

5-2017

The Guilty Breast: A Fleshy Semiotics

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THE GUILTY BREAST:
A FLESHY SEMIOTICS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design

by
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May 2017

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ABSTRACT

The Guilty Breast: A Fleshy Semiotics takes up the subject of the nude female breast, from St. Augustine's developing and a shifting semiotic theory of signs and the flesh in Christian doctrine through feminist theories and Foucault's analysis of the scientific "Gaze" to the protests of breastfeeding on social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, and in the public sphere. The dissertation argues that boobs teach us how to see by examining the breast's semiotic anatomy in five parts. "Chapter One: Nipple" asserts that breasts are *both...and*: maternal and sexual, subjective and objective, metaphoric and actual. "Chapter Two: Cleavage" juxtaposes St. Augustine with French feminist Hélène Cixous to reveal their shared life project of making "the sign" (and substance) of the guilty body—and by extension/ostension, female breasts—morally good. "Chapter Three: Milk" "mangles" and disrupts "the Gaze" of biological theory by dripping thirst, claiming that leaking itself is onto-epistemological. "Chapter Four: Areola" highlights social media's censorship of breastfeeding to explore socially constructed borders. "Chapter Five: Ducts" investigates two political examples of breasts-as-weapon. "Chapter Six: Support" offers "breast semiotics" as a new hermeneutic by which to read nude female breast texts via the plurality of bodies and concludes with a visual example.

DEDICATION

materiality
disrupts
theory—

for my daughters

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Whenever I am nervous I might forget something, I make a list. The following list then represents my sincerest affections and gratitude.

Thank you, Steve, for your vision.

Thank you, Cynthia, for Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva.

Thank you, Todd, for narrativity.

Thanks, Beth, for art history.

Thank you, Bryan, for your time.

Thank you, Cameron, for listening.

Thanks, Victor, for excluded thirds.

Thank you, Dr. Felder and SREB, for the fellowship.

Thank you, John, for your presence.

Thank you, Kristen, for suggesting breasts as motif and for your friendship.

Thanks, Dan, for showing up.

Thank you, Nathan, for the comradery.

Thank you, Hayley, for material feminisms.

Thanks, Data, for Josephine Baker.

Thanks, Charlie, for Augustine.

Thank you, Chipotle.

And with gratitude to Jed for his love.

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INTRODUCTION

“to see
and
to be seen”

Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently*

A conversation with my daughter after I picked her up from kindergarten:

JuJu: I know you are stressed about your presentation.

me: Dissertation, yes.

JuJu: What's a dissertation?

me: It's like a book, a hopefully-one-day book.

JuJu: What's it about?

me: Hmm. I guess it's about seeing. How to look at women with kindness. And that babies are people, too.

JuJu: What do you mean?

me: Like if you were a restaurant owner, and you saw a mama feeding her baby with her bom-boms, would you kick her out?

JuJu: No way!

me: Well, some people do. Even though it's against the law.

JuJu: I hope those people go to jail.



Fig. 1.

Cacich, Allison. "Photo of a Woman Breastfeeding in a Crowded Restaurant Goes Viral!" *Life&Style*. The Bauer Entertainment Group, 1 Dec. 2015. Web. 2 June 2016.

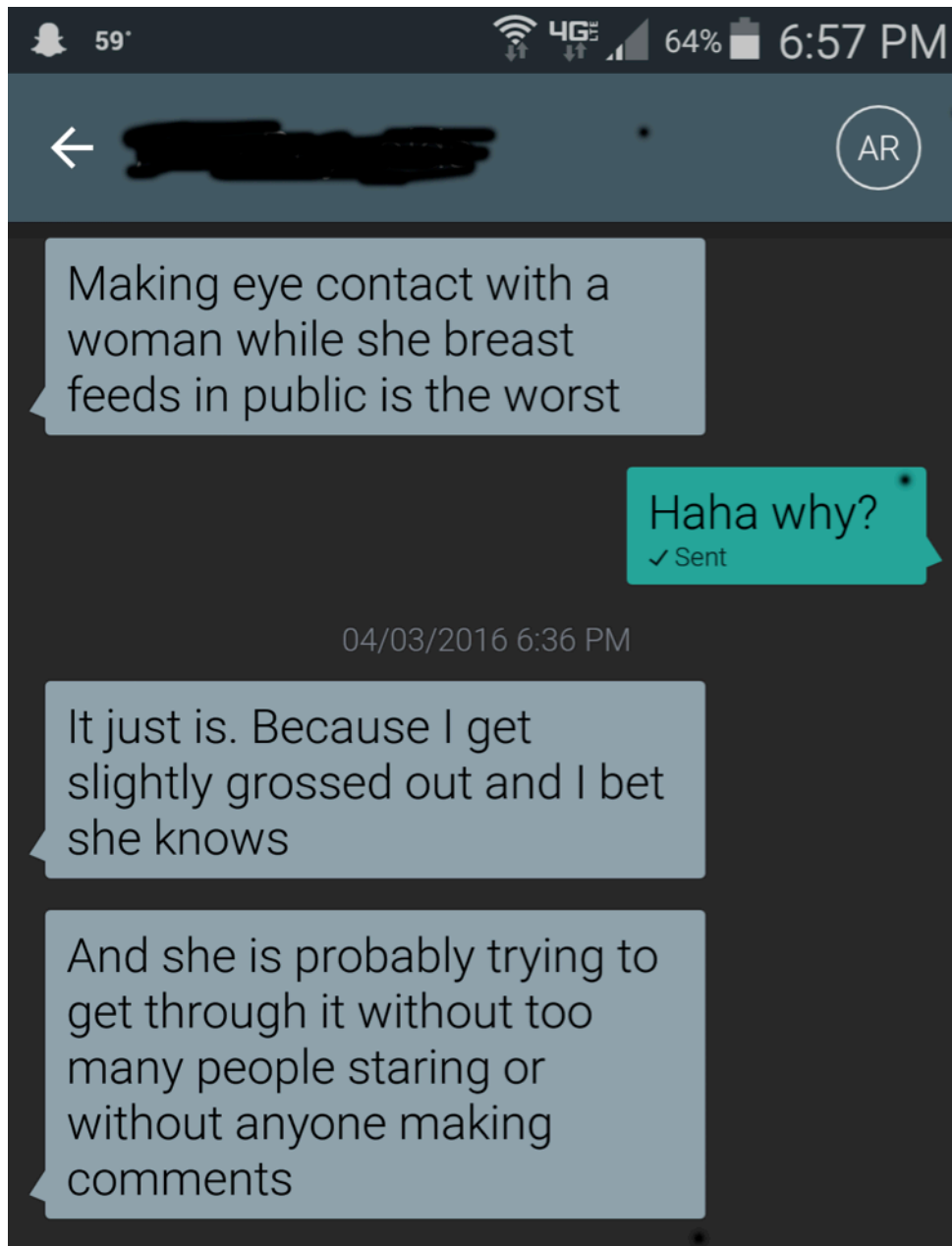


Fig. 2. A couple's text conversation

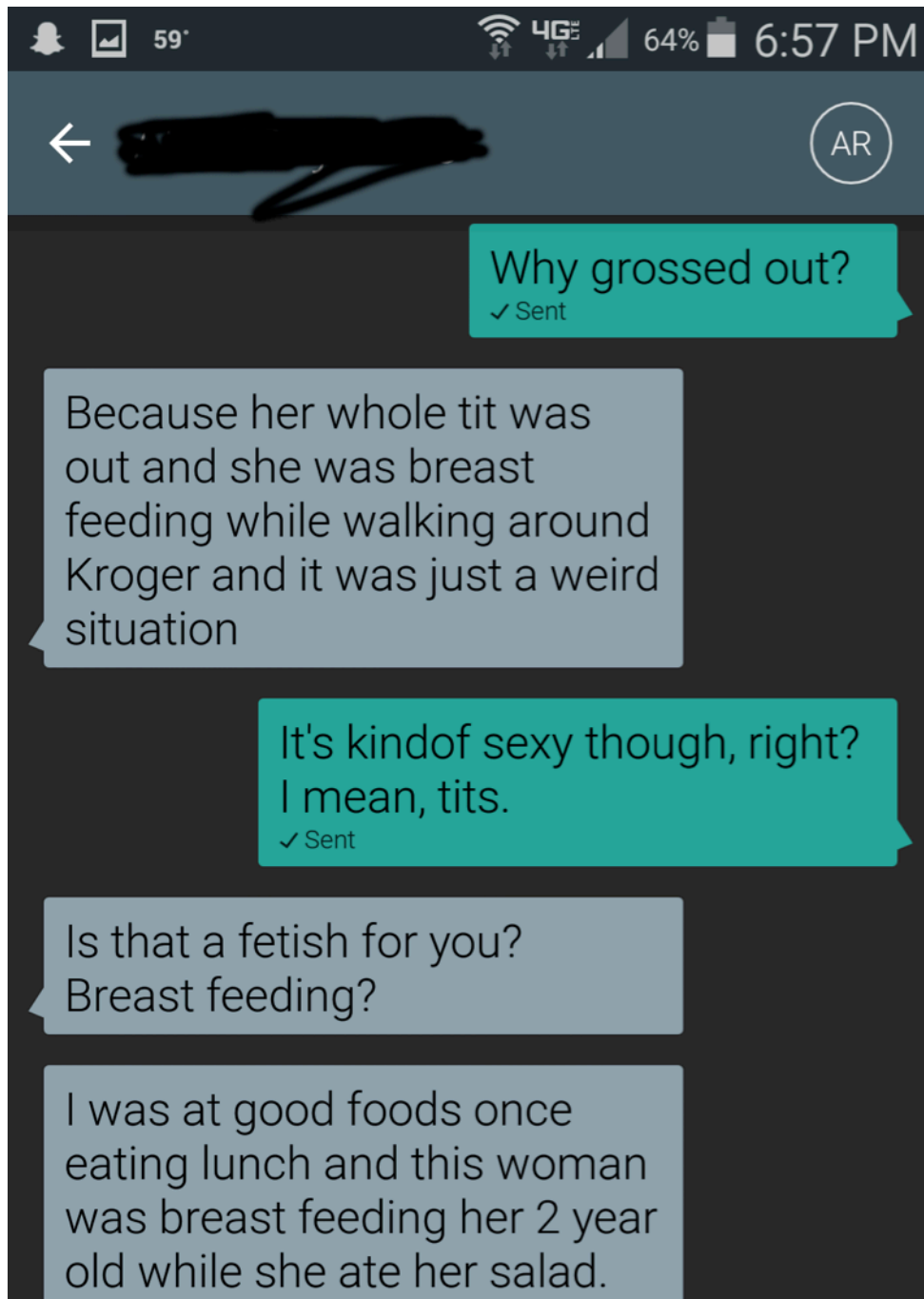


Fig. 3. A couple's text conversation (cont.)

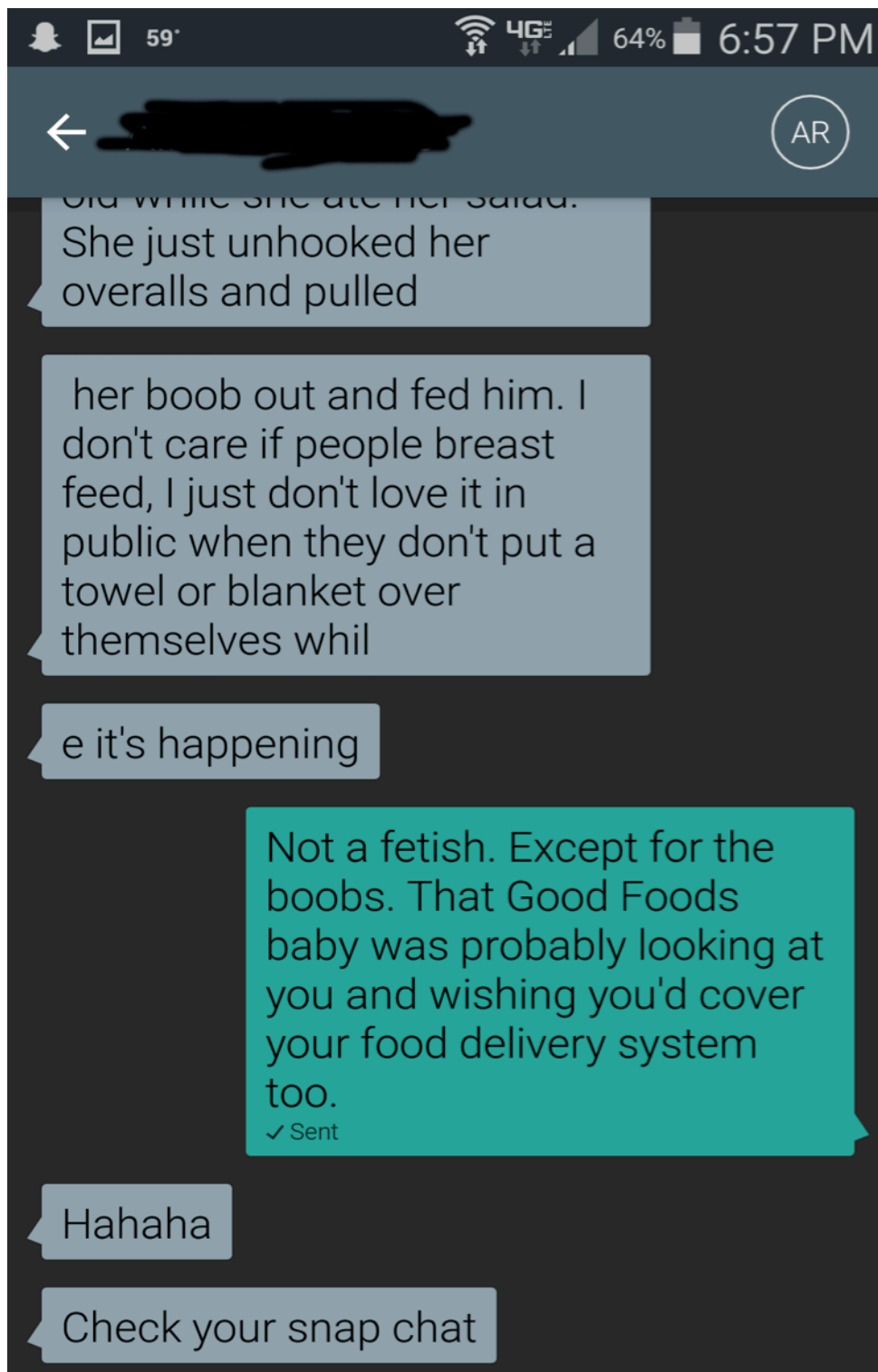


Fig. 4. A couple's text conversation (cont.)

Texts

The above text conversation between my friend and his girlfriend illustrates a familiar human anxiety with public breastfeeding. I read this unease as a question: “Where should I look?”

And although I, too, have asked that question and have had it asked of me, this project does not answer that inquiry. I began *The Guilty Breast* as a way, one of many possible ways, to answer the question “Where should I look?”, but found my reply in the form of another question: “How should I look?”

Breasts introduce the question of gaze. Perhaps most recognizable is the medical gaze Michel Foucault discusses in *The Birth of the Clinic*. Or maybe the film gaze from Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” leaps to mind. But as Foucault reminds us about silences in *The History of Sexuality*, “There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses,” so it is with gazes (27). There is not one but many gazes, and they are all integral to the discourse of breasts. Whether we are acknowledging God’s gaze, man’s gaze, the scientist’s gaze, a doctor’s gaze, the film camera’s gaze, an audience’s gaze, a mother’s gaze, or a baby’s gaze, breasts reveal power. But even more profoundly, breasts teach us how to see.

In *Skin*, Claudia Benthien reminds us that “nakedness is therefore not an ontological category but rather a relationship that always relates to something else” (ix). Benthien considers skin not merely as a border separating within from without, but as rhetorical place itself. What does it mean to uncover oneself? What is one asking? What

is one expecting in reply? “Only love is in a position to permit this vulnerability and lack of covering,” she concludes (99).

In *Second Skin*, Anne Anlin Cheng deconstructs and then reconstructs the surprising career of Josephine Baker, a mixed-race dancer in the Roaring Twenties who often performed nude. When faced with the question “how should I look?” at Baker’s uncovered female body, Cheng’s answer is to broaden the lens, “What are the conditions under which a (raced and gendered) body comes into visibility at all? [...] The crisis of visibility that I have been exploring holds reaching implications for the politics of equality today” (168). Cheng asks us to question the subject-object distinction as a social construct. When is a body a subject? When is it an object? When is a body a person? When is it a thing?

Iris Marion Young also approaches these impossible questions in her chapter “Breasted Experience” in *On Female Body Experience*. And indeed female breasts seem to be the perfect location to explore rhetorical boundaries:

The sex/gender system as we know it, then, enacts a border between motherhood and sexuality. Woman is both, essentially—the repository of the body, the flesh that he desires, owns and masters, tames and controls; and the nurturing source of his life and ego. Both are necessary functions, bolstering male ego, which cannot be served if they are together—hence the border, their reification into the hierarchical opposition of good/bad, pure/impure. The separation

often splits mothers: it is in our bodies that the sacrifice that creates and sustains patriarchy is reenacted repeatedly. (87)

Young highlights the socially constructed difference between motherhood and female sexuality. She extends her discussion of this superficial split by observing that many women feel conflicted over the duality of breasts. When they are breastfeeding babies, they worry that their male partners will find their milky breasts undesirable or become jealous. She also suggests that women experience their breasts as objects-for-another.

Later she argues for an entirely new way of experiencing breastedness:

Breasts are a scandal because they shatter the border between motherhood and sexuality. Nipples are taboo because they are quite literally, physically, functionally undecidable in the split between motherhood and sexuality. One of the most subversive things feminism can do is affirm this undecidability of motherhood and sexuality. (88)

The Guilty Breast desires to “affirm [the] undecidability of motherhood and sexuality” by exploring breast rhetorics’ *both...and*.

Flesh

Ignatyi Vishnevetsky writes in his *A.V. Club* article “How big breasts led Roger Ebert to discover a great filmmaker” about the unlikely creative duo of Ebert and Russ Meyer. Ebert’s affinity for big breasts led him to a 1965 screening of *Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*, directed by boob aficionado Russ Meyer. A “shared non-scientific interest in the female

bust line with Meyer” would lead Ebert to pen four screenplays for Meyer, three of them after winning the Pulitzer Prize. In a 1969 review for Meyer’s *Vixen*, Ebert writes, “Five years ago it might have been necessary to devise all sorts of defenses for Russ Meyer’s *Vixen*, finding hidden symbolism and all that. But I see no reason why we can’t be honest: *Vixen* is the best film to date in that uniquely American genre, the skin-flick.” Is the skin-flick a celebration of female breasts, as Ebert and Meyer argue, or sexploitation? Or are breasts simply too leaky for categorization? Do breasts themselves cause us to think, and become, beyond binaries?

