1-1-2004

Resisting aggression : Graphic re-presentations for other bodies

Camilla C. Loveridge
Edith Cowan University

Resisting Aggression:

Graphic Re-presentations for "Other" Bodies

Thesis submitted by Camilla Cecilia Loveridge BA (Fine Arts) for the requirements of Masters of Arts (Creative Arts) in the Faculty of Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Edith Cowan University.

November 2004

DEDICATION

To my father Gerard (Darwin), a deeply sensitive and gifted artist who has been my inspiration in life - to question, yet also to marvel in life's wonderful idiosyncrasies. This is for you.

Copyright and Access

Use of Thesis

Abstract

These chapters consider how art can provide a space for wider critical debate on established patriarchal power relations, which have operated in Western culture since the Enlightenment period. As a female artist, I want to explore the space in art of both the female body and the community body. This work seeks to position the female body within the "form" of her subjectivity, to destabilize patriarchal strongholds through the displacement of the traditionally aestheticised female "nude". That is, I examine the (historicized) notion of a "subject" and the representation of an "object", and understand the female "nude" as a representation of patriarchal dominance to this day. I use my art work of women to explore recent feminist theory that investigates these historicized notions, hoping to present images that critique rather than wholly participate in the tradition of objectifying women without question. Ultimately, I move to a broader field, to incorporate an idea of a community "body" that is embracing of those bodies culturally precluded from subjective empowerment. My attention is specifically focused on the remediation of the once "derelict" land and "polluted" waterways of East Perth, to the "pristine" condition of what is now an exclusive corporate and residential site. I intend to address my art to the many "marginalized" bodies, traditionally and presently obstructed from subjective representation within our Western culture. In bringing both "bodies" together, my art aims to help disrupt the patriarch from his central subjective stronghold.

Chapter 1 explores the (assumed) privileged "gaze" of the Western male artist (and my own naïve participation in this practice), which transforms the "deformed" physical "matter" of women into the "iconic", conceptual "form" of the patriarch's "Woman".

Chapter 2 examines the space for a female voice that recent psychoanalytic theory evokes in challenging the conventions of patriarchy. At this point in particular, my praxis seeks to reflect this emergence for women, as reconnections to the "matter" of the maternal body are made.

Chapter 3 investigates how feminist theory resists the patriarchal icon for female "beauty" (in the classical "nude"), through its representation of new bodily images and identities for women. Subsequently, I journey in my visual practice in responding to this "resistance", and focus specifically on the feminist notion of "ambiguity" for female self-expression, as a means to subversively obstructing patriarchal hegemony.

Chapter 4 articulates the significance of "desire" for women in their discovery of themselves at an intimate level, without the intervention of masculine visual penetration. I represent this intimacy (this "divinity" for women), through *tactile* qualities in my practice, which serve to connect women to themselves, whilst interrupting the penetration of the patriarchal gaze.

Finally, Chapter 5 shows how the resistance and corporeality of the female body comes to symbolize the existence of the "community body" that works to reclaim a "presence" (a place of domicile) within the redeveloped site of East Perth.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i)   incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii)   contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signed: Camilla Cecilia Loveridge…

8 May 2005

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank those who have assisted me in this journey of practice and research.

I would particularly like to extend my sincerest appreciation to Dr. Susan Ash and to Dr. Christopher Crouch. As my supervisors they have been most supportive and encouraging. In the theoretical and written components of this degree, Dr. Ash has been a consistent inspiration, and her understanding during some difficult times has been most appreciated. Dr. Crouch's pragmatism in the ambiguous realm of Visual Arts has assisted me immensely in developing confidence within my practice.

I extend my thanks also to Prof. Neville Weston, Dr. Maggie Phillips and Clive Barstow, as well as to Dr. Patsy Hallen of Murdoch University, for their interest and support during the early months of my research.

To Claudine, Emma, Nickie, Kathy, Mira, Elizabeth, Leticia, Dzuli, Mimi, Sunny and Suzanne who have inspired me so deeply as women and as models, I offer my affection.

I would also like to thank the East Perth Sambanistas and Perth City Farm for the vibrancy they have shared.

Finally, but not least, I wish to thank deeply my family and friends who have been so patient, understanding and supportive of me along this journey.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

CHAPTER 1: FROM MATTER TO FORM

I) Theorizing the Female 'Nude'

Since the birth of "humanity" during the Enlightenment period, Western culture has centred and thus privileged the male sex as "subject". Jacques Lacan theorized human subjectivity as subjected to the "Laws of the Father", that is, those laws and institutions which control both desire and the rules of communication. Although this condition of subjection to a social pact applies to all social beings, male and female, feminist theorists argue that this system is significantly more oppressive to women. For example, writing of Lacan, feminist critic Kaja Silverman (1983) highlights a further consideration:

> ...subjectivity is entirely relational; it only comes into play through the principle of difference, by the opposition of the "other" or the "you" to the "I". In other words, subjectivity is not an essence but a set of relationships. Moreover, it can only be induced by discourse, by the activation of a signifying system which pre-exists the individual, and which determines his or her cultural identity (p. 52).

Within this "relational" system, Silverman points out that with the psychoanalytic models of Lacan and Freud, the term "man" is gender-specific although it purports to include all of humanity. She states:

> [i]ts double application permits the phallocentricity of our philosophical heritage to go unquestioned, creating the illusion that any case which is made for man automatically includes woman. In fact, however, the definition of man which we inherit from the Renaissance does not apply to woman (p. 131).

Man is associated with reason and "transcendence" within the Western symbolic order, whereas woman is associated with irrationality the "Fall", observes Silverman. This association suggests that a pre-existing discursive system

necessarily privileges the male in patriarchy as the male/masculine "I" subjugates the female/feminine "you", precluding women from syntax that could potentially articulate and represent their own subjectivities.

How syntactical systems exclude or subordinate women is the subject of a range of (feminist) theory. Hillary Robinson (2000) considers the reference to "God" that Ludwig Feuerbach describes as the "mirror" of man, and suggests that this concept is underpinned by the simple premise that phallocentric structures "build man's subjectivity upon his 'seeing' everything around him as other of his same" (p. 227). She argues that man consequently creates God in his own image, and then suggests that for man within Western patriarchy, God is the (idealized) "other of his same". Fashioned in man's image and functioning as man's "horizon of possibilities", God is inspiring to the patriarch, explains Robinson, and empowers him into subjectivity. In other words, man in this position has secured his subjective identity (and relative dominance) through fashioning the "Divine" in his own image. In this structure the female subject has been excluded, bearing no such standing, having no "horizon" of possibilities to assert and represent her. She has become the binary opposite and is subject to man. As Robinson describes, the female is "the *deformed* [italics added] 'other of his same', the representation, 'Woman'" (p.227).

Helene Cixous (1989) similarly comments on logocentric thought as working through a binary system that is constantly in conflict through "dual, hierarchical oppositions. Superior / Inferior" (p. 229). She adds further that "'victory' always amounts to the same thing; it is hierarchized. The hierarchization subjects the entire conceptual organization to man" (p. 230). Cixous maintains, therefore, that the question of sexual difference is traditionally brought into focus through the binary attachment "activity/passivity", which privileges the active male who, consequently, sustains himself through female passivity.

Actively assuming the privilege of "re–presenting" the female body in high art, the Western male artist has, likewise, assumed his position as "master" in transforming the "deformed", physical "matter" of women into the "iconic", conceptual beauty of "Woman". Robinson (2000) discusses the notion of "beauty" and asserts that this concept has become the site, the meeting point "of the properties of physical matter and an elaboration of sexualized subjective identity" (p. 224). For example, Kenneth Clark (cited in Nead, 1992) argued that the nude female body "'remains the most complete example of the transformation of matter into form'" (p. 15). Nead explains that the transformation from the "naked" to the "nude" is thus the shift from the "actual" to the "ideal". Executing the nude becomes regulated and is, according to Nead, "the move from a perception of unformed, corporeal matter to the recognition of unity and constraint" (p. 15). Thus, a patriarchal system rectifies and contains woman's "matter" within the "form" of the female "nude", serving to satisfy man's desire to control women's flesh and exert his subjectivity. Any "horizons of opportunity" that exist for men through the notion of the "Divine", have been barricaded from women through this privilege of control (Robinson, 2000, p. 227).

Nead (1992) argues that a deep-seated "fear" of the female body is the driving-force behind the patriarch's regulation of "matter" into "form"; and she highlights Clark's assertion that the "cuirasse ésthetique", a type of "muscle-architecture" once used for the design of armour, befitted the heroic male body in classical antiquity as the symbol of power and control. It does, however, symbolize the fear of female "flesh" within the ideology of the German "Freikorps", explains Nead, as:

> ...the body of 'woman' is perceived as unstructured. It represents the flood, the human mass; it is soft, fluid and undifferentiated. The warrior male insulates himself from the threat of dissolution into this mass by turning his body into an armoured surface that both repels the femininity on the outside and contains the 'primitive', feminized flesh of his

3

own interior (p. 17).

In this, suggests Nead, the characteristically female body is paradoxically subject to "masculinization" that positions her in order to conform "…to an ideal of the male body that precisely depends upon a dread that the male body might itself revert to what is feared may secretly be its own 'female' formlessness" (p. 19). Consequently, because female flesh threatens the Symbolic, modes in art practice have traditionally regulated and disciplined that flesh into the "nude" form.

The aesthetics of 20th century modernist art also inscribe this position. In his discussion of "the self-contained aesthetic of Modernism", Malcolm Miles (1997) critiques its ethos of control and exclusion. He rejects conventional, modernist, public art that exists merely as a commodity (p. 12), and supports a new genre of community arts that "acts as a catalyst for other people's creativity" (p. 8). Miles believes that modernism imposes autonomy within the realm of aesthetics and precludes others' experience of everyday life. Marshall Berman (cited in Miles, 1997), maintains that the modernist artist is endowed with a freedom that is "'a perfectly formed, perfectly sealed tomb' (p. 13)". As Carol Duncan (1992) explains of New York's Museum of Modern Art:

> In theory, museums are public spaces dedicated to the spiritual enhancement of all who visit them. In practice, however, museums are prestigious and powerful engines of ideology. They are modern ritual settings in which visitors enact complex…psychic dramas about identity…[The] MoMa's ritual transmits a complex ideological signal… [It's] recurrent images of sexualized female bodies actively masculinize the museum as a social environment (p. 348).

As a powerful engine of ideology, circulating "sexualized female bodies", the MoMa can be considered a monument to western patriarchy in its practice of masculine control. Representations of unclothed women as "objects" are

crucially placed in areas of the museum that are excluded from "the big Abstract Expressionist 'breakthroughs'", which represent "absolutely pure, abstract, nonreferential transcendence" in the "sacred" spaces containing the New York's school of masculine icons (Duncan, 1992, p. 350). In representing the symbolic, the "sacred" spaces thus marginalize the images of grotesque women as "abject" bodies, consequently reinforcing the ideology of masculine supremacy. The perfectly formed and perfectly sealed "tomb", the monument, consequently barricades the modernist artist away from the "life-world", which, according to Jurgen Habermas, precludes his connection with "others". Habermas (1990) writes:

> What accrues to culture through specialized treatment and reflection does not immediately and necessarily become the property of the everyday praxis. With cultural rationalization of this sort, the threat increases that the life-world, whose traditional substance has already been devalued, will become more and more impoverished (p. 9).

Habermas explains that "the project of modernity", formulated in the 18th century, intended to develop "objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art", according to their "inner logic", yet at the same time intended to "release the cognitive potentials" of each of these areas from their esoteric forms (p.9).

Habermas observes that this optimism has, however, been shattered, as specialists continue in their "separation from the hermeneutics of everyday communication" (p. 9). Max Weber, he asserts "characterized cultural modernity as the separation of the substantive reason expressed in religion and metaphysics into three autonomous spheres...science, morality and art" (Habermas, p. 9). These areas became differentiated, Habermas explains, because the unified world-views of religion and metaphysics "fell apart". The domains of culture subsequently became institutionalized and were made to correspond to cultural professions in which problems could be dealt with by

5

"experts" of that particular field. As a result, observes Habermas, distance has grown between the culture of the specialists and that of the larger public. The optimistic intention to release the logic of the expert for the benefit of "ordinary" people has therefore not been realized through Modernism and, in order to challenge this distinctive rift, Habermas stresses the reappropriation of the expert's culture from the standpoint of the life-world. Within the discipline of art, Habermas proposes that the layperson "behave as a competent consumer who uses art and relates aesthetic experiences to his own life problems" (p. 12). This is only possible, I believe, if art "specialists" interact with the fundamentals of exoteric communication, and avail their practice to the life experiences of laypeople.

John Berger (1973) demonstrates how, with the invention of the camera (and more particularly with the movie camera), the convention of perspective was challenged. Perspective established in the early Renaissance centred everything on the eye of a single spectator who could only be in one place at one time, whilst every drawing or painting that used perspective "proposed to the spectator that he was the unique centre of the world" (p. 18). In other words, within the traditional convention of perspective, a "transparent window" was made on the world; arranged for the spectator "as the universe was once thought to be arranged for God" (p.16). This idea reflects Feuerbach's notion of man's privileged position, in "seeing" everything around him "as others of his same" (Robinson, 2000, p. 227). Man's view in drawing or painting, in other words, was considered the only view, and man as spectator was the centre of the world.

With the advent of Modern Art, Cubist painters advocated a break with traditional ideology, and dispensed with single-point perspective for "the totality of possible views taken from points all round the object (or person) being depicted" (Berger, p. 18). Rodrigues and Garratt (2001) refer to Lefebvre's account of this movement as having "absolute sovereignty" (p. 12), as the male artist was elevated to the status of "genius", and positioned above the plebeian public. The

Cubist work of Picasso and Braque exemplify these continuing power arrangements. Making a definitive break with traditional representation, they sought to paint what might be "known" about space and shapes, not only what is seen. This epistemological focus resulted in an intellectualised vision of form, painted upon a two-dimensional canvas. Whilst dismissing mimesis, it nonetheless correlated with traditional representation in its execution of icons as symbols of masculine autonomy over form. An example of this is *"Les Demoiselles d' Avignon"*, painted by Picasso in 1907, which heralds the advent of Cubism as an intellectual vision of form, yet still subjugates the female body. Modernism, therefore, failed to be "free" from the 18th century ideology despite splintering perspective; we see this in the cubist rendering of the female "form" particularly, in the practice of controlling female flesh through simplification and abstraction. This practice reflects the power that the master artist of antiquity had over his female subjects, when executing the iconic female "nude".

Peter Nicholls (1995), in referring to Apollinaire's poetry as being "Cubist", draws parallels with the work of Picasso and Braque. He refers to their work as refusing:

> ...to make of the work a transparent window on the world.
> The artistic material – paint, lines, words – assumes a new
> kind of self-sufficiency and we are not invited to look
> beyond the work for something to explain or legitimate it
> (p. 117).

This implies a rupture with the referent – a schism between the artwork and the model. Thus, a purely intellectualized vision of the subject results as artists engage in a radical break with the canons of traditional portrayal. With this engagement emerges the "art specialist" of Habermas' observation, practicing a separation with the "hermeneutics of everyday communication" (Habermas, p. 9). This is evident in the fact that we, as public viewers, are not invited to look beyond the work of modernism, and are not offered an explanation of the artist's personal statement.

A corresponding control of "matter" and of surplus female flesh is apparent in the placement of "master" works in the Museum of Modern Art. Carol Duncan (1992) suggests, in her essay *"The MoMA's Hot Mama's"*, that Willem de Kooning's painting, *"Woman 1"*, is a threatening representation of "woman", of "matter", within the masculinized environment of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. *"Woman 1"* is an Abstract Expressionist work that conveys a large, fearful and grotesque looking woman, representative of foreboding female "flesh". "She" has been hung, notes Duncan:

> ...at the threshold to the spaces containing the big Abstract Expressionist "breakthroughs" – the New York's school's final collective leap into absolutely pure, abstract, nonreferential transcendence (p. 350).

Although "inside" the establishment of MoMA, *"Woman 1"* remains outside the gallery, physically passed by on the way to the inner gallery spaces containing cubist paintings that are "iconic" in their simplification and abstraction. The metaphorical significance of this placement suggests that the "matter" of the female body remains a threat (as in antiquity), and must continue to be brought under control by the patriarch. *"Woman 1"*, as an icon of Modern Art, thus symbolizes the institutionalized notion of prevalent, uncontrolled female flesh to be restrained by the "Modern" artist in asserting his "rightful" position of authority. Evidence of this authority lies within the inner sanctum of the gallery spaces beyond, that exhibit large abstracted works, brought under the absolute control of the "master" artist. With regard to Modern Art, therefore, any reverence for natural form, for matter, for Nature, for the female body, is consequently eliminated. Similarly, the representation of a subject, communicating ideas within the grasp of the wider viewing public, is disregarded as the modernist work is to be read purely from the surface of the canvas.

Shirley Ardener (1993) explores the connections of "women" and "space" with the notions of "ground rules" and "social maps". In connecting these ambiguous terms she notes Judy Matthew's suggestion that space defines the people in it

yet (reflexively), the presence of individuals in space determines its nature (p. 3). Similarly, Goffmann (1979) is quoted by Ardener (1993) as proposing that:

> 'Objects are thought to structure the environment immediately around themselves; they cast a shadow, heat up the surround, strew indications, leave an imprint, they impress a part of themselves...' (p. 3).

Thus, objects are thought to structure the environment immediately around themselves, as well as being affected in turn by the place in space of other objects. Ardener observes further that not only the presence of objects (and their position in space), but even the absence of objects (or their "negative presence") may be important (Ardener, p. 3). Implications consequently exist here for a critical assessment of the gallery spaces within the MoMA, in which icons of "genius" male artists preside, structuring a masculinized environment. The repercussion of this order consequently absents the works of female artists from the domains of Abstract Expressionist Art, exemplifying how female artists have been excluded from the echelons of higher art. The placement of *"Woman 1"* on the periphery further excludes the presence of female "matter" from the "uncontaminated" masculine spaces of the galleries beyond.

II) Naïve Participation in Patriarchal Form

Being the daughter of a traditional portrait sculptor, my position as a visual artist bears the imprint of an inheritance which is located within the conventions of traditional art practice. From childhood I have been surrounded by my father's work, and have observed the intensity and commitment that he has consistently demonstrated to his practice. Paradoxes infiltrate my father's life as a sculptor which I consequently parallel with my own experience as an artist.

In his capacity as the male parent, my father inherits the culturally privileged position of "subject" within western patriarchy. This empowered position as "Father" is reflected in his professional status as a recognized (male) "sculptor"

within the paradigm of "Fine Arts" practice. Subsequently, as a reputable portrait sculptor in Western Australia, he has maintained (until recently) a series of notable commissions. In 1986 he was commissioned by Archbishop Foley of Perth to sculpt Pope John Paul 2 (from photographs) in anticipation of pontiff's visit later that year. My father felt "privileged" on this occasion to sculpt the Pope's portrait (as Christ's "representative" and the Church's "Holy Father"), and consequently preserved his image in bronze as "head" of the Catholic Church and overseer of its doctrine. Malcolm Miles (1997) investigates the role of the monument in maintaining the order of western, industrialized societies, and his thesis can be applied to this bust of the Pope. Claiming that monuments are familiar in the spaces of most cities, Miles argues that they represent stability, which:

> ...conceals the internal contradictions of society and survives the day-to-day fluctuations of history. The majority in society is persuaded, by monuments amongst other civil institutions, to accept these contradictions, the monument becoming a device of social control less brutish and costly than armed force (p. 58).

The canonical bronze bust of the Pope in his regalia, his "cuirasse esthetique" (Nead, p. 18), serves as concrete reminder of the Church's authority. The Pope's effigy represents authority, yet simultaneously conceals his human constitution that is potentially challenging to this authority.

It is through this gesture, however, that my father has demonstrated his (naïve) investment in the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Coming from a background of staunch Catholicism, he has conformed to its ideology in rendering the most "pious" living person of God, yet contiguous with this image is its sense of authority. In front of this monument, as laity, we are reminded of the Church's precedence over its fold. However, my father has consistently maintained an effort to capture the inner spirit of each individual he has been commissioned to represent (personal communication). Herein lies a paradox. Capturing the Pope

in his "essence" as a person (aside from his status), works against my father's position as a privileged "Artist/Sculptor" of iconic monuments, and this is in some way disempowering to him. As his work finds "honest" expression in the human form, he subconsciously resists the "sheath" of regalia, and consequently exposes the pontiff's vulnerabilities and, inadvertently, his potential resistance to convention. Wilson (2001) cites E. Kaplan (1984) to argue that while at a conscious level the male gaze is voyeuristic and represents potential mastery, the significance at an unconscious level is to "annihilate the threat that woman...poses" (p. 82). The paradox here is that my father, through his art at a subconscious level, seeks to collapse the distance that the regalia ("sheath"/ "male gaze") erects between the clergy and the secular. In Habermas' terminology the "'hermeneutics of everyday communication'" (cited in Foster), thus finds a voice within this artistic form, as an image of the man himself is rendered (p. 9). The Pope's facial expression is warm and gentle, his gesture "humble", and one could associate Christ-like "love" exuding from his representation.

Inspite of my father's honest attempt to reduce the divide between the Pope's images as "Holy Father" of the Church, and its "humble servant", the subsequent ceremony of blessing and unveiling the portrait was elite and covert, and my father was not invited to be present. Through this gesture my father and family, as laity, were reminded that the Church as an institution still maintains the balance of power. The pontiff's effigy as "Holy Father" has thus ensured the subordination and concealment of any "internal contradictions" that a subtext could potentially generate. Bronze, as a traditional medium for casting, represents the stability and permanence (both physically and metaphorically) of Church's "armour", in its celebration of authority over humanity. Consequently, bronze "monuments" serve to further divide any potential relationships that could develop between the Church as an institution and its "mass". My father has mediated this message of authority through his bronze of Pope John Paul 2. In front of this representation, one could be consoled by the idea that the Church

protects its people, through the hegemonic ideology of salvation for all the Church's devoted.

