THE FEMALE BODY TURNED INSIDE OUT

by

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ABSTRACT

The first portion of this thesis is devoted to the history of how the mind came to be regarded as a separate entity from the body in the Cartesian and Enlightenment period, and how a series of corollary binaries developed around the mind/body dialectic conferring an inferior status on women and their bodies. Part two explores the writings of Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Elizabeth Grosz who, prompted by their dissatisfaction with masculinist philosophical ideas of the body, reject the mind/ body dialectic and its associative binaries. While Irigaray posits that penetrating phallogocentric discourse by writing the sexual difference of the female body will reunite the body and mind, Kristeva considers that it is by writing the abject female body that we transcend not only all corporeal but psychical boundaries. Grosz, informed by these two theorists (and others), imagines the body as a Mobius strip, irreducible to inside or outside boundaries. The final part of the thesis applies Grosz's Mobius strip model to an examination of renderings of the interior of female body in Canadian feminist art. It concludes that binaries established by phallogocentric scientifico-medical discourse may be refuted and a new feminine subjectivity(ies) instituted through the female interior.

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INTRODUCTION

"Bodies are dangerous terrain, not only because they suffer, endure pain, die and decay, but also because they are the medium through which all experience is apprehended....everything to do with the body is potentially unsettling."¹

"...exploring the history of the body, we have to trace the fear (or desire) which the prospect of anatomical knowledge of the body's interior seems to have excited...As the physical body is fragmented, so the body of understanding is held to be shaped and formed."²

"They have wrapped us for so long in their desires, we have adorned ourselves so often to please them, that we have come to forget the feel of our own skin. Removed from our skin, we remain distant."³

Historically women have been determined by their bodies and yet the status of their bodies in the Western⁴ intellectual tradition has largely been one of absence or

¹ Deanna Petherbridge and Ludmilla Jordanova. The Quick and the Dead: Artists and Anatomy, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 106.

² Jonathan Sawday. The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture, (New York: Routledge), 2.

³ Luce Irigaray. "When Our Lips Speak Together" (1980) in Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader, Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (eds.), (New York: Routledge), 1999, 90.

⁴ The scope of this thesis is determined by the art contained within. It is an attempt to make sense of how a group of artists approach the empirical and cultural inscriptions on the female body over history. The thesis speaks only of the white, Western, middle class female body and Western philosophical and feminist positions. As it is addressing a specific theme across a specific culture, it does not in any way purport to address (or speak from) the position of the "subaltern" female subject and her body. It recognizes that the discourse(s) of sex intersect with, and cannot be separated from, those of race

dismissal. Scientific evidence (especially in the eighteenth-century) determined that women's bodies were deficient, unreliable, irrational and volatile in contrast to the ordered and rational containment of the male body.⁵ As a result, the mind was discursively affiliated with the male sex, while the women have become intimately connected – and even equated – with their bodies. Their bodies were relegated to an inferior status, their social and economic positions restricted. In the name of rationality and objectivity, science ensured this was so.

The disciplines of biology and medicine have regarded the biological body as a universal and stable entity outside of history, culture and language. They have also considered the biological foundation of femininity as a given. Maurice Merleau-Ponty

and class.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak asserts that, although Western feminist models which maintain that sexual difference and multiple subject positions are necessary for women to change the ontological status of the female body in order to occupy the subject position, they do not adequately address the non-Western woman. They are not capable of subverting the complicit imperialist racist hegemony produced around the white, Western (academic) feminists and their definition of 'Woman'. Thus, within the parameters of this thesis (its focus on sexual difference), the marginalized woman will not be addressed.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. "Feminism in Critical Theory" in Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Donna Landry and Gerald McLean (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 1996), 6, 67.

Benita Parry. "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse" in Oxford Literary Review, 9(20), 1987, 35, 36.

Colin McCabe. "Forward" in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics, (New York: Routledge), 1987, xiii.

⁵ The history of Christianity has also been a history of hostility towards women and their bodies. Since the second century, for example, women were equated with flesh and their bodies deemed dangerous and inferior.

Mary Malone. Women and Christianity Volume One: The First Thousand Years, (New York: Novalis, 2000), 15, 116, 130.

observes that science has considered itself to be independent of language and society.⁶ But science itself has a history. And scientific knowledge is intricately coupled with cultural and representational practices and, so, the ideology inherent in this knowledge must be taken into consideration when investigating artistic depictions of women and their bodies.

The female body is the mark of sexual difference which has historically situated women within a mind/body dualism. Across it and through it intersect the biological, psychological, social, sexual and language, and these discourses have aided in the positioning of males and females within a series of unyielding binary oppositions (such as male/female, culture/nature, self/other, psychical/physical, inside/outside, reason/passion, subject/object).

This thesis intends to explore and refuse the legacy of this oppositional thinking informed by the discourses of science and art, and to expose the patriarchal operations within them. It begins with an examination of how the discourses of art, science, psychology and history intersect. It then moves towards an overview of feminist theory on the body informed, for the most part on the writings of Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Elizabeth Grosz, all of whom reject the binary oppositions instituted in and around the female body. Their solution consists of advocating a writing of the female corporeal which does not involve an appropriation of 'nature'.

The thesis then integrates this feminist theory with the legacy of patriarchal

⁶ Kim Sawchuk. "Biological, Not Determinist: Nell Tenhaaf's Technological Mutations" in Nell Tenhaaf: Fit/Unfit, (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, 2004), 12.

science and employs it to respond to and analyze a trend observed in the aesthetic practices of a number of contemporary Canadian women artists. Their images of the inside of the female body are employed to rescue it from the empirical traditions of the anatomy theatre, anatomical texts and medical interventions, as well as the conventions of art.⁷ It is not a monographic or stylistic study, but an identification of a trope.

Works such as Pam Hall's installation Eye of the Beholder (1997) (figure 19), for example, directly reference and challenge the roots of the European anatomico-medical female body from the public realm of the anatomy theatre and anatomical texts of the Renaissance period to the contemporary anatomy labs and texts. Other works, such as Geneviève Cadiux's photograph Trou de mémoire, la beauté inattendue (1988) (figure 13) are, perhaps, less explicit in their referencing of this history, yet challenge it nonetheless. In doing so, they dispute the notion that corporeality is a fixed "natural" or biological given. They demonstrate that the ontology of the female body in anatomico-medicine and art is (and always was) an unstable construction and (re)position women and their bodies as *subjects* of scientific and artistic discourse.

The intent of Chapter One is to provide the reader with an overview of the history of the female body within art and science in order to situate it discursively. It will discuss prevailing ideologies surrounding the body and examine how it was that Cartesian and Enlightenment paradigms drove empiricism to discover and make visible the invisible corporeal. It traces the impact of these discourses on the project of

⁷ This thesis is interested solely in how *women* artists have responded to and experienced these historical inscriptions which mark their body.

anatomical dissection – how it was that women's bodies were dissected in order to disseminate a specifically male knowledge of women and, how this, in turn, effected the formation of the mind/body dialectic which exists even today. The chapter also investigates how the anatomico-medical and artistic projects intersected around the interior of the human body and how the scientific, artistic (and resultant cultural) treatment and representation of the female body has differed from that of the male body.

Because scientific practices (especially anatomical dissection) influenced art production while art directed the course of science and medicine, women's bodies not only belonged to an European artistic tradition which located them as objects of desire and which denied them subjecthood, they and their bodies were often the victims (discursively and sometimes literally) of the purportedly objective sciences. In anatomy labs and anatomy texts, women's bodies were subjected to the masculinist scientific gaze.

But contemporary feminist writers and artists do not regard the female body as a given, a stable entity passively waiting for science to reveal its mysteries. They regard it (and its set of norms referred to as 'femininity'), instead, as something that can only be accessed through language, through our realization that the female body, its anatomy and our ideas of health are shaped by the discourses of biology and medicine.

Because the female body did not fit the classical idealized male body of the Renaissance, it became the locus of a specifically gendered fear. The location of this fear was literally visceral. And given the powerful emotions with which the insides of

the female body was invested, opening the female body was both a way to study biology and to quell the rebellious nature of womanhood. As a result of the construction of the female body as a leaking, uncontrollable, repulsive, bleeding entity which is at the mercy of its hormones and reproductive function, an association has been drawn between femininity and disease, disorder and powers of seduction. These attributes – marked and given psychological and cultural significance – are not restricted to the particular body regions where they originate; the cultural ideology has, over time, percolated from the inside to the outside and also to other regions of the female body.

Feminist writers Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Elizabeth Grosz understand this historical association of the female body with gross materiality, yet engage with it in an effort to undermine phallogocentric discourse which operates on the basis of exclusion of the feminine and sustains the ideology of the woman and her body as inferior to that of the male's. Chapter Two of this thesis, then, will examine the writings of Irigaray, Kristeva, and Grosz, specifically their referencing of the interior of the female body and how writing the female corporeal challenges the phallogocentrism⁸

⁸ Phallogocentric (phallogocentrism) is a Derridean term which both Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous use to describe Western cultural systems and structures. It is a combination of "phallogocentric" (meaning that the structure of language is centred on the phallus) and "logocentric" (a Derridean idea meaning that the structure of language relies on spoken words being privileged over written words). Thus a phallogocentric culture is one which is structured by binary oppositions in which the first term is valued over the second to provide the basic structures of Western cultural systems and where the woman/the feminine are inferior to the man/the masculine. These associations with one or the other oppositions are conventional rather than fixed.

Jacques Derrida. *Margins of Philosophy* (Alan Bass, tr.), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, xxi.

< www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/cixous.html > February 06, 2004.

inherent in philosophical writings and other knowledge systems. These theorists look to the female corporeal as a way to challenge binaries inherent to these discourses. Irigaray asserts that writing the sexual difference of the female body mounts the most effective challenge, while Kristeva maintains that writing the abject body offers the promising strategy for the subversion of masculinist language systems. Grosz, informed by the writings of Irigaray and Kristeva, has developed a model based on the Mobius strip which she feels offers an effective challenge to these binaries.

Irigaray disputes the feminine as lack in the psychoanalytical writings of Lacan (and Freud) believing, instead, that the feminine exists within this phallogocentric language system. Because it is already contained within, she maintains, the psychoanalytic discourse must be penetrated and rewritten from within. Writing from the interior of the female body – from a position of sexual difference – is her solution for disrupting both the corporeal borders and for refuting the mind/body dialectic which positions women as inferior.

Kristeva, too, has a problem with the language of psychoanalysis. She contends that one must write the abject in order to disrupt its phallogocentrism. She defines the abject as what falls away from the body that continues to remain irreducible to the subject/object, inside/outside.⁹ Examples of Kristeva's abject include those fluids and organs normally internally and privately contained which transgress corporeal borders. As these substances seep to the outside of the body, they effect a collapse of the inside of

⁹ Julia Kristeva. Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection, (New York: Columbia University Press, 198, 3,5.

the body into the outside.¹⁰ When the inside/outside distinction is eroded, asserts Kristeva, so is the stability of the female body as a signifier.¹¹

By (re)appropriating the abject and fluid female bodies Irigaray and Kristeva write sexual difference and attempt to re-configure body politics. This (re)imagining of the female body, they hope, will give the feminine a voice within patriarchy, will create a speaking subject out of a silent or neglected object. If this is successful, a new signification of the female body is constituted and the feminine is no longer excluded.

Elizabeth Grosz, like Irigaray and Kristeva, refuses the mind/body dialectic and its positioning of the female body as inferior. For her the body is a point of mediation between what is perceived as purely internal and accessible only to the subject and what is external and publically observable. Her so-called *lived* body is a place from which to rethink all the binary pairs associated with the mind/body opposition and to achieve a kind of embodied subjectivity, a psychical corporeality.¹²

Grosz has developed a working model with which to envision these ideas and read the female body in a way which she feels refuses reductionism, resists dualism and remains suspicious of the unity of monism. It is based on the geometrical form of the Mobius strip and its 2D torsion in 3D space. She has chosen this model because, like the body, it possesses the ability to rotate from the inside out and from the outside in and yet

¹⁰ J. Kristeva (1982), 18, 25.

¹¹ Elizabeth Grosz. Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 192.

¹² E. Grosz, xii, 20.

it cannot be collapsed into one.¹³ What was external becomes internal and vice versa. The model of the Mobius strip, she maintains, may be considered an appropriate metaphor with which to challenge existing binary knowledges surrounding the female body.

Chapter Three uses Grosz's Mobius strip model as a jumping off point to unite the body with the mind and to provide a way in which to problematize and rethink the relations between the (psychical) interior and (socio-cultural) exterior of the female subject, between the body and the mind.¹⁴ As the interior and exterior surfaces of a Mobius strip "torsion" onto each other, so do the corporeal surfaces when the formerly invisible female interior becomes visible in artistic representations.¹⁵ The female body is no longer inside nor outside, cultural nor natural, textual nor biological, private nor public, subject nor object, but both.

Many contemporary women artists have addressed issues of the female body with figurative or metonymic representations of the *exterior* female body. Chapter Three argues that an exploration of the *interior* of a woman's body may be an even more fruitful endeavour. It will examine artistic renderings of the insides of the female body which, in conjunction with a referencing of the feminist writings of Irigaray and

¹³ E. Grosz, xii.

¹⁴ The purpose of this chapter is not to determine whether Grosz's model is *the* most efficacious in challenging the mind/body, inside/outside, subject/object or nature/culture binaries, but to demonstrate that it may be a useful one with which to apply to representations of the interior of the female body in contemporary Canadian art.

¹⁵ E. Grosz, xii.

Kristeva, are an effective method of visualizing Grosz's ideas of the Mobius strip where the inside and the outside binaries are collapsed. These include works by Canadian artists Genviève Cadieux, Pam Hall, Shelagh Keeley, Sarah Maloney, Regan Morris, Lisa Steele and Kim Tomczak, ,Jana Sterbak, Nell Tenhaaf, Diana Thorneycroft, and Louise K. Wilson.

The works by contemporary Canadian artists analysed in Chapter Three address the phallogocentric construction of the female body within the discourses of art and medical science. These artists use science and medicine's own methodologies (such as anatomical dissection, surgery, medical imaging technologies) to wrest biological reductionism away from the female body. They metaphorically penetrate phallogocentric discourse as they penetrate the feminine interior. By doing so, they explore the historical treatment of women and their bodies against these masculinist discourses.

Though they challenge the phallogocentric knowledge systems, they don't place themselves outside of science. They use the scientific communities' own methodologies or tools to expose and subvert the ideologies which historically have violated the internal space of the female body. The works in this thesis are also influenced by the postmodern paradigms. Incorporating postmodernist methodologies into their art production in order to engage critically with notions of gender, sexual difference and self-identity provides these artists with a way to engage with issues surrounding the female body while avoiding the naturalist trap.

By depicting the inside of the female body as a literal and metaphorical refusal of binaries, these works permit the repressed feminine to emerge and to re-think sexual difference without resorting to reductivism. The corporeal interior surface (the space of the mind, the psychical, the soul, the cultural) and the exterior surface (the space of the body, the material, the biological) become indistinguishable. As the mind/body dichotomy is refuted, so are all its corollary binaries.

Four recurrent artistic strategies observed within the canon of contemporary Canadian feminist art practice depicting the interior of the female body as a way to establish female subjectivity include: depiction of penetration of the skin (by flaying, fluids, wounds), other forms of corporeal openings (the mouth, the female reproductive system), internal organs, and the technological penetration of the female body (by the microscope, CT scans, MRI's).

Each corporeal opening represents a literal and metaphorical entry or exit point of the boundaries of the female body. They speak to the unseen interior of the female body which are not visible yet, nonetheless, have been exploited by medical science. They allude to or explicitly relay a connection between the interior and exterior where the invisible interior – by virtue of the opening of the female body – becomes visible. The feminine from within is released, the female object becomes a subject.

Although re-politicizing the female body by opening it up makes transparent the masculinist ideology hidden within phallogocentric language, this thesis and the works examined within it do not offer up a definitive prescription for altering the phallogocentrically informed representations of the female body in art and anatomico-

medicine or for refuting binaries which remain firmly entrenched in culture today. As the Conclusion makes clear, this thesis intends, instead, to generate a discussion. It identifies the female body as *the* site for the initiation of a dialogue on medical science's role within culture. It aims to allow the viewer of the works of art the freedom to imagine multiple female subjectivities, and as such, may be an agent of social change. It also hopes to generate more questions, more areas of investigation, than were within its present scope.

CHAPTER ONE:

A HISTORY OF THE SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE ON THE FEMALE BODY

I Introduction

The struggle to establish control over the knowledge of women's bodies dates to the early seventeenth century. Michel Foucault identifies the emergence of the "sciences of 'Man'" as the moment when a new political anatomy of the body was implemented in European culture.¹⁶ The Cartesian notion of the body as a machine (where the mind and body are considered to be separate entities) followed by the escalating importance of a rationalist paradigm in the Enlightenment precipitated the struggle to establish control over the *knowledge* of the female body. The body was determined to be subordinate to the mind and women were closely associated with the body while men were associated with the mind. The mind/body dichotomy spawned a number of related gender-based binaries, the consequence being that women and their bodies came to be regarded as subordinate to men. This discourse of inferiority intricately woven by Descartes and his successors persists even today.

This chapter provides an historic overview of dominant scientific discourses surrounding the female body, with emphasis on the Cartesian and Enlightenment

¹⁶ Michel Foucault. The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception, (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 193.

paradigms which established the mind/body dialectic and the association of the female with nature and the material. The chapter concludes with a detailed discussion of dissection and anatomical atlases which I suggest are key sites for the masculinist scientific and aesthetic discourses which developed around the female body. The historic material outlined in detail in this chapter provides a necessary grounding for the following two chapters which address feminist theoretical models as they relate to an ontological shift in our perception of the female body and the recent critical interventions by Canadian women artists influenced by these models.

II Cartesianism and the Mind/Body Dialectic

Since its inception in ancient Greece, the fundamental tenets of philosophy have been grounded in a profound somatophobia. The body was regarded as a source of interference or even a danger to the soul, the mind and reason. Christian doctrines, presupposing a unity between the mortal body and the immortal mind, had associated the body with what was deemed mortal and the mind with the immortal. Both were seen as part of nature and indivisible. In fact, it was not until the sixteenth-century that it was even possible to think of the body as a discreet entity because it was simply considered to be a vessel for the containment of the soul.¹⁷ Then in 1543 Andreas Vesalius published *De humani corporis fabrica* which initiated the very first 'mapping' of the human body. The body was regarded as an undiscovered territory, where in order to

¹⁷ E. Grosz, 5.

understand its mysteries, anatomists required skills similar to those of the geographical explorers. This focus of Vesalius' "new science" was not concerned with the study of disease but with illuminating the human body as an expression of the divine workmanship of God.¹⁸ Exploration of the body was motivated by a desire to discover forms which corresponded to the larger organization of the forms of the cosmos. In other words, information acquired about the human body and its processes was characterized as reflecting a divine purpose and glorified God.

The seventeenth-century marked a transitional age for bodily explorations. As the century progressed, information acquired in pursuit of knowledge of the body's interior was exceedingly vast and complex; it no longer fit into this 'geographical' paradigm of the body.¹⁹ Seventeenth-century perceptions of the body were influenced, instead, by discoveries of new non-Christian civilizations and by an unprecedented number of scientific discoveries. As a result, philosophers concluded that it would be human reason and not religion which would provide the basis for truth. The search was on for a scientific law which was based on measurement, one which would unify all knowledge. The basis of science became the experimental verification of facts; phenomena were accounted for by natural rather than divine causes. To the seventeenth-century scientist or philosopher, the unknown was merely the undiscovered.

¹⁸ Mimi Cazort. "The Theatre of the Body" in The Ingenious Machine: Four Centuries of Art and Anatomy, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1996), 14,16.

¹⁹ J. Sawday, 16,17, 23.

Superstition gave way to rationality and for the first time in the Christian era, 'Man'²⁰ was considered to be the master of 'his' own destiny.²¹ It was within this new rational cultural climate of the mid-seventeenth-century that René Descartes formulated his ideas concerning the human body and a new language to describe the body's interior evolved.

While the years 1540 to 1640 are considered to be the period of the 'discovery' of the Vesalian body, the mid-seventeenth-century heralded the 'invention' of the modern Cartesian body. With Discours de la méthode (1637), Descartes announced that he would accept nothing as true unless he had a clear perception of its veracity. To establish this veracity, he drew on the new scientific empiricism as a tool with which to discover the 'truth' about the human body. Out of this arose the formulation of his celebrated metaphor of the body as a machine. He hoped that this embodied machine would direct the development of a new medicine which would conquer disease. Descartes' influence on the science of the body was monumental; empirical measurement had, for the first time, replaced description.²²

²⁰ Descartes science is the science of 'Man' and, so, 'man' is used here in the sense that it was in the seventeenth-century. Science and its language during this time period (and even now to some degree) was masculine and implicitly gendered. See pages 24, 25 in this thesis for a more detailed discussion of the masculinist nature of the language of empiricism.

²¹ Norman Hampson. The Enlightenment, (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 25, 27, 28, 32, 35.

"René Descartes: Part One", Ideas, CBC Radio, May 14, 2003.

²² N. Hampson, 32, 35.

Drew Leder. "A Tale of Two Bodies: The Cartesian Corpse and the Lived Body", in Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader, Donna Welton (ed.), (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 118.

J. Sawday, 23, 29, 32, 230.

The body as machine is a body which has been silenced, left with no access to language; it is matter reduced to fittings.²³ It is a mechanism which if it malfunctions may be restored to its normal state of functioning through the technology of medicine.²⁴

When the body was objectified as a machine, it became a target of power on a scale previously unseen. According to Michel Foucault, Descartes' mechanistic body is a "docile body"²⁵, a body subject to surveillance, manipulation, training, compliance, transformation and utilization in everyday life and especially in prisons, mental hospitals, schools and hospitals. It is a canvas onto which knowledge is inscribed. Its materiality, movements, gestures and attitudes were (and are) impacted by this exercising of subtle coercion. This results in the fixing of norms of bodily appearance.²⁶

Descartes' "anatomic-metaphysical" model of the body continues to dominate medical

²³ Michael Onfray. "The Body is the Soul", Art Press, 186, p. E23.
J. Sawday, 37,159.

²⁴ J. Sawday, 37.

²⁵ Susan Bordo states in "Feminism, Foucault and the Politics of the Body", that Foucault was not the first to speak of this docile body. In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft described the docile body of the domestic woman of privilege.

Susan Bordo. "Feminism, Foucault and the Politics of the Body" in Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism, Caroline Ramazanlu (ed.), (New York: Routledge), 1993.

²⁶ Michel Foucault. Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison, (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 136.

It must also be noted that the Cartesian notion of the body as machine was just one element which contributed to the production of docile bodies. The institutional regulations of the army, schools and hospitals also controlled bodies and contributed to the formation of them. And the extent to which this power exerted control over the human body escalated in the eighteenth century.

M. Foucault (1977), 137, 138, 139, 190.

scientific discourse today. Science and medicine continue to operate together with hospitals, psychiatric hospitals and educational institutions to control bodies.

The creation of the 'Cartesian Man' was, according to Jonathan Sawday, "...the moment an alienated human subject was born".²⁷ The implications of this alienation of the human subject are considerable. As a machine, the body became objectified and detached from the ontological notion of the speaking and thinking subject. This modern body was a body which worked rather than existed. And as a machine, it was understood to possess no intellect of its own and would operate, instead, according to the laws of mechanics and nature. The soul/the mind/consciousness was not considered to be part of nature and, so, was not destined to be governed by the same laws as the body. Instead it was deemed independent of everything else and, so, could survive after death.²⁸

Descartes, then, effected a separation of life into spiritual and material categories. In an age where science, theology and metaphysics were inseparable and where men possessed innate God-given knowledge, he did not discount God's influence (indeed he was a devoutly religious man) but he did exclude God from the material governed by nature. In fact, although this new mechanistic view of the body did challenge classical conceptions of the body, it reinforced religious faith by revealing new principles of order

²⁷ J. Sawday, 159.

²⁸ Ideas, CBC Radio, May 14, 2003.
E. Grosz, 6.
J. Sawday, 29.

in natural phenomena which continued to be under the control of a divine architect.²⁹ As a result, a dichotomy between the mind and the body was established. The mechanistic view of the body positioned the material body as inferior to the spiritual, divinely governed mind. Within this seventeenth-century climate where science was increasingly questioning the dominance of the Christian doctrines, divine control over the mind and soul retained its preeminence.

Although Descartes was not the first to theorize a separation of the mind from the body,³⁰ he did advance a compelling argument for the separation of the soul from nature.

He did not attempt to prove that the soul and the body were distinct from one another, but he did decisively challenge perceptions of their unity. And with his formulation he established a dualism where, according to Elizabeth Grosz, three centuries later philosophical thought has not overcome or reconciled the gulf between mind and matter.

³¹ Descartes succeeded in linking the mind/body opposition to the very foundations of knowledge and in locating the mind in a hierarchically superior position to nature,

²⁹ N. Hampson, 24, 25, 28.

³⁰ It was as far back as Plato, then, that the struggle between interior and exterior was posited. Plato had previously theorized a separation of mind and body where the soul was in perpetual struggle with the body in order to escape its corporeal prison.

E. Grosz, 6

J. Sawday, 16,17.

Later, second century Christian teaching equated women with flesh and positioned women and their bodies as dangerous and inferior to men's and against the spiritual. In doing so, it contributed to the earlier Platonic position on the polarization of body and soul.

M. Malone, 15, 101, 145.

³¹ E. Grosz, 6,7.

including the body.³²

This mind/body dichotomy has always been correlated to a number of other oppositional pairs. These pairs include male/female, culture/nature, inside/outside, self/other, depth/surface, reality/experience, psychology/biology, reason/passion. The mind became discursively affiliated with the male sex, while the body became intimately linked – and even equated – with the female sex. Because dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchizes, one portion of the dualism is always subordinated.³³ It followed, then, that an inferior status was (and continues to be) inscribed upon the female body. Men and their bodies were ascribed the attributes of reason, self, and intellect while women and their bodies were identified with passion, nature and the other. Science ensured this was so. Scientific narratives, then, rely on the displacement of women from an active subject position. To quote Janet Kourany, “Science and masculinity were made for each other.”³⁴

Western scientists were (and are) trained to be objective, impartial, logical, unemotional and disinterested. These were also norms of masculine behaviour, in sharp contrast to societal norms of female behaviour.³⁵ Because science, the project of masculinist hegemony, proffers itself up as ideologically neutral, the patriarchal ideology

³² E. Grosz, 6.

³³ E. Grosz, 3.

³⁴ Janet A. Kourany. Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstruction, Princeton, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 1998, 232.

³⁵ J. Kourany, 232.

ingrained in it is not readily apparent. Neutrality covers up and justifies the hegemonic power relations. As such, knowledge was constructed in a way which was gendered. This gendered language dominated scientific discourse (especially biological scientific discourse) and continues to govern it even today. 'Man' (and his 'self') is not an autonomous, self-determining human being. Instead he is a historical product of discourse.

Another, yet interrelated, development emerging out of the creation of a mechanical or technological regime of the body was a reform of the language of science. In England The Royal Society and its so-called "Royal Science" advanced the seventeenth-century project of "dominion over nature". Out of this paradigm developed an aggressive language of appropriation and domination from which science (particularly biological science) has never recovered. Adjectives such as 'active' and 'virile' were applied to this new science and the Royal Society's goal was "to raise a Masculine Philosophy" and to make nature man's slave.³⁶ If woman was associated with nature, it follows that she would be man's slave. This new aggressive language demonstrated an inherently gendered dimension as it extended to notions of dominance over the female body. According to Jonathan Sawday "...it sought to establish a female dependency plundered by male virility". It was a decidedly 'masculine' science which structured knowledge in a way which was *implicitly* gendered (as it always had been). What had changed was that it had become *explicitly* gendered – it consciously deployed a gendered

³⁶ J. Kourany, 231, 232.
J. Sawday, 244, 245.

language of discovery.³⁷

Science was conducted for men and by men.³⁸ Patriarchal scientific institutions (and, hence, subsequent scientific discourse) ignored or excluded women and their bodies as students, researchers or objects of clinical trials.³⁹ The result of this masculinist domination of knowledge was that science purported to demonstrate unequivocally that women were more emotional and less intellectual than their masculine counterparts, that female sexuality was passive yet, ironically, also the site of uncontrollable disturbance and excess. Science objectively determined that women could not – or should not – venture outside of the private domestic sphere. Science, art, higher education, employment outside the home or any other public intellectual pursuits should be left to men, otherwise the security of the home, the family, the state and the future of the race would be in jeopardy.

