

Issue
2005

12

GENDER FORUM

An Internet Journal for Gender Studies



Illuminating Gender I: Gender and Disease

Edited by
Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier

ISSN 1613-1878

Universität
zu Köln



Editor

Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier

University of Cologne
English Department
Albertus-Magnus-Platz
D-50923 Köln/Cologne
Germany

Tel +49-(0)221-470 2284

Fax +49-(0)221-470 6725

email: gender-forum@uni-koeln.de

Editorial Office

Laura-Marie Schnitzler, MA

Sarah Youssef, MA

Christian Zeitz (General Assistant, Reviews)

Tel.: +49-(0)221-470 3030/3035

email: gender-forum@uni-koeln.de

Editorial Board

Prof. Dr. Mita Banerjee,

Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (Germany)

Prof. Dr. Nilufer E. Bharucha,

University of Mumbai (India)

Associate Prof. Dr. Carmen Birkle,

Philipps-Universität Marburg (Germany)

Prof. Dr. Ingrid Hotz-Davies,

Eberhard Karls University Tübingen (Germany)

Prof. Dr. Ralph Poole,

University of Salzburg (Austria)

Prof. Dr. Kathryn Schaffer,

University of Adelaide (Australia)

Prof. Dr. Chris Weedon,

Cardiff University (UK)

Editorial Deadlines

Spring Issue:

abstracts (October 1),

completed papers (January 1)

Summer Issue:

abstracts (January 1),

completed papers (April 1)

Fall Issue:

abstracts (April 1),

completed papers (July 1)

Early Career Researchers Special Issue:

abstracts (May 1),

completed papers (August 1)

Winter Issue:

abstracts (July 1),

completed papers (October 1)

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*.

Authors retain copyright of their work and articles are published under a Creative Commons licence.

There are no submission or page charges, and no colour charges.

Detailed Table Of Contents

Editorial	1
Elisabeth Strohwick: The Infectious Performative: Contagion between Bacteriology and Literature	3
Tanja Nusser: Foreboding Forefathers: Cross(br)ed Desire, A Child and Dubious Parenthood. Goethe's <i>Elective Affinities</i> (Translated by Kate Brooks)	17
Christina Fisanick: Too Fat, Too Hairy, Too (In)visible: Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome and Normative Femininity	36
Jozefina Komporály: "Crippling up is the twenty-first century's answer to blacking up": Conversation with Kaite O'Reilly on theatre, feminism and disability	58
Christina Wald (Review): Margaret Sönser Breen and Warren J. Blumfeld, eds.: <i>Butler Matters: Judith Butler's Impact on Feminist and Queer Studies</i>	68
Alyson Tyler (Review): Helma Järviluoma, Pirkko Moisala & Anni Vilkkö: <i>Gender and Qualitative Methods</i>	73
Dirk Schulz (Review): Judith Butler: <i>Undoing Gender</i>	77
Kaite O'Reilly: <i>Peeling</i> (Excerpt)	82
List of Contributors	86

Editorial

1 **Illuminating Gender** examines the interface of gender and disease, a thematic concern that will be taken up again in **Illuminating Gender II** next year. Two of the contributions to our first issue consider the interaction of medical theory and German literature in the eighteenth as well as in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, while the third target essay focuses on the Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome that troubles notions of normative femininity.

2 Elisabeth Strowick's article "The Infectious Performative. Contagion between Bacteriology and Literature" examines Robert Koch's groundbreaking research on tuberculosis in the late nineteenth century and Thomas Mann's literary presentation of the disease in *The Magic Mountain*. Emphasising issues of gender, Strowick analyses Mann's writing as a poeology of the "infectious performative" and in turn investigates the importance of language and script for Koch's science.

3 In "Foreboding Forefathers: Cross(br)ed Desire, a Child and Dubious Parenthood. Goethe's *Elective Affinities*," Tanja Nusser analyses the impact of the contemporary discourse on female and maternal imagination on Goethe's writing of *Elective Affinities*. Nusser's reading of Goethe's novel highlights the importance of maternal imagination and its relation to artistic creative capacity. Studying the "monstrous" child Otto as a product of parental and specifically maternal imagination, Nusser shows how Goethe's novel partakes in but also invalidates a discourse that places maternal imagination in the context of abnormal, monstrous visualization by opposing biological/natural (paternal) and artificial/imaginative (maternal) insemination.

4 In her essay "'Too Fat, Too Hairy, Too (In)visible': Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome and Normative Femininity", Christina Fisanick deals with the little-known Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome and assesses its cultural significance. Fisanick traces the reasons why the syndrome despite its visible symptoms such as overweight and baldness, which transgress normative femininity, is made culturally invisible and considers ways of implementing the transgressive potential of the syndrome.

5 The featured interview of **Illuminating Gender** is "Crippling up is the twenty-first century's answer to blacking up". The British theatre practitioner and playwright Kaite O'Reilly talks to Jozefína Komporály about theatre, feminism, and disability. We would like to remind readers that the interviews we publish are usually not chosen in accordance with the issue's thematic focus and that we do not consider disability a disease. However, the processes

of social stigmatization as described by both Nusser and Fisanick and those addressed by O'Reilly share similar concerns. The fiction section of **Illuminating Gender** presents excerpts from Kaite O'Reilly's *Peeling*, which was first staged in 2003 at the Birmingham Rep.

6 **Illuminating Gender** also offers reviews of Judith Butler's *Undoing Gender*, of *Butler Matters*, edited by Margaret Sönsen Breen and Warren J. Blumfeld, and *Gender and Qualitative Methods* by Helma Järviluoma, Pirkko Moisala & Anni Vilkkö.

The Infectious Performative: Contagion between Bacteriology and Literature

By Elisabeth Strohwick, John Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA

Abstract:

The following reading of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* and Robert Koch's writings on tuberculosis analyzes varying conceptions of infection in the discursive interface of literature and medicine. What is infectious proves to be fundamentally linked to methodological questions: just as Robert Koch works with isolating the bacillus and the cultivation of "pure cultures," the problem of infection within *The Magic Mountain* is influenced by poetological reflections. An approach based in theory of the performative is suitable for analyzing the poetology of the infectious developed in *The Magic Mountain* insofar as it leads to a decisively new treatment of the relation between language and body. Against this foil, literary stagings of infection can be theoretically related to the process of writing, which shifts toward the infectious performative, in which the sick body intersects with the matter of language. As I shall argue, Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* stages language as infectious material. The literary and theoretical stakes of infectious illness's treatment in literary modernity lie in the figuration of the act of writing as infectious performative. The epistemological implications of the literary-infectious performative will be worked out in a final constellation that includes Koch's bacteriological notion of infection.

Introduction

1 In *The Etiology of Tuberculosis* (1882) Robert Koch proves the tubercular bacillus to be the cause of tuberculosis. He thus conceives of tuberculosis as an etiologically defined entity of disease, and at the same time, he enables a microbiological conception of infectious illnesses to be generally accepted. From then on, tuberculosis is an object of bacteriological study. Yet literature too shows great interest in tuberculosis, above all in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in such prominent examples as Alexandre Dumas' *La Dame aux Camélias* (1848), Arthur Schnitzler's novella *Sterben* (1894) and Thomas Mann's novel *The Magic Mountain* (1924). The following reading of Robert Koch's writings on tuberculosis and Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* analyzes varying conceptions of infection in the discursive interface of medicine and literature. What is infectious proves to be fundamentally linked to methodological questions: just as Robert Koch works with isolating the bacillus and the cultivation of "pure cultures," the problem of infection within *The Magic Mountain* is influenced by poetological reflections. These in turn have to do with questions of the constitution of meaning, such as language's relation to the body, or the construction of gender. An approach based in the theory of the performative is therefore suitable for analyzing the poetology of the infectious developed in *The Magic Mountain* insofar as it leads to a decisively new treatment of the relation between language and body. When language

performs actions, language and body can no longer be thought of as opposed to one another, but rather they appear - as Shoshana Felman emphasizes in her reading of Austin - chiastically intertwined. Felman formulates the relation between body and language as a relation "consisting at once of incongruity and of inseparability," (Felman: 96) and the performative act as an act of the "speaking body." Against this foil, literary stagings of infection can be theoretically related to the process of writing, which - as it remains to be shown in detail - shifts toward the infectious performative, in which the sick body intersects with the matter of language. Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, according to the thesis proposed in the following discussion, stages language as infectious material. The literary and theoretical stakes of infectious illness's treatment in literary modernity lie in the figuration of the act of writing as infectious performative. The epistemological implications of the literary-infectious performative will be worked out in a final constellation that includes Koch's bacteriological notion of infection.

The Infectious in Pure Culture. Robert Koch's Preliminary Bacteriological Inquiry

2 Koch's famous *Etiology of Tuberculosis* is not least of all a methodological decree. The "discovery" of the tubercle bacillus connects both with an etiologic change in the definition of tuberculosis as a sickness and with the formulation of methodological postulates (later called *Koch's postulates*) which will leave a lasting mark on bacteriological research. The "discovery" of the tubercle bacillus can therefore not be separated from the techniques of investigation and methodological postulates because these are what - in the language of the text - lead to its "arrest" as a necessary cause of disease.

3 "If the importance of a disease for mankind is measured from the number of fatalities which are due to it, then tuberculosis must be considered much more important than those most feared infectious diseases, plague, cholera, and the like." (Koch, "Ätiologie": 77) After tuberculosis is characterized as "such a murderous disease" (77-78) the head counsel for the imperial health office in Berlin, Dr Robert Koch, takes up "investigatory work [*Ermittlungsarbeiten*]" (78) and proceeds to "explore the nature of tuberculosis" (78). His goal is to establish the "demonstration of some sort of parasitic objects foreign to the body" (78), which means their microscopic clarification (i.e., making them visible). Those methods of dyeing successful with respect to other pathogenic micro-organisms had until that point left the research in tuberculosis "in the lurch" (78). Koch moves away from these methods and develops a method of dyeing that brings the tubercle bacillus to view quite nicely:

Under the microscope, the structures of the animal tissues [...] appear brown, while the tubercle bacteria are a beautiful blue. [...] The color contrast between the brown-

colored tissues and the blue tubercle bacteria is so striking that the latter [...] may be found and recognized with the greatest certainty- (78-79)

4 The tubercular bacillus is clearly visible, in notably contrasting color - "beautifully blue" or a "vivid blue" (80) - and thus "to be found with the greatest certainty." When using other dyes, "the dyeing does not turn out as beautifully by far as with methylene blue" (80). "Beautiful," in other words, stands for what is easily recognizable or noticeable "with the greatest certainty." Koch's technique of making visible, of representation, integrates knowledge within an aesthetics. The fabrication of the tuberculosis bacillus is an aesthetic undertaking: beautiful, blue, clearly delineated and, as Koch formulates in the concluding postulates, isolatable - an aesthetics of disinfection. The hygienic matter is dismissed in the methods of investigation and representation that produce the infectious matter in the pure culture.

5 Koch directs his search toward the cause. His experimental ordering is designed to prove that the tubercular bacilli not only appear regularly in the various tuberculosis diseases of man and animal, but are their very cause.

In order to prove that tuberculosis is a disease brought about by the penetration of the bacilli, and that it is a parasitic disease conditioned by their growth and reproduction, the bacilli must be isolated from the body and cultivated in pure cultures until they are freed from any lingering diseased production of the animal organism; and finally, the same clinical picture of tuberculosis must be produced by transferring the isolated bacilli to animals. (83-84)

6 The "breeding" of "pure cultures" on slides is a technical innovation, established by Koch in bacteriology, and essential for his method of proof. The bacillus is to be "isolated" from the body, and the "pure culture" is to be "bred" until it is "freed from any lingering diseased production of the animal organism." If bacterial growths visible to the "naked eye [*unbewaffnete Auge*]" (86) already occur in the first days, then it is because of "impurities [*Verunreinigungen*], and the experiment has failed" (86). On the other hand, successful breeding results at the end of the first week in an increase of thirty to forty times in visible, "very delicate, spindle-shaped and mostly S-shaped forms, but also ones bent into similar figures" (86). It is not the only time that the form of the bacillus takes on the materiality of writing. In 1883 Koch "discovers" the "comma bacillus," which produces cholera. Of concern here is the "release" of "any diseased production" and the avoidance of "impurification"; in other words: the avoidance of infection. The pure culture is that which is "stripped of all infection," or the purely infectious. The techniques of making something visible cause it to gain an identity; thus at the end of the essay, Koch writes: "In the future, however, we will no longer deal with an undetermined something [*unbestimmten Etwas*] in the fight against the

horrid plague of the human race, but rather with a tangible parasite [*faßbaren Parasiten*]" (97).