I draw a parallel between my father's experience and my own. Similar paradoxes occur for me as a visual artist. As the daughter of a recognized (predominantly religious) sculptor, I have inherited the hegemonic values which my father has paid homage to in his practice, and drawings that represent iconic female forms reflect my early innocent investment in the practice of "Master Artist". Subsequently, in studying Fine Arts at the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT), I realized my entitlement as "Fine Artist" through the kudos of academia. Parallels prevail here with the status of "Master Sculptor" that my father enjoyed when rendering allegorical figures of the Catholic Church. During my time spent at WAIT in the late 1970's, abstract expressionism was the prevalent art movement taught. Consequently, I developed a passion for undelineated "mark making", and the rendering of "honest", spontaneous gestural marks became my preferred drawing style.

After a significant (child bearing) break in my career, in 1999 I held my first solo exhibition of life drawings at Kidogo Arthouse in Fremantle. Still passionate with the gestural approach to drawing, I rendered iconic female nudes under the illusion that an "honest", quick response to a beautiful female body as my subject matter meant "the real thing". I was anxious to break with what I considered to be the dominant practice of life drawing in Perth at that time, which seemed to value predictable, "laboured" and decorative work.
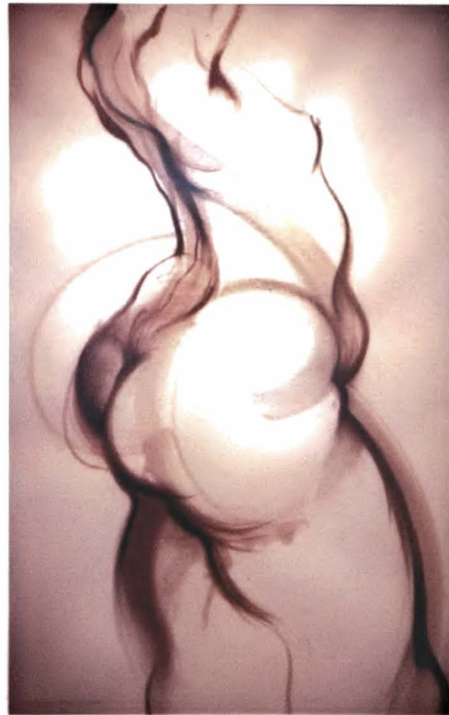
Figure 1 "Nude 1"   **Figure 2 "Nude 2"**

For my Kidogo exhibition, I made no shift in ideology as the fresh, spontaneous "sincere" work I produced, illustrated above in *"Nude 1"* and *"Nude 2"*, remained safely within my patriarchal heritage. I now perceive the nudes I produced as still representing the ideals of the patriarch, that is, to maintain control over women by transforming them into idealized objects for their privileged male gaze.

One work, *"African Head"*, in particular reflected my naïve participation in a kind of colonial ideology, in which the very large image of a stylized, exotic female Negro represented beauty to me, but in retrospect I see the image participated in the patriarch's controlling gaze of not just gendered but also colonized subjects. Most of the works sold. Due the fact that they were framed simply and I had no commission to pay to the gallery, my expenses were kept to a minimum, promoting financial accessibility of my art to the general public. My work was hung, also, in a "public - friendly" space that further attracted a wider

Figure 3 "African Head"

public and also contributed to sales. Though I made no shift in ideology within my patriarchal heritage, I consider (in hindsight) this exhibition to have been a "success" in that almost all my work sold. This show was also very satisfying in the dialogue it generated across both sexes, but particularly I was pleased with the "positive" interaction that female viewers seemed to enjoy.

However, my experience in selling art at an exclusive commercial gallery in the following year resulted in a different outcome, through a restricted access to the general public. During this exhibition, *"More Attitude"*, I was to be charged commission on each sale that I made, and consequently the prices that the

gallery asked precluded sales to the wider viewing public. In addition, the exhibiting space dictated the calibre of clientele through its pristine atmosphere of elitism. To meet the expectations of the discerning viewer, my work had to change. The inner passion of rendering honestly what I perceived to represent the individual had to be sacrificed for even a more controlled rendering of iconic forms that could hang passively on specified walls. My experience in producing such images on commission (as dictated by the clientele frequenting the gallery) reflects to some degree my father's experience in representing icons for the Catholic Church and feeling restricted by the formulae associated with these icons. However, whereas my father was commissioned to sculpt the Pope, as monument, I was commissioned to draw women, merely for the "gaze". The boundary enforced between me as the artist and the gallery's "valued" client resulted in a further paradox. No longer "Master" of my own works, I was obligated to the "Client", and felt as confined within those boundaries as the icons I drew.

However, I did make a shift in my awareness of patriarchal ideology, due to the theoretical readings I had commenced in studying for my Masters degree that year. In consciously making the shift, the subjects that I drew changed dramatically, as I elected to represent marginalized, obese female bodies. The women I consequently drew challenged the representations of iconic women, congruous to the delineated contours of conventional drawings. *"Kathy"*, a charcoal drawing, suggests the flow of female flesh beyond control, and as a representation of a very large woman she appeared threatening to the male partner of the commercial gallery in which it was hung. Consequently, *"Kathy"* and other particularly "confronting" representations of marginalized, less-than-iconic female forms were hidden by the Director of the gallery in a discreet corner of the exhibition space, for fear of disturbing patrons and consequently jeopardizing exhibition sales. Subsequently, I realize now that despite *"Kathy"* representing "obscenity" in her form to certain gallery patrons, her execution remained paradoxically "beautiful" in its rendered form, and remained within the

conventions of traditional art as her vagina lay neatly hidden behind folds of flesh. In hindsight, I believe that *"Kathy"* reflects my inadvertent conformity to traditional aesthetics, for the purpose of commodification.

Figure 4 "Kathy"

Questions consequently arise regarding the extent to which certain commercial galleries will impose ideological restrictions upon exhibiting artists in attracting exclusive consumers. Despite my conscious efforts to bring "other" bodies (via drawings on paper) to the inner sanctum of an exclusive gallery, the presiding "authority" restricted this access, relegating these bodies to the "margins" within hidden corners. Restricted access of "notable" art (to only privileged people) is evident, therefore, in exclusive galleries, and stark reminders of this occurrence exist, no less, within certain spaces of the MoMA. The confronting "matter" of de Kooning's *"Woman 1",* states Duncan (1992, p. 350), has been hung strategically at the "threshold" to the galleries containing "the big Abstract Expressionist

16

'breakthroughs'". Situated outside of the spaces containing the iconic works of the modern "Masters", *"Woman 1"* is an analogy of the viewing public, generally precluded from viewing "high art" in the gallery spaces that are privy only to critics and investors. Placed at the margins of the "inner sanctum", *"Woman 1"* represents, thus, a profane threat to the investment world of exclusive art. A paradox does exist, however, in that *"Woman 1"* is at least seen in the gallery, and seen first, whereas my work was hidden. As a representation of threatening female flesh, de Kooning's work nonetheless gains kudos through his status as a male, "Master Artist". It is ironic, however, that *"Kathy"*, one of my "hidden" works should later sell to a corporate enterprise in Perth city.

A parallel can also be drawn here with my father's experience of Church politics. Excluding lay people from private unveilings of public art highlights the notion of power imbalance that operates within Western patriarchy. While my father is privileged within patriarchy (more so than his daughter), as a male, "Master Sculptor", he too is subjected to the Church's "Authority". The Church as subject "silences" the laity that, in this instance, is only present through its absence. The Church assumes the position of "active" through the line of gender, the hierarchy established as male and representative of the "Divine". Through this binary attachment, the "people" of the Church are relegated to the position of "passive", as female within western patriarchy, and are the mass to be kept under control. The mass, as the viewing public, could also be seen to threaten the contamination of the "absolutely pure, abstract...transcendence" (Duncan) within the galleries of "Fine Art" (p. 350). The analogy of the "warrior male" who insulates himself from "the threat of dissolution into this mass" is pertinent here (Nead, p. 18). With the Vatican Council[1], papal infallibility was proclaimed. One might argue that misappropriation of this "grace" could armour the Church against the people, and maintain its lineage of masculine control. The proximity of the institutionalized Church to its people is thus maintained at a "safe" distance through dogma. Women, especially, must accept in faith that this hierarchy is

"natural" and must consequently comply with the male enforced icons that endorse engendered divides. God in man's image precludes any personal experience for women to express their own spirituality within the divides of the Church. Similarly, the general viewing public, representative of the female mass, is kept in check at exclusive galleries. Any tentative attempt to transgress conventions in visual arts may need to find expression outside of prohibitive galleries.

---

[1] The Vatican Council met in St. Peter's Cathedral (Rome) in 1869, and proclaimed papal infallibility in 1870.

CHAPTER 2: PSYCHOANALYTIC RECUPERATION OF THE FEMALE BODY

I) Emerging Space for the Female Voice

Feminist and psychoanalytic theories diverge regarding Freud. The debate arises between, on the one hand, those critics who perceive Freudian perspectives as oppressive (Millet et al), and on the other, those critics who find Freud useful in describing a culturally based gender hierarchy (Mitchell et al). Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore argue that Kate Millet sees Freud as threatened by women who rebelled against the patriarchal order and so set out to disarm the feminists by invoking the concept of penis-envy (1989, p.4). In contrast, Belsey and Moore argue that Juliet Mitchell contests Millett's ridicule of Freud, and argues that Freud's pessimistic account of women was a description of a particular culture, and was not an interpretation of a universal nature. Belsey and Moore argue that what is "radical" to Mitchell is:

> ...the theory of undifferentiated infant sexuality: the initial object of desire for little girls as well as little boys is the mother. The Oedipus complex represents the entry into a specific culture and thus into the gender roles defined by that culture (p. 4).

In other words, Mitchell maintains that for Freud undifferentiated sexual desire in infants is repressed when they learn to identify themselves as being either masculine or feminine, to conform to specific cultural expectations. Thus, Freudian psychoanalysis helps to explain how we acquire sexual identity by repressing desires which are culturally unacceptable. It does not require us to believe that sexual identity is synonymous with anatomy. In discussing Freud, anti-biologism and anti-essentialism, Mitchell (1974) is quoted by Robert Young (1991) in suggesting that psychoanalysis was not "'a recommendation for a patriarchal society but an analysis of one'". Mitchell suggests that Freud marks a significant, potential, first step towards ending patriarchal ideology and its

oppression of women (p. 150).

Silverman (1983) explains that in Lacanian psychoanalysis, the subject's entry into the symbolic order is defined by a linguistic structure "which does not in any way address its being, but which determines its entire cultural existence" (p. 166). She adds that the subject's entrance into the symbolic and the formation of the unconscious are "effected through a single signifying event" (p. 167). For Lacan the unconscious is structured like a language and comes into being simultaneously with language acquisition. According to Silverman, the subject is therefore linguistically "coerced", at the level of the preconscious, (as Freud has argued in conforming to cultural expectations), as well as at the level of the unconscious. In the Lacanian scheme, Silverman explains that the unconscious is "split off":

> ...not only from the undifferentiated needs which comprise
> the subject's being, but from the drives, which...are
> themselves already the product of a cultural mediation, i.e.
> of the territorialization of the body (p. 166).

This means that as we enter the realm of language in the symbolic order, we enter an area that we do not know or can not identify with, as our identity is split. This split defines the "Self" from the "Other", resulting in a "gap" which is the unconscious, a space that is alienated from our culturally mediated drives as well as from our corporeal "being", respectively.

In *"The Body of Signification"*, Elizabeth Grosz (1990) concentrates on Julia Kristeva's position, and focuses on her essay *"Powers of Horror, an Essay on Abjection"*. Grosz isolates two viewpoints around which Kristeva focuses her work. One centres on her psychoanalytic investigation of the role of the body and corporeality in the formation of the speaking subject; the other analyses the ways in which discourses and cultural representation position the subject of enunciation. Grosz explains that the connectedness of bodies (represented through psychoanalysis) and signifying systems (discourses and cultural

representations) are the precondition of subjective "identity". At the same time, she explains, that interlocking also provides the possibility of disruption and dissolution of the subject's symbolic registration through the "abject":

> The interlocking of bodies and signifying systems is the precondition both of an ordered, relatively stable identity for the subject and of the smooth, regulated production of discourses and stable meanings. It also provides the possibility of a disruption and breakdown of the subject's, and discourses', symbolic registration (Grosz, pp. 81-82).

For Kristeva the text (language) is the precondition to subjective "identity" (unconscious desire), supporting Lacan's notion that the unconscious and language come into being simultaneously. The "ordered" identity of the subject, however, is also vulnerable to dissolution because the cohesive link between psychoanalysis and signifying systems is constantly challenged by the "abject", or as Grosz explains "the unclean and the disorderly elements of [the subject's] corporeal existence..." (p. 86). This disruption to the subject's "identity" (the cohesive link between the body's corporeality and its cultural representation) occurs at the level of the unconscious, as the subject grapples with the "undifferentiated needs" of its being. Grosz (1990) describes the "abject" as a pre-oedipal space and self-conception:

> ...it is the space between subject and object, both repulsive and attractive, which threatens to draw the subject and its objects towards it, a space of simultaneous pleasure and danger. This is the space of the body in its pre-oedipal, pre-social organization, not yet ordered in hierarchized or regulated terms. It is the expression of a contradictory self-conception, one in which the subject is unable to reconcile its ...experience of itself with its idealized image (p. 94).

The "abject" is, therefore, Kristeva's term for the Lacanian notion of a split and unstable subjectivity at the level of the unconscious. It is at this level of instability

that the subject experiences irresolution between its corporeality and idealized body image.

Similarly, Griselda Pollock (1988) is cited by Wilson (2000) as claiming that the "male gaze" enjoys a privileged position within the modern sexual economy to produce "'a masculine sexuality which…enjoys the freedom to look, appraise and possess'" (p. 82). Pollock is particularly concerned with this practice, notes Wilson, as it is reflected within the works of Edouard Manet and his contemporaries. Manet's subjects were predominantly lower-class women subjected to exploitation by the "gaze" of bourgeois men. Wilson explains that Pollock's critique rests on the psychoanalytic approach of Lacan, and she observes further the concern that feminists express over his theory of sexual differentiation. Kaplan (1984) is quoted by Wilson as claiming that "'woman is located as other (enigma, mystery), and is thereby viewed as outside…male language'" (p. 82). Wilson thus suggests that whilst at a conscious level the male gaze is voyeuristic (and represents desire and potential mastery), its significance at an unconscious level is to "annihilate the threat that woman (as castrated, and possessing a sinister genital organ) poses" (p. 82). In other words, at the level of the "unconscious", the male gaze acknowledges the "reality" of a threat that woman, as "Other", presents. In the misogynist perspective of Lacan, this position considers women to be a sinister threat to be annihilated. In maintaining control, the subject thus experiences conflict and confusion at the level of the unconscious.

A parallel analogy can be drawn here with Nead's description of the "warrior male" who, in maintaining control over his environment, armours himself in fear of an attack. Similarly, the patriarch exserts a firm control over his "women" in fear of their potential resistance. Paradoxically, this analogy of Lacan's "split and unstable subjectivity" (and Kristeva's "abject"), has application in political and social reform within western patriarchy and, particularly, could offer women the potential for feminist dialogue. As Grosz observes, Kristeva places the "abject" on

the side of the "feminine" in her work and argues that it (the abject) requires some mode of control or exclusion to keep it at a "safe" distance from the "masculine" symbolic. However, according to Grosz (p.99), Kristeva observes that literature, the arts and poetry succeed (to some degree) in elevating the abject from this suppression.

Barbara A. Biesecker (1992) rereads Helene Cixous's essay *"The Laugh of the Medusa"* as "an essay which posits what can and must be done by women if they are to intervene effectively in the public sphere through written and oral discourse" (p. 86). Bieseker argues that feminist theory and criticism can be enriched through the approaches taken by theorists and critics who are seeking to contest the mainstream tradition of male rhetoric. This tradition, she notes, is a discipline with a distinct focus on male, public address, "a realm to which women as a class have historically been denied access" (p. 87). Biesecker asks, therefore, what the rhetorical critic and theorist can do, in making a feminist intervention into rhetoric. She observes Lacan's argument for a "split and unstable subjectivity", and sees him as being bent upon "ransacking Rhetoric by undermining the deliberative speaking subject" (p. 89). Cixous (cited in Biesecker), advises women to do something to the world through speaking and writing within the public arena, as this constitutes "'the possibility of change, the space from which one can throw out subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures'" (p. 90). Biesecker observes, therefore, that through this endeavour women can represent their own identity and thus pragmatically interrupt the smooth transmission of the male-dominated rhetorical tradition.

Julia Kristeva (cited by Psych Et Po, 1974) expresses that:

> 'the position of the feminine in discourse is a very difficult
> position to specify. As soon as one specifies it, one loses it,
> seeing that, perhaps, the feminine is precisely what

escapes nomination and representation' (p.95)[2].

Kristeva praises the women's movement because of its negativity and radicality, and urges women to connive with avant-garde phenomena. In this interview Kristeva specifically refers to the avant-garde literature of Lautreamont, Mallarme, Bataille, and Artaud, in which patriarchal structures (the State, the family, and religion) are attacked. Kristeva notes, however, that their critique permeates the very economy of their language which is often said to be esoteric, unreadable, and elitist (cited in Psych Et Po, p, 97). Kristeva, consequently, raises her concerns in this interview that Artaud, et al, is in fact a "high art" practitioner with a very limited audience. Kristeva does, however, hold the view that the rebellion Artaud has carried out "'disturbs the very rules of ordinary soporific communication… [and breaks] down the structure of language itself'" (p. 97). As society maintains the barriers of convention, the "cries" and "gestures" of dissipated, avant-garde language, she asserts, serve to disrupt these boundaries, clearing a "space" for expressions that are not tolerated within the mainstream of rhetorical tradition. In other words, this is the space of the "Other", and it threatens the Subject at the level of the unconscious, where the subject is split and "unstable", and is open to what Kaplan (cited in Wilson, 2001) asserts, lies "'outside… male language'" (p. 82).

Biesecker notes that the feminist intervention into rhetoric has brought about a pragmatic means for "(re)shaping human reality", and she observes, in particular, that Cixous' essay *"The Laugh of the Medusa"* is "neither issued in the discourse of high philosophy nor coded in the extraordinarily technical language of a literary semiotics crosshatched by psychoanalysis" (p. 90). She also observes that Cixous is neither detached, nor formal in her rhetoric, but addresses women as a woman herself. Biesecker thus cites Cixous' exclamation: "'Write yourself!'", and notes that Cixous is, in fact, writing from the position of a personal "I" to women as a familiar "you". This serves to challenge the pre-existing discursive system based on the binary attachment of masculine "I" with feminine "you" (p. 90),

---

[2] "Psych Et Po" is the Psychoanalysis and Politics group of the French Women's Liberation Movement.

privileging the male in patriarchy.

Janet Wolff (1995) discusses the need within language to be liberating and innovative, and relates this idea to dance. She observes Derrida's reference to Nietzsche's proposal, that the writer should learn to "dance" with the pen, and suggests that this metaphor "has to do with any unspecified writing strategies that destabilize meaning", (p. 80). Similarly, Ben Halm (1995) refers to the shaping of human "reality" through avant-garde rhetoric, specifically in the work of Artaud, and refers to the Balinese[3] theatre as Artaud's "vessel of pure or uncontaminated originality" (p. 149). Halm explains further that it is to restore forms to a higher "reality" that the actor brutalises them in the first instance. In explaining that the Balinese actor does not make the same gesture twice (as he does not want to remain a mere "recording organism"), Artaud is quoted by Halm explaining that the Balinese actor tries, instead, to recreate theatre by "'breaking through language in order to touch life'" (p. 146).

Mark Fortier (1997) discusses Artaud's work as a rupture between things and words, between things - and the ideas and the signs that are their representation. This rupture, this "gap", notes Fortier, is to be overcome for Artaud in "a language of living signs". He cites Artaud in this instance:

> 'The objects, the props...which will appear on the stage will have to be understood in an immediate sense, without transposition; they will have to be taken not for what they represent but for what they really are' (Fortier, p. 42).

In other words, Artaud attempts to put an end to "representation", to the barriers that semiotics hold up to life experience. In "breaking through language in order to touch life" Artaud (cited in Halm) claims that man's limitations are rejected, and the "frontiers of reality" are extended, as life is pushed "beyond its 'surface of fact' towards 'that fragile, fluctuating centre which forms never reach'" (p. 149).

This group conducted an interview with Julia Kristeva that was first published in 1974.
[3] I acknowledge the political implication here of Artaud's cultural appropriation of Balinese forms, but further investigation of this issue for Artaud is outside the scope of this thesis.

This notion of a "surface of fact" relates to our Cartesian heritage, that separates the body's rational, stable interior from its erratic exterior of life experience. Semiotic[4] drives contest to disturb the subject's barrier, thus breaking down the body's dualistic nature and subsequently promoting exchange within the subject. As the corporeal body moves "inward", the interior of the subject diverges to facilitate the development of engaging discourses and cultural representations. Feminist intervention into the rhetoric is a drive to find discourses that express a multitude of readings that break down the anachronous notion of one, unwavering, masculine reading. It is consequently through discourses and representational systems that the female subject looks to transform discursive norms. In other words, the feminist intervention strives to break down the binary that represents bodies as being either male or female, and looks instead to the idea of actual bodies as endlessly different to each other.

