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Anybody's Concerns I: Gender and the Body

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About

Gender forum is an online, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the discussion of gender issues. As an electronic journal, *gender forum* offers a free-of-charge platform for the discussion of gender-related topics in the fields of literary and cultural production, media and the arts as well as politics, the natural sciences, medicine, the law, religion and philosophy. Inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier in 2002, the quarterly issues of the journal have focused on a multitude of questions from different theoretical perspectives of feminist criticism, queer theory, and masculinity studies. *gender forum* also includes reviews and occasionally interviews, fictional pieces and poetry with a gender studies angle.

Opinions expressed in articles published in *gender forum* are those of individual authors and not necessarily endorsed by the editors of *gender forum*.

Submissions

Target articles should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition) and should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length. Please make sure to number your paragraphs and include a bio-blurb and an abstract of roughly 300 words. Files should be sent as email attachments in Word format. Please send your manuscripts to gender-forum@uni-koeln.de.

We always welcome reviews on recent releases in Gender Studies! Submitted reviews should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition), have numbered paragraphs, and should be between 750 and 1,000 words in length. Please note that the reviewed releases ought to be no older than 24 months. In most cases, we are able to secure a review copy for contributors.

Article Publishing

The journal aims to provide rapid publication of research through a continuous publication model. All submissions are subject to peer review. Articles should not be under review by any other journal when submitted to *Gender forum*.

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Editorial

1 Ranging from contemporary performance art to the ritual of clitoridectomy to in vitro fertilisation and its dramatic representation, the contributions to **Anybody's Concerns** explore artistic, medical and cultural practices and discourses concerning gendered bodies.

2 **Anna Furse's** essay "**Art of A.R.T.**" investigates the artistic and aesthetic potential of Assisted Reproduction Technology (A.R.T.) from a personal perspective. In so doing, she highlights the cultural tendency to marginalise sub-fertile women and describes the difficulties and prejudices women are confronted with when undergoing a fertilisation treatment. Furse complements her unusual theoretical and practical exploration of A.R.T. with a presentation of her current performance piece *Yerma's Eggs* and the impact it had on its audiences.

3 In her article, "**'Know that I do not suffer, unlike you...': Visual and Verbal Codings of Pain in Body and Performance Art,**" **Andrea Gutenberg** explores the interface of body art and the cultural codes at work in discourses of religion, hysteria and (cosmetic) surgery, among others. Focussing on gender differences, she traces the scenarios of narcissism and voyeurism both implied in the artists' live performances and stated in the manifestoes released by them.

4 **Samantha Hume's** contribution, "**The narrative of male violence on women's bodies,**" argues that past and present cultural practices such as clitoridectomy, foot binding or cosmetic surgery can be interpreted as acts in which male violence writes its narrative onto women's bodies. Hume interprets violent acts committed by women on their own bodies (or on those of other women) as a consequence of male-defined expectations of femininity that have become social imperatives. Focussing on cases of female genital mutilation, Hume highlights the urgency to take political as well as personal measures against acts of patriarchally motivated violence.

5 "One of my missions as a playwright is to let the magic back in," says **Diane Samuels**, British-Jewish playwright and novelist, in Andrea Birk and Tina Wald's interview. Samuels talks about her plays (among them her best-known work, *Kindertransport*) and her forthcoming novel *Cinderella's Daughter*. She also shares her experiences as a British-Jewish woman writer, reflecting, for example, on the patriarchal structure of the British theatre system.

6 The fiction section of **Anybody's Concerns** presents an excerpt from Diane Samuels' novel-in-progress *Cinderella's Daughter*, which juxtaposes Samuels' witty re-writing of the

Cinderella tale with a family story in a contemporary setting.

7 Finally, reviews of recent publications within the field of gender studies by Gabriele Griffin, Karin Ikas and Christina Hughes complete this issue.

Art of A.R.T.¹

By Anna Furse, Goldsmith College, London, U.K.

Abstract:

I have sought ways since to write and create dialogues and debates, images and performance poetics that reflect the interior landscape of the involuntarily childless. Such a voice as mine, that of a sub-fertile woman's perspective, tends to appear last, if it appears at all, in media reportage of any hotly topical IVF related case. These are too often sensationalised so as to feed into the popular notion of fertility experts 'playing God' whilst the sub-fertile are portrayed as selfish heathens or pathetic victims.[...] Aptly, I think, the acronym for Assisted Reproduction Tech-nologies is A.R.T.[...]. My play *Yerma's Eggs*, though not a didactic work, aimed to bring the audience close-up to the infertile experience and bio-ethics in an immediate, emotional and interactive way as only live theatre can do. I wanted to explore how to get under the skin of the infertile subject, represent different cultural and sexual-choice perspectives and bring the bio-ethical debate on A.R.T. into a theatrical space, emotionally and deliberately in-conclusively.

1 I make theatre. I have a child. She is 8 years old. She was made, like some many thousands of children in the world today from In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF).² I was 42 when she was born. My prognosis for success was 3%. She was, in short, a miracle of modern science.

2 In her ground breaking book *Of Woman Born*, the poet Adrienne Rich declared in 1977 that feminism offered women the possibility, for the first time in history perhaps, the opportunity to convert our embodied experience into both "knowledge and power." In short, our bodies were no longer object but subject. We had to wrest the gaze off us and begin to make sense of the world by thinking from our bodies in all their meanings. My own work has often reflected this perspective, most acutely my recent and current project on women and (non)reproduction. My experience of infertility - or to put it more accurately, sub-fertility (total infertility in both women and men is actually extremely rare; we have impairments, blockages, low gamete production for the most part, which reduces rather than eliminates fertility) - was devastating at the time. Nothing could have prepared me for the shock on discovery that I couldn't conceive without this highly invasive treatment. A working professional life was turned upside down by a roller coaster of drugs and surgery, my eyes pinned open to this new world in which women submit their bodies for a breathtaking, sometimes heartbreaking, and frequently spectacular process of pro-creation. My own process was intensified by my agreeing to participate in a major six part TV documentary series *Making Babies* (BBC 1996), which was being made in the Hammersmith Hospital where I was a patient of the now media-famous Lord Robert Winston.

¹ A.R.T. is the acronym for Assisted Reproduction Technologies.

² I.V.F. is the acronym for In Vitro Fertilisation.

3 The documentary that was eventually broadcast betrayed the reason I had wished to collaborate with the serious and committed producer. The project turned our lives in soaps and edited out anything I had spoken about in interview with regard to the economics or sexual politics of the infertile experience. The viewing ratings were, due to the series' popular appeal, very high and I was for a time recognised in the street as I carried my new baby around London. Strangers would come up to me and ask after my daughter by name. The whole experience left me feeling powerless, exposed and more than a little foolish to have believed that such a TV project would be devoid of sentimentality and constitute in many respects a manipulation of the truth. I had also encountered surprising reactions in my professional life to my IVF treatment and pregnancy, which were to change my career. The whole period was traumatic; from the moment I had realised that I was not able to conceive "naturally" (we sub-fertiles prefer the word "spontaneously") I had stepped out of a social norm and into a high-tech male dominated medical environment and, along with it, a totally new relationship with my body. My body became a project. I worked on this project, challenged it, willed it, filled it with chemicals and refused to accept its refusal to cooperate with what had become such a burning drive. I became a pro-active patient. I couldn't bear the unbearable silences in the waiting rooms, the agonised muteness of my fellow sufferers, the shame, the fear, the way in which the toughest independent women, high achievers, alphas, could be reduced to gibbering wrecks by a consultant's manner, or by plain bad news. I researched my project furiously. Alongside the reading I took my project into alternatives - Chinese herbs, meditation, even shamanism (which to this day I believe triggered my body to wake up to the task and, later, to not miscarry a second time in early pregnancy). I developed my own voodoo, daily rituals and idiosyncratic ideas with regard to certain features of a treatment. I was assertive with the doctors. I told them when I didn't like the way they related to my body and when and why I wanted to undergo treatment cycles against their better judgements because I had tuned into my project so intensely that I could feel my own hormone levels shift, my ovaries' activity, my womb's condition. I was determined to remain in control of my project and all its science (knowledge) and technology (art) to which I was so determinedly, obsessively, submitting myself.

4 I have sought ways since to write and create dialogues and debates, images and performance poetics that reflect the interior landscape of the involuntarily childless. Such a voice as mine, that of a sub-fertile woman's perspective, tends to appear last, if it appears at all, in media reportage of any hotly topical IVF related case. These are too often sensationalised so as to feed into the popular notion of fertility experts "playing God" whilst

the sub-fertile are portrayed as selfish heathens or pathetic victims. The normal frame for reading such stories is that reproductive technology is *de facto* sinister: that the technology is already fulfilling Aldous Huxley's prophecy in the 1930s of programmed human selection in his novel *Brave New World*, that legislation is there to curb a perversion of Nature, in short, that IVF is but an obvious short step to human cloning.

5 The public is confused.



Figure 1.: *Yerma's Eggs*

6 A month after my baby was born I wrote and published a book *Your Essential Infertility Companion* aimed to be a holistic self-help manual for anyone who is failing to reproduce when they want to. I subsequently wrote and directed a play for 4 - 7 year olds, *The Peach Child* which was commissioned by *The Little Angel Theatre* in London.³ This was based in an ancient Japanese folk tale about a childless elderly couple to whom a miracle

³ *The Little Angel Theatre* is a puppet theatre specialising in children's theatre. This production used film, live performance and puppetry.

child is provided, born from a peach. The story is extremely well known and loved in Japan. I was introduced to it in an anthology given to me when I was ten years old and for some reason had never forgotten it. It was when writing my book that I realised the significance of having loved this tale in particular out of many. A Nigerian born performer in the making of *Yerma's Eggs* echoed this kind of coincidence of memory/premonition later in rehearsals. It is as if we somehow always knew, even back in childhood, that we wouldn't parent easily.

7 "Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark, you're afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Most of all, don't go into the forest. And so we have internalized our fear of the dark" Helene Cixous reminds us (336). In the early 1970's Germaine Greer (in *The Female Eunuch*) urged women to taste our menstrual blood, take possession of our pleasure, and buck the system that was oppressing us. Our bodies, as the American self-help book claimed were *Our Selves*⁴ and we needed, urgently, to get in to them. We squatted on mirrors, we taught each other to use the speculum as a tool for empowering self-knowledge. To look at our genitalia, this taboo-ridden mysterious unknown part of our anatomy constituted an act of discovery, of revelation and reclamation. It was also, and importantly a flagrant protest against the way in which society and the medical establishment had alienated us from ourselves, made us hate ourselves.

8 Today's medical technology has taken us beyond the vestibule (*sic*) and deep inside our insides. Cordless ultrasound equipment (designed inevitably, and for anatomical convenience, on a phallic principle) can be inserted into the vagina for the highest quality imaging, better than the normal scanner passed over the surface of the body part being surveyed (the womb). In the UK this remains a privilege for the fertility patient in a clinic which can afford it. The simple procedure is generally performed by fertility experts and in certain cases with the woman not lying down but half sitting and in my case with several men (it is a teaching hospital) in suits without the neutralising, professionalising reassurance of white coats. This indignity aside, the sight of your own ovaries, follicles or fetus represented by the fragile, ghostly black and white imagery of ultrasound before you on a screen can be pretty awesome. It is one of the bonuses of IVF to have frequent scans, beginning with the image of your embryos to late in pregnancy. Inevitably women develop a relationship with pre-embryos because of their visual presence. In a very recent case in the UK the two women failed to overturn the ruling by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) that their frozen embryos could not be used without their ex-partners and husbands consent. The men did not wish the embryos carrying their genes to be born after the divorce/separation

⁴ See *Our Bodies Ourselves* - Boston Women's Health Collective, London Allen Lane 1978.

and refused permission for the women, one of whom had Polycystic Ovaries Syndrome and the other of whom had had ovarian cancer and had had her ovaries removed. Thus using their frozen embryos represents their only chance to have a baby of their own. One of the women told *The Sunday Times* that when she and her then husband had succeeded in producing embryos they had even named one of them "Cain" (cf. Hadley). The woman was naturally hurt that when her ex-husband left her for another woman with whom he had a child, they called this child by this name. Such fervent attachment to the embryo is common in IVF, even in the atheist. It is a paradox that even among those who subscribe to the woman's right to choose when it comes to abortion, we find this deeply emotional relationship to the embryo. British law itself enshrines this contradiction, as I will explain below. Perhaps we can understand the feelings aroused by embryos better if instead of looking at the question logically and ethically we look at it in terms of the embryo's signification for the parent: The embryo is your first success in IVF, your first achievement, and signifies a very real possibility of pregnancy and birth. Furthermore, whereas in ordinary reproductive lives the embryo is unseen, in IVF it becomes a spectacle. The artist Helen Chadwick, before her untimely death in 1996, became fascinated with the human embryo seen as it is, microscopically. Her last project before she died was a photographic one in which she arranged embryos like jewels, and then presented these choreographed images blown up very large. It was as if she was commenting on the absolute beauty of such early forms of human life, as well as how, through human manipulation in the laboratory, they become viable, and, finally, how this is made a visual experience for the beholder.

9 Imaging technology feeds the imagination, makes what would be invisible to the naked eye have form and shape. It connects us to parts of ourselves at a cellular level, vividly and beguilingly. For these "embryos" are actually only a bundle of cells, perhaps eight on average, encoded with genes. In medical parlance "pre-embryos" for they haven't reached the stage, fourteen days after fertilisation, known as "primitive streak" when the first signs of the nervous system start to appear, at which point by law in the UK they have become embryos and cannot be used for research. The status of the embryo, the question of whether it is a person or a thing and at what point it achieves personhood remains the pivotal question in all bio-ethical considerations, whilst the welfare of the child, in British law remains the principle of law.

10 We sub-fertiles see inside ourselves. We see infinitesimally small fragments of our genetic material begin to grow. We are hooked into our relationship with this process and its manifestations via available technologies. Becoming an IVF user is a journey into a

collaborative relationship with science and technology. Willy nilly, as Donna Haraway asserts, we become a cyborg, our chances of reproducing totally locked in to the application of technologies via which we see ourselves with fresh eyes, hope with fresh heart, submit our bodies to explicit interventions. Our reproductive strategies marry the organic with the inorganic, the programmed with the spontaneous, the predictable with the unpredictable. "Cyborg replication is uncoupled from organic reproduction," Haraway proposes, "By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism: in short we are cyborgs" (150).



Fig. 2.: From Courbet's *The Origin of the World*

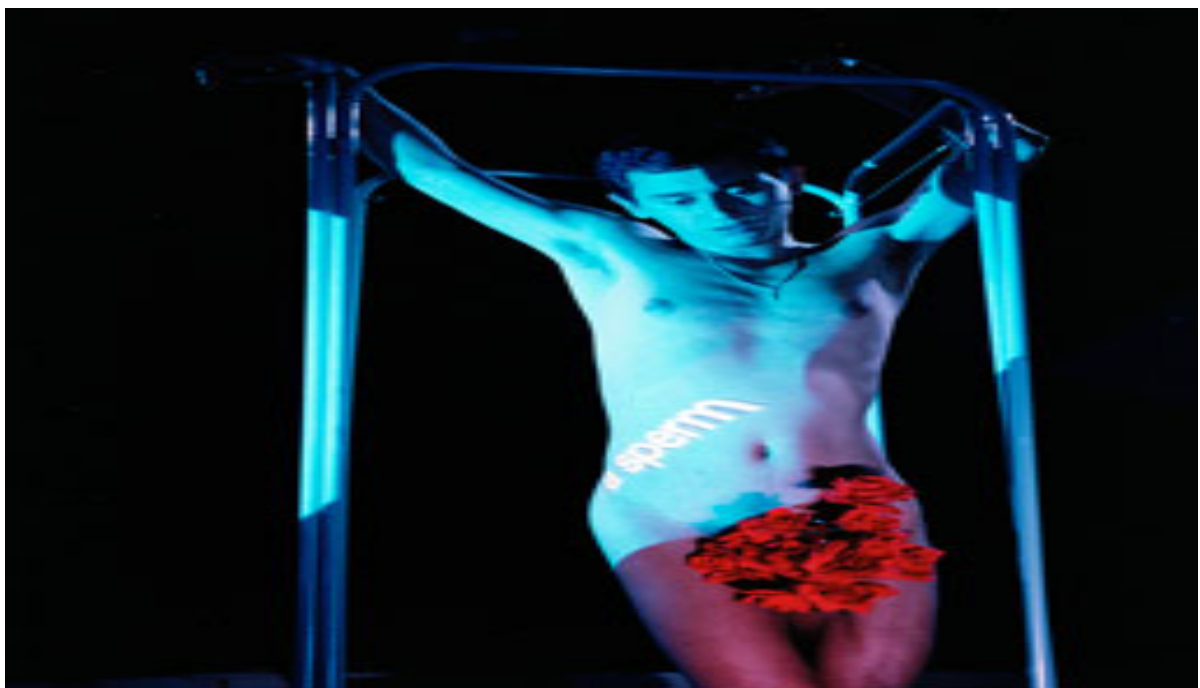


Fig.3.: From *Yerma's Eggs*

11 It is important to distinguish between science and technology. Their conflation leads to problems in how we might wish for example to regulate the application of certain reproductive technologies in specific cases. The word "science" means "knowledge" and "technology" (from the Greek *techne*) means "art" in the sense of skill, craft and how-to. In Heidegger's terms technology is a "bringing forth" that which is latent (cf. Heidegger). Aptly, I think, the acronym for Assisted Reproduction Technologies is A.R.T. Arguably, then, A.R.T. merely bring forth the material possibility of babies from latent, organic materials (male and female gametes) which possess only potential and only in combination with each other. A.R.T. then consists simply of procuring latent cells by intervening in a natural process (egg and sperm collection) only to return the results of this (embryos) to their natural environment (the womb). Attachment, that is the burrowing into the womb lining of such embryos so that they can be fed by it is never guaranteed. Indeed, problems of attachment which so commonly lead to spontaneous or later miscarriage remains one of the last mysteries for infertility specialists to overcome. Babies born from A.R.T. are manoeuvres, in the very sense of the word: works of Man. Nature, even now, with all that is known, still has the last word.

12 Society, egged on by the tabloid media, keeps asking: is A.R.T. hubris? Mind-boggling ethical issues certainly cluster around the topic, proliferating, it would seem, as individual cases smash against the legal system. The plot is thickening. For some the field is inevitably value-rich, for others it is value-free. Professor Lewis Wolpert, an embryologist and vigorous defender of the principle of our right to use A.R.T. in any of their variations (therapeutic cloning being one of them) asserts that our obsessive attention on the status of the embryo detracts from our responsibility towards children who are born in this world by whatever means: "The ills in our society have nothing to do with assisting or preventing reproduction but are profoundly affected by how children are treated" (*The Sunday Independent*).

13 IVF blends the most simple and the most complex ideas we could possibly have about the (reproductive) body. On the one hand, the process of extracting eggs from a woman and sperm from a man, introducing them to each other in laboratory conditions and putting the fertilised embryo(s) back in the woman's womb is as vividly simplistic as a child's drawing. As one of the pioneers of the birth control pill, the chemist Carl Djarassi, famously said, the Pill represented sex without reproduction, a revolutionary liberating tool for women worldwide. And now, A.R.T. offers reproduction without sex. After all, how are babies made? Gametes have to meet, that's all. On the other hand, there is this technology involved which is

"high," involving microelectronics incorporated (*sic*) into the process, leading to extraordinary imagery and insight into the body. This is not only complex in its own terms, but leads us to a whole new and complex relationship with our selves, our sense of personhood, our ideas about Life and its origins. Imaging tools today offer us the spectacle not of a generalised, still picture of our inner workings as in past technologies such as X-Ray, but portraits of our body as individual, evolving, mobile (see Comar 89). With IVF you journey consciously and imaginatively with the creation of your child (if you are fortunate that the process comes to that happy result). The romance, pleasure, or accident of a spontaneous conception "made in bed" is rendered irrelevant. It is replaced by a highly programmed, meticulously scheduled procedure in which an hour can make all the difference. For example, the key moment "midnight injection" that triggers the release of eggs for egg collection has to be performed approximately 36 hours before this surgical procedure. Similarly, embryo transfer is performed at a specific time in cell division. There is no possibility of forgetting a dose, a jab or an appointment. This is wide-awake conception. You think reproduction at its lowest common denominator, with worked out strategies for obtaining single cells - eggs and sperm. You are provided with images of the former, and, depending on your clinic and condition, the latter. The possibility of separating these cells from source (the human body) can also lead to their commodification. Emily Martin describes the process in terms of the breaking down of biological unities: "Human eggs, sperm and embryos can now be moved from body to body or out of and back into the same female body. The organic unity of fetus and mother can no longer be assumed, and all these newly fragmented parts can now be subjected to market forces, ordered, produced, bought and sold" (20). In the UK, the HFEA forbids a trading in sperm, eggs and embryos. Nonetheless the language surrounding the movement of our reproductive material is bluntly materialistic. In the quest of producing what clinics here call "take-home babies," we can produce "spares," we can "freeze," we can "host," we can "donate." Our reproductive bits have a potential all of their own, even with-out us. Our private parts become moveable parts. We paradoxically dis-integrate our organic selves, even if temporarily, in our quest to experience integrity, the fulfilment our reproductive desires.

14 Some radical feminists have seen the revolutionary implication of this technology in terms of sexual politics. They foresee a society in which sex with men is no longer necessary for any woman, lesbian or not, for the purpose of reproduction. The turkey baster solution of Donor Insemination (DI) remains a useful DIY procedure for fertile lesbians, but now there is a very real chance that in the future reproduction can be controlled via technology so that no

matter your sexuality, life style or fertility prognosis you will be able to parent a child of your own if you so wish.

15 To return to basics, what is IVF exactly, medically speaking, and what does a woman go through here? The *sine qua non* of IVF as I have discussed is that it constitutes fertilising eggs outside of the body. Meaning, "fertilisation in glass" the IVF process actually takes place not in the ghoulish test tubes of popular imagination but in a petrie dish. A great deal of detail goes into the preparation for this occurrence, with regular monitoring throughout. The procedure for the woman involves first a dose of hormones to shut down the menstrual cycle - in effect a chemically designed menopause, followed by intense doses of hormones taken subcutaneously to stimulate hyper ovulation. This causes the ovaries to swell (usually quite painfully). During this super ovulation phase you are ultrasound scanned, to check follicle and egg production. This is followed by egg-collection: surgery either via laparoscopy (keyhole surgery via an incision in the navel) or via the vaginal wall. Viable eggs can range from zero to the high twenties. Even more sometimes. If your eggs do fertilise, (and as I have said above this isn't always the case) A.R.T. then offers you a miraculous spectacle: you encounter your potential progeny on a monitor screen when they are barely 48 hours old. They are little 8 cell structures, glowing, heavenly blue blooms of hope. With the embryologist you even get to choose which of the several to insert there and then, painlessly, back into the womb.



Fig. 4.: From *Yerma's Eggs*

16 Our human eye is offered by A.R.T. the chance to see what can actually barely fill a pin head; what's more they are *ours*, a part of us which has temporarily been removed from our body to evolve into the pre-conditions of Life: pre-embryos at what would be the equivalent of two days after sexual intercourse, not a time that most women would be able to imagine, let alone feel the experience of a pregnancy. Now, with the latest advances in 4D ultrasound pioneered in the UK by Professor Keith Campbell we are entering a stage when we can spectate our fetus at six months or more, behaving in our wombs, sucking its thumb, smiling, winking. The flesh, as the poet Paul Valery once said, is no longer "the deepest thing." We can see through it. We now can view our bodies as interior spectacles *in vivo* where previously such visual opportunities, if they were to be offered the layperson at all, would be via paintings, sculptures, wax works. Today, anatomy meets art. The magnificently curated Spectacular Bodies exhibition at London's Hayward Gallery in 2000, the hugely popular plastinated corpses of Professor Gunther von Hagen's Bodyworlds seen in London in 2003 are evidence that we will never cease to be fascinated by the explicit body, the sight of our bodies within, preserved, bottled, flayed or simply magnified. What we might speculate is exactly how such ever increasingly accurate imagery will function on our sense of identity, on our self-imaging, on the idea of the sacred privacy of our parts. With new reproductive technologies, not only do we see beyond the flesh and the mysterious dark interior of women's genitalia, for example, but also women become the gazer *and* the gazed. The possibility of self-seeing has become (normally) painless and vivid. There are surely ever increasing possibilities for empowerment in this, preceded as it has been by our earlier fumbings with the cold clamp of the speculum. Feminists have for some many years been toiling to work out and through the problem of what has entered our critical vocabulary as the male gaze. The fetishisation of women's bodies traditionally fixates on the extruded reproductive sign of breast and the intruded dark secret of the vagina. Fecundity doesn't feature in table dancing. Pornography hardly conjures ovaries, cervix, fallopian tube and womb as stimuli to male excitement. Haraway again asks us to consider that:

The speculum served as an icon of women claiming their bodies in the 1970's; that handcrafted tool is inadequate to express our needed body politics in the negotiation of reality in the practices of cyborg reproduction. Self-help is not enough. The technologies of visualization recall the important cultural practice of hunting with the camera and the deeply predatory nature of a photographic consciousness. Sex, sexuality, and reproduction are central actors in the high-tech myth systems structuring our imaginations of personal and social possibility (169).

17 So what about our imaginations in this rapidly shifting reproductive landscape? Erotic fantasy deals with the implicit rather than the explicit, the tease of clothing part-removed, of

genitalia part-displayed, the art of suggestion and what might lie ahead. Our erotic imaginations are capable of such affecting associations and respond to such a complex array of signifiers that Victorian middle classes covered the legs of furniture lest they remind people of the human leg, which of course is connected to the sexual organs. Pornography (from the Greek meaning the graphic depiction of whores) on the other hand depends on the graphic display of coitus and other sexual contact. If as Haraway asserts, photographic consciousness is deeply predatory, how will such lively, graphic depiction of our internal anatomies begin to shift the alluring promise that a woman's external genitalia have hitherto offered the (male) gazer for penetration? And how, conversely, will women's sense of our own sexual signifiers shift in time as these visualisation technologies on journey us ever inwards to the phenomenal spectacle of our all interior complexity? Faced with our organic interiors we cannot any longer be a Dark Continent, neither to others nor to our selves. Our mystery is revealed. This explicitness, this overt and detailed imagery offered us via medical protocol is surely going to affect our self-image, our sexual imaginations? Chronologically speaking, visual technology today can take us back even further than the pre-embryos introduced to the IVF user. Colour treated images of sperm breaking into the zona pellucida of the egg are widely accessible. Many 5th formers in a UK school science class will have been introduced to a video of a single sperm being fished and then injected into the cytoplasm of the egg in a relatively new IVF technique called ICSI - Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection - used where there is non motility of sperm in cases of male infertility. It isn't only the images themselves but their magnification that is wondrous to behold.

Video clips (require Quicktime Player):

[4D Ultrasound](#) (large version: 24,360 kb)

[ICSI](#) (27,135 kb)

[4D Ultrasound](#) (small version: 804 kb)

[ICSI](#) (413 kb)

courtesy of Prof. Stuart Campbell www.createhealth.org

18 So much for the inside. What of the outside? Alongside such privileges as are offered the sub-fertile woman in the way of a visualised internal feedback system on a large and brightly coloured scale goes the dreadful language of failure and incompetence that is invariably used to describe aspects of reproductive impairment. We are *childless*. We *lose*. Our eggs are too *old*. We are in a *decline*. We *fail* to conceive. We fail. Emily Martin writes saliently about the way in which the language of medical textbooks has reflected patriarchal notions of women's bodies: "it used to be taught that menstruation is the uterus crying for the

lack of a baby" (45) because all the language of menstruation is about loss, shedding, haemorrhaging and failure:

[...] Menstruation not only carries with it the connotation of a productive system that has failed to produce, it also carries the idea of production gone awry, making products of no use, not to specification, unsaleable, wasted, scrap (46).... Perhaps one reason the negative image of failed production is attached to menstruation is precisely that women are in some sinister sense out of control when they menstruate. They are not reproducing, not continuing the species, not preparing to stay at home with the baby, not providing a safe, warm, womb to nurture a man's sperm. (47)

19 The involuntarily childless woman is dealing with a profound sense of powerlessness and failure. As Pamela Armstrong wrote of her own experience of late motherhood and her struggle before conceiving we "measure time in menstrual cycles." Each and every menstrual cycle we have had in our lives is rendered futile by sub-fertility. The idea of waste as stressed by Martin becomes acutely internalised. What might have been "sinister" and out of control in our menstruation is now carried over paradoxically into our inability to conceive. We join the female archetypes of the other, non-mother woman: witches, hags, hysterics, whores, old maids and even evil step-mothers. We are dry, withered, bitter crones. We are not feminine. It is an enduring confusion of women's sexual signification that we must embody contradictions: we must be both alluring and maternal, flat-stomached and fecund, independent and reproductive. Not becoming a mother is "not normal," "not natural." We are a waste of eggs, of breast, of womb. Our barren bodies are inscribed with meanings.

20 Barren women recur as deviants throughout cultural history. The Bible is full of such women, the Virgin-Whore paradigm as embodied in Mary the mother of God (divine donor insemination?) on the one hand and the childless prostitute and probably sexual partner of Jesus, Mary Magdalene on the other (see Elaine Pagels: *The Gnostic Gospels*). Judeo-Christianity has offered us this legacy, this peculiar yardstick by which to measure ourselves morally and maternally. Cultures worldwide have produced fertility legends, figurative art, songs, stories, totems and cults in response to deep anxiety at the non-continuation of the tribe or race. Arguably this anxiety is the root of homophobia, the spectre of genetic death. Is the particular threat of the barren, non-reproductive woman an enduring phobia because, as Martin indicates above, she has stepped out of the frame, she is free, she is mobile, she is dangerous, she has the opportunity to experience her sexuality as distinct from reproduction, she is, in short, *manly*?