7 For the elimination of the "undetermined something" by the hygiene of method or representation, the proof must be pursued to its conclusion. After breeding the pure culture from tubercular organs, "it now remained to prove the most important question, namely, that the isolated bacilli were able to bring about the typical tuberculosis disease process when inoculated again into animals" (90). While answering this question, it may be less the infectious matter itself than the hygienic-experimental production of its purity that dictates the series of experiments and propels them into infinity. In order to "exclude all mistakes" (90), Koch undertakes various series of experiments, of which I will name just a few: infecting the stomachs of guinea pigs with tubercle bacilli from human lungs; infecting the stomachs of guinea pigs with tubercle bacilli from the lungs of an ape; infecting mice, rats, hedgehogs, doves, frogs and hamsters with tubercle bacilli from the lungs of an ape; the injection of tubercle bacilli from a human lung into the frontal eye-chamber of several hares, etc. Even if the animals do not die "spontaneously" from tuberculosis, they are killed for the purposes of investigation. The depiction of eight experiments is followed by the sentence: "I was however not yet satisfied with that [*Ich begnügte mich damit aber noch nicht*]" (91). Koch performs five further experiments with guinea pigs, hares, cats, a female dog, and several rats. The latter were fed "two months long almost exclusively with the corpses of tubercolic animals. From time to time a rat was killed and examined" (92). Koch's method of proof resides within the logic of the pure culture. In order to isolate the cause of illness, or in other words, to accomplish the methodological-hygienic extraction of the (pure) infectious matter, Koch plans greatly varying kinds of infections: "It is scarcely worth mentioning, that the injection needles used for all of these experiments were securely disinfected for one hour at a heat ranging from 160 to 170 degrees Celsius" (93). In the test injections, infection and disinfection collapse. For the dual logic within which Koch's bacteriological understanding maneuvers - he speaks in his essay "On bacteriological research" of a "struggle" and even a "war against the smallest but most dangerous enemy of the human race" (Koch, "Bakteriologische Forschung" 109) - this would be by all accounts a cause of irritation. Yet another one: Koch's insatiability ("I was however not yet satisfied with that"). Apparently "lord of the infection" and thus of the life and death of the test animals, Koch is increasingly compelled to conduct further infections/experiments. What these further infections demand is nothing other than the methodological hygiene which demands the exclusion of every mistake, every possibility that things have a different relationship to one another. It can be

said that Koch is subject to the impulse of an ever more thorough disinfection of his method, infected by the desire for the "pure infection." Precisely the etiological isolation of the infectious matter presents itself as "source of the infectious matter,"¹ whose exclusion takes up Koch's entire effort. His methodological hygiene thus proves itself to be of just such fatal ambivalence as the test injection. Precisely where the method tries to overcome the infectious matter through isolation or the pure culture, it becomes instead the very place of infection.

Poetology of the Infectious in Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*

8 The microbiological perspective of tuberculosis established through Koch's research is also prevalent in *The Magic Mountain*, undoubtedly the most prominent tuberculosis novel in German literature.² At the same time, the concept of the "infectious" is here understood poetologically. After analyzing individual aspects of this "poetology of the infectious," I will return once again to Koch's bacteriological concept of infection.

Coughing

9 Upon his arrival in the sanatorium Berghof in Davos, Hans Castorp - the "simple Hero [*schlichte Held*]" (Mann, "Lebensabriß" 125) of the "strange Bildungsroman [*wunderliche Bildungsroman*]"³ - encounters a particular kind of background noise. Tuberculosis makes its presence felt in vocal articulations, which deliver several shocks to the newcomer. Even before the first meal, he perceives a noise that he can only recognize gradually, and only piece by piece:

They had reached the second floor, when Hans Castorp suddenly stopped in his tracks, mesmerized by a perfectly ghastly noise he heard coming from beyond a dogleg in the hall - not a loud noise, but so decidedly repulsive that Hans Castorp grimaced and stared wide-eyes at his cousin. It was a cough, apparently - a man's cough, but a cough unlike any that Hans Castorp had ever heard; [...] a cough [...] which didn't come in spasms, but sounded as if someone was stirring feebly in a terrible mush of decomposing organic material. (Mann, *Magic Mountain* 12)⁴

10 Directing his words to his cousin Joachim Ziemßen, who knows enough to report that

¹ "[...] the sources from which infectuous matter flows must be closed off from all things" (Koch, "Tuberkulosebekämpfung" 125).

² *The Magic Mountain* is not Mann's only engagement with the problem of tuberculosis - the earlier story *Tristan* (1903) already takes up this topic - and tuberculosis is not the only infectious disease in Mann's work, which actually considers the full range of infectious diseases. Consider, for example, the typhoid disease of Hanno Buddenbrook (*Die Buddenbrooks*, 1901); the sepsis of the old grand-duke in *Königliche Hoheit* (1909); cholera, which invades Venice and Gustav von Aschenbach (*Der Tod in Venedig*, 1912); and finally Adrian Leverkühn's syphilis (*Doktor Faustus*, 1947).

³ "The renewal of the German *Bildungsroman* on the basis, and under the influence of pulmonary tuberculosis is already a parody" (Thomas Mann to Philipp Witkop, 14 December, 1921, in: Mann, *Selbstkommentare* 27).

⁴ Subsequent references are given in the text.

this is the cough of an Austrian aristocrat born gentleman-rider [Herrenreiter], who is certainly not doing very well, Hans Castorp says:

"You must realize that I've never heard anything like it [...] a cough like that - that's something new to me at least - it's not even human. It's not dry, but you can't call it loose, either, there's no word for it. It's as if you were looking right down inside and could see it all - the mucus and the slime...." (12)

11 The cough, not a living cough, which resembles no other and cannot be resolved within the semantic unity of the word, goes together with an irritation of the senses, and with an intersection of perceptive modalities. It sounds as if one were seeing. Here, the rhetorical figure of "placing-before-the eyes" or *evidentia* may be summoned: a figure which, according to Quintilian, "in words of such marked shape in their occurrence, that one more readily believes to see it than to hear it" (Quintilian, IX, 2, 40). Though so close to rhetorical evidence's crossover between hearing and seeing, the noise of the cough cannot be equated with it. It is not speech that apparently models for the eyes, but rather a noise that, stripped of all sense, lets only "mud" be seen. In its infectious rhetoric, tubercular coughing marks the "end" of evidence, the limit of visibility/representability, a radical deficit in interpretation. And this is precisely what makes Hans Castorp glassy-eyed:

But Hans Castorp could not get the cough he had heard out of his mind and kept repeating that it was literally like looking down inside the horseman; as they entered the restaurant, his eyes, weary from the trip, had taken on a glint of nervous excitement. (12-13)

12 One can certainly speak of an infection here. With regard to this truly deadly acoustic sensation, and to this impossible gaze, an excited, feverish shine enters Hans Castorps' eyes. It returns on the next day: "[...] his eyes took on yesterday's look - seemed too hot and heavy [...] and shone with the same glint that the Austrian horseman's novel cough had enkindled [*entzündet*] in them" (39-40). The cough is inflammatory, infectious. It is, however, neither infectious in the medical sense of a droplet infection, as Hans Castorp only hears the sound from behind the curve of the hallway, nor in the psychoanalytical sense of a "psychic infection" or *Gefühlsansteckung* (Freud, *Massenpsychologie* 100), like the kind associated with hysterical identification, which becomes all too readily inflamed through coughing (one can recall Dora's coughing). Hans Castorp does not cough, as would be appropriate in a hysterical identification; instead, his eyes shine and he becomes feverish. The perceived cough is infectious as noise, the limit of interpretation and vocal articulation, an infectious-"parasitic" (Austin 22) "etiolation[] of language" (22) upon which the body becomes

inflamed, or upon which the body constitutes itself as a sick body.⁵ In other words: infection completes itself as performance through the materiality of language. The literary performative is an infectious performative in which the language-body (the noise of coughing) and the sick body (fever, shine in the eyes) intersect structurally. Hans Castorp becomes feverish on account of the tubercular language-body - that is the specificity of the literary infectious, which has further acoustic sensations in stock; such sensations include, for example, the whistling of Hermine Kleefeld's pneumothorax - the pride of the "half-lung club" - or the voice of "unique toneless quality" (285) of the resident singer, who gives a concert in the Berghof Sanatorium during Hans Castorp's first Christmas.

13 Infectious matter behaves like tonal matter - as the limit of articulation, which posits, inscribes, and crosses through meaning and interpretation - in a word: as noise. One meaning of the French word *parasite* is "noise" (as in a radio's noise); *bruit parasite* means distorting noise [*Störgeräusch*], whereby the parasitic shows itself to be a linguistic-medial phenomenon of communication. Literary infection attaches itself to parasitic tonal material; language is presented as parasitic-infectious material. In its literary treatment, the infectious element is exposed as a mode of reflection of the constitution of meaning.

14 In his medical studies, Hans Castorp stumbles inevitably across a text that teaches him on "parasitic cell fusion and infectious tumors" (280).

These were tissue formations - and very luxuriant [*üppige*] formations they were - caused by foreign cells invading an organism that proved receptive [*aufnahmefähig*] to them and for some reason offered favorable conditions (although, one had to admit, rather dissolute [*liederliche*] conditions at that) for them to flourish. It was not so much that the parasite deprived the surrounding tissue of its nourishment, but rather, in exchanging materials with its host cell, it formed organic compounds that proved amazingly toxic. Indeed ultimately destructive, to the cells of the host organisms. [...] This ritorious living [*Lustbarkeit*] [...] soon led to ruin, [...] lured [*angelockt*] to the scene of the accident, white corpuscles now arrived; [...] Meanwhile the soluble toxins from the bacteria had long since intoxicated [*berauscht*] the nerve centers; the organism was already feverish [*stand in Hochtemperatur*], and with heaving bosom [*mit wogendem Busen*], so to speak, it reeled toward its disintegration [*taumelte er seiner Auflösung entgegen*]. (280)

15 The parasitic attack, or the infection, takes the form of an erotic occurrence: luxuriant, dissolute, intoxicating. And Hans Castorp falls prey to it - as susceptible as the host organism - "feverish, and with heaving bosom." The medical description corresponds almost literally to the passage in which Hans Castorp - who catches a cold towards the end of the third week of

⁵ The body is constitutively bound to disease in *The Magic Mountain*: "Illness makes people even more physical, turns them into only a body" (175); "disease [...] which at the same time was an emphasis on the body" (280); "just as disease in an organism was the intoxicating enhancement and crude accentuation of its own corporeality" (281).

his stay and is ordered by the head nurse to have his temperature checked - ascertains his infection:

Between nine-thirty and ten, in the middle of the morning, his body temperature was 37.6 degrees - that was too high, it was a fever, the result of an infection to which he had been susceptible. And now the question was: what sort of infection? (166)

16 "What sort of infection?" Certainly not - or at least not primarily - an infection in the medical sense. Bearing in mind the poetological revision that the infectious undergoes in *The Magic Mountain*, Hans Castorp's parasitic-erotic infection is coupled with the tonal-/linguistic-matter (noise), and thus an infectious/parasitic matter, that crosses through meaning to become the articulation of a desire.

