessitates a conscious blindness to the

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8 Perhaps even within the sense of Derrida’s *mysterium tremendum*. 

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opposition that is exchanged. To explain this further we can turn to Foucault’s work on Machiavelli.

In his essay on *Govermentality* (Foucault 2002), Foucault talks about the art of government with reference to Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (1515). Working through Machiavelli’s writings, Foucault analyses the art of government and its objective concerning the exercising of power. Foucault looks at the relation of power of the Prince and his principality and seeks to analyse the link between them from the perspective of how they are joined as well as how they are separated. The Prince is located at a distance from his principality despite his control and integral association with it. The principality concurrently defines and excludes the position of the Prince as well as the person of the Prince, even though the principality may have been gained through conquest or legacy. This link between the Prince and his principality is what is at risk in this power relation, as the Prince needs to be constantly vigilant in the manner of protecting, serving, and strengthening his people. The exercising of power in terms of the Prince and the principality is not “to reinforce, strengthen and protect” (Foucault 2002:204) the people but rather is more concerned with preserving the position of the Prince.

Relating this back to visual cultures, the image functions in the similar position of the Prince and the governed individual as the principality. The link between the image and governed individual is constantly under threat from other subject-that-observes (the “Prince’s enemies”) who may interfere with any form of visual social domination, through presenting knowledge that may challenge the dominance of the image. Other threats that may subvert the image are other
visuals that have stronger seductive qualities. What the image seeks to protect is not the person of governed individual but more the concept of governing the individual, their subjectivity one that can be controlled – a protection of Kant’s fondness for the state. This is what the Prince achieves, in protecting his principality, he protects his position as Prince and maintains management and control, as well as separating himself from what he produces – a well-defined, well-ordered principality.⁹

The position of the Prince can also be viewed from the place of the subject-that-observes. Here the subject-that-observes functions in the position of the Prince and forms their investment of power on a similar basis as the Prince’s protection of his people. As the principality is isolated from but still connected to the Prince, so is the subject-that-observes from their criticality with regards to the image and visual cultures. In refusing to become governed by the social dominance of the visual, the subject-that-observes forms an isolated position as such a refusal distances the image from the subject-that-observes. Through this liberation from a visual economy that manages individuals, the subject-that-observes exercises a form of power at a cost. To refuse a specific site, reinforces the link between the image and governed individual as much as it reinforces the lack of a link between a governed individual and subject-that-observes. The subject-that-observes produces a questioning position in order to escape a

⁹ This is similar to Kant’s notion of the realm of obedience and its distinction from the realm of use of reason in light of the struggle of exploitation. Self-incurred tutelage is what exploits the individual. To escape it requires distinction between obedience and reason. If this struggle of exploitation separates the individual from what they produce, then escaping one’s own tutelage is also self-produced. A negotiation of obedience and reason produced by the subject exploits the tutelage and distances the subject from it.
governed viewing position, yet in doing so is kept distant from the visual as a consequence.

This struggle against the form of exploitation is most significant for the gift as it bears on the aspect of communication necessary to systems of exchange. The exchange of the gift, the physical handing over of the gift object, is an obvious circumstance of separating the subject from what they produce. What is less obvious is what is separated in the exchange of relationships between giver and receiver. In the event of gift exchange, finality to the giver/receiver relationship is implied as the knowledge or information of what connotes ‘exchange’ includes an ‘ending’ in the cycle. By this is meant that the giver gives the gift, the receiver accepts it and the cycle ends – only to repeat again later. In limiting this process of giving to a seemingly singular cycle the relations of power exercise a separation. What appears is that the giver has been separated from the gift yet the separation that has actually occurred is a consequence of their attempt to substantiate their position within an act of exchange. The giver has exploited the relations of power present to establish their position as receiver in the following cycle. In effect, the gift has been given away in order to create, and secure a subjectivity specific to “the division of labor [sic] and the hierarchy of tasks” (Foucault 1983a:218) for future acts of exchange.

3. Subjection

The struggle against subjection is to conceive of a power that is completely focused on the birth of the subject from governed individual. The power
struggles not only help to establish and consolidate a sense of subjectivity, they wrestle with any order that assists the government of the individual. Foucault states that using the term “to govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of actions of others” (Foucault 1983a:221). Foucault’s notion of power helps to mark the shift, or exchange, in subjectivity from an uncritical and unaware positioning to a conscious and self-reflexive positioning, with respect to an image in terms of visual culture. For the gift, this rally against control over subjectivity highlights how it is not simply the exchange itself that occurs between giver and receiver that demarcates the relation or exercising of power but rather it is the function of subjectivity (or the formation of it) in adapting and responding to each other within exchange that does.

The institution of the image designates specific observing positions from which the subject is required to view the image in order to obtain its ‘proper’ meaning (this forms part of the privilege of knowledge that the governed individual must struggle against in order to become a critical subject-that-observes). This power relies on a communication of strict systematic signification and/or symbolisation. This typology of information that comes from the image is not to be ignored in looking at the function of power, and indeed isn’t by the subject, yet it is to be separated not from what is happening within the subject-that-observes, but between the subject-that-observes and the image. Because power, here, is argued as a relational force, its existence is not completely dependant on systems of signification and can’t be read primarily within such a frame. This would suppose that power pre-exists a relationship, which it does not. To define power relationships only within a communicative domain is to restrict their importance
Kant & Foucault: Investing the power

The power relations present in visual culture that exist outside of systems of communication but also rest alongside of them. In the moment of resistance to the form of power (or what Foucault terms the totalising of the individual) the subject-that-observes asks the question “What are we?” The subject shifts from a relationship of power based on communication and signification and gravitates towards producing and defining meanings in relation to image from a position of self. Foucault talks of Kant’s paper that discusses the question “What is the Enlightenment?” This is, for Foucault, part of the issue of the Enlightenment –
that is, the formation of a type of subjectivity. In engaging with this question, Kant’s paper also asks a more fundamental question for all subjects (observing or otherwise), ‘What are we?’ that being a critical inquiry into the current status of subjects – the first step towards refusing and struggling against the government of the species, in terms of society and culture.\(^\text{10}\) Kant’s question is directed towards the modern state and indicative of its capacity to ask such self-reflexive questions. His questioning allows a self-reflexive moment in the history of ideas as well as in a specific point in time.

> When in 1784 Kant asked “What is the Enlightenment?” he meant, “what is going on just now? What is happening to us? What is this world, this period, this precise moment in which we are living?” Or in other words: What are we, as *Aufklärer*, as part of the Enlightenment? … But Kant asks something else: What are we? In a very precise moment of history. Kant’s question appears as an analysis of both us and our present. (Foucault 1983a:216)

Foucault accepts Kant’s question as an offer of escaping prescribed power structures and relations that belong to the state and its institutions who are interested in governing and managing subjects. His response to this question of Kant’s is to propose escape from any form of subjugation that institutions impose. The result aimed for being new typologies of subjectivities through different ways of forming them. This question ‘What are we?’ does more than merely direct focus to subjects and their position within a current socio-historical domain, rather it demands subjects adopt a critical perspective of themselves, their function and being to live out an active existence.

\(^{10}\) There is a connection with Kant’s distinction between the merely subjective and ‘subjective universality’ in *Critique of Judgment* (1907) but it would take us too far away from the focus at hand to do more than acknowledge it here.
For Kant, subjects are responsible for their own tutelage, and the escape from it must also be self-incurred. The change from governed individuals to subject-that-observes must be a responsibility taken up through asking the question ‘What are we?’ instigating the exchange between subjectivities, whether they are between activity and passivity or giver and receiver. This question is where the investment of power occurs. On the precipice of where both subjects and images define and position themselves, where the struggles are fought with respect to a configuration of our subjectivities, the power relation is also an investment of power. Subjects who ask ‘What are we?’ emphasise a conscious self-reflexive moment that signals the investment of power in the image for a subject. It marks the exchange from subjects to subject-that-observes and for us, redefines how all images are viewed as a different subjectivity has been assumed. ‘What are we?’ not only engages with struggles and power relations but it also identifies and concurrently resists the seduction of the state. Both Foucault and Kant acknowledge that subjects have a fondness for the state, the seduction to live out an uncritical and unquestioning existence forms part of the attraction of any relationship, either with an image or a gift. Kant’s idea of the ‘expanded horizon’ is interesting here, as it looks at how we modify our judgment by our speculative analysis of the likely judgments of our fellow citizens - a give-and-take process by imaginative anticipation. It could be argued that this Kantian version of expectation is invested in the gift – from giving, to debt, exchange and value. As has been consistently argued here, the gift resists singularity and so makes such judgments potentially self-reflexive (intrasubjective and cultural).
Such a connection between subjects and images provides fecund ground for the gift relationship in exemplifying the manifestation of power relations through a system of exchange. In visual cultures, we are confronted with diverse images against which we must negotiate our position through this constant questioning. Such interrelationships are present within the economy of the gift as each gift object possesses its own value, causing both the giver and receiver to continuously reassess their interaction with the gift and each other or to revert back to the comfortable prescribed positions within gift exchange. Foucault is suggesting that the answer to Kant’s question is not to release subjects from this individualising ‘comfortability’ but (and this is developed further on in the section) to use the question ‘What are we?’ – the investment of power, as a platform to create new subjectivities, at the very least engage with exchange as a system that holds this potential. As such, it is possible to view Kant’s question as both an invitation and refusal in terms of the formation of our subjectivity.

*The Image: the invitation and gift as invitation*

In gazing at the image the subject enters into a multitude of relations, forming investments of power. This is most critical as it fundamentally positions the subject and the image, individually and with respect to one another, and aims to classify each other through an exercising of power. The power relation is played out on the threshold of the subject’s gaze and the gaze of the image. Each time an image is looked at, the image re-asks itself ‘What are we?’ and rotates in a constant cycle of liminal questioning. The image asks this question as it seeks to totalise the individual. In asking ‘What are we?’ from its position as image, it is
determining the position from which it is to be viewed. It is important to note that
the image asks this question to define a position but still recognises the gift and
freedom line. Once a subject has entered into a discourse with the image, the
image possesses the privilege of knowledge and uses it in its exercising of power
to the best effect possible. Compare Andy Warhol’s *Marilyn Monroe* to Diego
Velazquez’s *The Rokeby Venus*, where as two images they superficially seem to
stand at diametric ends of a visual cultural spectrum. Both paintings hang in
veritable institutions-as-state, London’s National Gallery (Velasquez) and
Warhol’s versions of Monroe are to be found in similar institutions including The
Tate Gallery, and yet his series of images are culturally framed to be interpreted
as holding a different position within the art world. The Warhol image of the four
Marilyn’s represents the genre of contemporary art, generically subverting the
entire concept of representation and the image, at the same time as
deconstructing the myth of celebrity, through repeatedly presenting its
representation. Velazquez’s painting draws on classical mythology and
represents Venus the Goddess and personification of beauty and all that is
feminine, with her son Cupid. Here Venus looks not only at herself but also
seems to look at the viewer. The image that is reflected in the mirror is
ambiguous due to its opacity. This opacity is part of the idea that it exists in a
different realm of mirrors and *mirrorness*, like the non-real world that is often
found in the Baroque. Each image, provocative in its own way, deals with the
question of femininity and its representation through looking at their place and
function within a phallo-socio-centric context. The power relation from an
observer’s perspective brings them much closer together, as here the paintings
operate under similar surveillance despite their distance. *The Rokeby Venus*
comes from a recognised canonical position within the art world appearing to oppose Warhol’s piece despite its similar reverence as canonical art.

The investment of power here relies on the invitation to question the subject’s position and formation of subjectivity in response to a constructed and governed individualisation. In an abstract sense, the relationship of invitation and refusal in Kant’s question reflects a gift relationship as it possesses a similar paradox. Initially the question ‘Who are we?’ appears benevolent and to some extent it is, yet as Foucault’s perspective indicates, it also holds an aggressive position as it takes the formation of subjectivity and invites the subject to analyse their position both in relation to the discourse and power relation that they are a part of, and redefine it. From the perspective of the gift, it is this sense of the continuous re-cycling of subjectivities between people (the exchange of position as giver and receiver) through relations of power that mirrors this assertive questioning and suggests an exchange of opposition.

*The Subject: the refusal and refusing the gift because of the attached debt*

In forming a critical subjectivity the subject must also pose the question ‘what are we?’ in order to invest in a conscious identification with images. The subject asks it from a different point of view, as this inquiry is a refusal. It asks only to say ‘I am not’ but the ‘I am not’ is in response to the determining position asked by the image. In the Louvre sits Da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*. It is an attraction of the museum, one of its treasures, and yet the painting is encased behind glass and seems very small in comparison with the many other paintings in the room. The
Mona Lisa attracts the crowd not because it is the best painted, or because it is the most aesthetically pleasing, but because as an image, the Mona Lisa is a culturally recognised ‘piece of art’. As a highly valued object of art, the Mona Lisa reflects the history of art and the art gallery as institution-as-state. Here, the power exercised by the image invokes a desire within the subject to become a part of the body and privilege of knowledge within the image. The subject has choices in engaging with the image and also in the formation of their subjectivity by asking ‘what are we?’. Subjectivity can be invested in the image, within the confines of the image, so that the governed individual remains controlled but within the discourse of the image. The subject is not only seduced by the image but also by the state. Viewing the Mona Lisa becomes more about the act of viewing and being included in a cultural moment rather than viewing the Mona Lisa as a singular piece of art.

The refusal is a resistance against impositions of power. In refusing to subscribe to dominated, exploited and subjected mechanisms of power, the subject uses their investment to expose power relations, in terms of its machinations and consequences. This implication of investment returns us to the themes of the gift as a concept that contains its opposite, and as a system of exchange. Subjectivity influenced via a refusal (in effect investing power in a relationship that does not seem to advocate it) helps to analyse power outside its rationalities. Put differently, to analyse the gift it is better to view it as a debt. To argue a liberty of subjectivity, it is better to look at what imposes and controls it. Investing in relations of power becomes more about working against resistances in relationships like that of giver and receiver and producing subjectivities that are
not restricted. Such is the pervasive nature of these resistances, and the subsequent struggles against forms of power, that the subject in process becomes located not simply in a subject type but in a constant exchange of subjectivities through opposition.

3.2 Bodies and Gifts: Analysis of power relations through investment

The focus of this next section will be to conceptualise these Foucauldian forms of power, and power struggles, to the more image specific example of the body. It is the notion of the body’s capacity to mark systems of exchange within various socio-cultural discourses that is to be held in readiness here. Given that our culture is saturated with a diverse range of bodies from the canonical to the popular to the sub-cultural, this corporeal example keeps the issue of representation of the body separate from the topic at hand, that is to track the investment of power in the image via the body, through forms of visual media; the body as resemblance and as similitude; and to argue visual cultures as responsible for our culturally constructed corporality. In using the body to exemplify a subject’s investment of power, it is possible to develop the concept of power relations working as a discursive practice in visual cultures, subsequently arguing that all images, specifically here bodies, are interpreted through forms of power. This viewpoint provides an alternative perspective in looking at the gift. It is the similarity within the structure of the subject’s investment that is of interest to the argument of the gift. As images and bodily images are interpreted through power, so are forms of the gift. The second half of
this section is therefore structured as a comparative analysis of the subject’s investment and interpretation regarding the body and the gift via power relations.

This section looks at the construction of corporal representation in visual culture rather than the topographical interpretation of the heterogeneity of bodies, and involves the observer at the primary level of thinking about the formation of the visual. By looking closely at how bodies are formed through a framework of power, the observer’s transformation is traced from governed individual to subject-that-observes. Avoiding exclusive representations of the body, the discussion is freed from the confines of genre and visual mediums, and can look at typologies of the body and how they function in terms of investing power, and power as a discursive practice. The aim is to use representations of the body in order to illustrate how an observer responds and invests their subjectivity into the visual through a power structure associated with gift. It is not just a response and/or investment to any representation of the body but a response/investment to all bodies, disruptive bodies, sick bodies, healthy bodies, attractive bodies, feminine bodies, black bodies, Asian bodies, masculine bodies, Caucasian bodies, infantile bodies, bodies that tear, bodies that mend, bodies that move, that stand still and so on. The effects present in such investments of power are looked at to uncover how the subjectivity of an observer is formed. The example of the body further asks: do different representations of the body construct different observing positions? Looking at examples of particular constructions of imaged bodies deals with these sorts of questions and establishes a discursive practice that enables the subject to form interpretations through power relationships. This
Powerful bodies

For Foucault, power is produced, managed, and organised by various socio-cultural discourses, some of his most famous examples being the discourses of medicine and sexuality operating as institutions. In examining these discourses, Foucault is analysing the actions that happen on the individual, noting what power relations are constructed as a result of these actions. In *Discipline and Punish* (1987) Foucault explains the spectacle of public execution, and uses it to exemplify how power relations are established and controlled through the state or government as institution, and how this governmentality and state control within culture and society is acted out on the body through modes of punishment.

In his analysis of tortured territory, (concerning both body and culture) Foucault uses the body as a corporal example, for his new configurations of power and power-knowledge. The body works as power’s tangible reality and active existence, as from this perspective, this is what power (and power-knowledge which is returned to later) enters into and becomes for Foucault. After creating a visual sense of the condemned body, one is taken to the spectacle of the scaffold – where the body is put on display as example for other bodies and tortured. (It is significant to note that the spectacle of the scaffold is constructed as a discourse of the state as a gift to the people. The display of the body of the criminal is positioned as the gift of law and power of the authority). The body is a
fundamental part of Foucault’s larger research objective – the genealogy of the human being becoming a subject and how systems of knowledge and power produce each other, their manifestations acted out through visual constructions of the body.

These manifestations produce social orders of the body as different power structures and relations are imbued with different knowledges. The implications of knowledge in this regard are the typologies of discursive practices that form multiple interpreting positions. Foucault suggests that the separation of power and knowledge be discarded as forms that exist outside of and separate to each other, and instead view power and knowledge as inextricably linked, symbiotic forces that produce and propel each other through respective connotations:

> power produces knowledge … power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. These ‘power-knowledge relations’ are to be analysed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system, but, on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations.

(Foucault 1987:27-28)

Foucault’s neologism ‘power-knowledge’ has little direct connection with the image or the gift, but is applicable in terms of construction, development, and activity in forming multiple discourses. The subject meets the image with a prior corpus of knowledge, possessing a competence in reading images based on an archive of various images already seen and ready to be drawn on upon. This
produces a typology of knowledge based on the image they find. For the observer, it is the power-knowledge combination of power struggles and relations that have constructed the image in question that controls and governs the knowledges and discursive practices that are invested in. This is how one body can generate more than one discourse in the social order. The body becomes a supportive structure for relations of power and knowledge allowing the subject-that-observes to invest in the corporal image and subjugate it through transforming the image into an object of knowledge.

In *Gangs of New York*, the paternal body presents a multitude of social discourse within the characters of Priest Vallon and William Cutting (The Butcher). These differing social discourses are viewed from the perspective of Amsterdam who functions as the lost child. Vallon and Cutting embody the characteristics of the father as carer and barbarian, representations that are formed as a consequence of the various social orders that they are produced by and within. Cutting, after murdering Vallon, appears to be far removed from any sense of the paternal for Amsterdam, yet is connected to him as a father figure both through his desire for a son and through Amsterdam’s Hamletesque desire for the return of a father, as well as the exacting of his father’s revenge. Cutting’s body generates a multiplicity of discourses through the social order of the film all of which can be read through a series of gifts. It is not solely the paternal that determines Cutting’s corporeality however it is the dominant drive in determining his character. Interestingly it is within the clearest paternal acts that the presence of the gift appears. As leader of the ‘natives’, he fathers a patriotic culture based on racism and xenophobia through giving freedom and liberty via battle. He fathers
a part of society (the Five Points) through domination, exploitation, and subjection under the guise of the gift regarding protection and manipulative benevolence. In a number of scenes Cutting is shown to randomly give cuts of meat to his ‘constituency’11 – this appearing to be a form of controlled debt incurrence and carefully syphoned need rather than spontaneous giving. In addition to his ‘fathering’ of Amsterdam, looking to the role of Jenny also suggests that he enacted a fatherly role with regards to her character. It is through his gifts to Jenny (for example a locket – a highly personalised and unusual act from this man) that the duality of the paternal body as carer and barbarian is enforced. His control over her is maintained through these ‘gifts’ as they consistently inflict a debt to his care and an acknowledgement of the relation of power between them.

Paternity is predominantly defined and presented in terms of Amsterdam and this compels the observer to connect the film’s paternal bodies in the same way. Subsequently, the representations of Cutting and Vallon as fathers are subjected (independently and in response to each other) through their corporeality as objects of knowledge in that they identify the film’s socio-cultural notion of fatherhood in addition to Amsterdam’s own notion. The death of Priest Vallon is not framed in battle but as the loss of Amsterdam’s father. Similarly, the exposing of Amsterdam’s trickery is not framed as mutiny but as a betrayal of Cutting’s love for him – the loss of a son. Amsterdam is reprimanded and punished (barbarically albeit) but not killed. His paternity is contextualised in terms of a gift economy as all his actions are constitutive of retribution, for

11 Another typology of gift that appears within the film can be likened to the concept and deliverance of the threat in the section on pleasure and play, where Tammeny solicits Cutting for help in gaining votes illegally.
example, the returning or reciprocating the gift of his life and upbringing by Priest – his biological father – to revenge his murder and become a good son; but there are also conditions of gratitude to acknowledge the opportunities afforded by Cutting, such as his elevated station in society, certain privileges, all because of Cutting’s adopted paternity for Amsterdam.

Of course this filmic example of the subjection of the corporal into an object of knowledge is quite literal but there is a similar investment in the structure of power-knowledge even when the social discourses of the body are not so apparent. In *The Hours* (Daldry 2002) the maternal body (which has been read consistently here as a cultural configuration of the gift) is not simply a positive generative nurturing body but is also self-destructive within its own existence. This self-destruction is attached to the maternal body, but also appears separate to it. Again, it is through the act of the gift that an investment in the structure of power-knowledge is furthered.

Unlike Cutting’s seemingly obsequious gifts, the gifts attached to the maternal body that appear in *The Hours* are failed gifts, in spite of their genuine intention. They are excessive, repeated, sometimes absent, and all fail in the sense that they deny the maternal body to nurture. In this way the gift can be read as *en souffrance* – the gift as suffering.¹² This is different from the gift that is not recognised, as it is a gift that never arrives, both in terms of exchange and through investment. Virginia’s gift of ginger for her sister’s children is absent – it doesn’t arrive from London and this sets up the pattern of gifts in connection to a

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¹² This term is taken from Lacan’s ‘Seminar of the Purloined Letter’ found in *Yale French Studies* 52 p.38-72 (1975).
maternal nurturing for the film. As the ginger is absent, Virginia has no object through which to invest and enact her desire to nurture. Her body as maternal constantly suffers, finding momentary distraction with her niece who gives a dead bird a funeral. Her zealous care for the dead bird reflects the failure of her gift and the failure of her capacity to nurture as a maternal body. Clarissa’s gift of flowers for Richard represents her excessive need to be accepted as a maternal body nurturing. The flowers represent life and indirectly her desire to nurture Richard through his sickness (AIDS) but fail as Richard rejects her nurturing through his rejection of her body as maternal. The investment in power-knowledge within this film is determined through the seduction of the nurturing mother juxtaposed against the neurotic mother. All women, Virginia, Laura, and Clarissa, display characteristics of madness and neuroses, yet in their acts of mothering, the moments where they are defined by through their gifts of nurturing, they appear sane and without suffering. When Laura decides to bake a cake for Dan, it seems as a mammoth and incomprehensible task for her. She only seems to narrowly manage it through redefining the action as spending time with her son, as a mother making the cake rather than as a domesticated housewife. The attempt at baking the cake fails and Laura repeats it after making the decision to abandon her body as mother\(^{13}\), the successful cake only serving to remind the observer of its initial failure. For the governed individual, the relationship of power-knowledge that is imposed on the image is seductive and the observer is the one who is subjected and objectified.

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\(^{13}\) Interestingly, Laura’s suicide attempt fails because she cannot disassociate herself from any nurturing role. She vows to leave her family after the birth of her second child – once she has her ‘body’ back and can absolve herself from any subjection that she feels a maternal body imposes.
Such heterogeneity helps to frame the body as a signifying image that needs to be read differently from other bodies, similar bodies and at times, in contrast to the same body. In *The Hours*, the sexualised bodies of Virginia, Claudia and Laura are different from their maternal bodies as their separate relations of power outlay the differing social orders of the same body. The women as lovers call for an investment from the observer in the power relations that recognise the body of the feminine, the vulnerable and the object of affection. The observer, to invest in the discourse of love, needs to read the costumes, hairstyles, and so on, on their bodies in this frame so to construct meaning in the narrative. However, the same textual components symbolise a different social order of Virginia, Claudia, and Laura’s bodies when they begin to mother. The diegetics of the film foreground the discourse and become conventionalising signifiers so that observer can invest in a specific power structure that distinguishes the lover’s body from the maternal body. Through investing in the power-knowledge of the female bodies of Virginia, Claudia, and Laura, and concurrently bodies within the film, the observer understands that the bodies of the women haven’t changed but have in the sense their bodies have transformed and moved across discourses. The women as lovers operate via an alternate set of actions to that of women as mothers. The corporal signifier of the mother in *The Hours* is constant but the surrounding signs including the flowers, the cake, the ginger, and even the book *Mrs Dalloway* (both its suggested as well as its literal presence) are typologies of signs that have and have not shifted. Relations of power have altered because of how their bodies are imaged and constructed in shifting discourses of time and space. What this example offers for the gift is the situation wherein the gift object need not be the significant focus. The gift object is a space that has
surrounding relations of power and it is the investment in these relations that affects its value relative to its exchange, particularly between subjectivities.

Using Foucault’s example of the spectacle, we can look at these social orders of the body as the spectacle, the body itself as spectacle, and the spectacle of the body, to see how the construction of the body image is riddled with actions of power.\(^{14}\) The aim is not to methodically work through the multiple representations of the body in varying discourses to see how they are powerful in their own right, or to see how a body works within specific social orders, but rather to employ the social orders of the body to exemplify how an image, as part of a visual culture, is constructed for a specific action. As mothers, Virginia, Claudia and Laura possess a sense of meta-corporeality in that their mothering not only forms part of the thematic and narrative core of the film but is also provides material for each and every maternal or nurturing act that occurs. The series of gifts in the form of food works well here. Each gift of food – Virginia’s afternoon tea (and absent ginger), Claudia’s party, Laura’s cake, seemingly works towards a strengthening of the women’s identity as nurturing mothers but instead highlights their vulnerability as women and their inability to successfully nurture. The failure of each gift adds to their suffering and despondence about their role as mother. The bodies of these women are not purely ‘bodies’ in this film. They become vessels that carry the issues, morals and problematic of femininity and motherhood. In terms of the spectacle, Virginia, Claudia, and

\(^{14}\) Action in this sense referring to Foucault’s reworking of power as a social feature that holds currency only once “it is put into action” (Foucault 1983:219) and in terms of power relations possessing a discursive function. This is not to deny that representations of the body will play an important and central part in such a study of the constructed corporal image, as some discussion will be necessary in order to observe how a social order of the body is constructed and how such a construction of the imaged body affects the subject-that-observes.
Laura corporealise the torture exacerbated by power relations. Their gifts of food reflect the emotions within their torture.

This example of the gift as food is similar to the function of the bread and cordial in Lewis Hyde’s recounting of the nineteenth century Scottish folk tale, *The Girl and The Dead Man*. This folk tale moves along via a sequence of four gifts that revolve around food. Hyde uses the tale to evoke the circular motion of the gift, demonstrating that the gift must be kept in motion if it is to ‘survive’. He argues, “A gift that cannot move loses its gift properties” (Hyde 1983:8) and this is what is observed in the failure of the gifts from the three women in *The Hours*. Hyde further argues the gift as a consumable item, inferring its existence has a use-by date, “Another way to describe the motion of the gift is to say that a gift must always be used up, consumed, eaten. *The gift is property that perishes*” (Hyde 1983:8). The failed gifts in *The Hours* perish and cause suffering because they don’t move, or because they are not ‘eaten’. The maternal body and its need to nurture is a typology of feeding. The women’s nurturing is a form of gift in that they are giving their ‘children’ the food of their love, the moment it is given it is lost, consumed, devoured – a property that perishes or in other words of Hyde’s “the gift perishes for the person who gives it away” (Hyde 1983:9). The investment in the gift displays the dissolution of one relation of power for the sake of another. It is not the literal gift that perishes but the specific investment of giftness that is lost, almost forsaken.
4. Discursive Practices, the Subject, and the Gift

4.1 Semiotics and the Gift

4.2 Positionalities within discourse

4.3 The Enunciative Function

An inquiry into the discursive practices of the gift presents a number of questions that involve the subject and its relationship to both the gift and giftness. Primarily it is the fundamental question 'what is a gift?' that invites such investigations, as it involves the complexities of the discourse of the gift and must be looked at with specific regard to the construction of discursive practice. By linking the image with the gift, the aim is to think about the gift from the perspective of how the gift is come to be represented through signification rather than look to its literal constitution. This is part of the strategy to develop the notion of giftness, here, as a common element that undermines different discursive frameworks. A move away from the traditional hermeneutic investigation of a gift-in-circumstance (that is its physical manifestation) opens up possibilities of negotiations in terms of the gift, the subject, and discursive practices. This is not to negate the various models that have been developed within and across disciplines, most notably from anthropology to other knowledge systems such as philosophy, cultural studies, and their respective textual readings. However it is to acknowledge that what lies at the heart of so many recent studies of the gift is this need to observe and examine the gift beyond its apparent qualities. For example, how is a gift recognised, how are situations of giftness negotiated, and where do these discourses operate? Once more the emphasis here will be on the gift and image, and in doing so the discussion aims at developing a different discourse concerning the interpretation of the gift. In selecting the image as a link with the gift, a myriad of
gifts arises forcing us to look at the gift in different ways. The most interesting quandary that faces us is to locate and question the relationship between giftness and the gift within discursive practice and account for the instability that occurs during discursive exchange through another unstable signification system such as visual culture. Rather, what we are also looking for is a discursive practice of giftness that functions as a thematic drive in visual mediums such as film, painting, television, art and photography. By figuring a typology of gifts and a typology of discursive practices through theories and examples of the image, we move towards a definition of giftness.

