

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Culture, Consumption and Desire:
or the perversion of pink, plastic shoes

by

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A PAPER

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ART

CALGARY, ALBERTA

AUGUST, 1999

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0-612-49710-0

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Abstract

Culture, Consumption and Desire: or the perversion of pink, plastic shoes explores the theoretical basis of my studio practice following a deconstructive feminist perspective. Section I examines the commodification of gender by investigating the connections between common cultural signifiers, the societal imaginary and gender as a consumer product. This examination entails a discussion on sexual currency within the social system of exchange and the sexual division of labour within capitalism. Section II examines the construction of the gendered body within the social contract and within the context of a male-gaze oriented society which privileges a certain spectacle-spectator relationship. Section III explores the relationship between information, technology and identity. Central to this exploration is a debate on the virtual and electronic body infringing on the organic, the possible implications of such an infringement and how such a causal relationship alters the formation of identity.

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Introduction

Sitting in the Wrong Stall: from Beuys to de Beauvoir

...in a university, there is an interdisciplinary relation between all fields of human activity, and this interdisciplinary relation is capable of developing a new concept of art...because it's doubtful that artists will do so. Most of them - I'd say about 99% - have an interest in perpetuating the traditional concept of art for selfish reasons: because it suits the style of their work, for instance, or for financial advantage.¹

- Joseph Beuys

When fingers touch materials and our minds and bodies follow in an effort to manipulate them, or release them, into a form of expression, we may say that art has been created. The interference of our material bodies in the progress and evolution of these preexisting entities can be as minute or as involved as we choose. It can simply be our editing of the body from its previous context into a new one, the form itself unaltered, that creates this expression. It may simply be the act of paying attention to it that merits its transformation to what we can now label as "art." In a formal context, there is much that we can appreciate from the altered and manipulated material - through the residual evidence of the body which "interfered" in its evolution. We trace the brush stroke, the chisel mark, the frayed cloth, the pencil mark, the hand-coloured photograph with our eye and derive a sense of pleasure and assurance from it - "we are looking at art" we can think to

¹ Frans Haks, "Interview with Joseph Beuys," in David Thistlewood ed., *Joseph Beuys: Diverging Critiques* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995) p. 52.

ourselves. Something above and beyond a utilitarian object has been created here, through which we can pause and appreciate the production of culture and the mysteries of the human soul. Material has been reified and transformed into what the art historical canon deems as “art.”

Is this the only function that art serves within our society? By meeting formal and compositional requirements, and remaining within a coherent thematic context, can an “artist” now sit back and relax and take pride in her/his work? This may be an overly simplified question which points to an overly simplified answer, but in the current context of an art world which produces for a very select audience and mainly exhibits in highly specialized venues, what role does the artist play? What role should she play? In the course of the past two years, these questions have come to the forefront of my mind as I’ve increasingly produced politically-based works which have not deemed formal issues as their primary concern. The resultant feedback has been either a glossing over of my investigations as something that has “been done” and, hence, not even worth giving the attention to decipher its contents, or a criticism for using art as an ideological vehicle. So if not to embody the ideologies (or to challenge the ideologies) of our day, what purpose should art serve? And is “art” and “artist” even appropriate terminology for the cultural producers of our time?

In labouring over my own studio work and art theoretical pursuits, I have formulated that my own answer to this is no, investigating formal requirements is not enough, and the “artist” should be able to do more than produce objects for commercial consumption. The notion of the artist isolated in his studio, creating images to appease his tortured soul is a very romantic one and highly bourgeois. I have come to understand during the course of the MFA program that my priorities lie not in perpetuating a commodity-based art market but in using the platform of the art gallery as a forum to investigate the art historical canon in which I find myself, and its historical marginalization and negation of the person that I embody. That embodiment is as a woman artist of bi-racial origin. Let me clarify that I am not on a crusade to gain recognition for all past women artists that have been forgotten in the pages of the history books - that would be a life-long task that would leave me no time for my own art

practice. But I am unable to operate within this system as if ignorant of my positioning, and to feel satisfied in the creation of aesthetically-pleasing images. That is a process which rings hollow for me and which I would equate with condoning the patriarchal and misogynist practices that have been common place within centuries of art-production.

Having said all of that, what then is my purpose within my art practice? I believe that all art is autobiographical *to an extent* ; it is hardly possible to divorce yourself from such an involved process. I would not label my own art as autobiographical, however, but it does involve an affirmation of self. Current feminist and postmodern theory often refers to the *negation* of woman, the *production* of woman, the *masquerade* of woman. I feel that what is most affirmative for my being is to peel away the layers that “construct” woman within society. Obviously, I am not referring to her physiological construction but a sociological one. It is through sifting through all of these individual layers that I am able to gain sight of where I have come from and how the greater cultural context has influenced my positioning within art history and society. Thus, it is not simply an intellectual pursuit which I am following in my investigation of gender construction and commodification, it is a process which helps me define “self.” It is doubtful if one can ever totally separate their socialization from their “core” self, but in naming the processes and identifying the factors which are not the essentialist, innate phenomena perpetuated by a polarized gender discourse, we can decipher how self has developed into its present conception. Just as these processes of socialization can be deconstructed, so then can the systemic hierarchy within art production, and the gender-assignments within patriarchy.

Urinals and high heels - situating the artist

Sometimes, when I'm sitting in a public washroom, I'll experience this momentary panic that I've entered the wrong one. That, all of a sudden, as I gaze at the graffiti on the stall door, I've come to my senses and realize that the sign on the door displayed a stick man *without* a skirt and that I was just in too much of a daze to recognize it until now. Then I'll think that some man is about to burst in to the washroom and break down the door of

the stall to point out my error. A punishment then ensues that is nothing short of being displayed on the town square as a guillotine blade glistens in the background. Then I remember that I haven't seen any urinals. I see that another pair of shoes has settled in next to me and that they are high heels. I am safe, I think, at least until the next time I need to use a public washroom.²

In the past two years my art practice can best be described as residing within such an ambiguous bathroom stall - or rather within the frame of mind which accompanies the perceived state of displacement that comes with rethinking one's place within their environment. The initial focus of my work (post-1995) was in reifying the mundane, elevating domestic ritual, and reexamining personal and communal history through such devices. In retrospect, this act served not only to imbue everyday transactions (especially those revolving around the stereotypical domain of "woman," i.e. the home) with introspection, but to highlight the gendered nature of these transactions. However, unbeknownst to me, I was also romanticizing the domestic realm and the location of women within it. The contradictory devices of iconicizing objects associated with the cultural / stereotypical domain of the feminine and, in a lukewarm fashion, criticizing the historical limitations of women within this realm, served to neutralize both and to perpetuate traditional associations within these signifiers.

In the 1998 Little Gallery piece "Angel on the Kitchen Floor," I was once again engaged in this discourse of reifying the mundane (kitchen, floor, chair) while attempting to assign a dissonant visual experience to it. Through the sound piece which accompanied the sculptural installation (of a gridded and illuminated floor of tiled clouds), the work alluded to the suffocation accompanying this aestheticized setting by suggesting a narrative of sexual violence, creating a dissociative state (head in the clouds). Partially due to the technical difficulties which detracted from its overall ability to communicate the narrative, "Angel on the Kitchen Floor" once again fell into this idea of romanticizing oppression - whether it be ideological or physical. Although the intent was to marry a seductive facade with a disturbing situation and expose the contradictory process of how pain may instigate beauty and both can be experienced simultaneously, the overall effect

² Anne Marie Nakagawa, "The Taste of Air," unpublished manuscript, 1998.

of the various abstract elements was to distil a misogynist act and make it palatable. Formally speaking, the piece operated successfully on many levels but politically, it was a confused jumble of contradictions.

This is where the bathroom syndrome is an appropriate analogy: engaging in a very overtly feminist discourse within my academic pursuits, at the time of “Angel on the Kitchen Floor” I was unable to investigate my intellectual queries within my studio practice. But I propose the reverse scenario for this predicament: I found myself in a bathroom *full* of urinals, unable to find a stall with a closing door. In the introduction of Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body, Jana Sawicki writes:

We must continually ask ourselves why we write. What do we hope to achieve through our writing? This is an especially important question for academic feminists since there are so many pressures to write without regard for audience or purpose, and to privilege our conversations with men and their traditions... How many choices of feminists in the academy are influenced by the fact that surviving in them has meant getting powerful men to listen? For whom do we write as feminist intellectuals? Why do we choose one discourse over another?³

If we substitute the word “write” with “art-making,” a very similar scenario can be applied to those women practising in a feminist art vein. By quoting Sawicki, I am not simply pointing out the under-representation of women in the academy, but the systematic pervasiveness of patriarchal absolutes within this structure. I found myself (and continue to find myself) inadvertently engaged within these absolutes, feeling sheltered from criticism as long as I confined my feminist ideology within the crisp pages of my writing and did not air my concerns within the all too visible forum of my studio practice. By diluting my ideological concerns and masking them in a highly aestheticized finished product, I felt safe and convinced myself that I was accessing a wider audience. As well, I believed that I was avoiding the classification and marginalization of “feminist artist” while still loosely aligning myself with the “sisterhood.”

I continue to believe that this earlier work had a wider audience but do not necessarily consider this an indicator of its success. For who was the audience I was accessing and what were they getting from my work? This whole notion of intended

³ Jana Sawicki, *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body*, (New York: Routledge Press, 1991) p.2.

audience has played a large role in rethinking my approach to my studio practice. For, as Sawicki points out, does accessing those in positions of power connote success for a marginalized voice or simply conformity? On another level, by practising within a vein which appeals to a larger viewing public (i.e.: representational landscape painting) is one operating outside of an elitist fine art discourse and creating a more “democratic” art form? What I have concluded is that a visual artist working within a gallery or museum setting is already operating within a very isolated social milieu - to transcend that, one would have to work in television - thus, I feel justified in creating for a specific audience, one able to engage in a feminist art discourse.

As for why I even continue to engage in a visual art practice when I am so concerned with communicating a feminist problematic, I defer to Joseph Beuys. Of his “The Secret Block” drawings, which he exhibited in Oxford, he said:

At first glance the drawings contain imaginary shapes that don't convey a political meaning - at least, not directly, in such a way that people might say 'This picture has this or that political meaning.' That would be a very bad thing, because there would be no need for art. *If ideas alone were important, sounds, music, dance, acting would be quite superfluous!* (italics mine) Everything could be verbalized on a purely intellectual plane with ideas.⁴

Similarly, I believe that I am contributing to the production of “culture,” and my interest is in communicating my investigation of self and gender on a plane which engages not only the intellect but also the sensory. At the risk of contradicting myself, I believe that when the sensory is involved, a potential audience first enters an idea emotionally and viscerally, then translates this information intellectually. What this allows is a bypassing of initial censorship, and the possibility for the audience to engage with these ideas despite their intellectual biases. As Mary Whitford describes, the generation of symbols is “ a collective process which does not necessarily depend on the rational intellect; one can be moved by images that one does not understand.”⁵ Indeed, the strength of visual art is to appeal to this “unprogrammed” area of the mind which may experience the unimaginable - because it has yet to exist. In a sense, it creates the possibility of a new

⁴ Haks, p .57.

⁵ Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1991) p. 189.

synthesis of symbolic exchange.

“Metramorphosis” - speaking while sliding

In what follows, I will attempt to delineate the theoretical basis of my studio practice by investigating the following areas: 1) the representation of gender within Western patriarchy; 2) the signification of the female body and its resultant positioning within late capitalism; 3) the concept of *body* as a socio-cultural artifact which is “constructed” by a naturalised belief system within a given culture; 4) the role of power and technology within such a construction; and 5) the process by which identity is transmitted (and created) within a post-structuralist information-based society . Central to this discussion will be the exploration of gender as that which can possibly be constructed upon a neutral / passive body, the historical specificity of the notion of “sex” as identity, and the investment of this culturally and historically specific society in maintaining its gender divisions.

While I will attempt to adhere to a comprehensible line of reasoning, my approach to this investigation will include less conventional forms of writing that dip into the realm of fiction and creative writing. My first foray into the above subjects takes the form of a faux interview between myself and B. Doll, humour and irony playing a big part in this section. My desire, in deviating from a conventional format in this paper, is to operate within a mode of communication which does not emulate the traditional academic canon which I am criticizing. If I address patriarchy and the academy, much as Jana Sawicki does in questioning why academic feminists write without regard for audience, then I must also address the modes of communication which uphold these systems. Thus, it not only seems hypocritical, but limiting, to me to regurgitate information in a linear fashion while all the while assuming a singular omnipotent and authoritative voice. Although I realize that it is impossible for me to divorce myself from existing philosophical discourses, in assuming a more fluid voice, it is my hope to somewhat bypass the canonical notion of absolutes.

In “Matrix and Metramorphosis”, Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger writes of a descriptive process which she coins *metramorphosis*.⁶ This is a system which denies polar opposition and dualism, where there is a constant shifting of borderlines and thresholds between being and absence, I and non-I. The metramorphic consciousness “has no centre, cannot hold a fixed gaze - or, if it has a centre, constantly slides to the borderline, to the margins. Its gaze escapes the margins and returns to the margins. Through this process the limits, borderlines, and thresholds conceived are continually transgressed or dissolved, thus allowing the creation of new ones.”⁷ Ettinger’s metramorphic process allows for a mode of sense-making which escapes the dominant phallogocentric discourse and its insistence on a nature/culture, private/public, production /reproduction dualist structure. In adopting such a philosophical disposition I am not attempting to collapse all intellectual thought into universal relativism, but rather to deconstruct the “absolute” systems of knowledge which have historically accompanied a dominant patriarchal discourse.