³⁷ J. Sawday, 231.

³⁸ Science was not just masculine, but white, Western, middle class and masculine. Discourses on sex intersected with that of race. Racial science studied males and male physiology while the subject of sexual science was the European middle class male. Women and non-Europeans were seen as deficient when measured against the European man.

Londa Schiebinger. "Theories of Gender and Race" in Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader, Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 1999), 23, 24, 27.

³⁹ J. Kourany, 233.

III Nature, the Enlightenment and the Female Body

This quest for a rationalist scientific knowledge that was disengaged from Christian theology escalated in the eighteenth-century, the period generally known as the Enlightenment. This period was characterized by a shift in European thought; reason was considered to be superior to other modes of thought and the scientific method a superior means of discovering the truth about nature and the human being.⁴⁰ Barbara Stafford, in her 1991 book Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine, claims that every major aesthetic, critical or biological issue facing the contemporary era grew out of the doctrines of the Enlightenment.⁴¹ One of its central tenets was the claim that the 'truth' of the natural world (including the human body) could be revealed. The Enlightenment was characterized by rational knowledge based on empirical information derived from the senses. Empiricism held the key to illuminating the truth of the universe, the ultimate goal being the understanding of and mastery over nature including women and their dangerous sexuality.

Science and medicine were fundamental to these endeavours in three ways: first, natural phenomena like reproduction, sexual behaviour and sexually transmitted diseases

⁴⁰ Caroline Ramazanoğlu. "Introduction", Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism, Caroline Ramazanoğlu (ed.), (New York: Routledge, 1993), 23. Ramazanoğlu goes on to state that these ideas continue to dominate our assumptions of what is true and of the superiority of reason over emotion, abjection over subjectivity, mind over body.

⁴¹ Barbara Maria Stafford. Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 466.

became the focus of natural philosophers and medical writers. Second, science and medicine enjoyed a privileged position because their methods ostensibly offered a way out of the religious orthodoxy (which was perceived to have outlived its usefulness) and towards a secular, empirically based knowledge of the natural and social worlds. God lost his place as the source of knowledge, a role now occupied by man. And finally, as sex roles became constituted within the language of science, the natural sciences and medicine became associated with sexual imagery. 'Nature' became a metaphor for 'woman' passively waiting to be unveiled and probed.⁴² This metaphor of woman as nature was positioned against that of man as science or culture.

The pivotal role that 'nature' played in the eighteenth-century rise of liberal political thought drove the discourse on sexual differences. Nature served as the basis for many medical arguments and became increasingly embedded in the social theory of the period. Locke and Kant, for example, hypothesized a natural foundation for social conventions.⁴³ Science was gaining prestige and it was believed that scientific 'evidence' could prove absolutely that human nature differed according to age, race, class and, of course, sex. This clearly secured the social inequality of women. The female body emerged as the mark of sexual difference situating women firmly within the denigrated

⁴² Lisa Cartwright. Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1995, 57, 158.

⁴³ Londa Schiebinger. "Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of the Female Skeleton in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy", The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 43, 68.

half of the mind/body, male/female, culture/nature dualism.

'Objective' science located a woman's social worth in her physical 'nature'.

Women and their bodies were judged to be dangerous. According to Ludmilla Jordanova, it was more urgent that this danger be contained than to subject these women to the same scientific scrutiny as men.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the 'nature' of woman became a priority of scientific research. Science was purportedly capable of measuring and, hence, proving that woman's 'natural' reasoning skills were inferior to men's more intellectual abilities. Woman's intellectual development (like that of children and 'primitive' peoples) was suggested to be arrested at a lower stage of evolution than man's.⁴⁵ Her association with feeling and instinct was judged by science to dull her intellectual abilities. She was purported to be governed by feeling and passion rather than intellect and reason which made her more 'naturally' suited to motherhood and the private domestic sphere rather than public and cerebral pursuits, including the study of science.

Difference in intellectual abilities between the female sex and her male counterpart were considered to be inter-related with notions of their physical differences. For example, women's smaller skulls and wider pelvises were used as 'proof' that women were more like children and primitives. As children and primitives lacked the intellectual capabilities of men it followed, patriarchal science reasoned, that women did

⁴⁴ Ludmilla Jordanova. "Natural Facts: A Historical Perspective on Science and Sexuality" in Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader, Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 1999), 166.

⁴⁵ L. Schiebinger, 43, 46, 63.

as well.⁴⁶

So, a dual signification of woman as 'natural' was established in the eighteenth-century: her very essence was defined by nature (by her biology) while at the same time, she was positioned as a natural object to be exploited by medical science. But the paradox of this empirical position is that women have been largely excluded from participating in the very same scientific discourse which has been used to 'prove' their inferiority to men and to justify their continued exclusion. As rationality was the order of the day in the Enlightenment, the word of science was definitive and was used to justify not merely their exclusion from science but also from other public spheres such as government, education, commerce and legal systems.

Empirical arguments for the subordination of women which escalated in the nineteenth-century, reflected anxiety over the rise of the international crusade for women's suffrage. The writings of Hegel and his contemporaries, for example, secured the growing association of masculinity with reason and science and femininity with feeling and the moral sphere of the home.

[Man] is powerful and enterprising, [women] passive and subjective. Hence man has essential life in the state, in learning...as well as work. [w]ithin the family is where woman has her true definition.⁴⁷

At the end of the eighteenth-century, sex became a concern of the state. Women

⁴⁶ L. Schiebinger, 63.

⁴⁷ G.W.F. Hegel in Anthony Synott's The Body Social: Symbolism, Self and Society. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 50.

were widely affiliated with the domestic realm of the family. The sexual conduct of the population (birth rate, age of marriage, frequency of sexual relations, contraception, etc.) was a target of state intervention because it was believed to be tied to the future, health and fortune of society. Medicine set itself up as the authority on hygiene, public health, moral cleanliness of the social body and, through this authority, regulating sexuality became a medical objective. Its main concern was women's specific sexual physiology. The female body was considered to be saturated with sexuality and, so, must be ordered wholly in terms of reproduction. This was determined to be the responsibility women owed to the health of their children, the family institution and society.⁴⁸

In addition to medico-scientific discourses, the rise of a powerful Evangelical movement in the West fostered the proliferation of the 'cult of domesticity' which further delineated the prescribed domestic role for middle class European women from the public role for men. In the name of Christianity it opposed equality for women and maintained that it was the moral duty of women to remain in their separate domestic spheres.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault. The History of Sexuality Volume I : An Introduction, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 23, 26, 44, 54, 103, 116, 146, 147, 153.

Feminine sexuality was first medicalized in the bourgeois and aristocratic classes. Out of this emerged the medical concern over and treatment of the "idle woman" and the "hysterical woman". It was not long before the ideas surrounding this medicalization of sexuality were generalized and extended to women of the working classes.

M. Foucault (1990), 120, 121, 122.

⁴⁹ Lisa Tickner. The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 3.

This 'cult of domesticity' escalated during this period but was not new to the nineteenth century. Early Christian writings regarded marriage as a way of consigning 'good' women to silence, invisibility and removing them from public life.

The media, literature and art of the day all reinforced these views espoused by the scientific and religious communities and warned that if women strayed far from their proper domestic sphere, the security of the home, the family, the state and the 'future of the race' was in jeopardy. Pursuing emancipation, higher education and employment outside the home would impair a woman's reproductive and maternal capabilities. Consigning women to the domestic sphere effectively justified the regulation and exploitation of their sexuality and their bodies.

IV Dissection

A) The History of Dissection

The foundations of many of the binaries associated with the human body (in particular the mind/body, male/female, superior/inferior, reason/passion, culture/nature and inside/outside) can be located in the investigational project of anatomical dissection.

This exploration of the human body, this "anatomico- clinical" body, escalated in the Enlightenment and the period just preceding it. It resulted in the proliferation of phallogocentric discourses which persist today. As Catherine Waldby asserts, dissection involves a "...coordination of eye and hand in a circular economy of interpretation and inscription."⁵⁰ Dissection of the human corpse marks a key site where the masculinist disciplines of science and art became irrevocably coupled to determine that women were

M. Malone, 85, 93.

⁵⁰ Catherine Waldby. The Visible Human Project: Informatic Bodies and Posthuman Medicine, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 69.

natural, irrational and inferior beings. Accordingly, the rest of this chapter will address dissection and anatomy, in effect, as case studies of phallogocentric discourse enacted on the body.

Human anatomy is a descriptive science; it is an ordered study of nature which possesses a recognized body of knowledge easily verifiable or revised by further investigations. The ultimate reference point for anatomy is the structure of the living human being, even if its knowledge is based in the dissection of cadavers.⁵¹ Looking interiorly vastly increases the visualization of knowledge regarding the body. With dissection the private realm of the body is *publicly* displayed for an audience. As a result, the related dualisms of private/public and interior/exterior become less fixed and more fluid. The invisible is made visible.

The roots of modern scientific understanding of the body, the so-called "cult of dissection", emerged out of the Renaissance.⁵² It was during the fifteenth-century that

⁵¹ Although both male and female cadavers were available to anatomists from the thirteenth-century, except for the female reproductive system, it was specifically the male cadaver which was the paradigm for the study of human anatomy. Women's bodies were considered to be defective to the male bodies. It was man who was believed to be fashioned by God in his own image; woman and her body was regarded as a derivative model, deviant and sexualized while man and his body the original. Uterine dissection was the focus of dissection of the female body from the fifteenth to the eighteenth-century in part because of existing patriarchal hegemony and in part because anatomists, theologians and philosophers of this time period were concerned with understanding the origins of human life.

C. Benthien. Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and the World, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 86.

M. Cazort, 15, 30, 31, 33.

⁵² M. Cazort, 16.

J. Sawday, 4.

the study of human anatomy first came to be based on direct, empirical observation of the body rather than relying on theory. European medicine was transformed from a practice rooted in ancient wisdom to one based on the practices of observation, testing and knowledge. Dissection became the key to the gathering and dissemination of knowledge about the body and, because it was intimately bound to the contemporary philosophical debates concerning the origin of Man and his position in God's master plan, the human body was purported to reveal the divine workmanship of God. The literal peeling back of the skin in search of knowledge figuratively reflected the philosophical quest for knowledge from within.⁵³

During the European Renaissance, the bodies used for dissection were almost exclusively those of criminals. Dissection was performed as a matter of course on the bodies of prisoners after they were executed as an additional form of degradation; it was the body's final punishment after death for an offense against God and society. Dissection occurred in public where the attendant atmosphere was carnivalesque. The audience was composed of members of the general public, anatomists, artists and physicians who gathered to watch the body's symbolic disintegration unfold more than to watch a scientific investigation.⁵⁴ The success of public anatomical demonstrations also

⁵³ M. Cazort, 14, 36.
J. Sawday, 116, 117,
C. Waldby, 64.

⁵⁴ C. Benthien, 63, 64.
M. Cazort, 29.
J. Sawday, 62,30.
Katherine Young. Presence in the Flesh: The Body in Medicine, (Cambridge,

was due, in part, to the *frisson* which accompanied experiences around notions of life, death, sexuality and pain.⁵⁵

The promised 'objectivity' of science intimated that a solution to the "woman problem" would come from science.⁵⁶ Although the female body rarely was the object of the anatomico-medical gaze, when it was dissected, science moralized it even as it was peering intently at it. Jonathan Sawday in his book The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture (1996) maintains that

...To open the female body was not just to embark upon a voyage of scientific discovery, but it was also to trace the lineaments of the rebellious nature of womankind...Once Eve was transported into the [anatomy] theatre, then the investigation of the origin of death was buttressed by the pressing theological, social and scientific need to master her abhorrent sexual nature.⁵⁷

In other words, the goal of the anatomist was mastery over the female body as much as it was an understanding of the body's inner workings. The female cadaver was a manifestation of her sins as a woman and reinforced the need for patriarchal control over her disturbing, disruptive, deviant and dangerous body. Renaissance interpretation

Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 1997, 122

⁵⁵ J. Sawday, 5.

⁵⁶ J. Sawday, 245.
L. Schiebinger, 70.

⁵⁷ J. Sawday, 224.
But this association of women with Eve did not originate in this early modern period. Writings of the Early Christian period equated women with Eve and sin.
M. Malone, 132.

of the scriptures maintained that female sexuality was a potentially transgressive force requiring containment. Dissection provided a way to suppress or extinguish the threat that her body represented while contributing to an establishment of a discourse of sexual difference and gender construction.

In the early modern period this 'moral centrality' informed all Renaissance investigation of the female body. Body parts such as the uterus or genitalia were constant reminders to the Renaissance audience of every woman's role in the Biblical fall from grace. In conjunction with these moral arguments, the Renaissance woman was the subject of constant surveillance and her body was deemed 'naturally' grotesque.⁵⁸ The leaking uncontained female body was at odds with the pure and contained classical male body so prized by the Renaissance society and, later, the orderliness so important to the ever rational Enlightenment society. Historically, then, the control of the unruly and rebellious female body has been a principal concern of patriarchal society. To do this it had to be policed rigorously, even suppressed.

In 1543, with the publication of Vesalius' De Humani Corporis, the anatomy theatre was transformed. Outside the carnivalesque display of justice prevailed, but the corpse itself was brought inside (often into old churches and chapels) and dissected in a special structure designed solely for this purpose.⁵⁹ In this *theatrum anatomicum* the corpse was unburdened from its punishment and entered into a refashioned location where the dramatization of the spectacle was to unfold. As a result, the corpse was

⁵⁸ J. Sawday, 9, 10.

⁵⁹ J. Sawday, 62, 63, 65.

transformed from an object of penal display to one which assumed the dignity accorded science. Here one could transcend the spectacle of disorder. Order and the wisdom of God were asserted vis-à-vis His greatest creation. Although the general public was not permitted inside the theatre, the audience was not solely comprised of students and medical professionals.⁶⁰ The fashionable, educated and often wealthy elite were also in attendance, in a manner not unlike a present-day art going audience.

The seventeenth-century witnessed a shift from dissection motivated by religious discovery to one with an empirical intent reflecting changes in scientific discourse as discussed above. It was believed that knowledge of the mysteries of the human body (not the cosmos) could be obtained by dissecting and exposing the infinitely small components which constituted human anatomical systems. In other words, dissection was now anchored in the regime of knowledge, rather than religious creed.⁶¹ Descartes, for example, considered dissection to be pivotal in the advancement of medical knowledge and, as a result, the dead body played a central methodological role in his work.⁶² But by the late seventeenth-century, as a substantial amount of additional information regarding the human body was being discovered, it became obvious that the carnivalesque public anatomical demonstrations lent themselves neither to a more

⁶⁰ C. Benthien, 45.
J. Sawday, 30, 42, 62, 63, 65.

⁶¹ C. Benthien, 42.
M. Onfray, p. E23.
J. Sawday, 224.

⁶² D. Leder, 118.

detailed nor a particularly refined quest for knowledge about the human body.⁶³

Such seventeenth-century notions persisted into the eighteenth-century, the so-called Age of Enlightenment. Reason, rationalism, empiricism and objectification reigned supreme as the thirst for anatomical knowledge played a central role in the Enlightenment's project. A key tenet of Enlightenment philosophy was the Galenic concept of anatomy as an 'opening up' in order to see more deeply (into formerly invisible parts) in order to reveal the secrets of life. Barbara Stafford believes that it was out of the eighteenth-century's project of dissection that many of our polarizations regarding the human body arose. As she states, the "...dialectic of the invisible and the visible... is the foundation of all dichotomies".⁶⁴ And this dialectic of visible/invisible is inexorably bound to those of exterior/interior, surface/depth, body/mind, female/male, weak/strong and nature/culture.

Although the goal of dissection was no longer a religious one, religion continued to influence science and philosophy. The notion that the outer body was a reflection of a person's hidden inner spiritual qualities encouraged the penetration of the exterior to get

⁶³ By the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth century dissection shifted from public spectacle to a private, purely medical event similar to our current conception of an anatomy lab. By the beginning of the nineteenth-century the great spectacle of public punishment had disappeared altogether and the practice of anatomical dissection became fully dissociated from the judicial system

C. Benthien, 45.

M. Foucault (1977), 14.

J.Sawday, 62,63.

C. Young, 119.

⁶⁴ B.M. Stafford (1991), 9, 466.

at the interior, at the all important 'self' inside. In doing so, the anatomists hoped to achieve both metaphoric and literal knowledge of the human body.⁶⁵

In the eighteenth-century this problem of envisioning what was 'out of sight' became a critical trope of the sciences specifically, as well as society in general. Foucault theorizes that in the late eighteenth-century medical knowledge and its gaze around the human body underwent an epistemological shift from which we have not yet escaped. This shift entailed a transformation in modes of visibility. Medicine no longer simply read the visible or the appearance of the body, but, instead, discovered its secrets, finding and naming pathogens hidden inside. Clinical experience became the anatomico-clinical gaze. By the second half of the century the focus of anatomy had changed from sculptural representations of the human body to representations of its pathologies.⁶⁶

With the emergence of this anatomico-clinical model of the body, the purpose of opening the body changed. It came to involve a restructuring of medical diagnoses and treatment to deal directly with the interior of the body. Whereas the body had previously been opened in an effort to let harmful substances out, by the mid eighteenth-century it was opened to produce knowledge or repair injuries. This resulted in a new conception of the interior of the body as readable from the exterior. Now the purpose of outside of the body was to offer a wall of protection for the vulnerable inside. The outside surface became critical in protecting a person's emotional essence, their authentic 'self', their

⁶⁵ C. Benthien, 29.
B. Stafford (1991), xvii, 47, 84, 342, 343.

⁶⁶ Michel Foucault (1973), 120, 122, 131, 137, 146, 198.

'soul'. In this way, dissection supported Descartes' mind/body dialectic which, as discussed above, had already shaped scientific discourse for a century. By the end of the eighteenth-century, then, the model of the body as an intricate whole had finally crumbled. This epistemological shift of the body towards an investigation of its pathology led to the establishment of the 'normal' body in science and medicine.⁶⁷

But, paradoxically, it was out of this profound need to visualize all aspects of the invisible that the 'science' of physiognomics emerged. Physiognomy (like the related study of phrenology) was a technique of unveiling or discovering a person's temperament and character from outward appearances. It was predicated on assumptions about anatomical 'norms'. This field of study attained prominence, in part, because eighteenth-century European society's distrust of optics materialized as the magnification of microscopy and other probings into the interior of the human body failed to distinguish between its matter and its spiritual essence. Those who used optical means began to suffer from the stigma of charlatanism and soon non-optical means were utilized in an effort to solve corporeal mysteries.⁶⁸ Physiognomy was an analytical and dichotomous way of knowing the mind through the body and offered a solution to this

⁶⁷ C. Benthien, 14, 34, 35, 37, 41, 53.

⁶⁸ Psychoanalysis was another science of "unveiling". Freud later extended this concept of the all-knowing expert who identified properties of the inner self by taking on the task of exposing the aberrant properties of the mind. This approach continues today where shades of the physiognomic approach are also evident in the cultural acceptance of the notion that an alteration of appearance (for example as a result of plastic surgery or dieting) will effect a change the public's perception of a person's character or worth.

Barbara Maria Stafford. Good Looking: Essays on the Virtue of Looking, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), 135.

B. M. Stafford (1991), 84, 118, 469.

optical dilemma because it employed an 'expert' trained eye that was able to determine a person's character by thorough examination of physical traits. If the answer could not be found in the innermost recesses of the body, then, perhaps, the surface would elucidate.⁶⁹

Of course, neither the practices of dissection nor the organization of material into anatomical atlases (to be discussed below) were as 'objective' as science purported; they necessarily reflected the philosophical and sociomedical contemporaneous discourses around the body – particularly the female body and gendered attitudes in general. The eighteenth-century was the period of ongoing debate between those (such as Mary Wollstonecraft) who advocated social equality for women and others (including Rousseau) who supported their continued subordination to men.⁷⁰ It was within the context of this attempt to define the position of bourgeois women within a changing European society that the comparative anatomy project of the late eighteenth century had its origins. For example, the mid eighteenth-century saw doctors in France and Germany calling for more research into sexual differences between the male and female body.⁷¹ Whereas Vesalius (and his contemporaries) did not concern themselves with sex differences, the eighteenth century researchers turned instead to describing and defining sex differences in every tissue of the body. As discussed, differences between male and female skull size, for example, were used as evidence of women's inferior intelligence.

⁶⁹ M. Onfray, p. E 23.
B.M. Stafford (1991), 48, 84.

⁷⁰ L. Schiebinger, 67, 68.

⁷¹ L. Schiebinger, 42, 43, 48, 53, 56, 63, 64, 67.

As a result, their findings were exercised to further dictate the different roles for men and women within patriarchal Europe's social hierarchy.⁷²

B) Anatomical Atlases

It was out of the paradigm shift, where anatomy became an empirical science which dictated that women were inferior to men, that the illustrated anatomical atlas came into existence. Anatomy was introduced as a required subject in art academies in the sixteenth century, thus commencing an intimate connection between art and medicine that persisted far into the nineteenth century. The beautiful woodcuts in Vesalius's 1543 landmark anatomical atlas solidified this interconnection between art and science. Yet, according to Monique Kornell, anatomical illustration was not a decoration superimposed on anatomical science. It was, instead, the "centre of the subject".⁷³ The anatomical atlas created a corporeal interior which was homogenous and

⁷² This trend of ignoring sex differences extended back to ancient Greece. Aristotle and Galen both held that the female sex organs were a homologous but inferior form of the male's and, by implication, the woman was a lesser or defective man. Out of this belief evolved the 'one-sex' model of reproduction representative of reproduction in early modern biology (Figure 1). This one-sex model, of course, effectively ignores the autonomous role of the female uterus. Looking inside the female body seemed to reveal only men. This emphasized the hierarchical relationship between the sexes. This conception of women's bodies as similar to men's but inferior later gave way to the conception of the female body as different yet still not the equal of men's.

M. Russo, 116.

J. Sawday, 214.

⁷³ M. Cazort, 19.

Monique Kornell. "The Study of the Human Machine" in The Ingenious Machine of Nature: Four Centuries of Art and Anatomy, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1996), 73.

quantifiable, a rational and mappable space.

Initially it was the body itself which was the text for learning because studying anatomy involved the act of reading a book (the human body) penned by a divine author (God). When the anatomical atlas as a textual aide to dissection was implemented, it supplanted the body as a primary text. With the anatomical atlas, then, the study of the human body came to involve a simultaneous reading and writing of the corporeal text.⁷⁴

In addition to anatomical atlases, 3-D wax and wooden sculptures called *écorchés* were produced by artists to function as alternative anatomical teaching tools. They were not simply relegated to the anatomy lab or art studio, but introduced as precious objects to the public (especially to elite members of the public). These anatomical sculptures were representative of the eighteenth-century's manner of aesthetically beautifying unpleasant or taboo subject matter.⁷⁵

The human body was the critical link between the observational sciences and figurative painting. The study of anatomy and depictions of the human body began as two distinct disciplines but they were soon impacted by the philosophical and theological debates of the day. Initially the atlases were produced exclusively for the medical profession, where the anatomist chose the artist and directed the illustrations.⁷⁶ But by

⁷⁴ C. Waldby, 67,69.

⁷⁵ C. Benthien, 45, 47.

This trend changed in the nineteenth century when the aesthetic effect was no longer important and these anatomical sculptures ceased to be regarded as precious objects and became, instead, tools for medical training.

⁷⁶ Art assisted the biological sciences in their interpretation of intricate optical

the mid sixteenth-century atlases began to be produced explicitly for artists to study the musculo-skeletal structure of the human body. By the mid seventeenth-century books of anatomy solely for artists were regularly being published.⁷⁷ But artists and anatomists working together to produce anatomical atlases were ultimately pursuing different agendas. Artists were, indeed, recording empirical information but the choices made by these artists were tightly bound by contemporary stylistic and iconographic conventions (particularly classical iconography inspired by the Renaissance excavations of Roman sculptural monuments). Debates raged as to whether to depict anatomical figures as 'natural' or as beautiful, idealized images of the classical past.⁷⁸

The organization of the material in anatomical atlases reflected current sociomedical and philosophical discourses around the body. Such cultural values, masquerading as 'facts' of nature, prompted anatomists to direct their attention to the parts of the body which were politically significant. The male body was the standard against which the female body was measured and was found to be deficient or even deviant. This ideology permeated anatomical drawings where anatomists 'fixed' nature

information and reflected historically on the aesthetic issues surrounding it. For example, anatomical artists often "cleaned" up the messy scenes before them, making them aesthetically more pleasing and even arranging the cadavers in the manner of Classical sculptures. These anatomical images were considered to be art objects in their own right.

D. Petherbridge and L. Jordanova, 54.

⁷⁷ M. Cazort, 17, 20.
C. Waldby, 20.

⁷⁸ M. Cazort, 17, 20, 21, 40.

to fit contemporary ideals of masculinity and femininity.⁷⁹

A specifically male knowledge of the female body was not merely circulated in the anatomy theatre but also within anatomical texts. But the anatomical image could never simply reflect the human body and its anatomical order. Its conditions of production involve the dissection of particular bodies in the interest of knowledge production. As a result, these texts reproduced both the image which was in front of the anatomical artist as well as reflecting the masculinist empirical, artistic and social discourse around the female body. These texts, in turn, exerted an influence over the form that dissection itself took as they began to be used in anatomical theatres to actually direct the act of dissection itself.⁸⁰ Instead of drawing an anatomical map from an observation of the dissected cadaver in order to gain information, the anatomical map itself (the atlas) began to drive the dissection process.

In the eighteenth-century, medical writers placed a great emphasis on the aesthetic beauty of the human body, in particular the natural beauty of the female body. So too were eighteenth-century anatomists dedicated to the discovery of ideal female beauty.⁸¹ The female models in anatomical illustrations were distinct from their male counterparts. Although the gestures and poses of the dissected bodies of both sexes were

⁷⁹ L. Schiebinger, 62, 63.

⁸⁰ J. Sawday, 2.
C. Waldby, 55.

⁸¹ In medical history virtually no female *écorché* figures were produced. Nor are there many partially skinned female bodies and, therefore, few demonstrations of the human nervous, lymphatic or venous systems on female cadavers.
C. Benthien, 55.

portrayed as living beings as was the contemporary convention, male bodies were routinely depicted upright and in motion (figure 2) while female cadavers were more often displayed posing passively.⁸² According to Jordanova, these depictions of recumbent females seem to convey, for the first time, the sexual potential of medical anatomy.⁸³

These texts also portrayed female cadavers in a manner which highlighted woman's natural beauty by positioning her nude in a pastoral setting, highlighting the female's association with nature. The femininity of the female corpse was often exaggerated, in turn, reinforcing sexual stereotyping under the guise of empirical enquiry. The female figures in anatomy texts were often long haired, in full makeup or adorned with jewellery. Reminiscent of classical sculpture, their skin was often milky white, devoid of blemishes and hair. Often they were presented in a *pudica* position of modesty or otherwise modestly draped which, paradoxically, often drew attention to the very part it intended to obscure (figure 3). Representations, then, of the female body consisted simultaneously of lascivious and modest displays of the female body.⁸⁴ The "deviant" and sexual properties of female nature were uncovered and made comprehensible through the scrutiny of the female body by empirical science.

⁸² M. Cazort, 26, 27, 40.

⁸³ L. Jordanova (1999), 164, 165.

⁸⁴ C. Benthien, 48.
M. Cazort, 40.
L. Jordanova, 164.

Indelibly linked to conceptions of women's sexuality and motherhood is the female uterus. Whereas different physiological systems were depicted in illustrations of the dissected male body, depictions of the physiological systems of the female body consisted almost exclusively of her reproductive system (figure 4).⁸⁵ Since ancient Greece, the womb was believed to be connected to the female brain. The womb, then, was considered to be the source of life as well as the source of female irrationality.⁸⁶ Because a woman was equated with her uterus, it was believed that the dissection of the womb would uncover secrets of the creation of life that resided there as well as contain female sexuality and irrationality.⁸⁷

The female body, then, was both fetishistically adored while, at the same time, violently suppressed.⁸⁸ These depictions were not unlike those of renderings of the female body in the artistic canon. This indicates just how all encompassing the

⁸⁵ Even now, anatomical atlases frequently depict the female body only to demonstrate the female reproductive system. The majority of the other bodily systems are illustrated by way of a male cadaver. See figure 5 from Candent Anatomy Products Catalogue (2003).