"The discourse disintegrates as soon as it appears" (Foucault 1986a:34)

One of the key issues that Foucault brings to our attention in this disarmingly simple sentence is that discourses have the sense of permanence, but are constantly in a state of flux. Discursive formations, for Foucault, are inextricably tied to their disintegration. Apart from the ramifications this has for the gift itself, it is important to acknowledge this Foucauldian point for any study of discourse. To work towards the idea of giftness it is essential to consider features of the discourse of the gift (that is, the gift in its discursive domain). In order to theorise how we may come to recognise a gift, we must first consider the gift through its discursive practices and how different forms of discursive practices can be applied to the gift. To do this, two different approaches to theorizing discourse will be discussed – a semiotic driven one, and one considering ideas from Foucault. By utilising two different theoretical models we are able to work through the discursive practices involving the gift and the image in a number of interconnected ways. The purpose of employing both a semiotic
(mainly looking at work by Kristeva) and Foucauldian argument on discursive practices is to widen and broaden conceptions of gift, image and discourse within a larger cultural sense. It will also enable us to consider the ways in which the gift is rendered as a type of discursive practice.

4.1 Semiotics and the gift

This approach to formations of discourse is important to the present thesis as it draws attention to the fundamental function of the gift. In doing so we come to recognise one of the key relational dynamics of the gift - its ability to communicate within the social order, and consequently, how it is recognised. A gift communicates through its intertextual connections to previous gifts and previous gift circumstances. In this sense we are always responding to a gift via a variety of other gifts and their discursive practices. It can be argued that the pluralism of a gift's meaning becomes more important than the gift itself. This is one of the reasons why a semiotic approach is adopted here; it shifts the emphasis from attempting to establish a concrete meaning (perhaps even the desire to achieve ‘full’ interpretation) to one that deliberates on a multiplicity of meanings. This multiplicity operates both within the production and operation of the signifier and within the dynamics and slippages of the multiple signifieds. Furthermore, coded processes and their formation and interaction within a socio-cultural context can be seen as a central part of exchange, and in particular within the gift. Semiotics allows analyses of discourses through cultural systems, structures and codes from a cross-referencing sense.¹ A semiotics analysis

¹ To be more precise, Kristeva's argument on intertextuality moves away from referencing and closer towards a systematic look at exchange of sign systems.
will not only enable a reading of giftness, but also reveal aspects of the discourse itself.

*Intertextuality*

There are many instances within visual culture where intertextual references are made easily and without much cross-textual interpretative effort. This relative ease is part of the function of many of these references, particularly within popular culture; and in this sense part of their process (from economy to pleasure) is not simply to make textual references but to provide a sense of communal knowledge. The fact that most viewers of these texts will grasp the allusions with ease, or that even if they are not grasped very little is lost in terms of interpretation, indicates that what is at hand is a different sort of cultural gift. This is the idea that the observer exists in a community of users, each one sharing the phenomenon of intertextuality, even if they are not necessarily sharing the actual references themselves. (This can be linked back to Kant’s theory regarding self-tutelage, where the exchange of subjectivities is based on self-referential questioning concerning the status of the individual, and to Foucault’s invitation to use this criticality to create different and new subjectivities). This is described in terms of the gift here because the intertextuality is operating within a system of exchange. This is the gift’s dynamic operation of relations through exchange. However this is not to say that all intertextuality is gift exchange. This is a polysemic system, where exchange is a unifying and identifiable element. Where this exchange system of intertextuality becomes part of the discourse of giftness, there exists a ‘layer’ of semiotic order of the gift.
It is important to isolate both orders of intertextuality clearly here (even if quite often the two will be linked) so as separate investigations can occur with specific regard to the gift, the image and the gift within the image. To understand this better we can turn to a specific example, this time from the Renaissance. Sandro Botticelli’s *Adoration of the Magi* (1476-7), as with a great deal of art during this period, was a commissioned piece and as such was produced and operated from a strong political and personalised perspective. In this particular case the patron was Guaspare di Zanobi del Lama, who was a close friend of the Medici family. A number of interesting elements exist within this painting that can be directly correlated to the present argument of intertextuality and discourse. Botticelli paints the three male members of the Medici family as the three wise men. The specific intertextual connection between the socio-cultural context of that time (the financial and political position of the Medici family) and a Biblical story is the reference to a literary text (Bible) from a visual text (painting)\(^3\). What is of particular interest here is the gift of perspective. To the right hand side of the painting is what Vasari argued to be a self-portrait of the artist, Botticelli. Leaving to one side the historical validity of such a claim, focusing on only the potential of its truth - this claim makes room for the core constituent of intertextuality (leading us to the other interpretive order of intertextuality). This representation of the artist and their gaze creates another text - the text of the spectator. Botticelli’s gaze gives an undercurrent of self-reflexivity in the painting. The gaze to the spectator invites a consideration of what their function is in the event of the image and as a result asks the double question of ‘what do you see?’ and 'how do you see it?’ This meta-interpretive process call up the semiotic argument of intertextuality whose main focus

\(^2\) Botticelli painted five versions of the subject entitled *Adoration of the Magi*. This particular reference is specific to his painting completed in 1476-7.

\(^3\) Only the general sense of intertextuality is being dealt with here- the fundamental level - only to move on later to show how such references are actually a solid basis for the more interesting aspect of intertextuality - the transposition of signifying practices.
was not concerned with purely acknowledging the 'what' questions but more with the 'how' questions. Such constructions of intertextuality (via either semiotic or generic models) are not limited to either/or field. It is important to maintain the fundamental premise of intertextuality, which is that ability of both text and spectator to cross over and interpret from differing socio-cultural or socio-textual systems, structures and orders. It is to this aspect of intertextuality and giftness that the thesis must now turn.

Kris t e v a

Kris t e v a's intertextuality is important as it is, by her own volition, not for the reference of one text to another. She posits two terms - dialogism and transposition:

The term inter-textuality denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign systems into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of 'study of sources,' we prefer the term transposition because it specifies that the new passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic ... If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying system (an inter-textuality), one then understands that its 'place' of enunciation and its denoted 'object' are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated.

(Kristeva 1984b:59-60)

This is also the point at which the idea of giftness and discourse can be understood. It is this last aspect of Kristeva's transposition that has particular relevance for an intertextual analysis of the gift. If we liken such signifying practices to gazes that come from the image and gazes that rest upon the image, we can also specify that such gazing positions are never homogenous but are always heterogeneous. These multiple viewing positions constructed both by image and by spectator, are the places of enunciation that Kristeva argues. If we are to grant that any system of exchange is a
signifying practice, then any structure, system or instance of the gift is also a
signifying practice and is subject to the same assumptions. Therefore the gift, and any
system of exchange, is a field of transpositions and is able to be classified as
intertextual, but more importantly, heterogeneously intertextual. These are the
discursive acts that enable the gift to exist, for it is the formation of relations through
exchange.

This heterogeneity of the intertextual is directly embedded in the notion of
experience. Kristeva's field of transpositions not only asks intertextuality to be
reexamined via a semiotic framework, but asks more specifically to look at the
signifying systems that are produced by such a practice and also how these
vacillations establish that there is never any homogenous experience - here no
homogenous 'gift' experience. No gift is identical to another yet relies on knowledge
of other gifts (and other displays of giftness) in order to construct separation and
distinction. Likewise, every gift (every moment of exchange, debt, claim to property
and ownership, and so on) exists outside of the familiar patterns because it always
exists in potentia as the non-gift or the unrecognised/unrecognisable gift. Kristeva's
reading of the intertextual is more important here because of the emphasis she places
on heterogeneity. Heterogeneity exists within these fields of transpositions because of
its transcendental referential. By this is meant that the heterogeneity produced or
emphasised by Kristeva's intertextuality looks beyond the initial referential that
signifies 'gift'. 'This is a gift' is not so much the focus any more; it is rather the
transposition of the gift, 'how as this gift is produced does it become recognised as a
gift' and 'how does it produce again' - that becomes the focus and relevant to
heterogeneity. It is in the reading, the process of interpreting the gift and image through this field of transpositions that the conception of gift/exchange is formed.

It is necessary to clarify Kristeva’s distinction between the semiotic and the Symbolic dispositions. As Leon Roudiez points out in his introduction to Revolution in Poetic Language (1984b), Kristeva demarcates between la sémiotique in the specific domain of semiotics as the general science of signs - containing the other aspect of the signifying process of language - the Symbolic, whereas le sémiotique is its antithesis. Even though most of Kristeva's theory deals with spoken and written language, the ideas on 'language in general' are still the same. Le sémiotique not only disrupts and jars systems of language but also offers a space in which discourses can multiply. It is because of le sémiotique that discursive practices come to form discourses, and discourses form discursive practices, as part of the anarchic nature of le sémiotique is its ability to create space outside of the Symbolic. This is not to posit le sémiotique as a reversing process but to highlight its function of operating beyond and outside the surface/s of language and particular discourses. To dangerously simplify, the gift, every gift, works within fields of transposition helping to facilitate situations of exchange and further future phenomena of giftness. In doing this, not only is the discourse of exchange drawn upon but other discourses (and this is where le sémiotique shatters discourse into discursive practices) such as politics, power, knowledge (and power/knowledge as observed in the chapter on Foucault), culture, and the production of meaning, become part of the overall process of giftness. Whilst not directly in correlation with the unconscious/conscious dichotomy, or similar dichotomies, there are certain distinctions that apply. The strongest demarcation to identify is that le sémiotique/Symbolic distinction Kristeva makes is through
language. Keeping with this line of inquiry we can exemplify exchange and its phenomenon of gift as a textual system in the manner in which Kristeva views text: "the text [gift] that is analysed is actually the effect of the dialectical interplay between semiotic and symbolic dispositions ... the text [gift] cannot be thought of as a finished piece of cloth; it is in a perpetual state of flux as different readers intervene, as their knowledge deepens, and as history moves on" (Kristeva 1984b:5).

If we insert the gift in the place of the text - or modify our reading of the gift to mirror that of interpreting a textual system - then Kristeva's theory of le sémiotique holds considerable relevance to a better understanding of the function of exchange in a cultural sense. Such an approach is highly applicable because of the position from which we are looking at exchange, gift and the image. The intent here is to not focus on the end product - material representations or literal manifestations of the gift - but to look at a heterogeneity that exists within the place of production and operation. In this sense we also call upon and involve the argument with other discourses and spheres of thought – including history, culture, and politics. This fracturing process of production, particularly the production of exchange, is the main concern, and is manifested in such textual systems that Kristeva analyses.

This next part will not discuss literal representations of a gift nor will it be solely concerned with analysing situations and circumstances of gift presentation. Instead this section on discursive practices is directed more towards the production of the gift and giftness. Therefore shouldn’t one’s question shift to what the gift produces rather than the operations and presentations of the gift? Such a question confines boundaries and cultural beliefs and conceptions of giftness within its process of signification.
How can a boundary of the gift be produced and encapsulated within its system of signification? These questions are aimed at not searching for gifts that are produced from a realm of exchange but aimed more at producible gifts. To merely seek out and identify operating gifts that articulate their presence via recognition is to only go so far in the analytic process. By looking towards the producible gift we are engaging with the inside, the structure of giftness phenomena. Heterogeneity, transposition, and dialogism - all components relevant to giftness are found here, in the investigation of the producible gift. By working from this position the aim is not to side step any representation or signification of the gift (as this is an important but different issue). Indeed any representation or any signification of the gift immediately sets up a subject - object relationship anterior to (re)cognition.

Positing the object (gift), subject (the giver) and signification (the experience of giving and receiving) as producible and production, rather than produced - helps to uncover the conditions that produce these producibles. What we are trying to concentrate on in this part are two things - the production of discursive practices (specific to the gift) and in turn, what these discursive practices produce themselves. Kristeva's semiotic *chora* is a good example.

… no Meaning exists, but there *do* exist articulations heterogeneous to signification and to the sign: the semiotic *chora*. Though discrete and disposed, the *chora* cannot be unified by a Meaning, which, by contrast, is initiated by a thesis, constituting ... a break…

(Kristeva 1984b:36).

Kristeva argues by retaining the term semiotic (with regards to describing the *chora") *[it] will in fact allow us to envisage a heterogeneous functioning, which Freud called 'psychosomatic"* (Kristeva 1984b:41). Kristeva works through her idea of *le sémiotique* within Freudian theory in order to expand her conceptions of the subject
and language. Marrying Freud's term 'psychosomatic' with the semiotic, Kristeva's idea is to emphasise the concurrent nature of the biological and the social in both terms. Ultimately such a configuration is constructed with the signifying process in mind. Here Kristeva is elaborating how signification exists with the process of signifying and also alongside, separate to it: "the term 'semiotic' can simultaneously be seen as part of a larger process that englobes it: the signifying process" (Kristeva 1984b:41). This part of Kristevan theory is important to work through carefully as it helps to outline how a subject comes to position and be positioned within a signifying practice and within discursive practices.

After Kristeva has established her definitions of le sémiotique and Symbolic, she distinguishes le sémiotique from the realm of signification in order to establish the thetic and the subject's relationship to it. Therefore, the thetic marks and forms the threshold of language. It separates le sémiotique from the Symbolic. By being a part of each realm, le sémiotique - anarchic and disruptive; the Symbolic - structured and ordered, the thetic becomes simultaneously both a fundamental part of each order, yet separate from them. It is the point where the subject enters and becomes part of the Symbolic but because it is also part of le sémiotique (through its boundary); it also marks the subject's entry into an alternative order. If le sémiotique establishes space for new systems (Kristeva's example is for poetic language) then these systems are produced to operate anti-thetical to the constructions and rules within the Symbolic order. With regard to discursive formations, these spaces are where the gift, and potentialities of giftness, resides. The subject's entry into and engagement with a set of discursive practices that become discourse formations, and ultimately a 'discourse', constitute the thetic boundaries that Kristeva argues.
By looking at the discursive practice of the gift, it is the interplay of rules and regularities between the gift and its differences (to other discursive practices) that help the analysis. It is not a comparative look at an object and its counterpart. This is not relevant to what is being discussed: "[T]hese rules define not the dumb existence of a reality, nor the canonical use of a vocabulary, but the ordering of objects" (Foucault 1986a:49). The question being asked is how do discursive practices, specifically regarding those concerning the gift, form discourse formations? And how do these discourse formations produce discourses of ‘giftness’? Kristeva’s work on transposition offers some illumination particularly in terms of the lifting of one sign-system that alters slightly with each differing formation. Foucault outlines sites from where institutions form their discourse (Foucault 1986a). His specificity is within the discursive boundaries of nineteenth century medicine but we can use his methodology for our purposes here, broadly, to locate and define certain constructions of discourse (primarily those pertaining to the gift) as well as highlighting relative constructions of subjectivity.

**4.2 Positionalities within discourse**

To proceed in this vein, some relatively concrete examples of rudimentary gift sites will help to tie down the large, abstract nature of the argument. Such temporal sites as birthdays, Christmases, births, holidays (Mother's Day, Father's Day), festive occasions (such as Bar Mitzvahs) and random acts of giving are found in a range of textual sites like books, films, television, photography and painting. These textual sites that represent temporal situations of the gift are long removed from any
individual or personal act of giving by the time they produce a gift. Not just 'a' gift but particular typologies of gifts specific to the medium in which they are found, which become part of the discursive practice of giftness. One example is a picture that could easily appear on the front of a Christmas card - a child offering a present to a family member, or indeed, a Christmas pictorial representation of the three wise men offering gifts to the Christ child. Do these pictorial representations of giving change the way in which the gift is read or is the phenomena of the gift the point of departure for discussion?4 Taking these textual mediums as example, it is then easier to ignore the traditionally recognised instance of the gift. One could (almost) say the product of the phenomena of the gift is to forget the direct instance of 'gift giving' and adhere to what such an act itself produces - cultural recognition of a simple set of relations that form a signifying practice that becomes the 'gift'. Mediums have created within themselves, and through intertextual connection, an archive of discursive practices. Thus the way to work through Foucauldian discursive practices and Kristevan signifying practices appears to be from a perspective on/of positionalities of discourse and signification: "the positions of the subject are also defined by the situation that it is possible for him to occupy in relations to the various domains or groups of object" (Foucault 1986a:52).

The interplay between the subject and any potentially occupied sites forms relations of the Symbolic and le sémiotique, and it is these groups of relations that form discursive practices. It might be prudent here to acknowledge that there is little connection between Kristeva and Foucault in this area, and indeed no real connection between these two theoreticians in the field of the gift. The reason why such two

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4 What this example serves to illustrate is the difference between simply recognising a gift and recognising a produced gift ethic, such as 'it's the thought that counts', or, as is the ethos with Christmas, simply a time for generosity.
seemingly incompatible theorists are being compared is largely because of their work concerning positionality and its relation to the formation of the subject in discourse and signification. By working with these two fields, the aim is to illustrate a different set of issues regarding the positionality and formation of the subject and highlight its criticality in exemplary mediums such as cinema and painting. This, in turn, will allow us to explore giftness in the term of position and subject as discourse.

For both Foucault and Kristeva positionality is important to their conceptions of discourse and signification, respectively. (Within such a statement is the caveat that discourse and signification are far from being the same thing; however the issue of positionality aligns them here). It is the statement that marks the first positioning with discourse for Foucault. His analysis and workings of the statement and its part in discourse are concerned with discovering how discourses ultimately come to operate and be recognised within the Symbolic order. By methodically defining the statement - or redefining it in his own terms - Foucault is highlighting discourse's function of producibility, specifically producibility of meanings, relations and other discourses. For the purpose of the gift, this theoretical field is essential as it allows us to view representations of the gift, particularly within visual and textual mediums (such as cinema) without limiting ourselves to a sole primary discussion to what the gift is representing. It is because of Foucault's archaeological approach that his theories can be applied cross-theoretically. Foucault speaks nothing of the gift and nothing of the functioning of the gift with visual examples, and yet because of his archaeological argument/methodology concerning the producibility of meanings and forming contextual relations and subsequent discursive practice - we can use his work to form our own connections with discursive practices in other fields.
Kristeva aids this Foucauldian aspect on discourse as her work on transposition complements the approach. Transposition is the vehicle for the method in which we are looking at and using Foucault's archaeology of knowledge. Whereas Foucault's investigation systematically works through notions and ideas of the formation of knowledge and particular discourses, here the aim is not to work in the same manner that is from one representation of a gift to another. For example, in the film *Manon des sources*, Ugolin produces a series of gifts (including the gifts of dead animals) to the object of his affection, Manon. It is not my objective to involve this section with an analysis of this film, and further, not to leap from one cinematic example of a representation of the gift to another. Instead, my intent is to focus on the gift as a heterogeneous, fluid and disruptive signifying process which functions similarly as a discursive practice. So instead of analysing the effect of the individual gifts that Ugolin bestows on Manon, this section is looking at what these individual gifts produce as part of their action. They become Foucault's statement (the dead rabbit, the dead birds), Ugolin's love becomes the discursive practice as his gifts are the fruit of his love for Manon - which is the discursive formation of the film - the discourse of love.

The gift is not a gift until it has undergone a hermeneutic process within a specific discursive practice and this means until multiple discourses and signifying practices have been employed to read the gift in a way that incites a meaning construction. Manon does not see Ugolin's gifts as gifts (as for the most part she is consciously unaware that they come from him, but eventually becomes conscious that they are his gifts). Any act that Ugolin generates for and towards Manon can be viewed as
synecdochic exemplars for his meta-discursive gift, his love. Placing a hermeneutic value on a discursive practice such as the gift, forces an investigation of the signifying practices within it. Using Kristeva's theories in conjunction with Foucault's ideas on discourse helps to uncover the way in which the producibility that is being argued occurs. Kristeva's term transposition “specifies that the new passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic” (Kristeva 1984b:59). With this in mind, Ugolin’s constant production of new gifts for Manon can be read as his attempts to find new and fresh ways to introduce his love to her. These smaller gifts function as symbolic objects for Ugolin’s ultimate gift of love.

Foucault's 'Statement'

In The Archaeology of Knowledge (1986a), Foucault outlines his conceptions of the statement by realising the impossibility of imposing a limiting definition. The discursive practice in Foucauldian terms precedes the discursive formation. By the time a discursive formation has been reached “a complex group of relations that function as a rule” are in place, and “it lays down that what must be related, in a particular discursive practice” (Foucault 1986a:74). If the statement is a constituent that determines a subject's positionality within discourse, its connections and form help to flesh out specific discursive practices. The statement must always be defined via the discursive practice - the relation between two opposing elements - not necessarily in binary opposition. This suggests that the subject's position in the formation of discursive practice is also a series of statements that move from within a set of signifying practices (that form a cohesive set of rules outlining a relational context) to a point where subject - object positions become regularities. These sites of formations should be viewed in the same way that Kristeva's le sémiotique and
Symbolic functions. *Le sémiotique*, which provides the pervious disruptive boundary of the thetic for the Symbolic, is Foucault's statement, in that there is never any unity that the statement can provide or be a part of. As a result, the statement is constantly rupturing the unity that it so desperately tries to create. The gift in this sense belongs in part to the thetic boundary of the statement and discursive practice; and the thetic boundary of *le sémiotique*. This can be further linked back to the idea of *glissement*, where as the endless movement of signification it disrupts the unity of exchange through the potential for multiple interpretations that inevitably includes misinterpretation, non-interpretation and disorder.

It becomes apparent therefore that sketching out a discursive practice regarding the gift must rely on more than statements that group a set of relations based on similar form and connection. An apt example to illustrate this is the romantic gift. This typology of gift exists parallel to other typologies of gift - mad gifts, traditional, political for example. Placing a field of perspective - the romantic gift within film clearly has a fixed set of signifiers and codes through which the audience forms the fundamental meaning of gift and an attachment of romance (something that can be seen as a recurring motif in Mauss). As has been noted in Foucault's work however, formations of discourse are never wholly contained and do not produce secular identificatory sites of signification. By this is meant when an audience interprets a gift as romantic within a particular filmic discourse:

> what one must characterize and individualize is the coexistence of the dispersed and heterogeneous statements; the system that governs their division, the degree to which they depend on one another, the way in which they interlock or exclude one another, the transformation that they undergo, and the play of their location, arrangement and replacement

(Foucault 1986a:34)
The gift they are interpreting is not wholly the gift that they are interpreting. The audience's hermeneutic process draws on other signifying practices and representations of gifts from other various discourses, in this case other romantic discourses, in order to establish and assign a particular meaning to the gift they are viewing. What this aspect of statement gives rise to is the following question: are the same types of significations and representations always drawn on by the subject in order to produce a discursive practice (of the gift)? Foucault poses a question that can respond to this: "might it not be possible to establish groups of statements, by determining coherent concepts involved?" (Foucault 1986a:34).

Foucault is arguing that through the systematic use of the same statement to define some concepts, that a tightly knit group of rules should be enough to form a regularity and hence a discursive practice. However, Foucault also points out that limitations would soon be encountered if one was to follow this line of argument as in outlining all the elements that would make the formation of discursive practice possible; new and different concepts would appear - true to the nature of the statement. Configuring a discursive practice based on individual representations of the gift (in cinema for example) therefore falls thinly on theoretical ground - yet simultaneously allows a different sort of discursive unity to be noted. It is possible to recognise the culture of the gift operating as a narrative structure within films across genres; and it is possible to recognise more about character development and the film's meaning if the gift is "not sought in the coherence of concepts but in their simultaneous or successive emergence, in the distance that separates them and even their incompatibility" (Foucault 1986a:35). The significance of Foucault's theory for the gift is that the phenomenon of the gift rests in the 'between' of its appearance and distribution.
On the last hypothesis of regarding the statement, Foucault turns his attention to the thematic drive of the statement. This last hypothesis works to underline all other hypotheses of the statement. It would appear from a brief look at the statement and its function that the thematic link between statements would be the strongest device for forming a discursive unity. However as Foucault points out, thematic links actually cross systems of discourse, bridging as well as disclosing, the gaps that separate them. What Foucault sees, as central to any thematic connection between statements is the "dispersion of the point of choice". This brings us back to the subject's position within discourse. The lacunae of the statement, with specific regard to their involvement in discursive formation, require the subject to participate in the construction of discourse. The unity of discourse, the unity of concept and the unity of statement are all shattered because of the subject's position in the formation of a discourse. A subject's position, their subjectivity, can never be regularity. In this sense what is happening here is concretisation. The subject's position in relation to discursive formation is central to it taking place, yet is based solely on undetermined moments and undetermined statements.

4.3 The Enunciative Function

The enunciative function operates as part of the positioning of the subject. It is the existence of the space that results from the statement's grouping of relations. To work through this enunciative function, and its connection to the statement, Foucault sets up four conditions.
a) The condition of duplication

"The statement exists outside any possibility of reappearing; and the relation that it possesses with what it states is not identical with a group of rules of use" (Foucault 1986a:89). This positioning of the statement and its operation can be likened to the methodologies of Kristeva's thetic function. As the thetic separates the Symbolic order from le sémiotique, yet remains an aspect of both, so the statement relates to other statements and the enunciative function - autonomous but not independent. It is here that the element of the referential is introduced. For Kristeva this is the transcendental referential. For Foucault, the referential is characteristic of the enunciative level of formation. This particular type of referential is significant to the condition of duplication because Foucault uses it to establish a clearer focus on the differences and gaps between the statement and other statements. The referential is concerned with the laws and rules of an object's phenomena rather than the object itself. So with the specific example of the gift, of a statement of the gift, the referential for the condition of duplication would not be a referral to a previous gift, similar or identical but rather the production of place and the series of instances that enabled the statement of the gift to be made.

The referential if the statement forms the place, the condition, the field of emergence, the authority to differentiate between individuals or objects, states of things and relations that are brought into play by the statement itself; it defines the possibilities of appearance and delimitation of that which gives meaning to the sentence, a value as truth to the proposition.

(Foucault 1986a:91)

The idea behind the condition of duplication for Foucault is that the statement, despite the possibility of identical utterance, is never the same statement. A statement, once
stated becomes part of the enunciative function and consequently contributes to the formation of the subject and their position within discourse. For duplication, or reduplication, to occur it would mean that the positionality of the subject never fully asserts itself and that the subject is bound to only ever making similar types of statements. This in turn suggests that duplication, or rather the lack of it, has a large investment in heterogeneity and hermeneutics. For multiplicities of subject positions and the potential of corresponding hermeneutic investigations, there is no need to look beyond the spaces of differences between statements for insights into statements themselves and how they develop the enunciative function. The visual examples help to confound this because of their inherent heterogeneous subject positions. An example of the condition of duplication can be found in Monet's haystacks, where when placed next to each other the images of the haystack represent the same haystack but at different times of the day and in different seasons. It cannot be said that the same haystack appears in each of the four paintings because of the temporal and seasonal differences, yet the condition of duplication is registered because of the image of the haystack appearing four times. This visual example is not far removed from the gift in terms of duplication. All gifts are duplications - of themselves and of the gift process. As with the haystacks, the duplication is not simply replication – even if the signifiers remain constant. At one level this is the gift as simulacra, where what is duplicated simulates giftness independent of the gift itself. The duplicate gift confirms the discourse (in this Foucauldian sense) because it is an active agency. By duplicity itself, the gift sustains giftness.
b) the condition of subject position

"The enunciating subject brings into existence outside himself an object that belongs to a previously defined domain, whose laws of possibility have already been articulated and whose characteristics precede the enunciation that posits it" (Foucault 1986a:95). In relation, the statement (formed from a grouping of signs) allows the position of the subject to be created as it assigns a place or system of signification in which the subject can occupy. What Foucault is trying to define as a condition is the place from which enunciation takes place and how such a place is formed. Working from the statement, and ending at the level of discourse, levels of formulation are methodically explored to circumvent any danger of generalisation of the function of the statement and the subject. The subject's position in the enunciative function is not defined by or through the subject's relation between statement and object. Exemplified through the gift, the enunciating position is not produced from any presentation or re-presentation of a material gift but rather the spaces between the potential of occupying an enunciative position or not. That is, a subject only fulfils the enunciative function of giver if he/she can determine, through a series of statements that outlay a discursive formulation, that there is/are potential positions to be taken up as a subject. The next logical question is how does an individual come to note the potential of a position as subject. This leads us to Foucault's third condition of the enunciative function.
c) The condition of the associated domain

"The third characteristic of the enunciative function: it cannot operate without the existence of an associated domain" (Foucault 1986a:96). In order for the individual to assume an enunciative position - that is a position of the speaking subject - there are a number of domains from which it gains, and needs, support to exist. Foucault argues "a statement always has borders peopled by other statements." And this associated domain supports and helps establish the enunciative function. It is not a relational or contextual establishment and it is not a situation derived from linguistic framework that purports contextualisation for the enunciative function. An associated domain, in regards to the enunciative function, does not operate this way, as again the concern is with production. Such as the phenomena of the gift produces material signifiers labelled 'gift' which help to identify sites of subject position as subject-giver, the enunciative function must work on and with the assistance of the associated domain that helps create and produce the possibility of context rather than provide a context 'already-made'. 5 This assistance of an associated domain produces the place for the enunciating subject. There are four aspects to Foucault's associative domain (Foucault 1986a:114).

1) "It is made up ... by the series of other formulations with which the statement appears and forms one element".

2) "The associated field is also made up of all the formulations to which the statement refers (implicitly or not), either by repeating them, modifying them,

5 Compare this with Foucault's notion of the already-said (Foucault 1986a:110).
or adapting them, or by opposing them, or by commenting on them; there can be no statement that in one way or another does not reactualize others".

3) "The associative field is also made up of all the formulations whose subsequent possibility is determined by the statement and which may follow the statement as its consequence, its natural successor, or its conversational retort".

4) "the associated field is made up of all the formulations whose status the statement in question shares".

What these four aspects of the associated domain highlight for the statement is its coexistence. To go into and analyse further each aspect of the associated domain would be a lengthy and not especially relevant procedure at this point, as the focus is on investigating the enunciative function by working through its constitutive conditions rather than picking apart the aspects that form the conditions themselves.