Artaud's concept of a fluctuating centre which forms never reach, relates to Kristeva's claim that the position of the feminine in discourse is most difficult to define. However, Grosz (1990) explains that the feminine can be expressed, and most directly through the discourse of poetic text, in its "open-ended deferral of meaning and its refusal to congeal into a symbolic identity" (p. 99). In her paper *"Epilogue",* Anne Balsamo (1996) discusses the role of the body in feminist Cultural Studies, and she specifically refers to "corporal feminism" as a new area of feminist research identified most notably in the work of Grosz. Anne Balsamo (1996) cites Grosz in her definition of corporeal feminism as:

> '...an understanding of corporeality that is compatible with
> feminist struggles to undermine patriarchal structures and to
> form self-defined terms and representations' (p. 157).

Balsamo describes Grosz' work as recuperating a notion of the body that does

---

[4] Kristeva refers to the "semiotic" as the relationship of the maternal body to the power of language within our monotheistic-capitalist societies. She explains that it is heard in rhythms, intonations and in children's echolalia, as well as in artistic practice; is not based on appropriating power and language, but silently supports this system , allowing it to function - and then surpasses it (Kristeva in Guberman, pp. 104, 105).

not imply an unchanging, essentialist identity for sexed bodies, but rather repositions the body (from the periphery) to a centre of analysis, to be understood as the very "stuff" of subjectivity. That is, Grosz focuses on the work of feminists who seek to reconceptualize the body in its "sexed specificity". Elaborating on this, Balsamo quotes Grosz in tying subjectivity to "'the specificities of sexed bodies'", and cites Grosz's notion of the subject as being "'no longer an entity - whether psychical or corporeal - but fundamentally an effect of pure difference that constitutes all modes of materiality'" (Balsamo, p. 158). Sexed bodies, therefore, are regarded as being "different" to each other and are not isolated or opposed (in the binary sense) as being simply either male or female. Grosz's consideration here of sexed identities is distinct from Lacan's notion of the subject's "identity". Whereas Grosz's model regards "difference" as a fundamental consideration of identity, Lacan's model sees the subject's entry into the symbolic order entirely through a linguistic structure that determines the subject's cultural identity and in no way addresses its "being".

Grosz (1990) writes of "sexed specificity", in relation to the concepts of "man", "woman" and "identity" in *The Body of Signification"*, and asserts that differences between the sexes is a difference without positive identity, "a relative rather than an absolute difference, one which defies logo centrism" (p.98). Grosz's focus on the body as a subject in its "sexed specificity" correlates with her definition of corporeal feminism, as promoting for women self-defined terms and representations. Rather than being positively identified as "Woman", considered different and "other" to the male subject within traditional cultural norms, corporeal feminism offers a woman subjective empowerment in embracing her differences (including differences *between* women), and thus destabilizes discursive, cultural norms. Grosz believes it is through sexually differentiated bodies, therefore, that a difference should be made in the kinds of discourses produced (p. 102). Sexually differentiated bodies consequently intervene within discourse, and thus impact on the codes of representation in signification. Within discourse women have, traditionally, been considered different to men in their

corporeality, and have thus been represented by men in an essentialist form as "Woman", to reflect man's glory. However, through the intervention of sexually differentiated bodies, new discourses are offered for a multitude of different bodies (as "beings") that are not positively identified as either sex, but are relatively different to each other. This premise is the result of *"Queer Theory"*, of "queering" the existence of universal sexual norms and experiences. Belsey and Moore (1997) highlight Line Pouchard's point that the term "queer" "dislodges essentialist understandings of sexuality that propose a unified model of subjectivity based on biology" (p. 12).

Pouchard[5] explains that gender as a cultural construct, therefore, does not reflect the sexual act of a "sexed body"; rather it assigns men and women to different sexual roles, based on their biological essence. Through new discourses, however, women (and men) find means to expressing themselves in all their diversity. This intervention can also be equated with the "abject" which, Grosz explains, is placed on the side of the "feminine" in Kristeva's work (Grosz, p. 93). Consequently, the female body is seen as a source of disturbance and harassment, as the conventions of representation for women are confronted. For example, Martha Noel Evans describes hysterics as occupying a female position in their behaviour as "difficult" and "hostile" patients, who perpetually attempt to dislodge the analyst, assumed "male", from his place as an authority. She observes the analyst's description of feelings of impotence and castration, as he masters anger and humiliation in "returning the hysteric to 'object' status as an item in textual theory" (Evans, 1989, p. 78). This means that women are again positioned by men, represented by men, as objects through discourse to be controlled. The "hysteric strategy", deliberately employed by women, consequently promotes subversive control for women as they harass and threaten the patriarch in allowing such power relations to function.

---

[5] Refer to Pouchard's discussion of queer theory in her paper "Queer Desire in *The Well of Loneliness*"

In an interview with Elaine Boucquey (1996) Kristeva discusses the qualities of singularity and uniqueness that women display in not appropriating masculine power strategies to surpass men. These qualities, she explains, are earned "'without reducing them to a generic category of 'women' comparable to the proletariat or to 'men'" (p. 103)[6]. In other words, Kristeva does not embrace an essentialist female opposition, but rather uses the drives of the semiotic to destabilize and transform discursive norms in becoming a fully socialized being. Kristeva refers to this type of relationship that women have with masculine power and language as "the woman effect", which, Boucquey describes, is "a source of silent support, a useful backdrop, and an invisible intermediary" (Boucquey, p. 104). This support, she continues, allows power and language to function, and then surpasses them (p.105). Kristeva maintains that art characterises the semiotic reserves that women draw upon in surpassing men, and (art) acts as a margin in transforming:

> ...language into rhythms and...'aberrations' into stylistic
> figures. Art is the 'incestuous' side of language, as reflected
> in its dependence on the mother's body and its relationship
> to the pre-oedipal stage (cited in Boucquey, p. 109).

The object of the primal mother is thus kept at a safe distance from the "subject" of the symbolic father through art, whilst at the same time its energetic resources are brought into effect.

In exploring the significance of avant-garde literature further for feminist expression, I relate Susan Sellers' interview with Kristeva on the question of "subjectivity". Kristeva discusses the processes that occur during a child's pre-linguistic stage of development, in the modality of the semiotic; and she refers specifically to the babbles, rhythms and alliterations a child makes in imitating his/her surroundings. She focuses particularly on the "process" of identification

---

(Belsey & Moore, pp. 53, 54), in which she asserts that gender is not synonymous with sexual acts, and alludes to a "parody of gender roles" (as a means to contest culturally enforced binaries) through drag performances.
[6] This interview was conducted by Elaine Boucquey. The transcription was edited by Kristeva and published in 1975. The translation is by Ross Guberman.

for the child which she describes as the "semiotic" stage, a potential state of regression and disintegration. It is during this time, states Kristeva, that "patterns appear but...do not have any stable identity: they are blurred and fluctuating" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 128). She suggests that a "fixed" identity is an illusion, yet she emphasizes that a certain type of stability is attained at the symbolic stage, as the individual acquires subjectivity in "killing" maternal and primordial links with the mother. It is often in the social code, in social communication, she asserts, that the basis for our identities (which the semiotic forms within language), is repressed. Stability within the symbolic necessitates, in other words, the repression of the archaic contact that the subject has with the maternal body through vocal or gestural inscriptions. Kristeva explains that this repression is found "in the tempo of the voice, in the rapidity of the delivery, or in its monotony...in certain musicalities. Or in certain alliterations" (p.132).

Kristeva thus advocates re-presentation of these inscriptions within language that serve, in particular, as "a new point of departure" for women, through which they can express themselves as subjects. In an interview in 1974[7], Kristeva explains that since the linguistic rebellion of Artaud, et al, disturbs "the very rules of ordinary soporific communication", the structure of language itself is broken down (Psych Et Po, 1994, p. 97). We can see, she continues, that Artaud has engaged in this recourse to the semiotic, in attempting a deliberate revival through his work of the semiotic within the symbolic realm. That is, Artaud and other avant-garde poets have explored what Kristeva advocates for women today, which is an avenue for creative expression from within the ratified position of "subject".

The work of Artaud and other avant-garde authors has therefore served to unite the subject with the mother and the object. Whilst in Chapter 1 I have designated "Modernism" as a regression through its move to embrace only the elite in art practice and appreciation, in this chapter I look to a notion of "avant-garde art" as

---

[7] This interview was conducted by the Psychoanalysis and Politics (Psych Et Po) group of the French Women's Liberation Movement. It was first published in 1994, and translated by Ross Mitchell Guberman in 1996.

progressive through its subversive move to embrace the abjected "other" into subjectivity. John Lechte (1990, p. 32), in discussing the work of Kristeva, explains that to allow the "other" (the semiotic) to become symbolically a part of one's own self, one must:

> ...appreciate, or struggle to appreciate, the lyricism of writing...be open to the notion that it is the product of another's noeud rythmique, of another as a noeud rythmique...to be capable of love for this other (p. 32).

In other words, Lechte explains that it is through crises, and (as Artaud has demonstrated) through rebellion, that one becomes aware and considerate of others - through the semiotic link with language in the lyricism of writing. This consequently can lead to a love of others through openness to change. New symbolic means are therefore needed to appropriate this "difference", explains Lechte, a difference which is not simply another version of the same, but a semiotic difference – a fundamental "otherness". As Kristeva has advocated, re-presentations of inscriptions from the maternal body offer a "new point of departure" and, therefore, a new symbolic means for feminine linguistic expression. This version of modernism, Kristeva's avant-garde, works for the signification, therefore, of others traditionally abjected from representation within Modernism (as I have defined in Chapter 1). In other words, the avant-garde links the semiotic to the symbolic, and offers a representation for bodies that are diverse and changing. This operates through lyrical writing and other avant-garde art practices that link the maternal body with the body of signification.

II) Rupturing Boundaries

Two specific bodies of art that I have produced during my Masters research have resulted from my deliberate move to research patriarchal conventions that represent, and thus control, the female "body" for the privilege of men. I have chosen to demonstrate my reconnection with the maternal body - at two different levels. The first exhibition, *"Re-presentations"* (at the Moores Building in

Fremantle in 2001) "re-presents" the maternal body (as Kristeva has advocated) in a figurative manner through charcoal drawings and digital prints. My subsequent exhibition, *"Diversify/Fructify"* (above "Spectrum" in Northbridge in 2003) "re-presents" the maternal body through linguistic text, as a billboard designed to coincide with the Perth Festival of Arts.

"Re-presentations" continues from my previous exhibition, *"More Attitude"*, (held at the Gadfly Gallery earlier that year) in regard to the style and execution of female bodies represented. However, *"Re-presentations"* departs significantly in the female subjects symbolically presented. As Kristeva has articulated, a "new point of departure" for feminist expression is for the female subject to draw on the semiotic drives and the corporeality of the maternal body.

Figure 4   "Sunny 1"   **Figure 5 "Sunny 2"**

Two drawings for this show *("Sunny 1"* and *"Sunny 2")* symbolize patriarchal control over women through the representation of "beautiful" female (exterior) bodies that satisfy the "gaze", yet tension within each work is created as connections are made to the maternal body. Each body "frames" folds of flesh that suggest foetal forms, signifying the control within patriarchy of maternal

"matter". "Matter"[8], defined as "bodily discharge", and "mater"[9] defined as "mother", constitutes the maternal body as being refuge and waste within dictatorial representations. Paradoxically, these notions of the maternal body signify the patriarch's fear of female "matter", and are reminiscent of Freud's notion of "the return of the repressed". The idealized outer lines of *"Sunny 1"* and *"Sunny 2",* are designed to actually "hide" the foetus within, testifying to the move within patriarchal art to control women in controlling the encroachment of the maternal body. However, through these paradoxical images *("Sunny 1"* and *"Sunny 2"),* the subject is reminded of "an unspeakable and unpayable debt of life, of existence" (Grosz, 1990, p. 92). In representing "refuge" through the maternal body, this work strives to re-present to the viewer the qualities of diverse and changing representation for bodies that are abjected in patriarchy. For change and growth to eventuate, viewers are therefore reminded of the need to connect with the semiotic body. As a site of refuge, the maternal body also becomes a site of domicile and a place to grow.

Another work in this exhibition, *"Ecstasy"*, is a digitally superimposed image of *"The Virgin receiving the Annunciation"* (illuminated by Jean Bourdichon of Tours) and *"Ecstasy of St. Theresa"* (painted by Gian Lorenzo Bernini); and also contributed to the exhibition in signifying the maternal body. The Virgin as a canonically rendered, submissive woman signifies masculine dominance and a bonding with the "Divine" through this iconography. Bourdichon's image suggests to viewers that the Virgin acts merely as medium for the patriarch in receiving divine grace from the Holy Spirit. This image also renounces the corporeality of Mary as a woman, as she conceives Christ of the Holy Spirit. Her maternal body is, therefore, not signified, but her "immaculate", iconic image is. Superimposing

---

[8] Defined in The Macquarie Thesaurus (keyword 63.1), first published in 1984.
[9] Ibid., (keyword 533.4).
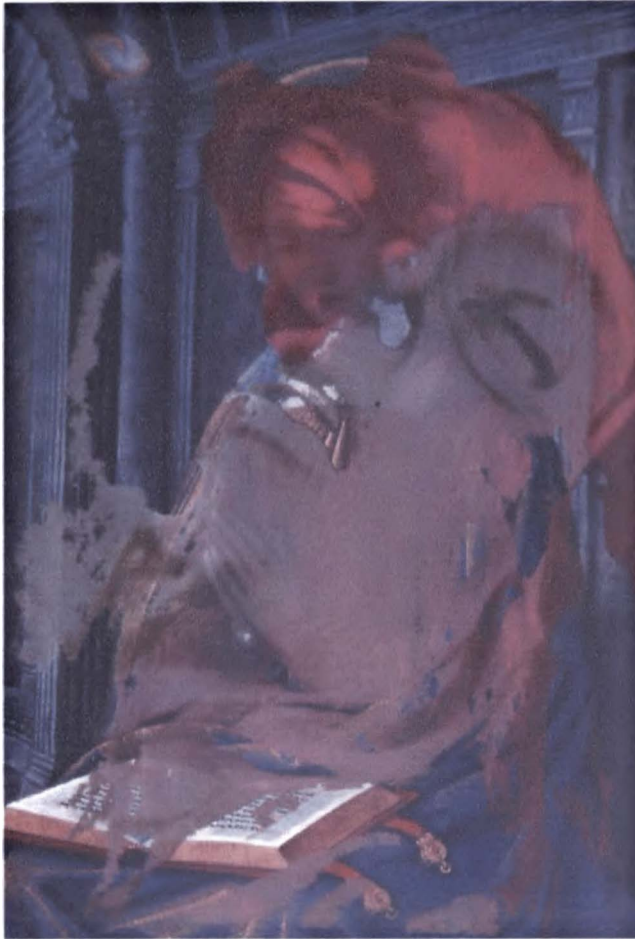
Figure 5 "Ecstasy"

the Virgin is the image of St. Theresa's face in ecstasy, with the digitally manipulated red veil of "blood" that functions to anchor the work to the maternal body. Tension also exists in this print as the image of the Virgin competes with the veil of "blood", again serving to remind the patriarch of the body's connections to the corporeal body through menstruation, "the living matter that helps to sustain and bring forth life" (Grosz, 1990, p. 92). The "horror" of menstruation, however, is a refusal to acknowledge the subject's corporeal link to the mother, thus intensifying my intention to represent the maternal body through this work. There are also sexual connotations within this image, which are not centred on the spiritual ecstasy of Saint Theresa, but refer to the physicality of female bodies, as sexed bodies, able to enjoy female orgasm. This relates to the notion

of female "autoeroticism", which suggests the symbolic significance of "desire" for women in their discovery of themselves at an intimate level, without the intervention of masculine visual "penetration".

The image "*Sycorax*" represents the absent, dead witch "Sycorax", marginalized in Shakespeare's play "*The Tempest*". The work is rigorously and crudely drawn to suggest resistance, and is significantly positioned in the exhibition at the margins of "*Nude 1*" and "*Nude 2*" in defiance of their representations as aestheticized nudes that frame (and control) the invasion of the maternal body within. Placed at the entrance to this exhibition, "*Sycorax*" also critiques the practice by MoMa (and other "exclusive" exhibition spaces) that marginalizes representations of "abject" bodies.

Figure 6 "Sycorax"

Kristeva (1982) explains the relationship of the abject body to the Symbolic:

> The abject confronts us…with our earliest attempts to
> release the hold of maternal entity even before ex-isting
> outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language (p, 13).

Kristeva refers to the encompassing power of the symbolic in repressing any links with the maternal body and she thus alludes to the subject's revulsion of this body by referring to it as "the abject". Connections can also be made between the foetuses in *"Nude1"* and *"Nude 2",* and the abject body of *"Sycorax".* As the latter attempts to create a visual disturbance within the show by upsetting the ambiance of the "classic" nudes, attention is drawn to the maternal body as a poignant force.

With reference to my billboard design, *"Diversify/Fructify",* I employ Grosz' concept of "corporeal feminism" as a means to self expression. Within the economy of patriarchy, the "mind" (representing the masculine subject) is separated from the "body" (representing the female object). As Silverman has explained, this rift (which privileges the male subject) only comes into play "by the opposition of the 'other' or the 'you' to the 'I'" (Silverman, 1983, p. 52). Miles, in discussing this binary of mind and body, refers to the rationale of Descartes, whom he cites:

> Now I will close my eyes, I will shut my ears, I will turn away
> from all my senses, I will even efface from my thought all
> images of bodily things…Or at least because of the difficulty
> of doing this I will deem them to be empty and false (Miles,
> 1997, p. 47).

In other words, Descartes (as patriarch) sees the body split off from the mind, and inferior to it. Corporeal feminism, however, strives to rupture this divide and to bring the corporeal body to signification. Balsamo (1996) explains Grosz' definition of corporeal feminism, therefore, as an acknowledgement of the struggles that women have faced as the "inferior" body within patriarchy. It consequently offers them the ground for "self-defined terms and representations"

(p. 157).
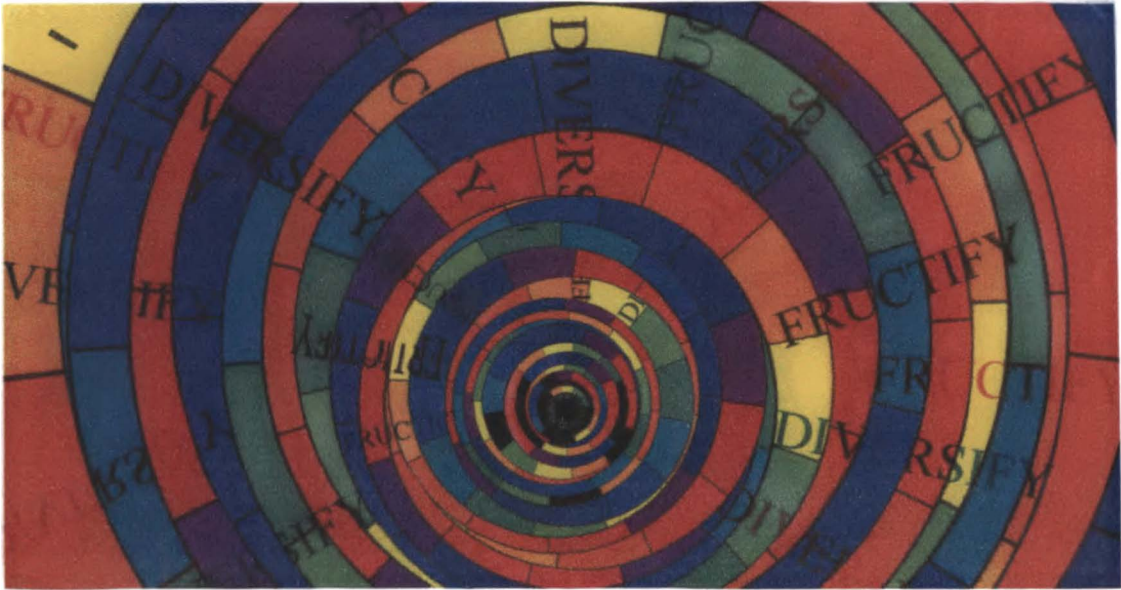
Figure 6 "Diversify / Fructify" (Graphics)

The text *"Diversify/Fructify",* whilst embracing "otherness", is structured as a binary attachment, and serves to critique patriarchal homogeneity and the exclusion of the maternal body. Through this work, however, I aim to symbolically re-instate the "inscriptions" of the maternal body that, Kristeva explains, have been repressed during the process of signification for the individual. The repetition of "Diversify" and "Fructify" serve to symbolize the fragmented structure of avant-garde text, as it breaks down the rules of ordinary "soporific" language (Kristeva's terminology) to connect with the maternal body in offering representation for changing and diverse bodies. A paradox exists in this visual critique. As ordinary, hypnotic language is upset in theory through the repetition of disruptive text, the visual impact of the billboard is arresting and spirals one's vision inwards. It could, however, operate in the reverse and spiral one's vision outwards, ejecting the text in the process. This billboard aims to create a pulsating sensation for the viewer and thus another visual disturbance, as the boundaries spiralling inwards and those spiralling outwards transgress. As this

billboard is situated on the margins of Perth in Northbridge, a culturally eclectic suburb proximate to the city, I relate its positioning to that of de Kooning's *"Woman 1"*, which is placed outside of the exclusive galleries of the MoMA for the general public to see. Erected shortly after my exhibition *"Re – presentations"*, the position of this billboard image also continues the disturbance to phallocentric images that *"Sycorax"* initiated, in agitating the iconic notion of corporate, "soporific" Perth.

The site of this work is also inclusive of "others", as the participants in this work are the general public, viewing from Beaufort Street in Northbridge.

Figure 7   "Diversify / Fructify"   (6m x 4m)

Figure 8 "Diversify / Fructify" (as viewed from Beaufort St.)

The corporeality of Northbridge as a site for "others" is the locus of the feminine "abject", whilst the city's centre represents the elite corporate world of masculine power. Thus situated on the margins of the city, my billboard serves to contest the sterility of "exclusive" masculine enterprise whilst hailing viewers to embrace diversity. Monumental in its size as a billboard, *"Diversify/Fructify"* nevertheless lacks the permanence of a monument, and its raw, unframed appearance serves to threaten the tenacious investment world of exclusive, corporate art.