Unambivalent noises and door-shutting by a feminine hand

17 The infectious space of sound has a specific character. Just as Hans Castorp already had an "excited" glint in his eyes caused by the cough of the Austrian gentleman-rider, the fusion of the disturbing noise, or the tubercular language-body, with a sexual desire with regard to certain noises from the neighboring room is undeniable. As the neighbor of the couple from the "bad" Russian table, Hans Castorp becomes the unwilling witness on the first day, during his morning grooming, to certain - one could almost say 'unambivalent' - noises, which attack him in "sticky" bodily fashion.

An apparent chase around the furniture, the crash of an upturned chair, a grab, an embrace, slaps and kisses [...]. Hans Castorp stood [...] and listened against his best intentions. And suddenly a blush rose up under his talcum, because what he had clearly seen coming had now arrived, and beyond any doubt, the game had turned bestial. [...] 'I wonder if I shall see these people later [...]'. But now Hans Castorp realized to his amazement that the flush that had come to his freshly shaven cheeks had not subsided. (38)

18 Just like the coughing of the gentleman-rider, the noises of the Russian couple cause a bodily sensation: Hans Castorp blushes on account of the scene which has become almost visible through its noises; ear-witness of an 'invisible scene,' he sees clearly coming what then comes; and he states - through the idea, that he could "see these people later" - that the redness of his face does not fade. Here too, the "dissolute" noise functions as the performative, Hans Castorp is corporally infected. The infectious performative is of an erotic nature, whereby the real scandal lies in the fact that the erotic is a disturbing noise.

19 In this regard, no noise is more effective than "a noise that Hans Castorp absolutely could not tolerate, he had always hated" (43): that of a door-shutting. The door in question is the door to the dining room, whose squeaking, which will repeat itself henceforth at every

meal, reaches Hans Castorp's ears for the first time during his first breakfast at the Berghof Sanatorium. By the second occurrence, he is able to ascertain the cause: it is a door being shut by a female hand, the entrance - or perhaps one could say *performance* - of a woman who heads toward the 'good' Russian table. Hans Castorp notices fleetingly "her broad cheekbones and narrow eyes [...] a vague memory of something or somebody brushed over him" (75) He learns her name from Miss Engelhart, a teacher who sits at the same table as he does, and who follows the entrance of the woman with her own interest: "'That is Madame Chauchat,' she said. 'She's so careless. A charming lady.' And Fräulein Engelhart's fuzzy cheeks turned a shade rosier." (75) The noisy appearance of Madame Chauchat engenders widely divergent kinds of desire. Nothing other than the repeated noise proves decisive for Hans Castorp's love-infection: Miss Engelhart "had understood from Hans Castorp's sensitivity about slamming doors that a certain emotional bond was developing between her young tablemate and the Russian woman." (133) In fact, Hans Castorp finds his handkerchief reddened after the first lunch; the infectious noise-disturbance acquires a performative-corporeal validity: "When he used his handkerchief, he found red traces of blood [*von Blut gerötet*], but he did not have the energy to think much about it." (76) Although a nosebleed seems to be the case here, an indecisiveness persists with regard to the interpretation of this sign. The 'reddened' handkerchief may also be read as an indication of a bloody cough, i.e., as a sign of (pulmonary-)tuberculosis. Is it perhaps even the irresolution of the sign that makes the reddened handkerchief into infectious material?

Pencil, Repetition, and Gender

20 Madame Chauchat - as was mentioned above - reminds Hans Castorp of "something" and "someone" from the first moment onward. It is Pribislav Hippe, a boy who was in school together with the then thirteen year-old Hans Castorp, a boy with narrow eyes, sharply accentuated cheekbones, and a pleasantly hoarse voice, from whom Hans Castorp borrowed a pencil in the oft-cited school courtyard scene. At that time, Hans Castorp had been directing if not his words then at least his desiring gaze towards Pribislav for a year. The relation between Hans Castorp and Pribislav could hardly be described as a "friendship," since they did not know each other at all; but Hans Castorp "did not worry about the intellectual or emotional basis of his reaction [*Rechtfertigung seiner Empfindungen*]" (118) or about naming his feelings.

21 When he does finally name them, it occurs only due to repetition, when Hans Castorp

addresses Clawdia Chauchat on the night of carnival. In the logic of the repetition⁶ - and love is always a repetition - the question of the correct or false address remains undecidable, and when one considers the intertwining of Pribislav Hippe and Clawdia Chauchat, that question of "true gender" (Foucault) remains undecidable as well:

"[...] je t'ai déjà connue, anciennement, toi et tes yeux merveilleusement obliques et ta bouche et ta voix, avec laquelle tu parles, - une fois déjà, lorsque j'étais collégien, je t'ai demandé ton crayon, pour faire enfin ta connaissance mondaine, parce que je t'aimais irraisonnablement" (Mann, *Zauberberg* 361). ["[...] I knew you before, from days long past, you and your marvelously slanting eyes and your mouth and the voice with which you speak - there was a long time ago, when I was still just a schoolboy, that I asked you for a pencil, just so I could meet you at last, because I loved you with an irrational love" (336)].

"Je t'aime [...] je t'ai aimée de tout temps, car tu es le Toi de ma vie" (Mann, *Zauberberg* 361). ["I love you, [...] I have always loved you, for you are the 'intimate you' of my life" (336)].

22 The naming, as the constitution of the love relationship, occurs belatedly. The relation - and with it the (primal) scene of the pencil loan - is from the very beginning doubled, or divided within itself. The "moment of the greatest closeness and corporeality" (129) that Hans Castorp and Pribislav Hippe experience in the schoolyard, repeats itself on the night of carnival between Hans Castorp and Clawdia Chauchat.

Drawing class was next, and Hans Castorp noticed that he did not have his drawing pencil with him. [...] And so there he stood in the tumult of the brick schoolyard, face to face with Pribislav Hippe. And he said, "Excuse me, could you lend me a pencil?" And Pribislav looked at him [...], "Glad to. But be sure to give it back to me after class." And he pulled a pencil from his pocket, in a silver-plated holder with a ring you had to push up to make the reddish pencil emerge from its metal casing. As he explained its simple mechanism, both their heads bent down over it. "But don't break it," ["*Aber mach ihn nicht entzwei!*"] he added [...]. That was all. (120)

23 Because the scene repeats itself on the night of carnival, during an opportunity in which "ladies in men's clothes, [...] and vice versa, gentlemen [...] in women's clothes" (320) appear, it permits the pencil-scene to appear in a travestic light, or more precisely: the scene marks the inherent travesty/travestic practice in which the pencil is the phallus.⁷ The scene takes shape as follows: a society game has begun - drawing a piglet with closed eyes. Yet the number of available pencils does not suffice for those who wish to participate.

"Who has a [...] pencil? Who'll lend me one?" [...] He turned around and walked back into the room, continuing to shout - headed directly toward Clawdia Chauchat [...] "Do you have a pencil, perhaps?" [...] "Do you mean me?" the bare-armed patient replied, in response to the familiar pronoun in his question. "Yes, I might." [...] She rummaged

⁶ See Freud, *Bemerkungen über die Übertragungsliebe*.

⁷ I understand "travesty" in Judith Butler's sense, as the practice that is irreducible for the constitution of gender identity and at the same time the marking of its contingency (see Butler, *Gender Trouble* 137-138).

in her leather handbag [...], first pulled out a handkerchief, from which she then extracted a silver pencil-holder [...] "You see, I knew it - I knew you'd have one." [...] And as they both bent their heads down over the pencil, she showed him the standard screw mechanism. (327-328)

24 The pencil cannot be separated from the repetition. It circulates in the repetition which it designs performatively.⁸ Within the borrowing of the pencil, Pribislav Hippe and Clawdia Chauchat intertwine. The moment of borrowing is, in other words, not only that of the "greatest closeness and corporeality" between Hans Castorp and Pribislav, and then Madame Chauchat, but most of all between Pribislav Hippe and Clawdia Chauchat. The repeated circulation, whose origin cannot be determined, completes a travestic intersection of genders. For who would say for certain whether it is not perhaps Pribislav's pencil which Hans Castorp returns to Clawdia Chauchat, or if it were perhaps Clawdia Chauchat's pencil which he had once borrowed?⁹ The act of return or borrowing - and thus the structural measure of repetition - would accordingly always be a missing action, the return/borrowing of what is always already another pencil, or here: a pencil of another gender, that is, the articulation of (gender)difference. The 'Toi de sa [Hans Castorp's] vie' is a doubled 'toi' (*you*), cleft in two through repetition, and also with regard to gender. Pribislav's comment that Hans Castorp should not break the pencil "in two" [*entzwei*] is therefore scarcely precise; the pencil as repetition is of course always already in two, a writing material divided within itself that travesties gender identity and infects it with its other. Such a repeated/lacking writing of gender certainly may be identified as the infectious performative.

Series of Handkerchiefs

25 *The Magic Mountain* produces handkerchiefs in series. After the second door-shutting appearance of Madame Chauchat, Hans Castorp finds his handkerchief 'reddened by blood'; on his walk, a nosebleed of such severity occurs that he must go repeatedly to the stream "rinsing out his handkerchief." (117) A handkerchief serves Hans Castorp furthermore as an excuse to arrange an encounter with Clawdia Chauchat, once he knows how to take advantage of her habitual lateness: "After taking his seat at the table, he patted himself with both hands and said in dismayed annoyance, 'I knew it - I've forgotten my handkerchief. That means I'll

⁸ When I interpret the pencil as phallus, it is not in the sense of Lacan's often criticized phallogocentric orientation of the symbolic, but rather according to Butler's reformulation of the phallus which connects it to the performative's structure of repetition (see Butler, *Bodies* 53-91).

⁹ In fact, Hans Castorp plays out the gender-crossing connected with the pencil grammatically during the later 'snow chapter': "[...] when Hans Castorp had found himself in a position equally as mad and difficult, when he had given son crayon, his pencil, Pribislav Hippe's pencil, back to the ailing Clavida Chauchat. [...] 'Son crayon!' In this case that means 'her' pencil, not 'his,' and you only say 'son' because 'crayon' is masculine - all the rest is just a rapid joke" (479-480). "I gave Pribislav Hippe's pencil back to ailing Clawdia" (486).

have to go back upstairs again.' Which he did - just so that he and 'Clavdia' could meet *head-on*, which was something quite different, more dangerous and more intensely alluring than when she walked before or behind him." (142-143) Yet another handkerchief supposedly - as Hans Castorp hears - lifted itself from the ground of its own accord during an occult session with the medium Ellen Brand. And finally, there is Hans Castorp's return from his walk, when the nosebleed and the 'dream' of the pencil-scene with Pribislav struck him - a return in a thoroughly exhausted state and rumpled attire: Hans Castorp, one could say, returns as a living handkerchief. Dr Krokowski's speech on 'love as a sickness-engendering power' has already begun:

But it was a miserable walk home [...] He repeatedly had to stop to rest - the blood would suddenly drain from his face [*daß sein Gesicht plötzlich weiß wurde*], cold sweat would break out on his brow, and his irregular heartbeat made it hard to breathe. (121)

Luckily there was a corner seat available near the door. [...] The audience [...] paid Hans Castorp barely any notice. And that was a good thing, because he looked dreadful. His face was as pale as linen and his suit was bloodstained, so that he looked like a murderer fresh from his awful deed. (122)

6 The face 'white,' "pale as linen," the suit "bloodstained." In its red-white combination, Hans Castorp's bodily attire recalls a bloody handkerchief and thus the sign of the tubercular lung-disease. Having returned from his encounter with Pribislav Hippe, Hans Castorp presents himself as a corporeal sign of sickness. Within the sign of illness - the bloody handkerchief - body and text intersect, precisely: the sick body as sign with the corporeality of the sign of the disease. Just like a "murderer fresh from his deed," Hans Castorp returns from his encounter with Pribislav, in which he addresses his words to Pribislav for the first time, and which furthermore granted him a pleasant drawing-lesson with his pencil during which, as may be supposed, he drew with the *red* pencil on *white* paper. This scene is also a writing scene: if Hans Castorp were to be characterized before his journey to the Sanatorium Berghof as an "unwritten," or white piece of paper ("Hans Castorp, being an unwritten page" [35]), then he is certainly no longer after his walk. The "deed" from which he returns stained with blood and with a feverish body concerns not least of all a corporeal-infectious, homoerotic writing act with the pencil, which he borrowed from Pribislav, on an "unwritten page." In short, writing and the sick body intersect within the handkerchief, the tubercular sign/sign of illness, that unfolds its textual influence as an infectious performative.