21 I will not dwell on this theme for it merits more consideration than I have space for here. Suffice to say that the involuntary childless woman has not only her own feelings to cope with but also the attitude of her community. And these feelings and attitudes are

conditioned by ideas deeply rooted in the culture. Quite simply, it is hard to accept our bodies not making babies when everyone around us is. The biological clock ticks cruelly in our ears. We feel utterly helpless, directionless, suicidal even. We are prone to obsession. As the Spanish writer Federico Garcia Lorca wrote in 1934, projecting himself into the psyche of a childless young woman:

YERMA: I'm sick and weary. Weary of being a woman not put to proper use. I'm hurt, hurt and humbled beyond endurance watching the crops springing up, the fountains flowing, the ewes bearing lambs and bitches their litter of pups, until it seems the whole countryside is teeming with mothers nursing their sleeping young. And here I am with two hammers beating at my breasts where my baby's mouth should be... [...] you mothers have no idea what it is like for us, any more than a swimmer in a mountain stream ever thinks what it is like to be dying of thirst" (186)

22 The word "*yerma*" means barren in Spanish. Yerma is the eponymous heroine of Lorca's poetic tragedy about an infertile peasant girl in rural Spain. This play was the inspiration to my own devised multi-media performance project *Yerma's Eggs* which premiered in April 2003 at London's *Riverside Studios*, funded by an *Impact Award* from *The Wellcome Trust*, which funds in particular projects which bring art and science together for the purpose of enhancing public understanding of science. The public understanding of the science of A.R.T. is distinctly lacking apparently. In the process of researching material for the piece and in workshops in schools and colleges since, I have become increasingly alarmed by the active level of heated response people give to many A.R.T. issues coupled with the scant actual comprehension they have of some of the most basic scientific principles in IVF. Our own research involved *vox pop* filming the public on the street, asking them a series of questions beginning with "how many eggs is a woman born with?" to "What do you understand of cloning?" There was generally ignorance, confusion and phobia by way of response. The many people we interviewed, of all ages, class and ethnicity were edited into a ten minute film projected huge on the wall of the theatre as the audience entered as a contemporary, social, ordinary frame for the expressionistic and deliberately timeless material in the performance that followed.

23 *Yerma's Eggs*, though not a didactic work, aimed to bring the audience close-up to the infertile experience and bio-ethics in an immediate, emotional and interactive way as only live theatre can do. Lorca wanted theatre to be a passionate arena, a tribunal for its audience, a chance to question mores. I wanted to explore how to get under the skin of the infertile subject, represent different cultural and sexual-choice perspectives and bring the bio-ethical debate on A.R.T. into a theatrical space, emotionally and deliberately inconclusively. In my project there is no tragic ending, only miserable feelings wrestling with all the imperatives of

medical intervention.

24 In *Yerma's Eggs* the original play remains a poetic framework, the plot filleted out so as to retain just the emotional flesh of barren grief. Yerma becomes every-infertile-woman (and man), all the actors playing this character at different points, each exploring a position of infertility, desire and rejection by partner or community. The older woman, for example, is isolated, excluded from and derided by the group (based on the gossiping village women in the original play). They jeer at her as mad and unbalanced, her defiant rage in response evoking the hags and witches (childless women) of storybooks and fairy tales, women who are dangerous and threatening precisely because they are not conforming to the destiny and ideal of motherhood. In another scene a gay male couple discuss their ambivalent feelings towards parenting, one of them clearly wishing for the child he feels he can't have in a scene I wrote myself. In a scene, which is verbatim from Lorca, a couple fights in front of a massive projection of a 5-week-old fetus, glowing like a crescent moon. She is obsessed with her need to parent whilst her husband implores her to give up, telling her he doesn't really want a child, driving her to distraction. In the original play this scene is pivotal and leads Yerma to strangle her husband Juan.

25 Speech-driven scenes are only one ingredient. I chose a multi-media approach and a multi-track narrative instead of a single-issue drama so as to maximise layers of possible meaning and association and to stretch the issues in historical time and geographical place. Video material projection - *vox pop*, medical and thematic - enters the action, becoming a protagonist in itself. In the development of the production we worked to find a synergy between the technology and the action so that the projected material was never illustrative or didactic but a meaningful layer in a multi layered text. The technology involved in projecting images into the theatrical space became a metaphor of medical visualising technology. We used small digital projectors, which the performers would nurse, move and embrace. We projected onto the walls of the theatre, the floor, actor's bodies, fabrics, water and pouring sand. Images included 4D ultrasound of the baby *in utero* as aforementioned, which had never been seen in public. A recent UK newspaper article published them. We also projected images of sperm entering egg, of single egg cells, ICSI, especially filmed sequences of children playing, spring flowers. Our finale included images of an empty swing going back and forth and the mournful sound of the creaking of its dry unoiled joints, a mechanism "not put to proper use," as Lorca's Yerma would say, and in need of attention. As the piece concluded, the footage gradually drained away to black and white, the only remaining colour on stage

coming from a small laptop: a film of a bright yellow daffodil blowing gently in the spring wind in the same playground which we had already seen projected onto sand.



Fig. 5.: From *Yerma's Eggs*

26 The six performers were each chosen because of a particular relationship with the subject matter. Two had worked on my Research and Development for the project eighteen months previously. They are variously single parents, childless, adopted, gay and undergoing treatment. They come from Italy, Columbia, Nigeria, India and the UK. Our common language was English on stage but they sometimes spoke or sang in their own language and throughout the project there was a conscious attempt on my part to bring their own backgrounds and histories into the picture. When I asked them in the first week to bring a song to rehearsal that their grandmother would have sung to their mother, one performer found that this song - which she had known and loved since her childhood in Africa - was in fact a searing folk tale about a desperate childless woman.

27 The making of *Yerma's Eggs* involved a training and improvisation process in which each performer created material - *etudes* based on themes and images I would give them. This was combined with images and ideas I had developed since Research and Development and spliced together with material from the Lorca original - deconstructed from its original plot structure - and my own writing. Certain words of Lorca's recurred, scenes played several

times in different combinations such as Yerma's sexually charged encounter with a man from her community, Victor, with whom she feels all the sexual energy that is clearly lacking in her marriage. Yet even in such a moment her obsession with having a baby triggers an aural hallucination. Lorca's stage directions at this point in the play indicate:

They stand motionless in silence. The tension between them is acute.

YERMA: Listen!

VICTOR: What?

YERMA: Can't you hear crying?

VICTOR: (listening) No.

YERMA: I thought I heard a child crying

VICTOR: What?

YERMA: Very close. As if it was drowning.

VICTOR: There's always a lot of kids round here, come to pinch the fruit.

YERMA: But it was a baby's voice.

VICTOR: I can't hear anything.

YERMA: I must have imagined it.

She gazes at him intently. He holds her gaze, then looks away as if afraid. (173)

Tension. Intensity. Fear. Feelings run high in this agenda. In our version this encounter was always a highly erotic embrace, an about-to-make-love moment, interrupted always by Yerma's inability to separate her desire from her desire for a child. Yerma is in the grip of her obsession. In the original she ends by killing her husband, yelling to the crowd that gathers round "yes I've killed him. I've killed my son" (206).

28 Juan-husband is also Juan-potential-father-of-a-son, and even a child substitute. It is typical of Lorca to conflate husband and child in ways which resonate poetically beyond a single, literal meaning. The play is saturated with poetic imagery: dry landscapes, thistles, heat, in contrast to orchards, water, fountains. Yerma identifies herself with her environment. She *is* the barren landscape in which she lives. She is a parched earth longing for saturation, likened to "a bunch of thistles." She is taunted by the fecundity of others, animal, human and vegetable. She cannot distinguish between herself and Nature on the one hand, yet she experiences herself as an aberration of Nature at its best on the other. So she is Nature at its worst, useless, impossible to cultivate, without purpose.

29 Ideas of Nature and what is natural are highly provocative in the field of medically assisted reproduction. The intervention of medical technology in "natural" conception is the *sine qua non* for the IVF user who is obliged to negotiate with the range of chemical and technological paraphernalia that can help in "making a baby." Whilst doctors probe a woman's body with ultrasound, speculum and camera, society - provoked by the media - probe the very ethical rights we may have to interfere in Nature, even when she is cruel. The public's disgust - and confused ignorance - regarding certain aspects and offshoots of IVF consistently returns

to the same question: is it *natural*? Legislation in the UK, upheld by the quango the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) has shifted this slippery notion of what is natural to focusing attention on two key issues: the status of the embryo and the welfare of the child. Both continue to vex us in certain instances. Our relationship with Nature on the one hand and Science and Technology on the other remain imbued with what can only be described as our profoundly emotional relationship with the idea of Creation itself and a suspicious and circumspect relationship with the man-made, that which is man-oeuvred. Discussions in the company regarding this debate about the role of Nature led me to write the following speech which an actor asked the audience to contemplate at the close of the show whilst enormous images of playgrounds were projected in triplicate on the performers' bodies and walls of the stage:

What is natural?

Spring water?

Cars?

Tinned food?

Marijuana?

Organ donation?

Plastic?

Carbon Monoxide?

Milk?

Bras?

Contraception?

Hair dye?

Paper?

Ecstasy?

Mice?

Electricity?

Concrete?

Bodybuilding?

Wood?

Macdonalds?

Computers?

Blood transfusion?

Soap?

Tomato Ketchup?

Sweat?

Earwax?

Vitamin pills?

Coffee?

Organ donation?

Alcohol?

Airtravel?

Fishfingers?

Ready to eat salad in a bag?

Sunscreen?

Coral?
Oxygen?
Mascara?
Condoms?
Aspirin?
Ice-cream?
Boats?
Oliveoil?
IVF?
Lemons in winter?
The news?
Polystyrene cups?
Pubic Hair?
Saffron?
Melodrama?
Families?
Talcum powder?
Sausages?
Sofas?
Nappies?
Sex?

30 The above is abridged. I have been using a version of this list in workshops in schools and colleges where multicultural classrooms include strong religious views from a range of cultures. The items provoke debates that mostly reveal how illogical and sentimental are our feelings about Nature and our place in it. I use this as a frame through which to explore bio-ethical issues in IVF. When people react with horror at the idea of medical meddling in what should be "natural" I ask whether they take medication for headaches. From there we can move into why our relationship to the embryo is so emotive, so deeply rooted in our religious or cultural conditioning. I deliberately leave questions open and refuse to resolve what cannot be resolved. Resolution is impossible anyway in a classroom in which, for example, Islam teaches some students to refute the science teacher's lessons in Big Bang theory. I have found that it helps that I tell them about my own experiences, that I have a child who cannot be unborn now, who is eight years old and who knows where she comes from and why. It tends to temper some of their more extreme reactions and make them stop and think. In my production it is my daughter who has the last word. An improvised moment between us at home one night during rehearsals produced a recording in which she quite unemotionally states her understanding of the IVF process that gave her life: "And then I was made." She concludes. Stage to black. House lights up on the audience.



Fig. 6.: From *Yerma's Eggs*

31 Making babies should be a private affair. With IVF it can't be. As a woman, a writer and theatre maker I have embraced this lack of privacy and tried to make it work for me, by taking possession of it, articulating it, refusing to be silenced by the pain and humiliation of it all. I have worked during and since my own medical experience to try and make sense of it, to try and counter the public's mixed up perceptions of the territory. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. A little knowledge obtained mostly from the tabloid newspapers is hideously censorious. Trying to make theatre out of my particular journey couldn't possibly lead me to write a play with a dramatic through line focused on a single case history, for that would imply the need to be autobiographical, which my research here emphatically isn't, or certainly not exclusively and specifically. I am involved in the conversion of my physical experience (Rich). To me this has to become a language of images and material from the unconscious as well as the spectacular evidence provided by biomedical science. I have wanted to go beyond psychological realism and reach down to the darker and less choate material, both that of the suffering sub-fertile and that of the audience. I can only do this via the poetry theatre itself as a medium - images, actions, sound, smell, physicality, and a visceral encounter between audience and performer. *Yerma's Eggs* is inevitably a highly charged, personal work bearing the stamp of each of my collaborators but with the merest touch of autobiographical storytelling. The performer's body is central, clothed and naked, screaming and whispering. The piece begins with water and ends with the voice of a child. In between these is the

material of the performance that is, consciously, uncomfortable for an audience. The subject is rife with contradictions, particularly for women. And to try and combine such a contemporary, medical and technological process with the tenderness and elusiveness of visual and physical theatre is a contradiction. But medical reason on the one side and embodied emotion on the other are the dualities that the sub-fertile straddles, daily. We medicate and meditate. We inject and project. We imagine.

32 After one performance an Israeli psychoanalyst introduced himself, enthusiastic about the work. He later wrote me an email saying that he worked as a therapist with infertile people and had been extremely sceptical that I could create a piece of theatre out of such subject matter. "All this disappeared," he wrote, "as soon as I saw Ms Rogante's feet." Rogante had launched the show with a six minute long, extremely slow, enactment of the baby's journey from the womb to its first steps. Her feet emerged, toe by toe from underneath her flesh coloured silk dress. She was Yerma, imagining herself into baby:

O I say these are not the parts and poems
Of the body only, but of the soul,
O I say now these are the soul! (105)

Author's note:

This research remains a work in progress, and I am looking right now for ways to work with nurses about to work in IVF (for which they get no special training in patient perspectives) and where and how to pitch Dry Land - a multi-media interactive installation I wish to create on the subject. I have also embarked on researching for a practice-based doctorate entitled Barren Body in which I intend to develop some of the ideas in this article.

Further information about this project and Furse's work can be found on:
www.athletesoftheheart.org

Some key moments in 25 years of IVF:

1960's: Advances in ovulatory drugs/endocrinology of infertility Birth Control Pill 1978:
Birth of the first human after IVF (Louise Brown) in the UK

1980 First human birth after IVF using drugs for ovarian stimulation

1984 First birth after cryopreservation (embryo freezing) First birth using egg donation (from one woman to another)

1985 First pregnancy after removal of sperm from male reproductive tract

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"Know that I do not suffer, unlike you..."¹ - Visual and Verbal Codings of Pain in Body and Performance Art

By Andrea Gutenberg, University of Cologne, Germany

1 The flagellation and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the *Mater dolorosa*, tortured martyrs such as Saint Sebastian - Western art history abounds in painted and sculpted displays of pain and suffering. By illustrating the necessity of painful submission to the symbolic order, these images have always served as reminders of Christian duty and morality: "Literally crucified, Christ gives figural expression to the way all human subjects must subject themselves to the law of the father and the reality principle he stands in for" (Bronfen 109). Christian iconography usually foregrounds the cruelty of the pain sustained and its ideals of passive endurance and unconditional confidence in God by the typical, visibly restrained motility of the figures involved. Christian images of suffering thus privilege a specific form of pain-processing and rely on the spectatorial gaze, which is why they are intimately linked with gender issues, as Kaja Silverman contends: "Christian masochism has radically emasculating implications, and is in its purest forms intrinsically incompatible with the pretensions of masculinity" (198).

2 From the 1960s onward, body and performance artists have substituted canvas and clay by real bodies and have exposed these to more or less painful experiences - obviously not with Christian morality in mind but out of a desire to test and possibly transgress body boundaries and social taboos. Early experiments by the Viennese group and by body artists were so successful that they provoked not only slanderous press campaigns but even led to legal prosecution or prison sentences - e.g. in the cases of Günter Brus and Otto Muehl. Significantly, the charges brought against Günter Brus following his 1968 performance *Der helle Wahnsinn* in Aachen were physical injury of the audience, some members of which had to vomit during the spectacle (Schröder 70). The offense was thus seen as a relocation of the site of suffering or as a "contamination" of the viewers with the bodily pain originally undergone by the performer. Paradoxically, even today, when Western popular culture embraces body-damaging techniques like tattooing and piercing, deliberate and seemingly non-purposive self-harm seems to persist as one of the last taboos of the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Schneede 59).

3 The catalyser for performance art involving bodily self-harm was Yves Klein's photographic montage *Leap into the Void* (1960). Although Klein, whose interest in levitation

¹ Orlan's address to her audience after one of the surgical pieces which make up her performance series *The Reincarnation of St. Orlan* (as cited in Davis 463).

apparently bordered on obsession, had really jumped from a two-storey house before the action itself took place, he carefully stage-managed this photographic event (several people were holding out a jumping blanket) in order to simulate the original situation while pretending it was purely documentary material. Two aspects seem especially significant in this context: (a) Not coincidentally, this origin of pain sold as art was a male narcissistic fantasy of heroic omnipotence and superhuman transcendence, which negated any notion of pain or danger (and was continued by artists such as the Australian Stelarc in his 1976 to 1988 *Suspension Performances*, who had his skin perforated by meat hooks and his body lifted in the air by ropes attached to them). (b) Klein was so euphoric about his successful leap and anxious to create photographic "evidence" for it that he created artistic material which faked the risk of pain and death (Zell 45-46) and thereby gave rise to a whole new tradition of photographic body work.

4 Even though it is held to be the first instance of calculated self-harm in performance art, Klein's example is not representative. Since the skin is not only perceived as the border of the self but is also the organ most sensitive to pain because of its enormous amount of nerve cells, body artists experimenting with real pain preferably draw on diverse forms of skin penetration such as cuts (Gina Pane, Marina Abramovic, Valie Export, Yoko Ono, Günter Brus), shooting (Chris Burden), biting (Vito Acconci), suspension (Stelarc), crucifixion (Chris Burden, Magnus Scharmanoff, Bob Flanagan) and operations (John Duncan, Orlan). While the performances themselves and even their filmic or photographic documentation are all meant to shock and provoke the public, the performers' negotiation of pain differs considerably. Apart from being merely simulated, pain is in most cases and for various reasons marginalized, hidden and even negated, while in other instances it is deliberately made visible, i.e. bloody, or audible. The majority of performers only incurred minor injuries but some artists (Günter Brus, Rudolf Schwarzkogler, Marina Abramovic, Chris Burden, Gina Pane and others) exposed their bodies to real risks and extreme forms of pain² - a form of work they ultimately had to stop for reasons of health.³

5 This paper sets out to analyse the status of pain and its visual and verbal representations in body art with regard to gender difference. Apart from potentially gender-

² Schröder (100, Fn. 191) cites an extreme example of self-mutilation ultimately leading to self-destruction: An artist called John Fare had a machine constructed which successively amputated his limbs during several performances until he died in front of an invited audience. Unfortunately Schröder gives no details concerning the negotiation of pain or the viewers' reactions.

³ Compare Günter Brus: "...meine Technik der Aktion war an einem Punkt angelangt, der sehr nahe am Selbstmord lag" (cited in Schröder 72) [my technique had reached a point very close to suicide], and Marina Abramovic: "My earlier works for instance were based on pain, they were very drastic. If I hadn't met Ulay, they would have destroyed my body" (cited in Zell 50).

related intertextual/ intermedial references to cultural codes such as religion (Christian iconography, sacrifice, rituals of initiation), references to pathological spectacles such as hysteria and cultural practices such as cosmetic surgery, the analysis will include: subject-object relations during the performance itself, the scenarios of narcissism and voyeurism implied by it, gender-specific forms of pain-processing and programmatic statements or manifestoes formulated by the artists themselves.

Sufferers and Perpetrators - Constellations

6 Within body and performance art, subject-object relations have always been a central concern. Performance artists consciously stage and position themselves, or more precisely their bodies, as objects to be looked at and sometimes even to be touched and meddled with (Vergine 15). This narcissistic type of performance, in which the work is the artist (25), replaces or supplements an earlier type of narcissism. In his *Anthropométries* performances, Yves Klein employed female models as stencils or stamps and invested his narcissism in female bodies as art objects, thus reducing them to their traditional domain of reproduction. Klein's own insight that his female nudes functioned as living paintbrushes did not keep him from unashamedly posing as a superior artist figure and stage-manager completely detached from the action itself:

Was mich selbst betrifft, so werde ich nie versuchen, meinen Körper mit Farbe zu bestreichen und mich selbst in einen lebendigen Pinsel zu verwandeln. Im Gegenteil, ich würde lieber meinen Smoking anziehen und meine weißen Handschuhe überstreifen. Ich käme nicht einmal auf den Gedanken, mir meine Hände mit Farbe zu bekleckern.

Die künstlerische Tätigkeit muß vor meinen Augen und unter meinem Befehl stattfinden, während ich dabei Abstand halte und davon losgelöst bin. (Yves Klein, "Hotel Chelsea", written in New York 1961, cited in Schröder 76-77)

[As far as I am concerned, I will never attempt to cover my body in paint and transform into a living paintbrush. On the contrary, I would rather dress in my dinner jacket and put on my white gloves. I would never dream of letting paint stain my hands. The artistic act must take place with me watching it and giving orders, while I remain distanced and uninvolved.]

Such a constellation between male performer and female model/muse does not really come as a surprise insofar as it merely continues art history's traditional distribution of roles. More generally speaking, early body art - where it engages with male-female relations - mirrors the conditions of Western culture at large, which has always linked femininity with corporeality and conceived of Woman (in the sense of a generic category) as the undifferentiated object of male imagination (Almhofer 37).

7 Within the history of body and performance art, a major shift occurred in the 1970s, when an exclusively male domain of artistic practice was gradually entered by female performers. Valie Export, who had been affiliated with members of Viennese actionism, was one of the earliest woman artists to explore the female (i.e. her own) body as an active part in live performances. Export and other female artists took advantage of the fact that performers operate from subjective or even narcissistic stances. They act as first-person "narrators", offer individual, corporeal interpretations and perceptions of the world (Georg F. Schwarzbauer cited in Almhofer 34) and have a tendency to monologize (Voigt 21) which can appear almost self-therapeutic. From a gender-based viewpoint this opens up an important but never uncontroversial potential for self-stylization and self-expression. Female body artists have to face the gender-specific problem of moving inside an affirmative tradition of bodily adornment meant to foreground typical characteristics of femininity, while aiming in their performances at a negation and transgression of these constraints. Bodily deformation, exhaustion or a conscious staging of performativity via plastic surgical transformation as in Orlan's case are the main venues they have chosen in the past.

8 Apart from autoaggressive works, both female and male artists arrange interactive performances in which they are attacked or harmed by someone else - either by an anonymous public (Yoko Ono invited the public to cut up the dress she was wearing in *Cut Piece*, 1964; in *Deadman*, 1972, Chris Burden lay down in the middle of a busy Los Angeles boulevard, wrapped in a canvas bag; similarly, in his 1975 performance *Teppich*, Wolfgang Flatz hid in a carpet to be trodden on by the public) or by a chosen participant or partner (Chris Burden had a friend fire a bullet at him in *Shoot*, 1971; Marina Abramovic and her partner Ulay ended their joint performance *Relation in Space*, 1976, by running naked into each other with full force). In this context the crucial question, at least from a gender studies perspective, seems to be whether the performers also *pose* as victims. From a feminist viewpoint, overtones of masochistic pleasure and especially the decision to perform naked bore a more problematic semantic potential in the case of women, who had traditionally been objects of a male, pleasure-seeking voyeuristic gaze. This dilemma, which some artists have clearly realised, might explain why the majority of performances by women emphasize the element of pain or its endurance more than they foreground the usually concomitant aspect of pleasure. Thus Lorena Wolffer, who declares herself to be "a politicized Mexican woman artist" (71), comments on the filming of her 1995 performance *Mexican Territory* for a TV broadcast as follows:

The TV director assigned a sports cameraman to shoot it. Sadly, he was more interested in my nude body than in the political content of the piece. It was deplorable

that my piece was perceived by this man precisely through the very sexist gaze I criticize in my work. This shocking incident forced me to select more carefully the contexts in which the piece is performed and documented. (72)

9 American performance and video artist Bob Flanagan, who suffered from cystic fibrosis from an early age and died of it in 1996, would be a contrasting example. Flanagan's work draws on an S/M aesthetics - in one of his most renowned pieces, *Nailed* (1989), he ended up nailing his penis to a wooden board in front of the camera - and this inclination has made him "a hero and model to the denizens of this subculture, even as he found much of their interest to be superficial and trendy" (Cooper 77). Again, it is significant that he completely ignored the pain caused by the action itself and maintained an ordinary communication, thereby refuting all notions of passive suffering and martyrdom. As one of the viewers observes: "When Bob hammers that nail through his member while telling a joke or personal anecdote to his video camera, he's trying less to shock than to make us reconsider the topography of desire, and the relationship between bodies and egos" (Rugoff 64). Nevertheless, not all male spectators take the action so lightly. As Renata Salecl has noted, many of them "scream in panic, some even have to leave the room" (30) when Flanagan removes the nails and the blood squirts onto the camera. According to Flanagan himself, masochism is not a unilateral form of sexual control but the roles in S/M are dynamic and reversible (Drier 80-81) so that S/M is not (or not exclusively) about objectivization or victimization, which he thinks people hate and which he sees at the core of most Hollywood movies (79). That his performances attracted voyeuristic spectators, not least because he was suffering from a lethal illness, was a circumstance he was obviously quite ready to accept.

10 Most body art relies on a cooperation between the artist, who employs his or her body as material, and a co-author behind the camera, who documents the action (Dreher 320). Consequently, exhibitionism and voyeurism are to some extent always part of the performance itself, even where there is no public. Nevertheless, public viewers are frequently an indispensable condition for the performance's proper functioning. This applies, for instance, to the Californian feminist performance called *Ablutions*, which was realised in 1972 by Judy Chicago, Suzanne Lacy, Sandra Orgel and Aviva Rahmani. Insofar as it played with references to rituals of initiation and used the flesh of dead animals, the performance had certain features in common with Hermann Nitsch's *Theatre of Orgies and Mysteries* but it differed from Nitsch's or Mühl's material actions in its feminist-didactic concern. The thematic context - rape and violence directed at women - was evoked by scenes in which a naked woman was bandaged from head to foot, another nailed cows' kidneys to the wall and still others bathed in eggs, blood and clay. Finally the performers tied up every person and

object in the room with strings and ropes while a tape-recorder was playing reports by women who had actually been raped. The fact of female victimization was thus communicated and criticised via scenarios of (simulated) pain and restricted motility involving the public directly. As Schröder remarks (157-158), the women remained subjects and in control of the action; they thus insisted on the integrity and invulnerability of the female body even by making it part of a rape scenario. The audience was not primarily provoked but appealed to as witnesses of a very intimate and revealing kind of experience in which communication and understanding were more important than self-expression and abreaction.

11 The role of the spectators in a performance thus ranges from accomplices in dangerous, painful actions, from voyeurs, witnesses and active participants to sources of energy and actual life-savers (during *Thomas' Lips* Abramovic was saved by members of the audience, who came on stage, removed the blocks of ice from underneath her body, covered her with coats and carried her away). The power the public can exert over the artist and the action shows most clearly when they are perceived as accomplices in a pact which makes it possible to the performer to overcome extreme bodily pain and which lends credibility to what happens. Chris Burden chose to perform in front of spectators for exactly these reasons (Schimmel 94, Schröder 114, Zell 71), and Marina Abramovic concluded a pact with herself but depended on the energy the audience chose to invest:

[...] I made the restrictions for myself, I kept to them, and I overcame the pain and got through to the other side. I've experienced that this is possible. That's why the transitory objects and the instructions are an important structure for the audience. They give them the possibility to invest their own energy so that the experience can take place. It works like a bank, the more money you put in, the higher the interest. (Celant/Abramovic 28-29)

12 While body artists typically foreground the intersubjective aspect of their work and thereby revolutionize the traditionally disembodied, narcissistic stance in art and art history, their dominant body/mind conception tends to perpetuate the Cartesian hierarchy of mind over body. At least in earlier instances of performance descriptions, *overcoming* and *resisting* bodily pain, with the connotation of conquering the body (sometimes as part of a politically charged emancipation process), are recurrent key terms in the rhetoric. Stelarc's statement "To me it [stretched skin] is part of the manifestation of the gravitational pull, of overcoming it, or of at least resisting it" (16) is a case in point, as is Marina Abramovic's outrage at her failure to remain in control in *Rhythm 5* (1974): When her feet started to burn after she had set a huge sawdust star aflame, she fainted and a doctor, who happened to be in the audience, took her away and saved her life: "I was very angry because I understood there is a physical limit: when you lose consciousness you can't be present, you can't perform. So I started thinking about how I could make the performances, in which I could use the body with and without

consciousness, without stopping the performance" (Abramovic 29).

Pain in Life and Art: Political and Aesthetic Programmes

13 As has been argued widely in phenomenological studies, pain is an experience central to human subjectivity in that it helps the subject to situate itself in relation to the world: it works both as a world-constructing and as a world-reconstructing faculty, i.e. both on an ontological and on an epistemological level (List 1996: 235). It is perhaps the one feeling which lends some credibility to the old-fashioned and long deconstructed notion of authenticity: "*Those who are in pain will tell you that they have the right to be taken seriously*" (Vergine 8; italics in the original). Apart from being an organic reaction, it is also a symbolic mode of expression. Its advantage is that it works when conventional forms of communication fail to do so, but at the same time it lacks a "vocabulary" which would adequately convey the feelings it triggers. Both as a real subjective experience and as a form of artistic expression pain is, as Elaine Scarry has demonstrated, uncommunicable and therefore unsharable (4); its liminal cultural status somewhere between body, psyche and discourse (List 1996: 224) is conditioned by its resistance to language and to factual verification - to quote Scarry's own, laconic but very apt formulation: "To have pain is to have *certainty*; to hear about pain is to have *doubt*" (13).