Kate Linker (1990) cites Barbara Kruger in her discussion of interpellation as an "entrapment" strategy in advertising:

> This 'hailing'…is one of the prominent tactics of most public
> design work, whether it be advertising, corporate signage,
> or editorial design…I learned to deal with an economy of
> image and text which beckoned and fixed the spectator
> (p.14).

Billboards generally interpellate female viewers as customers, directing women to "buy" for their bodies, with an acute focus on looking "good" for men. In responding to this tactic of interpellation, women set themselves up as commodities for men. My billboard, however, switches the focus for women and interpellates them to "use" their bodies instead, in challenging the western idea of conformity. In a movement away from patriarchal control, women are interpellated to express themselves in their increasing diversity.

Biesecker observes that rhetoric is "a discipline whose distinctive characteristic is its focus on public address, a realm to which women as a class have historically been denied access" (p. 87). In using rhetoric, men have traditionally addressed "the masses"; have expressed themselves as subjects, through the masculine privilege of language. Women, however, have been precluded from this avenue of expression, instead being the receptacle of this rhetoric. The billboard's fragmented text marks an attempt to undermine Rhetoric; and reflects Derrida's drive to "[ransack] Rhetoric by undermining the deliberative speaking subject" (Biesecker, p. 89). It signifies a feminist attempt at public address in its use of the immediate, active voice, whilst its pulsating, fluctuating graphics of colour symbolizes the notion of female subjectivity that refuses "to congeal into a symbolic identity" (Grosz, 1990, p. 99). The billboard, therefore, calls the general public to let go of conventional discriminations and to open up to the differences of "Others", in enabling a diversity of expressions to be heard. Positioned over Spectrum, a non-commercial gallery run through the initiative of Edith Cowan University, my links with the university are signified. My postgraduate studies at this institution have facilitated my departure (as a female artist) from a former naïve investment in the practice of restricted self-expression through patriarchy. In place of this I now consider and enjoy a diversity of options for self-expression - and also feel less threatened by the authority of mainstream commercial galleries.

CHAPTER 3: THE "NUDE" AND THE "NAKED"

I) Theoretical Representations for Women

Robinson (2000) asserts Irigaray's argument that a change in political and cultural discourse, that respects differences and does not subjugate or possess, is necessary for women to see themselves anew through the notion of self-image and "beauty". She cites Irigaray "'I have yet to unveil, unmask...myself for me'" (Robinson), and explains that women must do this in order to remove the masquerade, the surface plane or screen of the mirror that is socially constructed as "Woman" (p. 232). Lynda Nead (1992) similarly identifies the mask that covers women in western aesthetics, and refers to Kenneth Clark's formulation of the female "nude" as a naked female body "clothed" in art (p. 232). In other words, Nead suggests that the unstructured female body, in advance of its aesthetic transformation as a "nude" body (to be gazed upon and possessed by the patriarch), is the "naked" body that lies outside the field of art and aesthetic pleasures. She explains Clark's notion of the "naked" body as being the body without borders or containment, and correlates it with a notion of the "obscene" body (Nead, p. 25). The modern usage of "obscene" is connected to the concept "disgusting", and refers to something which is not aesthetically pleasing. "Obscene" is also a modification of the Latin word "scena", which literally refers to that which is off or to the side of the stage and is thus beyond "presentation". I argue that "obscene" in western aesthetics is considered to lie in the "naked" female body, suggesting both the patriarch's disgust in its lack of form, and its marginalization.

Nead argues that when Clark discusses the nude, the "spectre of its negative 'other'" as the naked, is always present (p. 15). Through this reference she indicates that the "naked" and the "nude" are in a binary attachment, the nude existing because of the naked body that precedes it. In other words, the naked (female) body has a temporal existence, which is possessed (to some extent)

through the patriarch's "gaze". This controlling gaze "frames" the woman's body, turning her into an object and representing her as the classic "nude", judged in western aesthetics to be visually pleasurable. The female body that is not brought under control by the patriarch's representation remains unstructured and lacks definition. It is the "naked" body that, outside of the frame, is not considered visually pleasurable by western aesthetics. It is this naked body, however, that Irigaray urges women to reconnect with. It is also this body that Nead has defined as "the body in advance of its aesthetic transformation" (Nead, p. 15). Rather than remaining passive, as representations of the gaze, women are urged, therefore, to become active and to see and represent themselves anew. I refer to Cixous' call to women, "'Write yourself!'", as she urges women to become active in their own representations (Biesecker, p. 90). This practice, thus, resists the continued representation of the nude, as a surface (a body) for masculine inscription.

In representing themselves anew, women need to rupture the formulated discourse of the binaries "naked" and the "nude". Nead explains however, that the naked female body, placed beyond the borders of aesthetic containment, can never be ratified outside of symbolic representation. That is, "there can be no naked 'other' to the nude, for the body is always already in representation" (Nead, p. 16). In suggesting this, Nead cites T.J. Clark "'By nakedness I mean those signs…which say that we are nowhere but in a body, constructed by it…'" (p. 17). Like Irigaray, she points out that because there can be "no recourse to a semiotically innocent and unmediated body", we must "investigate the *diverse* ways in which women's bodies are represented (my emphasis) and promote new bodily images and identities" (Nead, p. 17). For example, the *"Venus of Willendorf",* as a lumpy and protruding figurine is an example of a "constructed" female body, yet represents maternal flesh that is not ratified within western aesthetics. Nead suggests that Kenneth Clark "alludes to this image of the female body as undisciplined, out of control" (p. 20). His view thus exemplifies aesthetic judgement within patriarchy that relegates female matter "off or to the

side of the stage" (Nead, p. 25). Similarly, Nead reflects upon Kant's notion of "matter", as being that which is "bad", which goes beyond aesthetic taste and judgement. She argues that for Kant, "matter" is that which "...seduces, embarrasses or leads the viewer astray, away from the proper consideration of intrinsic form" (Nead, pp. 24-25).

In relation to the value that form holds within patriarchy, Nead questions where the distinctions between matter and form are made, and refers to Derrida's observation that in order to make a "pure" judgement one needs to judge what is intrinsic to the object and is thus the "proper" concern of aesthetic judgement, and what is extrinsic to the object and is supposedly "irrelevant" (Nead, p. 25). Questions pivoting around these issues consequently suggest that the notion of "object" is crucial to an understanding of any difference between "nude" and "naked". As Nead has suggested, the naked body has no borders of aesthetic containment. It goes beyond aesthetic taste and judgement and is, consequently, beyond the "proper consideration of intrinsic form". What does lie within the borders of aesthetic judgement, therefore, is the object that is contained and controlled. It exists, thus, within the formal definitions of "form", "art" and "aesthetics".

However, with reference to Derrida's argument of the "critical place of judgement", Nead notes that it is at the framing edge or the parergon, and concludes that:

> ...pushing against the limit, brushing against obscenity...the
> female nude is the border, the parergon as Derrida also
> calls it, between art and obscenity (p. 25).

The "parergon" as the permeable border, troubles the distinction between the inside and outside. I argue that representations of the female body as parergonal figure can potentially unhinge the binary between "naked" (as the female body that is unstructured and lies outside the proper field of art and aesthetic judgement), and "nude" that is an object of beauty, suitable for art and aesthetic

judgement (Nead, p. 25). Serving to "unhinge" this binary, the female body's relationship to the "sublime" also challenges the sense of order and form through aesthetic judgement. Nead cites Kant in *"Critique"*, who maintains that the sublime "'is to be found in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or else by its presence provokes, a representation of limitlessness'" (Nead, p. 26). In other words, Nead acknowledges Kant's notion of the sublime as a representation of form beyond limit, which intimates a state of divinity and transcendence. She sees the sublime, thus, as a "disturbing category", which shatters the binary of form and matter, and reminds us of "the social nature of all categories and boundaries" (p. 26). However, in relation to Derrida's parergon, placing the female body at "the critical place of judgement" invests within this image an insight into the sublime, and thus enables a representation of "the divine" for women. Robinson (2000) cites Irigaray to support this point:

> 'I have yet to unveil, unmask, or veil myself for me - to veil myself for self-contemplation, for example, to retouch myself with my gaze so as to limit my exposure of the other, but also to again be in touch with [retoucher] my own gestures and garments, thus to re-nest (into) my vision and contemplation of myself' (p. 232).

Here Irigaray asks women to look within themselves for their experience of the "Divine", rather than outside of themselves to an external icon - as men have practiced in western patriarchal tradition. In other words, women should not be limited to the representation of "The Father" as "The Divine", signified as the icon of masculinity, and not restricted to the aesthetics values of "pure form". In practice, this translates to women valuing themselves, and not the iconicized female forms of masculine signification as in the "nude". Women, consequently, become freer (but not free) to embrace and enjoy their own bodies for signification.

Nead has noted the experience of the sublime to be a "disturbing" category that shatters the duality of form and matter. She also considers it to be "kinetic" as it

explores the territory of unknown truth, which is in opposition to "the quiet, contemplative pleasure" of art (p. 26). Edmund Burke (cited in Boulton, 1958) wrote in 1757:

> 'The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature…is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other' (p. 58).

For Burke, the sublime becomes the site of passion and astonishment, but also the site of horror. In addition to the emphasis Burke places on the concept of a violently emotional sublime and horror, he explains the opposition of beauty and sublimity by a physiological theory. In this, the opposition of pleasure and pain becomes the source of two aesthetic categories, which derive beauty from pleasure and sublimity from pain (Boulton, pp. 113-114). This distinction between the beautiful and the sublime in relation to the viewer's experience of the "object" is also apparent in the works of Kant, which Nead highlights:

> "Whereas the pleasure provoked by the beautiful is one of life enhancement…, the pleasure (Lust) that is excited by the sublime is of a different and negative order" (Nead, p. 27).

Beauty and the sublime are, thus, described here in terms of the process of perception and its effect upon the receiver. The process of perception thus suggests a position of relativity in regard to its effects upon the physical body and emotions of the viewer. This relativity breaks down the "clean and proper bodies" defined in patriarchy, and promotes a need to explore ambiguities and uncertainties that the sublime presents. Lyotard (cited in Bennington & Massumi, n.d.) states: "'Let us wage war on totality; let us be witness to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honour of the name'" (p. 82). The sublime, "the unpresentable" in Lyotard's words, consequently dismisses the predictability and wholeness of the "beautiful", and challenges the ethos of western high art.

John Lechte (1990) clarifies Kristeva's position in relation to the sublime and the notion of "process". Kristeva, he maintains, proposes that the subject be understood as an "open system":

> Trauma, crisis, and perturbation similarly should be seen as
> the sources of an 'event' in the life of a subject, something
> which broadens horizons, and not something to be denied
> or resisted with a resultant atrophying of psychic space
> (p. 33).

Lechte clearly aligns Kristeva's sublime with the "disturbing" category, as it ruptures the border that divides aesthetic containment in "art" from a notion of what lies beyond aesthetic representation in "obscenity". In this process of "rupturing", the "obscene" is drawn into art - into symbolic representation, whilst "art" experiences a sense of the infinite, the "divine", through the female nude that, Derrida advocates, is at the critical place of pure judgement.

Rupturing the border between art and obscenity sets in motion a "process" that is akin to Kristeva's notion of an "open system". Considered a stimulus to change and adaptation, the outside world of the other is no longer a threat, explains Lechte (1990) but is something which "broadens horizons" (p. 30). As Lechte has noted, the subject for Kristeva becomes increasingly more complex and supple, and increasingly more capable of love, less threatened by the individuality of the "other" during this process of broadening horizons. In his or her individuality, the "other", Lechte notes, becomes, "a participant in an identity as 'a work in progress' central to 'the amorous state'" (Letch, p. 33). The subject is set in motion with a broadening of its horizons, as it expands to embrace the differences of the other. This relates explicitly to Lechte's notion of "semiotic otherness" - to an embracing of the other without control. It is also akin to Burke's notion of the sublime that fills the mind with its object so entirely that it cannot entertain anything other. In other words, with the sublime (with semiotic otherness) comes deep respect and love for that part of the subject that is

considered "other". Rather than viewing the object as "beautiful" in the manner of the western patriarch (to be coveted as property), the "other" sets in motion a dialogue between subject and object where boundaries are ruptured.

Michel de Certeau (1984) denotes "writing" as a modern mystical practice, a fragmented discourse "which is articulated on the heterogenous practices of a society and which also articulates them symbolically" (pp. 133-134). He identifies that, within Western culture, the "origin" of text is no longer narrated, and that "Progress" is scriptural in type, therefore distinguishing it from orality. De Certeau maintains that the "oral" is that which supposedly does not contribute to "progress" and, reciprocally, the "scriptural" is that which separates itself from the magical world of voices and tradition. A parallel to de Certeau's "oral" can be drawn here with the "boundary line" Kristeva identifies exists between the symbolic and semiotic. The "semiotic" is the zone of echolalia and the lullabies, and, similar to Derrida's conviction, it is the critical zone of debate, and provides a fertile ground for feminist discourse. This space is, metaphorically speaking, Kant's "Sublime" and Derrida's "parergon" or border, and, in Lyotard's interpretation, the "gap" between the presentable (the subject's facilities of presentation and judgement) and the unpresentable (the idea or object of knowledge). Similarly, in terms of artistic practice, the semiotic is the space between the framed classical female form and the uncontrolled matter of the archaic woman, the "pure and proper self" and the "obscene". The semiotic provides a buffer zone for these "opposites", promoting a dialogue between the two. In other words, the oral "zone" recognizes the diversity and individuality of marginalized subjects in Western culture and offers them a space to negotiate differences.

Kaja Silverman (1983) notes Louis Althusser's observation in *"Marxism and Humanism"* which claims that a person cannot step outside of ideology, since it is only from inside of it that one finds subjectivity and social reality. Silverman writes that it is important to keep in mind, however, that there is always:

> ...a heterogeneity of conflicting ideologies concealed
> behind the dominant one. While it may not be possible to
> step outside of ideology altogether, it is possible to effect a
> rupture with one, and a rapprochement with another (p. 31).

This claim implies that there is no reality outside of ideology to which a subject could have access. However, through a process of seduction, the "myths" (the established truths) of the ruling class can be disturbed, as authority is enraptured (p. 30).

Sim and Van Loon (2001) explain that Derrida, likewise, challenges the concept of "truth" and "meaning" in the West, which considers the full meaning of a word to be "present" to the speaker, or writer, in their mind as they use it. Derrida's argument is that a transparent "presence" of meaning can never be achieved because, in the act of transmission, meanings "slip" as words contain within themselves traces of meanings other than their assumed one. Derrida therefore advocates the notion of a field of meaning rather than a one-to-one correspondence between word and meaning (Sim & Van Loon, pp. 88-89). Similarly, Toril Moi (1989) notes of Helene Cixous' argument (from a feminist perspective), that to enclose maleness and femaleness in exclusive opposition to each other is to "force them to enter into the death-dealing power struggle... within the binary opposition" (p. 111). Following this logic, Moi notes, the feminist task becomes a deconstruction of patriarchal metaphysics. Thus she asks the pertinent question:

> ...[is] it really possible to remain in the realm of
> deconstruction when Derrida himself acknowledges that we
> still live in a 'metaphysical' intellectual space? (p. 111).

In other words, reminded of the fact that there can be no representation outside of the Symbolic, the question arises for women as to how the "absolute" meaning of a word within rhetoric can be broken into a multitude of other meanings that allow space for a diversity of women's voices to be heard. For my argument here, it remains to be seen *how* a woman artist might negotiate this tricky terrain and

create images of women that "rupture" this "death-dealing power struggle".

I return to Biesecker's appraisal of Cixous's essay *"The Laugh of the Medusa"* in which Biesecker observes that Cixous does not simply declare women's need to write and speak, but also offers suggestions on how they might go about it. The essay, notes Biesecker, realizes that the symbolic order conventionally allows women only to speak in the discourse of "The Father", and she rhetorically asks how and where women might begin to speak and write effectively within the space of the symbolic. Biesecker consequently suggests that it is from Derrida that Cixous takes her cue, from his assertion that one begin to write from wherever one is. Biesecker notes of Derrida's position, that "by giving up the dream of unfettered origin or absolutely clean space, one can…begin wherever one is" (Biesecker, p. 91). In answer to her own question of where a woman's place might be, Biesecker suggests it lies "in the uncanny realm of the 'in between'" (p. 91), as a woman is simultaneously in several places, both inside and outside the centre at once. This advances Moi's suggestion (in response to Derrida's notion of the metaphysics of presence) that it is "impossible to produce new concepts untainted by the metaphysics of presence" (Moi, p. 111). Cixous poses a similar intervention and I quote Biesecker's observation of her positing, as women are encouraged to "pilfer the discourse that regulates the system and move it in a new direction" (Biesecker, p. 91). Cixous, she observes, writes of women "flying" and "stealing" in language, taking after birds and robbers, flying the coup, taking pleasure in "'jumbling things and values, breaking them all up, emptying structures and turning the proper upside down'" (Biesecker, p. 92).

Moi suggests a study of Kristeva's consideration of feminism as a position, as it is marginalized by the patriarchal symbolic order. In other words, as occupying a position within the margins of the Symbolic, feminism enjoys representation rather than exclusion through a binary attachment. This marginal position construes women as the limit or border of patriarchy, separating the patriarch from "matter", yet permitting a permeation of this "boundary" into the chaos

beyond. Neither position corresponds to any essential truth of woman, explains Moi, and thus offers an escape from the threats of biologism.

Linda Hutcheon (1989) explains that the impact of feminist, gay, Marxist, black, postcolonial, and poststructuralist theories has brought about an investigation of social and ideological "production of meaning", through postmodernist criticism in literature and the visual arts. However, she observes that from another point of view "western capitalist culture has also shown an amazing power to normalize (or 'doxify') signs and images" (Hutcheon, p. 7). Postmodernist culture can therefore be considered paradoxical. Whilst providing a vehicle for diversity and "openness" of meanings, through a concern to de-naturalize some of our ideology, postmodernism necessarily must continue the tradition of ideological representation. Hutcheon defends, however, postmodernist representation, stating that it is always critical and not nostalgic; it is also not ahistorical or de-historicizing. She states:

> ...it does not wrest past art from its original historical context and reassemble it into some sort of presentist spectacle. Instead, through a double process of installing and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference (p. 93).

Parody, as a form of reproduction, calls into question the notion of artistic originality. Rather than stating a loss of meaning and purpose for art, states Hutcheon, parody anticipates a new significance for art, that works to "foreground the politics of representation". Postmodernist parody, she continues, "is a value-problematizing, de-naturalizing form of acknowledging the history (and through irony, the politics) of representations" (p. 94).

Postmodern art is thus fundamentally paradoxical in its relation to history, both critical and complicit of that which precedes it. It does not deny, states Hutcheon, "its inevitable implication in them [the 'master' narratives], but it also wants to use

that 'insider' position to 'de-doxify' the 'givens' that 'go without saying' in those grand systems" (p. 119). Postmodernist art is neither neoconservatively nostalgic nor radically revolutionary, maintains Hutcheon, but is unavoidably compromised (as is my position within my practice).She explains that the typical space for postmodernist critique is, therefore, between traditional art forms, as it serves to de-naturalize the notion of representation in high art as well as in mass media, playing on and subverting the presumed naturalness and transparency of traditional art forms.

Hutcheon's notion of postmodernist art echoes Derrida's approach to the breakdown of ideology, through a process of deconstruction from the margins of the symbolic. It relates, also, to Jean Baudrillard's position in regard to the notion of established "truths", as he disrupts the symbolic order via a system of "seduction", through which authority can be "beguiled" (Sim & Van Loon, p. 110). Luce Irigaray's play with mimesis also reflects this concept of beguilement. In an interview with Catherine Porter, Irigaray (1977) asserts that in order to recover a space for women, a direct feminine challenge to phallocentric discourse would only maintain sexual indifference in demanding to speak as a (masculine) subject. Rather than rivalling men in constructing "a logic of the feminine" (p. 76) Irigaray advocates "jamming the theoretical machinery itself... suspending its pretension to the production of truth and of a meaning that we are excessively univocal" (p. 78). Irigaray maintains, therefore, that with respect to the phallocentric logic of women defined as "lack" and "deficient", women should signify the possibility for a disruptive, feminine excess. This excess, she asserts, must maintain its fluidity of style or "writing", and not privilege sight, established form, figure or concept. It must take the figure back to its source which is, among other things, tactile.

II) A Space for Female Self-Expression

I return to the point that there is no recourse to "a semiotically innocent and

unmediated body" in theorizing the female nude (L. Nead, p. 17), and look again to Derrida's understanding, as Biesecker explains, that "by giving up the deadly dream of the unfettered origin or absolutely clean space, one can...begin wherever one is" (Biesecker, p. 91). Consequently, to promote new bodily images and identities for women, one must investigate diverse ways for the representation of women's bodies. Such representations suggest the notion of self-expression for women which, as Nead implies, must exist within the Symbolic. It is in this regard that I return specifically to Kristeva's defence of "the woman effect" which offers a means to subjective expression for women from within the symbolic order. Based not on appropriating power and language, the "woman effect", as a source of "silent support", allows power and language to function and then surpasses them (Boucquey, 1996, pp. 104-105). An example of this process, notes Kristeva, is the positioning of women within primitive societies as objects of exchange that "'constitute power and are indispensable to the exercise of power even though they do not participate in it directly'" (Boucquey, p. 105). The "woman effect" thus advocates subversion for women as being instrumental in the yielding of power. Kristeva subsequently recognizes that aesthetic sublimation (through "Art") characterizes "'a more patent immanence of the semiotic to the symbolic'", being the "incestuous side" of language (quoted in Boucquey, 1996, p.109). This "intimacy" of art with language results from art's proximity, also, to the semiotic. As Nead reiterates of Derrida's argument, art "[pushes] against the limit, [and brushes] against obscenity" (Nead, p. 25), and is, therefore, in contact with the "underbelly" (the abject) of the symbolic. Art that deviates from conventional formulas of representation for women thus embraces the differences perceivable among women. In the process of representation it is evident, therefore, that art (slipping outside of patriarchal representations) recognizes the ambiguities existing within the margins of the subject. Such differences can no longer be "glossed over" as stereotypes; they demonstrate the significance of the abject body for women in signification.