Communications scholar Nicole E. Hurt questions the social construction of female breasts by analyzing breast cancer awareness campaigns, mammography rhetorics, and public breastfeeding debates in her dissertation “Overexposed and under-examined.” She writes, “The goal, then, for materialist rhetorical critics is to understand the relationships and interactions between things in the world” (28). *The Guilty Breast* picks up where Hurt has left off—in the middle of the ongoing and often public breastfeeding debate. In *The Guilty Breast*, I broaden her scope and tighten her focus. Chapter One: Nipple opens by affirming breast’s undecidability and offers the *both...and* possibility for sight. Chapter Two: Cleavage flashes back to St. Augustine’s own anguished past as an influence on both Protestant and Catholic ideology regarding female bodies. Chapter Three: Milk jump-cuts to male scientists in the mangle of their own experiments and biological evolutionary narratives and argues that identity informs how we see and, by extension, the narratives we create. Further, Andrew Pickering’s mangle metaphor un/frames the female body. I deep focus in Chapter Four: Areola on the

particular places of censorship—the female nipple bordered by the areola—to include the lost narratives of censored photographs of female bodies. I argue that the nipple itself shatters the false female duality of the maternal versus the sexual self. I question this distinction’s necessity: Why can’t women be seen as *both...and*? The areola too, I maintain, is an arbitrary border: Isn’t skin a continuous covering? Chapter Five: Ducts flash-forwards to activism as a way to both subvert and evolve societal sight. Finally in Chapter Six: Support, I offer “breast semiotics” as a hermeneutic by which female breast texts can be read.

CHAPTER ONE

NIPPLE

“What we are seeking to establish in various ways is a theory of the materialist subject.

Let us talk about it as though it existed.”
Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*



Fig. 5. "Her breasts are all nipple"
Jenny Holzer. Pinterest, 2015. Web. 1 June 2016.

The Sentence Is A Body.

Harvard theologian and Augustine scholar Margaret R. Miles tracks the religious origins of the female breast's aesthetic depiction to its present secularization in *A Complex Delight: The Secularization of the Breast, 1350-1750*. Using Clifford Geertz' "thick description," Miles describes how a female body part came to symbolize sex, lust, and shame in anatomical drawings and pornography when it began in pictorial representation with connotations of maternal nourishment, connected love, and primordial bliss. She traces this evolution back to three pivotal changes in history: the invention of the printing press that made print pornography accessible to the masses, the shift of women's bodily care from midwives to secular hospitals, and the Protestant exclusion of religious art depicting the Virgin Mary (79-110). After censoring paintings of the Virgin Mary with her exposed breast (illustrative of maternal care), Protestant religious traditions found themselves looking at naked breasts which belonged almost exclusively to Eve as fallen mother and witches (84-86).

To begin, I would like to connote (as opposed to define) religion (broadly speaking) as man's search for meaningful connection often with a Higher Power but sometimes with another. For the purposes of this project, I will refer to Christianity with its Catholic roots and Protestant extensions. By focusing on St. Augustine and his doctrine of *caritas*, a term he invents to mean a caring love (*Strangers To Ourselves* 85), I hope to include both expressions of Christianity, as they each claim Augustine as a Church Father.

The printing press—it is impossible to avoid comparison with the Internet here—enabled pornography to reach previously untouched masses. Its broad reach made previous Church containment and supervision of pornographic images impossible (84-85). Miles notices that pornography's initial aims were similar to the Reformers': namely, to question the powerful institution of the Church and to make visible its control on people's lives. Pornographers of the day, including the father of pornography Pietro Aretino, used sex, the great equalizer, to highlight the Church's excesses and hypocrisies. When women's medical care shifted from midwives to secular hospitals with male doctors, more distance was introduced. Anatomical representations of women's bodies were drawn to aid doctors who sometimes never even saw their female patients in person, but who relied upon nurses to act as mediators between the male doctor and the female patient, between the doctor's knowledge of and the patient's actual physical body. These two new representations of women's bodies, and in particular the female breast, contrasted sharply with previous encounters with nudity, particularly religious art. After Protestant doctrine dictated that Jesus Christ was the true mediator between God and men, thus limiting The Virgin Mary's reach and power, pictorial representations of her nourishing symbolic breast were censored as well.

Miles calls these collisions the secularization of the breast and wonders about their far-reaching implications. What would it mean to de-objectify the breast? How would one do it?, she asks as she ends her book (140).

What Miles maintains is that breasts are *both...and*. Breasts function as objects sometimes, but they are also attached to human subjects. Beautiful and functional, breasts

are beyond a simple binary of sexual versus maternal because they are both. And we are wrongheaded and possibly damaging if we deny either of these characteristics. To help us understand this, Miles pans out to the historic introduction of wetnurses in the mid-fifteenth century in Italy. Religious thought taught that breastfeeding women could not engage in marital intercourse with their husbands. The belief was that the man's sperm would contaminate the woman's breastmilk. (They also believed that menstruation blood was present in breastmilk, but that is another discussion for another dissertation project.) Here we see the introduction of wetnurses as a widespread middle class social practice. Husbands hired wetnurses to breastfeed their children. Mothers suddenly found themselves valued for the production of children, but not for their nourishment and ongoing health and growth. Society valued the birth of its children, but not their continued well-being and upbringing.

Gestalt Switch: Metaphor

In *Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory*, Susan A. Handelman writes in her chapter, "Escape From Textuality: The Fulfiller of Signs":

In sum, for Augustine linguistic multiplicity is a condition of the fall. The loss of a stable referent that grounds the literal and proper meaning of words is a manner of exile. Ferguson perceives that the classical definition of metaphor—the transfer or substitution of an alien term for the proper term—likewise implies that metaphor is

another mode of exile. She demonstrates how in Augustine's thought, as well, this conception of language is considered to be an aspect of human exile: exile from the atemporal essence, the presence of God. What Augustine, following the Greek metaphysicians, particularly Plato, seeks is the mode of knowing as being-and-having—not the endlessness of interpretation, but the absoluteness of presence. (120)

The Body Is A Sentence.

After being Christianized, the Platonic transcendence of *nous* (νοῦς or soul) over body linked the soul to immortality and the body to mortality. Indeed the Cartesian divide furthers the abyss between body and mind...until one remembers that brains are body, too. Females have long been associated with the body, and in connection to the linguistic turn even feminists distanced themselves from their own bodies throughout the waves (Grosz, Hekman). But women, mainly because of their reproductive capabilities, have never been able to fully divorce themselves from their bodies. Indeed, from the Greeks onward, we can track women as bodies.

Judith Butler's theory of gender as performance challenges this body-identity causality. Similarly, Anne Faust-Sterling's *Sexing the Body* asks us to reconsider sexuality and gender as a spectrum rather than pure performance (or social construction) or pure biology. Iris Young also speaks to the breasted experience of being both subject and object and of being both singular self and multiple selves as a mother.

Contemporary Western culture both fears and is fascinated with female breasts, reading them as threatening Others, a religious sentiment that can be traced back to St. Augustine of Hippo's seminal thoughts on gender and sexuality as recorded in his *Confessions*, *On Christian Doctrine*, and other church writings. Further, female breasts are a metaphor, a synecdoche even, for women themselves in Christian discourse and consequently in Western culture. Women are subjects with objects, breasts, attached to them. Women are *both...and*. This project seeks first to shatter the border between motherhood and sexuality by positioning women as materialist subjects, that is, agents made of matter who *matter*. Using Andrew Pickering's metaphor of "the mangle" I argue for a metaphysics of fluidity or *leaking* for knowledge creation. *The Guilty Breast* is a call to reunion with the maternal body—the body from which we all emerged. Mothers' breasts and bodies must stop being erased. This project offers another gaze, the breastfeeding gaze, as a way to see and to be seen. The breastfeeding gaze is a dynamic, fluid, relational look that acknowledges the complexity of the Other and desires not to consume or to objectify but to empower anOther by way of love. But how to narrate flesh?

Love, like milk, leaks.

CHAPTER TWO

CLEAVAGE

“In other words, society lives according to a cleavage: here a sublime, disinterested text, there a mercantile object, whose value is . . . the gratuitousness of this object. But society has no notion of this split: *it is ignorant of its own perversion.*”

Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*

After I read St. Augustine's *Confessions*, I couldn't stop thinking about how the Church Father had abandoned his mistress and son to join the clergy, sending his family away to North Africa without money or provision. But I couldn't vilify Augustine. His dualism, his Gnosticism, felt familiar. I see Augustine as Julia Kristeva's "split subject" (*Desire in Language* 6) and his women, through the anguished Augustinian lens, written as Melanie Klein's symbolic good and bad breasts. Klein theorizes that "the infant splits both his ego and his object and projects out separately his loving and hating feelings, his life and death instincts" and further that "the maternal object is divided into a 'bad' breast, a mother that is felt to be frustrating, persecutory and is hated, and a 'good' breast, a mother that is loved and felt to be loving and gratifying" ("Paranoid-schizoid position"). Indeed, as I read *Confessions*, I did not see women written as *women*. Rather, Augustine writes his many mistresses as bad breasts and God as a good breast, much like Augustine's mother, Monnica. Finally, Augustine writes himself as a bad breast turned good.

Bad Boob: St. Augustine

Between young rhetorician Augustine and elder theologian St. Augustine, there are many Augustines. Additionally, these Augustines sometimes contradict one another, because Augustine is human.

- He is a playboy rhetorician-turned-priest.
- He had, in fact, several conversions, as opposed to a one-time conversion experience.
- He abandoned his mistress and son to become a Church leader.

- He writes extensively about his battle against the flesh, pleasure, and fornication.
- He writes a lot about sex, women, and God.

Bad Boobs: His Girlfriends

In *Augustine and The Fundamentalist's Daughter*, Harvard Augustinian scholar Margaret Miles points out, “Like generations of theologians after him, Augustine takes a meta-position, placing himself above the fray of argument, enjoying a God’s-eye view” (192-193). Indeed, in Augustine’s Prologue to *On Christian Doctrine*, he writes, “Some will condemn our work because they do not understand the precepts it contains. [...]

Answering all these objections briefly, to those who do not understand what we write, I say this: I am not to blame because they do not understand” (3). He then itemizes rules for exegesis, not only for exegesis of the Scriptures but also of his own explication of them. In Book 12 of the *Confessions*, Augustine writes, “They are not speaking because they are divinely inspired and have seen what they say in the heart of your servant; they are speaking out of pride” (12.25). Augustine claimed to be God’s mouthpiece, while denouncing his critics as arrogant. However much of a winning rhetorical strategy this was for him, his hubris negatively affects a contemporary audience’s reception of his work.

The *Confessions* pulse with a masculine perspective of sex, which Augustine often conflates with the spiritual life. Consider the sexual images present in the following passage:

But I have been spilled and scattered among times whose order I do not know; my thoughts, the innermost bowels of my soul, are torn apart with the crowding tumults of variety, and so it will be until all together I can flow into you, purified and molten by the fire of your love. And I shall stand and become set in you, in my mold, in your truth. (11.29-30)

Margaret Miles observes, “The strong images in this passage bring to a virtual climax, as it were, Augustine’s description of his conversion to continence, the theme of his *Confessions*. Male sexual experience is heavily—not subtly—referenced in the contrast he draws between being *spilled* and *scattered* and being *purified* and *set in you, in my mold*” (187). We might recognize a pattern here, introduced earlier in the *Confessions*: “I was tossed here and there, spilled on the ground, scattered abroad; I boiled over in my fornications” (2.2). During his rhetorician days before he joined the clergy, Augustine was somewhat of a player, and so I read these lusty verbs as Augustine projecting his passion for women onto God. For Augustine, there is no *both...and*, although the Church allowed its priests to marry and raise a family during this time. But Augustine was a man of many passions, clutching at women and ultimately at God. In Augustine’s grasp, even God becomes objectified. God is a woman whom Augustine desires and ultimately wishes to control.

Good Boobs: God...Augustine

In a different interpretation of *The Confessions*, “Reading the Negative: Kenneth Burke and Lyotard on Augustine's *Confessions*,” Hanne Roer observes that

Lyotard picks such passages from *Confessions* where the “I” tells us about being penetrated with God, feeling the terror accompanying the destruction of the subject [and] insists that the conversion-strokes are of an erotic character. Augustine does not transfer his desire into Continentia, rather he is transformed into a woman, a container of the divine. [...] The desire for God is related to the erotic urge.

Here the previous couple of God and Augustine is reversed. The erotic overtones remain, but God who was previously written as receptacle is now the penetrator with Augustine as receptacle. Whereas, God was previously written as a woman standing in for the younger Augustine’s many mistresses, now we see God as Lover and Augustine as beloved.

I read Augustine’s life project, both personally and theologically, as making the guilty body good because he must deal with both his own carnal lusts and also the problematic doctrines of the creation, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of the body (*Augustine* ii). If we read Augustine as an early adherent to the Platonic tradition of privileging the *nous* or soul over the flesh, the body itself becomes troublesome for the theologian. Augustine must make the guilty body good if Christianity is to be a unified whole in his mind and for the Church at large (*Augustine...* 128-131). Later French feminists Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva face the same task of making

the guilty body good for feminism. And currently, we witness the materialist feminists still attempting to make matter *matter*.

Fleshy Words and Wordy Flesh

Phillip Cary credits Augustine with two major inventions that influence Christian doctrine and ultimately Western civilization. In *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self*, Cary credits him as the inventor of what we now think of as our inner selves. And in *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things In Augustine's Thought*, Phillip Cary describes Augustine's theory of signs as "expressionist semiotics." He writes, "Expressionist semiotics includes the twin theses that words are external signs and that they get their significance by expressing things that belong to the deeper ontological level of the soul or inner self" (17). Cary cites Augustine's description of his soul learning to express itself as an infant in *Confessions*, "At that time I knew how to suck to rest content when satisfied, to cry when in pain, and nothing more," to exemplify this new semiotics. He explains, "Even the baby at the breast is not so close to another human being as he appears. She is external but he lives within, in an inner space she cannot enter, where his wants (*voluntates*, literally his 'wills') are hidden from her perception" (8). Augustine uses breastfeeding to symbolize the importance of inner self versus an outer self in expressionist semiotics. The inner self is always greater than its outward expressions because it contains the true self and Truth, which, for Augustine, is God: "Expressionist semiotics is thus the theory of meaning that goes along with the conviction that we find within ourselves that Other we must love, which is our true happiness" (13).

By marrying empirical philosophy to Platonism, Augustine essentially developed a new iteration of signs, the external sign that communicates expressions of the internal soul. If this sounds Platonic, it is. Contemporary theologians, rhetoricians, and philosophers read Augustine in the tradition of Plato; we read his early work as indicative of a belief in the *nous* (or soul) as being transcendent over the body, much like Plato's cave. Reflective of his early beginnings in philosophy and/but also as a classically trained rhetorician, Augustine's privileging of the *nous* over the body should be no surprise. In *The Confessions*, his language concerning the body is reminiscent of Plato's, a *nous* trapped in a cage. Augustine replaces the Higher Forms with God and Plato's two-dimensional recollecting soul (*Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self* 11) as a three-dimensional space, the soul-as-body. Augustine replaces Plato's earlier scribe, writing truth on one's soul, with Christ as inner teacher. Thus, while some Platonic thought regarding the *nous* / body distinction is updated with newly Christianized substitutions, its basic metaphysical model persists. Man is comprised of two parts: his *nous* and the body. The *nous* is transcendent to the body, but is trapped by it and is also constantly threatened by bodily defilement. If we could only escape our bodies, Plato intimates in the *Phaedo*, we could communicate directly with the Higher Forms and recollect, or later learn, truth. Similarly, Augustine writes of the *nous* as threatened by bodily containment and the temptation of flesh. Indeed, this is a major theme in Augustine's *Confessions*: If we could only make good the guilty body, we might be free to pursue and stay connected with Truth or Christ, the inner Teacher. Indeed, Augustine's conversion(s) and decision to enter the ministry of the Church was not for service, but instead for contemplation;

marriage to the Church offered the luxury of time and solitude to meditate upon the Word as Flesh, Plato's updated Higher Forms. Cary reminds us in *Outward Signs* that

The love of eternal Wisdom that burned in his heart ever since reading Cicero's *Hortensius* had always been in conflict with Augustine's worldly ambitions, his desire for wealth, power, and marriage, and nothing held him on this secular path more effectively than his need for a woman. The desire for a life devoted to philosophy, that is, to the pursuit of wisdom, is his overarching motivation, and sheer sexual need is the greatest obstacle to the life he wants. (172)

Plato wanted to communicate almost telepathically with the Higher Forms; similarly Augustine with Christ as Teacher, both dialectics.

We should emphasize here that Plato regarded rhetoric with distrust because it wasn't thought to be pure knowledge, but trickery. This could also be, in part, because Plato felt threatened by Isocrates' school that taught paying men rhetoric as a skill. Of note: women are not included in this type of education or enlightenment—neither Plato's nor Isocrates'. Aristotle enlarged Plato's vision for truth and also altered it by creating categories for knowledge. In this way, he raised rhetoric and lowered philosophy to equal status. Additionally, Aristotle created a new category, scientific knowledge or empiricism. Rhetoric was now recognized as legitimate, on par with philosophy. But again women are problematic; Aristotle regarded the female body as a defective male body—a botched job, as it were. Yet like Plato, Augustine renounces rhetoric and his

worldly ambition to teach it, which he comes to see as an empty if lucrative career choice (*Outward Signs* 18-29).

Still as a trained rhetorician, Augustine had the skills necessary for invention. When faced with the problem of a body, a cage, a constant temptation, and possible defilement, he lowers the *nous* to inhabit the body, both in value and in time and space. Now the *nous* was fully part of the body. And indeed the body was now, not a cage, but woven together with *nous* or soul (*Augustine's Invention* 39). Cary explains, "His inwardness is precisely a project of finding an *other* in the self" (*Augustine's Invention* 141). Where then would Christ teach? What of Plato's inner sanctum? Augustine invented the inner self, a deep sense of self, the sense of which persists to this day, informing religious theory and theology, but also influencing other disciplines and fields, such as philosophy and psychology (3).

Augustine's invention of a three-dimensional inner self might be also called memory. This is similar to but ultimately different than Plato's recollection, a two-dimensional space of words being written on the soul, a flat surface. To the Augustinian mind, memory is a three-dimensional space in which a teacher, Christ, teaches truth. Indeed, "no writer known to me before Augustine talks of finding things in memory the way he does—as if memory were a three-dimensional space ample enough for us to enter and look for things within it" (127). Additionally, Cary writes, "It is thus no surprise that Augustine finds God in memory as well" (127). In this way, Truth becomes a much more fluid, active, engaging and being engaged *thing*, involving a dynamism that goes beyond simply remembering. Cary reminds us that in both the *Phaedo* and *Confessions*, seeing

with the mind's eye or the soul's eye is central to understanding truth in the inner being (37). How do we come to understand *nous* or the soul though? And what of this inner self? The Augustinian turn is in and then up. God is inside us (in our souls), but also above us (in Heaven) (38, 63). We see God with the eye of our soul, which gives the inner self a type of metaphoric body, too. In *Timaeus*, the soul becomes embodied, but not as the result of any evil (31-44). Augustine, by way of Plotinus, attributed anything beautiful to God (31). Thus, bodies are not sinful per se, but entanglement and overindulgence with our outer bodies distract us from our inner body or inner self. And the inner self is most important because it is here where we learn Truth (32).