14 Pain's resistance to language can cause the person in pain to fall silent or to hold on to an archaic, pre-linguistic and therefore seemingly irrational form of expression (as attributed to the female hysteric, whose trauma-ridden body language seems to turn up again in some performance pieces of the 20th century like Marina Abramovic's *Rhythm 2*, 1974). Apparently body and performance artists preferably have recourse to the silencing of pain where they are affected by it themselves. Artistic "simulators" of pain, however, frequently use an alternative code, which consists in a careful display of objects culturally associated with pain and violence: "Both weapon (whether actual or imagined) and wound (whether actual or imagined) may be used associatively to express pain. [...] As an actual physical fact, a weapon is an object that goes into the body and produces pain; as a perceptual fact, it can lift pain and its attributes out of the body and make them visible" (Scarry 16). In their filmic and photographic work, body artists such as Günter Brus (*Selbstverstümmelung*, 1965) or Rudolf Schwarzkogler (*Aktionen mit Akteuren für Fotosequenzen*, 1956-1966) arranged weapons and cutting instruments and placed them next to human bodies or (bandaged) body parts in order to conjure up in the minds of the viewers associations of medieval torture, of mutilation,

castration or other painful processes.⁴

15 Günter Brus actually intended his body actions and the accompanying documentary material to point out the painful and necessarily mutilating process of art-making and the structural violence and destructiveness inherent in Western civilisation.⁵ As his colleague Peter Weibel elaborates, Brus practised body art as a self-referential, corporeal attempt to bridge the intolerably painful difference between the object of art and the work of art portraying it:

Die ästhetischen Mittel wurden also Realien. Der Schmerz darüber, daß in der Abbildung erst die Kluft zwischen Sein und Schein geöffnet wird, die Differenz zwischen Bild und Objekt, sollte ausgelöscht werden, indem eben Bild und Objekt identisch wurden, daß es eben keine Abbildung mehr gäbe, sondern nur mehr Sein. Der Körper als Abbildungsmedium war dafür das ideale Medium (42).

[The aesthetic devices thus became real facts. The identification of image and object, the abandonment of representation for mere existence was supposed to erase the painful thought that representation opens up the gap between reality and appearances, the difference between image and object. The body was the ideal medium of representation to realise this with.]

Understood in this way, pain is a psychological component of art production which body artists translate into physicality. Brus himself even tried to revalorise terms such as "destruction" or "self-destruction" when he pointed out their productiveness in art-making (Zell 24). He cited famous examples like Pablo Picasso's cubist destruction of the human face or Egon Schiele's and Willem De Kooning's deformation of the human body but significantly refrained from reflections on the physically painful difference between the fine arts and body art.

16 Brus' social critique - like most of the Viennese actionists he bluntly attacked the decrepit bourgeois attitudes prevailing in conservative Vienna and its failure to deal critically

⁴ Cf. Schwarzkogler's description of his second action "o.T.", summer 1965: "C. steht nackt an einem weiß gedeckten Tisch, auf dem ein schwarzer Spiegel liegt. Auf dem Spiegel liegen der bandagierte Penis, zwei Scheren und eine Injektionsspritze. Oberhalb des Penis ist ein quadratisches Stück Zellstoff mit Pflaster geklebt/ es werden Rasierklingen dazugelegt/ es wird eine rote Plastikkrabbe dazugelegt" (Klocker 186). [C. is standing naked at a table covered with a white cloth, on which a black mirror is lying. On the mirror are placed the bandaged penis, two scissors and a syringe. A piece of cellulose is attached to the top of the penis with sticking-plaster/ razor blades are added/ a red plastic crab is put with them.]

⁵ Compare Jochen Gerz, who cogently points out the painful side-effects of art-making: "Der Akt der Gestaltung, der in unseren kulturellen Bereichen allem zugrunde liegt und allem vorausgeht, ist auch immer ein Akt der Verstümmelung. "Es werde Licht", heißt es in der Schrift, und man könnte hinzufügen: "damit es dunkel wird". Die Geschichte unserer Kultur ist auch die Geschichte der Trennungen und Hierarchisierungen. Die Geschichte der Skulptur ist auch die Geschichte der Unterwerfung des Steins, die der westlichen Musik auch die des Verstummens des menschlichen Körpers als eines Instrumentes, von anderen Instrumenten zu schweigen" (Gerz 24; 26). [The act of formation essential and prerequisite to our domain of culture is at the same time always an act of mutilation. "Let there be light", the Scripture says, and one could add: "so that darkness sets in". Our cultural history is also a history of separations and hierarchies. The history of sculpture is also a history of the stone's submission, the history of western music also that of the silencing of the body as an instrument, not to speak of other instruments.]<

with its Nazi past (cf. e.g. Schröder 1990: 71) - materialized on the level of corporeality in performances such as *Zerreiẞprobe* (*Endurance Test*, 1971) during which he presented himself in blatantly antisocial fashion by appealing to the audience for certain banal favours (for instance to shut the window or to give him a glass of water) while ignoring their reactions or insulting them (by peeing into the glass and drinking its contents). Brus thus got to be known as the *enfant terrible* of early performance art and was actually marginalized socially not only because of his chaotic, dirty or sometimes even disgusting body actions but also because he put his finger on something Judith Butler thirty years later explicated theoretically: on pain as a side-effect of social norm-giving and norm-maintaining processes (related, not only etymologically, to *poena* or "punishment" - Scarry 16).⁶ As Brus put it, solely the child who does not yet know about social rules is still unhurt ("das Kind, das noch nichts weiss von dem Kram, ist noch mit heiler Haut da", cited in Schröder 86). The calculated social scandalon of body art lies in the presumptuousness with which it seems to take over traditional prerogatives of the state such as the negotiation of pain, of body discipline and the right to decide over life or death. Artists like Brus thus "assume the function of the aggressor; they both imitate his function and assume his symbols" (Vergine 19). Brus's colleague Peter Weibel explains:

Wenn nun die Kunst beginnt, dem Staat das Tötungsmonopol streitig zu machen, auch in der Selbsttötung und der "unendlich ausgekosteten Selbstentlebung", dieser unendlich verzögerten Selbsttötung, dann geht es einzig und allein darum, die Todesproduktion selbst zu brechen. (45)

[When art starts to dispute the state's exclusive right to kill, even by suicide and a "disembodiment enjoyed to the full", this infinitely retarded suicide, it is solely concerned with overcoming the logic of death itself.]

Durch die reale Verstümmelung des Körpers wurde die Realität der sozialen Codierung des Körpers und die verstümmelnde Funktion der sozialen Codierung angegriffen. (48)

[The realised mutilation of the body was an attack on the realness of social codes concerning the body and on the mutilating function of social encoding.]

That pain also originates in mutilating processes of genderization due to an inflexible heterosexual matrix, which excludes and prohibits all deviant forms of desire, as Judith Butler argues (65), is an insight still unavailable and possibly irrelevant to Brus and most other male artists of the time.

17 This is completely different for artists such as Carolee Schneemann or Valie Export,

⁶ This close affiliation between notions of pain and of punishment is also mirrored in Stelarc's statement on his *Suspension Performances* that "[The stretched skin] is the physical penalty you pay for suspending your body" (16). It becomes most obvious in S/M practices, which Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose draw on for their performance work.

who were aware of gender constraints well before the second women's movement started to make itself felt in continental Europe. In her 1968 performance *Aus der Mappe der Hundigkeit* Valie Export led her partner, Peter Weibel, who followed her on all fours, through an inner city Vienna street on a dog's leash. Although in commenting on this action she does not refer to gender explicitly - what she wanted was in her own words "die negative utopie des aufrechten rückgrats in unserer tierischen gemeinschaft zu proklamieren" (Mueller 19) [to proclaim the negative utopia of the upright backbone in our animal community], the ironic reversal of gender roles implied is unmistakable. In her performance *Kausalgie* Export differentiated between a black causalgy (the dark pain of oppression/submission) and its white counterpart (the light pain of emancipation), thereby acknowledging the fundamental ambivalence of pain, which is always intertwined to a certain extent with lust and desire and can, when the person affected by it is in control, even have liberating effects.⁷ In her programmatic article on "Aspects of Feminist Actionism" Export stresses the emancipatory power of re-enacting, resisting and overcoming pain. With regard to her own pieces *I am beaten* (1973) and *Bewegungsimitationen* (1974/75) she foregrounds the performative possibility to express "die Freude am eigenen Widerstand, die Freude, Schmerz zu ertragen und zu überwinden, die Freude, den fremden Widerstand zu überwinden, den Verlust zu sehen und darüber zu lächeln" (Export 159) [the pleasure of resisting, the pleasure of bearing pains and overcoming them, the pleasure of overcoming the resistance of the other, to realise the loss and smile]. Export tries to free herself from the pain involved in the performances themselves through desensitizing her body and thus putting a magical ban on them (Prammer 138).⁸ At the same time, her concept is an openly didactic one, which closely follows the feminist axiom of the personal being the political: she attempts to change people's consciousness by staging typically gender-marked experiences of pain, which hurt her

⁷ Interestingly, pleasure on the one hand and pain and violence on the other also mix rhetorically in Valie Export's retrospective observations on the Viennese group: "Es war eine großartige, gespannte Stimmung damals. Es klingt wie ein Schlagwort heute, aber es war eine echte Aufbruchsstimmung, alles war so mit Lust an der Provokation, mit der Lust am radikalen Ausdruck, ich meine damit Lust als Haltung. Die Zeit war lustvoll, frech und aggressiv für mich, jedoch auch sehr konstruktiv, innovativ. Man hat sich nicht um Normen und Regeln gekümmert, die eingehalten oder verletzt werden sollten. Man hat sie einfach verletzt, das war die Voraussetzung, man hat Wunden in die Regeln geschlagen. Es war eine starke, progressive Kraft vorhanden, man hat geglaubt, alles sei möglich und man könne die Welt, das System, umkrempeln [...]" (Valie Export cited in Zell 18). [We were in a tremendous, tense mood at the time. This may sound like a slogan nowadays but it was a time of genuine new departures, everything was teeming with the desire to provoke, the desire for radical expression, I mean desire as an attitude. The times were full of relish, cheeky and aggressive in my case but at the same time extremely constructive and innovative. No-one cared for norms or rules which had to be kept or broken. They were simply broken, this was a precondition, wounds were cut into rules. There was a strong, progressive sense of power, people thought everything was possible and the world, the system could be turned upside down.]

⁸ Compare Marina Abramovic's comment on *Thomas' Lips*: "The idea was to see how much you can increase the pain you inflict on yourself and really make your body immune" (30f.).

viewers more than herself (Zell 164).

18 In comparison to Export's feminist work and political attitude, Hermann Nitsch's aesthetic programme, which he conceives of as a *theatre of abreaction* (Vergine 177) and enacts in his *Theatre of Orgies and Mysteries*, appears to be a decidedly masculine one. Nitsch's performances do not involve real pain but use (animal) blood and (mostly male) human participants/models or slaughtered animals in order to evoke pain in faked rituals of sacrifice and festivity, which mingle associations of violence and desire (he refers to crucifixion, the holy communion, ritual regicide, the blinding of Oedipus and the killing of totemistic animals in his performances - Schneede 138). A theatrical framework serves him to stage what he considers to be an integral but - in modern times - suppressed element of cosmic reality and human nature: aggression and destruction. "Ich sehe Zerstörung auch als Folge von Lebensüberschwang, von zu viel Kraft, von ungebändigter Kraft" (Hermann Nitsch cited in Zell 40). Nitsch's Dionysian and implicitly masculine concept of performance art is based on an idealized, ecstatic aggressiveness considered to be an outlet for naturally built-up feelings which are norm-breaking and norm-reaffirming at the same time. Through his recourse to ancient rites, which he aestheticizes and presents in pseudo-priestly fashion, he evokes a shared cultural past but strips the individual ritualized act of the religious circumstances and community which alone justify it. His actions have a close affinity to Georges Bataille's theorizing on the social function of violence and sacrificial rites, by which societies, according to Bataille, achieve periodic moments of unity with a basically violent and excessive nature through a temporal suspension of the rules of rationality.

19 Similar to Yves Klein, Nitsch insists on the theatricality of his performance actions, which seem to hold the promise of catharsis for the audience (even though violence and pain are only simulated). Nitsch's reasoning with regard to sacrifice reveals his self-assessment as a messianic figure:

Ich nehme durch meine Kunstproduktion (Form der Lebensandacht) das scheinbar Negative, Unappetitliche, Perverse, Obszöne, die Brunst und die daraus resultierende Opfer-Hysterie auf mich, damit IHR EUCH den befleckten, schamlosen Abstieg ins Extrem erspart" (Nitsch cited in Schneede 139).

[Through my art production (a form of life worship) I take upon myself the apparently negative, unappetizing, perverse, obscene, the lust and the resulting sacrificial hysteria so that YOU are spared the stained, shameless descent into extremes.]

That an aesthetic programme like Nitsch's can corroborate self-stylizations as a (male) hero and figure of pathos is confirmed by Peter Weibel's comment on his 1971 performance *Initiation*, in which he stigmatized his palms by burning fuses. This "initiation rite" was supposed to have been an incentive to the viewers to accompany him on his artistic journey

and to trust him as a man who bears pains with a smile (Weibel cited in Schröder 124). Heroic endurance of pain is used here as a possible source of artistic credibility and charisma, following a masculine rather than feminine tradition established by Van Gogh cutting off his left ear.

20 Rudolf Schwarzkogler's performance work is also said to show characteristics of rituals or cult behaviour (Badura-Triska, "Kunst als Purgatorium der Sinne", 259). In his *ÄSTHETISCHES PANORAMA*-Manifest Schwarzkogler makes it clear that he aims at catharsis and regeneration through art, which he declares to be a purgatory of the senses, supposed to intensify the viewers' sensory perceptions (Badura-Triska, 257). Looked at more closely, however, his actions seem to be directed much less at a public audience than they are meant to further his process of spiritual self-perfection inspired by Eastern philosophies and practices such as buddhism, hinduism, yoga and tantra. Rudolf Schwarzkogler never enacted a single piece in public; only photographs remain as documentary material. In his reminiscences of his colleague and friend, Hermann Nitsch suggests that Schwarzkogler's own body and psyche were the target of his highly aestheticized but more apollonian than dionysian performance pieces and that these were not unaffected by messianic appeal: "vom gesundschwitzen des organismus, vom aderlaß war die rede. ein läuterungs- und auferstehungsvorgang war gemeint und dies nicht ohne die ausdrücklich gemachte anspielung auf die mythische gegebenheit von tod und auferstehung" (Nitsch 17). His self-imposed diets furthered the myth of Schwarzkogler as a martyr, who sacrificed his health and life in the name of art. In fact, his premature death was repeatedly but wrongly attributed in the media (initially in the American *TIME* magazine) to the consequences of a presumed self-castration which was thought to have taken place during one of his performances. Obviously, his photographic actions, in which he had staged several castration scenes, had been taken at face value as art's blueprint for life (and death).

21 In comparison to male artists like Klein and Nitsch, who clearly view themselves as directors of pre-structured works and sometimes even as divinely inspired saviours of the world, Marina Abramovic relies much more on the specific and changing reactions of her viewers for her performance effects. Her concept of body art is first and foremost based on dialogical exchange and openness, even though her artistic aims expressly include the test and transcendence of psycho-physical boundaries of the self:

Performance is some kind of mental and physical construction in which an artist steps in, in front of the public. Performance is not a theater piece, is not something that you learn and then act, playing somebody else. It's more like a direct transmission of energy. [...] I could never really reach the point that I can go over my physical and mental limits privately. There always has to be the public, there always have to be

viewers who give me that kind of energy. The more the public, the better the performance gets, the more energy is passing through the space. (Abramovic 27)

Accidents and interruptions are deliberately taken into account by Abramovic, who explains that her performance concepts, especially in the 1970s, resemble scores or recipes rather than a fully elaborated script. Her work has an undeniably political ring to it, sometimes even with feminist overtones, while at the same time it is strongly autobiographical. Abramovic experiments in autoaggression in order to explore her own body boundaries and to achieve a state of cathartic, transcendent purity. The presence of viewers allows her to harm herself in ways normally impossible, as she explains in an interview, and she admits that she loves the feel of complete liberty, of child-like innocence, vulnerability and emptiness that live performances arouse in her (Jappe 140). The fact that her performances are very drastic from the point of view of the pain involved can be attributed to her keen interest in states of trance requiring extreme physical challenges, which she got acquainted with during her one-year stay with Australian aborigines.⁹ In another interview with Thomas McEvilley, however, Abramovic intimates that her early Yugoslavian performances were a reaction to her strict upbringing by her mother who insisted that she be at home by 10 pm even when Abramovic was nearly thirty: "Es ist total verrückt, aber all die Selbstverletzungen, die ich mir zugefügt habe, die Schnitte, die Peitschenhiebe, das Brennen, aber auch, dass ich in dem Feuer-Stern fast umgekommen wäre, das alles geschah vor 22 Uhr" (Abramovic in McEvilley 16) [How absolutely crazy that all the self-harm I inflicted on myself, the cuts, the whippings, the burns and even the fact that I nearly died in the fire star, all this happened before 10 pm.]. Interestingly, with hindsight she regards these violent performances as having resulted from a masculine attitude of heroic resistance ("Bevor ich Jugoslawien verlassen habe, hatten alle meine Arbeiten einen absolut männlichen Ansatz, totaler Einsatz und Heldentum, immer bestand die Möglichkeit, dabei umzukommen, und all das", 16 [Before I had left Yugoslavia, all my work had a completely masculine approach, total commitment and heroism, always including the possibility of dying from it]), although the scenarios she created (e.g. she scourged herself until blood flowed in *Thomas' Lips*, 1965) were actually of a masochistic,

⁹ "Auf meinen Reisen nach Tibet und zu den Aborigines lernte ich auch einige Sufi-Rituale kennen, ich sah, dass all diese Kulturen den Körper an physische Grenzen treiben, um einen geistigen Sprung zu vollziehen, um die Angst vor dem Tod auszuschalten, die Angst vor dem Schmerz und vor all den körperlichen Einschränkungen, mit denen wir leben. Wir hier in der westlichen Gesellschaft sind so ängstlich. Die Performance war die Form, die es mir ermöglichte, den Sprung in jenen anderen Raum, jene andere Dimension zu vollziehen" (cited in Zell 50). [On my trips to Tibet and to the aborigines I got to know some sufi rituals, I saw that all these cultures drive the body to its physical limits in order to perform a spiritual leap, in order to shut out the fear of death, the fear of pain and of all the physical constraints we have to live with. People from western societies are so fearful. Performance was the form of expression which enabled me to carry out the leap into this other space, this other dimension.]

submissive nature conventionally associated with femininity, as the interviewer also remarks with respect to *Rhythm O* (an experimental piece in which a completely passive Marina Abramovic allowed the public to cause her either pleasure or pain with the help of diverse instruments at their disposal). That these kinds of performances may have been a way of working through a childhood trauma in that they recreated the typical constellation of a little girl suffering at the hands of her elders suggests itself. Abramovic obviously feels the need to refute this painful explanation and masked it by foregrounding the less disconcerting principles of heroic masculinity.

22 It could be argued that exposing oneself to extreme, i.e. potentially lethal forms of pain and injury is in itself not a clearly genderized behaviour. Rather, what counts from the point of view of gender relations are the masculine or feminine connotations generated by the choice of painful scenarios and their specific symbolic charges, the artist's attitude during the performance itself and his or her rhetoric in performance descriptions. If we turn to the American artist Chris Burden, for example, the bodily risk he takes is comparable to that of Marina Abramovic but his nonchalant behaviour, his mad scientist attitude and matter-of-fact style of comment reinforce connotations of modern heroic masculinity. As Schimmel (97) expounds, within a five-year span Burden underwent shooting, electric shock treatment, spearing, cutting, drowning, locking up and isolation. Viewed against these extreme risks of health, Burden's description of his performance *Shoot* (1971) appears not only laconic but must be considered a deliberate, conventionally masculine understatement: "At 7:45 p.m. I was shot in the left arm by a friend. The bullet was a copper jacket 22 long rifle. My friend was standing about fifteen feet from me" (Burden cited in Dreher 310). His professed political programme consists in making people aware of the ubiquity of violence and crime in American society (to "re-enact certain American classics - like shooting" - Burden cited in Goldberg 159), but the rhetoric he uses in a later interview to describe his aims in *Shoot* also betrays his personal excitement generated by the extreme physical challenge of this test of courage:

My sources are sometimes from the news, from reading, from what goes on in the world. The performance I did a long time ago - when I was shot - *Shoot*, worked so well because it deals with issues that everybody thinks about. You can see these things on television, you see it in real life and you read about it all the time - it has become an American tradition, like apple pie. Since I was an artist and I did this piece in an extremely clinical, scientific way it made people ask themselves: Why does he do this? What does he mean? The piece becomes the vehicle for an empirical, scientific inquiry because it ultimately raises the question: What does it feel like? Well, in order to find out, you have to do it! [Getting shot] is a fear everybody has, especially in America, for it's there all the time. When you read that an artist did this, then it does suddenly spark. (Burden 66; 68)

His relationship to pain, as he himself sees it, is one of direct confrontation ("[...] you must create a situation where you can test your fantasy and your fear against the actuality - rather than turn from it, face it head on and find out what it is", 84), and unsurprisingly, in most of his performances a strong focus lies on technical mastery and acrobatic stunts (Zell 70-71). Burden frequently acts in such a staggering manner, exaggerating traditional notions of masculinity, that his work seems to verge on gender parody, although such an intention is not verifiable.

23 Otto Mühl, one of the Viennese actionists, acknowledges the strong autobiographical impact of his own artistic work, which in his opinion led to its pronounced aggressiveness: "im aktionismus stellte ich die verbindung zu meinen verhinderten lebensenergien her und boxte mir den weg zu mir selbst frei. ich lernte nicht nur meine positiven energien kennen, sondern die negativen, verkrampften" (11). In contrast to Marina Abramovic, however, Mühl's biographical references are unmistakably and prototypically male. In his autobiographical prose work *Weg aus dem Sumpf* he frankly describes how much he despised and rejected his highly emotional mother (imitating his father in this respect) and how he modelled his artistic personality on the masculine traits his father stood for, of power, discipline and consequential behaviour (66). The decisive turning point in 1961, as Mühl himself realises retrospectively, namely from an earlier phase of painting to performance art, necessitated nothing less than a highly aggressive, symbolic matricide:

mitten im malen, das bild begann bereits abzusacken, ich konnte es nicht halten, kam die entscheidende wende. ich nahm das küchenmesser und schlitzte das bild auf. ich riss die leinwand mit beiden händen auseinander, zertrümmerte den rahmen, trat mit den füssen danach, das holz splitterte, ich drehte alles ineinander, ich würgte das bild, als ob ich jemandem den hals umdrehe. ich verknotete das bündel aus holz und leinwand mit schnüren, später wickelte ich noch einen stacheldraht darum, den ich auf der strasse gefunden hatte und überschüttete und bespritzte alles mit farbe, die ich gerade zur verfügung hatte. [...] ich hatte keine ahnung davon, dass ich einen symbolischen muttermord dargestellt hatte. (150-151)

[in the middle of a painting process, the painting had already to started to sink, i had difficulty holding it, the decisive turning point came. i took the kitchen knife and slit the painting open. i tore the canvas apart, smashed the frame, kicked it, the wood splintered, i twisted everything into each other, i strangled the painting as if i were wringing someone's neck. i tied up the bundle of wood and canvas with strings, later i wound a piece of barbed wire around it which i had found in the street and poured and splashed paint which happened to be there all over it. [...] i had no idea that i had represented a symbolic matricide.]

Mühl realised in 1977 that he needed the carapace of male heroism to hide his feelings of inferiority and vulnerability. In spite of his secret preference for being a woman (66), the body art he practised in his *Materialaktionen* perpetuated the misogyny he was taught as a

boy. He utilized, objectivized and exploited his female models, covered them in paint or in layers of film or tied them up with tissue and pieces of string. The potentially painful physical reality he thereby created was one which only affected the models so that his performances were not completely devoid of sadism. Mühl's description of his very first performance speaks for itself:

als ich die erste aktion durchführte, ging ich gerade so vor, als ob ich irgendein bild, ein objekt, zu demontieren hätte. indem ich babsi mit farbschlamm bewarf, mit in farbe getauchten tüchern zudeckte und umwickelte, verknotete, abfall über sie schüttete, sie mit dicker farbe einschmierte, zerstörte ich gründlich das menschenbild, das auf seife und intimspray beruht. ich hatte ein tabu verletzt (158).

[when i realised my first performance i proceeded as though i had to dismantle some painting, an object. by throwing mudpaint at babsi, by covering babsi and wrapping her in sheets soaked with paint, tying them up and spilling garbage on her, by covering her in thick paint, i destroyed once and for all the idea of human nature based on soap and deodorant. i had broken a taboo.]

24 After its first climax in the 1960s and early 1970s, Western body art was revived in the late 1980s and 1990s by artists such as Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose in the United States or Orlan in France. Especially in Orlan's work, revised but by no means uncontroversial notions of feminism and subjectivity manifest themselves, which are closely linked to current postbiological/ posthuman concepts. In her series of performances entitled *The Reincarnation of St. Orlan* (1990-1993) Orlan used her own body as a physical medium of successive, performative transformation, which she herself regarded as a "woman to woman transsexualism" (O'Bryan 54). She developed a computerized synthesis of selected famous women portraits from Western art history and made a team of surgeons operate her face according to this blueprint, while she herself, only locally anaesthetized, read out from philosophical, literary and psychoanalytical texts. Insofar as she attacks and counteracts in her performances the hysteria with which a flawless, idealized female body is being propagated in the media and popular culture, Orlan proves to be a deconstructive feminist in her own territory of performative, visual art: "My work is not a stand against cosmetic surgery, but against the standards of beauty, against the dictates of a dominant ideology that impresses itself more and more on feminine ... flesh" (Orlan cited in O'Bryan 54). Her transgressions consist in the substitution of the canvas by an operation table, in her collection of corporeal "relics" or souvenirs from individual operations, in her role as director of a self-conceived surgical spectacle and *gesamtkunstwerk*, including specially designed robes for herself and for the medical personnel involved, and, last but not least, in the aesthetics of corporeality set out in her *Carnal Art Manifesto*: "Unlike "Body Art", from which I set it apart, Carnal Art does not conceive of pain as a means of redemption or as a source of purification. Carnal Art is not

interested in the plastic-surgery result, but in the process of surgery, the spectacle and discourse of the modified body which has become the place of a public debate" (cited in Kerejeta 218).

25 This transformative aesthetics also revolts people by its citation of conventional norms of ugliness and monstrosity (Baxmann). In her 1993 surgical performance *Omniprésence*, which took place in New York and was broadcast live to a forum of intellectuals at the McLuhan Center in Toronto and to the Centre Pompidou in Paris, Orlan had two silicon implants in the form of horns inserted into her temples. The spectacle did not fail to shock the viewers, who witnessed an extremely brutal operation involving Orlan's skin being cut open and moved by surgical instruments in close-ups. The artist herself, however, appeared totally unaffected by the cruelty and pain she suffered and when asked about the impact of pain, she merely shrugged and said: "Art is a dirty job, but someone has to do it"; "Of course, there are several injections and several grimaces ... but I just take painkillers like everyone else" (Orlan cited in Davis 463). In her almost arrogant dismissal of pain Orlan resembles male artists like Chris Burden, and it is hardly astonishing that feminist critics have criticised Orlan harshly for her denial of feminine embodiment and for her neglect of pain. A feminist, biotechnological utopia as Orlan conceives of, who uses her own body as raw material, comes dangerously close to classical scenarios of martyrdom, it trivializes the dangers of cosmetic surgery and ignores the very real suffering of women who are not content with their looks. Furthermore, Orlan's operation theatre poses the question of subject-object relations anew with respect to authorship but does not offer any easy answers. Even though Orlan acts as a client with specific orders in mind, it could be argued that the surgeons are the actual performers and, because of their superior medical knowledge, are ultimately responsible for the end result.

26 The range of political and aesthetic positions in painful modern body and performance encompasses, as has been shown, traditional, art-specific legitimization patterns based on notions of catharsis or redemption (Nitsch, Brus) as well as more decisively "modern" motivation patterns such as self-transcendence through trance-like or ecstatic states of the body (Schwarzkogler, Abramovic). All of the performers, whether they stage autoaggression or experiment in injuries inflicted on them by participants in the performance, share the common aim of provoking and shocking the public - either directly as in live performances in front of viewers or indirectly via photographic or videotaped material. A dilemma they have to face is the rapidly increasing spread of images of violence in modern and postmodern culture and especially the media and the fact that this habituates people to scenarios of pain and suffering.

With regard to performances such as Orlan's theatrical operations, the question arises, therefore, whether they do not run the danger of losing their sensational appeal, especially if one takes into account that live broadcasts of plastic surgery have recently become a popular TV format on the US channel ABC.

Languages and Images of Pain

27 That intersubjective communicability of pain is a problematic issue has been Elaine Scarry's thesis and argumentative point of departure. Another, related question is how pain makes itself felt, how it figures as a sensation. Ernst Pöppel has analysed the interplay of pain and pleasure in human experience from a predominantly anthropological point of view and has come to the conclusion that the threshold of pain assessment ("Bewertungsschwelle") is an individually but above all culturally variable dimension (10). He differentiates between a minimal intensity of stimulus on the one hand, at which pain is perceptible as such and which seems to be universal among humankind (239), and a variable tolerance level of pain on the other hand. An interesting concrete example he cites is birth pains, which in Western civilizations seem to be more negatively charged and result in a comparatively low level of tolerance among Western women giving birth. Another example, which sheds an interesting light on Stelarc's *Suspension Performances*, is an Indian religious ceremony during which a young man chosen by the community to bless the soil is lifted up in the air by hooks inserted into the muscles of his back (239-240). Pöppel points out that the man shows no signs of pain whatsoever during the ritual and explains this by the cultural value and positive connotations attached to the process. The decisive factor in the negotiation of pain thus seems to be social conditioning so that in (religious) ecstasy, trance and masochism, which may be linked emotionally and mentally with positive features, perceptions of pain can be blotted out by endorphins the brain produces (249, 251). The frequent absence of pain in body-centred art performances, especially when they are performed live before an audience, are therefore not necessarily a consequence of the artist consciously withholding all bodily reactions but may be attributable to an ecstatic emotional state of dis-embodiment triggered by the performance situation itself.