"Claudine" is a large charcoal drawing I composed for an exhibition of the

"Soroptimist International" that was held at the Moores Building in Fremantle in 2003. In response to their theme "Remembering Women Working For Women", I endeavoured to celebrate heterogeneity and difference among women through this work.
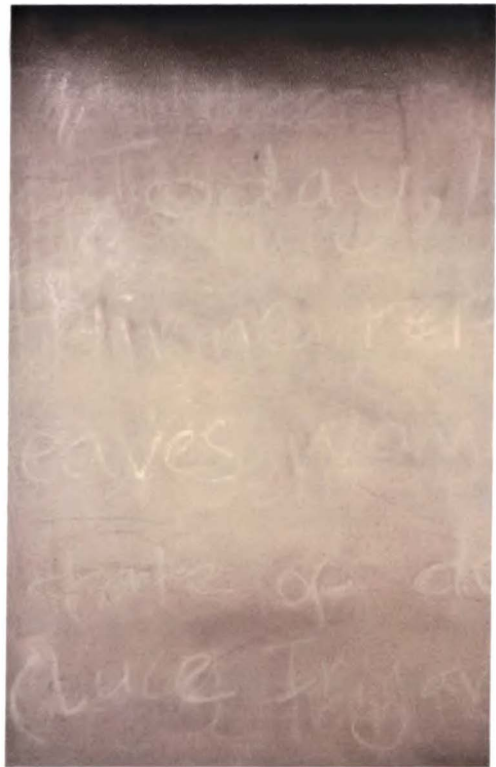
Figure 9 "Claudine"   **Figure 10 "Script detail"**

Operating within the conventions of western representation, I have depicted *"Claudine"* as a "nude" through seductively "aesthetic", delineated lines. The harmonious placement of these lines and tonal values facilitate a sense of "oneness" (and homogeneity), and facilitate a sense of "ease" for the viewer's "gaze". Intentionally overworked, this nude sits passively and symbolizes a body that is controlled by the patriarch. Viewed as an iconic representation, *"Claudine"*, with her eyes glazed and elsewhere, is a body that is trapped and precluded from subjectivity. She is unable to see herself, to represent herself, from this

perspective. Her velvet-textured contours contain no suggestion of threatening matter within. Yet, a break from this acquiescence (in exposing her vagina) posits *"Claudine"* as an expression of "other" voices. Therefore, whilst alluring to viewers as an aesthetic work of art, *"Claudine"* works other lips, subversively, in speaking for women from within symbolic representation. As a nude, she is thus "positioned" on the edge of the Symbolic, whilst "brushing up" against semiotic drives.

In exposing her vagina (though ambiguous), *"Claudine"* suggests the presence of semiotic drives and, therefore, the threat of the maternal body to the symbolic order. Her vagina is "obscene", yet it has a significant presence in this work that shocks the "gaze". Consequently, matter that is excluded from signification within the conventions of patriarchal art finds a presence here. The nude, as Nead observes, is "the internal structural link that holds art and obscenity together" (p. 26). *"Claudine"* (as that link) can "behave well", and remains within the "the scene" as an alluring image, but she also threatens to "destabilize the very foundations of our sense of order" (Nead, p. 26). *"Claudine"* could, therefore, be considered a metaphor for self-expression, in offering representation for bodies that have been traditionally excluded from signification.

"Claudine" must, consequently, work subversively as a "nude" towards this goal in maintaining a veil of chastity. It is only upon scrutiny of the pubic hair over Claudine's vagina that the viewer discovers, however, the suggestion of female genitalia beneath. Correspondingly, Claudine's bald head, ambiguous in terms of gender, unnervingly focuses on the viewer; it suggests a threat to the patriarch's gaze that is also undermined by the "apparent" female genitalia.

Figure 11   "Claudine (Close-up)"

Gustav Courbet's painting *"The Origin of the World"*[10], whilst thrusting a "vagina" at the viewer, reveals nothing of a woman's sexuality. Covered in pubic hair, her vagina area reveals nothing beneath the pubic veil. The pubic region of Duchamp's *"Etant Donnes"* also does not acknowledge female sexuality, in revealing a gash at her vagina that "goes nowhere". *"Claudine"*, however, attempts to challenge this patriarchal view of women being merely passive objects with no sex of their own. In revealing details of her sexual anatomy, my work aims, therefore, to critique the practice in patriarchy that glosses over a woman's sexual needs and desires. My attention to subtle details thus promotes a woman's means to self-expression rather than remaining streamlined and "beautiful" for viewers as an object for contemplation at an asexual level.

Robinson (2000) explains that "Today, lack of divine representation leaves

---

[10] Amelia Jones (pp 192-194) draws a comparison between Courbet's painting "The Origin of the World" 1866, and Duchamp's mixed media assemblage "Etant donnes" 1946-66. Through her discussion, it becomes evident that Jones feels ill at ease with the positioning of the female body within each of these works, as the position of voyeur is thrust upon viewers.

women in a state of dereliction" (p. 226). I have inserted this text into my work, though barely decipherable, to engage viewers at various levels. Engaging in an aesthetic manner, this writing is textured, yet subtle; whilst, instigating a response from viewers at a conceptual level, this text is socially loaded in its critique of "Divinity".

Irigaray (cited in Robinson, 2000) quotes Ludwig Feuerbach as saying "'God is the mirror of man'" (p. 227) in her discussion of "divinity" for men in patriarchal art through which God is represented in the earthly image of man, suggesting that man sees God in seeing himself. Irigaray (Robinson) has affirmed, however, that the representation of women in patriarchy has dispensed with and supplanted "'the role played in the real life of the senses'", implying that a woman's physicality and sense of desire has been denied her experience in this economy (Robinson, p. 227). Irigaray maintains, acknowledges Robinson, that women therefore need to see themselves for who they are, to see their own self-image (as beautiful) in order to develop a representation for themselves of "a female soul, and a female divine" (Robinson, p. 228). As women are canonically represented as "Woman" in patriarchal art, this impossible image holds no representation for women in their diversity. They have no place of domicile within patriarchal representation and must, therefore, find their own divinity – outside of this economy.

In its ambiguity, the text within *"Claudine"* paradoxically emphasizes the sense of isolation and lack of domicile that is paramount within patriarchal representations of "Woman" (which the nude's mask-like face reflects), whilst also approbating the diversity that exists among women. Claudine's exposed yet ambiguous vagina serves to counter-act the sense of dereliction that women experience in patriarchy, as Claudine's identity is promoted through a diversity of readings. In exposing her subtle though fleshy female genitalia, this work sanctions Irigaray's notion of "'the real life of the senses'" for women, and thus their sense of desire (cited in Robinson, 2000, p. 227). *"Claudine"* therefore stands as a metaphor for

women as diverse and sexual beings, experiencing subjectivity through their sense of the divine, manifest in their own (diverse) self-images.

Within a different body of work, *"Femmes Uniques"* (exhibited at the "Old George Gallery" in 2003), I have again explored ambiguity in representing female bodies, yet the execution of this work is very different to that of *"Claudine"*. *"Claudine"* is aesthetically and traditionally delineated, though her vagina is subtly exposed. Like *"Kathy"*, this work uses traditionally aesthetic delineated lines to present to the viewer "obscene" female flesh. In *"Claudine"*, the obscenity lies within her exposed vagina, which represents for women an acknowledgement of female corporeality and female sexual desire. *"Claudine"* is thus designed to shock viewers unaccustomed to viewing (and thus acknowledging) the physicality and desires of women.

My work in *"Femmes Uniques"* is not intended to shock in the explicit way that *"Claudine"* does, however it aims at ambiguity at two levels, and desires either to disturb viewers or to instigate in them an active response. *"Claudine 2"*, *"Suzanne"*, *"Mira 1"* and *"Mira 2"* represent my intention to brush the viewer up against the "intangible", and thus to offer them an experience of what might lie beyond representation; whilst *"Mira 3"*, *"Mira 4"*, *"Jenny"* and *"Emma"* are intended to cause a subtle disturbance.

Figure 12 "Claudine 2"

Figure 13 "Suzanne"

Figure 14 "Mira 1"

Figure 15 "Mira 2"

Rather than remaining passive icons of traditional female "beauty", *"Claudine 2"*, *"Suzanne"*, *"Mira 1"* and *"Mira 2"* are created to engage viewers in a subjective (rather than objective) response to what they as an audience perceive. These images, in other words, represent an expression of what could lie beyond rationality. Although the marks that I make are obviously limited, I aim to offer my audience an experience that is not limiting. In other words, my work could arouse in viewers an experience of aesthetics that lies beyond the confinement of traditional artistic representations. During the process of drawing, I have responded "acutely" to the progression of my "seeing", and have therefore offered viewers an experience of a "subjective" response in this execution. These drawings, therefore, are not intended to arrest one moment in time (as "classical" nudes might, for all "eternity"), but are designed to be experiential in their engagement with viewers, implying that subliminal forms exist beyond containment.

In explaining the experience of the "sublime" as seemingly kinetic (in contrast to the experience of the "beautiful" which is always contemplative), Nead (1992) cites Kant:

> 'The mind feels itself set in motion in the representation of
> the sublime in nature; whereas in the aesthetic judgement
> upon what is beautiful therein it is in restful contemplation'
> (p. 27).

In other words, through these drawings I aim to dislodge the viewer from the position of a controlling contemplator of the female body. In suggesting tactile sensations that rupture smooth delineations (through the kinetic marks I have incorporated into my work), I hope to offer viewers an opportunity to interact with the work in a less objective way. Female bodies executed as "tactile" beings are, therefore, my metaphor for an interaction and dialogue among people, which is essential to the challenge of patriarchal control and, thus, essential to the expressions of women.

"Mira 3", *"Mira 4"* and *"Jenny"* are ambiguous rather than explicit in their sexual identity, and are not intended to shock an audience in the manner of *"Claudine"*. However, their genitalia and engendered forms, through their lack of clarity, disturb contemplators desiring an iconic female form. These drawings are, therefore, designed to displace the conventional vantage point of the patriarch, as the passive female nude is replaced by bodies that interrupt the coveting "gaze" in their unpredictable forms. Although "positioned" as "studio nudes", these bodies serve to comment on the practice within patriarchy that reduces women to "object" status, and contracts them to service and submission.

Figure 16 "Mira 3"

Figure 17 "Mira 4"

Figure 18 "Jenny"

Finally, *"Emma"* conspires to disturb viewers from their complacent, objective gaze, as "she" represents an ambiguously sexed body. This nude engineers, also, to provoke feelings for the sublime, as "her" bodily contours are ruptured. Questions that might disturb viewers concern the biological sex of this subject, as both "her" penis and breasts are displayed. Upon closer inspection, however, the "penis" of this nude is not clearly defined, and harks back to Courbet's *"The Origin of the World"*, in its concealment of form beneath a dense "mass". Unlike the "shocking" realization of female sexuality that *"Claudine"* provokes, this nude's genitals go nowhere, and relate to "the horror of nothing to see" (which I discuss in my next chapter). Though suggested, this penis lacks "form", and offers a visual critique, therefore, of phallic, male dominance that exists within the echelons of a patriarchal society. Lack of delineated form and the profusion of surface texture within this charcoal drawing dissipate the patriarch's line of vision which has symbolized power and control over women.

Figure 19 "Emma"

In applying texture and form that lack clarity, I have attempted to represent a space for women that resists the controlling male gaze. This body of work represents, therefore, my space for a female self-expression.

CHAPTER 4: AUTOEROTICISM IN ART

I) Representations Working for Women through a "Feminine Syntax"

For Irigaray (cited in Robinson, 2000) the masculine syntax of logic privileges vision and has dominated western culture since the period of classical Greek civilization (p. 247). Women in patriarchy have thus been consigned to passivity, an object to be contemplated (seen) through art. This act of contemplation places the patriarch in control over his female object, subsequently representing his phallic dominance of her through the icon "Woman". As Grosz (1990) explains, for Lacan the representation "Woman" is "man's projection of his own perfection through his fantasy of 'The' woman" (p. 97).

Irigaray (1977) notes that through representation in patriarchy, to stimulate the sexual drives of the "Subject", the woman's body becomes eroticised and is "called to a double movement of exhibition and of chaste retreat" (p. 26). For example, in traditional art women have been "exhibited" as "beautiful objects" for the visual pleasure of men, to be seen by men but not to be touched. Irigaray claims that women take more pleasure from touching than looking (Irigaray, 1977) and therefore experience little pleasure themselves as "beautiful objects" in this economy (p. 26). Being "chaste" objects, women are denied any acknowledgement of their tacticity (their corporeality) as bodies with sexual desires. Women are consequently called to represent man's "perfection" and the control of his "sheathed" phallus in their chased (and encased) state. In this state they are denied any expression of their own.

However, elucidates Irigaray, a woman's sexual organs represent "the horror of nothing to see" in patriarchal economy (p. 26). As the patriarch refuses to acknowledge a woman's physicality, and her desires as a sexual being, her sexual organs are considered "obscene", and not to be represented (and thus empowered). To rectify this obscenity, or woman's "defect" they are "simply

absent, sewn back up inside their 'crack'" in representation (Irigaray, p. 26). In other words, "nothing to see" implies women's sexual organs are "incomplete", castrated, and lacking in unity of form and "perfection". Threatening to the male, they must be excluded, rejected from the masculine system of representation. Irigaray (1977) concludes that within this system of masculine control, the woman's sexual organs (considered not "one" organ) are counted as "none", and for the patriarch are the negative "underside", the reverse, of "the only visible and morphologically designatable organ...the penis" (p. 26). The woman's sexual organs are consequently hidden from the male gaze, replaced (to assert patriarchal authority) by the representation of chaste female icons. Paradoxically, however, Irigaray (1977) asserts here that the patriarchal notions of female incompleteness and formlessness work for a woman, in allowing her organ "to touch itself", indefinitely, over and over again (p. 26). Irigaray refers to this interaction as female "autoeroticism", which she describes as being the ability of a woman to touch herself:

> ...in and of herself without any need for mediation, and
> before there is any way to distinguish activity from passivity.
> Woman touches herself all the time...her genitals are
> formed of two lips in continuous contact (Irigaray, p. 24).

This means that within herself, a woman is already two; unlike a man, she does not have one sexual organ, but two organs that caress each other independently of a man's intervention.

Irigaray (1977) observes that women's sexual organs are absent in phallocentric art (but I consider to be present in pornography), and explains that for exchange value "a woman's body must be treated as an abstraction" (p. 175). She explains that this "abstract value" does not represent the "intrinsic, immanent value of the commodity"; that is, it is not as "women" that women are exchanged, but as "women reduced to some common feature – their current price in gold" (p. 175). Irigaray continues to explain that their value on the market does not reflect any intrinsic feminine quality, but merely indicates women's "value on the market by

virtue of one single quality: that of being a product of man's 'labour'"(p. 175). In other words, Irigaray believes that women, abstracted to some common feature (each woman looking exactly like every other), are exchanged merely as commodities and reflect the force of human labour that has been invested in them.

As I argue above, Nead (1992) describes the patriarchal representation of woman's form as a contained, streamlined "masculization", that conforms to an ideal of the male body, kept under control for fear that it "might itself revert to what is feared may secretly be its own 'female' formlessness" (p. 19). In other words, fearing the engulfment of female fleshy "excess" and a lack of form, the patriarch's sheath-like representation of "Woman" (that symbolizes the penis, the ultimate masculine form) works to control women.

Robinson (2000) similarly identifies the patriarch's concept of "lack" in female flesh, and observes his attempt to contain this "lack" through the patriarchal representations of women as "rigid structures of two-dimensional, illusionistic Realism [which] could be considered as 'resemblances, abstracted from the body instead of expressive of it'" (p. 245). Robinson refers to Irigaray's thesis in this text, and observes her reference to "Woman" as being an abstraction, existing for the patriarch purely as a commodity rather than representing for him intrinsic human qualities that exist within women (p. 250). Robinson subsequently compares Irigaray's apprehension of patriarchal dominance to an observation made by Suzanne Santoro (cited in Robinson) who discusses graffito on a wall from ancient Rome:

> 'When I saw how [the female genitals] had been treated in the past, I realized that even in diverse historical representation [they] had been annulled, smoothed down and, in the end, idealized...We can no longer see ourselves as if we live in a dream or as an imitation of something that just does not reflect the reality of our lives 2000' (p. 245).

As genitalia are integral to a person's sexual identity, covering up or smoothing down a woman's genitalia (in abstraction) denies them of any acknowledgement as sexed, corporeal beings with human needs and desires. Santoro thus alludes to the fact that (in patriarchy) women are denied access to their own representation, as their corporeal identity in its most fundamental form is not recognized or validated. It is through their being, through their tactile sensations, observes Irigaray (1977) that women are most able to express themselves, "to forge for themselves a social status that compels recognition" (p. 33).

Amelia Jones (1994) cites Irigaray in critiquing Marcelle Duchamp's work, *"Etant Donnes",* refering to it as "the masculinist 'age-old oculocentrism' that has allowed woman to be devalued in relation to man as the symptom of his plenitude" (p. 203). In other words, Jones observes Irigaray's response to Duchamp's work as a reflection of traditional artistic practice that values "form" in male genitalia over "formlessness" in female sexual organs.

Figure 20 "Etant Donnes"

Fig 21 "The Origin of the World"

Jones explains that female "lack" is not gratuitously covered in this work for the benefit of the male viewer. Instead, a visible, distorted gash exists that "goes nowhere", turning:

> ...the gaze back into the look, exposing the insufficiency of masculine attempts at visual mastery. It flaunts the 'no thing' to be seen, the female body as violently castrated (Jones, p. 201).

This means that whilst not acknowledging a female sexual identity in exposing the "castration wound", Duchamp's work exacerbates the male fear of the vulva. Jones argues that by refusing to hide the woman's "lack", Duchamp terrorises the male viewer, flaunting the fact that he cannot visually penetrate the female, and thus reverses the traditional syntax of subject viewing object. The female figure that has no open orifice, no way in, mocks the male subject's discovery that he can never return to the womb, the "Heim", the "home". Through the "dread of the vulva" or the "vagina dentate" the subject consequently fears a loss of his masculinity in being castrated. The notion of a vagina with "teeth" promotes a powerful female weapon against the control of the phallus, thus combating the male as predator and exposing his vulnerability.

In psychoanalytic theory, women's "teeth" thus serve to resist the smooth (visual) penetration of the patriarchal gaze. Consequently, I question the means to an empowering representation for women. Irigaray (1977) suggests a "syntax" that could ultimately lead to self-expression for women (p. 132). This syntax operates through the notion of "self-affection" in which a woman is in touch with herself all the time, and thus experiences female sexual desire. She explains that, because in the patriarchal economy women are denied "self-affection", they are exiled from themselves totally and are thus unable to know what they want. They lack a means of self-expression, a syntax that empowers them as subjects. However, through an experience of "self-affection" in touching themselves, women are enabled to prevent (metaphorically) the penetration of the penis, as Irigaray has

described, the "reign of the phallus and its logic of meaning and its system of representations" (p. 133). Irigaray's argument for a syntax for women leads to a discussion of the relationship between speaking "as" woman and speaking "of" woman, and she explains that the two are not synonymous. By speaking as woman "one may attempt to provide a place for the 'other' as feminine", whereas speaking of woman produces a discourse "of which woman would be the object, or the subject" (Irigaray, 1977, p. 135).

Within the traditional western model, therefore, women have responded to their denoted, all-encompassing identity as "Woman" in a culturally "appropriate" manner, seeing themselves as others see them, and covering themselves with the masks of cultural representations which deny their human representations. Irigary (cited in Robinson, 2000) asserts that these masks refuse "'their own physical, bodily beauty, their own skin, their own form(s)'" (p. 228). This refusal echoes Irigaray's earlier claim that women are denied an experience of their own physicality and self-affection. Robinson (2000) observes that there is an expectation of women in Western patriarchy that prevents many women from interrogating their own existence whilst providing pleasures for others (p. 228). She cites Irigaray to illustrate this percept:

> 'We look at ourselves in the mirror to please someone,
> rarely to interrogate the state of our body or our spirit, rarely
> for ourselves and in search of...our own becoming'
> (Robinson, 2000, p. 230).

Here, Irigaray encourages women to speak for themselves through an awareness of their beauty at a spiritual level. Robinson (p. 230) elucidates Irigaray's convictions for a female spirituality further, explaining that a woman's sense of "corporeal beauty" and her comprehension of "beauty in her self-image" are a part of this concept of spirituality. A woman's perception of these, notes Robinson, works towards a sense of "the divine" for women. Accordingly, it is through this sense of the divine that women look inward and see within themselves their own differences and particularities, in experiencing a "divine". In

other words, women outside of patriarchy perceive their divine as integral to their being, whereas men within patriarchy identify with an external "Divine", which is fashioned as the iconological male.