In much the same vein as Ettinger’s metramorphosis, Luce Irigaray’s approach to theory refuses the designation of an authoritative centre. In her words:

I think that one of the gestures that we have to make today, from the point of view of thought, is to refuse absolutely the opposition theory / fiction, refuse the opposition truth / art because it is a hierarchical opposition which is absolutely decisive for the establishment of metaphysics.⁸

Much of Irigaray’s own writing evolves around the creation of images, not simply ideas. These images become symbols which transmit phantasy - for her, this is an avenue for change. By generating images which revolve around a unique female iconography (i.e.: the two lips vs. the phallus) Irigaray bypasses the rational intellect and moves her readers by a visual language that they do not yet understand. According to Margaret Whitford, “The cultural reservoir of images, collectively structured by a patriarchal symbolic, is likely to be full of patriarchal symbols, while Irigaray needs to generate compelling

⁶ Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, “Matrix and Metramorphosis,” *Differences* 4 (no.3, 1992) p.201.

⁷ Ibid, p. 201.

⁸ Luce Irigaray, *Le Corps-à-corps avec la mère*, trans. Margaret Whitford (Montreal: Editions de la pleine lune, 1981) p. 45.

images which crystallize or propel the desire for change.”⁹ Once again, change being the introduction to what does not yet exist within our collective cultural consciousness.

Propelling a desire for change can sometimes mean subverting reason, linearity, as those concepts in themselves are rooted in the system we are attempting to change. While I would not fathom putting myself in the company of Irigaray and her writing, I feel an affinity with how she utilizes language, and, at times, bypasses the linear narrative. This paper, then, refuses to acknowledge theory / fiction as existing in separate realms. Within the framework of this paper, it is one and the same. Although it may appear that I am negating my own work by subverting my authority within this paper, I am maintaining the freedom of positioning my voice within a critical pluralist discourse.

This pluralist discourse is one which is most closely aligned with “deconstructive feminism.” To borrow from Moira Gatens, deconstructive feminism is an approach which eschews viewing theories such as Marxism, liberalism, existentialism, psychoanalysis, and so on as “essentially sex-neutral discourses through which women’s situation may be ‘truly’ grasped. (It) concerns itself with investigating the elemental make-up of these theories and to expose their latent discursive commitments.”¹⁰ In other words, deconstructive feminism studies the underlying commonalities of theories which attempt to explain “women” by subsuming them within their own theoretical agendas. However, unlike radical feminism, it does not take woman’s essence or biology as somehow enabling her to produce pure or non-patriarchal theory. On the contrary, it is very much aware of its positioning within a patriarchal philosophical history. In the words of Michèle Le Doueff:

(w)hether we like it or not, we are within philosophy, surrounded by masculine-feminine divisions that philosophy has helped to articulate and refine. The problem is to know whether we can take up a critical position in relation to them, a position which will necessarily evolve through deciphering the basic philosophical assumptions latent in discourse about women. The worst metaphysical positions are those which one adopts unconsciously whilst believing or claiming that one is speaking from a position outside

⁹ Whitford, p. 189.

¹⁰ Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (New York: Routledge, 1996)p.61.

philosophy."¹¹

Thus, in this support paper, I am using theory (well aware of its positioning within a patriarchal philosophical discourse) to support my investigations of the cultural significance of women, not the other way around.

Section I explores the commodification of gender in two parts. The first part, "Bubble Gum and Barbie Dolls: *A Dialogue between A.M. Nakagawa and B.Doll*" explores the connections between common cultural signifiers, the societal imaginary and gender as a consumer product. Part two, "Exchange: consumption and desire *or the perversion of pink, plastic shoes*" examines the relationship between female identity, consumerism and the social signification of "exchange." This examination entails a discussion on sexual currency within the social system of exchange and the sexual division of labour within capitalism. Section II, "The Imaginary Body," examines the construction of the gendered body within the social contract and within the context of a male-gaze oriented society. It also inquires into the role of power within this production and how power is distributed in a societal narrative which privileges a certain spectacle-spectator relationship. Section III, "Transmitting Identity," explores the relationship between information, technology and identity. Central to this exploration is a debate on the virtual and electronic body infringing on the organic, the possible implications of such an infringement and how such a causal relationship alters the formation of identity.

¹¹ M. Le Doueff, "Women and Philosophy," *Radical Philosophy* (no. 17, 1977) p. 2-11.

Section I

Commodifying Gender

Act I: Bubble Gum and Barbie Dolls

A Dialogue between A.M. Nakagawa and B. Doll

B. Doll : Ms. Nakagawa, it's come to my attention that in a recent performance piece at the New Gallery you commented on how there can not be a discussion on feminism (or the lack thereof) without involving the notion of Barbie. What do you mean by that and what is the purpose of villanizing such an innocuous toy? For heaven's sake, she's just plastic.

A.M. Nakagawa: Well Ms. Doll, I'm glad you asked. The reason I made that comment is because Barbie is such a huge cultural icon in North America and is very central in many female children's development of a self-image. As an instrument of socialization, she represents what women are mythologized as being in what Rosemary Hennessy would call the "social imaginary."¹² And I'm guessing by the lack of expression in your heavily made up face that you are unaware of this term...

B.D.: (interrupts) There's no need to get snide. You know I can't move my features.

A.M. : Sorry. Anyway, the social imaginary, according to Hennessy, is the prevailing images a society needs to project about itself in order to maintain certain features of its

¹² Rosemary Hennessy, "Ambivalence as Alibi: On the Historical Materiality of Late Capitalist Myth in *The Crying Game* and Cultural Theory," in Ann Kibbey, Thomas Foster, Carol Siegel and Ellen E. Barry eds., *On Your Left: The New Historical Materialism* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) p.2.

organization.¹³

B.D.: Like what?

A.M.: Well, for example, that male and female sex are naturally asymmetrical biological givens that masculine and feminine gender traits express (this then leads to the notion of a “heterosexual imaginary”). Within such an organization, sexual identification is legislated so that the object’s sexual aim is directed towards a coherently gendered member of the “opposite” sex.

B.D.: Like Ken, you mean?

A.M.: You could say that.

B.D.: But what exactly is wrong with that and why are you singling out dollkind in your criticism of this system?

A.M.: Please, Ms. Doll, I am simply employing a cultural signifier and an agent of socialization - I have nothing against the plastic people. As for what is “wrong” with this system, it simply assigns the cultural construction of gender as an innate and biological given. I’ll give you an example: the other day I was at a gathering where there was a two-year-old boy running around. Every time he acted rambunctious, aggressively, was rowdy or loud, everyone in the room beamed and repeated the chorus “what a boy!” Now, is he being “such a boy” because that is his innate tendency, or because every time he acts in accordance with the stereotypical male characteristics everyone shows him their approval? What kind of response would a girl child receive acting in the same fashion?

B.D.: Hmm....I see your point. Me and Ken never really had a childhood so I can’t comment on that. Although, if Ken ever got rowdy within the Barbiemobile I would sure put him in his place! After all, I am the main attraction.

¹³ Ibid, p.2.

A.M. : I have no doubt of that.

B.D.: *But getting back to this idea of socialization, what factors do you attribute for the formulation of such a system - I mean, it can't all be originating in the toy stores, can it?*

A.M.: Not at all. Despite my disgust with Barbie's completely unrealistic proportions and misogynist wardrobe, I can't pretend that agents of gender construction reside solely in Toys R'Us. (although Paula Fayerman was quoted as decoding F.A.O. Schwartz as "Fucking Asshole Oppressors"). I think that the "production" of gender actually operates concurrently with economic production.

B.D.: *(suspiciously) You're not one of those Marxist feminists are you?*

A.M.: No, I can't say that I align myself with Marxism. Although Marx attempted to address women's inequality in his model of production and economic theory, his efforts were far from satisfactory and attempted to engulf sexism within class struggle.¹⁴ I believe that classism and sexism are related but separate matters. However, there is something in the workings of capitalism which perpetuates this binary stereotyping of the sexes and, furthermore, commodifies the sexualized body - primarily that of the female.¹⁵

¹⁴ Juliet Mitchell, "Women's Position I," in Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., *An Anthology of Western Marxism: From Lukács and Gramsci to Socialist Feminism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 299. Within Marxism and much socialist analysis, the primary factor in accounting for the development of female subordination was women's lesser capacity for physical labour. But that would then lead to the assumption that the technological revolution, abolishing the need for strenuous physical exertion would lead to the liberation of women. According to Juliet Mitchell, 'de Beauvoir hoped that automation would make a decisive, qualitative difference by abolishing altogether the physical differential between the sexes. But any reliance on this in itself accords an independent role to technology which history does not justify.' (Mitchell, 301)

¹⁵ A piece which illustrates this concept is *Shirley Temple* (see Appendix C). It is a sculptural assemblage which consists of three glasses with the exaggerated female figure embossed into them, each of them filled with liquid and housing a contemporary artifact representing the female gender waiting to be consumed. These objects within the vessels remain inert, pickled in a sense, ready for examination, while the middle vessel simply echoes the form of the glass with its pink liquid outlining the trucker mud-flap girl. Clearly, before these products sat on the shelf of the gallery, they graced the shelves of toy stores and the houseware department - neatly packaged, gendered products of capitalism. As agents of consumerism, they exemplify the commonplace commodification and association of the female body with a polarized gender discourse, painting female identity with the same pink brush.

B.D. So...are you saying that consumerism supports sexism and gender stereotypes?

A.M.: I don't think it's as simple as all that. Definitely, the consumer choices you make, if they reinforce gender stereotypes are feeding into the problem. But capitalism (as that is the present economic system we find ourselves in) is reliant on the heterosexual imaginary to create consumer desires, and engendered desires, within this system of production.

B.D.: Can you be specific?

A.M.: Well, to borrow from Hennessy again, "the sexualized body has become the premiere commodity and marketing niche of late capitalism; corporeal fashion, engineering, simulation, and management have created a host of new needs and accompanying new modalities of power, knowledge and control...(it) obscures the multiplicity of possible other organizations of identification and desire."¹⁶ In other words, sex sells, and mostly it is directed towards a heterosexual audience and the sex exploits gender stereotypes to extremes (see enclosed sound piece, *If She Can't Use a Comb*, Appendix I).

B.D.: So, then, are you saying that without this kind of sexual system of identification capitalism would collapse?

A.M.: No, I think it would have to reinvent itself. As a system in itself, capitalism has no interest in the social identity of the people it exploits but is also likely to "co-opt whatever extra-economic oppressions are historically and culturally" present in any given setting ¹⁷ . The contemporary setting just happens to be one which caters to sexism ,

¹⁶Hennessy, pp. 4-6.

¹⁷ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)p. 267. Woods defines "extra economic" goods as those which fall outside of the realm of consumer production such as gender emancipation, racial equality, peace, ecological health, democratic citizenship, etc. According to Woods, unlike previous modes of production, capitalist exploitation is not inextricably linked with extra-economic, juridical or political identities, inequalities or differences.

among other oppressions.

B.D.: (blankly) So what's your point?

A.M.: Excuse me?

B.D.: Well, you're mutilating dolls, which I personally find cruel and unethical, for some theoretical economic structure which you admit doesn't even account for the misogyny within our society. So, what's your point?

*A.M.: Well, my point is that in the act of consumption, we are often buying into an ideology as well as a product, and often times this ideology reinforces cultural constructions of gender. (An obvious illustration of this concept is the piece *Object: Essence*, 1998 where a gendered "essence" is bottled and presented in a consumer-casing of pink synthetic flower petals in a white box. It speaks of openings and closing, as stereotypical sexual associations, but also of mutilation and linguistic dismemberment (See Appendix D). You buy the product, you bring it into your home, you interact with it within this binary discourse, your children take your cue. you assume this behaviour is the result of biology. That's the point. My other point feeds into Marxist philosophy to some extent. Where is your money going? If we look at the sexual division of labour, much of economic production occurs within a two-tiered system where women often occupy low-paying, low-status jobs, and their labour power is controlled by a patriarchal system which perpetuates a sexist wage differential.¹⁸ So, it is not simply consumer objects that you purchase, you are also supporting a system which is exploiting existing oppressive trends.*

B.D.: But you just said that capitalism has no interest in the exploited's social identity. I don't think I understand what you are getting at...You know, I need to go change, I've been wearing this outfit for over an hour and that's a limit for me. Perhaps while I change into another Barbie-patented pink outfit, you can think about how your studio

¹⁸ Mitchell, p. 328.

work addresses what we've been discussing. (rushes off in the Barbie mobile)

Later...

A.M.: (chewing gum) That outfit looks too tight to even move in.

B.D.: I've devised a system where I actually don't have to move or bend to sit - or, actually, it's to create the illusion of sitting.

A.M.: Well, congratulations.

B.D.: Why are you chewing gum? That's a rather rude thing to be doing during an interview you know.

A.M.: Actually, I'm chewing it to illustrate a point. This gum is a symbol of gendered consumerism. The more of it I stick in my mouth, the less you can understand me. But..da moh ah stuk en mah mout, da les ah kar...bou wha am sa en cuz ah can.. eben breed..

B.D.: Um, excuse me, but what are you saying? You're looking a little green...Do you think maybe you should take that gum out of your mouth? I don't know how you can stand it.

A.M.: (spitting out the gum) So, that's really what my work is about - de-codifying the overly saccharine flavour of constructed femininity through the appropriation of cultural artifacts. But, I think there are a few levels I'm operating on. There's this device of using the artifact as the actual signifier, but there's also a macabre sense of irony that I'm using in the coupling of certain objects, and a personalization of the process by occasionally inserting myself (or a representation of myself) into the work or installation. I'm interested in communicating a sense of the commodity-culture within which we live, in

investigating the production of this culture (economically and socially) and engaging the viewer visually with the objects and images I create so that some kind of dialogue is initiated.