⁸⁶ The term "hysteria" which comes from the Greek word for womb arose out of this conviction that the womb and the brain were directly connected. This label has historically been applied to women who did not fit the proper definition of "womanliness" i.e. those who fought for equality with men, were educated, displayed evidence of their sexuality etc. Around 1895 Sigmund Freud and J.M. Charcot determined that hysteria was not a physical disorder of the womb but one which was psychological in nature. Although this notion extricated the womb as the cause of hysteria, it did not impact on the link between hysteria and "unwomanly" behaviour. L. Tickner, 194, 196.

⁸⁷ D.Petherbridge and L. Jordanova, 104.

⁸⁸ J. Sawday, 222.

patriarchal discourse surrounding the female body was in early modern society and how interrelated the discourses of art and science were (and still are). It is the continuation of this ideology, sown centuries ago but ingrained in representations of the female body in contemporary medicine, art and popular culture, which has, as discussed in the following chapters, galvanized feminist writers and artists to attempt to subvert and (re)construct these images.

CHAPTER TWO:
**FEMINIST THEORY AND THE BODY: LUCE IRIGARAY, JULIA KRISTEVA
AND ELIZABETH GROSZ**

“She is beyond all pairs of opposites...”⁸⁹

I Introduction to Feminist Theory

In the preceding chapter it was established that the legacy of Descartes and the discipline of anatomy were instrumental in generating a phallogocentric discourse which has positioned the mind as superior to the body. Its association of men with the mind (and culture) and women with the body (and nature) has inscribed an enduring status of inferiority on women and their bodies. The objectification of women and their bodies resulting from the interdependent masculinist gazes of both the Western European artistic tradition and the anatomico-clinical model of anatomy have operated concomitantly to deny women subjecthood and disseminate a specifically male knowledge about the female body. The question to be posed, then, is whether it is possible to imagine a female body somehow removed from both the legacy of Descartes' mind/body dualism (and its many corollary binaries) and the anatomico-clinical model's

⁸⁹ Luce Irigaray. Speculum Of the Other Woman, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 230.

conception of the body as a closed entity. This is the project that has been set by many late twentieth century feminist theorists and artists. They reject the notion that the mind and body are two distinct entities (or two attributes in a single subject) whereby the mind is associated with the masculine and the body with the feminine. Instead they assert the need for the female body to be understood through a range of disparate discourses (including the social, cultural, and artistic), not simply limited to either the “objective” biological modes of explanation or the disavowal of all traces of corporeality. This chapter addresses the feminist writings (particularly those of Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Elizabeth Grosz) that are dedicated to (re)reading the female body against the grain of hegemonic masculinist discourse and refuting the binaries inherent to this phallogocentric discourse.

Recent feminists have rejected and/or reworked the metatheories of many philosophical theories of the body – particularly those of Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault – which are dedicated to the body as it is bound up in systems of signification or inscription. Lacanian psychoanalysis maintains patriarchal law and power relations between the sexes through the use of exclusionary practices and a failure to historicize sexual difference.⁹⁰ Foucault historicizes power relations between the sexes by calling for their examination within patriarchal discourse which is inscribed on our bodies. However he does not address the situation of women’s bodies specifically and assumes

⁹⁰ Judith Butler. Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”, (New York: Routledge, 1993), 327-330.

the body is *a priori* to discourse when, in fact, it is fully sedimented with discourse.⁹¹

In the last two decades of the twentieth century Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva (along with Hélène Cixous⁹²) have exerted considerable influence over the development of both feminist theoretical and artistic investigations of the female body.

Simultaneously, they offer compelling alternatives to Lacian and Foucauldian readings of the body. Although their theories on female subjectivity differ, they share a common goal. Each has proposed a way for feminists to explore how the feminine exceeds its material and discursive limits. They offer us re-readings and/or refusal of phallogocentric discourse in an effort to question patriarchal assumptions and provide alternatives to the dominance of the phallus and modernism's oppositional binaries which position women and their bodies as inferior to men.

Both Irigaray and Kristeva attempt to establish a female identity, language and writing that is capable of subverting and/or deconstructing the symbolic order (that space where psychoanalysis proposes that patriarchal authority prevails and maternal desire is repressed)⁹³ and, in doing so, they remind us of the constructedness of female identity.

⁹¹ J. Butler 29, 30.
E. Grosz, 156.

⁹² Hélène Cixous is arguably as influential as Irigaray and Kristeva, but for the purposes of this paper it is the theories of the latter two which have been selected for consideration. This will become clear later in the thesis in a discussion of the female interior as an artistic strategy to challenge binaries of sexual difference.

⁹³ For Lacan, the symbolic order is the entry of the child into language, into culture. It is the moment when the child becomes a subject. For feminists, the symbolic order is equated with patriarchy and, so, they chose to look to the pre-symbolic imaginary as the site to challenge patriarchy.

Both believe that language defines us as speaking beings and that, because all language is sexually differentiated, women need new forms of language which are specific to them. While Irigaray is confident that it is sexual difference to which we must turn as the most effective strategy for challenging phallogocentrism in language, Kristeva's political aim is to neutralize or minimize gender differences and give them new meaning.

Irigaray and Kristeva, like many feminists, take issue with phallogocentric philosophy's⁹⁴ privileging of the phallus and the male body citing its negligence in addressing the situation of women or female sexual specificity. But these same writings provide them with a useful point of departure for a discussion of female subjectivity and a disengagement of the female body from the constraints of biological determinism and the logic of linguistic binaries. Although both Irigaray's and Kristeva's theories have been endlessly critiqued by feminists worldwide, each provides feminism with theoretical elements which are worth extrapolating in their investigation of issues surrounding female subjectivity, female desire and the reversal of the mind/body dichotomy.

Elizabeth Grosz's feminism is informed by the writings of Irigaray and Kristeva. She incorporates their key ideas (along with many other philosophical writers, feminist and otherwise) into her theory of the *lived* (female) body. Like Irigaray and Kristeva, Grosz categorically rejects the mind/body dialectic and all its corollaries (especially that of mind/body, inside/outside). For her, the lived body exists as a threshold between

⁹⁴ In particular the writings of Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault.

nature and culture, between body and mind and, as such, is a body which resists dualism. The writings will provide a basis for my reading of recent feminist art in the following chapters and in a brief synopsis here.

II Luce Irigaray and Sexual Difference:

A) Irigaray and Psychoanalysis

Luce Irigaray's project is not engaged in how the female body has been constructed as feminine or how women have been associated with the material and men with the intellectual as much as it is with demonstrating that the feminine is actually excluded – excluded from phallogocentric discourses, specifically that of psychoanalysis. Irigaray shares psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's emphasis on the importance of language in the construction of subjectivity and the belief that all language is sexually differentiated.⁹⁵ But apart from their shared linguistic roots, her work diverges considerably from that of Lacan's. Irigaray takes great issue with the androcentric nature of Lacan's (and Freud's) model of subjectivity where the male self is the norm against which the female is positioned and where subjectivity is masculine in which Lacan pronounces, "Nothing distinguishes woman as a sexed being other than her

⁹⁵ Jacques Lacan. "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis", Report to the Rome Congress, 1953, in Jacques Lacan Écrits: A Selection, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 65.

sexual organ."⁹⁶

Irigaray refuses this premise of a universal patriarchy, a subjectivity which is always constructed as masculine. Within Lacanian psychoanalysis, she theorizes, the female subject is not a discursive given, but founded on the principle of exclusion, her desire predicated on lack. Lacan posits the phallus as the signifier of the desire of the Other, the mother.⁹⁷ Women do not possess the (imaginary) phallus and, because the desire of the mother *is* the phallus, there is no place for female desire in Lacan's discourse. "There is no Other of the Other"⁹⁸, states Lacan, "...*woman* does not exist, woman is *not whole*."⁹⁹ It is obvious to Irigaray, then, that female desire can not find form in Lacanian discourse. By this lack, woman is "...outside [a masculine] system of representation...a hole in men's signifying economy."¹⁰⁰ She must find the signifier of her own desire in the body of the father. This fact, he believes, is what sustains the so-

⁹⁶ Jacques Lacan. On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge BookXX 1972-1973, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), 7.

⁹⁷ Man's desire finds form through his desire of the Other. This Other (the mother) does not possess the phallus. But man desires the phallus, so the phallus is where the desire for the Other meets the (castration) threat of lacking it. Desire is the reply to the lack

Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious" at "La dialectique" Conference, 1960, in Écrits: A Selection, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 296, 311.

Jacques Lacan. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1973), 215.

⁹⁸ J. Lacan (1960), 311.

⁹⁹ Emphasis in the original.
J. Lacan (1998), 7

¹⁰⁰ L. Irigaray (1985), 50.

called "Law of the Father".¹⁰¹ And it is this fact, Irigaray maintains, which allows no speaking or viewing position for women within psychoanalytic discourse.¹⁰²

Irigaray rejects Lacan's notion that women define themselves in terms of a lack of the (symbolic) phallus. She contests both the primacy of the phallus as the sole sign of difference and the notion that this lack of the phallus positions the female subject as the Other to a privileged male subject.¹⁰³ When positioned as such, a woman and her body bear the projection of male not female desire. Irigaray suggests that it is feminine desire which is capable of disrupting this symbolic order, the so-called "Law of the Father", which represses feminine desire.¹⁰⁴

According to Irigaray, it is against this otherness that male identity and Western

¹⁰¹ Jacques Lacan. "The Signification of the Phallus" lecture at the Max-Planck Institute, 1958 in Écrits: A Selection, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 288-290.

Lacan (1960), 3 03.

Lacan (1975), 73.

¹⁰² Luce Irigaray. An Ethics of Sexual Difference, (London: Athlone Press, 1993), 62-63.

L. Irigaray (1999), 88, 90.

¹⁰³ L. Irigaray (1993), 62,63.

As such, Judith Butler contends, for Irigaray, it makes no sense to refer to a female subject or a female sexuality because the subject is already always masculine.

Judith Butler. "Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytic Discourse" in Feminism/Postmodernism, Linda Nicholson (ed.), (New York: Routledge, 1990), 326.

¹⁰⁴ Lacan states that men desire women even though they threaten their phallic function through castration (but at the same time he does admit that there also exists phallic women). He also states that there is no such thing as 'Woman' because she is not whole. 'Woman' as a signifier, then, cannot signify anything and therefore we cannot talk about 'Woman'.

Jacques Lacan (1998), 71, 71, 73.

ideology is anchored. Women, she believes, have been dominated by the laws of psychoanalytic language.¹⁰⁵ As a result, a hierarchical relationship between male and female has been established wherein the (passive) feminine is subordinated to the (active) masculine. This subordination, in turn, has denied women's inherent differences and suppressed feminine sexuality.¹⁰⁶ Because Lacan and psychoanalytical theory does not recognize female identity as a developmental norm (or ideal), she believes it is impossible to think identity in female terms within its framework. "We can assume," she states, "that any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the 'masculine' „¹⁰⁷

Because Irigaray sees no other position for women within the Lacanian model, she advocates a deconstruction of phallogocentrism. This is accomplished by opening up the psychoanalytic model so that "[woman] may penetrate herself once more...the distinction between inside/outside transgressed."¹⁰⁸ Like Jacques Derrida, Irigaray believes that what is excluded from phallogocentric ideology is also produced *within* it;

¹⁰⁵ L. Irigaray (1993), 5, 6.
L. Irigaray(1985), 230.

The notion that female identity is constructed against otherness is not intrinsic to the psyche of Western patriarchal society but became the dominant ideology towards the end of the eighteenth century.

Christine Battersby. "Just Jamming: Irigaray, Painting and Psychoanalysis", in New Feminist Art Criticism: Critical Strategies, Katy Deepwell (ed.), (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 1995, 136.

¹⁰⁶ L. Irigaray (1980) 88, 90.

¹⁰⁷ L. Irigaray (1985), 133.

¹⁰⁸ L. Irigaray (1985), 192.

what is excluded from the binary is also produced by it in the process of exclusion.¹⁰⁹ In other words, the feminine that is outside or excluded from the system is also *internal* to that system. It, therefore, emerges as a tension, an incoherence, a slippage, a disruption, and even a threat to the patriarchal symbolic order which represses female desire and subjectivity. Irigaray believes that beneath the surface of Western psychoanalytical masculinist discourse (with its conception of the male and his body as the 'norm'), lies a domain of textual production which can be designated as "feminine" that erupts (and, hence, disrupts) from time to time. So, it is from within this patriarchal system, at the level of the pre-symbolic that Irigaray believes women must challenge patriarchal language and open up a new space for them and their bodies.

Irigaray insists that this objective can only be accomplished by writing the suppressed physicality and desire of the female body asserting that "...if we don't find our body's language, it will have too few gestures to accompany our story."¹¹⁰ Through this *écriture féminine*, she explores a female sexual identity founded on the specificity of the

¹⁰⁹ J. Butler (1993), 39.

Derrida argues that all systems of thought are built upon a binary pattern where places concepts in opposition where one concept is privileged over the other. His concept of *différance* (that which must be differed-deferred so that we can posit ourselves) resists this dialectic and reasserts the arbitrary nature of meaning in language. His denial of ultimate meaning opens up discursive spaces and may be used to challenge the system of binary opposition which situates the male as the standard against which truth and value are measured. This is 'deconstruction'.

Jacques Derrida (1982), 5-11.

Gayatri Spivak, A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 424-426.

¹¹⁰ L. Irigaray (1980), 88,89.

female body and constructs a new signification for the female body around the anatomical differences of male and female.¹¹¹ Irigaray doesn't want to insert women into Lacan's discourse of lack nor reverse it by turning the feminine into sexual difference. She is looking, instead, for difference *within* difference.¹¹² Although their approaches differ they share in common a concern with the interiors.

...Sexual difference is one of the major philosophical issues, if not *the* issue of our age. [It]...could be our 'salvation' if we thought it through.¹¹³

But in her call for sexual difference, Irigaray addresses the body as the site where sexual difference plays itself out; she is not interested in the female body as sexually different from the male's.

Irigaray challenges the psychoanalytic legacy of Freud and Lacan by writing the

¹¹¹ *Écriture féminine* is the term coined by Cixous but used more generally to describe the call by contemporary French feminists such as Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva for a critical rewriting of the feminine through the female body, to develop a language and aesthetics based on the female body. Cixous argues that most women speak from a "masculine" position which is "marked" within a Symbolic order that is structured through binary opposites where the feminine is always repressed. Women, then, must speak literally and metaphorically from their bodies in order to produce a "feminine" writing. With this form of writing, language speaks through the female body, her words pass through it. Such feminine writing will serve as a rupture, a deconstruction, of the masculinist linguistic structure and women will, in this way, become active subjects of language.

H. Cixous in Writing Differences: Readings from the Seminar of Hélène Cixous, Susan Sellers (ed.), (London: Open University Press, 1988).

<www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/cixous.html> February 6, 2004.

¹¹² Naomi Schor. Bad Objects: Essays Popular and Unpopular, Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, 53.

¹¹³ L. Irigaray (1993), 5.

sexual difference of the female body. The space for sexual difference, she concludes, has never before existed in psychoanalytical models of feminine sexuality. Sexual differences in psychoanalysis have been disregarded, yet difference is obviously already in operation in psychoanalytic discourse. It has not had a chance to develop because the aforementioned – and implicitly hierarchical – binaries of masculine/feminine, phallus/no phallus (and the related binaries of mind/body and inside/outside) exclude or diminish the feminine.¹¹⁴

Irigaray advocates a return to the body as the solution to (re)read the feminine within phallogocentric language systems. She offers a way to explore female subjectivity outside patriarchal parameters. By writing the female body's suppressed physicality and desire, by speaking the corporeal, she gives a voice to the excluded: "...If we don't find our body's language," she cautions, "it will have too few gestures to accompany our story."¹¹⁵

B) Irigaray and Corporeal Inscription

Irigaray's strategy of writing the sexual difference of the female body shares some common ground with the theories of Michel Foucault while simultaneously problematizing his total rejection of psychoanalysis and his unwillingness to address the

¹¹⁴ L. Irigaray (1993), 14.
L. Irigaray (1985), 20, 21, 24, 26.
L. Irigaray (1985), 142.

¹¹⁵ L. Irigaray (1980), 88.

female body explicitly, as noted above. Although a certain amount of tension exists between their respective writings on the body, they share some commonalities in ideals.

Foucault calls for a rejection of psychoanalysis's notion that a change in ideology is required to alter power relations significantly.¹¹⁶ He opts, instead, to examine power relations (social, political, economic, empirical, judicial) within hegemony and to show how this knowledge is inscribed onto and disciplines our bodies.¹¹⁷ This power, he asserts, is non-authoritarian and non-conspiratorial, yet produces and normalizes prevailing power relations of domination and subordination. It is not in the possession of individuals or groups, but is a network of non-centralized forces. This power (including power relations between the sexes) is also historical.¹¹⁸ Domination of women and other marginalized groups, then, is not imposed from above but exercised through multiple processes of regulation (including self-regulation) and re-iteration of norms which reflects the societal concerns of a particular culture at a particular time in history.

For Foucault, these power relations are unstable and constantly in flux; as a result, they are frequently disrupted. The instability in power relations, therefore, creates

¹¹⁶ Michel Foucault. Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977 Colin Gordon (ed.), (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 131, 133.

¹¹⁷ Foucault argued that the rise of political liberty in the eighteenth century was accompanied by a counter-movement of unprecedented discipline against the body. This discipline produced subjected and 'practised' bodies which he termed 'docile bodies'. Corporeal size, contours, gestures, appearances etc. are the consequences of these disciplinary practices.

M. Foucault (1979), 136-38.

¹¹⁸ M. Foucault (1979), 190.

spaces or cracks where resistance erupts periodically. Because one is never outside power, it can operate within the very constitution of the physical body.¹¹⁹ And since the search for truth and knowledge is not outside of power relations, systems of power sustain those discourses inscribed onto the female body – including medico-scientific discourses. The female body, then, represents a key site where resistance to patriarchal hegemony may be effectively cultivated by Irigaray (and by other feminist writers and artists) to disrupt the phallogocentric notion of a coherent feminine identity.

Although Foucault's theory of knowledge and power can be applied to the situation of women and their bodies, Foucault's writings are not particularly sensitive to feminist cause(s) or gender issues. For example, he only infrequently addresses the specific situation of women and their bodies.¹²⁰ His model leaves no room for the feminine or the female desire of Irigaray's search. Nonetheless, Foucault does reject the view that the body and (patriarchal) power systems are ahistorical. Within an individual discourse (including those circulating around the body), Foucault endeavours to discover who is doing the speaking in addition to the positions and viewpoint from which they speak as well as how they discursively support the power relations which take form in

¹¹⁹ M. Foucault (1980), 131, 141, 142, 170, 171, 186, 217.

¹²⁰ Foucault has been taken to task by feminists for not addressing women and their bodies more specifically. For example, Elizabeth Grosz contends that because of the patriarchal society in which we live, a neutral body can "...only be unambiguously filled in by the male body and men's pleasures."

E. Grosz, 156.

women's bodies.¹²¹ It is in these strategies of exposing and thereby resisting hegemonic power that Foucault's ideas are useful to Irigaray and her theory of the feminine corporeal.

Like Foucault, Irigaray is less interested in the construction of sexuality than in the conditions in which that construction originates. In other words, for Irigaray, the female body *is* historical. It is a political, cultural and social entity and, therefore, a crucial site for feminist political struggle. Writing the sexual difference across it exposes, examines and challenges patriarchal power relations projected onto the female body.¹²² However, she diverges from Foucault in that she is interested, vis à vis sexual difference, in the *lived body* – that is to say, in how the female body is represented and how it is *used* in specific ways in our culture. Like Foucault, she suggests that this lived body is not a biological given or an acultural object shaped by the mind as it is in psychoanalysis. Yet, this lived body is also not a raw product of nature merely polished by culture. It is not a blank page, a neutral medium for the inscription of a text. Instead it is interwoven with systems of meaning and representation. The female body, then, for Irigaray is an object of systems of socio-cultural inscription, yet it is not simply marked as signified but is an active signifier in its own right. While Foucault deems the subject

¹²¹ M. Foucault (1990), 11, 12, 97.

¹²² Teresa de Laurentis, though, warns that we must be careful in our usage of sexual difference because if we are not careful, gender difference can actually homogenize women's bodies in the service of differentiation thereby erasing differences of class, race, and sexuality. She contends that it also does not interrogate the processes of normalization.

T. de Laurentis in Mary Russo. The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 12.

irrelevant to the construction of power, it is the subject which is key in Irigaray's writing as it is in psychoanalysis.¹²³

C) Irigaray and *Écriture Féminine* as a Corporeal Strategy

Irigaray identifies the materiality of the body as *the* site for writing the feminine corporeal *within* Lacan's phallogocentric system.¹²⁴ Irigaray's *écriture féminine* entails a parodic rewriting, a miming of the works of Lacan (and Freud). With this strategy, she attempts to subvert the binaries which position the female body and identity as static and ahistorical and, in the process, reformulate "woman" in language. By miming textual passages of psychoanalysis she hopes to "turn everything upside down, *inside out*, back to front and demonstrate that the feminine is already *inside* of the discourse; in this way she penetrates, occupies and reworks patriarchal language."¹²⁵ Irigaray is not concerned

¹²³ Joan Copjec. Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1994), 18.

¹²⁴ This is where Irigaray differs from Cixous. Both Irigaray and Cixous believe that a woman must speak through her body in order to deconstruct gender binaries, to subvert the Symbolic wherein the feminine is not properly articulated. But Cixous believes there is no place for the feminine within masculinist philosophy/language, that *écriture féminine* takes place "...somewhere other than in the territories subordinated to philosophical-theoretical domination" because only people in the position of mastery can have access to the "master's discourse". Functioning "'within' man's discourse" annihilates a woman's "signifying energy" and stifles her feminine voice. Her disruption of the system, of language structure, is enacted from outside of discourse, not from within as it is in Irigaray's theory.

Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément. Newly Born Woman, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 67, 92, 95, 96, 139.

¹²⁵ J. Butler (1993), 45.
L. Irigaray (1980), 84-87, 90.

with reversing ideology (as are social constructivists like Kristeva and Lacan) but with deconstructing terms of the binary difference which locates the female body as absent in culture. Her playful repetition makes the *invisible* operation of the feminine in language *visible*.

Irigaray believes that the objectification of women by men prevents self love. Women are positioned outside patriarchal discourse and this outside position prevents them from seeing themselves. So, women must begin to love the invisible inside of them, to love themselves from within.¹²⁶ She considers Lacan's concept of the mirror, which occupies a central place in psychoanalytical theory, to be tied to this objectification of the female body. Lacan posits the mirror stage as a pivotal moment in the process of subjectivity. He theorizes that it is at this stage in infancy when the infant subject assumes an image, where it identifies with its image and recognizes that *he* is an object.¹²⁷ It is also during the mirror stage when the ego becomes dependant on external objects, on an other; the image the subject perceives is an ideal image, an "Ideal-I", towards which the subject will incessantly strive throughout their life. The end of the mirror stage is the moment when all knowledge of the subject becomes mediated through the desire of the other, when the "Ideal-I" becomes the other of the subject. The subject then undertakes to reconstruct this ideal likeness and, in the process, finds fault

Emphasis is mine.

¹²⁶ L. Irigaray (1993), 18, 19, 69, 70, 109, 110, 111.

¹²⁷ Emphasis is mine.

with and does not recognize itself. It is, then, what it doesn't see that founds the gaze.¹²⁸

Lacan's conclusion, then, is that the mirror stage is the root of all subsequent identifications and that it sets up the subject as a desiring being. For Irigaray, though, Lacan's model of the mirror cannot be a reflection of the female self. What a woman sees when she looks at her image in the mirror is a reflection of the male gaze written on her body; she sees herself through male eyes and compares herself to the idealized images of women pervasive in phallogocentric culture. In this sense, Irigaray concurs with Foucault in his contention that the gaze is always *on* the subject by the other.¹²⁹ Yet she differs from him in that she strives to create a gaze specific to and *by* the (female) subject. Irigaray is a vocal critic of the primacy of vision generally because she considers the visual to be the key domain where the feminine lack is located. She argues that in phallogocentric discourses surrounding the female body the look has been privileged over the other senses, most notably touch (of the vaginal lips and of autoerotic stimulation). By refusing the (male) gaze (the eye) and submitting, instead, to the touch (a form of perception which occurs prior to the development of the dichotomy of active/passive and is not necessarily situated in the visible), Irigaray contends, the soul can escape and the distinction between inside and outside can be transgressed¹³⁰

¹²⁸ J. Copjec, 34, 35, 37, 38.

Jacques Lacan. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" at 16th International Congress of Psychoanalysis (1949) in Écrits: A Selection, (New York: W.W. Norton), 1977, 2, 3, 4, 5.

¹²⁹ J. Copjec, 36.

¹³⁰ L. Irigaray (1993), 164.
L. Irigaray (1980), 89,90.

Various artists have taken up Irigaray's rejection of the look. Although these works will be discussed at length in the next chapter, it is worth briefly introducing how Irigaray's work takes form in art. Canadian artist Pam Hall's 1995 large scale installation Female Action Verbs: Fragments From a Reconstructed Gynaeopedia (figure 6), for example, calls for a privileging of the other senses (in particular touch) in anatomico-medicine and art. Juxtaposed next to a hand print (the organ of touch of the artist) is text (more evidence of the touch of the female artist) which highlights verbs of touching ("to feel", "to touch") and other senses ("to smell", "to taste"). These words imply that the female is not simply material or natural entity but an intellectual and creative force. Although the female body in this work is, in part, a passive recipient ("to be touched"), most of the text (as the title of the work suggests), positions the female body in the active portion of the active/passive binary which Irigaray feels is the root of the separation of the soul from nature.¹³¹ Through her occupation of the active portion possesses a voice and may use it to contest her objectification and to assert her status as a speaking subject.

Yet, Irigaray concedes that some manner of mirror may be appropriate for reflecting the female image. But her model of the mirror is not the typical convex mirror of Lacan's theory which reflects only the male gaze. Her metaphorical choice of mirror

L. Irigaray (1985), 192, 193.

While Irigaray privileges touch, Cixous, on the other hand, feels that privileging the voice is needed to break the silence of the (feminine) other, to reclaim female sexuality. H. Cixous and C. Clément, 92.

¹³¹ L. Irigaray (1985), 20.

is the speculum because not only does its concave surface reflect a different, multifaceted view of a woman and her body, but it can penetrate the interior. The speculum is a "living mirror" which "... can be 'interiorized', *put inside*."¹³² This form of mirror, contends Irigaray, reunites the 'soul' and 'nature'.¹³³ In doing so, it renounces objectification of the female body and, instead, fosters female subjectivity. Again, this theoretical model has been taken up by artists. Diana Thorneycroft's 1997 Untitled (Speculum) (figure 18), a photograph of a blindfolded woman with a speculum forced down her throat, for example, makes reference to Irigaray's new mirror. She takes the speculum as an instrument of patriarchal medicine's control over the female body and (re)frames it as an instrument which makes possible the release of female dissatisfaction with this control creating a space for female subjectivity to exist.

Irigaray's material female body is a sexual body characterized by fluidity and plurality. The idea of an open passage is integral to her conception of the feminine. A phenomenon that remains in the *interior*, she maintains "remains on the edge of speech".¹³⁴ The interior of the female body must communicate with the exterior, so that the female subject communicates with the female object, the body communicates with the mind. This communication, then, facilitates the disruption of the binaries entrenched in modern patriarchal society. But within language, the feminine must have a conduit to

¹³² Emphasis in the original.
L. Irigaray (1985), 95, 136, 143, 144, 197.

¹³³ L. Irigaray (1985), 197.

¹³⁴ L. Irigaray (1993), 161.

the outside in order to disrupt it.

In contrast to the closed volume of the female body in modernism and in masculine fantasy, she envisions the female body as an open container with lips. As such, woman is "...indefinite, infinite...continually becoming something else."¹³⁵ These lips represent the potential passage between inside and outside of the body and, because the mind bears the mark of the body, it is a way into or out of both the female body and the self. The touching of the genital lips mimics the touching of the lips which speak, which participate in language. So, writing a female sexuality through the lips is a way to participate in language, a way for the female body to speak.

Irigaray identifies the associated vaginal mucous (experienced from within) as the physical link between the inside and outside, the material and the spiritual.¹³⁶ It provides a "...way into or out of the self and the other..."¹³⁷ As such, writing the lips and mucous is a metaphorical means of articulating feminine self love, desire and subjectivity, the unrepresentable in prevailing (patriarchal) philosophical models of the feminine. This intimate connection between the inside and the outside, the self and the

¹³⁵ L. Irigaray (1985), 229.
L. Irigaray (1980), 85, 86.