28 The perceptible reactions to pain or unease which are being articulated in performance art, however, are often employed consciously as critical, antisocial gestures. Asked whether he regarded body and performance art as a climax of speechlessness within art history, Otto Mühl answered in 1994: "Im Aktionismus wird eine neue Sprache eingeführt: die Sprache des Bauches. Sie ist viel echter. Rülpsen, Scheißen, Brunzen, Atmen, Röcheln. Der anderen ist zu

mißtrauen. [...] Die Sprache ist total vom Staat eingenommen, man kann eigentlich kein vernünftiges Wort mehr sagen. Und der Aktionismus hat es zum Ausdruck gebracht" (Roussel 118-119). [A new language is introduced into actionism: the language of the body. It is far more real. Belching, shitting, grunting, breathing, groaning. The other language is suspect. [...] Language has been completely appropriated by the state so that it is practically impossible to utter a single sensible word. And actionism has given expression to this.] Vito Acconci's photo action *Trademarks* (1970) appears to be a concretization of this linguistic scepticism among performance artists. Acconci assumed various painfully contorted postures in order to bite into various parts of his body and thus to refunctionalize the mouth as an instrument of aggression: "Mich beißen: Meinen Körper überall beißen, wo ich hinkomme. Tinte auf die Bisse auftragen; den Bißabdruck auf verschiedene Oberflächen stempeln" (Acconci cited in Schimmel 91). [To bite myself. To bite my body in all the places I can reach. To apply ink on the bites; to stamp the bite's impression on different surfaces.] A sceptical attitude towards conventional language as a medium of the symbolic order and the valorization of non-symbolic communicative modes such as the semiotic (in Julia Kristeva's terms) seems to have been a widely shared position among artists of all orders since the 1960s, but body artists probably had the most immediate and effective (because multisensory) access to such alternative languages. One of those was and is the language of blood and of skin colour.

29 Jochen Gerz took a specific way of speaking literally in his painful performance *Schreiben mit der Hand* (1972), when he grazed his hand against the wall of a house in order to write the sentence "Diese Worte sind mein Fleisch und mein Blut" [These words are my flesh and my blood] in blood onto it (Schneede 142-144). Gerz poses as a messianic figure in that he takes the Christian motif of the Eucharist out of its religious context and plays with its underlying concepts of physical pain as a gift to believers. Dennis Oppenheim's *Reading Position for a Second Degree Burn* (1970) could be regarded as another, though probably less painful and more passive, performative act of achieving colour change, "a traditional painter's concern" (Oppenheim cited in Goldberg 158), via body language. Oppenheim exposed himself naked to the sun, with a large book placed on his chest, until the sun had burnt the uncovered area and produced a body-specific form of pigment. He relegated artistic authorship to the forces of nature in this piece and thereby implicitly questioned the role of the performer: "I allow myself to be painted - my skin becomes pigment"; "I feel the act of becoming red" (Oppenheim cited in Schneede 62).

30 Feminist theory, which revealed the symbolic to be male- or phallus-dominated and

searched for alternative, "feminine" modes of expression, was taken up in the work of body artists such as Gina Pane. Pane, who wanted to draw attention to everyday violence against women by her facial self-mutilations, is very explicit about pain as a (feminine) language and her programmatic statements resemble those by French exponents of *écriture féminine* such as Luce Irigaray or Hélène Cixous: "Für mich, die ich Frau bin, ist die Wunde auch Ausdruck für mein Geschlecht, sie ist Ausdruck für die blutende Spalte meines Geschlechts. Diese Wunde hat den Charakter eines weiblichen Diskurses. Die Öffnung meines Körpers impliziert sowohl den Schmerz als auch die Lust" (Gina Pane cited in Zell 107) [For me who am a woman the wound is also an expression of my sex, it is an expression for the bloody hole of my sex. This wound is like a female discourse. My body's opening implies both pain and pleasure.] In a comment on her performance *Le corps pressenti* (1975) Pane stresses her effort to construct wounds as a visual language which is supposed to communicate their psychological relevance as bodily traces (Schimmel 99). When pain and its language of wounds are made manifest to a public, one could argue, they take over the function of a non-verbal collective memory, with blood functioning as a visible authentication of pain. From the perspective of cultural anthropology, Veena Das has convincingly argued that pain is a profoundly ambiguous social element: it can create a moral community between those who have suffered and those who have witnessed this suffering (818) just as much as it can represent an individual form of resistance against complete social incorporation (821). In other words, pain may operate as a marker of social affiliation or, contrarily, as a marker of individuality.

36 Especially those performances in which a visible action of self-injury is painfully slowed down or repeated seem to be motivated by the projection of suffering onto the viewers, while they also create a new consciousness of medialized images. In *Psyché* (1974) Gina Pane, who always performed dressed in white to intensify the visual effects of blood, took an almost unbearably long time cutting up her skin just underneath her brows until blood became visible and dropped onto her mirror image. Pane's self-professed intention, apart from the decision to use the body as a new type of raw material,¹⁰ was meant to shake up an

¹⁰ "Ich fing [1968] an, über den Körper ohne eine bildhauerische Prothese nachzudenken. Es sollte eine direkte Kommunikation zwischen dem Material Körper und seiner Vermittlung geben. Und deswegen habe ich Anfang der siebziger Jahre eine theoretische Verletzung realisiert. Ich nannte sie theoretisch, d.h. ich nahm eine Rasierklinge, die mir damals dazu diente, Collagen anzufertigen, Papier zu zerschneiden oder damit in der Erde zu arbeiten. Ich nahm also diese Rasierklinge wie ein Werkzeug, das ich gut kannte, um eine theoretische Verletzung zu realisieren" (Pane cited in Zell 48). [[In 1968] I started to think about the body without having recourse to sculpture. My goal was direct communication between the body as material and its mediation. And this is why I realised a theoretical injury at the beginning of the 1970s. I called it theoretical, i.e. I took a razor blade which normally served me to create collages, to cut paper or work with earth. I took up this razor blade like a well-known tool in order to realise a theoretical injury.]

anaesthetized public of television viewers out of their habitual lethargy. Douglas Gordon claims a similar artistic motivation for his two-part video performance *Dead Left* (1998) filmed in real time, which showed him slowly cutting off first one and then his other wrist from circulation with a piece of string until they turned blue and Gordon became an emergency (Schneede 39). Gordon, who was inspired by the educational films of psychopathology and who shunned any sensational effects, staged his action as an experiment in visual perception. By slowing down the moving image to an extreme degree and presenting a process of self-torture to the viewers he hoped to disturb their expectation of filmic simulation and to make them painfully aware of the sadistic side to voyeurism: "Sadism seems to me to be the logical progression in the beautiful and torrid relationship between the viewer and the screen. It's a post-voyeuristic state. Once we have had enough of looking, then perhaps we start touching. [...] Sadism is possible (maybe unavoidable) for our generation as we grew up with the VCR and the remote control and the video camera" (Gordon cited in Spector 85).

37 An increasing awareness of and interest in the role of the medium chosen for performance work has been making itself felt recently. With regard to gender issues, the medial aspect is not always unproblematic, as Nobuyoshi Araki's photographic work as well as his remarks on photography show. Araki, whom Marina Schneede praises as the most famous Japanese artist at the end of the 20th century (36), continues Otto Mühl's and Hans Bellmer's practice of tying up female models in seemingly erotic, aestheticized poses. The models do not only appear to the viewer like beautiful corpses but if we trust his words, Araki actually considers them victims of his "lethal" artistic instrument - the camera -, which grants him satisfying feelings of self-aggrandizement, mastery and total control:

Wenn man das, was sich bewegt, festhält, ist das eine Art von Tod. Die Kamera, das photographische Bild beschwören immer schon den Tod herauf. Und ich denke beim Photographieren auch an den Tod, was man den Bildern ansieht. Vielleicht ist das eine orientalische, buddhistische Vorstellung. Für mich ist Photographieren ein Akt, bei dem mein "Ich" mittels des Gegenstandes hervorgeholt wird. Photographie war von Anfang an mit dem Tod verbunden. (Araki cited in Schneede 36)

[If you keep hold of something which moves this is a sort of death. The camera, the photographic image always conjure up death. And when I take photographs I even think of death, which you can tell by the pictures. Maybe this is an oriental, buddhist idea. Photography for me is an act which brings out my "self" by means of the object. From its beginnings, photography has been associated with death.]

38 It appears as though initially, i.e. in the 1960s and early 1970s, body art's major innovation was to make use of the body as artistic material, to stage the sheer physicality of making art and to search for ways of spiritual transcendence. Later on performance art

typically went a step further in opening up additional, often politicized, levels of semantic content and offering some sort of "legitimation" for the pain undergone. In recent years, however, artists such as Stelarc, Orlan or Matthew Barney proceed from the tenet of the human body's obsolescence in a highly technologized world and aim at overcoming its biological constraints. Viewed against this development, it appears only logical that the treatment of pain as manifested in their performance work is tantamount to negation and marginalization. Any articulation of real pain would run the risk of reintroducing notions of the embodied subject into the discussion.

39 This development from an early focus on the "realness" of the body to its political framing and a revised notion of the embodied subject can be illustrated, I would contend, by body art's changing references to the highly popular motif of crucifixion. One of the first and most notorious artists to use it in body art was Chris Burden. In *Trans-Fixed* (1974) he was nailed with his arms spread wide onto the bonnet of a Volkswagen beetle. Insofar as he made a profane substitute (the car) take the place of the cross and had his own cries of pain replaced by the roar of the engine, Burden deprived a 2000-year old motif of Western art history and the central image in Christian religion of its singularity and pathos in an expressly antireligious, political gesture (Schröder 117). Because the action was not shown in public and many people (not unlike Thomas the apostle) doubted the authenticity of the action, he had photos taken of his pierced palms for evidence (Schneede 28). The realness of the event seems to have been a central concern for Burden at the time. Almost 25 years later, Finnish artist Magnus Scharmanoff took up Burden's motif and complemented it with a female mirror-image in his photographic cycle *Tappion Tunne - A Sense of Loss 8* (1997). The photo's two-part structure fits the scene of a double crucifixion, separated by a wooden post. The left-hand side is dominated by an unmistakably intermedial reference to Burden's *Trans-Fixed*: a young man, the artist himself, is lying on a car bonnet, his hands and feet attached to the vehicle by sticky tape. A procession of ordinary-looking men follow the car. On the right a middle-aged woman with rasta locks can be seen in the typical posture of Christ on the cross, with tears in her eyes and traces of mascara running down her cheeks. Her wrists are tied to a scaffolding by means of the same sticky tape. The profanation and gender criticism are more pronounced than in Burden's performance in that a man and a woman assume and share a traditionally male position fetishized in Christian religion. Pain, however, is only simulated and does no longer seem indispensable as a special thrill. As becomes clear from an e-mail interview by Angela Wenzel, Scharmanoff's photo series is part of his ongoing analysis of masculinity, of traditional male role patterns and their deviations. The artist

himself stresses that he regards identity - whether male or female - as a fluid and open rather than as a fixed and stable concept (Wenzel 272). In *Bob Flanagan's Sick* (together with Sheree Rose, 1991), this postmodern notion of the split, multiple subject is taken up, supplemented with a new concept of the body as map of erotogenic zones and linked to Christ's crucifixion in a completely different way:

[...] seven monitors hang in the form of a crucified figure. On them appear shifting images of the appropriate body part, spryly juxtaposed with Christian iconography, and scenes from bondage-themed movies like *Mutiny on the Bounty* and from Flanagan's own self-mortifying performances. Masochistic impulses, clearly, inflect a range of "acceptable" behaviours. Yet the Frankenstein composite constructed here is a body of independent parts, with each part enduring separate sensations (feet being whipped, face dunked, penis dripped with wax, etc.). (Rugoff 64).

As Rugoff points out, Flanagan uses associations of passively endured pain not only sexually but also as a critique of the medical establishment, which requires docility and ignorance of its patients: "While making us rethink these socially condoned forms of masochism, as well as our complacent submission to authority, Flanagan underscores both the body's frailty and its amazing resilience" (Rugoff 64). His intertextual and self-referential treatment of pain creates a metalevel of simulation which makes it impossible to differentiate between realness of pain and its mere staging.

Pain on the Advance or The Glamour of the Flawed Body

40 With regard to the history of pain in body and performance art, it is important to note that even up to the 1960s, the mechanistic conception of pain as developed by René Descartes was the predominant one in medical theory. According to this view, pain was a symptomatic physiological reaction to some sort of disease and would disappear as soon as the disease itself was cured. Read against this foil, performance art including pain as a side-effect or as a major concern probably helped to explore the multidimensionality, semantic ambiguities as well as the genderization of pain at a time when pain was only just advancing to the status of a scientific object in its own right (Zell 56). The 1960s and 1970s celebrated and emphasized the body "as a social enactment of a subject who is particularized beyond norms and stereotypes" (Jones 198). As Amelia Jones has pointed out (see esp. 22-25), the 1980s saw a turn away from the body in mainstream art discourse, closely linked up with feminism's sceptical attitude towards potentially fetishizing effects of the male gaze. Only in the 1990s did a revival of body art take place - again in connection with a return of the body in theoretical discourse but furthered by a new interest in the politics of body/self representation.

41 However, in the wake of postmodern theories, the notion of the body in pain has been

fading or is gradually being replaced by a posthuman body which seems to know no pain (List 1999: 763). At the same time, it could be argued that the realness of the body and of pain has never been felt more acutely and is even absolutely vital to popular culture. A recent instance of pain used in a sensational way for purely commercial reasons is the recent promotion campaign "Body Craze" organized by the London department store Selfridges. Whether Stelarc's *Suspension Performances* were an inspiration to the artistes engaged for a show of brutal and perverse self-chastisement, which also involved the use of meat hooks (Knöfel 142), was not verifiable. Apart from the popular genres of horror and splatter movies, an interesting, concrete example of pain and disgust utilized in the media for sensational effects is the American TV show "Jackass" on MTV. Protagonist Johnny Knoxville and his team try out painful weapons for self-defence on themselves and invent absurd tasks such as crashing into heaps of garbage bins. Although the format has been severely criticized in the past for playing down the risks of self-harm and attracting imitators and is only allowed to be broadcast after 10 pm in Germany, it enjoys a dangerously growing popularity among youngsters (*Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, March 3rd, 2003).

42 More generally speaking, exposing one's own body to painful, sometimes even torturous procedures such as tattooing, cosmetic surgery, piercing or extreme forms of fitness training has become an integral part of Western leisure culture. A current tendency is the greed for the sensational and unheard-of, for adventure and limit experiences, which alone seem to be able to stimulate the senses in a satisfactory way and typically involve the body (e.g. in extreme kinds of sport), reckoning with pain or even death. To some extent, pain has thus become popularized. Another widespread but more serious painful phenomenon is self-harming behaviour (cutting, scratching, etc.), a form of addictive, post-traumatic autoaggression teenage girls are especially prone to. The definition provided in a newspaper article on the subject (*Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, *Moderne Zeiten*, May 11th/12th, 2002) lists cutting oneself with knives, razor blades or shards of glass, burning, scratching one's skin until open wounds develop, the tearing out of body hair, the regular opening of healing wounds, knocking one's head against hard surfaces and injuring one's genitals. While the relationship between body art proper and non-artistic body practices is difficult to determine, it is almost eerie to realise that practically all forms of psychopathological autoaggression have at some stage been presented as art in public performances.

43 As far as pain is concerned, it seems that on the whole, performative spectacles of cruelty have gone out of fashion because of their waning impact on an audience which has long grown accustomed to painful procedures of body styling. Obviously, it is no longer

sufficient to destroy the integrity of the human body in order to impress a contemporary art public. Instead, the new target both for body artists and for lifestyle aesthetes is the flawlessness of the body, which provides an effective foil for any blemishes body artists may choose to inflict on it. In a recent *Spiegel* article on the status of the body in present-day culture and art, Ulrike Knöfel cites the example of Swiss photo artist Daniele Buetti, who has specialized in tattooing female top models, using the emblems of famous fashion brands such as Dior, Gaultier or Chanel - albeit only on paper (140). What she leaves unmentioned is the political impact behind this, namely the criticism of an unscrupulous marketing of bodies and their visual appropriation by the media. Knöfel's view that nowadays pain in art figures in ways ever more glamorous and sterile and thereby distinguishes itself from the 1960s, "der Zeit der schmutzigen Körper-Aktionisten" (142) [the decade of messy body artists], proves to be right with respect to the highly stylish performances by artists such as Orlan. The risks taken in body art are no longer as extreme as they used to be in the beginning and live performances have ceased to dominate the scene. Instead, the medial shift of the 1990s has led to the current predominance of multimedia installations and photographic works, which, because of their lack of immediacy, allow the viewers to distance themselves from any painful experiences they witness.

44 The political impact of performance work revolving around painful experiences, however, remains crucial. Compared to performances of the 1960s and 1970s, recent body art is less an artistic innovation - since it continues a by now more or less established tradition - than a form of social and, more often than not, gender-related critique. This seems to be especially true for female-authored body art, which has always been more openly political, and it distinguishes performance art from the currently existing multitude of cultural practices involving pain. Representations of the body as technologized and as decidedly unnatural have opened up new venues within body art and helped to reformulate questions of gender. Comparisons between male and female icons of suffering, the confusion of gender and the critical engagement with notions of masculinity in recent body art seem to be a far step away from the misogyny and gynophobia which dominated its beginnings.

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The narrative of male violence on women's bodies

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Abstract:

The term narrative, according to the New Oxford English Dictionary means a 'written account of connected events.' With reference to male violence against women's bodies, it seems to me to be clear that women's bodies are the surface upon which male violence writes its narrative. While this is not an entirely new concept in the realms of feminist studies, it appears to have lost some of its force in the abstraction of much theoretical work and the notion that women allegedly have gained the equality second wave feminism focussed on. In order to deconstruct the many instances of violence against women's bodies, one needs to survey both the superficial level i.e. the one which we see clearly on a day to day basis, but also the more profound invisible structures that perpetuate male violence and leave the integrity of women's bodies constantly in danger of being violated.

1 On the 27 August 2003, while wondering how to start this article, I watched a programme on the German television channel 3SAT called "Thema." It deals with controversial and often highly politically or socially sensitive issues. A report by Andrea Puschel presented the case of a young woman asylum seeker whose grounds for leaving her home in Mali without knowledge of any of her family there, including her husband, were simply that she refused to allow her daughter to be mutilated. The pressure to conform to the traditional customs of her family line was so great that Ms Serubuga recounted how every day she lived in fear that her family would mutilate her daughter's genitals while she was at work. In the evening, she would return home and immediately strip her daughter naked to check that she was still intact. The family was adamant that a female child had to undergo this "minor" operation in order to have the chance of ever finding a husband, to free her from being obsessed with sex and to be loved by god. Ms Serubuga refused just as adamantly and fled with her daughter. Austria refused her appeal for asylum on the grounds that the Belgian visa she used to flee her country meant that only Belgium could process her request for asylum. However, Ms Serubuga's brother-in-law often visited Belgium on business and made it quite clear that he would find her and have the daughter mutilated by force. According to Ms Serubuga, this had already occurred with other women who had been in her position and were living in Belgium. Despite the assault being against Belgian law, the family ties and contacts there were sufficiently large to warrant that Ms Serubuga believed the threats. From the tenth century on in China, it was considered to be a sign of great status to mutilate women's feet by breaking female children's toes and then strapping them tightly with strips of cotton to maintain the feet at a size of three and a half inches. The practice continued up until the

1930s.¹ It is beyond my comprehension and the motivation for this article how any woman (or man) can condone any practice which will impair their daughter's or any female child's wholeness in the name of tradition especially when one analyses that tradition to be a male-defined one, as I will argue, which perpetuates the notion that the natural form of women's bodies needs to be altered for them to be acceptable as subjects.

2 The term narrative, according to the *New Oxford English Dictionary* means a "written account of connected events." With reference to male violence against women's bodies, it seems to me to be clear that women's bodies are the surface upon which male violence writes its narrative. While this is not an entirely new concept in the realms of feminist studies, it appears to have lost some of its force in the abstraction of much theoretical work and the notion that women allegedly have gained the equality second wave feminism focussed on. In order to deconstruct the many instances of violence against women's bodies, one needs to survey both the superficial level i.e. the one which we see clearly on a day to day basis, but also the more profound invisible structures that perpetuate male violence and leave the integrity of women's bodies constantly in danger of being violated. It is necessary to see women as individuals and to treat each and every violation as unacceptable.² It is a well-known strategy to make excuses for male violence against women most often by putting the blame on the woman as Marian Meyers's 1997 study of media reports on violence against women points out "all women who are the victims of violence - regardless of race or class - are represented within the news media as potentially to blame for their own victimization" (Meyers in Hammer, 2002: 144).

3 This makes it clear that the focus must remain firmly on the perpetrators to ensure that change will ever be successful. The media, she contends, present violence against women as isolated incidents, as

a matter of isolated pathology or deviance, related only to the particular circumstances of those involved and unconnected to the larger structure or patriarchal domination and control. This mirage of individual pathology denies the social roots of violence against women and relieves the larger society of any obligation to end it. (Ibid.: 145)

4 Astonishingly at first sight, much violation is perpetrated by women on their own bodies, or by women on other women's (or rather female children's) bodies. This is often used

¹ There is extensive information and links on Chinese foot binding and its history, with photographic evidence at <http://www.rotten.com/library/sex/foot-binding/>

² This is a similar approach to the "zero tolerance" campaign for example, implemented in Edinburgh to stop male violence against women and children. The motto of the poster campaign was simply "No Man Has The Right." This makes it clear that the absolute focus must remain on the roots of male violence, not only on the effects on women or the reasons for their behaviour. This is discussed extensively in Evelyn Gillan and Elaine Samson's chapter (19) in Hammer, Jalna et al. 2000

to substantiate the argument that it is not in fact male violence at all. On closer inspection, however, this view is revealed to be vacuous as will be shown below. Violence committed by women on their own bodies illustrates the vast power that male-defined expectations of femininity, which have become social imperatives, exerts on women. Pierre Bourdieu (2001) discusses these forces and restrictions on women's bodies and their behaviour illustrating exactly how even the body space that is allotted them is restricted:

This symbolic *confinement* is secured practically by their (women's) clothing which (as was even more visible in former times) has the effect not only of masking the body but of continuously calling it to order [...] without ever needing to prescribe or proscribe anything explicitly [...] either because it constrains movement in various ways, like high heels or the bag which constantly encumbers the hands, and above all the skirt which prevents or hinders certain activities (running, various ways of sitting, etc.), or because it allows them only at the cost of constant precautions, as with young women who constantly pull at a too-short skirt, use their forearms to cover a plunging neckline or have to perform acrobatics to pick up an object while keeping their legs together. (Bourdieu, 2001: 28-9)

5 These daily restrictions can be considered the milder form of control of women's bodies that can in some circumstances, however, also lead to major violations. One need only consider the defence lawyer's use of the term *provocative clothing* for a justification for rape or sexual assault. By wearing a short skirt or plunging neckline the woman is commonly considered to have *asked for it*, on the other hand the same short skirt and high heels prevent her from escaping from the perpetrator. Instances of violation without male assistance such as eating disorders, self-starvation and the removal of body hair by waxing serve only to highlight the array of measures expected of women to create the illusion "woman" and to exert constant control over her. More severe forms of violence such as self-harming reflect more severe causes.

6 The skin is the body's largest organ; a constant source of great pleasure, but also a site of the most extreme pain. Even the smallest paper cut on the tip of the index finger can constitute a source of great pain to a cellist, while the carving of deep gashes in one's own arm constitutes relief to a woman who self-harms. Jane Kilby's article "Carved in skin" illustrates how the skin becomes a "deeply eloquent form of testimony" (124) for women who have been so traumatised on the whole due to violence against them as children that there are no words to express their pain. They use their skin as a means of speaking their pain and this, Kilby contends, is the reading we must give it:

The cutting of skin is thus a way of speaking the past by re-enacting it with a difference: matching pain for trauma.....It is a language that communicates the real of past trauma by rendering it more real through a repetition of pain. Arguably, there is a sense in which the pain expressed by cutting one's own skin is, albeit belatedly, the

trauma of past violation. (Kilby in Ahmed: 125)

She highlights the dangers that this implies for self-harmers as they withdraw from language and she shows how Judith Butler's argument that subjects who speak impossibly are no longer given validity as subjects and may end up incarcerated in psychiatric institutions can often be applied to them. Citing the experiences of Louise Pembroke and others,³ she shows the self-harmer's encounter with the medical profession as one of a lack of understanding and the inability to "read" the testimony of cut skin. They are considered "time-wasters" or "attention-seekers" and deemed pathological. This illustrates two problematic points: first of all, the self-harmer is not taken seriously as a person in need of someone who reads their cuts as testimony of past trauma and therefore, she is compelled to constantly repeat the action only to be injured again and again both physically by their own cuts and psychologically by the reproach of the unsympathetic carer. Secondly, the self-harmer is chastised for seeking attention as though it were inappropriate that she do so. These attitudes reflect the bias of underlying patriarchal power mechanisms which constantly reinforce the notion that a woman's role is of one who should put up her lot without complaint, and most certainly as one who is probably to blame for that lot in any case. From a rational perspective, it is understandable that women who have had their bodies violated by men turn the trauma and pain against themselves because, not only have they been socialised to do so, but in the wider social and especially legal context, men are persistently exonerated from responsibility. In the majority of cases of sexual violation or physical violence, there are no witnesses and no chance of retribution or justice for the victims. Kilby cites Pembroke as offering one way out for the self-harmer namely that the reader will respond to the act of self-harm with the speech act: "I hear you" (Kilby in Ahmed, 139).

7 When women perpetuate violence on other women's (or their female children's) bodies, the fact that it happens between members of the same sex is used to imply that it is not connected to males in any way. In the case of clitoridectomy, this is not the case. Using this term in itself constitutes an abstraction and a move away from the true horror of female genital mutilation. A similar example is the term *domestic violence* where there is no clear association with what the term means,⁴ who commits the violence and why. The reality of the

³ Louise Pembroke's detailed accounts of her treatment by doctors and nurses illustrates the complete lack of sympathy with the violation trauma that she must have experienced to feel the need to self-harm, but also reflects a certain unsympathetic social attitude towards this practice reminiscent of attitudes towards women who return to battering male partners.

⁴ Many researchers in the area of violence against women take exception to the non gendered terms "intimate partner violence", "spouse abuse", "marital aggression" and "domestic violence" (Jones in Hammer, 2000:136) on the very grounds that they veil the true perpetrators by implying this kind of violence is unrelated to gender.

violence on the women's bodies is thus sterilised in a pseudo medical term which implies either an illness or a necessity, a procedure sanitised by science given social justification. At the same time however, it also reveals that the forces that underlie the perpetuation of this violation are rooted in male-defined culture. Just as the medical profession is an institution of male power which determines definitions of sick and healthy, rational and irrational, the arguments supporting this mutilation are clearly justified by a patriarchal culture where men decide on what place women may have in their culture. Firstly, as Ms Serubuga pointed out, the "operation" is deemed necessary to prevent the woman from becoming possessed by sex reflecting a male-defined cultural image of women as allegedly "naturally" promiscuous and used to justify male control of their sexuality. Secondly, it is allegedly necessary to ensure her marriageability, which is based on the idea that a woman cannot be married or rather that a man will not choose her if she is not mutilated. This presumes that a woman of this culture has no other role in life than to become a man's wife. Her body must be moulded or in this case mutilated to please a potential husband. Her genitals are not her own to enjoy, but solely seen as excess skin and therefore cut off. She is deprived of any other choice of identity and furthermore, the social structure itself silences the possibility that there may be lesbian women in the culture who would perhaps choose not to marry. This rigidity reflects the patriarchal vision of womanhood as motherhood and wifehood and again reflects alleged "natural" roles for women based on dubious biological essentialism.

8 There are of course other problems involved in this criticism of female genital mutilation (FGM). From a global perspective, there are two main viewpoints. The first sees FGM as a human rights issue whereby female children are mutilated in horrendous circumstances with no anaesthetic, unsterilised knives, pieces of sharpened glass or rusty razors. The child is held down and in the worst cases her clitoris and labia are carved out and the wound is sewn together leaving only a pinhole-sized hole for urination and menstruation (infibulation). This can result in haemorrhaging, infection, abscesses around the wound, septicaemia, tetanus and urinary tract infections and even exsanguination resulting in the child's death. When the woman then marries and wishes to have a child, penetration causes unspeakable pain to her since the vaginal opening is so small. In childbirth, this needs to be cut open and in many cases Caesarean delivery is necessary.⁵ The highest rate of maternal

Hammer also cites bell hooks' use of the term "patriarchal violence" which "continually reminds the listener that violence in the home is connected to sexism and sexist thinking, to male domination" (hooks in Hammer, 136).

⁵ There are extensive accounts both statistical and personal on the horrors of these practises and enough research to illustrate that it endangers women's lives in for example Ndubuisi Eke's article "Female genital mutilation: what can be done?" in *The Lancet*, December 2000: 356 and the website: <http://www.umke.edu/sites/hsw/sexabuse/mutilation.html>

mortality is in the countries which practise FGM.⁶ The practice allegedly dates back to the Pharaohs justifying its continuation as part of ancient traditions and yet the practice of slavery or other inhuman acts committed in this period are not considered worthy of upkeep. If a community in England chose to revitalise the practice of ducking women suspected of being witches whereby some of them drowned (therefore being proven innocent), I wonder if there would be any discussion about whether this were a cultural tradition that had to be maintained to secure culture integrity?