By listing the aspects of the associated domain, what begins to become apparent is the nature of enunciative coexistence that assigns the statement (and accordingly the subject) as a situating place. Notably this can be read as one of the first components in the construction of Foucault's power/knowledge as through the statement's interdependence, its place in the enunciative function is also given a rank. As a result, accumulation of statements in an enunciative field becomes an accumulation of power/knowledge within particular discursive practices. What this means for the enunciative function of the gift is that certain gifts are afforded power/knowledge through a meeting of all its conditions. These may well be the established (culturally speaking) discourses of exchange, or even the highly coded ‘private’ (that is, intrasubjective) manifestations of the gift. This second type almost occupying a meta-
language of exchange – such as the love letter. One the gift ‘accumulates’ this power/knowledge status we are more inclined to see this as giftness.

\textit{d) The condition of material existence}

A statement needs a material existence to have enunciative standing but its articulation is not automatic. “The coordinates and the material status of the statement are part of its intrinsic characteristics” (Foucault 1986a:100). The statement's materiality forms part of its relationship to the discursive practice. A material existence gives the statement an identity within a site that enables the discursive practice to exist and ultimately positions the subject within the field of discourse. When the statement's materiality is altered, its occupation in the site of a particular discursive practice shifts to another. This is similar to transpositions - shifting from one sign system to another and in the course of it, altering the identity of the statement, the system of discursive practice and the positioning of the subject. Material existence of the statement therefore contains heterogeneity. Foucault asks, "How can one establish the identity of the statement through all these various forms, repetitions and transcriptions?" (Foucault 1986a:101). Ironically he answers it by setting aside the heterogeneity of enunciations and coins the terms 'repeatable materiality'.

This repeatable materiality (which was observed earlier in term of the gift and duplication) consists of a number of small differences between statements that are not large enough to change the actual articulation of a statement, and does not give
recourse to another statement but in its repetition, the materiality produces a space enough for a separation and distinguishing of statements. The statement in material form is defined through its station as an object (such as the cultural formation and manifestation of a gift) but not because it occupies a particular objectified space reserved for specific materiality and not because it came into material existence at a certain time. What makes the repetition of statements possible without changing their identity, is what Foucault calls the field of stabilisation, "no further equivalence, and the appearance of a new statement must be recognised." Here another parallel can be made between Kristeva's thetic and Foucault's threshold. As the thetic links and separates the Symbolic order (the order of things, regularity, law, rules, language) and le sémiotique (disorder, rupture, break, separation), the field of stabilisation operates as a link between the statement and other statements and the statement's inclusion in an ordered discursive practice. The field of stabilisation also links the statement's Symbolic identity (recognition within a social order as meaningful and producer of potential meaning) and its inclusion as an individual identity separate and distinct from another new (or just different) statements. "The constancy of the statement, the preservation of its identity through the unique events of the enunciations, its duplications through the identity of the forms, constitute the function of the field of use in which it is placed" (Foucault 1986a:104). The law of a series, constituted by a group or sequence of signs, that is referred to as statements, is discursive formation. The gift’s field of stabilisation is embedded in giftness as a discursive process. As observed in terms of Lacan’s glissement, the gift stabilizes at the moment in discourse where it is most powerfully observing the cultural conditions. Giftness, on the other had, reinvests the process with the thetic. For each stabilizing field of the gift, there is (in potentia) the force of giftness that disrupts.
To describe the subject's position within the discursive practice, the existence of the position must be looked at closely first. This isn't a topographical questioning, say what assigns the giver the name and place of 'giving' status, but a questioning that looks to the very threshold of the moment of positionality - the thetic boundary, or in Foucauldian terms, "the play of the 'signifier' and the 'signified' - that determines its unique and limited existence" (Foucault 1986a:111). This approach towards description originates from a concern with production, as it is the signifier that is of prime interest. At this point it is fit to sketch out, based on the discussion of the statement, discursive practices and discourse formations, a language. What we have is fundamentally a production of heterogeneous subject positions through formation of language that operates through its threshold of the Symbolic and le sémiotique. The enunciative level is found here too. Our involvement with language here is purposefully restricted so as to develop a sense of a language of the gift. Language in an arranging sense relates to the fundamental notions of productions and producibility. The Foucauldian archiving of the statement and the analysis of enunciative function help to flesh out a viewing of language in this 'arranging' capacity as it attacks the core of subjectivity and is played out on the threshold of language formation. The significance of this is considerations of conceptions of unity, of wholeness in terms of subjectivity, discourse and the subject in discourse. Investigating discourse from its fundamental element - the statement - serves to scale back conceptions of discourses operating as individual, secular streams through a Symbolic social order and focus not on what discourse produces but what produces discourse. This turns to an investigation of what is the meaning behind what is produced. Dissociating any idea of unity from discourse breaks down associating the
subject's position with concrete roles in discourse. At one level, this is the struggle with gift’s meanings. It traces back (in Derrida’s sense of the trace) the gift to giftness. In the polysemic capacity of the gift we find the production of meaningfulness, but actual meaning will remain slippery. It is this persistence of the will to mean within a discourse of resistance that comes to determine, and perhaps even define giftness.

The enunciative function that Foucault discusses unveils a function that, to work effectively, relies on these conditions of the referential, which is more about spaces of difference; of the subject, an uncovering of heterogeneity in potential positions of the subject; of the associated domain, which refers to the coexistence of other statements; and of the material existence which refers not to literal, tangible representations of materiality, but to a defining and separating status and the potential for duplication. Groups of statements form discursive formations and multiple positions for subjects. Systematic uses of referentials define the parameters that produce and run modalities of enunciation and subsequent positionalities of subjectivities.

This approach towards and perspective on the gift is to make way for further investigations on the phenomena surrounding the gift. At this point a step in the direction towards phenomenology guides a closer look at the production and proliferation of meaning of the gift. Additionally deeper discussion of giftness, the space of the gift and illusion of realities are engaged with.
5. Disruption & Space: Locating the gift

5.1 Disruptive Spaces

5.2 Carnivalesque Spaces

5.3 Liminal Spaces

5.4 Utopic Spaces

5.1 Disruptive Spaces

This section considers the idea that there are certain gifts that set up a form of resistance and disruption through disguising their very quality of giftness. This process operates within a type of space that can be seen as socio-culturally defined and played out through various textual orders. To this end this section contemplates disruptive spaces, including the idea that the gift itself holds in potentia the capacity to disrupt social space. Gifts circulate within defined spaces, notably ones of social organisation and exchange. However, one of the recurring ideas of this thesis is that gifts resonate outside of their immediate, observable contexts. This is the idea of the disruptive gift defined through its spatial domain.

To strategically place the gift in representational space,¹ and interpret it through forms of resistance, will allow us to consider the disruptive attributes of the gift in terms of certain hermeneutic qualities. In turning the theorisation of the gift to a consideration of the construction of space, it is claimed that any theorising of the gift and giftness is not context specific. This is so that Lefebvrian moments of

¹ This is a term coined by Lefebvre and is used intentionally here for two reasons, firstly to link ‘representational space’ to space itself and secondly, to the gift and representational gifts.
space are given importance and its active nature is capitalised on. Social orders are examined in to elucidate its construction in terms of space and culture (or a lack of culture). By developing the discussion through these differences, the intention is to view the gift in situations where it does not appear to possess giftness – maintaining the driving theme of disruption and resistance. Consequently this section is not solely space-specific, but does engage with ideas and concepts that concern and regard space. Work by Henri Lefebvre, Andrew Benjamin, Foucault, and others can help us consider the gift in different ways through its composition with space.

**Establishing space**

To gain a clear conception of the space that I want to relate specifically to the gift, I turn to Lefebvre’s work concerning social space. In *The Production of Space* (1993), Lefebvre argues that there are three parts to social space:

social space also contains specific representations of this double or triple interaction between the social relations of production and reproduction [of space]. Symbolic representation serves to maintain these social relations in a state of coexistence and cohesion. It displays them while displacing them.

(Lefebvre 1993:32)

The three parts are spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces. In each of these three aspects we find implications of an order to such social space and a contribution to its production. This work of Lefebvre is vital in any discussion that considers a location or theorising of the gift as it looks
towards the cultural formation of space, with specific emphasis on cultural knowledge and use of social space.

A discussion of how Lefebvre conceptualises space is necessary in order to develop a detailed look at the three ‘moments’ of space. Lefebvre’s work on social space is concerned with its production and capacity to produce and as such the idea of an event can be attached to it. As an event, space is constantly moving, occupying places and moving again. What space produces is not a finite embodiment of any one particular object but the potential for more space. Lefebvre argues that if space is a product, with particular emphasis in/on the social, then it is because of a double illusion, “each side of which refers back to the other, reinforces the other, and hides behind the other” (Lefebvre 1993:27). This hints back to an activity of space that Lefebvre wants to follow, and he outlines two illusions to maintain and further the idea of space as constantly shifting, and also to disillusion the reader of regarding space as a fixed concept, whether it is solely mental, physical or social. It is all three. The two illusions are the illusion of transparency and the realistic illusion. The illusion of transparency is where space is an action – it has ‘free reign’, a “transcendental illusion”. The illusion here is that there is no transparency, as the transparency of the spoken and written word is signification: “the spoken and written word are taken for (social) practice” (Lefebvre 1993:28). This is the ‘trap’ of the illusion of transparency for Lefebvre, as it tends to negate, or crudely conflate, the differences between verbal and non-verbal systems of signification. The realistic illusion rejects the dominance of orders of signification over orders of nature, “The illusion of transparency has a kinship with philosophical idealism; the
realistic illusion is closer to (naturalistic and mechanistic) materialism” (Lefebvre 1993:30). Lefebvre is quick to point out that the two illusions work symbiotically as well as asserting that they are not fixed mental conceptions of illusion. Outlining these two aspects of illusion help form a fundamental distinction between Lefebvre’s representations of spaces - which can be likened to the illusion of transparency - as here, systems of verbal signs conceptualise space. Representational spaces can be paralleled with the realistic illusion, as here non-verbal significations (a more ‘naturalistic’) frame space.

Three moments of space

A certain type of order within social space begins to emerge, but it is not an ordering, rather it is a connection of places. “Social space contains –and assigns (more or less) appropriate places to – (1) the social relations of reproduction … (2) the relations of production” (Lefebvre 1993:32). In this instance Lefebvre is referring specifically to the order of the family and relates issues of production and reproduction to it accordingly. Leaving the issue of the family and its specificity to production and reproduction aside, we can take up the idea that the two ‘appropriate places’ within a social space need an order, and as Lefebvre puts it “to localize them” (Lefebvre 1993:32). From this configuration, the ‘conceptual triad’ of spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces is formed. Now that a connection of spaces has been sketched, typologies of order relative to Lefebvre’s conceptions of social space can help define these spaces in terms of the gift.
Spatial practice

Spatial practice is the social space’s everyday space in everyday discourse. In this moment, practice and space function simultaneously, connecting all spaces in the social together through forms of the order in everyday: “… between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, ‘private’ life and leisure. This association is a paradoxical one, because it includes the most extreme separation between the places it links together” (Lefebvre 1993:38). Spatial practice is non-conceptualised space and shares in the Foucauldian notion of space, in that it is a forcing control over its inhabitants.2 If spatial practice embodies moments of physicality, the physical is not descriptive of spatial practice.3 Spatial practice is disruptive to the social space, as its operative premise is fundamentally different to the other moments of space. Similarly the gift is

2 This whole issue of the social space and everyday life is a key theme in Lefebvre’s work. See also, for example, Critique of Everyday Life (1990), The Production of Space (1991b), and Writings on Cities (1996) that show the significance of this issue. For an analysis and explication of some of these key issues see Edward Soja Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and Imagined Places (1996).

3 In Walkabout everyday space is juxtaposed against the space of the extraordinary. In a scene early in the film the Girl begins to unpack a picnic lunch, suitable only for parks and outdoor furniture, on the barren desert floor in the middle of the Australian outback. In this striking image all elements that occupy and help form physical everyday space (and hence a spatial practice) in Australian cities, such as the black Volkswagen, the children’s grey, woollen school uniforms, the chicken, ham and cakes, the battery-operated radio, and even the silver cutlery which is set out, are elements displayed as unsuitable for daily practice in the arid Australian outback. Such a displacement of spatial practice disrupts a reading of space and brings its contextualisation to the forefront of spectator consciousness – the very thing which spatial practice endeavours to avoid. In this practice is an order that tries to hide itself so that other components of social space can take up more of an active role. Keeping to its non-conceptualisation, spatial practice functions as a foundation for the spaces that rest and act upon it, as its key purpose is to construct a discourse that attempts to organise itself. The diegetics of everyday existence in an Australian city presented in a radically different context, such as the Australian Outback, brings the non-conceptualisation of spatial practice into the spectator’s consciousness. We don’t usually see such ordinary spatial practices, and this displacement is a disruption. The most important aspect to this organisation is its concealment. Where does this order of spatial practice come from? And what is its relevance to disruption?
disruptive to the gift process or ‘gift-giving’ through both its relation and its distance. Spatial practice is relative to social space but does not form the totality of it. Its order or localisation, within social space is dependent on other moments and orders of space. In such a typology of order the gift is free and generous. It is the reason and stimulus for the ‘gift giving’ but such a process is an ordered economy of exchange that cannot integrate the gift into its cycle. This is why the gift is relative but distant, and remains disruptive to the giving process. What appears to be forging itself through this discussion of moments in social space is a typology of orders specific to such moments. If spatial practice is everyday, non-conceptualised space, then the order within this moment of space is routine and organised – a localising order of ordered space. The order that appears within space itself parallels the order of whatever occupies the space. To explain this a bit clearer we can borrow a similar structure of order that presents itself in film narrative.

The diegetics of a film provide a social order specific to that film and its narrative, yet the concept of diegetics is present in all forms and genres of cinema. For example, in the new millennium we can still watch a Western film, whether it is ‘classic’ or ‘spaghetti’, and interpret it as a Western because of its diegetics. This is because we make meaning out of what exists within the film (its historical contexts and within the zeitgeist of its particular epoch) in order to interpret the present order of the film. Thus a ‘diegetics of space’ is mirrored by the space that produces it. This typology of order is easily established as it functions in the deepest folds of the Symbolic order. On one level this ‘ordering-

\[4\] More discussion occurs later in the section, engaging with Heideggerian notions of sacrifice. For the moment, the focus is still on Lefebvre’s social space.
order’ creates much of spatial practice because of its assimilation of, and integration with, what is familiar in the Symbolic. Because of this, any spatial practice, even that which does not appear to be everyday in ‘normal’ circumstances functions as though it were – specifically due to the performative normalising processes of the Symbolic. This raises the issue of how an order becomes applicable to spatial practice and how it is located within it, especially within the context of disruption. The disruptive register of concern here is the gift.

Such an ordering order, despite all its signals to define itself as otherwise, carries the potentiality of disruption through its inherent nature of the ordinary, or everyday. A filmic example of this can be found in John Ford’s The Searchers (1956), where Comanche kidnap Debbie at an early age. When she is kidnapped, Debbie comes to represent the White all-American nuclear family by operating as a synecdoche for ‘that, which must be rescued or preserved’. Debbie’s absence reinforces the Western genre’s construction of a heteronormative familial order: Father, Mother, Son, and Daughter. This unit in turn becomes the spatial practice that underpins the narrative of the film. To negotiate all the other present spaces in the film, it is this ordering-order of spatial practice to which spaces return. So when Debbie is found, speaks the Native American language and articulates her desires to be left alone, she disrupts the spatial practice of the American family, and subsequently the Symbolic order underpinning the film. The white girl doesn’t want to be rescued from the Comanche. Why this is disrupting is because Debbie’s refusal comes from this particular film’s Symbolic other. John Wayne and his cowboy equivalents represent the White American Symbolic order and
all their actions and thoughts are generated and rationalised through it. Anything that opposes this order (epitomised solely in the cowboy) is therefore situated as mad, incoherent and other. However, the Symbolic order of the Comanche mirrors that of the Americans. The patriarchy of Scar parallels the position of Ethan, there is a community and family structure, and so Debbie’s refusal to be rescued is a refusal of the White American Symbolic order in favour of the Indian American Symbolic order.

What is of particular interest here is that the negotiation of these parallel family orders – the spaces within (familial) spaces – is played out in terms of the gift. Ethan needs (very much in the psychoanalytic sense of pulsion/drive) to return to Debbie, as her giftness is a return to an ideological order/space of whiteness. The ‘corruption’ of this order for Ethan leads to madness. The gift of Debbie is the attempt to rebalance his world order, where space operates, as he understands it. (Hence his return to the ‘wilderness’ at the end of the film). The discussion shall return to these spaces of giftness shortly.

Representations of space

This is intellectualised space, particular to the sciences or spaces with a scientific agenda, such as architectural space. This moment of social space is interested in the measurement of space and the disciplines that build space through and with such measurement. A cinematic example is the matrix in *The Matrix* (Wachowski Bros 1999). The matrix as pure construction and fabrication is the
ultimate representation of space. The central issue here is how can measured space, carefully thought out and planned through science (keeping to Lefebvre’s model) be disruptive or function as a disruptive space? Representations of space are disruptive through challenging the space of the Symbolic order, not forms of the Symbolic order, as was the case with spatial practice. How such challenges present themselves are best seen through comparative analysis. Within the matrix all moments of social space are present. How they are different is where challenges between the moments of space and that space of the Symbolic order will be found. Through a comparison of their differences we find the disruptive spaces. One interpretation could be that social space on the whole operates and is produced through a series of disruptions caused by the differences between the moments of space and order within them. Social space contains an amalgamation of contexts, orders and varying spaces regardless, and may be the final expression of all challenges, disruptions, contestations and inversions that occur in the moments of its space. Paradoxically the balance that these three moments of social space creates is born out of their disruptive conflicts. The threats to the space of the Symbolic order are the heterogeneous spaces and orders that are constantly produced through the conflicts between the three moments of space, as each and every production of a type of space threatens to dismantle the stability of the Symbolic order (social space). Representations of space are measured and intellectualised for the reason that they are a representation and reflection of how the Symbolic order functions. Such measurements of space are reminders that their position is an active one in any construction or moment of space. In *The Matrix*, cleanliness, regimental order, mass consumerism and cultural homogeneity are elements composing the ideological impetus behind its
Symbolic order. Consequently all that is found in the matrix reflects such ideologies of the agents (people who want to destroy the real world).

The gift’s representation of space challenges its own Symbolic space. The unrecognised gift exists outside the three moments of space, its representation being the giving process where an order of economy through exchange is formed. Challenge to the gift’s Symbolic space is always there as such space defines itself on a gift that is measured that has been given or is in the process of being given. An unrecognised gift is not measured and it is not negotiated via representation either. Representations of space “are tied to relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose” (Lefebvre 1993:33), hence the giving process produces a representation of the gift but it is a representational gift. Like its spatial counterpart, it disrupts any consistency but still is a gift that has been represented.

Representational Spaces

Representational spaces are viewed from an arts perspective. Their differences from the other spaces – of representation and spatial practice – are a result of their having been negotiated through other spaces that have been represented. As Lefebvre states, “[representational space] overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” (Lefebvre 1993:39). Representational space finds its
disruptions through individual moments that resist conformity with the monotony of spatial practice and the measurement of the occupation of space. An order that we can find in representational space is an order of the individual response to representation. As all three moments of Lefebvre’s social space are connected, any order that can be related to representational space is a disruption in itself but is a response to any or all of the moments of space nonetheless. These connections are important as out of the three spaces, representational space possesses the strongest sense of activity in its movement. This stems from being negotiated via spatial practice and representations of spaces and the effect is a constant struggle against conforming to or being defined by the other two moments of space. “This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre 1993:39). Yet because of this struggle against spatial practice and representations of space, representational space produces transgressive and fragmented loci and this chaotic relationship becomes the definition of the connection of representational space to the other moments. Individual acts are the best examples. Using cinema as example, interpretation of space within a film negotiates these three moments. A spectator when watching a film “acknowledges the textual world order of the film (and all its specifications) and operates within at least one of the cultural orders. These include the cultural order of the production of the film…or the cultural world order of the reception of the film…or the cultural order of the critical analysis of the film…or the cultural order of its interpretation” (Fuery 2000:113). The act of interpreting social space is a further disruption and puts us back at the configuration of what social space is. It is made up of fluctuating, disruptive moments and it never finds a concrete localisation. It is always active.
and transforming because of its disruptive nature. The orders aligned to each of these spaces are not prescriptive, rather a working through of the potential of each space. At best spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces are moments of social space that should be conceived of as processes that are always forming other moments of space, and resisting the order, or any ordering of space.

*Cinematic examples*

*The Matrix* is a representation of space. That which it is not - the Real world - measures its space. It is a world that is built up via disciplines of strict order and purpose intending to blind its inhabitants through a misrepresentation of truthful existence. Occupied space within the matrix reflects a space that is carefully thought out and planned so as to conceal its true nature. The myth of the matrix is that of space. Being an architectural space, built from computer code and systems, the matrix can only become space through representation. This is why Neo functions as representational space. Neo moves between the matrix and the real world, resisting any conformity to the spatial practice of the matrix. He gives up his life as an accountant (typifying the epitome of the mundane), and the confinement of operating within a disciplined space (he learns ju-jitsu only in virtual space yet practices it in the matrix). Neo sees through and splits open the matrix through subverting the pretence of a space that isn’t there, exemplified in the final scenes where he sees space as code and nothing more. He disrupts the representation of the matrix through operating as a representational space
providing enough disruption to create another social space – the real world. Neo becomes a gift for the Real world via his resistance to the system of the matrix. 5

The interaction of space and the gift has been touched on in the working through of the three moments in Lefebvre’s social space. The space of the gift and its potential as a disruptive space can now be looked at further.

The space of the gift: sacrifice and event

“If there is either undecidability or the absence of a fixed determination which are not taken as ends in themselves then what is important is how the relationship between the elements comprising these states of affairs is to be understood” (Benjamin 1993:113).

The space of the gift is defined through relation and distance. In his chapter ‘Opening Gifts’, Benjamin begins with a questioning of the return of the gift and more specifically, “what does the process mark and what is marked in the process?” (Benjamin 1993:129). Benjamin is concerned with the idea of the event and reads the gift accordingly. For the gift to be situated as an event, issues of difference and repetition need to be discussed. However as the space of the

5 Equally in Walkabout, the Aboriginal guide and Girl function as representational spaces that collapse when they enter into the other’s Symbolic order. Space is an all-consuming activity in Walkabout. The clashing spaces of the outback and the city reflect Lefebvre’s shifting illusion of transparency and realistic illusion. The movement of the city based on an illusion of transparency is signified space and clashes when it moves into the outback where the space of realistic illusion presents itself. In the outback there is no movement for the transparency of signification (found in the city) and most of the verbal language is usurped by an employment of the surrounding space to communicate. For the Girl’s father, his inability to assimilate into the socio-cultural order of Australia is portrayed in the extremity of his presence in outback Australia, and his subsequent suicide. This is mirrored in the final stages of the film where the Aboriginal guide commits suicide for the same reasons.
The situation is complex since not only is there a return to the event, its being given again such that the gift comes to be present as a form of repetition, there is also the occurrence of the repetition. What happens therefore is marked by the process of giving and giving again. How therefore is this move within giving to be understood?

(Benjamin 1993:129)

The problem for Benjamin is in presenting repetition – an issue already encountered in terms of Foucauldian duplication. The possibility of the gift’s existence lies in its delimitation. There is a need to separate the gift from its giving process – its event – if we are to discuss the disruptive space of the gift. A gift must be located prior to the economy of exchange if it is to remain a gift. Benjamin works through this concept via Heidegger’s questioning of the essence of Being. Benjamin argues that in Heidegger’s questioning of the essence of Being, its possibility exists only “if metaphysics has been given away” (Benjamin 1993:136) that is, in effect gifted. Regarding the gift as event, Benjamin takes the giver as example to explicate how Heidegger’s questioning is his sacrifice:

the giver – located within thinking and thus gives in order to be, and to have been, in the position of thinking – not retain any trace of the gift that was given. Therefore, rather than there just being a gift prior to an
economy of exchange here, there must be both a giving and a gift with neither forming part of such an economy

(Benjamin 1993:136-137)

Therefore the sacrifice exists in the giving away – the action that separates the gift event from the economy of exchange. Furthermore, the issue of space is important because it is the location of the giver, as well as the gift, that informs this idea of event. Thus giftness becomes spatialised. This is complimentary to the usual theorising, and practice, of the gift in time. The gift is given (in time) from a space located as giftness. This idea is premised on Heidegger’s Destruktion\(^7\) – it needs sacrifice in order to transpire just as Derrida’s différance needs deferral and difference to deconstruct. Here we witness the temporality of deferral and the spatiality of difference. The gift is central to such a discussion as metaphysics becomes the gift to Heidegger’s questioning of the essence of Being because it is, that which is ‘given away’. Thus the notion of sacrifice is inextricably linked with all concepts – space, gift and disruption.

Benjamin outlines a logic of sacrifice ‘as already present’ in Heidegger’s theory of Destruktion. This defines sacrifice (and the gift) through relation at a distance. The impetus behind this logic of sacrifice is that if something is offered up to achieve a goal, “then that which has been offered is sacrificed” (Benjamin 1993:137). This suggests that while the sacrificial act is a result of sacrifice, sacrifice itself is not what is sacrificed as it is distinct from what is actually being sacrificed. In terms of the gift, the ‘giving away’ is not part of the gift and does

\(^6\) Derrida discusses the gift and time in great depth in *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money.*

\(^7\) There is more in Destruktion than the concept of ‘destruction’ and this is of particular relevance to the gift as it addresses the subtle complexities that exist within exchange, similar to the subtle complexities of sacrifice. Heidegger does not use the German for ‘destruction’ (Zerstörung) but rather the Latin-German term to continue and modify Husserl’s ‘critical dismantling’.
not form part of the economy of exchange as that which is given has already
distanced itself from the purity of the gift and entered into the event of offering.
The space of the conception is apart from the space of the event but is
inextricably linked to, and is a result of it. Or in other terms, the intellectual
space is apart from the physical and negotiated spaces. In the Heideggarian sense
of which it is being argued and presented, the logic of sacrifice is the sacrifice of
the gift. In its relation to its localisation, it is connected to, but not part of the
offer (or economy of exchange). After configuring this logic, Benjamin returns to
the metaphysical sacrifice for the questioning of the essence of Being, “the
present differentiation of the present from itself that in denying the possibility of
relation and in eschewing any eventuality of working within abeyance must, as a
consequence sacrifice the present for the future” (Benjamin 1993:138) and sets
up the connection between sacrifice and the ritual.

*Ritual repetition*

The ritual assures the relation of distance of the gift (or sacrifice) from its event.
“Ritual involves a cyclical repetition in which the same is repeated; a repetition
within the Same. Within it the consequence of sacrifice is assured by the
continuity of its repetition. Within ritual that which is sacrificed can stand for the
whole” (Benjamin 1993:138). This repetition perpetuates the cycle of the gift,
and the sacrifice, and keeps both separate to their respective events. The
disruption of the gift here is its standing apart from its economy of exchange.
The action of the gift – giftness – becomes the sacrifice, as when the gift is given
away it is no longer a gift. Giftness becomes that which is given away.
Benjamin asks why such a sacrifice is necessary in order for the event to occur. This line of questioning also looks more closely at what it means to say ‘the same is repeated; a repetition within the Same’. The return is important here as it reminds us what the gift is for and why sacrifice occurred. It is more productive to apply these theoretical positions to a different example than Heidegger’s metaphysical one. This will allow us to see if it can be sustained outside the discipline in which it is argued. A metaphorical sacrifice to further the issue of the return. The Searchers begins with Ethan Edwards returning home to his family from a civil war, seemingly out of nowhere except the great expanse of the desert. The overt narrative of the film is Ethan Edwards’ mission to save his young niece, Debbie, from a group of Comanches. After many years, and despite all the hardships he has to endure, Ethan finally saves Debbie, although she is no longer a young girl. The closing scene of the film mirrors that of the opening. Ethan is outside the homestead against a backdrop of expansive space. However in this final scene, Ethan does not enter the house. His gift is the returning of Debbie safely to her family, but he himself cannot return to the site of what he has given. In other words, what Ethan has given cannot be returned to as, even though the event of the gift can be repeated, the gift that is given cannot. Ethan’s inability to enter the home is more than just the cultural sense of homelessness. In this body, framed paregonally and as part of the mise-en-scène, we witness the Lefebvrean idea of representational space. This is the gift’s negation of subjectivity. If the subject is defined as the giver, once the gift is presented this ‘giver’ subjectivity becomes sous rature and his/her existence is brought into
question. Ethan’s inability to enter the space of the family is tied to the negation of his being (sous rature) as giver.

Another example from the film is the gift of the gold locket. On a previous visit, we are told that Ethan gave a gold locket to Laurie. Debbie asks for the same gift. Ethan repeats the gift event, in that he gives her a gold locket, but that which is given away - the ‘gold locket’ - is a war medal resembling a gold locket. In order for ritual to repeat, each sacrifice, or gift, must be surrendered with each respective event. This is the consequence of the gift. In order to continue its cycle, what is given away must be sacrificed in total. For Ethan to return Debbie to the family, he must renounce his part within their family and return to his homelessness. This is the disruption of the gift’s distant relation to its event. Heidegger’s Destruktion is similar to disruption, “it resists repetition and thereby fails to think the possibility of renewal as a form of repetition” (Benjamin 1993:139). In order for this to take place – all these exchanges and repetitions of the gift – there must be this Lefebvrian disruption of spatial practice. Debbie’s return, the gold locket, and Ethan’s necessary absence are part of the disruption of the social space of giftness.

Lacan’s mustard or jam pot illustrates this theme of repetition within the same even further.

I once spoke to you about a mustard pot. If I draw three pots here, I simply demonstrate that you have a whole row of mustard or jam pots. They stand on shelves and are numerous enough to satisfy your
contemplative appetites. Note that it is insofar as the pots are identical that they are irreducible. Thus at this level we come up against the condition of individuation. And that’s as far as the problem usually goes, namely, that there is this one, which isn’t that one.