¹³⁶ Irigaray claims that female sexuality has been represented as viscous and disgusting because of the unrepresentability of fluids within prevailing philosophical models of the feminine and the corporeal.

Luce Irigaray (1993), 109-111.

These bodily fluids also possess elements of the abject (a subject which will be discussed in detail later in this thesis) although Irigaray does not name them specifically as abject.

¹³⁷ L. Irigaray (1993), 111.

other, challenges the mind/body dialectic as a means of disrupting phallogocentric language systems.

Irigaray is not without her critics. They charge that because that her *écriture féminine* is a language which women alone may speak, it generates a feminist exclusion similar to the masculinist one she is critiquing. A theory based solely in the materiality of the body, they contend, cannot entertain the notion that the female body is a cultural construct. Monique Wittig denounces her work as essentialist.¹³⁸ And Rosemary Betterton believes Irigaray's theory demonstrates that the feminine is already inscribed within modernist discourse as a fixed economy of sexual difference in which an artist's work is always expected to reveal her sex.¹³⁹ As a result, these critics suggest that it does not adequately address questions of power relations and, so, cannot provide feminists with a strategy for achieving social change.¹⁴⁰

But it may be a mistake to take Irigaray too literally; her objection to Lacan may be more metaphorical than literal. In her writing she is not referring to the female body in biological terms, but only how it is produced and made meaningful by language – writing the body as an active subject of discourse can effect a change in the structure of language. Irigaray does, in fact, make a distinction between the biological body and the imaginary body and cautions against unifying the feminine identity by stating that her

¹³⁸ N. Schor, 22.

¹³⁹ Rosemary Betterton. An Intimate Distance: Women Artists and the Body, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 91.

¹⁴⁰ R. Betterton, 17.

écriture féminine

...does not mean a regressive recourse to anatomy or to a concept of nature nor recall a genital order...Rather it means to open up the autological and tautological circles of systems of representation and their discourse so that women may speak (of) their sex [*parler leur sexe*].¹⁴¹

Naomi Schor maintains that Irigaray is less concerned with theorizing feminine specificity than with refuting the universal subject.¹⁴² Irigaray does not wish to demonstrate how the female body has been figured as feminine but, instead, to deconstruct this feminine identity. Like Derrida, Irigaray accepts that what is excluded from the binary is also produced by it in the mode of exclusion and has no independent existence as an absolute outside. A constitutive outside, though, is composed of a set of exclusions that are nevertheless *internal* to that system and which erupt to threaten it.¹⁴³ In other words, although the feminine is excluded in a binary opposition and can never be figured within philosophy, it is from this same system of exclusion that a solution might be realized.

Another criticism levelled at Irigaray is that her opposition to Lacan is merely a reinsertion of women's bodies into cultural discourse.¹⁴⁴ The question then becomes whether or not this approach can be successful in occupying the patriarchal voice rather

¹⁴¹ L. Irigaray in R. Betterton, 15, 16.

¹⁴² N. Schor, 51.

¹⁴³ J. Butler (1993), 39.

¹⁴⁴ J. Butler (1993), 37, 47.

than simply re-inscribing it. Judith Butler and Naomi Schor contend that Irigaray's textual practice is, in fact, not grounded in a rival ontology but actually penetrates, occupies and redeploys the paternal language itself, that it actually deconstructs masculinist discourse.¹⁴⁵

Irigaray's rejection of the dominance of vision in psychoanalytical theory makes it potentially challenging to apply this *écriture féminine* directly applied to *visual art* practice.¹⁴⁶ Speaking as a woman and looking as a woman are distinctly different practices.¹⁴⁷ While both speaking and looking as a woman offer a commentary on the status of the feminine in a patriarchal world, an additional layer of ideology operates within the act of looking as a woman – a woman looks as a woman, but her feminine gaze is tempered by the omni-present masculine gaze which positions her and her body in relation to an idealized sexual object. This fact does not require that women artists reject Irigaray and her theories outright, just that they carefully consider the manner in which they utilize them. Postmodernist artistic strategies, such as irony, pastiche and self-reflexivity may offer a solution to this dialectic between looking and speaking.

¹⁴⁵ J. Butler (1993), 45.
N. Schor, 53, 54.

¹⁴⁶ The term 'visual art' within contemporary art practice is a bit of a misnomer as contemporary art often incorporates sound, performance, touch, text, etc.

¹⁴⁷ R. Betterton, 94.

III Julia Kristeva and the Abject:

While Irigaray advances the critical possibilities of sexual difference, Julia Kristeva suggests that writing the abject has the potential to liberate the feminine from phallogocentric psychoanalysis. Her account of transgression and abjection in the book Powers of Horror (1982), is a compelling synthesis of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the female grotesque, Mary Douglas' theory of the corporeal inscription of purity and pollution, and Jacques Lacan's theory of subjectivity. She approaches the theories of Bakhtin and Douglas from a Lacanian psychoanalytical perspective integrating the political and social potential of transgression with linguistic norms and codes. Like Irigaray, Kristeva's writing provides a rich theoretical grounding for contemporary feminist art.

A) Lacan and Subjectivity:

Kristeva addresses Lacan's concepts of the symbolic and the imaginary in an effort to develop a theory of subjectivity for women. Her concern has been primarily with the issue of sexual differentiation in language and how it affects the construction of the individual in culture. Lacan identifies the symbolic order as the place where the subject first forms its identity and where repression of desire of the mother, the feminine, occurs. Kristeva argues that the place of sexual difference is in the pre-symbolic order (the time when mother and child bond before the patriarchal symbolic order is firmly

established) not the symbolic order. She terms this pre-symbolic space 'the semiotic.'¹⁴⁸

Kristeva's semiotic is a place of instinctual drives within the body which prepares the subject for entrance into the symbolic through language. The symbolic is omnipresent, even in the semiotic. Kristeva, therefore, contends that although the symbolic functions to repress the semiotic, the feminine, the maternal drive, because the semiotic is in dialectical conflict with the symbolic, it nonetheless erupts into language.¹⁴⁹ The semiotic, then, is dynamic and disruptive, a space of fluidity and *interiority*.

Accordingly, it is also within this space of interiority that writing the feminine can occur.¹⁵⁰

In concluding that the feminine in language is repressed, Kristeva does not identify "feminine" with the biological woman nor "masculine" with biological man. She believes instead that it is possible for both men and women to possess elements of the feminine (and the masculine). She argues that the feminine is less visible and undervalued. Kristeva believes that a (re)valuation of the feminine is required to free it from phallogocentric order at the level of language.¹⁵¹ Like Irigaray, Kristeva argues that

¹⁴⁸ Julia Kristeva. Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 53.

¹⁴⁹ J. Kristeva (1982), 72.
J. Kristeva (1980), 120.

¹⁵⁰ Sarah Gamble. The Icon Critical Dictionary of feminism and Postfeminism, (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1999), 259.
J. Kristeva (1982), 72, 73.
J. Kristeva (1980), 18, 19, 134, 136.

¹⁵¹ J. Kristeva (1982), 73.

the feminine is located *within* the patriarchal system. However, she departs from Irigaray by suggesting that writing the feminine is not a discourse of a repudiated subject, but a search for the Lacanian laws of the subject's desires. This writing is not the search for the unacknowledged subject as much as it is a search for the laws of its desires.¹⁵² It is not a search for the feminine subject as much as it is for feminine desires.

Because phallogocentric scientific discourse "aspires to the status of a metalanguage", it represses the semiotic. But Kristeva argues that the feminine erupts nonetheless. This eruption occurs in moments of *jouissance*, a form of feminine pleasure.¹⁵³ Writing (and art) aimed at the semiotic, the maternal, the feminine, would assist with this release of *jouissance*. The meeting point of the semiotic and the symbolic order (the feminine and the patriarchal authority), then, in art and literature takes place in these moments of *jouissance* when the female subject is freed from subjugation by masculine language and knowledge systems. More specifically, Kristeva suggests that it is the writing of the *abject* female body that provides a vehicle for the release of this *jouissance*.

¹⁵² J. Kristeva (1980), 120.

¹⁵³ *Jouissance* is a Lacanian concept of sensual pleasure which emanates from a speaking subject. Kristeva's concept of *jouissance* is similar in some respects to Lacan's; she considers it to be more like a total joy or ecstasy with a bit less emphasis on its sexual connotations. Yet, in other ways, it is radically different. While Lacan claims that a female *jouissance* doesn't exist or signify anything, that woman knows nothing of *jouissance*, for Kristeva, it not only exists but represents a female energy centred in the body of the mother which Kristeva argues cannot be fully incorporated into the symbolic order.

J. Lacan (1975), 74, 75.

J. Kristeva (1980), 16, 135.

J. Kristeva (1982), 9, 10.

B) Bakhtin and the Female Grotesque

The writings of Russian philosopher and theorist Mikhail Bakhtin are important to Kristeva because he inserts himself into texts and rewrites them.¹⁵⁴ In Kristeva's Desire in Language (1980), she praises Bakhtin's writing because it breaks "...through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest."¹⁵⁵ As such, Bakhtin's work is useful for Kristeva in the formation of her theory of the Abject. Although he does not specifically address the female body,¹⁵⁶ Bakhtin's writings on the concept of the grotesque body in medieval folk culture are useful to feminist discourses on the female body. The grotesque body, he says, historically exists in all cultures and emerges only in relation to the norms it exceeds.¹⁵⁷ It is a body which represents the people's protest against the social status quo and, as such, it is first and foremost a *social body*. Because it undermines, as well as reinforces social structures, it has traditionally occupied a regenerative as well as an

¹⁵⁴ J. Kristeva (1980), 65.

¹⁵⁵ J. Kristeva (1980), 65.

¹⁵⁶ In fact, in his writings on the grotesque body, Bakhtin does not acknowledge the social relations of gender. Please see The Bakhtin Reader, Pam Morris (ed.), (London: Arnold, 1994).

¹⁵⁷ According to Mary Russo, the category of the grotesque originated with Vitruvius c. 27 B.C. who linked the classical style with the natural order, whereby the Classical aesthetic required a clear separation from the grotesque which was considered unnatural and irrational.

M. Russo, 4.

exclusionary role.¹⁵⁸

The grotesque characteristically exhibits elements of corporeal degradation so that cultural and social conventions are rethought on the level of the material or lower stratum.¹⁵⁹ It affords special consideration to the parts of the body which link the surface of the body to the outside world or to other bodies. The outside enters into the body and becomes part of the subject.¹⁶⁰ The grotesque, then, is a bodily projection of an inner state which locates the spiritual and the mind firmly in the body; it does so literally by linking the inside with the outside of the body and metaphorically by locating the social protest within the body. It is impossible to tell where either the interior or exterior begin or end. Boundaries between inside/outside, visible /invisible and biological/psychical are interchangeable and the mind/body dialectic is refuted in the process.

According to Bakhtin, the grotesque body developed in contrast to the classical canon of the Renaissance. It characteristically displays exaggerated outward corporeal features such as the nose, sex organs, mouth as well as inner features of the body such as the bowels, blood and internal organs – those body parts abjected from the bodily canon of classical aesthetics. Often these inside and outside features are merged into one grotesque body. Whereas the idealized Renaissance body is individualized and closed, the grotesque body is universal, open, unfinished and associated with acts of defecation,

¹⁵⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin. The Bakhtin Reader, Pam Morris (ed.), (London: Arnold, 1994), 206, 226, 233.

Mary Russo, 5, 53.

¹⁵⁹ M. Bakhtin, 205, 206, 239.

¹⁶⁰ M. Bakhtin, 228, 233.

copulation, pregnancy and birth. As a result, seemingly normal bodily processes such as aging, illness, reproduction and secretion have been linked to female social and sexual deviance.¹⁶¹

The grotesque has historically been invoked in a disparaging manner when the patriarchal order has been threatened. As Mary Russo observes, while the female grotesque body is a category which is hypervisible, at the same time, it surrenders this visibility and possesses a somatic lack because it is excluded.¹⁶² Embracing the female grotesque, that which is excluded, then, may be an attractive mode of empowerment for feminists in their construction of feminine identity and the female body.¹⁶³ A female body which is simultaneously in and out of sight, is more difficult to dismiss and stereotype or to affix with a singular identity.

Because the grotesque body is a social body, it is capable of disrupting the social order. By exploiting its socially transformative properties, it can challenge normalization (one of the great instruments of power according to Foucault) and its resultant homogeneity. Russo makes the claim that, in the West, subjectivity *requires* the grotesque body.¹⁶⁴ The grotesque body, then, is one of the spaces within the power structure that emerges to challenge it. It may be one way in which the cultural constructs

¹⁶¹ M. Bakhtin, 204, 205, 206, 226, 227, 228, 234.

¹⁶² M. Russo, 41.

¹⁶³ M. Russo, 48.

¹⁶⁴ M. Russo, 9.
Emphasis is mine.

of femininity might be brought together with female experience in patriarchal hegemony to produce a novel alternative feminine identity, to re-figure mechanisms of desire and to disrupt the sign "woman".

The grotesque body, with its merging of the female subject with the female object, the material inside with the material outside, the psychical with the biological, social text with biology, potentially affords feminists a strategy with which to challenge the mind/body dialectic. The grotesque body is also a universal body in the act of becoming; it is never finished or completed.¹⁶⁵ It is positioned on the boundary between individual bodies, the point of their intersection, on the margins. As such, the grotesque body could provide feminist artists with a strategy to subvert the ontological status ascribed 'woman' and speak to the unlimited, fluid, female subjectivity(ies). By incorporating elements of the grotesque into their work, many feminist writers and artists reject a singular definition opting, instead, for multiple bodies and multiple subjectivities.

C) Douglas and the Theories of Corporeal Pollution

Kristeva also draws on the work of the social anthropologist Mary Douglas and her studies of the phenomenon of the dichotomies of order/disorder and purity/pollution in the social structuring of different societies. In her 1966 book Purity and Danger, Douglas concludes that dirt is essentially disorder and it offends against order. Order in

¹⁶⁵ M. Bakhtin, 233, 236.

society is guarded and transgression is purified and punished in an effort to return to a system of order. Ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements and re-establishing elements of purity.¹⁶⁶

Douglas believes that pollutants are used by society to reflect a general view of the social order. Rituals around cleansing or purifying the body have developed in societies as metaphors for achieving cultural homogeneity, their purpose being the erasure of difference – especially sexual difference.¹⁶⁷ Like the grotesque body, socio-cultural concerns are, in effect, written onto these bodies. Like Bakhtin, Douglas theorizes that when society is threatened at the margins, the body, too, is threatened at its margins. And Douglas has observed that throughout history, whenever patriarchal society has been perceived to be threatened by matriarchal power,¹⁶⁸ men have transcribed this disorder and pollution (those inferior portions of the binaries) symbolically onto the female body around those signs of sexual difference (such as menstrual blood and childbirth) which transgress the corporeal borders.¹⁶⁹ According to Douglas,

¹⁶⁶ Mary Douglas. Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo, (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1966), 2, 4, 35.

¹⁶⁷ M. Douglas, 3.
E. Grosz, 193.

¹⁶⁸ A weakness in Douglas' theory is that through this generalization, she tends to homogenize various cultures.

¹⁶⁹ Fiona Carson. "Feminism and the Body" in The Icon Critical Dictionary of Feminism and Postmodernism, (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1999), 123.
M. Douglas, 4, 142.

Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its specially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind.¹⁷⁰ These orifices of the female body represent entry and exit points of social values. It is culture intervening into the constitution of the female body. It is a marriage of the lived experiences of the body to the social and cultural meanings affixed to it.

D) The Theory of the Abject

Kristeva synthesizes aspects of Lacan's psychoanalytical theories, Bakhtin's discussion of the grotesque body and Douglas's analysis of the impure female body into the formation of her theory of the female abject. Her abject is the grotesque female body, the socially polluted body filtered through psychoanalytical discourse. She admires Bakhtin because his theories transgress linguistic and social codes. In addition, because they are dialogical, writing the body "reads another writing...and constructs itself through a process of destructive genesis...Two texts meet, contradict and relativize each other."¹⁷¹

In other words, the participant becomes both object and subject of the discourse: Bakhtin's grotesque body parodies – yet is unable to detach itself from – the representation.

Kristeva incorporates Douglas's ideas, as well, into her theory, but interprets them from a psychoanalytical perspective, determining that the idea of self is formulated in the charting of the clean and proper body. She believes that Douglas's (social) symbolic system corresponds to the formation of a speaking subject in the symbolic

¹⁷⁰ M. Douglas, 121.

¹⁷¹ J. Kristeva (1980), 78.

order where the social has an effect on this subject vis à vis the order of language. A binary is produced between the proper and clean body and the improper dirty body. Subjectivity, she argues, is based on the expulsion of what is considered unclean, disorderly or impure from the clean, ordered, pure and proper self.¹⁷² This exclusion of the impure, Kristeva hypothesizes, allows for the creation of the *abject*.

Kristeva defines the abject as the place where meaning collapses. It is what escapes Lacan's symbolic system, the social rationality; it is the radically excluded. It is the translinguistic Other, kept under control by repression or sublimation but which appears in the gaps, the cracks in this repression, and threatens to dismantle the social subject. She maintains that the abject is a "universal" phenomenon and impossible to erase because it is incorporated into language but it assumes different shapes or codings in different cultures.¹⁷³

The abject is also a danger to the symbolic order because it is a device of difference. Kristeva argues that the place of sexual difference is in the semiotic which precedes the symbolic. The symbolic order, she concludes, doesn't have sufficient strength to "dam up" the abject or the "demoniacal potential of the feminine".¹⁷⁴ As such,

¹⁷² R. Betterton, 139.
F. Carson, 123.
J. Kristeva (1982), 71-73.
J. Kristeva (1980), 67, 72.

¹⁷³ R. Betterton, 133.
J. Kristeva (1982), 4, 11, 13, 28, 65, 68, 73.

¹⁷⁴ J. Kristeva (1982), 64, 65.

the female body and its inherently sexual differences (in particular the pregnant body, female genitalia or specifically female body fluids) re coded as abject.¹⁷⁵ This anchors her ontologically to the material, the Other, the impure.¹⁷⁶

It is *jouissance*, the pleasure released when the semiotic and the symbolic meet to produce the feminine, which makes it possible for the abject to exist. Without it the subject would look at itself, at its image in the mirror, and see an other, an object who doesn't meet the subject's expectations. It is a disappointment and the subject would be shattered, swallowed up in the ideal object. But because *jouissance* (which is also a moment of revelation) makes the object repugnant, the subject does not compare itself to the ideal object. The abjection of this object ensures that the shattering of the subject does not happen.¹⁷⁷

Since definitions of abjection are socially determined, the abject exerts a regulatory force on the subject. The female subject, then, is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection. The subject regards these impure objects with repulsion. It tries to expel it, but is not successful. This is because, while the subject rejects the abject object, it is aware that it is also *inside* of itself; the abject permeates the self, the subject. This repudiation is necessary for the subject to emerge. In other words, the production of the subject requires a simultaneous production of an abject being. The abject, then, is

¹⁷⁵ In Early Christian writings, for example, physical beauty was considered to be merely a container for the corruption of the female body.
R. Betterton, 211.

¹⁷⁶ J. Kristeva (1982), 54, 64, 65, 70, 73.

¹⁷⁷ J. Kristeva (1982), 9.

a corporeal object which nevertheless has some of the *subject* affixed to it; the self is not lost with the loss of bodily fluids. That is why the abject is also an *object* of repulsion. The abject is part subject, part object – yet neither exclusively one or the other. It is the space where meaning collapses, where the subject and object confront each other and assimilate.¹⁷⁸

The abject often takes the form of interior substances which are secreted from the body such as faeces, blood, vomit, skin, mucous, perspiration and saliva. As with Irigaray, Kristeva's work has provided a basis for much recent feminist art. Jana Sterbak's 1995 Perspiration: Olfactory Portrait (figure 11), for example, addresses the abject nature of the female body. This work consists of a plastic container filled with the artist's perspiration. It is, then, a 'natural' substance which is (re)framed as a cultural creation. This 'drop' of perspiration is indeed an object with part of the artist subject's corporeality attached. As such, it is an object of repulsion, an abject object. Female subjectivity meets the material object and it transgresses the corporeal and metaphorical binaries between inside/outside, subject/object, natural/cultural.

For Kristeva, the most significant borderline is that which separates the inside from the outside, the self from the other. As such, it is where (figuratively, psychically and literally) the inside and outside borders break down, where the relationship between the body and its signification is altered. Based on this observation, Kristeva identifies what she considers to be the three main categories of abjection: food, corporeal alteration

¹⁷⁸ J. Kristeva (1982), 10-13.

(including death), and the female body. In short, the abject is what falls away from the body while remaining irreducible to the subject/object, self/other and inside/outside dichotomies. As a result, the abject produces a heterogeneous subject, one who is never homogenous or totalizable and who is associated with the Other but is kept intact.¹⁷⁹

With the abject, Kristeva asserts, the body's inside "...shows up in order to compensate for the collapse of the border between inside and outside."¹⁸⁰ These body parts do not represent hygienic shortcomings but the effect of an external ideological disturbance on identity and the order of a society. As Kristeva states,

It is not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules.¹⁸¹

For example, in our current culture, fatness is considered to be a loss of control and a failure of feminine identity. Susan Bordo suggests that the dominant cultural ideal of the slender body represents, in fact, a desire to contain both the corporeal and the ideological margins, to retain control and reassert feminine identity. This desire is then rewarded morally and socially.¹⁸²

A loss of fluids or body parts simply attests to the permeability of the body, its dependence on the outside, the likelihood of the inside boundaries collapsing into the

¹⁷⁹ R. Betterton, 157.

J. Kristeva (1982), 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 18, 54.

¹⁸⁰ J. Kristeva (1982), 53.

¹⁸¹ J. Kristeva (1982), 4.

¹⁸² See Susan Bordo, "Reading the Slender Body" in Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader, Donna Welton (ed), (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 1998), 291-304.

outside. They highlight the female body's association with the surface, the material. But because the abject manifests itself in the permeability of the female body, it intimates that binaries associated with the female body may themselves be permeable. In a female body which is permeable, it follows that the interior necessarily merges with the exterior. The ideology which has long associated the female body with the external, the surface, is no longer valid with this material collapse of boundaries. This material collapse becomes a metaphor for the collapse of the corporeal surface into the psychological inside, the body into the mind. The material object (the object of scientific study) is now also the subject.

Kristeva advocates a (re)appropriation of the abject, that entity which, she contends, is impossible to erase and which has been associated with the female body while denying her a voice, to write the feminine within phallogocentric language systems. Because the abject is where meaning (language) collapses, where the subject is also the object, it proves to be an especially useful tool with which to address the subject/object binary (where "woman" represents the object) within patriarchal language and ideology. Kristeva aligns the abject with the semiotic or the pre-symbolic order. This is the time of mother/child bonding and, therefore, the place of the female. She argues that the abject shifts the border that separates the body from its signification. In other words, it shifts the boundary between the semiotic and the symbolic order, between the maternal authority and the paternal law, between the feminine and the moment of

entry of the child into language when he/she becomes a subject.¹⁸³ This shift towards the feminine, the semiotic, then, makes the abject particularly useful to writing feminine desire.

If the feminine subject is also an object, the concept of the abject, with its collapse of the subject into the object, may be used to dismantle the mind/body dialectic and its related corollaries of subject/object, inside/outside, culture/nature male/female, etc., which, in turn, establishes subjectivity for women. With the dismantling of binaries, the forms this subjectivity may take are unlimited. Kristeva considers the collapse of the subject into the object to be the equivalent of death, but that writing the abject is a resurrection of sorts.¹⁸⁴ So, it is possible to feel the effects of the semiotic, the feminine, in the patriarchal symbolic order through word play which draws upon what is repressed in the symbolic order.

Kristeva, like Irigaray, then, is concerned with issues of sexual difference. But while Irigaray considers writing sexual difference to be the strategy which will subvert the phallogocentric language systems and write feminine identity and desire, Kristeva (like other social constructivists) maintains that the neutralization of the sexually specific body and the transformation of patriarchal ideology would equalize masculinity and femininity in culture. She (and other psychoanalysts) first aim to minimize the differences and then assign new meanings to the female body. The body is regarded as a

¹⁸³ S. Gamble, 258, 324.
J. Kristeva (1982), 73.

¹⁸⁴ J. Kristeva (1982), 18, 26.

passive and neutral biologically determined object which is fixed and ahistorical. It is the mind which is social, cultural and historical. This identity is first fixed internally and then manifested in some external manner as gender. Gender is constructed but sex is pre-determined. Patriarchy is cultural but the body is merely a medium for communicating the patriarchal ideology. Sex is fixed, so transformation must occur at the level of gender.¹⁸⁵

Because psychoanalysts consider the most efficacious political strategy to be ideological transformation through the neutralization of the sexually specific body, it is the mind, the psyche, which actively marks the passive body, an attitudinal or ideological change will effect a corporeal change. This approach re-codes the mind/body dialectic as psychology/ biology or ideology/(re)production where both sexes are associated with each portion of the binary - albeit unequally. There is no male/female, mind/body corollary, and so, ostensibly, the mind/body dualism remains intact.¹⁸⁶

Yet, although she maintains that her aim is neutralization of the sexually specific body, in Powers of Horror Kristeva advocates writing the abject – including the abject female body. In other words, by writing that device of sexual difference (which she aligns with the semiotic, the feminine) she *is* writing the sexual difference of the female body. By incorporating the ideas of Bakhtin and Douglas into her theory of the abject,

¹⁸⁵ Judith Butler (and many other feminists) takes issue with the notion that sex exists *a priori* to gender. She refuses the sex/gender dichotomy suggesting, instead, that sex is not ahistorical, but is also inscribed with desire, signification and power.

J. Butler (1993), 1, 37, 10

¹⁸⁶ E. Grosz, 17.

she is constructing the female body as a socio-cultural text. The abject, then, is culture intervening into the constitution of the female body; it marries the lived experiences of the body to the social and cultural meanings affixed to the body. As for Irigaray, the female body is not simply sexually different from the male body, but it is the site where sexual difference plays itself out. Accordingly, although Kristeva's goal to change patriarchal ideology may be somewhat successful, it is not a successful neutralization of gender differences. In fact, it highlights those very differences in her writing of them. And it is this very fact that establishes the abject as a valuable tool for feminist artists who wish to challenge and subvert patriarchal discourses around women and their bodies inherent to both science and art, which simultaneously challenges the associative mind/body dichotomy.

The abject may be a way of moving beyond the Lacanian model of femininity as lack. Kristeva (like Bakhtin) asserts that modernism repressed abjection.¹⁸⁷ Kristeva, herself, maintains that any "...artistic experience which is rooted in the abject...by the same token purifies..."¹⁸⁸ Writing the abject, as Jana Sterbak does in her Perspiration: Olfactory Portrait, creates a subject out of an object of difference; by re-appropriating the abject, feminist artists are challenging the often confining notions of the clean and proper female body and its enforced homogeneity.

¹⁸⁷ J. Kristeva (1982), 26.

The collapse of the pure/impure dichotomy into an outside/inside is not a Modern phenomenon. It was in the New Testament with Mark, Matthew and Luke that this inversion has its roots.

J. Kristeva (1982), 114.

¹⁸⁸ J. Kristeva (1982), 17.

Kristeva's work (like Irigaray's) begs the question as to whether it is possible to escape this irreducible materiality foisted upon women and their bodies, a materiality that asserts the corporeal over the psychical, objectivity over subjectivity. Is it possible for women to use (or even celebrate) that which patriarchy has used against her to address issues of subjectivity and female identity? Kristeva's theories, like those of Irigaray, are more metaphorical than literal. She filters the theories of the materiality of the polluted and grotesque bodies through psychoanalytical discourse. Unlike Irigaray, however, Kristeva is not positioning herself within phallogocentric discourse in order to create a new language which mimes it. Instead, Kristeva subverts patriarchal discourse by privileging the space of the feminine, by writing the abject. The language she uses is not new. This concerns Christine Battersby, who also wonders whether it is possible to transcend the phallus as signifier if, as Kristeva believes, men and women relate differently only with respect to their differing relationship with the phallus. If the phallus is not refuted as the primary signifier, she observes, how is it possible to refute the binary opposition of male/female?¹⁸⁹

IV Elizabeth Grosz's Mobius Strip Model

In addition to Irigaray and Kristeva, the writings of feminist Elizabeth Grosz, too, are useful for investigating and refuting the Cartesian and Enlightenment binaries. Grosz

¹⁸⁹ C. Battersby, 130.

imagines a female body that is removed from the mind/body dichotomy, a body which is both material *and* inscriptional, biological *and* textual. She contends that feminists, like philosophers, have assigned the body to a subordinate position to the mind. This is in part due to feminism's close relationship to psychoanalysis. Her goal is to reconfigure the (female) body so that other ways of understanding corporeality, sexuality, and the differences between the sexes may be developed and explored. To do this, Grosz believes, we must turn to the corporeal. Focussing on the material addresses sexual difference in a way that mind does not.¹⁹⁰

In Grosz's model, the inside of the body (traditionally the realm of the mind or soul) is intimately affiliated with the exterior realm (the biological or material body).