9 This leads to the second perspective on this issue which propounds the maintenance of cultural differences. With the vast spread of information technology and Western cultural values, it is understandable that minority cultures resist being consumed into one global culture dictated by the West. For women, however, this often means a return to so-called traditional values which place them again in the role of a second-class citizen who does not enjoy the same rights and privileges as men. Renata Salecl's article "Cut in the body. From Clitoridectomy to body art" (Salecl in Ahmed, 2000) adds another element to the view of FGM as the maintenance of "ancient traditions" which define a culture by interpreting this as "a way in which the contemporary subject deals with the deadlocks and antagonisms of so-called post-modern society" (Ibid.: 21) and compares it to the widespread fashion of tattooing and piercing. Salecl contends that women from the ethnic groups which practise FGM are trying to ensure through this "initiation" the survival of their culture. In a psychoanalytical analysis, she sees them as subjects who are attempting to "find some stability in today's disintegrating social universe" (Ibid.: 24). She sees the *mark* (my emphasis) or cut on the body as the post-modern "subject's answer to the nonexistence of the big Other" (Ibid.: 25). Using Freud's notion of "shyness" and Lacan's notion of "lack" to explain why FGM should be viewed as respecting women by initiating them as adult members of the community, giving them a secure identity as women and thus according them honour seem to offer only a further abstraction away from the fact that real women's (in most cases children's) bodies are being brutally violated. Moreover, the arguments Salecl lists as an explanation of the reasons justifying this practice are not clearly criticised at any point. Rather, she asks, "[w]hat role does clitoridectomy play in the formation of women's sexual identity and how essential is this ritual for transmission of sexual norms from generation to generation?" (Ibid.: 22).

10 She, too, seems to be duped by the concept that it is still acceptable that heterosexuality be propagated as *the* norm and mutilating women's bodies to ensure they can marry (men) is the only option which these ethnic groups should offer their women members.

⁶ <http://www.umke.edu/sites/hsw/sexabuse/mutilation.html>

This surely constitutes cultural stagnation and a regression to principles which perpetuate women's inequality. Amnesty International point out the clear gender stratification that is introduced with this so-called initiation veiled under the auspices of respect and honour:

FGM is rooted in a culture of discrimination against women. It is a human rights abuse that functions as an instrument for socializing girls into prescribed gender roles within the family and community. It is therefore intimately linked to the unequal position of women in the political, social, and economic structures of societies where it is practiced.⁷

11 Compulsory heterosexuality is taken for granted and the notion that a woman should have the right to choose her sexual identity and what choices she would like to offer her daughters, should she have any, are subsumed under the assumption that no alternatives exist but the ancient traditional ones. All of the cultural arguments favouring this practice rely on the antiquated male-defined expectations of women's roles and power structures which ostracize women who resist the practice, as well as subjecting them to immense pressure, sometimes using force, to conform. The dilemma the women face is excommunication from the culture they are embedded in or subjecting themselves to this barbarity. When female children are subjected to FGM they are denied any choice about their sexual identity and if infibulation is practised, they will never know the particularly female body's potential for pleasure from the clitoris which has been robbed from them. Salecl describes the dilemma of seeing an educated woman who knows of the violent nature of FGM and still insists on undergoing the procedure, which one can empathise with, however what she does not point out is that FGM is practised on children, not fully grown adult women. In *The Whole Woman*, Germaine Greer also approaches this topic and comments on how because women have been mutilated, it does not necessarily mean that they do not have any sexual pleasure. Further, she notes the fact that despite its criminalisation, FGM is still seen as the most significant initiation from child to woman and these cultures still need some kind of initiation rite. Like Salecl, however, Greer does not point out that as with foot binding, these practices serve male structures and do not help maintain the *whole* woman. Simply because mutilation of women's and girls' bodies occurs in Western cultures too, for example as standard paediatric policy in the USA where "clitorises of more than three-eighths of an inch in length should be removed from baby girls before they are fifteen months old" (Greer, 94), does not mean it is justifiable. A woman who chooses this freely as an adult could be compared to a woman who practises self-torture in the name of body art or one who chooses to undergo cosmetic surgery, but it seems to me that there is a huge gap in the question of what truly constitutes choice when

⁷ This and other information can be found on the Amnesty International website: [http://www.amnestyusa.org/women/fact sheets/female genital mutilation.html](http://www.amnestyusa.org/women/fact%20sheets/female%20genital%20mutilation.html)

applied to these practices when so much social recognition or integration relies on them.

12 Violence on women's bodies perpetrated directly by men can be seen in the huge rise in hysterectomies, episiotomies and cosmetic surgery. While I am aware that there are female surgeons who do these procedures, the overwhelming number of doctors is still male and the whole institution of medicine and medical philosophy is similarly male-biased.⁸ The reasons for this lie in the manifold power mechanisms which make up the fabric of our patriarchal society. Germaine Greer points out that hysterectomies are all too often prescribed for heavy periods and some 90% of referrals are reported to be unjustified: "In the United States a third of all women will have had their wombs removed by the time they are sixty. One-fifth of women in England and Wales will have had a hysterectomy by age sixty-five" (Greer, 104).

13 The womb, it appears is seen as having no other function than to produce children and if this is not desired, the attitude appears to be simply to cut it out. It begs the question of why male testicles are not removed just as precipitously if a man does not wish to or in fact is not able to have children?

14 Episiotomies are seen as making childbirth easier for the "male" obstetrician attending who is oblivious to idea of the often long-lasting post-partum pain he may be inflicting. It is a cut in the perineum which is in most cases completely unnecessary. Midwives consider a successful birth to be one where the woman who bears the child is left intact. The increasing adherence to prescriptive policies in obstetrics means that women are no longer seen as individuals who need differing amounts of time to deliver their babies. A time limit is set for labour and if the woman does not react according to this limit, medical intervention is often the result. This means the woman is divorced from any natural time for birthing and slotted into the hospital's imperative. If she then responds with anxiety, a hindrance to the progress of labour, even more intervention is seen to be needed. This is an inherent part of the institution of medicine which deems the patients the "objects" of the doctor-patient relationship in that the doctor constitutes the agent/subject with an object of study. When that "object" is a pregnant woman, she is considered incapable of full subjective autonomy, that is, the ability to make informed rational choices. The number of forced Caesarean sections made on the basis that a woman who decides to act in defiance of doctors' instructions must be considered irrational is striking. When the mother's interests conflict with those of the foetus, she is often disregarded as the one who may make a decision about her own body. Many courts in both Great Britain and the USA "have intervened to order women, regardless of lack of consent, to undergo Caesarean sections when that is medically indicated for the well-being of the

⁸ Magrit Shildrick discusses the philosophy and ethics of medical practice and how they exhibit bias against women's bodies in *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries*.

prospective neonate" (Shildrick, 1997: 202). The gender bias regarding the rights and autonomy of the individual that becomes apparent in such circumstances are revealed especially poignantly in two cases where it was deemed unethical to force a father to donate a kidney to his dying child: "To compel the defendant to submit to an intrusion of his body would change every concept and principle upon which our society is founded,' the judge wrote in one such decision. 'To do so, would defeat the sanctity of the individual'" (Faludi, 1991:432).

15 Cosmetic surgery battles to achieve the perfect object of male desire.⁹ Most cosmetic surgery is enacted on women's bodies by men. Women are cut open and remodelled to try to adapt to an idea of femininity dictated by dominant cultural discourse. Although women seem to be acting of their own free will, it is clear that the complex weave of power mechanisms in social discourses lead them to subject themselves to the narrative of male violence on their bodies. Foucault (1990) pointed out how power relations inform social discourses in which subjects are constituted and how force relations discipline their bodies.¹⁰ Using Bentham's notion of the *Panopticon*, he shows how individuals monitor their own behaviour. For women, this means that they grow up in the knowledge of what is expected of them as women, transmitted with the aid of constant monitoring through thousands of images of the "ideal" woman, regulatory behaviour from parents or through language itself, and they try to conform to these expectations. In order to become an accepted member of their social environment, they must at least create the illusion of "woman"; which Judith Butler (1990) termed "performativity", meaning that women *perform* womanhood and femininity. They create and recreate an arbitrary image of what it means to be a woman. This image is defined by the cultures women are born into and as subjects they must conform to the given image in order to recognise themselves as the respectively gendered subjects. What is unfortunate and detrimental for women is that they encounter restrictions on their bodies and more importantly violence simply on the basis of their sex. The truly *natural* development of their bodies is violated at every juncture in their development and as Greer points out, as an individual, she is still equated with her body:

Every woman knows that, regardless of all her other achievements, she is a failure if she is not beautiful. She also knows that whatever beauty she has is leaving her, stealthily, day by day. Even if she is freakishly beautiful as the supermodels whose images she sees replicated all around her until they are more familiar than the features

⁹ It is clear that there are many cases of necessity for hysterectomy for example cancer, or episiotomy if, very rarely, there is a medical emergency and the child has to be born without delay, or cosmetic surgery for accident victims, reconstructive breast surgery after mastectomy and similar cases. It must be stressed, however, that these cases do not constitute the largest percentage in the statistics (Greer, 100-5).

¹⁰ See also Bourdieu, 2001

of her own mother, she cannot be beautiful enough. There must be bits of her that will not do, her knees, her feet, her buttocks, her breasts. Even if all these are fine and flawless, she knows that within she has guts full of decomposing food; she has a vagina that smells and bleeds. She is human, not a goddess or an angel (Greer, 1999:19).

6 Germaine Greer's damning representation of the struggles women face in their male-defined societies brings the narrative back to Ms Serubuga and her resistance against the power structures that would have her mutilate her daughter's body. It seems to me that resistance can only come in this form. One individual woman making an individual decision to keep the body of her daughter intact. The underlying structures in societies which perpetuate this violence against women's bodies, whether it be socializing young girls into believing there is no voice for their trauma but cutting their own bodies, persuading older women that they do not need a womb if it is not producing children, terrorizing pregnant women into believing they can only deliver their babies with the intervention of doctors, or teaching generation after generation of girls and women that purely by the fact that they are female, that they are in some way deficient and in need of the cosmetic surgeons' scalpel for repair or that they are to blame for any male violence committed against them. These are old criticisms, but Ms Serubuga's tale of the threats of her family make it apparent that just as there may be a resurgence of traditional ideas about the *value* of FGM, there must also be a resounding condemnation of any practice that serves to uphold power structures which sanction male violence against women's bodies.

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**"One of my missions as a playwright is to let the witches and the magic
back in." An interview with Diane Samuels**

By Andrea Birk and Tina Wald, University of Cologne, Germany

Diane Samuels was born in Liverpool in 1960 and now lives with her husband, journalist and author Simon Garfield, and their two sons in north London. She worked as a drama teacher in inner London secondary schools and then as an education officer at the Unicorn Theatre for children before becoming a full time writer in 1992. Since then she has written extensively for theatre (adults and children) and radio.

Her work for the theatre includes: *The Life and Death of Bessie Smith* (Lloyds Bank Young Theatre Challenge, 1989, Royal National Theatre); *Frankie's Monster* (adapted from Vivien Alcock's novel *The Monster Garden*, Unicorn Theatre, 1991. Published by Heinemann.); *Chalk Circle* (Unicorn Theatre, 1991); *Salt of the Earth* (Theatre Centre, 1993); *The Bonekeeper* (Tricycle Youth Theatre, short-listed for the W. H. Smith Awards for plays for children, 1992); *Watch Out for Mister Stork* (one-act play, Soho Theatre Company's Writers' Festival, 1992, and Finborough Theatre, 1995; Regents Park Open Air Theatre, August 1995); *Kindertransport* (co-winner of the 1992 Verity Bargate Award, winner of 1993 Meyer Whitworth Award. Produced by Soho Theatre Company at the Cockpit, 1993; at the Palace Theatre, Watford with Diana Quick and Jean Boht, transferring to the Vaudeville Theatre, West End, 1996. Also, Manhattan Theater Club, New York, 1994. Other productions throughout the USA, also Sweden, Japan, Germany, Austria, Canada and South Africa. Published in Britain by Nick Hern Books and in the USA by Plume/Penguin); *Turncoat* (Theatre Centre national tour, 1994); *How To Beat A Giant* (SNAP People's Theatre Trust, 1995); *One Hundred Million Footsteps*, (Quicksilver Theatre Company national tours, spring and autumn 1997); *Forever and Ever* (SNAP People's Theatre Trust, 1998); *The True Life Fiction of Mata Hari*, Palace Theatre, Watford starring Greta Scacchi, 2002.

Her work for BBC radio includes: *Two Together?* (Radio 4, 1993); *Frankie's Monster* (Radio 5 adaptation of her stage play, 1992); *Watch Out For Mister Stork* (Radio 4, 1994); *Kindertransport* (Radio 4, Monday Play, November 1995); *Swine* (Radio 4, Monday Play, July 1996). *Hardly Cinderella* (Radio 4, Saturday Playhouse, March 1997); *Doctor Y* (Radio 4, Monday Play, May 1997); *Hen Party* (Radio 4, Nov 2001). Her short story, *Rope* was chosen as one of the winners in Radio 4's 2001 DotDotDot online short story competition for

broadcast in early 2002.

Diane has recently written *Mrs Gorsky* about an American mother, housewife and communist spy for Birmingham Rep Theatre. She was awarded a Science on Stage and Screen Award by the Wellcome Trust in 2001 to undertake an experimental collaboration with 3 medical specialists, playwright Sarah Woods, visual artist Alexa Wright and performer Catherine Long to make an innovative piece of documentary, visual theatre about the nature of pain. The resulting work, *PUSH*, was showcased at The People Show Studios in London in June 2003. She is currently writing a new play for the Unicorn Theatre about Narcissus and completing her novel *Cinderella's Daughter*.

She also tutors playwriting for young people as part of the Theatre Royal, Haymarket's Masterclass scheme, has lectured part-time at Middlesex University, Oxford University and Birmingham University on writing and drama, has been working as a writer-in-residence at Hugh Myddelton Primary school in Islington, north London and writes children's book reviews for *The Guardian*

Diane Samuels on Kindertransport and British-Jewish Writing

Andrea Birk and Tina Wald: Your play *Kindertransport* that deals with issues of Jewish-British identity is your most well-known play and is often mentioned in the context of British-Jewish women writers. Since 1990 British-Jewish literature and culture has become more visible in Britain than before. Brian Cheyette has spoken of a "rise of British-Jewish literature", which is not only reflected by the growing number of authors who have written on the topic but also by conferences that dealt with questions of British-Jewish culture.

In her study *The War After* Ann Karpf has shown how different the climate was in earlier decades, when there was a more hostile environment in Britain. Karpf argued that there was and often still is a tendency among British Jews to keep a low profile due to their fear that expressing their Jewishness too prominently might inspire anti-Semitism. Do you agree with this analysis?

Diane Samuels: That's true. I think it's subtle. But it is definitely the way Jews are in this country.

My experience of being Jewish is a little bit different because I grew up in a community in Liverpool. Liverpool is an interesting place, it is a melting pot community and it's not

particularly indicative of what England is generally like. It's an immigrant culture. The Jewish community in Liverpool mostly came from the late 19th century and early 20th; those Jews came over from Eastern Europe. It was like growing up in a *stetl*, in an English version of the *stetles*. So, when I read Isaac Bashevis Singer, I was astonished because my community operated more like the communities he was describing in Poland than like I think most English communities are.

It was a very contained community. I went to a Jewish nursery school, and I went to a Jewish primary school, I went to a Jewish secondary school, I went to a Jewish youth club. And the strange thing about my Jewish schools was they did take non-Jewish students because they were state funded schools. They took non-Jewish students, but somehow we still didn't really mix with them. And I really can say that I hardly knew any non-Jews, they were on the periphery. I didn't really know any as friends until I left home at eighteen. I grew up in England and all my community, everyone I knew, that was all Jews. So, I don't have a representative English-Jewish experience, I have a very Jewish experience. And because of that I am much less being bothered about being out-Jewish than most English Jews who've grown up in a more integrated context. I went to Cambridge and talked very loudly about kosher and this and that in my college. And other Jews who come from more integrated families would go, "oh god, shut up," because I didn't really care, it didn't bother me. And I had been told raise your head, be proud to be Jewish. Everywhere I went with Jews, is Jewish. Jewish life and culture and the ways Jews do things was part of and fabric of my everyday life everywhere I went really.

AB and TW: British-Jewish writers have increasingly written about the latent anti-Semitism in Britain. As you have not kept a low profile, have you ever encountered anti-Semitism?

DS: On a very subtle level all the time. In a similar way I experience misogyny as a woman. And it's not, it's not really intrusive or nasty, but it's there and it is about where power lies in the culture and where your experience of the world fits in with the model that's generally acknowledged as the dominant model and how it is not the same. I mean when I was at school we'd sometimes get kids paint swastikas on the walls or something. And I grew up with a high level of security. When you think about it, it's quite shocking, because security is on everything. My oldest son goes to a Jewish school and I went there this morning to drop something off and it's so fortified because they have to protect themselves. I don't like that. But that's what it is like. It is a Jewish school and it does have a strong Zionist ethos even

now. But it is because it is a Jewish school and not because it is anything to do with Israel or Zionism that it's under threat. So, the threat comes from elsewhere now I suppose.

I think where Jewish students feel most embattled at university now in this country is around Israel and Zionism. It is not around being Jewish as much. But it gets shifted into. The line is very blurred between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. It is a very shady area. So, I think some people are just glad of an opportunity to be able to validly attack Jews. I don't think they even know that that is what they do either, quite a lot of it is unconscious.

AB and TW: Anne Karpf has argued that your play *Kindertransport* marks a turning point in dealing with Jewishness in Britain: "Until very recently, the second generation of both survivors and refugees has followed in the footsteps of the first - deferential, mute, acutely sensitive to the British culture of embarrassment [...], so perhaps it's not surprising that the psychosocial effects of the Holocaust only really came into public view with Diane Samuels's recent *Kindertransport*" (245).^{<fn>Anne Karpf. *The War After. Living with the Holocaust*. London: Heinemann 1996.</fn>}

Do you think that the success of *Kindertransport* was connected with a growing readiness within British society in the 1990s to consider the traumatising of the second generation of the Holocaust victims?

Read more about [Kindertransport](#)

DS: I think that it probably starts with the Kinder, the readiness of the Kinder themselves to acknowledge their histories. And I think it follows from there. The father of a friend of mine was on the Kindertransport, which is how I heard about it. And I heard about it around the time of the fifty-year-reunion in 1989. The organisation was set up by this woman Bertha Leverton in this country to bring everyone together and have a celebration. And this organisation hadn't really existed before that, it arose out of this anniversary. So the Kinder themselves had gone for fifty years without really acknowledging themselves as Kinder particularly. I mean some of them were members of the *Association of Jewish Refugees*, which obviously covered a broader area. It has something to do with time passing. It is something about when you get to a certain age in your life you get more in touch with other ages in your life. So, I found, I'm in my early forties now, that the age myself and a lot of my contemporaries get really into from their late thirties and into their forties is their adolescence. I have just been invited to a friend's fortieth birthday and he has said in the invite: "Party like you're fourteen." It's quite interesting you get really back in touch with when you were that

age and you really want to go back there. And I think the age that you go back to when you're in your fifties is your childhood. And so it is when the Kinder reached that age they were psychologically in the place to go back. And I think they started it. But I think the reason most British people were interested in the play was because it is about mothers and daughters not because it is about Jewish experience.

AB and TW: The play even goes a bit further and shows the traumatisation of the next generation, for example Evelyn's sense of guilt is transmitted to her daughter Faith. Do you think that talking about the personal past rather than repressing it, like Evelyn did, might stop this passing on of trauma? Or do you think that it even leads to reinforcement, to a verbal traumatisation of the children's generation?

DS: I think it is really interesting how one deals with one's trauma and other's and the effect of it. I was really interested in the relationship between one person suffering and how other people relate to that, and how we relate to each other's sufferings. And it's very interesting, there are two models of survivors or children of survivors. There are the ones who talk about it endlessly, which I guess is what you are getting at, and there's the ones who wouldn't talk about it at all. And it seems to me that both are traumatised. It's not about just talking about it, it's about dealing with something, and it's about facing something, and you don't have to talk a lot. One can do this through maybe creative arts or music. I think there is something one has to deal with and there are different ways one can deal with it. If you present your story to your child and then there's a whole other story which you will not tell, I think that is what I call incongruent behaviour, things are not fitting. So the child is picking up the undercurrent and yet is being told something else. And I think therein lies real damage and that it's very debilitating for a person to be raised like this. And it could be on many levels about many different issues. But I think this is something about being congruent with your children, being honest about things. How does one do that without laying it on them overtly? I think there is a lot of emotional work that people need to do. And one has to make a commitment to do emotional work, one has to take on board some very difficult things. I think therapy is one way. I think creative arts can be another way. But I think you have to make a commitment to do emotional work. Some people might do it through religion. I think it is very difficult dealing with trauma. I think it is dealable with, but you got to be very brave and you got to make a real commitment to do it. And I think maybe my generation is more willing to do that work than my parents' generation.

AB and TW: What do you think is the merit in writing fictionally about the Kindertransport rather than dealing with it in a more documentary way, for example as the film *Into the Arms of Strangers* did?

DS: Well I'm not writing about the Kindertransport. I'm using the Kindertransport as a metaphor for something else. What the play is about is separation. It's about separation between mothers and daughters, it's partly about the secrets of trauma and abuse within families. In my family the secret trauma and abuse is sexual abuse. So the play is partly about that. And the Kindertransport is merely a metaphor. So don't believe what you see on the surface.

AB and TW: You said people in Britain were interested in Kindertransport because it is about mothers and daughters and as you could see we were more focusing on the Kindertransport aspect. Do you think there is a cultural difference?

DS: Yeah. I'd never been to Germany before when I went there. And I was a bit nervous; my husband's parents were actually German Jews. They obviously had very ambivalent feelings about going back to Germany. And I was raised in a community where we didn't buy German products for many years. And, those are the prejudices and slight fear and I thought I'm gonna go there and look at people of a certain generation thinking, "well, what did you do?" And I found it the absolute opposite. I was really amazed. I know that it was a very particular department, context, but I thought, "god, here are people very interested in Jewish life, who're really aware of Jewish experience, who've made a real effort to understand it," and found Germans much more enlightened than anyone I'd ever met in England who wasn't Jewish. And you knew far more than your average English, intelligent, educated English person who knows about Jewish life. And I found that quite remarkable. Of my experience of Germans and Germany, I think a huge amount of really good work has been done in Germany around what happened during the war and about German history and the relationship. And I had a fantastic talk with one of the students at Mainz about how we'd both learned about the Holocaust. And I had gone to a Jewish school in Liverpool and he'd gone to a state school in Germany and we talked about both being let into this room and shown footage of concentration camps. And he had been prepared for it and talked about it beforehand. I hadn't! I mean it was done very crassly at my school. We were just shown this traumatic footage and

then sent off to lunch. And we were all sobbing our hearts out. And we talked about how we'd both been crying, but coming at it from different ends of the spectrum. That, I suppose, I had identified with the victims and he had identified with the perpetrator, made us both cry because it was so awful. And I've never had this conversation ever with an English person of his age, they don't even know. So, I think actually something happened. I think when something appalling happens like the Holocaust if you do the work afterwards to deal with the experience, then what coming out of it is actually the antithesis of what happened which is a deeper sense of humanity, a greater human engagement with otherness. And I was very moved by that. So I think in some bizarre way I feel more at home around Germans around these issues than around British people. Isn't that weird? I believe that emotional work can be done no matter how awful what may have happened. I don't think humanity is ever lost. I know Germany isn't that paradise. But I think that work has been done as well there. I went to see *The Pianist*. And the question I had was the depiction of the Germans in the film. I think to show people as just brutal bastards isn't good enough anymore. I want to understand why people, anyone, can do that. I mean the Americans do it in Iraq now, don't they? They could be portrayed in that light actually. And I'm interested in what it is that enables human beings to be like that and I think you must be very careful about portraying anyone in that way in art. A friend of mine wrote a book called *Gaglow*, her name is Esther Freud. What she shows is the shame and the humiliation and suffering that Germans experienced during the first World War, particularly the end of the war. And how absolutely damaged, and defeated, and sucked dry, and ground down the whole country was. And you could see how people were shamed, and humiliated, and reduced. And it makes the rise of Nazism much more understandable as reaction against that, as a way of trying to survive. I think we need to keep going looking backwards, getting a bigger perspective, instead of just going, "all Nazis were bastards". It's not good enough for us as human beings to do this labelling. When people now say as in justification of war, "well, of course if we hadn't fought Nazism... that's an honest and just war; that shows that war is worthwhile." Well you can say, "yes, but if it hadn't been for the first World War, there wouldn't have been Nazism." So, war caused that. So, you go back and back and back and it's always war causing war.

Diane Samuels on links between her plays *Kindertransport*, *The True-Life Fiction of Mata Hari* and *Mrs Gorsky*

AB and TW: There seem to be thematic connections between your plays, as they all deal with motherhood, with a secret in the past that haunts the present and with persecution. The

latter features associate the plays with the Gothic genre, creating suspense and a somewhat gloomy atmosphere within the plays.

Would you like to tell us something more about this secret that lies in the past and haunts the present? I mean you've said that you don't think the Holocaust is the haunting secret in *Kindertransport*.

DS: It was never a secret in my life. It was always pretty much out there to be honest. What is the big secret in Jewish communities is the levels of sexual abuse that goes on. I've not begun to really write about this, so... I don't know, is the ultimate sexual abuse circumcision? I think it is a pretty appalling thing to do. And it's a ritualised form of child abuse that goes on in the Jewish community quite openly. I think a very damaging and very difficult thing. And it is not owned at all as a damaging and difficult thing. And then there's all these secrets and I don't know if most people would even acknowledge what they are. My aunt talked very badly of her grandfather, whereas my father loved him. He was a dirty old man, he used to feel up all his granddaughters. So I think there are all sorts of issues around sexuality and I think what is very interesting about *Kindertransport* is that it is such an asexual play. And, you know, my later writing has become more and more sexy. Why do I write such an asexual play? It's an interesting question. And I think there are sexual issues but they are a huge undercurrent in the play, very repressed. It's hinted at and it's suggested, in the shadows. And I think my writing as it is evolving now is coming more and more and more out into the open, what that is all about. So, it's hidden in the play.

AB and TW: What I think is interesting though when we talk about Gothic that in the other two plays, in *Mata Hari* and *Mrs Gorsky*, is that there is the closet and the cupboard and all these motifs linked to a secret. At the end of each play that the audience has the feeling that there is something withheld, something that is not disclosed about the relationships between the people in the play.

Read more about [Mata Hari](#) and [Mrs Gorsky](#)

DS: I suppose it is something about wanting the audience have to go into that place of mystery. And it's a dangerous territory to work with as a writer because it might be that they'll just feel lost. Or they'll feel a bit dissatisfied. I feel like you've got to develop the craft or the skill to take them into this place and for them to feel it's rich and it's interesting, and let their imaginations go. When at the end of *Mrs Gorsky* they meet in jail, it's such a moving scene

when it's done, when you've seen the whole play. It's so moving because it all comes out into the open actually. They just stand there looking at each other in this jail and they dream of the lake together and they go to the lake together actually. And I think that is an amazing thing to do. I was told once in my research for that play that there's one guy, a political prisoner who is involved in the Black Panthers, who was put in jail somewhere in California and he practised transcendental meditation so he could go anywhere he wanted in the world. And he would travel all over the place. I thought that was fascinating. So I wanted that moment in the play.

AB and TW: The motif of persecution is in all of your plays, but on very different levels, in very different ways. Whereas Evelyn feels persecuted by her past that is embodied in the ratcatcher figure, Rosa is under surveillance by an imaginary FBI agent and Mata Hari is persecuted as a spy, but in addition also by her self-created myth.

DS: Yes. Well I was very interested in *Mrs Gorsky* in looking at how this, the 'Land of the Brave and Free,' has become a land in which the second biggest money spender is the prison system. It's the biggest growing growth sector in the economy after the military. It's huge in America, it's big business and it's growing rapidly. What's that about? Land of the free? I think actually that a lot of the paranoia that we see prevalent now about Muslims and terrorists it's rooted in this fear of communism that comes from the second half of the 20th century. And I think to understand the way Americans are now behaving you need to understand that. All these structures were set up around this fear of communism. And the way Rosa is treated is a real model.

AB and TW: We had the impression that in all of the plays motherhood plays an important role. And that Rosa decides for a low-profile life as a mother of five children and Mata Hari, on the other hand, leaves her children to pursue her career as well as her sexual interests. Would you agree that Rosa, Mata Hari, and Helga, who sends her daughter away to have a chance to live, are complementary figures concerning their decisions as mothers?

DS: Motherhood is a fascinating thing for women. All women have to deal with it if they're mothers or not, because they're all daughters. Anyway, so they have mothers, even if they don't know them, they have to deal with the issue of motherhood. And whether or not a woman becomes mother, is a huge feature of her identity. She chooses not to or is unable to become a mother or does become a mother. Rosa, Helga and Mata Hari are all different sides

of what being a mother is. Yes. That's interesting, they all link in. I'm very interested in this huge challenge that women have of dealing with being mothers and being good mothers. And leading their own lives and being artists, and being politically active. I mean Rosa is a passionate political fighter. She's a zealot, she wants to fight in the world. Ironically she ends up being a housewife. And that sort of attracted me to that story in the beginning. It is like the state has forced this role upon her, really overtly forced this role upon her.

AB and TW: In both *Mata Hari* and *Mrs Gorky* you refer to real-life characters and re-write their lives. Concerning Mata Hari we read that you first intended to write a piece about an actress who was to play Mata Hari. Why and how did you give up this idea and turned to the historical figure herself instead?