In *Phaedrus* the soul fell from heaven into bodies. In Platonic understanding, the body is cage, but it is also in dialectic with the soul. The soul animates the body, which is enough for Plato, but not for the Christian (*Outward Signs* 45-60). Augustine's task then becomes the redemption of the problematic body for the soul (and the Church) because of three key Christian doctrines: the Creation / flesh as fallen, the Incarnation / flesh as redeemed, and the Resurrection / flesh as risen from the dead. In *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist*, Cary reminds us that because of "because of the orthodox Christian doctrine of creation, the mature Augustine [...] thinks of embodiment as a good thing—a point he articulates by drawing on the less dualist strand in Platonism, which also helped him accept the doctrine of the resurrection of the body" (115). This is how Augustine differs from other theologians who have also had impressive influence on Western sensibilities such as Martin Luther who looks outward for salvation; Augustine substitutes God for the Higher Forms and the Holy Spirit for

Plato's inner scribe writing on our souls. In this way, Augustine influences Church polity and doctrine by advising Church members to look inward for God rather than outward (140-141). One wonders how Church members would know that who they were communing with was really God in the same way one wonders how Plato and his adherents knew that they were really learning Truth from the Higher Forms. Augustine never really addresses this hugely problematic question.

Possessing an inner self, man now needed a way to communicate the soul's expressions. This Augustine accomplished with his second invention, expressionist semiotics. Although Plato had introduced the concept of inner depth, it was Augustine who distinguished the difference between inner words and external words. Spoken and written words then become external signs of deep inner truths. We will return to Augustine's expressionist semiotics in Chapter Six, but it is worth noting here Augustine's inventiveness regarding this; signs had never been thought to express inner truth before (*Outward Signs ix*).

How an older, wiser, theological Augustine as opposed to a younger, less mature rhetorical Augustine goes about making the guilty body good is also a manifestation of his penchant for invention. Margaret Miles observes in *Augustine on the Body* that

It was Augustine who first brought to conscious realization and painstaking systematic articulation the task of reuniting soul and body, that is, of uniting consistent intellectual formulation with the deepest human longing. It was he who, not content to 'affirm without a shred of understanding,' worked out the implications of the soul's

love for its body, and sought more adequate metaphors to express it.

(128)

Augustine did not see the body as absolute reality or as absolute appearance. Rather, he saw the body as the organ by which man engages with the objective world. His strict control of the flesh, first observed in his harsh statements regarding sexuality, relaxes as he ages. It's almost as if his body recognizes before his mind that control is an illusion. Miles writes, “[W]e may wonder to what degree Christianity still suffers from St. Augustine’s pessimism, which is, explicable by his temperament, the circumstances of his passionate and brooding youth, and his nine years association with the Manichaeans. Why should a people bear permanently the image of what... a single individual once underwent?” (7).

Was Augustine for the body or against it, then? We might answer both. His theological project to make the guilty body good by reinterpreting Scripture and emphasizing key passages to create a new doctrine of the body—and new spaces within it for the realization of the Trinity— suggest his deep investment in materiality. But he also, personally and especially in his younger years, is deeply at war with his own flesh, lusts, and desires. In other words, Augustine was human.

Additionally, we might call Augustine the first material feminist. He leaks. His body leaks. His doctrine leaks. And the world in which he lived leaks into him. Nowhere do we observe the at-times austere theologian more human and humane than the three times (as recorded in his writings and in his biographies) he encounters death: the death of his best friend, the death of his son, and his own looming end. In these moments, we

observe a fully unified Augustine who neither overindulges in grief nor represses it. Rather, when Augustine is faced with endings, he instinctively begins.

Good and Bad Boobs: Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva

Upon first glance, Augustine appears to be a foil to French feminists Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, but a closer look reveals several surprising similarities. Miles quotes Iris Young in “Ideal of Community” to further explore the inward journey, especially as it intersects with subjectivity:

Subjects all have multiple desires that do not cohere; they attach layers of meanings to objects without always being aware of each layer or the connections between them. Consequently, any individual subject is a play of difference that cannot be completely comprehended. (70)

If St. Augustine’s evolution from fear to love illustrates this fracturing perhaps without his conscious knowledge, then surely Hélène Cixous and her body of writing, and in particular *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, celebrates the self with all of its shatterings.

Cixous begins *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* with a fixation on death: “Writing is learning to die. It’s learning not to be afraid [...]” (10). Then she tells us why we desire death: “The desire to die is the desire to know. It is not the desire to disappear, and it is not suicide; it is the desire to enjoy” (34). And perhaps this is the most apt place to begin an inner pilgrimage—with the awareness that a beginning is often an ending.

Unlike Augustine who claimed Truth, inspiration from God, as his authority to write, Cixous claims truth: “This is the definition of truth, it is the thing you must not say” (38). She cites the poets, not the priests, as the true travelers (64). And further, she decries religion in favor of the human: “That’s another thing. *There is no religion. There is the human*” (41). On the subject of confession, the feminist mother intimates, “It’s not about confessing oneself. This fascinates me, because confession puts into play something which seems to me impossible and terrible: erasure. Are we supposed to be amnestied? Confession treats ritually what is absolutely untreatable” (41). If Augustine uses the Church to suppress his fleshly desires, trading an obsession with sex for an obsession with God, Cixous denounces organized religion and preaches *jouissance*.

Not surprisingly, she combats the patriarchal misogyny so often found in organized religion, “Those Bible, those who are the Bible, abominable” (113), by reappropriating what was historically and culturally regarded as unclean, women and birds: “Dante loves birds, and in *Paradise* he has visions of birds like letters in the sky” (117). Cixous transforms women’s bodies from the abominable and cast off, objectified Others, to sacred / holy and life-creating subjects. By embracing what is unknowable and perhaps abominable in herself, Cixous reworks the Augustinian false guilt and fear into love and life. If we are to be connected with deity at all, she identifies as his / her sentence: “I am a sentence of God: this is a transposition. She is transposed. You cannot transpose” (155). Thus, while Augustine claimed to have heard God’s voice, Cixous claims to be God’s utterance, itself—a truly breathtaking assertion. What does it mean to be God’s sentence? Would it be the same as the Word become flesh? Let us take as our

working hypothesis the idea that not only can words become flesh, but also that flesh can become words. Our journey is towards this realization: flesh, particularly female flesh, requires interpretation. Breasts necessitate semiotics.

Cixous employs a journey as a metaphor for writing, but she also utilizes the conceit of childbirth. Positing that the mother-daughter relationship is the most intense, “the closest as far as the body is concerned” (89), Cixous reimagines writing in gendered terms that contrast sharply with Augustine’s patriarchal assumptions. Additionally, whereas, Augustine gives up rhetoric as worldly and arrogant, Cixous establishes a completely new way of writing, *écriture féminine*. This new women’s writing acknowledges the masculine codes embedded in language and seeks to subvert and play with the power structures of written expression. If Augustine distrusts language and sex, Cixous celebrates them both.

If Augustine fears the Other and if Cixous celebrates being an Other—both by traveling inward, Julia Kristeva completes the journey from Other to another in her compelling *Strangers To Ourselves*. Kristeva directs the completed inward journey outward. She begins by defining who is the foreigner or Other:

Who is a foreigner? The one who does not belong to the group, who is not ‘one of the,’ the *other*. The foreigner, as it has often been noted, can only be defined in negative fashion. Negative with respect to what? The other of what group? (95)

By pairing Cixous with Augustine, we see that women are the Other in organized religious structures as well as in language. Furthermore, Kristeva locates foreigners,

Others, in the early Church. The holy places were precisely where the foreigner was safest (79). Kristeva then connects the risen Christly Body, the Church, and the Eucharist—all three symbols of loving unity: “That unity enables one to recognize in the transition going from real to symbolic (and vice versa) a logic that takes hold of and soothes the foreigner’s psychosis” (81). Augustine had previously coined the Latin term *caritas*, which Kristeva connects with hospitality to foreigners, ironically a virtuous duty of the early Church:

Caritas is infinite, it grows, goes beyond itself and ourselves, thus welcoming foreigners who have become similar in their very distinction. [...] It is a treasure one does not lose when giving it back, it increases twofold, as it were, through the very return one makes. It is a feeling that grows in the heart of man as he gives evidence of it and increases all the more as people are its object. (85)

Kristeva traces the strength of foreigners—their unlikely bond because of difference—within the early Church and extends it to Augustine, who is consumed with love, expressed both sexually and charitably. One might argue that Augustine evolves from carnal lust to virtuous love, but I disagree. Augustine repressed and characterized as evil his own body—repressing natural desire and replacing it with obsessive piety. Though flawed, Augustine’s *Confessions* document a man of passion(s) attempting to live authentically. He does so by attempting to conform his inward state to an outward standard, a hallmark symptom of organized religion’s influence. Cixous, on the other hand, also introspects, but she harmonizes her internal state with her external world by

accepting her own fractured self, her own chaos, her own conflicting desires. She rejects “those Bible[s]” attempts to control her (113). Thus, both Augustine and Cixous travel inward, but their reactions to themselves, to self as Other, remarkably differ.

In *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, Cixous reminds us that the crowning achievement of Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, is that “he defends the right to dream” (93). This dreaming, and subsequently the unconscious which produces our dreams, is key to Kristeva’s logic of Otherness: “The foreigner is within us. Delicately, analytically, Freud does not speak of foreigners: he teaches us how to detect foreignness in ourselves” (191). Kristeva makes two connections. First, if the foreigner is within me, we are all foreigners (192). And second, “Freud sets the difference within us in its most bewildering shape and presents it as the ultimate condition of our being *with* others” (192). “How could one tolerate a foreigner,” Kristeva writes, “if one did not know one was a stranger to oneself?” (182). Using Freud’s theory of the unconscious, Kristeva locates the Other within every person. Thus, we, like the early Church Others, may unite in solidarity, despite superficial differences. Augustine and Cixous, despite being polar opposites in beliefs concerning sex and gender, religion, and writing as communication, are actually quite similar—both in their Otherness and in their inner journeys to themselves. They are both Others, and also, according to Kristeva, they are both others. If we are all alike in our Otherness, she argues, then we are neighbors who should extend *caritas* or hospitality one to another. By following Kristeva’s logic, we see that:

- Augustine fears and represses his own Otherness and, therefore, projects it onto women, labeling them as Other.

- Cixous liberates and ultimately celebrates her own Otherness by subverting the patriarchal code in life as in language.
- Freud locates Otherness (as unknown desire) within every person.
- Kristeva identifies Other as another.

Therefore, one cannot love another without first identifying oneself as Other. Freud places us beyond the superficial duality of repression and liberation by *both* locating repressed desire within every person *and* allowing for its liberation. Kristeva builds upon Freud's hypothesis by claiming that this difference is in actuality a commonality. Thus, difference itself unites. This is the Augustinian journey from fear to love. This is the pilgrimage of St. Augustine, Hélène Cixous, Sigmund Freud, and Julia Kristeva: the backwards journey from fear to love, from outward to inward, from Other to self, and finally from self to anOther.

Good and Bad Boob: St. Augustine

Cixous' journey through writing, and integration of the good and the bad, fear and love into a unified whole, is Augustine's journey as well. In his doctrine of *caritas*, we see his lifelong project of making the guilty body good reflective of a personal integration. The evolution of Augustine's life would be the shift from fear to love, to "breathe in [Y]ou a little" (*Confessions* 13.14). This relaxing of control is most strongly felt in Augustine's declaration, "My weight is my love" (203-204). The shift from fear to love would later be altered by Sigmund Freud to read "my weight is my fear" (203). Cixous, too, explores the complicated relationship between fear and love, especially as it manifests in the body.

Throughout Augustine's life, we witness a subtle but increasing change in direction, a u-turn of sorts, from the Church Father. When asked near the end of his life to define God, Augustine replied simply, "God is love. That's all you need to know about God" (*Augustine* 126). Not only does love replace his multifold rules of Scripture exegesis, he later reunites with his son and co-authors with the young man. Fascinatingly, Augustine's outward journey followed fear until his inward journey led him to love: toward God, toward others, and toward himself. Perhaps Augustine makes the guilty body good not by doctrinal revision as witnessed in his unification of the Platonic *nous* or soul with the flesh itself, but by a personal and internal unification of his own fears and loves.

CHAPTER THREE

MILK

"The body stands poised to flow, and to stop flowing."
Florence Williams, *Breasts: A Natural and Unnatural History*

"It is easier to control cows than women."
Dr. Edward Brush,
Journal of the American Medical Association (1904)

Table 1 A hospital sample of a newborn's typical schedule

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Feedings	AM 1:40,	3:40, 4:25,	1:55, 3:40,	1:10, 3:25,	1:40, 3:25,	5:25, 8:25,	1:40, 3:40,
	3:25, 6:25, 8:30,	6:25, 9:45,	5:25, 8:25,	6:25, 9:45,	6:25, 8:30,	9:45, 11:30	6:25, 9:45,
	10:35, 11:30	11:00	9:45, 11:50	11:00	9:45, 11:30		11:00
	PM 3:15,	1:15, 3:50,	2:05, 5:30,	1:25, 3:15,	5:26, 6:15,	1:15, 5:38,	2:05, 3:15,
	6:15, 8:25,	5:38, 8:36,	8:36, 9:30,	6:15, 8:25,	8:36, 9:30,	8:36, 11:00	6:15, 8:36,
	11:25	9:50, 11:00	11:10	9:30, 11:25	11:00		11:30
Wet Diapers	AM 3:15,	3:15, 6:15,	3:15, 6:15,	1:15, 3:56,	3:15, 6:15,	1:10, 5:15,	3:15, 6:15,
	6:15, 8:25,	8:25, 11:25	8:25, 11:25	5:38, 8:36	11:25	9:10	11:25
	11:25						
	PM 1:10,	2:05, 5:38,	3:50,	1:10, 3:40,	1:15,	3:15, 6:15,	1:10, 3:40,
	3:40, 5:15,	8:25	11:25	5:15, 9:10,	5:38,	8:25, 11:25	5:15, 9:10,
	9:10, 11:00			11:00	8:36		11:00
Stools	AM 3:15,	5:26,	1:52,	3:59,	1:15,	4:54,	3:15
	11:25	10:25	6:25	9:25	10:25	8:25	
	PM 3:40,	1:10,	1:20,	6:46,	8:40	2:28,	1:03,
	11:00	11:20	10:08	9:00		11:00	10:00

Leaking

In *Breasts: A Natural and Unnatural History*, Florence Williams recalls sending her breast milk to a laboratory for testing after having her second child. The resulting report indicates that her breast milk is tainted with environmental contaminants, industrial chemicals among them, and additionally that most women produce contaminated breast milk. Thus begins her investigation into how human subjects' actions leak into the objective universe and how the subjective universe leaks into human objects. This leakage constrains Williams to consider the breasts, of both males and females, an ecosystem. She writes that "the new sciences of environmental disease and epigenetics are redefining the very notion of human nature, challenging us to recall an ancient belief system that says we are deeply connected to our environment" (280). She argues for the

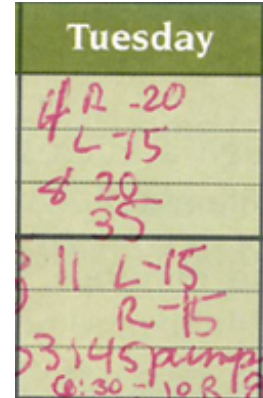
flexibility of DNA, that it's "built to bend", and that breasts themselves reflect our interdependence with the physical world (280).

	Sunday	Monday
6:45 L-20 RE 7:15 L-10 R-15 Feedings 11:30 R-10	AM 12:30 10	2:30 L-15 R-15
	3:15	7:30 -15
	10:50 15	
	PM	12:00 R-25 L-10
	11:50 15	
	3:00 R-25	1:20 - L-10

Breast tissue begins to develop by the fourth week of fetal life (Angier 145). Mammary glands evolved most likely for immune support (Williams 42). Williams traces breasts' literal and symbolic leakages all the way back to their self-deterministic origins. Unlike other animals that can attach to the mother by clutching her fur, human babies must be held in crooks of arms, and "even then, though, the nipple still needs to come down a bit to baby. Flat faces and flat chests don't work well together. The pendulous breast came to the rescue. Then, once the human baby's hands were free from clutching, they could gesture" (30).

The "pendulous breast" was not only necessary for human gesture, it also theoretically prepared the way for human speech. Williams connects breasts to human communication by way of the nipple. A unique human feature called basicranial flexion allows us to bend where our neck meets our head. Unlike other mammals, human babies can't hold their heads up on their own: "we have unusually big heads, and we also have necks, the better for growing a laryngeal cavity *so that we can speak*. All the more reason

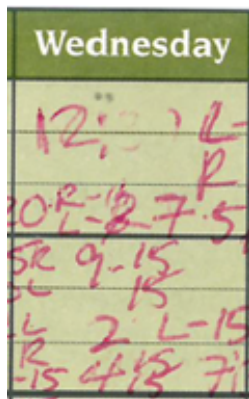
nipple that can come down to the baby. It's a theory, but I like it: thanks to pendulous breasts, we can speak" (31).



Even though lactation is the defining characteristic of mammals, it predates them (42). In the eighteenth century, Swedish taxonomist Linnaeus named humans “mammalia,” a term he invented that means literally “of the breast” (151). Thus, “the breast was called upon to service metaphor” (151). In spite of its discomfort, zoologists accepted humans as animals and needed a taxon to link humans to other species. Linnaeus needed a feature that would become the synecdoche of our beastliness. All mammals are hairy, but men are typically hairier than women. Ears are boring. But “the breast has romance and resonance, and best of all, it is most highly articulated in women” (151). After introducing the term Mammalia, Linnaeus also gave us our species name, *Homo sapiens*: “Thus, within Linnaean terminology, a female characteristic (the lactating mama) ties humans to brutes, while a traditionally male characteristic (reason) marks our separateness” (151).

Our species’ name itself foreshadows the Cartesian divide, suggesting we associate males with reason and females with the body. Williams tracks not only the

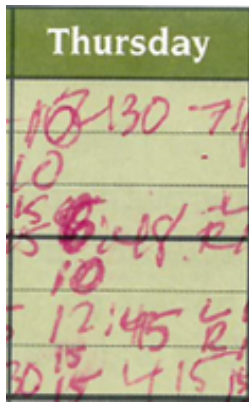
symbolic, but also the literal. From British zoologist Desmond Morris' *The Naked Ape* to Timothy Taylor's *The Prehistory of Sex*, evolutionary biologists theorized for years that breasts evolved and persisted—humans are the only mammals who retain breasts, regardless of lactation (Angier 140-141)—because males chose to mate with women with larger breasts. Scientists, mostly male, have conjectured without resolution why males would prefer larger breasted women. They theorize that enlarged breasts became normative in human females because of sexual selection. Now that more female scientists, and especially biologists and anthropologists, are joining the field, the question is being revisited. Some female scientists suggest that natural selection rather than the previously assumed sexual selection theory might be the reason for humans' retained breasts. We might ask, "What if instead of men selecting breasts, the breasts selected the men?" (Williams 34-35).