Grosz contends that

...the body is not a mode of expression of a psychical interior or a mode of communication or mediation of what is essentially private or incommunicable. Rather it can be understood as a series of surfaces, energies, and forces, a mode of linkage, a discontinuous series of processes, organs, flows, and matter...The body does not hide or reveal an otherwise unrepresented latency or depth but is a set of operational linkages and connections with other things, other bodies. The body is not simply a sign to be read, a symptom to be deciphered...¹⁹¹

All effects of subjectivity, she believes, can be explained using the subject's corporeality as a framework just as well as it could be using the psychical interior. At the same time, though, all the effects of the interiority can be explained in terms of the

¹⁹⁰ E. Grosz, vii.

¹⁹¹ E. Grosz, 120.

inscriptions on the corporeal exterior.¹⁹²

A) Grosz and Western Philosophy

In her search for a formulation of a (female) body not infused with binaries, Grosz looks, with a discerning eye, to the theories of psychoanalysis and theories of corporeal inscription as informed by the work of Derrida. With her 1994 Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism she attempts to read those Western patriarchal discourses which she maintains have ignored or misunderstood the implications of relying on a sexual specificity, yet are still of some use for feminists in extricating the female body from biologism.¹⁹³

Like Irigaray and Kristeva, she critiques the psychoanalysis of Lacan and Freud for their privileging of the phallus and a subjectivity which is always masculine, and their "blindness" to sexual difference. She also faults them for solely focusing on the subject's psychological interior (where the body is the mode of expression of a hidden interior) which, she believes, internalizes the meaning and significance of the body and

¹⁹² E. Grosz, vii.

¹⁹³ E. Grosz, 188.

While Grosz extensively traces the legacy of the works of Freud, Lacan, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Merleau-Ponty, Nietzsche, Guattari, (and others whom she feels have contributed to our wresting notions of corporeality away from discourses which have polarized it against the mind), I have chosen to discuss her treatment of the theories of Freud and Lacan as representative of psychoanalysis and those of Foucault as representative of corporeal inscriptional. I have chosen these theorists, in part because of the restricted scope of this thesis and, in part, because they largely inform the writings of Irigaray and Kristeva.

its parts. But Grosz does applaud them for making clear that the body is inscribed upon, is not innately psychical, and is an indeterminate entity. As such, it is capable of communicating its hidden interior. The implication of this, she explains, is a body with a pliable signification, capable of being rewritten in terms other than those which mark it as a lack or inferior.¹⁹⁴

Grosz also critically examines the writings of Foucault whom she credits with identifying the body as the target and instrument of power, with identifying that corporeal normalization results from disciplinary measures, and with identifying sexuality as a locus of the operations of power. In doing so, Foucault helped determine that the body is not outside of history.¹⁹⁵ Her concerns with his work are twofold. The first lies in the fact that his inscriptional theory leaves no room for consideration of the materiality of bodies. Foucault implies that the body pre-exists power. If sex and sexuality are the effects of power, she asks, "...on what are these inscriptions articulated?"¹⁹⁶ The second is that until his last writings, Foucault's concept of the body was "neutral" or sexually indifferent. Without acknowledging the fact, he talks only about the male body. His work has not left a space for women's accounts of the histories and the representations of their bodies. Grosz doesn't feel that feminists must abandon Foucault's writings on the inscription of corporeal surfaces, but we must refigure it with

¹⁹⁴ E. Grosz, 60, 61, 115, 116.

¹⁹⁵ E. Grosz, 146, 148, 152.

¹⁹⁶ E. Grosz, 155.

its ingrained patriarchy made clear.¹⁹⁷

Just as Grosz looks within patriarchal discourse, she looks at those feminist writers such as Irigaray and Kristeva, whose writings are informed by, yet challenge, patriarchal discourse.¹⁹⁸ Like Irigaray and Kristeva, the crossing or blurring of corporeal and metaaphorical boundaries is integral to Grosz's refusal of binaries. Grosz, too, advocates a return to the body, to the corporeal, as a solution for imagining an alternative to the mind/body dualism and all its corollary binaries. She embraces Kristeva's writings on the abject as a way to link the lived experience of the body with its cultural markings, and to explain why certain body parts and functions are privileged over others. Like Irigaray, Grosz considers the body to be the site where sexual difference plays itself out and, so, believes it is essential that we write the sexual difference of the body.¹⁹⁹ Both Irigaray and Grosz contend that sexual difference has been neglected in the theories of psychoanalysis and Foucault, the consequence of which is that its lack fosters the formulation of binaries.

Grosz's concept of sexual difference is not to be understood in terms of a fixed or ahistorical biology yet, she affirms that it must contain a biological dimension (she terms her biology an "open materiality"). Grosz allows that this position of sexual difference is

¹⁹⁷ E. Grosz, 155, 157, 159.

¹⁹⁸ Grosz's Mobius strip model is also informed by the writings of numerous other feminist theorists, but for the purposes of this thesis and its focus on female interiors, I have chosen to concentrate on Irigaray and Kristeva as the theorists who best represent these ideals.

¹⁹⁹ E. Grosz, 192, 115, 116.

not a neutral one, believing that it is only men who can afford to believe that their perspective is “objective”.²⁰⁰ Her sexual difference entails an ongoing negotiation between bodies whose differences are left intact, but with whom some kind of exchange is possible.

So, although Grosz takes issue with both psychoanalysis and inscriptional theories, she considers both necessary to forming a feminist theory of the body. Her strategy is to meld these theories into one theory of the body which is both psychical and material using the model of the Mobius strip.

B) Grosz and the Mobius Strip

Grosz refuses the mind/body dichotomy by positing the body as a “threshold” between nature and culture, where the material body and cultural inscription converge to form the subject. It is only when the subject is no longer perceived as an *entity* – either corporeal or cultural – but an *effect* of the sexual difference which constitutes materiality that sexual identity (and the corporeal manifestations of this identity) is made possible.²⁰¹ The body is a point of mediation between what is perceived as purely internal and accessible only to the subject and what is external and publicly observable. It is also a point from which to rethink all the binary pairs associated with the mind/body opposition and to achieve a kind of “embodied subjectivity and a psychical

²⁰⁰ E. Grosz, 191.

²⁰¹ E. Grosz, 21, 23, 190, 208.

corporeality".²⁰²

Grosz has conceived a working model that realizes her ideas of a body which is both biological and an effect of sexual difference, and that reads the female body in a way that refuses reductivism and resists dualism. Her model is based on the geometrical form of the Mobius strip, an inverted three-dimensional figure of eight, because it possesses the capacity for two dimensional torsion in three dimensional space (figure 7).²⁰³ It is capable of rotating inside out and outside in and yet can never be collapsed into one. Like the body, the inside and outside surfaces do not always harmoniously blend.²⁰⁴ As the scientific website devoted to the Mobius strip maintains, with the Mobius strip "...dichotomies disappear...Our choices are no longer binary...oppositions have melted into each other".²⁰⁵ It shows that there can be a relation between the apparently disparate mind and body, yet they have the capacity to "twist one into the other."²⁰⁶ As such, the body as a Mobius strip is capable of creating upheavals in the existing knowledge and power relations governing male and female binary oppositions.

²⁰² E. Grosz, xii, 20.

²⁰³ Grosz's Mobius strip model developed out of the work of Lacan who likened the subject to a Mobius strip.

E. Grosz, xii

²⁰⁴ Grosz reminds is that when the two surfaces interact there is always a question of power raised. At any one time one surface may predominate and the body be more an effect of the psychical or the material.

E. Grosz, xii, 189.

²⁰⁵ < www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/cpace/theory/Mobius/why.mob.html > February 2, 2003.

²⁰⁶ E. Grosz, 209, 210.

Because psychoanalysis presumes that the body's psychical interior is constituted through the social inscription of bodily processes (before contemporary feminism, the mind and psyche had been regarded as sexually neutral and indifferent to the body), Grosz positions psychoanalysis as the inside of the Mobius strip attempting to move outwards. But whereas psychoanalysis devotes itself to the body as it is experienced, "enmeshed in systems of signification", the focus of inscriptional theory is on the body as a social object, a text to be marked by power. So, Grosz maintains that this focus on outside powers which actively produce the body as historically specific is the outside of the Mobius strip striving for interiority.²⁰⁷ Taken together they represent a metaphorical Mobius strip whose aim is to (re)present the feminine and refute the binaries associated with it. Abject female bodies or those viscous bodies rooted in sexual difference may be a way of moving beyond the Lacanian model of femininity as lack.

The metaphor of the Mobius Strip could be used to open wide (literally and metaphorically) the anatomo-clinical, the psychoanalytical and the inscriptional model of the female body so that it is possible for the unrepresentable feminine interior of phallogocentric discourse to communicate with its exterior. With this model, the inside of the body torsions into the outside, the mind into the body and vice versa. The interior and the exterior of the female body become irreducible; they collapse into each other even while retaining (critical) reference to the discourse of interior and exterior. As such, the female body becomes neither inside nor outside, cultural nor natural, textual or

²⁰⁷ E. Grosz, 115, 116.

material, private or public, subject nor object but both poles of these dichotomous pairs.

Grosz's model can, therefore, be employed not only to irrevocably unite the mind and the body, but to provide a method for problematizing and rethinking the relations between the interior and the exterior of the female subject, between the subject's psychical interior and socially inscribed exterior. This Mobius Strip metaphor, in turn, may provide feminist artists with a workable strategy for challenging existing binary knowledges associated with the female body over the history of art and science. Works such as Genèvieve Cadieux's Rubis (1993) (figure 25), for example, are effective visualizations of Grosz's Mobius strip model. Cadieux's large scale photograph juxtaposes a photograph of a nude mature woman's torso next to a photograph of (ostensibly) her own red blood cells. With this image the women's private interior domain is intimately linked to her public exterior. The invisible is now visible, her body is *both* public and private. Her inside and her outside are irreducible, they cannot can not be collapsed into one. Because she is both the object and the subject of art and medicine, her body is *both* material and textual, her corporeal and psychical inseparable.

Grosz's model refuses both the position of those who would place the female body solely within a biological framework *and* those who disavow all traces of corporeality. Characterizing the body as a Mobius strip challenges those who imply that the body is merely a blank slate, composed of absolutely raw material, incapable of exerting resistance to its inscription. Nor is it a fixed, inert, purely biologically programmed entity functioning independently of cultural influences. We must, she maintains, contest the dominance of the body by biological terms *and* the terms of

biology itself. In other words, we must contest both the legacy of science written onto the female body, as well as the social ideology underpinning it.

Grosz maintains that the Mobius strip model enables subjectivity to be understood as fully material yet include and explain the “operations of language, desire and signification”.²⁰⁸ The Mobius strip also “implicates the subject in the object”.²⁰⁹ It creates a speaking subject of the female body long regarded as a silent, passive object. And this female subject’s identity is not static but malleable, assuming a myriad of permutations which, in turn, are written into and onto the body. To create this speaking female subject, Grosz asserts, we must rewrite and re-frame the terms by which the body has been socially represented and challenge the discourse which interprets the body and subject scientifically.²¹⁰

But Grosz anticipates the detractors of her Mobius strip model, warning that the Mobius strip is only one possible representation, that it doesn’t preclude other possibilities nor is it necessarily the best representation. In fact, she cautions, utilizing the Mobius strip model may link it to a kind of “monism” which understands the body as an effect of difference. This would simply replace a dualism with a monism and that is no more preferable.²¹¹ Yet, the Mobius strip framework is a model which creates upheavals in the structure of existing knowledges and relations of power governing the

²⁰⁸ E. Grosz, 20, 210.

²⁰⁹ E. Grosz, 20.

²¹⁰ E. Grosz, 62.

²¹¹ E. Grosz, 210.

female body. It also refuses singular models which are based on one type of body as the “norm” for other bodies.²¹² Contemporary feminist art provides an opportunity for the realization of this objective.

V Feminist Theory and Art

As is evident, the inside of the body is of paramount importance to Irigaray and Kristeva. While Kristeva advocates an “opening up” of the subject to question the social implications of materiality of the female body, Irigaray champions a penetration of phallogocentric language and an aesthetic practice of difference. Although their approaches differ they share in common the concern with the interiors.

For Irigaray and Kristeva it is the *inside* of the subject, the *inside* of language which is referenced over and over in their writings on the feminine where, they posit, the feminine erupts from time to time from *within* psychoanalytical and other phallogocentric discourses. The depiction of the interior of the female body is, therefore, an artistic strategy which would be preferable to one based on the exterior. Making the invisible visible holds the potential to give form to *jouissance* and resist phallogocentric discourse. As such, repressed femininity and feminine desire may be released.

The interior of the anatomico-clinical female body is decidedly abject and the construction of ideas around the female body within scientific discourse are steadfastly

²¹² E. Grosz, 62.

grounded in sexual difference. As discussed, the female body has been constructed as a lack or absence, but also as uncontrollable and leaking, threatening (patriarchal) societal order. This, of course, is not how women *are* but is their ontological status in culture. Bodily orifices are not simply entry and exit points for bodily waste but become those entry and exit points for social ideology and cultural marginality. But the ideology surrounding sexual difference attaches itself not only onto the specifically female body parts or fluids, but infuses *into* all other regions of her body.²¹³ And ideology is inside and out, throughout her entire being; women's entire bodies are positioned as inferior and repulsive in patriarchal society.

Because the theories of Irigaray and Kristeva inform Grosz's Mobius strip model to a considerable degree, the application of her model is particularly efficacious in collapsing boundaries and challenging binaries. Irigaray contends that it is imperative that "soul" and "nature" be reunited in the female body. She asks science to "reconsider the non-neutrality of the supposedly universal subject that constitutes its scientific theory and practice" and "produces a sexed world".²¹⁴ Kristeva believes that scientific discourse aspires to the "status of metalanguage", tends to reduce the semiotic component, and hides "poetic language" which has consequences for the feminine subject.²¹⁵ And Grosz maintains that a separation of the mind from the body, the soul from nature "...is

²¹³ E. Grosz, 193, 203, 206.

²¹⁴ L. Irigaray (1993), 121.
L. Irigaray (1985), 197.

²¹⁵ J. Kristeva (1980), 134, 135.

indifferent to considerations of the subject."²¹⁶

Writings of all three theorists, then, lend themselves to an artistic challenge of the traditional scientific discourses and Descartes' legacy of the mind/body dualism. It might be argued that speaking to the bio-medical body in art requires re-appropriating and writing both the abject body and sexual difference within Grosz's lived body in order to establish a female subjectivity and to dispute the relevance of the historical mind/body dialectic and its corollary binaries. Because women have historically been unable to speak the abject, the sexual difference of their bodies, the women artists in this thesis are endeavouring to do just that. By addressing female corporeal abjection through previously unspeakable images of the female body interior, it may be possible for female artists to convert body horror into feminine pleasure. Depicting that viscous, abject space of female interiority may, then, be an effective visualization of the refusal of Cartesian and Enlightenment binaries which exist even today and are fueled by empirical and artistic discourses.

Although Irigaray, Kristeva and Grosz attempt to develop a language and aesthetic based on the female body in order to advance the feminine, none offers up a prescription for a feminist aesthetic, just a different way to 'speak the corporeal'. They wish to demonstrate the instability and multiplicity inherent in female subjectivity and desire and to disrupt binaries in order to (re)unite the feminine body with the mind.

Irigaray's, Kristeva's and Grosz's invocation of sexual difference, the abject and the Mobius strip model in order to (re)write the feminine in opposition to prevailing

²¹⁶ E. Grosz, 6.

phallogocentric discourse have proven effective strategies for disrupting patriarchal order. In the following chapter, I will examine how various Canadian feminist artists have employed these strategies in works which specifically interrogate the anatomico-medical construction of the female body and aesthetic construction of the feminine.

Jana Sterbak's woman clothed in rotting meat in Vanitas: Flesh Dress For the Albino Anorectic (1987) (figures 9a and 9b) and Nell Tenhaaf's woman bursting free from a bloody sliced open female abdomen in Machines For Evolving (2000) (figure 14), for example, certainly are representative of an aesthetic practice of the abject that is also grounded in sexual difference in order to demonstrate a dissatisfaction with the discourses of science, art and popular culture. Like Grosz's Mobius strip, these female bodies cannot be reduced to either an inside or outside surface and, as such, effect a disruption of the mind/body dialectic and all its corollary binaries.

By literally opening the female body, artists are able to figuratively penetrate phallogocentric discourse. This, in turn, frees the feminine subject and questions the status of the female body as an object of masculinist empiricism and positions women as speaking subjects of discourse. But there is a problem with the penetration of the surface of the female body. It has already been penetrated by the anatomico-clinical gaze as the object of medical investigation. The question of whether it is possible for depictions of the interior of the female body to have an existence beyond that of an object of investigation becomes paramount. If this is possible, how is to be accomplished?

Two further questions arising out of these concerns regarding the penetration of

the female body beg to be answered. First, if emphasizing the abject or sexually different female body effectively emphasizes the material, is it possible for women artists who use the abject in their work to avoid a charge of biological essentialism? Neither a literal depiction of feminine morphology nor a formalist style which is considered to be essentially "feminine" is required to illustrate the connection between female subjectivity, female embodiment and their psycho-social effects.²¹⁷ But at the same time that we recognize that the body is a textual entity upon which the ideologies inherent in science, art and popular culture are written, the material nature of the female body is impossible to ignore when its internal viscera is intentionally patently depicted by these artists. And second, how can this aim of subversion of the binaries be accomplished without it simply accomplishing a privileging of the inside over the outside? This would simply be a reversal of the binary not a disruption. The answer to all these concerns may lie with the anatomico-medical female corpse and all its derivatives (the surgical body, anatomical texts, anatomical organs) and postmodern artistic strategies.

A) The Anatomico-Medical Female Corpse

Kristeva considers the corpse, generally, to be the extreme form of bodily waste, the ultimate form of abjection.²¹⁸ Corporeal dissolution and decay of the body, in particular, signify the dangerous permeability between the inside and outside and

²¹⁷ R. Betterton, 94.

²¹⁸ J. Kristeva (1982), 4.

threaten corporeal subjectivity. The corpse, for Kristeva, is the death of “I” and draws the inside and outside together indefinitely.²¹⁹ The corpse, then, is a conduit to the female interior, yet is significant because it is an entity which is neither interior nor exterior. As the interior is exposed to the exterior, the corpse draws the inside and the outside, the public and the private together where they collapse together indefinitely.

The *female* corpse, specifically, is representative of two of Kristeva’s three categories of abjection – that of abjection towards bodily wastes and death and towards the female body. So, depiction of the medico-anatomical female corpse and all its organs, its interior parts, would involve a double collapse of the boundaries of subject/object, the interior/exterior and, its positioning as such, is a powerful metaphor for the position of women in cultural discourses, especially scientifico-medical discourse.

Dissection (and the related field of surgery) is knowledge attained by tearing apart or separating discrete physical objects. Through the depiction of the dissected female corpse and its derivatives (the surgical body, anatomical texts, anatomical organs), the artists in this thesis penetrate the female body much as Irigaray penetrates phallogocentric language. This penetration is by mouth (as in Diana Thorneycroft’s 1997 photograph Untitled (Speculum) (figure 18)), by incisions in the skin (as in Pam Hall’s 1999 photograph Drawing on the Body (figure 15)), by medical technology (as in Louise K. Wilson’s 1995 MRI installation piece Possessed (figures 27a, 27b)) or a

²¹⁹ J. Kristeva (1982), 4, 25, 73.

combination (as in Lisa Steele/Kim Tomczak's story of a young girl at the mercy of doctors in a TB sanatorium in their 1997 video Blood Records (figure 16)). The result is a (re)positioning of 'woman' within a masculinist empirical (and aesthetic) discourse. This shifting of the corporeal and metaphorical borders involved in the act of dissection of the female body, has the potential to be a highly effective artistic strategy with which to reverse the mind/body, male/female dialectic long associated with women and their bodies.

B) Postmodern Art Practice

Postmodernism promotes a dialogical discourse between women's bodies and the discourses around them. Because it permits those voices marginalized by modernism to be heard, postmodernism may be a particularly effective tool for feminists and feminist artists with which to divest the ideology inherent in patriarchal institutions like art and science, to engage critically with notions of gender, sexual difference, female subjectivity and to expose the specific conditions of their production.²²⁰ As a discourse

²²⁰ Kristeva, for example, believes that modernism represses abjection and *jouissance*. J. Kristeva (1982), 26.

Feminist theorizations of the body which draw on the postmodern paradigm have been criticized because postmodernism (and poststructuralism) in their masculinist forms have been accused of an indifference to materiality.

Margrit Shildrick with Janet Price. "Openings on the Body: A Critical Introduction" in Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader, Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 1999), 7.

There are many forms of postmodernism, including one of resistance to hegemony. It is this form which is, perhaps, most useful to the feminist project. For a discussion of postmodern resistance see, for example, Andreas Huyssen "Mapping the Postmodern" in The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998),

of plurality, its strategies have been utilized to address the production of images of the female body in art and science in order to construct novel and multiple female subjectivities.

The works by the Canadian women artists discussed in this chapter embrace the postmodern conventions of fragmentation of the female body, the re-contextualization of existing imagery, historical quotation, the insertion of text, the introduction of elements of irony, pastiche and parody in an effort to challenge the ontology of "woman" and write female subjectivity and desire.²²¹ Using these strategies, postmodernist feminism allows for the acknowledgement of the legacy of woman's association with materiality yet, at the same time, (re)contextualizes it. It is not a simple embracing of the material. It is, instead, an appropriation and re-contextualization of the marks of sexual difference embedded in both the inside and outside of the female body and challenges phallogocentric science's imposition of the mind/body dialectic. By appropriating the very images used in their objectification and consignment to the realm of materiality – the abject body, the impersonal clinical body, and the idealized object of beauty – these artists are able to speak to the medico-scientific objectification of the female body. They acknowledge the past history of the female body in art and science, yet make it clear that

329-337.

²²¹ Rosemary Betterton contends that parodying of the feminine, in particular, is similar to what is at work in Irigaray's mimicry and is an especially effective strategy for exposing it as a product of the male imaginary. It converts subordination into affirmation whereas a direct feminine challenge means demanding to speak as a masculine subject. But, Betterton cautions, mimicry always runs the danger of reproducing what it mimics. This is a criticism of postmodernism in general.

R. Betterton, 96, 98, 99.

the images of the past are not acceptable to them as women and, more importantly, that these images are not fixed but changeable.

The reenactments of the penetration of the bio-medical female body vis-à-vis postmodern strategies generate the necessary distancing from various cultural representations of the female and direct attention to the artifice of the image. By disputing its 'naturalness', it exposes *and* disrupts phallogocentric systems of representation. These feminist strategies foster a dialogical engagement between women's bodies and the discourses surrounding them. Rather than concealing difference (including corporeal sexual difference), postmodernism highlights what Barbara Stafford calls "...a Piranesian scarred beauty consonant with diaspora and hybridity..."²²² As such, it is an especially useful strategy for investigating difference (between genders or amongst women) and for enabling the artistic production of an unconventional female body(ies).

So, as Chapter Three will make apparent, the use of the anatomico-medical corpse (and its derivatives) within a postmodern paradigm, in conjunction with a referencing of the writings of Irigaray, Kristeva and Grosz, poses a direct challenge to the phallogocentric medico-scientific formulation of the female body and blurs the boundaries between its interior and exterior surface. No one surface is privileged over the other. As such, binaries are refused and the female body (re)imagined. Through the use of the corpse and postmodernism, the strategy to re-frame representations of the

²²² B.M. Stafford (1997), 59.

female body is rooted in, yet is not reduced simply to, its materiality. Biological essentialism is avoided.

CHAPTER THREE:
THE CORPOREAL INTERIOR AS AN ARTISTIC STRATEGY

“...that subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible *within*; when it attempts to identify something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very *being*, that it *is* none other than the abject.”²²³

“Turn everything upside down, *inside out*, back to front.”²²⁴

I Introduction

The artists in this paper knowingly implicate art and science in their investigations of the representations of the female body within the scientific bio-medical tradition. Newfoundland artist Pam Hall, for example, has spent a great deal of her career investigating issues surrounding the history of women and their bodies in science and medicine. Her New Readings in Female Anatomy (2002) (figures 8a and 8b) is a multi-media installation that includes anatomical prints, drawings, and textbooks as well as the insertion of text, recorded messages and sculpture. Although it directly makes

²²³ J. Kristeva (1982), 5.
Emphasis is mine.

²²⁴ L. Irigaray (1985), 2.
Emphasis is mine.

reference to the history of women's bodies in science and medicine, it provides the viewer with a newly imagined "hystory" which encompasses the female viewpoint.

Hall's work is organized like a reading room, an anatomy museum and a medical classroom and, therefore, addresses anatomico-medical sources of knowledge directly. Cabinets reminiscent of eighteenth and nineteenth-century natural history museums contain anatomical specimens, anatomical posters adorn the walls, and a reading room creates a comfortable environment for the audience to read, listen or contemplate the installation piece.

Upon first glance her installation resembles the familiar space of the anatomy lab or anatomy museum. But on closer inspection the viewer notes that she is in fact contesting that same anatomico-medical discourse; she is disputing the very terms of its masculinist empirical roots as well as its ontological positioning of women and their bodies as objects of nature. Whereas objects in glass cases appear to be standard anatomical specimens, on closer scrutiny we see that they include hands which grasp an oversized penis, an apple, and a wedding ring. The word "DESIRE" is etched upon the glass cases which enclose these hands. Although Hall's work highlights feminine desire, it conjures up notions of man's fall from grace because of this desire. The glass doors encasing this hand are a reminder that this female desire historically has been diligently and firmly sequestered under phallogocentric medicine's watchful eye.

Also, seemingly standard anatomical textbook drawings of the female reproductive system adorn the wall. Yet these same drawings are inscribed with text which addresses women's "hystory" within anatomico-medical discourse. Historical and

psychoanalytical quotes accompany the drawings as a reminder that medicine and science has equated women with the body, specifically the womb. Hall's reading room is a space for listening to women's "hystories". It is a new space for medicine and science, one which questions its historical and ongoing production of knowledge around the female body.

The play on history in Hall's work, as well as in the work of the other feminist artists examined in this thesis, demands that questions about Western medicine's authority over the female body be raised and exposes the constructedness of its knowledge. They recognize that systems of power and knowledge are unstable and this factor fuels their desire to break free from the constraints of patriarchal languages of art and medicine and to reinvent the female body as one which is historical. They critically interrogate the terms of both art and science while challenging institutional discourses. Their work shifts the context from the anatomy lab, anatomy texts and the hospital to the art gallery in an endeavour to implicate medicine and the biological sciences in the construction of popular images of the female body and to establish that women are producers of culture as well as products of nature. As such, these artists rewrite and re-frame the terms of representation of the female body within anatomico-medicine and the art historical discourses.

By speaking to female subjectivity and the history of women's bodies within scientific discourse, these artists remind the viewer of the flesh of the female body, reclaiming it from the often cold and detached scientific objectification of the female body. But, although the corporeality of these artistic renderings of anatomico-medical

female bodies is indisputable, the works are not a straight forward celebration of the female flesh, of femininity. These female bodies are not simply ontologically fixed biological entities, but lived bodies inscribed by culture and by the experience of existing within a particular biological body. It is in this lived body that the mind/body binary is challenged.

This chapter addresses recent artistic strategies employed by Canadian feminist artists in their investigation of the interior feminine space. While many contemporary women artists have addressed corporeal issues in their figurative or metonymic depictions of the *exterior* of the female body, I suggest that growing numbers of feminist artists are exploring the *interior* space. Although taking disparate forms, I argue that works depicting the interior of the female body (that previously unspeakable feminine space), rather than the exterior surface, are the best way to somatically connect the mind with the body and proves to be more effective in refuting masculinist binaries and imagining new identities for women. I have referenced the writings of Irigaray, Kristeva and Grosz to guide my readings of these works.