Critique of Pure Infection

27 It may be concluded that *The Magic Mountain* develops a poetology of the infectious in its literary treatment of tuberculosis. Writing appears as an infectious act in which the sick body and the tubercular language-body merge structurally. As an infectious material, writing is divided within itself, thus producing a gender travesty and infecting gender identity with its other. With a different purpose the closeness of infection and the materiality of writing appears in the work of Robert Koch, where he characterizes the bacteria as "s-shaped" or as a "comma bacterium" with regard to their 'literal' aspects. Koch, one might say, breeds letters, whereby the letter appears at the same time as bacillus in "pure culture." With regard to the aforementioned medium of language, Koch's technique of the isolation/pure culture signifies the breeding of the pure, easily read and beautiful script. The bacillus may be easily understood, and communicate without noise (*bruit parasite*). In the constellation of bacteriology and literature undertaken in this essay, the literary discourse may be read as a *critique of pure infection*, a critique of the hygienic will to *pure infection*, insofar as the "undetermined something" (Koch, "Ätiologie" 97) of the infectious does not try to lead to a comprehensive identity, but rather installs itself simply as noise, etiolation of sense. Staged as infectious texture, the handkerchief - sickness-sign of tuberculosis - performatively subverts a bacteriological concept of infection. In fact, the handkerchief invades bacteriology as well - even Koch does not evade the infectious texture. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the popular documentation of his conquest of infection, which testifies to the closeness of infection and hygiene: the design of his laurel-crowned portrait in a red handkerchief. The handkerchiefs, produced in a quantity of around 100,000, were completely sold out by 1932.¹⁰

(translated by Jocelyn Holland, University of California, Santa Barbara)

¹⁰ See Heymann 328.

Works Cited

- Austin, John L. *How to Do Things With Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Barbin, Herculine, and Michel Foucault. *Über Hermaphroditismus*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1998.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York, London: Routledge, 1993.
- _____. *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, London: Routledge, 1990.
- Felman, Shoshana. *The Literary Speech Act. Don Juan with J.L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.
- Foucault, Michel. "Das wahre Geschlecht." *Über Hermaphroditismus. Der Fall Barbin*. Frankfurt a.M. 1998: 7-18.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Bemerkungen über die Übertragungsliebe." *Studienausgabe, Ergänzungsband*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1975: 217-230.
- _____. "Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse." *Studienausgabe, Vol. IX*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1974: 61-134.
- Heymann, Bruno. *Robert Koch, Part One, 1843-1882*. Leipzig, 1932.
- Koch, Robert. "Die Ätiologie der Tuberkulose." Ed. Steinbrück/Thom. *Robert Koch*. 77-97.
- _____. "Über bakteriologische Forschung." Ed. Steinbrück/Thom. *Robert Koch*. 99-109.
- _____. "Über den derzeitigen Stand der Tuberkulosebekämpfung (Vortrag anlässlich seiner Auszeichnung mit dem Nobelpreis für Medizin am 12.12.1905)." Ed. Steinbrück/Thom. *Robert Koch*. 123-140.
- Mann, Thomas. *Der Zauberberg*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1988.
- _____. "Lebensabriß." *GW*, Vol. XI. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1990. 98-144.
- _____. *Selbstkommentare: 'Der Zauberberg'*. Ed. Hans Wysling and Marianne Eich-Fischer. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1995.
- _____. *The Magic Mountain* Trans. John E. Woods. New York: Vintage, 1996.
- Quintilianus, Marcus Fabius. *Ausbildung des Redners. XII Books. Part Two: Books VII-XII*. Ed. and trans. Helmut Rahn. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975.
- Steinbrück, Paul, and Achim Thom (eds.). *Robert Koch (1843-1910). Bakteriologe, Tuberkuloseforscher, Hygieniker*. Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1982.

Foreboding Forefathers: Cross(br)ed Desire, A Child and Dubious Parenthood. Goethe's *Elective Affinities* (Translated by Kate Brooks)

By Tanja Nusser, University of Greifswald, Germany

Abstract:

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Elective Affinities* [*Die Wahlverwandtschaften*] was published in 1809. With the character of the child, Otto, Goethe takes up the debate surrounding female/maternal imagination and its supposed influence on the development of the embryo; however, he takes it out of the context of the discourse on monstrosity, in which it was traditionally discussed. When I study Otto as the result of parental imagination and relate this to the debate surrounding maternal imagination, I notice the "artificiality" of procreation and the apparent break with the genealogy in this so-called monstrous imagination. In other words, I am interested in the artificial and artistic status of the child whose birth appears to be the consequence of an artificial insemination.

1 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Elective Affinities* [*Die Wahlverwandtschaften*] was published in 1809, and although it may seem astonishing, the novel can be related to a discourse which was no longer current at that time. With the character of the child, Otto, Goethe takes up the debate surrounding female/maternal imagination and its supposed influence on the development of the embryo; however, he takes it out of the context of the discourse on monstrosity, in which it was traditionally discussed. With the child, Otto, as a "product" of parental imagination, Goethe refers to a centuries-old debate, in which medical and scientific as well as philosophical writings thematized the history of the gaze and the imagination. In the history of the individual, this imagination begins before birth and explains the monstrosity as an illustration of reality or as an illustration of an illustration of reality, which comes into existence through too vivid maternal imaginations.

2 While the novel has been interpreted many times over in German Studies' scholarship, and while Otto has been the focus of interest more than once because he does not resemble his parents and thus through his outer appearance signals the "elective affinities of relationships," to the best of my knowledge, there is no interpretation connecting Otto to the discourse of maternal imagination that had existed since the thirteenth century and no interpretation asking about the relationship between maternal imagination and the debate over creative capability.

3 When I study Otto as the result of parental imagination and relate this to the debate surrounding maternal imagination, I notice the "artificiality" of procreation and the apparent break with the genealogy in this so-called monstrous imagination. In other words, I am interested in the artificial and artistic status of the child whose birth appears to be the consequence of an artificial insemination and in this way plays two concepts of insemination

against one another: the biological/natural and the imaginative/artificial.

4 A physiognomic way of observation, which attempts to look for similarities with the father figure in order to explain "differences in appearance," comes to the foreground with the debate concerning maternal imagination. This debate began in the thirteenth century with the reception of Aristotle, but was increasingly discussed in the sixteenth century by a wide range of scientists, medical doctors, and philosophers, and continued to have effect until the mid nineteenth century. The face, but also the external surface of the body, was declared to undeniably testify to origin/ancestry and point, in the case of lack of resemblance, to imaginary and imagined adultery: Someone else has stepped into the role of the father and taken his place.

Creative Mothers. Imaginations Gone Wild: the Debate Concerning Maternal Imaginations

5 In 1510, Agrippa von Nettesheim published *De Occulta Philosophia*, in which his thoughts concerning the soul engage with its ability to transform one's own body or that of another person. The soul can cause these physical changes because the imagination or fantasy controls it as it follows sensory perceptions. Agrippa von Nettesheim does not attempt to explain how the relationship between (changed) object, imagination, and memory presents itself other than to emphasize "resemblance apprehended by [the] imagination" (201) and the results of imitation — a discussion which in the eighteenth century increasingly focused on the relationship of imagination to sensuality and reason (see Dürbeck) and which touched on maternal imagination only peripherally. He remains certain that the "passions of the soul [. . .] cannot only change their own body, but also can transcend so, as to work upon another body, so that some wonderful impressions are thence produced in elements, and extrinsical things, and also can so take away, or bring some diseases of the mind or body" (204).

6 In Agrippa's text, resemblance emerges as the fundamental episteme of perception and an *Order of Things* such as Foucault describes them for systems of thought until the end of the sixteenth century. Resemblance "largely guided exegesis and the interpretation of texts [. . .] organized the play of symbols, made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them" (Foucault, *Order* 17). The Order (of things), structured by resemblance, is to be understood on the one hand as an internal law of things and, on the other hand, as that which exists only through a grid of perception and allocation in sign systems (see xix-xx). This empirical order is both based on relationships of resemblance and structures perception and the world. In this order, this structure is understood as an

internal law and order of things. In the field of maternal imagination, which can reach another body with its effect, it will lead to the fact that the external appearance of the "monstrous child" is given a truth. This truth can be understood because the child's resemblance, as well as lack of resemblance to the father can point to a "deceitful" desire of the mother. The monstrous body is thus read as a sign within a "discourse of depth" which conceptualizes order as already present "waiting in silence for the moment of its expression" (xx) and whose similarity in its seclusion "must be indicated on the surface of things" (26). In the discussions about maternal imagination, the appearance of the child is given an ambivalent status since not only the visible monstrous body points to the invisible similarities with the object of the mother's desire, but rather — in a logical consequence which in the course of the discussion about maternal imagination is in fact considered to be the most dangerous threat — the "normal" body of the child can become a sign whose "invisible analogies" (Ibid.) point not to the husband, but rather to the father of the child — in other words to the adultery and lastly mark the child who resembles his father as the "real monster" (see Huet 79-82).

7 The infidelity of the woman as the truth of the monstrous (but also normal) body is not only thematized as actual adultery, but much more often is addressed as imagined adultery, which refers to a straying desire of the mother. This desire, however, is not only to be understood in terms of an erotic or sexual desire, but rather takes on much more sweeping traits and can extend to all manner of objects. These emotional triggers can include feelings of fear, religious awe, and anxiety, which in their intensity become triggers for the matter-forming power. Animals, fruit, vegetables, humans, objects, and paintings are affected by this female emotional exuberance. It appears as though the female imagination can only imitate in order to create resemblance in the way that the woman observes religious art or thinks about objects, humans, or animals during her pregnancy (and in a narrower sense during conception). This process is a reproduction, which transfers an "original" onto a second "original," which ends up only having the status of an imitation of the first original.

8 In this way, maternal/female imagination becomes for Agrippa von Nettesheim "monstrous imaginations of women with child" (204) which can only produce monstrosities. A displacement of the "mis-formed" body of the child onto the intellectual/spiritual capabilities of the mother occurs, in which grotesque ideas are perceived as monstrous as the history moves along. One should ask whether the maternal imagination is grotesque because in addition to objects, humans, and animals, it imitates with unusual frequency pictures, rather than living models. If the various texts which engage with maternal imagination are any indication of the interest in this phenomenon, then it can be established that the maternal

imagination often makes a representation of a representation, which nonetheless receives the status of a living model. It certainly collapses the border between presence and representation and undermines the distinction between art and nature (see Huet 13-35). Put differently: Are the monstrosities signifiers or signified?

9 A wealth of themes was continually used, handed down, and transported from text to text and had an amazing importance well into the nineteenth century which still has an effect today. By today's scientific standards, none of the authors of these texts provides empirical proof for this story. In the end it centers on questions of faith, which appear to be rooted beyond any power of proof. In this question of faith, scientific insight mixes with an untouchable Christian faith that is not thematized. As the debate surrounding maternal imagination shows, they are able to coexist in texts unhindered. Even if upcoming theories about preformation in the seventeenth century attempted to explain monstrosities in the context of a divine story of creation, the model of explanation still did not differ that much from Paracelsus' thoughts from 1537. As one of the few who supposedly knew a treatment for the "inculcated birthmark" (*Liber* 280), he blamed the devil in order to explain their presence (see *De natura* 61).

