

Historicizing as a Feminist Practice.

The Places of History in Judith Butler's Constructivist Theories.

Historiseren als feministisch project.

De plaats van geschiedenis in het constructivisme van Judith Butler.

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

Katriina Honkanen

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1. Introduction: Stating the problem

I believe, indeed, that we are all suffering from a consuming fever of history and ought at least to recognize that we are suffering from it (Nietzsche 1983, 60)

Historicizing and re-writing histories are usually considered as necessary and positive operations in academic settings. To treat concepts or objects ahistorically or to write universalizing historical narratives is considered negative. When discussing an object or concept, a sense of epistemological certainty is achieved by referring to the historical specificity of it. Also, constructivist theories often refer to the *historicity* of constructions; whatever has a history is contingent and *thus* constructed. To understand the meaning of an object often requires knowledge about its history and its historical emergence. The present state of things is explained through the historicity of meaning. Our understanding of sexuality, for instance, can be explained through investigating how the meanings of sexuality were historically produced. I point at these tendencies, which I have encountered within academic settings, as indicators of the epistemological value that historical knowledge, or a *consuming fever of history*, has gained in feminist thinking. It is my wish to contribute to feminist theoretization¹ on issues in relation to historicity. Inspired by the feminist critique of historicism I propose that the predominant state of theory within feminism is enabled by the epistemological hegemony of historicizing constructivism. I want to discuss the *metanarrative status* that history has gained. I claim that feminist constructivist arguments depend on such aspects of historical thinking that are otherwise problematized by feminist epistemologists. One of these aspects is foundationalism, with another being universalism.

My interest in the philosophy of history arose from a desire to figure out the twofold task that is so often voiced as the goal for feminist theories and feminist histories. Firstly, there is a need to rewrite history. This has meant going back to historical sources,

¹ Felski 2000, Ermarth 2001, 1992, Colebrook 1996, 1997, 1999, Irigaray 1999.

seeking out information about women and writing the histories of women. The task of re-writing history has been the responsibility of historians of women. The historical narratives focusing on women could also be used as tools in pointing at the inadequacies of universal histories. Another narrative in relation to mainstream history is created as women are made the subjects of history (Shapiro 1994, Scott 1996, Steedman 1994).

Secondly, there is an epistemological approach within feminist theorizing that stresses the importance of historicizing concepts, categories, differences and identities (Scott 1996, 1, Kellner 1998, 42). This approach means that identities or objects are not considered as *ahistorical givens* that have had an effect on the course of history in various ways, but rather, that the categories and concepts are *themselves* historical, in need of an historical investigation to be understood in their (historical) specificity. To put it briefly, I was puzzled by the shifts in perspective: an ontological understanding of history seemed to be in opposition to an epistemological understanding, or a conceptual approach to history seemed to be opposed to an empirical approach.

The twofold requirement to be both a historical realist (and empiricist) *and* to account for the epistemology behind that realism (that is, the construction of that *real*) has shaped and remolded the writing of history and the theories of history. Hans Kellner discusses the challenge that historians faced using the metaphor of the Galilean telescope: the Galilean telescope was a modernist device through which the independent historian-subject used to look at the past. The Galilean telescope, in the shape of historical method, showed the historian her object of investigation – the reality that now was past. In this empiricist understanding the historian could grasp the actual reality of the past. The linguistic turn of the late twentieth century transformed the telescope (Kellner 1995, 14). The telescope has become *language*. Today history also has

been pushed towards a full-blown concept that language constitutes the knowable world, limits the ways in which we can know and represent it, and offers us as natural what is in fact conventional (Kellner 1995, 14).

The realism and empiricism that history is still built on may seem naive from a linguistic point of view:

At the same time, historians just as routinely behave as though their research were into the past, as though their writings were “about” it, and as though “it” were as real as the text which is the object of their labours (Kellner 1995, 10).

When I analyze the places of history in Judith Butler's constructivism I am aware of this tension between the real and the constructed. As the tension between the real and constructed is too broad to adequately engage with I have narrowed it down to the form-matter distinction by using this distinction as an analytical tool (I will return to this later). I am especially interested in the ways that feminist constructivist theories at times use history as if it was “about” the past and as though “it” were as real as the text that refers to “it”. In what ways do feminists use the words ‘history’, ‘historicity’ and ‘historicizing’? What grammar do these words have in feminist theoretical language?

I am interested in looking at the ways in which historicity is used in feminist theories to see where and how it stands as a ground for knowledge, as this is one of the strongest employments of the word ‘history’. History is *origin*; it is *our past*. Where can I find this usage of the word ‘history’ in feminist theorizing and why is this particular usage effective in those particular arguments? The different uses of ‘history’ imply different textual purposes. What is gained by understanding the word history as meaning *being about the past*? There is an alternation between understanding history as fully discursive and understanding it as representing the past and the things that actually happened *there*. The strongest usage of the word ‘history’ implies an understanding where *history has happened* and is *for real*. I argue that especially constructivist thinking needs to use this realist aspect of history in its arguments. The connection between ‘history’ and ‘real’ is made in arguments like ‘some thing is not natural but constructed *because* it has a history’. *Having* a history is conceptualized as real, it tells us about the ‘real’ character of the phenomenon in question.

In this dissertation I will look at the different uses of the word history that can be found in feminist work. For example, history can be used in constructivist arguments in an attempt to counter essentialism:

While acknowledging the particular needs of concrete women, Riley steers a path between essentialist identity and the “airy indeterminacy” of dissipation by insisting on the historicity of sexed identity – on the fact that “women is historically, discursively constructed...” (Shapiro 1994, 10).

In this example, where Ann-Louise Shapiro describes Denise Riley’s work, constructivism is coupled with historicity to enable an “indeterminate” or shifting understanding of “woman” instead of an ‘essentialist’ one. This usage of history is, in a myriad of versions, the most common in feminist texts (Riley 1996, Scott 1996, Butler 1993, Fraser and Nicholson 1990) and it is such a general constructivist argument within feminist theorizing that I devote the most attention to discussing the underlying assumptions of this kind of argumentation. I find that this particular usage is clearest in the connections that it makes between constructivist thinking and various usages of “history”. When I do close readings of Judith Butler’s theories I do so with this question in mind: why is it so that things are considered as constructed *because* they are *historical*? To look at the places of history in one particular constructivist theory is also to gain a deeper understanding of the question on a more general level.

History can also be used as an explanative context for *meanings*. Phenomena are placed in *their historical context* and the very intelligibility of phenomena is grounded in an idea of them being embedded in a historical context. In these cases the historical and explanative context can be *the nation, the state, modernism, enlightenment*, that is to say, broader ‘periods’ or structures, which can be seen to consist of their own inner meanings and possibilities. This contextualizing employment of ‘history’ can often be seen already in subject matters like *women in modernity*, or *women and modernity*, *the nation*, *the state* and so on.

Entities like *the modern* or *the state* operate as contexts. Contexts need some general characteristics to be operative in positive ways *as contexts* for the varying meanings of, for example, ‘woman’. The word ‘history’ acquires particular grammars in these textual operations and the grammars of the term ‘history’ effect and enable various feminisms. Feminist should theorize this kind of strongly context-dependent usage of historical meta-categories, especially if feminists simultaneously wish to change the

meta-narratives or false universalities that historical accounts of the *nation*, *the state*, *modernism* and *enlightenment* often are based upon. Historians of women have criticized the inadequacy of historical periodization for some time now (e.g. Zemon Davis 1996, 92, Bennet 1994).

I consider all usages of history political. To *mention* history in one's work does not mean that you escape the realm of politics, or that the arguments stand outside epistemological responsibilities in a 'safe house' of historical transparency. As much as history can be used to explain political differences it is itself political difference. Politics lies in the grammars of the word 'history' and the fact that different grammars obey different rules. To reveal some history as ideologically biased is usually to deprive it of its legitimacy as history. History has to be about the 'real', about facts and not about 'ideology' or politics. Neither can it be equated with literature without losing its special character as history. This, the grammar of history and the way we think it and use it, is a realm that I call *historicity as a mode of thought*. It is perhaps on this level that history reveals its rule of grammar and where the strict rule of truth instead of fiction and politics is generally followed.

It is commonly acknowledged that *particular* historical accounts cannot claim to be true in any objective or universal sense. Particular histories, though, can be regarded as political. The truth and legitimacy invested in *historicity in general* is, however, seldom questioned. Historicity as a mode of thought has a truth-value of another order. Historical accounts should make true statements at the same time accounting for the particularity of every truth. Even the practice of historicizing particularities is based on the reliance on the truth-value of historicity. It is based on a reliance on the grammar and the conventional usage of the word 'history'.

The idea of historicity can, for example, be used as proof of arguments. History itself can become proof of the ahistorical treatment of women. This means that it is possible to argue that *history itself*² proves and legitimates theoretical arguments within

² Interestingly enough, a concept of history that makes it possible to think of history as singular, as "history itself" has a history. There is a complexity involved in considering the ways in which history is usable: I use conceptual history here to argue that the idea of *history itself* has a history and that for this reason one can problematize the use of *history itself* as historical proof. For a conceptual historical account of *history in itself* see Koselleck, 1985, Koselleck 2002.

feminism. In this usage “history” contains examples of differences among women; varying “historical contexts show” that woman is constructed, that it is not a natural or a common identity; the fact that concepts and meanings can be shown to “have a history” means that experiences must be historicized to be understood correctly:

The desire to legitimize feminist claims about women in order to consolidate an effective feminist political movement treats “women” uniformly and so *ahistorically*. But the creation of women as subjects of history places them temporally in the contexts of their action, and explains the possibilities for such action *in terms of those contexts*. Thus *history contains* examples of fundamental differences, in experience and self-understanding among women... (Scott 1996, 4, emphasis added).

History is understood as a temporal context, and as a context has ‘its terms’. The *terms* of historical contexts are made explanatory in a contextualizing usage of history. History also provides a corrective for instance to the essentialist tendencies of feminist politics (Scott 1996, 5). Truth and history are set against politics and history. Therefore, in order to avoid writing ideologically, feminists need to historicize. Even if historicity is an excellent critical tool against ideological representations it does not, however, at the same time allow for a questioning of history as such (Nancy 1990, 152), or for a questioning of *history itself*. When we utilize the grammars of ‘history’ we cannot analyze them.

The questions that I ask are connected to ideas about the *ahistorical*. What does the negative notion *ahistorical* tell us about the positive content of ‘history’? To question historicity also means to ask what the idea of history looks like when it is understood as something that *contains examples* and something that provides a *context* for meanings and representations. There is, in fact, a range of possible questions that can be raised here. What histories are we going to use as contexts when we historicize? Or does historicizing in itself imply a re-writing of history? If historical contexts are seen to have ‘terms’ – *of what* are these terms? Are these terms historical norms? Are necessities and norms ‘the stuff’ that history is made of? Where do these ‘norms’ reside? Are we to understand history as destiny?

If “essence” means the historical sedimentation of many-layered discursive products, this stock of culturally coded definitions, requirements and expectations about women or female identity – this repertoire of regulatory fictions that are tattooed on our skins - then it would be false to deny that such an essence not only exists, but is also powerfully operational. History is everyone else’s and hence also women’s destiny (Braidotti 2002, 41).

As we contextualize our categories, and problematize them through the idea of historicity and temporality, could this simultaneously imply a problematizing of the very foundation that enables historicizing? When the practice of historicizing is understood as some kind of universally legitimate way to ground knowledge claims, what this means in an interdisciplinary scientific setting, is that all disciplines have become/are historical. If this is the case, where does it leave historians of women? Is there ever a possibility for feminists to think unhistorically? Is the repetition of historicity a necessary operation for feminist theorizing? Should feminist theorists historicize using accounts of women’s history in order to create meanings that go beyond mainstream histories? Should feminist theorists, for instance, avoid using the historical periodization *modern, enlightenment* and such, periodizations that historians of women have pointed out to be inadequate? What does it mean to understand historical requirements as a destiny for ‘everyone’? What theoretical necessity turns history into ‘norms’, ‘expectations’ and ‘power’? Can we analyze this grammar of ‘history’?

What does it mean to make contextual knowledge claims through recourse to history – to argue that x can only be understood through the history of x? How is it possible, in general, to legitimize claims for knowledge through a reference to history? What is this history? For a feminist theory arguing against false universalism, the questioning of the uses and understandings of history in theoretical argumentation is a crucial one. Questioning historicity is crucial in order to avoid universalizing the idea of history and to analyze how it is used as a foundation.

When Nancy Fraser and Linda J. Nicholson claim that the discipline of philosophy has retained a position as elaborator of the basic principles by which all

claims to knowledge are to be judged (Fraser and Nicholson 1990, 2), they make this claim from within a historical narrative. I argue that it is this very possibility for history and its various usages that has retained a position as elaborator of the principles for knowledge. Elizabeth Ermarth phrases it as follows:

History has become a commanding metanarrative, perhaps *the* metanarrative in Western discourse (Ermarth 1992, 20).

Ermarth also argues that history has replaced mythology and fulfills the same function (Ermarth 1992, 25) as a mythological collective consciousness. I attempt to simplify the problem of history by trying to conceptualize it as a grammar. I am interested in the rules of use that we connect to the word ‘history’, its range of application and the variations of its legitimate use. My analyses of Judith Butler’s constructivist theories aim to explicate the legitimate usage of historicity in her constructivist theories. To seek the discursive limits of ‘history’ is simultaneously to look for places where a strategic forgetting of history might open up new theoretical landscapes and questions. To explicate and analyze the *correct* theoretical usage of the word history is to seek for particular discursive limits of “history” in specific theoretical accounts. Explicating the limits is possible through a strategic forgetting of history. My reading is a *counter-reading* that opens up a space for a philosophy of history – a space ruled by *virtual non-historicity*. I will come back to the theme of strategic forgetting and virtual non-historicity at several points later. It is a red thread discussed throughout this dissertation.

I would also like to stress the significance for feminisms to consider the epistemological *and* ontological aspects of history. The way history is used at the present and the place it has in contemporary feminist theorizing is partly explained through the consequences that the linguistic turn has had. My interest in the *historicity of meaning* and also in *history as meaning* stems from the effects of the linguistic turn. I understand the linguistic turn quite literally here. The hegemony of historicism has a connection to the emphasis on language, discourse and meaning that has become predominant also in feminist theorizing.

From a classical empiricist point of view, it could be claimed that my account disregards finite historical meanings and structures. That is to day, I do not investigate historicizing as a historian would, explaining differences in these practices by situating them in their particular historical contexts, claiming that historicizing has developed in this or that way within feminism because feminism is a part of a larger history of the writing and understanding of history. In a simple way my work aims at disregarding these kinds of explanations, although I am not at all certain that this kind of simplistic disregarding could ever be possible. Historicity is a disturbing phenomenon in as such as it enables us to think of meaning as historical and of truth in the past tense, that is, as a *depository* of all the narratable events that have happened in the past. I try to be *linguistic* in the sense that I concentrate on the grammar of the word 'history' which of course leads me to a large number of related words, such as 'historicity', 'historicizing', and 'historical'.

I will give tentative definitions to the central concepts that I work with. So far I have referred to history as a *word*. I do so because I want to stress my approach: I intend to look at the usages of 'history' and its *grammar*, so to speak. Different usages and different grammars show the different meanings of the word 'history'. These meanings, or usages, can be understood as concepts and as ideas about 'history'. To define history as a concept would mean that one explains the way one uses the word and what rules one follows, what general idea one has of history.

Usually, the word 'historicity' is understood as referring to the historical genuineness of an alleged event, or a phenomenon, as in the 'historicity of Sappho' or the 'historicity of Antigone's family relations'. With this usage, historicity could be substituted with the word 'historicality'. What becomes clear in chapter three is that my usage of historicity has mainly been influenced by the work of Martin Heidegger and Luce Irigaray. As this entire dissertation is an investigation into aspects of *historicity* and its connection to 'constructivism' and meaning, I discuss these words in depth in the following chapters (historicity in chapter three and constructivism in chapter four). The definitions that I give to these key concepts in this chapter are to be seen as preliminary and suggestive. The definitions are indicative of the way I approach these phenomena and of the way I use the words in this dissertation.

With historicity I refer to a mode of thought³ that enables the entity history to become an object of science, for instance, or to become a personal investment, or a shared horizon of reality, or a narrative (Heidegger 1962). Historicity is part of the way we think. At times I have chosen to write *the language of history*, *the grammar of history*, and *the word history*. I do this to highlight the fact that I analyze rhetoric. I look for different ways in which the word history is used. In what sentences can it be used? What are the rules of grammar that control the intelligibility of the word 'history' and what are the limits of this language in the particular text under analysis (for example Judith Butler's theory of performative in *Excitable Speech*)? I use the word 'word' to distance my self from the heavy reality-effect that the ordinary understanding of the word 'history' carries.

In my usage, the word history refers to the different ways in which historicity, the historical part of our thinking, is made use of (White 1987). 'History' refers to accounts that are told or written within historicity, within the language of history. All different histories are enabled by historicity as a mode of thought. The word history also refers to an understanding of *history as the past*. With the word 'historicizing' I refer to practices of knowledge construction within historicity. Historicizing is a set of techniques used to construct *histories*. This use of the word 'historicizing' departs from the ordinary grammar of the word. Usually, historicizing is used talking about 'taking into account the historicity of a phenomenon', or when 'accounting for' the historicity that a phenomenon is thought to have.

My thesis argues that that the rules of grammar that are connected to the word history should be theorized. It argues that these powerful rules direct thinking. My thesis sets out to show how and where Judith Butler's theories are historicist. As Judith Butler's theories are widely cited and discussed within women's studies and feminist theories the predominance of historicity in her theoretization has consequences for the whole field. On a general level the language of history can be seen to follow some basic rules. The rule of *history as the past* makes history usable as an *elsewhere*. The past is

³ If I were to argue here that *historicity as a mode of thought* has a history of its own, I could not be sure whether this argument was enabled by the very mode of thought that I would at the same time be claiming to have a *history of its own*.

understood as *strange* and temporally gone and this elsewhere is used as a foundation for contextualizing varying meanings. The rule of context-dependency stems from the fact that historical objects are ontologically constituted as *things belonging to the past*. Historical objects are seen to belong to a particular temporal context of the past and no other. The rule of 'the real' requires that these contexts of the past are factual and not fictitious. Without this empirical 'truthfulness' history makes no sense as history and becomes literature. The rule of chronology is closely connected to the rule of 'the real'. As chronological time is defined by the fact that it can be measured and dated it is one of the basic factualities that historical narratives have to follow. I will explore these rules and discuss how they can be seen to be operative in Judith Butler's theories. I will also generally discuss the connections between constructivist thinking and historicity. In the following passage I will present the structure of the dissertation.

The structure of the dissertation

Chapter two accounts for my theoretical background both in feminist theory and women's studies and in the philosophy of history.

In chapter three I explicate my understanding of historicity. I discuss the grammar of the word 'historicity' and present some uses and restrictions that I have found in connection to this word. I will clarify what it means to understand historicity as a mode of thought by showing how the meanings of objects are constructed as historical. I point at the interconnectedness of historicity and temporality. I problematize the ontological historicity of concrete materialities, such as the 120 000 objects in The Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The arguments in this chapter present a reading of historicity where its relation to chronology and contextuality is explicated. I argue that the empiricism underlying the language of history is a fundamental aspect of its referential nature. In order to question the taken-for-granted historicity of objects I present Irigaray's critique of the way that objects are understood to *belong*. According to Irigaray, the self-evident historicity of objects is enabled by a forgetting of materiality. I find that it is relevant for feminist theories of corporeality to discuss this forgetting. The second part of chapter three discusses aspects of temporality. I present different temporal ideas that I develop further

in relation to historicity and theories of performativity (in chapter five). I present *Chronos*, *Kairos* and *Aion* and discuss temporality through these modes of temporality. I will also raise questions concerning some aspects of 'space-time'. I clarify the role of temporality in Judith Butler's theoretization through an analysis of Butler's texts and the elements of chronology, linearity, contingency and infinitude that can be 'found' in them. Terms such as "always already", "pre" and "before" are examples of the temporal language that Butler uses. I discuss the presentism in Butler's theory of the performative and consider its relation to chronology.

In chapter four I turn to constructivist arguments. I consider how and where constructivist arguments need and use the word 'historicity'. The chapter is based on a discussion of Judith Butler's constructivist argumentation in her theory of "materialization". From a historico-philosophical perspective I illustrate how Judith Butler's theory of materialization is a theory of productive historical forms. I suggest that chronology has a central role in constructivism; it seems to be a hegemonic logic. When problematizing the hegemony of historicity in feminist constructivist arguments I use the form-matter distinction as an analytical tool. With the help of this tool I discuss feminist theories of corporeality and argue that a privileging of the form over matter delimits the possibilities to theorize the vitality of matter.

I discuss the consequences of a historization of the "constitutive outside" using Judith Butler's texts as an example. The space for questioning the interrelatedness of historicity and language is radically delimited if the constitutive outside is historicized. With the help of Irigaray's work, I argue that historicizing the constitutive outside hinders feminist theories of corporeality in thinking through the materiality that lies behind the language of history.

Chapter five examines the constructivist elements of performative theories. Where and when does "history" and its variations matter in Judith Butler's performative theory? I discuss the distinction between performative speech acts and constative speech acts. I argue that historical sentences are defined by their constative nature whereas performative speech acts are characterized by their present-centeredness. Thereby, performativity does not operate in the same manner in relation to historical sentences and sentences that are connected to the past or the imperfect tense. Historical sentences are

regarded as true or false descriptions of facts. This is also the definition that J. L. Austin gives to constitutive sentences (Laitinen & Rojola 1998). On the basis of this distinction I problematize Judith Butler's argument that performative speech acts are enabled by historicity. I ask what kind of constantivity the performative speech act is based on and argue that the power of constantivity embedded in 'history' is a force, which itself constitutes a convention. It is this convention, the convention of the language of history that is used performatively in Judith Butler's theory. In chapter five, I discuss further how a chronological understanding of iterability differs from a cairologic understanding of iterability. The present-centeredness of performative theories and the nature of iterability are more compatible with a cairologic time-conception.

As this dissertation is philosophical and theoretical its method is close reading. I do a textual analysis based on the theoretical frame that I introduce in chapter 2. I conceptualize the philosophy of history as a set of questions concerning history and I have posed these questions in reading Judith Butler's theoretization. My method is a counter-reading, or a deconstruction of historicity in Judith Butler's theoretization. I work through testing arguments that are concerned with history or historicity. Usually, this kind of method is not considered 'empirical'. I have to say that while sitting and highlighting words such as "always already" and "history" in texts written by Judith Butler I felt minutely empirical. Textual analysis, such as this, is concrete and practical. It is deconstructive in the sense that I have been looking for 'outsides', limits and aporias in connection to historicity. The philosophical idea of a strategic forgetting of history enables a deconstructive reading of a predominantly historicist theorist. A deconstructive method within a philosophy of history implies that you trace the possibilities for outsides, *unmeaning* and nothingness and by doing this open up spaces where it might be possible to rehearse a thinking characterized by virtual non-historicity. A deconstructive reading means that the places where historicity delimits and directs thinking are opened up for discussion.

My university education is in the field of history. I received my MA from the department of Nordic History at Åbo Akademi University in Finland. This particular history department specializes in national and political history and the education it provides is oriented towards basic empirical historical research. I moved to women's

studies early on in my academic studies. My MAtesis was a historiographical investigation of the ways that equality-thinking was predominant in the writing of Finnish women's history (Honkanen 1997).

The education for my doctoral degree has come from the field of women's studies. I have been working under the supervision of Professor Marianne Liljeström in the Gender System National Graduate School which is a national graduate school for women's studies scholars in Finland. Throughout the process Professor Harriet Silius has provided me an office at the women's studies department at Åbo Akademi University where I also have been teaching and attending seminars. I started my thesis with a historiographical approach where themes from feminist theory were played against ideas about women's history. This was the usual approach at the time and the main argument was that *historians* should take into account the theoretical insights that feminist theories provided. It was within my education in the Gender System National Graduate School that I first came to do post-graduate studies at The Netherlands Research School of Women's Studies at the University of Utrecht in spring 2000. Under the supervision of Professor Rosi Braidotti, my focus turned towards the philosophy of history and my questions changed direction. During my stay at The Netherlands Research School of Women's Studies I studied philosophy of history and feminist theory. My main arguments were changed by these readings and the dissertation shifted into an analysis of how ideas about history effected *feminist theoretization*. My dissertation became increasingly framed by corporeal feminist theory in the mode of feminist philosophy of history. At this point I was also supervised by Professor Tuija Pulkkinen at the women's studies department at the University of Jyväskylä. As it is not yet possible to defend a thesis in the field of women's studies in Finland and due to the strong empirical tradition that the history department at Åbo Akademi University stands for, I saw that my thesis could not be defended in Finland and offered it for defense at the Netherlands Research School of Women's Studies at the University of Utrecht, Faculty of Arts. Thus, on top of being interdisciplinary, my dissertation is international in its theoretical orientations and Trans-European in the material conditions of its production.

2. Problematic historicizing

In this chapter I will discuss some of the problems that follow from historicizing. I do this by raising questions in relation to historicizing. In asking preliminary questions about notions of the 'past' and the 'real' I argue that contextuality becomes an epistemological question whenever historicity and its function in the production of knowledge is discussed. To begin with I will show how I approach the connections between constructivism and historicism. All these issues will be addressed in more detail in chapter three where I give an account of how the historicity of objects is bound to contextuality and temporality and also throughout the dissertation in my analysis of Judith Butler's constructivist theories.

History as the past , the past as real, the past as context

There is a certain idea of *aboutness* embedded in historical knowledge and truth.⁴ History is understood to be about the past, about past realities that are lost. This kind of aboutness can be read in methodological concerns. The problem is related to how (well) the historian is seen to be able to *gain access to the past realities* that history is *about*. When this question is decided and the historian is seen to be able to reach the past reality, then the question about what methods she should use to approach the objects and materialities that history is *about* is raised. These questions point at fundamental aspects of history, as it is understood and as the word is used. Historical knowledge seems is fundamentally referential in its aboutness. History is about the past, about the reality that people lived in. Histories are accounts about past experiences and about the construction and contexts surrounding and enabling varying experiences. When we interest ourselves in history, our interest points to an *elsewhere*. When something is about history, it is about this elsewhere, the ever fascinating other that was real and that still is real as history.

⁴ On aboutness and truth see Alcoff 1999, 71

...when we commit ourselves to historical labour, there it is, whether we are reporting on a holiday in Egypt or describing modern historiographic thought. We are talking about *something*, and that *something* was real (Kellner 1995, 10 original emphasis).

In history the object of reference, the “something”, *was* real. It is something that is not considered present anymore. Perhaps the fact that the past was real and that history is about that real makes us think of history as something that is as real as the objects that it refers to (for example, as real as Tutankhamen's sandals). We can even imagine that history is "somewhere", as it would be 'stored' somewhere, sedimented as 'the past'. The elsewhere that history is about is 'the past'. It is elsewhere in relation to the present and the future. The 'elsewhere' and 'otherness' of the past is the foundation that the 'aboutness' of history relies on. Hayden White writes:

Historical events, whatever else they may be, are events which really happened or are believed really to have happened, but which are no longer directly accessible to perception (White 1989, 297).

Historical events have to be connected to an idea about the real. Even though a particular event might not really have happened at least the firm belief in its factual happening constitutes a connection to the real. The fact that these events are no longer "accessible to perception" leads to the necessity to narrate histories 'about them'. Historical events are *elsewhere* and *other*, they are not present. At the same time they are considered real:

We come back to the materiality of the past, and the reality of its meanings. We, too, believe in loyalty towards the past. History was lived by real people (Korhonen & Tuohela 2002, 6.)

I argue that this 'elsewhere', and the presumed reality of it, is what makes historicity so usable as a point of exit from formalist theoretical accounts. Closed theoretical systems that, for instance, explain sex to be a universal and natural category would become far

less *fixed* were they to argue that this particular nature has a history. 'Sex' is not its own context, it does not explain itself through its naturalness but rather the context of an *elsewhere*, the context of the past is invoked to question the formalistic fixity of 'sex'. When history is utilized as context, meaning is seemingly set into motion.

Historical thinking is an example of the "classical" way to avoid totalization by deferral: "truth," whatever it is, will always exceed knowledge at any given moment" (Ermarth 1992, 149).

History operates as the elsewhere that ultimately explains any "truth" or totalization in the present and in the past. All knowledge at any point in history will have a history. I have not been able to analyze the aspects of this 'othering' in relation to *history as the past* because this kind of analysis would require a deeper knowledge in the theoretization about otherness as it has been problematized within feminist theories of postcoloniality. My dissertation departs from feminist theories of corporeality and the form-matter distinction and this approach leads to another strand of feminist theory. I will come back to corporeality and my theoretical framework in the next chapter (2.1.). I still find that this estrangement involves problematic themes. Through the language of othering the possibilities to cite cultural imperialist discourses is close at hand. *History as the past* can be conceptualized as a *foreign culture*:

The past is understood as a foreign culture, which we cannot (and should not) reconstruct (Sorainen 2004, 16).

The rhetoric of strangeness and otherness becomes unquestioned when it is connected to the idea of *history as the past*. The fact that the past is understood as *gone* coupled with the reference to an *elsewhere* that history implies can lead to an exoticizing of the past. Even ideas of respect and *authentic voices* can be found in relation to ideas about *history as the past*:

For a historian, the past emerges as an ethical question: we may have to abandon simple claims to objectivity, but we cannot abandon respect. Being respectful means giving voice to past otherness, but by interpreting, by trying to make sense of it with the help of our own concepts (Korhonen & Tuohela 2002, 6).

In my understanding there is no 'past otherness' to give a voice to. Historians speak through the language of history and it is within this language that the historian speaks their own language as the language of *the past others*. When "past otherness" is conceptualized as an actuality and a reality *historicizing* implies accepting and making visible the difference between the past and the present (Korhonen & Tuohela 2002, 6). In conceptualizing the past through *difference* and *strangeness* historians and historicizing theorists should consider the way in which critical theorists (Said 1980, Spivak 1988, Ahmed 2000) have problematized these themes.

The language of history is referential. *The past* and *the real* are essential elements in historical languages. It is possible to ask: how do we in our historicizing presuppose the referentiality inherent in the idea of history? How is our historicist anti-foundationalism caught in the foundational chain of historical events –in the chain of events that history is *about* and built on? By contextualizing and by situating objects in history we claim to know something specific *about them*. How should this specific aboutness, a kind of internal referentiality and foundationalism, be understood in relation to the feminist critique of foundationalism, correspondence theories, and theories disclaiming a notion of referents beyond, above or behind phenomena? Elizabeth Ermarth argues that one cannot oppose history to foundationalism because history *is* foundationalism (Ermarth 1992, 55, also Scott 1992, 26). I think that these are important questions to be considered within feminist theory. The foundationalism that history *is* has a special character and the theoretical consequences of this should be investigated.

Historicism

I think that radical historicism is a self-defeating enterprise (Laclau 2000, 58).

On a more general level, the issues that I raise here can be read as attempts to analyze the basic structures of historicism as they can be traced in feminist theorizing. Historicism is a critical movement insisting on the fundamental importance of historical context to interpretation of texts of all kinds. One way of understanding historicism is to locate it in the history of ideas. This is also what Paul Hamilton does when he argues that historicists oppose the formalism and natural law-governed understandings of the Enlightenment reaching from the 17th Century to Kant and Hegel. Anti-Enlightenment historicism develops a double focus: It is concerned with situating any statement in its historical context and secondly, it understands itself as situated in a historical context. It becomes, in a strikingly Rankean way, suspicious of the stories that the past tells about itself, at the same time as being suspicious of its own partisanship. According to Hamilton, poststructuralist critique and epistemology is fundamentally a historicist one (Hamilton 1996, 2-3). The linguistic turn of the late twentieth century foregrounded the level of epistemology and problematized the interrelatedness of language and meaning. When feminists started to theorize sex and question its taken-for-granted status, they did this through showing how the meanings connected to sex were historical rather than natural. When Michel Foucault questioned the taken-for-granted meanings connected to sexuality, he did this through writing a *history* of sexuality. These poststructuralist histories are, of course, written in the language of history. *If* and *how* Hamilton's claim about historicist poststructuralism holds for feminist theory should be investigated further. My aim is to show how historicity operates in Judith Butler's feminist theoretization (in chapters 3, 4, 5).

The basic structures of historicism can be read as the different grammars that word 'history' carries. The words history and historicity are used in particular ways, not only because they are very particular, but also because they can be used intelligibly only in accordance with the grammar and the uses that we are accustomed to. As a tradition of thought, historicism operates through this grammar. It makes use of it and stresses the fundamental importance of the word 'history'. It would be possible to situate feminist historicizing into this history of ideas. This would mean that historicizing would be understood as part of the history of the conceptualization of history. This dissertation is an analysis of the grammar of history in particular theoretical situations and it does not

situate these grammars into a history of ideas. In this sense I am not writing a history. I analyze the grammar of history and I strategically forget to historicize this grammar. I speak in the language of feminist theory, for if I were to use history as an explanative context for my findings I would simultaneously fix them in a way that would not allow for a creative space for feminist thought (that I call virtual non-historicity). I will of course return to this forgetful virtual space at several points further on. Virtual non-historicity is a place to think in that is not saturated by the language of history. It enables a problematizing of the relationship between form and matter, the discursive and the material. It is a place that follows from feminist philosophies of history by their habit of strategically forgetting history. In theorizing constructivism and materiality, feminists enter this virtual space in order to be able to think towards transformation.

It would also be possible to write a history of the disciplinary differences that can be found in different approaches to history. What is, for instance, called 'new-historicism' is primarily grounded in literary studies (Derrida 1990, 71). Hans Kellner argues that the nature of reflection about history has been strongly influenced by structuralist literary theory (Kellner 1995, see also Vann 1995). The uses of history have changed with the linguistic turn. From various perspectives, *the turn* has been labeled many things (Canning 1994). The turn can be traced as an internal split, or splits, *within* historicism. Empiricist accounts were considered naïve in their ontological approach to history. The level of language and meaning was foregrounded and historians started to investigate the *construction of truths* instead of truths, the *constitution of facts* instead of facts. Both the empiricist approach and the linguistically oriented approach are historicist. I prefer to call this internal shift, where empiricism has been increasingly placed under pressure from poststructuralist epistemologies, the linguistic turn. I do this in order to emphasize the centrality of the problematics of language and the signification that followed it (Ermarth 2001, Kellner 1995, LaCapra 1995). The linguistic turn has produced shifts in perspective within historicism. In addition to empiricist historicism, a discursive (or narrative) historicism has emerged that is often referred to as 'postmodern historicism' (Pieters 2000). Postmodern historicism is defined by its highlighting and theorizing of the role of language. The role and status of language is theorized in relation to 'the cultural', 'the social' and 'the historical'. Materialism could be understood as

constitutive of history and historical agency. Material conditions were seen as enabling history in various ways. Cultural patterns could be understood as directing historical agency. Postmodern historicism reorganizes these categories. Language and discourse are seen to enable experience and constitute agency. The ways that language is conceptualized and connected to the formerly central spheres of 'the social' and 'the cultural' varies greatly. When attempting to describe postmodern historicism, the solutions given to the problem of language are many and become part of the very field and debate it seeks to describe. The stance that one takes on the role of the linguistic is played out in the descriptions of the historiography of postmodernism (as can be seen in Cabrera 2001). The one idea that postmodern historians can be said to share is that they theorize the role of language in the constitution of historical processes and meanings (Cabrera 2001) coupled to the fact that they operate within a constructivist mode of thinking.

When I use words like 'structuralism' or 'empiricism', it is important to note that I am not a specialist in structuralism or empiricism, as a historian of ideas would be. I do not pursue a historical investigation on these matters. I do not approach these *isms* as parts of the history of philosophy or the history of mentalities. I only use these words to differentiate and describe the function of theoretical arguments. Does the argument rely on ideas about the empirical? Is the argument made referring meanings to some structure or history? A historian would ask the same questions but they would situate their findings in a historical context.

Within the discipline of history the linguistic challenge began formally, aiming at a description of how historical texts work. What makes a text historical as opposed to, for example, 'fictive'? The linguistic turn within history was rhetorical and sensitive to differences in genre (Kellner 1995, 5, Kellner 1987, Vann 1995). It resulted in investigations concerning the rhetorical strategies that historians use and the variations of genre that can be found in historical texts. Hayden White was groundbreaking in this line of investigation (see White 1973, Megill 1998, 4). I am a narrativist in the sense that my dissertation claims that history is used as a reality-prop in theoretical narratives. I endorse a narrative view of history and understand history as a language that is used to narrate. I am interested in matter, though, and find narrative accounts problematic if they, in their

radical constructivism, deny the existence of matter. I will come back to a discussion about this denial later. I also think that for the language of history to be usable for either positive or negative purposes it has to be connected to the real. Full-blown narrativism that denies this connection *robs* history of its political force, that is to say, its nature as history, making it another form of literature.

In its strongest sense, the linguistic turn stressed the textuality or discursivity of all history and denied history's connection to any representationalism, or connection to a 'real past' that would have been outside the historical text or narrative. In this view all meaning, history included, is produced in semiotic systems. History and everything else is seen as one of these systems (Ermarth 2001, 42, Jenkins 1999). The linguistic turn emphasizes the role of language in relation to meaning and this language is conceptualized as profoundly historical.

In my view, historicism is a mode of thought that enables the projects of both the empiricist historian and theorist who understands the 'real' as historically constituted. Both lines of investigation cite historicity. My aim is to avoid *using* or *consuming* historicity, rather I attempt to *mention* it as a concept, or a word (Derrida 1990, 75). My study is not a discourse analysis of what, in the history of ideas, or within historiography, could be called historicism. Instead, I locate the places of *the historical*, i.e. I look for uses of the word 'history' and related words in feminist constructivist theories. I do not aim at a history of ideas. In this dissertation, historicity is looked upon as a language that is *used and cited* in varying ways to make coherent constructivist arguments. Historicity is seen as a combination of different rules for the use of the word 'history'. What I gain from this approach is that I avoid fixing meanings into some specific historical narratives. I regard this as a gain in my attempt to open up feminist theoretization towards a philosophy of history and to a questioning of the hegemony of form and historicity over materiality. I will come back to this in the chapter concerning my theoretical background. What my approach loses is the possibility to construct valuable historical narratives about feminist theoretical practices. These historical narratives could be histories of ideas or conceptual histories concerning central concepts, such as those that, for instance, Judith Butler uses (i.e. contingency, constitutive outside, historicity etc). Since I would myself

be using history to narrate, I would find it difficult to answer the historico-philosophical question that is central to my approach: how is history used in theoretical narratives?

Constructivism and historicism

The language of history is closely related to constructivist theoretization. Many construction stories are histories of a particular construction. I want to think through some aspects of the interconnectedness between constructivism and historicity. My interest to theorize constructivism in relation to historicity stems from the observation that the debate about the usefulness of poststructuralism for feminist epistemologies often concerns the nature and depth of historicism, not historicism as such (see for instance Hoff 1994, Parr 1995, Scott 1996, Butler 1993, Carlson 2000 and 2001). The debate often focuses on whether phenomena should be seen as 'situated' in history or 'constituted' by history. The parties agree upon the essential link between constructivism and historicity. What is under debate is the *depth* and reach of construction (see, for instance, Kirby 1997, Butler 1993, Carlson 2001). Are things *fully*, or *thoroughly* constituted, or are there remainders of non-constituted constancies? The stakes of this debate are, of course, high. The questions concern agency, determination and free will. The place where historicity is seen to enter a phenomenon is the place where constructivism is seen to enter. If sex, for instance, is understood to be a rather stable phenomenon that means different things throughout history, or whether history is understood to constitute even the matter that we call sex, are the kind of problematics that is being theorized. What interests me in this kind of theoretization is the place and the uses of history as part of a constructivist argumentation.

My approach is a textual analysis of historicizing rhetoric. I will analyze feminist constructivist arguments as to their historicity. The fact that historicizing has become one of the main legitimating factors for feminist constructivist arguments concerning knowledge and truth, however specific those arguments might be, is what I want to

understand. Several theorists within different disciplines have questioned the limits of historicity⁵ and I move within this interdisciplinary area of questioning.

The weight of historicity is also a crucial part of contemporary feminist theorizing. The crisis and the object to be changed are often located in the historicity of signifiers, i.e., in the *pastness* 'embedded' in concepts. Inequality, power and violence – norms, expectations and limits – are in this sense equated or reduced to the historicity of meaning. The “unavoidable impurity of the resources for change” (Butler 1993, 241) that any politics is seen to have to face is conceptualized as a *historical impurity*. Paraphrasing Judith Butler, our political recourses are "polluted" by history because these recourses are understood as historical through and through and, hence, are not "pure". Could it not be that this idea of the 'past' or of historical pollution makes power rework itself as a polluted historicist epistemology? What is the ontological constitution of the historical *as such* if history is understood as 'unavoidable' or as *destiny*? Of what is a history made as it is capable of materializing itself as the very flesh of our bodies? (Butler 1993)

The aforementioned questions are highly relevant for politics. From the point of view of war and suffering, history seems to have such ontological truth-value that it exceeds any other belief-system as a driving force and legitimator in today's disputes⁶. History is a usable tool in the legitimation of violence and oppression. As I understand it, different nationalisms are built on histories, their possible appeal residing in a shared sense of history, which can become sacralized. Even this 'sacred' can be historicized into the national narrative. Although history can also be used for more positive purposes such as liberation and freedom from oppression, it is the negative and violent uses that become disturbing.

⁵ Colebrook 1996, Ermarth 2001, Felski 2000, Heise 1997, Jenkins 1999, Laclau 2000, Žižek 2000a, 2000b Nancy 1990, Derrida 2001, Brennan 1993.

⁶ Tony Blair was shown on Finnish television speaking to the US-parliament on 16.7.2003. He said that if the allies were wrong about there being weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, history would “forgive them”. If, on the other hand, they would not have shown leadership and the presumption about weapons of mass destruction turned out to be right, history would "not forgive them". The argument gets credibility from the fact that history is seen to be about the real. This sacralized history is a usable tool against arguments that are seen to be about “belief only”. History forgives in its ability to explain factually and correctly any “state of affairs” and how it actually happened. In this argument, history is conjured as the single sovereign and “the last objective judgment” for “homo politicos”.

The ontological constitution of history is of high relevance for the attempts to question and problematize universalities and to avoid foundationalism, or any thinking that is violently exclusionary. Women's history has shown that one of the main specificities of historical narratives is their western, white male-centeredness (Scott 1996, 12, Dauphin et al. 1996, 569, Thornton Dill 1996, 35, 39, Shapiro 1994, 3). Seen from this topical point of view, history, in all its universality, has in fact been shown to be very particular. Beyond such topical concerns lies the philosophical question concerning history. Is there something in the very idea of history that makes it usable in particular ways, or rather is it that whenever I speak through the language of history it actually speaks itself (as any language would do)? What concerns me here is the problem of epistemology in relation to historicity. We obviously 'know' history, but how, in fact, do we know it? What consequences does our *knowing* history have? Is it necessary to always remember history? I am going to argue for a necessary forgetting of history at strategic points. A strategic forgetting of history and the possibilities, which are thereby opened to think otherwise, not only in the language of history, are valuable for feminist theorizing. A radical historicism that goes unquestioned effectively hinders a non-historicizing creativity in theorizing. Instead, the requirement to historicize makes feminists repeat this universalism and cite a language that is problematically structured. History is understood as something that we share universally. It is considered to be a foundation that *resulted* in the present. A strategic forgetting of history opens up spaces where these kinds of universalities do not come to hinder patterns of thinking. History is also understood as a context for knowledge. As we contextualize what we know in history and language we are, of course, constituted by it. The space to think through the issue of contextuality, materiality and the formative will be a place of historicity. I will argue against these kinds of delimited spaces with my request for a virtual non-historicity. I do this in order to expand the range of usable theoretical languages.