As a concept in art, female autoeroticism suggests, however, the symbolic significance of desire for women in their discovery of themselves at an intimate level, without the intervention of masculine visual penetration. As women are encouraged to touch themselves with their "veils", they contemplate themselves as subjects. With reference to this, Irigaray (cited in Robinson, 2000) asserts "'I have yet to unveil, unmask..., or veil myself for me - to veil myself for self-contemplation...to retouch myself with my gaze'" (p. 232). In this exclamation, Irigaray encourages women, therefore, to direct their gaze inward, and to visually touch themselves in the process. Irigaray is quoted further by Robinson (2000) "'The mirror, and indeed the gaze, are frequently used as non-tactile weapons or tools, which break off the fluidity of touch, including that of the gaze'" (p. 232). In other words, Irigaray implies that the "tactile" gaze of self-contemplation for the woman contrasts the "voyeuristic" gaze of the patriarch, which desires to possess and control. The tactile gaze, therefore, works for women as a veil that facilitates the return of a woman's touch to the gaze, whereas the voyeuristic gaze is a veil which, in aesthetic judgement, retains the gaze as abstract, specular and evaluative. An inconsistency consequently exists here; the veil that represents women for the privilege of men conflicts with the concept of a veil that serves to represent women for themselves. However, this paradox is necessary for women to function as subjects, in expressing themselves from within the symbolic order, because women can contemplate themselves subversively from behind the veil. In knowing themselves and what they want, women are thus able to recognize and develop a representation that is appropriate for themselves, which, as Robinson (2000) explains, would "necessarily include a possibility of beauty for women, a female soul, and a female divine" (p. 228).

A woman's "syntax", therefore, must operate through the subversive form of

mimesis. As Irigaray has suggested, it is from behind the veil that women can contemplate their inner selves, and therefore find their identity within patriarchy. Irigaray (cited in Robinson, 2000) refers to "maintenance mimesis" (in Plato) as being a female "performance" for men in patriarchy through their "'imitation, specularization, adequation, and reproduction'" (p. 249). In other words, "maintenance mimesis" affords women the opportunity to work "under cover", performing for men whilst discovering themselves for themselves. However, Robinson (2000) explains Irigaray's subjective expression for women, advocating mimesis as "production" (p. 230). This works towards "a sense of spirituality or the divine for women, which issues from a sense of female beauty", observes Robinson (p. 230). She subsequently observes Irigaray's conjecture of this production, as offering expression for women through "'the possibility of a woman's writing'" (Irigaray cited in Robinson, 2000, p. 249). This means that, by removing "the veil", women express themselves as diverse and individual. No longer feeling subordinate to men, they position themselves alongside their male counterparts within the symbolic. Irigaray explains her notion of a "woman's writing" as a "feminine syntax", in which "there would no longer be either subject or object; 'oneness' would no longer be privileged" (Irigaray, 1977, p. 134). Therefore, proper meanings, proper names and "proper" attributes would cease to function, and would be replaced by nearness and proximity. A woman's syntax is, therefore, a "writing" that does not delineate but is fluid; it does not establish ownership upon the body, but encourages expression. Irigaray suggests that the "gestural" code of women's bodies is the place a "feminine syntax" could best be deciphered (p. 134). However, since their gestures are part of the masquerade, they are often difficult to "read", except for "what resists or subsists 'beyond' in suffering, but also in women's laughter" (Irigaray, 1977, p. 134). Gestures that are "tactile" embrace expression (including laughter) and consequently exist beyond the delineations of patriarchal scopophilia.

Such a structure (a feminine syntax) would operate in a manner so extreme, Irigaray adds, it would "preclude any distinction of identities, any establishment of

ownership, thus any form of appropriation" (P. 134). Women could enter this domain through a discovery of themselves, for who they are, as proximate to other beings. Consequently, the "clean and proper bodies" of aesthetic judgement undergo a process of dissipation, as women are enabled to explore their (relative) ambiguities and differences. This notion of women's focus of themselves in relation to others defies logocentricism because their positioning involves nearness and proximity rather than opposition. Within the patriarchal structure, "oneness" excludes diversity, representing supremacy and iconic perfection. It consequently repels the existence of anything different. Within the structure of a female syntax, however, "otherness" includes diversity and represents a tolerance for difference. As such, a multitude of voices are affirmed, replacing the notion of "one" exclusive voice. This reflects Grosz's idea of difference for women without positive identity. Rather than expressing difference through opposition to patriarchal control, Grosz suggests the expression of female differences *along side of* (and in relation to) conventional identity, therefore advocating a relative rather than a positive difference for feminist expression (Grosz, 1990, p. 98).

I refer again to Ludwig Feuerbach's comment that "God is the mirror of man", and Robinson's argument that man looks at God and sees himself. God is therefore fashioned in man's image as "Divine". Existing in man's own image exclusively, the indivisibility of "Divine" representation offers no possibility for women to assert and to represent themselves, their particularities and their differences. "Productive mimesis" however, in working towards a sense of the "divine" for women (through a woman's sense of beauty in her own self-image), is an inscription upon womanly corporeal beauty that no longer just sanctions the iconic, conceptual beauty of "Woman". Women as gestural, physical and tactile beings are empowered for self-expression.

The female body has thus provided the visual site for cultural, masculine inscription, but it is also the potential corporeal, tactile means to a female

expression. Janet Wolff (1995) explains this phenomenon of the woman's body as "the ground of cultural (and gender) oppression and the potential site of its overthrow", and focuses on dance as being "the real or metaphorical arena of liberation" (p. 76). Elisabeth Dempster (cited in Wolff, 1995) suggests that the body, dancing, can challenge and deconstruct cultural inscription:

> 'In moments of dancing the edges of things blur and terms
> such as mind/body, flesh/spirit, carnal/divine, male/female
> become labile and unmoored, breaking loose from the fixing
> of their pairings' (p. 77).

In other words, dance as movement can be considered a metaphor for the critique of patriarchal fixedness (or intolerance for anything that lies "beyond"), as the dancer moves through space and brushes past things. The fluidity of dance can thus represent continuity, lack of boundaries and thus formlessness.

Jo Anna Isaak (1996, p. 4) discusses the ongoing activity of "pluralizing, destabilizing, baffling" any centered discourse, as an "agency of intervention". "Feminist art practice", she argues, is not a term designating an "homogenous group" (as the disenfranchised), or a "fixed site" (as the margin). Referring to feminist art practice in particular, she points out:

> The convergence of the feminist critique, postmodernism's
> decentering of the subject, and theoretical reflections on
> gender, sexuality, politics, and representation [provide] the
> momentum for a number of feminist artists who are, indeed,
> the most innovative artists working today (Isaak, p. 2).

Emphasis is placed here on the vigorous nature of contemporary practice, and its expanding interaction with "value systems that extend far beyond the art world" (Isaak, p. 5). Aligned with the buoyancy and temporary, subjective qualities of contemporary art practice is "laughter"; a metaphor "for transformation [and] for thinking about cultural change" (Isaak, p. 5). Isaak engages in Bakhtin's theories of laughter and the carnivalesque and refers to them as potential revolutionary strategies. In her critique of Nancy Spero's work, Isaak draws attention to the

laughter with which her work "unites us". She observes that this laughter is "radical" and rooted in a serious and robust form of cultural politics. When Spero speaks of her work as "carnivalesque", Isaak observes that she not only refers to lyrical, dancing figures, but also to work "from the dark chaos of the early Black Paintings, to the grotesque realism of the Codex Artaud..." (Isaak, p. 20). Isaak explains that in turning to chaos and grotesque realism, Spero attempts to break from the predetermined representation of "Woman" in finding a voice for women that is "intelligible, yet separate from the patriarchal voice" (Isaak, p. 21). In turning to a critique of rhetoric, Spero adopts Artaud's abusive language and brings language into direct contact with the body as "abuses, oaths, and curses form the basis of the grotesque concept of the body" (Isaak, p. 23). As Artaud had a profound influence on Spero's work, Isaak highlights Kristeva's description of Artaud's writing:

> '...underwater, undermaterial dive...where the black, mortal violence of "the feminine" is simultaneously exalted and stigmitized...coming to grips with one's language and body as others, as heterogeneous elements...through language too, go through infinite, repeated, multiple dissolution, until you recover possibilities of symbolic restoration...'(Kristeva, cited in Isaak, 1996, p. 23).

Kristeva's description here is of a process of writing that leads to a voice in the symbolic for women, a voice that is heard in expressing women's "real" social issues. This description also describes a trajectory of Spero's work, which addresses the need for a female "voice" necessary for women to express themselves as empowered subjects.

II) Representations in Praxis

In *"Claudine"* I have attempted to recalcitrate the passivity of the classical nude in sitting Claudine with her legs apart. This positioning is by no means meek. She is

intended to shock viewers as her sexual physicality is unconventionally exposed. Upon a close inspection of Claudine's vagina she is "explicitly" herself, and is thus no longer veiled in abstraction for the glory of men in patriarchy. Her genital area, rather than showing a void, exposes the formation of labia and, therefore, re-presents women as sexed beings with their own physicalities and corpo*real* desires.

Luce Irigaray (1997) addresses a multitude of "realities" among women's existence, and advocates a syntax that would encourage women to discover themselves intimately. Such a syntax, Irigaray explains, would:

> ...make woman's 'self-affection' possible. A 'self-affection' that would certainly not be reducible to the economy of sameness of the One (p. 132).

She explains that a woman does not practice self affection with instruments according to the masculine model, but can "touch herself 'within herself,' in advance of any recourse to instruments" (p. 133). The exposure of Claudine's labia ("two lips") as proximate to each other suggests that women are continuously and intimately "in touch" with themselves, and preclude the intervention of the phallus for their sexual gratification. Irigaray's paradigm of "autoeroticism" enables women, therefore, to enjoy erotic contact with themselves independently of outside intervention, through the auto-stimulation of their genitalia.

Figure 22   "Claudine (Close-up)"

In resisting the concept of feminine dependency upon the phallus for gratification, a female syntax embraces the notion of "difference" among women, which breaks down any conformity to iconic representation (and thus control) within patriarchy. At a socially symbolic level, therefore, *"Claudine"* represents a move to embrace difference among "others", restoring a dissolution of iconic representation (that reduces female genitalia) to embrace the notion that "others" enjoy their own corporeality in a multitude of different ways. *"Claudine"* stands as my metaphor for "symbolic restoration". Her exposed genitalia reveal her corpo*reality* that is particular to *"Claudine"* as a sexed being. The particularity of Claudine's corporeality (as opposed to idealised abstraction) is therefore symbolic of the other "realities" that are particular to all women as sexual beings.

As Robinson has implied, it is a woman's specific sexual physicality that acts as a metaphor for female subjectivity, as a woman turns to her own corporeality (through touch) in finding "a sense of spirituality or the divine" (Robinson, 2000 p. 230). Reference to this is made in *"Claudine"* through text that (ambiguously) reads "Today, lack of divine representation leaves women in a state of dereliction" (Robinson, p. 226). In illustrating this notion, *"Claudine"* is a

paradoxical image. Her face is veiled with a mask that supports the patriarchal concepts of disembodiment and alienation of women, characteristic of the canonical nude that is left without domicile. Her sexual organs, however, are unveiled. She exposes her own physicality (her most intimate self) that could stand as a metaphor for the "possibility of beauty for women, a female soul, and a female divine" (Robinson, p. 228). Through this representation of the "divine" for women, *"Claudine"* thus stands as my figuration of self-expression (of a "voice") for women.

Representing the "Divine" in the image of man has advanced the patriarch's status of control over women who have traditionally been denied representation within their own sense of "reality". My work *"Ecstasy"*, discussed in Chapter 3, resists the notion of the "Divine" solely as an avowal of patriarchy, and represents for me a voice against women's degraded position in our culture today as a consequence of religious hierarchy. I focus particularly on the notion of the veil as mimesis, and examine how mimesis can work for women in representing themselves. I consequently return to Irigaray's differentiation of mimesis, on the one hand as a "visual maintenance" of patriarchal power and control over women through imitation; and on the other, mimesis as a production, through which "the possibility of a woman's writing may come about" (Irigaray, cited in Robinson, 2000, p. 249).

The veil as a visual site for patriarchal control over female subjects is represented in the Virgin Mary in my work. Her pristine, iconic image stands for man's "Divine" status, whilst her stylized, delineated contour suggests the reduction of her body to masculine dominance. Superimposed over this "surface", is the image of Saint Theresa's head, thrown back in ecstasy. Her face is somewhat ambiguous and emerging from the suggestion of a dissipated veil. I see this ruptured veil as having a textured, "tactile" quality, whilst also cascading over the picture frame. It suggests movement as the eye flits from one fragment

to another, disrupting the definitive unity of the Virgin beneath. I relate this to the image of a dancing body as it moves through space, brushing past the edges of things that "blur". Dance is the metaphor for a critique of masculine permanency, as Wolff explicates , and is the "breaking loose from the fixing of [binary] pairings" (Wolff, p. 77).

The vague image of teeth protruding from the mouth of Saint Theresa furthers this rupture of the woman from the clutches of masculine control, but in a less subliminal and, therefore, more threatening manner. Her mouth, representing a vagina with teeth, a "vagina dentate", threatens the penetration of phallic vision.
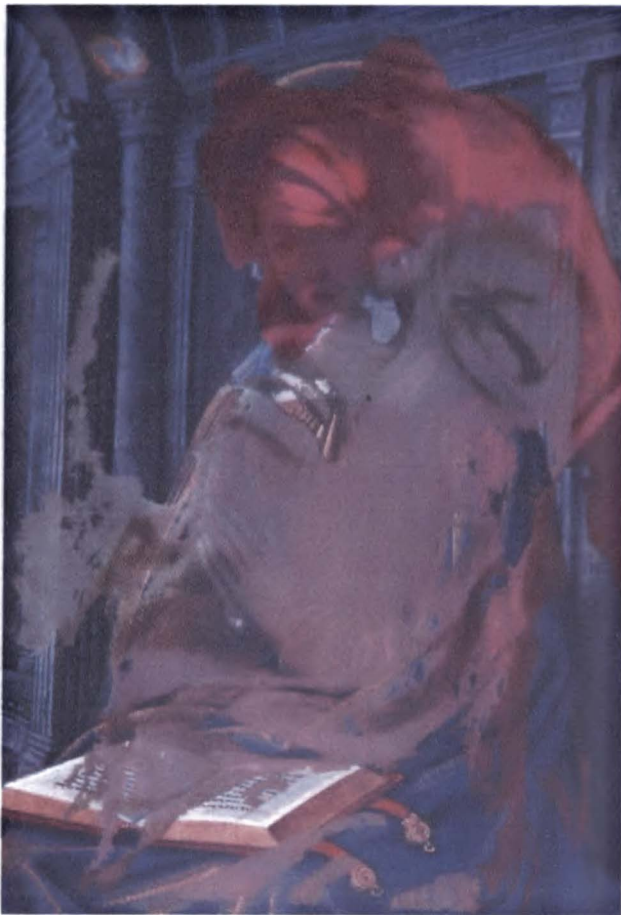

Figure 23   "Ecstasy"

Her teeth are tactile, and they will hurt. Placed over the draped right breast of the

Virgin, this "vagina dentate" brings a subtle focus to the breast as covered in chastity, whilst suggesting the paradox of the breast that represents the return of the mother within patriarchal signification. This is coupled with the colour of the veil which is red (suggestive of menstrual blood), and reminds the patriarch of his origins (and thus his debt) to the maternal body. The teeth also resemble a church organ, and contrast the voice for a woman with the silenced voice of a woman, represented in the work (through the Virgin's clothing) as the authority of Church.

"Voices from the Margin" is a large, digitally generated print, collaged with photographs on various tactile surfaces. Commissioned to represent Perth as a lively city, this work was exhibited at the "Perth Art Award 2002", and represents the "East Perth Sambinistas" as a metaphor for an "other" representation and presence within the male dominated space of redeveloped East Perth.

Figure 24 "Voices from the Margin"

This print explores the notions of "placement" and "positionality" on two levels. At a physical level the collaged photographic images are crudely arranged and offer a tacky, tactile sensation to viewers. This overlays a surface that is silky smooth, upon which images are digitally printed. At a second level (a symbolic level), the images of the physical layers represent bodies celebrating life from the margins of the symbolic order.

Figure 27 "Voices from the Margin (Close-up)"

At a symbolic level, this work represents a voice for bodies that are pushed to the margins of western culture and patriarchal society. The "East Perth Sambanistas" metaphorically represent these bodies, yet are empowered in this work to resist the stranglehold of corporate redevelopment. In actuality, the Sambanistas are a lively performance group who are based at "City Farm", a community-based organization that lies on the border of the East Perth Redevelopment enclave. As a group of dancers and musicians, they celebrate life through their art and appear to thrive at City Farm, injecting life into what seems otherwise to be a

sterile, homogenously exclusive residential and corporate site.

Within my work, the Sambanistas represent matter that is considered by the Symbolic (the East Perth Redevelopment Authority) to be abject. Grosz explains Kristeva's claim that the abject body is, however, still a part of the symbolic order and "a necessary condition of the subject" (Grosz, 1990, p. 88). It is this tie with the symbolic that paradoxically empowers the Sambanistas to create a disturbance at the margins of EPRA.

At a physical level this work attempts to represent (through textural contrasts) the significance of tactile sensations for women as sexual beings, and thus their expression as empowered bodies through autoeroticism. The top layer of this work is ruptured through collaged surfaces and, consequently, offers tactile sensations (suggestive of autoeroticism) as a means to women's self-expression. The lower layer of this image alternates between vibrant (defined) colours and tonally subdued hues. The "framed" Sambanistas (each within a rectangle) are designed to synchronize with these alternating tones and hues, to pulsate visually from the surface of the paper. This effect is designed to reflect a similar visual sensation experienced in response to the billboard "Diversify/ Fructify", as it correspondingly suggests a rupture from the picture frame to what lay beyond its containment (within the public realm of Northbridge).

A photograph of my charcoal drawing *"Sycorax"* is physically superimposed over the Sambanistas. Sycorax is printed on the tatty and fragmented surface layer of this work (which tinkers with glossy photographic card, clear acetate and delicate tissue paper) to again create a visual and tactile rupture of symbolic order. Representing the dead witch (dead mother) in Shakespeare's play *"The Tempest",* Sycorax therefore represents the abject. Her swinging hips break free of the boundaries that her nude form canonically strives to contain. Kristeva (1982) describes the abject as ambiguous:

> …because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut

off the subject from what threatens it – on the contrary,
abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger (p. 9).

In other words, Kristeva describes the abject as something that disturbs the system, it does not respect borders, positions, rules, but is "the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (p. 4). Within this collage, Sycorax symbolizes ambiguity in reference to *"The Tempest"*. She is alluded to, though not present, as the "Mother" of Caliban. Collaged on the surface of the print, her repeated image keeps the eye flitting across the picture plane, suggesting the splintering of symbolic form. The ambiguity of Sycorax's splintered form suggests that obscene bodies find no place of belonging (and are "off the scene") within the parameters of patriarchal representation. The delineated yellow contour lines of an "iconic" form superimposed over Sycorax attempts, however, to bring this fragmented image back into alignment. Eye movement between each yellow icon activates the work even further, and introduces the concepts of dance and celebration as Sycorax integrates with the subversive Sambanistas beneath.

My intention in these works is to offer a social comment, which "positions" images of the corporeal female body against the hyper-real iconic female body that is represented in patriarchy. The Sambanistas and Sycorax are regarded as "different" to people from within the mainstream. Sycorax is vibrant in her movement, and her flesh ruptures the boundaries of the delineated, iconic contour figure. Similarly, the Sambanistas are vibrant in their movement and voice, and their eclectic dress metaphorically ruptures the boundaries of a confined body image. Rather than participating in a "unified female opposition pitting itself against a male front", my work attempts to represent the notion of "heterogeneous difference" for those bodies that are excluded from representation (Moi, 1989, p. 111). In other words, it is through a relative positioning (for a diversity of bodies) that a voice for a female self-expression (through the physicality of the Sambanistas and Sycorax) is manifest.

The resistance and corporeality of the female body in my representations comes to symbolize the existence of another body, that of the "community body", that

strives to reclaim a "presence" (a voice) within the existing ideology of EPRA. This means that the female bodies within my work serve to symbolize the return of an abjected *community* body to the presently elite EPRA site, which is a site that was once considered a place of domicile for "the derelicts or whoever else that was there" (Colbung, 1994, p. 37).

CHAPTER 5: RESISTING AGGRESSION FOR A PLACE OF DOMICILE

This chapter combines theory with practice, to focus specifically on the ideas underpinning the execution of three mixed media prints, conceived as a sequence to address the redevelopment of East Perth as an elite enclave community. As I suggest in concluding Chapter 4, by critiquing EPRA's "rejuvenation" process, my work aims to reinstate some sense of the former *diverse* "community body" that once enjoyed a place of domicile at this site.

The imagery of the Sambanistas within my collaged print *"Voices from the Margin",* suggests the abject community body that has been evicted from East Perth for redevelopment through the East Perth Redevelopment Authority. This image implies the controlling force of EPRA through formal repetition of frames around each Sambanista figure, yet the lively dancers suggest transgression of this order. In placing Sycorax as a tactile body over the smoothness of the digital imagery, my intention has been to suggest a "positioning" of the former community *along side* the "order" of EPRA. This move to position the abjected community body along side rather than to impose it over EPRA, symbolizes my intention to cause a "disruption" and agitation of corporate order and control, rather than to brutally attack this system. This method of "disruption" is significant to my work for feminist expression, and reflects Irigaray's notion of "jamming the theoretical machinery itself" in disrupting the operation of masculine discourse. This "style" of feminist expression subversively "put[s] the torch to fetish words, proper terms, well constructed forms" (Irigaray, 1977, pp 78-79).