DS: Because Mata Hari is too interesting. She wouldn't let anyone else be in the play. Yes, the whole play was written. It was about this actress who is in her fifties and played Mata Hari, the mythical Mata Hari, in her heyday thirty years, twenty years, thirty years earlier. And it was her big role and her big starring moment and ever since then her, you know, nothing has equalled it. And she goes on a trip to Amsterdam with her young lover, who is twenty years younger than she is. And she goes to see the writer and says, "I wanna play Mata Hari again and I think we should do a revival." And he just tells her, "well actually there is going to be a revival, but, you know, you're far too old now, someone else is doing it." And she is heartbroken by this and she becomes obsessed with Mata Hari, says well, "I'm gonna claim her back, you know, I'm gonna find her for myself." So she travels to Mata Hari's birth-town in Holland and she drags her lover with her. She becomes more and more obsessed with Mata Hari, and she starts to see her everywhere. Act One ends in this house Mata Hari grew up in and she sees Mata Hari with her father. And then increasingly Mata Hari is with her as she goes to Paris and goes around Paris, to all the places Mata Hari was in Paris. And her lover is becoming more and more disconcerted about and alienated from her, as she goes rather crazy. She ends up going to the place where Mata Hari was executed at Vincennes. When the execution is happening and she goes up to Mata Hari, just as Mata Hari is about to be shot when she's standing at the stake. Mata Hari says, "you've got this young lover, you've got everything to live for." But the woman says, "but I want to be immortal, I want to be a star." And she says, "ok, lets swap." So they swap. I love that ending! The actress takes the role as the icon who dies the iconic death on the stake. And then Mata Hari gets her life. The lover comes up to find her at the end and says, "is it over now?" And she says, "No, it's not

over." It's clear that they're gonna go off and go to bed together. So it's about getting real or living the fantasy. I enjoyed writing that version. The problem was that Mata Hari was so interesting. People are getting more interested in her than in the actress.

AB and TW: But you've transported this idea of role playing into the actual play. We had the impression that actually Margaretha Zelle is trying to play Mata Hari now.

DS: Yes, exactly. Well, she did. She said Mrs Lady MacLeod is what she liked to call herself of all the things she liked to call herself. And she said, "Mata Hari can do things Lady MacLeod never could," is something she said which I thought was really interesting.

AB and TW: Mrs Gorsky is not just a fictional character either? **DS:** No, she's a woman who really lived. I took her basic story. Her name is Judith Coplon. She's still alive and she lives in Brooklyn. I was basically sent letters by her husband and her lawyer saying, "please don't write about her because she's suffered so much." Cause she was kept under house arrest more or less in Brooklyn for eighteen years because they didn't rescind her terms of bail. Terms of bail are very rigorous. It is like being under house arrest. So that happened to her from 1950 to 1968/69. And actually I have friends in New York who know her quite well and she always said she never did spy. The whole story of Heidi is the bit I made up. In fact, Heidi is based on a woman I know who was in jail for fifteen years and has just got out a few years ago, for conspiracy against the American government. And I think in the production of the play I'd want to include this documentary element. Cause I think it's important and find a way of including it.

Diane Samuels on novel writing

AB and TW: Is writing novels very different from writing plays? Do you normally attend the rehearsals of plays and change something?

DS: I do. The wonderful thing about writing novels is no one mediates between what is going on inside my imagination and what my audience get. And that is fantastic! I'm very interested in a psychological imaginative space. So it's a natural thing for me to do to write novels actually. And I'm very interested in making this inner psychological imaginative space manifested in the theatre. But when theatre is like the secular equivalent of the church of England it's quite hard. The vocabulary doesn't exist and the audience's expectations are hard

to fight, although I think people are hungry for this. Theatre has to move on before that world that I inhabit can really find its life in the theatre because theatre doesn't do it. I won't give up on it, I will continue with it, but I need other fora to be able to feel satisfied. So that's why I've turned to literature. And it's a much bigger commitment writing a book. Writing a play isn't anything like as major. It's huge, it's going on a major trip, on a huge expedition, whereas writing a play is more like a vacation... in comparison.

AB and TW: Is *Cinderella's Daughter* your first novel?

Read more about [*Cinderella's Daughter*](#)

DS: I've tried to write two novels. And I've got 200 pages and then for some reason I've stopped. The first one is a bizarre thing that I may one day finish or not. It was based on Sleeping Beauty actually. But it was done in a very strange contemporary way. The second book I wrote is called *After Tom* and it's a thriller-esque piece about a young woman. It starts with this young woman away on holiday with her older academic boyfriend, who's in his mid late forties and she's in her early thirties. And she's very much in love with him and they go away to the Lake District. He's a professor of medieval literature at Cambridge. And he goes off one morning and she can't find him and then his body is found on the bottom of a mountain they were meant to be climbing together. And a story starts to unfold that he was working with a colleague in Cambridge on a book about Chaucer; whether or not he was a rapist. Cause there is some evidence to suggest that Chaucer did actually commit a rape. There's documentary evidence and there's very scholarly discussions about this. There's been a series of very vicious, brutal rapes that have been happening in the last couple of years. And she starts to discover the various clues, literary clues. And this work on Chaucer's rape seem to link her lover who's died with these rapes.

AB and TW: Many of the topics that we've discussed so far turn up in *Cinderella's Daughter* again. Motherhood, the past, the secret in the past that haunts the present...

DS: That's it! That's what I do! It's interesting because it's really evolving. In the first version I just sat down and told. It does exist as a play, which was on the radio. And I wasn't fully satisfied with that telling of it because there were many more things I needed to say with this story. And so I've done it. And it's far too long and it's very imaginative and people who've read it have said, "where the fuck did you get half of this from, it's bizarre." But it's about a

young woman coming into her sexuality. So it's much more overt in dealing with that and it's about how mothers and fathers play a role in the evolving sexuality of their child. And the things one has to grow through and let go of to be able to come to sexual maturity. So it's about that journey really. It is about mothers and fathers, but very specifically in terms of sexuality, which in my other work it isn't so specific and overt.

AB and TW: But this time the mother is absent?

DS: They're both absent. She has to leave them both. The father was present but she has to run away from him cause she can't marry him. The mother is totally absent, she's dead. Although she is present through her whispers, through her psychic presence. She goes in search of a prince. The prince doesn't recognise her because she's not a princess anymore. She's become an animal. She finds the gown and the crown and the shoes come out in the evening and she goes to the ball. And he falls in love with her as a princess but in the day when she's this furry creature all cleaning out the grates he kicks her aside. So it's about that dynamic and then it comes to a moment in the third ball when he asks her to marry him and he finds out who she really is.

AB and TW: You said that you think prose or fictional writing is a bigger commitment. Would you say that it's more complex and that you can express yourself more sophisticatedly in prose?

DS: I think you can express certain things more. I think the inner life, the inner voice, the imagination have more room in fiction. There are other things one can do in the theatre. For me theatre is actually about creating a communal experience and you can't do that in literature. But what you can do in literature is create a private experience and create a psychological experience on a different level. People don't watch plays in bed but they read books in bed. So you can go to bed with someone, whereas in the theatre you bring people together, which is a very precious thing that's very different. I think all plays are for me about enabling definitely one, more than one magic, golden moments to happen in a communal, shared experience. And the whole play exists to make that moment happen. And when the play works that's what happens and you're transported somewhere else with everyone else present. But making a theatre play you need a lot of craft and it's not an easy thing to do. It's just in terms of time, sheer time and energy it just takes more to do a novel.

Diane Samuels on *PUSH* and on her experiences as a director

AB and TW: I think you haven't directed one of your plays. Would you like to do it?

DS: Well, I directed *PUSH*.

More information on [PUSH](#)

And on that I started off collaborating with another playwright. But she wasn't Jewish. And we then brought a visual artist on board and we worked with a number of doctors. And in the end actually the other writer, dropped out. And I ended up taking the piece to production as a director, together with a visual artist and a performer we collaborated with. I directed a reading of *Mrs Gorsky* in Birmingham a couple of years ago. And it was very interesting because at the beginning of it the actress said to me, "does this make you very nervous or concerned that I'm gonna get it wrong?" And I said to her, "No, I just really want to know what you could bring to it. I'm really open to whatever you have to say, I'm intrigued, I'm not in the slightest bit worried, and I don't feel nervous, I'm just quite interested, very interested and open." And she just relaxed. And the reading had that quality of emotional, shared experience for the audience, people crying at the reading. And I think it was cause I knew how to unlock the play. My plays are like codes, they're not literary. When we were doing *PUSH* I kept saying to the actors, "Our job is to create energy fields, we're creating energy fields. And we're creating them for people to experience. And we're including them in it. This is what theatre is about." So, reading my work only is like reading a music score. It means something, but you need to hear it, played. And all it is it's the code to unleash the energy field. And I'm not sure how many directors I've met understand what that is, to be honest. Cause a lot of them tend to be quite literal minded. It's astonishing but they are. So, they literally read the words and they think that's what it's about, but it isn't. It's about how the words build on top of each other and how they create patterns, and it's about rhythms. And you have to discover that. I would definitely say that for a writer to find the right director, I can't talk from the director's point of view, it's a million times harder than for any human being to find their life partner they can live with. I have had not had trouble finding a life partner to live with and raise children with in the way I've had trouble with finding the right director. I think finding the right director is much harder.

AB and TW: Could you explain on the collaboration in *PUSH*?

DS: It was a very hard project. I wanted to make a piece of theatre that was author led. When you try and get plays on in this country, there is so much politics involved and theatres are really little empires run by whoever runs them. And along very rigid lines usually, very subjective, particular lines, and agendas are really heavy. They're not led by the artists, they're led by directors and administrators. And I wanted to do something that was artist led. I've written plays for years dealing with medical issues and I really feel this connection between being an artist and being a healer. For me it's very very powerful. I've done radio play about infertility, and genetic testing, and all these kinds of things, and went in research very heavily going into hospitals and talking to scientists. I've just been fascinated by all of this. I wanted to take it a step further, rather than just researching subject matter and writing a play. I wanted to let the piece be formed by the subject matter more, sort of break out of just writing a play. There is a whole movement in this country about bringing artists and scientists together in dialogue and in collaboration with each other. And it's various bodies that will fund this work. So, one body was the Gulbenkian Foundation and I got money to research it and we put an ad in the *British Medical Journal*, which is the major professional journal for British doctors and British medical profession. And we interviewed loads of doctors, really high level doctors, fascinating how many doctors want to do creative things. And we found three really good ones that run pain clinics in various parts of the country working research into pain. They're all trained as anaesthetists and then they've moved into working in the area of chronic pain, which is very challenging and difficult because it's not curable and it's inexplicable in many ways. We just met with them every month and we had dialogues, artists and doctors, about what is pain. And we also got on board a man called Patrick Wall, who's the leading neuroscientist in the world and who revolutionised theories about pain. And he actually lived around the corner from me. And then we managed to raise the money from an award from the Wellcome Trust, which is a big charitable organisation that funds medical research to make a piece of work. And we collaborated and we hooked up with the performance artist who lives with chronic pain. So she became a key person in the piece. That level of collaboration was really demanding but at the same time very amazing. And I learned a huge amount. We used video images, audio images, sound scape. We've tried to create integrated holistic form, which doesn't just work from words or images, but brings everything together to create a different reality. And we interviewed many people a long time, and it is a combination of documentary material and fictional metaphorical material. So we just played with all different medium realities and wanted to create a sense of wholeness. But the aim of the piece of work

was also to make theatre a forum for healing really. And I want to continue that work in a big way.

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AB and TW: And how did the audience respond to this? Did you find that these were people who were concerned with pain?

DS: It was a mixture of people who came. I think people respond at all sorts of different levels really and people have very subjective different reactions. Some people found it very fascinating some people loved one element and didn't like another. And I think everyone felt they learned something from it. There were things they'd never thought about before, they were now thinking about, about what pain is, and how people experience pain, and they experience pain in their own lives, how they relate to it in others. So it opened up this area of engagement.

AB and TW: And did you just focus on physical pain? I guess the line between physical and psychic pain is blurred, isn't it?

DS: Well, that's what Patrick's research was about, that's a holistic model, physical and emotional pain. And his research blew that. It's not about physical and or emotional, it's a holistic thing, it's just how it's manifested. There is a story about the boot, where a guy goes into hospital and he has got a huge nail right through his boot and he is screaming, he is in absolute agony. And the doctor's trying to take off the boot, so they can see what the damage is and sort it out. And he says, "I can't bear, I can't bear it." They give him an injection in his ankle to numb the foot. When it's numb, they remove the boot. And the nail has gone through between his toes and there's not a scratch on him. So, what pain is that? And should they have given him the anaesthetic? And the doctors say, "yes it was real, he did experience that pain and he did need the anaesthetic." I think that's acute pain, which is more straightforward than chronic pain, which is really not straightforward. The opening is Patrick Wall, this pain scientist, talking about pain. And he says:

One of the things that classical medicine said was that pain comes from damaged tissue, so

somebody says they're in pain, you must find some damaged tissue. But supposing you can't? And now these people are in real trouble. And we've all had such pains. Headaches. Where is the damaged tissue in a headache? Even a migraine. There's no damaged tissue there. So that people don't take migraines very seriously and people are ashamed to have a migraine because they know if they go to the doctor, they say "Well, you've got it again." Completely unsympathetic. Or, "take these pills and go away and don't bother me."

So, what we were probing was the whole territory of people who'd been living with pain for years and what does it mean. And what does physical or emotional mean? It is fascinating. The piece of work we made was really unique and interesting. And I hope it will influence all the work I do in the future.

AB and TW: Did it have a live performance aspect as well?

DS: Yeah! There were two performers. One was Cathrin, who lives with chronic pain, very serious chronic pain. So we had to deal throughout the process of rehearsing and performing with the thought she was in pain all the time and see how much you could do or couldn't do. And she also gives an interview. So she's on a huge video screen, and she talks about her actual experience of living with pain and what it's like. The central character of the piece is a mountaineer and he talks about climbing mountains. Katherine is the shadowy figure wearing a long weather proof coat, and you don't see her face until the end, when you realise that she's the woman in the video. She's like the mountaineer's shadow, the dark side. You know he's a relaxed person, he is a mountaineer and then it starts to emerge as the piece goes on that he can't climb at all anymore cause he suffers debilitating chronic pain in his head. It is a very physical performance he gave cause he starts off giving this talk and then he goes silent. The big issue of chronic pain is how does one communicate it. We don't have the language to do it. And he goes silent and so then his thoughts come up in projected text on a screen. So you see this fragmented text and then he starts to literally climb the walls, which was quite astonishing. So we made it very physical and very visual, and there was this intense sound scape. And I think people came out from an alternative reality they'd been in.

AB and TW: As we started the interview with a question about you being a British-Jewish writer, we would like to talk about another of such 'labels' now. What is it like being a woman writer and is there a particular aim you have in writing as a female author?

DS: I think one of my missions as a female playwright is to let the witches back in and the magic back in. And I think I see British theatre as being the exact equivalent of the church of England. And it's run by priests and vicars, artistic directors, et cetera. And the source of theatre in the old sense is healers, storytellers, it fits in with medicine men, rituals, wise women, and priestesses. And that's all being hoisted and taken away by particular structures and particular ways of doing things, quite limited patriarchal models. It's about trying to bring that female emotional energy alive in theatre and to infiltrate theatre. I will continue to do this through the rest of my life. And if I do not get produced because of it, that's not going to stop me. I've got a real mission here. I think it's time to reconnect the relationship, which was why I did *PUSH*, between theatre and healing, the performing arts and healing arts, medicine, community, creative arts and communal arts. And I think the disintegration into fragmented specialities has long served its job, it did serve a job for a while, it doesn't anymore. And I really want to manifest a different way of making theatre.

AB and TW: Thank you very much for this interview.

**Gabriele Griffin, ed. *Who's Who in Gay and Lesbian Writing*. London:
Routledge, 2002.**

By Isabel Karremann, University of Erlangen, Germany

1 It is an open secret that the biographical guide or dictionary is the most intertextual genre of all academic writing - and the least acknowledged to be so. Looking up individual entries in several dictionaries (possibly in the course of researching for a 'new' biographical abstract oneself?), one encounters very often one and the same portrait of a writer. Editing and compiling a biographical guide neither seems to be a very original task nor do existing articles on individual authors, unlike book-length biographies or studies, seem to enjoy something like a copyright - they are common academic knowledge. Of course there is only so much one can present within a limited space and most of this space is taken up by the presentation of unchanging factual knowledge such as birth dates, education, publications, maybe suggestions for secondary reading. However, a foray into several lexica and dictionaries should ideally be rewarded by a more differentiated portrait of the person one is in quest of, not just slightly differing versions of the same.

2 Gabriele Griffin's *Who is Who in Gay and Lesbian Writing* both measures up to this ideal and fails it. While she assembles for the first time a fascinating host of contemporary gay and lesbian writers from the Anglophone world and beyond, the entries on writers from the centre of the gay and lesbian canon are prefigured by the choices of other dictionaries - an encounter with the usual suspects is unavoidable, and their inclusion in this dictionary often seems to have occurred by associative names-dropping rather than by conceptual criteria. On the other hand, this of course testifies to the fact that there is by now a canon of gay and lesbian writing that produces its own faultlines in terms of inclusion and exclusion. Here I have to lay open my own highly intertextual approach to Griffin's book and my hallmark of comparison, as well: it is Claude J. Summer's *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage* (ed., 1995). Picked at random, some entries in Griffin's - e.g. on Charlotte Mew, James Merrill, John Cheever - prove to be taken almost verbatim from his companion. In the face of this 'intertextual' practice, as questionable as it is widely-practiced, Griffin's dictionary has its greatest strength where it is most original: in its astonishing range of entries on very contemporary gay and lesbian novelists, poets, playwrights, theorists of and fighters for the existence and beauty of same-sex desire.

3 Laying open its (academically/politically correct) criteria, the introduction to the *Who's Who* professes an awareness of the historical alterity of the literary treatment of same-

sex love as well as the contemporary plurality of meanings of what gay and lesbian love means or might look like. This awareness is one result of the GLQ studies of the last three decades which have developed reading strategies that make same-sex desire visible, have done meticulous research on historically specific representations of sexuality that provide us with a differentiated vocabulary to speak about same-sex desire and offer a sophisticated theoretical approach that allows us to understand the differences and the complex relationships between sex, gender and sexuality. (Accordingly, there are also entries on some major GLQ theorists such as Judith Butler, Michel Foucault and Marjorie Garber, and, opening the historical dimension, on Krafft-Ebing, Magnus Hirschfeld and K. H. Ulrichs.) These issues inform Griffin's choice of authors and crystallize in two main criteria defining "gay and lesbian writing:" "texts with a lesbian and/or gay content" and "texts written by writers who identify publicly as lesbian and gay, or who are known to be lesbian and gay" (ix). The first category opens up a spectrum of gay and lesbian content ranging from "expressing admiration for the body of someone of the same sex" over "playing with gender on a linguistic level" (also known as the Jeanette-Winterson-technique) on to the "extended description of a same-sex sexual encounter" (ix), and therefore can potentially include almost all of the traditional (read: heterosexual) canon. While the two categories often overlap, Griffin makes explicitly clear that "there is no necessary correlation between the (sexual) identity of the writer and that of her/his characters" (x). Thus, gay or lesbian authors are included whose work does not explicitly treat homosexual issues, which on the other hand can be traced in the work of heterosexual writers. Another kind of "cross-gendered" focus, one might add, is the existence of quite a few number of women writers writing gay men, such as Mary Renault, Claudia McWilliam or Patricia Nell Warren.

4 Far from establishing a separate and separatist gay and lesbian canon (as the title might indicate) Griffin thus aims at imploding the notion of a "high-brow" canon itself by juxtaposing homosexual and heterosexual writers, ancient and very contemporary ones, texts from "high" and popular culture (xi). Of course this new canon produces its own exclusions as well: Since "high cultural" writing is much better documented and object of academic debate, this information is more accessible, a fact which is reflected in the length of some entries from the centre of the gay and lesbian canon. On the other hand, there are writers who have not yet been re- or dis-covered for gay and lesbian writing. The enormous proliferation of lesbian and gay publishing since the 1970, at least in the Anglophone world, makes exclusions necessary and is made to account for the clear predominance of writers from Britain and the US (300 out of some 440 entries), while in other countries the literary

treatment of same-sex love is still subjected to censure and the texts very difficult to obtain.

5 The major achievement of this compilation certainly is to have detected and included so many contemporary writers from those countries. Especially the entries on contemporary lesbian writers from Scandinavian countries (e.g. Bente Clod, Helvi Juvonen, Mirkka Elina Rekola, Pirkko Helena Saisio, Cora [Fabricius] Sandel) and on gay writers from Middle and South American countries are noteworthy here. However, since these writers are fairly unknown except to the specialist, an index grouping certain writers under headings that denote both the genre of their work and national/ethnic origin would have been very welcome and made the dictionary a much more useful research tool than it already is. This is also true for the impressive range of contemporary lesbian playwrights from Britain or the US, often of mixed ethnic origin, which as the editor's own special field of research clearly is the forte of the dictionary. The majority of these writers are here assembled for the first time (including, for example, Claire Dowie, Tash Fairbanks, Bernardine Evaristo, Pam Gems, Bryony Lavery, Nina Rapi, "Split Britches"); an index could have pointed out the prominence and variety of this genre in lesbian writing at a glance.

6 What makes the *Who's Who* interesting for all already working in the field of GLQ studies, or looking for an introduction to it, is precisely that it offers informative, well researched articles on gay and lesbian writing of the twentieth century, and especially on contemporary writers. While establishing a tradition of gay and lesbian writing undoubtedly is one very important project of the GLQ studies, it would have been a more fortunate decision to restrict the *Who's Who* to the twentieth century (whilst, of course, marking this restriction in the title). It is simply not feasible to chart the history of gay and lesbian writing *and* provide first-rate material on contemporary writers on a mere 224 pages. The attempt to bring both aspects together ("from Sappho to modern pulp fiction," blurb) leads to the choice-by-names-dropping as well as unaccountable exclusions mentioned before. Besides, it is not necessary: Much excellent research has been done and published on the gay and lesbian literary heritage, as represented for example by the companion edited by Claude Summers, which remains unsurpassed when it comes to embedding single authors, texts or genres in their historical context. Given the emphasis on twentieth-century writing, some entries (important as these authors are) simply remain at odds with the majority of articles. An especially crude example of this is Virgil, who is quoted as the only antique author on male-male desire, while Homer, Plato, Martial, Ovid and Theocritus (to name but a few) are simply ignored. While some relevant early modern authors such as Marlowe, Shakespeare, Rochester and Richard Barnfield are duly quoted, the dictionary, due to its concept, cannot provide the

context needed to understand their works in their historical alterity. Ihara Saikaku, a seventeenth-century Japanese poet, famous and important as his writings are for contemporary gay poets, remains oddly unconnected with the other entries on Japanese writers; these entries fail to give an impression of both the literary tradition and the culturally specific context they are embedded in. Of course, a bibliographical guide is simply not able to provide all this information; yet this makes it all the more desirable to refrain from presenting knowledge on a universal range (a master narrative) and to tell localized, contextualized, contingent stories instead.

7 Again, it is undoubtedly very important to establish a gay and lesbian literary tradition, or rather: to implode the heterosexual canon by showing that same-sex desire often is at the very centre of it. However, the *Who's Who in Gay and Lesbian Writing* and, indeed, its readers would in my opinion have profited from restricting the entries to the twentieth century. As it is, this biographical guide serves as a very helpful, easily accessible introduction to much of the huge corpus of gay and lesbian writing existing in our consciousness by now. The many entries on contemporary writers from countries beyond the Anglophone world, France and Germany make it a necessary research tool and above all a valuable complement to the historically more profound, yet not as recent *Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage*. Its slender format - as compared to the 786 pages Summers companion weighing over 2 pounds - will make it the first choice of students wishing to enter the vast field of GLQ studies.

Karin Rosa Ikas: *Chicana Ways: Conversations with Ten Chicana Writers*.

Reno & Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2002

By Claudia Leitner, University of Vienna, Austria

1 Based on ten in-depth interviews with female Mexican American writers, Karin R. Ikas's *Chicana Ways* pays tribute to the consolidation and dynamics of Chicana literary discourse over the past thirty years. Focusing on women of Mexican American descent - or *Chicanas*, to use the politically and culturally more biased self-denomination that also allows for gender inflection -, the book draws innovatory strength from its specific outlook: "It is the first collection of interviews exclusively with female writers of the fastest-growing minority group in the United States," as Ikas points out in her introduction (XVI). There is another peculiar feature of the conversations assembled in this book: With a young German scholar acting as interlocutor and editor, *Chicana Ways* appears as a particularly interesting instance of inquiry and dialogue in an intercultural context.

2 The book is designed to appeal to a wide audience, its purpose being "to present the multiplicity and diversity of Chicana voices to an international audience and to stimulate further interest in these writers and their works in the United States" (XVIII). An emphasis on polyphony is also manifest in the aptly chosen title of the book: While *Chicana* - as opposed to the masculine term *Chicano* - indicates the dual focus on gender and ethnicity, the term *Ways* highlights the importance of positionality in the articulation of subjectivity and helps to display cultural identification as a variable and fluid process. It is in fact even possible to detect some historico-political resonances, taking us back as far as the 1960s: The plural term *Chicana Ways* appears to invoke and question the much-discussed "Chicano Movement" and the normative, monolithic model of cultural and political identity which it implied.

3 With an exclusive focus on women writers, Ikas sets out to counter prevailing homogenized versions of ethnic identity, organized around a paradigmatic male Chicano subject. As these writers reflect upon their lives and works, stereotypical images of the self-sacrificing, devout, submissive and inarticulate Mexican (American) woman fade. What emerges instead is a rich panorama of articulate and indeed very literate women "daring to speak out and tackle the multiple forms of discrimination within Mexican American culture and society in general" (XIV).

4 The publication of *Chicana Ways* comes at a fortuitous moment: it coincides with the third edition of *This Bridge Called My Back* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 2002), a book that may not only be considered a foundational text for Chicana literature, but also a

cornerstone of Women of Color's Feminism. It is indeed one of the strongholds of *Chicana Ways* to have the two editors of *This Bridge Called My Back*, Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, look back and reflect upon the specific circumstances that made them bring out their pioneering anthology in 1981. Anzaldúa vividly recalls her experience with former academic hostility towards Chicana issues, "The adviser told me that Chicana literature was not a legitimate discipline, that it didn't exist, and that women's studies was not something that I should do" (4).

5 The amazing rise of Chicana subjects both in theory and literary practice that has since taken place is documented not only in Anzaldúa's and Moraga's accounts. Several of the other writers interviewed - Lorna Dee Cervantes, Denise Chávez, Lucha Corpi, Jamie Lujan, Demetria Martínez, Pat Mora, Mary Helen Ponce, and the late Estela Portillo-Trambley - are also well-established figures in the literary and academic world. Although the two Chicana authors who have most successfully entered the US literary mainstream, Sandra Cisneros and Ana Castillo, are not among those interviewed in *Chicana Ways*, continuous references to them in the conversations recall their importance.

6 The ten writers and artists (especially actress and theater activist Jamie Lujan seems more involved with the performative aspect of literature) with whom the book is concerned are presented in alphabetical order. They appear not only in text but also in image as each entry is begun with a photograph of the interviewee. Conducted in a period between September 1996 (Chávez) and April 1997 (Martínez), the interviews in *Chicana Ways* comprise between seven (Portillo-Trambley) and twenty-five pages (Ponce). The time and place of each interview is conveniently stated in a separate line below the heading. Each interview is moreover preceded by a short introductory note and followed by a bibliography listing the respective author's works. Especially readers not yet familiar with the writers and works in question will be grateful for the compact presentation of basic information and the valuable frame of reference provided in these bio-bibliographical notes.

7 Trained at the University of Würzburg, Germany, as well as at several universities of the American Southwest where she has conducted research, Karin R. Ika is to be credited with an impressive array of publications on Chicano/a literature, Cultural Studies, and Feminism. In *Chicana Ways*, she keeps posing questions that are currently debated in and about Chicano/a culture as it is silhouetted and refracted against Latino/a culture, Anglo-American culture, and global issues. Recurring concerns are the writers' family backgrounds, their access to education and literature, their professional choices, literary practices, influences and affinities, bilingualism, choice of language and of genre, ethnic identification,

religion and spirituality, body images and cultural icons, site specificity, personal and social space, cultural heritage and generational matters as well as commitment to social change and resistance.

8 In moving from interview to interview, readers will be able to perceive not only the diversity of the individual writers' approaches, but also various strands of convergence. While most of the older generation authors interviewed still acknowledge their affiliation - even if it was only peripheral - with the Chicano civil rights movement, the overt political didacticism characteristic of earlier Chicano/a literature engaged with the Movement has given way to more subtle approaches. As many Chicano issues, in Cherrie Moraga's words, "are already understood now [...], people can go on to ask more complex questions about how class, gender, race, and sexuality intersect" (155).

9 Chicano ethnic nationalism, with its bipolar opposition between Anglos and Mexicans, as well as its idealization of Mexican "homeland" and culture, has notably disappeared. In fact, in these women writers' testimonies, Mexico is only one possible source of inspiration and identification among many others. Lucha Corpi, the only first-generation Chicana among the writers interviewed in this collection, actually casts quite a critical, ambivalent look back on Mexican society and the Mexican everyday culture she grew up with before emigrating to the USA at the age of 19 (72-74).

10 Steadfast bipolarity thus gives way to an enhanced attention towards diversity and a more nuanced look at regional and historical developments. Local differences and global dynamics are in the foreground when Demetria Martínez emphasizes New Mexico's historical isolation from Mexico and relegates the most Mexican of all icons of Mexicanness, the Virgin of Guadalupe, to the poor place of a "recent immigrant, brought by recent immigrants from Mexico" (122). As Lorna Dee Cervantes comments upon her Chumash ancestors, Native American culture in California becomes discernible (38). In New Mexico, both Denise Chávez and Demetria Martínez draw on local native as well as Jewish cultural heritages (59 and 124). Pat Mora's observation that identity ought to be regarded as "multiple" and "situational" (138), is corroborated in Mary Helen Ponce's reflections on the "culture shock" a Chicana is likely to experience even *within* Chicano/a communities when moving, for instance, from California, or Texas, to New Mexico (194)

11 New, more complex perspectives on "core" topics of Chicano/a culture are complemented by a considerable widening of thematic interests. "More and more," as Gloria Anzaldúa observes, "I am asked to speak about global stuff, international subjects" (18). Among the younger writers interviewed in *Chicana Ways*, Demetria Martínez appears to be

the one who most obviously continues the tradition of social protest and political activism so typically assigned to Chicano/a literature. As she comments on subjects as varied as NAFTA, the international movement of capital, Vietnam, Central America, Argentina, and her involvement with the Sanctuary Movement, it becomes clear, however, that her commitment reaches far beyond Chicano/a or Latino/a communities in the USA.