2.1. Theoretical framework

As I discuss the predominance of historicizing within feminist theories and argue that one of the reasons for this predominance is a constructivism that largely builds on historicism,

my theoretical background is both in feminist theory and the philosophy of history. The problem of historicity is itself a problem, where the relationship between meaning and materiality is central. Because constructivist theories conceptualize history as *a form affecting matter* or as *a power that constitutes matter*, feminist theories of corporeality become central to my approach. Feminist theories have in different ways tried to solve the problem of the combination between the discursive and the material. What I aim to do in this chapter is to discuss some of this theoretization, keeping in mind my attempt to open up spaces where it would be possible to forget history at strategic theoretical points. If historicity is not problematized in rethinking the interrelatedness of the discursive and the material then the form-matter distinction, which is inherent in historicity, re-enters the theoretical scene. I find the form-matter distinction a useful tool in an analysis, such as this, where the place of historicity in the interrelationship between the discursive and the material is problematized. The form-matter distinction lies at the heart of feminist theories of corporeality and as an analytical tool it is valuable for theoretical consideration concerning the meanings invested in *historicity*.

Corporeal constructivism

Thinking the body as constructed demands a rethinking of the meaning of construction itself (Butler 1993, xi).

Philosophical discourses have a long history of combining femininity with corporeality, nature, the body and the biological. Challenging the naturalizing assumption about the materiality of sex has been a major task for feminist scholarship. Studies showing how science has misrepresented women as bodily creatures have, particularly, had a major impact on how the body was conceptualized in feminist scholarship (see Schiebinger 2000, 4, Braidotti 1991). Feminist epistemologists have shown science to be misogynist and its notions, such as objectivity, to be oppressive, as they have been used to naturalize and biologize women's social roles. The fact that science has seen women's bodies as essentially linked to reproduction has been challenged in many ways by feminist

scholarship (Simonsen 1996, Grosz, 1994, Schiebinger 2000). Women's marginalization from philosophical discourses and the public sphere has been produced through associating maleness with reason and femaleness with the corporeal or the physical (Braidotti 1991, 17). The feminist concern to re-evaluate the body opposes such gendered mind/body dualism (Ahmed and Stacey 2001, 3).

The problem of corporeality can be traced to different strands of thought. Psychoanalysis has had a strong impact on feminist thinking and theoretization about corporeality. Psychoanalysis conceptualizes 'the subject' through embodied (un)conscious, symbolic and affective structures (Braidotti 1991, 16 ff, Braidotti 1994, 41 ff, 182-185). Phenomenology and its Foucaultian critique are other central currents in problematizations of the body within the human and social sciences (Braidotti 1991, 39). The fact that my analysis of historicity in constructivist arguments and my close reading of Judith Butler's texts is not contextualized and understood through a discussion about the places of history within a psychoanalytic frame, can be seen as problematic. I do not go into psychoanalytic conceptualizations of corporeality in spite of the fact that Butler's theories build on psychoanalysis. Judith Butler *historicizes* both the Lacanian real *and* Foucaultian corporeality and the consequences that this historicizing has for feminist theories of corporeality is what I aim to understand. The consequences that historicity has for psychoanalytic theoretization are of no less importance (Brennan 1993). I find it pertinent to concentrate on the mechanisms of historicity in Butler's theoretical argumentation. I find that historico-philosophical feminism is suitable as a women's studies background in order for me to be able to pose questions about the place of historicity within the work of a *feminist* theorist; although the work of a feminist theorist can and should be read as theory within psychoanalysis also. As for the theoretical backgrounds on a general level, I think that phenomenology comes closer to my project. This is due to my use of Luce Irigaray's and Martin Heidegger's work and also because of the possibility to read Foucault's emphasis on "bodies and pleasures", an emphasis that I discuss in more detail later in this chapter, into phenomenological accounts of experience.⁷ In my problematization of the tension between the 'real' and the 'constructed,' I have understood the centrality of the notion of *experience* and I am

⁷ On the connections between Foucault and phenomenology, see Oksala 2002, Pulkkinen 2003.

interested in looking for possible solutions to the problem of corporeality from a non-historicist reading of phenomenology (Irigaray). I am not a phenomenologist, though.

The way I approach historicity suggests that I am a structuralist or a formalist. From my perspective history is a language and what interests me are the rules that this language follows. Furthermore, I do not historicize these rules; rather I discuss how they operate in theoretical arguments. In this sense, perhaps I am a formalist. I am interested in form rather than content, and conceptualize historicizing as a technique. If the main argument against structuralism and formalism is that they miss historicity my strategic forgetting of history could be read as an attempt to become a structural formalist. I think that making such claims about structural formalism is connected to my historico-philosophical perspective. As I use non-historicizing as method, formalism is what is left for me when I attempt to describe my work, since it is characterized by a non-historicizing approach. It would, of course, be easier to define my scientific background if I chose to write historical narratives. I would become a feminist historian of ideas or a conceptual historian.

At the heart of feminist theories of corporeality lies the nature of constructivism since thinking of the body as constructed demands a rethinking of the meaning of construction itself (Butler 1993, xi). How should the relationship between materiality and discursivity be understood in feminist constructivist theories? How does the form-matter distinction operate and what role does history have in this system? Contemporary feminist theories of corporeality problematize these kinds of questions (Kirby 1997, Butler 1993, Grosz 1994, Braidotti 2002, Jokinen (ed.) 1997, Heinämaa, Reuter, Saarikangas (eds) 1997, Oinas 2001, Väättäin 2003). I define feminist theories of materiality, in a broad sense, as the kind of feminist theoretization that highlights the body and materiality. With my perspective of constructivism and historicizing, I intend to draw some basic and crude distinctions within this massive body of feminist work. If one looks at the “depth” of constructivism one can begin to see some differences in how feminist theories of corporeality understand the body.

Feminist standpoint theories (Harding 1997, Hekman 1997, Hartsock 1997) in their various forms are a major line of feminist investigation that problematizes the

connections between meaning making and materiality.⁸ The Feminist critique of the naturalizing assumptions about women's bodies has opened up a space for theoretical and epistemological questions about the connections between materiality and meaning. An approach that questions the mind/body dualism ends up theorizing the form/matter dualism or discursivity/materiality. When feminist theorists ask questions about the connection between materiality and meaning, the language of history is foregrounded. A rewriting of the form-matter distinction implies that history has to be placed somewhere in relation to this dualism.

I choose to divide feminist scholarship on materiality and the body into three lines of thought according to the character of constructivism that they imply. In doing so, I situate my work in relation to feminist theories of materiality and give a brief description of these theories from this limited perspective. In *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz (Grosz 1994) makes a categorization that I use as model in my discussion of feminist theories on the body. Grosz calls the first category "Egalitarian Feminism"⁹ and characterizes it as a line of thinking where the specificities of the female body (menstruation, pregnancy, maternity, lactation and so forth) are foregrounded. This is done either by trying to move away from the constraints of the body (e.g. Firestone 1970), or by pointing at the significance of the female body for reproduction and humanity and aiming at a re-evaluation of its cultural significance. What is common to both the attempt at a positive re-evaluation of the female body and a negative overcoming of the restraining body is a belief in the assumptions about the female body as more natural than the male body, as more tied to its biology than the male body. They also share the assumption about bodies as biologically determined (Grosz, 1994, 15-16). Neither constructivism nor historicity reaches the body or materiality in this model. Constructivism stays at the level of 'beliefs' and cultural meanings that are imposed on the biologically, anatomically and physically defined female body. The *beliefs* attached to female bodies are understood as historical. I call this line of feminist thinking about materiality *biological determinism*.

⁸ See Hekman 1997 and *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 22, no.3 for a broad presentation of feminist standpoint theory.

⁹ She includes Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, Mary Wollstonecraft together with liberal, conservative and some ecofeminist thinkers (without naming these) in this category.

What I find problematic in biological determinism is that it takes 'biology' as a given. In doing so it becomes descriptive of the power that goes into thinking of bodies and matter as biologically determined. The day-to-day 'manifestations' of these 'fundamental differences' cannot be critically assessed. Rather, 'menstruation', 'reproduction', 'male testosterone' and the behavioral patterns these are coupled with are approached with a certain fatalism and melancholia – either you accept the facts and cope with them or you bypass them through medical means.

In Grosz' model, the second line of thinking about materiality is called "Social Constructivism". The idea of a sex-gender system, coined by Gayle Rubin (Rubin 1975) assumes that gender is a social construction imposed on biological sex. Matter is understood as raw material for culturally and historically shifting meanings (Grosz 1994, 16-17). Sex is understood as a raw material that culture uses to anchor, legitimize and naturalize its gendered meanings. This line of thinking works for the liberation of women through challenging gendered norms and thus expanding the horizons for women's activities. When gender is shown to be socially constructed, sex, or the fact that an individual has a woman's body, loses some of its normative power.¹⁰ From my perspective the assumptions that this category has about materiality is more precisely described by the term "*sex-gender constructivism*".¹¹

Sex-gender constructivism historicizes gender but leaves the materiality of sex (sex of materiality) untheorized (Butler 1993, Liljeström 1996, Pulkkinen 2000). In sex-gender constructivism materiality operates as the constitutive exclusion that ultimately makes constructivism work on the side of gender (Kirby 1997, 104, Butler 1993, 28). Constructivism refers to the varying meanings that gender carries and these shifting constructions are inscribed on biologically (and unproblematically) sexed bodies. Although the body or materiality is left untheorized, sex-gender constructivism is not a biological determinism since *gender* is the realm of meaning in history, culture and

¹⁰ In the Finnish research-context the assumptions that sex-gender thinking holds are conceptualized as "sex-roles" or as a division between "biological sex and social sex" (Liljeström 1996). Perhaps this difference in conceptualization stems from problems of translation (in a broad sense), since the Finnish word (sukupuoli) is firmly anchored in a two-sex (it translates as "sex-half") model and the space left for challenging it seems to be the use of a prefix (either social or biological "sex-half").

¹¹ For a further discussion on sex-gender constructivism, see e.g. Butler 1990 and Braidotti 2002.

society and since gender – not sex – is seen as the determining category. In biological determinism both negative and positive meanings can be directly anchored in biological sex and its features. Although gender opens up the fixity of sex to some degree, it still reproduces a heteronormative idea about sex in the sense that it departs from the basic assumption about there being two sexes, two bodies with these two coming to define each other. The basic heteronormative assumption about two sexes also delimits morphology to *two types*. Bodies have to be sexually distinct for the sex-gender model to function as a frame for thought. In my assessment sex-gender constructivism is reactionary – it invents gender to give a little space for variation but it still leaves *sex* untouched, intact and unquestioned. To get out of this dichotomous and en-sexing frame what is needed is a profound problematization of materiality. I argue that the form-matter distinction is a useful tool in problematizing materiality.

The third line of feminist scholarship on materiality is called “Sexual Difference” (Grosz 1994, 16-17). The body or materiality is central in these anti-biologist theories. This line of investigation has also been called corporeal feminism (Anermahr, Lovell, Wolkowitz 1997, 25-27) and can be referred to with concepts such as “embodiment”, “body-studies” (Schiebinger 2000), and “fleshy theory” (Braidotti 2002). With this line of thinking, feminism is seen to be turning towards materiality (Palin 1996). This line of investigation stems partly from a critique of the sex-gender model (Grosz 1994, Butler 1990, 1993, Braidotti 1994, 2002). When sex-gender feminism historicizes gender and leaves sex or materiality as immutable, sexual difference theory historicizes materiality too in its critique of the sex-gender model. The constructivism that sexual difference feminism endorses is often based on historicity and could, in these cases, be called *sexual difference historicism*. In the case of Judith Butler's theory of materialization, I would, as does Pheng Cheah, call her theory a *theory of productive historical forms* (Cheah 1996). In my assessment, ‘sexual difference feminism’ is the only line of thinking that problematizes materiality in an appropriate way. When sexual difference is understood as a question and not as a fact, or not as a material reality that somehow lurks behind the social or the historical, the possibilities to ‘cope’ with this question are opened up. Coping with the question of sexual difference and materiality is one of the central tasks for feminist theory. The fact that sexual difference is a question that poses itself

constantly involves a temptation that is risky. It is the temptation to answer this question once and for all. The power of the question lies in this self-evident temptation. When the question is not *coped* with, but answered, the metaphysical character of the question becomes en fleshed and the idea of the two sexes is reproduced, albeit that the 'couple' might have moved to another place. Coping with the question means that it is not *resolved*. Coping with the question of sexual difference means that the question is shown to be unresolvable and delimiting. Coping does not mean fixing, rather rendering sexual difference virtual.

As I see it, and as I will argue later with examples from Judith Butler's theory of productive historical forms, is that if theories of sexual difference historicize *matter*, then there is a risk that through this historicizing the idea of the two sexes is summoned *from the past* as a kind of inevitable *background* to the present state of affairs. This kind of summoning again supports the answer one has given to the question of sexual difference and the question may seem to be *resolved*. Historicizing the question of sexual difference repeats and circulates a sexed language through the language of history. Although sexual difference is historically linked to materiality, there is more to the problem of materiality than sexual difference.

In the next chapter, I am going to discuss my theoretical understanding of corporeality and its relation to historicity. The crucial point for theories of corporeality that wish to problematize historicity, is the effort to combine the theoretical operations of the discursive and the material in a way that does not privilege the level of meaning, language and historicity. It is important to avoid upholding a formalistic hegemony of *the historical* over the material.

Combining the discursive and the material

I situate my work as part of feminist theories of materiality, embodiment and corporeality. My work contributes to the theoretical debates on materiality by focusing explicitly on the connection between constructivist and historicist arguments. I argue that historicity is not enough to challenge the division between the discursive and the material. When the discursive is understood to *constitute* the material and historicity is

seen as an essential characteristic of the discursive, the capability of materiality to affect discursivity is often bypassed. For Judith Butler, for instance, “historicity is a term which directly implies the constitutive character of history in discursive practice” (Butler 1993, 282).

Historicizing the material and explaining the body as a product of discourses within the human sciences involves an entire theoretical tradition, which is drawn from phenomenology, psychoanalysis and structuralism. There are many discursive spaces where it is possible to consider bodies as constitutive in relation to discourse. It is a complicated theoretical terrain and one, which I do not master. My work discusses the place of history in a selection of the texts of one feminist theoretician, in order to be able to raise questions concerning theoretical consequences of historicizing. As I have mentioned previously, I draw insights from phenomenology. At times I touch upon some of the critique of structuralism. My knowledge of psychoanalysis is limited. Since my field is women's studies, I try to approach historicity from a transdisciplinary feminist perspective in a historico-philosophical mode. In relation to the history of ideas I practice "nomadic thinking" (Braidotti 1991, 278-281, Braidotti 1994, 36). This means that I do not stay in any one theoretical discourse, except from the feminist theory that has been developed within the discipline of women's studies. My historico-philosophical perspective means that I add this perspective to the feminist theoretization that has been done concerning the combining of the discursive and the material. The new insights that I bring to this theoretical theme are in the problematization of history.

Feminists have contested the domination of the body by biology and at the same time they have been questioning the terms of biology itself (Keane & Rosengarten 2002, 261). Research has been done concerning the history of “how the sexes was made two and only two” (Crasnow 2001, 139, Dreger 1999a, Laqueur 1990, Laqueur 2000, Schiebinger 2000, part I, Fausto-Sterling 2000), which examines the ways in which natural science has constructed ‘knowledge’ and ‘sex’. These accounts problematize the social narratives embedded in our notion of biology. There is a social model of intersexuality as well as a social model of disability (Tremain 2002). The idea that these various ‘social models’ upholds is that disability (and sex) is a socially and historically constructed category and it should not be conceptualized as a "problem linked to

individual bodies" (Reinikainen 1999). Social models tend to render materiality untheorized as they focus on the restrictive social sphere.

In contrast to this the critics of constructivism within, for example, disability studies who argue that the physicality of disabled women should be conceptualized as real physical sensations and features irrespective of the disabling obstacles that the historical and social environment presents to bodies (Reinikainen 1999, 345, Väättäinen 2003, 27, Tremain 2002). A return to the body does not lead feminist theories of materiality forward if materiality is still understood as a 'raw-material' or a factual base for the varying historical and 'social models' (Schriempf, 2001). In this sense, constructing dichotomies, such as impairment/disability or sex/gender, might improve the social situations for *some* bodies. What can be seen to be operative in the various social models, and their critiques, are the two lines of constructivist argumentation. In the first case, matter is seen as pre-discursive and immutable and the varying social and historical contexts are seen to change the meanings *attached to* the bodies. In the second case, historicity is seen to constitute matter, as in the case where impairment is seen to have been disability all along, or in the case where 'sex' is seen to have been gender all along (Tremain 2002, Butler 1990).

When the constructivisms of corporeality are problematized, keeping in mind the function and role they grant to history, it remains unclear what exactly *it* is in history that gives *it* its formative powers in relation to matter. This becomes particularly interesting if historicity is understood as thoroughly constructed, as a language that is structured in accordance to certain rules. Theorizing the form-matter distinction and the relation between materiality and meaning can gain new insights from a strategic forgetting of history at some points. Forgetting history would mean that one did not prioritize 'the formative' by only referring to the existence of 'historicity' without explicating the content and place of 'historicity'. The forgetting of history amounts to a remembering of the fact that historicity is theoretically problematic as such. By moving towards a virtual non-historicity, when theorizing corporeality, one can avoid forgetting to think about a diversity of matter and morphologies. Virtual non-historicity is a space in which to contest knowledge. It is a bounded horizon from where to problematize knowledge. To problematize knowledge it has to be forgotten. Remembering the intimate link that

knowledge and history have, I propose that creative feminist thought needs to think in virtual historicity. It is virtual in the sense that abandoning history altogether is not what it seeks to accomplish. Virtual non-historicity is a space for thought and theorizing that can be opened though forgetting history at strategic points. This of course implies that the power that history is invested with is taken seriously and remembered. Otherwise it can never be forgotten and it keeps repeating itself endlessly and in doing so reproduces knowledge that hinders agency, becoming and transformation. If history (or culture, or discourse) is understood to be constitutive of matter, the diversity of morphologies is always circumscribed by historicity and the history-knowledge pair. What are histories if not stories narrated by historians knowledgeable in the rules of the language of history? Historians routinely write histories on the basis of the very same realist ontology that theorists of corporeality criticize (Tremain 2002).

The idea of *materiality as raw material* can be seen in accounts of bodies that stress the historical and discursive constitution of matter. Although I see that historicity is a necessary step for theories on bodies to take, I claim that staying within the confines of history hinders the attempts to theoretically unite the material and the discursive since the foregrounding of history leaves little room for thinking about the agency of matter or the role of materiality itself. Elizabeth Grosz highlights this problem:

The human body, for example, cannot fly in the air, it cannot breathe underwater unaided by prostheses, it requires a broad range of temperatures and environmental supports, without which it risks collapse and death (Grosz 1994, 187).

She claims that materiality 'resists' cultural coding and attempts to give materiality a space of agency (Grosz 1994, 190). Historicizing "prostheses" or writing the history of airplanes does not aid in the attempts to understand the ways in which materiality or physicality sets limits to knowledge, history, discourse and language. In the midst of the historical investigation into the medicalization of intersexuality, for instance, only a small degree of agency is given over to the fact that 'biology' (if this is, in fact, what I want to call it?) actually constructs and constitutes *a diversity of morphologies* (Fausto-Sterling

2000) that should be understood as *positive sites* (Väättäinen 2003, 176) for theories of materiality instead of forgotten in stressing the fact that history negatively constructs, constitutes and necessitates itself through materialization.

The hegemony of historicist constructivism can be seen in the vacillation between bodies and the meaning that bodies are given:

Surely bodies live and die; eat and sleep; feel pain, pleasure; endure illness and violence; and these “facts”, one might skeptically proclaim, cannot be dismissed as mere constructions (Butler 1993, xi)

The lists of ‘undeniable physicalities’ that Judith Butler gives here (illness, age, weight, metabolism, life and death) are accompanied by a historicist argument in which each of these “facts” are shown to be both persistent and contested regions *because of historicity*. The argument points at historicity and the history that each of these categories has (Butler 1993, 67). Vicki Kirby argues that this kind of privileging of the discursive (history, culture) reinstalls the binary between the discursive and the material and expands the discursive by evacuating the contents of materiality (Kirby 1997, 107). If the only way to comprehend and approach materiality is through the discursive how can I understand the way in which physical and material features have an influence on the way discourse can work? How can I begin to theorize material formations when my thinking is bound to investigating the historical formation of matter? Both are necessary, but one should not evacuate the space of the other.

I think that the consequences of this critique of constructivism point at a highlighting of ‘the empirical’ in a very broad sense. Within the discipline of history, this would imply a move away from a predominantly conceptual level of investigation. Contextualization should also start with a focus on the material. I think that a central concept to revisit within the discipline of history is the concept of experience, especially a materialist, empiricist notion of experience. In feminist theories of materiality strong empiricism and a concentration on concrete experiences of actual bodies might lead to an uplifting of the connectedness and interrelationship between the discursive and material where none of these spheres are prioritized. What is needed here is a concentration on

bodily *detail*. The details (movements, pleasures, pains, gestures, abilities, limits, mistakes) should be conceptualized as elements of corporeality. Corporeality should be studied through contexts, instead of analyzing contexts through corporeality (Väättäinen 2003, 43). The expressions and instances of material-bodily details should be analyzed as to how they affect and enable or delimit - that is how they part-take in the constitution of events, emotions, experiences and thoughts. Consider as an example of this part-taking the way that the capacity of a head to bend during dance enables the overall performance (Väättäinen 2003). These events and ‘bendings’ again, are seen as the immediate context and as the surroundings of bodies, or as the *happening of morphological diversity*. What is usually analyzed is the way that discourses, thoughts and historical meanings effect and delimit the “scene of bodies” and how the meanings that are invested in these bodily scenes are historical (as in examining how dance-discourses about bending heads in certain manners *marginalize* dancers when the head cannot be bent in accordance to the rule).

As an example of the possibility to read experiential details in non-historicizing ways I would like to briefly summarize Judith Butler's critique of Foucault's "bodies and pleasures". Michel Foucault writes (Foucault 1980a) about "a vitality" of bodies and of "innocent pleasures" that bodies are capable of. Butler criticizes Foucault for not historicizing these phenomena and for contradicting himself when he does not extend his critical deconstruction of sex and sexuality to the body, instead naively presenting an idea of “bodies and pleasures” as a site of resistance against power (Oksala 2002, 174, Foucault 1978, 157, Butler 1990, 93-106). I think that the Butlerian critique is an excellent example of the predominance of historicity in her theory. It is also an example of how a theory of materiality that privileges the discursive over against the material fails to think through the formative possibilities that bodies have and, instead, restores the body to discourse. Butler writes:

The significant difference between Foucault’s position in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* and in his introduction to *Hercule Barbin* is already to be found as an unresolved tension within the *History of Sexuality* itself (he refers there to “bucolic” and “innocent” pleasures of intergenerational sexual exchange

that exists prior to the imposition of various regulative strategies). On the one hand, Foucault wants to argue that there is no “sex” in itself which is not produced by complex interactions of discourse and power, and yet there seems to be a “multiplicity of pleasures” *in itself* which is not the effect of any specific discourse/power exchange (Butler 1990, 97).

This critique concerns the materiality of sex and the sex of materiality. Butler has argued that matter cannot be taken as a given and as she problematizes sex and materiality she uses foucauldian genealogy as a means to do this. A genealogy of the materiality of sex – the history of the process where matter is constituted as sexed – shows that there is no *sex in itself*. In the quote above, Butler expands this critique and argues that Foucault is upholding an idealist or nostalgic view towards the body in those parts of his texts that introduce the idea of “pleasures”. In *Hercule Barbin* Foucault writes about the tender pleasures of sexual non-identity, about love, kisses and a world of feelings. He writes about pleasure, sorrow, and warmth of contact, caresses, sweetness and bitterness in a monosexual monastery. Foucault writes about the delights that *not having a sex* enables the hermaphroditic Alexina Barbin (Foucault 1980a, xii-xiv). Butler argues that there are no bodily pleasures in itself that would not be effects of something ‘outside’ the body. These are relevant steps in her argumentation for a historicized theory of matter. There can be no ‘left-overs’ of bodily details or sensations or vitality in itself. Can these pleasures that Foucault refers to be understood as details of the body? I think they can. When Butler wonders how these pleasures are possible *in itself*, the difficulty leading to this question lies in a reluctance to grant the body any agency – real or imagined – that would lie outside the *historicity* of discourse. It is matter “in itself” that is problematic for Butler. I argue that within a historicist theoretical frame it is impossible to theorize a body outside a system that presupposes that there are two sexes. This is, of course, due to the fact that ‘sex’ is historical in the sense that it is narrated, done through deeds and practices. The language of ‘sex’ uses the language of ‘history’. There is no necessity involved in objecting to “a multiplicity of pleasures in itself” on the ground that there is no ‘sex itself’ (what does “and yet” indicate in the above quote?). There is no necessity to “en-sex” this assumed multiplicity of pleasures. The metaphysics of the idea of the two-

sexes and the historicity of this metaphysics becomes a hindering universality when materiality is understood through an emphasis on historicity. The fact that sex is essentially historical does not have to lead to the conclusion that materiality is historical in the same manner.

In contrast to Butler's notion of the body, Foucault seems to be a materialist and a utopian when he writes that some day, in a different economy of *bodies and pleasures* (he does not write "in a different economy of sex and sexuality"):

People will be surprised at the eagerness with which we went about pretending to rouse from its slumber a sexuality which everything – our discourses, our customs, our institutions, our regulations, our knowledges – was busy producing in the light of day and broadcasting to noisy accompaniment (Foucault 1978, 158).

The materialism that I read in Foucault's texts, which I would not like to see historicized and resolved once and for all, lies in the way he writes about the body and its intensities, about the force of the vitality of bodies that makes power seem parasitic at best. In my assessment, Foucault conceptualizes sexual difference as a question and sets out to investigate the *history of answers* to this question. He does not answer it himself. I do not think that in Foucault's text there lies a hidden, yet operative, notion of sex or sexuality that critics should rouse from its slumber and expose. I think that we are still busy *producing* sex or sexuality through answering the question of sexual difference. Using the language of history to *answer* the question of sexual difference will surely insist that sexual difference is historical. And it is. This does not necessitate the argument that also matter is historically constituted or that pleasure is historically constituted. If the profound historicity of sexual difference is expanded to also involve materiality then sexual difference is brought back into theory through its historicity. Luce Irigaray claims that the essence of man lies in (the historicity of) his language (Irigaray 1999, 33). And furthermore, she claims that this language is one where there is no possibility for any other language than the sexed language that *he* has invented. Irigaray argues that this *Sameness* delimits what can be thought, said and done within language. "The One"

language is a safe-place where hierarchical sexed patterns of meaning resist transformation by constantly referring back to their own history of meaning to legitimate themselves (Irigaray 1999, 37). If it is so that the model of the two sexes is the essence of *man*, and if this essence lies in the historicity of his language, then citing and repeating this historicity in all places and reproduces power as sexed. The necessity of the idea of two sexes in its relation to materiality should be explicated. Perhaps feminists could also forget to historicize materiality at some strategic points to allow for theories of materiality to expand to areas not confined by the metaphysical character of sex or by historical narratives and contexts. The reason that sexual difference and historicity are so closely intertwined lies in their shared metaphysical foundation.

In her doctoral dissertation, feminist philosopher Johanna Oksala proposes that feminists read Foucault's "pleasures-body" not as a passive material object but, instead, as an experiential body, a body that through phenomena, such as pleasure, has formative powers in relation to discourse (Oksala 2002, 176, 181). I endorse this proposal but I want to add the problem of historicity into this picture. For feminist to be able to theorize the vitality of bodies I claim that both history and sexual difference should be conceptualized as questions that constantly pose themselves, demanding an answer, demanding to be spoken about, demanding presence. The vitality of matter is an issue extending far beyond the particular instances of its occurrence, such as 'pleasure' or 'pain'. In theorizing materiality through the experiential body the temptation to resolve the question of sexual difference through the language of history is close at hand. This kind of solution ends up producing sexual difference and offering historicity as a solution for the produced fixity. It ends up producing fixed materialities, such as 'impairment,' and rendering these seemingly non-foundational through the language of transformation – the language of history. Problematizing the language of history shows that it is itself foundational, ontological and that it itself already implies assumptions about materiality. I will come back to these issues in the next chapter.

The notion of experience is perhaps a way to theorize the gap between the material and the discursive given that the discursive is not prioritized. Foucault writes that the purpose of his study (*The History of Sexuality*) is:

to make (the body) visible through an analysis in which the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another, as in the evolutionism of the first sociologists, but are bound together in an increasingly complex fashion.... Hence I do not envisage a “history of mentalities” that would take account of bodies only through the manner in which they have been perceived and given meaning and value; but a “history of the bodies” and the manner in which what is most vital in them has been invested (Foucault 1978, 152).

Foucault, here argues against an idea of bodies being there *before history* awaiting meaning. A history of mentalities will end up describing how bodies have been perceived at various places and in different times. Analyzing what is most vital in bodies is analyzing how this vitality has been invested to produce patterns of thought and behavior. Without this vitality of bodies there would be no investment. Power thrives parasitically on the vitality of bodies. I argue that to be able to theorize what is most vital in bodies – pleasures, growth, sensation, limits and excess – to be able to theorize metamorphoses, to use Rosi Braidotti’s term – a re-evaluation of corporeal ‘experience’ is needed. In re-evaluating experience I would seek for other solutions than those in which “the biological and the historical are consecutive to one other” and I would also seek for solutions where the complex fashion, in which the physical is bound to the discursive, is understood in other ways than in ‘the historical’ way only. If it is so that the vitality of bodies is where the intensity of power is at its highest then it is crucial not to historicize the meanings that are invested in bodies. To forget history and the habit of writing the histories of these meanings I avoid strengthening them with *knowledge*. Forgetting history allows for a more situated approach to the problem of experiential bodies. It allows one to think through the vitality of bodies and to problematize the ways in which power thrives on bodies by investment. Historical narratives are not the only way to explore this complex interplay between power and bodies. Attributing force to historicity only might lead to some operations of power, which are connected to the capacities and activities of materiality, being missed.

The vitality in bodies is also active and formative in relation to discourse and this is why a ‘history of mentalities’ will not be enough for a writing of the ‘history of bodies’

(Foucault 1978, 152). The fact that these vitalities can be invested in is a fact about the active formativity of bodies and not just the 'malleability' of bodies in a passive sense. My analyses of Judith Butler's texts in chapters 3, 4 and 5 have these kinds of questions as their background. Through an analysis of the place of history in Butler's "always already", "the constitutive outside" and "performativity," I will discuss the issues that a historicizing constructivism raises.

An investigation into historicizing as a mode of thought is a necessary operation for theories of materiality. An investigation into the consequences that historicism might have in theories of materiality is necessary. In my opinion, feminist theories of materiality and feminist constructivist thinkers need to become explicit and concrete about their view on what history means and what it means in their theoretical frameworks. My work is a contribution to the analysis of the historicizing rhetoric of constructivist theories and one aim of this investigation is to discuss how historicizing continues to privilege the discursive in feminist theories of materiality, especially in Judith Butler's theory of materialization.

2.2. Background to historico-philosophical questions

A feminist philosophy of history – a historico-philosophical feminism?

As I have mentioned previously, I approach historicity from a transdisciplinary feminist perspective in a philosophical mode. This means, that in addition to the feminist theoretizations of corporeality that my work is situated in, I draw from the philosophy of history and especially from two phenomenologists: namely Luce Irigaray and Martin Heidegger. In this chapter, I will give the background to my historico-philosophical questions. I will give a brief account of what kind of issues I find interesting and of the place they have in relation to the arguments in my thesis. I will also account for the literature that in my case raised these questions. I will elaborate on some key-ideas – historical ontologies, "unmeaning", and the necessity of history – that are essential to my conceptualization of historicity. I will then go on to discuss the reasons why they are essential. These key ideas do not form a coherent theoretical framework in the sense that I would be arguing within a delimited theoretical frame. I use these ideas as nodal-points

that direct my analysis and questions at crucial points. They also support my main argument about the relevance of a strategic forgetting of history. But first I will briefly discuss the amorphous notion “feminist philosophy of history”.

To read the whole philosophy of history from a feminist perspective would be quite impossible. This is the case, firstly, because there is no unitary discipline that one could go through (Kellner 1998, 42), there is no doxa; there is no such discipline as *the philosophy of history*. The Philosophy of history is as interdisciplinary in its roots as feminism. I understand the philosophy of history as a set of questions that can be asked from different disciplinary perspectives. According to Karl Popper, the philosophy of history involves three big questions: (1) What is the plot of history? (2) What is the use of history? (3) How are we to write history (Domańska 1998, 42)? My understanding of the philosophy of history as *questions concerning history*, has lead me to ask questions of type two: what is the use of history within feminist theories?

A lot of the discussion of history is based on poststructuralist assumptions with origins in phenomenology and Heidegger (Kellner 1998, 41). The rethinking of history also has psychoanalytical dimensions. What is our relationship to our personal past? What is the place of history within a Lacanian framework, for instance (Brennan 1993, White 1998, 34, Ankersmit1998)? Because the philosophy of history is defined only by its perspective and the kind of questions it poses, there is a range of philosophical traditions that it stems from. The fact that a particular historicism has become so predominant in the west makes the problem of history a very general problem that touches every discipline and can be found in *every language*. The impact that linguistics has had on the kind of questions that are asked of history is relevant also because it makes the philosophy of history even more complicated in its disciplinary backgrounds. The narrativist or linguistic turn within philosophies of history again introduces a new set of background theoretical traditions, especially the predominance of literary theory. Writing a dissertation in the midst of such a 'field' is entering a terrain that is often defined only through 'name-dropping': White, Foucault, Rorty, Derrida, Ankersmit, Barthes, Nietzsche, Hegel (see, for example, the introduction in Domańska 1998). In my assessment, such generality should lead to caution. Mentioning history in a theory should be done in such a way as to avoid a metaphorical and imprecise use. When using history

or historicity as an argument, the content of the language should be concretely explicated and tested. Does the notion of history and the implications of it suit the rest of my theoretical frame?

The practical consequences of the complicated theoretical background that the philosophy of history has, not to mention the fact that a *feminist* philosophy of history makes the picture even more complicated, is that I read phenomenologists as “philosophers of history”. I pick up the theme of history from their work without considering the phenomenological background that their ideas about history stem from. I do this to be able to concentrate on the feminist historico-philosophical perspective. Were I to go into these backgrounds I would end up in a history of ideas, tracing the genealogies of feminist theories. I could also end up writing conceptual histories concerning the various words that Judith Butler uses in her theory. The advantage of my reading is that I will be able to assess some of the historico-philosophical issues that can be found in Judith Butler’s theories.

When I read feminist theorists of corporeality I do as with other disciplines: I pick up the uses of history without considering the psychoanalytic, phenomenological, deconstructionist, and such like, background that these ideas stem from. I think in a historico-philosophical mode, picking up the theme of history from various theoretical traditions. This is important because my theoretizations aim at an assessment of feminist theories of corporeality and, more specifically, at an assessment of the role of history in Judith Butler’s theory. To be able to argue that a problematization of history is fruitful for theories of materiality I think that using the history of ideas or any other history to explain the place of history in Judith Butler’s theory would be contradictory and counterproductive. I also think that the possibilities for theorizing that philosophy of history opens up might interest feminist theoreticians of materiality. These are some of the reasons behind the fact that I do not explore or contextualize my findings in disciplinary background traditions. I intend to map and explicate – because I want to rehearse – thinking within a feminist philosophy of history (which is, by the way, a term that I very seldom see used anywhere) and, furthermore, because I do not intend to write *a history of ideas or mentalities* explaining ‘from where’ ways of thinking ‘originate’. As I analyze historicizing I try to avoid historicizing. I avoid historicizing because I want to

analyze the language that is used to historicize. History is a language and I am interested in the rules that this language follows.

As I have stated before, the way I approach historicity suggests that I am a structuralist or a formalist. I discuss the rules of the language of history and analyze how they operate in theoretical arguments. Since I do not historicize these rules or contextualize Judith Butler's theories into a history of ideas I cannot think of describing the approach that I have as anything else but formalism. Concerning the use of history I am interested in form rather than content, but when it comes to feminist theories of materiality I am interested also in content and what consequences the form of historical language has for the content of theories of materiality. I conceptualize historicizing as a technique. If the main argument against structuralism and formalism is that they miss historicity my strategic forgettings of history should be read as attempts to become a structural formalist.

For me the strength in feminism lies where it ceases to be a perspective or a corrective. Although feminist thinking is an excellent corrective too, its strength and creativity is fully opened only where it ceases to be reactive. Rethinking power is a politics, an aesthetics and an ethic. It is a mode of becoming. The fact that feminist thought is still not considered to be in the center of philosophy can be considered negative. It is also exactly at this point, where a temptation to "resist" arises, that feminist thought finds its autonomous status. The thinking that this autonomy enables will be of great value to historians and philosophers seeking to come out of ordinary patterns of thinking produced by the "center". In the case of philosophy, for instance, the autonomy of feminist thinking means, that feminists write philosophical feminism instead of a feminist philosophy. Philosophical feminism is a mode of feminist thinking that cannot be "owned" by any scientific tradition, such as philosophy. Feminist philosophy, on the other hand, is a kind of thinking that wants to operate within the philosophical tradition. My aim is to write a feminist philosophy of history so that I could explore and assess the possibilities for a historico-philosophical feminism (see for example Hodge 2000). My feminist philosophy of history is based on a simple question: what is the use of history? It is an opening question that leads to an elaboration of transforming this fundamental question into a historico-philosophical feminism. What I argue in this dissertation is that

feminist theories of materiality can gain new insights through a strategic forgetting of history. This argument is an example of a historico-philosophical feminism. On the most general level to write a historico-philosophical feminism means to explore the openings and passages for feminist thinking that can be traced and found in the realm of the past – in its interplay with the present and the future. In historico-philosophical feminism, history has become a question. It is no longer a fact, a self-evident aspect of the world. Rather, as a question it constantly re-poses itself and makes itself present through all the answers given. History becomes present because the answers given are necessarily given in the language of history. Historico-philosophical feminism takes this into account as it theorizes materiality or any other issues. It does not abandon history, it *cope*s with the question and uses history strategically in a non-deceptive, conscious and clearly stated manner.

Within the discipline of women's studies, feminist theories of corporeality can be studied from a historico-philosophical perspective. Feminist theories of corporeality are in the center of women's studies being one of its major lines of theoretization. Adding a historico-philosophical perspective to feminist theories of corporeality makes the approach a *historico-philosophical feminism*. Within women's studies it is also possible to depart from a certain strand of philosophy and contextualize feminist theories of corporeality into that theoretical tradition making the approach a *feminist philosophy of history*.

As I study Judith Butler's feminist theory of materialization through a historico-philosophical feminism, my theoretical background is divided. Feminist theories of corporeality are central to it as they are under analysis and my historico-philosophical perspective aims at opening up spaces for feminist theories of corporeality. In this way, my approach is a feminist one. The discipline of women's studies is transdisciplinary in this complex way. Its strength and autonomy lies in this complexity and transdisciplinarity.

One of the first feminist writers that inspired me to ask the kind of questions about history that I do is Elisabeth Ermarth. Her widely quoted "*Sequel to History - Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time*" (Ermarth 1992) stems from the field of literature and problematizes the construction of time and the crisis of historical

thinking that has followed postmodernism. Another initial influence was Claire Colebrook's article *Feminist Ethics and Historicism*, (Colebrook 1996) which also is from the field of literature. The meaning and function of historicity in feminist theories is problematized in both Colebrook's and Ermarth's work. As my field is women's studies I saw a possibility to operationalize these questions by taking into account the ongoing epistemological and theoretical discussions within the field of women's studies. I began to notice the historicism embedded in feminist theories dealing with constructivism and materiality (Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, Rosi Braidotti).

When it comes to my historico-philosophical perspective, I have chosen to operate with three key-ideas, or nodal points which I will discuss in the next section. These nodal points, 'unmeaning', historical ontology, and the necessity of history, are markers of the transdisciplinary nature of women's studies. As I will explain below, I do not become a philosopher of history, opting for a heiddeggerian, hegelian or some other theory of history and then go on to analyze feminist texts. Rather, my nodal points support my main argument that feminist theories of materiality gain from a problematization of historicity and historicizing in general.

Nodal points

Historical ontologies and outsides

I have collected my understanding of historicity from many sources. The basic ideas that I use in this dissertation come from Martin Heidegger and I explain these further in chapter 3. *In Feminist Interpretations of Martin Heidegger* (Holland and Huntington 2001) temporality and history in Heidegger's work is mentioned as one of the most fruitful sites for a feminist inquiry together with the themes "bodies" and "others" (Chanter 2001, 73). The aspects of Heidegger's thought that I have focused on in chapter 3 are commensurate with this since they mainly concern his ideas on how objects and phenomena are thought to be historical. For me, Heidegger's *Being and Time* is a

description of the ontological aspects of historicity. What I have borrowed from it are the ideas of *history as the past* and *history as belonging* and also, a basically chronological notion of *time as now-points*. I will account for this in chapter 3 and I will use these ideas throughout the dissertation as analytical tools.

Heidegger problematizes temporality in relation to the historical and the writing of history. I read Heidegger as *describing* the phenomena of historicity and it is from his description that I will do a feminist reading.¹² Irigaray's *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* will serve as my feminist guide. I trace the places of history in Irigaray's reading of Heidegger. A most excellent branch of feminist scholarship is related to the study of Heidegger's texts. The history of feminist interpretations of Heidegger is a philosophy as such (see Holland and Huntington 2001) and the parts of my work that discuss Irigaray and Heidegger could also be placed into this strand of feminist thinking.

Heidegger investigates objects as ontologically historical. Heidegger's account places historicity inside the objects, as part of their very being instead of placing ahistorical objects into an already existing history (and meaning) that would be somehow outside the objects. For Heidegger the ontology of objects includes historicity. I use Heidegger's analysis of the ontology of historical objects. Many feminist readings of Heidegger actually take up the fundamentality of historicity that he introduces. It is then used to argue *for* the fundamental historicity and context-dependency of meaning (Holland and Huntington 2001). I also take up these themes - the historicity and context-dependency of objects in chapter 3 (as part of the idea of "belonging") but as my approach aims to problematize historicizing it, of course, follows that I cannot depart from an assumption about the "necessity that we all understand concepts and categories in their context-dependency and that we ought not to disregard historicizing" (Scott 1996). If I would depart from this assumption I would situate my findings in a history of ideas or write a conceptual history. In my thesis, the ontology of historical objects is regarded as an aspect of the language of history. As it is my aim to assess some of the

¹² Heidegger uses terms like "ordinary", "inauthentic" and "approximately and for the most part" when he interprets Dasein. I do not go along with his phenomenology, that for him necessitates that one finds a genuine ontological analysis of Dasein that lies behind the inauthentic level and has to be reached by further investigation (Heidegger 1962, 426). I use the "inauthentic level", his analysis of "the ordinary", as a description of objects and their interconnection to historicity without operationalizing his ideas about "the authentic".

consequences that historicity has in Judith Butler's feminist theories, I have followed the opposite path: that of a strategic forgetting of history at points where Butler uses it as an essential ingredient in her theories.

When problematizing the historicizing operation, thinking about the limits of history becomes an issue. At these limits, drawn by the question concerning the uses of history, the question about 'the outside' is raised. Thinking about an outside of history does not mean that one argues that such an outside actually exists as a place where I could overcome the language of history or where I would lose my ability to speak through it. The possibility of an outside becomes an issue when history is not understood as a self-evident fact and as a necessary and normal feature of the world. Investigating history as a language means that the nature, the rules and the logic of this language is explicated. Perhaps the structural formalism that I discussed earlier is an outside to historical language. The structural formalism, in all its abstractivity, does exactly what it has been criticized for doing: it forgets history in its analysis (of history).