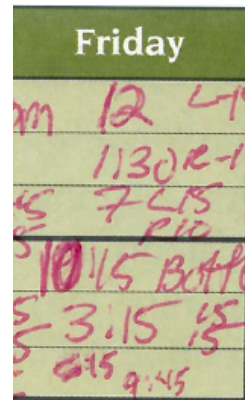
This paradigmatic shift should not be glossed over. Beyond

contextualizing breasts as a feminist manifesto and, as mentioned before, a parable of self-determination, viewing breasts as a result of natural selection as opposed to sexual selection has several profound consequences. First, female breasts-by-way-of-natural-selection suggests that this body part should be valued for its utilitarian function as well

as its aesthetic quality. Culturally, we value breasts for their sex appeal. But breasts' functional devaluation has very real consequences for the health of both babies and mothers. Second, if natural selection allowed breasts not only to exist but also to persist, it negates a male-centric narrative of the female breast—a narrative that, we will see in the chapters to follow, pragmatically affects where a woman can breastfeed her baby and what she must wear in public to do so. Third, if the female breast exists because of what



it can do—feed a human being, then it seems reasonable that we should allow it to continue to do, with as much freedom and ease as possible, what it was evolved to do in the first place. Breasts' magic, biologically speaking, is that they transmute blood to milk (52). And this liquidy miracle necessitates an onto-epistemological paradigm shift in addition to pragmatic consideration.



	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6:45 L-20 R-15 7:15 L-10 R-15 Feedings 11:30 R-10	AM 12:30 10 3:15 6:50 25	2:30 L-15 7:30 -15	4:20 L-15 8:20 35	1 L-20 5 R-20 L-10	5:30 L-20 20 5:30 L-15 3	1 L-25 2-25 6:45 L-15 10	5:30 25 10:30 15 1:00 L-15
	PM 11:50 15 3:00 L-15	12:00 R-25 L-20	11 L-15 R-15	6 L-15 16 L-20 L-15	6:15 L-5 5:30 L-15 10:45 R-15 L-25	9:45 L-25 2-20 12:30 10:00	4:45 5 8:30
		1:20 L-10	3:45 pumped 6:30 10 R-15 8:45 L-25 R-25	10:45 L-25 R-25	10:45 L-25		

From Candace Woessner, Judith Lauwers, and Barbara Bernard's *Breastfeeding Today: A Mother's Companion* (page 116):

Q.) What is leaking?

A.) Many women leak milk during the first weeks of breastfeeding, and some even leak colostrum during pregnancy. Leaking is a normal part of lactation. The interior structure of the nipple is composed mostly of muscles that serve as a closing mechanism for the milk ducts. These muscles work more efficiently for some women than for others. For this reason, some women never experience leaking, while others begin leaking colostrum during pregnancy and even continue leaking milk for months after breastfeeding begins. Usually, however, leaking subsides after the mother's milk adjusts itself to her baby's needs. Leaking is quite common during the early days of breastfeeding, when the letdown reflex is being established. In fact, any time your milk lets down, leaking may occur, and you will not always have control over the letdown.

In *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Elizabeth Grosz embraces the leaky nature of the female body for its metaphoric possibilities: “Fluids, unlike objects, have no definite borders; they are unstable, which does not mean that they are without pattern. Fluids surge and move, and a metaphysic that posits things being as fluid would tend to privilege the living, moving, pulsing over the inert dead matter of the Cartesian worldview” (204). She additionally posits that a female body that leaks and is uncontrollable retains power, even in its unpredictability:

Can it be that in the West, in our time, the female body has been constructed not only as a lack or absence but with more complexity, as a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as formless flow; as viscosity, entrapping, secreting; as lacking not so much or simply the phallus but self-containment—not a cracked or porous vessel, like a leaking ship, but a formlessness that engulfs all form, a disorder that threatens all order? (203)

The female body-as-liquid *escapes* the Cartesian divide of mind versus body and also the socially constructed duality of the sexual versus the maternal and by extension aestheticism versus utilitarianism. If Florence Williams sees female breasts as an ecosystem of literal leakages, the female subject leaking into the objective world and the subjective world leaking into the female object, then Grosz welcomes this porousness for its ontological possibilities. Breasts, inherently the excluded third, leak—a disorder that threatens all order. Milk escapes the duality of mind versus body, his reason versus her bruteness, and sexual attraction versus utilitarian function. What seems, upon first glance,

only an embarrassing spot becomes the very means of escape that Cixous locates in language. The very seepage that feels, physically, uncontrollable becomes the password to slip past patriarchal norms. Feminism has historically treated the female body as a limitation on professional and personal liberty (*The Theorist's Mother* 9). Have women made a categorical error of distancing themselves from their own reproductive bodies in a vault towards equality? And in doing so, have they created a roof housing their own freedom?

Table 2 A newborn's actual schedule

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Feedings	AM	7:00 20/20 12:00 10/10 8:10	12:00 30	2:00 L-20 6:00 L-10 9:00 R-20	9:45 L-25 R-10	3:20 R-15 6:30 L-12 R-10	6:30 L-15 R-15
	PM	3:00 17/10 5:00 10 10:00 10		10:15 L-10 2:30 L-10 4:00 L-15	2:30 R-15 L-15 5:30 9:20 R-12	9:40 R-10 L-15 11:30 R-10 L-15	3:20 R-15 L-15
	AM	7:00	12:15	2:00 20/20 9:00 12:20	9:45 2:30 3:20 4/10	3:30 10:30 11:00	5:30 L-10 R-10 7:05 L-20 R-25
	PM	12:00 5/10 3:00 10:00 3:00 11:00	2:00	2:30 7:40	5:50 9:00	5:00-5:15 5:30 10:00 11:07 3:00	11:15 6:30 12:40
Stools	AM	7:00	20/20	2:00 6:00 9:00 7:30 12:20 10	1:45 3:20 7:45	3:30 6:30 10:00	3:00 3:20
	PM	12:00 5:00 10:00 3:00 11:00		2:30 10 7:40 9:30	3:50 9:00	12:00 5:00-5:15 5:30 6:30 12:40 3:00	3:00 6:30 3:00
	AM	7:00	20/20	2:00 6:00 9:00 7:30 12:20 10	1:45 3:20 7:45	3:30 6:30 10:00	3:00 3:20
	PM	12:00 5:00 10:00 3:00 11:00		2:30 10 7:40 9:30	3:50 9:00	12:00 5:00-5:15 5:30 6:30 12:40 3:00	3:00 6:30 3:00

I am continually surprised by the number of people who don't know the basic biology of breastfeeding. And perhaps we see this nowhere clearer than in the recent censorship of Facebook photos and deleted Instagram, owned by Facebook, accounts. In

fact, there was such an outcry from nursing mothers and supportive breastfeeding groups such as *The Leaky Boob*, *The Fourth Trimester Bodies Project*, and *Bare Reality*, to name a few, that Facebook changed its policy to include breastfeeding photos—as long as a woman’s areola doesn’t show. In response to this rash of breastfeeding censorship photographs, a colleague wrote this to me, "It just seems like women who breastfeed in public are trying to draw undue attention to themselves." This subsequent online exchange followed:

me: Do you even know how boobs work??

him: Do they work?

me: Milk production is a matter of supply and demand. If a mother doesn't breastfeed her baby or pump when her milk lets down, the milk will pool in her breast ducts. If not released often enough or in a timely fashion, the pooled milk develops into an infection. This is very common. Imagine your chest filling up with liquid, and then getting the flu. That’s what mastitis feels like. Also the mother’s brain will get the signal from the breast that the baby isn't eating. Then the brain prompts the breast to produce less milk. It’s a body-brain networked response. So then when the mother does feed the baby during the next feeding, there might not be enough milk because the brain has told the breast to produce less. Also, the baby has to eat when she’s hungry, whether the mother is out in public or not. Lactation specialists inform a new mother that she works as a unit

with her baby; mother and baby are simultaneously two but also one. Additionally, formula works as far as general food intake, but it doesn't have the mother's unique immune-building, illness-fighting nutrients in it.

him: Okay.

me: Have you ever nursed a baby in a nasty bathroom? Because I have.

him: I get it.

me: Also, it's pretty typical when a woman begins breastfeeding for her nipples to bleed and eventually blister. After several weeks, it doesn't hurt as much because the nipple has "toughened up." When the milk initially "comes in," it feels prickly like pins and needles, but then engorgement, which feels like pouring a gallon of warm milk into too-small pockets. Your breasts feel like they are about to explode for the first couple of weeks, at least mine did. Your nipples are bleeding and sore to the touch for roughly a month. Lactation nurses encourage new moms to go around the house shirtless to let the nipples heal. And baby typically eats every two to three hours for the first month. Some babies eat more often.

him: Got it.

me: I remember my husband having to help me re-open blisters with a sterilized needle to my nipples so milk could come through for Julia,

and I was feverish and felt like I had the flu. After my first bout of mastitis with Dk, I pumped. My breast pump, which is a thing, cost four hundred dollars. That was the current price. A pump is absolutely necessary to avoid getting infections, such as mastitis and also yeast infections on the nipple that can transfer to the baby and sting her mouth so that she won't eat. Only prescription antibiotics can usually take care of these infections. Also, there is a thing called leaking.

him: Boobs officially desexualized.



Fig. 6. A breast pump

From Tara Haelle's *NPR* article "Women Who Have To Delay Pumping Risk Painful Breast Engorgement":

Q.) What does engorgement feel like?

A.) "All I really remember was air hurt to touch, much less a bra or a shirt."

Ashley Fuller, Venus, Texas

A.) "It would be like drinking 80 oz. of water before a 12-hour flight. You are the only person who isn't allowed to use the bathroom. Your bladder expands to the point of extreme pain. Your pants feel tighter and tighter so that their very pressure on your skin causes more pain. The pain is at the level of slamming your fingers in the car door, only it gets worse instead of better. It feels like trauma pain that waxes instead of wanes. Eventually you just start leaking pee. People think you are whiny and disgusting. Then there is the knowledge that you are increasing your chances of mastitis, which is like full blown flu while someone torches one or both breasts."

Shelley Smith, Mount Pleasant, South Carolina

A.) "It's beyond physical; grandmothers feel it when the baby cries."

Irene Thompson, @maccalled

Mangling: Metaphysical Leaking

“It is all just flows, and flows flow together.”
Susan Hekman, *The Material of Knowledge*

In a campaign to encourage first-time mothers to breastfeed their newborns, ad agency Boone Oakley created posters of pregnant and lactating women with fruit stickers on their bare breasts. Xení Jardin writes about this provocative push in “Breastfeeding stickers turn mom's nursing breast into ‘fruit,’” noting that the Women and Babies Hospital in Lancaster, PA is the first hospital to use stickers and posters to encourage breastfeeding. The stickers resemble the produce tags on oranges and bananas at the grocery store, but have pro-breastfeeding messages on them such as “the best nutrition for your baby is you” and “100% natural.” The model casting specifically asked for nursing or pregnant women, who weren't professional models. Boone Oakley was looking for full, natural, breasts, not surgically “perfect” ones.

Tim Nudd who also covered the campaign observes in “Pro-Breastfeeding Ads Come With Produce-Style Freshness Stickers for Your Boobs” that, besides supporting breastfeeding as an ad campaign for its health benefits, “the stickers also have a practical purpose—nursing moms can place them on one breast at a time to remind them which breast to feed their baby from next.” The ad agency offered the posters, for free, to any “baby-friendly” hospitals that wanted them. And the project itself was an internal one with no client involved. The idea came to Gross and her art director partner Kara Noble, neither of whom have kids, when they were talking with a Boone Oakley account woman, a new mom, who confided how difficult breastfeeding can be physically. Nudd

quotes copywriter Mary Gross, “We're so used to breasts being sexualized. But to a newborn, it's nutrition. You don't censor fruits and vegetables, do you?”



Fig. 7. Female breast with fruit sticker
(Photo credit: Boone Oakley)

Perhaps ironically, censorship remained an issue with the breastfeeding ad campaign: “While creating the work, [Boone Oakley] had a ‘breast wall’ at the agency covered with about 100 photos. The entire wall had to be taken down twice for client visits” (Nudd). Boone Oakley removed the models’ oft-augmented, sexy breasts in order to make room for the mother’s natural, utilitarian ones. This unlikely censorship alludes to the dualistic perception of breasts themselves—that they are either sexy or utilitarian, aesthetic or pragmatic, beautiful or functional. One wonders if this code-switching is

culturally rooted or biologically programmed. In other words, is nature or nurture to blame for how we perceive female breasts?

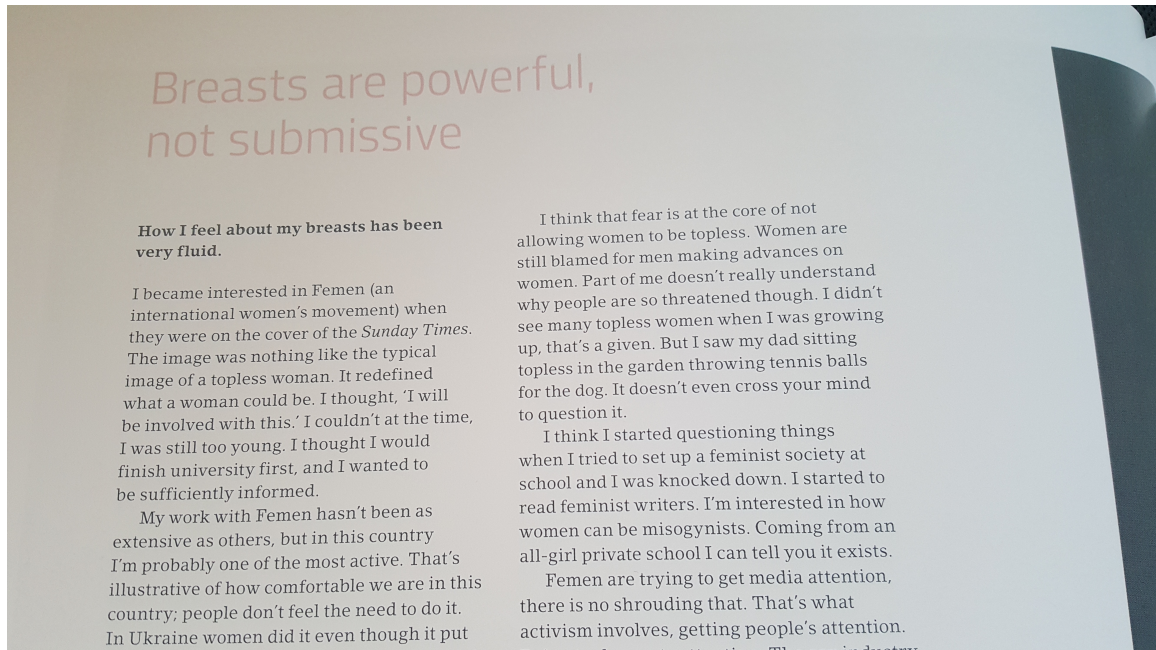


Fig. 8. A woman's actual account of her breasts in *Bare Reality: 100 Women, Their Breasts, Their Stories*

Susan Hekman writes in *The Material of Knowledge* about perception leakages that occur when we explore the physical world via science:

How the material world is leaks into and infects our representations of it in a non-trivial and consequential fashion. The result is what Andrew Pickering calls 'mangle realism,' a position distinct from either correspondence or coherence theories of truth. [...] The focus of the mangle is the interaction of the constitutive elements. Science, its theory and practice, nature, machines, technology, and politics all

interact in the mangle. Mangle is both a noun and a verb. It is the entity in which the interaction takes place, but it is also the action that occurs. The elements of the mangle are mangled; they are mixed up with each other into a combination in which the various elements lose their clear boundaries. [...] Scientists are in a mangle when they do their work. But the significant advantage of the mangle is that the metaphor explains more than just science. It illuminates the situation of human agents in the contemporary world in nearly every aspect of our existence. [...] The mangle is particularly useful in examining the situation of women in the modern world. (23-25)

Hekman asks us to reconsider the scientific method by panning out to include the scientist within our understanding of it. If we can include the subject conducting the “objective” observations, she argues that we undergo a paradigmatic shift in which the arbitrary, socially constructed line between the subject and the object is blurred to the point of being unrecognizable. By invoking the Pickering’s metaphor of “the mangle”, which operates grammatically as both noun and a verb, Hekman paints a vastly different vision of the material world science studies—and asks us to learn a different way of observation and of seeing the physical world. Hekman asks us to see from part to whole. Furthermore, because “the focus of the mangle is the interaction of its constitutive parts”, we understand science itself as both a noun and a verb, a process as opposed to a product. This recalls Hilary Putnam’s “the world isn’t a product. It is just the world” (27).

If we apply Pickering's metaphor of "the mangle" to the female body, this distinction becomes even more consequential: "The linguistic, social, political, and biological are inseparable in the constitution of women in modernity. The mangle allows us to effectively analyze this constitution" (25). The mangle shatters the association of women with their bodies and, in particular, their reproductive bodies. Women become more than reproducing bodies—in seductive connotations, the sexy breast and in functional ones, the working breast. Their breasts become more than too-exposed or not-exposed-enough objects—depending upon how one sees. Within the metaphor of the mangle, the female body itself becomes both a noun and a verb, both a subject and an object. Female bodies are more than Julia Kristeva's excluded third, the abject. They become *both...and*: the subject and the object and the abject and...

Later in *The Material of Knowledge*, Susan Hekman utilizes Andrew Pickering's metaphor of the scientific mangle to re-read Michel Foucault regarding the relationship between power and bodies. Hekman insists that Foucault means not only that power is manifest in subjects, and subjects manifest power, but also that without the intersection of the body and the available discourses of subjectivity, subjects quite literally cannot be at all. In short, Foucault explores how materiality interacts with discourses. Without abandoning the insights of the linguistic turn, Foucault retains reference to the material. This is as good a place as any for feminists to begin speaking—in the middle of Andrew Pickering's metaphorical mangle and Foucault's *both...and* informing a history-of-now. And perhaps that is why material feminists find themselves turning and again returning to the body, first to their own and then to the world's. Activism demands acknowledgment

not only of historically silenced voices, but also of muted bodies stemming from social injustices and environmental issues. Indeed, feminism seems to be growing to include more and more heretofore voiceless voices. History histories. What can and should prevent academic discourses from being overwhelmed by this enlarging multiplicity is materialism. Foucault reminds us that social justice issues and human campaigns need both language and bodies *to be*.



Fig. 9 Sonogram of fetus

In “Getting Real: Technoscientific Practices and the Materialization of Reality,” Karen Barad, another leading material feminist, uses the sonogram as an example of the mangle of onto-epistemology: “Several elements jointly constitute the practice of fetal imaging. What the ‘fetus’ *is* is an important element in the practice of using sonograms to

‘see’ fetuses. How we define the fetus is structured not only by scientific/medical and technological practices but also by politics” (77). In Barad’s example, the sonogram helps illustrate what Anne Anlin Cheng has named “the crisis of vision” in her book *Second Skin*, especially as it relates to the subject-object dichotomy. Several moving parts constitute fetal imaging: the fetus itself, the sonogram, the focus of the image, the imaging technician herself, and the female body being observed. Perhaps the element most invisible is the politics informing the person observing-by-framing the image and the image’s audience. By panning out to include these subjects within the object observed, we begin to appreciate the blurriness of vision itself. In focusing the image, we story. And in storying, we create a narrative, or an underlying meaning, for the image. This is what we expect the audience to see. But what happens when the audience sees other things by concentrating on what is largely out of focus or on the periphery? Barad’s example of the sonogram suggests that what we see as a subject is simultaneously an object, an artificial map with socially constructed boundaries. Where does the mother end and the fetus begin? Using Pickerings’ metaphor, “mangles mangle” (*The Material of Knowledge* 126). Hekman writes in *The Material of Knowledge* that Barad builds upon Niels Bohr’s theory of agential reality: “For Barad, Bohr’s agential realism has the advantage of bringing matter back in, and specifically matter as agential, without denying the role of theory in the constitution of what will become reality” (73). Additionally, Hekman notes that Bohr emphasizes the apparatus itself because “measurement and description entail one another: ‘Concepts are defined by the circumstances required for their measurement’” (73). It follows that “there is no unambiguous way to differentiate

between the object and then agencies of observation. No inherent/Cartesian subject-object distinction exists” (114).