12 The literary works discussed and documented in *Chicana Ways* also reveal an astonishingly wide range of genres. Perhaps in response to the fact that the alignment of Chicano/a literature with ethnic and socio-political protest has itself become a limiting stereotype, several writers figuring in *Chicana Ways* have chosen forms of expression not immediately associated with ideological agendas. Detective fiction (Corpi) and children's literature (Anzaldúa, Chávez, Corpi, Mora) may be genres that will require more critical attention when it comes to assessing Chicano/a literature in the future.

13 Most of the writers interviewed in *Chicana Ways* display a strong commitment to feminism. Even those who do not openly subscribe to a feminist agenda tend to acknowledge the importance of feminism and gender issues - together with issues of lesbianism and bisexuality - for their works. Thus the views articulated in *Chicana Ways* coincide with what has been recognized elsewhere: Chicana feminism is definitely one of the most influential currents in contemporary Chicano/a literature and criticism.

14 The work of gender in the reformulation of Chicano/a forms of consciousness may well be exemplified by the effective establishment of Malinche as a role model for Chicanas. In contrast to Mexican and Chicano nationalist discourse where Malinche has been vilified as a scapegoat for colonization and selling out to the dominant culture, Chicanas tend to affirm their affiliation with the woman who, as interpreter in the conquest of Mexico, gained mythic stature as a mediator between cultures and as a symbol of *mestizaje*: "we are not *hijos de la chingada*, meaning the woman who was raped, but *hijas de La Malinche*, meaning the woman who was very able, intelligent, and capable" (Corpi, 78). Explaining the implications of her novel *Mother Tongue*, Demetria Martínez relates Malinche with the concern for the voices of indigenous people and the recovery of Spanish in a predominantly English-speaking context (123).

15 As one of the Chicano/a "mother tongues," Spanish is given its place in this volume. The way Spanish words and expressions are integrated, however, poses some problems. Among the several spelling mistakes which occur in *Chicana Ways*, the ones in Spanish tend to be more unfortunate. The Uruguayan poetess Delmira Agustini, for instance, quoted twice as a source of inspiration by Lucha Corpi (70, 79), is misspelt as "Augustín" the second time

she is referred to (79). This may lead to the false assumption that there are two persons implied - particularly since the error manifests itself also in two different entries in the Index (217, 218). Similarly, the bilingual show title "¿iQué Nuevas!? - What's New!?" becomes "¿iQué Nueves!?" in the Index, which does not make sense in Spanish (221). Finally, the famous Carmen Miranda song "Mamá, yo quiero" mentioned by Jamie Lujan is not quite accurately translated as "Mama, I love you" (110n.9)

16 Another set-back of *Chicana Ways* is the uneven listing of the individual writers' works. While the slight variations in the organisational principle of the bibliographical entries may be of little concern, some limitations in the overall scope of bibliographical information given are rather disturbing. Whereas Denise Chávez's, Lucha Corpi's and Mary Helen Ponce's literary productions, for instance, are amply documented, including works published in anthologies, journals and magazines, other writers' bibliographies are surprisingly short, limited often to monographs, i.e. books written or edited by the respective author. In any case, this selective approach produces a rather distorted image of the bibliographic facts. Why is it, to give just one example, that Lucha Corpi's contribution to the anthology *Cuento chicano del siglo XX* (ed. Ricardo Aguilar, Mexico City: UNAM, 1993) is listed (89) but Estela Portillo-Trambley's short story "El vestido de París" ("The Paris Gown"), included in the same collection, is not (see 213)?

17 All in all, the selective bibliographies in *Chicana Ways* tend to downplay the vital importance of anthologies for the promotion of Chicana/o literature. Cherrie Moraga's landmark text "From a Long Line of Vendidas," for instance, gained international visibility precisely through its inclusion in publications of wider availability such as *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies* (ed. Teresa de Lauretis, London: Macmillan, 1988). The same holds true for Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, extracts of which came to represent postcolonial theory in *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). An international readership would certainly have appreciated to find the corresponding bibliographical references in *Chicana Ways*.

18 These few shortcomings, however, are more than compensated by the book's attractiveness. *Chicana Ways* successfully updates and opens up Chicano/a issues for a wide public. This work is a positive balance to old stereotypes of Chicana women, and it is broad enough in perspective to avoid essentialisms and tokenizations of other kinds. It offers delightful, informative reading for both scholars and nonspecialists, and is destined to become a valuable source of reference for anybody interested in Chicano/a studies.

19 One of the most compelling virtues of Ikas's book is the way it links highly personal

data to more general concerns and developments, thus effectively displaying the intercultural dynamics and multivocality of Chicano/a existence. Readers will perceive quite a few instances where the writers' standpoints unwittingly enter into friction and debate with one another. So while there is a general agreement as far as the consolidation of Chicana literature is concerned, opinions diverge when it comes to discussing rivalry or a possible generation gap between established Chicana writers and those who started out later. Portillo-Trambley gives a plain negative answer to this question (208), whereas Anzaldúa admits that there might be some rivalry, yet regards herself as "out of it because they look at me as a *gente grande*" (20). Cervantes is probably right in concluding, "But no, there definitely is a very exciting new generation of Chicana writers right now" (36). Profiling this new generation in context, and placing it within the achievements of its *grand(es)* precursors, *Chicana Ways* helps the reader to understand what the excitement is all about.

**Christina Hughes: *Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Research*. London:
Sage Publications, 2002**

By Miriam Wallraven, University of Tübingen, Germany

1 The main purpose of Christina Hughes' *Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Research* is to introduce a "conceptual literacy" for social science students. Hughes' differentiated explorations of equality, difference, choice, care, time and experience, which are key concepts in feminist theory, and her balanced overview of sociological and connected studies are based on topical postmodernist and poststructuralist approaches: "Conceptual literacy is no more, and no less, than an act of sensitization to the political implications of contestation over the diversity of conceptual meanings. In this it draws attention to the multiplicity of meanings that are invoked by the use of key terms; to the dualistic framing of language; to the art of deconstruction; and to the salience of focusing on language in use" (3). In her accessible handbook, the author not only provides an overview of the vast amount of literature on feminist theory, but also manages to facilitate access to complex theories and convey the importance of deconstruction in social sciences and related areas.

2 The clarity of the book's layout and structure enable students to easily compare and distinguish difficult concepts. Chapter subdivisions make a multifaceted exploration of each topic possible. Hughes' overview of the major studies concerning feminist theory will help the reader to become acquainted with parts complex œuvres such as these of Butler, Irigaray and Spivak. Hughes not only summarizes, but explains theoretical debates and also provides insight into the complexity of these authors by including longer quotes of their work. Each chapter ends with a short summary of the main arguments and definitions as well as further commented reading suggestions which enable students to find their way through the relevant literature with ease. The further reading sections and the bibliography refer to classic as well as current studies. The book also includes 17 case studies dealing with a variety of issues such as education, gender transformations and the economics of gender. These case studies point above all to applications of feminist theory, drawing attention to the necessity of conceptual literacy and particularly taking cultural diversity into account ("Progress' in Zimbabwe," "Theorizing Young Asian Women's Experiences"). The prism of cultural and postcolonial diversity avoids the shortcomings of other feminist studies which are often exclusively focused on white Western experiences. Throughout the book, Hughes follows the poststructuralist approach which she uses in order to examine key feminist terms and provide an overview of academic debates and literature.

3 The introduction to *Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Research* centres around the necessity and validity of poststructuralist thinking and research as such. Hughes makes it very clear even for newcomers to theory that what is at stake in this debate is the previous insistence on one stable authoritative "truth:" "For all its postmodern provenance, plurality stands in contradiction to a more modernist desire for fixity and boundedness, for neatness and framing. It contradicts, in fact, a desire for absolute knowing that is a mark of scientific enquiry" (3). In addition, the introduction anticipates students' "fear" of theory and already provides answers to possible problems or misconceptions. The explanation of pedagogical aims and an overview of the book's structure ease the reader's entry into this challenging domain.

4 In the first chapter "Concepts: Meanings, Games and Contests," the author clarifies that a debate over the meanings of concepts and terms is crucial for our complex society and our scientific research. After introducing the sex-gender distinction and subsequent debates about the usefulness of these terms (Toril Moi), Derridean notions of *différance* are contrasted with hierarchical dualistic Western thinking, particularly with respect to issues of power and language (Plumwood). Both Derrida's basic theses (compared to de Saussure) and Wittgenstein's analysis of language games highlight the merits of poststructuralism. The detailed analysis of the workings/strategies of binary thinking urgently illustrates the need for deconstructive approaches to gender in linguistics and subsequently in social research.

5 The second chapter entitled "Equality" sheds new light on the question "Equal to what?" by clarifying different definitions of gender equality and their interactions. Hughes recapitulates the debates on equality as sameness and equality as difference, refers to possible measures of sameness and deals with critiques of essentialism. To dismantle the standard which is often uncritically aimed at by feminists, as that of white, middle-class masculinity, the book critically works with studies on equality and its measures (does equal treatment mean identical treatment? does equality mean equality of opportunity or equality of outcome?). Hughes explains the historical basis of equal rights arguments, which is Enlightenment liberalism of the 18th and 19th century. The chapter reflects on liberal philosophy, the insistence on equal rights and legislative changes and discusses criticism about the narrow focus on the middle class. In this context, motherhood is historically treated as a central point of the debate on "equal *but* different" or "equal *and* different" (already in Mary Wollstonecraft). Like others, Hughes is convinced that the seeming necessity of choosing between essentialism and constructionism is detrimental for feminist theory and practice. Her reference to cultural differences (for example Italian theories of sexual

difference which cannot be easily classified as either essentialist or constructionist) illustrates this convincingly.

6 The third chapter further investigates debates on difference. Both the chapters "Equality" and "Difference" prove to be valuable reading not only for social scientists, but also for readers working with theories of literature, expanding uncritical and mono-dimensional views on the equality-difference debates that have influenced discourses on gender. Hughes explains major standpoints of gynocentrism, identity politics and postmodernism and also refers to the key thinkers that students should be familiar with. The author devotes most of the space to postmodernism and poststructuralism, as in contrast to other approaches, "Postmodern critiques note that there are as many claims to 'truth' as there are different language games and discourses" (65). In this chapter, which I regard as the most important chapter of the book, influential theories as those of Butler, Scott, Spivak and Foucault are rendered accessible for beginners. In addition to such concepts as Butler's performativity, psychoanalytical approaches are examined (Lacan, Mitchell, Chodorow) to determine their usefulness for feminist theory. *Écriture féminine* (Irigaray, Kristeva and Cixous) is presented as central for post-Lacanian theories of sexual difference. Finally, the sub-chapter "Postcolonial Differences" completes the treatment of the concept of difference by incorporating vital issues of postcolonial theory: "Drawing on the idea of multiple subjectivities postcolonial analyses have also challenged Western binary oppositions through a focus on cultural hybridity that gives rise to multiple differences" (77).

7 The next chapter is focused on the concept of choice. Issues of agency and structure serve as an analytical framework. Hughes points to two distinct conceptualizations of choice: rational choice based on the assumption of an agentic, rational subjectivity, and poststructuralist conceptions of choice where issues of mastery and submission come into play. Economics plays a major role in rational choice theory centred on "methodological individualism" (86). Although rational choice theory maintains that "individuals are relatively free to choose with no account taken of power relations or the structuring of advantage and disadvantage" (99), feminist critique dismantles its basic tenets as based on gender binaries implying a simplified view of gender based stereotypes of public and private. The sub-chapter "The Poststructuralist 'Choosing' Subject" shows that the gender blindness inherent in rational choice theory has to be addressed differently. Above all, poststructuralist accounts of agency are based on a critique of humanism and take into account the fact that "The consciousness and deliberateness of 'rationality' might be subverted by both conscious and unconscious desire" (100). Finally, Hughes argues that the concept of free and autonomous choices

neglects the power of discourses which makes even a forced choice appear "free."

8 Chapter five, entitled "Care," undertakes an analysis of the literature and concepts focused on the multifaceted approaches to care. In particular, Hughes addresses the economic character of care both in areas seen as private (family) and those regarded as public (workplace). It becomes clear that care occupies a contradictory role in feminist theorizing, regarded both as a "hallmark of woman's difference and [...] as an entrapment of subservience from which woman must escape" (108). Ethical, moral, political and psychological matters are discussed in this context.

9 Hughes' chapter on time in feminist theory distinguishes between three different conceptualizations of time: linear clock-time, cyclical time and concepts of time that regard past, present and future as simultaneous and thereby illuminate issues of authenticity and identity formation. Time plays a role not only in feminism (first, second and third waves, post-) and other social revolutions, but also as category in philosophy and personal experience. Discussing important theorists, Hughes traces the development of thinking about linear "male time" and cyclical "female time" and connects this with ideas about time and selfhood. Her treatment of theories on time and space (Irigaray, Kristeva, Grosz) also draw attention to areas of feminism which remain undertheorized at present.

10 Experience, Hughes shows in chapter seven, also forms an important category within feminism, as it includes political, social and personal matters. It becomes obvious that phrases such as "the personal is the political" and methods of consciousness-raising have given important impulses to feminist thought and still provide critical challenges to scientific methods and authoritative knowledge claims. Old conceptualizations of truth and reality are at stake in this discussion and are confronted with "feminist epistemologies" (Griffith) and postmodernist relativism. The very enlightening discussion of Haraway and "Cyborg Standpoints" provides glimpses into a post-gender world as well as into possible new developments of postmodern standpoint theory.

1 The last chapter, "Developing Conceptual Literacy," ties previous discussions together and connects the terms presented in order to enable readers to recognize them and develop a new approach to social sciences, which Hughes has stated as the aim of her book: "my primary purpose in writing this text is to offer an approach that will enable students to go beyond simple learning to live with the multiple conceptualizations of key terms" (10). This chapter provides examples of synthesizing concepts and learning to regard them as connected and mutually influential - as a "web of meaning." Hughes' focus here lies particularly on the work of Bronwyn Davies.

12 This book makes clear that feminist issues are neither on the margins of social sciences nor a minor aspect of academic research, but convincingly shows that feminist demands and discourses partake in and, in turn, transform every discourse of society. The fact that feminist concepts are at the centre of critical and poststructuralist thought is made clear by chapters covering basic sociological fields of interest (Care, Time) from a feminist and poststructuralist perspective. The text casts a critical view on gender-blind research in the social sciences and ultimately challenges patriarchal notions of "truth" by introducing the complexity of feminist and social concepts and helping students develop "conceptual literacy."

13 Hughes precisely and comprehensively introduces a deconstructivist view of previously fixed terms and definitions. In doing so, she ultimately challenges the reader to critically examine all concepts and "truths" that he or she will be confronted with. However, the most central term - "feminism" - lacks a critical and, above all, a historical definition. Both the history of what we now call "feminism" and of the term "feminism" itself (which was in Britain only used in the modern sense from the 1890s onwards) requires a more careful analysis. Given this omission, the reader unfortunately may be tempted to oversimplify the term "feminism," which would undermine Hughes' basic aim - the introduction of critical, multidimensional concepts which require active reflection and discussion. Presenting a history of feminism could reveal much about terminology and definition as such (is the *Querelle des Femmes* of the Middle Ages, which anticipates many gender concerns of today, already feminist? What are the differences between a "pro-woman" and a feminist argument? What significance do such terms as "the Woman Question" or "Female Advocate" hold for the development of feminist concepts today?). A definition such as Gerda Lerner's "feminist consciousness" could be very helpful for Hughes' study.<fn>Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From The Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993.</fn> As far as Hughes' valuable references to Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill are concerned, two aspects are important to bear in mind: first, that both writers/philosophers did not refer to themselves as "feminist" and second, that there were of course also many other important thinkers promoting what we now call a feminist point of view. A short reference to these and to further reading on the history of feminist theory would probably be helpful.

14 As a whole, *Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Research* is a very useful handbook, which is at once accessible for beginners and complex enough to account for the

multidimensionality of poststructuralism. It is certainly always topical and is thus an invaluable guide through the jungle of gender theory in the social sciences.

Cinderella's Daughter: An excerpt

By Diane Samuels

Chapter Three - The Grave

"Askenbasken said she only wanted a rose-tree, with the roots and all. She wanted to plant it on her mother's grave." "Askenbasken, who Became Queen", from "Jyske Folkeminder", Evald Tang Kristensen Princess Amanda hovered under the arch at the entrance to the graveyard. She cradled a brace of lilies in her arms and tried to keep her balance. The last year was spinning too fast and she could not find her foothold. How the queen had clutched at her throat as she started to choke. Amanda had watched her mother's face redden then drain blue. And then she had sat beside the body in the throne room where Cinderella, myth, monarch and woman, was laid for all to pay their respects. She had held her mother's hand in her own for three days and three nights. She would eat and drink nothing. The chief lady in waiting tried to offer some of her favourite hot milk. Just a sip? Maybe without the cinnamon out of respect for the deceased? Princess Amanda had refused even to smell it. She concentrated her senses onto Cinderella's motionless form. She could not believe that her mother could be quite so still as this. The king had sat opposite Amanda for the same three days, clutching Cinderella's left hand, silent as hell. Then the Chancellor had unravelled the yellowing scroll and whispered that the allotted moment had come to return her majesty to the earth. The king had repeated the customary words. Amanda had mechanically done the same as if she were a clockwork mouse. The king had then pulled his hand out of the clasp. He flashed an eagle-eye at his daughter to do the same. She knew that there was no point in disagreeing with daddy. He never took it well. He became severe or upset, depending on whether he was in public or private. So she let go of mummy's leaden palm. As she did so, she noticed that her father was kneeling now at her mother's feet. He placed his hands upon the crystal slippers which had been dressed upon her corpse. With one hand he pushed against the slipper on Cinderella's right foot, firming it into place. With his other hand, he tugged. Off slid the shoe like a lump of ice. Then, gripping the dainty footwear to his breast, King Rufus III strode out of the throne room towards his bed chamber, muttering an instruction for his daughter to come to sit in contemplation with him at midnight. Princess Amanda blinked out of her reverie. The sun cast her shadow into the graveyard. How might her father treat her today? She had not seen him during the daylight hours since that first vigil. For the last year, each night, at 11.59 pm, she had been taken to join him as the castle clock began to strike. As soon as the twelfth ring had rung, they had bowed to each other and taken their leave. She had seen no more of him than

this brief and dark encounter once every twenty four hours for four entire seasons. And here was the same late summer day again. Would he even remember who she was? She was glad she had come ahead of the rest. She could have some precious time on her own with mother before life (supposedly) began again. "Whoa. The skin on her, the hair on her..." Florence was all bug eyes peeping over the edge of the grave which had become a hidey-hole. Gloria held back. "If you can see her then she'll likely spot you." she warned. The Ugly sisters were wary. Their ears rung with their pap's maxims which included the oft used "Dig or be dug for", "Every rotter ends up rotten", "No worm turns once it's been eaten by a bird" and "The lowest of the low are to those on high what the Underworld is to the Sun God." When they'd asked about the Sun God, their pap had told them that he was the source of all life. When they'd asked about the Underworld, their mam told them that this place was the source of all darkness. And both parents together warned that if the likes of them blotted any noble's vision for one second, they would be buried alive instantly. Many funerals had passed, including that most tragic affair the previous year for Queen Cinderella, with Flo and Glo cowering in a half dug grave. "She ain't looking this way not one bit." determined Florence. So Gloria dared to push an eyelid up to viewing level and shot a glance towards the object of Florence's gawping. "Aaah." she let out a gasp. "How does she get to be so floaty and soft?" "I'd do anything to know the answer to that one." said Florence, not realising just how much she meant it.

Princess Amanda had no recollection of how she'd moved from the archway to the spot in which she now found herself. Maybe she had glided above the surface of the earth, blown by the breeze. But the air was quite still in the damp aftermath of the storm. So maybe she had stayed where she was and the ground had shifted beneath her feet. Last time she had stood here, there had been a hole with walls of mud descending before her and the coffin of ebony (the buttons on her dress were made from the same source) had slowly been lowered on black ribbons until the box dropped until it would drop no further. Then the ends of the ribbons were released and fluttered down, their own fate sealed too. Now, a year later, there was a slab of granite, grainy and grey, where the hole had been.

The princess did not notice that all around were identical slabs, each one as plain and simple as the others, and on each was the name of a king or queen or princess or prince, going back precisely four generations and no further. All those from before were buried in the vaults of the castle in which Princess Amanda lived. Her great, great, great grandfather, King Rufus I, had fallen out so badly with his own father, King Randolph VI, that he had avoided the old

tyrant's funeral. As the canon boomed to mark his father's encryptmen, he had stomped along the banks of the river for until he had stopped to pick blackberries from the wild brambles. The fruit was ripe, sweet and bitter in turn, and burst on his tongue with such flavour that it made him weep with joy. He could hardly believe that he had survived the cruel ogre who called him "that feeble arse" and never smiled at him once but swore at him, "bugger", "bollocks head", "little shit", every day of his life. He had himself sworn in a holier fashion there and then, purple berry juice staining his fingers and lips, that this is where he would be buried when it was his turn. His wife (even though he didn't have one yet) would also be buried here and so would his children and their children and on and on hereafter. Not one of his own descendants were to be laid to rest beside that "foul jackal", the father whom he hated like only a son can hate a parent who has the nerve to bring him to life and then treat him as if the fault for being born was his. King Rufus I had a productive, law-filled reign and when he passed away he had been buried downriver, beside the brambles as he decreed, with plain granite, unpretentious and durable, for his headstone. Thereafter, it became fashionable to be laid to rest in what became a thriving graveyard beyond the Capitol. Out of disappointment and rejection can the most unlikely creations flower. Such was this graveyard, a beautiful, peaceful sanctuary to the noble dead. A new king had broken away in life and death from his cruel father.

Queen Cinderella's headstone, her daughter did notice, was marked in precisely the same lettering as all the other royal headstones with no more than her name, the date she was born and the date she died. Princess Amanda held out her arms, full of lilies.

"Mummy. I got these for you."

She said this to the stone, or more precisely to this name written upon it, because she wasn't sure where else to direct her words. She laid down the lilies just below the numbers which revealed that her mother had been exactly forty when she had died.

"They're not roses. I'm sorry."

Florence's whole head had now appeared above the parapet of the new grave. Gloria bobbed right down as if concealing herself more would somehow make Florence less visible. "I'm not with her. Nothing to do with me." she was thinking, practising in case someone interrogated.

"Did you ever see a girl so black and beautiful with arms pouring petals so white?" salivated the incorrigible Flo.

Gloria just couldn't keep down any longer. Up she sprang. Her head wobbled from side to

side.

"I want a dress like that. I want buttons that do up to my throat." she moaned, taking the words right out of Florence's mouth.

"Some get silk, others get soil. Only idiots hanker." spat Florence with double the force because Gloria had no right to steal her own most precious longings.

Cinderella's daughter continued to arrange the lilies, stem by stem.

"You do like lilies too, don't you?" she checked with the name on the stone. "I wanted to get roses. I did try. Lilies have a more powerful perfume. I thought there might be more chance of you smelling them. If you still have a nose that is. You do still have a nose, don't you?"

And suddenly she wasn't talking to the stone but directing her words through the layers of soil, down to the ebony coffin, to her very mother, whatever remained of her. Oh heavens, what did remain of her by now? What did she look like?

A cacophony of flapping. From every bush, every tree, every stone, the crows spread their wings like the cloaks of so many vampires when the sun has at last set. From all sides they drew together directly above princess Amanda as she knelt beside Cinderella's grave.

"What's up with them?" whimpered Gloria.

"What is up with them?" wondered Florence.

"Mummy? Can you hear me?" urged princess Amanda.

The cawing was deafening. The princess turned her face upwards to observe the circle of beaks and feathers above her. It blocked out the sun perfectly.

"You, crows, can you hear my mummy speaking? What does she say?" she implored.

"I reckon it's a warning." muttered Gloria like an old shepherd interpreting the clouds at dusk.

"How's it a warning?" sneered Florence.

"I know it when the dark birds do speak." said Gloria, her eyelids half closing and a dusty aura beginning to emanate from her face.

"All you know is what drops out of their backsides." pricked Florence and Gloria's magical bubble was burst.

The crows were circling so fast now that they had coalesced into a single shadow above princess Amanda's head. She shrunk downwards and appealed to the gravestone.

"Are you angry about the roses?" she trembled.

She hadn't wanted to admit how she had gone out this morning to the beds of salmon pink, ruby red, luscious maroon blooms. These were Cinderella's pride and joy. Since her mother's funeral, she had become too afraid to approach the gardens, terrified that the thorns would

scratch her to death. When a servant brought a vase of freshly cut stems into the castle, the princess had run screaming from the room. This morning she had woken up and braced herself. "Courage." she had said in the voice her father used when the things in life we'd rather avoid have to be faced. Then she had stared at the image of herself, so like her mother, in the mirror. "Flowers from her daughter for the dead queen." This was the tradition. How could it be anything other than the beautiful roses? She had clenched her fists as she approached the flowerbeds. The urge to run a million miles in the opposite direction swelled in her breast. But princess Amanda possessed her father's will and this is what steeled her. The head gardener had handed her his secateurs. She'd bent down, shuddering, ready for the thorns to lacerate her skin. She grasped the flower just beneath the petals to hold it firm. Was the blood flowing yet? Would anything remain of her hand when it was done with her? And then something most unexpected had happened. The flower did not attack. Instead it drooped as if she had attacked it. The second rose had done the same. The third had shed its petals as soon as her fingers came near. And the fourth and the fifth. The head gardener had never seen anything like it. He bit his lip hard as she had grabbed wildly at the stems, screaming at them to stay alive and keep their beauty. Still biting that lip, he had led her away to the hothouses where the lilies were thriving. He was obviously concerned that the princess would destroy the entire crop. He didn't want to have to answer for a vista of bare beds. He took some relief that the softer lilies seemed to calm her a little. He wiped the back of his hand across his mouth as she gathered the thornless blooms. Later, he noticed a smearing of blood below his knuckles which he had to lick off.

"I promise that I did my best." Princess Amanda struggled to explain to the gravestone and the crows, circling and crying above.

"I tried to pick roses for you but every single one wilted when I went near it." She bit back the tears, "Isn't it meant to be the other way round, mummy? Shouldn't the princess fear the prick of the thorn rather than the flower droop at the pick of the princess?"

As if to quiet this most disturbing of questions (but somehow serving all the same to underline it) a trumpet blared in the distance. The crow circle immediately froze and seemed like it might drop, hard as a discus of lead upon the princess and her mother's grave below.

"I wish with all my heart, that there was some way.....I'd do anything, mummy, anything to bring you back."

Another plaintive trumpet note sounded, nearer this time, and the saucer of black in the sky burst like a clay pigeon hit bang in the middle by a perfect shot. Birds scattered in every

direction. The sun shone again on Amanda's head as a lone, black feather dropped silently onto the grave directly over the name CINDERELLA. Amanda picked it up. A feather from heaven. Keep it and you will be protected. Cinderella had told her about birds. She slid the quill sideways into the pocket hidden in the seam of her skirt.

At my mother's funeral, my father did something wonderful for me.

After my younger brother and sister and I, my father and all the relatives and members of the community, had followed her coffin to the grave and watched it lowered into the ground, the rabbi offered the spade to dad so that he might shovel the first fragments of earth to bury her. Dad took the shovel and then said aloud so that everyone could hear, "You have the right to do this. You're her first born child." And he held the spade out to me and I took it and I led the burying of my mother. I was thirty five years old. There are many things that my dad has never understood about me but when it came to parting from a parent, he understood before I did.

My mum was sixty when she died. Two weeks before she fell into a coma and passed away we'd talked about her funeral.

"How do you want it to be? Is there anything you'd like to happen?" I'd asked.

"I can't imagine it." she said. "I won't be there, will I?"

The day before the funeral, at the undertaker's, I stroked her skin which was colder than I knew skin could possibly be. I kept expecting her to move. Of course, she didn't. This was unnerving. Her over-heatedness, the flush of her presence was one of the most distinctive things about her. Pallid had never been her style. I talked to this reduced version of her. So did my sister. We decided to tell her everything we'd wanted to tell her in life but hadn't. My sister had a lot more to say than me. Ten months before I had said most of the difficult things I needed to say. She was still able to reply and we'd both been very upset, and I almost didn't dare, but I am now forever grateful that I did. Mum was still in her wheelchair when we had that talk. She did grow to understand over the following months that I had not played the silence game of "protecting her feelings" because the protection was a fence of barbed wire between us. I said:

"I'm so angry with you about so much that it's getting in the way of being able to care that

you're ill and being able to give you the consideration and love I want to give. I want to be able to get beyond feeling so furious and this is the only way I know how, telling you outright." And so I said how much I'd hated the hitting and the shouting and the judging and the way she didn't believe me when I told about the bad half-memories of my sufferings as a child: the threats that the shears would come and slice off my head if I said anything about what had been done to me (whatever it might be for I could not remember); a feeling of being trapped inside my skin and needing to flee and having nowhere else to go but to the topmost corner of the ceiling behind my head from where I watched myself trying to escape from what could not be seen because my down-there eyes were closed and my up-there eyes were averting their gaze. There were also the recurrent nightmares about crocodiles swimming upstream, their jaws dripping with my blood and torn flesh whilst I still swam desperately ahead of them, still trying to get away even though I was already done for.