Luce Irigaray's work locates places where the limits of historicity and meaning are drawn. In *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* (1999), she asks: "of what" is this historicity constructed (the historicity that Heidegger describes as a matter of universal fact)? "Of what" is it made? "Where" is this context-dependency (Irigaray 1999)? Although Irigaray's language might sound awkward I find that the choice of words already indicates the direction her answer will take. "Of what" indicates a materiality and construction, "where" indicates a spatiality, a material space. I will come back to this. Although Heidegger's account might be accurate in its description of historicity, Irigaray shows that as an explanation of man, an explanation of his world and the objects in it, historicity is fundamentally based on non-history, the realm of materiality that has its own unfolding. It is a materiality that becomes historicity's unspeakable and unintelligible base. I will present my reading of Irigaray in chapter 3.

I mention Irigaray and Heidegger here as my nodal points because of the way Irigaray's work engages with Heidegger's. This discussion made me understand how Heidegger's ontological theory of history can be problematized from a feminist perspective. Irigaray's *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* also pinpointed the relevance of questioning the interrelationship between language and historicity. In its

critique of language and historicity, Irigaray's feminism further opened up for a possibility to also do a feminist reading of Derrida's ideas of the hyperbole. I will explain the relevance of this last nodal point in the next section.

"Unmeaning"

To offer a working definition of the idea of 'unmeaning' as I understand it in this work, I will now discuss aspects of epistemology, that is, I will discuss how the idea of *meaning in general* raises questions about 'unmeaning' or the hyperbole, of excess and hybris; the unstructured, and the incomprehensible, which stand outside all epistemology. This is important to my work because of the intimate connection that historicity and meaning have. The problem of the historicity of all meaning is unresolvable and theorizing this problem has led to critiques of radical historicism. Without the idea of the hyperbole, or 'unmeaning,' the predominance of historicity goes unquestioned and becomes the logical outcome of the historicity of meaning.

Looking at the construction of meaning through the process of othering, trying to situate this process historically, one has to take into account an epistemological level. In examining how various meanings are constituted in a dichotomous way, in a way that simultaneously constitutes the one and the other of this one, it is not possible to simply describe differences between one thing and another. What is needed is an analysis of how these things were invested with difference in the first place. This kind of analysis operates on the level of epistemology and constructivism. It examines how meanings are historically produced. This differs from an approach where meanings are *described* and where their constitution is not problematized. Joan Scott pushed our thoughts concerning women's history to this limit. She writes the history of difference, of the ways that meanings get produced through difference. That is, she historicizes meanings, writing a history of (certain) meaning(s). This kind of epistemological approach actually implies writing the history of social constructions. They are investigations into the constitution and construction of meanings and it is these social constructions, these categories of meaning and these concepts that are explored through a historical narrative. In this epistemological approach, there is no "woman" behind the construction of the category

woman. Analyzing “woman” means historicizing “woman”. It means writing the history of this particular social construction. “Woman” has to be historicized because, in the constructivist framework, meanings are understood to *always already* be historical. By introducing gender and difference as analytical tools for (feminist) histories, Scott avoids the ‘essentializing trap’ by writing a conceptual history. Gender becomes a historical structure, instead of being placed into history. Gender is not *in history* as some self-evident aspect of the world, rather, history is inside gender as its sole meaning. This is an effect produced by historicity in its connection to meaning in general and it makes it possible to point to the relativizing effects of history in relation to the essentializing and descriptive accounts of women. To open up this debate, one that is fundamentally connected to the interrelatedness of historicity and meaning, the concept of experience is central. In analyzing women’s history ‘experience’ is especially something that must be rethought, keeping in mind the connections between the philosophy of history and feminist epistemology. The debate about different ways of writing women’s history that, among others, Linda Gordon and Joan Scott have engaged in, is articulated through the concept of ‘experience’.

‘Experience’ has been one of the most fruitful concepts within feminist theorizing and women’s history. I argue that this is because as a concept, experience, has close relations to ideas of ‘the real’, ‘empirical’, ‘material’, and ‘actual’. Feminist epistemology has theorized experience and standpoint theories based on this concept. Analyzing women’s experience is often done through historical narratives. The accounts of experience become histories of women. The project of re-evaluating the concept of experience is an essential step in theories of constructivism and corporeality as well as in standpoint theory, of course. As words, both ‘experience’ and ‘history’ have close connections to ideas about the ‘real’ and the ‘factual’. Problematizing the nature of these ‘reals’ and ‘factualities’ is what feminist postmodernists have been doing. They underline the historicity of meaning and point at the historically constructed nature of experiences. I take all this up because I think that if the interconnectedness of historicity and meaning *in general* is not theorized, as such, rather it is used only in arguments, the effects will be unfruitful and delimiting to feminist theory and history. The problem of ‘unmeaning’ and the hyperbole are valuable in places where the historicity of meaning tends to become a

universal *law* and where problems concerning meaning are 'resolved' through 'historicity'. Solutions, which are based on repeating the fact about the historicity of language and meaning, do not manage to theorize this ever-fascinating problem. The hyperbole and 'unmeaning' can be used to argue that there are questions to be asked and problems to be solved for feminist theorists concerning the self-evident nature of historicity, constructivism and meaning in general. ¹³

Understanding meaning and language as essentially historical is to make language ask the question about its own meaning *from* and *within* its historicity. Pushed to its limits history is *meaning itself*, as Derrida constantly argued (see also Nancy 1990, 158). Within historicist feminist theory and women's history, this implies that 'woman' means what it means historically in language. This is its inescapable limit. There is no 'pre' to the meaning 'woman' and any way to achieve a transformation of meaning must run through history (myth is no option here because it is seen to lack a connection to the 'real' and the 'factual'). It is no wonder, then, that the work for change or transformation and politics is understood to be *historical work*:

Gender performativity involves the difficult labor of deriving agency from the very power regimes which constitute us, and which we oppose. This is, oddly enough, historical work, reworking the historicity of the signifier, and no recourse to quasi-transcendental selfhood and inflated concepts of History will help us in this most concrete and paradoxical of struggles (Butler 1995b, 136).

The historicity of the signifier is *meaning in general* and this meaning manifests itself in most concrete (if not all) situations. An inflated concept of history would transcend this particularity, where historicity and meaning, or "the domain of intelligibility", show themselves in the concrete. There is a risk of a radical historicism here becoming so if it does not manage to ask the question about its own possibility: an unquestioned historicism comes to operate as a blockage for thinking and theorizing and thinking

¹³Franklin Ankersmit has emphasized the concept of experience in philosophies of history in general. On this general level, the insights of feminist theory and feminist historians (Scott 1991) are valuable. For the Scott-Gordon debate, see *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1990, 15:4. For an account for experience within philosophy of history see Ankersmit 1998.

becomes reactive. An argument where historicity and meaning are equated, on a general level and without recourse to any particular or concrete situation to support the equation, is an argument based on historical determinism:

The power of discourse to materialize its effects is thus consonant with the power of discourse to circumscribe the domain of intelligibility. Hence, the reading of “performativity” as willful and arbitrary choice misses the point that the historicity of discourse and, in particular the historicity of norms constitute the power of discourse to enact what it names (Butler 1993, 187).

The historicity of discourse is a historicity of meaning. It is a historicity of the norms that circumscribe the domain of intelligibility. It is the historicity of meaning as language. It is the historicity of matter. It is history determining.

Luce Irigaray (1999) poses questions at these historicized limits of language and meaning: Of what is this language made? Of what is this history? Is there an outside? Of what is *his* language made? Does history-language need loyalty? It is possible to ask again, why 'is' *his* language 'historical'. Is there no way out of *his-story*?

When meaning is historicized, historicizing itself easily becomes a non-question. Historicizing meaning does not in itself alter the logic and rationale of historical thinking; rather it is the object that history turns to that changes. Investigating the ways in which meanings get constructed through difference is investigating the basic operation of language, of positivity and negativity, which produce semantic opposites and dichotomies. Conceptual history is no guarantee against the universal, or the foundational.

In Jacques Derrida's work, I have encountered the question about the structurality of meaning (and of meaning as history). I believe that his way of discussing the emerging problematizations of centers, telos, and origins, as being part of a structuralist thinking, is worth considering in relation to historicizing and difference. This is fruitful for feminist theories in being able to avoid getting trapped in the necessity of contextuality, which at many times means a necessity of historicism. The insight concerning the connection between contextuality and historicity made me understand that when Luce Irigaray

argues that “a time before history” (Irigaray 1999) is a prerequisite for history to emerge, I can read this statement as a critique of contextual and self-representational language, instead of discarding it as a ‘fabulous’ ahistorical philosophy. To avoid repeating the necessity of historicity, an avoidance that is essential when problematizing historicity as a mode of thought, requires that I understand the negative notion of the ‘ahistorical’ as an internal limit that sustains the space of historicity (Žižek 2000a, 214). The temptation to react to anything ‘ahistorical’ in the negative and to convert this negativity into a positivity through historicizing, is a temptation that effectively hinders thinking about how the notion of the ‘ahistorical’ operates as a ‘gatekeeper’, which sustains the space of historicity. As internal limits, both ‘the historical’ and ‘the ahistorical’ are part of the same historicist matrix and this realization opens up a possibility for a critical philosophy of history.

As my project aims at opening up spaces for "virtual non-historicity" and possibilities to rehearse a strategic forgetting of history, notions such as the "ahistorical" become tricky. The hegemony of historicism is inscribed into language and limits thinking through drawing lines, which are then conceptualized through the "ahistorical". These limits are understood negatively, as something to be avoided. When the ahistorical is understood as an enabling limit for the historical, questions about ‘excess’, ‘nothingness’, and ‘nondetermination’ come to the fore. When the ahistorical is not understood to be outside the historical, the question about an outside to this double-bind can be re-posed. ‘Unmeaning’ and hyperbole can be compared to the “constitutive outside”. The ahistorical is internal to historicity, which pushes the hyperbole further from this double-bind. Thinking these issues through minimizes the risk of radical historicism and expands the area for feminist thinking. I will analyze the constitutive outside in Judith Butler’s theory in chapter 4.3.

In problematizing phenomena such as historicity, the necessity to remember ‘hyperbole’, ‘excess’, the ‘nondetermined’, ‘Nothingness’ or ‘Infinity’ – a time before history – is crucial in order not to forget the origin of meaning. In my reading, ‘the origin of meaning’ lies in ‘unmeaning’ and the hyperbole. In *Cogito and the History of Madness* (Derrida 2001), Derrida discusses a certain totalitarian and a historicist style that follows from the elusion of excess or nothingness. He claims that the *hyperbole*, an

excess in the direction of 'nothingness' and 'unmeaning', is an excess that overflows the totality of that which can be thought. It overflows the totality of beings and determined meanings; it overflows the totality of factual history. It is 'non-meaning', non-history, it is the excess that enables and opens up the possibility for history, the possibility for the play of the negative and the positive (e.g. the historical-ahistorical). An effort to reduce the hyperbole to a historically determined totality, risks erasing the excess by which every philosophy of meaning is related to the non-foundation of 'unmeaning' (Derrida 2001, 68-70, 393). This erasure is a risk for Derrida because his theory of iterability and his idea of *différance* depend on undecidability and unknowability. Erasing these elements and replacing them with the historicity of meaning means that the question concerning language and signification would be resolved by referring to historicity, and that meaning would remain fixed within the confines of the language of history. Erasing the excess and 'unmeaning' reduces everything to intraworldliness. Reductionism is violent.

The critique that Irigaray and Derrida offer is also a radical critique of historicism. It is a warning against the possibility of a determinism that historicizing might impose on meaning and thinking. Radical historicism is seen as a self-defeating enterprise, since a radical historicism would imply a certain self-referentiality of language. Using the language of history to contextualize meaning implies that meaning remains fixed within the confines of the structures of this language. Derrida critiques the tendency to reduce everything to intraworldliness through, for example, history, and argues that this reduction is the very meaning of what is called violence (Derrida 2001, 70). Reductionism is violence. The problem of determinism that a full-blown historicism implies – a determinism reducing all meaning to intraworldliness – cannot be resolved without posing the question of the origin of historicity *in general*. This question can free knowledge of its historicism. As I intend to find a space in which to forget history, I read Derrida's question as one concerning the structure of thinking. What is the origin, or causal place of history in relation to meaning and language? Is there a place 'before' history? Derrida's own suggestion about the origin of meaning and historicity introduces the idea of 'hyperbole'. According to Derrida, the origin of meaning and historicity lies in the 'hyperbole' that enables meaning to unfold:

I think, therefore, that (in Descartes) everything can be reduced to a determined historical totality except the hyperbolic project. Now this project belongs to the narration narrating itself and not to the narration narrated by Foucault (in the History of Madness). It cannot be recounted, cannot be objectified as an event in a determined history (Derrida 2001, 70).

The importance of thinking the 'hyperbole', 'unmeaning' and 'nonhistory' lies in the ethical responsibility that the thinking of it forces on the narrator and their narrative. Historicity is not in a position to forget its limits. The ethical dimension, in connection to the hyperbole, is an effect of the violence involved in reducing everything to intraworldliness and to the self-righteous utilization of the historicity of meaning. The power invested in this kind of self-evidency and 'truth' that historicity involves, needs to be assessed. Historical narratives are constructed and to use them in legitimate politics without acknowledging their narrative status or without acknowledging "narration narrating itself," is to utilize a language of truth and knowledge in service of one's own arguments.

Although Derrida poses the question concerning the predominance and operations of historicism in western thinking, he leaves us with 'language' (and perhaps a materiality of language itself?). His model can be said to secure the fundamental link between meaning and historicity in general. For Luce Irigaray, who also poses the question about the origin of meaning and language, solutions that are based on a forgetting of materiality become problematic. I use the work of Irigaray to cite its feminist reading of 'unmeaning' and non-history.

With an understanding of the profundity of the 'beyond', or of 'unmeaning' and excess, it is possible to theorize 'exit-signs' that say 'virtual' or 'not real'. Historicity is so bound with language and meaning in western thinking that at times these kinds of issues seem impossible to question. Debates get caught in a circle where historicity and meaning support each other in directing thinking. The temptation to argue that 'but that is already a meaning' or the 'but that is also a meaning' have, for me, become indicators of the hegemony of historicist epistemologies. They operate as 'stop-signs' for

philosophizing and, thus, indicate power. To be able to think about historicity and not just through it, I have operationalized the ideas of hyperbole and 'unmeaning' as sites that enable this almost totalitarian frame where historicity, meaning and language support each other. The crucial insight of the hyperbole, combined with Irigaray's material remembrance, directs my thinking. Whenever I choose to remember history I simultaneously forget the possibility for this unconditional unmeaning. When I choose to use historical narratives and the particularities of history for strategic purposes, I must take the factuality of history and historical events seriously. Would I not do this, the legitimacy of my histories would become suspect and the fact that I use history strategically would show. This of course robs my argument of historical legitimacy. However, in order to be able to find a strategic place where a forgetting of history is possible, it is this same seriousness that I have to become suspicious of. For me, it would have been impossible to even think of history as a language and as a metaphysics were it not for a "secret" fascination for thoughts about the outside, 'unmeaning', and another language. This fascination stems from my determination that there is no logical necessity or factual and simple truth that would compel me to historicize.

To unlock the way meaning and historicity are intertwined requires some feminist separatist tendencies. As long as thinking about history remains reformist, that is, that women's history, for example, is seen to be 'additive' in relation to the history already written, as long as it seen in this way, then the language of history is *used*. The critic, that is, the reformist, remains inside a language that she wants to alter, since it is the only language there is. It is criticized for its male-centeredness and women have demanded 'access' to this language, which, of course, they do have. What the reformist simultaneously does is that in her demands, she en-sexes the language of history and uses the language of history to construct sex. To come out of a reformist thinking, separatism is an option. Separatism implies a suspicion towards reformism as it sees that the politics of reform is a way to uphold power because, as many feminists have argued, the logic of power demands resistance. I am partly constituted by what I oppose.

The fact that I argue for a strategic forgetting of history and for the fruitfulness to think about 'hyperbole' and 'unmeaning' in relation to historicity partly stems from my suspicion towards the operations of power. A strategic forgetting of history is also a

separatist or anti-reformist move. This leads me to my last nodal point. In the next section, I will further discuss the necessity of history that I have already touched upon here. I question the necessity of history. I argue that a strategic forgetting of history will enlarge the space for feminist theorizing and politics, and that thinking about a strategic forgetting of history will lead to philosophies of history. It is my intention to state that even feminist arguments *against* the possibility of a strategic forgetting will result in feminist philosophies of history. In historicist times such as this, I find this positive.

A strategic forgetting of history?

With the phrase "the unhistorical" I designate the art and the power of *forgetting* and of enclosing oneself within a bounded *horizon*; I call "suprahistorical" the powers which lead the eye away from becoming towards that which bestows upon existence the character of the eternal and stable, towards *art* and *religion*. *Science* – for it is science which would here speak of poisons – sees in these two forces hostile forces: for science regards the only right and true way of regarding things, that is to say the only scientific way, as being that which sees everywhere things that have been, things historical, and nowhere things that are, things eternal; it likewise lives in profound antagonism towards the eternalizing powers of art and religion for it hates forgetting, which is the death of knowledge, and seeks to abolish all limitations of horizon and launch mankind upon an infinite and unbounded sea of light whose light is knowledge of all becoming (Nietzsche 1983, 120)

There is a radical questioning of the historicity of meaning at stake in the texts that I have used to counter historicity (Ermarth, Colebrook, Irigaray, Heidegger, Derrida, Žižek, Laclau, Nietzsche). This questioning leads to different attempts, or suggestions, for rewriting historicity, abandoning history, going beyond history and into myth, for example, or going back to tradition. To be able to use historicity, instead of being used by history, historicity has to be considered as part of the problematics of what is called

metaphysical thinking. I opened this dissertation by quoting Friedrich Nietzsche. He argues that we are suffering from a consuming fever of history and ought at least to recognize that we are suffering from it (Nietzsche 1983, 60). I think Nietzsche's claim describes the way I approach history. I understand history as a language, which is used and consumed. As I have stated before, I see the philosophy of history as questions concerning history. Karl Popper posed three: (1) What is the plot of history? (2) What is the use of history? (3) How are we to write history (Domańska 1998, 42) and I have asked questions of the second kind. As Nietzsche argues; we *consume* history, we use it. This is also my understanding. At the same time, I argue that remembering the fact that history is a language might be helpful in the attempt to forget it at strategic theoretical points. The hegemony of historicizing leads to a feminist thinking, which never forgets the violence of a language that is circumscribed by a total intraworldliness. A language that is bound to events that already 'have happened' and to circumstances that cannot be altered and, thus, these become necessary and shared "backgrounds" to the present. To me, this implies a certain amount of suffering. This suffering stems from a duty to repeat a language and to refer to stories that have gained a metanarrative status within knowledge-construction. The suffering stems from an unacknowledged sense of duty, from the fact that historicity is taken as a self-evident fact that makes us repeat the language and even to learn its chronology by heart. I like Nietzsche's sentimental language in his description of suffering from a "historical sense" and from the "universal empire of history":

To speak without euphemism: the mass of the influx is so great, the strange, barbaric and violent things (of history) that press upon the youthful soul do so with such overwhelming power that its only refuge is in an intentional stupidity.[...] The young man has become so homeless and doubts all concepts and all customs. He now knows: every age is different, it does not matter what you are like. In melancholy indifference he lets every opinion pass him by...(Nietzsche 1983, 98).

The actual student of history has become an active servant of truth and "a lord in the universal empire of history" (Nietzsche 1983, 98). To avoid the intentional stupidity that Nietzsche referred to in the above quote, I argue for a strategic forgetting of history. A strategic forgetting is not the same as the intentional stupidity Nietzsche refers to, since it is based on a thorough problematization of historicity; it is based on a philosophy of history. In the end, I think that these two things cannot be separated since, for a historicist mind, a strategic forgetting of history comes out of a logical necessity considered as stupidity. The normalizing necessity of history that the *accusation* of stupidity attempts to install is already enough to reassure oneself of the fact that one is, at least, on *some kind of feminist track*.

Feminists have used historicity as an ingredient in their narratives in both creative and non-historicist ways. Myth is a genre that is closely related to historicity. Myth, and fiction in general, have also been discussed in attempts to abandon history. The historical tends to distort myth and make myth a part of its own content. Friedrich Nietzsche understands myth as a mode of thinking that simply is not reasonable. This is why myth might be seen as a means to question the predominance of reason and history. Myth is part of the aesthetic and, thus, also a vehicle for creating a new language as the basis for a new world (Megill 1987).

The idea of a consciously created myth, an option made available through the illusory nature of western conceptual thought, is worth considering in relation to feminism and its possibilities of avoiding logocentric modes of thought, especially historicity. Nietzsche tries to reread the past as a prophecy that will change the present, not as a justification or explanation of how the present came about, which is how the past is usually deployed (Hamilton 1996, 115).

Feminist mythmaking employs revisionist myth to invent new forms of identity (Gloria Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde, Mary Daly, Rosi Braidotti¹⁴). Here, I think especially of Mary Daly's *Quintessence...Realizing the Archaic Future*, which is the "fifteenth anniversary edition" (from the year 2048, the mythical Era of the book) of a book that was originally published in 1998. I also think of Monique Wittig's and Sande Zeig's

¹⁴ For a further discussion concerning the mythologizing aspects in these writers see, Keating 2000.

fascinating dictionary *Lesbian Peoples: Material for a Dictionary*, whose narrative is organized in the order of the new language that it alphabetically presents. This new language incorporates elements of unheard of historical periodization and myth that is based on recognizable experience, which, furthermore, is often a bodily experience.

I read Rosi Braidotti's idea of "figuration" (Braidotti 2002) as one of these operationalizations of myth for the purposes of feminist thinking. Braidotti uses the term figuration to describe what is implied in new feminist subjectivities such as the cyborg (Haraway), the inappropriate(d) other (Minh-ha), and her own nomad and so forth. These figurations are expressions of the embodied situatedness of a subject. Figurations necessarily involve both repressive and empowering social imaginaries. I would argue that they are ways of 'coping' that aim at transformation and change. Figurations can be used to invent new structures of thought and to think about the possibilities for conceptual change (Braidotti 2002, 173, 241). Since figurations draw maps of social power relations, they can also help identify possible strategies of resistance (Braidotti 2002, 3). Keeping in mind the close relationship between historicity and language, I would argue that what would also help in identifying places of 'resistance' is that I remember the power that history is invested with. Figurations can be situated historically, but if the argument about the historical specificity of every figuration becomes a methodological necessity, then figurations will always be circumscribed by their historicity. This again means that the language of history will become the 'mother-tongue' of every figuration. I might suggest a figuration of *virtual non-historicizers* to remind feminists of philosophy about history and about the possibilities that it can provide when thinking about change.

Some of the feminist interventions and figurations can be read as examples of a strategic forgetting of history. Wittig and Zeig create a lesbian space that is enabled by 'virtual non-historicity'. Their point is not to nostalgically return to some prehistoric period. Instead, they perform a radical rewriting of the past that allows one, to use Trinh T. Minh-ha's words, to start again with different re-departures, different pauses and different arrivals. These returns could be conceptualized as performative rather than descriptive (Keating 2000, 383). These kinds of feminist returns are part of a

mythologizing practice, where history is used rather than a historicizing practice, where myth is made part of history's content.

I think that points of exit are as necessary to thinking as points of entry. My point of exit in this work is matter –and more specifically the *vitality and diversity* of matter. I believe that feminist theories of materiality gain new insight by refusing to grant priority to the historical as the main formative power in the relation between the discursive and the material.

A forgetting of history at strategic theoretical points opens up a space for questions that do not have to be drawn back into the confines of *his* (sexed) language and *his* (heterosexualizing) historicism. As I now go into the more analytical chapters of the dissertation, I aim to rehearse a strategic forgetting of history to be able to problematize historicizing without contextualizing this practice into some determined historical frame.

3. Historicity - temporality

In this chapter, I will explore some aspects in historicity as a mode of thought. I do this by accounting for one understanding of how the meanings of objects are constructed as historical. The meanings of objects are both epistemologically and ontologically connected to historicity. As I argued in the previous chapter, an investigation into historicizing as a mode of thought is a necessary operation for theories of materiality that aim at a rethinking of the form-matter distinction and that theorize the relationship between the discursive and the material. The complex interconnectedness of the historical to the material is an issue that needs to be theorized also from a historico-philosophical perspective. In this chapter, I will further explore the interconnectedness between historicity and materiality through a consideration of historical objects, such as the 120 000 objects that are situated in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo¹⁵. These are concrete objects and materialities that are ontologically historical. Concrete objects that are considered to be 'from the past' are also epistemologically historical in the meanings that they carry and in the hierarchical organization that they stand in relation to each other. Tutankhamen's gloves and sandals carry an epistemological value that a cowbell in the antique store in Utrecht lacks. The connection between the ontological historicity and the epistemological meaning is relevant when considering the interconnectedness between the discursive and the material. The connections between historical narrative and chronological order are essential in understanding objects as historical and contextual.

I argue that the historicity of concrete materialities and historical objects involves an idea of 'belonging'. The question of where historical objects have belonged is a question that concerns their meaning. The intelligibility of historical objects is possible through an investigation and narration of this, basically chronological, belonging. I want to point at the fact that the way historical objects are conceptualized and understood is ontological and that this ontology implies a chronology, a necessary contextuality and an empiricism. Standard historical objects, such as the objects in the Egyptian museum, are

¹⁵ The Egyptian museum houses some 120 000 "objects from the past". Museum website at <http://www.emuseum.gov.eg/>

understood to have a specific chronology as their basic feature. They are also seen to belong to a context, such as 'Egypt's 18th dynasty' and they have to be material and empirical, so that they can be analyzed, stored and looked at. The second part of this chapter concerns aspects of temporality, both in a general relation to historicity and also in Judith Butler's constructivist arguments. The first part is a prelude to the second, as it sets out to explore some aspects of historicity and temporality that are subsequently used to analyze Judith Butler's theoretization as a 'case-study'.

I would like to briefly discuss some very general aspects of historicizing. I understand historicizing as a means by which historicity is used and utilized. What historicizing utilizes is some of the basic characteristics of historicity, which I will discuss after I have shown, through a few examples, what I mean with the 'uses of history'. Historicizing is a practice that uses the grammar of history. Historicizing utilizes the idea of belonging, the possibility for anti-formal structurality and an empiricist connection to the 'real' that the language of history offers. In the following, I point at some operations of historicity and introduce the form-matter distinction, which I will use as my analytical tool in discussing constructivist arguments in more detail. I do this to support the argument that the language of history can be used only by following the rules of this language (i.e. the rule of context-dependency, the rule of the real, the rule of chronology and the rule of history as the past) and that using the language of history directs the way it is possible to theorize materiality. It directs a lot of constructivists. It is of course also important to think through aspects of historicizing, especially as I intend to rehearse a strategic forgetting of history.

Historicity and constructivism: some uses of historicity and belonging

Indeed, there has been controversy among feminist historians about whether or not this effort (historicizing difference) is even appropriate. The controversy is symptomatic of the tensions within feminist history, between the political imperative to essentialize women and the relativizing effects of history (Scott 1996, 9).

According to literary theorist Elisabeth Ermarth, historical thinking is an attempt to save the essences by historicizing, by making the essences a historical one and by simultaneously being able to lend the idea of changeability to them (Ermarth 1992, 21). In Ermarth's view, historicizing is understood as a practice of saving essences by referring meanings to an 'Elsewhere', to the neutrality of historical time as past, present, future, in fact, by referring meaning to historicity.

In the ways that historicity can be 'used' to shift the focus from naturalistic or determinist assumptions, it has the capacity to point towards change, towards the past, the future, or towards 'difference', and, as such, it has its obvious uses for liberating projects. According to Rosi Braidotti, essentialism used to refer to "something beyond the reaches of historical change, something immutable and consequently outside the field of political intervention" and she notes that essentialism is often reduced to "mere biological determinism" (Braidotti 1994, 176-177). When essentialism and foundationalism are shown to be just that, that is "a foundation", history lends its inherent ideas about temporal change, belonging and chronology as tools for those who like to make use of them. In other words, when the grammar of history is operationalized, the rules of this grammar become used and useful. The grammar of history enables history to become used and useful. The grammar of 'history' enables it to be used as an 'Elsewhere', as 'other belongings', as 'context'. In using historicity in this way, it is also important to keep in mind the profoundly political character of these kinds of operationalizations. Remembering this is important so that it is possible to more fully situate one's arguments in the actual power relations that one is part of. What am I constructing as I historicize? Am I repeating the idea of the two sexes by narrating the history of this idea? Am I writing a history of my own sexual politics? What consequences do my politics have for others? To be able to think about a transformation of concepts and patterns of thinking, forgetting the 'old' and the existent is necessary. Historicity consists of meanings that are conceptualized as *already known* (by somebody somewhere).

There is a fatalistic tendency involved in a radical historicism, as it claims that the power imbalance in the present can be explained through historicity. History is always already there and the present state of power imbalance is seen as part of a historical

process that no one can retrospectively alter. This fatalistic tendency can, at times, be seen in connection to equality politics where it is argued that present inequalities are connected to 'history' and 'old-fashioned' beliefs that will go away in time. With a strategic forgetting of the historical narratives, it would be possible to explicate the actualities and complexities of oppression and the ethical pull towards political demands – the actual changes – might become stronger.

I would argue that it is relevant to think through the nature of constructivism and its essential link to historicity. Where do different variations of constructivist thought place history? In denouncing naturalism, essentialism and biologism¹⁶ or 'the real' in favor of a constructivist epistemology through 'historicizing meaning', constructivism ends up using the 'specificity' invested in historical empiricism to ground its claims. If I question the truth of some history by pointing at the truth of another, what I am doing, in fact, is using the power that historicity makes possible, or the power that history is made of. This is the power of legitimacy, truth and knowledge that stems from the rules of this language, the 'real', the context-dependency, chronology and 'the past'. One example of this power is the 'relativizing effects' of historicizing. Historicizing would not accomplish relativizing were it not for the connection it has to the 'real' and the 'factual'. These connections make it usable in legitimate arguments and this, then, makes it usable in 'relativizing'. As long as this is done openly and as long as the 'citing' that one is doing is explicated, there is no problem. When historicity is used as if it were as real as the objects that it refers to, then it becomes determining. To present a counterargument to this kind of historicizing one would have to refer to an alternative historical narrative. If I use historicizing to produce 'relativizing effects', I cite the power invested in the rules of grammar in the language of history.

I could of course also question the kind of liberation or freedom that historicity offers. Historicity is always bound in the rules of grammar, which no feminist thinker has

¹⁶ Essentialism is the postulation of a fixed essence and is usually defined as 'unchanged historically or culturally'. Essentialism often refers to naturalism and biologism, but it might also appeal to theological or cultural factors. I would add that essentialism can also refer to historical factors. Biologism postulates a universal biology that is used in explaining culture and history too, perhaps. Naturalism invokes some kind of nature, god-given, cultural, biological, or, I would add, historical nature, as in 'natural history'. For a further discussion, see Grosz 1994.

ever participated in spelling out. If my politics is based on historicizing, I cannot help but to become suspicious of the narratives that my politics have to cite and re-circulate. What power am I opposing and rearticulating as I seek for idealized (are there any other?) pasts or futures? I think that there is a risk involved in using the language of history and this risk is connected to the fact that, in most cases, history is 'already there'. What I can do, however, is add to this basic grand-narrative the parts that seem to be missing. When doing this I strengthen the basic narrative by criticizing it and wanting to 'reform' it. And, furthermore, in doing so, I add to it, making it, perhaps, slightly better and in this way, I reproduce its basic structures. Where do these genealogies take me (or should I ask how)? Have I become a reformist in my attachment to this language? My problem with a reformist politic is that it delimits the possibilities for transformation. I am too suspicious of power to dare be a reformist. I think that reformism is one the basic operations of power.

Form-matter and historicity

At some point a thinker denouncing 'naturalism', essentialism, and biological determinism through constructivism needs to rethink 'materiality' in relation to historicity. To argue through historical constructivism means that the problems concerning the materiality that historicity *itself* implies are left out of sight. Within feminism, corporeality has been an issue through the constant linking of 'women' to 'bodies' and 'sexuality' (Cheah, 1996). The sex-gender distinction is one of the feminist frameworks to think about form-matter. The sex-gender system, an idea coined by Gayle Rubin (Rubin 1975), conceptualizes gender as a social construction imposed on biological sex. The sexually differentiated body is conceptualized as raw material for culturally and historically shifting meanings (Grosz 1994, 16-17). The usefulness of the form-matter distinction as an analytical tool becomes clear here – a form is imposed on matter. Matter is raw-material-like, *awaiting* the form. In the sex-gender system, sex is conceptualized as a raw material that cultural forms *use* to legitimize and naturalize its gendered meanings. Gender is historicized in the sex-gender system and this leaves the materiality of sex (sex of materiality) untheorized (Butler 1993, Liljeström 1996,

Pulkkinen 2000). The connection, which I draw between the sex-gender distinction and the form-matter distinction, stems from the fact that the sex-gender distinction has an inbuilt form-matter distinction. Gender is understood to be form and the varying conceptualizations of gender have matter as a stable point of reference. Sex is conceptualized as non-constructed matter. As in the example of the sex-gender system, the usability of the form-matter distinction in theorizing materiality and historicity becomes clear.

The form-matter distinction is exemplified in constructivist rearticulations of the 'natural' and 'biological' and in the relationship that these have to the 'cultural' or 'social'. Within different constructivist theories, the 'historical' is a central part of theoretical argumentation. History can be conceptualized as a form affecting the *meaning of matter* in different ways, yet still leaving matter the same. History can also be understood as *formative of matter*, as in 'making it matter' in a Butlerian sense. In the first understanding, history is understood to be a concrete materiality that is given a certain form through the writing of history. The materiality of history, or the past, is unchangeable, whereas the narratives and forms given to history are variable¹⁷. In the second understanding, history pre-dates matter and is usually understood as a set of norms, intelligibilities, or as a set of powers that are formative of matter and that operate through matter. Butler writes:

We might historicize the Aristotelian notion of the schema in terms of culturally variable principles of formativity and intelligibility. To understand the schema of bodies as a historically contingent nexus of power/discourse is to arrive at something similar to what Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish* as the "materialization" of the prisoners body" (Butler 1993, 33).

Schema means form, shape, figure, appearance, dress, gesture, figure of a syllogism and grammatical form. Butler states that matter never appears without its schema, its form, and since this Aristotelian form is to be historicized, this means also that form pre-dates

¹⁷ Hayden White has theorized the forms that historical narratives take and the content embedded in these narrative forms (White 1987).

matter. In fact, Butler uses 'history' to separate form and matter and to temporalize them into a *before* or *after*, or a 'simultaneity'. If the form is historical, then the materialization, or the formation of matter, is also historical. The constructivist argument further states that feminists should not take materiality as an irreducible, rather they should conduct a critical genealogy of its formation (Butler 1993, 32). This genealogy of formation is a *history* of form(ation).

One interesting aspect in the relationship between these two operationalizations of the form-matter distinction is that they use the same 'source material'. In the first case, the concrete materialities of the past, events, acts, changes and continuities are seen as 'historical material' that are 'about the past or from the past'. The second line of investigation, the line of "materialization", also needs its historical and empirical objects, be it that these are read as instances of materialization or of a social constitution. The second approach also needs to use empirical objects that are "about the past" or "from the past", even if these might now be those invested in present bodies "carrying the past in them". In both cases, history is formative: either history is conceptualized as a way to *form narratives* based on past materialities or it is conceptualized as a way to account for the *formation of matter* (narrate). It seems that the same tool is utilized for telling different stories about construction. The same grammar rule can be used for different purposes. Placing the word in another sentence has effects. From the ontological point of view, the tool is the same: the historical being of objects. There have to be objects that 'carry history', that in their very being *are historical*. Historicity should be rethought on its ontological level to make a difference (Laclau 2000, 183).

In chapter four, I will use Judith Butler's critique of the sex-gender distinction as platform to think through historicity and its place in theories about 'matter' and materialization. Historicity is not a natural phenomenon but rather a "cultural" one. Historicity is problematic rather than self-evident. History is closely tied to narrative. From this point of view, a solution such as Butler's, where rethinking the form-matter distinction is done through *historicizing* the form, becomes theoretically interesting. In Butler's sentences, historical and contingent forms materialize and 'matter', or 'things', cannot be known in ways other than through these historical forms. These forms are considered to be ontologically historical. The connection that historicity has with ideas

about the real and the factual, the chronological and the past safeguard theories against idealism. The idea of empiricism in history invests meaning and language with materialities connected to the “past”. As such, historicity is a tool that can be used against linguistic monism or formalism¹⁸. These issues are relevant for my thesis since I argue that a feminist rethinking of constructivism and materiality demands a rethinking of historicity. This implies that the nature of both ‘form’ and ‘matter’ be explicated in relation to historicity. It also means that the nature of historicity be explicated.

Arguing within historicity

The sheer idea of the supposed ‘newness’ of current historicizing as opposed to the ‘ahistorical’ tendencies in previous feminist theorizing, which can be read in, for instance, Nancy Fraser’s and Linda Nicholson’s requests for a good contemporary feminist theory, has historicity as its founding argument. This request derives from the very discourse of history, its ‘pasts’, its ‘olds’, ‘futures’, ‘news’ and ‘presents’. This is worth considering as there sometimes is a tendency to think of historicizing as something ‘new’, as something that ‘theory’ has invented to oppose the supposedly ‘ahistorical’ or ‘universal’ (see, for instance, Nicholson and Fraser 1999). Judith Butler’s strong historicism and the fact that it is an essential part of her theories, which are widely used within the field of women’s studies, also have impacts on the way that current feminists theorize. For the sake of clarity, it is necessary to see the political uses of history also in current narratives. Instead of conceptualizing historicism as a methodological and theoretical invention that helps to produce more accurate feminist theory, I suggest that it be problematized. This is because criticizing universalism, foundationalism or essentialism can too easily be done through a historicist argument ‘proving’ the inaccuracy of these by referring to the idea of ‘historical specificity’.

On a rhetorical level, the operationalization of historicity often amounts to using historicity as argument against fixed categories, ideas about essences, biological determinism etc. In the end, and out of necessity, the counterarguments come from inside

¹⁸ A discussion concerning the formalism–historicism opposition can be found in Butler, Laclau, Žižek 2000.

the very foundationalist modes of thought that one is criticizing. For example, the critical practice of genealogy is often considered to be able to argue against phenomena or objects with cores or essences, although genealogies *are* built on chronological 'cores':

the genealogical approach does not assume the original "something" to which the history happens, that which is affected by power in the course of history. Instead it conceives of the phenomena under research totally as an effect of power, that is, totally constructed in its past and present without any starting point or nucleus which gets modified (Pulkkinen 1996, 216).

Genealogy is invested with rhetorical powers of historicity. Phenomena are effects of power wholly, a power that is in itself historical. The grammar of history is effective in the force it lends to the deconstruction of fixed binaries, determinisms and so on. The essence or 'cores' of phenomena become not natural, but rather chronological. Chronology explains the continuity of the otherwise fractured phenomena. As long as I need to use 'history' in *this* way, there is, of course, little room for questioning the operations of power (whose historicity makes genealogies usable?) that, for instance, chronology includes. I will come back to chronology at several points later.

I propose that statements about history be situated in the particular discourses in which they are used and that the fact that they are used is explicated. This is important to avoid using the language of history as if it would be as real as the objects that it refers to. It is also important because of politics. Political practices that are based on the language of history are delimited by the rules of this language. The use of history as part of constructivist and political argumentation should be problematized. This is not, however, meant to forbid its use. When trying to 'convince' students about constructivism with arguments like 'but *that* is a historical construction, *it* has its own history, it does not mean the same as it did a hundred years ago and thus might not mean *this* a hundred years from now; You see - *it is* changeable' we should also teach them about the practice and place of historicizing. This is important to be able to give students sophisticated means and tools so that they can theorize and act for transformation. It is also important so that they are given as many tools as possible in order for them to build up their own

feminist strategies. I do not want to teach feminists about any unproblematized truth or necessity.

The obvious usability of history for the questioning of fixed meanings can be understood as operationalizations of 'belonging'. The idea of belonging is essential to the intelligibility of historical objects. The fact that historical objects are rendered meaningful through an idea that they 'have belonged' may also be used in the service of disputing meanings that are 'seemingly fixed'. Historicizing categories, concepts and objects introduces *past belongings* and shows that the present belonging cannot claim any transparency; the present meanings are pushed to explain and explicate their belonging, heritage, and lineage. I move on to explain the notion of belonging in the next chapter.

In this sense, historicizing is a structuralism at work. It is a structuralism that cannot ask the question about its own history. Rather, it seems to put this silence to work (see Derrida, 2001, 75). It is an anti-foundationalism, that is, a constructivism that would not be possible without historicity. According to Elizabeth Ermarth, historically determined objects are always foundational in their very referentiality, where the past as a referent is an 'elsewhere' in relation to the present (Ermarth 1992). I would also suggest that historically determined meanings are always empirical or material in one way or another. As I will argue below chronology is also understood as 'material'.

The *pastness* of a historical object is considered empirical in its character of belonging, that is, in its fundamental context-dependency. The context-dependency of the historical object is not in itself understood as historically variable. The general statement about the context dependency and historical specificity of objects must be seen as 'a matter of fact'. For example, the meaning of the category 'woman' is considered to be historically variable and context-dependent. If I use this context-dependency as an argument for the social construction of 'woman', I cannot historicize my general argument about context-dependency. If I were to do this, the context-dependency of 'woman' would become context-dependent and, thus, contingent. Context-dependency is (also) a formal characteristic of historicity as a mode of thought. Context-dependency is a rule of grammar in the language of 'history'. Within historicity, this rule cannot be historicized. It is an aporia.

Using historicity for purposes of disputing categories sometimes seems to render irrelevant the kind of past belonging that is created or used. It seems to make no difference what context or structure gives the category in question its changeability. That is, as long as the context is considered 'correct', in a historical sense (not fictive), it seems that it is of no relevance for the operation undertaken whether the past context is described as a feminist one. What is needed is a mode of thought that enables rendering categories fundamentally context-dependent. Women's history is seldom used as a preliminary contextualizing horizon that would be able to stand on its own explanative ground. In fact, problematizing categories seems to become more credible if it is done when referring to a recognizable main-stream past context, certain foundations, acknowledged grounds or shared truths. The fact that main-stream contexts are more credible could be shown on many different levels of historiography, in the sense that the history of ideas does not seem to be credible as a context if it is only an arbitrary alternative account to the main-stream of the history of ideas. One would still always have to mention the main narrative and the fact that one contextualizes within an alternative version of it. A Women's history of ideas is not often referred to and, if it were to be referred to at all, its place in relation to the main-stream would probably have to be accounted for.