B.D.: Ew! I think I got some of your gum on my mini skirt! (rushes out)

Act II: Exchange : consumption and desire
or the perversion of pink, plastic shoes

Females in white-suprematist patriarchal society are most often socialized to consume in an unmindful manner. We are encouraged to value goods, especially luxury goods, over our well-being and safety. Many women remain in domestic situations where we are being hurt and even abused by sexist men because of an attachment to material wealth and privilege.¹⁹

- bell hooks

The society we know, our culture, is based upon the exchange of women. Without the exchange of women, we are told, we would fall back into the anarchy of the natural world, the randomness of the animal kingdom.²⁰

- Luce Irigaray

As consumers and that which is “consumed,” the relationship of women to the supply-demand culture of capitalist society is one which is loaded with symbolic, semiotic, economic and historical signification. One only has to look at the work of Barbara Kruger to note that there is a plethora of material at our disposal which features women coupled and interacting with consumer products or, to apply Marxist terminology, exchange commodities. These images reinforce the cultural self-perception of the female as tied to the realm of desire - desire for her physiological construction (representing nature), her “resources,” her ability to sexually fulfil (a heterosexual male audience) and, through association, the products which she is flanking or stroking. On the other hand, while most product advertisements feature the female body in various stages of undress and, thus, may be assumed to be appealing to a heterosexual male audience, cultural stereotype continues to propagate the notion of woman as the ultimate consumer victim. In Art on My Mind, bell hooks refers to an attachment to material goods which is so strong that

¹⁹ bell hooks, *Art on My Mind*, (New York: The New Press, 1995) p.124.

²⁰ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) p. 169.

some women will tolerate abuse in order to maintain their consumer power. In the following section I will explore the connection between female identity, consumerism and the social signification of “exchange.”

Packaging desire- turning history into nature

Plastic packaging wraps or binds the object of desire. The contents is insignificant - it is always the same thing, although it may look different. Within the asphyxiating bubble you can taste the synthetic molecules of production. You lick it - it tastes like sweat from the thigh of a prostitute, from the navel of the toned stomach which props up a SONY laptop computer; or it foams in your mouth like detergent which “make your whites whiter” as a mother hugs her cherub-like child with a fluffy towel on a warm spring day. Smoke doesn’t leave the factory anymore - it’s been converted into invisible gases. They seem harmless and clean. Maybe they are. But maybe they are more dangerous because you can not fight their insidious nature, can not cover your mouth to prevent them from invading your body. You breathe in, you breathe out. Another mould opens on assembly line thirty-three and releases a Paula-Play-Nice doll into the hands of a migrant worker who packages her in a bright pink box. More gases. Her smile is wide, fuchsia, latex. “My name is Paula. Do you want to play? I don’t like math. Let’s play ring around the rosy. Mother says good girls always clean up their mess. Will you be my friend?” Vapour envelops you and you feel light-headed. Nauseous. Is that bubble wrap under your feet? The popping of plastic lulls you into a numb stupor as you lie down clutching tiny little Saran wrap bundles of yourself. But the contents don’t matter, really.

I first conceived of the project “Packaged” while browsing through the aisles of London Drugs. For some reason, I chanced upon the children’s toy aisle - a not overly impressive display of your standard G.I. Joe / Barbie type of toys with a sprinkling of less

glamorous, “educational” toys. As I refocussed on my original purpose - the purchase of toothpaste - and began to head back to the dental hygiene aisle, a smattering of bright, candy-coloured hues caught my eye. Upon closer examination, I deciphered these plastic baubles to be shoes, for Barbie. Although the colours varied, the configuration of the shoes remained constant: little teetering heels supporting a sole on a 45 degree angle. These little bits of plastic, neatly hanging next to the other Barbie accessories, enraged me so that I was forced to buy them. At the check out counter, the cashier commented on how “sweet” the miniature heels were. Without comment, I paid and left the store, Barbie shoes in hand.

What enraged me so is the blatant evidence of the creation and propagation of children’s play things which depict women’s feet as perpetually at a 45 degree angle, necessitating the support of spiked heels. The idea of presenting a young girl with this representation of “woman” (blond, busty, and disproportionately curvy) and fitting her with ergonomically incapacitating footwear seems one of the most ideologically violent acts a parent can impose upon her / his daughter. Then to consider the manufacturer’s role within this process, the adaptation of Barbie from a fetish toy in a Belgian sex shop into a child’s play thing, the huge Mattel empire, a young girl’s consuming desire for a Barbie - it all smacks of capitalist misogyny. It is not simply the creation of a child’s toy which we are witnessing in this process, it is the insidious mirroring of patriarchal society’s sexual desires onto an object designed for a girl child’s self-identification, and, furthermore, for the construction of her own desires.

As Rosemary Hennessy points out in her discussion of the social imaginary within capitalism, heterogendered difference is presented within this system as fixed natural opposites which “robs sexuality of its history, erases the social order it helps guarantee,... and obscures the multiplicity of possible other organizations of identification and desire.”²¹ (A piece which examines the participation of popular culture within this “erasure” is *If She Can’t Use a Comb...* See Appendix I.) What I am most concerned with is this “obscuring” of other possibilities of desires which the heterogendered consumer object represents. Our society is composed of these artifacts which seem to refuse a history, or whose history has been transformed into nature. Thus, the general

²¹ Hennessy, p.6.

consumer within capitalism does not approach her/his purchases as a reflection of a greater societal myth, but as an extension of such a seamless “nature”. To borrow from Hennessy, “myth displaces real social relations with naturalized imaginary ones. The effect of this displacement is to encourage meaning that will smooth over and manage the historical contradictions encoded in the narrative tale.”²² I proffer that, within patriarchy, the interests of capitalism do not lie solely in the creation of profit and economic gain but in the perpetuation of this narrative.

Aside from supporting a rigid system of gender assignment and projection of desires, this narrative also naturalizes a practice of sexual exchange which commodifies women. In *Pornography: Marxism, Feminism and the Future of Sexuality*, Alan Soble notes that women in capitalism are subjected to a widespread and deeply affecting type of alienation which he coins “the dismemberment syndrome.”²³ (See “Hope Chest”, Appendix B) In his view, it is the positioning of male sexuality within capitalism which is responsible for the creation of such a syndrome. Soble theorizes that there are three different kinds of dismemberment: physical, linguistic, and photographic. Physical dismemberment falls in the realm of violent sexual assault or “aesthetic” dismemberment such as depilation and liposuction. Linguistic dismemberment encompasses all part-specific nomenclature for women such as “piece of ass” and “cunt” - where her ontological status is reduced to that of a part. The photographic dismemberment practice is largely embodied in capitalist advertisement where female body parts are singled out and isolated, reflecting male interests in specific parts of the female body. It is interesting to note that the visibility of such dismembering photographic practices (in advertising) finds a sharp increase when national economies transform themselves to capitalism from other kinds of systems (i.e.: communism).

According to Soble, much advertisement within capitalism encourages women “to do to their bodies what men already do, to pay attention to each part so that the man’s satisfaction in dismemberment is guaranteed.”²⁴ Here, while I find Soble’s observations quite useful, I would replace “men” with the “social imaginary.” Within the socially

²² Ibid, p.3.

²³ Alan Soble, *Pornography: Marxism, Feminism and the Future of Sexuality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) p. 56.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 61.

constructed narrative, the isolation of female body parts and their representation is seen as an acceptable mode of communicating female sexuality and cultural positioning (See “(In)valid”, Appendix E). In isolating the shoe from the rest of the body, “Packaged” not only becomes a showcase for a single gendered cultural signifier, but an example of the dismembering practice which accompanies the creation of such a signifier. The empty, miniature shoes remain available for occupancy should the viewer choose to engage in this practice.

From these candy-coloured icons evolved bundles of tightly wrapped plastic shopping bags. The larvae-like shopping bag bundles were first conceived as consumer “cushions” for the glass slipper of gendered desire. However, they began to take on a life of their own through the redundant and obsessive act of their creation. As I repeatedly folded, squeezed, and bound these tight constructions, I began to associate them with the processes of cottage industries, production and women’s labour. As constructions, they appear to swaddle unknown objects, presenting themselves as gifts or offerings. Void of anything but their raw material - plastic bags - they are, in fact, only offerings of refuse, the garbage left behind by consumerism. But, to the viewer oblivious of this fact, does the signifier sitting on top of these packages suggest a gendered bow bundling the “exchange of women”? I believe that these associations play off one another in that there is a symbolic “discarding” of the capitalist narrative represented by the abject material, while there is also a reclaiming of our commodified selves by recycling and re-presenting the by-products of consumption. If “Packaged” refers to the production of gender identities through consumer ideology, it also speaks of our ability to critically view this process and rethink our role within this production.

Sexual currency

Luce Irigaray proposes that the basis of Western culture is intrinsically tied to the exchange of women. In de-coding Irigaray, Margaret Whitford emphasizes that *exchange* should be understood in its most fundamental sense as the basis of sociality, at whatever

level, economic, contractual, juridical, linguistic, interpersonal, moral aesthetic and so on.

²⁵ One can exchange any kind of object, provided there is a *currency*. However, as Irigaray posits, “how can one participate in social exchange when one has no available currency?” - when one *is* the currency?²⁶ Marxist philosophy has often subsumed the inequality of woman within the inequality of class, asserting that once one’s role in production is democratized, equal signification within society will result. Where this theory falls short is in accounting for how the act of production in itself is a sexualized process. The problem is not only that there exists a sexual division of labour (traditionally woman in the private, unpaid domain, men in the public, paid domain) but that the nature of exchange within production signifies *woman as currency*.

The most obvious kind of sexualized currency, and the ultimate form of photographic dismemberment, is embodied in the pornography industry. It is the quintessential commodification of sexuality within capitalism and offers the visual equivalent of the sex-for-money exchange. To quote Soble:

The production of pornography in capitalism is made possible by women’s relative political, social and economic powerlessness. But the power of owning, the power of money, the power to coerce women into participating as labour in the production of pornography and the power to turn women and women’s bodies into commodities is capitalist power, or patriarchal capitalist power, not simply male power.²⁷

As Soble indicates, the power of patriarchal capitalism favours a women-as-commodity mentality. Granted, G.I. Joe dolls hang next to Barbie on the toy store rack, but how many men are plastered on the pages of fashion magazines or product advertisements? Even magazines which purport themselves to be “men’s” magazine (catering to male interests, fashion, grooming; not to be confused with pornographic publications) showcase scantily clad women on their covers in come-hither poses. Products which appear to be gender neutral such as detergent, cookies, shampoo, water filters, toilet paper, soap, are often still advertised through, of or with a female body at its side. And, most often, it is a woman who fits into a specific, socially-acceptable aesthetic - she who

²⁵ Whitford, p. 186.

²⁶ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) p.119.

²⁷ Soble, p.88.

will fit into the pink, plastic heels.

In Tom Jonsson's review of The New Gallery "Packaged" installation, he observes a connection between "fashion and phallogocentric desire."²⁸ The erotic nature of the foot is very central to cultures such as Japan and China. In the case of China, this spurred a practice of binding women's feet so that they would become the size of a lotus flower, small enough to fit into a man's mouth. As well as alluding to this practice in the tightly bound plastic bundles of "Packaged," I also drew an earlier reference to it in sculptural pieces such as "Object: Binding" (1998, Appendix F). "Packaged" calls not only on associations of physical binding but psychological binding, of the personal restraint and martyrdom of women who sacrifice their own desires for socially-prescribed ones. It is a prescription which is constructed into the grand narrative tale from an early age. To quote Jonsson:

Shoes have strong connotations of the fulfilment of adolescent fantasies, reinforcing cultural myths like Cinderella and Hans Christian Anderson's *The Red Shoes*. They act as vehicles of transition from youthful innocence to realized adulthood. In Nakagawa's retelling, there is no 'happily ever after' to look forward to however. Like the perversion of the red shoes which entrap the wearer into an unending dance, these miniature shoes lock the wearer into a gender defined by consumerist fashion and function.

The "unending dance" may be viewed as the exchange of women referred to by Irigaray. Beyond fashion and function, this dance carries itself into the symbolic and economic systems of social signification and authority. In her writings, Irigaray often blurs the epistemological demarcation between one field of inquiry and another (i.e. language, economics, philosophy, patriarchal kinship) in an attempt to persuade the reader that among all these different fields is a "homogeneity constituted by the exclusion of woman/women except as object(s) of exchange."²⁹ In an effort to address this systemic malaise, she posits, what if women took part in elaborating and carrying out exchanges?³⁰ According to Whitford, the answer to this can not exist in the form of theory because it would require the imagining of an entirely different social order.³¹

²⁸ Tom Jonsson, unpublished review, 1999.

²⁹ Whitford, p. 186.

³⁰ Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, p. 191.

³¹ Whitford, p. 188.

A key element within the exchange system, and a primary factor in the structuring of the accompanying social order, is the power of labour. The kind of labour I am referring to here is not only involved in the production of economic goods but the production of *people* within this system. In “Packaged,” this notion of the “production” of people and identities is addressed and represented by the multiplicity of organic forms which have been produced by the same process, yet remain slightly different. Through consumer culture, we give birth to material refuse but also to our own socially-programmed identities. Juliet Mitchell puts forth that “the whole of society...can be understood by looking at both these types of production and reproduction, people and things.”³² As she points out, both aspects are intertwined, as a mode of production must be capable of reproducing itself - the production of things requires people, the production of people requires things.³³ She posits that if we view these two modes concurrently, we must deduce that there is no “pure capitalism” or “pure patriarchy,” for they must coexist out of necessity. (I would argue here that the two are not mutually exclusive but that their co-existence makes them become interdependent. For example, patriarchy can exist within a socialist system.) Following such a system would suggest that the production of the individual within society and goods within the economy are in fact one in the same.