(Lacan 1992:198)

Lacan’s analogy of jam pots to the condition of individuation supports Benjamin’s ritual. The ritual works on the basis of a repetitive cycle. This is relevant to Lacan’s jam pot as the ritual only operates if the cyclical repetitiveness is of the same. As such each ritualistic act is a template for the next and so on. Each gift that is given away becomes the precedent for the next because of the condition of individuation. Just as each jam pot’s difference lies within its sameness, the same can be argued of the gift. Lacan illustrates the idea of same and difference within the psychoanalytic process; a relationship that we find within the cultural circulation of the formation and enacting of giftness.

5.2 Carnivalesque Spaces

Many aspects of the carnival contribute to a space that can be termed carnivalesque. Discussing the space of the gift through the carnivalesque helps to identify how the gift is disruptive in two ways. Following Benjamin’s model, where the gift remains separate but a seminal part of that which is given away, the gift functions as carnivalesque space in direct relation to what is given away. Delicatessen (Jeunet and Caro 1991), The Last Supper (Title 1995) and Fight Club (Fincher 1999) are three examples where gift functions as carnivalesque space. Secondly, the gift as carnivalesque space disrupts the social space in
which it presents itself as an event through a multiplicity of styles. Read in this way, the gift has the potential to be disruptive in any social space based on its dialogic processes and manifestations.

*Gift as carnivalesque space*

Looking at the gift as carnivalesque space suggests a fragmentation of space within an order that is unruly, rebellious and unstructured. Rather the aim of this tangent is to argue the space of the gift, functioning as carnivalesque, within a larger space that is dominated by hegemony. Notions of carnivalesque structure and order are aimed to reflect those present within a hegemonic order. Gift as carnivalesque space draws on specifications and definitions particular to the gift in order to outline the type of the social space in which it presents itself. These include how the gift comes to represent what is carnivalesque about its presentation within such a space. In *Delicatessen*, the Butcher’s gift answers the famine of his customers by masquerading human remains as meat. Here it is the condition of the gift that renders it as carnivalesque space and as such fragments not only the social space it presents itself in, but also within its own discourse of giving. To clarify this dual fragmentation, the gift is the answer to famine. There is no meat available, so to avoid hunger and famine, the butcher finds a solution (for his own ends albeit) to the town’s problem. Giftness in this sense is not carnivalesque, but the gift is. When related to what is given away, (the translation of gift to human remains as meat) what disrupts as carnivalesque is the impetus behind the giving away. The giftness in the gift event is not the butcher’s altruism in feeding his clients but rather selfishness, as this act merely sustains
his business despite moral and social boundaries. Thus gift as carnivalesque space works because the carnivalesque space disrupts in between the relation of the gift to its being given away.

Not all gifts are disruptive via this carnivalesque condition. Gift can also function as carnivalesque space through its capacity to fragment the social space in which it appears. This is different to the previous gift as carnivalesque space, as here it is the gift event operating within social space, rather than the in-between of gift and its being given away, that is the focus. To discuss the gift as carnivalesque space in these terms, we need to look at examples of social space where the practice of the gift is challenged by resistance or is ignored altogether. Disruption is caused here through the interruption of the practice of the gift. What is carnivalesque now is the discursive structure of the gift.

In Manon des sources an almost comical exchange of gifts is played out in the hills. In true carnivalesque style, a breakdown in the character’s narrative highlights the structure of communication between Manon and Ugolin. It is often misread and thus functions as a metaphor for communication in a general social order, and between a film and its spectator – although these are not the only limitations. A breakdown in communication between characters in a film, like Manon and Ugolin, is a common manipulation of cinematic narrative particularly in terms of romance. This resistance to a straightforward playing out of events is a good example of how carnivalesque space operates within and against social orders. For example, within the context of cinema, certain genres have a film language that contributes to the audience’s construction of meaning in the film.
Resistances such as Manon’s misinterpretation of Ugolin’s gifts keep the film audience engaged. So the resistances function as carnivalesque cohesion in that they help propel or further the monologic narrative of the film. In this sense little resistances, like twists or misinterpretations, in cinema become part of film language (the larger film order) and are in themselves dialogic in comparison to other stages of narrative. Carnivalesque space here then are these dialogic resistances within film narrative that provide a spectator with moments of multiple narrative, guessing what is going to happen next whilst still being able to follow the meta-narrative of the film.

Relating this to the gift, carnivalesque space conflict opposes epistemic ideals of gift exchange. Ugolin provides Manon with a series of gifts: birds, rabbits, etc. Manon meets a hunter and believes these gifts come from him, and subsequently enters into another discourse of exchange with him based on Ugolin’s. This is disruptive to the epistemic ideal of the gift, as part of the gift’s conditioning within socio-cultural discourse is its structure of giving and receiving. Keeping simply to the fundamental basis of what is given is returned, Ugolin’s gifts are not returned to him but to the hunter. The gift is carnivalesque space here as it fragments the socially inscribed practice of giving through challenging its usual presentations or representations. On another level, Ugolin’s gifts are symbols of his love for Manon, and consequently her lack of gift acknowledgement symbolises her lack of love for Ugolin and simultaneously her interest in the hunter. The result is a heterogeneity of gift practice. The gift as carnivalesque
space has the capacity to alter its operation in social space through challenging its traditional order. It can and does do this in a number of ways.

Dialogism and Polyphony

The carnivalesque space, in this condition, is furthered through a doubling effect through challenge and juxtaposition. “Bakhtin’s term dialogism as a semic complex thus implies the double language, and another logic…the world ‘dialogism’; the logic of distance and relationship between the different units of a sentence or narrative structure, indicating a becoming” (Kristeva 1984:71).

This is more than a doubling effect, however, as it offers a multiplicity of gifts and gift practices and is articulated through unpredictable events of the carnival, which appear as concurrently confinable and excessive.8 Including Bakhtin’s dialogism in a discussion of the gift furthers the idea of heterogeneity of gift practice. A dialogical approach helps to enforce the idea that an array of gifts exists in a number of varying socio-cultural orders, as repetitions and as differences. Its main influence is its conception of multiplicity. Bakhtin is specifically referring to the novel and in particular a linguistic tradition when he talks of dialogism, yet its inherent qualities aid this work on the gift if we read the gift as a discursive practice. The heterogeneity that dialogism offers is directed as language against monologism. This conflict sets up a resistance within language, specifically to deriving meaning within a text. Dialogism encourages a movement towards manifold meanings and interpretations, whereas

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8 An example of this is the Mardi Gras. While the costumes, dances, music and abundant shows of homosexual flesh are excessive within a heterosexual order, the order of the carnival’s progression, the number of floats and adherence to time structures (beginning and ending of the actual carnival) is deeply rooted in heteronormative structure. The Mardi Gras appears on a particular day, thus in its occasion it can function as an event that inverts the social order because the social order contains its excessiveness to this particular day.
monologism was focused on fixed meanings, “discourse lives, as it were, beyond itself in a living impulse toward the object” (Bakhtin 1981:292). Dialogism is important as it opens up an avenue of multiple structures that we can apply to the gift as carnivalesque space. This allows a presentation of multiple spaces and places where the gift can be carnivalesque not dependent on any one aspect.

Thus gift, as carnivalesque space is not restricted in any particular way to certain conditions of the carnival. This opens up space within the gift, its event and the space in which it is exacted instead of the role of the carnivalesque. This lack of specification is further disruption to the social space surrounding the gift, the gift-event and also the space of the gift as carnivalesque space. Bakhtin’s polyphony, we can argue, is both a consequence and necessary component of such carnivalesque space; and as part of the argument here is that the gift is polyphonic, the link to the carnivalesque is made even more pronounced.

1) Resistance

Carnivalesque rebellion lies in dialogism and inverts the social order through challenging hegemony (often within the social practices of space). A multiplicity of orders threatens the structure and stability of the hegemonic order and this is the rebellion. Sexuality is a good example of resistance within/to the carnivalesque. The greater the repression of sexuality is, the greater the potential for carnivalesque expression.9

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9 In a comparable, yet antithetical, fashion this is the point Foucault makes with the repressive hypothesis and the Victorian era. The repressed sexuality of the time didn’t lead to negation, but rather an explosion of discourses on and of sexuality, including the medical, psychoanalytic, and sociological. Such discourses are not in themselves carnivalesque, and yet they are performing a
Largely gift as carnivalesque space operates as a mechanism to further its gift event. Dialogic moments are a fundamental function of a sequential orders that, together with monologic content, achieve a comprehensible event - like a giving a gift. Moments of excess, resistance and rebellion help to characterise the gift as carnivalesque space through challenging logical order or narrative. Along these lines the gift carries with it the capacity to create its discursive structures and thwart them at the same time. A more interesting localising of the carnivalesque space is in margins of orders where elements of the carnival are played out but not through differences, but through a bordering or containing effect within a particular social order. At this point it is worth turning briefly to consider a discussion of liminalities to further this space.

5.3 Liminal Spaces

Carnivalesque space has been posited as a space that operates out of and through rebellion and resistance. However another sense of the carnivalesque is its marginalisation within wider social or cultural spaces. This relegation of space is liminal space. The carnivalesque that is found in liminal spaces is not overt, but rather subtle and intimated. However it is not the carnivalesque within liminal space that is the focus here but instead, the operation and significance of the liminal zone. This is not intended to negate any presence of the carnivalesque within such a space, as for the most part it is a fundamental aspect of it. Liminal space has other functions other than representing, containing and signifying the remarkably similar function. See Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction Volume 1* (1979).
carnivalesque, and these are to be the main concerns here. As an alternative to
discussing the carnivalesque in liminal spaces and looking at liminal spaces as
carnivalesque, we can borrow determining characteristics of both to further ideas
and conceptions on how liminal space operates and how it operates in relation to
other spaces. Ambiguity, the double, inversions and traversing of social orders
are these points that we can adapt and elaborate on. Freud’s work on repression
and the uncanny can be read as interesting theories of liminal spaces because
they are concurrently ambiguous, double and transverse. It is important to clarify
that liminal space in these contexts is not a mere reflection of opposites but rather
an integration of the other as a crucial point in its own construction. Giftness
operates in a liminal space because it is so unstable. Fixing a meaning to giftness
is an impossibility, and because of this the gift itself challenges meaning. The
liminal space of the gift is perhaps best illustrated by the tension of gift and debt.
The theorising of the gift (certainly from Mauss onwards) ascribes a liminality to
it, even when the practice of gift giving is heavily encoded in cultural practice.
The liminality of the gift is necessary because it is a vital part of the way in
which it resists meaning.

5.4 Utopic Spaces
Foucault’s utopias are a form of liminal space when compared to ‘real’ spaces such as Lefebvre’s social space.¹⁰ One point of departure for utopic space is to elaborate how it embodies the potential to disrupt. As utopia, its fundamental capacity to disrupt exists in its opposition to real space, yet to keep to this definition is to reduce the function of utopic space and to limit its activity. The gift is set apart from its gift event whilst remaining an important driving force, and utopic space works in a similar way using its in-between status to create its own place. It is in between as it represents a fantastic space within real space, seemingly offering the opportunity to enter it, but simultaneously maintaining its ambiguity. Utopic space exists in between these sites of real space through a sequence of linkages that he terms emplacements. Whilst utopic space is concurrently located within and forms part of social space, it never exists wholly within it.

Emplacements

For Foucault we are in an age of space. Space exists as a set of relations via juxtapositions, oppositions and connections. Foucault’s working through of space is not meant to deny the link of time to space but rather he establishes a history of space to order or historicise its relation and connection with time. To briefly engage with this, Foucault primitively outlines a history of space (and thus a history of time) from Middle Ages to present day via Galileo. “to retrace very crudely this history of space, that in the Middle Ages there was a hierarchized ensemble of places ... It was this whole hierarchy, this opposition, this

¹⁰ Derrida’s supplement has a certain resonance here in that through the chain of endless supplementarity, we can see a connection of spaces that stem from liminality rather than any sense of definite origin.
interconnection of places that constituted what be called … a space of localisation” (Foucault 1998:176). This sketching out of how space has been regarded throughout history is an attempt to order it and highlight how each age of space reflects the order it has been categorised within. The space of localisation reflects an order of hierarchy and appropriation through arrangement. Space was ordered through a succession of places. This thinking and defining of space was limited in that space could only be created or conceived based on the space preceding it. Localisation needed a concrete place of space to continue its hierarchy.

Galileo¹¹ becomes Foucault’s example of how the next age of space was created. A sequential progression of space was replaced with a delimitation of space. This age of ‘extension’ kept the idea of order within space but applied it to the idea that spaces were not solely local, “the real scandal of Galileo’s work was not so much in having discovered, or rather rediscovered, that the earth revolves around the sun, but in having constituted a space that was infinite, and infinitely open” (Foucault 2000:176).¹² For Foucault, the next age in space exists now and is termed the age of emplacement. As with the previous epochs of space, order is a central aspect but it is how order is applied that changes the fundamental nature

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¹¹ It is no accident or surprise that Galileo marks the change in how the ensuing age of space is conceived for Foucault. Galileo resisted conformity to the widely enforced institution of Aristotelian thought and rejected his geocentric theory of the Earth in perfect orbits. Instead, Galileo agreed with Nicholas Copernicus’s heliocentric theories, and in 1610 published The Starry Messenger wherein he noticed that Venus had phases and seemed to change in size suggesting that it moved around the Sun and not the Earth. Foucault’s point in using Galileo is to demarcate a break from progressive conceptualising of space via localisation, evidenced in Aristotle’s geocentric theory. Instead of relating to space from the Earth’s perspective, Galileo’s work created room for a thinking of space outside of Earth. Consequently, as Foucault argues, Galileo’s Starry Messenger does not simply prove or assert the notion that the Earth moves around the Sun but that the Solar System revolves around the Sun. The importance of this Galilean theory is that perceptions of space were able to expand beyond forms of geocentric localisation.

¹² Socrates exemplifies this threat of infinite space in his method of questioning and thinking, refusing to accept a finite and concrete answer.
of space. The order within emplacement comes from its relativity between spaces, “Emplacement is defined by the relations of proximity between points or elements” (Foucault 1998:176). Foucault has retained aspects of delimitation and order within his outlining of a new age of space but he has also gone a step further and looked at the space that exists in between each place both as a secular unit and also as a seminal part of the space it connects with and relates to.

Foucault goes outside of space to define what he means by emplacement as a relation of proximity. By moving outside of space in order to discuss it, Foucault posits emplacement, and subsequently space, as a heterogeneous experience. Space is not discussed and constructed via an outlining of its definitive constituents such as what is this space made up of, or what fills this or that space; rather space is arranged and argued through an investigation of the relations that link it to other spaces. The heterogeneity of space is inextricably linked to the theory of heterogeneity of space. In creating and analysing this in-between linking of emplacements, heterogeneity infuses all aspects of space and a spatial argument. Emplacement develops not as a particular linking system or a linear means of connection between one space and another but rather it relates space as it moves. In other words, emplacement is an appropriation of the movement of space. In this manner, the gift-event ‘emplaces’ the gift. In so far as the gift remains distant but part of the gift event, the giving process requires a form of appropriation specific to its context. Emplacement allows room for heterogeneity in the gift and also within in the event of giving. No gifts are the same, and thus no appropriation of gift events can be identical. This theory and contextualisation of emplacement offers a discursive and spatial locality to each gift event as it
arises. Appropriation of the gift-event in this sense is the effect of relativity (of both the gift and the subject) to the space of the process of giving. Emplacement is not a tangible or concrete grasping of a specific space or place. As space moves from one place to another, emplacement is the formation of their relativity. Arguably the process of emplacement aids the hermeneutics of the gift and its event in each specific circumstance.

This line would seem to be arguing that the gift event has changed in contemporary times, as it has become part of the emplacement process. This argument can be sustained on at least two levels. Firstly, the gift event has indeed changed, as it always must do. The processes of giftness are fluid, altering across time, cultures and even the individual event. Such fluidity, as noted elsewhere here, is an essential part of the gift. Indeed, the gift can often be defined by its fluidity and alternatives as much as its actual manifestations. The emplacement of the gift is part of its contemporisation/contemporality. Emplacement is part of the status of the gift now because this is how space and relations have come to be ordered (in the Foucauldian post modern era). The second aspect that allows us to read the gift and emplacement (and thus produce a different type of giftness) is the interplay of theory itself and the gift event. This is the intervention of theory on the gift. In other words this is the idea that the theorising that has taken place (since Mauss, at least) on the gift has altered its cultural position. It is argued here that the calibre and tenor of this theorising is part of the emplacement of the gift. Theorising the gift has transformed what the gift is, its has transferred its giftness.
Foucault uses the example of a train, “a train is an extraordinary bundle of relations, since it’s something through which one passes; it is also something through which one can pass from one point to another, and then it is something that passes by” (Foucault 2000:178) to exemplify how an emplacement may be described as a particular place or a placing of space, but this is not his only example. His other examples of emplacement are also spaces wound up of intricate socio-cultural relations, like the beach, café, cinema but there are others that could easily be included like the work place, and so too the factions within each of these places. If space is linked by emplacement then what links up and ties space together exists simultaneously inside and outside of space. This is the function of emplacement and as such moves with space. Similarly, relativity of the gift to its gift-event must reside both within and outside of the gift-giving process. As its emplacement is derived from its relativity to space, each gift-giving process is influenced by its ‘outside’. Where the giving takes place determines the space of the gift within a constant ideal of movement. Emplacing the gift therefore, ensures its cyclical characteristic and its possibility of repetition. The movement of emplacement is not one of motion but of elasticity. Of all the emplacements that exist, the two that Foucault focuses on are those that “suspend, neutralize, or reverse the set or relations that are designated, reflected, or represented by them. Those spaces that are linked with all the others, and yet at variance somehow with all the other emplacements, are of two great types” (Foucault 2000:178).

_Utopias_
These two great types of emplacements are utopias and realised utopias – heterotopias. These two categories of space further Foucault’s conception of emplacement as an elastic medium as by revealing more about the spaces they separate and link, the actual space of utopia is opened up for investigation, “Utopias are emplacements having no real place” (Foucault 2000:178). Utopias are emplacements that relate spaces within the proximity of real social space but are not real. A good example of this is found in the cinema. Here utopic space reflects social space in perfection or in inversion but only exists in temporal celluloid. For as long as a film runs, there is a utopia that can be sustained and enjoyed as one type of emplacement. There are other examples where such utopias exist momentarily, in cinema posters or in brief showings of previews, and even arguably in appearances of celebrities in magazines, premiers, video clips – any virtual image or image in general. These moments function as synecdochic utopias, quickly offering an indication of a sustainable utopia or fantastic space included within but existing outside any real social space. Utopic emplacement relates the proximity of fantasy to reality – social space as it could be but isn’t.

The gift is utopia as it is never given away. The gift event is the emplacing of the gift but once emplaced, the utopia of the gift has been lost as now, as gift-event, an unreal space has been placed. Cinematic representations of love work in this way. The gift of love is manifested via a gift event of either a kiss – an act of love undertaken to represent the emotion of love one has for another, or via a material gift event – a small token, again given to convey the idea of love one has for its object of affection. Some signifiers of love are rated higher than others
in varying mediums, but none is greater than the kiss. Love itself is never given, only through a series of events and acts is its giftness conveyed and understood. Once a utopia has entered into the Symbolic Order it must be articulated through it. As a result, love is the most perfect utopia and the gift is the signifier above all others in this utopia. Although it is sought in vain, it is never ‘placed’ or obtained. It is both within and yet outside of itself. This occupation of space as simultaneously inclusive and exclusive brings us to heterotopias. Foucault uses the mirror to connect utopic and heterotopic space to each other and to social space respectively.

The mirror is a good example for both types of emplacement as it functions both as utopic and heterotopic space. As utopic space, the mirror is a synecdoche, reflecting a space that relates to social space but does not reside within it. For Foucault, the mirror typifies the in between nature of utopic space as it exists as a “mixed, intermediate experience” (Foucault 2000:179). Like the poster advertising the latest movie, the mirror is a reflection of that which exist not completely within reality. As Foucault argues, the mirror is utopia as it reflects a space that exists and does not exist; which is the status of giftness that has been being developed throughout this thesis. Its utopia is the projection of desire of the ‘viewer’. The projection of desire is directed towards the mirror but only ever rests on it.

*Lacan’s inverted bouquet*
This schema (figure 5.1) is Lacan’s model aimed at an integration of the Imaginary, Symbolic and the Real. This is relevant to a Foucauldian discussion concerning the mirror as the schema of the inverted bouquet is Lacan’s attempt to progress with his notion of the inter and intra relationships of the subject of the image. For Lacan, in the act of looking, “subjectivity is implicated at every moment” (Lacan 1988:77). The operation of the gaze is more than an act of looking, rather it is about the formation of subjectivity and as such, the relationship between the gaze and its scopic object is continuously fluid. The gaze locates the subject in its act of looking and this is why the mirror can work at a utopic space. What the subject sees in the mirror is not a true reflection of the self but a projection of the self, so what is seen in the mirror is a disruption to true reflection and representation but utopia in space and reflection. What is viewed on the plane mirror – the flowers in the vase – is the disruption of the mirror. The vase of flowers is both utopia and disruption as what is seen is not really there. What allows this to happen is the gaze of the subject – it allows the connection of the reflection of reality (real space) and the reflection of fantasy (utopia). The subject’s image in the mirror as utopia is similarly viewed. What is seen is not a reflection of real space – the true representation of the subject, instead the subject sees a utopic image of their self, and the projection of what they would like to look like becomes infused with what they see. Their gaze disrupts the image in the mirror and forces it into a utopia. This is a version of the ideal-ego - a false utopia at one level, as it draws on a version of the ego within the pre-Symbolic. This is why Lacan’s schema is so heavily invested with a self-reflexive subject caught between the demands of the Symbolic and his/her own demands and desires.
Looking at another emplacement of the mirror, the heterotopia, offers more. The heterotopia exists as:

real places, actual places, places that are designed into the very institution of society, which are sorts of actually realized utopias in which the real emplacements … are, at the same time, represented, contested, and reversed, sorts of places that are outside all places, although they are actually localizable

(Foucault 2000:178)

As far as the mirror is a possible utopia, it is also a possible heterotopia in the sense that it possesses tangibility. When Foucault discusses the mirror as a heterotopia, its tangibility relates specifically to the space of the mirror to the space of the subject rather than the concrete object ‘mirror’ – although this is included in the terms of relations of proximity. The heterotopic mirror highlights the age of emplacement because of its relative function. Foucault argues that by looking into the mirror, the heterotopic function allows the subject’s reflection to appear as a reality, a connection of fantastic (mirrored) space to real (social) space. There is a sense of depth to Foucault’s distinction between utopias and its sub-category of heterotopias, as though heterotopias lie on top of utopias and afford the potential of a transition from real social space to utopia via a heterotopic experience. Arguably each heterotopic principle outlined by Foucault is posited as a gateway to a utopic space in this manner, heterotopias act as a disruption towards the possibility of utopic experience.
Foucault argues that places of no space are other spaces - spaces that have always been used but simply not looked at - spaces within spaces. His argument of other spaces comes through juxtaposition. Space and no space; place and no place. Yet it is not a direct establishment of polarities that he sets up in order to argue different spaces, rather it is the acknowledgement of pre-conceived binaries which creates the "ensemble of relations that makes them appear as juxtaposed, set off against one another, implicated by each other - that makes them appear, in short, as a sort of configuration" (Foucault 1998:237). What is fundamental to Foucault's argument of space is interested in configuring how occupation that is space/of space is created, how it comes about, what signifies spaceness. Space becomes objectified as it is viewed as a construction. Space becomes an 'it' that works in and out of places that are attributed qualities of space and clutter alternatively. From the perspective of giftness, Foucault’s observation alerts us to the infiltration of giftness in social space. The give-take relationship is part of the interaction with social space whether it is within an interpersonal or intrapersonal frame; or whether it rests in potentia. Fundamental to this Foucauldian sense of space is how giftness is disseminated. Through this age of space giftness can be found within the connection of spaces. Its emplacement is relative, particularly in terms of relations be they of power, sexuality, morality, ethics, and so on.

Relations among sites

"we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another" (Foucault 1998:239).
Foucault argues that different sites allow spaces to be created and abolished, both temporarily and permanently. He identifies conceptual sites that embody 'real' spaces, "sites of transportation ... sites of temporary relaxation..." (Foucault 1998:239), but it is not these relations among these sites that he is primarily concerned with as they reflect each other with similar definitive sets of relations. What Foucault is ultimately concerned with is the sites which "have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect" (Foucault 1998:239).

The creation of space, temporary or otherwise, occurs through the relationship with different sites and the set of relations that define them – an issue central to the understanding of the gift as a processional event. For example, a space that locates giftiness is defined by a set of signifiers that typify what it is to give and how one gives a gift – time and place (such as occasion) – generous nature, other signifiers of paper, ribbon, cards, and so on. These signifiers come to form a set of relations that separate this site (of giving) from others, such as a site of inheritance, gratuity, or donation. These sites however do nothing other than distinguish different spaces, reflecting through separation and difference. While these reflective sites acknowledge and define certain spaces and occupiers of space, they are only concerned with the initial paradigm of space. The inversions of space - the oppositional structures are taken for granted as just the other space, as though their function as binary is to merely reflect. As Foucault observes:
These are oppositions that we regard as simple givens: for example between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work.

(Foucault 1998:238)

This oppositional element within relative sites functions on a higher level. It reflects through difference and deferral that which it is not to assert that which it is, but more fundamental to that is its make-up of the other. According to Foucault, this perverting of relations between sites so that there is an inversion is dependant on his separation of the two categories of utopias. The first is utopias. "Utopias are sites with no real place" (Foucault 1998:239). The other being, heterotopias - Foucault's real places "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted". Ironically, because of the imbedded structure of opposites within cultural dynamics, these two categories are inevitably\(^\text{13}\) placed as a binarism, which works and doesn't concurrently.

Taking the categories as they are at this moment - simply categories - so too are their sites defined through deferral and difference. Utopias are utopias because they are not heterotopias and heterotopias are heterotopias because they are not utopias. What this means is that within each of their respective sites, there is a space that possesses qualities of its other in order to be distinctive from it. That

\[^{13}\text{Admittedly there are other explanatory schemes. For example, polarities in a continuum, rhizomic relations, dynamic systems, relations and so on.}\]
is, within utopia there are heterotopic qualities and within heterotopias there are utopic qualities. This rests solely in the conceptual space of words at this moment - at the site of language begins the inverting of the set of relations that they are supposed to designate.

*Effectively enacted utopias*

Sites begin to slip and spaces occupy multiple sites simultaneously. Taking this argument to the concept of the gift, immediately we have an opposite - gift and debt. This fits well into Foucault's argument of utopias and heterotopias as the gift is not a tangible space, rather it is a site that momentarily attracts space for giving, like the pre-determined Christmas morning of gift exchange. This presents us with the potential idea that the gift’s utopia contains the heterotopia of debt. This is not inversion, but much more along the lines of the Lacanian inverted bouquet. Just as Lacan develops the idea of ‘planes’ of subjectivity within the schema (his ongoing investigation of interval intrasubjectivity formulated through the self reflexive moment of the mirror – in particular the Imaginary and its relationship to the Real); so the relationship of utopia and heterotopia is possible only because they exist on distinct yet inseparable ‘planes’. The utopic gift and heterotopic debt (and of course it is entirely possible to have the heterotopic gift and utopic debt) presents a different approach to the debate typified in the ‘exchange’ between Derrida and Cixous, namely is the gift possible without a sense of debt? The utopic gift, to follow Foucault, is certainly not debtless. Rather the debt exists on another place. This is the subject – virtual subject of Lacan’s inversion played out in terms of giftness. That is, the gift-as-subject/utopic and the virtual gift-as-subject/heterotopic debt. Just as in the
inverted bouquet to different orders of existence are transposed to form an illusion of unity,

the gift in the space of emplacement is unified with its debts. What is presented is the illusion of gift/debt as unified, but this is only the case through the trick of the mirrors. Gift and debt may well operate in a variety of relations, but their fusion is not one of simplicity. Gift and debt (utopia and heterotopia) need to be understood as discreet and bonded elements in this space of emplacement.

The gift, and subsequently the debt, “[can be interpreted as] sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society ... these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces” (Foucault 1998:239). While the gift, figured in at a conceptual level at this moment, occupies utopic spaces, its materialisation operates within heterotopias. The times for giving, the codes under which one gives (and receives) have no real places. Even down to the choosing of the gift - we choose what we think the receiver would like to have - an ultimately biased choice based on our own desire to receive a similar gift or an investment of how we ‘understand’ their subjectivity. Thus the reception of our chosen gift rests in a utopia. We think that the gift (whatever it may be) will be welcomed and ecstatically received because we like it.14 This materialising of the gift from conceptual to realised, signifies a movement between utopia and heterotopia.

14 Further to this - we send a gift in order to receive its likeness. A mirror of its event or act - a big gift incurs a big debt and vice versa.
A fundamental part of the utopia of the gift and gift giving is its reception. Foucault's heterotopias differ from utopias in that they are "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted" (Foucault 1998: 239). This is an aspect of post-structuralist thought, in that there is no society, only a multiplicity of societies - fragments as it were that collate in order to function alongside of each other.

Foucault's argument is much for the individual, in that we all have heterotopias - our individual effectively enacted utopias are the spaces in which we live, in the sites that we occupy. Whilst there are larger socio-cultural laws and systems that we all recognise, our interpretation of these laws and system differ due to these individual enacted utopias. The gift requires this status of enacted utopia precisely to exist, for this is the enacting of giftness that reveals its impossibility. Heterotopias are these differences within spaces. They are a collection of spaces that make up a heterotopia. Thus utopias and heterotopias form a web of spaces and sites through which cultural codification and systems are played. Another example of these 'real' sites (heterotopias) is the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. For one night of the year, Sydney, Australia performs a freedom for gay and lesbian expression - that everyone is equal regardless of sexual choice and lifestyle - that being homosexual is acknowledged and accepted and that everyone has a big party. What is ignored for this time is that Liverpool Street, Oxford Street, Flinders Street and Moore Park\(^\text{15}\) are not places where gays and lesbians are celebrated every day of the year, indeed not even for one whole day.

\(^{15}\) This is the course of the parade from start to finish - although this is the route taken by the parade entrants; the site of Mardi Gras has a space that reaches much further on the night through television exposure and other forms of media.
This parade exhibits the heterotopia of gay and lesbian liberation because for a few hours a site is created for their assertion of homosexual space. The Mardi gras initially captures a homogenous space like a birthday and Christmas, whereas the everyday lifestyle for gays and lesbians is one of heterogeneous sites and spaces.