Hekman notes that feminism’s relationship with biology is “fraught with multiple dangers” because of biological essentialism, a root cause of sexism (83). Yet she observes that Grosz maintains we must “bring biology back into feminist theory” if we are to advance any social justice initiatives (83); neither feminism nor science can afford to give up on “the real material world” (66). Much like Augustine’s lifelong project of trying to make the guilty body good for Christian thought and practice, material feminists are still trying to make matter *matter*—both in feminist theory and in the biological world. The body itself teaches us becoming, they argue. Materialism, specifically the female reproductive body, is what can hold multiplicity and difference in harmony. Florence Williams’ metaphor of breasts as ecosystem appears more apt than ever. As subjects leak into the world, the world leaks into us.

CHAPTER FOUR

AREOLA

“[T]he repressed of today is the body, the sensory and motor body.

In the era of the third industrial revolution,
the revolution of information,
nuclear energy, and the video,
the repressed is the body.”

Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*

#lactivist #brelfies

A Natural Boundary

It is 2009, and I am twenty-nine-years-old. I've just had a baby, my first. Emergency C-section after a planned induction gone wrong. The baby is too big. Stuck. And I remember telling the doctor, You've got to cut this baby out. A good thing, too, because Julia Grace Ramler is born with a large hole in her heart. The doctor tells me afterwards, She would've never made it out naturally and would've gone into distress had we not gone in. The pediatric cardiologist, tells me later, Don't put your baby in daycare. The first cold she gets will land her in the ER. (It does.) Do you notice her tiring as she breastfeeds? She takes a little nap between nursing on each side, I say. That's because the hole in her heart is putting extra pressure on her lungs, he answers. It's extra work for her to eat. She'll be okay. We'll do heart surgery around six months and close up that hole. After that, you'll see a big difference in her energy levels.

After the doctor gives us the OK to venture out from home but before Julia has heart surgery, I find myself in a Dillard's bathroom in the Haywood Mall with a screaming infant because it's time to eat. I am too embarrassed, ashamed, to breastfeed on a bench in front of The Gap or Sears or Starbucks. I know nothing about breastfeeding modesty covers, and lactation rooms haven't been built yet. I try to relax so my milk will let down. My baby is inconsolable. Women pass us on their way in and out. Some of them wash their hands; some don't. I feel invisible, but worse. What's the word for worse than invisible? Forty minutes later, on my way out, I pass Victoria's Secret.

I feel like I'm being erased.

A Socially Constructed Border

The areola is a perimeter; a natural boundary, yes, but it is also a socially constructed border. The areola on the female breast is the exact line of censorship. In *Chicago Tribune* article “Facebook orders breast-feeding photos off member pages,” Trine Tsouderos quotes Facebook spokesman Barry Schnitt: “We’ve made a visible areola the determining factor. It is a common standard.” The areola becomes a universal division by way of bodies and social media.

Due, in part, to the changing demographic of the First World nursing mother, often times a full-time worker living in an urban or suburban community where breastfeeding remains largely invisible, many women have turned to online communities to receive breastfeeding support, posting photographs of themselves feeding their babies on social networks like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. After the Facebook-owned, social media platform Instagram, censored some mothers’ breastfeeding photographs and deleted their accounts in early July 2014, the redacted women joined in solidarity to form a protest response to Facebook. Naming themselves The Mothers of Instagram, they called on Facebook to stop “sexualizing the innocence of children and the natural act of breastfeeding” (Castañeda). And while much has been written about the controversy surrounding public breastfeeding, virtually little has been said about social media platforms’ censorship of female breasts. The Mothers of Instagram asks the question: How did we, as a society, arrive at a place where online companies censor pictures of mothers feeding their babies?

The scientific and medical evidence of breastfeeding's health benefits for both mother and baby is overwhelming. In his article "Pediatrics in General Practice: Breastfeeding," N. B. Mathur reminds us that The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the baby up to six months and continued breastfeeding up to two-years-old, that exclusive breastfeeding is the most effective intervention to reduce infant mortality, and that exclusive breastfeeding is estimated to prevent thirteen percent of under five child mortality in low income countries. Moreover, breast milk is the most complete form of nutrition and is associated with reduced risk of acute otitis media, nonspecific gastroenteritis, severe lower respiratory tract infections, atopic dermatitis, asthma in young children, obesity, type 1 and 2 diabetes, childhood leukemia, sudden infant death syndrome, and necrotizing enterocolitis, and mother's benefits include a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes and breast and ovarian cancer. Community benefits are social, economic, and having a more productive workforce (*Dental Abstracts*). However, research suggests that for successful breastfeeding to take place, mothers, and new mothers especially, need accessibility (a place where they feel comfortable breastfeeding) and subsequent community support—both emotional and pragmatic (McLachlan, Mathur, and "Breastfeeding: Official AWHONN Position Statement").

In Chapter Two: Milk, I highlighted intrepid science reporter Florence Williams' *Breasts: A Natural and Unnatural History* in which she takes a close look at breasts' biological anatomy and social evolution. Williams focuses on breast health, and in particular the environmental toxins found in breasts and the relatively high risks of breast

cancer in women today. Prevention is also covered with unexpected humor. Tanya Cassidy and Abdullahi El Tom, editors of *Ethnographies of Breastfeeding: Cultural Contexts and Confrontations*, cover the global debates now circulating around breastfeeding as a cultural (religious, ethnic, and political) practice. In order to examine the cross-cultural challenges facing mothers feeding their infants, they conduct empirical research in Brazil, West Africa, Darfur, Ireland, Italy, France, the UK, and the US.

Marilyn Yalom's book, *History of the Breast*, takes a humanities approach in exploring twenty-five thousand years of ideas, images, and perceptions of the female breast—in religion, psychology, politics, society, and the arts. In particular, she interrogates the paradoxical perception of the breast: the good breast of life, which nourishes and feeds; and the bad breast of sex, which tantalizes and torments. Margaret Miles, Augustine expert and feminist theologian previously introduced in Chapter One: Cleavage, makes a similar move in her book chronicling breasts' religious art history, *A Complex Delight: The Secularization of the Breast*. Miles follows breasts' religious and maternal connotation to its sexualized and medicalized one. In 1350, the Virgin Mary's bare breast represented nourishment and loving care, God's provision for the Christian, but by 1750, artistic representations of the breast were either erotic or medical (Preface IX). The breast's evolution in brief: "Late medieval interpretation of the breast was solidly within the church's portfolio. By the seventeenth century, images of the breast circulated in medical anatomies and in the illustrated pornographic literature that flooded Western Europe within a century of the invention of the printing press" (132). By tracing this change, Miles leads us towards the eventual collision of attitudes, shaping

Christianity's, and consequently Western civilization's, contemporary perspective on the female body; "interpretation of the breast changed hands [...] from churchmen to physicians, medical illustrators, and pornographers" (132). Miles' writes with concern about the social, economic, and legal effects of the large-scale cultural shift from admiration and love to fear and the medicalization of the female form, developed in "Part Two: The Secular Breast." Similarly, in another of her books, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West*, Miles turns to visual and verbal representations of the naked female body in Western Christian history. Focusing on how female bodies have symbolized shame, beginning in Eden, the feminist theologian asks us to consider how the male gaze has participated in the shaming of female bodies, and in particular of breasts. She writes:

In Christianity the body scorned, the naked body, is a female body. Ironically, the contemporary feminist concern for recovering the female body lies at the heart of the ancient Christian project. To represent the female body, not as erotic—as "erotic" has been culturally constructed—not as the object of fascination and scorn, but as revelation and subjectivity is to correct and complete the Christian affirmation of body. It is to present the flesh, not made word, but given voice to sing its own song. (185)

With these sacred and secular contextualizations in mind, Brett Lunceford's *Naked Politics: Nudity, Political Action, and the Rhetoric of the Body* emerges as a convergent force. Lunceford considers nudity of both sexes from a rhetorical perspective.

Why do we disrobe, and what are we communicating by exposure? Furthermore, how does an audience interpret what we have displayed? Specifically citing contemporary examples—The Running of the Nudes and The World Naked Bike Ride to name a couple—and in particular women using nurse-ins or posting lactivist photographs online to support other mothers and/or protest censorship, Lunceford composes a careful, nuanced, intersectional approach to what is said, and not said, when the naked body is on display. Chapter Three “Weaponizing the Breast: Lactivism and Public Breastfeeding” enumerates the cultural obstacles to breastfeeding, including public sphere architecture’s assumption of no children. More specifically, he explores the tensions in the public breastfeeding controversy including the following: breastfeeding is / is not excretory, breastfeeding is / is not exposure or sexual, breastfeeding is / is not natural and beneficial to the child, and breastfeeding mothers do / do not suffer from oppression by those who oppose public breastfeeding (40). At the heart of this debate are the lactivists, whom Lunceford characterizes as “reluctant activists” (50-53). Lactivists’ key concern is control over women’s bodies and sexuality. Another pivotal distinction taken up is the confusion over female breasts’ duality itself: when a mother is publicly breastfeeding her child, are breasts sexual, utilitarian, or both? In the second part of Chapter Three, Lunceford transfers the protest to the venue of Facebook, detailing several case studies of online lactivists’ protests. Breast as breast and/or breast as symbol figure as prominent themes in cyberspace as well.

Alison Phipps also in *The Politics of the Body: Gender in a Neoliberal and Neoconservative Age* focuses on the politicized body. What’s most interesting about

Phipps' book is its welcome look at both sides of the political coin: the far right and the extreme left both caricature feminism, resulting in Western feminism's current political dilemma of what to do with female bodies.

Finally, Anne Fausto-Sterling's *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* asks readers to reconsider everything they know about gender orientation and sexual preference. Indeed, Fausto-Sterling argues that even science is rhetorical interpretation of sets of data and invention. By deconstructing dualisms of sex / gender, nature / nurture, and real / constructed, Fausto-Sterling cheerfully leads us down the slippery slope of scientific identity. If human interpretation and invention, of sorts, is always present, how do we arrive at personal truth's ground zero? And if we cannot get there, what *can* we say about identity, about ourselves and our relationships, with certainty? Fausto-Sterling claims that we are *all* both male and female, and it is society—not individuals—that needs to change.

The gender and sexuality theorists agree that for female breasts to be desexualized, there must be a deconstruction of the standard binary of breast rhetoric: maternal versus licentious, the mother / whore dichotomy. In Victorian England, literature portrayed these opposite female tropes as the Angel of the House versus the Seductress. However, in a postmodern world, several key feminist theorists have written about the breakdown of familiar stereotypes in gender and sexuality studies. Perhaps best known is Judith Butler and her book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Disrupting the masculine and feminine binary, Butler questions the category *woman*, itself. But perhaps most subversively, she posits that, rather than an identity one

is born with, gender is a *performance*. Virpi Lehtinen's book *Luce Irigaray's Phenomenology of Feminine Being* continues in this vein asserting that feminine identity is a network of lived experience including embodied, affective, and spiritual relations with oneself, with others, and with the world (Preface ix). Lehtinen reminds us that Irigaray argues that each woman is individually distinct, but is also connected to a network of others. Irigaray's project is to free women from the male / female binary, an invisible "style" that male philosophers, including Plato and Aristotle among others, canonized. She maintains that the masculine code privileges sight over the feminine preference for the tactile, touch (21-27). In the public breastfeeding debate, society's censorship concerns itself with the breast as a sexual object that must be hidden from sight; whereas, lactivists argue that breastfeeding is a maternal, utilitarian task involving skin-to-skin contact between a woman and her baby. Ultimately, Irigaray asks the central questions: What does woman mean? And what does it mean to be a woman? (23). She challenges continental philosophy's portrayal of women as incomplete souls, subpar material bodies, and damaging to male Platonic / pure thought. Ultimately, she questions this dualistic portrayal of the male / female code. Irigaray's careful deconstruction of gender norms reveal the layers of embodied lived experience that comprise continental philosophy and its Western ideal of women:

Yet, the Ideal of Woman is itself a deviation from the (masculine) norm of humanity. So the Ideal to which woman participates is in all cases dominated by the masculine norm. Thus, as the Ideal of man is external to her humanity as a woman, she only can imitate this Ideal,

without participating in it directly, Thus, both as a human and as a woman, woman lacks her own ideal; she only has a possibility of participating in real humanity through the Ideal of masculinity.

(27-28)

Here we recall Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*.

Kristeva names the *abject* as the excluded third in the subject-object dichotomy, paving the way for gender breakdown, disruption, and subversion. If we consider the abject in the public breastfeeding sphere, we might do well to remember Lunceford's critique of the utilitarian versus the sexualized rhetoric of the breast itself. Perhaps a third rhetorical category is necessary to birth a genuine dialogue about public breastfeeding and censorship. Kristeva's work in *Desire and Language* and, especially, *Strangers To Ourselves* is also crucial to understanding the abject, or excluded third, in regards to gender as socio-cultural construction. But abject connotes what is unwanted and hidden. From a patriarchal gaze, breastfeeding mothers are the abject. But calling ourselves abject reinforces a connotation of inherent uncleanness. How does one re-connote what has been deemed dirty, especially if that thing is oneself?

In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Hélène Cixous introduces the metaphor of "white ink" to imagine using breast milk to write (312). "White ink" works toward an unalienated relation to female bodies in general and a universal reunion with the maternal body. Cixous' *rootprints*, *Stigmata*, and *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* also explore what it means to be female in patriarchal coded language and culture. Cixous' answers for entrapment are subversion, play, invention, and finally celebration or

jouissance. Her new—feminine—way of writing, *écriture féminine*, acknowledges the masculine codes embedded in language and seeks to subvert and play with the power structures of written expression. Cixous celebrates the female body, sex, the limitations of language, and the fractured self. Much like Irigaray, she liberates woman by seeing what has always been there but not previously acknowledged or appreciated. Finally, Iris Marion Young edits a volume, *On Female Body Experience*, a collection of scholarly essays that personalize theory in their recollection of lived experience(s). Beginning with the opening essay that rethinks gender, each essay further complicates and problematizes traditional categories while simultaneously addressing issues of womanhood, including the sexuality of breasts.

Selfies: Content Unavailable

Due to the lack of scholarship attending to these issues, I include the following recent newspaper and magazines articles that report social media platforms' censorship of female breasts.

In her article “Breast-Feeding Women Descend on Walmart After Store Shames Nursing Mom,” Liz Dwyer writes about Elizabeth Morena, a new mom, who was told by a manager at an Oklahoma Walmart to stop nursing her baby and to cover up. After leaving the store humiliated, Morena and twenty other mothers and their infants later publicly protested Walmart's request to leave by staging a “nurse-in.” Dwyer writes, “A nurse-in is like an old-school sit-in, but with more breast-feeding.” Morena and her friends protested by walking around the Walmart with their babies, some of the mothers

openly breastfeeding during the march. Lisa Amir cites more examples of stores asking breastfeeding women and their babies to leave the premises, even though breastfeeding in public is a mother's legal right. In her journal article, "Breastfeeding in public: You can do it?" published in *International Breastfeeding* last December, Amir maintains that for mothers to successfully breastfeed their infants, they must be allowed to do so at any given time in any location without being shamed or guilted by the community. Moreover she insists that breastfeeding not only be allowed, but also that it must be *visible*:

In many cultures today there is a conflict between the concept of breast milk being pure (like tears), and contaminated or "dirty" (like genital secretions or vomit). In these settings, the female breast may be considered primarily a sexual organ, and therefore a private part of the body, which needs to be invisible in the public arena. In order to increase breastfeeding initiation and duration and to reduce health inequities, breastfeeding needs to be more visible.

Amir notes that nursing covers actually make breastfeeding invisible, which paradoxically discourages public breastfeeding. She observes that in some cultures breast milk is actually considered unclean or dirty. Similarly, the breast itself is often thought to be a private part of the female body. Even in the United States, these attitudes can be seen and are often felt by breastfeeding mothers, as Elizabeth Moreno's experience suggests.

Amber Hinds, a mother who is also a certified lactation counselor and blogger at *Au Coeur* wrote in her guest post for *The Huffington Post, Parents Blog* about a personal experience in which she was asked to stop breastfeeding in public. In "Why I'm Glad

Someone Told *Me* to Stop Breastfeeding In Public,” Hinds recounts swimming with her family at a county recreation center’s indoor pool. When Hinds’ baby began fussing, she instinctively allowed the baby to latch onto her breast and nurse. Hinds was immediately approached by a lifeguard, asked to leave the pool’s premises, and told she could continue breastfeeding in the locker room. Because Hinds had her other young daughter with her at the pool, she was hesitant to take the whole family into the locker room to finish feeding the baby. She told the lifeguard that state law protects her right to breastfeed wherever she can legally be and continued feeding her baby. Hinds concludes her essay by sharing feelings of overwhelming confusion and shame in spite of her knowledge and experience as a certified lactation consultant.

Hinds links to Katharine McKinney’s article “If You Don’t Support Breastfeeding In Public, You Don’t Support Breastfeeding” also on *The Huffington Post, Parents Blog*. McKinney lists the several reasons for support of public breastfeeding, including the biological fact that a mother’s health and milk supply are both threatened by attempting to pump before leaving the house and/or packing formula to feed the baby in public. In both scenarios, the mother’s breast will still fill with let-down milk. If the baby does not drain the breast, then the milk may cause discomfort, pain, and—not uncommonly—a breast infection. Additionally, this skipped feeding sends a biological signal to the mother to produce less milk since the baby is not draining the breast at an expected feeding time, thus reducing the mother’s milk supply. McKinney argues that if women expect to continue their public lives while breastfeeding, they must have accessibility and public

support to breastfeed their babies in public. If you don't support public breastfeeding, you don't support breastfeeding, at all, McKinney concludes.

Because of the lack of community support for public breastfeeding, many mothers are turning to the Internet for support from online breastfeeding communities. Yet, even here the mothers are censored, shamed, and guilted for feeding their babies in public spaces. In "*BuzzFeed's* List of 25 Stunning Images of Women Breastfeeding" subtitled "The most natural thing in the world," nine of the Instagram photos had been censored at the time this chapter was written. The error message "Content unavailable" substituted for the photograph of mother and child.