There seems to be no problem here in situating current feminist concerns, however radical, in what women's historians would call male-stream-history. As main-stream history is composed of narratives about nationalism, colonialism, imperialism, economy and sexism,¹⁹ there is a risk that these are used as self-evident and "shared" contexts, which we all are understood to be part of. In the *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* (Code 2002), recent feminist work on main-stream political history is considered to be able to alter the fact that political historians disregard the work of

¹⁹ Judith Butler uses the war against Iraq as an example in her discussion on action and the missiles sent to Kuwait as an example of a failure of all ordinances and as a refusal of a communication (Butler 1995a, 42-45). See also Griffin & Braidotti 2002. History can also be seen to provide a corrective for instance to the essentialist tendencies of feminist politics (Scott 1996, 5). The work that has been done concerning 'women in Finland' stands as a good example of this. In a reformist fashion, the narratives about women set out to show how women have always been part of the society, part of national history, part of politics, and part of working-life. See, Apo et al 1999 and Manninen & Setälä 1990. For a historiographical critique of this, see Honkanen 1997.

feminists. This universalizing move presupposes that the categories and narratives of history is something that we all share, either by criticizing or endorsing them, and forces these histories upon every body. How are we to work for transformation and an end to oppression if we keep centralizing this main-stream through contextualizing every meaning into these basic western narratives? These historical *accounts* are not responsible for oppression and repeating these histories and showing that one is aware of the oppression that is embedded in them does not do away with oppression²⁰. What is gained when oppression or injurious names are explained through historicizing them²¹ (Butler 1997, 36)? What kind of changeability is achieved using these contexts, this 'belonging', and this 'there is/was'? Is the force of the shared universal history of the west what is needed and repeated here?²² What implications does the structurality of this thinking have (for feminism)? Is it, rather, the case, as Irigaray argues, that what is needed for context-dependency and historicizing to work is the *one* language and its singular meanings (the same)?

In the next section I will further elaborate on the relationship between concrete historical objects and their connection to chronology, historical narrative and historical knowledge. The way in which the materialities of history, the empirics of history are understood to 'belong to a past' (in Heidegger) gives way to Luce Irigaray's critique of such fundamental belonging and context-dependency. I end the first part of this chapter with Irigaray's argument that the self-referential status of language is dependent on the historicity of language. Irigaray further argues that the self-evident historicity of objects is grounded in a forgetting of materiality and the unfolding of matter. It is my reading of Irigaray at the end of the first part of this chapter that reveals the spaces for how historicity can be rethought within a historico-philosophical feminism. I use Irigaray as an example of a 'virtual non-historicity'. In my reading, Irigaray offers an example of

²⁰ Have you ever thought of why it is necessary for Foucault, for instance, to refer to the French revolution in almost anything he writes or says (Baker 1994)? In his dislike of political history, it seems that his genealogy is used for, at least, saying something about the revolution that is more fundamental than the whole of political history.

²¹ What difference is there between racist speech and racist speech that works through its historicity (Butler 1997, 34)?

²² About fate and repetition as elements of authentic historicity, see Heidegger 1962, 442.

how a strategic forgetting of history reveals aspects of materiality that, without this forgetting of history, would themselves be forgotten. I find that it is a crucial argument that feminist theorists of corporeality should take into account.

3.1. Historicity and objects

Conventional historical objects such as the 120 000 objects housed in the Egyptian Museum differ from the objects that, within feminist constructivism, are understood as 'historical'. 'Sexuality', 'sex' or 'women' are historical *concepts* or discourses that cannot be stored in museums as specific and concrete objects. The historicity of concepts is connected to the historicity of language and meaning. Foucault argues that language has an internal historicity. Language does not need a supplementary history or a context to show its historicity. Language is *in itself* historical, there is no need to express the relation of language to its environment in order to understand the historicity of language. Language reveals its historicity immediately. The historicity of objects needs a supplementary history to express the relations of the object to its environment (Foucault 1994, 294). It needs a 'belonging' or 'context' to be understood in its historical meaning. Objects need to 'come from the past' to be historical, language is historical in the sense of 'having the past in it' as the historicity of meaning.

In spite of the major differences between historical objects and the historicity of concepts or the historicity of language, I do believe that it is the almost religious historicity that surrounds the sacred objects in the Egyptian Museum, or any 'archive' that stand as an important ground for the truth-value of historicity. These objects represent a concrete and empirical historical reality. We can look at them and we can touch them. I try to make a parallel reading of these two: the historicity that feminist constructivism operationalizes and the fundamental empiricism of existing historical objects. This is why I consider it relevant to discuss some aspects of the ontology of historical objects. I present the way Heidegger and Irigaray have conceptualized historical objects, or 'objects from the past' to further elaborate how a historical object differs from and is connected to the idea of the historicity of meaning.

In the end, the question about the interrelationship of concrete historical objects and the historicity of language leads me back to the relationship between materiality and discursivity. When language and meaning are understood to be *formative* of historical objects, discursivity is prioritized at the expense of materiality. The prioritizing of the formative powers of language also results in a constructivism where the form-matter distinction is re-operationalized through arguments referring to the *historicity* of language and the *historicity* of the form.

3.1.1. Objects from the past, objects and belonging

Have you heard the scandalous stories about people who live nearby places where it is possible to find building-material and other useful 'stuff'? These stories account for the abuse of the past and a fundamental displacement of 'objects from the past'. I am referring to tales told about people that have 'stolen' from 'archeological' sites, ripped down historical remnants and used them in the building of new houses. The bricks, however present they might be, are considered to be 'from the past'²³. In this chapter, I discuss objects that are invested with enormous value in historicist societies. These sacred objects are materially present in the present. They are not extinct or 'gone' the way the past *per se* is understood to be gone. Their peculiar character of 'pastness' distinguishes them from contemporary objects. There is a difference between a *historical brick* and a brick.

What is it that, according to Heidegger, makes it possible to think of an object, a document or an artifact as past, although it 'persists' in the present? By what right do historians and historically thinking people call documents or monuments historical if they are not yet past? Do documents have in themselves something historical, something 'of the past', although they are materially present now? And are the documents that are still present the same as they once were?

In general, pastness is connected to the self-evident character of linear temporality and culturally dated time; objects are understood to 'come from the past' or as being 'part

²³ The Egyptian Museum houses objects under the category "Building stones and other rocks" in section U 55 E, *Guide to the Egyptian Museum* 1988, 9.

of the past' and historical things are 'old'. We seem to be surrounded by objects that carry this quality of both being present and belonging to a past. The grammar of the word history implies 'the old' and 'the past'.

According to Heidegger, the 'pastness' of objects is derived from the fact that they are considered to have been part of some totality. They have belonged to something that is part of the past as 'other', the dead, the extinct, and the unknown and strange. Even documents can be considered to 'come from the past'. In this sense, the fact that the Chinese taxonomy, which Michel Foucault uses as an example of a different episteme in *The Order of Things*, becomes relevant as a marker of past, because the objects it presents have belonged to a context or a discourse that made them understandable. Foucault begins *The Order of Things* with a citation from "a certain Chinese Encyclopedia" that divides animals into the following categories:

a) belonging to the Emperor, b) embalmed, c) tame, d) sucking pigs, e) sirens, f) fabulous, g) stray dogs, h) included in the present classification, i) frenzied, j) innumerable, k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, l) et cetera, m) having just broken the water pitcher, n) that from a long way off look like flies (Borges quoted in Foucault 1994, xv²⁴)

Foucault uses this as an example of another system of thought to be able to point at the limitations of our own. He uses the taxonomy to show that the way objects in modern western epistemes 'belong' is not a necessity. The way the animals in Borge's taxonomy belong in unintelligible ways is a marker of the fact that the taxonomy is *Other* (the other system of thought is, according to Foucault, characterized by an "exotic charm"). (Foucault 1994, xv). The taxonomy could also come from a past, a past that *we* do not

²⁴ Keith Windschuttle, the author of *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists Are Murdering Our Past*, has argued the following: There is, however, a problem rarely mentioned by those who cite the Chinese taxonomy as evidence for these claims. No Chinese encyclopedia has ever described animals under the classification listed by Foucault. In fact, there is no evidence that any Chinese person has ever thought about animals in this way. The taxonomy is fictitious. It is the invention of the Argentinean short-story writer and poet Jorge Luis Borges (Windschuttle at: <http://www.nationalreview.com/15sept97/windschuttle091597.html>). The fictitious character of the taxonomy is, however, clear in the *Order of Things* as Foucault refers to his source as "a fable" (Foucault 1994, xv).

recognize as our own anymore, from the past as *stranger*. Belonging is relevant here, because the question of belonging is situated at the limit of intelligibility: to what did it belong? What historical context can explain this historical object? It is also relevant for the question of meaning: what belonging could explain the animals? The meaninglessness of the animal-objects in, for example, the Chinese taxonomy, becomes a problem of context.

Belonging to the past and having been intelligible in that belonging (when this belonging is explained historically, belonging becomes a finite historical totality), is a simultaneous belonging in the present as unintelligible, that is, as a question, as the wonderment about the Chinese taxonomy, as explainable, and knowable. The idea of pastness structures present meanings: to what does the present (un) intelligibility belong? How was it then? How is it now? The meaning of 'it' is being constructed through historicity. This is a fundamental historical question; actually it is where general historicity (there was) is turned into a determined, specified historical question (it was). It is where the ontological and epistemological aspects of history are coexistent: the ontologically historical object and its belonging to a past, to a context that constitutes its meaning.

The centrality of the context is even further buttressed when considering objects that are 'unknown,' although they have a definite belonging. There are several objects of this sort in the Egyptian Museum, for example object number 525: "curved piece of wood, of doubtful use" (*Guide to the Egyptian Museum* 1988, 325²⁵). The context of this object is known and can be described as precisely as the objects from the Tomb of Tutankhamen (King Tut) in West Valley, on the West Bank at Luxor in ancient Thebes. This particular location is numbered KV 62²⁶. The historicity of the curved piece of wood stems from that chronological context and I do not even need to know what its further

²⁵ Other 'doubtful' objects include objects number 175-180 & object number 519.

²⁶ Site Location: Latitude: 25.44 N, Longitude: 32.36 E. Information also includes an egyptological narrative: "It is believed that Tutankhamen ruled Egypt between 1334 and 1325 BC. He was probably the 12th ruler of Egypt's 18th Dynasty". For more information see <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/tut.htm>

meaning was to be able to assert its profound historico-cultural value. The rule of chronology is strong.

The epistemological shift from the idea of pastness to particular historical objects reveals the fundamental empiricism that historicity is based upon. How can I understand this object? What *did* it mean (also meaning what *does* it mean)? What is it? Can I know this at all? How can I know it? How can this object belong now, now that it no longer belongs *then*? Explaining historically the meaning that the object had in the past, explicating its past belonging, simultaneously and fundamentally posits it as an object from the past, that is, it explains the essential discursive character of the object in the present and fixes it in its present intelligibility and belonging. A specific 12.5 cm long ivory spoon comes “from late 4th Millennium BC Egypt” and, thus, it is an object that now belongs to the Cairo Antiquities Museum. In this sense, the pastness of the object is a repetition of a certain (narrated and chronologically and spatially empirical) belonging²⁷.

This belonging is an opening for location, for a space, for ‘relatedness’. This ‘relatedness’ is a profoundly historical space in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. It is made of objects in their historicity; the idea of a world-historical is the shared horizon for objects and materialities. Heidegger can also be read as accounting for how objects and meanings are constructed *as and through* history, or, perhaps, rather, how meaning and language is structured *as history* (through the idea of historicity and temporality). Historicizing in this sense has the capacity to render objects as changeable and subject to temporal variation. Nonetheless, it simultaneously invests objects with a certain power that they otherwise would lack. This is the power of history and tradition as truth, certainty and legitimacy. Without this powerful truth/foundation/origin, nothing would stop us from trying to fell our timber with an Amazonian double-headed axe, as this is how present objects, of the sort of axes, are intelligible to people cutting wood.

When Heidegger discusses ‘equipment’ and their character of being “ready-to-hand” and not simply “present-at-hand” as ‘things’ he uses the hammer as an example.

²⁷ I am not familiar with the discipline of archeology but I realize the philosophical value of theoretical archeology when the interrelatedness between form and matter is discussed. Interviews with practicing archeologists revealed that archaeologists put “black substance” in plastic bags and write “black substance” on the bags – adding, of course, the valuable context: time and place. These plastic bags are valuable and essential ‘props’ to be used in narratives.

Equipment has a mode of being that is characterized by “readiness-to-hand” (for use). Equipment does not merely ‘occur’. We can stare at a ‘hammer-thing’ as a thing that is merely present-at-hand, that just *is there*, but the readiness-to-hand of equipment cannot be understood in its epistemology with this kind of approach (see Heidegger 1962, 129-130. Also, more specifically about ‘things,’ in Heidegger 1962, chapter III). The reason that I look upon the historical object, the object from the past as present-at-hand, is that when one starts to make assertions about equipment these, then, turn into something “about which” assertions are made (Heidegger 1962, 200). Now, with this ‘about which’, we are looking at something present-at-hand; we are looking at the axe as an object that we can see and problematize. The axe is conceptualized as ‘past’, as ‘historical’ and it is rendered present-at-hand in particular ways (in such and such a manner). Historical equipment lose its readiness-to-hand. You do not use historical equipment the way you use equipment in general. Historical equipment becomes ready-to-hand only if it is conceptualized as ‘props’, which can then be used to construct historical narratives. They are ready-to-hand for narrative purposes.

The historicity of objects always implies a prior investment, without which the ‘Amazonian axe’ is regarded as an axe that is, perhaps, still usable in the same manner as the remnants of a temple become bricks, which are then needed for buildings at other places. The brick becomes non-historically concrete (and perhaps there is an instant wish to return back to it some history at least). We are not supposed to use the Amazonian axe in this way. The Amazonian axe ‘takes space’ and becomes present according to its historicity. Without knowledge of its historicity you grip it ‘wrongly’ and you might even use it as you would use any axe (what a scandal!).

The Amazonian axe is, presumably, a very concrete and real object and if I were to locate one, I would have to know about its historical ontology, its chronology (I would have to know that it is ‘old’) and its historical epistemology, that is, I would have to know the historical narratives referring to it (using it as ‘prop’) in order to be able to answer the question: *what is that thing?* There are various narratives about the Amazons where the axe can be used as a prop. As a feminist lesbian I was happy to hear the narrative that stressed the women centeredness and separatism of the Amazons. After hearing this narrative I always felt that the others, which left these aspects out, those

neutralizing and main-stream narratives, had somehow robbed me of both the history and the axe. Historical objects belong in a fundamental way. It is hard to give them away to be used as props in other narratives too. I want to own the axe. If the historicity of the axe is rewritten, the axe becomes another object – or does it? If I had never heard a (lesbian, feminist) historical narrative about the Amazons – it would become another axe. This ‘owning’ also goes for a history of ideas. Ideas are seen to *stem from* certain traditions and to claim something else or to recontextualize an idea can be seen as downright incorrect.

What does this metamorphosis tell us about the form-matter distinction in relation to the constitution of historical objects? Although I will return to this aspect in the chapter “Constructivism and Realism” (4.1.), I will quickly run through the argument at this point from the perspective of historical ontologies. Is there an axe behind the ‘Amazonian’? It is as if the axe, even if it were the same object, would not have an *Amazonian* materiality without the formative powers of historicity. As such, in being material (stone? iron?), the axe is not and cannot appear as ‘the Amazon thing’. It needs a certain history to be able to mean *Amazonian*. It needs a historical account, a story, a narrative.

The thing in itself cannot be known, our knowledge is restricted to the appearances, and we cannot have access to what is outside systems of meaning (Vasterling 1999, 21). Although the object remains, its historicity and meaning vary. Or is it so, that the fact that historicity and meaning can vary is based on the persistence of the materiality? Is matter, here, the raw material of the form? What happens to a pair of sandals from the Egyptian Museum if they are displaced? What happens to object no. 6231, the bronze mirror with a wooden handle “that has not been cleaned in any way” (*Guide to the Egyptian Museum* 1988, 212) if I were to find it on Tahrir Square, outside the Egyptian Museum? Does it ‘become again’ in another form (as its materiality always comes with a meaning)? Am I left to ponder about (the) materiality (of the thing)? Perhaps I could clean the mirror, see that it is broken, and wonder of what wood the handle was made? To whom does it belong? Perhaps I would use it as a ‘prop’ in my narrative.

We invest in the meaning 'Amazonian' by repeating the power of historicity through making the axe (materiality) the ontological reference to *this particular contextual meaning* – to this particular historical narrative. The fact that the sheer materiality of the object seems to become something else without this particular historical form, or with another historical narrative, does not mean that the object would simply be an ideal formation, or that it would not exist/persist as a thing - that it would not 'be there'. The fact that the materiality of the object has not transformed, that it did not enter a metamorphosis and decompose into soil is an aspect of this materiality that makes it 'available'. Decomposition again is an element of the complex vitality of matter. The object and its materiality can be reduced to being an effect of historicity in the form of narratives. It can be claimed that materiality always comes with a form. However, I can also argue that historicity is enabled by materiality, as historical narratives need material 'props' that are labeled 'empirical'. They need these to become referential and factual. Materiality is not solely constituted by historicity and theorizing. Theorizing this requires that feminists question the power of historicity and analyze the ways in which historical narratives use materiality. This is important to prevent feminist accounts where the historical forms thrive on a "silencing of matter" (Irigaray 1999) (Irigaray argues this and I elaborate further on this in the chapter on Irigaray).

To argue that form and matter constitute each other, that there are no 'things', no materialities separate from their form and meaning and to argue that these are *simultaneously constituted* is still to posit a *historical* form as constitutive of matter. Materiality operates as the raw material of the form, as the empirical reference of the form, the meaning, narrative and language. Materiality is there to be named. The concrete materiality of the object coupled with the fact that it belongs to the past, that it can be chronologically ordered into a certain past belonging (a determined space-time) is necessary. Without this empiricism, history could not be separated from literature. History is knowledge about these concrete objects and about 'the reality of the past'. Literature can invent its objects in a way that history cannot. Historical objects have to be real – they have to be 'found' (in space), not invented. History needs a connection to the material and the empirical. By chronologically dating objects, they become real as

'objects from the past'. They are used as 'props' in narratives to make these narratives communicate the real through history, chronology and the past belonging.

In the next section, I will further develop some aspects of 'belonging'. Historical objects are understood to belong to particular contexts and historical narratives are built on the assumption that questions concerning these contexts can be resolved once and for all. This basic belonging is part of the very historicity of objects and should be assessed by feminist theorists wanting to problematize universalism. As people are understood to be part of the same historicity, we are also seen to share this fundamental belonging. How are feminist to understand and use this universalism?

Contextuality: Historicity of objects as belonging

Objects can be considered as 'past' only to the extent that they are seen as being part of some shared history. Heidegger calls this shared history 'the world-historical', and in doing so, he refers to the idea of a shared and lost present to which the past thing belonged. This idea of a 'lost present' corresponds to the present and to the actuality that we are understood to share in the 'contemporary'. The shared present turns into a shared past in the course of time (and the other way around). Without this idea of the world-historical (the shared lost present), we could not consider past things as belonging; there would not be a context that would explain them historically (the world-historical needs a 'we'). Without the ability to think the world-historical, objects would remain *historically* unintelligible to us.

I interpret this world-historical as consisting of the ideas of past, present and future. What is shared here is a basic assumption about historicity and chronology. Stemming from this historicity, it is possible to think and narrate different histories, which are all based on the logics of temporal order (chronology). It is rather seldom, though, that one would encounter accounts that consider the meaning of this fundamental historicity or, in the words of Heidegger, the world-historical. The practices of historiography presuppose its objects to be historical in this way. The writing of history also presupposes the historian as belonging to the same historicity as its objects. The shared idea of historicity is universal. Although the universalizing assumptions

underlying particular histories have been questioned, the universality that historicity itself implies is more seldom questioned.

What Heidegger does is that he links the intelligibility of objects to historicity and historicity to the idea of belonging. I read this as a way to understand the centrality of contextuality in historicity. I think it is because of these kinds of fundamental aspects of objects, their historicity and belonging or contextuality, that history is made the ultimate context. Because historicity is referential and contextual, analyzing the historicity of any object will be done in a referential and contextual mode. Whenever I want to contextualize parts of my narrative the language of history becomes usable. I cannot think of any thing that would be impossible to historicize. Understood in relation to chronology and empiricism, history is also the ultimate context because it comes first; it is always already there whether you choose to explicate it or not. Historicizing means examining these historical contexts (Korhonen & Tuohela 2002, 11). We can always think a little bit further with history.

The case of fraud in relation to historical documents could perhaps clarify this connectedness. A forged document carries an idea of a false belonging. The falseness breaks the connection or simultaneity between the objects historicity and 'actual' belonging. It claims to have a context that it chronologically does not have. This falseness underlines the fact that the historicity of the object is guaranteed by its belonging. When the forgery is announced, truth becomes immediate, transparent and back in place, the belonging and historicity of the object become simultaneous. The pastness of objects *as their belonging to a historicity* (world-historical) is a necessity for us to be able to think history or particular histories in the first place. Historicity is in this sense a "grand" context-dependency. This is why the question of structure suits questions concerning historicity. The question of structure concerns the inherent structures and patterns of ideas that historicity is 'composed of'. This structural composition is used to narrate historically. One element of this structure or composition is belonging and context-dependency.

The historical object is usually considered empirical in one way or another. The documents that are used as sources have to be empirical in the sense of being material. The events - the objects of study - are considered to be empirical; they *must have*

happened and they *must be considered real*. The empiricism or fundamental materiality and physicality of objects is already historical. This empiricism can be seen in sentences like:

The individuals we encounter in the past were flesh and blood, and although we look at them through textual constructions, visual representations and material artefacts, they envisioned themselves in the context of everyday experience (Korhonen & Tuohela 2002, 9).

What the historian does is that they *repeat* this empirical belonging in narrative form. To be other than fiction, history needs the actuality of the empirical; it needs the material 'artefacts'²⁸ upon which the form is applied. Historians need the "flesh and blood" to be able to claim something factual. In this sense historical thinking must be referential to be able to constitute the meaning of something. Frank Ankersmit argues that particular historical statements can be judged to be referentially either true or false. The same is not true of the historical account as a whole (Megill 1998, 6). Historical narratives cannot be judged referentially other than in reference to their chronological correctness. The referentiality of historical thinking is a mode of the form-matter distinction, where matter and the empirical stand as the referent of the historical forms. At times these become honored in museums as empirical objects 'from the past'; at times they become 'appearances' 'carrying' lost worlds.

Thinking through historicity seems to be inherently structural. History can be made a structure, explaining how the empirical object, as a work of literature, can be made 'a sign of its times'. History gives objects and phenomena meanings as these are contextualized into historical narratives (as the materialities are used as 'props'), that is, as they are *situated in history*, or as they *get constituted by history*. The meaning of an object, such as a prison, for example, can also be made a structure consisting, perhaps, of a network of institutions, symbols and powers and *this* meaning, or set of structures that the prison is 'composed of', is given a chronology of its own, a genealogy. In the latter

²⁸ The Oxford English Dictionary gives the word 'artefact' the following definition: "A man-made object; a simple prehistoric tool or weapon". The artefact is already historical in its materiality.

case, the meaning is itself rendered structural with the object becoming the center, or reference point for these structures. In the first case, a historical structure can lend its meaning to the object and become the center of its meaning. Here the object is related to a supplementing history – as is the case with the "unknown object number 519" in the Egyptian Museum, which means “belonging to historical structure 18th dynasty”. The historical structure is at the center of the object and, yet, not part of it because the historical structure has its center elsewhere (Ermarth 1992, 148). In both ways, what is made present – be it historical object or historicized structure – is made present as *history* and as *belonging*, as part of a 'there is' by means of a detour via a 'there was'. It is made present by shifting the places of the formative in relation to matter; either the form constitutes matter or the form is imposed on matter. Either the form is 'inside' the objects as its way of being in the world, or the form is 'around' the object, surrounding it.

In my reading of Jacques Derrida's idea that difference does not simply belong to either history or structure (Derrida 2001, 34), is a critique of both historicism *and* contextual thinking. History alone cannot explain 'difference' anymore than structure can.²⁹ There is more to structure and more to historicity. And furthermore, historicity *implies* a structurality and context-dependency. I argue that the context-dependency that historicity *in itself* implies enables unproblematic arguments about contingency and, also, promotes a thinking that is limited by a radical historicism. In this setting, the historicity of contingency and historicism remains unresolved (Žižek 2000a, 230). The structurality and the context-dependency embedded in historicity seem strangely non-historical and self-evident. How can history be text and context at the same time (Hunt 1990, 101)? The problem of context is seriously missing in historicism, both linguistic and empirical (Derrida 1990, 92-93).

The materiality of the object might be seen as a historical form. In this case its *materiality* is formed; it does not pre-date the form, waiting for a meaning. A historical form might also be seen to be imposed on matter, matter being the raw material, or stable reference point for shifting historical meanings and change. In this case, matter is there

²⁹ Žižek argues that one cannot resolve the problem of politics by opting for either formalism or historicism. With this option, one sees difference stemming either from the symbolic, the law – and the formalities of language and meaning – or from historically contingent formations. Butler sees the formalism-historicism opposition as an “apparent opposition” (See Žižek 2000a, 214; Butler 2000b, 276).

before the historical form and is, in this sense, *ahistorical*. The matter that is understood as raw material, or empirical reference, can always be historicized and does not escape history in any fundamental sense. I mean to say that there are no empirical objects that would need to be historicized in order for them to become historical. No empirical object or phenomenon is ahistorical in this sense. The grammar of history and our use of the word 'history' are more fundamental than that. This is why I suggest that we should pause and think again when we find ourselves considering something as 'ahistorical'. Perhaps the claim that something is considered ahistorical is a claim made because of the possibility that it gives to write or tell a historical narrative with reference to *this particular object*.

What is also important here is not to slip from epistemological to ontological argumentation without a careful consideration of the consequences and usefulness of such reductionism. Otherwise, you easily end up claiming that historical objects do not exist as materialities, as ontologies, when you actually intend to argue that the *meaning* of any particular object is, in fact, historical (I return to this with examples in chapter 4.1. "Constructivism and Realism").

In connection to the accounts in women's history that aim at a rewriting of patriarchal history, Heidegger's idea of the world-historical, of historicity as the shared ground for our very thinking of histories, poses interesting problems. If it is so that the way objects are considered to *be* (historicity is a question of ontology on the level of materiality, empiricism) is already historical and that this historicity implies a notion of belonging, a structure or totality, how can history be rewritten without profoundly rewriting the very basis of the idea of history, the idea of historical being as a 'shared belonging'? Rewriting 'history' can also be done through questioning its grammar. A rewriting of the rules of grammar for the word 'history' transforms the elements of structurality, contextuality, materiality and empiricity that the language is now based upon. History can also be rewritten by reorganizing the history of events, but this rewriting presupposes an idea of the historical and of the pastness of objects as a shared

belonging, a universal 'there is/was'³⁰. If the connection between ontology and epistemology in the case of historicity is re-thought, then there is a risk of losing the meaning of history altogether. Altering the grammar of 'history' means that the new sentences become incomprehensible in relation to the previous ones. I think that becoming ahistorical on this level is a possibility that feminists should consider. It is important so that feminists can explore the consequences, which the inherent structuralism in the way we think history has for a feminist history. Becoming ahistorical in a more profound sense is worth considering for feminist theoreticians of materiality because of the ways that historical narratives can thrive on materiality to become historical. It is possible to rehearse a strategic forgetting of history at this level, a level where the fundamental chronological 'empiricism' of objects is in question.

Problematizing historicity is risky; it points at a fundamental loss of meaning and the risk of 'unmeaning' (we might lose the 'Amazonian' and end up with just an old, useless axe). But still, the places of risk or crisis might not be in the places they appear to be. The places of non-historicity and 'unmeaning' become places of promise and transformation. When historians of women and historicizing feminist theorists rethink the fundamental levels of historicity, they open up the space that has been delimited by the language of history. In question is not the search for some deeper truth or more authentic understanding, but, rather, the thinking up of spaces for strategy by considering the boundaries and limits that historicity, or the grammar of 'history' sets for feminist thought.

Gail Stenstad refers to this kind of process as "a-byssal thinking" (Stenstad 2001, 339). In the case of historicity, this would imply that the security and certainty that historicity offers, as a ground for knowledge and being, is questioned. In 'a-byssal thinking' the ground is not *there*, it cannot serve its grounding function. The ground falls away giving us an abyss without ground (Stenstad 2001, 339). Stenstad suggests that we think *towards* this abyss. I suggest we think towards a virtual non-historicity that is an abyss within a historicist mode of thought.

³⁰ Heidegger discusses the "there" at length in *Being and Time*. It is a fundamental aspect of "being-in as such" where Dasein as always "being-in" and being "thrown" into the world, encounters itself through moods in relation to being "there". See Heidegger 1962, 169-224.

Reading the radical implications of this suggestion from Heidegger, I argue that there is a possibility to become non-contextual and to denounce or rewrite the idea of historicity and/or rewrite the meanings of pastness. I further argue that feminists should become aware of the place and role that historicity has in theory. The stakes are turned here: from being understood as the universal glue of every particularity, historicity can also be seen as part of a chain of western violent meaning and thought; violent, in that it is a universalizing, phallogocentric One.

As I have tried to demonstrate, historicity can be approached as a contextual and referential mode of thinking. Historicity and history can be understood through the idea of a grammar, as a language with particular rules. This is important when rethinking the relationship between materiality and discursivity. It is especially important if constructivism is rethought in a manner that grants more space to the material. A rethinking of constructivism is needed to open up a space to theorize the experiential body and to do a non-historicizing reading of the body and materiality. As I see it, historicity is an obstacle to this kind of theoretical development since it constantly draws matter back into the confines of language and meaning, i.e. it draws matter to itself. Historicity might not be such an obstacle within other disciplines, such as psychology or biology, for instance, but within the social sciences and in the humanities, it *is* an obstacle. To open up a space for a feminist 'virtual non-historicity', I will now account for Irigaray's critique of Heidegger's work. She questions historicity on a fundamental level, where the chronological and historical empiricism of objects becomes constituted.

Luce Irigaray's problematization of belonging, historicity and language

The problem of historicity is an ontological problem. Historicity is about the ways that objects are considered *to be*. Historicity resides in the very materiality of objects and to ask questions about historicity, is to ask about what there is in the world and how this 'there is' and 'there was' is made possible. In what ways are objects in this 'there'? What is the nature of the 'there was'? Consider, for instance, what enables "bodies that matter" to either appear or vanish in this sentence:

These regulatory schemas are not timeless structures, but historically revisable criteria of intelligibility which produce and vanish bodies that matter (Butler 1993, 14).

In what ways are objects, bodies and materialities in this sentence? What is 'there'? The sentence makes present "regulatory schemas" that are criteria of intelligibility. These criteria produce (and vanish) bodies that matter. These criteria are historically revisable and this means that they are historical in their very being. Regulatory schemas *are* historical. The fact that the regulatory schemas are historically changeable is an essential feature, without which the regulatory schemas would become something else (timeless, pre-social, or pre-symbolic) (Butler 1993, 13-14). The historicity of regulatory schemas is part of the ontology of regulatory schemas. This historicity cannot easily be rendered contingent or in itself historical. There is a certain etiology in the quote above and I read it as a micro-example of the way in which historicity often stands as origin, the way it stands in the center of theoretical arguments providing a point that covers the otherwise formalistic character of argumentation. Historicity can be used to provide a genesis-effect. What if regulatory schemas were timeless and ahistorical structures? How would they be in that case? Would it even be possible? Where would they 'come from'?

Accounts concerning the ontological aspects of historicity are often 'genesis-stories'; they are stories that account for the being, origin and place of historicity. This is why questions about the nature of, for instance, the idea of a 'there was' become central. The problem of ontology cannot be avoided here and accounts of ontology tend to be

genesis-like. The problem of historicity is central in feminist attempts to change sexed meanings and practices. The symbolic logic cannot be fundamentally altered without altering its sense of history (Braidotti 2002, 26). With 'sense of history', I refer to the way we think about *history in general* and not just how we learn to think within history in different ways, as new perspectives of history are foregrounded. Altering the sense of history means questioning the grammar that 'makes sense'.

I wanted to take up the issue of origins and ontologies because at first I felt reluctant to ask or think about ontology. Constructivist theoretical landscapes, where questions about foundations or origins are considered outdated and irrelevant or as part of some modernist project that should be overcome, do not foreground ontological issues. It seems that the only legitimate questions that can be asked about historicity are epistemological ones, questions about how meanings are historical and how knowledge is historically produced.

The centrality of stories of origin or accounts of genesis, such as Irigaray's, is even more important within a feminist framework of constructivist thinking. Constructivist thought has made its task easier by rendering historicity an internal characteristic of construction and at times equating construction with historical construction, placing the origin or genesis of objects, of meanings and materialities *inside* their historical constructedness:

The name has, thus, a *historicity*, what might be understood as the history which has become internal to a name, has come to constitute the contemporary meaning of the name: the sedimentation of its usages as they have become part of the very name...(Butler 1997, 36).

Historicity is internalized. I do not think that an internalized historicity eliminates the possibility for foundation, or essence. The temporal movement of chronology is, when it is explicated as something more than a general idea, always contextual, foundational and empirical in one way or another. When historicity is theoretically used as a 'general idea', what should be considered is its fundamental alliance with language, that is, the fact that historicity *is* language. When the level of meaning is foregrounded, the historicity of

language becomes the site where materiality gets constituted as a linguistic effect. I have discussed the nature of historicity with examples of Judith Butler's theory as a prelude to Irigaray's thinking. I have done this to show the place and relevance of Irigaray's philosophizing as I have seen it.

Genesis

Irigaray argues that Heidegger's 'there is' is made possible because of the properties of air. She thinks through the materiality of air and, at times, also through the temporality of air. Irigaray reminds us of the permanent availability and openness of air's fundamental character of being, the 'there is air' ontology of air (Irigaray 1999, 8).

I would like to think of Irigaray's air on a more general level here, as spatiality. I think that air in this case would be the 'matter' that space is made of. Irigaray understands the materiality of air as a *resource* for the 'solid', for *physis*, and for objects. She regards the materiality of air as a spatiality, as a constitutive element of space out of which 'the solid' is constructed as the primary form of matter. Irigaray considers the non-solidity of air as a fundamental aspect and mode of materiality that is *forgotten* in prioritizing the solid, boundaries, and the 'spaces in between'.

Irigaray argues further that Heidegger constitutes the space-time – the 'there' that his objects 'reside in', erected as solid, and encapsulated – by *forgetting* the openness and infinitude of air. When Heidegger describes this universe, its 'there', its space-time, its objects in their historicity and belonging – when he describes the 'there is' through the 'there was', binding them to ensure one and other – he forgets to think the materiality of air and the very necessity of air. Irigaray writes:

She gives – first – air, and does so irrecoverably, with the exception of the unfolding, from and within her, of whoever takes air from her. While this air is – first – fluid matter carried by the blood she gives, it can also be understood as voice and phenomenon. These issue from it and are the possibility – ever material – of naming-denominating, of appearing in presence" (Irigaray 1999, 28).

This is an ontological argument relying not on the temporality and historicity of matter but on aspects of materiality. Perhaps this is one reason why Irigaray's argument at first seems so unfamiliar to my mind, a mind that is so accustomed to historical 'being' and historical ontologies? A mind that is so familiar with the idea of the 'always already' that it forgets the 'not yet' of itself (Irigaray 1999, 53). Irigaray invokes a highly unfamiliar mode of materiality: the fluidity of matter. A vital aspect of this rethinking is, as Irigaray shows, the rethinking of the connection between historicity, spatiality and materiality. It is here that Irigaray's notion *mater* (in her *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*), can be conceptualized as one aspect in the formative powers of matter, in the vitality and diversity of matter.

Irigaray's *mater* is an opening towards understanding non-historicity, an opening where it is possible to think about the materiality of space and to forget, for a while, the temporality and historicity of matter. There is no sentimentality involved in this appraisal of the maternal/material. It is a political attempt to provide symbolic representation for a notion of materiality that goes beyond the economy of phallogocentrism (Braidotti 2002, 23). And furthermore, as I see it here, it is only one mode of materiality – not *the* matter, or 'the *ur-mother*', another version of the same and 'the One' in the form of the hetero-reproductive maternal, in its connection to the idea of a 'fe-male'.

Judith Butler's theory of materialization explicitly denies the possibility for making a connection between materiality and *mater* because she sees that such connections always include and reiterate heteronormative ideas of 'the feminine'. Rosi Braidotti wonders about this kind of "femino-phobia" (Braidotti 2002) arguing that the feminine for Butler only points at a foreclosed homosexuality. She argues that Butler's feminine is reduced to a pathetic effort at simulating signification on a road to nowhere. Even the feminine-looking/passing lesbian or 'femme' has been erased in lesbian and queer theories in the USA unless she is inscribed in the butch-femme couple (Braidotti 2002, 50-51). When I discuss *mater* it should be noted that I refer to *one* aspect of the *vitality and transformativity of matter* and this aspect is not automatically connected to any 'feminine'. I try to de-link the vitality and diversifying nature of matter from the feminine, attempting to avoid the historicizing operation. Were I to historicize the vitality of matter, the connection between historicity and language would link *mater* and the

feminine because of the connection that is repeated in ‘his language’ between ‘women’ and ‘reproduction’. As I understand it, historicizing is a technique whereby the basically metaphysical idea of sexual difference gets installed as material. In my understanding, material metamorphoses (growth, and decomposition, for instance) are examples of the vitality, ‘agency’ and ‘becoming’ of matter. It is my argument that the vitality of matter is characterized by metamorphoses.

The way I theorize materiality is defined by a fundamental suspicion towards sexual difference. This makes me a theorist of sexual difference. Whenever sexual difference is not conceptualized as a question, but rather as some existent in the world, the historicity of sexual difference, is in my understanding, repeated and reproduced. In this respect, I am a true poststructuralist and I can relate to Rosi Braidotti when she claims that feminist philosophies as well as poststructuralist ones are defined by a conceptual creativity. The complexity and diversity of feminist modes of thinking and being is at stake when I oppose en-sexing operations. Rosi Braidotti writes about the subject of feminism and asserts that it is a “complex and multilayered embodied subject who has taken her distance from the institution of femininity”. “She” may no longer be a “she” but a mutant that has undergone an essential metamorphosis (Braidotti 2002, 11). She can be both feminine and gender-queer or “nothing of the sorts” (ibid.). My idea of the relationship between materiality and sexual difference is gender-queer. This means that I am critical of patterns of thinking that reinstall sexual difference as somehow based on materiality. I think that materiality can also be theorized through notions such as vitality, agency, experience, *différance* and, although these can be conceptualized through sexual difference, there is no necessity to do that. Sexual difference can be queered towards androgyny, the neuter, the mutant, the ‘not-one’, making sexual difference unresolvable. It is against this background that I see a risk involved with the word “mater”. There is a possibility that when a materiality is invested with *mater* ‘the feminine’ is reinstalled (Butler 1993, 225). In my reading of *mater*, which is not even what Irigaray means with it, (since for her *mater is feminine*) *mater* stands for a vitality of matter, for material metamorphoses. As I understand sexual difference as a ‘nagging question’ demanding to be solved, in order for sexual difference to become present, I avoid attempting to resolve this question on the level of materiality. The level of

materiality is the most common place to go to when the question of sexual difference is answered in a manner that is supposed to prevent further questions. I am not opposed to binarisms as such and I realize that I reiterate other binaries all the time as I go along. I am opposed to ideas that connect sexual difference to materiality. To me the metaphysical character of sexual difference is connected to the metaphysical character of historicity. When materiality is theorized in relation to the form I would argue that there is no necessity to reinstall the norm of sexual difference. Neither is there a necessity to reinstall an anthropologism (Cheah 1996). As an unresolvable question, sexual difference can be used, cited and invested in. I would not like to see it fixed though, since this hinders diversity and is violent. The idea of material metamorphoses is used to create new figurations that do not reinstall distinctions, such as animal/human, but rather attempts to rethink materiality in a less reductive manner (Braidotti 2002). I argue that the possibility of *not* thinking sexual difference requires a questioning of historicity. If historicity is summoned at the level of materiality, sexual difference is most likely to be simultaneously summoned ³¹ If materiality is historicized, then the narratives about the two sexes, which are part of every history, are hard to avoid. As an unresolvable question, sexual difference is not physical and has, in that sense, no connection to morphology. Sexual difference is historical and secured in the historicity of language. This is why, paradoxically, a questioning of the question of sexual difference requires that its profound historicity is acknowledged and it also requires that historicity is thoroughly rethought in terms of the connections it has with materiality. When sexual difference materializes (and it almost always manages to do this) it shows itself in its most concrete metaphysical and illusory character. Historicity is invested with the power to accomplish this materialization. Historicity is invested with the ideas about exactness and factuality, and about ‘empirical’ and material *past* and *sexed* realities that ‘show themselves’ in the present. This is why the summoning of historicity is the summoning of sexual difference. The historicity of sexual difference makes sexual difference present. A strategic forgetting of history opens up a space where neither the necessity to historicize nor the necessity to repeat sexual difference delimits feminist creativity.

³¹ For more about the ‘real’ of sexual difference in a Lacanian framework, see Žižek, 2000b, 309.

The connection that historicity has to meaning and language also needs to be thought about. In theorizing the relationship between matter and form and in attempting to rethink constructivism, the fact that the form is granted priority over matter is connected to a hegemony of language and meaning. I argue that it is within the historical hegemony of the form and within *one* language, within one of its main dialects – history - and the rules of its grammars that every thing has to be understood as always already constituted by language. I will now explore the way that Luce Irigaray has approached language in *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*. I present Irigaray's work to further my argument about the connectedness of historicity and language. By writing about *the* language, Irigaray shows how historicity and language preserve 'the order of things'.

The Language

Why could we not think the fluidity of matter instead of repeating the temporal locations of solidities and 'things', instead of repeating the chronology of things? What would it make of historicity? Irigaray asks:

He begins to be in and thanks to fluids. Which will be forgotten and surpassed in the consistency and solidity of his propositions and arguments? In the coherence of his language? In the permanence of his Being and truth? In that of "things": past, present and to come? In those faultless envelopes where the inquiry bears above all upon history: the envelopment he has made for himself and which he keeps unrolling - rolling up (Irigaray 1999, 33)?

Irigaray argues that the solidity and 'thingness' of constituted objects is enabled by *something*. The coherence and self-referentiality of language, a language that cannot point at anything but its own history of meanings, *forgets* the fluid, the openness of air, the formativity and vitality of matter, the availability of air-space, its unfolding and its concreteness. The faultless, purified envelopes, that is, the concepts whose permanence

resides in the repetition of their histories and grammars of history, operate as if they were autogenetic:

But, of course, when man comes into the world he is already entering a pre-established system of relations between beings. This past, which for him never will be present, is granted him as the ground upon which basis he exists. Lacking all possible experience of its constitution, doesn't he receive it as the established sky/heaven for any and all vision (Irigaray 1999, 169-170)?

The past is "always already there", it installs the "masculine privilege of autonomous self-definition" (Braidotti 2002, 23) and cannot but refer to itself to explain itself. This past, this historicity that *he* never knew in its constitution seems to constitute everything. It is because *his* language is what it is, that things could not have occurred otherwise (Irigaray 1999, 37). Language is received as the horizon of all things.

Heidegger's historicity and the objects he describes and analyses in *Being and Time* belong to (t)his space-time. The history of language-use reveals *this* belonging. Heidegger's account can be read as a genesis story of his (sexed) world based upon the reliance on his language, its words and their grammar. Heidegger's account is enabled by listening to what his language proposes, as if it would be its own origin³². What Heidegger's method does *not* reveal is its enabling outside, the material genesis-stories that remain untellable, the story about the vitality of matter that made him begin.