As with all space, the space of the Mardi gras is polysemic. The Mardi gras Parade begins as a homogenous space as all that come to watch, or who watch on television are celebrating the celebration. However, the subject of celebration enjoys fragmentation. As the concept of Mardi gras is to celebrate difference and its expression, varying sites begin to attract heterogeneity. Within the parade there are lesbians, dykes on bikes, bisexuals, gay pride, gay and lesbians in the armed forces - in short many different groups and factions that even though they come under one parade (Mardi Gras) and have one agenda (to be celebrated), their space is different from each other despite the fact that they walk in front and behind each other. Consecutive numbers marks their places and there is a pause after each section. *They are all effecting their enacted utopias within a temporary utopia.* In doing so these enacted utopias are moments of giftness that can operate simultaneously as a part of the Symbolic, and a disruption of it (of course this is the frame device of the carnivalesque). The gift is to the self as well as a disruptive gift to the social order and, somewhat perversely, a hegemonic gift from the dominant social order to the marginalised.\(^\text{16}\) Part of the complication with such an example is the ideological revisionism of a heteronormative social

\(^{16}\) Chapter three of the thesis, which examines certain aspects of Foucault’s theory of the body, takes up the issue of the spectacle of the scaffold in terms of the gift of Law. This is similar to what takes place in the carnivalesque and the hegemonic gift of the State.
order offering the gift of a space for the carnivalesque. This is a gift that is very carefully controlled.

Foucault argues that between the sites of utopia and heterotopia, "there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror" (Foucault 1998:239). This is the overlap between each site of space, "a utopia, since it is a placeless place." Parades like the Mardi gras, birthdays - where you get to have your own way, wishes, and get presents for it; and Christmases - where everyone gets presents, lots of food and excess. It is the excess of all of these occasions, which effects an overlap - a temporary utopia within individually enacted utopias. I choose these occasions as nothing features more predominately on any of these dates than the gift, its giving, and its reception. The concept of virtual space is exemplified by an analogy of the mirror by Foucault. This 'mirror' space, which exists between the two sites of utopic and heterotopic space, is the self-reflexive aspect of all sites and spaces. Amongst utopias and effectively, enacted utopias, there is the overlap, the temporary site of the 'mirror' wherein both spaces engage in the same site. It is at this point where we get the chance to virtually act out our utopias. When we give a gift, is the joy really in the giving - and what joy is this? Certainly it is not solely the joy of making someone happy - despite all immediate protests that it is- but rather our own joy superimposed onto the receiver of our gift. Within this site of exchange/gift-giving, there is potential for a myriad "mixed, joint experience" between the two sites of space. The utopia of the perfect gift; the heterotopias of the giver and the receiver. They seem to keep separate sites of space, but the site of exchange is the ultimate site that inverts and contradicts its spaces.
In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. (Foucault 1998:240)

The gift-giver sees him/her self where he/she is not. The giver gives a gift that she/he would have liked to receive him/herself. The exchange takes place in this 'unreal, virtual space' where giver and receiver simultaneously engage and switch between their respective sites. *They mirror each other.* The giver and receiver, after the initial material exchange, enter into a heterogeneity of exchange. "The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault 1998:241). The indebtedness begins the required mirroring of duties where the giver no longer exists in that capacity but now becomes the awaiting receiver. It is through the heterotopia of gift giving that the giver reaches their utopia of receiving - they can only be placed in the space of receiving once they have given their gift. The site of exchange, the heterotopia of the gift "exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror, I discover my absence from the place where I am, since I see myself over there" (Foucault 1998:240).

Spaces identify sites through contextualisation. A site for space becomes enacted through the identification of the range of possible meanings. There are no
identical sites. Experiences of sites and spaces therein are never the same on account of their inherent heterogeneity. Nonetheless the concept of a utopia embodies a site that is identical because of its purpose. Conceptually parallel sites exist, and without definition heterotopias become indistinguishable. Spaces exist in temporary states because of a site's inability to be concretely, uniformly contextualised. Sites have temporary contexts in order for spaces to identify themselves and other spaces. Through this relationship between sites and space, there exists inevitable overlapping - the unreal, virtual space. But its reality of unrealness is what creates the contesting of the set of relations among sites with its spaces.
6. Pleasure and play: Object, Transition, Subject, & Gift

6.1 On Pleasure

6.2 Communication and play: Bateson

6.3 Abstraction

6.4 The Frame

6.5 Paradox and Repetition

This section concentrates on the relationships, associations and connections between pleasure, play and the gift as circumstances of exchange with respect to the subject, its positioning and formation of subjectivity. The inter-subjective paradigm that can be called the gift revolves around the fundamental element of the subject, more specifically, where the subject creates, invests in, or forms certain typologies of subjectivity. The aim in bringing psychoanalysis to the gift is to use such situations like Freud’s *fort/da*, Winnicott’s theory of illusion, and Bateson’s nip\(^1\) to investigate the relationships between the subject, and the formation of subjectivity in terms of giftness using pleasure and play as structures or circumstances that contribute to gift exchange. In doing so the psychoanalytic imperative of the gift is foregrounded. That is, not only does psychoanalysis provide an analytic structure for examining the gift, but also giftness is fundamental to psychoanalysis, its operation and theoretical functioning. To illustrate the structures involved within these typologies of exchange, the image (and its place in visual culture) provides ample ground for cultural expression of the connection between gift and pleasure, and gift and play. The focus here is how pleasure and play operate in terms of the subject as well as the subject and their involvement with the gift. Teaming pleasure with

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\(^1\) It is the application of this example that is psychoanalytical, not the example in itself.
play carries the sense that they are connected in some manner, or that one is a result or constituent of the other, and in this regard they are – much like the irreducible duality of gift and debt. Keeping these two concepts symbiotic is to emphasise the sense and circumstance of exchange and paradox that pleasure and play supply.

If play is to be read as a circumstance of, or contributing factor towards gift exchange, then pleasure must be seen to operate as a supporting and fundamental element in the creativity of play. Creativity in this sense is taken from a Winnicottian perspective, and therefore does not refer to those acts of artistic endeavour or expression (although Winnicott himself does acknowledge that acts of creativity and a subject who lives creatively does produce culturally conceivable ‘creations’)\(^2\), rather creativity here is directly connected to Winnicott’s notion of the subject’s “whole attitude to external reality” (Winnicott 1999:65). In connection with pleasure and play, these expressions of creativity are to be read only as necessary aspects, or circumstances toward gift exchange that ultimately do not form the act of giving but rather are important sustainable acts within themselves. There is no sense of a forward chain or cumulative sequence between the structures of pleasure and play. By this it is meant that pleasure does not produce play and is not the satisfying goal of play, and similarly, play does not solely produce pleasure. Together they equal acts of

\(^2\) “In order to look into the theory that analysts use in their work to see where creativeness has a place it is necessary, as I have already stated, to separate the idea of creation from works of art. It is true that a creation can be a picture or a house or a garden or a costume or a hairstyle or a symphony or a sculpture; anything from a meal cooked at home. It would perhaps be better to say that these things could be creations” (Winnicott 1999:67). This perspective that Winnicott establishes is interesting for the gift and creativity in terms of the image as it forces one to view the subject’s involvement with any visual representation on the basis of production – especially in terms of the formation of subjectivity.
creativity - both sites of pleasure and unpleasure existing (and herein is their importance) as acts of creativity. It is necessary to clarify the position and context of pleasure with respect to play and the gift, especially before we move on a discussion of the subject. We can hear the echo of the pleasures and unpleasures associated with gift giving in Emerson’s definition of the gift and their influence on the subjectivity of the giver, “[t]hey eat your service like apples, and leave you out. But love them, and they feel you, and delight in you all the time” (Emerson in Schrift 1997:27).

Pleasure, in all its manifestations, cannot be read simply as constructions of play or of the gift, but instead as constructions that seek to create continuous forms of pleasure. It is through play, and the gift that is play, that pleasure is able to achieve this in the creativity of the subject. Pleasure becomes a primary tool in the communication of the gift, particularly through the exchange in and of play and its interpretation. Adopting these considerations of pleasure and play brings us to the psychoanalytic theories of Winnicott and Freud, and the social anthropology of Bateson - all of whom consider play and pleasure in different, but equally significant and creative ways.

6.1 On Pleasure

Freud’s concept of the ‘pleasure principle’ can be read in terms of a typology of pleasure to the present economy of the gift. Pleasure, in this sense, exists prior to the gift. Ultimately it is the circumstance of exchange and the situation that allows transition (between gift and debt; giver and receiver; illusion and disillusion) that is the main concern. In this section, the gift is posited as a
reflection of the construction of playing, illustrating a capacity for exchange and

economy within the conceptions of pleasure and play. The creation of debt - the
return of the gift - is pleasure configured through transition and draws on
conditions of the paradox found embedded with the processes of communication
present in a gift-giving economy. The issue of paradox is dealt with in particular
depth later in the section, with specific regard to Freud, Bateson, Wilden, and
Winnicott through the structure of play, as it is arguably the most fundamental
aspect found in the form of exchanges that present themselves here.

Freud's definition of pleasure is primarily constituted in terms of unpleasure.
This is because, for Freud, pleasure is produced through the avoidance of
unpleasure - or at least defined by what is unpleasurable. The reality principle
manages pleasure through controlling it and allowing its expression only in small
amounts. The pleasure principle is dangerous, having no meter to guide itself,
just a desire to fulfil its aims. The reality principle does not seek to strike out
pleasure but attempts to keep it restricted to measurable doses. The pleasure
principle operates on stability and it holds no dominance within the mental
process, "The pleasure principle follows from the principle of constancy" (Freud
1987:277). Freud does concede however, "that there exists in the mind a strong
tendency towards the pleasure principle, but that that tendency is opposed by
certain other forces or circumstances" (Freud 1987:278). This opposition is the
reason why such an ideal of balance is central to the success of the pleasure and
reality principles, and this balancing is particularly relevant to the economics and
dynamics of the gift:
Under the influence of the ego's instincts of self-preservation, the 
pleasure principle is replaced by the reality principle. The latter principle 
does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it 
nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of 
satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities in gaining 
satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the 
indirect road to pleasure

(Freud 1987:278)

Freud further explains his conception of the pleasure principle in a discussion of 
"innate instinctual impulses" (Freud 1987:279). In order to fully configure his 
notion of pleasure, Freud carefully outlines resistances to formations of pleasure 
and pleasure itself. These 'innate instinctual impulses' work compulsively 
towards their aims in the hope of gaining satisfaction - pleasure. However, 
according to Freud, not all impulses achieve their aims and as such, these 
residual part impulses are repressed and forbidden direct satisfactions. In doing 
so, what is left is a foundation for repetition, as these 'innate instinctual impulses' 
keep attempting to gain satisfaction via any means possible. If these repressions 
manage to somehow subversively achieve the satisfaction/pleasure they aim for, 
it is perceived as unpleasure by the ego as is blocks what Freud refers to as "fresh 
pleasure" (Freud 1987:279) from being gained. This particular emphasis on the 
manifestation of unpleasure is explicated by Freud in order to make the point that 
"most of the unpleasure that we experience is perceptual unpleasure" (Freud 
1987:280). In creating such a contextual basis for the pleasure and reality 
principles, Freud's case example of fort/da is able to further the notion of
pleasure and unpleasure based on subjective perceptions of repetitive instances, and help to determine the relationship of pleasure and play as circumstances for gift exchange, as well as introduce the notion of paradox and its role and relevance.

Fort/Da – Pleasure and play

Admittedly, fort/da – one of the cornerstones of the Freudian theory of pleasure - has been widely discussed and theorised almost to the extent that to include it here is going over old ground. However, to exclude some discussion on fort/da is to ignore the foundation for the construction of pleasure, particularly within psychoanalytic theory. A treatment of fort/da has been included here as it represents the most primitive level of the gift as a communicative event. It illustrates how a simple relationship and construction such as a child’s game (that exemplifies Freud’s concept of pleasure) is a relationship and communication with the self through gift as play in and through pleasure. The following section on fort/da is used with this specific intention of highlighting the issues of pleasure and play in terms of the gift, communication and exchange.

In ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’, Freud sets out in his example of fort/da play as "a great cultural achievement" (Freud 1987:285) to further his concept of pleasure. Here pleasure functions as the creative force behind play and its communication, and it is around this notion of play that one is able to develop the gift within the psychoanalytic terming of pleasure. In this context, 'play' operates as the creative social order for the subject that releases certain manifestations of pleasure. In System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange
Anthony Wilden comments on Gregory Bateson's example of the nip and the bite in animal play, citing that his example of a nip is used to connote how a shift in signification occurs in an order of play. In this situation, both the reader (nipped) and sender (nipper) are vital to the message (nip) being successfully delivered, "play, could only occur if the particular organisms were capable of some degree of metacommunication, i.e., of exchanging signals which would carry the message 'this is play'" (Bateson 1978:152). The deliverable success of the nip is dependent on a 'correct' reading and interpretation of the message as being a nip instead of a bite.

Within Bateson’s example both parties must acknowledge each other through a sense of play, the falsification of the signifiers via specific code systems, so that the sense of pleasure can operate. In Freud's example of his grandson's game (fort/da), it is the child who is (through creating the game and its rules, and more importantly the repetition of the game) the party who acknowledges the sense of play and in so doing, establishes a system of communication. By creating a strict set of rules within a controlled manifestation of presence and absence, the child creates a falsification of signifiers, where the disappearance of the spool on a string is equated with absence (fort) and its re-turn (da) is equated with presence. The child's control of play (specifically the exchange between the absence and presence within this example of play) finds pleasure in the repetition. This repetition of play and pleasure forms the communicative event that can be read as a circumstance for, or element within gift exchange. The gift is the child’s discovery in that is not only the game that has been created that is pleasurable,  

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3 To contextualise this reference, Bateson is referring to his observation of monkeys playing at a zoo. The focal point of his argument is the meaning derived from signification denoting that which appears as their opposite.
but also the pattern that is established by repeating it. In this version of the gift we also see the foregrounding of power. The spool in *fort/da* is a signifier to be controlled, for the subject to assert itself as a powerful entity. This controlling subject allows it, in turn, to be the dispenser of gifts; hence this is the site of egocentric giftness that can only be manifested through a type of power. Once this ego driven subject has a sense of control – of the spool and the nip – the he/she allows the signifier a sense of giftness. That is, ‘I allow this to be a gift, and I give it to you (the mother, the nipped, and even the self)’. This pleasure is not a conscious or secondary process of thinking for the child, rather it is a result from the ‘innate instinctual impulses’ of which Freud argued. The child, through their game, seeks to master their own position in terms of inner and external realities\(^4\) and works towards this through repeating the play. The paradox here is found within such repetitive pattern. The more the child plays the game, the more the pleasure is repeated.\(^5\) However to escape Freud’s dialectic of absence and presence, it is better to equate *fort* with deferred presence, because in terms of material and tangible signifiers, it is the spool that denotes both the *fort* and the *da* of the *fort/da*. Its difference effected only through alternating systems of signification.

In positing play as 'a great cultural achievement', a specific order is aligned to it. In child's play, what is drawn on for imagination comes from their individual experiences within the cultural order. Freud’s view and consequent analysis of play depends on regarding the use of play, that is solely through its content, which differs from Winnicott’s view on child’s play which looks to play as a

\(^4\) More of the negotiation regarding inner and external realities of the infant will be taken up in depth later in the section with regard to both Freud and Winnicott.

\(^5\) This particular point of gift exchange can be related to the economic law of diminishing return.
thing in itself that creates a form of pleasure, “playing is an experience, always a creative experience, and it is an experience in the space-time continuum, a basic form of living. The precariousness of play belongs to the fact that it is always on the theoretical line between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived” (Winnicott 1999:50). Indeed Wilden reads Lévi-Strauss’s work on gift exchange and symbolic function through the act rather than the object, “Unlike monetary exchange and contemporary systems of commodity exchange, in such a system of symbolic exchange, the [gift] objects of exchange are insignificant compared with the function of the ACT OF EXCHANGE” (Wilden 1980:16, *sic*). Play, and its link with pleasure, functions as a typology of ‘glue’ in the process of communication within the order of play that the child produces. This ‘glue’ then progresses to form a communicative event, organised by play and pleasure so that its exchange can take place.6

Here it would seem that different orders of play are presented. However both seek to establish an order of play based on experience and types of pleasure. For Winnicott, playing as experience relates to the ‘intermediate area of experience’ between Mother and child, resulting from a smooth transition through the illusion-disillusionment process (using transitional objects and transitional phenomena) and on to cultural experiences. The child uses “objects or phenomena from external reality and uses these in the service of some sample

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6 By looking at the act of gift exchange and the act of playing instead of what is played within this manner, one finds a certain resonance in Gasché’s argument in *Heliocentric Exchange* (1972). Gasché takes up Mauss’s work on the gift, denying that there is a single original gift that ‘begins’ any economy or exchange, “Thus the gift which, for Mauss, inaugurates each and every exchange circuit never explains why there is a gift: the force in things makes clear only why the gift is given back” (Gasché 1972:67). For Gasché, gifts are “the products of a transfer, carry is only their transferential power: metaphoric in the broadest sense of the word, they say nothing except their metaphoricity; they redouble, ad infinitum” (ibid).
derived from inner or personal reality” (Winnicott 1999:50). For Freud, part of the order of play in *fort/da* is a mastering of the situation, a ‘handling’ of the return of the repressed. These discussions regarding orders of play realise that the happening of play is a form of communication based on specific organisation that help to create an ‘event’. In play the child’s interest is occupied within an area and of an order that is not easily interrupted. The organisation of play and pleasure becomes paramount to the act of exchange. The spool must disappear before it can return, and while this may seem a simple statement to make, it is incredibly important as it illustrates how play and pleasure interrelate through organisation. This interrelation and structure of organisation sets up the communication of exchange as circumstance of gift practice.

Communication in this sense is a result from play, both in terms of content and theory that relies on a gift to the self. The child uses play as a satisfying event to seek pleasure and then repeats it, so that through repetition he/she establishes this organised cycle of exchange that forms gift practice. In repeating their ‘play’ (from *fort/da* to any action of play that has a repetitive theme) the child subsequently repeats their pleasure and gives to itself. The pleasure from play is communication as gift exchange. As Winnicott argues, “Playing is essentially satisfying. This is true even when it leads to a high degree of anxiety” (Winnicott 1999:52, original emphasis). Freud argues a similar line through outlining the potential for pleasure through an avoidance of unpleasure. In *fort/da*, Freud’s

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7 In a short paragraph in *The ‘Uncanny’* (1919), Freud clearly outlines the involvement of a compulsion to repeat in terms of the pleasure principle. He does this mainly to emphasise the recurrences that appear and present themselves as uncanny, and within instances of an uncanny nature, highlighting the force of the unconscious and innate instinctual impulses. This force to repeat, Freud argues, is “a compulsion powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle…very clearly expressed in the impulses of small children” (Freud 1990:361).
grandson’s spool functions as what Wilden refers to as ‘markers’ that generate information for the act of play. Wilden equates Winnicott’s transitional object as a typology of marker that gains their information and importance, alongside creating pleasure, in the process of communication that develops from play. Bateson’s nip as the message ‘This is play’ thus functions as a clear indicator of how communication in the act of exchange is a result from an organisation of play and pleasure. Despite that Bateson’s example stems from animal play, it is possible to take his theory as a standard of play in general. In distinguishing the nip from the bite, communication must revolve around the orders of exchange involved with play and pleasure. Bateson claims that in order to distinguish the nip from the bite, a second order of communication is necessary that is termed as meta-communication. It is the ordering in and of play that becomes essential to the exchange involved in these levels of communication. At this point it is worthwhile to look at Bateson’s work in depth regarding how meta-communication ignites the paradox of play. Meta-communication may likewise be stipulated as a condition of giftness as it directs the circularity of the gift in such a heterogeneous manner. Issues of paradox, semantic instability and play are central to the composition of the gift and any ensuing interpretation. How does one distinguish a gift? Through comparison? It is via the circle of the gift, the meta-communication of giftness within the discourse of the gift that allows the paradox to evolve and deepen the instability of the gift – much like the paradox of play.
6.2 Communication and play: Bateson

Bateson’s paper, ‘A Theory of Play and Fantasy’ in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1978) outlines his approach to play and its relationship to the exchange that occurs in communication and meta-communication. Through a “series of generalizations” Bateson finds and outlines an agenda for a specific typology of communication (what Wilden refers to as analog communication) through looking at the message of play. Initially, it is the levels of abstraction within modes of communication (mainly verbal) that Bateson is attracted to. This provides the fundamental basis for Bateson to build on in determining his definition of meta-communication. All messages, whether they are about play, threat or the gift, are dependant on these “contrasting levels of abstraction” (Bateson 1978:150). These levels are a further variation on what has been argued here as the theoretical context of understanding the gift, as well as the imperative operation of giftness. Levels of abstraction, like emplacement (gift in/as space), or gift as supplement, and so on, are part of how the gift operates as well as the discourse of interpreting it. From here, Bateson looks towards the exchange involved within communication and finds that it is through the ambiguity of “signals [as] only signals, which can be trusted, distrusted, falsified, denied, amplified, corrected and so forth” (Bateson 1978:151) that levels of abstraction feed into layers of communication. The exchange of signals at different levels of specificity (or generality) is what Bateson decides to denote as meta-communication and uses the message ‘This is play’ to further the function and operation of meta-communication.
Here, allowing signals to sign and to communicate ambiguously generates abstraction within communication. This degree of ambiguity paired with abstraction in Basteon’s example is attractive to any study on the gift as it allows a different perspective regarding the operation of gift exchange. In animal play, what is communicated as play is dependant on ambiguity and abstraction and so it is with the gift. As the gift is played (exchanged), its value is understood differently as the event of giving – the causality – is no longer the focus. Rather, the focus shifts from the object that is exchanged to the entire structure and process of what comprises the act of ‘gift-exchange’. The value of what is given as gift must be ordered and organised ambiguously and abstractly. This returns us to the instability of interpretation that surrounds the gift. This instability, rather than a ‘fault’ or problem of giftness, is exactly what is desired. Like the polysemic nature of the literary, giftness in its metacommunication insists on destabilising the interpretative act. Looking at Bateson’s analysis of communication and play, we can identify similar paradoxical communicative processes at work in the gift.

Bateson looked at the message of play and saw how the generation of abstraction initiated paradox within not only the message ‘This is play’ but in a larger sense – within meta-communication in general, “a negative statement containing an implicit negative meta-statement. Expanded, the statement ‘This is play’ looks something like this: ‘these actions in which we now engage do not denote what these actions for which they stand for would denote’ (Bateson 1978:152). This description of the message ‘This is play’ identifies one of the main elements of gift composition – duality of meaning or the paradox. It has been one of the main
contentions and driving themes of the thesis to extrapolate and analyse the gift in terms of value, exchange and (in a Freudian sense) *das Ding* as a ‘thing’ containing its opposite. Bateson’s concept of meta-communication, developed through an analysis of the message ‘This is play’ contains these elements found in the gift, as the gift possesses similar levels of abstraction. The gift and its act of exchange ‘do not denote what those actions for which they stand’ but rather something quite different – a debt. Nevertheless, its status as a meta-communicative statement depends on abstraction, especially with regard to the gift-object and its part in gift exchange. The gift-object must only be read as that which it is not in order to become part of what is exchanged. The gift, if it is to be exchanged cannot be acknowledged as a hidden debt, indeed as nothing else but the gift despite its status as a signal (or symbol) not denoting the actions for which it stands. As John Frow argues in *Time and Commodity Culture: Essays in Cultural Theory and Postmodernity* (1997), “There can be no possible ‘logic of the gift’, no discourse which could coherently take the gift as its object, since the gift is just whatever escapes the measure of discourse, whatever cancels itself as soon as it signifies itself as gift” (Frow 1997:112). Here Frow is remarking on Derrida’s impossible/possible analysis of the gift, wherein the concept of an original gift is debated and contested. This returns us to Gasché’s similar claim in *Heliocentric Exchange*. The paradox of the gift begins to develop here and finds a strong parallel within meta-communication.8

Bateson draws on Korzybski’s theory regarding the relationship between map and territory to establish his own theory of levels of abstraction within

8 A more developed analysis of Derrida’s argument regarding the impossibility/possibility of the gift is taken up in chapter seven.
communication exchange and meta-communication. The map and territory relationship highlights the falsity of language contained in a message and in the exchange of the message:

the fact that a message, of whatever kind, does not consist of those objects which it denotes (‘The word “cat” cannot scratch us’) … It appears from what is said above that play is a phenomenon in which actions of ‘play’ are related to, or denote, other actions of ‘not play’. We therefore meet in play with an instance of signals standing for other events and it appears, therefore, that the evolution of play may have been an important step in the evolution of communication.

(Bateson 1978:153)

This quotation is useful as it offers a clear connection between this consideration and perspective of the phenomenon of play with that of the gift, particularly with respect to their individual associations of exchange. The phenomenon of the gift works in the same manner as Bateson’s theory of play in that it manipulates these signals within levels of abstraction that create the act of exchange within meta-communication to the extent that the simple message ‘This is gift’ is loaded with paradox. The reason for this is its exchange belongs within its opposite. It is not ‘gift’ or ‘giftness’ that is communicated or exchanged, or even the opposite – debt (these are the levels of abstraction of both gift and debt). Rather it is the paradox, the falsity of the signal/symbol and the meta-communication that is exchanged.

Indeed as Bateson recognises within his examination of ‘This is play’, it is the threat that operates on the same pre-text. The threat exists because it is not
delivered – its object (the message) does not denote the action for which it stands in the message. The message that states ‘This is play’ is functioning on the abstraction of what it is not. The nip is a playful nip only because it is not a bite. The ambiguity of the message rests on establishing play and generating a pleasure directly resulting from that play (for both the nipper and the nipped). The threat remains a threat only because its proposition is not acted upon. What is communicated here, what is exchanged, is Bateson’s secondary layer of communication, meta-communication. This is exactly the mode of the gift. The message ‘This is gift’ can only exchange on the ambiguity and abstraction found in its opposite value. It is the gift but only because it cannot be given. As with ‘This is play’, these messages become trusted acts of communication through distrusting the signals, or alternatively, through acknowledging the falsification of signals. In this sense ‘this is play’ becomes ‘this is gift/giftness’.

6.3 Abstraction

Whilst the central part to this typology of meta-communication is the level of abstraction present in the signals exchanged in the event of the message, more importantly it is the issue of repetition or the repeated message that allows the paradox of play, threat, and ultimately the gift to guide meta-communication. “Not only does the playful nip not denote what would be denoted by the bite for which it stands, but in addition, the bite itself is fictional” (Bateson 1978:155). For play to have meaning in the message ‘This is play’, or for the gift in ‘This is gift’, the communicative event needs to be established and repeated enough times in order for the meta-communication to come about. The exchanges of signals denoting gift or play are repeated within the same parameters as previous
messages to the same degrees of abstraction. This generates a trust in the false signal, and subsequently introduces the fulcrum of all further meta-communication – the paradox in the message.

This form of paradox in a message can be given a playful visual example, and introduces the idea of repetition that is so important to any message of play and indeed the gift. In Swabian’s painting, *Portrait of a Woman of the Hofer Family* (1470), one can see a fly on/in the top left hand corner. As with *Trompe L’oeil* pieces of art, the trickery (or abstract ambiguity) is not found in the fly nor in the painting, but in the exchange between spectator and art. Here the message, ‘This is art’, is abstracted via the presence of a filthy insect juxtaposed against the purity of the white headdress. The trickery and paradox of such a message is dependant on the spectator’s realisation that the fly is part of the painterly text – its existence *playing*. Is it *on* it or *in* it?\(^9\) The fly typifies the paradox in play and illustrates how this particular typology of paradoxical play is paramount in working towards a comprehensive theorisation of the gift, as it highlights the falsity of the signal within an act of exchange. The presence of the fly\(^{10}\) allows the spectator to communicate with the painterly text, participating meta-communicatively, exchanging signals belonging to the discourse of art, yet at the same time denying the frame of this meta-communicative exchange by drawing attention to its own small part in a much larger piece of art. The paradox reflected by the signal/symbol of the fly is that it is play within art, denoting art

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\(^9\) Bateson refers to the concept of the frame in terms of peculiarities of play that is referred to later in the section with reference to paradox.

\(^{10}\) This presence of the fly is interesting especially in terms of size. The fly provides a reality effect for Swabian’s text and outside its playful intention, can be linked to the Barthesian concept of *punctum*. The fly arrests the spectator’s gaze towards the image and shatters the *studium* that constructs and supports the painting.
and denying art, through its playful positioning. Giftness participates via a similar paradox in the gift – it simultaneously denotes and denies the gift through exchange and circularity. Once the gift has been played (‘delivered’) it is denied by both giver and receiver. For the giver it is no longer their gift – it is the property of the receiver. If the fly in this image can be seen as part of the play (of image and reality, of art and disgust) then the ‘fly’ in the gift process are those elements that draw attention to giftness. In this sense giftness is part of the parergonal logic that Kant and Derrida speak of. It is neither inside or outside the gift itself, yet without it the gift could not be recognised.