Exposure as Erasure

Monica Beyer's "Why Instagram is shutting down moms' accounts." shares mothers' stories of their accounts being deactivated by Instagram due to breastfeeding selfies: "The hypocrisy of censoring a breastfeeding or baby photo when photos of thong-clad bottoms are allowed is another major question that should be answered." Beyer quotes Mandy Allender who had her first Instagram account (@Tempestbeauty) disabled, but who has never been able to rouse a response from Instagram: "The loss of my original account is heartbreaking to me. Four thousand images. The birth of my third child. Priceless breastfeeding photos. But not just that, because I had all of the images backed up to my computer...but the loss of the story. I treat Instagram like a living scrapbook." Beyer also quotes Jordine Chase, a breastfeeding advocate: "Women look for support online and this issue affects their ability to get that support. Researchers have found lack of support for

breastfeeding in public is a factor in early weaning. So this isn't just a women's rights, or a human rights issue — it's also a public health issue."

But individual mothers are not the only posters experiencing silencing. Entire lactation support groups such as The Leaky Boob have also had accounts deactivated. *The Huffington Post, Parents Blog* reported the on-again, off-again nature of Instagram's redaction of nursing mothers in its article "Breastfeeding Photos on Instagram Get 'The Leaky Book' Disabled, Then Reinstated." Instagram deactivated the online breastfeeding community's account on June 8, 2013. Jessica Martin-Weber, who runs the organization's website, told *The Huffington Post* that she received several relatively ambiguous warnings about content on her account. In spite of repeated efforts, she could not obtain more information about why her account was deactivated.

Dominic Kelly's article "Mom's Controversial Breastfeeding Picture Brings Supportive Moms Together On Social Media," dated January 27, 2015, covers Kaya Wright's experience of unexpectedly getting a notification from Facebook when her photo, posted on a closed group for breastfeeding moms, was flagged for nudity. She thought it was a joke, at first, and some of her friends wondered if the photo had been reported by mistake. In solidarity, several of Kaya's friends posted their breastfeeding photos on the Facebook breastfeeding group's closed page. Kaya's statement to Kelly was "In the Western world breasts are sexualized[...]. But people need to remember that first and foremost breasts are for feeding babies."

In answer to the question “Does Facebook allow photos of mothers breastfeeding?”, the official policy on Facebook’s “Help Center” page for breastfeeding photos is as follows:

Yes. We agree that breastfeeding is natural and beautiful and we're glad to know that it's important for mothers to share their experiences with others on Facebook. The vast majority of these photos are compliant with our policies.

Please note that the photos we review are almost exclusively brought to our attention by other Facebook members who complain.

Erasure as Exposure

Additionally, Facebook maintains that it “protects expression that meets the community standards” outlined on its “Community Standards” page. Facebook’s updated policy on nudity is the following:

Facebook has a strict policy against the sharing of pornographic content and any explicitly sexual content where a minor is involved.

We also impose limitations on the display of nudity. We aspire to respect people’s right to share content of personal importance, whether those are photos of a sculpture like Michelangelo's David or family photos of a child breastfeeding.

However, Tracy Miller reports in her article for the *New York Daily* “Facebook 'censorship' of mastectomy photos angers breast cancer awareness advocates” that

Facebook’s June 2013 censorship of cancer survivors’ mastectomy photos unnecessarily violated its own policy while angering an entire cancer survivor community. Professional photographer David Jay who created *The SCAR Project*, a series that depicts young cancer survivors bearing their mastectomy scars has had photos removed from his page and has been banned from Facebook several times—thirty days each infraction. “When they remove these photos, the comments go with them,” Jay told the *New York Daily News*. Scorchy Barrington, who has Stage IV breast cancer, began a Change.org petition stating:

Facebook says these photos violate their policy—essentially putting these images in the same category as pornography. The Scar Project, Stupid Dumb Breast Cancer and other pages like them do not objectify or sexualize the human anatomy. They document the physical and emotional toll of women and men who have undergone mastectomies. They raise awareness of the disease and reinforce the need for early intervention and research toward a cure.

At the time of this chapter’s writing, the petition had 21,772 supporters with an announcement that it had made change (change.org). The new Facebook policy regarding posting mastectomy photographs answers the question “Does Facebook allow post-mastectomy photos?” as follows:

Yes. We agree that undergoing a mastectomy is a life-changing experience and that sharing photos can help raise awareness about breast cancer and support the men and women facing a diagnosis,

undergoing treatment or living with the scars of cancer. The vast majority of these kinds of photos are compliant with our policies.



Fig. 10. Photograph from *The SCAR Project*

In her guest post, “The ‘N’ Word,” for *The SCAR Project Blog*, breast cancer survivor Debi Memmolo wrote the following last year:

This week Facebook removed The SCAR Project’s photographs, posted to honor one of the SCAR girls in light of her recent passing, February 23. Hundreds of followers of The SCAR Project wrote beautiful messages upon seeing these photographs (while they were still up) and hearing the news of her death. And then, without warning (or apparently a deep thought), Facebook took them all down and locked David Jay out of his own page. Why? Because nipples are improper

nudity on Facebook and a hint of one of Vanessa's nipples was in one of the images.

The Mothers of Instagram movement proves an excellent example of today's politicized female body urging society to decriminalize public breastfeeding, to desexualize the mother's breast, and to de-censor online breastfeeding photographs. The SCAR Project, too, reminds us that breasts are an anatomical reality. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram would do well to remember the rhetorics surrounding female identity and, in particular, female breasts are more diverse and nuanced than assumed sexual connotations. The female areola is *both* a natural boundary *and* a socially constructed border.

The Areola Is a Circle, And a Circle Is a Liminal Line.

In her Introduction to *In A Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan reminds us of “the contrast between the neatness of exit with the messiness and heartbreak of voice” (xix). Cixous also notes, “The voices that touch us most strongly are the voices that come still naked, voices from before the door of Paradise, from the time when we knew neither shame nor fear” (49). Cixous defines voice: “In the person, the voice is what finds its source at the most ancient layer” (49). Gilligan defines voice as what “the neuroscientist Damasio calls core consciousness or the core sense of self—the knowing self that registers our experience from moment to moment by picking up the music, the ‘feeling of what happens’” (22). She continues, “The resistance I observed in adolescent girls and young

boys was a resistance to losing pleasure and entering a hierarchy that required a sacrifice of love” (22). Gilligan writes:

To have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person. But speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act. When people ask me what I mean by voice and I think of the question more reflectively, I say that by voice I mean something like what people mean when they speak of the core of the self. [...] And voice is a powerful psychological instrument and channel, connecting inner and outer worlds. For these reasons, voice is a new key for understanding the psychological, social and cultural order—a litmus test of relationship and a measure psychological health. (xvi)

Italian feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero also offers voice and by extension hearing as an alternative sensory mode to sight. Cavarero’s new gaze is a gaze that speaks, like a mother breastfeeding her newborn. Skin-to-skin, eyes making contact with the infant’s, the mother speaks to her nursing baby who recognizes her voice as a familiar, comforting sound, heard in utero. Cavarero recognizes the importance of the embodied uniqueness of voice, particularly the female voice. In her book *For More Than One Voice*, she writes, “The voice, whatever it says, communicates the uniqueness of the one who emits it, and can be recognized by those to whom one speaks. [...] Breathing into their mouths, God creates unique beings—just as their voices, in which His voice reverberates, reveal them to be unique” (24-25). In her introduction to her book

Augustine on the Body, previously her dissertation, Margaret Miles writes that she regrets using the words *the body* in her title (ii). She explains: “The phrase seems to assume and imply that there is such a thing as a generic (human) body, a body without sex, skin, color, ethnicity, health or illness, nourishment or its lack, or any number of other variables that make for radically different bodies and different bodily experiences” (ii). She adds, “No one has ever seen or touched ‘the body;’ we see and touch particular bodies, bodies with intelligence and experience” (ii).

A thought experiment: What if, like other mammals, female humans did not grow breasts in adolescence and retain them throughout their lifetimes? Would the male gaze view a public breast as a sexual object? Or would it regard the exposed swollen flesh as lactation? Would public breastfeeding and breastfeeding photos shared on social media continue to be censored or would they be regarded as biology? Furthermore, if this were the normal context of bare breasts, would the sexualization of female breasts be a fetish? A woman’s breasts and voice are utterly subjective, a symbol of agency and potentiality. Being thus, breasts require interpretation and interpreting subjects.

Laura Dodsworth’s beautiful book of photography *Bare Reality: 100 Women, Their Breasts, Their Stories* curates a body of uncensored images. Dodsworth interviews one hundred women, asking them to talk about their breasts, and includes their chest photo. What the women reveal about themselves is bravely honest: they express feelings about growing up, sexuality, motherhood, breastfeeding, relationships, body image, health, cancer and aging. In a global, networked, pluralized world, feminism, and material feminism in particular, allies with individuals, voices on the margins who have

been historically censored, unheard. Voice arrives at voices. Story stories. And the future of the body is bodies. Instead of censoring the female areola, we might remember that the areola is a circle, and a circle is a liminal line, neither within nor without, yet connecting inner and outer worlds.—Is the areola a liminal voice? Do breasts speak?—Artificially labeled separations, liminal lines also have the power to be welcoming thresholds, places of connection between mother and child, between the materialist subject and the world.



Fig. 11. Cover of *Bare Reality: 100 Women, Their Breasts, Their Stories*

CHAPTER FIVE

DUCTS

“Our boobs will be stronger than their stones.”
FEMEN, #toplessjihad

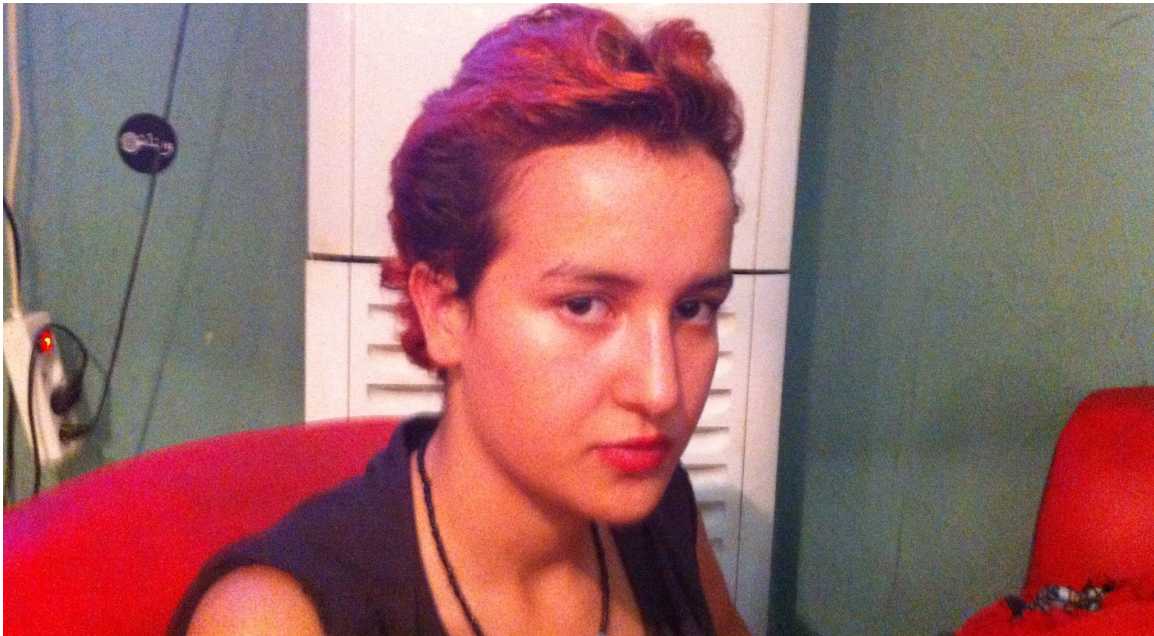


Fig. 12. Amina (Sbouï) Tyler

Breasts Obstruct Religious Narratives

In his article, “Sextremists Roadshow: On Amina Tyler And FEMEN’s Topless Protests,” Jeremy Sheeler writes about the strange story of Amina Tyler and FEMEN, a noteworthy protest which took place in March 2013:

Back in mid-March, a 19-year old woman named Amina Tyler from the tiny, North African country of Tunisia became an international sensation when she posted two topless photos of herself on Facebook. Although the photos did break Facebook “Community Guidelines,” this sort of action usually does not garner much attention. The reason, though, for the interest was across her bared chest the words “Fuck your morals” were scrawled and in Arabic “My body belongs to me,

and is not the source of anyone's honor." Later, in an interview with Tunisian newspaper *Jadal*, Amina stated the pictures were an attempt to "make the voice of Tunisian women heard and protect them from suppression." Not surprisingly, the photos sparked fierce reactions from conservative religious leaders throughout the country, with the head of the *Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice* in Tunisia calling for her to be "stoned to death."

Tyler's story recalls Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" story of her aunt, the seventeen-year-old Bhubaneshwari, who hanged herself during her period to allow her body to speak for her—to show that she had not committed suicide because pregnant but for political reasons. In her essay "If Only" Spivak writes the following:

In order to show, that whereas the British Indian reform of sati is much celebrated, when a young, single girl attempted to write resistance in her very body, she could not be read. If only I could occupy with desire, that singular inscribed body. I have tried to understand how she felt as she waited for her periods to begin, so she could disprove what she knew would be the conclusion drawn from her hanged body—illicit pregnancy.

Female bodies disrupt narratives, even and maybe especially religious ones. Individual bodies, like Amina Tyler's, are creating female bodies and religion as a universal discourse.



Fig. 13. Amina Tyler's posted Facebook photos

Amina Tyler entered the Burkean Parlor using the tools available to her as a Muslim woman in a Muslim country: her own body, a camera, and a Facebook page. In her *New Yorker* article "How To Provoke National Unrest With A Facebook Photo" Emily Greenhouse writes, "In the digital age, no editor or mediator gets to decide how to frame a public battle. A woman has a room, a body, a camera, and a Facebook profile of one's own." Greenhouse details the unpredictable aftermath of Tyler's topless Facebook post: FEMEN, a feminist activist organization of volunteers, took off their shirts. In cities dotting Eastern Europe, FEMEN took to the streets to bare their breasts on Tyler's behalf. Chanting "Free Amina!" in front of mosques and other holy places, several of the naked-from-the-waist-up women were arrested. But two-and-a-half months after her arrest, Amina Tyler was released (Greenhouse). Why was it important that FEMEN took off

their shirts to expose their boobs? And indeed, what can breast rhetoric teach us about being exposed and exposing?

As noted previously Brent Lunceford's *Naked Politics: Nudity, Political Action, and the Rhetoric of the Body* considers nudity from a rhetorical perspective. What are we communicating by exposure? Furthermore how does an audience interpret what we have displayed? Through Lunceford's lens of the nude breast as protest, we can read FEMEN's breasts as an act of subversive agency. By removing their shirts, FEMEN women took back their own bodies, agencies, and narratives. Using their bodies and the technology available to them, social media platforms in particular, these women reframed their personhood. The politicized body becomes women politicizing their own bodies, a subversive disruption of the norm—a returned gaze, a leaky frame. Breasts, like veils, help us understand what it means to be exposed and to expose. Whether lactation accommodation, topless beaches, or the legality of shirtless women in NYC, female breasts highlight the inequality between male and female bodies. Breasts disrupt the narrative of normalcy. In his article, "Topless Jihad: Why Femen Is Right," Jeffrey Taylor writes the following:

Now that they have moved to the West, Femen has courageously broken rules and enlivened the debate over religion's role in our world. Its activists are charting a new route for public discourse about women and religion, and making it an unabashedly universal discourse, venturing into realms where they may be hated, and they may yet pay a high price for this.

But in an unexpected plot twist, Amina Tyler leaves FEMEN, accusing the feminists who helped free her of being “Islamophobic” (Taylor). I find this fascinating because it complicates and problematizes the clean binary of feminism versus religion, the naked female breast versus as taboo. In Amina Tyler we see, if not a contradiction, then certainly a paradox. Taylor, too, picks up on this tension:

The media has long fostered the view that religion should be de facto exempt from the logical scrutiny applied to other subjects. I am not disputing the right to practice the religion of one's choice, but rather the prevailing cultural rectitude that puts faith beyond the pale of commonsense review, and (in Amina's case), characterizes as “Islamophobic” criticism of the criminal mistreatment of a young woman for daring to buck her society's norms, or of Femen for attacking the forced wearing of the hijab.

Should religion be above critique, especially as it relates to physical threat and harming of the individual? And what is harm? Who defines the term? And who determines if a person is “harmed”? I argue along with Nuraan Davids in his article “Are Muslim women in need of Islamic feminism? In consideration of a re-imagined Islamic educational discourse” that “Muslim women need to engage and deliberate with the discourse of the Qur’an, so that they can begin to bring into contestation the privilege of male interpretation.” Additionally, I contend that religion should be critiqued as it relates to the potential harm of the *individual*. Amina Tyler was sentence by a male Muslim cleric’s

fatwa to serve seven years in jail followed by stoning for posting an immodest Facebook picture (FEMEN).

Feminist psychologist and researcher Carol Gilligan can help us with the enormous task of trying to untangle the knotty dilemma of morality. Gilligan asks: Can morality be individual agency even as morality (à la organized religion) is often synonymous with harmony within the collective? What should we do with the individual's subjective experience when it opposes the objective values of the group? And what of the process of developing morality in men, in women? In *The Birth of Pleasure*, Carol Gilligan asks us to reimagine love as pleasure by substituting the tragedy of Oedipus with the myth of Psyche and Cupid when discussing desire, gender roles, and human sexuality:

Psyche must journey through a wasteland of relationships among women, a landscape devastated by envy and fear. But the road she has taken is unfamiliar in part because, in exposing the costs to women of living in patriarchy, it will also lead her out of that territory. To leave patriarchy, she must cross its psychic terrain, and as the old woman foretells, the labor of love that leads to the birth of pleasure is a difficult psychological labor" (55).

Although the immediate connection between patriarchy and religious discourse might not be explicit, Gilligan's move to substitute the dominant male narrative of Oedipus with the female narrative of Psyche (and Cupid) offers us a way out of patriarchal cultural codes in language and by extension practice. Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, is a religion

of the word. Gilligan argues that introducing alternate stories opens up the governing discourse to include Others who lack the authority to speak, often women and children in religious spheres.

Again *Luce Irigaray's Phenomenology of Feminine Being* by Virpi Lehtinen argues feminine identity as a network of *lived experience*: embodied, affective, and spiritual relations to oneself, to o/Others, and to the world (Preface ix). Irigaray sees each woman as individually distinct, but also connected to a network of others.

Lehtinen via Irigaray posits that because she is defined by male philosophers and Western culture as the Other half of man a woman can never be or become herself. She performs an identity outside herself, a role created for her by another. This recalls Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva's linguistic entrapment of being forced to speak and write from within patriarchal coded language as well as Edward Said's critical lens of Orientalism. If we apply this to religious discourse, we see that females are often defined by their relationships with men—not only with their spouses but also with religious leaders and fellow congregants. If Gilligan suggests utilizing different, more inclusive stories, then Irigaray offers us a way to define (or un-define) women in relationship not only to men, but also in relationship to themselves, other women, and G/god.

As argued earlier, French feminist Helene Cixous suggests subversion by invention. *Écriture féminine*, established by Cixous as a new feminine way of writing models its author's famous invocation in "The Laugh of the Medusa": "Write yourself. Your body must be heard." In her multitudinous body of work, Cixous engages the taboo by subversive play with language itself.