II The Female Interior

Cultural inscriptions onto the *outside* surface of the female body (particularly the nude), as well as the role that the female body has played as an object of desire for the male gaze, have been addressed extensively by feminist theorists. Many women artists have successfully imagined a female body which functions as a speaking subject as

opposed to an object of desire. But, as discussed in the preceding chapters, the *inside* of the female body, too, historically has been a space infused with masculinist ideology. Across history, discourses of science and art marked women's bodies; they have effectively regulated and suppressed elements of female desire and effected an objectification of the female form. Women have also been denied an interior by these discourses which, as discussed, have effectively ignored the interior of women's bodies altogether or treated them as homologous to men's. If they merited consideration at all, they were objectified or greeted with revulsion and fear.

The ideology operating on women's bodies affects both corporeal and psychical changes and is often *internal* to the social systems in which a woman exists. In other words, patriarchal ideology operates from within our social and cultural institutions, which in turn, shape language and gender relations and, subsequently, scientific and artistic discourses. Depicting the interior of the female body exposes the ideology written into this body which, in turn, exposes the phallogocentrism internal to these institutions. As the interior of the female body becomes visible, so does the inherent hegemony.

Artistic representations of the exterior surface of the female body as a means to both address issues around the female body in art and bio-medicine and to refuse the mind/body dialectic is certainly an admirable exercise. Yet it may be even more efficacious to depict the *interior* of the female body as a means to reverse these binary oppositions. Like the exterior surface, the interior of the body is neither material nor textual, but both. But the interior lends itself better to challenging ideology because,

even more than the exterior, the interior of the female body precludes any denial of the materiality of the female body. The interior is abjectly material; it is the unspeakable and formerly hidden female body. Yet at the same time it is grossly material, the interior, like the exterior, is replete with ideology. Even more so, perhaps, as the inside of a woman's body is the last bastion of the excluded, invisible female in anatomico-medical discourse.

The exterior is much more a public surface than the interior. The interior of the body is epistemologically a biological and private entity. It is perhaps the most private space conceivable. As discussed previously, women have historically been associated with the body, nature and the private at the expense of the mind, culture and the public. The private status of a woman and her body in culture is immediately and indelibly altered to a public one when it is presented in a public forum either for a scientific or art audience. Depicting the interior entails that the female insides are facing out for all to see. As a result, they become neither inside nor outside, public nor private. The inside of the female body laid open as if for anatomical or surgical study makes it possible for women to be both the object of bio-medical knowledge as well as subject of its own knowledge as all the binaries collapse into each other. They are private objects made public subjects, medico-scientific objects made speaking subjects. The boundaries between visible and invisible become indistinguishable and the mind/body, subject/object binaries are rendered invalid. A hyper-visible feminine interior (rather than a corporeal exterior) would better speak to the lack of consideration and the spectacularization and/or objectification of the female body evident in the history of

science and art and, hence, provide a more effective means of disrupting phallogocentric order.

This chapter addresses recent Canadian feminist works which engage with the female corporeal interior. My discussion will be organized into four sections, each centred on a different trope derived from the anatomico-medical corpse (and all its derivatives) and informed by postmodern practices. They are: skin (flaying, fluids, scarification), corporeal openings (mouths, female genitalia/reproductive systems), metonymic organs, and the unseen (microscopic and other imaging technologies).

III The Invisible Corporeal

“Reconnecting invisible cause with visible effect will require the construction of intelligent imagery.”²²⁵

Out of Enlightenment discourse arose a desire to examine and make public the human corporeal interior – the most private, mysterious and elusive space of all. Just as the projects of Neoclassicism and Romanticism were intent that false or superficial images had to be stripped away to reveal their “true” essences, stripping away the body surface and delving into the interior repudiated deception and revealed authentic knowledge. This search for knowledge entailed a vertical penetration of the human body because it was believed that with an increase in depth came an increase in the knowledge

²²⁵ B.M. Stafford (1997), 110.

of a person's character. The deeper one delved, the more knowledge was obtained.²²⁶

Reflecting on the historical interrelationship between the female body and art and the anatomical sciences, Geneviève Cadieux, Sarah Maloney, Jana Sterbak, Nell Tenhaaf, Diana Thorneycroft, Lisa Steele with Kim Tomczak, Louise K. Wilson, Regan Morris, Pam Hall, and Shelagh Keeley delve into the interior of the female body. Within the framework of a feminist and postmodernist artistic project, they depict a female body released from the mind/body dialectic. To do so, they employ deep looking into the female interior space in an effort to refute spectacle and reunite the corporeal with the mind. Yet the works are not reducible to an essence of femininity. In their dissection of the female body, these artists also deconstruct images of this body in science, art and popular culture and then use these same images to construct a new image(s) and identity for "woman". They demonstrate that the body, modelled on the machine, is susceptible to discourses of power in science and medicine, but that the components are, in fact, pliable and can be re-configured.

By opening up the closed or contained Modern body, exposing a permeable abject body, they (re)appropriate the normal corporeal processes of aging, reproduction, secretions and all signs of sexual difference which have been historically linked to female sexual deviance in the masculinist empirical knowledge systems. The female interior provides a space for becoming somatically connected with the mind and for resisting the distancing anatomico-medical gaze. The interior space of the female body

²²⁶ B.M. Stafford (1997), 22, 37.
B.M. Stafford (1991), 131.

is chaotic and grossly material, and as such, starkly contrasts the clean, docile, and fleshless body of scientific and artistic discourse. Art works such as Nell Tenhaaf's Machines For Evolving (2000) (figure 14) penetrate corporeal boundaries in an effort to disrupt the boundaries of the binary oppositions within social and bio-medical discourses which equate women with the body and not the mind. Rather than representing a conflict from outside the patriarchal system, opening the female body, instead, metaphorically represents a disruption from within this phallogocentric system. As the interior viscera is made patent, so is the ideology contained within the masculinist discourse.

Framed by Irigaray's project of sexual difference, Kristeva's abject, and Grosz's Mobius strip within a feminist postmodern paradigm, the ensuing works by Canadian women artists remind us of the absent female flesh of empirical science. Their compelling depictions of the interior of the female body – whether graphic or lyrical – force us to acknowledge its materiality. Like Irigaray and Kristeva, the works emphasize the interior corporeal and linguistic space. In an effort to challenge masculinist discourses and make a speaking subject of an anatomico-medical, linguistic and artistic object, these works place women and the interior of their bodies firmly inside the institutions biological sciences, medicine, art and language.

Although the works in this thesis depict internal anatomy of the female body, they are not passive nor nostalgic renderings. Similarly, these works are not simply an insertion of the interior of the female body in place of the more familiar depictions of the exterior surface nor are they an insertion of the interior of the female body as

replacement for the more common canonical male corporeal norm observed within empirical disciplines. By entering the female body they enter the masculinist discourses of science and medicine and mime its visual and empirical language. This enables them to move “deep” inside the masculinist images of the female body as well as to actively deconstruct and reconstruct the signification of the female body. But they lack the “objective”, illustrative intent of empiricism. Unlike the claims of anatomico-medicine, they do not purport to be neutral renderings. In this way, these artists are penetrating, occupying and reworking the patriarchal discourses, not attempting a reversal of the ideology with an insertion of the feminine into the institutions. This is, perhaps, their way of entering – literally and figuratively – the scientific institutions from which women have historically been excluded.

In the works of each artist, the art audience recognizes that they are viewing an image of an anatomico-medical body which is also a miming of this same body. It is, therefore, a *double* representation, a mimicry of the historical somaticization of the female body. Although as viewers we immediately recognize the medical referent in Pam Hall's Drawing on the Body (1999) (figure 15), for example, as the nude image of a woman who has undergone a mastectomy, we recognize that there is a distinct difference from those same images in medical textbooks. These two photographs of a headless female torso post-mastectomy are arranged one above the other in a diptych. But the pen mark scratched over the incision and the use of the diptych arrangement informs the viewer that this image is not simply for medical teaching purposes, but is making a statement about the treatment of the female body – the breast – by medicine. This self-

reflexivity, then, becomes an important strategy to refute patriarchal discourse. These artists are staging the physiological, the material, rather than simply representing it. The audience recognizes that the medical body is the referent but that this body is new, somehow different. This knowledge serves to refute the signification of the referent. The revealing of the messy interior in these works serves as a commentary on the disgust and horror which has been historically inscribed upon the interior of the female body.

As well, the following works attempt to recover the female body within the space of its exploitation by making the invisible bodily interior, the excluded, visible. In reality, then, these images act as a *triple* representation; by staging both the visible and the invisible, these artists are miming the female body's *visible* role as a scientific (and artistic) object as well as exposing the *invisible* deployment of patriarchal language in the traditional representation of the female body in art and science. As a result, each image is beyond both culture and the signifier.

These artists penetrate phallogocentric discourse as they penetrate the female corporeal. They are making the invisible hyper-visible and this strategy is successful in refuting the (male) scientific and artistic gaze. So the writing of sexual difference and the abject in the works of these artists is not essentialist and may be used to bring women and their bodies into discourse.

Like the Enlightenment model of vertical penetration, the schema of this thesis proceeds from an examination of visible interior feminine space resting just below the corporeal surface to the most profoundly invisible depths. It mirrors the Enlightenment's obsession with depth, but re-appropriates and reworks it. This literal shattering of the

unity of the female body, by artistic depiction of the messy, leaking female interior, is a metaphorical shattering of the unity of the phallogocentric image of the female body within masculinist anatomico-medical discourses. This, in turn, produces a female body which is chaotic, fluid and fragmented, one which embraces diverse identities and which is both producer and consumer of desire. This image of the female body is diametrically opposed to those historical anatomical representations which were free of taboo female inner regions and which took care to present a modest or aestheticized female body. It is also antithetical to contemporary medicine which has determined that the anatomical body should only be displayed in a "neutralized" scientific and scholarly context.²²⁷

A) Skin: The Corporeal Interface

"All pain, all experience, all illness and all violence leave a trace in the flesh, changing it forever. In this sense flesh is historical, conditioned by the passing of time which eventually brings its death and dissolution...Once it is marked, its marks cannot be erased."²²⁸

Skin is a unique organ in that it may receive information from the interior *and* the exterior of the body. It acts as an interface between the two surfaces and, so, is neither inside nor outside, self nor other, subject nor object, signifier nor signified, but both. It is the boundary between the body and culture; it is historical and is inscribed by cultural values and norms. As such skin is both a visible and performative, both active and

²²⁷ D. Petherbridge and L. Jordanova, 96.

²²⁸ C. Waldby, 80.

passive surface.²²⁹ Skin renders it difficult to determine where the body or the mind begins or ends. They are united as one in the epidermis and, as such, the skin may be a useful metaphor for (re)framing the position of women in the mind/body dialectic.

Until the eighteenth century, skin was understood to be a boundary for the mysterious and invisible corporeal interior. With the emergence of the Modern body, what used to be understood as an open, leaky entity became closed and non-porous. This skin protected and contained both the corporeal interior as well as the psychical interior.

But with the emergence of the more recent eighteenth-century anatomico-clinical model (which provided a glimpse into the interior) the skin came to be regarded simply as a passageway into the interior of the body, a protector of the corporeal interior.

Because it is often understood as shaping one's identity, skin is experienced as an envelope for the self. But this protective envelope can also be binding. In the history of the female body, skin has represented an object for the empirical sciences and art. As a result, it has concealed the subject within/beneath this empirical object both literally and figuratively. The skin, then, sometimes functions as the other of the self.²³⁰

But because the skin is porous and subjectivity is etched onto it, the skin is also a

²²⁹ C. Benthien, viii.

Skin is also *the* signifier of race. Discussion of skin as a racial signifier is beyond the scope of this paper, but I direct the reader to works such as Frantz Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks, (London: Pluto Press, 1986) and Claudia Benthien's Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and the World, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

²³⁰ C. Benthien, 13.

discourse of *interiors* not solely a discourse of surfaces.²³¹ Feminist theorists and artists have envisioned a female skin which resists containment, transgresses borders, is permeable and malleable and offers a metaphoric release of the feminine inside to the outside. Female skin, therefore, is an example of Kristeva's abject and may represent Irigaray's passage between the inside and the outside of the female body. As the literal and metaphorical female interior shifts towards the exterior, the one-time concealer can be exploited as a revealer of feminine identity/subjectivity. Skin is also regenerative and may serve as a metaphor for the potential of the female body to generate a novel signification, one which reveals and is (in)formed by the feminine.

The skin mediates between private and public, individual and environment, material and psychological. It is at once both a real *and* a symbolic boundary. As such, skin is and a useful agent for refuting dualism. And by rupturing the skin's surface literally Pam Hall, Shelagh Keeley, Regan Morris, Jana Sterbak, and Nell Tenhaaf aim to rupture it figuratively. By disrupting or deconstructing the phallogocentrically informed ideas of the anatomico-medical female body they (re)construct a feminine reality. These works potentially and purposefully evoke discomfort in the viewing audience as they attempt to displace the image from its medical, artistic and even pornographic referent. These fantasies of overcoming or modifying the corporeal surface in an effort to explore issues around feminine identity, though, are often marked by violence, a violence which highlights the often violent exclusion of women and appropriation of their bodies by phallogocentric knowledge systems. Bodies which are flayed, incised (surgically or

²³¹ K. Young, 84.

otherwise) or permit the leakage of fluids are but three forms the visualization of these feminist artistic explorations take.

Flaying

The flayed body occupies an important place in the history of anatomy. The act of pulling back the skin to reveal what lay underneath was first rendered in a medical context in Bologna in the early sixteenth-century. The body was conceptualized as a proliferation of layers and tissues laid one on top of each other and the anatomical demonstration proceeded as a flaying. But flaying was not simply a physical uncovering of corporeal layers. The removal and lifting of the skin in the male anatomical model has historically rested on the notion that uncovering the cadaver is a metaphoric uncovering of knowledge. At the same time, though, the removal of skin from the female body, instead of adding to the body of knowledge, has triggered fantastic fears.²³² Representations of the female body, then, have been few in number over the history of anatomy.

The flayed female body is an example of an abject body, one which represents a threat to the inner and outer borders in which the speaking subject is constituted.²³³ But flaying may also be representative of an allegory of liberation or change, whereby the female subject has a chance to emerge if the constricting skin, the marked surface, is

²³² M. Cazort, 28.
C. Waldby, 64.

²³³ C. Benthien, 94, 238.

stripped away. The artists discussed in this section have addressed the horror directly and rewritten it as a narrative of liberation of female identity. Their works may be interpreted as an inward search, a re-examination of the feminine.

Canadian artist Jana Sterbak's now infamous 1987 work Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic (figures 9a, 9b) resembles the flayed male corpse traditionally seen in *écorchés* and anatomical atlases. This work consisted of several flank steaks fashioned together into a dress which was both worn by a model and hung from a garment hanger. It is at once a performance piece and a *memento mori*, and, as such, an active *and* passive body, disrupting the active/passive binary. Through a decidedly female garment – the dress – Sterbak inserts the female subject firmly in the long history of medicine and science where the male body has functioned almost exclusively as the subject and object of empirical knowledge. In inverting the inside/outside boundaries and the abjection associated with a flayed female body, the speaking feminine subject within is released. Vanitas is less a female copy of the male standard (or insertion of the female body into the male cultural or empirical institutions) than an investigation of how the abject female interior has operated over history. Sterbak is explicit in stating that in this work she is addressing the historical paradigm of the male body as the norm or as superior to the female body, a paradigm which

...identified women with breaches in boundaries, with lack of shape or definition, with openings and exudings and spillings forth.²³⁴

²³⁴ Diana Nemiroff. Jana Sterbak: States of Being, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1991), 30.

Sterbak's work is both human and animal, interior and exterior, culture and nature. It is a reminder of the enduring patriarchal ideology which has equated women with their bodies, as a piece of meat. Yet, at the same time, the fact that the work is composed of raw and rotting meat – an abject object – addresses Sterbak's collapse of the inside and outside, the decay of the phallogocentrism's positioning of woman as a 'natural' or sexual object.

Arguably, a more subtle allusion to the historical anatomico-medical flayed female body is observed in Canadian artist Shelagh Keeley's 1990 large scale wax, pigment and oil installation entitled Flesh of the Body (figure 10). This installation wraps around the room much as skin envelopes the body. Keeley's skin functions as a giant map for reading the body, for deciphering its mysteries. Although it is a depiction of skin peeled away from its underlying tissues, ghostly remnants of those same tissues can just be deciphered under the skin. It is as if we are viewing the individual tissues (nerve cells, sweat glands, oil glands, etc.) through a microscope. But this outside layer has been separated from its emerging inside layer. As the boundary of the skin is unable to contain the tissues beneath it, neither can exterior boundary contain female subjectivity. It tentatively emerges through the skin just as the tissues do. The skin's function is no longer to conceal but to reveal.

Fluids

At the same time that skin acts as a boundary which conceals, it also permits sensory perceptions and secretions to seep out. It defies resistance yet is at the same time permeable. The interior manages to escape the exterior and, so, the skin is indeed a passageway to the interior but is also a conduit for the interior to escape outwards. Metaphorically, then, the subjectivity concealed within the female corporeal interior percolates out and marks the skin.

Although body fluids sustain life and generate life, they also are potential sources of infection and death. Regardless of their function, Kristeva alleges that body fluids represent the border of our conditions as a human being.²³⁵ As such, they are a threat to the contained body and, therefore, they constitute an example of the abject. Fluids which are secreted through the skin, according to Kristeva, are evidence of its permeability in the face of conventional notions of containment. It is as if the skin no longer guarantees the integrity of the "own and clean self" and gives way in order to deject its contents. The body's inside is revealed in order to compensate for the collapse of the border between inside and outside.²³⁶ Oil, perspiration, blood are all substances which move from the interior onto the exterior. These fluids have been traditionally met with revulsion, and are considered to be abject.

Jana Sterbak's reconstituted human sweat in a bottle entitled Perspiration: Olfactory Portrait (1995) (figure 11) resembles a droplet of perspiration magnified many

²³⁵ J. Kristeva (1982), 83.

²³⁶ J. Kristeva (1982), 53.

times. But where others consider this form of secretion to be an abject substance, she covets it as a “reassuring” one that “would be on hand even when its owner and producer was not”.²³⁷ This sweat, then, stands in metonymically (and perhaps ironically) for the producer of the work, the female artist; it designates or marks the female as creator, as the producer of art. It is both a celebration of the crossing of corporeal boundaries and, as the title suggests, the privileging of another sense – smell – over vision.

But there is another fluid which is typically deigned more abject than all the others: menstrual blood. Fears around the female body have historically centred on the female process of menstruation; it has incited horror consistently over the centuries. As discussed, Mary Douglas effectively traces its association with the impure status afforded women and their bodies. When menstrual blood flowing out of the body is regarded as dirty, as contaminating, it is transfigured into a threat to the order of the modern material *and* social body. Certain religions consider this impurity a threat to their practices. For example, in orthodox Judaism, a woman is untouchable while menstruating and Islam will not permit a menstruating woman to enter the mosque. According to Kristeva, menstrual blood represents a threat from within identity and threatens the identity of both sexes in the face of sexual difference. Semen, on the other hand, according to Kristeva, is not accorded any “polluting value”.²³⁸

Regan Morris' wall installation Rubies and Pearls (1995) (figures 12a, 12b) takes

²³⁷ Amada Cruz. Jana Sterbak, (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998), 34.

²³⁸ J. Kristeva (1982), 71.

the menstrual blood's threat to order and places them front and centre in an aesthetically pleasing arrangements of droplets. According to Jan Allen, her use of faucet heads painted red or creamy white represent droplets of blood and semen respectively which produces a mingling of (female) desire and danger.²³⁹ Its title, Rubies and Pearls, makes reference to the overtly feminine emblems and intimates, perhaps, that both substances, like rubies and pearls, are worthwhile coveting as symbols of feminine identity.

The droplets speak to the leakiness, the lack of the containment of the human body, its tendency to transgress boundaries. What is interesting about the work is that the "blood" droplets are arranged systematically in pattern whereby each droplet is equidistance from its neighbouring one, almost as if the artist is attempting to (re)order the disorder that has historically been associated with the female body.

Scars/Wounds/Surgery

Purposeful scarification (surgical or otherwise) in culture has traditionally marked the body as public and social. For example, scars imprint the discourse of medicine onto the female body. These social inscriptions may occur violently or make their mark in a more subtle manner. Scars pierce the body but do not belong to the body; they are incorporated into the body. They evert the lining not of the body but of the self; they are openings of the subject.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Jan Allen in RX: Taking Our Medicine, Jan Allen and Kim Sawchuk (eds.), (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1995), 13.

²⁴⁰ E.Grosz, 73, 114, 139.
K.Young, 86, 86.

Rupturing the continuity of the skin – the corporeal container– by cutting the interior, renders it indistinct from the exterior. Although not technically part of the corporeal interior, wounds are intimately connected to it. Wounds suggest a disruption of perception literally as they cut through the nerves of sensation and figuratively as they disrupt the diagesis of the phallogocentric gaze. As such, depictions of wounds offer artists a strategy with which to challenge and modify cultural perceptions of the female body in art and science. These artistic practices operate within the literal and the metaphorical fissures of the hegemonic phallogocentric medical knowledge systems. One must keep the wound open, advises Kristeva, and write the abject.²⁴¹

A corporeal wound may be either physical or psychical in nature. Often times it is both. The corporeal scars depicted in the works by Pam Hall, Geneviève Cadieux, and Nell Tenhaaf are literal as well as 'symbolic wounds'. The works by these artists may be read as a longing for a missing part as well as a missing identity, a feminine voice. They are suggestive of the healing of an ontological wound which is the result of patriarchal ideology's mark on the female body. (Alternately, they may be read as suggesting that although the wound has closed over, patriarchy's mark is ever present). They also challenge the closed, orderly body of the phallogocentric modernist project. The female body is, instead, open, its boundaries permeable, a state which is essential for female subjectivity/entity to emerge.

Ironically, anatomical knowledge of the *corpse* is essential for all surgical

²⁴¹ J. Kristeva (1982), 27.

practices on the *living* body but it is surgery specifically which conveys an overwhelming sense of corporeal vulnerability. Of all the fields of bio-medical science, it is surgery (and dissection), in particular, which entails the most considerable degree of violent intervention upon the body. Anatomical images generally inspire pathos because they hint at our mortality.

The violence implicit in the surgical act may be used metaphorically to speak to the violence inflicted upon women and their bodies over the history of science and medicine. Traces of the human touch, evident in all corporeal incisions, may offer a visual solution to Irigaray's call to privilege the tactile in language and art. Artistically exploring surgical violence (either explicit or implied) upon the female body, vis à vis the interior of the female body may be an effective means of disrupting scientific discourses, as well as art historical discourses where idealizations of femininity and the female form abound. The danger inherent in this approach is that, if care is not taken, an ontology of women as fragile beings or helpless victims will be reproduced.²⁴² Hall, Tenhaaf, and Cadieux manage to avoid this in their works.

²⁴² Jana Sawicki does not believe that surgical intervention is violence, believing instead, that this model sets up new binaries (such as masculinist medicine vs feminist medicine) and prevents us from looking for ambiguities and contradictions. It cannot adequately explain why some women appear to be bound up in a system of male domination and some (male) physicians are political allies in the struggle against domination. Foucault's model with its theory of multiple centres of power and intersecting subject positions provides feminist with a better political advantage. The emphasis on normalization practices explains how women subject themselves to patriarchal power willingly. It operates by creating desire. But she does admit that there have been incidences of unjust or callous uses of power over women in medicine.

Jana Sawicki. "Disciplining Mothers: Feminism and the New Reproductive Technologies" in Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader, Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 195, 196.

There are elements of the grotesque and the abject in the act of cutting the body. The idea that the female body is supposed to be closed and smooth skinned is shattered when a scar is present. This purposeful abject marring of the feminine surface is used strategically by Geneviève Cadieux in her large scale photograph and mirror entitled Trou de mémoire, la beauté inattendue (1988) (figure 13). The history of anatomy, medicine and popular culture's ideals around the female body are referenced by the extreme photographic close up of a scar. At first glance the viewer may perceive that the image is one of female genitalia surrounded by hair. Shortly thereafter we recognize it, instead, as a scar on the surface of the skin. Cadieux has dislocated the familiar (male) gaze, has divested it of erotic content.

This beautiful yet abject image of the female body purposefully clashes with popular culture's conventional ideals of female beauty and hints that there is something inside both the female body and its associated medical and artistic discourses– a feminine subjectivity perhaps – trying to be released (or has been released and is now healed). Cadieux infers that the female body cannot be contained by its skin or these discourses. Yet, at the same time this photograph can be read as an ominous symbol forewarning us that without the proper vigilance, proper remembrance of the past phallogocentric repression, this newly released feminine may easily be confined once again as the deliberate opening is stitched up, healed over.

Nell Tenhaaf celebrates “imperfection” by disturbing imagery from popular culture. She seeks to disturb the “truth seeking” of science and expose its operations, in

particular the stereotypes of femininity. To do so she often chooses the trope of splitting or tearing in her works on the female body as a metaphor for the splitting of the chromosomes, those building blocks which are central to the biology of the human body.²⁴³ She considers the visible gap as an important signifier of an opening in the discourse of science, a space which she as artist can break into and occupy.²⁴⁴

Tenhaaf's Machines for Evolving (2000) (figure 14) alludes to the violence involved in the containment of women's bodies. This work depicts a female figure seemingly emerging from within an graphic, naturalistic looking artificial wound alongside *the* fundamental element of all corporeal insides – t-RNA (a genetic building block). The female body and the feminine subject are finally freed from the history of masculinist empiricism with this corporeal spilling of the female guts onto the outside. There is no way that this female body and female identity is contained or regulated by science; this is one wound which is not about to close over and return to its previously contained state. The healing of a potential feminine subjectivity (one which is in process) is accomplished by an opening not a closing. And the evisceration of the viscera implies that violence is also implicit in opening the female body to release the feminine.

Pam Hall's dyptich Drawing on the Body (1999) (figure 15) graphically depicts the image of the breasts of a woman who has undergone a radical mastectomy. In doing

²⁴³ Nell Tenhaaf. Artist's tour of her Fit/Unfit exhibition, Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Sunday January 25, 2004.

²⁴⁴ Nell Tenhaaf. Interview with Dot Tuer in Fit/Unfit exhibition catalogue, (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, 2004), 52, 53.

so, the violence inflicted upon her body by disease and by medicine is obvious. The top image depicts a healthy breast alongside a missing breast. This missing breast is implied, its image scratched out with pen. Below this image is text which reads "Sorry I left my other breast at the hospital," an ironic apology for shattering the cultural ideal of the female body. The bottom image, though, summarily dismisses this ideal. The surgical wound is not concealed; it is not closed up with a neat scar, not prettified. Instead, it extrudes beyond the internal boundaries and onto the corporeal surface.

By depicting such a graphic and abject image of the female body Hall also speaks to the constructedness of the female image in popular culture as well as her desire to deconstruct and (re)construct it.²⁴⁵ The woman's "apology" for her appearance, for her corporeal transgressions, is withdrawn as is demonstrated by her refusal to hide the results of the surgery (on the breast which is perhaps the most fetishized part of the female body) under an aestheticized image. It may also be Hall's indictment of the cavalier nature with which medicine undertakes the maiming of the female body and the little regard for the psychological implications that these marks leave on female body image and female sexuality. Both readings address dissatisfaction with the societal conceptions of the female body and create a speaking subject of a silent medical object.

²⁴⁵ Pam Hall in her website < www.med.mun.ca/artistinresidence > November 2, 2003.

B) Corporeal Openings

Like Irigaray and Kristeva, these artists have chosen the (sometimes oozing) openness of the female body as a metaphor for the fluidity of female identity. They reject the notion that the female body is a closed container. But, as discussed, for the metaphor to truly reflect female subjectivity, Irigaray contends that a link to the exterior is necessary; one cannot reach the interior without penetrating the exterior. Kristeva's abject, too, is centrally about the interior of the body moving across corporeal boundaries to the exterior, the invisible becoming visible. This abject, in turn, highlights the semiotic, that space of fluidity and interiority where the repressed feminine in phallogocentric language resides and from which artistic creativity springs.

The following works by Geneviève Cadieux, Shelagh Keeley, Diana Thorneycroft and Pam Hall remind us that the mouth and the female reproductive system provide an intimate connection between the inside and the outside, that as openings they are a superlative embodiment of semiotic space. As such, this metaphorical and literal feminine materialization from within the masculinist discourse vis à vis artistic renderings of these conduits to the female interior body disrupts this same discourse.