Within his language, how should accounts of 'contingency', or context-dependency be understood? The history language-use preserves meanings and concepts. Etymology is in this sense preservative although it describes changes in language. Although it is possible to write counter-preservative, perhaps even decomposing histories, these are still based on the rules of the language of history and do not manage to disconnect from the 'reality-effects' and the 'factualities' combined to it. One of these facts is the forgetting of matter that historical form needs to do to be able to use materiality as a 'prop'. Conceptual histories are accurate descriptions of what follows

³² For Heidegger's account on language see, for instance, Heidegger 1962, 203-210.

from the forgetting of the *gift*³³ that precedes all speech (Irigaray 1999, 37). According to Irigaray *this gift is the matter that form needs to forget*. After this forgetting, things are firmly inside historicity and meaning. They are fixed and safe. There is a risk involved in thinking a language that would remember the gift – the unfolding of matter – and this is a risk of losing access to autogenetic and omnipotent knowledge, to philosophy. It is a risk of losing a politics based on identity and the same. Consider the example of the Amazonian axe that I presented in chapter 3.1.1. The materiality of the axe, the matter that it is ‘of’, can be used as prop in various (historical) narratives. In wanting to ‘own’ the axe through claiming it narratively, I forget the ‘gift’, the fact that the materiality persists. Metaphorically speaking, feminist theorists of materiality should think through what they lose and what they gain by giving the axe away.

Irigaray's book opens up a space where matter unfolds, where air is the prime-penetrator-matter, making a mockery out of the solidity of ‘things’ and their encapsulated nature, their arrogance, of the illusionary nature of ‘contingency’ within such a closed horizon. Historicity and space-time seem to be suspensions of the unfolding of "physis" (Irigaray 1999, 88). The movement and unfolding of materiality (*mater*) is encapsulated (in Heidegger), change is made safe, becoming an endless alteration within the ‘Same’.

A critique of a fundamental monotony is also in line with feminist philosopher Mary Daly's ontological argument about language. According to Daly, language stops the unfolding of ‘Being’, appropriates the verb-likeness of language, makes a proposition, and stops the verb in a noun and a name – a name with a history. Language restores movement, accomplishing a chain of solidities repeated back and forth. (Daly 1988, 23-32) There is unfolding and then there is "becoming names", endlessly.

Irigaray argues, further, that the ‘Same’ in Heidegger, the ‘there is’, is kept safe in the historicity of ‘Being’ (Irigaray 1999, 90). The ‘there is’ is enabled by the historicity of ontologies. In reading Heidegger's description, his account of historicity, it becomes clear how firmly entangled meaning and historicity are. In language they are, in fact, the same – they are inseparable. According to Irigaray, the essence of language should be understood as a shelter for man's essence (Irigaray 1999, 91). The essence of language is

³³ The gift is his constitution, it is the ‘from which’ of which he is. His beginning, prior to all saying, is a gift that cannot be repaid (Irigaray 1999, 30).

always already historical (in Heidegger) and *this* fundamental connection explains why the level of meaning making and language is highlighted:

My argument is not that reality is 'merely' a text, but rather that reality can only be attained through language. So social and political structures aren't denied, rather they must be studied through their linguistic articulation. And Derrida is useful for such a study (Scott quoted in Iggers 1997, 132).

The argument also holds true for historical reality. History is not understood "merely as a text," but it can only be attained *through language*. Language is the site of history's enactment (Scott 1992, 34). How should the historicity of language be investigated and approached within feminism?

The 'there is' does not belong in Irigaray in the same way as Heidegger would have it constructed. In *him* the 'there is' is constructed into a finite unified whole. He manages to turn a spatial 'there is' into a temporal 'there is-there was-there will be' (Irigaray 1999, 126):

But this *there is* - [...] is constructed by man as *one* path, *one* project, and *one* conveying that unites him with himself as selfsame, in his world, with no alliance or exchange between two that are different. Unless it takes place within an always already existing unity that is presupposed or postulated to be one between antagonists, opposites, contraries, between subject and object, all of which are determined on the basis of, or with an eye to, a whole. [...] That architecture that imperceptibly reorganizes the perceived, the received, and the appearance of everything that happens, of everything it comes up against; that assigns it a position, a status, a name; that establishes it within a system of relations that has the force of law over the existent and its growth. Every(thing) being snared in sameness (Irigaray 1999, 125).

This is the common and shared horizon of belonging. Is this a description of the context that we contextualize in? From the perspective of the materiality of the 'existent', of what

there is, so to speak, in this universe, one cannot proceed by changing specific items or objects within a horizon already defined as common (Braidotti 2002, 26). It is about changing the horizon of ‘commonness’; it amounts to changing the horizon of historicity.

In *Excitable Speech*, in a passage that I quoted earlier, Judith Butler writes that history is internal to the name and that history has constituted the contemporary meaning of the name and, in writing this, she refers to Martin Heidegger’s ontological definition of the historicity of Dasein. Butler further quotes Hans-Georg Gadamer in saying: “the historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon” (Butler 1997, 36, 168-169). What Irigaray argues is the fact that this already is a truly closed horizon. What Braidotti argues for are changes on the level of “commonness”. What *I* argue for is a need to rethink the necessity of historicity. The fact that historicity and language are based on sexual difference, in a complex manner, and the fact that language and historicity are coded as ‘male’ makes the bond between historicity and language fundamentally homosocial. The possibility of this internal dialogue between one sex and itself is founded in the forgetting of its material roots and the forgetting of the ‘gift’. Conceptualizing historicity as a necessity is, of course, opposed to my project of a strategic forgetting of history. To be able to open up theoretical spaces for a virtual non-historicity, the status and nature of history must be thought about. Not questioning historicity means that a repetition of this factual ‘state of affairs’ – the homosocial bond between historicity and language – becomes the only legitimate way to understand the world and to create knowledge.

I think Irigaray is giving an example of one way to rethink historicity. She questions the ‘belonging’, the context-dependency and chronology as these are constructed within the space-time of *his* language. She also writes about *the* language instead of just ‘language’ to open up a space where one could begin to think, not *in* another language, but about the possibility that there might not be just one language.

The second part of this chapter will consider temporality. Time – the future, the past, and the present – is another shared horizon that is important to notice in its relationship with historicity. I consider ‘chronology’, ‘the instant’ and the relationship between infinity and finitude, as these are connected to temporal aspects in Judith

Butler's work. Temporality is connected to my project in a complex way. What I will be arguing for is that one of the main rules of the language of history is the rule of chronology. The rule of chronology leads to ideas about historicity, but historicity is also defined by chronology. Chronology is closely tied to ideas about 'measurement' and accuracy and these again to the factuality of historical narratives that are based on following (the rule) of chronology.

3.2. Temporality and the event

Some thoughts on the intimacy between temporality and historicity

History is not easily banished from our repertoire of useful tools to think with (Felski 2000, 13).

The subject is historical by virtue of its being in discourse; entities of the world are historical (Heidegger 1962, 440). Within historicity, we do not have to make anything historical nor would it be possible for us to stop making something historical. As a mode of thought, historicity is part of the very being of objects and it is this general historicity of objects that enables their historicizing and the explicating of this or that object's history.

The intelligibility of things is always already historical. This is one of the main rules in the grammar of 'history'. The history of objects/things does not signify something that would be outside or elsewhere of the things; rather their very intelligibility is constituted as being historical. Discourse is temporal and historical. History, in the sense of historicity, considered as a mode of thought and as a language, is not something external that accompanies the inner temporality of the subject, the soul or a 'thing'. Historicity is not something that could be considered as an aspect of objects. Historicity is part of the constitution of intelligible objects. Perhaps this is best clarified by the fact that in the realm of the 'there is', the realm of ontology, any object can be understood as a 'there was' – any object can be historicized. All 'things' are in their intelligibility historical and understood as such; historicizing is infinite, limitless and

never-ending, since here meaning (and non-meaning) is history. This does not mean, simply, that all objects ‘have’ a history or genealogy as an integrated part of their meaning. Historicity is ontological and is already ‘there’ with the object.

Of what is historicity constituted and how is it reconstituted? Time is a constitutive element of historicity. In Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962) the historicity of objects and of our way of being is explained through temporality. It is in terms of temporality that the historical character of the subject becomes intelligible and the subject exists historically only because it is temporal in its very being (Heidegger 1962, 278, 428, 434)³⁴.

I have chosen to concentrate on the level of historicity and this delimits my perspective on temporality. What becomes relevant in this kind of reading are temporal notions like ‘chronology’, ‘event’ and ‘now-time’, rather than the Heideggerian and phenomenological notions of ‘care’ or ‘being-towards-death’ (for an example that uses Heidegger in this way, see, for instance, Adam 1995, 172; Ermarth 1992, 34-35).³⁵

Paul Ricoeur draws a distinction between fictional and historical narrative by modifying Heidegger’s notion of belonging. Ricoeur adds ‘narrative’ into the Heideggerian picture. According to Ricoeur, historical narrative is a kind of allegory of temporality (White 1987, Ricoeur). Temporality, that in Ricoeur is the past, present, future-axis, is understood as the base-structure that reaches language in narrativity. Time, with its ‘afters’ and ‘befores’, is itself narrative. Time is serial; we are within-time. The narrative structure of historical events distinguishes them from natural events (White 1987, 171).

According to Ricoeur, historians cannot invent events in the way novelists can, since historical events are always already invented or created by past human agents. They have been constructed in relation to some sort of agency (White 1987, 173). That is, they have belonged and, thus, they have had a context. Ricoeur underlines the difference

³⁴ Heidegger writes: “In terms of temporality, it then becomes intelligible why Dasein is, and can be, historical in the basis of its Being, and why, *as historical*, it can develop historiology” (Heidegger 1962, 278).

³⁵ Problematizations of the temporal level are also more frequent within feminism. There has been work done on this area by Elisabeth Ermarth, Barbara Adam, Rita Felski and Kia Lindroos, just to name a few, but on the level of historicity, problematizations are scarcer.

between history and literature: the immediate referent in literature being imaginary and in history, real events. Both forms of narrative ultimately share a reference to the human experience of time, or the structures of temporality (White 1987, 175).

To experience time as future, past, and present rather than as a series of instants or now-points in which every now-point has the same weight or significance, is to experience historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) (White 1987, 179). Heidegger wanted to show that our understanding of the present is a kind of co-understanding of the past, out of which the present derives, or the future, toward which it is headed (Chanter 2001, 100). Historical narrative is speaking otherwise about temporal experience. I think that the interconnectedness of linearity (before, now, after, [past, present, future]) and a unique event, a now-point or an instant, is a central aspect particularly in recent problematizations of time and history. Many of these accounts, for instance Ermarth's, can be read to contrast the instant – the now-point to linearity – claiming that history in its linearity oppresses the fragmentary, rhythmic and repetitiousness of difference (Felski 2000, 11).

The idea of contingency is a species of this temporal double bind, where the continuity of time is always understood in contrast to the unique moment. For some thing to be 'contingent' usually means that 'it could have been otherwise'. Contingency uses the context-dependency of historicity to argue against the fixity of meaning. Actually, one meaning of 'contingency' is 'depending on something that may or may not happen' (The Oxford English Dictionary). The meaning of contingency is also heavily linked to "happening" and "occurring", which in turn are connected to ideas about chronology. To put it otherwise: the meanings that are set in operation here are 'infinity' and 'finitude'. Contingency is 'infinite-like' in its concreteness. The 'it could have been otherwise' that contingency implies is not contingent, it is an always already. This productive pair (infinity and finitude) is also, in other ways, a central element in constructivist argumentation; as 'moments of constitution', for instance, where the 'moment of constitution' is a marker of finitude and construction only because it is set up against ideas of the infinite, the never-ending. I will come back to this in chapter 3.2.1 "Contingency and constructivism".

What I think is important here is the way both Heidegger and Ricoeur point at connections between different levels: temporality, historicity, and narrativity. In their view, temporality is articulated through different kinds of narrative genres, history being one of these, with a particular relation to the event. The connection between the levels could be studied in a descriptive manner: how are the levels interconnected in theoretical argumentation? What more often seems to be the case, though, is that causality gets constructed: one level is made the fundament of the other or leading to the other. The existence of history is explained through temporality and time.

Temporality and notions of time can be historicized, claiming that it is history that provides the conditions for the way time is conceptualized. What is interesting is that at the same time it is possible to argue that history itself is “at the mercy” of temporality (Grosz 1999, 6). The levels of temporality and historicity can interchangeably be rendered fundaments for each other. Rita Felski argues that Elizabeth Ermarth is doing this kind of hierarchization when she claims that the formlessness of time comes closer to capturing the ‘real’ or ‘authentic nature’ of time (Felski 2000, 11). Ermarth, thus, posits the (formless) temporal level as a foundation and uses this foundation to dispute the relevance of the historical level.

These kinds of fundaments or universal referents are, of course, highly problematic. In relation to temporality, it locks thinking within the temporal parameters of seriality, leading to the historical time of past-present-future. Locking the levels in a series leads to an incapability to see any possibilities beyond the series. In fact, options that radically disturb temporality and historicity seem unthinkable as long as one settles for these kind of hierarchical solutions. It leads to normativity and determinism:

But although we constantly rewrite the past, we cannot redo or undo the past, alter the outcome of historical processes, step into past time in order to change what actually happened (Felski 2000, 13).

Temporality and historicity, here, stand as proof of the irreversible order of succession and linearity, in a word, chronology. One key-element in our understanding of history is an irreversibility that, as Felski argues, cannot easily be discarded as erroneous. Coupled

with the strong materiality of ‘chronology’, the idea of irreversibility performs powerful meanings – powerful in that they are so self-evident (we grow older rather than younger, future is ahead, the past is behind, the ‘before’ cannot know the ‘after’). Within this model, we cannot even begin to think of the possibilities for actually changing what “actually happened”.

The idea that one has to “step into the past” in order to change it is, I argue, connected to empiricism and through that to materiality, and to the problems of empiricism in relation to history. In history, the foundation for empiricism, the events, ever so material, are constructed as meaningful in their physical absence, when the problem of empiricism in natural science is based on its ability to actually change natural processes and, perhaps, even reverse them. For history, these processes seem to be ‘lost’, gone, and past in their materiality or physicality. Historical events cannot be repeated as physical events in laboratory can be (White 1998, 16).

When the problem of historicity is solved in this manner – invoking the ‘pre-historical’ and physical-material nature of chronology, positing this temporal level as the lost material foundation for historical accounts, what, at least, should be done together with this solution, is to rethink space. On this ontological level, temporality is made out of space and one should talk about space-time and consider the implications that this has for the constitution of objects and materiality (Irigaray 1999).

In the next section, I will briefly introduce some ideas concerning chronology. As the materiality and empiricism, which historicity relies on, are often based on a chronological time-conception, I present the logic invested in *Chronos*. I will also discuss other aspects of time such as linearity, the idea of cyclic time, the idea of time as ‘now-points’ and as experiential time, *Aion* and *Kairos*.

Times

Chronology

Chronological time implies an idea of movement and transformation. The present constantly becomes past and the future either lies ahead or is seen to enter the present.

The order involves an idea of the ‘before’, of the present (the past) and the ‘after’ of the present (the future). Simple succession would mean *indistinguishable* instants (Ricoeur 1985, 53). The chronology of time is understood as minutely empirical, measurable instants that follow one another. Conceptualized as events, dates, or years of the past (the stuff of history), chronology is used as the empirical material that historical narrative is built upon. Within historicity, temporality becomes a chronology.

In Greek, *Chronos* refers to the destructive force of time and to a long duration of time. Chronology is an objective, measurable time. Chronology is an order that exceeds individual existence. Chronology, as it is commonly used, refers to the quantitative aspect of time (Lindroos 1998, 11-12). Chronological order is stronger than simple linear succession. Linear succession can change direction without losing its linear character. The meaning of linearity might be articulated as ‘arranging on a line’ and it remains more open to the necessities of particular arrangements. Chronology implies a stricter arrangement of events in the order that they have occurred. A chronological order, when used in historical narratives, is causal – the first thing leading to the next and not the other way around. As an example of a chronological list, consider *The Annals of Saint Gall* that has the following entries:

- 709. Hard winter. Duke Gottfried died.
- 710. Hard year and deficient in crops.
- 711.
- 712. Flood everywhere.
- 713.
- 714. Pippin, mayor of the palace, died
- 715. 716. 717.
- 718. Charles devastated the Saxon with great destruction.

....

(Quoted from White 1987, 6-7)

Although the entries follow one another, there is no narrative involved, no need to narrate and further explain the events. It is as if chronology itself would suffice for the *annals*.

What is important and central in this list is the sequence of years, the chronology that is at the center of explanation and *that* is the narrative here (White 1987, 9). Within chronology, the ‘intervals’ between the earlier and the later can be measured. A linear arrangement does not necessitate causal succession between the arranged items or events. With linearity, there is no idea of measurement involved. You can even think of linearity in non-temporal terms, as spatial linearity, for example.

I will come back to the relevance and place of chronology at several points later as, I argue that there is a necessity involved in the way chronology is understood. It is this necessity of ‘dating’ and ‘measuring’ that can be found at the heart of historical language.

Linear, cyclic, Kairos, Aion

Because time is such an integral part of our way of being – time is an ontological issue – attempts to change the world are often articulated through criticisms of time. When questioning the ways in which historicity and temporality are combined, the way we use words and the grammar that this language implies, I think that claims made on behalf of different times and alternative temporalities, such as the cyclic, are not enough. I do not go in to the feminist discussion regarding the (‘sexual’) differences between linear and cyclical time. By sidestepping this debate, I miss the possibility to more fully analyze and understand the nature and function of this complex sexed feminist language and the interrelationships that it has to the language of time and history. By sidestepping this debate I gain, however, a possibility to concentrate on aspects of history and temporality in Judith Butler’s theory of materiality. My reading of Butler’s texts would probably gain from an analysis of the feminist accounts of cyclic/linear time in relation to the ideas about sex-gender. The materiality of time is coupled with bodies and this bond is en-sexed with the argument that “women’s reproductive materiality is cyclic”(Adam 1995). As I stated earlier, in connection to my discussion of Irigaray’s work, I avoid trying to solve questions of sexual difference in theorizing materiality and I could use some of the feminist accounts as examples of *answers* given to the question of sexual difference where materiality is explicitly en-sexed.³⁶

³⁶ For a presentation of feminist accounts of cyclic/linear time, see Felski 2000, Adam 1995.

I think that alternative or other times are already included in the grammar that combines historicity and temporality. It is clear, that the notion of cyclic time for example, so frequently mentioned in feminist texts, does not manage to escape the basic logic of succession and linearity invested in temporality (Felski 2000, 20; Adam 1995,³⁷ Forman and Sowton, 1989). There is nothing inherently anti-linear in a cycle. If circular patterns are endorsed, these are still by definition chronological and linear. Even in their circularity, events still happen one after another. Nonlinearity is fundamental only in relation to words such as the 'eternal' or 'infinite', since these are connected to the non-temporal, the realm where nothing temporal moves. A cycle is also temporally successive and mandated. Instants follow one another in cyclical time. We can test the limits of linearity by asking of cyclic time whether it enables a corporeal stepping back into the materiality of the past. This is what is argued about history as the past – that this past is special because one cannot go back ‘into it’, that it is gone as a materiality. Does a cyclic time conception make a difference in answering the historical question; what actually happened in the past? With these questions I see that cyclic time does not break the rules of grammar when it comes to history.

There are of course attempts to break away from the linearity and irreversibility of time. These reconceptualizations of time imply a rejection of the totalizing tendencies of abstract time and the affirmation of contingency, indeterminacy, incompleteness, fragmentation and rupture (Adam 1995, 155). Mary Daly’s work is fundamentally built on alterations of ‘patriarchal temporality’. Her “dictionary” – *Webster’s First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language* has up to thirty entries directly linked to time (Daly & Caputi 1988)³⁸. Words that can be found in the *Wickedary* include Anno Feminarum, which is a "feminist postchristian time/space"; Archaic Future is a time that transcends the "deadtime of patriarchy"; Crone-Time is a time for qualitative leaping (Daly & Caputi 1988). These are examples of the centrality of temporality and history in

³⁷ Or consider this option of a different time: "Postmodern time is thus Cronopios time: it's performative, it's improvisation, it's jazz, it's bricolage, it's individual and it's collective" (Jenkins 1999, 175).

³⁸ Is there a prioritizing of temporality in Daly? What political consequences would such a prioritizing have? Maria Lugones points at the spatiality of linguistic resistance. The complexity of the routes pointed to by word-clues also has a spatial dimension. Attention should be paid to the spatiality of resistance and linguistic domination: relations of power. English as “locations”. (see, Lugones 2000).

(Daly's) feminist philosophy (Korte 2000). They also include aspects of myth. Perhaps the involvement of myth has a connection to the fact that these examples simultaneously alter both history and time. In this case, myth is something "outside" or "other than" history and time (Nietzsche 1983).

Another reconceptualization that has been used in feminist arguments is Walter Benjamin's concept of 'now-time' that claims to achieve the reversing of time.³⁹ On the basis of Benjamin's work, Kia Lindroos (Lindroos 1998) has presented the idea of cairologic time. Cairologic time is conceptualized as something that enables the creation of a space where it is possible to think beyond chronology and its simple temporal causation:

The cairologic approach neither searches for means of measuring or understanding movement through temporal continuity, nor attempts to control the dynamics of time and action through freezing them. Instead, this approach emphasises breaks, ruptures, non-synchronised moments and multiple temporal dimensions (Lindroos 1998, 12).

This approach prioritizes the present. It uses the immediacy of the present to argue for change. With this change of time-conception from *Chronos* to *Kairos*, Benjamin and Lindroos attempt to create a shift from historical categories of *thinking* towards political categories of *action* in the now (Lindroos 1998, 13). I understand cairologic time as a species of time conception that stresses the uniqueness and singularity of *moments*. Cairologic time is enabled by breaking the chain of chronology and by freeing the moments from the hold of succession. From a political point of view that is critical of historicity, Benjamin's ideas are highly relevant. They are particularly relevant in their attempt to problematize the way historicity is connected to politics. As I stated above, in Benjamin's critique, historical categories of thinking are replaced by political categories of action. I will come back to this in chapter five where I argue that cairologic time is more compatible with theories of performativity than chronological time is

³⁹ For an excellent presentation of Benjamin's work, see Lindroos 1998.

The present is often prioritized in this kind of reconceptualizations. The present is seen to become continuous and consisting of qualitatively different times simultaneously. Reconceptualizations of the subject often involve a reference to temporality:

A non-unitary subject [...] inhabits a time that is the active tense of continuous 'becoming' (Braidotti 2002, 62).

The idea of a continuous present is often articulated on the level of experiential time (*Aion*). The experiential level of time has been used to argue against *Chronos*, the time of the public and history (Lindroos 1998, Braidotti 2002, 162). When the order of chronology is denied, its flow of time seems to stop and what is left is an experience of a continuous present and an expanding of time. In this sense, *Aion* cannot be anything other than 'intimate' and 'individual'. As it departs and defines itself against chronology, it also defines itself against the commonness that chronology is invested with. *Chronos* is measurable; *Aion* is beyond measure. Although *Aion can be* 'measured' temporally, as experiential duration, *Chronos* is constituted by measurement that is independent of differences in individual durations.

I still see that there is more to both *Aion* and *Chronos* than an optional opposition. If temporality is reconceptualized on the level of experiential time without questioning historical time, I think that the new temporality will visit *Chronos* frequently. A foregrounding of a continuous present is not easily compatible with an idea of historicist (chronologically) situated knowledge. When the duration of experiential *Aion* is accounted for, as situated knowledge, it 'visits' the language of history and *Chronos* and delimits itself by using *Chronos* as context. This is why Elizabeth Ermarth, for instance, is suspicious about the hegemony of the historical (Ermarth 1992). If one wishes to avoid cross-citing *Chronos* and *Aion*, their interconnectedness should be problematized.

I suggest thinking of *Aion* as having its own temporal structure. It is a temporal structure that is connected to experience and memory. What is gained by this division, is that the levels of experience and memory are granted 'a time of their own', which helps to think through the complexities involved in experience and memory. It also means that experience is given an autonomous function that cannot be understood by simply

proceeding to historicize accounts of experience. In my understanding, experience and memory involve a rational reworking of events together with unconscious modes of conduct. *Aion* is the time of personal transformation. Although experiences, once had or made, are as complete as the occasions are past, experience can alter in retrospect. Chronology cannot explain this. Experiences overlap and mutually make one and other. New hopes or fears, or expectations enter experiences with retrospective effects (Koselleck 1985, 272-275). Conceptualized as *the time of experience*, *Aion* is characterized by the fact that it is built on a different temporal structure. It is fundamentally a-chronological. Chronology is the constitutive outside of *Aion*. My argument here is that neither linear, cyclic time, or *Chronos* and *Aion* are unproblematically interchangeable. I will come back to temporality and especially to the differences between *Chronos* and *Kairos* in chapter 5, where I analyze Judith Butler's theory of performativity. I will argue that the time of performativity is that of *Kairos*.

Space and time

Thinking about 'other temporalities' Irigaray's reading of Heidegger. again gives convincing routes. She argues that *man* constitutes his temporality out of the spatial matter of the world. The *infinity*⁴⁰ of spatial matter – of space, air – is a resource upon which Heidegger grants privilege to time (Irigaray 1999, 94-95. See also Chanter 2001, 98). To question 'spatiality' within historicity could easily be seen as a nagging non-question. The reply would be 'well, just write a history of space or of geography!' The interconnectedness of time and space is so self-evident that a simple stating of their interconnectedness is considered enough:

Much feminist work, therefore, consists in analyzing how cultural meanings of gender are produced and circulated, Such analysis, however, needs to be socially and historically contextualized, situated in time and place, institutionally and structurally grounded (Fraser 1995, 160).

⁴⁰ I read infinity here as the non-temporal aspect of space.

Analysis needs to be “situated in time and space”; it has to acknowledge its rootedness in space, in a location. This epistemological answer is made possible by neglecting, or forgetting, the ontological level of space-time.

The space-time pair enables a structuring of historical thought:

I didn't see the point of your objection. Now I can see that the problems you put to me about geography are crucial ones for me. Geography acted as the support, the condition of possibility for the passage between a series of factors I tried to relate. Where geography itself was concerned, I either left the question hanging or established a series of arbitrary connections (Foucault 1980, 77).

This interview, which is about space and spatial metaphors in Foucault's work, makes for interesting reading. It makes clear how hard it is to see the relevance of spatiality within historicity. The complexity of the question is further underlined by the difficulty of finding the appropriate level that would render the question meaningful. It is a question on the level of ontology; it is not a question that could be answered through, say, some specific history. I see the question of spatiality as one that can be understood through the ideas of infinity and finitude. I am not going to develop this theme further,⁴¹ although I wonder at the fact that ‘constructions’ are understood as things with beginnings, as opposed to the eternal character of things that are considered ‘non-constructed’ or ‘natural’. Space can be seen as infinite in its non-temporality:

Forever there - "intemporal" spatiality where everything takes place" (Irigaray 1999, 167).

According to Irigaray, the infinite space is reconstructed as finite time-space. Appearance in presence is possible with this shift, an appearance in need of a temporal

⁴¹ Heidegger's work begins with a prioritizing of temporality in *Being and Time*, but according to Joanne Faulkner, there is shift towards space in his later work. I am not acquainted with this work nor Irigaray's work on space in her *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Faulkner 2001, 125, 139)

technique –in the form of repetition. An appearance needs ‘encapsulation’ to become ‘perceivable’. An appearance cannot cope with more than a ‘location’; even ‘horizon’ seems too vast within space-time. This repetition, which makes objects appear in presence, deposes to language the gift of springing up within a body. The repetition leaves to (the) language the encapsulated temporal unfolding (Irigaray 1999, 100). Irigaray uses the materiality of air as an example of the infinity of space. This space is, in my reading, a materiality that is forgotten in the constitution of space-time.

When I wish to think the non-temporal, or of movement ‘before’ even the atemporal, I turn to Irigaray who, most certainly in reading Heidegger, has opened up spaces for these kinds of thoughts:

The openness of time before history. Where everything happens but one time, though in an unfolding that knows no final term. This initial time is never repeated but lasts forever. A moment this side of, or beyond, the finite and the infinite, anterior to every measure, subsisting as the to-come of their past or future (Irigaray 1999, 118).

That which happens, happens once, but it has no measurable beginning or end. Events participate in the unfolding; an unfolding that is beyond infinite, that is the openness and unfolding of space before history. This is a temporality that is not measurable or repeatable. It is not measurable because it is beyond the temporal double-bind of ‘finite-infinite’. It is an ‘initial time’, the unfolding that *his* temporality is built upon. Its characteristics are not, in fact, temporal at all in the sense that they are not *his*. I would say that this ‘picture’ or ‘mind-map’ that Irigaray draws, pictures *space* as openness and vastness. The *unfolding of materiality* in the form of air that she describes is an all-penetrating fluidity, which cannot be framed by the capacities of ‘historicity’ or space-time (temporality). Irigaray does call it a time though. This is a necessity, since, as she argues, it is a time *before* history. It is a time that needs another symbolic – it is a place for thinking ‘virtual non-historicity’ through a ‘time before history’.

The centrality of the idea of irreversibility in both temporality and historicity sheds a different light on some methodological problems that history, as a discipline, is

faced with. Historians tend to tackle problems concerning *access* to the past, that is, their ability as a scientist to *reach* the past with the appropriate methods. The idea of the material irreversibility implied in chronology is often voiced against what is defined as positivist history, which tends to believe that historians can report *what actually happened* (see, for example, Scott 1996, 9) or that historians can *go back to the past*.

If history is conceptualized as a construction, I would argue that one cannot so easily dispute the reality of history by arguing that we can never physically reach the past, or that we can never ‘know the other’. As a discursive set of meanings, as a text, a language, a means to understand, or as a basic temporal structure, one cannot easily dispute the construction of the historical by arguing that it is not real, that it is not physical anymore, that it is now ‘fictive-narrative’, that the outside, it supposedly refers to, is materially-physically inaccessible to us. The idea of history – or historicity – is fully within the reach of discourse (analysis), it is all here; it is in language, not in some past otherworld.

Those who dislike referentiality in their constructivism might want to think of history as being not *there* but *here*. The historical and the temporal are in every case already here, ‘objectively’, without being grasped by the discipline of history (Heidegger 1962, 441). The levels of temporality, historicity, and narrativity, seem to be there/here with all their meanings of insides, outsides, their inner referentiality, and their pastness. This makes it possible to have history as an object of science. It makes historicizing possible. The self-evidency of the temporal and historical as the condition of discourse even makes the questions about the nature of this historicity seem like a simple verbal sophistry (Heidegger 1962, 441). To talk about verbal sophistry is, in fact, quite illuminating *if* history is understood as a language we *use*. The grammar of this language makes us say certain things and not others. To use the words ‘history’, ‘time’, ‘historicity’ unconventionally is to experiment with an, at times, incomprehensible grammar; it is to use these words in strange sentences.

The problem of materiality remains: the materiality of the event. The raw empiricism of the ‘there was’. Is this empiricism anchored in the materiality of the ‘there is’, in the chronological aspect of it? The connection between ‘perceivability’ and ‘empiricism’ is fundamental here:

You can't replicate – by definition – historical events. They are no longer perceivable. So they cannot be studied empirically. They can be studied by other, nonempirical kinds of methods (White 1998, 16).

Historical events cannot be perceived. That is, they are not present. In Hayden White's linguistically oriented argument, 'the empirical' necessitates 'perception' and 'presence'. Also, Michel Foucault writes about perception. When Foucault argues that intellectuals need "a ramified perception of the present", the argument assumes that such a perception is possible:

What's effectively needed is a ramified perception of the present, one that makes it possible to locate lines of weakness, strong points, positions where the instances of power have secured and implanted themselves by a system of organisation dating back over 150 years" (Foucault 1980, 62).

Perhaps 'histories of the present' overcome some of the problems of accessibility that 'histories of the past' have to resolve? Foucault calls his genealogy the history of the present. The history of the present can be seen as an attempt at writing the history of meaning, taking into account the fact that meaning is history. However, it is simultaneously a decision, a determination and (thus) and a criticism of present meaning. In reading Foucault, the certainty concerning the present is, at times, quite striking:

In a society such as our own *we all know* the rules of exclusion. The most obvious and familiar of these concerns what is prohibited. *We know perfectly well* that we are not free to say just anything... (Foucault 1972, 216, Emphasis added).

For millennia the tendency has been to give us to believe that in sex, secretly at least was to be found the law of all pleasure (Foucault 1980, 190, Emphasis added).

It seems that Foucault first has to 'reassure' his reader of the present state of things with phrases such as, "we all know", and the "most obvious things" that "for millennia" has been given to "us". Is not referring to "tendencies of a millennial time-span" something that would amount to a "sweeping statement" coming from a historian? This certainty of meaning is needed to be able to write their histories, to make the present their origin. The ramified perception that locates instances of power in the present has to be transparent and descriptive of appearances. Whose certainty is this? It is as if the present could be 'perceived' in a way that the past could not.

Most historians agree that historical narratives are forms constructed by historians. This does not mean that historians agree upon the event, the events that the narratives are build on. Of what are events? Events can be conceptualized as forms. They can be considered 'physical', as concrete happenings, such as Caesar crossing the Rubicon. Historical agency is considered corporeal. Mortality, that is, finitude, is connected to the temporality of the organism. I see that theorizing the event gains from using the form-matter distinction as an analytical tool, since the concept of the event might already involve this distinction. Events could be thought of separately, as both temporal and historical, taking into account that there are other forms of temporality than just chronology. Within chronology, the event would be a material instant or moment in a serial succession of time: within a cairologic time-conception, it would be something else. Within historicity, the event would be an instant of context-dependency and belonging. Within a historical narrative, the event becomes part of the narrative structure. As there obviously is a materiality in temporality, constructivist thinking, operating through the form-matter distinction, finds it interesting to think through the materiality invested in time. Time flies, don't you feel?

Of course, the past *per se* is not imagined in the sense that "it" didn't actually occur. It did occur, and in exactly the way it did (Jenkins 1999, 14).

The past "in itself" is real. It did happen. The "itself" or *per se* of the past is "of time". I think that the fact that time can in a way be 'sensed' is connected to the materiality of time. Time is connected to corporeal experience. This is an aspect that I will develop in

the future since this kind of problematization of time has to be done through the notion of experience. It is perhaps this experience and aporia of time that has made me ponder upon the following sentence time and again:

Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.

This opening line, taken from the novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, is a fascinating example of a narrative that opens up different times in one single sentence. The sentence takes me to the distant afternoon that the colonel remembers and then makes me wonder about the time of that remembrance as the colonel faces the firing squad “many years later” and I do not want to read *this* time as referring to the distant afternoon. For me, the “many years later” refers to a future that still is in the past. There is a possibility to think of a third time, the time that is before the “many years later” and I think that something must have happened in this earlier time that enabled this unfortunate outcome of events. The time that the “many years later” refers to, is a sort of past future that leads to the time where the colonel stood in front of the firing squad facing the end of his days. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is also a history. It is the history of village, of a family, of individuals, and regions. As a whole, the book can be seen as ‘a sign of its times’, it can be contextualized into the history of literature. For me this sentence opens up a temporal field, a space of interrelatedness and a complex temporal context that relates events. Marquez’ words constitute an experience of time and shows what you can accomplish with narrating it.

In the next section, I will analyze aspects of temporality in Judith Butler’s theory of performativity. Here, Butler’s “always already”, “pre” and “before” are seen as examples of a temporal language that she uses. The effects of temporal language and the logics of *Chronos* are as interesting in Butler as they are in Marquez. I discuss the presentism in Butler’s theory of the performative and consider its relation to chronology.

3.2.1. Temporality in Judith Butler's theory

It is in eternity, which is supreme over time because it is a never-ending present, that you are at once before all past time and after all future time (Augustine).

I understand temporality in feminist theoretical arguments to be a part of feminist politics, in the sense that it allows for conceptual movement and introduces change. Differences in feminist politics might also imply differences in notions of temporality. For instance, Judith Butler seems to be firmly rooted in the present, arguing for a politics based on the reworking of history in the now, in performative political acts and the historical meanings that these acts or meanings imply, whereas Seyla Benhabib bases politics more in empirical history, through her stress on intentional, pre-known parameters for political agency. Benhabib's feminist is an intentional agent, explicitly knowledgeable of its direction on a temporal axis (Butler 1995a, Benhabib 1995a⁴²). Consider myth as a counter-example to this. As I stated previously, in discussing feminist uses of myth, a political praxis based on myth is intentionally directed away from the empirics and factualities of history. In this chapter, I ask what role 'temporality' plays in Judith Butler's theory of the performative. I have analyzed Butler's texts and looked for elements of chronology, linearity, contingency and infinitude. I discuss repetition and the idea of iterability in relation to temporality more fully in chapter 5.

Always already: at all times before this time

It was Butler's "always already" argumentation that pointed my attention towards the strong historicist aspect in her constructivist argumentation. Although Butler's texts are full of explicit references to social and historical construction or constitution, it was the temporal aspect and place of the "always already" that clarified for me the depth and interconnectedness of historicity, temporality and constructivism in her theoretical

⁴² About the "Benhabib – Butler" debate, see Webster 2000, Carlson 2000.

arguments. The always already, the 'infinite-like' aspect in Butler's constructivist argumentation is also the location of history. Things are always already in history, things always already have a meaning, history is always already situated as part of meaning – as meaning. The always already could be called an *a priori*. “A priori” refers to something that is prior to something else. “Prior” means that some thing's existence is *caused by* the existence of another (The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy – IEP⁴³). Interestingly, causality is involved in both Butler's always already and in the *a priori*. To have knowledge of a *prior* thing, then, is to have knowledge of a causal relationship (IEP). In this sense the ‘always already’ – or the ‘at all times before this time’ – as a necessarily prior ‘thing’, involves causality and a certain order. With its hint of causality, Butler's always already implies a chronological temporal order.

When Butler offers a critique of the prevailing ideas concerning woman, feminism, power, solidarity, and the subject, the use of temporal expressions becomes most frequent (see, for instance, Butler 1995a, 41, 42, 46, 47). It is in instances of refuting a certain universality or essentialism, naturalism and unquestioned and, thus, seemingly fixed notions or ideas, that Butler relies on temporal terminology, such as “from the start”, “pre”, “before”, “always already”, “in advance”, “never”. Here are some examples of the way that Butler uses temporality in her arguments: “the ‘I’ who would select between positions is *always already* constituted by them and the positions that the ‘I’ claims must be given *in advance*”. “Agency is *always and only* a political prerogative”. “Subjects who institute actions are themselves instituted by *prior* actions”. “Sex does not describe a *prior* materiality, but produces...” “Identity categories are *never* merely descriptive”. “The cultural context is *already* there as the disarticulated *process* of the subject's production” (Butler 1995a 42, 43, 46, 50). I have paraphrased Butler here to show what kind of arguments I have considered in my discussion. What is notable in these sentences is that “constitution” and “construction,” or “production,” are often articulated in their ‘not-but’ and ‘if-then’ structures.

To argue that the temporal essence or limit of a phenomenon is not where it is thought to be, is to argue that the phenomenon has another temporal logic and another

⁴³ <http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/>

place 'beginning'. In my reading, "always" means 'at all times' and "already" means 'before this time'. Following from this, "always already" would mean 'at all times before this time'. ("In advance" means 'ahead in place or time', "never" means 'at no time', "prior" means 'coming before in time, earlier', "process" refers to 'a series, an order'). What is further notable is that "already" is connected to the past whereas "always" is connected to the eternal or infinite. With a combination of these meanings and usages, I wonder whether or not chronology is a central reference point in Butler's constructivist argumentation. The combination between chronology and constructivism should be theorized.

Constructivism introduces the idea of change or movement. A constituted (a word used by Butler six times in the following quote) entity is subject to reconstitution and a reworking:

Where are the possibilities of reworking that very matrix of power by which we are constituted, of reconstituting the legacy of that constitution, and of working against each other those processes of regulation that can destabilize existing power regimes? For if the subject is constituted by power, that power does not cease at the moment the subject is constituted, for that subject is never fully constituted, but is subjected and produced time and again (Butler 1995a, 47).

Constructivist arguments introduce objects in chronological and historical movement as opposed to the stillness of eternity and essence. Change is, of course, essential to any political project, but to reduce change to historicity might even hinder change (Butler 2000a, 13). Whereas time constantly moves from before and now, to after and, whereas history moves on the axis of past, present and future, in eternity or infinity, nothing moves. A constituted object is produced "time and again", it moves on a temporal axis. It does not stop since it is "never fully constituted", or "finished" as an essence would be. A construction has a temporally definable beginning and an open future. A nonconstructed thing or phenomenon lacks *this kind* of temporal beginning and becomes the "always already", the "infinite-like". The temporal aspect in Butler's argument becomes clear

through a formalist approach – one disregards the content of the argument and looks at the elements in its form.

This idea of eternity is connected to stillness. Because Ricoeur presents Augustine's idea of eternity in order to describe the flow and movement of time, the aspect of stillness is highlighted. Eternity could be connected to movement and repetition also, in other narrative frames, such as the "eternal recurrence" although in that case the difference between eternity and infinity would have to be thought through. Repetition can be understood as never ending through the 'infinite' or as a mode of temporality that is immeasurable. To be able to discuss the limits of this language, I preserve the word 'eternal' in its atemporal mode. In the eternity that Ricoeur describes, all is present. Time, on the other hand, is never present all at once (Ricoeur 1984, 25, 26, 29). The 'now' and the 'then' flow and fluidity can be thought of as the movement of time. In contrast to temporal movement, stillness carries the aura of 'just being'. Eternity can be conceptualized as a closed horizon and a stability with limitations. The constant movement of time, where contexts follow one another, can be used as a counter-example to eternity as a closed horizon. It is closed in the sense that it does not decontextualize itself through the movement of time. Butler's frequent use of terms such as "from the start", "in advance" or "prior to", "always already" and "always and already", "permanent" or "process" hints at the centrality of eternity or infinity in constructivist argumentation. It also hints at the centrality of eternity in relation to temporal movement. One cannot understand time without grasping its definitional limits, the ideas of the atemporal, and the eternal (its enabling outside).

In *Feminist Contentions*, Butler's "always already" refers to a certain constituted nature of the subject: the subject is at all times constituted before (its intention) and historical discourses, historical institutions and history constitute it. The "always already" lies at the very center of construction. Constitution is also linked to the idea of history. In constitution, historicity follows from a 'temporal before' that has 'always already' had its say. Historicity is placed 'before' any particular meaning and constitution cannot be made free of this temporal necessity. In these constructivist arguments, historicity is a chronological a priori. As I argued in the beginning of this chapter, 'belonging' is an essential aspect of historicity. It is a belonging to the past, or a 'stemming from the past'.

It is the elsewhere embedded in 'history as the past' that can be seen in operation here. Arguing through the language of history makes history *a priori*. When Butler argues against the intentional subject, she does this partly through the necessities invested in chrono-logic – the fact that in chronology the before-after sequence cannot be reversed. Also, the 'if...then' schema constitutes temporality in thinking (Irigaray 1999, 167).

The future for Butler remains opaque, unforeseeable, and the present, as it manifests itself in the moments of constitution or events, cannot be willed, because the subject is constituted in the present act in such a way that it forecloses the possibility for pre-knowledge. The past is part of this picture, as it is considered to be the powerful legacy/discourse that produces the subject. For Butler, (past) meaning is always part of the constitution of the subject *in its making* and the (past) meaning is reworked in its present iteration. Actually, the temporal 'before' is embedded in the eternal or infinite 'always already', regardless of any finite historical totality. The 'before' is 'always already' present in the articulation of meaning. The logic, or formal account of the mechanisms of construction where the 'before' 'always already' has to be in the 'now', operates regardless of its particular place in history. The fact that the 'new' – or the present – is always implicated in the 'old' – the before – is not a historically contingent fact. The old is in the new, the before is in the now. The temporality invested in the formal account of the mechanism constructivism is, in this sense, ahistorical (which is not to be confused with the non-historical as the ahistorical is grounded in a radical historicism). It is these kinds of formalities that feminists should consider when using elements of temporality. These formal elements of the language have to be theorized and thought through by feminists who attempt to change and transform meanings. I will come back to the issue of temporality in Butler's constructivism in chapter 5, where I explore her theory of performativity.