11 A similar adornment of art exists within Crivelli’s I Santi Pietro e Paolo, but of a different order of message. Part of Crivelli’s artistic technique is to adorn his work with man-made objects such as glass, to represent jewels. These adornments are similar to Swabian’s fly but only in as much as they further the art. In Crivelli’s case, these jewels that adorn the religious costume of Saint Augustine celebrating not only the image but also his canonicity and the canonicity of Catholicism. If Swabian’s fly is to be read as an addition to the image, being part of it but not at the same time, then Crivelli’s glass jewels are the image. They extend the discourse of art through spectator recognition. The spectator is offered the image and that which it celebrates (religion) through this closing in of spatial distance. The spectator is positioned by Crivelli to acknowledge the jewels as part of the image, not through playful exchange but celebration and offer. Enjoy this image, enjoy this religion. Whereas Crivelli’s adornment of jewels work to sustain the exchange of what is to be celebrated between the spectator and his art (the value of Catholicism), Swabian’s fly represents another agenda of exchange through disruption. This addition disrupts the discourse of painting and this where the messages of play and gift intersect. In another visual example, the Dutch painting The Soldier and The Girl, (Frans Van Mieris 1659), one can see a parallel sense of play that disrupts and negates the message of a painterly text, and also finds the echo of the repetition that presents itself in fort/da (and as a return of the message ‘This is play’). In the right hand corner, one observes two dogs in the act of mating. Initially this is not seen and the more central theme of seduction is very much fore-grounded. In Van Mieris’s painting, one can see an act of play within the act of seduction. His human subjects represent what is cultural – clothing, eating and drinking with objects, and they are surrounded with further instruments and products of culture and cultural life (the lute, the furniture, the bedding, even the drink from the pitcher). In terms of culture, the soldier and the girl disguise the act of seduction through the gift of flattery and wine and the pre-text of service. However, the presence of the dogs to the right of the soldier represent nature’s act of seduction in a much rougher fashion. Here there are no pre-texts available and as such their mating disrupts the painting. One of the functions of these two dogs is that they are the moment of disruption and are connected to nature, a parallel to be found in Swabian’s painting with the fly, whereas the woman of the Hofker family and the soldier and the girl are products of culture – signals that represent civility and disguised acts of disruption. More importantly however, is that the mating of the dogs allow the play (and the pleasure that the spectator derives from it) within Van Mieris’s text to circulate and continue for however long the spectator looks at the painting. Their gaze returns to both the relationship between the soldier and the girl as a meta-communicative statement ‘This is seduction’ as well as the relationship (and subsequent disruption of the non-metacommunicative statement ‘this is just sex’) of the dogs. As in Hans Holbein’s The Ambassadors, where the anamorphosis underpins and determines the message of the painting, the dogs communicate the message of The Soldier and the Girl – the crudeness within their act of seduction. Such disruption and peculiarity of paradox relies on false signals being trusted for their falsity, their play.
6.4 The Frame

Bateson’s peculiarities of play are stated as, “a) that the messages or signals exchanged in play are in a certain sense untrue or not meant; and b) that that which is denoted by these signals is non-existent” (Bateson 1978:156). This reflects the positivity of the paradox involved in play and also in Winnicott’s illusion-disillusionment theory, as the messages that work on exchange require such ‘peculiarities’ in order to be delivered and received. It can be argued that the gift and gift exchange operate on the same basis as Bateson’s paradoxical peculiarities of play for within gift exchange there are messages or signals exchanged which must be untrue and not meant. For the gift to circulate its exchange needs to possess the dynamic of paradox – the gift can only deliver if ‘it’ (its giftness) does not exist but is read as though it does. Bateson equates the example of a frame (see figure 4.1) to his work on meta-communication ‘This is play’ to further its paradoxical function.

Bateson does not outline the frame in the sense of what follows, but to plainly identify the paradoxical element of the frame it is worth setting out its qualities in this way:

- There is an initial self-contradictory proposition;
- Reversibility is essential and inherent to all paradoxes and paradoxical frames; and
- The frame contains the irresolvable component of the paradox.

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12 Further in this section, I discuss how Winnicott’s illusion-disillusion theory provides the basis for his theory of play.
It can be further stipulated that:

- An economic dynamic of exchange is necessary for a paradox to sustain itself, in order for a frame to operate;
- In order for the paradox to work within the frame, it must rely on meta-communication.

According to Bateson “the paradoxical play frame depends upon [the unconscious]”, yet is not completely a product of it (Bateson 1978:157). Play is therefore a combination of both conscious and unconscious processes. Highlighting this factor of the make-up of play aids Bateson’s contextualisation of the frame more coherently.

The frame of which Bateson argues is not solely a literal concrete, tangible apparatus. He uses the frame as a metaphor for the psychical contextualising and ordering within meta-communication (play is his example). This acknowledges the psychological frame that helps human beings to externalise realities. The application of a frame offers the subject a platform from which to form their subjectivity. The methods through which this formation occurs revolve around the frame. For example, whatever subjectivity is formed ‘inside’ the frame, another separate and distinct subjectivity exists ‘outside’ the frame. Within the exchange of the gift (and of play), this idea of the frame helps to demonstrate how a giver is able to shift positions between what is subjectively perceived to what is objectively perceived within the same circumstance. What the frame provides is a psychical apparatus for the movement that occurs when different subjectivities are formed. More specifically, the gift is what metaphorically frames the subjectivities of giver and receiver. It is clear that these are temporary
subjectivities defined entirely through their connection to the gift, prior to the act of exchange. The gift becomes the frame that allows the assembly of giver and receiver subjectivities.

In *fort/da*, the child employs such a frame in producing pleasure via repeating the disappearance and return of the wooden toy. The message of disappearance is ‘inside’ the frame, whilst the message of return is ‘outside’. The pleasure of the child resonates in their mastering of the messages and the distinction and shifting between their alternating inclusions within the psychical frame. It is through these two meta-communications, revolving and repeating that the child masters their subjectivity. Similarly, the mother’s breast affords the infant the same sense of mastering over the formation of subjectivity through the mother’s adaptation to the infant’s needs. What occurs within the infant’s realm of illusion is a psychical frame of omnipotent control that allows the exchange between illusion and disillusion to take place. The meta-communication of the messages found in these exchanges operates on what messages are included and excluded from such psychical framing.

In arguing frames are exclusive, Bateson includes and carries the sense and function of the paradox, as initially the frame appears to be performing the same action by excluding and including messages within its single meta-communicative psychical apparatus. Yet, as has been demonstrated through the differing potential orders of play, such distinction is too simple. The giver, working with the psychical frame of gift exchange, believes or works under the notion of giving. In ‘including’ messages within a certain frame of exchange,
Bateson insists that what is included must overshadow, dominate rather than negate, what is excluded from the same frame. This suggests for the gift that although the concept of the debt is excluded from the psychical frame of gift exchange, it nevertheless *is* somewhat included as part of the picture despite its psychical existence as excluded. It is this particular construction of the relationship of the messages within meta-communication operating as a typology of exchange that embodies that crucial paradox. The giver gives the gift within the psychical frame of gift exchange that *seemingly* excludes its opposite – the debt. The value of the message inside the frame (and subsequently the exchange) is dependant on the message outside the frame possessing a lesser value – purely as a result of their situation with regards to the frame. Such distinction between messages shows how formation of subjectivity and any following shifting within exchange works.

Bateson claims that the frame forms part of the message. Specifically in play, it is within the interpretation of play where the frame is included or as a pervious boundary keeping interpretation within limits (Bateson 1978:160). Messages outside the frame cannot be ignored if the message/s within the frame is/are to remain meta-communicative (which is the parergonal logic referred to earlier). Bateson argues however, that the frame itself is meta-communicative through the messages that sandwich it and also acknowledges a reversibility, “Every metacommunicative or metalinguistics message defines, either explicitly or implicitly, the set of messages about which it communicates, i.e., every metacommunicative message is or defines a psychological frame” (Bateson 1978:161). Bateson’s entire example of the frame (both his literal example of the
painting frame and the psychological frame) is an analogy of how logic works. In effect, this example of play and the ensuing analysis of order and organisation within the meta-communicative statement ‘This is play’, is employed as an in-depth example for his larger agenda regarding the effects of the break down of logical systems, for example in schizophrenia.

The messages that are included and excluded from the frame are these different systems of classifications, or logical types. In the messages that are included inside the psychical frame, or indeed in the painting frame, one finds that the figures and the background present two logical types, “[t]he picture frame then, because it delimits a background, is here regarded as an external representation of a very special and important type of psychological frame – namely a frame whose function is to delimit a logical type” (Bateson 1978:162). Bateson claims this typology of frame is what instigates the paradox. To avoid any sense of paradox connected to the frame or meta-communication is to correlate the logical types (or messages) that exist inside and outside the frame. ‘This is play’ represents the sort of message that personifies the paradox however, and also reflects the necessity of the paradox within meta-communication, as through the paradox the distinction between logical types can be made. It makes sense to claim that the paradox within meta-communication creates the potential for exchange between these different logical types. The child applies a psychical frame to the disappearance of the wooden toy and in doing so creates a logical type. Another logical type is applied when it is ‘returned’. The paradox that allows this play to be a meta-communication is what propels the exchange and in turn precipitates repetition. The child, in manipulating their psychical frames,
produces the paradoxes within the meta-communicative messages of play, and establishes the difference of logical types creating exchange.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{6.5 Paradox and Repetition}

Returning to the issue of order in play, an inverted social order, that of the carnivalesque, creates space for pleasure through its limit-creating capacities. The pleasure of the carnivalesque lies in its anti-thetical nature because it prescribes to the fortunes of the illogical, or rather the 'antilogical', for it does have its own internal and systemic logic. By segregating the carnivalesque from the \textit{vraisemblance} of the cultural order drawn on by the child-at-play, helps to contextualise and perhaps offer the possibility of \textit{fort/da} residing in one order or both. What such an offering provides is a delimitation of play as a strict social order, and within each and every subsequent repetition of play lays the potential for difference. Issues of control and pleasure are fundamental to the possibility of difference. Without the option of the carnivalesque, the control of play (and repetition) produces no pleasure; as such control of repetition without the potential of disorder offers no 'fresh pleasure'. In the order of play, repetition is exacted in conjunction with what is the same, as well as the possibility of what could be different. In terms of gift exchange, this suggestion of difference within an order of play confounds the importance that the integration of play and pleasure holds for its communication. Whilst the opportunity for diversity presents itself, the need for a structured arrangement of communication is essential for any production of meaning, gift related or not. All play is based on

\textsuperscript{13} A different development of this is looked at in terms of Freudian transference and counter-transference as a discourse of the gift in chapter seven.
configurations of presence and absence, and the pleasure of play is to be found in
the double semiotics of this interplay of presence/absence with the insertion of
the subject, and the disturbing of the cultural order, that is the momentary
arresting of the reality principle. If child’s play, or any form of play, is to be
correlated with pleasure and read as a circumstance of gift exchange, especially
in terms of the self, then it is this sense of double semiotics, or Bateson’s double
layers of communication, that is significant for repetition. Outside the primary
level of communication, in the case of the spool, its simple disappearance and
return; or in the case of the transitional object, its shift between illusion and
disillusion, it is the secondary layer of what the act is signifying in terms of
pleasure that becomes the gift practice for the subject (and subsequently the
reason for desire to repeat).

Pleasure in repetition, despite the negativity in the re-experience of the act, is
largely due to the control of the subject, in Freud's example the child-in-play.
Involved in the cycle of repetition is this notion of inversion, in the sense that the
pleasure derived from repetition is negative in its nature. For Freud, "it is clear
that in their play children repeat everything that has made a great impression on
them in real life, and that in doing so they abreact the strength of the impression
and, as one might put it, make themselves master of the situation" (Freud
1987:286). The giver and the receiver within the economy of gift exchange are
similarly entered into a negativity of repetition through continuing the cycle of
giving. Fundamental to the repetition of pleasure within the act of play is the
exchange in communication and the use of the play-object. Using Freud's case as
exemplar, the child through its play moves between sites of pleasure and
unpleasure using repetition as the function of transition. The child's game enables an effect of his/her own exchange in subjectivity from a child who experiences pleasure, to a child who experiences unpleasure, and so on. The act that is repeated here through the play-object, the throwing and retrieving of a spool - works in cycles constantly founding two particular sites of subject position. This shifting mirrors the movement of pleasures and unpleasures through different stages of play, as well as concretizes the interrelationship of play and pleasure that is creative in terms of gift exchange. The repetition of the game, as well as repeating the pleasure and gaining stronger control over the act of exchange in the play, develops an economy of continuous gifts to the child. The child is consistently putting themselves in the position of giver and receiver and this tight control is what makes his game so pleasurable.

Freud argues that in repeating experiences of unpleasure (such as the giving away of a desired gift\textsuperscript{14} or the delay in giving within an act of exchange) the act is a movement from the position of passivity to activity. For Freud, the repetition of an act creates transition in subject position within the same cultural event.\textsuperscript{15} When the child throws away the spool, he/she is operating within a passive field, but on retrieval of the spool, the child has managed to shift not only their position from passive to active subject but also the signification of the spool. The retrieved spool is significantly different from the spool that was thrown because

\textsuperscript{14} On this matter Marilyn Strathern’s analysis of gift exchange is relevant, “As I understand it, what Euro-Americans call gifts in late twentieth-century consumer culture, whether body substance or merchandise, are regarded as extensions of the self insofar as they carry the expression of sentiments. Sentiments are commonly expressed toward other persons, but they may equally well be directed to abstract entities such as “society” … They thus appear as the person would like to appear, autonomous, charitable” (Strathern 1988:97).

\textsuperscript{15} See also Freud’s example of the unconscious mediation for the “accidental” breaking of the vase – a gift from someone Freud disliked.
of what it is able to (re)signify for the child. Here one is able to see an inverted social order of play as well as the potential for multiple exchanges of pleasure within a (seemingly) single act of play. What this shift in signification of an individual play-object demonstrates is that through any combination of pleasure and play, it is the ordering and organisation of communication within the act of exchange that sets up the parameters for what becomes the circumstances for the gift. Additionally this shifting in signification of the spool registers the heterogeneity of the gift and its inherence within all acts of communication across all levels of communication — through exchange and as paradox.

Freud uses another example of a child who 'moves' their unpleasurable (passive) experience of a doctor's appointment to a situation of a game, thereby creating an active subject position, "the unpleasurable nature of an experience does not always unsuit it for play" (Freud 1987:286). This movement symbolises a 'handing-over' of unpleasure within the experience and reaffirms Freud's original claim that production of pleasure can be achieved through the avoidance of unpleasure, and indeed reaffirms Winnicott’s claim that playing is essentially satisfying, "As the child passes over from the passivity of the experience to the activity of the game, he hands on the disagreeable experience to one of his playmates and in this way revenges himself on a substitute" (Freud 1987:286). This issue of control over repetition is complementary to Derrida's reading of Freud's argument of pleasure.

Derrida views repetition in a dialectical fashion, focusing on its paradox. For Derrida, negativity is imparted from the repetition, "Dialectics is the movement
through which expenditure is reappropriated into presence - it is the economy of repetition. The economy of truth. Repetition summarizes negativity, gathers and maintains the past present as truth, as ideality" (Derrida 1978:246). This negativity within the repetition of an act is crucial to the effect of pleasure because of its paradox. Superficially it would seem that no pleasure can be gained from a re-experience of an act that primarily causes a feeling of unpleasure, especially not a series of 'identical' repetitive acts. How can this be a form or circumstance of the gift? The paradox in this instance results from the initial experience of unpleasure, that pleasure can be gained through repetition. Freud speculates that for a child, their repetitive game might "make themselves master of the situation" (Freud 1987:286). The situation of play creates room for re-experience and the promise of control, and subsequent pleasure. This is another reflection of how play operates within the gift – through repetition. For Derrida, repetition functions in an economy, a series of cycles, yet the pleasure derived from such economics stems not from any prediction in the result of the act. Derrida's reasoning also highlights the aforementioned play of subjectivity within the fort/da. Subjectivity is tied to control over the domains of a subject's passive and active subjectivity. The image of the self is invested in both elements of appearance and disappearance within the fort/da. In repeating the game, the child is able to create control over all aspects of the fort/da. The negativity within Derrida's dialectics becomes pleasure through the subject gaining control over different sites of subjectivity and all elements of the fort/da. This ‘mastering’ of the subject’s position in play enables a progression towards the release of ‘stale pleasure' and satisfaction of 'fresh pleasure'.
In applying the pleasure in the repetition of play to the economy of the gift, it becomes evident that any productions of pleasure/avoidance of unpleasure, and issues of control over subjectivity are situated and established in the act of exchange. Within this gift exchange the giver has knowledge of the inevitable return, just as the subject knows what part of play produces a certain typology of pleasure. The absence of the initial gift predicts the presence of its 'return'. In choosing a gift, part of a subject's subjectivity is invested in, and directed towards, giftness. The formation of giftness is the abstraction of giving, and directs the flow of the material gift. Such a unique combination means that to part with the gift is to part with a materialised/manifested aspect of one's own desire and conception of giftness. Such a gift depends on reciprocation, a 're-investment' of desire from the previous receiver. The gift cycle and the re-gift are necessary for both the giver and receiver to gain pleasure in repetition. The received gift is a replacement of desire - the signifier of the shift from a passive position as giver, and active position as receiver. The subject becomes active by the repetition of the reconstructed return.

At the core of the *fort/da* is the notion of transition. Specifically the sites of passivity and activity create a fluctuation of exchange, which is highly relevant to subjectivity. Effectively, the act of repetition is an act of re-affirmation of the subject's own subjectivity. In terms of the gift, the giver must operate as though they are 'master of the situation' through-making choices of the gift, deciding the moment of transition (departing of the gift) and the receiver also works in this way. For the receiver, control of the situation is also constructed as though they are 'master of the situation', albeit in an inverted sense. For the receiver to master
the situation, they must await affirmation of their subjectivity from the giver. The control of receiver is that closely attached to reconstructed return and of deferred presence. The control of giver is that of presentation and presence. The passive and active belong in both sites of subjectivity. The giver's action of giving renders their position as passive - a seemingly reversal of control. This action however is almost a stricter control that those sites that move from a passive act (such as the child in Freud's example of fort/da). The giver constructs return of the gift. Through this shift in subjectivity the subject indirectly experiences a transition and subsequently produces pleasure through an act of deferral.

Winnicott’s Paradox: Illusion-disillusion

The gift, if nothing else, is an irreducible paradox. One of the key aspects of the gift for the current concerns is that which appears as its opposite. Within such a concern one finds many connections to circumstances of paradox, especially in terms of the practice of pleasure and play. Winnicott’s theories on playing and creativity are interesting for this discussion on the gift as it is within the use of play, looking at playing rather than what is played with, which holds the resonance of paradox. The paradox that has been looked at here, from a number of different perspectives, is based on the predicate of communication. In this light, one can read the paradox as a fulcrum for circumstances of exchange, whether it is pleasure, play or gift specific. Winnicott’s paradox is to be found in the infant’s use of the transitional object – not in the manner of how a child relates to the object but how the child using transitional phenomena uses the object. This particular paradox is interesting for this thesis and the discussion of the gift, as it is a paradox that is to be left alone. In order for the gift to operate and circulate, to possess a social and cultural meaning, its aporia and irreducible
duality must also be left alone and allowed to exchange under the cloak of paradox.

Like Derrida’s conception of the gift through and in language, Winnicott’s transitional object is an inherent aspect to the formation of the child as it operates on the basis of paradox. For Winnicott, the transitional object is the infant’s first ‘not-me’ possession (where the infant has “the capacity to recognize the object as ‘not-me’”) “some soft object or other type of object [that] has been found and used by the infant” (Winnicott 1999:4) and combined with transitional phenomena, outlines the intermediate area of experience. Transitional phenomena are methods through which the transitional object is utilised. These methods help to establish the area of experience for the infant – the initial creative site - the most common of which is auto-erotic experience. The most important function of transitional phenomena and transitional object is that combined, they operate ‘in’ illusion. They help form Winnicott’s ‘intermediate area of experience’ along with the Mother’s ability to aid the illusion through providing the breast when needed, or as Winnicott specifies, adapting to the infant’s needs.

Specifically Winnicott offers the following as examples of transitional phenomena - babbling noises, or soft cloth that is caressed, sucked or stroked, or collection of soft and comforting material (Winnicott’s example is wool), or the introduction of an object into the mouth (Winnicott 1999:3). Winnicott does acknowledge that in some cases the transitional object is the Mother; yet again it is not the actual object that is involved with the paradox but the use of it. The
infant develops a personal pattern with the transitional object that accompanies thumb-sucking or dummy-sucking. By forming a pattern with the transitional object and within transitional phenomena, the infant is able to establish the paradox that begins in sphere of illusion and disillusion, which in turn is “at the basis of initiation of experience” (Winnicott 1999:14).

It is the transitional aspects of the objects and phenomena of Winnicott’s theory that is interesting for the gift as they can only become transitional on a giving and taking foundation found in an experiential pattern similar to illusion-disillusionment. It is neither the objects nor the phenomena themselves that are of specific interest in terms of gift exchange, rather it is their capacity to help initiate the illusion-disillusionment process – the negotiation of internal and external realities of the infant – that relates to the gift and paradox in play and pleasure:

in playing, and perhaps only in playing, the child or adult is free to be creative. This consideration arises in my mind as a development of the concept of transitional phenomena and it takes into account the difficult part of the theory of the transitional object, which is that a paradox is involved which needs to be accepted, tolerated, and not resolved.

(Winnicott 1999:53)

This paradox is essential for the transitional object to be used effectively and to work effectively, likewise for the gift. By the time that transitional phenomena has become apparent, a pattern has been established, suggesting that patterning is an essential component of paradox, particularly in Winnicott’s sense. Part of the paradox that belongs to the pattern of transitional phenomena can bear upon the
relationship and patterning of pleasure and play in terms of the gift, and the production that transpires within the repetitive relationship between giving and taking.

The smooth functioning of the paradox (smooth in that it must be a paradox that is not questioned but accepted) is paramount in order for the infant to create a ‘normal’ concept of reality. For example, when putting an infant to rest, or settling their anxiety, a placator or comforter may be used such as a dummy, or the child may suck their thumb. A particular type of material may be touched or caressed during this auto-erotic experience. These transitional phenomena are imbued with importance for the infant as through the pattern of repeated usage (or one is tempted to argue a typology of play as the infant has become master of their subjectivity and hence producer of pleasure through the repetition of this act) a meta-communication has been established, stating ‘This is safe’, ‘This is pleasure’. Safety and pleasure further arises from the concept of illusion wherein the infant believes the mother’s breast is under its own control as an internal object, part of their inner reality. As the infant navigates its way through the process of illusion and disillusion, the transitional object loses its importance (eventually becomes “decathected, especially as cultural interests develop” (Winnicott 1999:14) ) as the transition of the object from an infant’s inner reality to external reality has been worked through to the extent that the infant realises their individual existence. With this recognition of a separate external reality to the infant’s inner reality, disillusion has succeeded and the infant has attained a notion of individual, separate reality to the Mother. Without transitional phenomena, patterns are unable to evolve, meta-communication is unable to be
established and the paradox necessary to the functioning of illusion and disillusion is annulled. The infant cannot make its passage to a separate reality outside that of the Mother, through the psychical paradigms of illusion and disillusion.

Transitional objects and the concept of gift exchange can be paralleled through Winnicott’s illusion and disillusion. Such a parallel is important as it foregrounds the idea of the pattern that is so intrinsic to the gift. Using Freud’s observations of pleasure through the play-object in the fort/da, the transitional status present within gift exchange appears as its most defining aspect. Similar to the transitional object, gift exchange resides in the limbo of illusion and disillusion. The value of exchange is derived from the causality of the gift. The cause is specific to the subject’s (infant’s) external reality, and its affect relates to the subject’s inner reality. Gift exchange operates within the same capacity as transitional objects by relating to illusion and disillusion in the same way. These dichotomies that Winnicott identifies enable the infant to shift from inner reality to external reality through the use of the transitional object, and are comparable to the shifting of reciprocity in the economy of the gift.

Through illusion-disillusionment, the infant distinguishes between their inner self and external reality. This distinction is based on the illusion of the mother’s breast as being immediately adaptable to the infant’s desires, needs and wishes, “The mother’s adaptation to the infant’s needs, when good enough, gives the infant the illusion that there is an external reality that corresponds to the infant’s own capacity to create” (Winnicott 1999:12, sic). Fort/da, the external reality is
dependant on the illusion created by the infant of pleasure in both the disappearance of the spool and its return. It is the inextricable connection between the disappearance and return in Freud’s example of play that allows pleasure to generate and repeat. In the same way, illusion and disillusion cannot work independently of each other. Winnicott uses two figures to explicate his theory of how transitional objects and illusion relate.

Figure 6.1 Figure 6.2

These two figures illustrate the process of illusion and how transitional objects relate in terms of creativity. The illusion/disillusion development is the circumstance for the infant’s negotiation of inner and external realities – a process that Winnicott claims stays with us throughout life, “no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience which is not challenged (arts, religion for example). This intermediate area is in direct continuity with the play area of the small child who is ‘lost’ in play” (Winnicott 1999:13). It is within this intermediate area that we find the initiation of paradox. Figure 1 sets out the psychical arena for Winnicott’s illusion-disillusionment, and arguably the arena wherein Freud’s grandchild begins to master his situation over the disappearance and return of the spool, as it becomes the foundation for creativity. In this sense the transitional object theory of Winnicott explicate certain aspects
of the gift. The other aspect that becomes evident is that the transitional object is a type of gift in itself. It is the gift given to the self – and so is the gift that cannot be given.

Figure 6.1 represents the first situation of play. In his theory of play, Winnicott states that “baby and object are merged with one another. Baby’s view of the object is subjective and the mother is oriented towards the making actual of what the baby is ready to find” (Winnicott 1999:47). This is the illusion both within play and within the infant’s negotiation of inner and external realities. It is where the paradox of further exchange begins. In this primary process of playing, the sense of giftness is evident. Play is to develop for the infant and enable them to experience a ‘normal’ reality completely based on gifts. Here the gift comes from the mother through her ‘adaptation’ to the infant’s needs. Winnicott offers Figure 6.2 to elucidate where transitional objects and transitional phenomena function for the infant and to what purpose. Within these figures, Winnicott is slowly working towards a development of play stemming from an intermediate area of experience that remains unchallenged but is wholly based on forms of exchange and gifts (here between infant and mother). In this ‘unchallenged area’ one finds the arena where a child can be ‘lost’ in play.

Disillusionment provides the second half of the paradox and provides an additional step to the theory of play and gift exchange. It is important to realise this paradox as positive as this is key to its acceptance, tolerance, and being left alone. The primary paradox of illusion-disillusionment sets up the basis for further paradoxes in the developments of play and gift exchange as it is intrinsic
in a subject’s construction of self/other, inner/external reality, as well as the foundation of other subjectivities such as giver/receiver. Part of the positivity of the paradox (and other subsequent paradoxes) is its reversibility, and hence the necessity for such a paradox to be accepted, tolerated and not resolved. The illusory feature of illusion is disillusionment. Illusion’s capacity and function is dependant on the paradox that illusion-disillusionment sustains (and here we witness a Batesonian reading of schizophrenia, for this is the reality paradox par excellence). The infant’s illusion of the mother’s breast appearing at its hunger is disillusion, in that it belies external reality. The mother’s adaptation to her infant’s needs is essential in order for illusion to take place (and subsequently disillusion). Therefore what is illusion for the infant is disillusion for external reality.

This disillusionment process is not a negative psychical function and does not negate the operation of illusion. Instead, disillusionment enhances the illusory nature of illusion by enforcing its value through setting up the paradox and exchange. It is because there is disillusionment that illusion can become part of exchange. In terms of a theory of play, disillusionment affords the birth of creativity, “[t]his complex process is highly dependant on there being a mother, or mother-figure prepared to participate and to give back what is handed out” (Winnicott 1999:47). The infant, through the gift of maternal adaptation, is allowed to be creative, allowed to begin to play through the exchange of illusion-disillusionment. This is a form of pleasure through exchange (and thus connectable to play and gift exchange) as what is being accepted is a certain
subjectivity, what is being tolerated is the paradox, and what is not resolved is the finality of the illusion-disillusionment negotiation.

Through the reversibility of illusion-disillusionment a ‘normal’ reality is reached for the infant. The illusion of a mastered subjectivity, as illustrated in Freud’s _fort/da_ analysis, demonstrates precisely this construction of a normal reality through reversibility. This reversibility participates in the act of exchange that takes place in _fort/da_, illusion-disillusion and the economy of the gift. The crucial tie that runs through these typologies of exchange is play as each of these situations of paradox revolve around and depend on the area stipulated by Winnicott in Figure 1 – the “neutral area of experience which will not be challenged” (Winnicott 1999:12). This area is the fundamental construct of reality and the subsequent acceptance and tolerance of the reality of the paradox. Arguing the possession of the transitional object is important as it clearly separates between internal (mental) and external object, giving the use of the object the status of significance in the transition or exchange from inner to external reality. Without such possession, the exchange cannot take place. Despite the fact that the object is not transitional, its presence as catalyst for exchange is essential. In _fort/da_, it is not the wooden spool that produces pleasure in itself, nor is its materiality that incurs the play. What the wooden spool provides is a tangible signifier for exchange to take place within a ‘neutral area of experience’ and allows Freud’s grandson (through the use of the wooden toy) to create the illusion of his play of disappearance and return. The gift’s illusion is sustained in a similar manner, as the gift cannot be recognised as it is the signifier for the transpiring of giftness. The gift signals the process of giving
and the illusion of altruism, just as the play-object allows the creativity in play to effect the illusion. The infant is able, through using the object, to identify ‘me’ and ‘not-me’, to take part in the illusion of an object that is still ‘me’, concurrently displacing the object as ‘not-me’ via disillusionment. The subjectivities of giver and receiver are connected through the gift in comparable terms of relativity. It is through the connection of ownership and control that ‘giver’ and ‘not-giver’ help to circulate giftness, identifying that the gift is the object that exchange denies.

Pleasure, as it appears in play and gift exchange, is illusion as its expenditure rests on the amount of unpleasure to be avoided – just as the illusion-disillusionment must be balanced out, so too with pleasure and unpleasure, gift and debt. This dichotomous dynamic works to keep these two psychical binary states connected through forms of exchange, particularly when viewing paradox. What emerges here is a paralleling of dynamic paradoxes as they both seek to reach a plateau, or stable subjectivity via exchanging their opposites economically.