Within this productive / reproductive model, Mitchell sees the crux of patriarchy (from a materialist viewpoint) as men’s control over women’s labour power.³⁴ That control, she explains, is maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources by restricting women’s sexuality:

Men exercise their control in receiving personal service work from women, in not having to do homework or rear children, in having access to women’s bodies for sex, and in feeling powerful and being powerful.³⁵

She maintains that the traditional sexual division of labour within capitalism is a means of perpetuating a systemic patriarchal discourse. Thus, it is not simply that women’s access to “production” differs from that of men, but that their access limits their economic standing within society. So, from a wholistic standpoint,

³² Mitchell, p. 320.

³³ Ibid, p. 320.

³⁴ Mitchell, p.321.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 321.

every interaction within the consumer sphere perpetuates a sexist system of labour division. However, in a system which is more and more frequently seeing two income households with less and less of a wage differential, such a statement may resonate as a sweeping generalization. While such trends are encouraging, discrepancies still exist between the arenas of employment most commonly occupied by women and those occupied by men. For example, many of the jobs occupied by women mirror the jobs they only used to do in the home - food preparation and service, cleaning of all kinds, caring for people, and so on. These jobs are low-status and low-paying, thus patriarchal relations remain intact.

Mitchell fails to make the connection that it is not simply the limited access to production which puts women in a disadvantaged position, it is their signification as currency within this economic system. Furthermore, it is not simply “things” that are required in the production of people, *female bodies* are required in this production. And if production and reproduction are interdependent and crucial in the self-definition of a society, why is it that those who are integral in the reproductive act are positioned so low within the socio-economic hierarchy? Section II will examine the conception of the female body within the social and symbolic contract and how this translates into her access of power within a patriarchal capitalist system.

Section II

The Imaginary Body

Then one night, during a dream, I looked down and saw myself below at a desk, writing the dream and devising these complicated plots for this dolt-like dreamer to stumble through. And this was like the relationship of director and actor, but it was also like what happens to everybody in the waking world when they invent a credible, more or less consistent personality, and then just sort of live it out. And it's only when you do something really out of character - impulsively jump in a fountain on your way to work, or have a sudden barking fit while waiting for the bus - that you start to ask yourself: who wrote this anyway? Who wrote these rules?³⁶

- Laurie Anderson

To call these (hysterical) symptoms functional is but to confess our ignorance, for they follow the pattern of a certain imaginary anatomy which has typical forms of its own. In other words, the astonishing somatic compliance which is the outward sign of the imaginary anatomy is only shown within certain definite limits. I would emphasize that the imaginary anatomy referred to here varies with the ideas ...about bodily functions which are prevalent in a given culture.³⁷

- Jacques Lacan

Separated by forty years, Laurie Anderson and Jacques Lacan both addressed the notion of a societally prescribed role of the embodied ego. While Lacan was inquiring into the

³⁶ Laurie Anderson, *Empty Places: a performance* (New York: Canal Street Communications, 1991) pp. 41-43.

³⁷ J. Lacan, "Some Reflections on the Ego," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (vol. 34, 1953) p.13.

formation of hysteria (following Freud's research) and Anderson communicated her ponderings within the phantasmagoric arena of a performance, both posed the question "who wrote this anyway?" Lacan suggested that the ego was following an imaginary anatomy when engaging in a hysterical episode. This "somatic compliance" to the imaginary body is a result of a culturally constructed social contract. When it comes to deciphering identity within culture, the somatic experience is often dismissed as a fixed biological entity - as the "controlled" variable within the equation. It is assumed that physiology is assigned, then the rest of what we become is based on choices made outside of the body. Can we not propose that when Lacan's "imaginary" anatomy is dependent on the prevalent corporeal ideas in a given culture, that what constructs the body itself is dependent on these ideas? By this I mean that a culture's conception of *body* is so integral to the body that its existence is tainted by this conception.

I have been using the phrase "gender assignment" quite liberally within the previous pages. Here, I would like to investigate the process this implies and to clarify that, in using this phrase, I am not insinuating a passive body receiving a societal assignment which erases its history. As the body is a situated subject from the moment it enters this world, I do not believe that it can ever extricate itself from a cultural or historical specificity. Thus, the *idea* of woman, (for example, within economic exchange) while prescribed by socio-economic factors, does not exist independent of the body it acts through. This is not to say that stereotypical characteristics associated with "woman" are innate within her biology.

Moira Gatens defines the imaginary body as that which is socially and historically specific, constructed by shared language, psychical significance and the privileging of various zones of the body, as well as common institutional practices which act through the body.³⁸ She draws on the imaginary body to explain the unsatisfactory exploration of gender as a pure construct of socialization. According to her, we must account for the different positioning of the sexed body within society as there is no *neutral body*; there are at least two different kinds of bodies - male and female.³⁹ Gatens believes that it is strategically important to insist on two bodies given that we live within a patriarchal

³⁸ Gatens, p. 12.

³⁹ Ibid, p.8.

society that organizes itself around pure sexual difference, and will not tolerate sexual ambiguity. She calls the bluff of “degendering feminists” by insisting that such a process depends on the assumptions that a) the body is a neutral and passive entity and that b) one can alter the important effects of historical and cultural specificity by changing material practices of the culture in question.⁴⁰

Thus, if one establishes that there is no such thing as a “neutral” body, as each body is positioned within society as being either male or female, then one must dismiss the notion that patriarchy is organized around gender. In Gatens’ words, “Gender is not the issue; sexual difference is. The very same behaviors (whether they be masculine or feminine) have quite different personal and social significance when acted out by the male subject on the one hand and the female subject on the other.”⁴¹ I would add here that, while I concur with Gatens’ analyses, what has come to be understood as “gender” within Western culture is based on sexual difference and, therefore, feminist advocacy of “degendering” means to address the elimination of the historical precepts based on the sexed subject. I maintain Gatens’ observations of the sexualized subject to be correct but do not believe that this necessarily negates past discourses of gender *construction* . However, for the purpose of this section, I will follow her analyses in determining the role of the imaginary body in the assignment of power and the adherence to the social and symbolic contract.

Women and the social contract

According to Irigary, women are still, symbolically, in a “state of nature” and need to be brought into the symbolic contract.⁴² She uses the symbolic (the possibility of exchange in general) and social (the passage from “nature” to “culture”) contract interchangeably, asserting that the central problematic remains that woman/women are excluded from the symbolic/social order due to her representation as nature.⁴³ The nature-to-culture foil is

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 7.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴² Whitford, 170.

⁴³ Ibid, 170.

only one example of the dualism featured in much of the sociopolitical theories central to Western thought. Others include: body and mind, passion and reason, reproduction and production, family and state, individual and social. As many feminists have argued, the left-hand side of these dualisms is often intimately connected with the idea of women while the right-hand side is associated with men and masculinity. Gatens observes that “it is only the right-hand side of these distinctions which is deemed to fall within the realm of history.”⁴⁴ Thus, denied a history and access to the public sphere, the social contract implicates women as positioned outside of the domain of power.

The video installation “Projection” (1999, Appendix G) examines this notion of the social contract and the accompanying modes of female representation within it. In establishing a dialogue between two, oppositionally- projected four minute video clips, “Projection” mimics a dualist representational system but also offers a critical reading of it. Both of the 8' x 10' video projections capture women, girls and their signifiers through static or moving imagery. The binary here is not a clear-cut division of nature/culture, body/mind, female/male but a more abstract and metaphoric one alluded to by an irreconcilable representational system which will not allow the simultaneous viewing of the two projected narratives. The logistics of the installation force the viewer to choose one vantage point and engage in one specific mode of image-consumption at a time.

Following Irigaray, if women are excluded from the symbolic/social order because they are relegated to a state of nature, “Projection” asks, how then can she be signified, if at all? While there are a plethora of images which depict women within popular and “high” culture, do these modes of visual communication simply serve to perpetuate her as that which is signified instead of a signifier in her own right? In other words, do such representations continue to validate her as the feminine component within the nature/culture equation and disguise a naturalized myth of history? Hélène Cixous asserts that “One is always in representation, and when a woman is asked to take place in this representation, she is, of course, asked to represent man’s desire.”⁴⁵ If we maintain that somatic compliance to the imaginary body is integrally tied to predominant social beliefs, what kind of body results from adherence to cultural practices articulated by

⁴⁴ Gatens, 61.

⁴⁵ Hélène Cixous, “Entretien avec Françoise van Rossum-Guyon,” quoted in Heath, *Difference*, p.96.

Cixous and Irigaray? Standing as representation for *man's* desire, woman's corporeal image within the social contract seems to elude her own desires.

In her book, *The Sexual Contract*, Carole Pateman illustrates how the social contract is a fiction inaugurated by liberal theory and that the concept of a civil society is a patriarchal construct.⁴⁶ While the civil contractual order appears to be peopled by individuals who freely enter into the contractual agreement, it conceals a patriarchal contract which gives men access to women. In her words, "contract is far from being opposed to patriarchy; contract is the means through which modern patriarchy is constituted."⁴⁷ Whitford concurs that the "individual" itself is a patriarchal construct and is in fact male; women are not party to the contract.⁴⁸ Once again, if women exist outside of the social contract, what does her representation signify? Whitford's claim that the individual itself is a male seems to imply that the creation of the female image is simply another act which gives men access to women. However, I would contest this reading as yet another instance where binaries are instituted in the gender construction discourse; it is not only men who participate in this construction - all spectators collaborate in the production of her image. According to Paul Schilder:

Our own body image gets its possibilities and existence only because our body is not isolated. A body is necessarily a body among other bodies. We must have others about us. There is no sense in the word 'ego' when there is not a 'thou'."

Thus, the maintenance of a gendered body image involves the participation of both men and women. Within "Projection," the viewer is given the opportunity to observe her/his participation in the creation of this conception, and how it, in turn, shapes their own "ego" as situated within this patriarchal contract.

⁴⁶ Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988)

⁴⁷ Ibid, 2.

⁴⁸ Whitford, p. 174.

⁴⁹ P. Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body*, (New York: International University Press, 1978) p. 281.

Narrating the body: image, gaze and spectatorship

As a part of the social imaginary, and the resultant imaginary body, the situated subject finds itself engulfed in a discourse which privileges the male gaze. When we talk of the spectators' participation in constructing the projected or captured figure's identity, it draws on this visual hierarchy which locates woman as image and man as bearer of the look. Such a dynamic parallels Western philosophical theory which frequently places the female subject in a passive, submissive position (i.e.: her exclusion from the social contract or lack of representation within economic exchange) and her male counterpart in an active, dominant role. Speaking of the cinematic medium, Laura Mulvey observes the following:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/ male and passive/ female. The deferring male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Women displayed as sexual object is the *leitmotif* of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease from Ziegfield to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire.⁵⁰

Thus, following Cixous, Mulvey proffers that within symbolic and cultural production, women are positioned to signify male desire. It is significant here to recognize that such observations span the gamut of inter-disciplinary study. From Pateman's political theory to Mulvey's film theory, contemporary feminist thinkers echo the notion of an institutional social practice which excludes women from representation in all realms involved with symbolic/ historical self-definition. This is not to say that women do not exist within these realms, simply that the social contract excludes their symbolic representation within them.

As for film, what this means is that, in traditional cinema, the female spectator has been subsumed into the body of the male audience. Similar to the production of societal myth, visual politics propagates a narrative tale which naturalizes hierarchal inter-sexual

⁵⁰ Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1989) p. 19.

relations and gendered perspective. Returning to Gatens' imaginary body, such visual practices are the genesis of constituting certain kinds of bodies - bodies which utilize culturally shared phantasies about the female body and its inherent *to-be-looked-at-ness* . Mulvey expands this narrative structure of the sexed body to include the effects of a heterosexual division of labour⁵¹ . She claims that "According to the principles of the ruling ideology and psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification...Hence the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man's role as the active one of advancing the story, making things happen."⁵² In this context, the male character emerges as the bearer of the look of the spectator (the perspective which the audience identifies with), while woman is represented *as* spectacle. Where this becomes crucial in the construction of the imaginary body, is in the filmic perspective's desire to reproduce "the so-called natural conditions of human perception."⁵³ Thus, the male protagonist's perspective is offered as the *human* perspective. Much as product consumption within capitalism assumes a stereotypically-gendered perspective, consumption of cinematic culture involves adopting a heterogendered male perspective.

Drawing on the tradition of the cinematic medium, while "Projection" does not feature a male character, the presence of the female body can not help but allude to the privileged gaze and the many inscriptions implicit in her projected image. As with all time-based art mediums, video installation is as engaged in the audience-spectacle dynamic as its predecessors of film. This being the case, "Projection" is dependent upon its audience to identify the originating gaze within its video clips and to differentiate between the gaze of the camera and the gaze of the spectator, if at all. Mary Ann Doane observes that "...the cinema generates and guarantees pleasure by corroboration of the spectator's identity. Because that identity is bound up with that of the voyeur and fetishist, because it requires for its support the attributes of the 'noncastrated,' the potential for illusory mastery of the signifier, it is not accessible to the female spectator,

⁵¹ Ibid, p.20.

⁵² Ibid, p.20.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 20.

who, in buying her ticket, must deny her sex.”⁵⁴ Doane suggests that for the female spectator, the process of viewing inevitably ends with self-negation. While I agree in part with Doane’s analysis of cinematic spectatorship, a new wave of female filmmakers who consciously work outside of a male-gaze-centric discourse necessitate a revision of such theories as absolute in nature. What I hope “Projection” is able to do is to offer the viewer the possibility for self-*construction* through the spectator-spectacle relationship by gauging her/his own participation within the viewing paradigm.