The Mouth

The mouth is another form of perforation, an interruption in the surface of the skin. It breaks its containment and provides another passageway for food and drink into the female interior. Perhaps more meaningfully, it is a means for the interior to make its way out. Freud, for example, considers the mouth to be the bridge connecting

perceptions from inside and outside the body.²⁴⁶ As such, the mouth is the corporeal opening where speech and language exit. It provides human beings with an avenue for expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction while affording a passageway for their voice to be heard. It is most certainly an abject space as it is the point where internal fluids such as saliva and vomit are expelled. It does not grow back together like a wound to the epidermis would and, therefore, may provide a more useful metaphor for the disruption of ontological boundaries. The mouth is linked to the corporeal interior and mucous membranes and, as such, may fit nicely with Irigaray's theories which identify mucous as the substance *par excellence* with which to write the female body as interior to patriarchal language.

Lisa Steele and Kim Tomczak's 1997 video Blood Records (figure 16) explores the transgression of borders of the female body, the drive to penetrate the depths of the female body, control over and violence enacted on the female body historically by the hospital system and the state, and the loss of the female voice and search for feminine identity/subjectivity within the phallogocentric medical system. Its narrative recounts the story of Marie, a young girl sent to a TB sanatorium in Saskatchewan in 1944, and her attempt to find a voice and obtain some measure of control over her own body. The video incorporates archival medical educational footage, archival photographs of scenes of life in TB sanatoriums in order to establish an atmosphere of corporeal regulation. The scientific gaze penetrates Marie's body seemingly against her wishes. Figure 16 shows the apparently masculine hand of medicine firmly planted on Marie's head so that

²⁴⁶ E. Grosz, 92.

her insides can be examined. This hand is not a reassuring hand but seems, instead, to be preventing an obviously unhappy Marie from escaping out from under it. Every minute of Marie's day, as well as all her physical processes, are regulated and monitored. She apparently maintains little measure of control over her own body. Yet, within this physical and emotional environment of containment – by the walls of the “San”, by the daily rituals, and by medicine's attempt to contain the pathogen in Marie's body – corporeal boundaries are transgressed. Images of her spitting up blood visually attest to this fact.

It is Marie's insides which ultimately provide her with a voice. As the inside collapses into the outside, her psyche is externalized on the material body. The silent object controlled by phallogocentric medicine becomes the medical female subject who has found a voice. Medicine tries hard to shut the open feminine mouth, reviled as evidence of female sexuality and the transmission of the TB bacterium. But despite all of medicine's efforts to contain female sexuality and TB, the mouth becomes the open conduit of both. It is ultimately through Marie's mouth that feminine identity internal to the phallogocentric language system is set free.

Artists may use the mouth in their works to subvert popular culture's images of female sexuality. The mouth in Geneviève Cadieux's 1992 La Voie lactée (figure 17) billboard installation, with a photographic representation of heavily rouged lips slightly parted and floating above in the heavens, is reminiscent of advertisements which make use of the suggestive or pornographic image. It also makes reference to the use of the

female body as sexual object in the art historical canon – in this case Man Ray's 1934 Lips.²⁴⁷ In one respect Cadieux refuses the sexual overtones associated with the female mouth. The title, a pun on the Milky Way and lactation, suggests that this mouth (and the female body) exists for purposes other than as a sexual object for men. Cadieux recalls the abject female body with her use of breast milk, that fluid which (apart from menstrual fluid) has most contributed to the idea of the female body and unclean or polluted. The sexuality of the image is subverted when we remember that the mouth has served to nourish us.

On the other hand, Cadieux's work seemingly highlights the sexual function that the mouth serves. The same mouth that sucks the maternal breast also performs fellatio. It is not a stretch to make this link because of the sexualization of the lips, where the female mouth is slightly parted in a sexually suggestive manner, recalling advertising's regular invocation of oral sex. Cadieux, then, seemingly infers that her depiction of the female mouth, like all mouths, collapses the boundaries between the corporeal inside and outside, but at the same time, refuses the binaries of maternal female body/sexual female body, object of desire/subject of desire.

Diana Thorneycroft is quite explicit in her belief that she and her body suffered violence at the hands of the medical establishment. Speaking at the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography in 2001, Thorneycroft links being a patient to being a

²⁴⁷ Geneviève Cadieux's. Interview with Curtis Collins, curator of A Feminine Presence Beaverbrook Art Gallery, June 14-November 1, 2000.

prisoner.²⁴⁸ Her 1997 photograph Untitled (Speculum) (figure 18) depicts a phallic-like speculum violently forcing open the mouth of a blindfolded woman, much like a simulated rape scene. The woman's neck is encircled by barbed wire. Here her language, her subjectivity, her rage has been physically stifled by the (phallogocentric) medical system, whose penchant for violence and misrepresentation have forcibly constrained her and her body. It appears that she cannot speak; she is an object without the capacity to speak as a subject. Her body is at the mercy of the medical system. She is helpless – sightless and apparently in pain – as a result of the violence inflicted upon her body by medicine. The use of the speculum as the device which gags her, implies that her (female) body, with its powers of reproduction and sexuality, somehow demands silencing by medicine.

But for Thorneycroft, the open mouth represents the site where language and rage exit.²⁴⁹ It is through her mouth that she re-claims her orifice silenced by medicine and it becomes, instead of an obstructed passageway, the conduit for the release of her language of protest. Though the medical system has attempted to gag her (literally and physically), it is through her mouth that she re-claims her orifice silenced by medicine and it becomes, instead of an obstructed passageway, the conduit for the release of her language of protest. Like Irigaray's metaphorical mirror, Thorneycroft's speculum

²⁴⁸ Diana Thorneycroft. Artist's tour of her exhibition The Body: Its Lesson and Camouflage, Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Sunday, April 29, 2001.

²⁴⁹ Diana Thorneycroft. Artist's tour of her exhibition The Body: Its Lesson and Camouflage, Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Sunday, April 29, 2001.

represents a (re)framing of the female body and female desire within phallogocentric discourses. Also, as with any work where the artist is the model, there is a subject/object shift in (Untitled) Speculum. The artistic object is irrevocably enmeshed with the subjectivity of its creator. This accords extra power to the image in its formation of a feminine subject.

The Female Genitalia/ Reproductive System²⁵⁰

Related to (and inseparable from) abject fluids and openings is the fear and horror of female genitalia and the female reproductive system. As discussed, discourses of science have fostered a fear of the female genitalia and reproductive functions. By the nineteenth century the anatomico-pathological model of disease had taken hold and with it came a change in the way that the female reproductive body was conceptualized. Physiological explanations of bodily functions became inseparable from discourses of morality which, in turn, grounded the female body in theories of sexual difference. According to Dianne F. Sadoff, because the female body was considered to be frail and

²⁵⁰ I consciously chose not to investigate the interior of the 'maternal body'. This was due, in part, to the limitation in scope of this paper, as this body could be a thesis in itself. Also, there are issues that are specific to the maternal body and don't apply to the other areas discussed. These include psychoanalysis's focus on the mother figure (particularly with respect to the male), fetal imaging technology, arguments around 'instinctual' or 'biological' maternal drives (an element of biology not relevant to other images of the interior female body), issues around the purity of the Madonna figure, etc.

Kristeva even goes so far as to say that science as a discipline is not concerned with the mother as the site of its proceedings.

J. Kristeva (1982), 237.

susceptible to pathologies, the norm for women “became infected by pathology.”²⁵¹ Sex organs were considered to be the seat of female sexuality and, as such, deemed to affect the female psyche. Research appropriated sexual difference and in the lab produced these differences as scientific truths. For example, the uterus was cited as the source of women's irritable nervous systems which was, in turn, associated with the feminine maternal virtues of compassion, piety, kindness *and* the frailties of rage, jealousy and lasciviousness.²⁵² Hall's 1997 multi-media installation The Eye of the Beholder (figure 19) consists of a series twenty photographs and drawings of the female reproductive system. This “twenty ways of looking at a woman”, was hung outside the anatomy lab at Memorial University's medical school in St. John's, Newfoundland. She installed the works here because they would be the first things students would see before and after studying a human cadaver. These images were intended to “get the students to acknowledge that the way you see determines what you see.”²⁵³ The clipboard provided next to the installation for students to pen their responses indicated that the images were indeed provocative with responses ranging from the tentatively positive to the

²⁵¹ Dianne Sadoff. Science of the Flesh: Representing Body and Subject in Psychoanalysis, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 59, 60, 68.

In his Power/ Knowledge (1980), Michel Foucault warns that when sexuality begins to occupy the space of the pathological (i.e. when we medicalize it) it runs the risk of it actually becoming an illness or inducing illnesses.

M. Foucault (1980), 191.

²⁵² D. Sadoff, 193, 194.

²⁵³ Catherine Teasdale. “How Do MD's View the Female Body?”, Family Practice, 11 May 1998.

ambivalent to the expressly hostile.²⁵⁴

The Eye of the Beholder consists of several images of pregnancy, caesarean sections, pelvic X-rays and hysterectomies which reference medicine's attitudes towards the female reproductive systems and make patent the power of the medical gaze to penetrate the interior of the female body. In one part of the installation, an image of a rope tightly binding a female abdomen reinforces the (sometimes cavalier) decision to perform hysterectomies and caesarean sections. In another, the image of a pregnant abdomen is juxtaposed next to an abdomen with an incision. That this is more than a textbook instructional image is evidenced by the medieval image where a 'surgeon' has slashed open a female abdomen and removed the baby from the womb. In light of the medieval views which linked the womb to both reproduction and a dangerous lasciviousness, this installation could be read as a comment on patriarchy's attempt to manage and remove any evidence of female sexuality.

Hall does not implicate medicine alone in its role in the formation of knowledge regarding the female body. By referencing such canonical images as DaVinci's La Gioconda (1503-06) (more popularly known as Mona Lisa) and Botticelli's Birth of Venus (1485-86), she takes to task the role that art and popular culture have played in phallogocentric culture's formation of an idealized female image. The culturally ingrained idealization of the female form is further reinforced with Hall's depiction of the familiar popular culture image of a smooth, flat, unblemished female abdomen. This "perfect" female abdomen, the scalpel laid across it implies, is soon to be irreparably

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

tarnished by medicine. With this image Hall asks us to implicate both popular culture and medicine in the creation of these images. At the same time, though, she prompts us to think about why an image such as this, where a scalpel taunts the viewer with the transgression of corporeal and societal borders of the idealized female body, disturbs us so.

Hall has attempted to humanize the anatomico-medical female body, to subjectify the medical object. Her bodies are not simply comprised of an X-ray, a statistic, or a uterus but deserve some consideration as an individual. And since medicine, as discussed, is responsible for the formation of some central ideas around the female body, particularly with respect to the uterus and the female genitalia, turning the female body inside out in much like a surgeon does, creates a speaking female subject of a medical object.

Shelagh Keeley's series of large scale wax, graphite and oil panels entitled Gestures of the Body/Gestures of the Site (1985) (figure 20) addresses, in part, the notion of menstrual blood and the role it plays in female identity. As the title suggests, the artist attempts a literal and metaphorical (re)writing of the female body with painted images of blood and viscera. In "a world where gestures have no carrying power" she is endeavouring to institute a different female body using the creative gestures of her body *and* her mind, evidence of the haptic. The work consists of a large scale depiction of the female body's internal organs, dissected feet, bare bones, open wounds and bodily fluids. This abject body matter peeks out from under a curtain of opaque blood coloured red

paint; it cannot be contained within its corporeal borders. The open mouth resembles both a mouth and female genitals and speaks to (or is it scream for?) the need for a collapse of corporeal boundaries.

This mouth is also the site from which the words in the accompanying text fall. Scattered across the work are the phrases "raw sensuality", and "smell of eroticism", which speak of female desire. Like corporeal matter, this desire cannot be contained. As such, the inside collapses into the outside and the female subject emerges, desire in hand. The boundaries of anatomico-medical science cannot contain the female subject, cannot maintain the ideology inherent to the female body informed by phallogocentrism.

The visual is not irrelevant in this work, but neither is it privileged over the other senses as is the traditional model of imaging the body. In accordance with Irigaray's theories, this work (like Cadieux's perspiration) privileges senses other than the visual. It affords touch (the hands), smell (the "smell of eroticism"), sound (the ear), and taste (the mouth) equal privilege. The visual is not so much dismissed as some of its privilege is lost or shared with the other senses. Keeley's writing of the female body demands a new language for the female corporeal while expressing feminine desire and de-privileging vision.

C) Metonymic Internal Organs

The eighteenth century was the "era of uncovering". Anatomy and dissection of the corpse were – and remain today – a paradigm for the forced study of the depths. While penetrating the skin exposes the inside of the body, it does so at a relatively

shallow level. The impetus to delve deeper into the body as a way to unravel the corporeal and cosmic mysteries became an obsession of Enlightenment philosophy. This impetus translated into the scientific and artistic discourse of the day. Foucault contends that dissection became increasingly central to clinical experience because it rendered the body and its diseases as patently visible for the anatomico-clinical gaze. Whereas formerly medicine was concerned with describing symptoms, in the eighteenth-century it was replaced by the medicine of organs, sites and causes.²⁵⁵

But this modern body has been cut into parts like a machine where it, according to Irigaray, “forgets or shuns the flesh”. Women’s bodies, long associated with the material, the flesh, then, are “forgotten” within the disciplines of science and medicine or positioned as inferior within their phallogocentric discourses on the body. As a result, Irigaray asserts that women have “never had a relationship of language to their organs.”²⁵⁶

Several artists choose to depict those tissues positioned deeper in the body but still visible to the naked eye. The human body is considered to be an “organ-ism”, an assemblage of tools which contribute to the body’s capacity as a useful machine. As the body is fragmented, the understanding of the body is shaped and formed.²⁵⁷ Individual organs come to be regarded as representative of the human body generally.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ M. Foucault (1973), 120, 122, 131, 146, 198.

²⁵⁶ L. Irigaray (1997), 125, 140-43.

²⁵⁷ C. Waldby, 55, 57.

²⁵⁸ But to analyze individual organs is to reduce a whole to its constituent parts. So, there

At first glance, the corporeal objects produced by the artists discussed below merely appear to be anatomico-medical specimens dissected from a cadaver or excised through surgery with the purpose of investigating which component of the corporeal machine has failed to provide added knowledge of the disease and anatomical systems, or to remove diseased tissue. And in a way they are. Except that these specimens are dissected organs with a twist. They do not stand for human bodies in general, but sexually specific bodies. They are metonymic depictions of the female body and, as such, these organs represent the whole sexed organism. This form of depiction ensures that the relationship between the corporeal whole and the organ is maintained. These works allude to the situation of women in their content and (in the case of Sarah Maloney) in materials used in the production of the art works. It is as if they are dissecting the history, the position, of women in the medical science and art.

Jana Sterbak's Golem: Objects as Sensations (1979-82) (figures 21a, 21b) is an installation of silver gelatin prints juxtaposed next to lead, bronze and rubber body parts resting on the gallery floor. This installation speaks to the role that psychoanalysis plays in repressing organic sensations.²⁵⁹ Her apparently mute Tongue (not pictured), dissected out of the body, may not be mute at all. It may, in fact, be speaking to the absence of the female voice/language which Irigaray maintains exists within psychoanalytic discourse. Sterbak deems her Malevolent Heart (Gift), so

is a risk of fetishization of the organs, in that the relationship between the organ and the corporeal whole, the corporeal context, is lost. In their postmodern ironic context, though, these organs are neither static not fetishized.

²⁵⁹ D. Nemiroff, 24.

dispassionately displayed as a medical artifact, the "ultimate anti-romantic valentine: a heart made of radioactive fermium...which consumes itself..."²⁶⁰ With this work she "consumes" the stereotype which positions and equates the female body with emotion and passivity.²⁶¹

The word "golem" in Jewish mystical tradition is an artificially created man. The word appears once in the Bible and has been translated as meaning "embryo". The significance of the golem lies in human efforts to duplicate the act of creation.²⁶² And that seemingly is Sterbak's goal when she states "...I build my insides/I make myself/ I am at once golem and its maker".²⁶³ This statement implies that she has taken over the role of (male) creator and is (re)creating the female body in a new mould, with a new corporeal language which comes from within, yet is apart from, the anatomico-clinical model.

Pam Hall's (1995) Female Action Verbs: Fragments From A Re-constructed Gynaecopedia (figure 22) addresses the masculinist nature of anatomico-medicine and the need for a feminine re-appropriation of its language to speak feminine desire and subjectivity. The title alone confirms her belief that it is an *active* re-appropriation

²⁶⁰ D. Nemiroff, 17.

²⁶¹ It could arguably, though, also be misread as a reiteration of the stereotype of the fearsome female sexual predator, but within the context of the whole Golem series it is more likely a re-affirmation of female subjectivity within a masculinist medical discipline.

²⁶² D. Nemiroff, 25.

²⁶³ Ibid.

which is required. Drawings which mimic those in an anatomy text are juxtaposed alongside text which alludes to the association of the female body with the corporeal and its desire to be freed from this association or to re-figure the association in feminist/feminine terms.

An anatomically correct human heart organ labelled as the "Origin of Female Love" makes reference not only to the association of the female body with the corporeal, but its long association with emotion and feelings over reason. There is a uterus containing an eye as well as an additional eye labelled "(her) eye" whose gaze is directed upon text which reads "To Be Freed". With this work Hall is seemingly calling for a female body freed from the male gaze, from association with the corporeal (especially the womb) and emotion. She simultaneously calls for an active replacement of the male gaze of medicine with a female gaze, with a female subjectivity, which (re)constructs conventional representations of the anatomico-medical female body.

With the depreciation of the visual in the Enlightenment there was a push to eliminate in art all signs of manual construction and body performance in favour of critical mental activity. With this came a condemnation of the pride of the expert craftsman.²⁶⁴ Women's handiwork was particularly devalued as evidence of the touch of their hands in their work was undeniable. Sarah Maloney's Circulatory System (1998-99) (figure 23) at first glance appears to be a lovely embroidered sampler of red and blue thread. The 'sampler' speaks to the traditional relegation of women to the domestic

²⁶⁴ B.M. Stafford (1997), 143.
B.M. Stafford (1991), 1.

sphere, the dismissal of their artistic production as “low art” or “craft” and the association of their bodies with the natural. Upon closer scrutiny, the viewer realizes that it is not a traditional sampler but an illustration of the human circulatory system, the stitches fashioning arteries and veins. The subject matter chosen for this ‘sampler’ consciously subverts the association of women and their bodies with gentility, passivity, delicacy, and femininity. As well, the precision and painstaking construction of this “sampler” mimics the process of anatomical dissection and surgery.

By privileging both the delicate traditional feminine handiwork and the abject female interior, hierarchies between artistic and domestic domains fall away as craft and high art, the private sphere of the home into public sphere of the art gallery, the interior of the body into the exterior, the exclusion from discourse into an inclusion into discourse as a speaking subject all collapse. By highlighting evidence of feminine handiwork, by privileging the feminine touch as advocated by Irigaray, the feminine subject is given a voice.

This is also evident in Sarah Maloney’s Brain (1994) (figure 24), hand knitted and free standing replica of a brain and spinal cord. In one sense it appears to be a faithful rendition of an image from an anatomical atlas yet is also an incredibly beautiful and delicate object. There is no mistaking Maloney’s allusion to the feminine, especially in the pinkness of her knitted brain and spinal cord. With the physical evidence of her handiwork, she directs our attention to the fabrication of female identity and of the female body by patriarchal culture (in particular medical and artistic discourses). She publicly exposes the most private of corporeal (the brain) and physical (the domestic

sphere) spaces for consideration. By appropriating domestic traditions, the materials of the domestic sphere, the work announces itself as a fabrication by a woman. She is making a body with her own body and moulding it into the identity she desires.

Maloney acknowledges the assignment of an ideological role which is unsatisfactory and offers up a new feminine identity. Yet, at the same time, by appropriating women's domestic activities (knitting and embroidering), she celebrates the fact that women may choose to identify with or not identify with their traditional domestic role.

With the obvious manual work involved in knitting, Brain is also a visualization of the inseparable nature of the mind and body. Just as the brain is responsible for shaping the female body, the artist's body – notably her hands – is responsible for shaping the brain. Brain is a conceptualization of “creative thought”; both the mind and the body are involved in physically and mentally creating a female body which is both spiritual and material.

D) Seeing the Unseen

Since its beginnings, the entire anatomical project has revolved around visualization of pathology in the corporeal interior.²⁶⁵ But, interestingly, during the Enlightenment, a form of anti-visualism became entrenched in Western discourse in response to the rise of image manipulation by charlatans who used the latest technology to fool the eye. Enlightenment philosophers dismissed this empty voyeurism and lauded rigorous empirical observation. They equated shallow looking with spectacle and deep

²⁶⁵ C. Waldby, 24.

looking with empiricism. The patently visible, then, was dispatched in favour of the invisible, rational thought and empiricism. Words and numbers were regarded as a superior means of articulating the true meaning.²⁶⁶

This deep looking at the unknown was inseparable from the technological innovations needed to examine them.²⁶⁷ The phenomenon described above resulted in the advent of the microscope, the x-ray, the CT scan and has culminated more recently in technological advances such as the MRI. With these technologies, science trains the eye to visualize invisible structures. The invisible interior of the body is rendered thoroughly visible without breaking the epidermal barrier. Biomedical research strives to partition the body into smaller and smaller levels of scale while configuring the interior as exterior. How ironic that this patent hyper-visibility of the invisible is accessed in order to arrive at a rational linguistic system of knowledge.

As Foucault summarizes in The Birth of the Clinic, with the anatomico-clinical method which developed out of dissection throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe, the human was conceptualized as an object of science.²⁶⁸ "Man" is both subject and object of scientific knowledge; the body becomes a scientific object for an interpreting subject. But, although it is imaging that precipitated the convergence of

²⁶⁶ B.M. Stafford (1997), 46, 103, 170, 192.

²⁶⁷ B.M. Stafford (1997), 27.

²⁶⁸ M. Foucault (1973), 197,198.

science and technology,²⁶⁹ technology also advances the objectification of these subjects by science at the expense of subjectivity, even as it protects these same subjects from the ravages of internal invisible disease processes. As Irigaray asserts, science uses instruments in an attempt to free itself from the human “subject” and assume a mastery over the human body, the “object” of their study.²⁷⁰ Results are read in a lab or X-ray often without any human contact with the subject involved. There is no direct encounter with human flesh by most technicians; their judgement of the subject is mediated through the technology. This encourages the positioning of the subject as a medical object. It also glaringly thrusts the private body/private subject matter into the public arena where not only the doctor but a series of other technicians and “experts” study the private interiors of the patient. In doing so, the isolated body part is in danger of being fetishized. This is of particular consequence when viewing the female body already fetishized in medicine, art and popular culture.

The information garnered from these technologies is reputed to provide the reader with “true” and unbiased information about the human body. Yet this information obtained is never a neutral representation. It, too, is at the disposal of both technical manipulation and reader bias and every image reflects a history and convention of the anatomico-medical corpse. For example, even a person purportedly properly trained in the interpretation of the medical images may have problems interpreting an image which is grainy. And certain pre-existing ideas about the subject the reader possesses because

²⁶⁹ B.M. Stafford (1997), 10.

²⁷⁰ L. Irigaray (1985), 232.

of their knowledge of the patient's age, sex, previous medical history, etc., may influence the testing and the results. Medical experts do not live in a cultural vacuum. Waldby states, "...visual ordering is not a practice of re-presentation, a copying of the world as a picture, but rather a practice of perception, an interpretive relation..."²⁷¹ This leaves the reading open to personal and cultural biases. But there is another issue to consider: these technologies are not simply adjuncts to scientific knowledge but are what science often bases its knowledge upon. In other words, they are constitutive. "Norms" are identified and documented, placed into discourse. As a result, cultural biases become further entrenched in medico-scientific discourses.

The Microscope

The invention of the microscope indulged the Enlightenment appetite for investigating concealed depths. It was initially touted as an amusing technology which created optical illusions. But a principal Enlightenment philosophical project was the establishment of order. This undermined the microscope's credibility in a climate where the Neoclassical project emphasized the strict systematic examination of the previously invisible images and a division arose between pleasurable watching and rational observation. This division was epitomized in the microscope.²⁷² Microscopy was a scientific and aesthetic tool which evolved into a purely scientific implement and

²⁷¹ C. Waldby, 30.

²⁷² B.M. Stafford (1996), 146, 147, 169, 170.

popularized rational, detached and disembodied viewing of the human body. This scientific act of delving into the body in order to understand the mysteries of the universe was best suited to (male) "genius". The artists discussed here call for a return to hybrids between science/art, empirical/creative (cultural), biological/cultural, body/mind and a rejection of male genius.

The microscope, by its nature, subverts the known, stable body; boundaries are dissolved. But deep looking does not necessarily refute spectacle, even though, purportedly, it is the goal of science. The image of a stained and magnified slice of bodily tissue could evoke detachment and objectification, curiosity, repulsion or even aesthetic appreciation. (Re)appropriating the abject spectacle of the interior of the female body, though, restores humanity, rejects the cold objective gaze and the spectacle of the medico-scientific gaze. By probing deeper into the female corporeal interior and speaking to issues around the female body in anatomico-medical discourse, the known, stable signification of the female body becomes unstable, chaotic. What was thought to be clear and distinct societal knowledge about the female body is rendered indistinct. The same holds true for the microscope's technological descendants, the ultrasound, X-ray, MRI.

Because it is an instrument which fosters bodily fragmentation and abstraction, the microscope provides its user with a visual record of the "disintegration" of the human body.²⁷³ It would follow, then, that with this disintegration of the body comes disintegration of the boundaries between the interior and the exterior. The interior

²⁷³ L.Cartright, 82.

becomes visible through a microscope and this interior is fragmented and abstract. Postmodern works which strategically fragment the body, the medical object, also highlight the disintegration of boundaries of the female body. Geneviève Cadieux's Rubis (1993) (figure 25), a large scale photographic diptych of a woman juxtaposed next to a what looks like a stylized microscope image of blood cells, is a visualization of microscopic and postmodern corporeal disintegration. Her female body is fragmented both interiorly and on the surface in order to disrupt existing ideology around the female body. For Cadieux, what we "contain in our body is the question to be answered."²⁷⁴ And, indeed, it is the inside of the woman in Cadieux's photograph where Cadieux looks for answers. In this diptych, a microscopic image of blood cells is juxtaposed next to a nude female body, the corporeal interior next to the corporeal exterior. The image of the blood cells resembles an aesthetically pleasing abstract painting and the female body's pose is reminiscent of Ingrès objectified nude odalisques and other eroticized images from popular culture. But like Irigaray, Cadieux is miming the language of phallogocentric art, medicine and popular culture in order to subvert images of the female body. The fragmentation of the nude female body, in conjunction with the breakdown of the corporeal boundary to expose the woman's interior, refuses the objectification and fetishization of the female body in art, medicine and popular culture. The image enacts such a refusal by depicting an older woman, the artist's mother who has a history of cancer; this beautiful arrangement of cells are, in fact, diseased. Menace

²⁷⁴ Geneviève Cadieux. Interview with Curtis Collins, curator A Feminine Presence, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, June 14-November 1, 2000.

lurks behind beautiful images, the construction of the female body is threatened.

Donna Haraway argues that the immune system is pre-eminently a "twentieth century objective, a map drawn to guide recognition and misrecognition of self and other in the dialectics of "western biopolitics."²⁷⁵ In other words, the concept of the immune system was constructed for the purpose of maintaining the boundaries between self and other within the realm of the normal and pathological. It is, like other areas of medicine and medical research, historical and enmeshed in power relations. Cadieux's Rubis also, then, by purposely confounding the boundaries set up around discourses of what is "normal" and what is "diseased" or "pathological" in the female bio-medical body, collapses the boundaries of self and other together. Once again, the emergence of the female corporeal interior hails the emergence of the subject out of both an artistic and bio-medical object.

Xrays, CT scans and MRI's

The artists discussed here examine the relationship between the speaking female subject and the scientific object by exploiting the slippage between the internal and external boundaries which occur with biomedical technology. These technologies offer a simultaneous view of the inside and the outside. The body's boundaries are re-configured as the body's depth collapses onto the surface (of a flat screen). This slippage

²⁷⁵ Donna Haraway. "The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies: Determinations of Self in Immune System Discourse" in Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader, Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 1999), 206.

may be observed early on with the advent of the microscope, a bit later with the X-ray and more recently with the MRI. With the X-ray, CT scan, MRI technologies the body interior as private space is abolished without a need to dissect it at all. As a result, more than incisions, body orifices or dissections, these technologies call into question the corporeal boundaries, the distinction between the interior and exterior.