In chapter seven, the subjectivities of giver and receiver are paralleled to those of analyst and analysand. This is done to further consider the discourse of the gift, exemplifying psychoanalytic treatment as a gift economy with emphasis on the impossible possibility of its duality. Indeed, given that analysis is a highly circular engagement between two people, it is evident that a concentration of giftness exists in this discursive practice. The ambiguity of the gift is looked at in
depth, with specific reference to Derrida’s discussion in *Given Time: I.*

*Counterfeit Money.*
7. Transference and Countertransference: A discourse of the gift

7.1 Transference, Countertransference, Dora

7.2 Transference as gift

7.3 The circular ambiguity

7.4 The Impossible Possible, the Possible Impossible

This section continues the themes of paradox and instability considering such drives of giftness with regards to the formation of subjectivity. Given that Derrida’s paradox, the impossible possibility of the gift, is dependent on reading the gift, it is important that the context of relationship is looked at. We find a highly concentrated relationship of giftness within psychoanalytic treatment where both analyst and analysand continuously shift roles of giver and receiver. In this relationship, words are given and returned as treatment. Ambiguity presents itself as a technique of delivery here, particularly with regards to subjectivity (its formation and positioning). As Bateson notes, “the resemblance between the process of therapy and the phenomenon of play is, in fact, profound” (Bateson 1978:164). Transference and countertransference are viewed as a form of gift practice and as a form of gift exchange for these reasons but also because they lend themselves to the paramount problematic of the gift – as a phenomenon that does not have ‘cure’ as its goal.

Transference is postulated as gift to analyse the reversibility of ‘giver’ subjectivity, the famous case study of Dora is used as example. Lacan’s Intervention on Transference (1985) is central to such a discussion of the gift as its different perspective regarding the countertransference is presented in terms of cycles and investment, undeniably key elements of giftness. Derrida claims:
the simple consciousness of the gift right away sends itself back the gratifying image of goodness or generosity, of the giving being who, knowing itself to be such, recognizes itself in a circular, specular fashion, in a sort of auto-recognition, self-approval, and narcissistic gratitude.

(Derrida 1994c:23)

This specular forethought to gifting guides the presupposition of a ‘true’ gift and confirms the importance of subjectivity in the deliberation of the gift and giftness. Hélène Cixous resists Derrida’s theorising of the gift, believing that only within patriarchal culture can the gift be viewed as non-existent. Cixous’s analysis of the gift has poignant resonance in terms of its economics, as much of her discussion of the gift concerns the formation of subjectivity in the realm of the proper. As Jean François Lyotard has noted, “[t]he category of the gift is a theatrical idea, it belongs to semiology, and it presupposes a subject, a limit of his proper body and his property, and the generous transgression of this property” (Lyotard 1993:123). As such, this section establishes the significant position of subjectivity in gifting and continues to frame the consideration of the gift as Alan D. Schrift has pointed out, “is a political question, a question of the polis, that addresses fundamental issues of intersubjective interaction” (Schrift 2001:119). The last part of this section takes into account Cixous’s gendering of the gift in response to Hegelian and Derridean configurations of the gift in order to offer an alternative sense and reasoning of giving and the gift.

7.1 Transference, Countertransference, Dora

The 'cure' is not a final result - or a guaranteed end to the analysand's complaint. One of the aims of psychoanalysis is to, through the transference between analysand and analyst, move the repressed unconscious desire/s into the conscious mind thus creating awareness and relieve the symptoms of the analysand. The transference
figures predominantly as through it, the analyst is able to 'unknot' the analysand's unconscious to discover the underlying problem. In most cases, the present problem is not the direct cause of the analysand's complaint. The transference allows an intimacy to form in the analytic situation, and the analysand's history can be shared and is situated as necessary excess in the process of transference. These excesses can be found in those areas of history concerning the analysand infancy and primary love-object choice. These historical 'excesses' are located within a circuit but are not being used, yet are still needed in order for the entire transferential process to work. The excesses of transference form part of the process of the transference that helps to construct it but are not always a part of the transference in the time of its operation.

To explain this it helps to draw on further definition from Freud. In his introductory lectures, Freud summarises what he means by transference.

> We mean a transference of feelings on to the person of the doctor, since we do not believe that the situation in the treatment could justify the development of such feelings. We suspect, on the contrary, that the whole readiness for these feelings is derived from elsewhere, that they were already prepared in the patient and, upon the opportunity offered by the analytic treatment, are transferred on to the person of the doctor.

(Freud 1986:494)

In this definition of transference the economy for exchange is hinted at, as are the ingredients of the symbolic exchange of the gift to which Lyotard refers. Freud is establishing a relationship (between analyst and analysand – a discourse) that depends on the machinations of a cycle and in arguing that the transference exists prior to the engagement of an analytic relationship, he is suggesting that there is no ‘original’ transference. Rather a series of transferences have already occurred, the transference presenting itself in analysis is simply another transference in the cycle. It is during

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1 See section six where it is noted that Gasché argues that there is no original gift. Indeed, here we find traces of forgetting that are integral to a Derridean conception of the gift, “forgetting would be in the condition of the gift and the gift in the condition of forgetting” (Derrida 1994c:18). The forgetting that
analysis that the analysand transfers previous desires, 'imagoes', from childhood onto the analyst. The analysand is continuing to transfer this infantile 'imago' love onto different love-objects during the transference via a series of what Freud terms as 'stereotype plates'.

Through the combined operation of his [the analysand] innate disposition and the influences brought to bear on him during his early years, has acquired a specific method of his own in his conduct of his erotic life - that is, in the preconditions to falling in love which he lays down, in the instincts he satisfies and the aims he sets himself in the course of it. This produces what might be described as a stereotype plate (or several such), which is constantly repeated - constantly reprinted afresh - in the course of the person's life, so far as external circumstances and the nature of the love-objects accessible to him permit, and which is certainly not entirely insusceptible to change in the face of recent experiences.

(Freud 1914:99)

These stereotype plates are part of the excesses that form the transference in psychoanalysis. The layering effect of these plates adds to the analysand's history of transferences, but continues the transferential process, as its ‘success’ or continuation relies on a compulsion to repeat. So in effect, there are two excesses within stereotype plates - the excess of history and the excess of repetition (determined in Freud as the compulsion to repeat). Whilst the transference that presents itself within the analytic situation appears as ‘new and refreshed', for the analysand it is simply a different picture on the same canvas. To explain this cyclical nature another way, for Freud the transference in analysis is a case of history repeating, an effect of the compulsion to repeat, and what is being repeated here are the imagoes that were formed in from the

occurs here concerns the transference of the analysand’s object-choice onto the analyst. This is an unconscious process of forgetting and gifting imperative to the success of analytic economy. Without forgetting (or repressing) the reason the analyst chooses particular love-objects, there is no causality or circularity within the transference and no gift like economy. Of course there is also further resonance here regarding Heidegger’s es gibt. However, I am not the first to see this. Schrift notes that “The link between giving, gifts and forgetting allows Derrida to move the discussion to Heidegger insofar as for Heidegger the event (Ereignis) of the gift (of Being) has been forgotten, and the recollection of this event, which is to say, the appropriate reception of this gift, which is to say, the overcoming of this forgetfulness is now, at present, the task of thinking” (Schrift 2001:121n).
experiences in the analysand's childhood. These imagoes are also considered as part of the historical excesses of transference, as whilst they do not directly have a playing role (that is the initial love object has changed) in the analytic situation between analyst and analysand, it is primarily due to their foundation that the transference can occur in psychoanalysis at all. The gift carries the similar excesses of history and repetition in that must always be re-presenting itself within acts of exchange in order to survive. The gift must re-present itself based on previous presentations but with the condition of failing to remember its existence as a gift. As Charles Champetier has noted (with specific reference to a Derridean gift) “the gift cannot be linked to thought without becoming alienated, without entering the vicious circle of an intention and a volition that annul it inasmuch as they appropriate it” (Champetier 2001:16). Its history of cyclical exchange is what identifies its existence as gift, and the repetition of giving mirrors the repetition of the analysand’s imagoes – always hoping to reach betterment through another cycle.

Another component of these transferential excesses is repression. The analysand is unaware of the stereotype they are replaying continuously and ironically. While repression is an element that forms part of the transference, it is only through the enactment of transference that the repression of the stereotype plates becomes apparent. Through transference, the analysand acts out their infantile imagoes; these stereotype plates are brought into conscious reality through present translation. For Freud, the father-imago was at the centre of the transference and his analysis and interpretation of transference was inhibited by this patriarchal structure. In his case study of Dora, it is through her father that Freud believes Dora introduces him into the transference, as he believes that Dora's infantile imago was her love for her father,
"[a]s long as the patient is in the treatment he cannot escape from this compulsion to repeat and in the end we understand that this is his way of remembering" (Freud 1914:150). Freud's conception of transference (and this returns us to the theoretical importance and relativity of transference), suggests that whom we love, and arguably how we love, is a further enactment of the stereotype plates. Our first experiences of love, both in giving and receiving, lay the foundation for our later loves - in forming our object-choices and object-relations. In this way it is undeniable that our identities and subjectivities are formed within gift-giving economies.

A number of gifts present themselves in the analytic situation. Most notably there is the transference itself that continues the analysand’s on-going exchange and replaying of their repressed childhood imagoes. This begins or at least instigates the exchange within the analytic situation. Additionally, the compulsion to repeat is another symbolic gift, as its centrality to the economy of exchange within psychoanalytic transference forms the return of the imagoes (what is repressed) for the analysand. It is in *Dora* that transference and countertransference is most clearly illustrated, and an interpretation of its unfolding situation as gift exchange cannot be excluded from a thesis on the gift. More points regarding different typologies of gifts within the psychoanalytic situation will offer themselves as the section progresses.

*Dora*

It is said that *Dora* reads like a story. Freud warns against this particular seductive quality, yet this engaging narrative has particular relevance with respect to transference as in no small part is Freud’s construction of the narrative a gift in itself.

As previously stated, transference is partly formed by included excesses including
stereotype plates, repressions and infantile imagoes. Positioning Dora as an included excess within transference theory, it can be viewed with the same stereotype plate effect, with its own repressions - here those of the analyst, Freud. Lacan introduces the countertransference in Intervention on Transference, using the example of Freud's own countertransference to extend the theory of transference and add the dimensions Freud's blindness (concerning his own transference) failed to notice. Lacan concedes that it was Freud’s inability to acknowledge and address his own countertransference that lead to the failure of Dora’s analysis, yet maintains that one is still able to find a diamond in the rough, as it were. Lacan believes that through methodically working through the dialectical relationship that exists between Freud and Dora (or more commonly analyst and analysand) it becomes apparent where his analysis failed and how it can be rectified.

In her response to Lacan’s article, Suzanne Gearhart views countertransference as a problematic, which is “the distortion or bias imposed on his [Freud’s] psychoanalytic theory and practiced by those limitations and desires” (Gearhart 1985:105). For Lacan she stipulates that, “countertransference is the negative phase of a dialectical process that leads, practically speaking, to the positive transference - the key to all successful analyses - and theoretically speaking, to an ultimately coherent, unified, scientific theory” (Gearhart 1985:105). Gearhart's discussion of transference begins with an analysis of the seduction scene at the lake between Dora and Herr K. She argues that Freud saw this scene as “a knife that cuts both ways. The accusation against the father went with and concealed an accusation directed by the patient against herself - that she had desired a child by her own father” (Gearhart 1985:107). Much of Gearhart's analysis is focused on Lacan's Intervention on Transference as a disclaimer to Freud's
Dora.² Gearhart highlights the flaws, as she sees them, within Freud's initial conception of transference by using Lacan's analysis as a platform. The primary fault within Freud's interpretation hinges on his loyalty to the belief of the paternal figure operating as a ‘natural referent’.³ Gearhart's use of the term ‘natural referent’ relates to the primary love-object for the girl - her father. This first experience of love, the first love object, forms the stereotype plate for every ensuing love-object, object-choice and object-relation.

Capitalising on this specific case study allows us to clearly see how transference and countertransference function as gifts, with particular emphasis on the fluctuation between subjectivities of giver and receiver. The richness of the analytic situation for the gift lies in its semantic status as the basis for success and failure within treatment rests on the same signifiers and conditions to gift exchange. For this reason it is worthwhile looking at Lacan’s article Intervention on Transference in depth where Freud’s Dora is analysed from the perspective of countertransference. Lacan takes us through a system of dialectical reversals and developments of truth to highlight the cycle that occurs between Dora and Freud, and countertransference and transference. In his analysis, Lacan discusses the discourse of the analyst and analysand in terms of a series of cycles. The plurality involved in such continuous processes of turn taking between analyst and analysand is what can be read as a form of gift exchange. Lacan’s account is of particular relevance as it acknowledges that even within a seemingly dual exchange of transference and countertransference there is always a

² Lacan’s article is developed in depth further on in the section.
³ The term 'natural referent' becomes a social construction of loving and sexual identity. Originally, this is a reference to the Oedipus complex, which signifies the movement into the Symbolic order. Prior to the Oedipus complex, according to Freud, we are 'polymorphously perverse'. When we pass through the Oedipus complex we become sexually socialised. The 'natural referent' thus functions as a term that denotes the passing into the Symbolic order and subsequently the process of socialising sexuality.
more complicated structure. One example of this is found in Lewis Hyde’s book *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (1983), wherein he discusses the circle of the gift. He argues that, “[t]he gift moves in a circle, and two people do not make much of a circle. Two points establish a line, but a circle lies in a plane and needs at least three points” (Hyde 1983:16). Comparatively, Lacan’s analysis of countertransference takes the analytic situation and argues its discourse as something far more complicated and diverse. He views the discourse between Freud and Dora as something more than an exchange between two people. It becomes the template for understanding the psychoanalytic interpretation of a particular psychical and social structure invested in power and a complex historical moment. However, before this particular Lacanian critique begins, it is worthwhile looking at some key definitional aspects of countertransference.

*Countertransference*

Laplanche and Pontalis outline countertransference as “the whole of the analyst's unconscious reactions to the individual analysand - especially to the analysand's own transference” (Laplanche and Pontalis 1980:92). In determining the parameters of countertransference, two positions emerge. The first position is to attach everything within the analyst's experience to influence and configure their countertransference, whilst the second is to limit the countertransference to the respective transference in each individual analytic situation. Laplanche and Pontalis further cite Daniel Lagache who extends the second position. For Lagache, the countertransference is not specific to the analyst, or the transference to the analysand. As a result, the analytic situation is to be viewed as both analyst and analysand possessing aspects of countertransference and transference. This duality within each subject adds to the formation of
subjectivity with the analytic situation. Briefly here, as this is expanded on later, it is
the treatment itself that is used as the signifier for subject formation. By recognising
that countertransference and transference exists in both parties of the analytic
situation, the site of psychoanalysis lends itself to the concept of a cycle, similar to
that of the gift. In gift exchange, each subject (giver and receiver) takes turns in filling
each other place. The treatment works on the basis of investment in subjectivity, as by
repeating the transference (and countertransference) one’s subjectivity becomes
stronger, where the sensibility of giftness becomes deep-seated. This idea of analysis
possessing cyclical qualities returns us to Lacan's article.

Lacan’s intertwining of dialectical reversals and developments of truth provide the
structure for his analysis of countertransference and transference and the case study of
Dora. Through instituting a series of dialectical relations, Lacan aims to discover the
point in the process of analysis where the transference failed for Freud. These
dialectical relations are comprised of developments of truth and dialectical reversals,
constituting the countertransference. Lacan is working towards a positive transference
as a result from the analytic situation:

What is involved is a scansion of structures in which truth is transmuted for
the subject, affecting not only her comprehension of things but her very
position as subject of which her "objects" are a function. This means that the
conception of the case history is identical to the progress of the subject, that is,
to the reality of the treatment.

(Lacan, 1985:95, original emphasis)

His term ‘developments of truth’ are moments that occur with countertransference
and are the analysand’s contribution to the dialogue that exists between him/her and
the analyst. As this dialectical relationship is dependent on words, the words help to
form the act of exchange that transpires within the treatment. It is through this
conception that Lacan introduces his argument - "psychoanalysis is a dialectical experience" (Lacan 1985:93, original emphasis) and aims to define transference through such dialectics. Lacan begins with a first development, “exemplary in that it carries us straight onto to the plane where truth asserts itself” (Lacan 1985:95) where the ‘truth’ in the analytic situation is tested. It is precisely here that the analysand resists (but also concedes) placing their trust in the analyst. The formation of subjectivity within psychoanalytic treatment begins with the investment of power in the analyst as becoming sujet supposé savoir. With this investment, transference commences. From this position and fundamental basis of analysis, a set of processes has been put into action; a cycle has begun. What passes between analyst and analysand are a gift of truths belying their investment within their psychoanalytic exchange. Using Dora as an example, Dora uncovers the truths of her dreams, desires and happenings in her life - her gift is that of trust, honesty and openness in her words. Dora begins her treatment through entering into a dialogue with Freud, outlining her memories and experiences. In Freudian terms it is the question "This is all perfectly correct and true, isn't it? What do you want to change in it?" (Freud 1983:67) that continues the treatment, as it invites Dora to again trust in Freud and return to her words to re-examine them in light of her own involvement. For Lacan, it is this challenging question that ignites the set of dialectic reversals and moves onto to further potential developments of truth, as the words of the analysand cause the pattern of development that Lacan indicates.

In answering this question the analyst turns the analysand's question back on them - marking the “first dialectical reversal” (Lacan 1985:96), and consequently stimulates an economy of exchange. In this moment, the analyst begins to participate in the
process of exchange through returning this ‘development of truth’ to the analysand. The treatment moves onto a second development of truth wherein Dora is seen to invest a large part of her subjectivity into the analytic situation through retelling her story to Freud. Her story becomes “caught up in a subtle circulation of *gifts*, serving to compensate the deficiency in sexual services, a circulation that starts with her father in relation to Herr K., and then comes back to the patient through the liberality it releases in Herr K” (Lacan 1985:96, emphasis added). The second development of truth, Freud’s return to Dora’s words, maintains the pattern of treatment so that from this point onwards, the analysis hosts a series of dialectical reversals and developments of truth that are exchanged to define treatment and countertransference, working towards a positive transference for the analysand. What is clearly developing through this countertransference is a series of exchanges based on the dialogue that exists between analyst and analysand. The words of Dora are constantly being returned to her in the hope that positive transference will result. In this sense it is negative for the subject, as the questioning of the words appears to be a questioning of the truths rather than a constant return and reexamination of them. The purpose of these dialectical reversals is to revisit the analysand’s words (or ‘truths’) and determine what they are hiding. The words are given to the analyst who returns them to his/her analysand – this return aiming to produce new words or at the very least a different perspective of these words as truths. This turn taking reflects the exchange of giftness as *glissement* in that it is a floating concept, with each return signifying a gift invested in difference with the final aim of lifting repression.

The second dialectical reversal within the Dora case study occurs when Dora is confronted with Freud’s analysis of her jealousy pertaining to her father’s love affair,
“it conceals an interest in the person of the subject-rival [Frau K.]” (Freud 1983:97), leading to a third development of truth which is the exchange between Frau K. and Dora, pleasantries regarding Dora's father. Dora's gift here is the maintenance of civility to Frau K., despite her sadness at the perceived loss. However, Dora is also upset in losing the intimacy of her relationship with Frau K. (which she sees has moved to between Frau K. and her father). The affair between Frau K. and Dora's father is important in terms of Dora's subjectivity, because their intimate connection threatens Dora. This leads to a third dialectical reversal that shows “real value of object that Frau K. is for Dora. That is, not an individual, but a mystery of her femininity, by which I mean her bodily femininity” (Lacan 1985:97-98). By excluding Dora as object of affection, both Frau K. and Dora's fathers have taken away the signifier which Dora had invested her subjectivity. Dora is threatened with aphanisis by the presence of the affair. It is because of this significant grounding of subjectivity within affection from Frau K. and her father, that Dora is faced with a loss of identity. To acknowledge the affair between Frau K. and her father is to acknowledge, for Dora, that she no longer exists as the same 'Dora' with respect to each person, which as we shall note in a moment has specific resonance for the theorising of the gift.

By working the Dora case study in terms of dialectical reversals and developments of truth, Lacan brings Freud's countertransference to the forefront as the reason for the failure of the treatment. It is possible to argue that it was important for Freud to invest his subjectivity in the treatment to assert his position as both analyst and sujet supposé savoir. Freud's identifies too strongly with Herr K., which is a direct result of his countertransference:
it is because he put himself rather too much in the place of Herr K. that, this
time, Freud did not succeed ... Because of his countertransference, Freud
keeps reverting to the love that Herr K. might have inspired in Dora, and it is
odd to see how he always interprets as confessions what are in fact the very
varied responses that Dora argues against him.

(Lacan 1985:101)

Lacan's main argument is that Freud mistook Dora's dialectical reversals and
developments of truth as signification of transference-love instead of limiting the
emotion developed to the dialectical point in which it occurred. The result of this is
his blindness to his own countertransference.

It is possible to read this presentation of countertransference as a series of gifts based
on the exchange of words. The treatment of psychoanalysis is dependent on an honest
and open dialogue between analyst and analysand and in the case of Freud and Dora
this occurred only in part. Dora’s gifts to Freud were overlooked in favour of his
questions to her. This development of truth that Lacan claims come from the
analysand is the primary gift that appears, and from this first development of truth
stems the entire economy of exchange within the treatment. Freud’s dialectical
reversals – the constant returning to Dora’s words – is another form of gift in that it
allows a different perspective of truth be uncovered – slowly working towards the gift
of transference. However, in this case, as has previously been stated, the
countertransference caused the analysis to fail because Freud’s returns (dialectical
reversals) were not aimed at the right words in Dora’s development of truths. On the
whole, the back and forth exchange between developments of truth and dialectical
reversals are gifts in as much as they contribute to the continuation of economic
exchange. It can be further argued that Lacan’s critique of transference and tightly
constructed paradigm of countertransference parallels the series of gifts that appear
within Freud’s case study, offering us the sense that what are exchanged are a series of gifts and countergifts – all given on the basis of expecting reciprocity.

There are further transferential processes found in sites that belong to the cultural order - sites of power and knowledge, and specifically here, sites of gift exchange. Invested in the cultural order is this sense of transference which foregrounds individual sites (such as that of the gift and the debt) as transferential processes. Psychoanalysis - the site of therapy - uses transference to progress towards a lifting of repressions and a working through of the unconscious. This function of transferentiality within a psychoanalytic situation is similar to the process of giving. Gift giving, like psychoanalysis, operates on the illusory concept that its status is not recognised - not 'seen'. The gift can be acknowledged, like the process of analysis, but it is important that both the giftness and transference is not acknowledged. It is a game that is played out in keeping with codes from the cultural order. The paradox present within the gift exists in transference. To acknowledge the transference is to thwart it. Freud argues that an analyst cannot direct the analysand's attention to the undertaking of transference. The entire issue of transference (and countertransference) cannot be brought into direct focus as its function is to bring “what is unconscious into what is conscious, we lift the repressions, we remove the preconditions for the formation of the symptoms, we transform the pathogenic conflict into a normal one for which it must be possible somehow to find a solution” (Freud 1986:486). It is in hindsight that Freud argues that he should have directed Dora (and thus the treatment) to transference - her transference.
If *Dora* can be read as a late 19th century Viennese love story, with affections involving all characters, including (especially) Freud himself, the transferences in this case study can be said to appear as gifts and countergifts displaying love and the lack of love. In Lacan’s view, “as soon as the subject who is supposed to know exists somewhere ... there is transference” (Lacan 1978:232). The initial transference that occurs in *Dora* comes from Dora's own infancy. Dora's stereotype plate was formed through the love she had for her father. Each following object-choice and object-relation was based on this infantile imago. Dora's love for Herr K. was transference from the love she had for her father. During analysis, the analysand transfers their desires onto the analyst, creating an intimate relationship of transference-love, infused with issues of power and authority. Through this final transference (from those presented to us in the case study) of Dora's affections to Freud as analyst, the unconscious repressions present in Dora's object-choice and object-relationship begin to emerge. It is through her transference that the complexity of her varying object-choice becomes clear. The transference within the psychoanalytic situation corresponds to the dialectical relationship that occurs between the gift and the debt within an act of exchange as the process of giving also follows a predetermined pattern that adheres to a structure of object-choice and object-relations. The giver transfers their desires onto the gift intended for the receiver. In effect, the gift chosen reflects the desire/s of the giver - they give want they would like to receive. The size, the expense and all other mitigating factors, which contribute to the gift-choice, are directly relative to the gift-relation. The occasion, the relationship between giver and receiver, are just as specific and important to the gift-choice as the relationship between analysand and analyst. The variables in each situation are dependant on
power and authority and a precedent of respective transferences. A certain resonance exists regarding Derrida’s claim that the consciousness of giving reflects “narcissistic gratitude” (Derrida 1994:23) particularly with the current focus on psychoanalysis – where reflecting on one’s self and identity invites a certain form of necessary narcissism that can be found within giving.

7.2 Transference as gift

On the analyst's acknowledgement of the analysand's transference during the analysis, the dynamics of the gift have been actualised. The transference is posited in the realm of the gift and the analyst's countertransference is posited in the realm of debt. This situation depends on a reversibility that enables a continuation of transference and giving. For example, the analysand's transference begins as a gift to the analyst whose countertransference is enacted in turn. As a response to this countertransference, and due to previous object-relationships, the analysand unconsciously interprets the countertransference as transference - that is, the situation is interpreted as a love-relationship. There is no distinction between types of transference-love at this point. Indeed Robyn Ferrell discusses the differences between transference and love in her book, Passion in Theory, asking “[w]hat is the difference between transference and love? Superficially, it is 'anything which is excessive' - it is that part of any relation where libido protrudes” (Ferrell 1996:50).

Declaring the transference as gift brings into question the analysand's position in relation to the analyst. The relations of power become the stage for the transference between both subjects in the analytic relationship. From the initial positioning of

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4Certain points are taken up in chapter three where Foucault’s theory of power is discussed in terms of subjectivity and investment.
power relations, where the analysand appears as subordinate to the analyst, the process of transference is read through and operates within a site of power and authority and a site of power and knowledge. The analysand has automatically placed the analyst in the position of the *sujet supposé savoir*, imbuing the analyst with the presupposed gift of knowledge and power through the initial transference. There is no greater example of the *sujet supposé savoir* than Freud, especially in the case study of *Dora*. “As soon as the subject who is supposed to know exists somewhere ... there is transference ... [Freud] was not only the subject who was supposed to know. He did know, and he gave us this knowledge in terms that may be said to be indestructible” (Lacan 1986:232). Lacan's *sujet supposé savoir* is the psychoanalyst. Through their training the psychoanalyst, it is argued, becomes the one who should know. Despite this knowledge however, the analyst is given all intimate details to help and add to the ubiquity of knowledge. "He must know, to him must be transmitted, through actual experience, what it is all about" (Lacan 1986:231). The analysand places the analyst in the position of knowledge, awaiting their ‘cure’. The analytic situation depends on this investment in the analyst’s capacity as *sujet supposé savoir*, even to the extent that the analyst begins to believe that they know. This was part of Freud's dilemma and failure in Dora’s case study. The desire of the psychoanalyst, intrinsic to their position as *sujet supposé savoir* is the trust from the analysand. Freud let his desire limit and complicates the psychoanalytic treatment and in a sense disrupted the economic dialogue between analyst and analysand because he did not return the ‘right’ words, or as Lacan argues, did not interpret the developments of truth correctly.
Transference helps to define the subjectivity that forms within the analytic situation. In locating the *sujet supposé savoir*, the analysand locates himself or herself, as they are able to create their identity based on their investment in analytic exchange. In the gift-giving process, through contextualising the giver in terms of receiving and reciprocity, the gift itself becomes the object that locates sites of subjectivity. As the analysand uses the transference in psychoanalysis to help situate them, the giver uses the gift in gift exchange to establish their identity and the ensuing role of the receiver. The subjectivity of giver also sets up the role of receiver and obligations of reciprocity, becoming the giver that is supposed to know. Each gifting becomes a site that depends on this investment and recognition of subjectivity. Invested in each subject position is the relationship of subject formation. In response to the position of the analyst as *sujet supposé savoir*, the analysand’s subjectivity depends on the dialogue within treatment, their subjectivity forms through the exchange in dialogue both in relations of power and knowledge.

The gift marks the point of investment of subjectivity in the relation between giver and receiver, as it allows the positions of giving and taking to recycle. In terms of Freudian psychoanalysis, it is repressed behaviour that is repeated or recycled within the transference. The object that signifies gift exchange is relatively insignificant compared to what it actually represents. The gift (or rather it is the representation of giftness) symbolises the capacity within gift exchange for renewal found in the excesses of history and repetition. In investing in the gift – or the exchange – the giver and receiver are investing in the cycle of exchanging subjectivities. Such a relationship of exchange parallels the *sujet supposé savoir* and analysand. Here both adopt subjectivities of giver and receiver – the *sujet supposé savoir* (analyst) as giver
of knowledge and interpretation, whereas the analysand is positioned as the receiver of such knowledge and interpretation. When reversed or exchanged, the positions of subjectivity can be read as analysand as giver of ‘words’ that the analyst receives in order to interpret and become the sujet supposé savoir. What this exchanging, reversing and shifting of subjectivities within the analytic situation (and within gift exchange) is arguing is that no subjectivity is intact and the act of giving is a subject-stabilising attempt to produce a sense of intactness. In The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, Freud gives an example of unconscious motivations and in the destruction of an object. Walking past a vase given as a gift Freud’s elbow knocks the object, smashing it to the ground. For Freud this destruction originates from his unacknowledged dislike of the gift-giver. This can be read as an unconscious tactic for the preservation of the subject through the denial of such despised gifts. The vase effectively threatens Freud’s subjectivity and his seemingly accidental breaking of it is motivated by the desire to preserve the self. This comparison can be extended further when one recalls that, in the essay on humour, Freud argues that the role of humour is to allow the superego to comfort the ego and protect it from external harm. This is part of the intactness of the subject and gift giving.

Their choice of gift needs to be recognised so that their subjectivity remains intact. The gift signifies the formation of subjectivity through its 'unveiling', as in revealing itself, the gift establishes certain relationships within gift exchange, between subject and Other, the Other and the gift, the gift and subject; but concurrently loses its giftness, “[t]he question is first, for each subject, where he takes his bearings from when applying to the subject who is supposed to know. Whenever this function may be, for the analyst, the transference ... is established” (Lacan 1986:233). For Lacan,
the analyst is the object of transference. Lacan argues that the analysand's lack of confidence in the initial phase of analysis "is the threat that the psychoanalyst may be deceived by him", (Lacan 1986:233) this is the threat of aphanisis. By the analysand being able to deceive the analyst - the analyst is no longer the sujet supposé savoir thus breaking down the transference, and the analysand is no longer able to invest his/her subjectivity in the analytic situation. The analysand is confronted with the fear of the loss of treatment as signifier that has come to represent their subjectivity. As will be discussed later, Cixous's conception of appropriation is formed on this premise of loss. Cixous believes this framing of economy has been “erected from a fear that, in fact, is typically masculine: the fear of expropriation, separation, of losing the attribute” (Cixous 1986:80). Lacan's argument is that the subject (analysand/giver in this example) invests certain signifiers with immense psychical value, so that their loss (or threatening loss) represents a loss of identity - here specifically in analysis and gift exchange.