Such an awareness includes the recognition of the cognitive processes which the viewer references in organizing information. Is s/he drawing on a socially-prescribed imaginary body to situate these figures? How does this position the perceived figures within the viewer’s world? And, following Gatens, do perceptions differ between men and women as differently situated subjects? In “The economy of desire: the commodity form in/of the cinema,” Doane examines woman’s spectatorship as a situated subject and argues that:

the woman’s ability to purchase, her subjectivity as consumer, is qualified by a relation to commodities which is also ultimately subordinated to that intensification of the affective value of sexual relations which underpins a patriarchal society.⁵⁵

Thus, as the historic subject *and* object of commodity exchange, one could infer that, for women, the process of viewing her image is a much more involved one than that of a male subject viewing his own representation through video or film. Doane offers the metaphor of the cinematic image as “both shop window and mirror” for the female spectator - one a means of accessing the other.⁵⁶ Through the mirror/ window, she sees her subjectivity becoming synonymous with her objectification. Hence, her viewing pleasure necessitates the woman spectator to identify with the satisfaction of seeing her own corporeal representation disciplined by the cinematic gaze. As a consumer, she is much like the snake that eats its own tail, so to speak. As outlined by Gatens, once again, it is not gender that separates the subject but sexual difference.

⁵⁴ Mary Ann Doane. “Woman’s Stake: Filming the Female Body,” in *Feminism and Film Theory*, Constance Penley, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1988) p. 216.

⁵⁵ Mary Ann Doane, “The economy of desire: the commodity form in/of the cinema,” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 11: 1989, p.24.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.31.

Productive and Reproductive Power

Addressing the notion of the situated subject, Irigaray claims that the contract which founds civil society depends upon the separation between the public (male) and the private realm to which women are relegated; thus deeming sexual difference essential to such a civil society.⁵⁷ Outside of the civil contract then, where is the imaginary body of woman situated in relation to power? Let us reverse this equation for the time being and ask - where is power situated in relation to the body? In Power and Knowledge, Michel Foucault provides an alternate reading of power as that which is a productive force.⁵⁸ Foucault points out that dominant accounts of power tend to view it as a repressive force where it is imposed upon a subject despite resistance. While not disavowing the existence of this type of power, he proffers that power can also possess productive operations where it creates rather than destroys. Within this reading, power does not dominate the body, it *constitutes* it. Thus, following this model, one could argue that gender is a material effect of the way in which power “takes hold of the body rather than an ideological effect of the way power ‘conditions’ the mind.”⁵⁹ This returns us to Gatens’s argument that gender is not simply located within the social but also within the material realm.

...what is required is an account of the ways in which the typical spheres of movement of men and women and their respective activities construct and create particular kinds of body to perform particular kinds of task. This sort of analysis is necessary if the historical effects of the ways in which power constructs bodies are to be understood and challenged.⁶⁰

The idea of spheres of movement forming and constructing the body is also echoed within Foucault’s work where he makes references to the various techniques which produce the “disciplined body.” These techniques include daily regimens and time-tables, methods for disturbing and organizing bodies in space, drills, training exercises,

⁵⁷ Whitford, p. 175.

⁵⁸ M. Foucault, *Power and Knowledge*, C. Gordon, ed. (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980)

⁵⁹ Gatens, 66.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 69.

examination and surveillance techniques, etc.⁶¹ Influenced by Foucault's ideas, Sandra Bartky exposes disciplinary technologies that are specific to feminine embodiment: dieting, fitness regimens, expert advice on how to walk, talk, dress, style one's hair and wear make-up.⁶² Through Foucault's model of power, Bartky explains how technologies subjugate by developing competencies, not simply by taking power away. Such technologies are effective because they involve the acquisition of skills and are associated with a central component of feminine identity - her sexuality. Thus, the disciplines enhance the power of the subject by simultaneously subjugating her.

The technological subjugation of the female body, however, is not limited to the actual body but reaches her virtual self as well. While dieting, depilation and the like "discipline" the corporeal embodiment of woman, photographic and digital representations of her are equally disciplined through part-specific editing of her image and the encouragement of a particular mode of viewer participation (i.e.:viewing the female as either a "sex object" conforming to certain physical criteria, or as an ugly, sexually-neutral hag, deviating from the desirable, corporeal ideal). "Projection" does not escape such a disciplining of the subject, in fact, at times it exaggerates the act by dissolving and inverting the images in the static captions reel and cropping the images to mimic the "disciplining gaze". Clearly, digital manipulation is at work here to reconfigure the captured stills - zooms lead to dissolves leading to light flares leading to fades. Within this framework, however, "Projection" begs the question, how much "disciplining" are you adding as a viewer? Which images disturb you or annoy you to the point where you attempt to edit them out of your consciousness? Which ones do you desire to "enhance" or "rectify" to become conducive with your visual framework? This is where the abstract notion of a social contract takes a more concrete form - it is the filter through which you view your world.

"Projection" also borrows from Foucault's notion of what he called "Biopower." Biopower is "the process through which women's bodies are controlled through a set of discourses and practices governing the individual's body and the health, education and

⁶¹ Sawicki, p. 64.

⁶² Sandra Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," (paper read at the American Philosophical Association, May 1986) p.4.

welfare of the population .⁶³ He classifies “disciplinary power” as one form of biopower which possess knowledge of and power over the individual body and aims to represent the body as a machine . The first way which “Projection” accomplishes this is symbolically - by utilizing the medium of video and digital manipulation, technology is used to, in a sense, “reproduce” women. The fact that most of these representations are of young girls or dolls further reinforces this sense of “giving birth” to a female signifier. The images which represent her here are not fully-matured ones but ones that are yet in a state of formation and transition, still close to their symbolic or biological births. The other way in which “Projection” draws on the disciplinary power of biopower is by using images of humans and dolls interchangeably. Although the images are only projections, technologically-produced data of the feminine, by unrepentantly alternating between captions of plastic dolls and organic, fleshy humans, the video installation suggests that they are both subject to the same process of production and, thus, both part of the same reproductive “machine.”

Within productive power, the imaginary body is an effect of socially and historically specific practices - an effect, not of genetics, but of relations of power⁶⁴ . The “spheres of movement,” alluded to by both Foucault and Gatens, are constituted by these historically specific practices which mould and, indeed, *compose* body. However, following this paradigm, can we invert this equation and proffer that body constitutes power? Certainly, politically-speaking, it is the symbolic civil body which constitutes and delegates power (despite the fact that women are excluded from this contract). If Foucault’s power attempts to make bodies into machines, can we not also infer that bodies produced within this age of mass bio-technology create a system which imbues power with a previously foreign, individual and corporeal presence (i.e.: talking computers, digital response phone lines)? Following a similar line of reasoning, Jana Sawicki poses the question:

If, as Foucault claimed, biopower was an indispensable element in the development of capitalism insofar as it made possible a “controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production,” then it must also have been indispensable to patriarchal power insofar as

⁶³ Sawicki, p. 67.

⁶⁴ Gatens, p. 70.

it provided instruments for the insertion of women's bodies into the machinery of production.⁶⁵

Economic production yields human reproduction, and vice versa. We see here the possibility that economy not only influences "gender production" and binary modes of representation for the situated symbolic body (and desire within capitalism) but also affects the production of the material body.

Such a causal / symbiotic relationship is reflected in the dialogue between the two walls of video imagery in "Projection." The two video clips in "Projection" offer two modes of reading the female body - one static, the other kinetic, one colour, the other black and white, one "staged" through posed photographs and appropriated imagery, the other a "candid" recording of a child running. The two separate projections ask the viewer to create a dialogue between them, to construct their own social contract which marries one image to the other and to overcome signifying binaries. However, the logistics of the installation will only allow this through a memory of the image viewed prior to either one. This "ghost" image may cognitively be super-imposed onto the viewed image, perception and conception then challenged - is the memory of this "ghost" image accurate, and are we being influenced by its projection, or are we, as the viewer, *creating* this superimposed image, and constructing a new narrative? This brings us back to relations of power insofar as this process engages the viewer's desires in their cognitive perception, and my own power (as creator) in communicating my own vision of this installation piece. It is an interplay between both of these arenas of power (and the will of the creator and the viewer) which results in the symbolic/constructed body of "Projection."

And then I dreamt that I was floating in a deep, blue abyss. The liquid around me felt warm and thick and, although it was completely dark, I could see every pore on my skin. The translucent surface exposed the veins and arteries below my skin, pumping and

⁶⁵ Sawicki, p. 63. Sawicki here is referring to a quote from Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (N.Y.: Pantheon, 1978) p. 141.

flowing, pumping and flowing. I felt so light that I came apart - drifted away from my own body, piece by piece. But it was not a painful process, it seemed to me very natural, very coherent. I drifted in all different directions, a tiny little thread attached to each of my parts. But it was a choreographed drifting; I danced with the warm, blue glow, not knowing how I knew what to do but doing it anyways. Sometimes it was a waltz, sometimes I was a character in a Noh play, and other times I was directing traffic at an airport, waving my arms around madly. After I landed my fourth Boeing 747, I saw them. They were all watching. And clapping. And laughing. That's when I realized I hadn't come apart at all, I only thought it. The lights came on and I saw that I was on stage. The strings attached to my parts started to twirl me at an alarming pace. The audience clapped rhythmically, like a march, and the sound turned into pellets which flew into me. Twirling and twirling. Each twirl made me angrier and angrier until I yelled at the top of my lungs "that's enough already!" and, magically, it stopped. Livid and relieved at the same time, I turned to the audience. Staring back at me was an auditorium full of myself. We looked at each other, at a loss. The pellets of sound started to fall to the ground. They felt like spring rain and lead bullets all at once. I curtsied and the curtains closed to a standing ovation.

Section II b.

Interlude

v

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There are two kinds of contact, that of quantity, and that of power. By the former a body can be touched only by a body; by the latter a body can be touched by an incorporeal reality, which moves that body.

There are two kinds of contact, that of surface, and that of power. By the former a body can be touched only by a body; by the latter a body can be touched by an incorporeal reality, which moves that body.⁶⁶

- The Critical Art Ensemble

⁶⁶ The Critical Art Ensemble, *The Electronic Disturbance* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1994) p. 8.

(cordless)

the red wagon.

the Trans Canada (2,4,6 lane).

railways tracks, roller-blading on

wet cement.

Mr. Dress Up.

Shinkansen, Telus Mobility.

telegraph wires.

“hello, I’m not home at the moment but

leave your name and number after the beep

and I’ll get back to you as soon as possible...”

click.

note: the SONY sign board in Shinjuku

square is seen by the six million

commuters that pass through the station daily.

or maybe it sees them.

a bic pen.

the pink and yellow buggy.

aerial antennae and extension cords.

Doraimon.

Dulles International Airport.

traffic bumps on range road 74.

“hi, this is just me calling to remind

you (me) not to pick up the phone.

you’re not home. ciao.”

Balao Magico.

Channel 7 (cable 4).

Grand Central Station.

of modems and mice.

London Bridge is

falling down.

turn styles/ tokens/ tickets.

“for service in English, press 1. for service
in French, press 2. for service in Portuguese,
Spanish, or Italian, press 7. for Japanese,
press 0.”

the yellow line.

Yamanote-sen.

a trail of bread crumbs.

Je me souvien.

Jasper: 348 km.

“let’s go over to the tree house to see
what Casey and Finnegan are doing..”

“I’m sorry, I can’t hear you. hello? hel-”

there are two kinds of contact, that of
production, and that of destruction.

Section III

Transmitting Identity

What I am suggesting is a model of the relations between bodies and cities which sees them, not as megalithic total entities, distinct identities, but as assemblages or collections of parts, capable of crossing the thresholds between substances to form linkages, machines, provisional and often temporal sub- or microgroupings (...) a fundamentally disunified series of systems and interconnections, a series of disparate flows, energies, events or entities, and spaces, brought together or drawn apart in more or less temporary alignments. ⁶⁷

- Elizabeth Grosz

I periodically experience this sensation of seeing myself, outside of myself. Where there is a double-take of sorts as I am unable to recognize the person that I happen to be inhabiting. I feel myself doing a "mind-scan," where I am inputting all of the facts and reconfiguring the statistics to see if they match up with who I am supposed to be. Often, this sensation comes over me when I am alone, with no sound, TV or people to distract me. During these times, I seem to be occupying a space that lacks the informational "landmarks" or reminders of what I am. I imagine that some of my confusion comes from having been raised in three very different cultures in which *self* assumes distinctly different meanings. In Japan, self was part of a greater community and to deviate from it meant to disrespect your country(wo)men. In Brazil, the only selves that had any worth

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Grosz, "Bodies - Cities," in Beatriz Colomina, ed., *Sexuality and Space* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992) p.248.

were those with economic influence; other bodies co-existed with such selves but they were disposable commodities, a part of a different social state. In Canada, we pride ourselves in being “non-selves,” a country of self-effacing people without any particular demands (at least in comparison with the Americans). In actuality, we are very demanding beings, necessitating much personal and consumer space. But within every society, self emerges out of a pool of information which feeds individual and collective identity.

These periodic sessions of non-self-recognition are curious to me because I believe their root to be based not only in cross-cultural confusion, but in technologically mediated sensory deprivation. What I mean by that is the absence of the regular bombardment of information (through technology) which informs me of who I am. These associations may not be direct or obvious, but through my constant dialogue with television, radio, the internet, telephone and fax, I am continually affirming and disaffirming what constitutes my self or selves. In “Bodies-Cities,” Elizabeth Grosz explores the connection between architectural and physiological entities. According to Grosz, the body is incomplete, an indeterminate, amorphous series of uncoordinated potentialities which “require social triggering, ordering and long-term ‘administration’... (by) ‘the micro-technologies of power’.”⁶⁸ She suggests that this “triggering” is what makes a body readable within culture, but, conversely, that body also constructs (or triggers) the locus of information within society - the city.