Similarly, Shirin Neshat's photograph collections, *Unveiling* and *Women of Allah*, explore notions of the female form in relation to Islamic fundamentalism and militancy. Portraits of women entirely overlaid by Persian calligraphy comprise her *Women of Allah* series (Dadi). Allowing the female body to be read as a literal text, Neshat invites her audience to acknowledge the identity-dilemma that many Muslim women encounter and embody: female bodies are both authors and texts. Culturally and religiously, the female Muslim body blurs the lines between feminism and religious doctrine. In both Amina Tyler's censored photographs of her bared chest and Shirin Neshat's art, we feel the tension of women who are simultaneously both being read and who are actively reading. We can trace breasts' patriarchal encoding all the way back to Augustine. But breast texts are open to new, better exegesis by the interpreting subject. Female breasts obstruct the dominant religious discourse because they have multiple meanings and applications.

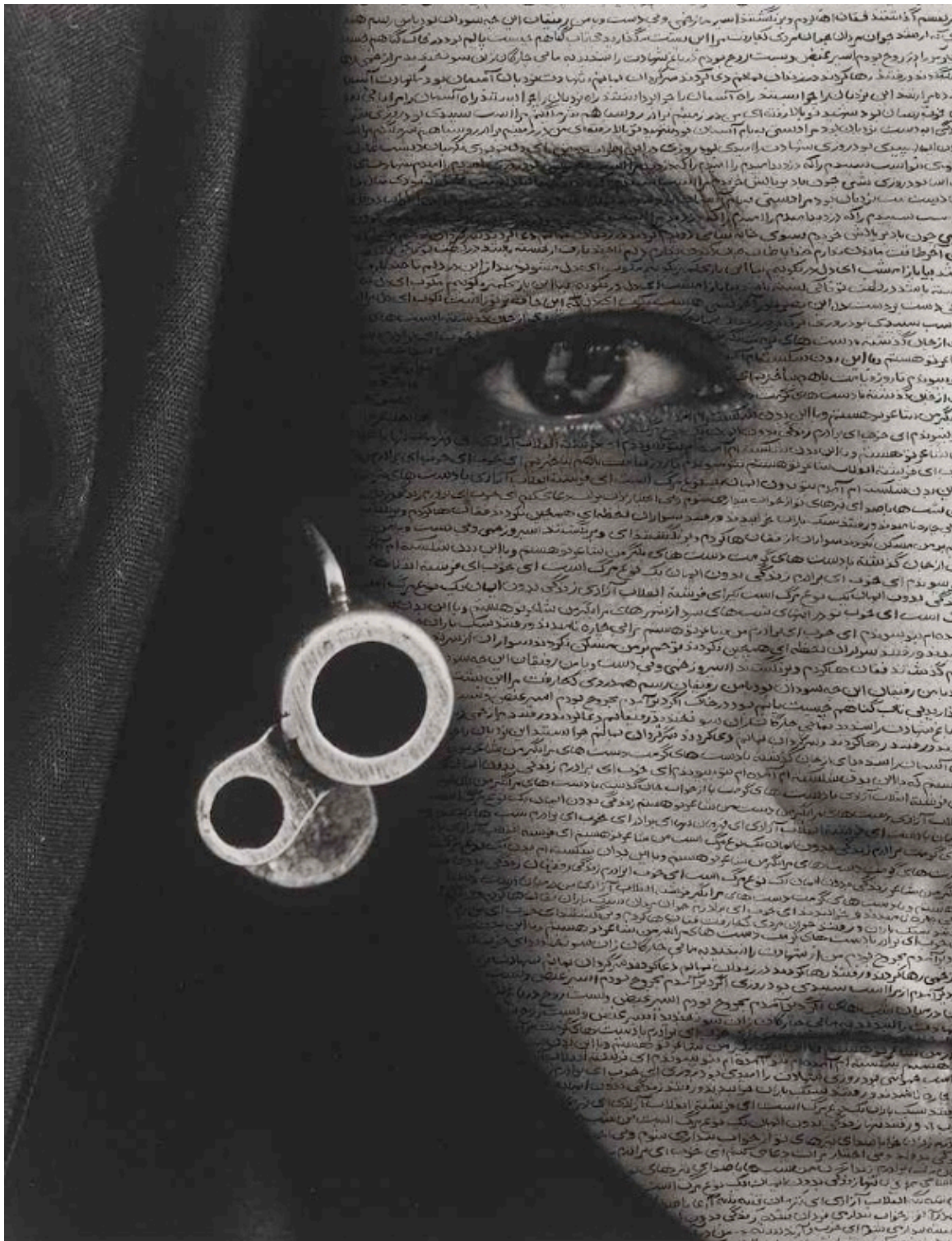


Fig. 14. Shirin Neshat's "Speechless"

Breasts Obstruct Political Narratives

On July 17, 2016 in Cleveland Ohio, 100 women disrupted the Republican National Convention by taking off their clothes. Spencer Tunick's mass nude photo shoot entitled "Everything She Says She Means" relies on two simple truths: the arresting attention of the naked female body and the power of the collective. In "100 Heroines Just Posed Nude At The Republican Convention," Priscilla Frank quotes Tunick's reason for including mirrors in the shoot: "The mirrors communicate that we are a reflection of ourselves, each other, and of, the world that surrounds us. The woman becomes the future and the future becomes the woman." Although Tunick's vision for the overall project was to model unadorned unity at the political event—he'd been planning the shoot since 2013 (Storey), the women themselves had differing reasons for undressing: some of the women modeled body positivity post-childbirth and disease, some were rape victims trying to heal, some were trying to stick it to the GOP. But Frank writes that "with 'Everything She Says And Means,' women joined together to show just how non-controversial a woman's naked body is." In mass, the differences became invisible, as one woman expressed, "I was struck by the sameness of all the different bodies."



Fig. 15. “Everything She Says She Means”

With “Everything She Says She Means” functions as a mirroring of #toplessjihad. When Amina Tyler posted her topless “Fuck Your Morals” photo on Facebook, she disrupted a religious narrative with her nude body. Similarly, Tunick’s volunteer nude models disrupted a narrative, this time political, with their bodies. Femen women voluntarily de-robed in solidarity to protest Tyler’s death sentence. The “Everything She Says She Means” women de-robed in solidarity “against the rhetoric of hatred that’s being spewed out from the Republican party; against the misogynistic, xenophobic, racist, anti-LGBTQ, ableist platform that has defined hating others as an acceptable American lifestyle” (Frank). Recall Brett Lunceford’s questions in *Naked Politics*: why do we disrobe, and what are we communicating by exposure? Furthermore, how does an audience interpret what we have displayed? In short, how does an audience frame female nudity? And is nudity itself a challenge to one right way of seeing?



Fig. 16. Rachel Levit Ruiz. “Breast-feeding the Microbiome.” *The New Yorker*, Condé Nast. 22 July 2016. Web. 23 July 2016.

Breasts as Leaky Connectors

Amelia Jones writes in *Seeing Differently* about “the leaking frame of the argument on how to see differently” (1). She explains the leakages first using Derrida’s “beveling”:
“For Derrida this beveling is a metaphor for the contamination of interpretation. There is a staining on the passe-partout, marking the bodily and desiring role of the interpreter in defining what a work is and what it means” (2). We might recognize Derrida’s idea of interpreter-contamination as another iteration of Andrew Pickering’s scientific metaphor of the mangle, namely that the hypothesizing scientist contaminates the experiment always. Jones also turns to Trinh T. Minh-ha and her “deconstruction of the logic of

categorizing behind much feminist thinking, '[d]espite our desperate, eternal attempt to separate, contain, and mend, categories always leak'" (182). These leakages recall Elizabeth Grosz's leaky female body in *Volatile Bodies* and Susan Hekman's perception leakages in *The Materiality of Knowledge*. And finally, she includes Merleau-Ponty's theory of projection as our "reaction to the disorientations posed by difference" (219). Jones's concluding chapter offers queer vision and art as a way to escape contemporary gender and sexual binaries of thinking and looking at female bodies, but she also writes, "we need new models to think and 'see differently'" and that while "we cannot fully extricate ourselves from binaries, it is imperative that we try to imagine a productive and future-oriented way of thinking otherwise" (219).

Thinking Otherwise

Andrew Parker proposes in *The Theorist's Mother* that "what unifies the otherwise disparate traditions of critical theory and philosophy from Karl Marx to Jacques Derrida is their troubled relation to maternity" (1). Parker quotes philosopher Sara Ruddick's complex reaction to Simone de Beauvoir's groundbreaking book *The Second Sex*:

During most of the years that I was actively taking care of my children, mothering was said to be love and feminine duty rather than a thoughtful project. [...] As a 'philosopher,' I could imagine myself 'thinking' only when I was not being 'a mother' but was at 'work'—teaching or better still when I was trying to write about the transcendent objects and transcendental questions of philosophy. (7)

Parker uses Ruddick's reaction to argue that "not only that mothers *think* (a radical notion then as now) but further that they think *distinctively*." He writes, "How might a mother, a person who thinks regularly and intently about children, think about 'the world'? What styles of cognition and perception might mothers develop?" (7). Parker also uses Emmanuel Levinas' *Otherwise Than Being* to flesh out his thesis that maternal ways of thinking and being have been historically excluded. Parker writes, "Levinas suggests that the maternal body—at once host and hostage to an internal Other—is the universal model for ethical responsibility regardless of a person's gender" (20). Parker quotes Levinas:

The one-for-the-other has the form of sensibility or vulnerability, pure passivity or susceptibility, passive to the point of becoming an inspiration, that is, alterity in the same, the trope of the body animated by the soul, psyche in the form of a hand that gives even the bread taken from its own mouth. Here the psyche is the maternal body. (20)

If the maternal lens has been historically ignored by foundational theorists including Jacques Derrida, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud, what might seeing otherwise reveal? Additionally if we were to exchange a film lens for the metaphor of the mangle and include ourselves in our perceptions, what would that look like? To zoom in on the female body is to recognize breasts as so much more than mere sex objects. Breasts are an integral part of a female body's anatomy, a biology that includes inherent sexuality and functionality. By panning out, we observe that breasts, both as anatomical parts and as a synecdoche for women, have been traditionally viewed as guilty. But we also witness

that boobs' guilt has been ascribed by people who were boobs themselves. We need both a deeper way to look at breasts in their functionality and also a broader way to look at breasts in their historicity. By acknowledging our own onto-epistemological resolution(s), we might conclude that there are many ways to see.

Seeing Otherwise

My life didn't begin until I had my children, I find myself sometimes saying. And this feels simultaneously dead-on accurate and smudgily wrong. When I recount the years, I see I had a life before I became a mother: I went to school, I got married, I taught. I had friends and hobbies and fascinations. So why do I find myself saying this rightish/wrongish thing?

I think what I mean by the above is that the various threads of my life didn't intersect into a cohesive meaning until I had Julia. Paradoxically, when I gave birth to my first daughter, I left the church, the ministry, and organized religion. This had been a long time coming, but I didn't have enough of a reason for that betrayal until I had a daughter. Julia was born with a hole in her heart, which made nursing harder for her. Breastfeeding tired her out. She'd nurse on one breast and then take a little nap, long enough for me to feel I should be doing something but not long enough for me to actually do it. We did this all day, all night.

When I think about voice and about story and by extension about meaning and love, I think about those long day-nights. I wonder if my experience is true for other

women. I didn't find my voice until I needed it. I didn't know my story, couldn't create it, until I had to for another.

If Luanne Frank is correct in her article "Heidegger, Captain Paul Watson, and the 'Look' of Leviathan," we are not only diminished but we can also grow by gazes. The breastfeeding gaze is just the right distance for intimacy between two separate subjects. It is a gaze of two unique persons functioning beautifully as one unit. A gaze that acknowledges a return gaze has been previously called ethics. I would like to rename this gaze-into-gaze love.

In her essay, "Loving Attention: Lessons in Love from *The Philadelphia Story*", Susan Wolf asks us to reconsider a new way of looking. She recalls Iris Murdoch's theory of morality and more specifically the active moral agent's central duty of acknowledging "the individual, thought of as knowable by love" and furthermore argues that love constrains us to look differently than Hollywood or contemporary culture has heretofore modeled (174). A just and loving gaze would recognize the individual with all her strengths and faults and would love her unreservedly with this knowledge. The opposite of blind love, it is a blinkered love. Wolf cites examples from the film *The Philadelphia Story*, but I wonder if a blinkered look of love is in actuality the just and loving gaze of a mother. Additionally, Wolf quotes feminist theorist Marilyn Frye to add that this new way of looking would recognize the independence of the Other. It would not be a consuming gaze, but instead would acknowledge the complexity of the Other, welcoming said complexity as bringing always new things to learn about the Other. This is the breastfeeding gaze, not just the mother's gaze but the returned gaze of the baby,

with each subject growing in and by the Other's eyes. It is the opposite of a sexualized gaze that objectifies what it admires. It is a granting gaze, a generosity that receives double what it yields. This is St. Augustine's doctrine of *caritas*, love for the Other that receives in its gift.

Alain Badiou argues in his recent *In Praise of Love* that love must be re-invented to recall its inherent risk and adventure. Badiou identifies love as perceiving the world through the eyes of two as opposed to only one. And it seems to me that breasts are a good place to begin.

CHAPTER SIX

SUPPORT

"Breasts are ubiquitous in twenty-first-century media culture—as objects.

Is it possible in the face of such overdetermined meaning to imagine
a subjective breast?"

Margaret R Miles,

A Complex Delight: The Secularization of the Breast, 1350-1750

“In the text of pleasure, the opposing forces are no longer repressed but in a state of
becoming: nothing is really antagonistic, everything is plural.

Can it be that pleasure makes us objective?"

Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*



Fig. 17. Warner's 1944 advertisement for bra sizes A through D. "Bra Size." *Wikipedia*. Wikipedia, n.d. Web. 27 Aug. 2016.

The Sentence Is A Body.

Eve, the mother of all according to some religious traditions, traded innocence for knowledge, and this stolen knowledge exiled her from the world she knew into another

world, a foreign and hostile place where she learned shame, guilt, and death. In *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero highlights the misinterpretation that the Old Testament *Genesis* creation account suffers from a Christian reading; namely, that the world was created by God's *speech*. Cavarero argues that a more accurate translation of the creation of the world would use the words *breath* and *voice* as opposed to speech (20). She traces God's breath back to the prophets who lend him their mouths so that eventually God's breath/voice becomes speech.

This might seem overly pedantic to our Western ears, but if we can suspend critique momentarily, the implications are worth exploring. The creator's breath animates life; voice breathes out being. If babies hear the sound of the mother from the womb, long before language acquisition, the baby recognizes her mother's unique voice. Cavarero contrasts this auditory recognition with the Western privileging of sight, the infant's instantaneous recognition of voice through sound as opposed to the learned skill of vision and identification through practiced sight. Iris Marion Young writes in her essay collection *On Female Body Experience* that the chest is the center of a person's being-in-the-world and furthermore that men and women have different experiences of being-in-the-world (94). She claims that breasted existence is central to a woman's identity-building process and actualization. Noting the vast amounts of feminist writings on bodily experience and sexual identity, Young wonders at the lack of material on breasts (although this is currently changing, especially in the social sciences)—both from a personal and critical perspective. Young additionally is perplexed at this silence because

most women, in her experience (and in mine), are readily willing to talk about their breasts and are hardly ever neutral in their feelings about them. She notes how we rarely talk about breasts in conversation, much less in academic writing. One theory Young posits for this lack of dialogue is that breasts are scandalous for patriarchal norms because they disrupt the border between sexuality and motherhood. Indeed, breasts are *both...and*, an ambivalence that Brett Lunceford in his chapter “Weaponizing the Breast: Lactivism and Public Breastfeeding” in *Naked Politics: Nudity, Political Action, and the Rhetoric of the Body* claims is at the heart of the Facebook / Instagram censorship debate of breastfeeding photos. Young asks us to consider breasts as they inform a metaphysics of fluidity; of an evolving embodied history. Very few women have “ideal breasts,” and even the women who are lucky enough to possess these have said “ideal breasts” for only a fraction of their lives. In *The Pleasure of the Text*, Roland Barthes cites Nietzsche, “a tree is a new thing at every instant” (61), to focus on the process of becoming as opposed to the staticity of being. Barthes speaks of the “absolute flow of becoming” (61) and adds his characteristic zest by asking us to consider not only the meaning but also *the feeling of the meaning* of texts. English translation names this word *pleasure*, but perhaps more accurately Barthes in true French fashion asks us to consider the eroticism or *jouissance* of language (4).

Susan Hekman also in her *The Feminine Subject* traces the histories of feminism and gazes to the present-future to create *an emerging feminine subject, not a woman who speaks for all women, but a way of communicating multiplicity while also still retaining a community with common values and investments* (emphasis mine). In *The Material of*

Knowledge: Feminist Disclosures, she uses three settlements—the philosophy of science, analytic philosophy, Foucault: We have never been postmodern—to focus on the flow of flows that she envisions as feminism’s future. How can we contain emerging multiplicities in our classrooms and on university campuses?, she asks. Social justice issues are feminism’s next logical step in academe, she reasons. How to proceed? Hekman’s questions are two sides of the same coin: Who are we? and What do we do next? In *Material Feminisms*, which she co-edits with Stacy Alaimo, these questions are expanded upon and enlarged to include incorporeality, the female body itself. In a stunning moment within this essay compilation, Karen Barad states, “[W]hat is important about causal intra-actions is the fact that marks are left on bodies. Objectivity means being accountable to marks on bodies” (142). While most of this volume makes its work arguing that matter *matters*, this quotation stops me, takes my breath away. Science and empiricism collides with subjectivity and personhood in bodies. Is objectivity acknowledging what we see and, perhaps more controversially, that *we* see?

Elizabeth Grosz in *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* takes up this self-conscious, embodied approach to knowledge and meaning making. Grosz questions, What’s inside and what’s outside? How did we get here? Which came first the chicken or the egg? Can there be a *flesh of things*? And what do we do with the fact that many of the ways that we understand knowledge derive from a metaphor of privileged male sight? Anne Fausto-Sterling’s *Sexing the Body* also takes this mangled and mangling approach to knowledge via the metaphor of the Möbius strip. Again the question: What’s inside; what’s outside? Which came first? Fausto-Sterling asks us via molecular biology to

reconsider what we think we know regarding gender and sexuality's origins by placing these assumptions on a spectrum. She additionally cautions us to not forget that politics is always in the mangle of science and knowledge creation. Like religious dogma, scientific facts aren't discovered; they're created. Offering the example of hormones, Fausto-Sterling challenges the naming of hormones as sexual categories rather than growth categories. Fausto-Sterling's investigation of sexuality on a spectrum asks us to remember that there is a person in the mangle and that persons are mangles themselves.

Claudia Benthien's *Skin* seems a good way to bridge the material with the immaterial since skin itself is a marked boundary. Skin is *both* inside *and* outside. Again, touch is noted as the first sense to develop (when the embryo is less than three centimeters long), followed by auditory perception, and then sight (Introduction 7). Benthien treats nudity as a vulnerability that has all too often been incorrectly labeled taboo. For Benthien, sight is the archaic fear of being possessed by the consuming gaze of anOther (99). Her answer: only love is in a position to permit vulnerability.