10 It is not — as in Paracelsus — the devil who marks "his children through the imagination of the mother who has evil cravings, evil lusts and evil thoughts during conception" (*Ibid.*). However, Paracelsus' way of reading the physiognomy of the monstrous body would keep intact for centuries. As previously written, the body's surface becomes the place where resemblance and lack of resemblance could give information about maternal desire based on a belief in the readability of physiognomy and in a Christian-influenced value system. Even after James Blondel had accused the "Imaginationists" of irrationality in the first third of the eighteenth century during the Blondel-Turner dispute, which was very influential in the medical community (see Boucé, *Imagination* and Wilson), maternal imagination, continuing into the nineteenth century, was met with reference to historically established capacities (von Haller, Boerhaave, Vidovici, and Malebranche) and with a power of faith, which believed itself to function as a scientific power of cognition (see Boucé, *Sexual Beliefs*). Such a belief can be seen in a text from the middle of the eighteenth century, which received the first place prize from the imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg for answering the following question: "What the nearest cause may be why a change may occur in the body of an unborn child and not on the body of the mother who has suffered from a great emotional shock; and specifically why it happens on precisely that part of the body of the child, where the mother touched herself with her hand?" (Krause 3).

11 Because the maternal imagination is considered to have the ability to give birth to monstrosities and in this way to produce an imitation, which can lay claim to the status of the new, it is apparent that this ability to copy or illustrate can also be valued positively. Recognizing the power to shape matter, the pregnant woman is called upon to take the "beautiful arts" as a model and is advised to hang a "beautiful painting" over the bed in order to guarantee that in an imitation the child will be born well-formed (see Roodenburg 709). This demonstrates the ambivalent valuation of the maternal creative abilities: On the one hand, they appear to be threatening because imagination no longer follows the laws of reason and their creativity is no longer merely reproductive but productive. On the other hand, the positive potential of this creative force is only recognized as long as it is limited to, and directed towards, the beautiful.

12 The century-long discussions concerning maternal imagination are imbedded in the various scientific models of human reproduction. Even by the middle of the eighteenth century, human sciences still did not have a "temporal definition of development" (Lepénies 45) and understood "evolution" as pre-formation in which all beings on earth existed from the beginning already in a complete form (including monstrosities), preformed either in the male's semen or the female's ovaries and needing only to be "rolled out" after birth. A temporality that would allow evolution to be thought of as a process of development first occurred with the development of epigenesis. In regard to monstrosities and in particular bodily deviations, the pre-formation theory was pushed to its limits of explanation: Either the monster was a sign from God, in which case it could not have existed in the "embryo," or God placed it there when creating the universe, in which case its existence contradicted the idea that godly creation was purposeful. In the last decade of the eighteenth century this limitation led to a "redefinition of formation deviations as a phenomenon of nature" (Hagner 87) in connection with the developing theory of epigenesis, which assumed that the individual parts of the body are formed from unorganized matter and that thus a disturbance in the development could lead to a disturbance in the physical appearance. Nevertheless, both the preformists (whether Animalculists or Ovists, whose controversy was first settled when Oscar Hertwig proved in 1875 that conception occurred through the fusion of the egg and sperm) and the epigenesists had proponents of the effects of maternal imaginings on the unborn fetus.

13 Because monstrosity laid claim to a new real space, which was understood simultaneously as mimesis or imitation, a quite complicated relationship between reality and duplication developed in the models of the previously mentioned sixteenth century texts. This relationship comes into being not because maternal imagination only reproduces that which it

sees without differentiation (whether a living model or representation) (see Huet 19-21) but, according to Ambroise Paré, because it has considerable power over the sperm and reproduction (38). The problem facing Renaissance thinkers was that the maternal imagination not only crosses out the paternal position — in both the Aristotelian tradition and the simple assumption that the child has to resemble its legitimate father — it also questions the distinction between art and nature so that — to change now to contemporary terminology — the distinction between original and copy threatens the authoritarian position of the male author (see Huet Part I). If the threat consisted in the fact that the woman attained a non-differentiating power of creation for herself, Nicolas Malebranche's *The Search after Truth/De la Recherche de la Vérité* (1674) shows that the potential danger of copying also comes from the fact that this is not about an identical copy as we understand it today, but rather that only exterior attributes, or surfaces, are imitated as exactly as possible. Using the example of an imagination that was emotionally touched by a painting, Malebranche assumes that the mother "imitated it at least in posture. [. . .] But, the fibers of the child's flesh, being [. . .] susceptible to all kinds of configurations, the rapid flow of the spirits produced in its flesh all that was necessary to make it exactly like the image it perceived. And the imitation to which children are the most disposed is nearly always as perfect as it can be" (116-117). While the imitation's accomplishment is emphasized here, because the mother does not understand the inner connections and can only grasp the surface, this accomplishment is deadly and thereby threatening to the generative patriarchal order.

14 In *De generatione animalium*, Aristotle's reflections laid the foundation regarding the nature of imagination that produces such illustrations. In his writings, insemination is understood as the male act of giving a soul to the female matter: "While the body is from the female, it is the soul that is from the male" (738b). This act defines the relationship between the sexes in the sense that the woman "is a mutilated male, and the catamenia are semen, only not pure; for there is only one thing they have not in them, the principle of soul" (737a). The idea that the woman is always only able to be a mutilated male is at the base of Aristotle's conviction that "the movement imparted by the male will make the form of the embryo in the likeness of itself" (767b); a paternal copy that will only be maternal and therefore incomplete if "the first principle does not bear sway and cannot concoct the proper nourishment through lack of heat nor bring it into its proper form, but is defeated in this respect, then must needs the material which it works on change into its opposite" (766a). While these descriptions constitute a clear hierarchy in which the man has taken on the creative and creating function, Aristotle's argumentation hints to a possibility that will only be discussed at length much

later; it suggests that something else can demand and unfold its own creative powers in the uterus against the paternal/male powers. The maternal imagination of the pregnant woman has gone wild because it is no longer moderate and points to a closely related image of hysteria as an illness of the womb. It also shows that when a "deficient" being independently creates or is creative, the act in itself is abnormal/unnatural and can only give birth to monstrosities, which must be read as signs of a disturbed order of the sexes. Form and matter are out of joint. With the monstrous births, it is not only the distinction between art/nature and original/copy which is threatened but much more foundationally, the debate surrounding maternal imagination discusses the question of truth as well as gender attributions bound up with it, the process of creating standardizations as well as controls.

(In)visible Natures. Imaginary and Real Affinities; Otto's Physiognomy Speaks Volumes

15 While in the debate surrounding maternal imagination the appearance of the child was a signifier for a roaming desire, Otto's physiognomy points not only to maternal, but also to paternal deceitful/ unfaithful desire. In the novel the cross(br)ed contaminating desire is imagined as the chemical act/phenomenon of elective affinities. Goethe's novel confirms the elective affinities' threatening and deadly affinities, which had been described the previous year in Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert's *Views from the Dark Side of Science* [*Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft*] which strongly influenced the romantic movement. He describes this in chapter four:

Where the individual powers and elements unite according to their own law of affection and elective affinity, products and phenomena of sickness and death come into being in living organic bodies. In this way everything that the individual natures of our present world, by virtue of their mutual relationship of exchange and elective affinity most internally and most strongly search for, leads immediately on the next and shortest path to decline and annihilation [. . .]. One could thus say that the individual elements of this world, following the law of death, mutually search and strive for each other unto death, and mutually betray each other through the kiss of love. (99-100)

16 Schubert's proclaimed history of decline and disease, death and decay is situated against the background of a past nature which he evokes, in which at one time "generally higher principles reigned in regard to which products and effects were possible, which were so different from the present relationships of exchange in dead nature as the movements and stirrings of fermentation and decay are from that of organic life" (99). Elective affinities are taken up in this treatment as one of these examples, which, similar to animal magnetism, clairvoyance, and somnambulism, make clear that in the natural science as well as with the planets, "a dark side in the spiritual sense" (5) can be proven, which has at its disposal two

(non)metaphorical lights: The one "reflected, carries the recognizing observing human spirit" (Ibid.) into nature and the other "allows itself to be observed in passing as strange light of nature" (Ibid.) This peculiar phosphorescent light, as Schubert describes the planetary shimmer of light in the night that is not called forth from any known light source, turns itself to a "related part of our being" which lives "more in half dark feelings" (Ibid) and marks ambivalence and uncertainty for him, like for example the oracle sayings. In this way, the example of the elective affinities serves the theorizing of scientific unproven phenomena, whose scientific "dark side status" serves as part of a reflection of the recognizing human intellect and spirit.

17 Schubert's "speculative" philosophy of nature, which bears the religious stamp of an ordering world soul to which the entire organic (including human beings) and inorganic world belong, came into being at a time when the empirical, i.e. experimental, sciences established themselves. In the end his thoughts stay in the natural sciences without consequences and according to some Goethe scholarship (see Hoffmann and Selbmann, esp. 156-159), the chemical model of elective affinities, also called the theory of affinities, was already considered outdated at the time of Schubert's paper and Goethe's novel. While it has been shown from many sides that in this regard the model cannot be interpreted as an anticipating interpretation or "miniature image" of the novel development (Breithaupt 308), the chemical model can be read that, in it, the relationship between reality and representation, between reality and imagination, as well as between nature and symbol(ism) are named as some of the central themes of the novel.

18 The readability of the world, to borrow a phrase from Hans Blumenberg, appears in the novel to be one that produces a misunderstanding and points out that the will "of interpretation and interpretability of the world cannot rely on the visibility of meanings" (Noyes 133) and thus the "unreliability of the visible symbol" (Ibid.) becomes evident. The symbolic processes of structuring and meaning production (see Blondeau, Schneider, Weinhold, and Daemmrich 613-618) keep catching up with nature — that is both landscapes as external aesthetic nature and "human nature", whereby each nature is a horizon of interpretation for the other. However, by the end of the novel they are shown to no longer correspond with one another. The various textualizations and medializations (letters, diaries, copies, tableaux vivants, maps, the novella, *The Curious Tale of the Childhood Sweethearts*, the letters *E* and *O* on the drinking glass, the paintings in the chapel, etc.) bear witness to these efforts, but also to their failure. The protagonists' trust in signs is wrapped up in a game of signs by the narrator that, based on repetitions, multiplications, references, and deceptions,

shows (Kritschil 245) that this attempt at mutual interpretability, which is based on the principle of similarity, is treated with skepticism by the narrator as being a proliferous imagination. Mittler's attempts to mediate understanding and consensus can only intervene without success in the other characters' process of understanding because he always only operates with, and within, the split between presence and presentation, between object or event and the representation, but cannot unite this split. Jochen Hörisch interprets Mittler's "ubiquitous will to speak and understand" as a "discursive power practice," which shows the failure of a hermeneutically oriented literary studies (309). Whether post-modern, structuralist, deconstructivist, or psychoanalytic analyses (to name just a few) would be able to approach the text more adequately than a hermeneutic analysis (or whether this would fail as well) remains a question; however, most efforts of understanding the text are similar in that they continually describe the processes of understanding and constructions of meaning in the novel as working through the relationships between reality/existence (*Dasein*) and representation (as illustration and idea) (see Breithaupt and Peucker). Even if one does not want to understand the child's, Otto's, existence only allegorically or metaphorically, he becomes the character through which the relation of imagination as a creative ability to both object (object of imagination) and illustration/idea is thematized.