I am interested in Grosz’s interpretation of this symbiotic relationship because it debunks the notion of human “mastery” over our physical environment and the uni-directional flow of meaning being assigned from organic, “independent” beings to non-organic and “dependent” beings. In other words, it strips any authority or permanence from the cultural signifiers on which we assume to base our collective identities. Instead, it necessitates a re-thinking of such a causal relation into a more Deleuzian model where information moves in a circular, rather than dichotomous configuration.⁶⁹

It is this type of multi-directional flow of information and the creation of identity that informs my installation “Dissemination and Dictation” (1999, see Appendix H). “D

⁶⁸ Grosz, p. 243.

⁶⁹ Boundas, V.C., ed., *The Deleuze Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) p.27,

& D” consists of a wall of pink pom-poms which scatter their way around the gallery walls in a configuration which mimics sound waves disseminating or the movement of gaseous atoms. The scattered pink balls revolve around a central listening station (with cassette player and headphones) which plays a tape of overlapping voices reading from various feminist discourses. The sound is activated by the viewer who is instructed on the pedestal to “Put headphones on. Rewind and press play. Listen.”. Further into the installation is a rug sweeper sitting on the floor next to the instructions “Grab handle. Move sweeper back and forth. When clean, move to another area.” The entire installation alludes to the process of acquiring information, the originating voice and the receiver’s role in de-coding it.

“D & D” creates a dialogue between the bright splashes of colour on the wall and the authoritative voices on the tape activated by the viewer. In choosing to obey the instructions presented to her/him, the viewer participates in instigating the flow of information. At first decipherable, the voices become layered and eventually overlap to such an extent that all that is audible is a jumble of chaotic words. In the information age in which we currently exist, such a cacophony of information is an all too common phenomenon. Within that scenario, what, I ask, is the individual absorbing, and what role does this bombardment of information play in the formation of our identities? I am specifically interested in the construction of “female” identities and their interplay with the plethora of contemporary feminist theory. If feminism, as all of technology and information purports to do, is supposed to be “freeing” its audience from ignorance and oppression, what does it accomplish when it is presented in such a convoluted and elitist format? Is it indeed stemming from “the people” or from a select segment of a privileged population?

The rug sweeper is the foil to the academic audio piece. Both objects (cassette player and rug sweeper) are presented with their instructions for usage. The obvious nature of these instructions is meant to reinforce a didactic, institutional hierarchy in which the most basic actions are coded in user manuals. As well, they question what indeed *is* obvious when it comes to utilizing technology (cassette player) or domestic objects which have previously been relegated for the usage of one gender (rug sweeper).

One reality speaks of an idealized intellectualized approach to understanding female identity, while the other speaks of the actual reality for many women who lack the means of accessing such a discourse. As the pom poms of information gradually fall off the walls, the floor becomes cluttered with more “dirt” for the sweeper to absorb. Within this arena, where is the viewer located? Is s/he on the walls, represented as a pink dot? Is s/he within the audio, a voice within the confusion of the others? Or is s/he desperately attempting to keep the damn floor clean? But, more importantly, how are each person’s actions affecting the other?

In “The Electronic Disturbance,” the Critical Art Ensemble discusses the relevance of contemporary performance art and the performative matrix on which it is based. According to them, the performance grid

suffers from the clutter of codes and simulated persona imposed by spectacle. The attempt to sidestep these problems, by bringing the personal into the discourse, does not have an intersubjective depth of meaning that can maintain itself without networking with coding systems independent of the individual performer. Consequently, the spectacular body and the virtual body consume the personal by imposing their own predetermined matrices.⁷⁰

The C.A.E. suggests that where a history of information exists, the personal can not exist as it must draw on the existing discourse to define itself. But following Grosz and Deleuze, can we not surmise that it is not simply the “performer” who is plugged into the information matrix, but that the matrix is informed by the performer as well? As it is impossible to exist outside of history, if we utilize the C.A.E. model, we must conclude that the individual cannot exist. I prefer to believe that the individual *does* exist but that it is engaged in a cyclical system of exchange where it is constantly reinventing itself and its environment, one the product of the other.

The object informs the body, and then leaves the body behind. Knarled in a tangled mass of auburn, jet black and blond, it embeds itself in the crowning glory of her sexuality.

Rolling out of the meeting place for gossip, perm solutions, paige boys and hi-lights;

⁷⁰ The Critical Art Ensemble, p. 60.

waxy with oils and dirt. Each one telling a story of pride, self-hatred, beauty and tyranny. So bright and colourful one could almost eat them. Suck them. Choke on them. Springing corkscrews for the blushing bride. Tracing the taut tresses with her fingers. The unbearable heat projecting down onto her scalp. Waiting. Wanting. Writhing. Little mini straight jackets for your head. Squeezing and pulling, tighter and tighter; pulsing with desire. Ecstasy comes with release. You lay limp, satisfied with the consummation.

Auto-cannibalism

The subject: Born to consume just for the fun of it. Just for the fun of it, mass consumption necessitates self-consumption, just for the fun of it. Just for the fun of it auto-cannibalism is the material signifier of excess consumption, just for the fun of it. Just for the fun of it excess consumption is the logic of economic narcissism, just for the fun of it. Just for the fun of it mass consumption equals self-consumption, just for the fun of it. Auto-cannibalism is the logic of fashion.⁷¹

-The Critical Art Ensemble

The C.A.E. surmises that the logical product of mass consumption is self-consumption or, to use their terminology, "auto-cannibalism." If consumption is seen as an affirmative act (just for the fun of it), then to affirm our own existence, we must consume ourselves. According to the C.A.E., this consumption necessitates the release of the organic body which is replaced by the body without organs (BwO), or the electronic body. The BwO is the perfect body for it is forever reproducible.⁷² Within this model, a seamless scenario is set up where the "reproducible" body (BwO) can insert itself into a mass production-based reality. Following this logic, we consume ourselves from the get-go when engaging in mass consumption. Once again, the C.A.E. proposes a model of self-actualization which eliminates the personal, identities simply falling off the assembly line of mass

⁷¹ The Critical Art Ensemble, p. 60-61.

⁷² Ibid, p. 72.

production.

The concept of auto-cannibalism is attractive to me as it presents another possibility in interpreting Foucault's "disciplined body." The disciplined body is created through self-imposed disciplinary rituals (daily regimens, time tables, drills, etc.). As discussed in Section II, Sandra Bartky explains how technology subjugates the body by developing competencies and disciplinary skills (dieting, engaging in fitness and beauty regimens).⁷³ I proffer that the disciplined body is not only the product of disciplinary technologies but also of auto-cannibalism. In society's frenzy to consume capitalist goods, it consumes itself and re-defines its body in an ever-narrowing field of existence. The acquisition of goods does not expand the realm of self-definition when they are the product of a pre-determined machine of production. On the contrary, they limit the possibilities of identification to a vision espoused by ad agencies and corporations.

The residual product of auto-cannibalism, the BwO, is embodied in "Pinned" (1999, Appendix J). The thin line of curlers, sandwiching faux hair and twist ties, looks much like an exaggerated bar code in its twenty feet of length. The curlers are all second hand, the discarded artifacts of someone's beauty ritual. In the absence of their previous owners, they represent an incarnation of "body" and, in fact, *are* a body - inanimate but powerfully present. As evidence of mass conformity to grooming expectations, the curlers are agents of Bartky's disciplinary technologies. As disciplinary technologies, they served to create a uniform standard for physical appearance, but also to strip their previous owners of other modes of identification for their bodies. Mass consumption (consuming an ideal of beauty) can be read here as self-consumption or auto-cannibalism. Perhaps one could equate the twenty-foot line to the spine of an animal, the bones picked clean after a feast of flesh. Sitting at the table of mass consumption, we eat ourselves with precision, stuffed with the illusion of gratification.

In its formal configuration, "Pinned" also evokes the association of "flat-lining" - death, the termination of individual energies. Much like "Packaged" which speaks to the mass production of identities within a consumer society, "Pinned" supports a system of individuation based upon conformity. Each curler is separate yet bound to each other in an absolute fashion. That which holds the curlers together is literally a pin, a bobbi pin,

⁷³ Bartky, p. 4.

claiming the mobility of the masses. In its consistent horizontal flow, “Pinned” illustrates and questions corporeal and psychic conformity and begs the question, “who does *not* possess a body without organs?”

Conclusion

The Plastic Membrane: transmitting desire

Throughout this paper, I have re-read passages and marveled at the ideas and the synthesis of words with image and logic. It gives me great pleasure to construct a sentence which is concise yet beautiful, challenging but lyrical. Then I've stepped back and wondered what any of this has to do with my art-making process. While one influences the other, I have faced a constant battle in understanding the relationship between the two and in maintaining a harmonious balance. In fact, there have been times when the two have seemed completely separate from each other, only connected by the necessity of the MFA program. I still struggle to understand how words can be related to objects, sounds and images. They may describe them, they may question them, but they can never co-exist within that same reality. The verb and the noun and the preposition and the adjective float in another realm and create pleasure and displeasure via different channels. I can not help but think that the words are simply an excuse to create the work, or that the work is simply an illustration of the written ideas.

A few weeks before my show, I came up with the exhibition title "the plastic membrane: transmitting desire." The main attraction in my thesis exhibition is "Packaged," 1200 bound plastic bag sculptures. On the opposite wall, a quiet line of colourful curlers floats in response to the consumer query posed by "Packaged." Both pieces embrace the medium of plastic - stretched, dyed and cast. It is the industrial wonder, resilient and virtually non-biodegradable (much to the chagrin of most environmentalists). This synthetic creation is what my entire show rests on, whether it be through its literal usage or its symbolism as that which is phony, denaturalised, and

suffocating. But a membrane is permeable. It separates two entities (or joins them) but also allows for some transmission of their contents, maintaining a relationship between the two. The membrane regulates this relationship, acting as the controlled buffer. I see *myself* as such a membrane between my art and my writing, allowing the contents to seep from one to the other but always separating the two, joined in the middle, but unable to fully engage in either one. I am always unfaithful to one or the other.

In the location where I am supposed to be summarizing and synthesizing my approach to my art-making, I offer the possibility that the synthesizing and the art-making have been bastardized one by the other. This is not to say that my situation is unique. Every artist who writes a grant application or gives an artist's talk is forced to verbalize and intellectualize her/his art-making process. I am not so impractical as to suggest that we abort this practice to maintain the "purity" of art. Certainly, my own art is very much based on ideas over aesthetics and the verbalization of these ideas allows for a more complex understanding of the work. I am simply stating that my own creative process has not made this relationship an easy one and that the accompanying struggle has often made me question the possibility of their co-existence.

It would be appropriate here for me to recapitulate the body of the paper and to speculate as to the future direction of my art work. However, I feel that it would be redundant and pointless to go over what has been examined in depth in the previous forty pages only to come up with a lukewarm abridgement of it. As for the future direction in the creation of my "art," it is extremely difficult for me to say where it will take me next.

One important experience that resulted from the installation of my thesis show was the cooperation and the coordination between myself and my eight helpers in executing the labour-intensive task of "hanging" the exhibition. Although the ideas for the individual pieces originated with me, having so many people aid in the installation of the work changed my relationship to it and the ability for me to claim exclusive authorship over it. Far from diminishing my sense of accomplishment, this added element has greatly enhanced my appreciation of the exhibition and my desire to engage in further collaborative work. It was noted by many observers that the process of the installation itself was a performance piece with big, burly men hammering little stick pins into tiny

plastic bags adorned with Barbie shoes. Erasing the chalk line grid for “Packaged” with soapy water and rags was also a performative experience, alluding to domesticity and the modernist grid. The labour of washing the walls erased the thousand plus tiny rectangles from fifty feet of gallery wall space. Some of the helpers commented on the irony of the labour division when all of the men ended up installing the wall extensions for “Projection.” drilling and hammering while I, in the meantime, was sticking pink pom poms to the walls. Unfortunately, I did not have the foresight to video tape the whole process. However, from this experience, I am left with the desire to re-create a similar situation for the express purpose of its documentation.

In conclusion,

**Grab handle. Move sweeper back
and forth. When clean, move to
another area.**

Happy sweeping. Oh, you missed a spot.

Afterward

It has been a month and seven days since the thesis show was installed. The work now sits in garbage bags and boxes, dormant until its next exhibition. The haste with which I needed to conclude my thoughts and my work has now dissipated and I am left wondering just how successful I was in communicating to my audience. Further deliberation and discussion on my work has reinforced the dichotomous nature of the relationship between the objects and projections on the walls and the words which fill these pages. Where do these two arenas overlap, if at all?

I believe that the answer lays in their intent. My intent in both projects has been to re-read our existing social structures through their trail of debris - cultural debris, consumer debris, intellectual debris, whatever you choose to call it. In both my written work and my studio work, the debris is subjected to a process of re-organization and re-classification. Ideas are taken out of context and inserted into a new context. They are slowed down, sped up, bent, clasped together, abstracted, merged, divided and then cleaned up. Whereas in the visual work there is a recognizable aesthetic that the pieces conform to, in the written work, there is a narrative style which it adheres to. There is restraint and excess in both realms, clarity of expression hinging upon their interplay.

At the end of the MFA closing reception, I took a quick glance around my exhibition, surveying the area for evidence of human interaction. And I found it. Along the floor of "Dictation and Dissemination" were rows of neatly organized lines of pom poms. Apparently some of the younger visitors were taken by the random bunches of pink balls and decided to impose some order to them. The furry lines looked like pink centipedes making their way around the room. And there it was in a nutshell - my creative process encapsulated within an imaginary furry creature. The pom poms keep falling, and I continue to make my illusive insects.

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Appendix A

Bubble Gum and Barbie Dolls: a performance piece

Script from performance executed at The New Gallery, March 30, 1999

Notes: A.M. is Anne Marie Nakagawa, P. is Paula Fayerman.