I suggest that this is an operationalization of the idea of time as a flow of now-points, an order that is chronological. The idea of time as a flow of now-points comes from Heidegger's *Being and Time*. I find the idea of time as a flow of now-points usable for my argument since it gives me the opportunity to think through the possible connections between the now-point and the event. The idea of time as a flow of now-points is an operationalization of chronology whenever it implies causality. The 'moment

of constitution' always has its 'before' and this previous 'now' (or nows, these can be multiplied, as in the nows of different discursive elements that can be 'seen'), shows its self-same presence in the 'present now'. Although the finite historical totality changes this 'self-sameness of', the now-point does not. The 'now' is always a 'now'. Within a historicist frame, chronology is central. The possibility to read Butler's 'always already' through the 'infinite', instead of chronology, is disturbed by the fact that 'behind' every instance of constitutive moments lies historicity. A reading that conceptualizes the 'always already' through the 'infinite' would be closer at hand would it not be that Butler's theory is profoundly historicist. The idea of time as now-points does, on the other hand, carry aspects of infinity itself. This is why I argued that infinity is a temporal notion and differs from eternity in this sense.

Within the idea of time as a flow of now-points, time is understood as a succession of nows, as a flowing stream of nows, as 'the course of time'. This sequence of nows is also understood to imply sameness and continuity:

In every "now" is now; in every "now" it is already vanishing. In every "now" the "now" is now and therefore it constantly has presence as something selfsame, even though in every "now" another may be vanishing as it comes along. Yet as this thing, which changes, it simultaneously shows its own constant presence (Heidegger, 1962, 475).

In this way, in contrast to the finitude of temporality that I pointed at above, time, here, carries the image of infinity: The sequence of nows is uninterrupted and has no gaps (Heidegger, 1962, 475). No matter how far we proceed in dividing up the now, it is always a now. The continuity of time is understood within the horizon of something that is indissolubly present-at-hand (Heidegger 1962, 475-476). This is a basic element in the chronologically ordered perspective of history as temporal course (Lindroos, 1998, 85). It is a basic ingredient in the language of history. It is also notable how 'now-time' is crucial in making present. 'Now-time' is needed for objects to appear and to be perceivable. One makes present *that which* is moved in the movement of time (the subject, woman, sex, acts, meanings).

‘Making present’ is a matter of space-time since it is not just a ‘now this and now that’, it is simultaneously a ‘now here and now here’ – a temporal location. I would argue that it is here that one can find a strong chrono-logical argument (temporal empiricism), a language use that relies on the empirics embedded in a notion of time. The "constitutive moment" is an empirical event, because it has the character of the temporal now, it is ‘of time’, it is ‘of a moment’ and it is datable, locatable and measurable. The "constitutive moment" is also a moment of materialization enabling ‘the empirical’.

The infinite movement of time clarifies the processual aspect of the subject: the constitution of meaning is a movement in time. So, there is no moment (in the now) where power (legacy, historicity of the signifier, or construction) would stop. There will be no such moment and there never was such a moment. When temporality and historicity are inscribed into the center of meaning-making and when the constitution of meaning implies historicity, this constitutive and infinite movement cannot itself be historicized. The problem remains unresolvable. There is no stopping of the flow of time or of chronology. This movement, process and permanence is situated in the time and again, in the temporal realm. The infinity of meaning-making - its ‘always already’ - is set in an intertwined temporal and historical movement. It can be used as simultaneous foresight (it will be continuous) and hindsight (what has been, is) where ‘what is at all times before’ any meaning is its context, its historicity and this will continuously be so. Meaning cannot be owned by the speaking subject. The power and the legacy, the historicity of the signifier can be ‘worked with’. It also constitutes possibilities for agency. At the same time the "always already" is infinitely before. This is a rule in the language of chronology and history. It is a rule that can be used to bind meaning and its historicity and to repeat the connection between language and history. It is a formal structure that makes temporality intelligible as movement and transformation. These kinds of formalities should be assessed when they are used. They should be assessed for their theoretical consequences, so that their usability for feminist political purposes can be evaluated.

The idea of ‘contingency’ is widely used in Judith Butler’s theories. The meanings that the word contingency carries also have temporal and historical dimensions, which I now set out to explore.

Contingency and constructivism

In this section I will consider the idea of contingency in Judith Butler's texts. The idea of contingency has both temporal and historical features. In my reading, contingency has temporal elements that are closely tied to politics. I also use the textual analysis, which I have done concerning contingency in Butler's theory, as an example of how the interconnectedness of temporality and historicity can be used in constructivist theoretical arguments. The word contingency is widely used in feminist theoretization and its use and meanings vary. What kinds of temporalities are involved in a theoretical language that composes sentences like 'x is always already constituted by contingent performative acts'? Does the 'accidental flavor' that contingency introduces loosen the necessity related to the 'always already'? According to *Merriam-Webster's English Dictionary*, contingency can be defined as an adjective, meaning:

1: likely but not certain to happen: possible. 2: not logically necessary; especially: Empirical. 3 a: happening by chance or unforeseen causes b: subject to chance or unseen effects: Unpredictable c: intended for use in circumstances not completely foreseen 4: dependent on or conditioned by something else 5: not necessitated: determined by free choice. (It is interesting to note that *Webster's* gives contingency the synonym 'Accidental').

I will use the different meanings of contingency in my discussion on Butler's texts. As there is a flavor of accidentality and chance in the meaning of the word, the centrality of 'contingency' in Butler's theory could be read as an attempt to break out of a (temporal) necessity. Does the notion of contingency manage to break the strong chrono-logic of the 'always already'? The function can also be the opposite, to underline that entities are conditioned by historicity, that they are dependent on it.

When an entity is thought of as constructed, it is seen to have its moment of constitution. It becomes a now-point on the axis of temporal variation. It comes into being, it begins, although it is never fully constituted, rather, it is produced time and again. The moments of constitution are contingent, iterable and historical points, event-

like particulars and specificities. If contingency is read to mean ‘dependent’ and ‘conditional’, then history is a ‘condition’. Against this idea of temporality, Butler argues the following:

The notion of temporality ought not to be construed as a simple succession of distinct moments, all of which are equally distant from one another...it is important to underscore the effect of sedimentation that the temporality of construction implies. Here what are called moments are not distinct and equivalent units of time, for the past will be the accumulation and congealing of such moments to the point of their indistinguishability (Butler 1993, 244-245).

I read this as an argument opposing simple succession. This means that the indistinguishable instants of ‘before’ and ‘after’ are problematized (Ricoeur 1985, 53). It opposes simple succession by invoking an idea of the past as a *repository of moments*, moments that are sedimented in the past. I do not know ‘where’ the past is or ‘of what’ it is. Is it ‘of history’, as history is usually conceptualized as the past, the old? Why do moments become indistinguishable in the past? Is it because their history is not yet written or is it because they become ‘meaning in general’ as if they weren’t moments at all? I could argue that Butler opposes simple succession by invoking the idea of pastness, its otherness, its historicity. The language of history can be seen in use here. The past is gone, it is a depository of ‘gone’ moments; it is a gathering, a gathering that defines the special temporality of construction. As I argued in the previous chapter, the past is understood as ‘elsewhere’ and this character can be used as an outside and as an origin for meanings. If, on the other hand, historicity is understood to be fully narrative and the rule of the real connected to history is broken, then I would have to take into account the fact that history as a language is all here; it is fully reachable for theory and analysis.

In relation to agency, Butler writes:

Gender performativity involves the difficult labor of deriving agency from the very power regimes which constitute us, and which we oppose. This is, oddly enough, historical work, reworking the historicity of the signifier, and no recourse

to quasi-transcendental selfhood and inflated concepts of History will help us in this most concrete and paradoxical of struggles (Butler 1995b, 136).

It is actually historicity that gender performativity opposes; it is pastness that it reworks. In specific cases of opposition, in particular struggles, it is historical structures that represent historicity: thus we oppose history. This is why deriving agency from our *historical* constitution means deriving agency from the *contingent temporal moments* of performative acts (Contingency 2: not logically necessary; especially: Empirical). To be precise, one could argue that deriving agency is also temporal work. If it so that I have to derive agency by reworking the historicity of the signifier, I am in no position to strategically forget history. As I argued before, I understand sexual difference as metaphysical and it is in its metaphysical nature that I think of it as profoundly historical. I question a strategy where I am seemingly compelled to repeat sexual difference in an attempt to rework it. The problem to me here is that of reformism. It is a reformism that is caught in the 'in between' of historicity and language. The connection between language and history is the place where gender performativity *happens*. If I rework the historicity of the signifier and the signifier is connected to sexual difference, I rework sexual difference. If I cite historical narratives in connection to sexual difference, there is a risk that I repeat accounts of sexual difference through the 'matter of fact' or constative nature of historical language. In my view, contingent solutions are all that sexual difference needs 'to become' present. What I gain with citing historical narratives is a possibility to underline the limits of sexual difference and to question the fixity of it and, thus, create more space within a system of sexual difference. In the section on Luce Irigaray, I argued that a strategic forgetting of history will open up spaces where materiality can be theorized, in ways that grant it some vitality and transformative power. When materiality is theorized I am opposed to the idea that sexual difference is a necessity.

Butler's political agent is in the present tense, it is action oriented; it is its continuous deed and moment. The possibility for political agency lies in this very presentist openness and temporal movement. Seen from the point of view of time as a flow of now-points, experienced as moments or political events, one could argue that

contingent foundations rely on a temporal empiricism, or on the constative aspect of historical language. Contingent foundations rely on the apparent materiality of a chronological notion of time. Another reading is also possible. The presentism involved in Butler's idea of the political might not be connected to chronology but, instead, to cairology. As I argued in my presentation of various time-conceptions, the time of *Kairos* emphasizes breaks and ruptures, non-synchronized moments and multiple temporal dimensions (Lindroos 1998, 12). Cairologic time emphasizes the present and differs from chronology because chronology is built on the flow of time from earlier to later. Whereas chronology is measurable, cairologic time does not search for means of measuring and it does not understand movement through temporal continuity. For a presentist temporal politics, there can be no beyond or before. The idea of constitution and reconstitution enables the political. The possibility for transformation lies in the movement, in being "*in medias res*" in midst of the "now" of political arenas (Butler 1995b, 131). To me all this becomes more comprehensible if I define this time as cairologic and show that it is in contrast to a 'then' or 'after', to a need to project a chronological politics into the future. A projection seems to need the before as the site from which the political agent projects and intends. What remains to be done is a rethinking of the relationship between the profound historicity of Butler's theory and the kind of temporality that it endorses. As the language of history follows the rule of chronology, it would be most illuminating to theorize a historicity that would be based on cairologic time. This might alter the language of history in valuable ways.

Walter Benjamin's ideas concerning the connection between temporality and politics are also relevant here. As I argued previously, Benjamin attempts to create a shift from chronological time to cairological in order to accomplish a change in politics. There is an attempt to shift historical categories of thinking towards political categories of action in the now (Lindroos 1998, 13). This is well in line with Butler's idea of politics. In Butler's frame, the norms of political life or political sites become apoliticized if these are defined 'in advance'. One needs to throw oneself, *in medias res*, into the flow of history and meaning and rework oneself/pastness (Butler 1995b, 131); (contingency 3 c: intended for use in circumstances not completely foreseen). I would argue that Butler's

politics is cairologic and I will develop this further when I explore her theory of performativity in chapter 5.

In this chapter, I have discussed both the historicity of objects and temporality in its connection to chronology. I have argued that the historicity of concrete materialities, historical objects, involves an idea of 'belonging'. Both the concrete objects 'from the past', as well as the narratives that use these objects as reality-props in becoming historical, are grounded in the material qualities of time. I have argued that chronology is one of the basic rules to be followed in the language of history. The way historical objects are conceptualized and understood is ontological and that this ontology implies a chronology. Historical objects are, out of necessity, contextual and empirical. I have shown how Irigaray questions historicity on the fundamental level, where the chronological and the historical empiricism of objects gets constituted.

I have also used Irigaray as an example of one way to question the 'belonging', the context-dependency and chronology as essential parts of the space-time of *his* language. The self-referential status of language is dependent on the historicity of language. I have argued that the self-evident historicity of objects is grounded in a forgetting of materiality. In my reading, Irigaray has offered an example of how a strategic forgetting of history can reveal aspects of materiality that, without a forgetting of history, would themselves be forgotten.

I have discussed various temporalities and suggested that Butler's notion of contingency is cairological rather than chronological. The presentism involved in her theory is not compatible with chronology. The historicity of her theory poses the problem of chronology and temporality might, thus, become a difficulty because of the incoherence between the levels. A historicity based on cairological time is possible. Theorizing this possibility will alter the language of history. As problematizing this language lies at the heart of my project, I see these kinds of 'problems' as positive sites for feminist interventions.

In the next chapter, I will analyze constructivist arguments and the role that historicity, as a mode of thought has, in constructivist thinking. I argue that constructivist theories need historicity to become operative and from this point of view it is in fact *constructivism* that upholds an unquestioned historicism, and with it, it upholds a rigid

hierarchization between the discursive and the material. This is important to my project of virtual non-historicity, because questioning the necessity of history is connected to constructivism. If I am to rehearse a strategic forgetting of history, this forgetting will most certainly affect my constructivist argumentation. I now set out to explore the links between historicism and constructivism.

4. Constructivism and historicity

My object of interest in this chapter is constructivist *argumentation*. I have already discussed constructivism in my theoretical framework. In the chapter on corporeal constructivism, I accounted for my non-historicizing constructivist approach to materiality. It is on the basis of non-historicizing that I set out to discuss the places of history in Judith Butler's theory and, also, the way in which constructivism has been conceptualized in the field of history. My non-historicist approach to corporeal constructivism means that I rehearse a strategic forgetting of history at places where I see that historicizing implies a repetition of the language of history and, where the rules of this language are used to produce a 'constructivist effect'. I am not aiming for a description of 'constructivist thinking' or for a comprehensive account of different strands in feminist constructivism.

Feminist standpoint theories can be read as specifications of different types or degrees of constructivism. The basic assumption of feminist standpoint theory is that all knowledge is "located" and "situated" (Hekman 1997, 349). Out of this assumption, historicizing easily becomes a key-element in standpoint thinking. The feminist critiques of science, objectivity and knowledge are closely related to my feminist problematizations of knowledge-claims made through recourse to historicity. Feminist critiques of science underline the socially constructed nature of scientific truth claims. Feminist standpoint theory problematizes epistemology, truth and knowledge and notions of the 'real'. In this sense, my own questions are also locatable in what is called feminist standpoint theories. I ask questions concerning the reality invested in historicity and problematize the epistemological and ontological grounds that the idea of history implies⁴⁴. I analyze the rules of historical grammar.

⁴⁴ For an introduction to problematizations of constructivism on a more general level, see, for instance, Carlson 2001, Hacking 1999, Kusch 1993.

As my object of interest is constructivist argumentation, I have sought for examples on a rhetorical level, in order to be able to locate arguments that combine constructivism and historicity. I analyze how the words ‘history’, ‘constitution’, ‘construction’ and other related words are combined in sentences. I want to understand some of the rules that the language of history is organized around. I will use the form-matter distinction as an analytical tool in problematizing specific constructivist arguments. I concentrate on the differences between a constructivism that *problematizes* the form-matter distinction and on the kind of constructivism that *builds on* this distinction. I look at Judith Butler’s ideas as an example of constructivism that reaches the level of materiality and I discuss this in relation to constructivist ideas, where construction is placed at the level of meanings affecting matter, and not ‘constituting matter’. Historicity has a central role in both of these ways of arguing for construction. Judith Butler’s theoretization on constructivism is central to feminist theories. Butler’s work is widely used and discussed within the field of women’s studies. The centrality of her theoretization and the fact that her theory stands as a good example of a historicist constructivism is why I think that an analysis of her work is illuminating.

I would also like to argue for the need of a shift from historical constructivist arguments to political constructivist arguments and wish to show that the collapsing of constructivism into history limits possibilities for thinking change. This kind of reductivism also has consequences for theories of corporeality, when a combination of the discursive and the material is hindered by a historicism that privileges the force of discourse in its relation to matter and materiality. If the formation of matter is understood as a historical process, I have argued that the diversity of matter, or the force and vitality of matter, is always explained through some history. I have argued that this hinders a theoretization of the relationship between ‘the material’ and the discursive since historicity, in its connection to discourse, meaning and language, is seen as the sole constitutive force enabling matter. Historicity forgets the gift that Irigaray reminds me of: the possibility for the form to thrive on matter.

Some work has been done within feminist theory that attempts to rethink the constructivism that feminism has operated with (Butler, Grosz, Schriempf, Väättäinen, Fausto-Sterling, Braidotti, Cheah, Carlson, Vasterling). One of the key-issues here is a

call for a return to the biological roots of the body, or to materiality, and a simultaneous effort not to anthropologize the whole issue of constructivism (Cheah 1996, Irigaray 1999). Instead of bypassing the materiality of bodies, these theorists have wanted to look at not just the meanings and ideologies that categorize bodies, but also at bodies themselves. In the mainstream of science one can see a neo-deterministic and discriminatory trend (Braidotti 2002, 137) in the attempts to ‘return to biology’.⁴⁵ To counter these discourses, it is perhaps necessary to discuss the constructivist arguments that feminist theory uses. As stated earlier, I have chosen to take a closer look at Judith Butler’s constructivist arguments due to the popularity of her theoretization.

This chapter introduces some ways in which constructivism has been discussed within the field of history. The arguments in this chapter move on a general level in an attempt to describe bits of the framework that define the relationship between historicity and constructivism. I analyze the historicity of Judith Butler’s ‘constitutive outside’ and exemplify my argumentation with the form of historicity in her theory of materialization. Firstly, though, I will first present some general thoughts concerning the ways that constructivist arguments circulate the language of history.

Constructivism against fixity and foundations: historicize!

Postmodernity provides for an assertion of personal uniqueness that is far more complex and creative than what cartesian philosophy once asserted: a personal uniqueness not given, but constructed: a uniqueness I create as I go from day to day, specifying in particular ways my multiple shared potentials. From that aura

⁴⁵ There have been several attempts to understand history through Darwinism and evolutionary theory in the recent debates on the “H-History and Theory” e-mail discussion list. One can also see a psychologizing trend. For all the discussion logs see <http://www.historyandtheory.org/>. *History and Theory* also published a theme issue on the implications of evolutionary theory for historical scholarship. See *History and Theory* 1999. Theme Issue 38, “The Return of Science: Evolutionary Ideas and History”. For an example of evolutionary perspectives on history, see *World History and the Eonic Effect. Civilization, Darwinism, And Theories of Evolution* by John Landon, Xlibris Corporation 1999. See also, Fitzhugh and Leckie 2001, for a discussion of the implications of a ‘biological turn’ for the understanding of history.

of possibility, and with all my limitations upon me, I construct, - you construct, he and she and they construct the unique and unrepeatable poetry of an individual life (Ermarth, 2001, 48).

I have chosen the above quote to illustrate the centrality of constructivism. I want to stress that my interests in theoretization concerning constructivism is not negative. I am in no way opposed to constructivism. What I want to problematize is the way historicizing is used to legitimize constructivist arguments. Problematizing historicity implies an enlargement of the field of constructivist thought, since the necessity of historicity is questioned and other languages may enter the scene. I think that Denise Riley summarizes the general idea of the historicizing constructivist argument when she quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty:

Man is a historical idea and not a natural species (Merleau-Ponty quoted in Riley 1992, 127)

The mobilizing and transformative effects of both constructivist and historical thinking are usable as an anti-naturalist strategy. Other times and other places point at the fact that things do not have to be the way they are. Judith Butler's constructivist theory builds on historicity. When Butler argues against the 'irreducibility' of materiality, that is, against the natural and essentialist understanding of the body that is predominant, historicity is crucial to the structure of her argument:

Indeed, if it can be shown that in its constitutive history this "irreducible" materiality is constructed through a problematic gendered matrix, then the discursive practice by which matter is rendered irreducible simultaneously ontologizes and fixes that gendered matrix in its place (Butler 1993, 29).

In this example, historicity is operative in the 'if-then' structure. If it can be shown that the irreducibility of materiality is historically constituted as sexed, *then* the ontology and

fixity of sex can be questioned also. The complicated 'if-then' structure problematizes the way in which gender is thought of as irreducible materiality and it does this through showing that the constitutive history of 'irreducible' materiality involves a gendered matrix.

Historicity is frequently used to question the taken-for-granted meanings of sex. I think that this kind of critique is necessary, but I question the predominance of historicity in the arguments:

And what is "sex" anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal, and how is a feminist critic to assess the scientific discourses which purport to establish such "facts" for us? Does sex have a history? Does each sex have a different history, or histories? Is there a history of how the duality of sex was established, a genealogy that might expose the binary options as a variable construction? (Butler 1990, 7)?

In questioning the "origin" of "sex", Butler lists the usual claims about its origins: hormones, chromosomes and so forth, and then goes on to ask if there might be a history involved in these 'truths'. She claims that this possible history exposes the non-natural and constructed nature of 'sex'. History shows that sex was always already gender, a construction. Whereas I endorse the idea that 'sex' is a metaphysical phenomenon turned empirical, I question the ability of historical language to 'break up with' metaphysics. Everything worth calling a construction has a history (and temporality). Anything that is subject to historical variation cannot 'always be the same'. The supremacy of naturalized meanings that are considered self-same can be questioned by placing their meaning on a temporal and historical level. This level imbues meanings with time and sets them in motion. When words are inserted in historical language, they become subject to change according to the grammar rules of the language that is used. It seems that when the historicity and temporality of a phenomenon is emphasized, transformation and a sense of movement is achieved. What is called social constructivism could, in most cases, also be referred to as historicism (for a similar argument see

Hacking 2001, 19). One could perhaps claim that if constructivist arguments often rely on history and temporality, the same does not hold for history: history can do, that is 'narrate', without an explicated reference to social construction.

To think about how constructivism is tied to *temporality* is a complex issue. There are many possible starting points for such a study. The idea of a constructed entity becomes thinkable in opposition to something that is thought of as not constructed. The constitutive outside, or the absolute anterior to a construction, is *essence*. This double bind has its temporal twin in the dichotomy 'eternity - within-timeness', or infinity and finitude. A constructed phenomenon is something that has a more or less definable beginning. A non-constructed phenomenon lacks a definable beginning; it is understood as timeless or eternal. A construction 'has its time'. The timeless or eternal stand as anterior to the temporal and this anteriority is duplicated in the contrast between something that is created and that comes into being (and thus is a construction), and something that exists but is not created or constructed – something that "just is" (Ricoeur 1984, 23) and remains the same in itself.

Perhaps the predominance of historicism in feminist critiques of essentialism has a background in the understanding and uses of temporality. Historicity introduces temporal aspects of 'the flow of time', of chronology and movement and it, thus, becomes usable in arguments against fixity. To further develop the relationship between constructivism and historicity I first discuss the ways that constructivism is understood within the science of history. Within history, constructivism is often discussed in relation to realism. As this is not the case within feminism, I see that a brief presentation of the contemporary discussion is illuminating for feminists who wish to consider the relationship between historicity and constructivism.

4.1. Constructivism and realism

The science of history and the practices of writing and investigating histories are highly influenced by ideas of realism and empiricism. I think it is because of this epistemological foundation that historians, at times, find it hard to understand the

constructivism involved in ‘linguistic turns’ or ‘postmodern accounts’ and, also why some historians see these accounts as threats⁴⁶ to the credibility of historical accounts.

Feminists usually endorse constructivist arguments in opposition to foundationalism, essentialism, naturalism etc. The questions that historians have asked about constructivism, within historiography or the philosophy of history, more often relate to concerns about realism, as such. History and realism are, as modes of thought, closely linked. History itself is one of the most powerful constructs of realistic conventions (Ermarth 1992, 13). The language of history is related to the language of realism and the word ‘history’ is related to the word ‘real’. Within many contemporary historiographical debates constructivism is set up against realism⁴⁷. This difference is indicated in the way constructivist arguments are employed. While feminists argue that phenomena are not ‘natural’, rather that they are constructed as natural, historians ask: ‘Are things constructed or real?’ To posit constructivism in opposition to realism, in the sense that historians, do tends to render constructivism a sort of ‘antirealism’.

Realism, in its widest sense, which is also how it is used within the debates revolving around the science of history that I refer to, is usually understood as a thesis, claiming that reality, or parts of reality, have certain qualities *irrespective of* human consciousness or representation; namely, language and knowledge. In relation to this realism, constructivism means that reality or parts of reality are *dependent on* human activity and thought (Carlson 2001, 105).

To think about ‘the past’ in this setting usually means that one understands the past as an existing reality ‘in the world’. The existence of the past is seen to be based on the natural qualities of time. Although historicizing and the writing of history are considered human activities, these activities are still founded on ‘the reality’ or on the ‘existence’ of the past. This means that historical narratives or accounts can be thought to be dependent of

⁴⁶ See, for instance, McCullagh 1998.

⁴⁷ The constructivist-realist aspect of the debate within historiography stems from the challenges that the linguistic turn has posed to the discipline. My analysis departs from contemporary debate (Kellner 1995, Megill, 1998, 8-9, Iggers 1998, 112, McCullagh 1998 *and History and Theory. Studies in the Philosophy of History* vol 40, Number 4, December 2001) also referred to as the science wars, or the culture wars (Hacking, 2001, 4) and does not go into the different uses of constructivism within the whole field of history. There are, of course, many other constructivist arguments to be found within historiography and investigating those is out of the scope of this dissertation.

human activity, but the underlying temporality or historicity, chronology and the past-present-future-sequence are considered as real, in the sense of having certain temporal qualities irrespective of human activity. We can think about past objects as real and we can imagine future objects as inevitably becoming historical. Although past human agency is understood as contextual and contingent, it is still factual and real in the sense that it happened. The raw material of history is real; the events are (were) real, physical⁴⁸. According to Hayden White, the historian confronts a veritable chaos of events already constituted and, it is out of this chaos, that the historian must choose the elements of the story *she* is going to tell (White 1973, 6). Whether chaotic or not, the events are ‘already there’.

Also, when analyzing this thinking, and considering history as a mode of thought, or as a language, the analysis is still built on the distinction realism-constructivism. When considering *historicity* as a mode of thought that makes us *think* that history and time are materialities, which just ‘are there’ and then, investigating what enables this kind of thinking, the investigation is not based on a denial of the materiality or reality of history and time, but is, rather, an investigation into its construction. The question about how the ‘real’ is constructed *as real and material* does not escape the real-constructed distinction, rather it moves from the area of investigating the real to investigating its construction. Both the realist and constructivist arguments about history operate within the realism-constructivism distinction.

Constructivism in the field of history

Within the field of history, it is possible to talk about either the construction of facts (or knowledge?) or the construction of objects and materialities. It is possible to make a distinction between constructed social and historical facts, on the one hand, and brute facts, or physical facts (natural laws, phenomena) on the other (Carlson 2001, 112,

⁴⁸ There is something inherently metaphysical at heart of this historical realism. Where history is most empirical-material and concrete it tends to be most metaphysical especially when its material referent is considered gone, as part of the past that we cannot reach.

Hacking 1999, 23). What is interesting here is that historical facts are usually considered constructed in the sense that they are *based on* brute facts. The brute facts of history are the empirical and factual events that histories are made of. Historians tend to agree that historical facts are constructed and that they *can* and *should* be altered. Historical facts should be altered to describe and correspond to the brute facts as accurately as possible:

If you set out to determine what happened in 1649, you will look at the material that recommend themselves as the likely repositories of historical knowledge and go from there. In short, you and those who dispute your findings (a word precisely intended) will be engaged in empirical work, and as Howard Horwitz has recently said, arguments about history 'are not finally epistemological but empirical, involving disputes about the contents of knowledge, about evidence and its significance' (Fish 1989, 313).

Stanley Fish underlines here the empirical base that the science of history and historical knowledge is based on. The brute facts of history are discussed, disputed, and problematized. You can have epistemological discussions about them but the empirical work involved in finding this evidence is more fundamental for the construction of historical knowledge. The brute facts of history are the 'events' and the fact that they 'happened'. What is also asserted is the 'chronology', the fact that time goes forward and cannot be reversed. Historians honor the brute facts by adhering to strict methods of investigations, including such aspects as source criticism and epistemological discussions. The historians' work is seen to be fundamentally empirical. I think that the foundational aspects in the way we think about history reside in these 'brute facts', in chronology and in the events that are connected to 'history as the past'.

Historical objects can be conceptualized as constructed in the sense that they are 'made', 'crafted' or 'formed' by past human agents, but to understand their historicity as constructed and to question them for being brute facts from the past, is usually considered a kind of unbelievable 'irrealism'. Within the historians' world, this is an area that constructivism cannot enter, without becoming an absurd antirealism:

If there is any appeal of Realism which is wholly legitimate it is the appeal to the commonsense feeling that of course there are tables and chairs, and any philosophy that tell us that there really aren't - that there are really only sense data, or only texts, or whatever, is more than slightly crazy (Putnam, 1995, 163).

This commonsense realism concerning the 'there is' (tables and chairs), also has its historical dimension in the 'there was'. The commonsense feeling about there being chairs is as commonsense as being concerned with the fact that, of course, there 'has been'. The meaning of chairs can vary, but the materiality of chairs is a brute fact with a historical dimension. The materiality of the chair is a foundation and the empirical nature of history as a science relies on this foundation.

There is an ongoing debate within the field of history,⁴⁹ where postmodernist historians are seen to stand for the possibility of this kind of antirealism, denying the reality of Napoleon, the Berlin wall, the Holocaust and so forth. In their physicality or materiality, objects are considered real *and* historical. The historicity of objects is considered to be a part of the real. It is one thing to state that the meaning of an object is constructed, which is upholding a constructivist epistemology, but it is another thing to endorse constructivist arguments on an ontological level. Are ones claims for constructivism ontological or epistemological? There is a possibility for slips between these levels (Vasterling 1999, 19, Hacking 2001, 29), where one shifts from talking about *ideas* to talking about *objects* and, I think it is the source of a lot of confusion. Consider the following denial:

The materialities, which phenomenologically appear to us as referents outside the semiotic, are not real objects, but rather truth-effects (Chouliaraki 2002, 92-93).

Statements like this seem absurdly antirealistic if they are understood to be about the material reality (ontology) of historical objects. The argument denies the materiality of objects and, for a historian, this would amount to a denial of the materiality of past events

⁴⁹ See for instance Kellner 1995, Megill 1998, 8-9, Iggers 1998, 112, McCullagh 1998 and History and Theory. Studies in the Philosophy of History vol 40, Number 4, December 2001.

and a denial of the possibility for real events. It is, perhaps, in this context that Behan McCullagh's counterargument becomes intelligible:

Sentences about the past mean, among other things that there was something such that, if you had been there to perceive it, you would have had experiences of certain kinds. So when historians refer to past events, they are not merely expressing a concept. They are telling us something about the real world. Historical descriptions are true if it is the case that, had anyone been present, then things in the world would have produced the perceptions which the sentences imply (McCullagh 1998, 39).

The difference between real events and illusionary events can be drawn in a way that becomes devastating to the writer of history. History is equated with fiction (White, 1987). There is a possibility to hold a belief that objects are literally created. Science creates objects, such as nuclear bombs. An object that is created and constructed opens the possibility to historicize it. The possibility to situate and investigate its creation does not make it less an object or a physicality (Hacking 2002, 43-45).

Within historiographical debates, 'antirealist constructivist' arguments are usually questioned by examples from some trends in historical revisionism, especially 'holocaust denial'. Are we to see the Holocaust as a truth effect? If one were to write a book entitled *The Social Construction of the Holocaust*, what would such a book be about? (Hacking 2001, 4).

As I see it, the language of history is enabled by the 'rule of the real'. The fact that history can be used to legitimate politics, arguments and standpoints is grounded in this rule. The empirical base that the credibility of history *as history* stands on in its interconnection to chronology is essential for the writing of history. I think that these complex issues and the problem of the historical real should be thoroughly theorized and taken seriously.

History as other foundation

Debates about constructivism differ from one science to another. The real, as a counter concept for constructed, is not the same real within historiography and within Lacanian psychoanalysis, for instance. I argue that that the real of historicity is seldom questioned and can be used in arguments against other reals and other foundations. When Judith Butler argues with the Lacanian real, she suggests that there might be a *historicity* of norms and perhaps a historicity of the Lacanian real (Butler 1993, 187-222, this critique of Lacan comes from many directions, for instance, from Gilles Deleuze). Historicity can be used as a foundation to reveal ‘other’ foundations.

The differences between the ‘reals’ that constructivist arguments imply have theoretical consequences. The real within history has its special character and is usable in specific ways. The real that historicity implies is epistemologically connected to materiality, to the extent that history is connected to the empirical and to chronology. Using an empirically based discourse to argue against the notion of materiality as raw-material (Butler) could be seen as a puzzle within feminist theory. The real within history has its special character and is usable in specific ways.

When constructivist arguments are used to denounce naturalism, essentialism, and biological determinism, referring to the *historicity* of these naturalized meanings, what is often left undone is a rethinking of ‘materiality’ in relation to historicity. Historical thinking is based on an empirical foundation and this ‘empirical’ is connected to ‘matter’ in complex ways. Historicist constructivism often leaves one with the problems that the materiality embedded in historicity, itself, implies. In this sense, historicism might hinder a rethinking of the form-matter distinction.

If constructivist arguments build solely on the formative powers of historicity, attempts to re-evaluate materiality are delimited by the ‘discursive limits of history’. Historical constructivist arguments are the least demanding of constructivist arguments (Hacking 2001, 19). If the ‘elsewhere’ and otherness inscribed in the language of history are used to set meaning in motion, without considering what it is in history that makes it ‘elsewhere’ and, also, how this ‘elsewhere’ is connected to materiality, theories of corporeality will be theories of the *historicity* of corporeality.

In the following, I will further discuss these usages of historicity in constructivist arguments and in this further analysis I use the form-matter distinction as an analytical tool.

4.2. Form, matter, and constructivism

Constructivist arguments are used to denounce ‘naturalism’, essentialism, and biological determinism. This is usually done referring to the historicity of these meanings. In this matrix, the relation between historicity and materiality is not at the centre of concerns, although the language of history is a language of the empirical. This means that historicity is itself made intelligible through its connection to materiality.

The form-matter distinction is central in constructivist re-articulations of the ‘the natural-biological’. When the meanings invested in these categories are rearticulated, it is done by relating these to ‘the cultural’, or ‘the social’. Matter, or the ‘natural’, is shown to be ‘culturally formed’. The weight of historicity cannot be underestimated here. It is here that historical language becomes usable. It is possible to understand history as a *form affecting the meaning of matter* in different ways yet still leaving matter the same. It is also possible to understand history *as constitutive of matter*. In that case, the process of materialization is seen as a historical process, making matter (in a Butlerian sense). The first line of argument understands history to be a concrete material phenomenon, ‘the past’ that is given a certain form through the writing of history. The materiality of history, or the past, is unchangeable, whereas the narratives and forms given to it are variable. In the second line of argument, historicity pre-dates matter. History, in this case, is made of sets of norms, or intelligibilities and is equated with ‘meaning’ (in general). It consists of sets of powers that are formative of matter and that operate through materialization.

In problematizing constructivist thinking, the form-matter distinction is a useful tool. I use the form-matter distinction as a thinking-device. As I noted in chapter 3.1 (“Historicity and Constructivism”), Judith Butler revisits this Aristotelian notion in her critiques of social constructivism from the perspective of a theory of ‘materialization’

(Butler 1993, Cheah 1996, 110, Carlson 2001). The usability of the form-matter distinction in problematizing constructivism is ‘redoubled’ when one is working through both constructivism and historicity since, as Ian Hacking argues, anything worth calling a construction ‘has a history’. This also means that construction stories are histories (Hacking 2001, 37, 50). The interconnectedness of historicity and constructivism is so profound that it is hard to conceptualize a construction without historicity. Another kind of foundation for constructivism could be possible if one pictured a pure non-temporal spatiality. Luce Irigaray argues for this option in her *The Forgetting of Air* (Irigaray 1999). In seeking this other foundation, one would have to remember that ‘location’ in the way that it is used in constructivist argumentation is already spatio-temporal; when we argue that some thing is constructed because it does not have the same meaning everywhere, this argument is not purely about space. We can still ask why the meaning is not the same ‘there’ and the usual reply would be referring to the particular history of the ‘there’, the history of that location.⁵⁰

In its usual usage, constructivist arguments set our ideas about materiality in operation. Constructivist arguments work with the meanings of things and with objects in relation to knowledge about these objects. Within feminism, the most elaborate example of constructivist thinking is the sex-gender distinction. The sex-gender distinction, which I have mentioned earlier, is one answer to the problems concerning the nature of the ‘object’ or ‘thing’ – woman. The fact that the sex-gender distinction is ‘an answer’ is connected to the fact that sexual difference is a question. My answer to the question ‘what is sexual difference?’ is that it is an unresolvable question. As a question, it is constantly reposed (Butler 2001, 418). The answers of course vary – woman is a historical form; woman is material; matter is sexed. In the ‘sex-gender answer’ to the question of sexual difference, sex is understood as the material upon which gender is formed. Gender is a construction that uses the sex of materiality as a kind of raw material. The constructivism that sex-gender thinking endorses is useful for the purpose of

⁵⁰ For a discussion on spatial metaphors in feminist theory see J. Tronto 2003, Time’s Place, *Feminist Theory* 4(2): 119-138. It is notable that Tronto’s argument about the predominance of spatial metaphors and a request to reassert temporal dimensions in feminist thinking is the opposite to my argument here. I argue that there is a predominance of historicist thinking in feminist *constructivism* that needs to be challenged.

rendering gender workable, changeable and contingent (Grosz 1994, 17). It matters little how fixed the sex of materiality or the ‘anatomical body’ might be when meaning and form are invested in the concept of gender, and gender is seen as the knowable category and as the political signifier. The knowledge concerning the raw materiality of sex is rendered irrelevant in the human sciences and in the political realm of human egalitarian rights. Gender is social, historical, cultural, and philosophical; gender is a historically variable form. The natural, biological or anatomical should be left to natural science (and socio-biology to egalitarian politics).

I have chosen not to use ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ in my analysis, instead departing from the form-matter distinction in constructivist arguments. This is because I think that, where I to pose the question of sexual difference in relation to materiality, my work would shift focus and become an investigation into the place of historicity in theories of sexual difference. To be able to focus on constructivist arguments and the place of historicity in these, the form-matter distinction is a more usable thinking device. This is because it touches upon the distinctions ‘discursive–material’ and ‘constructed–natural’. What I am interested in is the place of historicity in relation to these distinctions. I attempt to rearticulate the connectedness between the discursive (form) and the material (matter) in a way that does not grant all formative power to the discursive. This is because I think that a constructivism that is only built on historicist arguments delimits theory to the use of one language, the language of history.

When considering the language of history, in relation to constructivism and matter, two problems arise. The question about the historicity of matter (which is the usual constructivist argument) and the argument that matter and the understandings of different materialities and things have histories and that these understandings change (the history of ideas, conceptual history), is one of these. The other question is about how historicity itself is constructed through certain operationalizations of matter. The construction of historicity and the language of history put varieties of the form-matter distinction in operation. The language of history incorporates the form-matter distinction. Opting here for placing historicity on one side of this distinction, claiming, for instance, that history is a materiality (based on chronology) rendering objects specific, or, on the other side, claiming that history is formative of meaningful materialities (of events,

archives, monuments), is to settle for what is already given in an existing notion of historicity. It is making historicity operative in service of a constructivist argumentation, rather than thinking through or rethinking historicity and constructivism. The fact that matter is so easily thought of as unchanging and ahistorical – as material to be worked upon – has just as much to do with our ideas about historicity and the language of history as it has with our ideas about materiality.

Consider historicity in the following as an example of the self-evident place that the language of history has in constructivist theoretization:

If postmodern-feminist critique must remain theoretical, however, not just any kind of theory will do. Rather, theory would be explicitly *historical*, attuned to the cultural specificity of different societies and *periods* and to that of different groups within societies and *periods*. Thus the categories of postmodern-feminist theory would be inflected by *temporality*, with *historically* specific institutional categories such as the modern, restricted, male-headed nuclear family taking precedence over *ahistorical*, functionalist categories like reproduction and mothering. Where categories of the latter sort were not eschewed altogether, they would be *genealogized* - in other words, framed by a *historical* narrative and rendered *temporally* and culturally specific (Nicholson and Fraser 1999, 114 Emphasis added).

The language of history is predominant in this argument. Theory should be explicitly historical, the categories used should be historically specific and ‘ahistorical’ categories should not be used unless framed by a historical narrative. The emphasis that I have added to this quote highlight the necessity to read historicity as a language and, also, to question its function in constructivist arguments. In my reading, there seems to be nothing but history and temporality upholding this particular demand for good feminist theory. The argumentation relies on history and is firmly situated within history. It is clear, here, how history is understood as a form, imposed on matter and capable of ‘freeing’ matter from functionalism (causality) and, of course, from ahistoricism (biologism, naturalism, determinism). This is certainly an example of what Linda

Hutcheon referred to, with her statement that “one of the effects of postmodernism is that it reinstalls historical contexts as significant and even determining. The paradox of the postmodern is that it simultaneously problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge” (Hutcheon quoted in Heise 1997, 14, Ermarth 1992).

The text by Nicholson and Fraser argues for a theory that is explicitly historical. For a theory to be explicitly historical, the categories that it uses must be contextualized historically. This means that according to this very model, every feminist theory is historically specific *except* for the theory of historical specificity. The theory of ‘historical specificity’ is not a historically specific theory. It becomes a method of constructivism, and a universalizing rhetorical device. This is a paradox rooted in the language of history. When this language is *utilized* to legitimize constructivism, it cannot itself be questioned. Historical specificity becomes unresolvable. The usefulness of history lies in the self-evident character of truth, the real and the factual that are connected to it. It is this very factuality that constitutes the paradox: even the claim about ‘historical specificity’ loses some of its legitimacy if its ‘historical specificity’ is questioned.

The way in which historicity is used in the previous quote is anchored on the level of specific histories. That is to say, it argues on the basis of *finite* historical contexts, on the basis of narratives that these histories supply, or, on the basis of the possible narratives that these contexts imply. The rhetoric argues explicitly through history and, thus, does not argue explicitly through historicity, which is also possible.

I suggest that the necessity of historicity is also connected to a certain metaphoric use of history. In a metaphoric use, the question is not anymore about *finite and particular* narratives, that is, histories, but rather of the *historicity of meaning*. As an example, consider Butler as she is arguing for a theory of ‘materialization’ instead of the theory of ‘social construction’:

What I would propose in place of these conceptions of construction is a return to the notion of matter, not as a site or surface, but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effects of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter. That matter is always materialized has, I think, to be thought in

relation to the productive and, indeed, materializing effects of regulatory power in the Foucaultian sense (Butler 1993, 9-10).

Here, Butler refers to matter as a process instead of as a surface or a site that is influenced by history. To conceptualize matter as a process of materialization means that one has to investigate this process. The notion of matter is reconceptualized, historicized. It is historicized through the notion of form, through keeping the form-matter distinction operative and rendering 'form' historical. The 'process of materialization' is thus a *historical process*, where the "regulatory power", the norms (that also are referred to as regulatory schemas, regulatory power), are seen as *historical forms* that materialize and stabilize over time (this is "the Foucaultian sense"). Matter always comes with a meaning. To matter is to mean (that matter) and it is this meaning that in the end is formative, it is made of historical form (history here also guards against linguistic monism, whereby everything would be only and always language⁵¹. Although history is a language itself, it can be used in this way).

To summarize: feminist constructivist theories can argue through recourse to historical events and the presumption about the material realities of the past, as was the case in the example taken from Nicholson and Fraser. Secondly, feminist constructivist theories can argue through recourse to the historicity of meaning without reference to actual historical events in the ordinary sense. In both usages, history as a mode of thought and as a language enables the constructivist argument.