19 Earlier I referred to the protagonists' undertaken, if failed, reference to nature and "human nature." However, using Foucault, one can argue that the importance that both of these terms get in the time of Classicism shows that there was an attempt to "guarantee the kinship, the reciprocal bond, between imagination and resemblance" (*Order* 71). Foucault argues that in the classical period a displacement announces itself, in which resemblance, which had previously functioned as a category of cognition, is rejected, but is nonetheless still a necessary category covered by "knowledge [. . .] to its full extent" (68). Based on this assumption, he describes the function of similarity as that which is most distanced from cognition: Through similarity, the representation can be recognized. But the resemblance "manifested only by virtue of imagination, and imagination, in turn, can be exercised only with the aid of resemblance" (104). The abilities to remember, to relate two things to each other, and to eventually produce an order that can connect the present with the past allow to "transform linear time of representation into a simultaneous space containing virtual elements" (*Order* 70) as well as to name the similarity of things without immediately classifying or ordering them. Here, two opposed moments come to the fore, which for Foucault can only experience their "unit[ity] in the idea of a 'genesis'" (Ibid.). However, what interests me in this passage is only the side of "analytic of imagination" (69). Since the middle

of the eighteenth century, imagination had been conceptualized in multiple ways, differentiated from similar notions (or not) (see Unger), and increasingly moved to the center of philosophical interest in the attempt to "rehabilitate 'lower cognitive capacities'" (Trede 347). In this process, the imagination received, as Larissa Kraitschil formulates it in relation to Goethe's novel, "productive components (as a capacity of invention, as a spark) as well as a reproductive component (as capacity of empathy and memory)" (10). Negotiated between these two poles, theorists of imagination struggled either in an effort to remove imagination's potentially threatening power as a creative capacity that can take on "pathological traits" or to theorize it as a reflexive capacity. Precisely for literature, and in particular in the theoretical essays concerning poetry, the significant meaning that imagination is given as an actualization and conceptualization of pictures becomes visible (see Schulte-Sasse 103-105). Returning then to the Poetics of Aristotle and following in the footsteps of Leibnitz and Wolff, some theorists of imagination argued that things should be thought and presented in their absence but beyond that also in their potential developments following principles of abstraction and combination. However, this only works — according to a reduction that Breitingner and Bodmer undertake — as long as the possible is conceived as the probable. The debate surrounding imagination reveals that it should be continually emphasized, by the romantics for example, as an outstanding creative capacity, but at the same time that limits should be set that only allow the probable (Kraitschil 18-20) and thus, in the end, the similarity appears not only through the power of imagination but rather is replaced as the prerequisite for a productive imagination: Above all, the reproductive function is always superimposed upon the productivity of the poetic imagination.

20 Larissa Kraitschil argues that the topos of resemblance unfolds in Goethe's later work (208) and that the topos implies that nature is imitated but that at the same time the imitation should resemble nature and also present its own "truth"; thus productive and reproductive imagination unite but do not aim at a mimesis of nature. In *Elective Affinities*, Goethe is, on the level of content, occupied with imagination and its relationship to nature and "human nature" as a relationship of resemblance but also as a reflection. However, as already mentioned, he does not allow these to exist unbroken and he emphasizes the completely "pathological" traits of an imagination in which resemblance as a capacity of cognition can be misleading. Nature is misread or misinterpreted not least because the world or nature is not

imitated, but rather because nature is only meant to reflect the self. The narrator explains this most clearly with the character of Edward.¹

21 In Immanuel Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit-seer explicated through Metaphysics* (*Träume eines Geistersehers erläutert durch die Metaphysik*), published more than forty years before *Elective Affinities*, imagination (understood as *imaginatio* and fantasy) is led into the territory of nothingness which can nonetheless bring about productive results. It is not about an imagination led or gone astray as in the case of Goethe, but rather "the effect of the imagination of pregnant women" is ordered into the category of absurdities (just as supernatural visions, divining rods, premonitions) that "gain entry even to those who are reasonable simply because they are generally talked about" (969). Kant describes the "wild phantoms of the spirit-seer," Swedenburg, as a monstrosity whom the collector of nature "exhibits in his cabinet" (981). Not everyone was allowed to view this, however, because among the boldest people, there could be pregnant women "upon whom it might make a bad impression" (Ibid). Fearing for an ideal conception, which could follow as well as predate monstrosity, it would "make him sorry, if they would have some kind of an accident" (Ibid). The accident/mis-seeing as a basis for a (re)productive imagination that produces those kinds of monstrosities that are displayed as (metaphysical) objects in the natural history collection and in this way evade the separation between intellect/spirit and body/soul and the eye, which Kant is working on in his text, is based on a twofold textual "nothingness." Because Kant's work "in the end results in nothingness" (981), he also stands before nothing and hopes he will not be "blamed for the mooncalves, that on this occasion are likely to be born from their fruitful imagination" (Ibid). This virgin conception by a "nothing" marks exactly the problems around which Kant's text circles (see Weissberg 44). His efforts at classifications and establishment of boundaries that should position the metaphysical, as well as visions, in a geographical process of localization can be understood as "imperialistic gestures" (Ibid). In this effort it is continually revealed that this search for empirical confirmation — "for an 'experience' that he himself must still determine" (35) — must continually fail.

22 Kant's text presents the way in which perception and truth are coupled in the thematic of imagination; imagination cannot only be dangerous, but it can also bring about (re)productive work that is coming from an accident/a mis-seeing based on nothingness and can claim an empirical effect. *Elective Affinities* can be observed in the afore-mentioned context of the eighteenth century's new and higher valuation of imagination on the one hand as artistic creative capacity and on the other as a planning, goal-directed capacity. Both

¹ See Edward's comment that humans are narcissists who like to see themselves reflected everywhere and use themselves as measure for everything (112).

capacities serve to function in the novel as a "visual appropriation of the world," (Schneider 290) which often turns out to be self-deceiving (see Kritschil 260-272) because the gaze does not leave the boundaries of panoramic perception and continually focuses only on the subject of perception.² In the figure of the child, Otto, this creative imagination is crossed with a procreative (in the medical sense) imagination.³ This points to a completely different, multi-faceted discourse on maternal imagination that is mostly set off from the aesthetic discussion. It does not occupy itself with the question of what kind of capacity imagination might be, but rather names countless examples of the effects of this ability (see Boucé, *Imagination*).

23 The child, Otto, has the middle (and formerly first) name of the father as well as that of the Captain (a friend of the family) and furthermore points to both *Otilie* and *Charlotte* (see Schlaffer). Thus, he signifies the various hypothetical parental and selected relational constellations. Due to the fact that we do not discover the last names of the individuals who take part in this cross(br)ed desire, Otto's first name makes his lineage "unclear." This lineage must be all the more urgently signified and verified through the passing on of the parental/paternal name because it is based on a genealogy of the name which is on the one hand unknown (last name) and on the other not unequivocally attributed (first name). The 1804 (1808 for the Kingdom of Westphalia in German) publication of the *Napoleonic Code* established that the genealogy of names was unable to guarantee without a doubt the children's legitimacy. The code's new institutionalized law in the first book, *Of Persons*, in title 7, § 312 named the husband as father of a child conceived during marriage unless he could prove that "either because of absence or some other reason making it physically impossible, he had been unable to have intercourse with his wife from the entire time in the interim between the 300th to the 180th day before the birth of the child" (136, 138).

24 While Otto's name does not allow for an unequivocal recognition of his origins but rather establishes the cross(br)ed desire of the quartet as a part of his inheritance and doubles the parents, his appearance reveals this desire even more clearly than his name. "He seemed a miracle, a prodigy: handsome to behold, big, well-proportioned, strong and healthy; and what was more amazing was the dual resemblance that was growing more and more apparent. In features and figure the boy increasingly came to look like the Captain; his eyes became

² Horst S. Daemmrich points out that the panorama as a perspective of interior space finds expression in the circular forming of the landscape and is only questioned by Otilie when she suggests building the house on a hill.

³ Larissa Kritschil points out that Goethe was possibly referencing Jaques-Henri Bernardin de Saint Pierre's novel *Paul and Virginia* (1788). In the novel, which is considered to be one of the first examples of French exoticism, it is concluded that Paul resembles his patron saint, Saint Paul, because his mother, Margaret, feeling "while pregnant, abandoned by all the world, and continually occupied in contemplating the image of this benevolent recluse, her offspring had contracted some resemblance to this revered object" (53).

increasingly hard to distinguish from Otilie's" (Goethe 232). Otto does not resemble his biological parents at all and, corresponding to this, it is not surprising that his appearance against the backdrop of maternal (but in Goethe also paternal!) imagination is read physiognomically. His physical appearance bears witness to what happened only imaginarily: "This child is the result of a double adultery" (238). In *Le Affinità elettive*, a film adaptation of *Elective Affinities* from 1996, the marvelous quality of this wonder child is bound up more unequivocally in the discourse of monstrous imagination: "This strange night of love," as the narrator explains (as voice over) "had born a wonder or perhaps a monster." Otto's appearance bears "a striking resemblance to the Captain" (216): That his physical form in the Goethean sense of formation/education points less to the meaning of formation stemming from the middle of the eighteenth century in the sense of an unfolding definition of formation or development of one's personality as it does to the *form (Bild)* in the word *formation (Bildung)* as well as to the productive imagination of all the participating characters. His form is an illustration that testifies to the (pro)creative act of the parental imagination and signifies the topos of resemblance in which nature is imitated but presents its own truth as a monstrous deviation since the imagination's capacity of invention remains in the framework of a capacity of memory through reproductive imitation and resemblance, but lays claim to the status of the new. The child, Otto, presents a new reality that can no longer be understood as an artistic representation but rather questions the status of nature, art, model, and copy and in this way points to the threatening and pathological traits of an imagination that can form matter and not only signs. However, Otto also illustrates the desire that drives the individual characters to decode the material world and nature as sign or reflection of "human nature," as the "monstrous" failure which is threatening to societal order. The reflections, as it turns out at the end, evoke the "false face" and show that the ego always fails but also that human nature is always layered with a cultural nature that can no longer be understood in a relationship of resemblance.

25 Bearing children (*erzeugen*) and bearing witness (*bezeugen*) are close to one another at the etymological level of interpretation of *Elective Affinities* but they point to different and mutually exclusive genealogies in the character of Otto: As figures they repeat the cross(br)ed and contaminating desire of the four protagonists. Bearing children and bearing witness can no longer function in the character of the small Otto as generative models that declare without a doubt one father and one mother because they point in different directions and fall away from one another. As witness to a truth that never occurred, Otto becomes a displaced sign that attributes a reality and a power of creation to the imaginations that in the end form matter

and are able to point out in a psychoanalytical argument the fragility of the law of the father (see Braidotti 86) whose side of signification is always threatened by repressed desire.

26 The imagination in Goethe's *Elective Affinities* refers ex negativo to scientific thoughts that admit to the ability of maternal plastic imagination to allow the monstrosity (the adultery) to appear in "genetic camouflage" (see Boucé, *Imagination* 94) as normalcy (the child has the appearance of the husband) and thus does not allow monstrosity to be understood as anatomical. In this way Goethe works within the discourse and expands it to include the procreative effects of a paternal imagination and thereby ties it back to its own story: The "normal" (the child, Otto) becomes a monstrous sign because it refers not only to the matter-forming, and thus contaminating and displaced desire of the parents but also shows how the dietary discipline of the parents, which structures the novel, simply fails in the desire for the Other. As Foucault explains based on Plato's *Nomoi* and the pseudo Aristotle: In a diathetic model of desires, the thoughts of those participating in the act of conception should be concentrated on one another if good, attractive children should be the result. However, "it is so often the case that the children of human beings do not resemble their parents, the reason is that the latter, at the time of the sexual act, had many other things on their minds instead of thinking only of what they were doing at the moment" (Foucault, *Pleasure* 124). Goethe's novel is reminiscent of a discussion that had been going on for centuries in an attempt to explain different bodies and faces and it adds an important meaning without the narrator of the text being in the position of the one by whom these absurdities gained entry. The narrator's distance to the narrated story marks this model of explanation in the way he reaches for the story of maternal imagination as one which thematizes the borders or the limitation of truth and untruth. In this way maternal imagination becomes a displaced examination of the creative capacity of imagination.

27 The labeling of the wonder child may initially refer to the amazement of people who see Otto for the first time and it in this way indirectly thematizes the history of the eye and of the gaze, but it can also be related to the history of monstrosities. These had been marked since Aristotle's thoughts regarding the generation of living creatures as wonder animals (Part V Book IV 4) and as a wonder of nature. Goethe's text stands more at the end of one or of several scientific epoch(s) in which the most varying theoretical models attempted to explain "deviations of formation" by playing the maternal imagination against the generative power of the male semen and thus established two models of conception as natural versus artificial/abnormal. Nonetheless, his novel, which finds itself in the literary company of E.T.A. Hoffmann, Jean Paul, and Lessing, points back to the centuries-long ongoing medical

history of maternal imagination and tells the story of "abnormal" visualization, even in a displacing movement, one more time.