Once the analysand has begun their psychoanalytic treatment, the circular economy of words has begun, signaling the process of exchange. Arguing countertransference (as a series of developments of truth and dialectical reversals) precedes positive transference is a strictly Lacanian approach. The countertransference for Lacan is the intervention on transference. However in order to argue transference as gift, it must be read as being part of the treatment within psychoanalysis. Ferrell claims that “transference then is more than a by-product of analysis; it becomes the vehicle of the treatment” (Ferrell 1996:51). Therefore, transference is present in the analysand’s developments of truth as without the trust in the analyst as sujet supposé savoir there is no dialogic basis for a return to their words. Transference works alongside
countertransference as the vehicle of the treatment. Lacan argues that in analysis, “the subject is, strictly speaking, constituted through a discourse, to which the mere presence of the psychoanalyst brings, before any intervention, the dimension, the dimension of dialogue” (Lacan 1985:93). As Freud states, "transference is an inevitable necessity. Practical experience...shows conclusively that there is no means of avoiding it" (Freud 1983:158). Transference as gift performs the same purpose as ‘vehicle’ in that it affords the analyst and the analysand a site for exchange. In becoming the sujet supposé savoir, the analyst is empowered by the analysand and similarly in receiving the gift, the receiver empowers the giver. This exchange operates on the economy of the movement of the gift and in this way the gift (object that is given) is a vehicle for gift exchange. It is as though the gift allows the entire process of gift exchange to occur on the premise that its existence is overlooked. In the same way, the transference enables treatment to succeed but cannot be foregrounded within analysis.

By placing transference as gift, the analyst's countertransference is questioned in terms of debt. In Freud's Dora, we find an example of how, by focusing on one aspect of a connection (in this case transference) another is ignored and/or not seen. Transferential processes and the process of the gift (which also necessarily includes the process of transferring the gift – that is the agency of giftness) operate under a veil as through only not announcing their presence can they continue to function. Once each becomes apparent, the dynamics shift and each process ends. The analysis ceases to continue and the gift no longer exists. Freud argues that "transference, which seems ordained to be the greatest obstacle to psychoanalysis, becomes its most powerful ally, if its presence can be detected each time and explained to the patient"
(Freud 1983:159). However, part of transference is resistance and in lifting the
repressed, unconscious desires of the analysand into their conscious, transference is
always being destroyed. As Lacan has noted, Freud's countertransference was ignored
and Freud wrote the case study of Dora in hindsight, allowing him to construct the
narrative with the transferential process in the foreground. However, not even in the
background does Freud acknowledge or cite his countertransference as part of the
analysis, despite its direct influence on his interpretation of the transference within
Dora and his relation with the analysand overall. This unbalanced interpretation (due
to Freud's own transference-love) causes Freud to consider his part in the reason for
Dora's cancellation of treatment. He distinguishes between a negative and positive
transference in psychoanalysis and attributes his failure of Dora’s analysis to not
being able to ascertain a positive transference, “I did not succeed in mastering the
transference in good time” (Freud 1983:160). His conception of a positive
transference was to explain to the analysand his/her own transferences rather than also
acknowledge his own countertransference, “I ought to have listened to the warning
myself. ‘Now’, I ought to have said to her, ‘it is from Herr K. that you have made a
transference on to me’” (Freud 1983:160). This statement is indirectly asserting
Freud's countertransference as he has placed himself in the position of Herr K - whom
he has thought to have been the object of Dora's affections. In stating he should have
explained Dora's transference on to him. Freud is reaffirming his transference-love for
Dora. Aside from Freud's analytical conclusions, his reasons for Dora's premature
cessation of treatment have a particularly acidic undertone to them. In explaining the
reasons for his failure as an analyst, Freud offers the reader a partial scorned lover’s
curse.
If cruel impulses and revengeful motives, which have already been used in the patient's ordinary life for maintaining her symptoms, become transferred on to the physician during treatment, before he has had time to detach the from himself ... then it is not to be wondered at if the patient's condition is unaffected by his therapeutic efforts.

(Freud, 1983:162)

The structure of transference and countertransference and the dialectic of the gift and the debt reveal a psychical exchange between analyst and analysand and also between the giver and receiver. Part of the argument here is that transference isn’t simply a metaphor or model of the gift, but it can only function and make sense in a context of giftness. In this way, Freud’s problem with Dora’s ‘dismissal’ of him like a servant is because she has refused a gift, and in doing so directly challenges Freud’s subjectivity. That such a challenge is embedded in ambiguity once more illustrates the impossibility of the gift and its polysemic nature. Such impossibility and polysemes produce a resistance to meaning that comes to define giftness. This contrived psychical exchange highlights respective ambiguities within each relationship. In such relationships one engages in the analysis of how the gift/debt circular economy operates within the impossible.

Before these comparisons between transference and countertransference and gift and debt can continue, the gift needs to be contextualised in terms of exchange, power-relations and gender positioning. Hélène Cixous’s consideration of the gift allows the thesis to consider the gift within a gendered economic frame. Comparing her perspective to Derrida's, we find the question of the gift adopts a stronger socio-cultural resonance reflecting more than simple exchange or ambiguous presence. Cixous’s argument disrupts the problematic of the gift in a number of ways, not the least being how it should be theorised. Considering the circular ambiguity of the gift
and the definition of giving subjectivities, allows us to move on to discuss Derrida’s idiom of the impossible possibility of the gift.

7.3 The circular ambiguity

Derrida argues that there is no such thing as a gift. For him it exists within, and typifies, the realm of the impossible, “the gift is the impossible. Not impossible but the impossible. The very figure of the impossible. It announces itself, gives itself to be thought as the impossible” (Derrida 1994c:7). The premise of Derrida's argument rests on the recognition of the function and the forgetting of the gift within gift exchange. He argues the gift does not exist in the process of exchange, but rather exists concurrently with debt. If a gift is to exist there must be no return.

For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt. If the other gives me back or owes me or has to give me back what I give him or her, there will not have been a gift, whether this restitution is immediate or whether it is programmed by a complex calculation of a long-term deferral or differance.

(Derrida 1994c:12)

The structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss is important to the whole formation of the 'exchange-value' of the gift, particularly within Derrida’s framing. Briefly, Lévi-Strauss differs between "two types of reciprocity, to which [he] gave the names restricted exchange and generalized exchange, restricted exchange being possible only in an even number of groups, generalised exchange being compatible with any number of groups" (Lévi-Strauss 1963:150). Concerning the gift, exchange functions as more of a generalised restrictive exchange, generalised because the gift applies to all situations, and restrictive because of its repetitive circular economy. Lévi-Strauss acknowledges this on pages 150-151 in Structural Anthropology (1963).
He decides that his distinction between restricted and generalised exchange was "naive, because it is still to close to the native's classifications...it is more reasonable and more efficient to treat restricted exchange as a specialised case of generalised exchange" (Lévi-Strauss 1963:150-151). Thus Lévi-Strauss acknowledges that exchange cannot be represented in a dualism (hence neither can the gift), rather it is a "guise [through which exchange] vainly tr[ies] to masquerade [in]" (Lévi-Strauss 1963:151). Champetier also notes that Derrida’s refusal to simultaneously deal with irreducible duality of gift and debt viewing “the gift as the indivisible part of a cycle of the circulation of commodities grounded on destitution and restitution – places Derrida in direct, conscious, and acknowledged opposition to the anthropological and ethnological tradition” (Champetier 2001:16). Champetier claims that Derrida repeats Lévi-Strauss’s critique in assuming the generalised exchange by viewing the hau as the “‘causal non-causal factor’ of the gift” (Champetier 2001:16). The interest of Champetier’s claim here exists in the interpretive gesture of gift economy. A key element that arises is that interpretation and interaction with something as intersubjective as the gift is predicated on constant potential misinterpretation. The inescapable Derridean legacy that any discussion of the gift owes a debt to is that his work reflects some of Mauss’s own conclusions, such as the “[g]oodness and happiness in the peace that has been imposed … in the mutual respect and reciprocating generosity that is taught by education” (Mauss 1990:83).

Derrida claims, “[a]t stake is a certain circle whose figure precipitates both time and the gift toward the possibility of their impossibility” (Derrida 1994c:6). Derrida relates the gift to economy through this circle motif, creating parallels of exchange and circulation. By creating this correlation of circle and gift, Derrida implies that
within the concept of the gift lies its own economy. The gift does not belong to an
economy; rather it creates its own through the laws of return and exchange. “This
motif of circulation can lead on to think that the law of economy is the - circular -
return to the point of departure, to the origin, also to the home” (Derrida 1994c:6-7).
This returns us to one of the most prevailing themes of the thesis, the paradox of the
gift. The ambiguity that surrounds the gift emerges not from its definition but from
the presence or lack of recognition. Ironically, this recognition is critical to the
machinations of the gift. The gift and the debt belong to the same process of exchange
but form two different sides, and whilst the act of giving can be acknowledged and
celebrated, the presence of the gift cannot. However the debt that belies the gift must
be acknowledged in order for the economy of gift to continue. It is the previously
argued excesses of history and repetition that forms this debt present in the gift and
the circle of gift exchange relies on the countergift (debt), as without return the gift
cannot be 'acknowledged' and the economy of exchange ceases. This ambiguity is
heightened when the gift's circular exchange is broken, through an act of donation for
example. However, in order to be aware of donation, one has to be aware of how to
primarily recognise the gift. Most donations today are tax deductible or arguably
morally deductible. The donation can be masked as a gift to oneself, cancelling out a
previous tax debt or balancing out a prior moral misdemeanor. In terms of charity,
donations function as circular gifts of good will and higher morality. To give in
donation is culturally regarded as a good rather than selfish act - by giving you are
also giving to yourself. In his famous work on blood relations, The Gift Relationship.
From Human Blood to Social Policy (1974), Richard Titmuss argues that the gift of
blood operates within a similar range of selfless/selfish acts, yet this is not the specific
focus or direction of the thesis here.
Gendering Economy

Derrida argues that in order for the gift to exist independently of its individual economy, “it must not circulate, it must not be exchanged, it must not in any case be exhausted, as a gift, by the process of exchange, by the movement of the circle in the form of return to the point of departure” (Derrida 1994c:7). The Derridean use of economy embraces the value of home (oikos) and law (nomos), allowing him to draw on the economic relativity of distribution and partition. Here Derrida is acknowledging a debt to the Hegelian nomos and autos, working to outline an economy and law of the self and other, and at the same time establishing the implication of acquisition and property. This signifies a symbolic exchange where questions of return, origin and self are attached to issues of appropriation, economy and exchange. And perhaps this is why Cixous sees the economy of the gift within a gendered context. For Cixous, it is not the subjectivities that are involved with the gift (specific of giver and receiver) that are gendered, but rather the economy of the gift. It is within the interpretation of the gift economy that is read as masculine or feminine. In his paper Logics of the Gift in Cixous and Nietzsche: Can we still be generous?, Schrift states, “[a]ccording to Cixous, current economic realities operate within what she calls ‘L’Empire du Propre,’ the ‘Empire of the Selfsame/Proper.’” (Schrift 2001:116). Schrift critiques the possible economy of generosity via a comparative analysis of Cixous and Nietzsche, his discussion regarding the validity of Cixous’s gender distinction is of particular interest here.
In *Castration or Decapitation?* (1981), Cixous claims that the economy of the proper, if based on foregrounding reciprocity as an economy of the *propre*, possession of private property and the need to accumulate, are reflective of a fear of loss. It is this fear of expropriation that Cixous sees as masculine. In *Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays* (1989), Cixous outlines her qualification of the masculine with reference to the gift, “[the masculine economy] always turn the gift into the gift-that-takes … [and] brings in a return. Loss, at the end of a curved line, is turned inot its opposite and comes back to him as profit” (Cixous, 1989:87). Her reference to the ‘curved line’ is an engagement with Derrida’s configuration of the gift and specifically refers to the issue of time that rules the economic dynamic. For Cixous, if the economy is to operate as masculine, time will always incite return, both in terms of expectation and obligation. This takes up the issues of feminine and masculine subjectivities that, as Schrift points out, Cixous sees as risky:

Cixous is aware of the risks of linking economy to anatomy in a way that suggests essentialism … she continues to use the qualifiers ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ is reference to economies because she regards these qualifiers as culturally operative signs that must be acknowledged if the forces that animate them are to be challenged and changed.

(Schrift 2001:117)

In order for a gift to exist, Derrida claims its presence cannot be recognised. A masculine economy of the gift waits for its return and its recognition. Once this occurs, the gift enters into the discourse of circular economy of debt, countergift and annulment, “according to the same circular ring that leads to 'giving back' ["rendre"], there is payment and discharge of a debt” (Derrida 1994c:12). Yet there is an instant wherein the gift can exist outside the confines of its economical exchange. This enters into Derrida's argument of time concerning the gift and its 'instant'. Derrida's argument is that the possibility of the gift rests on “the instant all circulation will have
been interrupted and on the condition of the instant” (Derrida 1994c:9); this instant exists as the focal point of the circular economy, what Cixous would argue supports a masculine economy, embodying both the gift's possibility and impossibility. This instant of time sustains the separation of giver to gift (or self and other) through the constant denial of a pure gift. This distinction between the relationship of self and other is also derived from Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* where, Cixous forms her gendered distinction on the same foundations of the acquisition of property.

As time passes the ambiguity that surrounds the gift appears in the method of recognition regarding the gift, debt, and the process of exchange. This 'instant' of possibility that Derrida argues lies at the core of the economy of the gift. The economy/circle of the gift is polysemic, encompassing the gift's possibility with much impossibility. A possible gift is that which is unrecognisable, an impossible gift is that which is recognisable; intimating that a gift's possibility exists through its impossibility and vice versa. The gift's presence is its ambiguity. The possible gift is clear from debt and exchange yet, as the ring of ambiguity and impossibility surrounds it, it can never be realised, “[t]here would be a gift only at the instant when the paradoxical instant (in the sense in which Kierkegaard says of the paradoxical instant of decision that it is madness) tears time apart. In this sense one would never have the time of a gift” (Derrida 1994c:9). It is vital that the gift remains outside the constraints of time, as time is what destroys giftness, always suggesting return and reciprocity. This is further discussed later in the section.

Cixous claims, “[w]ho could ever think of the gift as a gift-that-takes? Who else but man, precisely the one who would like to take everything?” (Cixous 1976:888).
Cixous's category of gift as feminine economy is not offered in opposition to 
Derrida’s masculine economy but as an alternative ironically provided precisely by 
the exclusion of phallocentrism. The lack of woman, their non-position is what 
Cixous sees as an essential element of creating a feminine economy, “[i]f there is a 
‘propriety of woman’, it is paradoxically her capacity to depropriate unselfishly: 
body, without end, without appendage, without principal ‘parts’” (Cixous 1976:889). 
Cixous contends that it is the masculine that views the gift in terms of debt and it is 
the feminine that views the gift in terms of lack of debt. Schrift notes that this form 
and non-position of woman-as-lack is want Cixous “wants to link to the possibility of 
writing” (Schrift 2001:118). Part of the giving economy, whether feminine or 
masculine, engages with a desire to produce. It is of no surprise that Cixous likens a 
feminine gift economy to *écriture feminine* as she sees the exclusion of woman as the 
very condition for writing and forming a separate feminine economy. In *The Author in 
Truth* (1991), Cixous further qualifies her idea of feminine economy in terms of 
writing and interestingly draws on a paradox similar to Derrida’s gift. The feminine is 
“The economy of positive lack” (Cixous 1991:164) and is simultaneously negative and 
positive, yet not at the consequence of negation. What emerges is a likeable 
irreducible duality that is present within the Derridean gift aporia.⁵ 

Cixous deliberately uses the French *voler* to implement its concurrent meanings of 'to 
fly' and 'to steal' with respect to the status of woman. Within the structure of this 
theoretical dialectic it is possible to read the gift in the Cixousian term of *voler*,

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⁵ This separation of purpose regarding gift economies has been made before, most notably with the 
Derrida’s analysis of the gift. With *Given Time* we have an analysis of the gift that invites other 
discursive engagement, different to traditional anthropological writings. Even within anthropology 
there exists two disciplines regarding treatment of gift exchange— as commodity and as personal gifts. 
literature that exists now on the gift reflects a completely different set of research disciplines from 
particularly with regards to the gift as feminine economy. Cixous argues that woman has been stolen within phallogocentric discourse and that she has been ignored and forced to exist and act within a masculine economy. “What woman hasn't flown/stolen? Who hasn't felt, dreamt, performed that gesture that jams sociality? ...Who, by some act of transgression, hasn't overthrown successiveness, connection, the wall of circumfusion?” (Cixous 1976:887-888; italics added). If woman's actions within a masculine economy are prescriptive of transgressions, then so too is the gift she engages with. However, Cixous argues that woman must free herself from patriarchal discourse - here the double meaning of voler comes into play. Woman must fly. By flying away from masculine economy and freeing herself of all its constraints ‘that jam sociality’, woman is able to establish her own gift, nor longer defined by masculine parameters of binaries or laws.

Cixous argues that a feminine economy reverses the Derridean definition of the gift. Within écriture feminine, the means through which a feminine economy can be realised, woman will no longer “appear as the one who is taken for; the bait in person, all veils unfurled, the one who doesn't give but who gives only in order to (take)” (Cixous 1976:888n). Rather woman's gift will transcend the structure of exchange and return. Woman will steal back from masculine economy in order to “dash through and to ‘fly’” (Cixous 1976:887) and implement her own debt-free gift. Voler demonstrates the gift because it should be impossible to steal a gift – that which is stolen is not a gift. Cixous’s point must be that the two economies (masculine and feminine) steal the signifiers of the gift from one another and in doing so negate the very qualities of giftness. It is not difficult to see how this would be applied in different contexts – the stealing of culturally defined gifts, for example. Cixous's gift as femininely inscribed
gives rise to a larger argument of power and authority when paralleled with Derrida's gift, defined within a masculine economy.

The economic debate between Derrida and Cixous has certain significance for the gift and debt when related to transference and countertransference. In *Dora*, both Freud and Dora embody the categories of gift and debt within the analytic situation, as well as illustrate certain gender stereotypes. The power structure in this particular psychoanalytic situation appears to benefit Freud through his position as analyst and render Dora in a less empowered position through her as analysand. From the perspective of sexual difference, it appears as though Freud manipulates his masculine position and dominates Dora’s culturally ‘inferior’ feminine position. However through the transference and countertransference, these occupations of place and space, relationships of power, and manipulations of gender become ambiguous. Dora's transference seems to be indicative of a potential disempowerment - yet Freud's own countertransference carries its own loss of power. As argued, Dora's transference functions as a gift as she ‘gives’ Freud the power to cure her hysteria and direct her treatment, through placing him in the position of the subject who is supposed to know. Dora's transference is a gift of knowledge to Freud, both as analyst and also as a gift to the masculine. From the first to the second dream, Dora is the disempowered analysand and female in distress. Towards the end of the second dream, the power relations begin to reverse between Freud and Dora. Freud's countertransference is the countergift (the debt), signaling the reversal of gift and debt and his masculinity (and personal need to be loved or desired by Dora) clouds his interpretation.
In this particular example, Freud's countertransference is indicative of debt as it presents itself in response to Dora's transference. Through his inability to detect his own countertransference, Freud loses his primary power as analyst. In a moment that Cixous would enjoy, Dora is empowered and in response to Freud’s inability to affect a positive transference, takes control of her treatment through her independent decision to end it. By not registering his countertransference, Freud also does not open his mind to other possible transferences and limits his interpretation to the possible transference between himself and Herr K, “transference took me unawares ... because of the unknown quantity in me which reminded Dora of Herr K., she took her revenge on me as she wanted to take her revenge on him, and deserted me as she believed herself to have been deceived and deserted by him”(Freud 1983:161). The emotion of Freud's words ('revenge', 'deserted') indicates that the blindness to his countertransference interrupted the analysis. Freud's writing up of the case study was done in hindsight and still his countertransference goes undetected. This invites the possibility for countertransference to be placed in the position of both gift and debt. It functions as debt when intervening (as Lacan would argue) or responding to the transference, yet as Freud was unaware of his transference, does this indicate that his debt is a possible gift rather than impossible? The recognition of the gift returns to the Derridean notion of ambiguity. The possibility of the gift represented in its non-recognition and its impossibility represented in ambiguous recognition.

Correlating transference and countertransference to the respective gift economy, the implication arises that countertransference is a ‘given’ concerning the presence of transference. Without transference there is no countertransference, but more importantly, transference cannot exist independently from countertransference. The
relationship of transference and countertransference holds intrinsic notions of giving and taking, power and authority - all of which are infused with ambiguity. Ambiguity is dependent on the constant reversibility of transference and countertransference and the gift and the debt - highlighting the impossible nature of the gift.

7.4 The Impossible Possible, The Possible Impossible

Recognition of the gift is the key to its impossibility. For without recognition the gift is able to remain possible, “the simple identification of the gift seems to destroy it” (Derrida 1994c:14). As the gift is susceptible to multiple semiotic coding, so too is it open to multiple readings of how it is rendered. As multiple readings of the gift occur, for example the gift existing in both transference and countertransference concurrently as gift and as debt, its ambiguity is prominent and hence its impossibility. To explicate the impossibility of the gift even further, we need not look past the varying hermeneutic arguments from Cixous, Derrida and Lacan. Cixous interprets the gift as a gift-that-does-not-take, whereas Derrida sees the gift as a gift-which-takes. For Lacan, his interpretation of the gift can be realised through applying his discussion of the sujet supposé savoir - placing the gift as the gift of knowledge.

The gift is impossible for Derrida because of its ritual of debt. Through this ritual, Derrida explores concepts of forgetting, truth and desire in relation to the gift as dependant on time. It becomes apparent within these parameters of the Derridean gift economy that the gift is possible because of its impossibility. Derrida writes, “there is gift, if there is any, only in what interrupts the system as well as the symbol, in a partition without return and without division [répartition], without being-with-self of
the gift-counter-gift” (Derrida 1994c:13). If the gift is to give anything for Derrida then it is that which supports it as masculine economy – time, “the given of the gift arrives, if it arrives, only in narrative” (Derrida 1994c:41). Whereas Cixous's gift interrupts the system as it waits for no return and is not dependant on time. The gift in a feminine economy does not forget that it is a gift and does not give with the desire of reciprocity. Rather this feminine gift gives freely within a discourse that has already stolen and taken from woman. Cixous's gift is able to interrupt the system, as it exists outside of masculine economical parameters, indebting itself not to debt but rather to its absence. What can be seen as striking contrasts between Derrida and Cixous are more striking as similarities. Both theorists recognise the gift in terms of debt (or lack) but it is how their debt is linked to recognition that defines their gift's impossibility/possibility. Hence the two dialectics can be presented as inter-dependent, that of the gift/debt and the possible/impossible (no in respective order). Cixous recognises the gift as that which expects no return and Derrida views the gift as relying on return.

Each theorist, regardless of return, invokes the concept of exchange. Cixous's exchange appears in terms of lack. Her gift exists because it has no debt. Derrida's exchange is dependent on debt; his economy is because of the gift/debt relation. What is ironic is that whilst these are the premises of each claim, both are argued from a reverse standpoint. Cixous - to negate the debt within gift - reasons from a strict possibility of the gift, to emphasis its impossibility with masculine economy. Derrida - to reinforce debt and negate the gift – claims an impossible gift, to emphasise its dependence on return. Derrida's notion of forgetting implies an alteration regarding the possible impossibility of the gift. If one does not remember that they are giving,
then a gift exists? Derrida argues that “the forgetting ... if it is constitutive of the gift, is no longer a category of the psyche. It cannot be unrelated to the forgetting of Being, in the sense in which Blanchot also says, more or less, that forgetting is another name of Being” (Derrida 1994c:23). To forget implies knowledge and knowledge is recognition. On this level the gift, according to Derrida, would be annulled. Therefore to state the gift as impossible, its possibility must be considered, for what is impossible if it is not possible? Derrida circumscribes the gift's possibility to the realm of the instant and then defines the instant as impossible, “[t]he truth of the gift ... suffices to annul the gift ... The truth of the gift is equivalent to the non-gift or to the non-truth of the gift ... That is why it is caught in the impossible of a very singular double bind, the bond without bond of a bind and a non-bind” (Derrida 1994c:27).

This illustrates that even in the situation of donation, where one assumes that the donor is not expecting a return, there is no instant wherein a memory without the gift exists. For the instant wherein the gift is possible, it is also made impossible through the acknowledgement of its giving. The donor realises that they are giving regardless of the fact that no material countergift is expected. This is the split-instant where the gift becomes possible through its impossibility, and impossible through its possibility.

Cixous would respond that no impossibility is attached to the gift - her feminine gift. Cixous also equates her gift with woman's love, “[s]he gives that there may be life, though transformation ... [w]herever she loves, all the old concepts of management are left behind” (Cixous 1976:893). Thus, to call the gift impossible, to state it exists without the desire of return, is to call love impossible and state that it exists without
the desire of return. Derrida argues in a direct diametric “a gift without wanting, without wanting-to-say, an insignificant gift, a gift without the intention to give? Why would we still call that a gift? That, which is to say what?” (Derrida 1994c:27). Herein lies the recognition of the inevitable impossibility of the gift. Both Derrida and Cixous discuss the concept of the gift within their own separate economies determining their possibility and impossibility based on how each is recognised.

To measure the impossibility of the gift, its possibility needs to be considered. In this sense the relation between gift and desire provides enough scope for the conception of the possible impossible and impossible possible to surface.

For finally, if the gift is another name of the impossible, we still think it, we name it, we desire it. We intend it. And this even if or because or to the extent that we never encounter it, we never know it, we never verify it, we never experience it in its present existence or in its phenomenon.

(Derrida 1994c:29)

What enables this reversing dialectic to exist is the ambiguity that serves to validate and concurrently refute the gift. This ambiguity is what defines Derrida’s gift. While Derrida contends that the gift is impossible, he considers its possibility despite its existence being confined to the instant - the instant where possibility and impossibility meet. Cixous's theory of the feminine gift, the gift-which-does-not-take, gives credence to the notion of the impossible possible. Within a feminine economy, gift - with all its ties to lack and debt - exists “[e]lsewhere, [where] she gives” (Cixous 1976:893). What becomes clear is that it is the recognition or non-recognition of the gift that defines its possibility and impossibility. The gift is possible through impossibility and impossible through its possibility. Schrift asks the question:

This idea engages with the Barthesian concept of *I-love-you* wherein "*I-love-you* has no 'elsewhere' ... *I-love-you* is not a sentence; it does not transmit meaning, but fastens onto a limit situation" (Barthes 1990:148).
[i]f we depart from the more traditional accounts of gift exchange that presuppose a misrecognition or forgetting of the debt that its reception entails, would this allow us to avoid describing gift-giving practices as a misrecognition of what is in reality reciprocal exchange?

(Schrift 2001:120)

He is questioning the imposition and limitation of these Hegelian ideals that are applied to the economic aesthetic of the gift, seeking a freedom from “the oppositional logic of ‘self vs. all others’” (Schrift 2001:120). Schrift is clearly reflecting his Nietzschian and Cixousian bias here, yet his questions are significant if we are to truly listen to Cixous’s alternative logic of the gift.
Notes towards a Conclusion: On Giftness

The relationship between the gift and giftness is a precarious one. On presentation, the gift demands recognition even amidst discursive instability. The connection between giftness and the gift operates as a meaningful intentionality in a highly unstable signifying process and in doing so produces a series of consequences. Fundamental to this is that the gift circulates as a cultural force. In other words the gift is determined not by its signifiers, but the reciprocity of cultural relations that are formed through its existence. The gift circulates, and in doing so enables the circulation of other cultural forces. This is due in part to the sliding nature of the gift in terms of its meaning: Who can ever really know what a gift means? Who can ever be sure of the exchange system of a gift? And it is due in part because of the demands made by the gift process. The gift may reside in presents (to speak literally) but its presence must always remain uncertain. Meaning is arrested through the gift system, which in turn brings into question how the gift can be represented at all.

To understand the gift, then, involves more than noting its modes of representation. The life cycles of the gift (including the cultural constructions of giftness) operate in terms of discursive practices, where enunciating the gift is invested in social spaces, transgressive moments, and the formation of subject positions. And it is precisely because of this glissement that the space of the gift becomes located outside of, underneath, and beside the dominant cultural orders. Even the most complacent, most hegemonic gift harbours disruption because it feeds into those spaces located as otherness – the liminal, utopic, carnivalesque, and disturbing. In doing so the gift’s reciprocity comes to challenge social space and the praxis of subjectivity.
The reason for this disturbance is because within the slide of meaning and interpretation, within the moments of gift giving and receiving, exists a domain of pleasure and play that is paradoxical. The paradox of repetition and the *fort-da* of play produce a critique of the frame that encircles the gift process. Subjectivities become invested in the gift, and because the gift resists interpretation, a certain type of fear is produced. The desire attached to the gift becomes transferral, and the investment becomes one of power and knowledge. In such contexts all relationships become part of giftness, all interaction become modalities of exchange. The political economy (examples include the state’s gift of security against outside threat and the preservation of the Law), the body (as clean and proper, as abject, as the sign of punishment and visibility), and the visual text are part of the enunciation of the gift, as well as how the gift enunciates these cultural discourses.

And yet despite all of these complex relations, errors of reading, disturbances of space, the gift remains one of the most profound and sustained social processes. Cultures, and the subjectivities within them, need the gift for a great many reasons. Not the least of these is because the gift defines relationships. Cultures (including their visual formations) define themselves through their giftness; subjectivities are formed according to the ways in which they are positioned as givers or receivers. Even in the most destabilised of examples, the gift remains attached to the ways in which a culture produces meaning for itself. The capacity to give remains embedded in the identification of both culture and subject. Without such a capacity all that is left is demand.
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