Gestalt Switch: Milk as Metaphor

French feminist Julia Kristeva offers two insights as we travel towards a materialist subject possibility. First, using Freud's theory of the unconscious in *Strangers To Ourselves*, Kristeva locates the Other within every person. The foreigner, she tells us, is within, an internal exile. Relatedly, in *Powers of Horror: And Essay on Abjection*, she offers an excluded third, the abject, to help us think beyond the subject – object binary. By linking the sacred (or “set apart”) to the abject, Kristeva offers us a way of proceeding

without being reduced to binaries. It has been suggested to me that the breastfeeding censorship issue (both in public and on social media) falls under Kristeva's abject category, but I reject this because I see the breast as more nuanced and complex than simple horror (54-55). Perhaps the patriarchal gaze can reduce a woman feeding her dependent child to the category of abjectness (and I realize that Kristeva would argue that there is true beauty in both horror and abjectness), but I prefer the category of the materialist subject because it acknowledges the breast as more than an object of medical gaze or aesthetic film lens. It views the female breast as life sustenance. Furthermore, it implies a broader demographic: both men and women have material breasts and are subjects.

In *Three Steps On the Ladder of Writing*, Hélène Cixous identifies milk as ink, a phrase not easily dismissed or forgotten. *Milk as ink* contextualizes writing as both nourishing and nourishment. It connotes reunion with the female, specifically the maternal, body that I see as largely absent on most college campuses. It hints at the abject without making a nourished and nourishing erotic writing incestuous. Yet it feels both familiar and foreign. Like Barthes, Cixous in her body of writing connotes writing and the written word with *jouissance*. *Écriture féminine* speaks to multiple pleasures. She urges us to acknowledge the patriarchal male codes embedded in language and then to subvert them by play, flight, and by writing itself. Indeed, her works convey a playful, subversive, freeing emotional tone even as they deal with often heavy subjects such as exile and death. Cixous models a celebration in the face of endings and a subsequent creation in the wake of loss. In spite of her exile as a Jewish woman and the loss of her

young child, her Medusa laughs. I think this is why Cixous treats breath as sacred. Breath in Cixous' hands feels wave-like, steady. She recognizes truth as the thing that we can never utter, track down, or capture, but she delights in the pursuit. The inhale-exhale of life's breath causes her to confront pain but also to cling to pleasure. She quotes Kafka as making Moses say, "How beautiful the world is even in its ugliness." (*Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* 89). And Cixous' pleasure is multitudinous and accessible to all. If Kristeva identifies the abject as a stray, exiled and wandering, Cixous identifies the abject as a bird.

Cixous intimates that we desire to live as we have never lived; totally nude (*Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* 49).

Cixous notes that St. Augustine called the wound *blessed* (*Stigmata* 243).

Cixous speaks of the subject at risk and tells us that that is what a subject is: to be at risk (*rootprints* 171).

The materialist subject then would be a person at risk in her own body, an internal exile. An ethical vision would acknowledge the at-riskness of the subject and her material body. It would remember that bodies are unique material histories and allow for multiplicities. It would see the marks. Kristeva reminds us that St. Augustine named this ethic *caritas* or love (*Strangers To Ourselves* 85).

The Body Is A Sentence.

“There is an ancient Talmudic text that has always impressed me: God is absolutely extraordinary. In order to stamp coins, States use a mould. With a single mould they make many pieces, all alike. God, with the mould of his image, is able to create a dissimilar multitude: ‘I’s,’ all one of a kind.”

Emmanuel Levinas

In *Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory*, Susan A. Handelman writes in her chapter, “Escape From Textuality: The Fulfiller of Signs”:

We have characterized Rabbinic reading of texts as metonymical—as retaining differences within identity, stressing relationships of contiguity rather than substitution, preferring multivocal as opposed to univocal meanings, the play of 'as if' over the assertions of 'is,' juxtapositions over equivalencies, concrete images over abstractions. Rabbinic interpretations never dispenses with the particular form in which the idea is en clothed. The text, for the Rabbis, is a continuous generator of meaning, which arises from the innate logic of the divine language, the letter itself, and is not sought in a nonlinguistic realm external to the text. Language and the text are, to use a contemporary term, the space of differences, and the truth as conceived by the Rabbis was not an instantaneous unveiling of the One, but a continuous sequential process of interpretation. (88-89)

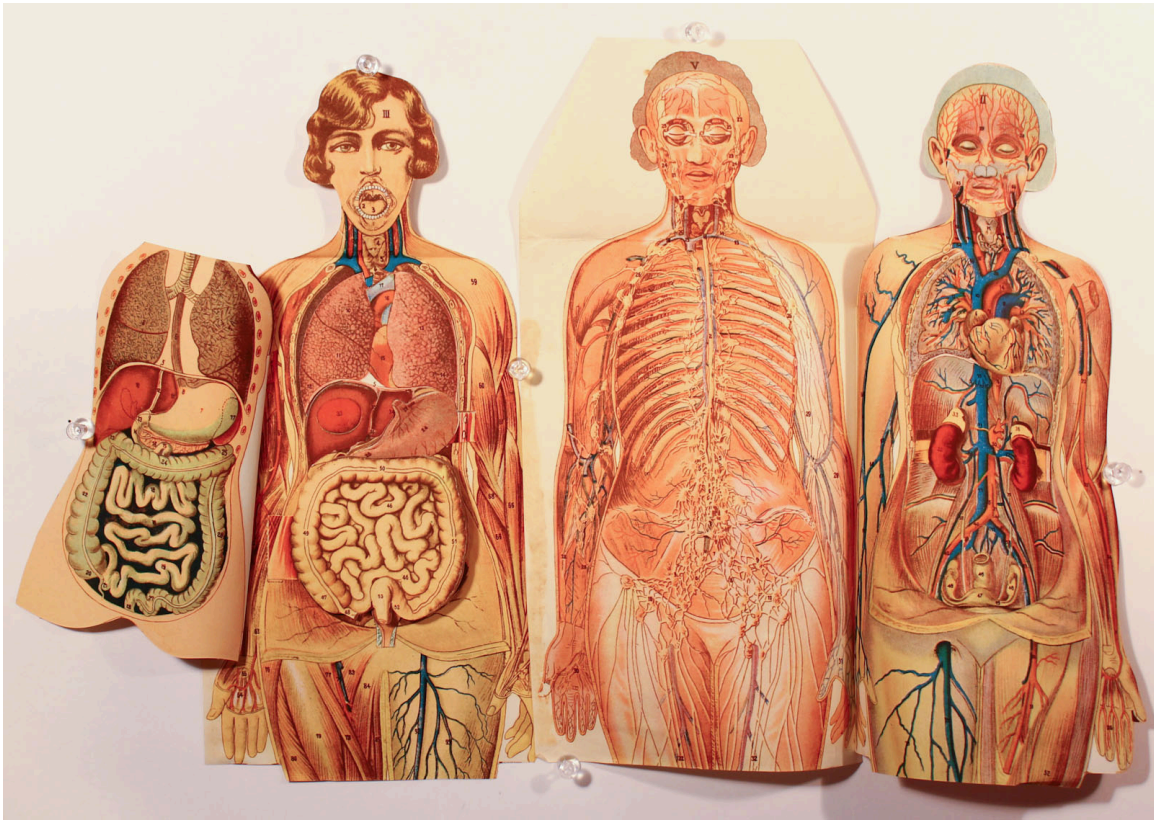


Fig. 18. Scott W. Vincent. "Vintage Fold-Out Anatomical Diagrams." *lungStruck*. Wordpress, 11 May 2014. Web. 19 July 2016.

The metonymy that provides generative interpretational possibilities within Judaism troubled Augustine, who:

associates a synecdochic mode of knowing with the fall, and considers human language, which he so radically separates from the divine word, to be indicative of imprisonment in temporality. Reading and interpreting as an endless horizontal sequence of knowing-by-part can never render the simultaneous whole presence that Augustine seeks. Because language cannot express this essence of perfect sameness, and because there is such an irreparable gap between this

simultaneous apprehension of truth and man's nature, the incarnation becomes the bridge of an otherwise unfathomable abyss. God descends into human language, into human time and history: the word becomes flesh. And this doctrine becomes the only possible escape form man's exile into language. Jesus is the essential link between signifier and signified because with the doctrine of the incarnation, the substance and its representation are one and the same. (Handelman 119-120)

Western Protestant and Catholic Christian thought teaches that the Word becomes final in the Flesh. We had God's revelation via language until the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Thereafter, any openness and dialogue regarding interpretation of the Old Testament suddenly stops because Jesus claims to be the Word in the flesh. Flesh is ultimate presence and removes any need for symbolic words. But Jewish thought and practice depends on this ongoing, generative conversation because Judaism does not accept Christ as Messiah. With a Derridean approach to language, many possible interpretations are created and extend dialogue and meaning. In Judaism, Jesus Christ as Messiah stops debate; the Word as Flesh silences.

We have historically viewed the word of the body through the limited male gaze of the film lens (e.g. Mulvey). But if we could add to our visionary repertoire the metaphor of the functional mangle, we might see flesh in more ways, in ways additional to over-sexualized aesthetics. Flesh, and maybe especially the female body, can also generate many possible interpretations. Flesh compels us to see through multiple lenses;

breastfeeding women, so often seen through the sexualized film lens, offer us different ways to see, to interpret. *The Guilty Breast* highlights the public breastfeeding debate to focus in on those other possible ways of seeing, to move us toward a multiplicity of bodies and perspectives. We might see breastfeeding as a biological norm of providing for a baby's physiological needs. We might see the breastfeeding mother and her baby as a unit, two parts working together to accomplish one difficult task. We might see public breastfeeding as a way to nourish our collective future.

Pickering's metaphorical mangle insists that we pan out to include the scientist (and, we might add, theologian) and how his or her identity informs the narrative of the experiment when we talk about "objective" observations. To mangle is to realize that *who we are* contaminates our observations and narratives. We are never simply observing through the distanced lens of microscope or film. Rather by focusing in on what is most important, we are always actively framing, cutting. And in doing so, in making value judgments of what to cut, we sometimes leave essential perspectives on the editing room floor. The mangle acknowledges this focusing and subconscious framing in observation, and it forces an acknowledging of our cuts.

Expressionist Semiotics

Augustine's semiotics of the word, stimulated by the problems of divine scripture, was remarkable because it was not merely a theory of signs but simultaneously a theory of language (Handelman 114). In Augustine's semiotics, "a sign is a thing which causes us to think of something beyond the impression the thing itself makes upon the senses"

(115). Handelman also writes, “For Augustine, letters are signs of words, and written words signify spoken words, which in turn signify things” (115). And for Augustine, “the thing is more important than the word chosen to designate it” (115). Besides privileging the thing over the symbol for it, presence over meaning, Augustine’s most important contribution to sign theory was the interpreting subject (115). In his, he recognizes that a subject is always interpreting the meaning of a thing and that meaning is never an automatic transmission.

Contrast Augustine’s distrust of language as exile with Judaism embrace of language as deferred meaning. If Judaism welcomes generative possibilities and a multiplicity of meaning, for Augustine linguistic multiplicity is a consequence of man’s fall from grace and physical alienation from his Creator (120). For Augustine, flesh is presence. We might recall his promiscuous young adulthood and later distrust of rhetoric as a worthy profession. Does his own personal life inform his interpretation of the Word? Words represent absence for Augustine, but for the Rabbis, words represent presence. Handelman ends her chapter wondering if Rabbinic Jews are more accepting of language as deferred meaning with no ultimate fleshly presence because of their uniquely embodied history, wandering as home.

What if we could combine the pluralism of Judaism’s words with the presence Augustine’s Word? If we got Jewish language-y about bodies, might we recognize a multiplicity of meaning? In other words, what if the Rabbinic reading of texts as metonymical were applied to the female body? What if we didn’t “dispense with the particular form in which the idea [of being] is encloded,” dismiss the particularities of

bodies themselves (88-89)? What if the text, for us as for the Rabbis, were a continuous generator of meaning? What if female breasts are texts?

Breast Semiotics

Breast semiotics is a reading of flesh as metonymical—"as retaining differences within identity, stressing relationships of contiguity rather than substitution, preferring multivocal as opposed to univocal meanings, the play of 'as if' over the assertions of 'is,' juxtapositions over equivalencies, concrete images over abstractions" while also acknowledging the self as an interpreting subject" (Handelman 88-89). In Jewish thought, language is generative. The word as flesh limits generative possibilities. If words are symbolic of things and if things are open to interpretation by the interpreting subject, then maybe metaphor is all we have. Maybe meaning occurs in the space between the word and the thing—in reach.

But flesh is generative, too. Female bodies create life. Female breasts sustain futures.

On March 15, 2015 Facebook changed its policy on breast nudity to allow "actively engaged" breastfeeding photos and pictures of mastectomy scars. The change came shortly after an activist onslaught of mothers posting brelfies in response to Facebook's censorship of breastfeeding photos. In many cases, these women's breastfeeding photos were/are removed, and their Facebook and Instagram accounts

were/are temporarily shut down. As we noted with “The Leaky Boob” and #toplessjihad, artistic activism seems a natural response to the pervasive misreading of breast texts to effect change. This is Amelia Jones’ call to see differently as invention. British author Laura Dodsworth photographed one hundred women’s breasts and published these images with their accompanying narrative in *Bare Reality: 100 Women, Their Breasts, Their Stories*. Dodsworth’s volume is notable for its sheer breadth of scope. From a sign of coming-of-age to a sign of aging, women see their breasts as sexual objects, biological utilities, anatomical anomalies, and symbols of identity. Similarly, the 4th *Trimester Bodies Project* created by Ashlee Dean Wells is a movement dedicated to educating, embracing, and empowering women through photographs and storytelling. Laura Weetzie Wilson joined Wells to create a touring team who captures women’s images and stories. They host conferences to invite a global conversation about body positivity and postpartum care. Recently, they just published an archive of these images and stories and, by popular demand, are working on a second volume. *Bluegrass Birth Stories* collaborated with *Morgan Tolentino Photography* and *Kate Dooley Photography* to recently host a breastfeeding photography event where mothers could have professional photos taken of themselves breastfeeding their babies. The event was held on Sunday, August 7 2016 from 5 – 8 pm. Women were instructed to RSVP in advance and that participation would require a ten-dollar minimum donation. The event was both a celebration of breastfeeding and an opportunity to support public breastfeeding. Seventy-four mothers participated.

Contrast this celebration with a recent exile also in Lexington, Kentucky. On September 19, 2016, two mothers were asked to leave the Lexington Pavilion’s public swimming pool because they were breastfeeding their babies while watching their older children play in the water. After being confronted by the pool’s lifeguard, the mothers refused to leave. The director of the pavilion said that the lifeguard was trying to enforce the rule that stipulates no eating and/or drinking while on the pool deck—unaware that the one exception to this rule was breastfeeding. In an interview, Jessica Alihodzi told LEX 18, “I felt disgusting, and I have never felt like that the entire 18 months I’ve nursed my daughter. It made me feel ashamed and disgusting like I was doing something wrong” (“Lexington Women Asked...”). Sherri Nicholas, the Director of the Georgetown-Scott County Parks and Rec Department responded to the mothers’ concerns by releasing a statement that ended, “In addition, management assured the ladies that all staff would be notified once more about breastfeeding mother’s rights in the facility” (“Lexington Women Asked...”). The question was not where to look, and the answer was not exile. Breast semiotics applied to this situation acknowledges both breasts’ sexuality and their functionality. The interpreting subject ideally would have been able to read the rhetorical situation in its nuanced context. Nudity teaches us how to see.

Augustine understood metaphor as exile and yearned for the presence of flesh. His lifelong project to make the guilty body good offers other, better metaphors for what it means to be a body. But limited by his own fleshly experience, he connotes female

bodies as either sexual or maternal. Female breasts are both. Similarly, Augustine's semiotics privileges the thing itself over the word symbolizing the thing. He offers us his own invention of the interpreting subject, an acknowledgment of our own subjectivity in meaning making. In *A Complex Delight*, Margaret Miles wonders what a subjective breast would be. She writes, "The subjective breast is erotic because of its sensitivity, not because it is displayed for men's erotic stimulation. Both the delight of a lover's or an infant's touch and the harsh fear of disease need to be included in any construction of the subjective breast" (138). An older, wiser Augustine writes this about resurrected female bodies, "There women's bodies will not exist for male use (intercourse and childbearing), but will be part of a new beauty (*decori novo*)" (139). He describes this beauty as enjoyment of the other *as* other, enjoying one another's beauty for itself alone" (139). Breast semiotics brings us full circle.

Like Augustine, breast semiotics recognizes that metaphor sometimes symbolizes exile, but also involves reach, a forward pull toward presence. Like Augustine's semiotics, breast semiotics offers flesh as presence, but widens the vista of presence to include both maternal and sexual connotations, sometimes simultaneously. Furthermore, breast semiotics embraces the uncertainty of Judaism's religious theorizing of language as deferred meaning. It recognizes Augustine's interpreting subject as it reaches towards conclusion. It remembers that meaning-making sometimes comes in the moments between sound and symbol. It creates meanings by acknowledging flesh as plurality; the vision of "the body" is "bodies." It aspires to networked agency. Breast semiotics

contextualizes the flesh's past as sacred, its present as nourishing, and its future as generative. Breast semiotics is sighted practice.

Augustine's expressionist semiotics contributes the idea that signs can be read and that the flesh, the body, is a sign. It additionally offers the then-innovative idea of the interpreting subject—the idea that we are always subjectively interpreting signs, bodies. Judaism's semiotics contributes the idea that meaning derived from language can be deferred. This deferral provides generative possibilities. Breast semiotics takes the best of both Christian and Judaic semiotics to argue that bodies can have multiple meanings and must be interpreted by a subjective interpreter. Breast semiotics argues that meaning derived from flesh can be deferred, and that this deferral generates multiple possibilities of meaning. *The Guilty Breast* offers three lenses for looking at exposed breasts: sexual, biological, and political. The guilty breast intimates that boobs teach each other how to see.

CONCLUSION

"If breasts could talk, they would probably tell jokes
—every light-bulb joke in the book."

Natalie Angier, *Woman: An Intimate Geography*

4th Trimester Bodies Project, July 15, 2015:

“Mari Ramler with her daughters Julia (5.5) and Dahlia (3.5). Mari had very healthy pregnancies with each of her girls but unexpected birth experiences. Julia was born via emergency cesarean and found to have a hole in her heart that had to be repaired once she got a little bit older. Dahlia was born via scheduled repeat cesarean, but they couldn't stop Mari's bleeding afterward and had to go back in to operate again. Mari breastfed both of her daughters as long as she could but said it was horrible and painful and also not what she expected. That thread is what Mari's motherhood experiences have taught her: growth through the unexpected. She says she is now more accepting and flexible of herself and others and understands that expectations and experiences don't always align. When asked why she chose to participate in this movement, Mari says, that she, ‘is here to model for my daughters how to love and accept their bodies and to learn through this project how to be a better citizen of the world as a woman, as a mother, as a researcher, as a teacher, and as a person.’”



Fig. 19. My photo in *4th Trimester Bodies Project*
Photo Courtesy of Ashlee Dean Wells

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