Works Cited

- Agrippa von Nettesheim, Heinrich Cornelius. *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. Trans. James Freake. Ed. Donald Tyson. St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1993.
- Aristoteles. "De generatione animalium." *The Works of Aristotle*. Ed. J.A. Smith and W.D. Ross. Trans. Arthur Platt. Volume 5. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958.
- Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Jacques-Henri. *Paul and Virginia*. Trans. Andrew Lang. New York: Howard Fertig, 1987.
- Blondeau, Denise. "Goethes Naturbegriff in den "Wahlverwandtschaften." *Goethe-Jahrbuch*. 114 (1997): 35-48.
- Bouc , Paul-Gabriel. "Some Sexual Beliefs and Myths in Eighteenth-Century Britain." *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Ed. Paul-Gabriel Bouc . Manchester/Totowa: University Press, 1982. 28-46.
- _____. "Imagination, pregnant women, and monsters, in the eighteenth-century England and France." *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment*. Ed. G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987. 86-100.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Breithaupt, Fritz. "Culture of Images: Limitation in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften." *Monatshefte f r deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur*. 92.3 (2000): 302-320.
- Code Napoleon/Napoleons Gesetzbuch. Faksimile-Nachdruck der Original-Ausgabe von 1808*. Edited for Instituts f r Textkritik e.V. von KD Wolff, Frankfurt a.M./Basel: 2001.
- Daemmrich, Horst S. "Landschaftsdarstellungen im Werk Goethes. Erz hlfunktion - Themenbereiche - Raumstruktur." *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift f r Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*. 67.4 (1993): 607-624.
- D rbeck, Gabriele. *Einbildungskraft und Aufkl rung. Perspektiven der Philosophie, Anthropologie und  sthetik um 1750*. Studien zur Deutschen Literatur 148. T bingen: Niemeyer, 1998.
- Egger, Irmgard. "'[...] ihre gro e M  igkeit': Di tetik und Askese in Goethes Roman *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*." *Goethe-Jahrbuch*. 114 (1997): 253-263.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage, 1994.
- _____. *The Use of Pleasure. Volume Two of The History of Sexuality*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon, 1985.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. "Elective Affinities." *Goethe's Collected Works*. Trans.

Victor Lange and Judith Ryan. Ed. David Wellbery. Vol. 11. New York: Suhrkamp, 1983.

Hagner, Michael. "Vom Naturalienkabinett zur Embryologie. Wandlungen des Monströsen und die Ordnung des Lebens." *Der falsche Körper. Beiträge zu einer Geschichte der Monstrositäten*. Ed. Michael Hagner. Göttingen: Wallstein, 1995.

Hörisch, Jochen. "'Die Himmelfahrt der bösen Lust' in Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*. Versuch über Otiliens Anorexie." *Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften. Kritische Modelle und Diskursanalysen zum Mythos Literatur*. Ed. Norbert Bolz. Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981.

Hoffmann, Christoph. "'Zeitalter der Revolutionen'. Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften* im Fokus des chemischen Paradigmenwechsels." *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*. 67.3 (1993): 417-450.

Huet, Marie-Hélène. *Monstrous Imagination*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Kant, Immanuel. "Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik." *Immanuel Kant Werksausgabe*. Ed. Wilhelm Weischedel. Vol. 2. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1991. 919-989.

Krause, Carl Christian. "Abhandlung von den Muttermälern, in welcher die Wirkung, und der Einfluß der Einbildungskraft der Mutter auf ihre Leibesfrucht, wider die Zweifel und Einwürfe der Gegner gerettet, und, so viel thunlich, erklärt wird." *Abhandlung von den Muttermälern, welche mit dem, von der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu St. Petersburg, aus dem Jahr 1756 ausgesetzten Preise gekrönt worden. Nebst einer andern Abhandlung, welche die gegenseitige Nennung behauptet. Aus dem Lateinischen übersetzt von Christian August Wichmann*. Leipzig: Gollner, 1758.

Kritschil, Larissa. *Zwischen "schöpferischer Kraft" und "selbstgeschaffnem Wahn."* *Die Imagination in Goethes Romanen*. Epistemata. Reihe Literaturwissenschaft 293. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999.

Le Affinità elettive. Dir. Paolo und Vittorio Taviani. Filmtre, Gierrefilm. Italy/France, 1996.

Lepenies, Wolf. *Das Ende der Naturgeschichte. Wandel kultureller Selbstverständlichkeiten in den Wissenschaften des 18. und 19 Jahrhunderts*. München/Wien: Hanser, 1976.

Malebranche, Nicole. *The Search after Truth*. Trans. and Ed. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Noyes, John. "Die blinde Wahl. Symbol, Wahl und Verwandtschaft in Goethes *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*." *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*. 65.1 (1991): 132-151.

Paracelsus (Pseudonym of Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim). "II. Magia naturalis. De natura rerum." *Paracelsus Werke*. Vol. 5. *Pansophische, magische*

und gabalische Schriften. Ed. Will-Erich Peuckert, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968. 53-133.

_____. "II. Magia naturalis. Liber principiorum." *Paracelsus Werke. Vol. 5. Pansophische, magische und gabalische Schriften*. Ed. Will-Erich Peuckert, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968. 262-281.

Paré, Ambroise. *On Monsters and Marvels*. Trans. Janis L. Pallister. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Peucker, Brigitte. "The Material Image in Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*." *The Germanic Review*. 74.3 (1999): 195-213.

Roodenburg, Herman W. "The Maternal Imagination. The Fears of Pregnant Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland." *Journal of Social History*. 3 (1987): 701-716.

Schlaffer, Heinz. "Namen und Buchstaben in Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*." *Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften. Kritische Modelle und Diskursanalysen zum Mythos Literatur*. Ed. Norbert Bolz. Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981.

Schneider, Helmut J. "Wahllandschaften: Mobilisierung der Natur und das Darstellungsproblem der Moderne in Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*." *Rereading Romanticism*. Ed. Martha B. Helfer. Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000.

Schubert, Gotthilf Heinrich. *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft*. Dresden, 1818.

Schulte-Sasse, Jochen. "Einbildungskraft/Imagination." *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*. Ed. Karlheinz Barck et al. Vol. 2. Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 2001. 88-120.

Selbmann, Rolf. "'Auf den Menschen reimt sich die ganze Natur.' Über das Verhältnis von Chemie und Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert." *Euphorion. Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte*. 90.2 (1996): 153-165.

Trede, J.H. "Einbildung, Einbildungskraft, Teil I." *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Ed. Joachim Ritter. Vol. 2. Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1972. 346-348.

Unger, Christoph. *Die ästhetische Phantasie. Begriffsgeschichte, Diskurs, Funktion, Transformation. Studien zur Poetologie Jean Pauls und Johann Wolfgang Goethes*. Frankfurt a.M./Berlin/Bern/New York/Paris/Wien: Lang, 1996.

Weinhold, Ulrike. "Ebenbild und Einbildung. Zur Problematik des Garten-Motivs in Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*." *Neophilologus*. 67 (1983): 419-431.

Weissberg, Liliane. *Geistersprache. Philosophischer Diskurs im späten achtzehnten Jahrhundert*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1990.

Wilson, Philip K. "Out of Sight, Out of Mind? The Daniel Turner-James Blondel Dispute Over the Power of the Maternal Imagination." *Annals of Science. The History of Science and Technology*. 49.1 (1996): 3-85.

Too Fat, Too Hairy, Too (In)visible: Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome and Normative Femininity

By Christina Fisanick, Xavier University, USA

Abstract:

It seems that there is much potential at the site of the PCOS body to transgress the boundaries of normative femininity. In many ways, the PCOS body already does just that. In all of its hairy, balding fatness, the PCOS body represents a challenge to what is expected of the female body. The problem is that it lacks visibility. It is hidden within the matrix of cultural expectations, and attempts to make the PCOS body visible are regulated not only by society but by women with PCOS as well. Will future attempts by the PCOSA and other organizations like it ever make the PCOS body a body that matters? Perhaps working in conjunction with NAAFA or other organizations fighting for the acceptance of diversity in body type and kind is one way of doing so, but until then, the PCOS body will remain invisible, a hairy, balding, infertile fat body shuffling along in the dark made visible only when subject to ridicule and regulation.

"You see, your period is like mowing the lawn. All month long, the grass grows up and then, when you bleed, the lawn mower mows it all down. *Your* grass just isn't getting mowed."

—Ob/Gyn explaining PCOS to me at age 25

"[T]he acquisition and maintenance of femininity-female gender identity-requires continuous and unfailing attention to the body as an instrument of self-presentation."

—F.K. Furman, *Facing the Mirror*

1 It is estimated that 6-10% of all women have Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), an endocrine disorder characterized by obesity, male pattern hair growth and loss, irregular menstruation, infertility, and skin abnormalities (skin tags, adult acne, and dark patches of skin under the armpits and between the thighs). Despite its prevalence, PCOS is often not diagnosed or misdiagnosed, leading Dr. Samuel Thatcher to dub it "The Hidden Epidemic." It is difficult not to see the irony (intended or not) in this designation. After all, in our image-obsessed culture, it would be hard to miss a 300 pound balding women with a moustache. Reductive though this characterization is, it nonetheless represents a crucial way of thinking about PCOS and the bodies of women who have the syndrome. Women with PCOS have highly visible bodies, but are coded by normative femininity as invisible.

2 I have chosen the PCOS body as a site for investigation not only because I have PCOS, but because two major sites that construct femininity — body size and body hair — come together in the PCOS body as in no other place. The PCOS body provides an opportunity to explore the ramifications of performing femininity when these characteristic elements are in excess, out of control, beyond normal limits. In this essay, I will explore the

ways in which the normative practices of femininity shape the interpretation of the PCOS body and the quest of women with the syndrome to at once make PCOS visible and keep the PCOS body hidden. In addition, I will explore recent attempts by the Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome Association (PCOSA) to make the PCOS body visible.

On Be(com)ing a Woman: Negotiating Normative Femininity

3 In order to understand the ways in which women with PCOS both subscribe to and resist normative femininity, it is important to reiterate the current conversation surrounding femininity. Femininity is not a descriptor, but an ideological system in which all people participate. As Sandra Bartky writes, "We are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine. Femininity is an artifice, an achievement, 'a mode of enacting and reenacting received gender norms which surface as so many styles of the flesh'" (132). The female body, then, is femininity's site for struggle and its vehicle for expression and for coercion. Although corsets have long left our everyday attire, we are faced with a more binding, more constrictive force than just strings and whale bone; we must struggle each day, each moment within the bounds of an ideology that we can barely render visible let alone easily resist. Femininity relies on a system of negation: no calluses, no bulges, no hair in the wrong places, and also a system of contradiction: produce children, but do not store enough fat to ovulate, have muscle tone, but do not be strong. Coupled with its ability to conceal its own genesis and disguise its disciplinarians, femininity is a project that is doomed to failure.

4 It is in the arenas of negation and contradiction that the PCOS body excels. The PCOS body is at once a condition of excess: too much hair, too much fat, too much testosterone, and a condition of lack: too little hair, too little progesterone, too little ovulation. It is at once the body of the fertility goddess/mother (large breasts, wide hips, round belly) and infertile. It has too much facial hair and not enough head hair. It is both male (excess testosterone) and female (genitalia). Is there a possibility, then, in this state of excess, of both hyperfeminine and unfeminine, for women with PCOS and their bodies to subvert the dominant regime of normative femininity?

5 Judith Butler's concept of gender as performative is particularly useful here. Just as gender is constituted through a "stylized repetition of acts," femininity is also performed and "must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion" of an enduring femininity (Butler 403). In other words, wearing makeup and high-heeled shoes, dresses, crossing our legs, and dieting are all acts that contribute to the rhetorical illusion of femininity. If, then, femininity is an

illusion, a complex performance of acts, then it seems possible that that illusion can be shattered or at least interrupted in a way that allows other forms of embodiment to exist as well. Butler acknowledges this prospect by arguing that "the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" (403). But, she is careful to caution, breaking or changing individual acts alone is not enough to evoke this transformation. Rather, what is required is an understanding that all acts are part of a "collective action," a system of acts done with others that follows a script that is always already in existence (Butler 404). Therefore, one could conclude, if transformation or subversion is to occur it must be done collectively; acted out as a group. Of course, this alone is not enough either, because even though the acts may change, if they are still operating within the old system, then they are hardly transformative. For example, hiring a few diverse faculty members is not enough to change a college campus' attitudes towards diversity if the biased system of power remains in place.