When historicity is inscribed in theories of construction or materialization as temporal movement, this inscription ends up in constructivist politics. It is no coincidence, then, that political work for Butler *is* historical work (Butler 1995b, 136). A more detailed version the link between historical constructivism and politics might be considered as follows:

Explicated thus, the Butlerian conception of language is fully compatible with a realistic notion of agency. While doing away with the misguided idea that the

⁵¹ About linguistic monism, see e.g. Butler, 1993, 6.

subject is capable of complete self-determination and full control over language, this conception retains what I take as the quintessence of agency: the possibility of initiative or intervention, a possibility that is both dependent on the past, that is, established conventions, and at the mercy, as it were, of the future, but nevertheless a possibility that may effect desired changes if--and this "if" indicates a necessary condition--the initiative is picked up by others (Vasterling 1999, 28).

An agency that is 'dependent' on 'the past' and 'at the mercy' of 'the future' depends on chronology. It becomes clear that agency, as such, and political agency in particular, are *conditioned by* historicity and context-dependency. If one wishes to discuss the constitution of *this* historical necessity, one might go along with Laclau and ask:

What are the conditions of context-dependency and historicity as such? Or to cast the argument in a more transcendental fashion how has an object to be constituted in order to be truly context-dependent and historical? (Laclau 2000, 183)

In his article about structure, history and the political, Laclau raises the question about historicity: Is historicity, as such, a contingent historical construct? Thinking about historicity within constructivist argumentation, one is lead to question the ontology of historicity per se (Laclau 2000, 183). At issue is no more simply the historicity of meaning and the question concerning the historical specificity of all ontologies. The question about construction is taken one step further problematizing the *connections between* epistemology and ontology not just within constructivist arguments (for an argument that is within constructivism, see Vasterling 1999) but, also, within historicist ones.

Arguments opposing the foundations of modernity are often based on an altered view of constructivism. Where there used to be a distinction between language and reality and where language was seen to 'refer to' that reality, languages is now seen to constitute realities. Inhabiting a language has come to mean inhabiting a reality (Ermarth 2001, 42). What is drawn from Saussurean linguistics is, among other things, the idea that language

is not transparent, that language does not simply describe, but *constitutes*. Semiotic systems *produce* meanings. This kind of linguistic, or textual approach, has generated a space for anti-historicist constructivist arguments:

Although historians may say otherwise, we don't need a history in order to 'place ourselves' in present times, or for thinking about our future or for articulating identities and programs for a reflexive, emancipatory politics 'without foundations'" (...) Some of the most brilliant thinkers of our current 'postist' position - Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Deleuze, Irigaray, Kristeva, Rorty, Fish, Judith Butler, Laclau - just are able to write book after book, article after article, on our current condition and future, emancipatory possibilities ('where we are now' and 'where we might best go to') without a *single one of them being a historian* in metanarrative upper case or professional, 'proper', lower case senses (Jenkins 1999, 201-202).

This is a form of 'antihistorical historicism' that can be found in many discussions on postmodernism, that tell big historical stories about the demise of history (Felski 2000, 12). Keith Jenkins is a good example of this postmodern trend as he states, with *irony* that, in arguments for the end of history, we still – at the moment – need to employ historical arguments (Jenkins 1999, 16). Ermarth also states that one need not give up history to challenge its hegemony. (Her remark also comes with a sense of *irony* (Ermarth 1992, 14).

I have pointed both at the centrality of historicity in constructivist arguments and also at the complexity of the levels of argumentation. Especially in the quote from Nicholson and Fraser, there seemingly is nothing but history and temporality. In Jenkins' temporal argument about anti-historicity, historicity also weighs heavy, as it becomes a fundamental thing to be overcome. What Ermarth's text finally makes clear is that the challenge of 'the hegemony of history' has to be made with a rethinking of the empirical and material roots of history. Active 'overcoming' or abandoning seems to fail because history is taken too lightly, overlooking its ontological aspects (Hacking 2002). Taking historicity seriously means that the question of historicity is posed as a theoretical

question. Historicity is not a given, not a premise or a foundation to ground arguments in. As I see it, historicity is, rather an unresolvable question. Conceptualizing history as a question is essential for the possibility to forget history at strategic theoretical points. A strategic forgetting of history differs from anti-historicism in the sense that it takes history into account. To enable a strategic forgetting of history, the question of historicity must already have been posed. A strategic forgetting requires that history is not used as a ground, as a universalized context for meaning, as a foundation, as an elsewhere. Strategic forgetting of history does not aim to dispose of history. Anti-historicity suggests that it is possible to answer the question of historicity once and for all. A strategic forgetting emphasizes the fact that while the question of historicity must continuously be posed, there is no obligation or universal necessity to speak in this language.

Productive historical forms

While Butler accepts the premise that sex is socially constructed, that it is a form, she wants to take constructivism a bit further, arguing that construction involves the materialization of certain kind of bodies (Cheah, 1996, 111). Butler argues that the form that these materialities take is historical; the norms that delimit materialization are historical; interpretive matrices are historical and categories of intelligibility are historical:

But the undeniability of these materialities [examples that Butler gives are among others: illness, age, weight, metabolism, life and death] in no way implies what it means to affirm them, indeed, what interpretive matrices condition, enable and limit that necessary affirmation. That each of those categories have a history and a historicity, that each of them is constituted through the boundary lines that distinguish them and, hence, by what they exclude, that relations of discourse and power produce hierarchies and overlappings among them and challenge those boundaries, implies that these are both persistent and contested regions (Butler 1993, 67).

The argument, here, is that the fact that materialities have a history and a historicity implies that they are not to be seen as unchanging, as just matter – or as ‘non-constructed’. If the categories did not have a history or historicity, the argument would fall. Since there is no other element that would be considered formative of matter, one could not argue for a theory of materialization without recourse to historicity. When the form-matter distinction is applied, form becomes history, making matter meaningful only within the historical. When historicity is problematized in constructivist rearticulations of the form-matter distinction, it is possible to refer to Butler's theory of materialization as a *theory of productive historical forms* (Cheah 1996). It is always also a theory of productive historical forms, as much as it claims to be a theory of matter or materialization. This becomes clear only after one starts problematizing the self-evident character of historicity. Whenever there is room for refreshing questions, something has been accomplished: How does a theory of productive historical forms affect attempts to rewrite history? How does it relate to the ‘brute facts of history’? How does this theory relate to the fact that histories are considered as narratives, that history can also be understood as a construction?

If constructivist arguments build solely and fundamentally on the formative powers of historicity, any attempt at a re-evaluation of materiality is underscored, or at least circumscribed, by the idea of history. In an attempt at re-writing the hegemony of the discursive over the material, one needs to reconsider and clarify what it is *in historicity* that enables it to constitute matter. From where does it gain its formative powers? This question is both epistemological and ontological. One answer to the interconnectedness between historicity and materiality, is that the understandings of different materialities and things have histories and these understandings change (the history of mentalities, conceptual history). With this answer the question about how historicity, as form, is constructed through certain operationalizations of matter, cannot be posed (forgetting the gift). If theories of corporeality need historicity in this constructivist way, then there is little room to think of bodies and materialities without historicity. A materiality that would be thought of in a space of ‘virtual non-historicity’ becomes suspect. I want to defend the possibility to forget history at strategic points in order to widen the scope of constructivist theoretization. Within a historicizing setting,

such as the one discussed above, a strategic forgetting of history, at times where materiality is theorized, is impossible. Every thing has to be thought of as being firmly inside the fixity of contingent historical and contextual meanings. This kind of thinking hinders a deconstruction of the form-matter distinction and upholds the distinction by prioritizing the form, the discursive and the historical. It forgets the gift. It forgets that the form thrives on silencing matter in legislating that matter is nothing without the form.

In the following, I will discuss the theoretical idea of ‘constitutive outside’ in Butler’s writing. The constitutive outside is a central element in Butler’s constructivist theory and I have explored how the constitutive outside is connected to historicity. The constitutive outside is a fundamental theoretical place where the possibility for ‘unmeaning’ becomes relevant. I argue that historicizing the constitutive outside and, thus, forgetting ‘unmeaning’ and the hyperbole, and the possibility of non-history, leads to a trace of melancholy in Butler’s texts.

4.3. The historicity of the “constitutive outside”

But it (the past) also consists of that which is refused from construction, the domains of the repressed, forgotten, and irrecoverably foreclosed. That which is not included...as a phenomenal constituent of the sedimented effect called “construction” will be as crucial to its definition as that which is included; this exteriority is not distinguishable as a “moment” (Butler 1993, 245).

The past consists also of that which is refused from construction. Whatever is included in construction becomes a phenomenal, sedimented effect: it materializes. Butler argues that temporality should not be conceptualized as a simple succession of distinct moments since, she continues, these become indistinguishable when they are past (Butler 1993, 245). This is also true in relation to exteriority: it cannot be conceptualized as a moment. When Butler refers here to exteriority, I take her to mean what also is termed as the ‘constitutive outside’. The qualification of the character of the constitutive outside is also at stake when Butler calls for a shift of terms from ‘constructivism versus essentialism’ to

the problematization of 'constitutive constraints'. Butler wants constructivism to take into account this domain of constraints, a domain that includes the radically unthinkable (Butler 1993, 94). As I understand the text, this domain of constitutive constraints is not to be seen as historical in any ordinary sense of being 'situated in some history'. At least, this exteriority is not a moment. These constraints stand as the limit of what can and cannot be constructed (Butler 1993, 96). And still, Butler does not want to see any constitutive outside, for instance the 'Lacanian unsymbolizable', as being outside the historicity of discourse. The constitutive outside is inevitable for the constitution of meaning, but it is still historical:

[T]he mechanisms of that production (of the unsymbolizable) are - however inevitable - still and always historical workings of specific modalities of discourse and power (Butler 1993, 205).

Concerning the construction of political fields Butler writes:

[T]he political field is of necessity constructed through the production of a determining exterior. In other words, the very domain of politics constitutes itself through the production and naturalization of the "pre-" or "non-" political. In Derridean terms, this is the production of a "constitutive outside." Here I would like to suggest a distinction between the constitution of a political field that produces *and naturalizes* that constitutive outside and a political field that produces and *renders contingent* the specific parameters of that constitutive outside. (Although) I do not think that the differential relations through which the political field itself is constituted can ever be fully elaborated (precisely because the status of that elaboration would have to be elaborated as well *ad infinitum*) (Butler 1995a, 55).

In this passage, the production of a constitutive outside is discussed as somehow optional. Butler presents a distinction between political fields that naturalize and political fields that render contingent a constitutive outside. Although she states that the constitutive

outside of a political field cannot be fully elaborated, she still suggests this distinction. With this distinction, Butler implies a difference between them and communicates an idea about there being an option. It is as if I could choose how the outside is produced. In the former example, the mechanisms of the constitutive outside were inevitable. Butler operates with three different words referring to constructivism: 'constructed', 'constituted' and 'produced'. What is meant by 'constitutive outside' is, here, taken from Derrida's analysis of the constitution of meaning. The constitutive outside refers to the oppositional and exclusive aspects in the constitution of meaning in general. The idea of the constitutive outside frames the domain of the intelligible *in general*, and in that sense 'produces' particular meanings. This outside is always at the limit of meaning as impossibility in general. The constitutive outside is the determining exterior to a produced meaning. Is the quote above a minute description of how meaning *in general* is produced or is it *only* valid as a description of how a political field is produced as meaningful? I would suggest that in Derridean terms, this is a description of how meaning in general is produced violently in the sense that its production is of necessity exclusionary. On this general linguistic level, the constitutive outside is a formal inevitability and a positive force.

Is the constitutive outside something that can be produced? In the above quote, Butler ends up suggesting a distinction between two ways of *producing* "constitutive outsides": one that can produce a constitutive outside and *naturalize* it, and another that can produce a constitutive outside and *render it contingent*. There is either the constitution of a political field that produces a naturalized outside or there is a constitution of a political field that renders contingent its constitutive outside. This again, is problematic, since according to the Derridean (formalistic account) account, this logic necessarily implies that these 'contingencies' or parameters, which are now named, produce new constitutive outsides. This is why Butler also argues that these parameters can never fully be elaborated – that they would have to be elaborated *ad infinitum*. If constitutive outsides are understood as something that can be *historically produced*, this surely leads to some problems, among other things, in defining and delimiting the field of politics and change. These problems are related to intentionality, for instance. If political work is historical work and a work that includes producing constitutive outsides, then the

mechanisms of excess and ‘unmeaning’, that Derrida’s theory builds upon, are reduced to intraworldliness. A production of constitutive outsides also implies that political agents are seen to be capable of ‘intentionally’ using a theory of the constitution of meaning through rendering the produced constitutive outsides ‘contingent’⁵².

There is also another difficulty here, though. What if the constitutive outside is conceptualized as a general and formal characteristic of the possibility of meaning-production, in the Derridean sense, or as the mechanism of a language that already implies historicity? Then, you cannot render any constitutive outside contingent (historically variable) because it always stands *outside* the historical. What the mechanism of the constitutive outside produces and constructs is contingent. As I see it, the constitutive outside enables contingent operations of the positive and the negative. From this point of view, the constitutive outside is not in any unproblematic sense ‘historical’. The constitutive outside, as a general enabling mechanism for meaning, is not the same as ‘social exclusion’ or ‘socially excluded’. In my reading, the constitutive outside is the place of the hyperbole and ‘unmeaning’” a place that is central to my project of locating the possibilities for a virtual non-historicity. I discussed the hyperbole in chapter 2.2 and argued that to think of the idea of ‘unmeaning’ in general, or of the excess of this nonfoundation that every philosophy of meaning is related to, as ‘contingent’, is to risk the erasure of negativity in general (Derrida 2001, 393)⁵³. Every contingent ‘unmeaning’ or ‘abnormality’ is already within history: that is, it is *within the constructed* and it is an effect of the constitutive outside. Particular instances of negativity are constituted against particular positivities and the operation of the positive and the negative is based on the constitutive outside, which enables them both. These issues become relevant here since the constitutive outside can be seen as connected to ‘unmeaning’ or ‘unintelligibility’. The place that is given to the constitutive outside in a theory can be analyzed through looking at where historicity stands, in relation to the

⁵² The dialogues between Butler, Žižek and Laclau (Butler 2000, especially Butler 2000c) concern the place and function of negativity, the unspeakable, and the foreclosed in relation to formalism.

⁵³ In the case of thinking the hyperbole as non-history/meaning, the security and certainty that historicity offers is lost. The history that should be there as the ground is not there, it does not serve its grounding function. The ground falls away giving us an abyss without ground. According to Stenstad we should think *towards* this abyss. (Stenstad 2001, 339)

constitutive outside. As I explained in chapter 2, Derrida criticizes Foucault's *The History of Madness* for forgetting the possibility of 'unmeaning'. He asks, what kind of project the attempt to write a history of silence is. How is it possible to write a history of madness or the history of Nothingness, or of Infinity, or any excess that overflows the totality of that which can be thought? How can one write a history of something that overflows the totality of beings and determined meanings (Derrida 2001, 69)? Derrida writes:

And if madness in general, beyond any factitious and determined historical structure is the absence of a work, then madness is indeed, essentially and generally, silence, stifled speech, within a caesura and a wound that open up life as historicity in general. Not a determined silence, imposed at one given moment rather than at any other, but a silence essentially linked to an act of force and a prohibition which open history and speech. *In general* (Derrida 2001, 65 Original emphasis).

This act of force and this prohibition *is* the Derridean constitutive outside. As Derrida argues, the constitutive outside *opens history and language* and cannot for this reason in itself be 'historical'. This is also what Luce Irigaray states in her claim that the maternal-material is the constitutive outside of the economy of the Same. In this line of thinking, historicity and language are *a posteriori*, based on the silencing of the material-mater. Braidotti stresses the historization of the moment of constitution of the subject both in Irigaray and Deleuze (Braidotti 2002, 57). For Butler, it seems, the constitutive outside *is historical* and thus, no horizon is possible outside the reach of phallogocentrism. She writes:

The historicity of discourse implies the way in which history is constitutive of discourse itself. It is not simply that discourses are located in histories, but that they have their own constitutive historical character. Historicity is a term which directly implies the constitutive character of history in discursive practice, that is,

a condition on which a “practice” could not exist apart from the sedimentation of conventions by which it is produced and becomes legible (Butler 1993, 282).

The argument here is that discourses have their own constitutive character and that this character is historical. The sedimentation of conventions produces discursive practice. Since “the sedimentation of conventions” is a way of saying ‘history’, this means that history and historicity produce discursive practices. I understand “the sedimentation of conventions” as ‘the past’ because my work concentrates on the problems of *Chronos* and not *Aion* (“the sedimentation of conventions can be conceptualized as ‘memory’, especially when constructivism is discussed in relation to *Aion*, the time of experience). In historiographical terminology one could think of sedimented events. The things that have already happened remain ‘there’, in the past and in that way become sedimented, perhaps altogether forgotten. The discourses or practices that sedimentation produces are also located in histories. Contingency is connected to these varying locations: it could have been otherwise. Any specific instance of power is contingent (Vasterling 1999, 31) and located in some history. In Butler’s historicist constructivism, history also operates on the level of language and discourse. The historicity that produces discursive practices is a necessity, not contingent. This historicity is a constructivist *a priori*.

A historization of the constitutive outside does not leave space for a strategic forgetting of history nor a virtual non-historicity. When the constitutive outside is historicized, then the issue concerning the possibility of historicity in general cannot be investigated. Reading Luce Irigaray is helpful when pondering on these issues. Her analysis points at the temporalization of space and the homosocial bond between language and historicity that this temporalization leads to. Butler ends up stressing the autogenetic status of language to a degree that leaves no room for alternative spaces. When the linguistic turn is made through historicity, the space for *différance*, multiplicity and excess are always limited by the historicity of meaning. This amounts to not being able to theorize the transformative powers of matter. It amounts to a prioritizing of the discursive over and against the material in theories of corporeality. In a historicist linguistic turn any ‘constitutive outside’ that questions the historicity of meaning is

rejected. If all is historical, all that there is is language. Matter is understood as an *a posteriori* hallucinatory projection (Braidotti 2002, 44-47). Historicity is its *a priori*. At best, the presence of this 'lost constitutive outside' becomes a constant haunting and mourning. In fact, what is accomplished by historicizing the constitutive outside is a real loss of promise and perspective and the negativity that follows (Braidotti 2002, 52) this kind of thinking is only logical. It haunts, it is to be mourned and the repetition of historicity is melancholic:

This not owning of one's words is there from the start, however, since speaking is always in some ways the speaking of a stranger through and as oneself, the melancholic reiteration of a language that one never chose, that one does not find as an instrument to be used, but that one is, as it were, used by, expropriated in, as the unstable and continuing condition of the "one" and the "we", that ambivalent condition of the power that binds (Butler 1993, 242).

It is there from the start – the historicity of meaning and the language of history. I read this quote as an account of speaking through a language that one did not choose. The language of history is one of these. To cope with this melancholy, I suggest that the language of history be problematized. Within a historicist frame of thinking, the language of history is used and taken for granted. Historicism leads to the fact that one is used and expropriated by the language of history. I suggest that a feminist philosophy of history is a useful tool against one part of this melancholy. I argue that taking language into account is necessary for feminist epistemologies, but to criticize linguistic accounts by arguing that 'all there is, is language' is to forget that in relation to language and meaning, *historicity as stranger* is always there, connected to 'the start', the 'always already' and the 'before'. Language and meaning *is* historicity and the critiques of linguistic accounts become critiques of the historicity of meaning. I think that the critiques should take this into account and *explicate* their philosophy of history. The melancholy connected to being used by *language in general* is harder to cope with, but it is possible to question the bond between language-meaning and the particular language of history.

The constitutive outside is also operative in Butler's arguments against the production of anterior regions of abjection within feminism. Concerning the construction of the feminist subject Butler writes:

Through what exclusions has the feminist subject been constructed, and how do those excluded domains return to haunt the "integrity" and "unity" of the feminist "we"? And how is it that the very category, the subject, the "we", that is supposed to be presumed for the purpose of solidarity, produces the very factionalization it is supposed to quell? Do women want to become subjects on the model which requires and produces an anterior region of abjection, or must feminism become a process which is self-critical about the processes that produce and destabilize identity categories? (Butler 1995a, 48)

In discussing the construction of the feminist subject, Butler asks what is excluded in this production. Butler questions the coherence of the feminist "we" and argues that feminism should be self-critical about identity-categories since these are always exclusionary. I endorse this critique. I use this quote as an example of how Butler operationalizes the constitutive outside. The constructivist argumentation in this example operates through the logic of the 'constitutive outside' that was discussed above. The constitutive outside here is the "anterior region of abjection" (ibid) that is produced in process of constructing the feminist subject. Again in this paragraph, Butler repeats the "voluntarism" that she connects to her adaptation of the Derridean position: Butler asks if women *want to* become subjects according to this model. If constitutive outsides are understood as something that can be historically produced, then the constitution of meaning does not *necessarily* require a constitutive outside. If a political field is *out of necessity* constructed through a determining exterior, how could feminists or anyone avoid this necessity? The fact that there always is a haunting (excess, outside?), means that it is always possible (necessary?) to re-draw the lines of any determination and in that sense, they cannot be naturalized. The constitution of an outside can, of course, be articulated through recourse to the natural, but it can never naturalize any constitutive outside once and for all. I argue that these issues in Butler's arguments stem from the historicity of the constitutive

outside. If the constitutive outside is seen to be historically constructed and constructable the ethical responsibilities for this operation lies in the hands of political agents. If, on the other hand, the constitutive outside is seen to be a general horizon for meaning, as ‘a place’ from which the operations of the positive and negative generate, then perhaps, historicity becomes an issue. When historicity becomes an issue, it is no longer self-evident that historicity has the sole force to discursively constitute matter.

The *rejection* of materiality and the *forgetting* to think a vitality in relation to matter is, perhaps, what should be historicized. This way, the constant rejection of materiality is shown in its historicity, that is, in its patriarchal roots (Braidotti 2002, 57). The connection between *the* language and history are to be investigated. An analysis of historicity that explicates historicity’s bonding with language and masculinity and the autogenetic and *a priori* condition of this fundamental bond is needed (as in Irigaray 1999).

The corporeal feminism of theorists such as Luce Irigaray and Rosi Braidotti, aims at materializing the *a priori* conditions needed to achieve changes in the symbolic. This requires a rethinking of space, time, nature (Braidotti 2002, 59) and ‘the historical’ in its fundamental relation to language and materiality. The aim at ‘a materialization’, posits history as *a posteriori*. A historicism hinders thinking of the formativity of matter, of growth, *mater*, vitality, ‘flowering’ (Irigaray 1999), decomposition and unfolding. Historicism continues to repeat the ‘always already’ of historicity. Whenever a meaning is uttered, it gets drawn into historicity with reference to the historicity of language. Whenever any thing ‘is’, it is said to ‘mean’ and this meaning is historicized through the historicity of language. To be able to theorize corporeality in nonhistoricist ways, a strategic forgetting of history is needed. The advantages of this position, which I am supporting here, are that feminist theories corporeality and feminist constructivism can widen their critical scope. With a problematization and strategic forgetting of history, theories concerning the relationship between the discursive and the material are not necessarily historicist, always repeating the same formula where the historicity of language operates as a hegemonic form in relation to matter, forgetting the gift, forgetting the possibility that the form thrives on a silencing of matter.

In this chapter, I have discussed some of the consequences that follow from a historicizing constructivism. I have argued that historicity can be understood either to constitute matter or affect the meaning of matter. In both cases, the hegemony of the form over matter is reinscribed through underlining the connection that is drawn between constructivism and historicity. Through an analysis of the connection between historicity and the 'constitutive outside', I have rendered discernible the limits that this connection draws for thinking. If the constitutive outside is historicized, there is no room for questioning historicity in its connection to language. When the constitutive outside is understood as a general horizon enabling meaning *and history*, there is a possibility to forget history at strategic theoretical points. If the constitutive outside is historicized, the possibilities to conceptualize it as a positive force are delimited by historicity.

I have also discussed constructivism in the field of history. As a discipline, history is built on an idea of the past as real and on a presumption of the reality of events and their chronological order. The basic empiricism that history implies is connected to the temporal aspects that underlie historicity that I discussed in chapter two. Feminist critiques of essentialism are predominately historicist and, thus connected to understandings and uses of temporality. The fact that historicity introduces chronological aspects and a sense of movement, makes it usable in arguments against fixity. Within the science of history, constructivism is often discussed in relation to realism. The differences between feminist constructivist arguments and constructivist arguments within the field of history are illuminating in any consideration of the relations between historicity and constructivism.

The last chapter is devoted to an analysis of the place of historicity and temporality in Butler's theory of performativity.

5. Performativity

In this chapter, I argue that the force or power that makes performatives work in Butler's theory is founded on the elements internal to historicity, as a mode of thought, and to the rules of historical language use. It is not that I intend to show *that* Butler's theory of performativity is profoundly historicist – this is a quite obvious description of it (Koivunen 2003, Žižek 2000a, 2000b Cheah 1996) – rather, I intend to consider *how* and *where* historicity is operative in it. I will first describe and discuss some of the temporal elements in Judith Butler's performative theory. Secondly, I will discuss questions concerning historicity in Judith Butler's performative theory. The discussion is based on a close reading of the rhetoric in her theoretical writing.

J. L. Austin's *How to do things with words* (1978) raises questions about the performativity of language. In this book, Austin wonders when saying something is *simultaneously* doing something. In it, Austin defines sentences like "*I do apologize*" as *performative speech acts*. In uttering a performative speech act or sentence, I simultaneously do something; I apologize. The speech act *constitutes* the apology itself and the reality that it refers to – the apology – is of its own making (Laitinen & Rojola 1998, 7-14). In Austin's theory, the idea of convention is central to performativity. Would there not be a convention of apologizing, the performative would not accomplish anything. The sentence "*I thus grant myself a divorce*" does not function performatively because in a Finnish cultural context there is no convention of granting divorces in this manner. Because of the lack of convention, no act or event follows from this saying (Laitinen & Rojola 1998, 7-14).

Another aspect in Austinian speech act theory is a divide between *performative* and *constative utterances*, which, from the perspective of historicity, is especially interesting. Many times the Austinian performative utterance is theorized without considering a possible dependency it might have on the constative utterance. If, on the other hand, all language is considered performative and every utterance is seen to be act-like and event-like and no constative utterances are seen to exist, then performativity is a lot more than a constructivism among others. This universal approach would have

profound consequences, at least for the philosophy of history and for the practice of producing historical knowledge. Judith Butler develops her theory of the performative on the basis of an Austinian speech act theory. She discusses speech act theory and Jacques Derrida's critique of its Austinian version (Koivunen 2003, 22).

In my reading, performativity is a constructivism. It is a theory about the constitution of meanings and acts. From a historico-philosophical perspective, the present-centeredness of performative speech acts is peculiar. The fact that something is accomplished through a speech act such as *I apologize* seems to require the present tense. The sentence *I did apologize* is not performative in the same sense any longer. In fact, it seems that historical sentences or sentences referring to the past are 'constative utterances'. According to Austin, constative utterances are *assertions, they are true or false description of facts* (Laitinen & Rojola 1998, 9). Performative speech acts are understood to constitute events in the present, and they are seen to *be* events in themselves. In an ordinary understanding, historical events *were* present tense and historical sentences are seen to describe events that already have happened and that are connected to the past, the realm of the 'imperfect tense'. In the everyday language of history, sentences are thought to be either true or false description of facts or events. I think that the difference that we read into fiction and history, into literature and historiography (White 1987) is rooted in the fact that we understand and hear *the constativity embedded in historical sentences*.

Out of this Austinian mixture of performative and constitutive readings of utterances, a general question can be raised: if it is so that convention and the historicity of meaning empower speech acts and that speech acts could not be conceptualized as performative without a historicity of meaning and if, on the other hand, history is, in some sense (if not wholly), based upon constative utterances, what kind of 'constativity' is used as a ground for performatives to work? Particular historical sentences can be read as consisting of true statements concerning what has happened in a particular context in the past, for example: "*Finnish women got the vote in 1905*". It can be argued that this sentence is performative in its capacity to produce a textual meaning as part (prop) of my argument in this text. The problem with the above sentence is that it is a 'false description of facts'. Its 'factual inaccuracy' is disturbing on *another* level

("Finnish women did not get the vote 1905" would be considered an accurate response to the above sentence⁵⁴).

It is the force of the empirical factuality of already finished events, the chronological necessity and the rule of the real that the language of history operates with, that makes us understand historical sentences as constative. The fact that history has to 'be about' the 'real' and the 'factual', and the connection that this factuality has with the necessities of chronology, constitutes a force in itself that can be used. These aspects of historical language are general ones and, regardless of any specific histories, these aspects operate 'performatively', that is to say they produce reality-effects. Problematizing theories of performativity from a historico-philosophical perspective highlights the interrelationship between the performative and the constative. How are we to understand the nature of historical sentences in theories of performativity? As I see it, these are essential questions for feminist theorists. Since there is no universal necessity involved in the language of history, a strategic forgetting of history might open up alternative political landscapes.

Performativity can also be understood as a mode of historicity. To quote Anu Koivunen's Butlerian understanding of performativity:

I suggest that the historicity of film, i.e., its "reality-effect" be understood as an effect of "repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices" (Koivunen 2003, 26).

What is it in historicity that links it so closely with "reality-effects"? The question is important for accounts that depart from a performative understanding of meaning. It raises questions about the interrelatedness of performativity and historicity. We understand the historicity of discourse as a force that makes performatives work (Butler 1993) and, simultaneously, we look upon historicity as performatively produced, as an effect of iteration (Koivunen 2003). What should be clarified is how this 'double-use' of historicity is theoretically possible. These questions are relevant so that theories of

⁵⁴ The correct constative sentence is as follows: Finnish women got the vote 1906 (Manninen & Setälä 1990).

performativity do not become theories that unproblematically repeat and follow the tracks of power that they place in the domain of historicity.

There is also a possibility to think about history as a language that we use performatively. The *uses* of the words ‘history’, ‘historicity’ and other related words, can be read through performativity. In that case, I ask how the word ‘history’ is used and operationalized in Judith Butler’s theory of the performative. The language of history is used, circulated and cited performatively in theoretical texts, to produce various effects. Then, the reality-effect (no inverted commas) that a performative use of history usually constitutes, lends some of its force from the basic rules of historical language; the rule that historical sentences are either true or false descriptions of facts, and the rule of chronology. It is with these kinds of questions in mind that I set out to analyze the place of historicity in Judith Butler’s theory of performative.

5.1. Performativity and historicity

The force of historicity

In what does the “force” of the performative consist, and how can it be understood as part of politics? Bourdieu argues that the “force” of the performative is the effect of social power, and social power is to be understood through established contexts of authority and their instruments of censorship. Opposed to this social account of performative force, Derrida argues that the breaking of the utterance from prior, established contexts constitutes the “force” of the utterance (Butler 1997, 141).

Considering the force of the performative or speech acts in general, one usually refers to instances, such as the priest pronouncing somebody ‘husband and wife’ or the judge ‘sentencing’, or any speech act that, in its very utterance *produces* the meaning that it announces. The specificity of understanding communication as performative is underlined if one considers the difference that a performative utterance makes in relation to a ‘constative’ utterance. Constative utterances refer to classical ‘assertions’,

generally considered as true or false *descriptions of facts*. Performative utterances are seen to allow accomplishing something through speech itself, through speech acts (Derrida 1988a, 13). When thinking about performative speech acts, speech acts that produce something, one has to account for that production, for the nature of the productive force. It is in this setting, that Butler asks what force is it that ‘produces’ effects on the level of events. Is the ‘context’ of the utterance ‘forceful’? Is there something forceful in ‘repetition’? Is the force in its nature ‘historical’, ‘structural’, or ‘social’? It is through the answers to these kinds of questions that the nature and place of historicity in theories can be explored. These questions indicate on what level historicity and the language of history are *used*.

In *Excitable Speech*, Butler poses the question about the nature of the ‘force’ that makes performative work, by looking at how Bourdieu and Derrida read Austin. When Bourdieu seems to give ‘the social’ a privileged position in explaining the ‘force’, Derrida keeps within the linguistic sphere, making the ‘force’ a structural element of every utterance. Derrida gives force to structuralism as a mode of thought.

The question about the ‘force’ of the performative is a crucial one. I aim to approach this question by looking at the place that ‘history’ (usually referred to as ‘convention’, ‘tradition’ and ‘sedimentation’ in these cases) gets in these theories and their variations. Looking at the historical aspect of performative theories, it is possible to argue two things. Firstly, I could argue that there is something performative in the idea of historicity itself. The main function of historicity in theories where it gets ‘applied’, is that it ‘lends itself’ or becomes part of a chain of citations. The language of history enables it to operate as an iterable and citable ‘idea’ and as a performative. As a language, history is itself a convention. Often it performs because, and in accordance to the rules of historical language, historical statements are descriptions of facts. This constantivity of the historical sentence is read as legitimate and true. I argue that historicity operates as a constantive theoretical utterance, becoming the ‘fact’ that makes a performative work. In this sense, there is a constantivity at work behind the performative speech-act. This constantivity – in its relation to the factual/the chronological – is a force that constitutes a convention.

The performative nature of history can be put to practice on at least two levels: on the level of citing ‘historicity’ metaphorically, (as Butler does) or on the level of citing historical events in the way that these have been narrated by referring to historical ‘facts’ (“Women in Finland got the vote 1905”). The second argument stemming from the historical aspect of performative theories is that the ‘force’, in performative theories, needs historicity (and chronology) to be understood as a force in the first place. Arguing this centralizes terms such as ‘social power’ (Bourdieu), ‘prior established context’ (Derrida), ‘convention’ (Austin) or ‘sedimented social performatives’ (Butler) in theoretical narratives about why and how performatives ‘work’. To argue for performativity, its movement has to be accounted for. Theorizing performativity means that I have to determine *what* exactly sets performativity in motion. Historicity and chronology are close at hand when looking for powerful origins and origins of power. But historicity also, with its inherent possibility for thinking temporal movement (transformation), is crucial for any political postmodern discourse such as Butler’s. A politics based on performativity is a politics ‘in the making’ – “*in medias res*” as Butler argues (Butler 1995b, 131). I argue that the strong emphasis on historicity and chronology hinders the immediacy of performative politics. It postpones and delays politics through its practice of always tracing the genealogies of hegemony.

Performative theories also carry aspects of temporality. Consider the possibilities for a reading of the ‘before’, ‘after’ and ‘nows’ (point-like, event-like?) in connection to ideas such as ‘citation’, ‘iterability’, ‘rupture’ or ‘break’. Iterability seems to have a certain temporal logic also where empirical historicity is irrelevant for the way the movement of meaning is explained (in my reading, this would be the case in Derrida). Performativity is characterized by present-centeredness and, as I will argue below, is more compatible with a Cairologic time-conception than it is with the time of Chronos and history.

Performative constructivism: iterable marks

A performative act is one which brings into being or enacts that which it names, and so marks the constitutive or productive power of discourse (Butler 1995b, 134).

I read theories of the performative as answers to questions about constructivism. This means that I read Butler's performativity as a *technology of constructivism*. Performativity operates as an answer to questions like 'how is the body constructed', 'how does a subject come into being', 'how is agency possible' or 'how is meaning in language'. It is in relation to constructivism that a discussion about 'speech acts' and the logic of the performative differs from, say, empiricist accounts (or from accounts that are based on a constative view of the utterance). What constitutes, what produces? Historicity is a force that, for Butler, enables performatives to work and in the sense that it becomes a technology of constructivism. I understand iterability as another and not necessarily historical force that makes performatives work. A performative speech act is one that brings into being that which it names. The question then becomes what exactly is the process of this 'bringing into being'? What is the constitutive power of discourse? Is it historical (Kaskisaari 2003, 8)? Searching for answers to these questions, Butler turns to Austin, Derrida and theories of language. To look at theories of performativity from a constructivist perspective narrows the scope of their truth-claims. Thinking about performativity means rethinking the meaning of construction itself (Butler 1993, xi).

The normativity, legitimacy and rules of language constitute meaning and, according to Butler's reading of Derrida, this constituting is made possible by the iterable structure of every mark. For a mark to be a mark it has to be repeatable. Iterability is defined as a breaking from a 'prior context'. One does not take up or re-enact straightforwardly an existing meaning; rather one breaks away 'from it' by citing it. The continuous constitution of meaning and the life of language and communication depend on iterability, characterized by the force of rupture or break from prior context (Butler 1997, 148-149, Laitinen & Rojola 1998, 18-19). In this setting, history is usually

understood to be situated as ‘the context’ of meaning. Historicity seems to be part of finite structures and contexts.

Although the history that performative theories often refer to is a historicity in general, this general historicity implies the actual histories and the finite contexts that contingent meanings ‘appear in’. Were there not any actual histories or locatable historical contexts, rather only an idea about a general ‘historicity’, the meaning of ‘history’ would be utterly different. Not even iterability breaks away from a general historicity that would not be anchored in at least the possibility for a contingent location in the chronologically ordered history of events or ideas. There has to be something for iterability to ‘break away from’, the prior, convention, the before, the past.

If iterability is seen to enable meaning in general, this implies that were marks not iterable in this way, language and communication would simply stop. Meanings would be permanent, eternally fixed, and ‘communication’ would be ‘autistic’. The world would be in a state of pre-construction. When iterability is understood to enable meaning in general, the only thing falling outside of iterability is ‘unmeaning’, nothingness, hybris, and dionysos. The break from prior context is a necessity for iterability to ‘work’. Iterability is always a decontextualization, where the ‘before’ becomes (a now), an ‘Other’ and this also means that meaning is partly enabled by temporal decontextualization or movement.

The very idea of repetition implies a temporality, a past and a present, since for something to be repeated it must have ‘happened’ or ‘been before’. Iterability introduces difference into an idea of identity by negotiating the impossibility of ever repeating something in exactly the same way. Yet, to understand iterability, some element of a thing must still have occurred before for ‘it’ to be able to iterate. The temporality involved here is central to decontextualization (unless iterability is understood as inherently spatial). To me, this means that the temporality involved in accounts of iterability should not be left untheorized. I see that temporality in its connection to historicity is a fundamental aspect of iterability and a cornerstone of performative theories. These aspects of performative theories are essential and, as performativity is so widely used in women’s studies, also this tool – performativity – should be constantly

rethought to avoid schematic accounts that can become repetitious rehearsals of sophisticated language.

Derrida also writes that the shift in meaning that iterability involves has a temporal dimension:

[T]he time and place of the *other time* already at work, altering from the start the start itself, the *first time*, the *at once*” (Derrida 1988b, 62).

What kind of temporality does Derrida's notion of iterability imply as he claims that the *first time* of taking up the mark, of repeating its meaning, alters “the first,” making it an other time; *at once*? The “at once” in Derrida’s sentence is not the time of chronology. Chronology is ‘before-after’. I find that, as there is a problematization of the chronological time in operation here, it might also open up for a philosophy of history. What temporality can be read into a time where the other time is, in the first time, at once? What ‘chronology’ would a history follow within this iterability? The ‘other time in the first time’ might be read as a minute description of the temporality involved in an ongoing process, as a technique of language and meaning construction. But since iterability is *not* repetition, as it is not a repeating of ‘the first time at the other time’ it can also be read as nontemporal. As a nontemporal process, iterability has no beginning or end (Butler 1997, 151). It is ‘eternalish’ or infinite. Iterability can also be interpreted as an expanded present, as an idea that brings every meaning and ‘time’ into the ongoing now, a now that does not have a meaningful ‘before’, since the other time is always ‘at once’ with this time. This would be the time of *Kairos*, which I presented in chapter 3.2. In Greek mythology, *Kairos* is the personification of opportunity. The relevance of considering *Kairos* is highlighted when iterability is seen as an essential ingredient in a performative theory of politics. The qualitative aspects of time, in relation to politics, are issues that, according to Kia Lindroos (Lindroos 1998, 252) have not been sufficiently theorized. When set in opposition to chronological time, cairologic time is qualitative. Cairologic time stresses the present and this is why it should be theorized in relation to present-centered performative politics and iterability. Iterability can be interpreted in connection to discontinuity or hybris, which again falls into the realm of *Kairos*. An

emphasis on *Kairos* highlights breaks and ruptures. *Kairos* is ‘composed of’ non-synchronized moments and multiple temporal dimensions (Lindroos 1998, 12) and, I could add, of *différance*. *Kairos* prioritizes the present. Cairologic time is a species of time conception that stresses the uniqueness and singularity of *moments*. Cairologic time is enabled by breaking the chain of chronology and by freeing the moments from the hold of succession. As I understand it, Derrida’s notion of iterability is cairologic, while Butler’s is chronologic. I will now discuss some of the implications of this.

From a cairologic approach, the idea of an ‘original context’ or a historical convention that iterability would stem from, becomes suspect. Perhaps convention could be translated as ‘practice’ (praxis in general), instead of ‘tradition’ to underline the present centeredness of iterability or to underline the fact that, if (Derrida’s) iterability is not conceptualized as repetition it is not compatible with Chronos? This move would also throw a different light on theories that try to combine performativity (the conventionality of meaning) and performance (practice) (Kaskisaari 2003, 9), since reading iterability as ‘cairologic’ comes close to reading it as practice in general; giving every noun a verb-like character and investing meaning-making with narration. In that sense, iterability can be read as ‘performance’ (*in general*).

Reading iterability through cairologic time also implies that there is a possibility for a strategic forgetting of chronology. This forgetting is strategic in the sense that it does not deny the implications and the power of historicity and chronology, but it is strategic in its attempt to remember *Kairos*, the personification of opportunity. The opportunity that cairologic time gives is that it does not necessitate a rehearsal of historicity, rather it makes the use of history and *Chronos* more connected to the political moment, the strategic moment of the now.

Iterability as verb

Performative theoretical accounts introduce chronology and historicity through notions such as ‘ritual’, ‘convention’ and ‘legacy’. Austin claims that the force of the performative is derived from convention, that is, from ‘ritual’ and ‘ceremony’. Bourdieu argues that the force is made possible by the social power of the speaker (and he would

hardly deny that this social power has its historical roots). For a performative to work, the speaker must first be invested with legitimate power. It follows from this that a performative can misfire if the speaker lacks legitimacy and authority.

Both Austin and Bourdieu (and following them, Butler) can be said to historicize the force of the performative. Butler does this explicitly, using the word ‘history’ to describe ‘that’, which *backs up* the performative operation. She historicizes the performative to the extent of actually letting historicity define what makes the performative work and reducing the ‘force performative utterances’ to historicity. The power of historicity is the source of whatever power the performative has (Butler 1997, 159). Butler writes:

Performative utterances operate according to the same logic as written marks, according to Derrida, which, as signs, carry “a force that breaks with its context...the breaking force (*force de rupture*) is not an accidental predicate but the very structure of the written text...” Later on that same page, Derrida links the force of rupture to spacing, or the problem of the interval that iterability introduces. The sign, as iterable, is a differential mark cut off from its putative production or origin. Whether the mark is “cut off” from its origin, as Derrida contends, or loosely tethered to it raises the question whether the function of the sign is essentially related to the sedimentation of its usages, or essentially free of its historicity (Butler 1997, 148).

What is visible in this passage is a discussion where Butler argues for her historicist stance. She argues against Derrida’s structural account of iterability and argues that iterability, as the ‘breaking force’, is connected to the historicity of language. The ‘cutting off’ that Butler refers to is “the break with context” that lies at the heart of iterability. If this context, which the mark is seen to be “cut off” from, is understood as historical, it necessarily becomes connected to the ‘historical chain of usages’ that chronologically pre-date it.