The Sambanista print succeeds a screen print (with chalk overlay) that I submitted to the Perth Art Award, entitled *"A Pure Vision of Sophistication and Opulence".* In this work, representations of actual female bodies, as abjected female "matter" and iconic female "nudes", are replaced by representations of symbolic community bodies, as "excluded" bodies and "exclusive" bodies in patriarchy. I allude here to the "exclusive" social body of EPRA, with photographs

of an elite housing estate, with inhabitants of this enclave clearly absent from their gated glass facades. The tombstone-like windows of
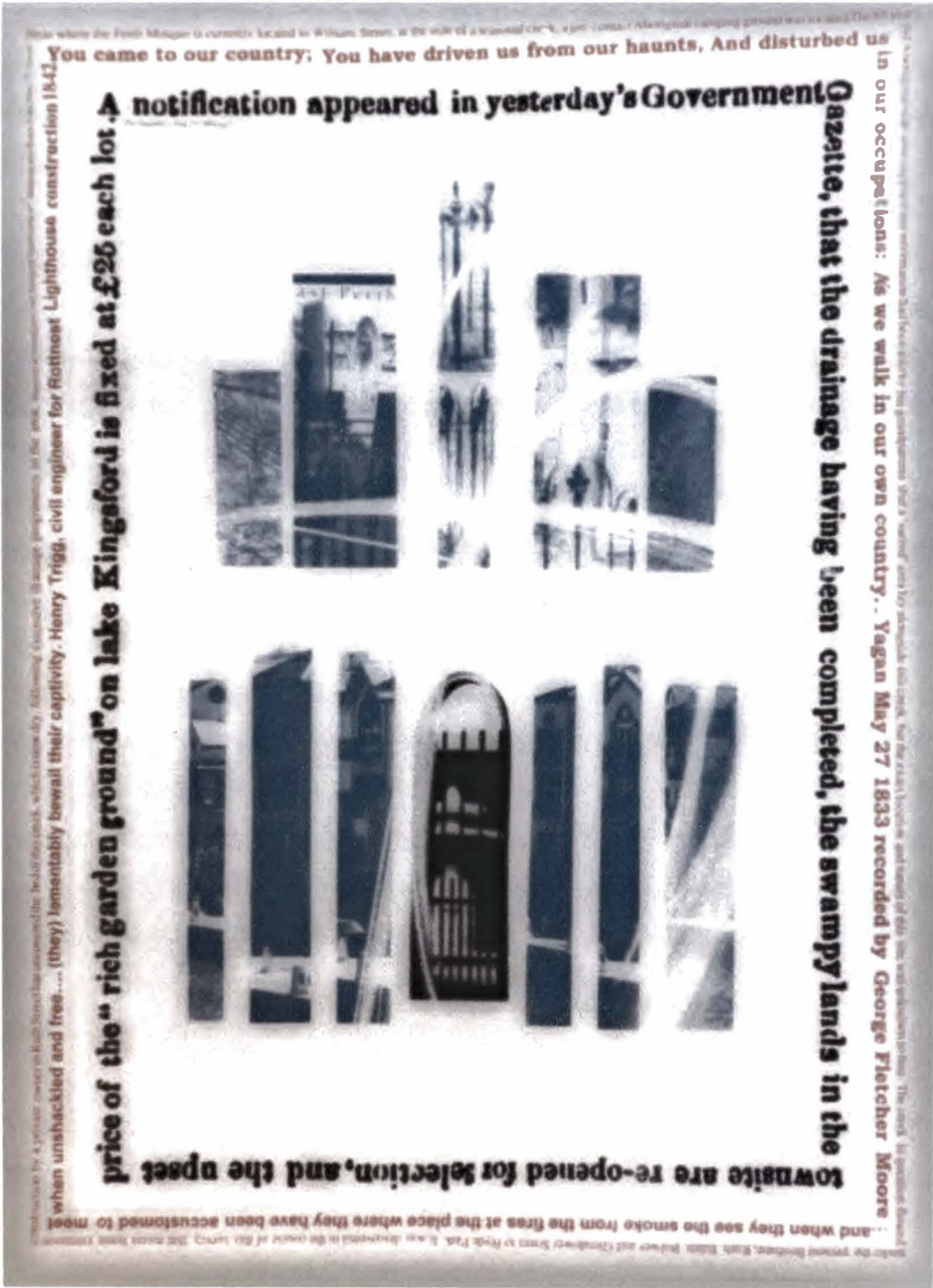

Figure 25   "A Pure Vision of Sophistication and Opulence"

the frontages reflect the gravestones of the historic East Perth graveyard situated adjacently to this enclave. Paradoxically, the absence of an/other social body (the abjected former East Perth community) is also represented through these facades, paying tribute to a once significant site of "belonging". Drawn in white chalk over this print is the vague suggestion of graffiti that resembles the tomb stones of East Perth and represents, further, the infiltration of "other"/"absented" bodies to this exclusive site.

In this chapter I argue for the return of "vagrant", evicted bodies as "real" bodies to their place of domicile in East Perth. For this discussion, I establish a conceptual transition from tangible "sexed *bodies*" that I have represented in life drawing, to the notion of "engendered *spaces*" that I represent in collaged prints. The notion of "engendered spaces" within the context of my practice refers to the presence of either masculine or feminine characteristics that dominate the cultural environment. In this argument, EPRA is considered a "male" space, and represents (through its corporate design and "austere" atmosphere) the power of patriarchal control. The streamlined, smooth-textured structures that constitute corporate offices and exclusive "homes" within EPRA echo the armoured body of the "cuirasse esthetique" from classical antiquity. In other words, the "muscle-architecture" refers to the controlled, closed conceptions of the female (and the male) body within patriarchal representation. It parallels, also, the notion of EPRA as a gated "community", imprisoned within its own barriers of exclusiveness. Conversely, the lack of life and social, economic diversity within EPRA suggests the "presence" of vagrant bodies, evicted "off the scene" and represented within this enclave as abject, female space.

I associate, therefore, the redeveloped site of East Perth as a projection (through advertising strategies) of an exclusive location, which symbolizes the patriarchal dominance of white masculine power within a confined, elite segment of the population. These advertising strategies serve to project the notion of "difference" to the mainstream of Western society, as being subversive and threatening to the hegemonic values of order, conformity and social homogeneity. Sibley (2000)

observes that attachment to the mainstream:

> ...depends for its continued success on the belief in core
> values...reinforced by the manufacture of folk devils...of
> various 'others' (p. 273).

Sibley suggests that these various others, the "devils", are in fact those not embedded in the core values of the family, the home and the nation, but are the "deviant" youth, other sexualities and racial minorities. He maintains, therefore, that through a process of exclusion, the existence of a morally "superior" condition has come into being, with connotations of stability for the relatively affluent. Sibley's observance that society has become more searching of deviance with boundary enforcement is relevant to my study. Belonging and not belonging, the sanctity of territory and fear of others transgressing, brings boundaries into sharp focus and supports my argument that EPRA enclave, exhibiting the image of an armoured body, alludes to fearing difference and intrusion through its advertising strategies.

Malcolm Miles explains that "perhaps the urge for a new city derives also from a desire to purge the unclean, abolishing the mess and the complexities of the past" (1997, p. 23). This parallels Kristeva's notion of the abject being feared and discarded by the symbolic order as it (the abject) strives "to break down and through identity, order, and stability" (Grosz, 1990, p. 86). The power of representation, of planning a city that can be made to exist, becomes no longer contingent on the lives of its existing inhabitants, as the city-planner assumes the power to create a new city upon existing ground. This relates to my study of East Perth in how the fabric of a heterogeneous mix of people has been cleared for homogenized new development through the architectural "gaze".

Corporate power in Western society is epitomized through publicity strategies, as a single viewpoint perspective is used in advertising images. Miles points out that the conventional city plan "adopts a viewpoint as if in the sky above the city, looking down from God's eye" from which position of power "an all-knowing representation can be conceived" (p. 41). This single viewpoint perspective, he

continues, relates the planning of a city to the "invention" of the distant view with the Enlightenment period, and allies to Alberti's system of single viewpoint perspective. Perspective, thus, makes the single eye the centre of the visible world, which is arranged for the spectator, explains John Berger "as the universe was once thought to be arranged for God" (1973, p. 16). Similarly, Michel de Certeau relates his experience of viewing New York from the 110th floor of the former World Trade Center. He wonders what the source of pleasure is in "'seeing the whole', of looking down on, totalizing the most immoderate of human texts" (1984, p. 92). The vantage point of single-viewpoint perspective represents, therefore, a position of power and appropriation.

In a manner that is intolerantly (and intolerably) exclusive, publicity conveys (to targeted audiences) the notion of "threat" which allegedly emits from "multiple presences" within our community. Saskia Sassen asserts that the representation of the city, contained in the dominant economic narrative, can "exclude large portions of the lived city and reconstitute them as some amalgamated 'other'" (1996, p. 192). Sassan demonstrates here how corporate culture contains contested spaces that have multiple presences, even though its representation is exclusively corporate, neutralized and precise. The "other", whilst occupying corporate buildings, has no place in the economy of the city, has no economic representation, and is thus made "invisible", she maintains.

This relates to my study of EPRA, which, despite its myth of contained exclusiveness, is in fact a contested space. Physically and through advertising strategies, the boundaries of this redeveloped site are constantly controlled. At its margins is public open space (developed by EPRA), but I argue that its design expresses feelings of vulnerability and threat. Depending on one's viewpoint, residents clearly secure themselves from the threat of the outside, or, imprison themselves behind the barricades of opulence and electronic surveillance that monitor their every move. Advertisements likewise reassure a privilege of round-the-clock security. A past presence is supposedly appeased, as relics are hardly recognized beneath the veils of "token" monuments erected within this

marginalized, public zone. The threat to EPRA of an "outside" presence is also controlled, through the marketing of a certain lifestyle, and entices those who want to be interpellated into this exclusive class whilst absenting "others" in the broader community.

The relations of power and passivity are most prominently demonstrated through the structure of the East Perth enclave. The masculine sense of order and control (through the disciplines of Architecture and Town Planning) permeates the site, through the publicity guise of "homes" as safe havens of domicile within "a safe, attractive 'village' community" (East Perth Redevelopment Authority, n.d. a). These "homes" are, in fact, iconic show pieces that exist in an environment that is divorced from the life of a "village community". As icons of "beauty", these buildings (exclusive to privileged, wealthy consumers) mirror the body of the iconic female nude in patriarchal art, created to passively exist for the privilege of the male gaze.

The structure of the East Perth enclave thus reinforces the fact that the place is indeed an engendered site, as the "masculine" nature of corporate enterprise subjects the wealthy (yet vulnerable) "community" into submission through misleading propaganda suggesting, for example, that:

> The infrastructure in place at East Perth is encouraging an increasingly vibrant environment, including... a thriving residential and business community with close proximity to the dynamic central business district" (East Perth Redevelopment Authority, n.d. a).

As the artist within patriarchy brings women's "matter" into alignment in rendering the naked into the "nude", the corporate "Authority" similarly transforms "East Perth's derelict past...to breathe life and spirit into the new East Perth" (East Perth Redevelopment Authority, n.d. b). Both "bodies" reflect the rigours of a controlling force, which has manipulated matter into form, thus suggesting the engendered notions of "masculine" dominance over "feminine" submission.

The concepts of the ("masculine") EPRA planning, control both physically and through publicity the extent to which the community at large (the "feminine") has access to the site. Ardener cites Robert Hertz (1909)[11] as saying:

> 'Society and the whole universe have a side which is sacred, noble and precious, and another which is profane and common, a male side, strong and active, and another, female, weak and passive; or, in two words, a right side and left side' (1993, p. 5).

Within these historically gendered spaces, the sanctified male "interior" is inaccessible to the defiled female "exterior". Miles refers to the city as a "wasteland", being a site of desolation, singular and exclusive; and asks whether the city's bleakness reflects "a cultural attitude founded in masculine traits" (such as a refusal of feeling), and whether the process of planning and design originated in a masculine space of interiority, in which refusal of feeling becomes possible (1997, p. 44).

The pedestrian bridge on EPRA site serves to control the intrusions of "outsiders" to the inner space of the redevelopment. Lynda Nead's suggestion of "nakedness" being a mark of material reality in contrast to "nude" as being a cultural disguise (1992, p. 17), relates directly to the representations of gendered spaces that lie within the redevelopment of East Perth. The live ("female") space of the broader community is exposed through its "difference". It can be considered "naked" and represents a space that is beyond the parameters of the "nude". Contrasting this "female space" is the space of an elite community that is "contained" in its homogeneity. As a representable space subjected to masculine control, EPRA can therefore be considered the equivalent of the "nude" in its contoured, controlled and aestheticized form.

"A Pure Vision of Sophistication and Opulence" represents East Perth as a multistorey site, and traces its historical uses as first a space for the Noongar

---

[11] Robert Hertz wrote the classic text "The Pre-eminence of the Right Hand" in 1909. He ranks gender in this text, positioning male over female.

People; later a housing project for colonial Perth; through the phase of degeneration as an industrial waste and polluted waterways; and finally as a "sanctuary", as Kenneth Colbung (interviewed by Erica Harvey) says, for "'the derelicts or whoever else that was there'" (Harvey, 1994, p. 37). During this interview with Erica Harvey, Colbung describes East Perth as once:

'...a sanctuary for any person that was running away from anybody...[People called it] "Mattagarup", because matta is leg and the water is as high as you can walk – you could ford across there' (Harvey, 1994, p. 36).

Colbung explains that any place like "Mattagarup" in Aboriginal culture was a sanctuary, and believes that East Perth should remain a place of refuge. He clarifies the environment of East Perth further, as having a heterogenous mix of people:

'...more than derelicts ...grew up in East Perth. A lot of famous people...it was a beautiful atmosphere but its going to be lost though...here were two people who were one of the richest men in East Perth and one of the poorest, yet they were really pals together. It was a bond that stayed there with them' (Harvey, 1994, p. 36).

Colbung considers East Perth to have once been a place of "belonging", and refers to a period of time up to about ten years before the redevelopment commenced for East Perth as it is today. During this time, East Perth was a run down place, yet a space of domicile to many people who were marginalized "once these corporate structures came in [to Perth city]" (Harvey, p. 34). As corporate development encroached on East Perth, claims Colbung:

'So East Perth died. You know the heart of it went out once you took the people out...so the pulse just went flat and you didn't have the variety of people who were there' (Harvey, p. 35).

In the present moment the "derelicts" have been moved on, and a policy of exclusive housing has been developed. The abject "matter" of this site, with the

"unsightly, inaccessible, polluted and forgotten" Swan River, has undergone "one of the largest remediation programs of its kind" (East Perth Redevelopment Authority, n.d.). My work *"A Pure Vision of Sophistication and Opulence"* illustrates the contrast of values surrounding East Perth and the Swan River. Whereas EPRA values the site as a potential commodity and representation of "exclusive" living, Colbung cherishes the land for what it is, as sanctuary that is nurturing and inclusive as a "living" space. EPRA turns the "matter" of this lived space into the "form" of a homogenous enclave, linking the vision for exclusive living with the privileged gaze of the patriarch (in conceiving his "nude"). The abjected "matter" of Colbung's sanctuary, therefore, becomes my metaphor (within this print) for the "others" body that, nonetheless, strives to infiltrate EPRA's pristine condition. The gestural (irreverent) chalk overlay, which resembles a graffiti tag over my precisely registered screen print, suggests that a gradual process of reclamation is under way.

Striving, also, to assert the process of reclamation within this redevelopment is my collage entitled *"Back on Site"*, which I presented "on site" at the Holmes a Court Gallery in East Perth, as a part of the *"More Miniatures"* exhibition there in 2001. This work is layered and "tacky" in its cut out "collage" of laser copied icons, and is intended to critique the redevelopment at various levels. At the centre of the image, the advertising slogan *"A Pure Vision of Sophistication and Opulence",* found on an EPRA hoarding, exhibits further evidence of the reclamation process through graffiti. To either side of this slogan are images of power that are physically present at the site, or are represented in advertising imagery. These include the Eiffel Tower, symbolic of phallic control as well as the "pretentious" aspirations of the Redevelopment Authority in its advertising. Lasered copies of tombstones, a (dried up) marble fountain, grills, fences and wrought ironwork continue the demonstration of this environment, "existing" in some make-belief world, exclusive, alienating and lifeless. Paradoxically, the only life that is strongly suggested is the life that has been radically excluded from EPRA. A lonely park bench beckons absented bodies. The "tacky" layers bring "life" to the work as a bodily sensation, yet hint also at the fact that EPRA is an

imposed social body, a "Disneyland" replica (Harvey, 1994, p. 36), tacky and vulnerable in its construction.

Figure 26   "Back on Site"

EPRA, as the "Authority" in power, demonstrates its objectives explicitly through various advertising strategies. In its brochure *"1992 to1997 - A Five-Year Retrospective"* the Authority's renewal plans are sequentially documented, and commence with a mention of the Authority's charter, which was to:

> ...plan, undertake, promote and coordinate development of
> the 146 hectare site. It was given control of the area,
> empowered to acquire land and to set planning guidelines for
> development (East Perth Redevelopment Authority, n.d. a).

The "Retrospective" continues, with its account of extensively dredging the Swan River; in restoring its waters to "pristine condition". In seeking to clean and "fix" the site from dereliction, clear messages of salvation are conveyed to the public that the Authority will rid the wasteland of its "folk devils...of various 'others'" (Sibley, 2000, p. 273). In other words, the deviant youth, as well as social and racial minorities, will be evicted from the Authority's "sight", the area made "secure" and, consequently, exclusive. Advertising slogans on EPRA hoardings read *"Residential Lifestyles for the New Millennium"*, and *"No-one will ever forget your address"*; illusions of grandeur (exclusive space) contrast starkly with "reality" at the site, as the lots of actual land are small and come only at a

92

premium price. A parallel can be drawn here with my argument concerning the female nude in patriarchal art. The notion of perfection in the nude's form, which represents the patriarch's supremacy and his association with the "Divine", is reflected in EPRA's policy of creating a "pristine" enclave, exclusive of any corporeal "matter". Harking back to the "illusion" of the female nude (her divine form solely for the privileged gaze) is reflected in the Authority's "vision" for East Perth as an intangible icon that precludes the tangible mass, and operates within an economy that is totally divorced from "various others".

EPRA'S attempt to excise "real" abject bodies in "one of the largest remediation programs of its kind" (East Perth Redevelopment Authority, n.d. b) has, ironically, created a space that is absent of life, of physical bodily presence. Through its proliferation of "exclusive" publicity images, the Authority has indeed silenced the masses, and I argue that this has resulted in a "subject-less", "derelict" site of its own. Its monumental facades of opulence, of glass and steel, are imposing and tomb-like; and reflect the monument of the East Perth graveyard that is a token reminder of its former life.

I relate EPRA publicity, in selling the "rehabilitate[d]...valuable land close to the city centre" (East Perth Redevelopment Authority, n.d. a), to Roland Barthes' notion of "fraternizing". Barthes (1981) refers this concept to the engagement between creators and consumers, and explains "fraternizing" as his need to "read the Photographer's myths in the Photograph, fraternizing with them but not quite believing in them..." (p. 28). The notion of "rehabilitated" land advertised in EPRA publicity sounds attractive to prospective clients, yet in actuality this "valuable" land remains far from the vision of thriving community living. Those looking for an exclusive, "safe" environment in which to live, perpetuate the mythical vision for EPRA that would "bring together the best of lifestyle, environmental, commercial and residential features, providing a safe, attractive 'village' community" (East Perth Redevelopment Authority, n.d. b). It is, therefore, this sector of the population that EPRA targets in its advertising strategies, as notions of "exclusive" living beckon only those who desire and can afford such an

existence. The "myth" that surrounds the East Perth enclave is therefore perpetuated through the desire and demand of its clients, interpellated by EPRA's advertising "promises". I argue that this myth is an entertaining vision for the privileged, of a playground that exists only within the pastiche of images in EPRA brochures, hoardings and architectural plans. The sad reality of this redevelopment is the fact the place of "belonging" that the former residents of East Perth enjoyed has now been sacrificed by corporate powers for a site that is presently lifeless and has no real sense of "belonging". What stands at this site now is merely a monument to the desires of those in power. It is a "vision" devoid of the tacticity of people, a vision that parallels the patriarchal gaze of the iconic female nude, which stands as a monument in honour of the patriarch.

My work "*A Pure Vision of Sophistication and Opulence*" critiques EPRA's "vision" as a simulacrum of "European" or overseas opulence, which is totally divorced from the reality of East Perth's former site and its surrounds. The imposition of this "reality" is depicted in my work as an ordered arrangement of opulent facades that have been photographed and then screen printed within a composition that resembles a Gothic cathedral window. The text surrounding this image suggests, at first glance, that this image is a poster or a postcard promoting this site as a sanctuary of opulence, exclusive of the "devils" of its previous existence.
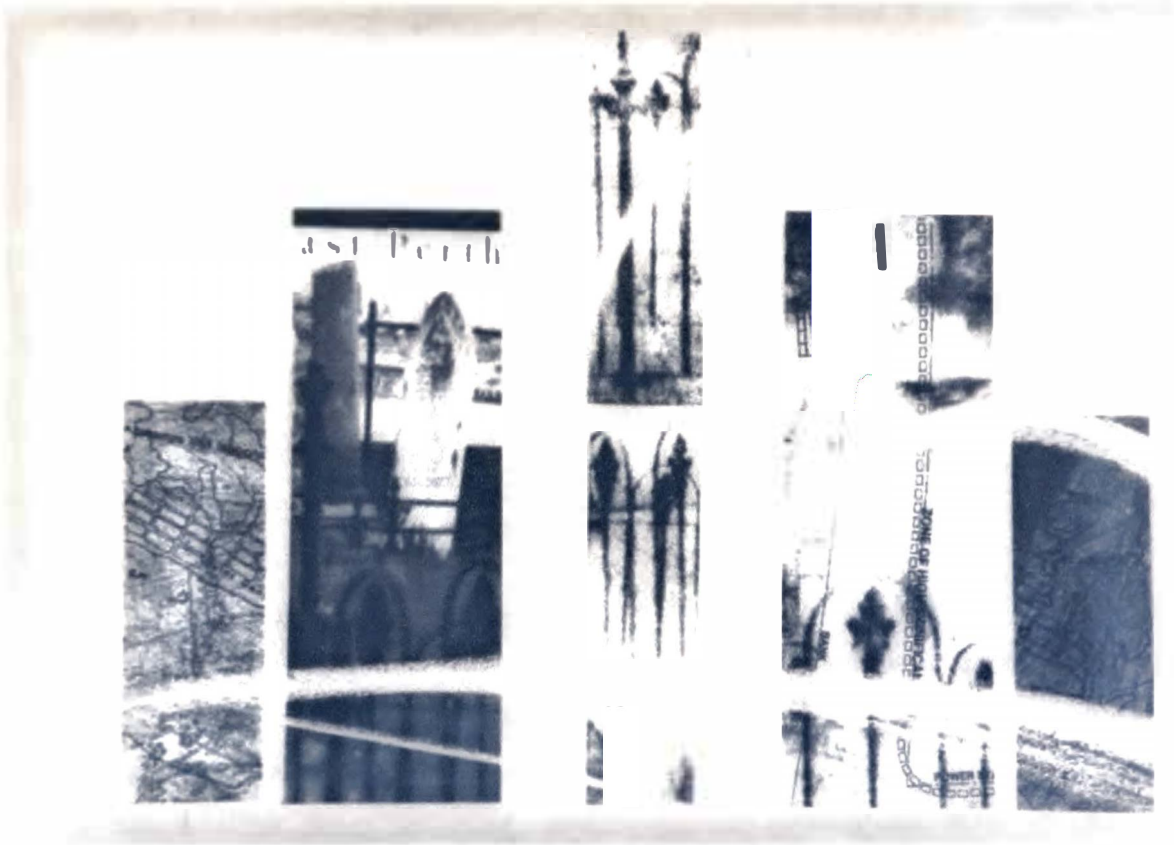
Figure 27   "A Pure Vision of Sophistication and Opulence (Close-up)"

Through the configuration of the images into separate parallel columns, however, I aim to suggest the sense of emptiness, detachment and alienation that the enclave projects. I parallel this atmosphere with the East Perth grave site that, upon closer inspection, one observes has been screen printed above (and immediately adjacent to) this composition. I have again thus attempted to convey the absurdity of "exclusive" redevelopment, as its positive attachment operates negatively in excluding connections with de-valued, exterior "other" bodies. "Visions" that gaze into a "future" thus preclude the experience of the here and now. The tangible bodies of a previous life are replaced by a disembodied existence within redeveloped East Perth.