And so I spoke. And she listened. And we both cried. And she said after three hours of this:

"I'm sorry. Can you forgive me?"

"And I said that the little girl who could have forgiven no longer existed. But I was left and I did love her."

The tumours on her spine were to make her paraplegic and lay her up completely a few weeks after this conversation. The last eight months of her life were spent in bed. This last period was by far most positive between us. We were able to be more open and warm than we'd ever been able to be with each other before. Her feet lay like lumps at the end of her bed. She had absolutely no feeling in them and a strange aspect of her illness was that her belly and arms and legs were bloated with water retention whilst her skin became dehydrated. Her toe nails were growing, curling and yellow, and her skin was flakey. She asked me if I'd take care of them for her. So I carefully cut each nail with the nail-scissors, scraped away the dead skin and massaged baby oil into the foot from toe-tip to ankle. As I did this, she smiled and told me that my brother was furious with me for being so inconsiderate as to attack her when she'd been ill. She was referring to our difficult conversation. I asked her again if she understood why I'd said what I had. She said that of course she did and she'd told him that things were much better between us now because of it and that he was to put it into the past. District nurses visited three times a day to change the urine bag, check the catheter, re-dress the bed sores, change the sheets, clean her and raise her up in the hoist so that she could poo. Dad had to help with that, plastic gloves on, because she had no control of any of the muscles below her waist. I watched them hoist her up. She liked me to stay with her when I came up on the train to visit. And she'd listened to my shit so I bore the expulsion of hers. I found it appalling

how hideous she looked with her legs splayed, her body bloated purple and pink and white by the drugs, the tumours and being so stationary. She smelt strongly of something between stale sweat and decay. My youngest son shied away when she held out her arms to hug him. He whispered to me later that she made a bad smell and he couldn't bear it.

My mum was not in the least bit bothered by her odour. She had been born without a sense of smell and had been able all her life to clear out rotten food, pass near seeping drains or unflushed toilets, clean up vomit and put her nose into a bottle of sour milk, without flickering an eyelid. It also had its disadvantages because she couldn't smell fresh lavender or her roses from the garden or a handful of mint. She said that it didn't bother her because she'd never known any different.

"It's like trying to imagine a colour if I was born blind." she'd say. "What's the point?"

My mum was the Queen of Allergy. Her world was strewn with dangerous substances, like curses, which had to be watched and kept at a safe distance. She was also determined to co-opt her children into the same system of reference. From as early as I can remember, feathers were dangerous. Whenever we stayed in a hotel (in the early days when such luxuries could still be afforded), mum would enter a room and make straight for the pillows.

"Are there feathers in those?" she'd demand of the chamber maids or porters.

There invariably were and the whole lot, in the children's room too, would be despatched in favour of pillows with synthetic stuffing. Air freshener was a no-no. Many perfumes gave off subversive fumes (of course mum couldn't smell the scented element). Only pure silver or gold could be worn in jewellery. Any impure metal would trigger some kind of reaction. This meant that pierced ears were forbidden because the mere pricking of the ear-lobe was asking for trouble. House-dust was like nerve gas and changing the hover was a perilous process. Wasp stings could put you into hospital. The world was full of stuff that would make you sneeze, itch, swell and, in mum's case, bring on a lethal asthma attack, desperate gaspings for breath, rattling in the chest, bulging eyes. As she got older, the list of hazardous substances increased: alcohol was no good for her, most E number food colourings would "set her off" (which ruled out a large number of processed foods), wool could not be touched let alone worn, lamb could not be eaten (I am yet to understand why this hazardous quality was particularly possessed by sheep). But the strange thing was that we lived with cats for years. I would go around with a streaming nose and red eyes most of the time, always had piles of tissues wherever I went, and neither she nor I ever made the connection between my physical symptoms and the possibility of a cat allergy. When I left home, at the age of

eighteen, the symptoms abated. I realised that what I thought was a normal level of sinus irritation was an unpleasant problem. My eczema also disappeared when I left home. I used to have bleeding scabs inside my elbows and knees for most of childhood.

Chapter Four - The Slipper

"Before the queen died she took a ring from her finger and gave it to the king, saying, 'When you have to marry again, marry a woman whose finger fits this ring - not too slack and not too tight.' "Dona Labismina", from "Contos Populares do Brazil", Silvio Romero

The trumpet blasts were loud and near.

"More royalty." Florence continued to contort her frame so that she could be hidden but still see everything.

"Is the setting-in-stone starting then?" Gloria was trying to see too, despite her wariness.

"Course, it's starting. What do you think is going on - the seven wise angels come to make you the bleeding queen, turd face?"

Gloria ignored the put down and double-checked further. "And is our Lord and king approaching?" She didn't dare look at all now. It was far, far too risky.

Florence couldn't bear not to look. She forced herself into a very awkward position which afforded a decent view from the entrance arch all the way to Queen Cinderella's grave. It was worth the pain.

King Rufus III made his appearance like a being from another domain. He was sleek as a panther in a perfectly tailored, understated jacket with a high collar in the classic style, parallel-lined trousers and laced shoes. His hair was so black that it made the graveyard crows look washed-out by comparison. He walked a few paces behind the trumpeter, the rest of the little procession behind him. Then he stopped beneath the archway where he hovered for a long, agonised moment, just as his daughter had done. He too closed his eyes as he recalled his one-year younger self in precisely the same spot. Everyone behind him came to a respectful halt, their eyes averted. The trumpeter held the brass mouthpiece a hair's breadth from his lips. Time stood still. The world waited. The king opened his turquoise eyes with pupils of jet. He looked at the dark shape standing beside the grave and his brow furrowed.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"That is your daughter, sire, the princess." replied the Chancellor without moving.

"Aaah, yes." remembered the king. "She has taken it badly, hasn't she?" And he nodded to himself in answer to his own question. "The stone has been set, I see." Another moment of silence. Then, as if he had been given an inaudible command, the trumpeter let the mouthpiece connect with his ready pucker, blew a note of brass and paced towards the princess and the headstone. The king strolled behind. After him came the Chancellor with his cropped red hair, blanched skin and slim frame, wearing his suit of inky blue-black with narrowing trouser-legs and pointed shoes. Beside him was the High Priest, white curls tight above his dark brown forehead and wearing a cassock of deepest grey. Then came the senior members of the king's staff and the princess's chief lady-in-waiting. Unlike the funeral, the setting of the stone was a private, low-key affair. There were no pitch-black stallions, no drums, no battalion of infantry with polished buttons and rifles, no representatives from every walk of life and every other land. This time the main body of the court and the ordinary people were out on the streets at the Capitol, preparing to welcome their monarch back to the world after the twelve months of mourning had officially ended. As her father approached, princess Amanda stepped back to vacate the prime position. Only in that moment did she realise that she had been keeping the spot warm for him.

Gloria could not take her eyes off the slipper. Ringing in her ears were the words she'd been taught from birth:

"My mam had a sister, like I've got you, and did she cop the prince? Like hell. She got off with the lousy grave-digger that buried her mam and step-dad and so she was married to the spade and soil for the rest of her days. And all coz her feet was too damn big."

The slipper sparkled in the sunlight. That sparkle illuminated a mighty door of lost opportunities revisited. That sparkle promised another way of being, lost in the embrace of a king and not any king. This was the king who had once been the prince and who was now older and handsomer and more rugged than when her mam was full of hope and had fallen head over heels for him.

"I'm bloody trying that on!"

Spade in hand, Gloria Ugly leaped out of the grave.

"Glory be, Gloria Ugly. Get yerself back in here." frothed Florence, all in a lather of terror. But Gloria was hoofing across that graveyard at thunder and lightning pace. "My Lord and Majesty. I give my foot into your regal hand." She plonked herself bang in front of the King. "For to try on the slipper and be proven as bride."

Florence was gasping for breath, gobsmacked at the way her stupid, useless, appalling sister had gone over the top.

"Bog me if I'm being left behind."

And out of the grave she too jumped, bounded over to where Gloria was standing, elbowed her aside and placed her own foot where her sister's had been.

"Great and mighty king. Take my foot for your test of love."

The King knew too well how women clamoured when the slipper fielded its challenge. All modesty was abandoned in the name of naked desire. That desire had in turn amused, charmed or excited him when he was younger and believed in the power of love to satisfy all longings. Now he felt less than nothing. Everyone else started when the demons from the mud appeared. But the king did not flinch an inch. Princess Amanda, on the other hand, nearly popped out of her skin.

"What are these?" she gasped.

"I believe that they are a variety of female, your highness." informed the Chancellor.

"Human females?"

This wide-eyed inquiry broke the tension. The entourage chuckled indulgently. Mourning was over and they were able to express humour publicly again. What a relief.

The Chancellor called the applicants to attention.

"First arrival first."

Gloria was chuffed to see that Florence didn't dare protest.

The Chancellor continued, "Foot please."

A page knelt on all fours to make a human stool. Gloria sat on his back and raised her leg as the Chancellor indicated. The king took up the crystal slipper and knelt before the Ugly girl whose mother he didn't remember but who had sat before him as eagerly all those years before as her daughter did now.

"With this slipper, I honour thee my consideration." he intoned as he held the crystal just below her foot.

Gloria slid her toes onto the transparent sole of the slipper. It was cool to the touch and ungiving. She realised at once that her mother's fate with this shoe foretold her own exactly. There was no way her plate of meat was going to fit. Then the pit of her brain spat up a memory that couldn't possibly be hers: it was her grandmother offering her mother a knife. Florence, watching, had the same memory too. How it got into both their minds when this happened before they were each born, is not clear. Maybe it had been inserted into mam's story one night when the wind was high and the bint, her heart still spiked with bitterness, was too knackered to censor events. But the sharpness of the memory acted like a very clear

instruction.

"Blow me if that isn't a flying pig. Look! Up there!" shrieked Gloria, pointing to the sky where the crows had formed their circle just before the king had arrived.

Everyone stared upwards expectantly.

Extremities clearly demanded extreme measures. "Come here you stupid foot." Gloria raised her spade and braced herself. Big breath in and...slash! In a flash she sliced the blade down across the place where her toes nestled. Hackety hack, hack, hack until there they lay, five stunted potato tubers in the mudddy grass.

"The aviating pig seems to have eluded us." observed the Chancellor turning his gaze back to the applicant and her test.

"It fits." declared Gloria.

"It fits." confirmed all the rest in attendance.

"It does seem to fit." declared the Chancellor.

Florence's jaw dropped to her knees.

"Out of the graveyard and into the palace!" shouted Gloria with a far too much bravado.

"His majesty must inspect and confirm." stated the Chancellor.

"My eternal love." breathed Gloria.

The king ignored her as he had ignored his daughter during the midnight chimes of mourning. Gloria's bottom lip was beginning to twitch. His stillness made her nervous. How she longed for him to embrace her, to still her too. The slipper fitted, didn't it? They were made for each other (even if surgical adjustment had been needed to prove the fact).

"You majesty?" The Chancellor still required the regal affirmation.

"Daddy?" Princess Amanda whispered. How could this supposed female, more or less the same age as herself (she guessed), become the King's wife! Her mother! And yet the Chancellor was behaving as if the wedding was all but organised. The creature herself was salivating at the mouth. It was disgusting. And that wasn't the only place from which she was oozing. There was some other substance. What was it? A wooziness came over princess Amanda. She pointed to the claret pool forming beneath the toe of the crystal.

"Oh daddy, look, look." she pressed. "Look at all that stuff pouring out of her. Is that normal? Get it away. Please, get it away."

The king lowered his eyes to view the offending extremity.

"Chancellor?" he said in a tone, which suggested affirmation not of the validity of his bride but of his certain belief that she never had been anything of the sort.

The Chancellor was on the case at once.

"Is that crimson trail yours, madame?" he challenged.

"What trail?" Responded Gloria as vacantly as she would to one of Florence's admonishments (although this time her words were laced with innocence rather than surliness).

"That bloody mess behind you." insisted the Chancellor.

Gloria looked down, doing her best to maintain her air of blamelessness even though the endeavour was becoming as hard as pushing a boulder up a hill. When she saw the goo where her foot prematurely ended, she felt this boulder refuse to go up any further.

"Blummin bummer!" she whined.

And the boulder began to tumble back. She tried to jump out of the way but it was too late. It flattened her. The Chancellor drove her humiliation home.

"More of a scissoring than a fitting is it?" Princess Amanda whimpered at the very thought. She couldn't bear to look.

"Let us not prolong the agony." pronounced the King, without harshness. Some flicker of life was stirred in him by this re-enactment of events from his youth. He realised how much he wanted to have his chance again. He had never imagined that he would face growing old so alone.

"Forgive me. Oh Highness. Please. Forgive me." Gloria was on her knees. If only he would look at her and see how she loved him, enough to sacrifice even more of her body parts to fit his requirements. For him she would carve herself to the torso because once he took her, whatever remained, to his heart, then she would be made more whole than she had ever been before. The King glanced her way for a split second. She caught a flicker of acknowledgement.

"Back down the hole." instructed the Chancellor, seizing the moment.

Gloria was swept up by the human stool and another page exactly like him. The water sloped in the bottom of the half-dug grave as she plopped into it.

"Why did she do that to her toes?" asked princess Amanda, peering through her fingers at the nuggets as they congealed in the grass.

"When you're older, darling, I'll tell you all about these things." replied the king as he bent down and scooped them up in his hand.

"Ugh." Princess Amanda's belly heaved.

The King took out a handkerchief from his pocket and dropped the five little piggies into it. A page instantly cleaned the royal hand (the same page who had already cleaned the slipper), another page handed him a fresh handkerchief, whilst a third page received the bundle.

"Return these to their mistress." instructed his majesty, exuding a sense of fair play.

Florence watched as the page dropped the bundle of toes into the grave where Gloria lay. The older Ugly was moved by the King's gesture of consideration. That he should show the Maggot who'd tried to cheat him such respect, and him a high monarch. How then would he treat the one he loved? Florence's heart burned to succeed where her mother, aunt and sister had failed.

"Don't forget about me, my dear Lord." she prompted.

"Must we put ourselves through this again?" muttered his majesty.

"Respect the law and it will be for you an anchor and rock." pressed the Chancellor.

"Of course. Continue." acknowledged the King.

The same page knelt into a stool again. Florence sat on his back and raised her leg again. The King took up the crystal slipper again and knelt before the second Ugly girl whose mother-in-her-pre-mother-youth he was starting to remember. Wasn't there something about the determination of the clamped jaw that was familiar?

"With this slipper, I honour thee my consideration." he intoned as he held the crystal just below her foot, again. Florence had her turn now to slide her toes onto the transparent sole of the shoe. It was just as cool and just as ungiving as before. She realised at once that the fates of the other women in her family foretold her own exactly. Again she envisaged her grandmother offering her mother that knife. Florence used all her power to brush the spectre away. She would not repeat their mistakes. She was the right one. She had to be.

"The foot is far too big." observed the king, preparing to rise.

"No, really, my beloved majesty, just you hold it tight and push hard. Don't be afraid. I can take it." encouraged Florence.

The king looked up at her then, for longer than he had looked at Gloria. It was beginning to come back to him, this pleading expression to keep trying. Every single face belonging to every single foot appeared in his mind's eye. One face, most of all, presented itself. Its features were smeared to a mess. They belonged to a creature hidden in a back room, at whom everyone had scoffed. He recollected the mutters, "Poor, desperate fool thinking her foot will fit." and "Is she really human?" and "She's got no chance." He'd almost believed the comments himself, but he had an ache that needed her balm wherever she was, and his desperation urged him to try every single possibility no matter how sordid. And because he had been prepared to embrace even the most debased creature on the earth, he had been granted his reward. By lifting her on high, so had he been raised on a high which made low his worldly status. Beneath the ashes he had found her. Gold lives, after all, in the slime of the river bed. And the

King now looked at Florence and remembered the ash girl. He looked closely at the shoe and at the size of the foot. It didn't seem possible. But what was not possible if one wished hard enough? "More...more...don't hold back." urged the girl.

"If it could happen once," the King tried to believe, "Why not again?" And so he pushed the little slipper hard onto the big foot. Florence bit her lip as her bones crunched. Princess Amanda covered her mouth to keep the rising tide of bile from surging out of her. "Harder." urged Florence.

Hard, yes. Hold nothing back. The King forced with all his might. Splinters crackled inside Florence's toes and at her heel.

"Are your bones breaking?" asked the king.

"Not mine. I'm fine. Look. It nearly fits." promised Florence.

The King refused to notice the patches of blue spreading across the skin.

"Even harder." pressed the girl.

Even harder he pressed. And then it was on.

"How it fits." gasped Florence.

But the King did not feel the elation that he should.

"Can you stand?" he asked.

"No problem." said Florence. She had to clench her every ounce to rise onto both feet. Princess Amanda squealed as the wretched creature stood. Florence beat down the screech in her breast.

"Can you hop?" intervened the Chancellor.

"Why shouldn't I?" replied Florence.

But she was kidding herself. As she let her body weight drop onto her broken foot, crammed to overflowing into the delicate slipper, her screech escaped with such appalling ferocity that Princess Amanda was now forced to cover her ears.

"Enough." declared the king, "Relieve us of this agony."

Within seconds Florence was crashing on top of Gloria who had not had the will to move from the bottom of the grave. And there they lay, motionless, one Ugly sister on top of the other, in the mud. The story had repeated itself. It had a life of its own and they existed, mere mortals, to feed the hungry narrative with its pound of flesh. Both were wondering if being dead wasn't a much more desirable state than being alive ever could be.

Princess Amanda was relieved that her nausea was abating. She was also overwhelmed with curiosity.

"Father, why did they harm themselves for the slipper? Please tell me." Surely the day when she was old enough to know more of these strange rites of courtship had arrived?

"Do you not want to marry a prince above all else?" asked her father.

"Oh yes." she said with enthusiasm.

"Well, so did they. And they were misguided. But you are right. Princess-and-prince-together is the purest form of happiness." The king could not take his eyes off the slipper in his hands.

"Prince and princess. Be assured, nothing is purer." confirmed the Chancellor.

"And is it not the most beautiful slipper?" mused the king.

"May I try it on?" asked Princess Amanda. She had always been captivated by the special slippers. Cinderella had let her wear them once. They had flapped about her ankles and she'd nearly smashed one of them because, although strangely durable, they also had a very particular and translucent fragility.

"You want to wear your mother's slipper, my dear?" The King was touched by her sweet request. He remembered the tottering and the heel-flapping. He recalled how he and her mother had laughed together at their little princess who so longed to be a queen.

The page bent behind the princess now. Amanda sat. A lady in waiting removed her black court shoe. The entourage burst into spontaneous applause as the king kneeled rather ostentatiously. Was there even some sense of fun in the air?

"Give me your foot, my darling."

"Here father."

And Amanda let her heel drop into her daddy's hand. She shivered when it touched his open palm and realised just how very, very terribly she had missed all the cuddles and hand-holding and hair-stroking that had been their way together and had abruptly stopped the day her mother collapsed.

"What a delicate foot you have." the King observed, suddenly noticing that it was more shapely than he ever remembered. He slid the slipper over the toes and then back over the heel.

What happened now has been told many times by adults to children, by children to other children and back to adults, by minstrels in the light of the camp fire, by animated figures on the big and little screens. What happened next has happened before and will keep on happening again and again.

"It fits!" beamed Princess Amanda. If only mummy was here to see how she'd grown.

"So it does." muttered the High Priest to the Chancellor.

"Indeed, it does fit." said the Chancellor.

Princess Amanda was delighted. She stood up and let her weight sink into the sole. The point of the heel tapped against the stony path.

"I can hop!" she declared and did so with tremendous ease.

The attendants burst into applause as she held her arms aloft in triumph.

"May I dance in it?" asked the princess.

"If it fits. Of course." replied the King.

Princess Amanda raised her arms in an arc in front of her and, one shoe ash black, one shoe gleaming crystal, she began to step out in rhythm.

The King felt as light-headed as he had felt the first time the slipper had found its owner. He saw the foot in the shoe, jiggling down the path through the graves. He watched the skirt swirling around her legs, alive with the tempo of the dance. He noticed her mauve jacket, the same material as the lining of his own. He took in the raven black hair and the porcelain skin. And then his eyes met hers. Emerald green, sparkling like the slipper. His only love. How could he have been deceived into believing that she would leave him alone forever?

"Ella? My Ella?" he choked. "Cinderella?"

She stopped her dance right in front of him.

"It's me, daddy. Amanda."

"My beloved." he gasped.

"Beloved. Yes. Because I am." Princess Amanda was so grateful that at last her daddy was remembering who she was.

"Whomsoever's foot the remaining slipper fits, low or high, poor or proud....." said the King, trailing off, pausing, not completing the sentence. Not yet.

"Do I have to take the shoe off now?" asked Amanda, looking around for more mud-streaked applicants to emerge from holes in the ground. She supposed she'd had enough fun and it was time to get back down to business.

"No." smiled the King, "You can keep it on for as long as you like."

Was he indulging her again like he used to? Was her daddy returned to her at last?

He held out his hand. "Shall we dance?"

Princess Amanda was filled with the flurry of all the dances past, her feet high in the air, the king's off-duty hands tight against her ribs, holding her up. Dancing with daddy was always like flying. She flung herself into his arms and he received her. Why had they been so separated this last year? What a waste. He clutched her tight, not round the ribs now, but his

palms hugging her shoulders, pulling her hair from her face, pressing his clean-shaven skin against hers.

"Dance with me, my love." he said and shifted her gently into position, letting his finger tips slide across her palm. His other hand dropped down to the base of her back and pressed her firmly. No music was playing but he seemed to hear it anyway. As they began to dance she realised that her feet, with their odd shoes, were still touching the ground.

A flap of black. Something landed on the gravestone decorated with lilies. The feather in her pocket was fluttering now as her skirts swished, as the dance built up pace. Were they taking off? Where were they going? The king was asking the same question. He'd been here before but it seemed like an adventure into the unknown all the same.

"Whomsoever's foot the slipper fits, low or high, poor or proud, will be my rightful wife and queen."

They were swirling through the graves together, the King and his daughter.

"The slipper fits. It fits you perfectly. Everything about you fits." He was pressing his forehead upon hers. She could feel his breath on her cheek. As for the king, he could feel his blood flowing hot in his veins. She was warming him back to life. She was bringing him to the boil.

"Your majesty?" The Chancellor was puzzled. The High Priest's brow furrowed with unasked questions too. The princess's legs crumbled beneath her. The dance stopped. The King was displeased.

"Is something bothering you, Chancellor?" The royal voice had that razor edge which made Amanda chill. It made the Chancellor chill too.

"Princess Amanda is....."

"She is the one, no?" asked his majesty.

Neither the Chancellor nor the Priest looked puzzled any more. They looked nervous.

"What has been lost must be replaced. A new queen shall be selected for the King forthwith." quoted King Rufus III by memory.

"Indeed your majesty, but the princess is...."

"The law dictates and I bow to it, do I not?" The king's voice was now en garde and pointing deep into the Chancellor's breast, almost breaking his skin. "The slipper has chosen has it not?"

"It has, my Lord."

"If anyone objects, then they are clearly in contempt of the law."

"Your majesty...?"

"Respect the law and it will be for you an anchor and rock. Is this not so?" The blade of the King's voice now turned on all those in attendance. "Who wishes to challenge the King and his law?"

Everyone was silent. King Rufus I was undoubtedly turning not two hundred paces away in his grave. But the reviving King Rufus III was oblivious to his dead ancestor's disquiet deep in the ground.

"Well?" he challenged.

"It does fit." agreed the Chancellor and the High Priest. All the others attending nodded their heads. Princess Amanda did not nod her head.

"I really should take off the slipper now. " she decided aloud. She pulled her hand out of her pocket, let go of the shuddering feather, and removed the shoe herself. No page or lady in waiting could have got it off quickly enough.

"We'll have another one made just like it. You will wear them for the wedding." Everyone else present, relieved that they were no longer in the line of fire, clapped their hands. Their lives depended on it. Princess Amanda felt so bewildered that she had to ask outright the question which no one else appeared to have the courage to voice.

"Are you going to marry me, father?"

"Of course I am."

"But how can I become my own mother?"

"Were we not all so happy?" he responded.

She could not disagree with this. "Very happy."

"And believe me. Trust me, my only darling. We will be again."

The promise of all the old happiness being restored seemed too glorious to refute. Could he be right? He always had been before. What reason on earth could she have to start mistrusting him now?

"Now, come here. Let me kiss you."

She turned her face dutifully. "Yes, father."

"Why do you offer me your cheek?"

Then she felt his hand cup her chin and raise it towards him. He bent down. Turquoise eyes. Emerald eyes. Her father's kingly lips. Her own lips. His mouth was wet. Hers was dry. Somewhere a bee was stinging a tongue. Whose tongue? Where was it? Deathly silence. When, at last, he pulled away, the applause of the entourage was far too unbearably eager.

"I thought I'd never taste such happiness again." smiled the King, twice as entranced with this girl as he had been with her mother when she was only three years older than her daughter

was now.

Princess Amanda did not dare to wipe her mouth with the back of her hand.

"Is this really what happiness tastes like?" she asked.

He held out his arm to her. "This is only the beginning. I promise. Come with me now to the palace."

Two crows shot into the air in unison, singing their tuneless ditty overhead. The feather was desperate to escape from her pocket.

"May I please stay here a little longer?" She asked.

"Whatever you want, my love." said the King and pressed his lips, his eyes closing momentarily, to the tips of her fingers. "Don't be long."

The trumpet flourished. King Rufus III bowed to his daughter, his future wife. The royal entourage left the graveyard and headed back to the castle where the crowds were waiting, ready to cheer.

List of Contributors

Anna Furse is an award-winning director, writer and movement researcher who teaches full time in the Drama Department of Goldsmiths where she runs the MA in Performance. Training includes the Royal Ballet Schools, Grotowski in Poland, Brook in Paris and she was a founder member of Chisenhale and on the editorial collective of New Dance Magazine. She has been artistic director of several companies including Paines Plough and her own new company Athletes of the Heart with whom she produced YERMA'S EGGS in 2003. Her practice based research into training and productions has focused - though not exclusively - on women's bodies: hysteria, eating disorders and body image, prostitution, disability and infertility. Two of her plays AUGUSTINE (BIG HYSTERIA) and GORGEOUS have been published and produced in the USA, Canada, Denmark and the Czech Republic.

Andrea Gutenberg teaches English literature at the University of Cologne and is currently working on a research project on English modernism and the degeneration debate. She has written a PhD thesis on possible worlds theory and female-centered plot patterns in the British novel and is preparing her habilitation on narcissism as a scientific and poetological concept (c. 1850-1950).

Sam Hume lectures in English language and literature at the University of Cologne with a focus on German/English translation. She studied in Canterbury and Nottingham and is also a professional translator. Her research interests are feminist theory and especially contemporary women's writing. She is currently working on a PhD on feminist interpretations of contemporary British detective fiction.

Isabel Karremann

Claudia Leitner

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Diane Samuels was born in Liverpool in 1960 and now lives with her husband, journalist and author Simon Garfield, and their two sons in north London. She worked as a drama teacher in inner London secondary schools and then as an education officer at the Unicorn Theatre for

children before becoming a full time writer in 1992. Since then she has written extensively for theatre (adults and children) and radio.

She also tutors playwriting for young people as part of the Theatre Royal, Haymarket's Masterclass scheme, has lectured part-time at Middlesex University, Oxford University and Birmingham University on writing and drama, has been working as a writer-in-residence at Hugh Myddelton Primary school in Islington, north London and writes children's book reviews for The Guardian.

Diane Samuels' work for the theatre includes: *The Life and Death of Bessie Smith* (Lloyds Bank Young Theatre Challenge, 1989, Royal National Theatre); *Frankie's Monster* (adapted from Vivien Alcock's novel *The Monster Garden*, Unicorn Theatre, 1991. Published by Heinemann.); *Chalk Circle* (Unicorn Theatre, 1991); *Salt of the Earth* (Theatre Centre, 1993); *The Bonekeeper* (Tricycle Youth Theatre, short-listed for the W. H. Smith Awards for plays for children, 1992); *Watch Out for Mister Stork* (one-act play, Soho Theatre Company's Writers' Festival, 1992, and Finborough Theatre, 1995; Regents Park Open Air Theatre, August 1995); *Kindertransport* (co-winner of the 1992 Verity Bargate Award, winner of 1993 Meyer Whitworth Award. Produced by Soho Theatre Company at the Cockpit, 1993; at the Palace Theatre, Watford with Diana Quick and Jean Boht, transferring to the Vaudeville Theatre, West End, 1996. Also, Manhattan Theater Club, New York, 1994. Other productions throughout the USA, also Sweden, Japan, Germany, Austria, Canada and South Africa. Published in Britain by Nick Hern Books and in the USA by Plume/Penguin); *Turncoat* (Theatre Centre national tour, 1994); *How To Beat A Giant* (SNAP People's Theatre Trust, 1995); *One Hundred Million Footsteps*, (Quicksilver Theatre Company national tours, spring and autumn 1997); *Forever and Ever* (SNAP People's Theatre Trust, 1998); *The True Life Fiction of Mata Hari*, Palace Theatre, Watford starring Greta Scacchi, 2002.

Her work for BBC radio includes: *Two Together?* (Radio 4, 1993); *Frankie's Monster* (Radio 5 adaptation of her stage play, 1992); *Watch Out For Mister Stork* (Radio 4, 1994); *Kindertransport* (Radio 4, Monday Play, November 1995); *Swine* (Radio 4, Monday Play, July 1996). *Hardly Cinderella* (Radio 4, Saturday Playhouse, March 1997); *Doctor Y* (Radio 4, Monday Play, May 1997); *Hen Party* (Radio 4, Nov 2001). Her short story, *Rope* was chosen as one of the winners in Radio 4's 2001 DotDotDot online short story competition for broadcast in early 2002.