A.M. lying on the ground, hyperventilating...breathing into paper bag.

P. - What are you doing?

A.M. - I'm hyperventilating.

P. - Why are you hyperventilating?

A.M. - I can't do this piece.

P - Does this have to do with your self-esteem?

A.M - No. It's too much pressure. I feel like we're the token feminists....all feminist performance artists will be judged by our piece.

P. - How many feminists does it take to change a light bulb?

A.M. - How many?

P. - That's not funny.

A.M. - That's NOT funny!

P. - How many performance artists does it take to change a light bulb?

A.M. - How many?

P. - I don't know I left.

WHY DO THE PIECE?

A.M. - Why are we doing this piece?

A.M. - Why do we do anything? Why did we decide to do this again?

P. - Well, I think it was an excuse to procrastinate in other areas of our life.

A.M. - Oh yeah. You know what we need?

P. - What?

A.M. - Gum. Gum would make this better. (*Looking at audience*) Does anyone have gum?

P. - Hey, I have some. Are you getting into that oral fixation thing again? (dumps a bucket of Double Bubble bubble gum on AM's stomach)

A.M. begins to chew gum, sitting on the ground.

Paula pulls up chair and sits next to A.M.

A.M. - O.K., I feel better. In fact, I have an idea for the piece. Where's that taperecorder of mine...

BREAST SIZE

A.M. - (*speaking into a taperecorder*) Idea for performance piece, March 30, 1999: large-chested women - big breasts and discomfort within the female body, blah, blah, blah.

P. - Is that what's going on with you? Are you afraid to perform because you have discomfort with your body because of your breasts size?

A.M. - Hey, yours are bigger!!

P. - Do we have to talk about this in front of other people? We're in a performance here, you know.

A.M. - No, we don't have to...But I think we can. We are both women who are well endowed. So what is the primary discomfort factor happening for you?

P. - I think it has to do with self-esteem, not wanting to be looked at..

A.M. - So you don't want to be objectified...

P. - There you go with the big words already! (*assumes a Jewish matriarch voice.*) For this you go to college? Why don't you just marry a nice Jewish doctor and get over it?

A.M. - Shut up. One part of your body is somehow being paid more attention to than the rest, and people don't look at you - person, but you-object. Isn't that what's happening?

P. - But I really don't conceptualize it as that. I don't walk around thinking 'people are objectifying me,' and that's why I'm walking around with my shoulders hunched down with back problems.

A.M. - Do you have back problems?

P.- Yeah, it has to do with my large breasts.

A.M - Why do you say that?

P. - Just a hunch. Why are we doing this piece if we don't want to be looked at?

A.M. - Good question.... Well, I thought it could be a part of my masters thesis.

P. - What's in it for me?

A.M. - Exposure.

P. - We've already established that I don't want to be exposed. Play back that idea.

PLAYING THE TAPE - ALAN SOBLE

A.M. plays back tape. In place of her words is an Alan Soble quote.

"Women in capitalism are subjected to a widespread and deeply affecting tupe of alienation, constituted by what I call 'the dismemberment syndrome.' Much of the dismemberment alienation experienced by women is a function of male sexuality in capitalism. The three interconnected manifestations of the syndrome are physical, linguistic, and photographic dismemberment. The most obvious form of physical dismemberment is the seperation of the limbs from the trunk of the body during violent sexual or nonsexual assault. Clitoridectomy is another example of physical dismemberment, one that has received extensive medical justification. Clitoridectomy can be carried out psychologically rather than surgically. Some clothing, for example high heels, girdles, tight skirts, and brassiers, can involve dismemberment. Another good example is depilation..."⁷⁴

P. - This makes me nervous... (*starts chewing gum...*) What does that quote mean? I can't even hear it.

A.M. - Don't you understand plain English?

P. - Anne Marie, I am trying to make sense of the world. Why are you making fun of me - why are you embarassing me... This is not the piece!!! (*looks at the audience as she says this.*)

A.M - (*reads out first part of the Soble quote*) What don't you understand?

"Clidoridectomy is another example of physical dismemberment. Clitoridectomy can be carried out psychologically as well as surgically."

⁷⁴ Soble, p. 56.

P. - I'd rather have it done psychologically, thanks.

A.M. - (*continues reading*) "Some clothing, for example..blah, blah...depilation."

DEPILATION

P. - Depilation! I know depilation! I knew it was dismemberment! I hate shaving my legs.

A.M. - But you don't.

P. - Well, sometimes I get coerced into it. And I hate being forced to dismember myself for the sake of social integration. Just shut up and shave your legs! That's what they should say.

A.M. - I'm kind of guilty of it 'cuz I wax once a year.

P. - You know what? I shaved.

A.M. - When? What happened?

P. - I had to go to a swimming pool.

A.M. - And you couldn't do it, hey? Did you feel like you were compromising your ideology?

P. - Yes! Why is this such a big deal for me? BECAUSE I'm dismembering myself, I'm infantilising myself - for the ideals of femininity within capitalist society, that's why! How can I be an individual and shave???

A.M. - Can you be an individual and shave, really? Come on, now (*looking at audience.*) This gets back to this whole thing of if your ideologies limit you from doing things, because, say, you're SO uncomfortable that you *can't* wear shorts, you *can't* go to the swimming pool, because you feel like people are staring at you ...what purpose does it serve? I mean, feminism is supposed to be about liberating yourself, not to be confined by it.

P. - People say they don't care. Do you think that's true?

A.M. - NO. Because they stare.

P. - They do stare, but they don't say anything. They don't come up and say, "gee, you have hairy legs, how can you live like that?"

A.M. - Listen to this: (*continues to read Soble*) "It is also a type of alienation suffered mostly by women." This is about linguistic dismemberment. "To dismember a man, by calling him a 'prick' is not always to demean him or reduce his status."

P. - Well, men don't have to shave their fuckin' legs, do they?

A.M. - No, they don't.

P. - Well, actually I was just reading Simone de Beauvoir and Blah, blah... (*reads de Beauvoir*) **

BARBIE

A.M. - You know, this goes back to the whole Barbie thing. What do you think about Barbie?

P. - What do I think about Barbie? Anne Marie, I am trying to have a serious discussion about feminism and reading from one of the foremothers of the movement and you're asking me about Barbie?! What's wrong with you?

A.M. - Paula, I'm not trying to trivialize what you're talking about. But, really, Barbie is such a huge cultural icon in terms of representing the female body in Western society that you can't have a discussion about feminism, or the lack thereof, *without* discussing Barbie. So what do you think about Barbie ?

P. - Well, aside from the obvious feminist interpretation that she's a horrible role model for young girls and, as Soble says, she's a prime example of the dismemberment syndrome...

A.M. - (*interrupts*) Where are you coming up with this crap? Soble doesn't say anything about Barbie? This is how misinterpretation of critical discourse occurs. YOU are a part of the problem, my friend.

P. - I'm not the problem, Barbie is the problem.

A.M. - Yeah, well what's your take on it?

P. - Well she's representative of the so-called classical ideal feminine form. You know, if Barbie's boobs were like a real person's, tight, up-lifted, nipples pointing up...

A.M. - She doesn't have any nipples. They were shaved off so she'd be less sexual.

P. - You're right. I'm confused by the critical discourse again. But anyways, she'd be a 44 DD. And, I mean she is turning forty, so how realistic is that!

A.M. - 44DD!?

P. - Yeah! And her waiste size would be a 26.

A.M. - Really?

P. - Well, maybe a B... she'd be big. Her waste would be small and her boobs would be big.

A.M. - And she'd have no internal organs.

P. - And what about the toes?

A.M. - Yeah, the toes bug me. It's not just the toes, it's the whole configuration of the foot - it's not flat.

P. - It's very oppressive.

A.M. - Barbie can only tip-toe around. She's very co-dependent - I mean, she required the aid of a small child to move her because of those feet.

CHINESE FOOT-BINDING

P. - It's just like women in China who've had their feet bound! What is up with that?

A.M. - It's an oppression thing.

P. - It makes women immobile.

A.M. - *It is* about making women immobile. Do you feel immobile? Did you grow up playing with Barbie?

P. - Well, I played with Barbie a little bit. Did you grow up playing with Barbie?

A.M. - Well, you know, I grew up in Japan until I was ten.

P. - Did they have Barbie there?

A.M. - They had Rika-chan.

P. - Rika-chan?

A.M. - Yeah, she had kind of auburn-ish hair. But she was quite a bit flatter than Barbie. She wasn't as perky - she probably emulated the Asian physique more, they don't have a lot of curves. Asian women are pretty flat and not too hippy. So I played with her and then when I moved here I think I did play with Barbie. But I don't know... although I think Barbie is quite evil *now*, I'm not really sure if playing with her damaged me, I see the potential there, but I'm not sure if she did.

P. - Are you saying that we can blame Barbie for the self-esteem problems of women?

A.M. - *No*, I'm saying that *I don't know*. I'm saying that I think she's quite evil in that she's not an appropriate toy for young girls to play with, basing their notion of what they should turn into. I think it's a bad thing. But then when I think back on my own childhood and see that I did play with Barbie, I don't know how much of my own low self-esteem, or self-hatred of my body and other issues that I've dealt with actually came from Barbie, because she's only an indicator of a much larger phenomenon within our culture, right?

P. - Yeah, it's just like Soble said - "women in capitalism are subject to a widespread and deeply affecting kind of alienation." Like, did you know there's a whole Barbie store?

A.M. - Oh, really.

P. - Yeah, haven't you seen those? Not in Calgary but in the States. What's the name of that big toy store?

F.A.O. SCHWARTZ

A.M. - F.A.O. Schwartz. I wonder what F.A.O. stands for?

P. - Fucking Asshole Oppressors. Barbie's really getting me down. I want to bite her head off. Why don't you want to bite Barbie's head off? Are you afraid of it's mysogynist implications or something? Take a stand, baby!

A.M. - I don't want to bite Barbie's head off because I think it will wreck my dental work.

P. - Is that it???

A.M. - Yup. Plus, they're very expensive.

P. - How do you think this performance is going?

A.M. - Well, Paula, it's fortuitous that you ask. This review is just in (*picks up a FFWD magazine and reads*):

REVIEW: "Bubble Gum and Barbie Dolls" by P. Fayerman and A.M. Nakagawa

This painfully long performance piece confirmed the notion that feminism and feminist performance art is now dead. Ladies, what were you thinking? Through a most annoying display of mastication, the two performers spat their way through contemporary feminist discourse. So what? The self-indulgence of this piece left me feeling nauseous at the best of times. At least it's a comfort to know that none of our hard-earned tax dollars are going into the pockets of these wanna-be-performer feminazis.

P.-That's not very good, is it?

A.M. - Nope. I should have guessed that this would happen. Feminist work is always misinterpreted.

P. - Well, how can we make this more of a performance?

A.M. - I don't know...

P. - Oh, I have an idea - vaginal scrolls!

A.M. - Well, *you* can do that Paula. But I think.. (*pauses, then has an idea*) Oh! I know! We could use technology! Yeah, audio-visual stuff like Laurie Anderson. We need gadgets and levels and metal do-hickeys, and distorters and amps! That's what real performace artists use - stuff that you plug in.

P.- I was thinking of nakedness, chocolate and sparkles.

A.M- Oh, that's good too, maybe we can do both.

Turns on tape machine, AM sits down on chair chewing , snapping and blowing bubbles. A cacophony of voices reading feminist theory begins to play. Voices get progressively louder as piece goes - drowning out P. and A.M. P. gets mikes set up and reorganizes chairs. The sound of bubbles popping echoes through the mike and distorts through the amplifier. A.M. and P. sit next to each other with boom box in the middle.

CHARACTERS

P. and A.M. sit next to each other for a while. A.M. continues to chew gum and look at the Double Bubble jokes. P. joins in the chewing and snapping and they echo together in synch with the background audio.

P. - So, is this better?

A.M. - Of course, we have technology now.

P. - But do you think we should be doing something else?

A.M. - Why? We're all geared up. This is a good piece.

P. - Well, maybe we need to get into a character or something...

A.M. - Oh, O.K.! I've taken acting classes, I know how this goes... alright, you need to ask yourself who am I? What do I drive? What's my job? What do I eat for breakfast? What TV shows do I watch? How old am I? What do I read? How large are my breasts? Can I pretend that I'm an A cup? Who's my character? This is my persona - I'm Laurie Anderson. For the performance, I will think that. Yup. I'm not going to think the violin but spoken-word Laurie Anderson. *Whahhhhhh.. (into mike)*

P. - If you're Laurie Anderson, who am I?

A.M. - You can be Laurie Anderson too. It'll make us obnoxious and aggressive which is what we need to be.

P. - I think our breasts are too large to be Laurie Anderson. She's very flat.

A.M. -Oh, well, why don't we be pregnant hags in the theatre of the carnivalesque?

P. - What is that?

A.M- I don't know, ask Julia Kristeva.

P. - O.K., let's ask Julia Kristeva. (*Whips out Julia Kristeva....reads*)***

A.M. - (*sarcastically*) Well, that really clears it up.

P.- Maybe we can be strong feminist personalities instead. Have you seen this Germaine Greer article in *The New Left* where she's biting Barbie's head off?

GERMAINE GREER

A.M. - (*reads article*) "Germaine Greer has been forced out of her reclusive ways to straightened out the feminist back fighters with characteristic boldness and polemic. She denounces those taken in by fake equality and those who have forgotten women's endless hardship, pain and grief. It's time for women to get angry again, she says." What do you think?

P. - I've always been angry.

A.M. - You've always been angry? You know what? I'm angry too! And I'm criticized for that all the time. Blah, blah, it's so done, men and women are equal now, I mean, what are we whining over...