Baudrillard's contention that we now inhabit a world of hyperreal simulacra, that "truth" has become a series of simulations (Sims & Van Loon, 2000, p. 112),

supports the notion of Descartes' dualism of mind from body, which Miles describes as:

> ...the privileging of representation, reliant on the visual sense, is one aspect of a visual culture derived from the dualism of Descartes' rejection of the senses and the body in favour of an abstract mind, which is the only location in which representation, or simulation, could be 'real' (Miles, 1997, p. 186).

A simulacrum, packaged, coded and polished, is transparent and legible, and reduces the complex "texture"/ fibre of lived life to simplistic and predictable stereotypes. East Perth as a redeveloped site is packaged as a most desirable commodity through EPRA's advertising strategies. Barbara Kruger parodies the significance of publicity, as she employs its strategies of seducing the viewer, by enlarging, overprinting and, particularly, states Linker, "in her use of red enamelled frames to commodify her images" (1990, p. 76). Linker explains that for Kruger "the pose wins out, evacuating all specificities and 'unpleasant textualities' for the illusion of a smooth, untroubled whole" (p. 77). Within my print, the illusion of order is conveyed through the repetition of parallel columns, yet the notion of disunity within this enclave is suggested in the images of facades that have been cut up and fashioned into tomb stones. This work is intended initially to draw viewers to a place of serenity and sacredness, to hang as passively as a classical nude. Graphically, the text neatly frames the work, controlling its boarders. Central to the work, the focal point of an iconic arch frames a grilled (and dried up) marble fountain, offering a glimpse to a "reality" beyond the facades. This collaged arch, however, speaks to critical viewers that this work is merely a pastiche, a construction, an illusion. It suggests that nothing lies beyond the larger cathedral shaped window/the tombstone effigy. In screen printing photographs, and manipulating photographs of photographs, this work signifies East Perth in its present state as a hyperreal simulacrum. It remains intangible as the focal point highlights a pastiche of images. The work is void of people, fauna and flora, and is printed monochromatically in the emblematic blue of EPRA, further distancing the "vision" through a cool palette.

Henry Lefebvre expounds his belief in the spatial dimension of time in space. He states:

> The past leaves its traces; time has its own script. Yet this
> space is always, now and formerly, a present space, given
> as an immediate whole, complete with its associations and
> connections in their actuality (2000, p. 197).

Malcolm Miles (1997, p. 198) acknowledges Miffa Salter's reference to Lefebvre, as Salter explains that it is on top of the city constructed by power and money that "users" overlay social practices. These practices, notes Miles, "may be more or less undetectable to some professional observers but are a part of a delicate web of repossession" (p. 198). Despite EPRA's claim to the site and its continued control through exclusive publicity, Lefebvre's belief that "users" overlay social practices in everyday living gives hope for the future of East Perth as a "lived" space for a heterogenous mix of people.

Sassen (1992) suggests that city spaces, despite exclusive corporate representation, are in fact contested spaces that contain multiple presences (p. 186). Numerous "illicit" inscriptions have progressively appeared over EPRA publicity texts, indicating a process of subversive "repossession" within EPRA site, and affirming that it is, in fact, a contested zone. The sanctioned graffiti walls of City Farm might similarly be considered an attempt to resist the redevelopment of East Perth, as large, colourful and unruly walls juxtapose the "tasteful" aesthetics of commissioned public art at the heart of the enclave's public space. A conflicting discourse exists here, however, as the previous residents (the indigenous and working class people of the area) are acknowledged and "honoured" in public art, although the physicality of EPRA site (and its publicity) precludes their actual presence.

"City Farm" (as a concept and as a physical presence) signifies another challenge to corporate power, as it represents the actual presence rather than the sanctioned "token" presence of "other" bodies at the margins of EPRA.

Paradoxically, as a volunteer organization that leases its land from EPRA, City Farm initiates a resistance to the exclusiveness of the estate, as it valourizes bodies that have "marginalized" there. Through my practice I extend this theory to reclaim the site as a place of subjectivity and political identity for those who have been excluded. I will employ current advertising strategies to unmask EPRA's projected ideologies.

EPRA schemes only to attract "exclusive" residents, through selective advertising techniques that conjure mythical "realities" within the imaginations of those interpellated. The slogan *"A Pure Vision of Sophistication and Opulence"* (exposed on hoardings that surrounded the construction of the redevelopment) demonstrates a process of city zoning that purifies and excludes difference. I argue that a reading of EPRA's advertising propaganda is hostile in its exclusiveness, whilst a "reading" of EPRA space itself imparts a similar tone. Sharon Zukin discuses legible spaces and claims that legibility and identity are interdependent. She claims that legibility also speaks:

> ...to the greed and exclusion that underlie perennial plans
> to rid a downtown of 'dirty' manufacturing, low-rent tenants,
> and all infrastructure connected to the poor, workers, and
> ethnic and racial minorities outside of tourist zones (1996,
> p. 49).

Images of harmony and coherence, the weaving together of work, home and leisure, are symbolized through the meandering Claisebrook Cove in East Perth advertising. These images could, however, signify a channel that presents a barrier to viewers not initiated or interpellated to this exclusive world. Surveillance assures residents of their security, but to "outsiders" East Perth residents seem to be imprisoned within a panoptican that observes their every move, with mirror-glass facades that leave the "others" outside – with images only of themselves.

I refer the marginal area of public open space at the EPRS site to the "liminal" zone of which Ardener speaks. She describes this peripheral area as a

necessary but potentially dangerous zone of confrontation with the "other". When difficulties arise in maintaining distinctions between interior and exterior spaces, devices are introduced in societies, explains Ardener, which enable them to cope. Mechanisms for entering private or exclusive space may be needed, and so "intrusions may be controlled by confinement to the periphery" (1993, p. 13). This argument allows for a feminist discourse in that the unmediated physical body within the 'feminine' space gains access to subjectivity and political identity through an intertextuality that Julia Kristeva supports. Simultaneously, the predictable, rational control over the "self" loses ground, as the subject moves into an arena that is potentially limitless and extensive, an arena which is the domain of the "other". I extend Nead's theory from its associations in high art to a place of impact and relevance within the echelons of corporate culture; the boundaries created through the control of EPRA planners. The "form" of the enclave might rupture (in a positive sense) in the event of brushing with the space of "others". Permitting access of "other" bodies in the larger community to EPRA site through a projection of inclusive rather than exclusive advertising could therefore be the first step for the return of a livelier and more diverse community in East Perth.

.

I intend to use my practice as a metaphor for intervention, in disrupting the syncronystic "hum" of East Perth for the validation of "otherness" within this domain. However, as Mayne points out, "resistance", used as a subtle undermining of the notion of woman as object may also serve to *reinforce* the conquest of the female body, and may be somewhat self-defeating:

> If a female character 'resists' the power and authority of the
> male gaze, that resistance may well be nothing more than a
> temporary distraction, a brief interlude that serves to
> reinforce the conquest of the female body (1989, p. 30).

For Mayne it would be better to resist an essentialist female opposition to the male EPRA. An alternative marginal practice is mimicry where dualities are broken down and "otherness" is embraced through dialogue. As Trinh Min-ha argues in *"When The Moon Waxes Red"*, mimicking stereotypes can be used as

a subversive means to *criticizing* stereotypes and:

> ...constitute a powerful practice...[This kind of] repetition, as a practice and strategy, differs from an incognizant repetition in that it bears with it the seeds of transformation (Minh-ha, 1991, p. 190).

Arguably, East Perth is already a stereotype of simulated (postmodern) exclusive "European" space in Australia. An advertisement for the Upper Eastside Apartments in East Perth features text as *"Appartements superieurs d'eastside...Upper Eastside superior luxury boutique apartments"* (Asset Special Projects, n.d.). It also displays an image of the Eiffel Tower, supporting the idea that East Perth is a copy of "European" architecture and cosmopolitan living. I have referenced this advertisement within the first panel of the collage *"Back on Site"*, depicting one of Germaine Krull's photographic images of the Eiffel Tower[12] taken at an oblique angle skywards.

Figure 28 "Joie de vivre"

---

[12] Germaine Krull produced a series of gelatin silver prints of the Eiffel Tower during the 1920s. Her work is documented in K.Sichel's book "Germaine Krull: Photographer of Modernity" (Sichel, 1999).

As viewers, we are confronted by the phallus suggested in the tower that also explicitly represents notions of power and control in the advertisement for the Upper Eastside apartments. Phallic power is, however, subtly threatened by the infiltration of outside forces that demonstrate opposition to the rhetoric "surrounding" this redevelopment, as graffiti takes a hold on East Perth's hoarding barricades. Within the third panel of *"Back on Site"*, the dried up fountain and the empty park bench are a stark reminder that beneath the veneer of this opulence is a reality of barrenness. However, the infiltration of resistance could offer a positive outcome for the future of East Perth, in shifting its visions from exclusive redevelopment to the notion of inclusive *community* living.

An excerpt from *"The Inquirer"* (1854) surrounds the screen print *"A Pure Vision of Sophistication and Opulence".* Layered as a parergon, this text suggests a palimpsest of references that hark back to colonial practice in Perth when the city was drained for early settlement. The text reads:

> A notification appeared in yesterday's Government Gazette,
> that the drainage having been completed, the swampy
> lands in the townsite are re-opened for selection, and the
> upset price of the 'rich garden ground' on lake Kingsford
> (sic) is fixed at 25 pounds each lot ("Local and Domestic
> Intelligence",1854).

I exercise this practice of mimicry in my work, as viewers are presented with an opportunity to debate text that mimics the publicity strategies of EPRA. I consequently identify issues through a series of visual cultural 'interventions' within EPRA site that intentionally encourage discussion and debate rather than a predetermined interpretation of them. The specific issue that I present surrounds the control of corporate power on EPRA site, which translates to foreigners as "keep out" in advertising strategies. An explicit example of this rhetoric, *"A Pure Vision of Sophistication and Opulence"* addresses only the privileged, whilst those who clearly cannot (or do not) "aspire" to such an exclusive lifestyle have been excluded. It is my intention that subtle resistance to narratives such as this one might lead to other "readings" and, consequently, to a rupture in exclusive corporate redevelopment; which will offer, instead, an atmosphere of social exchange for the diverse, wider community.

This text is printed boldly in black ink, and suggests a poster in framing EPRA publicity images of residential facades and the pristine waters of Claisebrook inlet. EPRA text echoes this notification, reading:

> Today most of the old industries are gone, replaced by gardens, waterways and landscaped precincts. Only public works are there to tell of the area's history, its industrialization and subsequent transformation...The infrastructure in place is encouraging an increasingly vibrant environment....a thriving residential and business community (East Perth Redevelopment Authority, n.d. a, p.6).

The "gardens, waterways and landscaped precincts" now reflect the drained "rich garden ground", advertised for selection in 1854. Both excerpts offer an alternative reading of their dominant ideology, which pertains to the disturbance of "Mattagarup" by the authorities of the times (Harvey, 1994, p. 36).

The palpable chalk graffiti drawn over the "advertisement" for the East Perth Redevelopment is intended to rupture the "purely visual" sensation that *"A Pure*

Vision of Sophistication and Opulence" provides. By "roughing up" the veneer surface of the residential facades in East Perth, the "Sycorax-like" markings of the chalk graffiti symbolically interfere with the "synchronistic hum" between the desiring gaze of potential buyers and the spiritless, desired enclave of East Perth. Linker has cited Kruger's description of her focus as "'the panorama of social relations mediated by images'", and notes her remarks elsewhere as "'the cool hum of power [resides]...in the elegantly mute thrall of sign language'" (Linker, 1990, p. 29). In other words, within western patriarchy, significance is placed on the visual sense, which is clearly evident through EPRA advertising strategies. Within my practise I aim to utilize these strategies as a parody of EPRA's involvement in East Perth. Images are uniformly composed, yet speak subversely of EPRA's docile conformity in supporting textured, undelineated inscriptions on top. Counter-attacks occur on "power and control", as signs of resistance emerge (both physically and symbolically) as inscriptions upon the veneers of corporate redevelopment. Rather than wielding direct force in this attack, resistance is, therefore, subversive and disturbing.

Afterword

In my journey through this study, I have used feminist theory as a catalyst for expression through my visual arts practice. As Nead (1992) observes, there is "no recourse to a semiotically innocent and unmediated body" (p. 16). Consequently, I embrace the opportunity to "represent" to the wider community the female body as a metaphor for social and cultural change – change through resistance to aggression that has stigmatized "other" bodies in Western patriarchy.

As Jon Bird (2000) has proclaimed, we need a new politics of place, one that is "capable of recognizing and exploring the instabilities and contradictions present in all areas of social life and political formations". We need "practices that symbolize the bridging of individual experience, cultural difference and collective representations" (p. 309). Through my practice, I have strived to raise public awareness of East Perth as once being a "place" of belonging. I suggest the potential for reclamation of this place as a space that brings the periphery to the centre once more, and embraces a heterogeneous mix of people.

Robert Jensen (1997) explicitly links this work to feminism, when he advises "men" to base their "identity politics" on a "feminist critique" (p. 421). As a feminist artist myself, I thus consider a development of these social concerns in my future practice, and see my art as contributing to a global practice that resists exploitation of "others" for social or political gain.

References

Ardener, S. (1993).Ground Rules and Social Maps for Women: An Introduction. In S. Ardener (Ed.), *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps* (pp. 1-31). Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd.

Asset Special Project, (no date). [Advertisement]. Perth, Western Australia: Author.

Balsamo, A. (1996). *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Barthes, R. (1981). *Camera Lucida.* New York: Hill and Wang.

Belsey, C. & Moore, J. (1989). Introduction: The Story So Far. In C. Belsey & J. Moore (Eds.), *The Feminist Reader.* (Sec. Ed. pp.1-15). London: Macmillan Press.

Bennington, G. & Massumi, B. (n.d.) *Theory and History of Literature, Volume10.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Berger, J. (1973). *Ways of Seeing.* London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Biesecker, B.A. (1992). Towards a Transactional View of Rhetorical and Feminist Theory: Rereading Helene Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa" *The Southern Communication Journal;* 57, 2. (pp. 86-96).

Bird, J. (2000). Dystopia on the Thames. In M. Miles, T. Hall & I. Borden (Eds.), *The City Cultures Reader.* (pp. 303-309). London: Routledge.

Boucquey, E. (1996). "unes femmes": The Woman Effect. In R.M. Guberman (Trans.). *Julia Kristeva Interviews.* (pp. 103-112). New York: Columbia University Press.

Boulton, J. T. (1958). *Burke, On the Sublime.* London: Routledge & Kegan.

Certeau, M. de (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life.* (S. Rendall, Trans.). Berkeley and Los Angeles: Icon Books, Ltd.

Cixous, H. (1989). 'Sorties'. In P. Rice & P. Waugh (Eds.), *Modern Literary Theory* (pp. 229-235). London: Oxford University Press Inc.

Duncan, C. (1992). The MoMA's Hot Mamas. In N. Broude & M.D. Garrad (Eds.), *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History* (pp. 347-357).

New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

East Perth Redevelopment Authority, (no date, b). *1992 to 1997 – A Five-Year Retrospective*. [Brochure]. Perth, Western Australia: Author.

East Perth Redevelopment Authority, (no date, a). *East Perth Project: Bringing It All Together. [Brochure]*. Perth, Western Australia: Author.

Evans, M.N. (1989). Hysteria and the Seduction of Theory. In D. Hunter (ed.), *Seduction & Theory: Reading of Gender, Representation, and Rhetoric* (pp. 73-85). Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Fortier, M. (1997). *Theory/Theatre: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Grosz, E. (1990). The Body of Signification. In J. Fletcher & A. Benjamin (Eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: The Works of Julia Kristeva* (pp. 80-103).

Habermas, J. (1990). Modernity – An Incomplete Project. In H. Foster (Ed.), *Postmodern Culture* (pp. 3-15). London: Pluto Press.

Halm, B. (1995). *Theatre and Ideology*. Sellinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press.

Harvey, E. (1994). *An Interview with Ken Colbung*. Oral transcript 0H2546/3. Battye Library, Perth, Western Australia.

Irigaray, L. (1977). *This Sex Which Is Not One*. (C. Porter & C. Burke, Trans.), New York: Cornell University Press.

Isaak, J.A. (1996). *Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter*. London: Routledge.

Jensen, R. (1997). Men's Lives and Feminist Theory. In D. Kendall (Ed.), *Race, Class, and Gender in a Diverse Society* (pp. 419-430). Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon.

Jones, A. (1994). *Postmodernism and the Engendering of Marcel Duchamp*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection.* (L.S. Roudiez, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Kristeva, J. (1989). Julia Kristeva, 'A Question of Subjectivity – an Interview', Women's Review, no 12. In P. Rice & P. Waugh (Eds.), *Modern Literary Theory* (pp. 128-134).

Lefebvre, H. (2000).'Plan of Present Work' and 'Social Space'. In M. Miles,
T. Hall, I. Borden (Eds.), *The City Cultures Reader* (pp. 197-199).
London: Routledge.

Lechte, J. (1990). Art, Love, and Melancholy in the Work of Julia Kristeva.
In J. Fletcher & A. Benjamin (Eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia & Love*.
(pp. 24-41). London: Routledge.

Linker, K. (1990). *Love For Sale: The Words and Pictures of Barbara Kruger*.
(C. Miers, Ed.). New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

Local and Domestic Intelligence. (1854, August 2). *The Inquirer*, p. 3.

Mayne, J. (1989). Marlene Dietrich, The Blue Angel, and Female Performance.
In D. Hunter (Ed.), *Seduction & Theory: Readings of Gender,
Representation and Rhetoric*. (pp. 28-46). Urbana and Chicago:
University of Illinois Press.

Miles, M. (1997). *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures*.
London: Routledge.

Minh-ha, T. (1991). *When the Moon Waxes Red*. New York: Routledge.

Moi, T. (1989). Feminist, Female, Feminine. In C. Belsey & J. Moore (Eds.),
The Feminist Reader (Sec. Ed., pp. 104-116). London: Macmillan
Press Ltd.

Nead, L. (1992). *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*.
London: Routledge.

Nicholls, P. (1995). *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Psych Et Po. (1996). Woman Is Never What We Say. In R. M. Guberman (Ed.),
Julia Kristeva Interviews. (pp. 95-102). New York: Columbia University
Press.

Robinson, H. (2000). *Whose* Beauty? Women, Art, and Intersubjectivity in Luce
Irigaray's Writings. In P. Zeglin Brand (Ed.), *Beauty Matters* (pp. 225-251).
Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Rodrigues, C. & Garratt, C. (2001). *Introducing Modernism*. Cambridge: Icon
Books, Ltd.

Sassen, S. (1996). Analytic Borderlands: Race, Gender and Representation in
the New City. In A. D. King (Ed.), *Re – Presenting the City: Ethnicity,*

Capital and Culture in the Twenty- First Century Metropolis (pp. 183-202). London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Sibley, D. (2000). Border Crossings. In M. Miles, T. Hall & I. Borden (Eds.), *The City Cultures Reader* (pp. 269-275). London: Routledge.

Sim, S. & Van Loon, B. (2001). *Introducing Critical Theory.* Cambridge: Icon Books, Ltd.

Sichel, K. (1999). *Germain Krull: Photographer of Modernity.* Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Silverman, K. (1983). *The Subject of Semiotics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, E. (2001). *The Contradictions of Culture: Cities, Culture, Women.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Wolff, J. (1995). *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Young, R. (1991). Psychoanalysis and Political Literary Theories. In J. Donald (Ed.), *Psychoanalysis & Cultural Theory: Thresholds.* (pp. 139-157). London: Macmillan Education Ltd.

Zukin, S. (1996). 'Space and Symbols in an Age of Decline'. In A. D. King, (Ed.), *Re – Presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital and Culture in the Twenty-First Century Metropolis* (pp. 43-59). London: Macmillan Press Ltd.