Butler inserts historicity into the Derridean model, but why? This question is relevant as I set out to understand how historicity is theoretically *used*. The question is

also relevant because the nature of iterability and the break are essential to performativity and produce differences between performative theories. Is historicity used because history and temporality are closely linked to transformation? The fact that political work is historical work in Butler's theory suggests this (Butler 1997, 159, Butler 1995b, 136). In an argument against performativity as a politics of willful choice, Butler writes:

The power of discourse to materialize its effects is thus consonant with the power of discourse to circumscribe the domain of intelligibility. Hence, the reading of "performativity" as willful and arbitrary choice misses the point that the historicity of discourse and, in particular the historicity of norms (...) constitutes the power of discourse to enact what it names (Butler 1993, 187).

Butler clearly states that the *historicity* of norms constitute the power of discourse. Historicity backs up power and performativity. To oppose power and to work towards transformation one has to take into account the historicity of norms and re-invest historicity with a power to be able to 'misuse' that power. Bourdieu and Austin seem to prefer the word 'social' instead of 'history' although 'social' could be read (and most often is read) as implying 'history'. In an explicit historicizing setting as this, it is no wonder that Derrida's iterability stands out as curiously cut off from or 'essentially free from its historicity', as Butler puts it (Butler 1997, 148). I would be cautious to read Derrida's position here as being necessarily optional to or missing the problem of the "social" or the "historical" in relation to performativity. From a historico-philosophical perspective, I would rather consider the possibilities of Derrida's reading: historicity does not define the whole scene of meaning and this non-determinism opens up the question a more fundamental violence that enables and upholds speech and history (Irigaray 1999, Derrida 2001, 65). I read Derrida's account of iterability as a formal account and suggest that it has cairiological instead of chronological temporal qualities. This means that a historicizing of Derrida's account of iterability requires that temporality, in its relation to iterability, be problematized. If it is so that the temporality of iterability is cairiological and 'infinite', rather than chronological and historical, then the formalities involved in performative theories cannot be chronologically ordered in any simple way. I think that

considering the possibility of cairologic time in connection to performativity opens up a space to problematize history and, thus, enables a strategic forgetting of history. To my mind, these possibilities contribute to theoretization and to the transformation of patterns of thought.

Although the languages of temporality and history are interconnected, I would like to think through *how* the inherent temporality of the iterable mark, for instance, is connected to historicity. I would like to think this through before inserting history into performative theory. I also think that going along with Derrida for a while here might enable a deeper problematization of historicity's inherent powers. The question about how the language of history 'works' performatively, needs a theoretization of iterability and performativity that does not place historicity as a factuality, which enables both iterability and performativity. If there is a constantivity involved in the language of history, this constantivity must be discussed in relation to the idea that "historicity constitutes the power of discourse to enact what it names" (Butler 1993, 187). When historicity is conceptualized as the force that enables both iterability and performativity, there is no place to theorize the repetition of 'historicity'.

I would argue that what Butler needs from Derrida's iterability is the idea of the 'break', or the necessity of the break that Derrida articulates. Butler does not want to place the break as part of a structuralism; rather she historicizes the break. Following Derrida, one could argue that historicizing the break means that one is 'used' by the very structuralism that is denied. Butler needs Derrida's structural or formal break because neither Austin's nor Bourdieu's rather static descriptions of social power will help to think change. In problematizing iterability, the idea of the break is essential. The break stands for movement and change. It is central to a theory of politics and its status is always connected to some sort of temporality. The idea of the break (from context) is often discussed through the possibility of 'failure'. In the final section, I will discuss further the break and its connection to 'failure', iterability and politics.

The force of the break

This force (of the performative) is associated with the break from context, the scene in which, through repetition, the formula establishes its structural independence from any of the specific contexts in which it appears. The “force” is not derived from conditions that are outside of language, as Bourdieu suggests, but results from the iterability of the graphematic sign (Butler 1997, 149).

According to Derrida, the force of the performative is what enables communication. The force is not possible without the break from prior context, or from a determined meaning. The break is the movement of meaning, the break is *différance*. The movement is the force, *différance* is a force. Hybris is the force of the brake. The place and meaning of the break is, of course, a highly complex problem and I can only take it up here to the extent that it is central in Butler’s *Excitable Speech* and to extent that it concerns historicity.

It seems that Butler often reads the break as a sign of performative failure. A reading that is in no way necessary, especially in light of what is written in “*Signature Event Context*” (Derrida 1988a). The necessity of Butler's reading stems from the argument that she makes, the argument about the *politics of the performative*, which uses the idea inscribed in the Derridean “break” *after* it has been disconnected from iterability as a (verb) formality of language.

But what is the relation between ‘iterability’ and the ‘break’? Derrida understands the break as a necessary feature of ‘iterability’, enabling the utterance. This means that the break is not conceptualized as a feature of the utterance, as a feature of the empirics of the singular event. It is a general enabling break. It is here that I see that iterability is *cairologic* in its temporality. Would the break be seen as connected to the singular event, it could be measured and placed into chronology. As I understand it, the temporality of the performative can be read as the logic of iterability, as the necessity of movement. It is verb-like; it is *Kairos* – *the opportunity of différance*. For movement to be apparent a break is needed. The Derridean break is part of every event. Iterability and its internal break are necessary structural features of every mark and there is little point in considering whether the break always happens or not, whether it ‘fails’ or ‘succeeds’.

Without the break iterability would be made impossible. In this sense the break cannot fail. Différance cannot fail. In some sections of *Excitable Speech* the break is considered to imply failure:

If the break from context that a performative can, or in Derridean terms, *must* perform is something that every “mark” performs by virtue of its graphematic structure, then all marks and utterances are equally afflicted by such failure, and it makes no sense to ask how it is that certain utterances come to carry the force to wound that they do, whereas others fail to exercise such force at all (Butler 1997, 150).

Why is the break from context renamed here as ‘failure’? If it is the case that all marks and utterances are ‘afflicted’ by such a break, then the interchangeability of the ‘break’ and the ‘failure’ becomes problematic. Seeing the break as enabling does not imply that it would not make sense to ask about differences between performative speech acts. We can still ask about violence and harm because the break is always a ‘success’. I think that iterability and the break should be allowed a theoretical space not predefined by *particular instances* of their working, by circumstantialities. Even with all the power that is invested in these words, historicity and history are reworked through a general iterability.

The idea of a general citationality becomes a problem for Butler since it is not historically contingent in Derrida’s theory. Butler calls for an account of the *social* iterability of the utterance (Butler 1997, 150). For this socio-historical account, Derrida’s structural or formal account of iterability is not enough. Butler asks how the a priori status of the structurality involved in iterability can manage to explain empirical differences in the effects of its operation. For Derrida, iterability is associated with the break from context that enables performative utterances *irrespective of* and *independently from* any specific instance, independent of contingent and accidental occurrences. This is important in relation to historicity. I cannot historicize *this* iterability because historicizing is, *here*, enabled by iterability. There is no ‘socio-historical iterability’ unless the theory of iterability is conceptualized as an empirical history events or a

sociology of events. If the context that the utterance breaks away from is understood as a historical context or as the context for the specific utterance's historicity, it seems that the structural features of language are replaced by the historicity of meaning and, thereby the structural features of *a specific language*, the language of history.

Derrida argues that the "pure singularity of the event", the singularity of instances of "failure" cannot count for the iterable structure of every mark (Derrida 1988a). In this sense, iterability is what makes the semantic possible, and, in my reading, the kind of failures or infelicities that both Austin and Butler turn to, are *semantic*. The context, that Austin needs to be able determine the speech act, is a semantic context, it is a determined meaning. There is a need for the conscious presence of an intentional speaking subject in Austin's speech act. It seems that in Butler's theory, there is a need for a presence of the political intention of the subject, a subject whose presence in the insurrectionary speech act becomes one with its 'utterance', *producing* and *enacting* transformation. Performative politics is the communication of an *intentional* meaning even if that meaning has no referent in the form of a thing (Derrida 1988a, 14). The political intention has its reference in the historicity of meaning. Historicity is made present as the intentional political agency of the subject.

So what is it that 'fails' in Butler's version of the performative? I would argue that it is the performative as such, or the speech act understood as singular and empirical event. Butler writes:

That performative utterances can go wrong, be misapplied or misinvoked, is essential to their "proper" functioning: such instances exemplify a more general citationality that can always go awry, and which is exploited by the "imposture" performed by the mimetic arts (Butler 1997, 151).

Butler is referring to "instances" of misapplication. This is an Austinian version of speech act theory, where the 'failure' is understood to lie somehow 'around' language as a kind of ditch that the speaking subject can fall or intentionally step into. The political subject can actually *exploit* this failure. Here, as Derrida points out, "accidental circumstances", the instances of exploitation get to 'define' the performative and these accidents (or

perhaps contingencies) are used as arguments against a general iterability. What Butler calls here ‘a more general citationality’ is, perhaps, what Derrida is referring to as iterability (iterability including the break).

If the performative is seen to be able to fail, the question about the nature of such ‘failed performatives’ arises. Theories of performativity argue that there are two kinds of sentences – performative and constative. The nature of the ‘failed performative’ should be theorized in relation to these two kinds. I suggest that iterability preferably be thought of on another level, a formal level enabling the movement of meanings such as ‘failure’.

I also see a danger here for an excess of history that might lead to an equating of ‘prior context’ with ‘originating context’. What is valuable in looking at the structural features of language, without historicizing these, is that the space opened up for theorizing politics is widened. Speech acts do not have ‘originating contexts’ and there is no such *historical* norm that would necessitate repetition in general. As Nietzsche argues, politics and life become too ‘learned’ if these are historically determined (Nietzsche 1983). A political praxis, whether successful or failed, is also about a will to power or about self-assertion and striving to survive. A political praxis is fundamentally moral and aesthetical as a praxis, as a verb. Historicizing this immediacy of suffering or success, explaining the historical backgrounds for ‘practice’ abolishes the singularity and gravity of the political moment, where a more fundamental repetition of violence might be at work. Perhaps a strategic forgetting of history at this point leads one to a place of virtual non-historicity where *Kairos* replaces *Chronos*. When political practice is conceptualized as cairological rather than chronological, then the *uses* of history as part of the political praxis cannot be taken for granted. If and when a politics is legitimated through history this use has to be accounted for. There is no transparency involved in invoking histories for the sake of politics. Cairologic time clarifies this in its capacity to stress the gravity of the political moment in its present-centeredness. At strategic points a forgetting of chronology means that its hegemonic logic cannot be unproblematically used for political purposes. The way history and chronology are used, as techniques for legitimating politics, must become a political issue in itself.

6. Conclusion

Virtual non-historicity: A strategic forgetting of history

A predominance of historicism has consequences. One of them is that historical narratives are used as ‘reality-props’ in theoretical accounts without taking into account the specific nature of the language of history. One of the most concrete specificities of historical narratives is their use of an extensive footnote system. One can argue that the footnote system, which is distinctive to scientific historical accounts, reveals the fundamental empirical character of historical language and narration. The footnotes are the ‘reality-props’ used in historical narratives. The way history is used in feminist theory disregards the meanings that the historians footnote system is based on. When the new reader in European women’s studies, *Thinking Differently* (Griffin & Braidotti 2002), sets out to discuss the question “What is ‘Europe’, it frames Europe into a web of different historical narratives. It begins with the name ‘Europe’ and places it in Greek mythology and continues into the political history of European nation-states, the world-wars and the European Union. The text uses the language of history but it does not use the foot-note system.⁵⁵ In contrast to this, the historical realism underlying empirical historical research is based on adhering to methods of research such as source criticism and an idea of the past as a reality, albeit a lost one. A neglect of historical research, in the sense that it is not referred to in spite of the fact that historical narratives are constantly used, is a paradox within the hegemony of historicism.

I approach historicity as a language and discuss some of the rules that limit the use of the language of history. As I see it these rules can also be understood as the basic rules that the historians footnote system must follow. Some of the rules that I have discussed in this dissertation are: *the rule of context-dependency*, which in the case of history, stems from the ontological constitution of historical objects as objects ‘belonging

⁵⁵ Griffin & Braidotti 2002, 8-13. For another example consider Rose 1999, 66, where Rose, in accordance with the section title, writes *the* history of freedom (not even a history). In the section you can find sentences like “Most authorities agree that for most of human history...”. Rose does not tell the reader who these authorities are. About footnotes, see Ricoeur 1984, 195, 186, 175, Windschuttle 1996, 248.

to the past'. This belonging, which historical objects become understood through, gives way to a fundamental context-dependency that defines the historical *as historical*. Historical objects belong to some specific temporal context of the past and no other; the rule of '*history as the past*' makes history usable as an 'elsewhere' and a 'stranger'. The idea of a past that is temporally 'lost' as presence makes the 'elsewhere' of history usable as foundation. People that lived in the past are considered to have lived 'elsewhere' and it is the historian's task to understand this 'strangeness' that is connected to the past. It is possible to conceptualize the historian's footnote system as a primary level of the historical text and, in this sense, the footnote system in itself constitutes an elsewhere; The rule of *the real* draws a line between literature and history with the argument that history is about the real, that it is based on empirical findings and that, whereas literature can make up events, historical events have to be 'real' and 'factual'. When historians narrate about events, their footnotes have to refer to unquestionably empirical phenomena in order to legitimate their claims; the rule of *chronology* that connects history to temporality. Chronological time cannot be reversed and historical events are chronological in that 'the first' event is understood to have happened before 'the second'. Historical narratives have to follow the rule of chronology and source criticism is concerned with confirming the chronological authenticity of the materials used. The footnote system is used to verify this.

I have analyzed where these rules can be seen operative in feminist constructivist arguments. As I understand history as a language, I conceptualize 'history' as a word within this language. Investigating the uses of this word, I have found different conceptualizations of history – for example, 'history as context', 'history as the past' and 'history as elsewhere'. I understand historicity to be a mode of thought that enables history to become an object for science and personal investments. Histories are accounts of the past that are enabled by historicity as a mode of thought. To become historical narratives these histories – these narratives – have to conform to the grammar of the language of history. Historicizing is a technical term under which the different ways to construct and use histories can be placed.

This dissertation is an investigation into the practice of historicizing within Judith Butler's feminist theories. It concentrates on the place and function of historicity in

feminist constructivist arguments. It departs from a critique of historicism that stems from many theoretical traditions and a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. This critique highlights the predominance of historicity in theories stemming from a variety of disciplines. Critics claim that history has gained a metanarrative status in western thinking. They argue that history implies a universalism, a foundationalism and an intraworldliness and there is a discussion about the consequences that historicity has for critical theories. I have considered the consequences that historicism has for feminist theories of corporeality. The dissertation concentrates on one particular kind of constructivist argumentation, namely that in, the feminist theorist, Judith Butler's theory of materialization and her theory of performativity.

This is a work that asks questions stemming from the philosophy of history. Furthermore, it is a feminist philosophy of history. This means that the philosophical questions concerning history are posed from within feminist theory and the discipline of women's studies. My understanding of philosophy of history as *questions concerning history* has lead to me to ask questions of the type: 'what is the use of history within feminist theories'? The complexities as to the theoretical traditions behind such a work are many. There are disciplinary differences that lead to differences in perspective; historians' concerns differ from literary researchers'. The theoretical backgrounds range from psychoanalysis, phenomenology and structuralism to deconstruction. To be able to rehearse a thinking that I have characterized as a historico-philosophical feminism, I have avoided staying in any other theoretical background than in that of feminist theories of corporeality. This dissertation is grounded in the field of women's studies and I see that it is of high relevance that the theories that have been central within women's studies are granted some degree of autonomy in relation to the wide variety of traditions that it draws from. To me, the strength in feminism lies where it ceases to be a perspective or a corrective. Writing a historico-philosophical feminism has meant an exploration of the openings and passages for feminist thinking that can be traced and found through asking questions concerning the meaning and nature of history. At several points I have shown where there are possibilities for a strategic forgetting of history. Questioning historicity on this critical level shows what relevance the philosophy of history has for the politics of feminist theorizing.

In chapter three, I discussed both the historicity and temporality of objects in connection to chronology. I argued that the historicity of concrete materialities, historical objects, involves an idea of ‘belonging’. Both the concrete objects ‘from the past’ as well as the narratives that use these objects as ‘reality-props’ to become historical narratives, are grounded in the material qualities of time. I claim that chronology is one of the basic rules to be followed in the language of history. The way historical objects are conceptualized and understood is ontological and this ontology implies chronology and a necessary contextuality. There is an empiricism inherent in historicity, and the referential nature of the language of history is based on this. Luce Irigaray questions historicity on this fundamental level, where the chronological and the historical empiricism of objects gets constituted. Irigaray gives this as an example of the level that a feminist philosophy of history operates on. To think through the possibility of a feminist philosophy of history is relevant also for philosophies of history because a *feminist philosophy of history* explicates the points where a philosophy of history fails to question historicity, taking its inherent meanings for granted.

The ‘belonging’, the context-dependency and chronology are essential parts of the ‘space-time’ in phallogocentric language. The self-referential status of language is dependent on the *historicity* of language. Furthermore, the self-evident historicity of objects is grounded in a forgetting of materiality. When materialities are understood to ‘reside in space and time’, the self-evident nature of this shared historical horizon has always already had its say. Irigaray offers an example of how a strategic forgetting of history can reveal aspects of materiality that, without a forgetting of history, would be forgotten. This is an essential argument that feminist theorists of corporeality should consider.

Historicity and the language of history always imply a time conception. The most obvious one is chronology with others being *Kairos* and *Aion*. Through highlighting such terms as ‘always already’, ‘pre’ and ‘before’ in Judith Butler’s theory, I have shown where her theory operates within a chronological time-conception. I discuss the presentism in Butler’s theory of the performative and consider its relation both to cairologic time and to chronology.

Chapter four clarifies the connection between constructivism and historicity. The fact that the language of history operates with aspects of chronology, with the ‘flow of time’ and with movement, makes it usable in constructivist arguments against fixity. The difference between feminist constructivist arguments within the field of women’s studies and constructivist arguments within the field of history, are illuminating in any consideration of the relations between historicity and constructivism. The science of history often discusses constructivism in relation to realism because the language of history is closely connected to ‘the empirical’ and ‘the factual’. Feminist theories have used historicity to accomplish exactly the opposite: historicizing is used to question the realism that science is based on. The fact that the language of history is usable in such questioning stems from its relatedness to ‘the factual’.

In elaborating the tension between the real and the constructed the form-matter distinction has been used as an analytical tool. The form-matter distinction lies at heart of feminist theories of corporeality and it is also usable in analyzes of the conceptualizations of history in general. Feminist theories of corporeality are discussed through the form-matter distinction and I have argued that a predominance of historicism privileges both the form over matter and the discursive over the material. In accounts, such as Judith Butler’s, where matter is understood to be historically constituted, the hegemony of the form over matter is rewritten through the hegemony that the historicity of meaning and language has over matter. However, where matter is understood to be the raw-material of the historical form and in itself unchanging, the form becomes the major area of interest. This again leaves materiality, now conceptualized as ‘raw-material-like’ untheorized and, again, delimits feminist theories of corporeality. In both cases, the privileging of the formative delimits possibilities to theorize a vitality of matter.

The hegemony of the form over matter is reproduced through a theory of materiality that is based on the idea of ‘productive historical forms’. Judith Butler’s theory of materialization is based on this idea and when she goes on to historicize the ‘constitutive outside’, the space for questioning historicity in its relation to language, is radically delimited. Strategically forgetting history, I argue that it is fruitful to conceptualize the idea of a ‘constitutive outside’ as a non-historicized general horizon for meaning. When the constitutive outside is conceptualized as a positive force, enabling

meaning *and history*, a space for a virtual-non-historicity is already opened. To be able to think up spaces for a virtual non-historicity I seek possibilities where a strategic forgetting of history would enable theories of corporeality to find new paths. The constitutive outside is one of those places where an understanding of the ‘beyond’, or of ‘unmeaning’ and excess, becomes relevant. It is these kinds of theoretical spaces that require a strategic forgetting of history. A problematization of the function of the constitutive outside is necessary for all philosophies of history because of the interrelatedness of language and historicity.

The sophistication of the feminist constructivist arguments within feminist theories of corporeality can give valuable insights and analytic tools to philosophers of history in their theorization of historicity. Within the philosophy of history, an analysis of the interrelatedness between constructivist thinking and historicizing practices on a general level has been overshadowed by a debate concerning the consequences of the linguistic turn for theories of history. The way feminist theorists of corporeality have problematized the form-matter distinction through ideas about ‘sexual difference’ and the notion of ‘experience’, raise essential questions that any sophisticated philosophy of history should relate to.

Judith Butler’s theory of performative is widely cited and used within feminist theory. It is usable as a constructivist model for feminist theoretization. Austinian performative theory builds on a distinction between constative and performative speech. I have argued that in their interconnectedness to the empirical and to the chronological, historical sentences are constative in nature. That is, they are usually understood to be ‘true or false descriptions of facts’. Historical sentences, such as “Finnish women got the vote 1906” are read as ‘assertions’ concerning past events. A performative speech act is characterized by its present-centeredness in its capacity to enact that which it names. Against the background of the distinction between performative and constative utterances, I have asked: ‘what kind of historicity is it that is conceptualized as a constitutive force enabling performatives to work?’ Butler’s theory of performativity places *historicity* as a force that is constitutive of discourse and that makes performatives work. Historicity is conceptualized as a sedimentation of usages, as conventions that ‘back up’ the performative speech act. Historical sentences or sentences referring to the

past, such as, *I did apologize* or *I did pronounce you companions*, are not performative, but constantive in their nature. This means that there is a constantivity that ‘backs up’ the performative speech act in a historicist version of performativity.

From the perspective of the place that history gets in performative theories, I have argued two things. Firstly, that there is something performative in the idea of historicity itself. When historicity gets ‘applied’ in theories it ‘lends itself’ and becomes part of a chain of citations and, the fact that historicity can be ‘cited’, makes it perform certain functions within the theory that it is used in. The language of history enables it to operate as an iterable and citable ‘idea’. It operates as a performative. The language of history is itself a convention. It ‘performs’ because it consists of statements that are considered descriptions of facts and this constantivity is not questioned. Historicity operates as a constantive theoretical utterance; it becomes the ‘fact’, the ‘reality-prop’ that makes a performative work. The power of the constantivity that lies at the heart of historical language – in its relation to ‘the factual’, and the chronological – is a force that *constitutes* a convention to be cited performatively.

I have analyzed ‘iterability’ and discussed the meanings that are given to ‘the break from context’ that the idea of iterability is based on. I have shown how Butler’s notion of iterability is based on historicizing the force that makes iterability work. The ‘break’ that sets iterability in movement is semantic and historically contingent in Butler’s theory. Through a reading of Derrida’s notions of iterability, I have shown how iterability can be conceptualized as difference, *hybris* and plenitude. As theories of performativity are present-centered, I suggest that a temporality offered by *Kairos* is more compatible with performativity than *Chronos*. In this reading, iterability is defined through cairologic characteristics – that is – through the possibility of multiple temporalities ‘at once’ and through non-linearity. Cairologic time highlights breaks and ruptures. It is ‘composed of’ non-synchronized moments and it prioritizes the present. Cairologic time breaks the chain of chronology by freeing the moments from the hold of its succession. I have argued that Derrida’s notion of iterability is cairologic while Butler’s is chronologic.

Philosophy of history is a mode of asking questions. As a mode of questioning it is also a place where a strategic forgetting of history is possible. A historico-

philosophical feminism implies that the places for forgetting are established and determined by the kind of feminism that one endorses. I have stressed the power of history whenever the historicism behind the hegemony of 'sexual difference' is taken for granted and repeated as a necessity. The hegemony of sexual difference is upheld both by the sexed character of theories of materiality and by the predominance of form over matter. The predominance of form is repeated through *historicizing* the form and by unproblematically granting historicity formative powers in relation to materiality.

When constructivism finds an ally in historicism in feminist thinking, the argument that 'not only are things constructed and thus not natural but that they are *historically* constructed' finds its stable point. The historicity of language – the site where all meanings reside – the place where every thing becomes understandable and constituted, is now a sovereign power compelling every existent thing to spring forth. Historical thinking grants historicity a constitutive power in relation to discourse and materiality. With the power of the form, matter becomes meaningful and the other of *this* form remains unintelligible, at best uninteresting. Historicity is conceptualized as formative of 'what can be known about the world' and also of what *is* in the world. Historical formativity is not only understood to be capable of materializing itself as the very flesh of our bodies, it *is* also my flesh due to the necessity that my flesh is.

Historically constituted things have become necessities. History is to explain 'the state of affairs'. Feminist theorists are compelled by this language to take the historicity of this necessity 'into account'. However much we revive ourselves with the idea that 'it could have been otherwise', we will infinitely fail to show where 'it actually was otherwise'. How could it have been had things not turned out the way they did, I ask, and then, immediately, the inner constructivist voice reminds my historicist mind about the fact that *this very question* is enabled by the workings of history. I get drawn back into the safehouse of *the* historical language.

No, I am still here.

I suggest that feminists start practicing a strategic forgetting of history. This would open up spaces where the prevailing hegemony of the form over matter would have to be rearticulated by other means than historicity. It opens a space defined by virtual non-historicity. Virtual non-historicity requires that the predominant constructivist

companion – historicity – be rethought and various articulations of feminist philosophies of history will follow from entering this virtual space. History is serious, but this seriousness should not become a constitutive fate. History can be a useful source for creative feminist inventions and strategic forgettings.

I think that the language of history should be cited subversively, that is, it should be cited incorrectly. In forgetting history we need an explicated remembrance of what power history is invested with. Taking history seriously means that we recognize that, although feminist theorists historicize, we are not historicist enough. Instead, we have a tendency to write ‘histories without footnotes’. We do not consider the complexities involved in using the language of history. Remembering the complexity is relevant whenever the language of history is used to avoid being used by its universalizing and foundationalist aspects and to avoid following rules that one otherwise opposes. To avoid referring to history as if it would be a mythological collective consciousness, I propose that whenever feminist theorists use the language of history they do this by taking into account the ‘footnote system’, metaphorically speaking. I might even suggest that historicizing would imply using actual footnotes referring to particular historical accounts, ones that are based on historical research conducted by feminist historians.

I call my own counter-approach to historicism ‘virtual non-historicity’. This figuration describes the space of a feminist philosophy of history. It is a place that follows from feminist philosophies of history by their habit of strategically forgetting history. Feminist philosophies of history share the interest to problematize historicity. I have conceptualized history as a language and my main question, opening up the space for philosophy of history, is the question about the uses of history. Conceptualizing historicity as self-evident is opposed to my project of a strategic forgetting of history. Virtual non-historicity is a feminist response to the demand to always historicize. Methodologically virtual non-historicity implies a deconstructive reading of historicist texts. A deconstructive reading traces the possibilities and places for ‘outsides’. It seeks to find the textual places where history or historicity is used as foundation, elsewhere. A deconstructive reading pauses at places where historicity becomes unresolvable. Virtual non-historicity is skeptical towards the use of history and understands historicity as problematic in itself. Virtual non-historicity is connected to the idea of a strategic

forgetting of history. A deconstructive reading opens up the places where historicity delimits and directs thinking.

A strategic forgetting of history is a feminist answer to historicism. Historicism requires that history always be remembered. This way it operates as a stop-sign, hindering transformation and new theoretical insights. Historicism leads to a temptation to repeat and speak in the language of history. A strategic forgetting of history is a major methodological tool that enables virtual non-historicity and a feminist philosophy of history.

The possibilities that a strategic forgetting of history enables become clear in relation to feminist theories of materiality. In theorizing constructivism and materiality feminists gain from entering a virtual space. In theorizing materiality, it is essential to question the place of historicity in order to be able to broadly think towards transformation. In theorizing materiality, feminists attempt to deconstruct the form-matter distinction. In theorizing the form-matter distinction, forgetting history means that ‘the formative’ is not prioritized by referring to the existence of ‘historicity’ and to the historicity of the form and its capability to ‘constitute matter’ without explicating the content and place of ‘historicity’. Within virtual non-historicity, it is harder to forget the gift and the fact that the form thrives on a silencing of matter. When theories of corporeality need historicity to support the constructivist argument about the historical constitution of matter, the room to theorize bodies and materialities without historicity is delimited. To think about materiality in a space of ‘virtual non-historicity’ becomes suspect and might even be accused of essentialism. I want to defend the possibility to forget history at strategic points in order to widen the scope of constructivist theoretization. Within a historicizing setting, a strategic forgetting of history, in times where materiality is theorized, is impossible. Every thing has to be thought of as being firmly inside the fixity of contingent, historical and contextual meanings. This kind of thinking hinders a deconstruction of the form-matter distinction and upholds the distinction by prioritizing the form, the discursive, and the historical.

Virtual non-historicity is also politically grounded. The relevance of thinking the hyperbole, ‘unmeaning’ and nonhistory is connected to the ethical responsibility that its thinking forces on the narrator and *her* narrative. Here historicity cannot forget its limits.

The violence involved in reducing everything to intraworldliness and the self-righteous utilization of the historicity of meaning, makes the hyperbole an ethical device. The kind of self-evidency and 'truth' connected to historicity is invested with power that needs to be assessed. Historical narratives are constructed and to use them to legitimate politics without acknowledging their narrative status is to utilize a language of truth and knowledge in service of one's own arguments.

A strategic forgetting of history is a response to a suspicion towards the operations of power. A strategic forgetting of history is a separatist and 'reformism-skeptical' move. The reformist criticizes the language of history for its male-centeredness and demands that women have 'access' to this language. The reformist has only one language. The reformist simultaneously uses the language of history to construct sex. Separatism is an option to come out of a reformist thinking. Separatism implies a suspicion towards reformism as it sees the politics of reform as a way to uphold power because, as many feminists have argued, the logic of power demands resistance. Virtual non-historicity is a space for separatist philosophies. To be separate means that I keep apart to be able to analyze, that is, to be able to deconstruct. To be separate also means 'being between', as in when a lake separates the two shores. Virtual non-historicity is being in between historicism and feminist thinking.

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Summary

The dissertation comes from the field of women's studies and feminist theory and it draws insights from the philosophy of history.

The dissertation explores feminist uses of history and historicity. It discusses the way historicity is used in feminist constructivist arguments and it uses Judith Butler's work as an example. The dissertation elaborates on the predominant theoretical requirement to historicize. It is a contribution to the current feminist attempts to problematize some of the prevailing practices of constructivist thinking. As constructivist arguments, for the most part, build on the idea of the historicity of phenomena; a historico-philosophical perspective brings valuable new insights into the problematization of constructivism.

The dissertation discusses the consequences that the predominance of historicism has for feminist constructivist theories, especially Judith Butler's theories of materialization and performativity.

The main content of the dissertation is:

Chapter two presents my theoretical framework. It discusses corporeal constructivism in relation to historicity.

Chapter three explicates my understanding of historicity. I discuss the grammar of the word 'historicity' and present some uses and restrictions that I have found in connection to this word. I will clarify what it means to understand historicity as a mode of thought by showing how the meanings of objects are constructed as historical. I point at the interconnectedness of historicity and temporality. I problematize the ontological historicity of concrete materialities, such as the 120 000 objects in The Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The arguments in this chapter present a reading of historicity where its relation to chronology and contextuality is explicated. I argue that the empiricism underlying the language of history is a fundamental aspect of its referential nature. To question the taken for granted historicity of objects, I present Irigaray's critique of the way that objects are understood to 'belong'. According to Irigaray, the self-evident historicity of objects is

enabled by a forgetting of materiality. I find that it is relevant for feminist theories of corporeality to discuss this forgetting.

The second part of chapter three discusses aspects of temporality. I present different temporal ideas that I develop further in relation to historicity and theories of performativity (*in chapter four*). I present *Chronos*, *Kairos* and *Aion* and discuss temporality through these. I will also raise questions concerning some aspects of ‘space-time’. I clarify the role of temporality in Judith Butler’s theoretization through an analysis of Butler’s texts and the elements of chronology, linearity, contingency and infinitude that can be ‘found’ in them. Terms such as “always already”, “pre” and “before” are examples of a temporal language that Butler uses. I discuss the presentism in Butler’s theory of the performative and consider its relation to chronology.

In *chapter four* I turn to constructivist arguments. I consider how and where constructivist arguments need, and use, the word ‘historicity’. The chapter is based on a discussion of Judith Butler’s constructivist argumentation in her theory of “materialization”. From a historico-philosophical perspective, I explicate how Judith Butler’s theory of materialization is a theory of productive historical forms. I suggest that chronology has a central role in constructivism; it seems to be a hegemonic logic. When problematizing the hegemony of historicity in feminist constructivist arguments, I use the form-matter distinction as an analytical tool. With the help of this tool I discuss feminist theories of corporeality and argue that, with a privileging of the form over matter, that follows from a historicism, delimits the possibilities to theorize a vitality of matter. I discuss the consequences of a historization of the “constitutive outside”. The space for questioning the interrelatedness of historicity and language is radically delimited if the constitutive outside is historicized. With the help of Irigaray’s work, I argue that historicizing the constitutive outside hinders feminist theories of corporeality in thinking through the materiality that lies behind the language of history.

Chapter five examines the constructivist elements of performative theories. Where and when does ‘history’ and variations of it matter in Judith Butler’s performative theory? I discuss the distinction between performative speech acts and constative speech acts. I argue that historical sentences are defined by their constative nature, whereas performative speech acts are characterized by their present-centeredness. Thereby,

performativity does not operate in the same manner in relation to historical sentences and sentences that are connected to the past or the imperfect tense. Historical sentences are regarded as true or false descriptions of facts. This is also the definition that J. L. Austin gives to constative sentences. On the basis of this distinction, I problematize Judith Butler's argument that performative speech acts are enabled by historicity. I ask what kind of constativity the performative speech act is based on and argue that the power of constativity embedded in 'history' is a force that, itself, constitutes a convention. It is this convention, the convention of the language of history that is used performatively in Judith Butler's theory. In *chapter five* I discuss further how a chronological understanding of iterability differs from a cairiologic understanding of iterability. The present-centeredness of performative theories and the nature of iterability are more compatible with a cairiologic time-conception.

I call my own counter-approach to historicism 'virtual non-historicity'. This figuration describes the space of a feminist philosophy of history. It is place that follows from feminist philosophies of history by their habit of strategically forgetting history. Feminist philosophies of history share the interest to problematize historicity. I have conceptualized history as a language and my main question, opening up the space for philosophy of history, is the question about the uses of history. Conceptualizing historicity as self-evident is opposed to my project of strategic forgetting of history. Virtual non-historicity is a feminist response to the demand to always historicize. Methodologically, virtual non-historicity implies a deconstructive reading of historicist texts. A deconstructive reading traces the possibilities and places for 'outsides'. It seeks to find the textual places where history or historicity is used as foundation, an elsewhere and where history becomes an unresolvable aspect of the text. Virtual non-historicity is skeptical towards the use of history and sees historicity as problematic in itself. Virtual non-historicity is connected to the idea of a strategic forgetting of history. A deconstructive reading opens up the places where historicity delimits and directs thinking. A strategic forgetting of history is a feminist answer to historicism. Historicism requires that history always be remembered. In this way, it operates as a 'stop-sign', hindering transformation and new theoretical insights. Historicism leads to a temptation to repeat and speak in the language of history. A strategic forgetting of history is a major

methodological tool, which enables virtual non-historicity and feminist philosophies of history.

Samenvatting

Deze dissertatie komt uit het veld van Vrouwenstudies en feministische theorieën en het baseert zich op inzichten uit de filosofie van de geschiedenis.

De dissertatie onderzoekt het feministisch gebruik van geschiedenis en historiciteit, en exploreert de manier waarop historiciteit gebruikt wordt in feministisch constructivistische argumenten, waarbij het werk van Judith Butler als voorbeeld genomen wordt. Deze dissertatie weidt uit over de overheersende theoretische eis te historiseren, en draagt bij aan de hedendaagse feministische pogingen door enkele gangbare constructivistische denkbelden te problematiseren. Doordat constructivistische argumenten grotendeels voortbouwen op het idee van de historiciteit van fenomenen, zal een historisch-filosofisch perspectief waardevolle nieuwe inzichten brengen in de problematisering van het constructivisme.

Deze dissertatie bespreekt welke gevolgen deze overheersende historiciteit heeft voor feministisch constructivistische theorieën; in het bijzonder voor Judith Butler's theorieën over het materiële en performatieve karakter van sekse.

De inhoud van de dissertatie is als volgt:

Hoofdstuk twee presenteert mijn theoretisch kader en behandelt de relatie tussen corporeel constructivisme en historiciteit.

Hoofdstuk drie verklaart mijn begrip van historiciteit. Ik bespreek de grammatica van het woord 'historiciteit' en presenteer enkele vormen van gebruiken en restricties welke ik in verband met dit woord ondervond. Door aan te tonen dat de betekenis van objecten als historisch geconstrueerd wordt, verduidelijk ik de consequenties van het zien van historiciteit als een manier van denken. Ik benadruk hierbij het verband tussen historiciteit en tijdelijkheid. Ik problematiseer de ontologische historiciteit van concrete voorwerpen, zoals de 120 000 objecten in het Egyptische Museum in Cairo. De

argumenten in dit hoofdstuk presenteren een interpretatie van historiciteit, waarbij de relatie tot chronologie en context uitgelegd wordt. Ik beargumenteer dat het onderliggend empiricisme in de geschiedenistaal een fundamenteel aspect vormt van haar referentiele natuur. Teneinde de vanzelfsprekendheid van de historiciteit van objecten te bevragen, presenteer ik Irigaray's kritiek op de gedachte dat objecten 'thuis moeten horen'. Volgens Irigaray wordt de vanzelfsprekende historiciteit van objecten mogelijk gemaakt doordat hun materialiteit vergeten wordt. Ik ben van mening dat dit 'vergeten' relevant is voor feministische theorieën over corporaliteit.

Het tweede deel van hoofdstuk drie behandelt aspecten van temporaliteit. Ik draag verschillende denkbeelden over temporaliteit aan, welke ik verder ontwikkel in relatie tot historiciteit en theorieën van performativiteit (*in hoofdstuk vier*). Ik bespreek temporaliteit door *Chronos*, *Kairos* en *Aion* naar de voorgrond te halen. Vervolgens stel ik vragen betreffende sommige aspecten van 'ruimte-tijd'. Ik specificeer de rol van temporaliteit in Judith Butler's theorieën door het analyseren van haar teksten en de elementen van chronologie, rechtlijnigheid, contingentie, en oneindigheid die hierin 'gevonden' kunnen worden. Termen als "always already", "pre" en "before" zijn voorbeelden van Butler's gebruik van tijdmatige taal. Ik bespreek de tegenwoordigheid in Butler's theorie van de performativiteit en onderzoek de relatie tot chronologie.

In *hoofdstuk vier* gaat het over constructivistische argumenten. Ik onderzoek op welke momenten en in welke vorm in constructivistische argumenten het woord 'historicitet' noodzakelijk is en gebruikt wordt. Dit hoofdstuk behandelt Judith Butler's constructivistische argumentatie in haar "materialization" theorie. Vanuit een historisch-filosofisch perspectief expliciteer ik in welke hoedanigheid Judith Butler's materialisatietheorie historische vormen produceert. Ik suggereer dat chronologie een centrale positie in het constructivisme inneemt; het lijkt een heersende logica. Wanneer ik de hegemonie van de historiciteit in feministisch constructivistische argumenten problematiseer, maak ik gebruik van de vorm-materie distinctie als analytisch gereedschap. Met behulp van dit gereedschap onderzoek ik feministische theorieën van lichamelijkeheid. Ik ben van mening dat dit bevoorrecht van vorm over materie, welke voortvloeit uit de hegemonie van historiciteit, de mogelijkheden om de vitaliteit van materie te theoretiseren te veel beperkt. Ik bespreek de gevolgen van het centraal stellen

van historiciteit. De ruimte voor het bevragen van de relatie tussen historiciteit en taal wordt radicaal begrensd wanneer het “constitutieve buiten” wordt gehistoriseerd. Met behulp van Irigaray’s werk beargumenteer ik dat het historiseren van het ‘constitutieve buiten’ verhindert dat feministische theorieën over lichamelijkheid doordringen in de stoffelijkheid die schuilgaat achter de taal van de geschiedenis.

Hoofdstuk vijf onderzoekt de constructivistische elementen in performatieve theorieën. Waar en wanneer is het concept van ‘geschiedenis’ en aanverwante variaties van belang in Judith Butler’s concept van performativiteit? Ik onderzoek het verschil tussen performatieve spraakvormen en constaterende spraakvormen. Ik ben van mening dat historische zinnen gedefinieerd worden door hun constaterende natuur, terwijl performatieve spraakvormen gekarakteriseerd worden door hun ‘tegenwoordigheid’. Hierdoor functioneert performativiteit anders op historische zinnen en zinnen die verbonden zijn aan de voltooid verleden tijd of de onvoltooid verleden tijd. Historische zinnen worden gezien als ware of onware beschrijvingen van feiten. Deze definitie geeft J. L. Austin ook aan constaterende zinnen. Gebaseerd op deze distinctie, problematiseer ik Judith Butler’s theorie dat historiciteit performatieve spraakvormen mogelijk maakt. Ik bevrage op welk soort constantie de performatieve spraakvorm gebaseerd is, en ben van mening dat de kracht van een in ‘geschiedenis’ ingebedde constantie zelf een conventie constitueert. Het is deze conventie, de conventie van de geschiedenistaal, die op een performatieve wijze gebruikt wordt in Judith Butler’s theorie. In *hoofdstuk vijf* onderzoek ik het verschil tussen een ‘Chronologische’ en een ‘Cariologische’ duiding van het begrip van ‘iterability’ (uitbaarheid of herhaalbaarheid van woorden). De ‘tegenwoordigheid’ van de performatieve theorieën en de aard van ‘iterability’ zijn meer compatibel met een caiologisch tijdsbeeld.

Ik noem mijn benadering van historiciteit ‘virtuele non-historiciteit’. Deze figuratie beschrijft de plaats voor een feministische filosofie van geschiedenis. Deze plaats wordt gecreëerd door feministische filosofieën van geschiedenis door hun gewoonte van strategisch vergeten van geschiedenis. Feministische filosofieën van geschiedenis delen het feit dat zij historiciteit problematiseren. Ik heb geschiedenis opgevat als een taal en mijn belangrijkste vraag, ruimte maken voor een filosofie van geschiedenis, is een vraag naar de gebruiken van geschiedenis. Het opvatten van geschiedenis als een

vanzelfsprekendheid staat tegenover mijn bewering van strategisch vergeten van geschiedenis. Virtuele non-historiciteit is een feministisch antwoord op de eis om altijd te historiseren. Methodologisch gezien impliceert virtuele non-historiciteit een deconstructieve interpretatie van geschiedteksten. Een deconstructieve lezing traceert de mogelijkheden en plaatsen voor 'outsides'. Het zoekt naar tekstuele plaatsen waar geschiedenis en historiciteit wordt gebruikt als fundament, en waar geschiedenis een onopgelost aspect wordt van de tekst. Virtuele non-historiciteit is sceptisch over het gebruik van geschiedenis en ziet historiciteit als een probleem op zich. Virtuele non-historiciteit is verbonden met het idee van het strategische vergeten van geschiedenis. Een deconstructie laat zien waar historiciteit het denken juist stuurt en begrenst. Een strategisch vergeten van geschiedenis is een feministisch antwoord op historiciteit. Historiciteit eist dat geschiedenis altijd wordt herinnerd. Op deze manier opereert het als een stopteken, het belemmert transformatie en nieuwe theoretische inzichten. Historiciteit verleidt tot het herhalen en spreken in de geschiedenistaal. Het strategisch vergeten van geschiedenis is daarentegen een goed methodologisch instrument om virtuele non-historiciteit en feministische filosofieën van geschiedenis mogelijk te maken.