P. - There's plenty to be blah, blah-ing over! *Paula reads a Terry Eagleton quote.*

FRENCH ACADEMIA

A.M. - There's lots of academic feminists blah-blahing anyway. Maybe the Europeans are more open to feminist personalities. Do ya think?

P. - I think France has a more academic intellectual tradition.

A.M. - Like Kristeva, Cixous, Irigaray..but how many of the French population actually engage in this kind of discourse? If you're looking for it, you can find it but...

P.- (*interrupts*) Well, that's what our piece is about! How many people like me with big breasts engage in feminist theoretical discourse to figure out why my big breasts make me feel uncomfortable?

A.M. - Let's ask the audience. How many people here with big breasts engage in feminist theoretical discourse? Please raise your hand. We'll give you gum.

GUM JOKES?

P.- Can you understand the jokes in these bubble gum packages? (*inserting bubble gum in her mouth and looking at the jokes.*)

A.M. - No, they're dumb. And there are no girls in them. They're very obscure and they're not even funny!

P. - Yeah, it's kind of like critical discourse! (*Stand up on chairs here., ready to make a proclamation*) **BUBBLE GUM AND BARBIE DOLLS, AREN'T WE JUST INFANTILISING THE WHOLE IDEA OF WOMEN YET AGAIN?** It's depilation again, dismemberment theory. Like have you ever noticed Barbie doesn't have hair on her legs?

A.M. - But neither does Ken.

P. and A.M. stand up on the chairs. P. produces a Barbie and in a most neanderthal fashion, bites its head off. P. whispers to A.M. across the chairs.

A.M. - Paula wants me to say "the sociological construction of woman is Barbie." There, I said it. (*Turns to P.*) You know what, I want some fries? This gum just isn't doing it for me anymore.

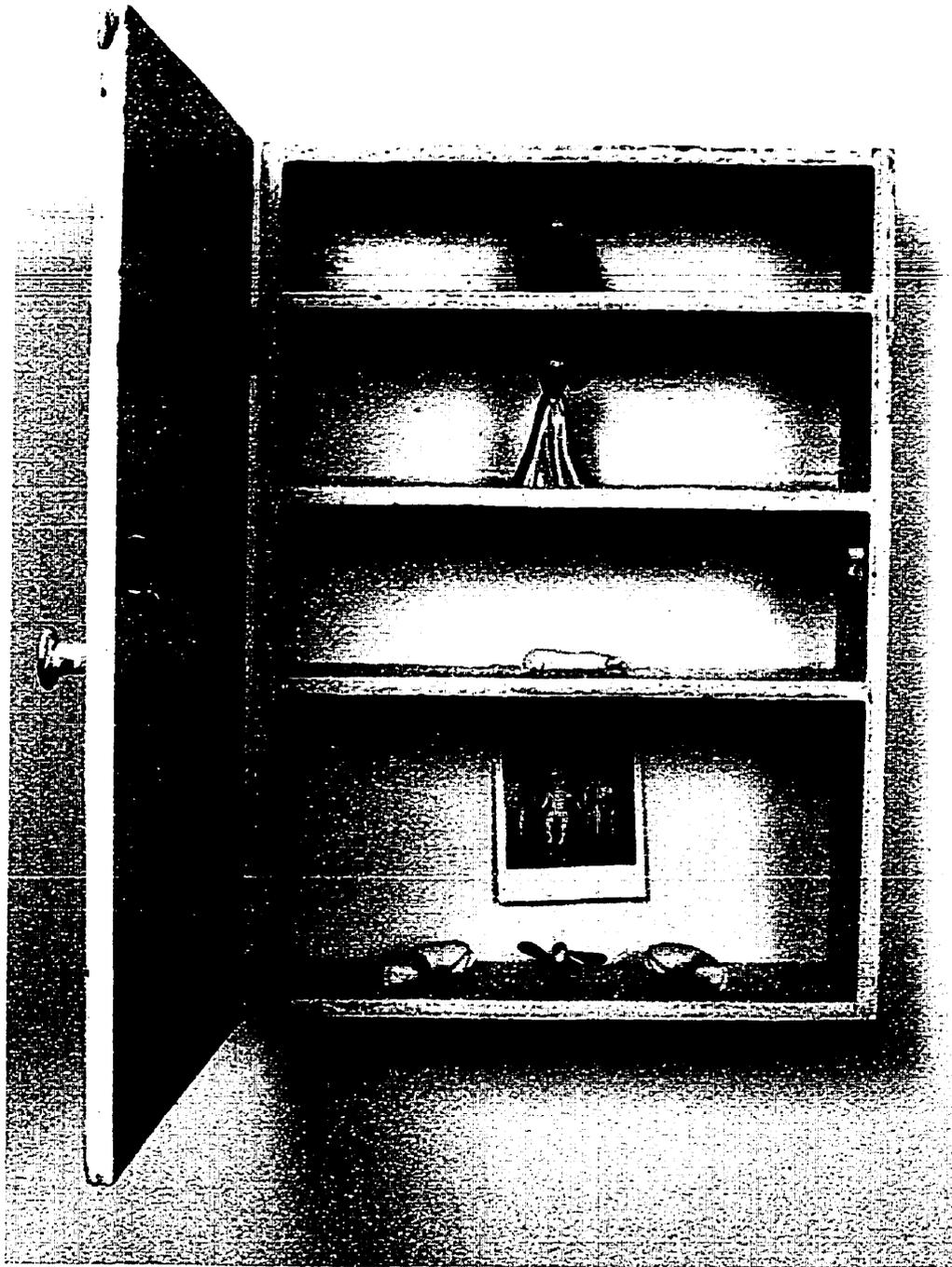
P.- You want what? Is this more about your oral fixation? I just ate Barbie, I'm full.

A.M. - Well, just come with me.

P. - O.K.

P. and A.M. get off chairs and walk off stage. The last of the tape plays.

Appendix B



"Hope Chest," Mixed Media, 1998.

Appendix C



"Shirley Temple," Mixed Media, 1998.

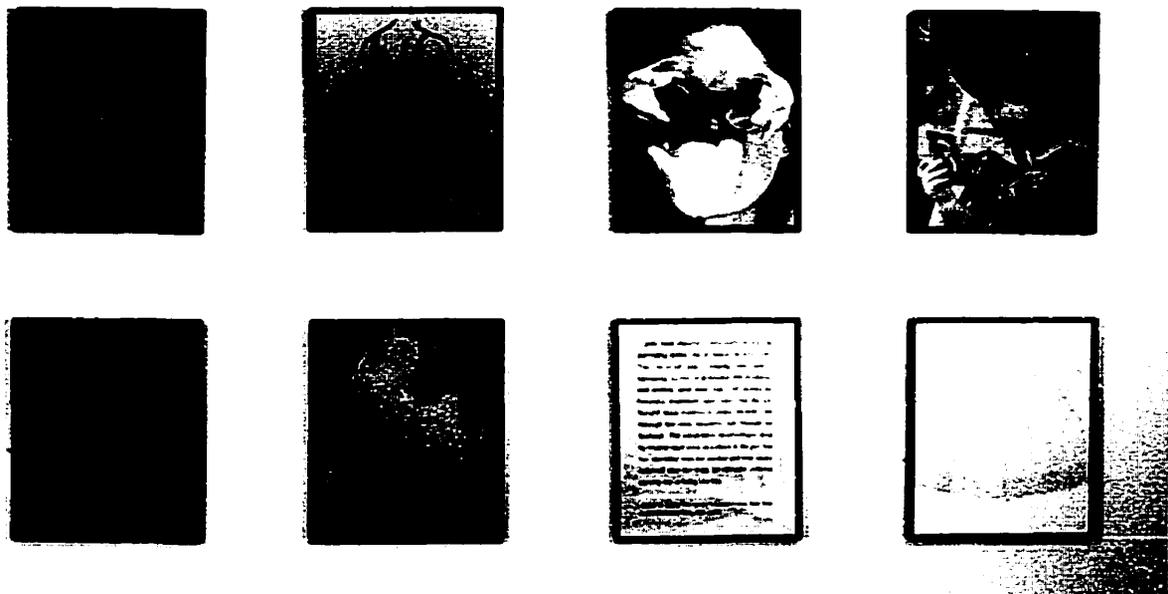
The glasses hold a "pickled" Miss Piggy and Sailor Moon. Popular children's toys, both figurines represent the female child in various hues of pinks. Sailor Moon's skirt is short enough to expose her underwear, although it is hard to tell with her limbs missing. Miss Piggy draws on common associations with women as "pigs" and gluttons, out of control and defined by her habit of excess. Both toys float in a clear fluid (actually water) which flank a glass of a pink cocktail ("Shirley Temple"). I see the liquid as being part amniotic fluid, part embalming fluid. The figures are trapped and isolated within their containers but they are also waiting to be born, released. All three glasses are available for consumption - of image, of ideology, of food to appease our sexual appetites.

Appendix D



"Object: Essence," Mixed Media, 1998.

Appendix E



“(In)Valid,” Colour Photographs and Girl’s Dress, 1998.

The images, both original and appropriated, speak of an objectified corporeal representation for girls and women. None of the figurines possess an entire face and, thus, are without identity. They are cropped just above their smiles, allowing the viewers to be both content and disturbed in the knowledge that the anonymous figures are happy in their fragmented existences. The face with tulips (see detail on next page) and its couplet of a child applying lipstick are the two exceptions to this fragmentation. One is whole, yet obscured, its eyes and mouth covered by tulips. The other is only obscured by a child’s garish application of lipstick. Identity is in the process of being applied in this image. The two corset illustrations come from “The Canadian Mother and Child” published circa 1950. They represent the mature female form, but also the pregnant one as the images are of maternity corsets. Questions of (re)productive power as violence are posed here as well as the making of the “disciplined” body..

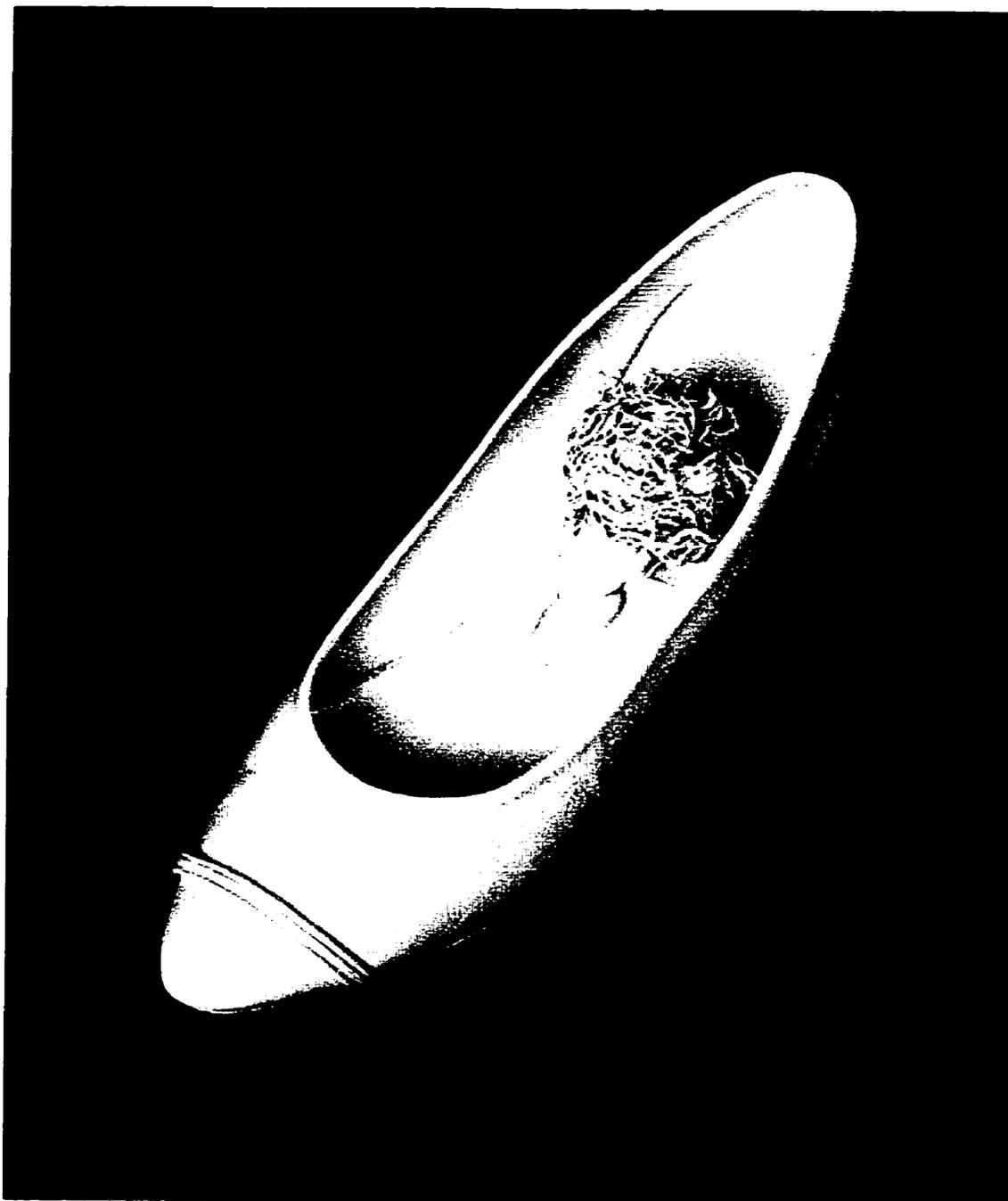


"(In)Valid," Detail, Colour Photograph, 1998.



“(In)Valid,” Detail, Colour Photograph, 1998.

Appendix F



"Object: Binding," Mixed Media, 1998.