The X-ray was discovered in the late nineteenth century and is the basis for most subsequent twentieth century medical imaging technologies. As photographs, X-rays simultaneously view both the corporeal inside and the outside, they collapse surface into depth. The surface is lost in the image as the relation between depth and surface is reversed because the X-ray ruptures the distinction between inner and outer space.²⁷⁶ Therefore, the very boundaries of the body are re-configured. Thus, art which incorporates this technology may be extremely useful in subverting the inside/ outside, private/public and mind/body dialectic. The metonymic X-ray image, then, has proven strategically useful for feminist artists exploring issues around the female body.

a) X-rays

The X-ray has also been crucial in shaping public perceptions of life, health and the body. According to Lisa Cartright the X-ray is a "pivotal" site of investment for an exploration of medicine's knowledge, desire and power. It is also the site of "multiple paradigms of visibility" and multiple political agendas. The X-ray is an extreme example of a technology which renders the subject an object of a disciplinary gaze.²⁷⁷ It was a

²⁷⁶ C. Waldby, 92.

²⁷⁷ L.Cartright, 108.

valuable tool for the state control over the body which emerged in the eighteenth-century.²⁷⁸ Through X-rays, the female body in particular has been disciplined as the X-ray was utilized to target their bodies as objects of surveillance and to define a role for women as one of disease management for their families. In the first half of the twentieth century women appeared in public health media not as objects of medical concern but as bearers of contagions such as tuberculosis who, in turn, as caregivers in charge of family and community health, threatened the integrity of the family, community and nation.²⁷⁹ This form of imaging secured an affiliation of women with the moral. A correlation was drawn between female duties of a social nature and health and disease. Women were assigned responsibility for the physical and moral health of the family, yet the potential for disease was purported to lie hidden within the nurturing or seductive female body.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ In the eighteenth-century state control took the place of sovereign control. Executions were replaced by control over the "social" body in schools, hospitals, army barracks, poor houses, etc. Social initiatives included spatialization of disease, minute control over a person's activities, extensive medical record keeping of disease and the overseeing of hygiene by the state. Specialized hospitals for treatment of disease like TB emerged in conjunction with the rise in medical surveillance.

M. Foucault (1980), 55, 55, 167, 169, 170, 174, 177, 181.

M. Foucault (1979), 11, 144, 149, 190.

²⁷⁹ L. Cartright, 146, 147.

Michel Foucault in his Power/Knowledge theorizes that beginning in the eighteenth-century, the health of the family generally (and the health of the child specifically) became the moral responsibility of the family as the private ethics of good health became linked to the collective system of population hygiene.

M. Foucault (1980), 170, 172.

But it is worthwhile noting that Foucault, yet again, does not specifically address the role that society assigned women in this policing of the social body.

²⁸⁰ D. Petherbridge and L. Jordanova, 85.

The history of the X-ray, then, is not one of a neutral diagnostic technology but a sexualized one, one which marks the entry into the private interior of the body on a large social scale. But women and their bodies have not only been analyzed through X-rays but have contributed to the establishment of a popular X-ray culture.

A visualization of the role of women in policing the social body is made evident in Lisa Steele and Kim Tomczak's video Blood Records (1997) (figure 16). As noted previously, this work depicts a young woman's stay at a TB sanatorium and her quest for some measure of control over her body and voice. This video opens with archival educational footage of patronizing doctors attempting to educate 'ignorant' housewives about the evils of tuberculosis and the central role that reckless female sexuality plays in its airborne transmission. Suppression of female sexuality and permitting the medical gaze to penetrate the female body via X-rays were a women's familial duty, the narrator implies. The remainder of the video chronicles the control of the state as it confines Marie to "the San" where the X-ray plays a central role in the state directed medical gaze(s) upon her body and the imposition of pre-determined treatments upon her body.

b) The CT scan and the MRI

The questioning of selfhood is a cornerstone of the postmodern paradigm. The concept of a stable, unchanging self is further challenged with the slicing and fragmenting of the body by the imaging mapping in the descendants of the X-ray – the CT scan, the PET scan and the MRI. Therefore delving deep into the female interior vis-à-vis postmodern visual practices in conjunction with their investigation of medical

technologies undoubtedly advances an exploration of female identity/subjectivity. The artists discussed in this thesis are not advocating that women resist being imaged by these technologies which further mark the interior female body as a medical object different or inferior to the male norm, but are re-configuring these technologies so that women's subjectivity may emerge from within them. Geneviève Cadieux's installation The Shoe at Right Seems Much Too Large (1986) (figures 26a and 26b) addresses the relationship between the gaze of this new technology which probes the body to unprecedented depths. It is composed of a pair of eyes, a gaze, in a box projected into space confronting a tomogram of the female skeletal system juxtaposed next to a silhouette in high heels. This is seemingly a medical gaze directed at a woman's body vis-à-vis its use of medical technology, instruments of knowledge. Though the gaze is firmly centred on the other two images, it is disrupted by undulating waves. It is also disrupted by the fragmentation of the woman's body into two segments – its skeleton and its corporeal silhouette. The implication is that this unprecedented vision aimed at the female body through the use of scientific technology is removed from the reality of feminine experience. Although it should ostensibly provide technologists with information about the female body, it is bound up in masculinist knowledge systems which are, in fact, limiting and which fail to acknowledge female subjectivity and objectify the female body on an unprecedented level. The silhouette with its absent features speaks to absent female identity within the masculinist medical discourse. Cadieux's work is, at the same time, about rejuvenation and the release of female

subjectivity, a subjectivity which is not absent but inside of the discourse. Hints that this feminine identity manages to emerge and assert itself is evidenced by the high heeled shoes. As the relationship between the outside/inside boundary collapses, so does the relationship between the object/subject.

Louise K. Wilson's 1995 performative installation entitled Possessed (figures 27a, 27b) depicts a couch above which is positioned a screen projecting an MRI. This couch, reminiscent of both a nineteenth century fainting couch and Freud's psychoanalysis couch, is for a member of the viewing audience to lie down and contemplate the image. As such, the image projected becomes an image of their corporeal and psychical interior.

In assuming this position on the couch, the viewer becomes the subject of the piece. Like Irigaray, Wilson questions the active male/passive female binary of phallogocentrism, in particular the influence of Freud's ideas. The performative nature of the piece implies that the subject actively and willingly assumes the subject position and, perhaps, uses this subject position to question the visual culture of medical science and how its resultant knowledge marks the female body. By lying on the couch the female subject assumes an active role (not the passive role that this form of couch implies) in the formation of her subjectivity. This belies the historically passive role she and her body has played within society and within psycho-medical discourse.²⁸¹ The woman on this new interactive couch is a speaking subject who exerts control over and questions

²⁸¹ The interactive role of a male participant, of course, does not effectuate the same deconstruction of the active/passive binary.

the power of the image – the phallogocentric image generally and the medical image specifically – and its role in the formation of ideas around the female body. The active male/passive female boundary is deconstructed and refused.

IV Conclusion

Like anatomico-medicine's traditional drive to visualize the invisible, the intent of the penetration of the female body by these artists was to make the invisible corporeal visible in order to expose the phallogocentrism concealed within Western masculinist science. They do this by engaging science from *within*, by mimicing images of the female body in anatomy and medicine. They penetrate and occupy the interior of the female body in order to penetrate and occupy the patriarchal scientific discourse. They choose to penetrate, (re)frame, (re)appropriate and (re)deploy the images and the discourses rather than reject them outright. Afterall, it is "active engagement", that according to Kim Sawchuk, "opens discourse."²⁸²

Art (especially postmodern feminist art) is well suited to Grosz's feminist project which rejects the mind/body dichotomy. Equally well suited to feminist artistic production are the writings of Irigaray, Kristeva and Grosz, focussed as they are on interiors and interiority. In order to penetrate phallogocentric discourse, the work of the artists discussed in this thesis, though primarily visually driven, also privilege sensations such as touch and smell which conjure up images of the leaky, mucous-filled bodies of

²⁸² K. Sawchuk, 21.

Kristeva and Irigaray. As such, like a Mobius strip, the boundaries of inside/outside are transgressed and the binaries of body/mind refuted and a female subject emerges from phallogocentric anatomico-medical language systems.

CONCLUSION:

Being a female is not simply a biological fact, but is enmeshed in a network of cultural codes and power relations. Many feminists feel that anatomico-clinical discourse is but one patriarchal discourse which has exercised a disproportionate degree of control over women's bodies. This power extends from control over the direct medical care of their bodies to images of their bodies which inform our socio-cultural perceptions of the female body or the feminine. However, these perceptions are not necessary nor are they static. The aim of this thesis has been to acknowledge that both academic feminist writing and feminist art practices have been instrumental in exposing and refusing the phallogocentric operations within anatomico-medical depictions of the female body. It has also been to propose an alternative, more fluid, conception of the female body within this masculinist discourse.

This thesis identifies the female body as *the* site for the initiation of a dialogue on science's role within culture and formulation of our ideas of the female body or what it means to be female. Informed by art, science, history, philosophy and psychology, the women theorists and artists in this thesis are instituting a corporeal protest, a way of re-imagining the female body. They offer another way of seeing which challenges the patriarchal gaze of science and art. For these artists, exploring the interior space of the female body offers the best vehicle for this protest. From this interior space, the repressed feminine in phallogocentric knowledge systems is released, the signification of

the female body altered.

As the sexual difference or abjection is written across the female body and filtered through the Mobius strip model, the ideas of Irigaray, Kristeva and Grosz are made manifest in the works by the women artists in this thesis. Just as Kristeva and Irigaray use bodily fluids to ground their theories, referencing the corporeal is a necessary starting point for an elucidation of Grosz's imaginary Mobius strip body. Through their art these artists attempt to engage the interior of the female body with medicine on medicine's own terms. In the process they refute the mind/body dualism (and all its associated corollaries) which evolved out of the Cartesian and Enlightenment paradigm and which continues to dominate discourse even today. As the literal borders between the corporeal interior and exterior collapse, so do the metaphorical borders. It is in these patently material renderings of the female body that the mind, soul and subject becomes inseparable from the corporeal. The result is that the object of medicine becomes a speaking subject.

The art in this thesis is not only *influenced* by theory, but may be said to be a *producer* of theory. Because art is not simply part of social production, but is itself productive, these works are capable of challenging social discourse. But while these artists challenge the masculinist discourse of science but they don't place themselves outside of it. As they enter the female body as an artist, they are also entering the scientific discourse. The penetration of the inside of the female body is a strategy of occupation whose purpose is to identify and reject binaries which position women as inferior. Engaging science from within its own parameters cultivates social change. The

point is not that imaging of the female body by science and medicine exerts power over women and their bodies and, as such, women should resist being imaged.²⁸³ It is that women should actively re-configure or re-frame these images because they have been endowed with constitutional power. Changing these images, then, (re)constitutes the signification of the female body.

As notions of the inside and outside morph into each other, so do notions of the subject and object. Women's bodies no longer exist simply as objects of science, art and culture, but as subjects of these same discourses. This subject/object collapse is important within this paradigm of freedom from binaries so that women are able resist their objectification by medical and cultural discourse. But it also provides a model which may explain how it is that many women enjoy their role as a sexual object or how they might even be implicit in their own objectification within patriarchal discourse.

This (re)invisioning of the female body generates identities and subjectivities for women which are multiple and fluid. Speaking from a subject position, it enables these women to reject and invert both the medical and the artistic gazes invested in representations of their bodies by science, art and popular culture. In the process, a new body and new definition(s) of "woman" is permitted to emerge. It does not offer the "true" definition of "woman", but offers a multiplicity of possibilities for the female body and female identity. Instead, these images are intended to generate a discussion, engage the viewer in a dialogue.

Re-politicizing the body makes patent the masculinist ideology hidden in

²⁸³ L. Cartright, 170.

language. The concern, though, is that when the female corporeal is (re)appropriated, it may simply re-instate the relations of power which historically have equated woman with the body (the natural), the inferior portion of the hierarchical binary of the body/mind. A strategy of simple inversion would merely demonstrate difference for difference's sake, not re-configure the body politic.

If language constructs our ideas of the feminine, then naming and depicting the feminine (including the material) becomes necessary to produce an alternative to phallogocentric discourse and novel female subjectivity(ies). This thesis demonstrates that it is the writing or the depiction of the interior of the female body (in conjunction with postmodern artistic strategies) which prevents a collapse into gender difference. The interior female body makes reference to the history of the mind/body dialectic (and all its associated binaries), and its positioning of women and their bodies as inferior to men's. It is, therefore, an appropriate space with which to challenge these binaries.

It may seem paradoxical to argue against binaries and then confirm them first by selecting works based on gender and, second, by selecting works which depict the female interior. But it was not done in order to rewrite history nor to insert women into historical or contemporary discourse. It was intended, instead, to reveal and subvert power relations which are inherent and 'naturalized' within those masculinist medico-scientific knowledge systems which exercise control over the representation of the female body:

In answer to the first concern, although this thesis does not purport to reflect all

the subjectivities of 'Woman', it does recognize that the female experience with science is divided along the lines of race, class and culture. There is no single position from which science can be evaluated. Yet gender differences continue to be important in virtually all cultures, classes, races. They are fundamental to social organization and feminine construction and so need to be addressed and employed. And these artists *are* female and traces of their negotiation of this experience invariably informs their works.

We must, then, invoke binaries from a feminine perspective to challenge those binaries instituted by masculinist discourse. If it is not the female subject who provides the model for the politics of the female body, then what does? If no subject is chosen, how can the ontology be changed? In this thesis the theorists and artists are writing sexual difference more than gender difference, where this sexual difference does not refer to the body in the biological, is not equivalent to material differences. It is, instead, how differences have been practised across the female body. Writing sexual difference is not essentialist because it recognizes that there are differences within each sex as well as between them.²⁸⁴ Judith Butler warns that although it is important to recognize the differences and determine how it is that certain bodies were marginalized in the first

²⁸⁴ I agree with Naomi Schor who cautions that essentialism not be equated with universalism. While essentialist theories can, nonetheless, account for certain differences between women informed by race, class, sexuality, etc., universalism suggests a commonality between women at all times. There are many essentialisms (French feminist, U.S. feminist, heterosexual, homosexual, etc.)

N. Schor, 3, 12, 46.

Both Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak call for a "strategic essentialism" which they feel is necessary in order to assert feminism's political demands, regardless of whether women primarily identify themselves as "woman", "queer", "black", etc.

J. Butler (1993), 218, 219.

N. Schor, 14.

place, if we were to strive to include all marginal or excluded position within a given discourse, it might be in danger of actually erasing signs of difference.²⁸⁵

In answer to the second concern, depictions of the inside of the female body does not reaffirm the inside/outside binary. Instead, they merge until they are indistinguishable. Opening the female body creates an entity whose inside is outside, private is public. As such, the natural medical object is also the cultural subject. When the interior, the traditional seat of the mind, becomes also exterior, the mind and body become inseparable. The Cartesian binaries are rendered incomplete. This interior of the female body represents both sides of the Mobius strip and, even though one side may dominate (as it often does in real life), it is irreducible to one side or the other.

But can artistic depictions of the inside of the female body actually act as agents of social change? The likelihood of this happening is up for debate, but it certainly is not inconceivable. Afterall, artistic tropes have previously (especially in the Enlightenment) played a role in the course that anatomico-medicine has taken. Anatomical illustrators, influenced by these tropes, both created and reiterated patriarchal stereotypes of the female body. Eventually the works of these illustrators came to drive the act of dissection itself.²⁸⁶ Maybe these 'new' dissections can steer the course that science medicine takes and create a new ontology for the female body within

²⁸⁵ J. Butler (1993), 53.

²⁸⁶ See B.M. Stafford (1996), B.M. Stafford (1991), J. Sawday (1995) and D. Petherbridge and L. Jordanova (1997) for a detailed description of the intersection of art and anatomical medicine.

them.

I would like to conclude this thesis with a comment and by posing questions about the relationship of technology and the body. As new technologies (especially virtual technologies) evolve at breakneck speed and our bodies are constantly engaging with them, our ideas of the corporeal must change. The definition of the 'body' itself is in jeopardy, as the distinctions between body and non-body are destabilized with technology. The Virtual Human Project (VHP), for example, makes this clear. It demonstrates that the biological is the most negotiable of entities. It makes all body parts thoroughly accessible to the viewer in multiple points of view and therefore is what Catherine Waldby calls an "utterly accessible and mastered form of embodiment."²⁸⁷ The virtual human is open to transformation by the viewer where the user is both audience and anatomist, and seems to erase the anatomico-medicine's traditional reliance on the model of the corpse. It contributes to the idea of the human body as synthetic and a product of technology as well as biological and cultural discourses.²⁸⁸ It blurs the limits to a greater degree than has ever before been seen.

How, then, does this new form of the body fit in with the model proposed by Grosz, Irigaray and Kristeva? Do we need a different model for analyzing the relationship between gender and technology than what was described within this thesis? What effect will this form of extreme corporeal control take in the female body and how will it impact patriarchal conceptions of this body? If the image of the body is

²⁸⁷ C. Waldby, 8.

²⁸⁸ C. Waldby, 111,158.

transformable by the viewer, will women's bodies be judged even more harshly against the masculinist ideal and will this technology further contribute to the historical positioning of their bodies as inferior?²⁸⁹ As technology continues to be a male dominated discipline, will phallogocentrism control the production of images of the female body more than ever before? It remains to be seen just what effect burgeoning technological innovations will have on women and their bodies.

²⁸⁹ Waldby makes the claim that male VHP is used as the 'norm' while the female VHP is used primarily for the study of her reproductive system.

C. Waldby, 17

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1

Excised vagina from Vesalius
De Humani Corporis Fabrica
1543

Figure 2

The Fifth Plate of the Muscles
1539-41, woodcut, from the portfolio *Andreae Vesalii Bruxellensis Icones Anatomicæ*

Figure 3

Nicolas Beatrizet
La anatomia del corpo humano
1589

Figure 4

Flowering foetus from Spigelius,
De formato foeto
1627

Figure 5

Anatomical Charts

2003, Candent Anatomy Products Catalog.

Display of posters, 20" x 26" available in various formats

Figure 6

Pam Hall

Female Action Verbs: Fragments From a Reconstructed Gynaeopedia
1995, Photo courtesy of Carleton University Art Gallery

Figure 7

Möbius Strip

http://www.questacon.edu.au/html/mobius_strip.html
Downloaded 2004, actual size

Figure 8a

Pam Hall

New Readings in Female Anatomy

Photo courtesy of Carleton University Art Gallery

Figure 8b

Pam Hall

New Readings in Female Anatomy (detail)

Photo courtesy of Carleton University Art Gallery

Figure 9a

Jana Sterbak

Vanitas Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic, (cat. no. 8)

From the book Jana Sterbak: States of Being
1987, flank steak. Dimensions vary daily

Figure 9b

Jana Sterbak

Vanitas Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic, (cat. no. 8)

From the book Jana Sterbak: States of Being
1987, flank steak. Dimensions vary daily

Figure 10

Shelagh Keely

Flesh of the Body

1990, wax, pigment, oil stick on steel. 118" x 330"

<http://207.188.95.49/non-active/agnyskeele.htm>

Figure 11

Jana Sterbak

Perspiration: Olfactory Portrait

From the book Jana Sterbak

1995, Glass bottle, reconstituted human sweat

Height: 10" (25.4cm), Diameter: 6" (15.2cm)

Figure 12a

Regan Morris

Rubies and Pearls

From the book RX: Taking Our Medicine

1995, acrylic tap heads, wax and paint

installation size variable, approximately: 244 x 366 x 5

Figure 12b

Regan Morris

Rubies and Pearls (detail)

From the book RX: Taking Our Medicine

1995, acrylic tap heads, wax and paint

installation size variable, approximately: 244 x 366 x 5

Figure 13

Geneviève Cadieux
Trou de Mémoire, la beauté inattendue
From Canada XLIV Biennale di Venezia Geneviève Cadieux
1988, colour photographic enlargement, wood, burnished mirror
208 x 472 x 14 cm

Figure 14

Nell Tenhaaf
Machines for Evolving
1995, six r3 colour photographs, each 23.5 x 18.7 cm
<http://www.digibodies.org/works/images/tenhaaf1.jpg>

Figure 15

Pam Hall

Drawing on the Body

1999, <http://www.med.mun.ca/artistinresidence/pages/body1.htm>

Figure 16

Lisa Steele and Kim Tomczak

From the book The Blood Records Written and Annotated: Steele and Tomczak
1987, Still from *Blood Records*

Figure 17

Geneviève Cadieux
La Voie lactée

From the book Geneviève Cadieux

1992, Panneau lumineux, Boîtier d'aluminium, procédé informatisé d'impression par jet d'encre sur toile
translucide et flexible imprimée des deux côtés, 1/2. 183 x 457 cm

Figure 18

Diana Thorneycroft
Untitled (Speculum)

From the book Diana Thorneycroft: The Body, Its Lessons in Camouflage
1997

Figure 19

Pam Hall

Eye of the Beholder

1997, <http://www.med.mun.ca/artistinresidence/pages/gallery6.htm>

Figure 20

Shelagh Keely

Gestures of the Body/Gestures of the Site

1985, pigment in was, oil pastel and graphite on wove paper, 96.3 x 185.1 cm each (approx)

Photo courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada

Figure 21a

Jana Sterbak
Malevolent Heart (Gift),
From the book Jana Sterbak: States of Being
1979-82, silver gelatin print,
detail from *Golem: Objects as Sensations* (cat. No. 2), 32.8 x 24.3 cm

Figure 21b

Jana Sterbak
Hearts Series,
From the book Jana Sterbak: States of Being
detail from *Golem: Objects as Sensations* (cat. No. 2), 32.8 x 24.3 cm

Figure 22

Pam Hall

Female Action Verbs: Fragments From a Reconstructed Gynaepedia
1995, photo courtesy of Carleton University Art Gallery

Figure 23

Sarah Maloney

Circulatory System (detail)

From the book Sarah Maloney: Corpus
1998-1999, embroidered cotton on silk, 304.8 x 111.8 cm

Figure 24

Sarah Maloney
Brain

From the book Sarah Maloney: Corpus
1994, knitted cotton, metal post, wooden base, 35.6 x 35.6 x 152.4 cm

Figure 25

Geneviève Cadieux
Rubis

1993, colour photograph on plexiglass sheet, 268.6 cm x 358.8 cm
<http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/content/full/163/7/866>

Figure 26a

Geneviève Cadieux

The Shoe at Right Seems Much Too Large

From Canada XLIV Biennale di Venezia. Geneviève Cadieux

1986, screen lamp, partial view of the installation

wood, acrylic, display transparency, ventilator, metal, halogen lamp, acetate, gold pigment,
2.43 x 3.04 x 1.82 m

Figure 26b

Geneviève Cadieux

The Shoe at Right Seems Much Too Large

From Canada XLIV Biennale di Venezia. Geneviève Cadieux

1986, light boxes, partial view of the installation

wood, acrylic, display transparency, fluorescent lights, transformers
one box of 282 x 101 x 25.4 cm and another of 282 x 168 x 25.4 cm

Figure 27a

Louise Wilson
Possessed
From the book RX: Taking Our Medicine
1995, mixed media with video
installation size variable, approximately: 305 x 152 x 213

Figure 27b

Louise Wilson,
Possessed (detail)
From the book RX: Taking Our Medicine
1995, mixed media with video
installation size variable, approximately: 305 x 152 x 213

LIST OF WORKS

De Humani Corporis Fabrica, 1543

Excised vagina from Vesalius

From Jonathan Sawday. The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture, (New York: Routledge, 1996).

The Fifth Plate of the Muscles, 1539-49

Woodcut, from the portfolio of *Andreae Vesalii Bruxellensis Icones Anatomicæ*, Bremer Press, Munich, for the New York Academy of Medicine and the University of Munich
Image from William A. Ewing. Inside Information: Imaging the Human Body, (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1996).

La anatomia del corpo humano, 1589

Nicolas Beatrizet

From Ludmilla Jordanova and Deanna Petherbridge. The Quick and the Dead: Artists and Anatomy, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

De formato foeto, 1627

Flowering foetus from Spigelius,

From Jonathan Sawday. The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture, (New York: Routledge, 1996).

Anatomical Charts, 2003

From Candent Anatomy Products Catalog, Toronto

Display of posters, 20" x 26" available in various formats

Female Action Verbs: Fragments From a Reconstructed Gynaecopedia, 1995

Pam Hall

Photo courtesy of Carleton University Art Gallery

Mobius

Questacon web site

From http://www.questacon.edu.au/html/mobius_strip.html

New Readings in Female Anatomy, 2002

Pam Hall

Photo courtesy of Carleton University Art Gallery

Vanitas Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic, 1987

Jana Sterbak

Flank steak. Dimensions vary daily

From Diana Nemiroff. Jana Sterbak: States of Being, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1991).

Flesh of the Body, 1990

Shelagh Keely

Wax, pigment, oil stick on steel. 118" x 330"

From the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art web site

<http://207.188.95.49/non-active/agny/skeeley.htm>

Perspiration: Olfactory Portrait, 1995

Jana Sterbak

Glass bottle, reconstituted human sweat

Height: 10" (25.4cm), Diameter: 6" (15.2cm)

From Amanda Cruz. [Jana Sterbak](#), (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998).

Rubies and Pearls, 1995

Regan Morris

Acrylic tap heads, wax and paint

Installation size variable, approximately: 244 x 366 x 5

From Jan Allen and Kim Sawchuk. [RX: Taking Our Medicine](#), (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1995).

Trou de Mémoire, la beauté inattendue, 1988

Geneviève Cadieux

Colour photographic enlargement, wood, burnished mirror, 208 x 472 x 14 cm

From Canada XLIV Biennale di Venezia [Geneviève Cadieux](#), 1990.

Machines for Evolving, 1995

Nell Tenhaaf

Six r3 colour photographs, each 23.5 x 18.7 cm

From the web site Digitized Bodies-Virtual Spectacles

<http://www.digibodies.org/works/images/tenhaaf1.jpg>

Drawing on the Body, 1999

Pam Hall

Digital photograph

From the web site for Memorial University of Newfoundland

<http://www.med.mun.ca/artistinresidence/pages/body1.htm>

Still from Blood Records, 1987

Lisa Steele and Kim Tomczak

From Sue Ditta, Mike Holbloom and Johanne Lamoureux. [The Blood Records Written and Annotated: Steele and Tomczak](#), (Oakville, Ontario: Oakville Galleries, 1999).

La Voie lactée, 1992

Geneviève Cadieux

1992, Panneau lumineux, Boîtier d'aluminium, procédé informatisé d'impression par jet d'encre sur toile translucide et flexible imprimée des deux côtés, ½. 183 x 457 cm

From Charles Godmer. Geneviève Cadieux, (Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 31 Mai- 30 Mai, 1993).

Untitled (Speculum) 1997

Diana Thorneycroft

From Meeka Walsh. Diana Thorneycroft: The Body, Its Lessons in Camouflage, (Winnipeg: Bain and Cox, 2000).

Eye of the Beholder, 1997

Pam Hall,

From the web site for Memorial University of Newfoundland

<http://www.med.mun.ca/artistinresidence/pages/gallery6.htm>

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Detail from *Golem: Objects as Sensations* (cat. No. 2), 32.8 x 24.3 cm

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Pam Hall

Photo courtesy of Carleton University Art Gallery

Circulatory System, 1998-1999

Sarah Maloney

Embroidered cotton on silk, 304.8 x 111.8 cm

From Curtis Joseph Collins. Sarah Maloney: Corpus, (The Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 31 January-14 April, 1999).

Brain, 1994

Sarah Maloney

Knitted cotton, metal post, wooden base, 35.6 x 35.6 x 152.4 cm

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Colour photograph on plexiglass sheet, 268.6 cm x 358.8 cm

From the web site of the Canadian Medical Association Journal

<http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/content/full/163/7/866>

The Shoe at Right Seems Much Too Large, 1986

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Light boxes, wood, acrylic, display transparency, fluorescent lights, transformers

one box of 282 x 101 x 25.4 cm and another of 282 x 168 x 25.4 cm

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Possessed, 1995

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Mixed media with video

Installation size variable, approximately: 305 x 152 x 213

From Jan Allen and Kim Sawchuk. RX: Taking Our Medicine, (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1995).

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