6 Likewise, it is not enough for me to show up to class tomorrow having not shaved or plucked or burned off my facial hair. I am sure I would get some stares and maybe even my students would talk about me, but I doubt it would make much of difference. I would simply be the weird woman professor with a mustache. That is not to say that individual acts aren't worthwhile, because they certainly can be self-empowering and even change the way others think, but alone they constitute little more than a red mark or erasure on the heavily encoded script of embodied performance. Therefore, it is necessary to seek out others and attempt to change the system that makes normative acts seem, well, normal. In the following sections, I will attempt to theorize the two most visible aspects of the PCOS body — fat and hair — in the hopes of shedding light on the way these two characteristics are defined by femininity. I chose fat and hair among the other symptoms of PCOS, because they visibly mark the PCOS body and provide a contrast between the visible and invisible. Seen within the matrix of femininity, perhaps, the path to subversion will become clearer.

Fighting Fat: When More is Less

7 It is estimated that 75% of all women with PCOS are obese, making this characteristic a prominent one among women with this condition (Thatcher 25). The excess weight, usually centered around the midsection, is caused by the overproduction of estrogen and insulin resistance, a condition that many Americans face today and one that often, if not always, leads to diabetes. It is extremely difficult for women with PCOS to lose weight and even more

challenging for us to keep the weight off, because the body literally fights the weight loss process by altering the uptake of insulin on the cellular level, which causes estrogen levels to increase.

8 In *PCOS: The Hidden Epidemic*, the first comprehensive book on the syndrome written for the lay audience, Dr. Samuel Thatcher points to the "glucotoxic environment" in which Americans live and eat. He argues, as popular culture theorists have as well, that while we live in a world that encourages us to "super size," we are not supposed to be "super-sized" ourselves. Easily accessible foods, such as French fries, cheeseburgers and pizza, contribute to the early onset of diabetes, which could possibly be prevented by better dietary choices. Yet, at the same time, he acknowledges the very difficult task that weight loss presents to women with PCOS when he advises, "Forget about ideal body weight! I know this is heresy, but in PCOS patients, normal weight and the body weight that insurance and American culture has mandated as ideal will never been the same. A goal to reach such a weight is doomed to fail from the start (Thatcher 133). Instead, he encourages women with PCOS to "strive for metabolic fitness. Rather than seeking an 'ideal' weight, a more realistic final expectation is to break and maintain weight under 200 pounds, or to achieve a 20% weight reduction, whichever is the greater loss" (133). Given that the "healthy weight" for women in this country is around 127 pounds, even proposing such a number as 200 as "the goal" is controversial, even though it is much more realistic.¹

9 Abundance. Excess. Glut. All are fearful because they represent things we cannot control. They represent that which cannot be contained, that which has unabashedly broken the rules of modesty and of morality. Nonetheless, our culture encourages and is proud of abundance, of having more than we can use. We are pushed to consume, yet pushed harder to not show signs of that consumption.

10 In *Fat History: Bodies and Beauty in the Modern West*, Peter Stearns directly links our current obsession with slimness to this very contradiction and ties it to American national identity. Americans were and still are known for their excess, for having too much, and for consuming too much. Rockwellian images of Thanksgiving dinner tables packed full of more food than any family could possibly eat instilled pride in Americans who felt as though they had finally made it, that they had succeeded in the pursuit of the American dream. Like the dinner table, healthy and prosperous American bodies were full and abundant. Then, in 1890, for reason that Stearns does not fully articulate, a shift occurred that called for

¹ No more proof is needed of this magical number than an examination of home scales. Of the eight brands found at a local department store, seven of them had display stickers that read the weight of the imaginary (woman) dieter at 127 pounds. The eighth scale read 125 pounds.

Americans to put a stop to their gluttony and to abhor the round female form. (Fat men were not yet victims of these fat attacks.) Stearns argues, "what was happening between the 1880s and 1920 was a moral mobilization against fat among respectable Americans. Habits that had been dismissed or even praised were now condemned" (23-24). He further notes, "World War I provided new opportunities to publicize the attack on that, for healthy eating became part of a patriotic duty" (Stearns 24). Therefore, body size became a national concern.

11 Most interesting about Stearns' approach to fat phobia as a function of national identity is the link he makes between indulgence and control. As Americans became more wealthy and were able to enjoy the finest foods in the largest quantities, guilt about gluttony soon replaced pride in plentifulness. Further, as more and more Americans turned away (or were shut out) from organized religion, the locus of moral control was disrupted, leaving most people adrift in terms of regulating excess. However, it seems that no matter the origin of the current state of fat objection (er, abjection), the public has been set up as the gatekeepers for body size, and if a woman fails to meet the current standards, then there are consequences. Fat women are labeled as being out of bounds, out of control, and out of touch (also read untouchable). Although the fat acceptance movement has gone a long way with the National Association to Advancement Fat Acceptance (NAFAA) and books such as Marilyn Wann's *Fat!so?*, fat is still nowhere near where it's at.

12 The current, early twenty-first century perception of the fat body is complex in that it is constantly being shaped by contradictory rhetorics. Medical science, for example, has taken on a new, stronger authority for most Americans. We are convinced now more than ever before that we can control our bodies, their shape, their size, their well-being. And, we have become an even more consumption-driven culture. Recall the post-9/11 pressure placed on Americans to shop, shop, shop to help our country recover. It is your patriotic duty. Fatness is forbidden, yet the very means that are said to make a person fat are not only promoted, but are expected to be consumed.

13 Susan Bordo picks up on this inner tug-of-war and frames it in the contradictory rhetorics of fulfillment and desire. She argues, "The rules for this construction of femininity (and I speak here in a language both symbolic and literal) require that women learn to feed others, not the self, and to construe any desires for self-nurturance and self-feeding as greedy and excessive" (Bordo 96). Therefore, the "results" of that self-nurturing, a round, fed body, is a physical representation of that greed and excess that cannot be hidden or denied. This outward manifestation of feeding oneself is an affront to ideological system of normative femininity. It challenges the boundaries of this system and invites discipline to those who are

in violation.

14 Cecelia Hartley explores the issue in "Letting Ourselves Go." She argues that fat women represent a challenge to mainstream society, because by "letting themselves go," they physically announce their opposition to dominant gender roles. They are failing to control themselves in a way that is expected of women, that is demanded by the rules of femininity. She writes, "Women who do not maintain rigid control over the boundaries of their bodies, allowing them to grow, to become large and 'unfeminine,' are treated with derision in our society, and that derision is tied inextricably to the personal freedom of women" (Hartley 63). She adds that getting fat, becoming ungainly and therefore, unfeminine, exemplifies the ultimate act of the loss of self-control.

5 In addition to the cultural consequences of being fat, i.e. verbal abuse, lack of romantic interest from others, being passed up for a promotion, Hartley argues that women see fat as the ultimate punishment for lack of self-control. Noting that many surveys have recorded being fat as a primary fear among women, she states that "Above all, women must control themselves, must be careful, for to relax their vigilance might lead to the worst possible consequence: being fat" (Hartley 64). The object being resisted, then, is the fat female body, which "is suspect, needy, always in danger of erupting into something that will grasp more than is allowed. The end result is that women, fat or thin, often develop an antagonistic relationship with their bodies" (66). Extending Bordo's concept of the self struggling against the self, Hartley now adds an object to the battle, the fat body, that which should be avoided at all costs. In this view, women are no longer just trying to achieve the standards of femininity, but they are also fighting against becoming a fat woman. There is now an object, a target, an image that women can defend themselves against: "The fat body...is a reminder of all that a woman cannot and should not be" (Hartley 67).

16 Le'a Kent, drawing on the work of Julia Kristeva, takes this concept one step further by describing the fat body in terms of abjection. "In the public sphere," she writes, "fat bodies, and fat women's bodies in particular, are represented as a kind of abject: that which must be expelled to make all other bodily representations and functions, even life itself, impossible" (Kent 135). In other words, the fat body is necessary to the existence of the thin female body. Kent argues, "the fat body rings the margins of the good self, haunting them as it helps create them. The fat body must be repeatedly evoked at the margins, drawn in and then expelled, in order to continue taking the weight of corporeality off thin bodies" (136). Therefore, the fat body represents all that is nasty, unsightly, and unspeakable about the body. It represents poor health, disease, and death. It is what allows the thin body to exist as the ideal, because it

assumes the negative qualities that all bodies, in reality, possess.

17 At the same time, Kent argues that "there is no such thing as a fat *person*" (emphasis hers, 135). Using as an example the before and after pictures of dieters found in advertisements for weight loss and exercise products, she explores the notion that a fat person is not a person, but "something encasing a person, something from which a person must escape, something that a person must cast off" (Kent 134). We have all seen ads in which a picture of a fat woman's body is placed over her now-thin body or infomercials in which the new, skinny version of a woman bursts through a blown-up paper image of her old, fat self. This very scenario, Cecilia Hartley adds, "both consigns the fat body to an eternal past and makes it bear the full horror of embodiment, situating it as that which must be cast aside for the self to truly come into being" (145).

18 Of course, what these ads and the ideologies behind them imply is the prevailing and unquestioned belief that all fat people want to be thin. It is impossible for most people to believe that anyone would prefer to remain fat. In *Women's Health: Psychological and Social Perspectives*, Christina Lee argues that these expectations are the result of the concept of "normative discontent," which she describes as "the notion that it is normal for Western women to be unhappy with their bodies, [which] has been accepted as a natural facet of femaleness; in fact, not being concerned about one's body shape is seen as unfeminine and somewhat odd" (136). It is the rare exception that anyone, including other overweight people, would think that a fat person could possibly love their own round bottoms, rolled tummies, and thick thighs. If you love your fat body, you are said to be, as Kent writes about herself, "impossible, I am living in a state of denial, and I must sooner or later come to my senses and resume loathing my body, if only for my 'health'" (131). It is interesting that self-help gurus like Oprah and Dr. Phil want you to love your body, but they only want you to love it so that you can make it thin. After all, if you truly love and respect your body, you will lose weight, eat right, and exercise. "Body love" has now become the new means of control. In our PC, reverse-psychology world, it has replaced verbal abuse as the way of getting fatties to get down the pounds, because, if you don't love yourself, then you can't possibly love anyone else. And what more evidence do you need than a fat, lazy, sloppy body to prove to the world that you don't love yourself?

19 Despite its obvious visibility, the fat body remains invisible, an absent presence lumbering through life only to be ignored or shunned. It represents and is represented, yet has no representation. Kathleen LeBesco discusses the "presence" of fat female bodies in her essay, "Queering Fat Bodies/Politics." She deconstructs women's magazines that feature both

dieting and high-fat, high-calorie food articles right on the cover. One might conclude, she notes, that the object or audience for these magazines are fat women, yet these women are nowhere to be found, a state that Braziel has called "the corporeal mark of absence" (LeBesco 78). In this case, her absence is the result of a number of issues. Obviously, it would be difficult to profit from a magazine selling diet tips and recipes with a fat woman on the cover. Again, no one wants to be fat and her presence would imply that the diet did not work and the foods made her fat. In addition, no one wants to see, to be confronted with, the fat body. It is an object of ridicule and disgust. To see the fat body requires an acknowledgement by the looker that he or she does not desire or even respect the fat body. It is better to simply avoid this messy encounter altogether and leave the fat body out of the picture in the first place. Therefore, as Jana Evans Braziel notes, "the fat female body. . . constitutes that which should not be seen, perhaps that which should not *be* at all" (emphasis hers, 237).

20 These cultural attitudes about the fat female body have greatly impacted the way in which women with PCOS have been treated by the medical profession. Although obesity was part of the original diagnostic criteria for PCOS established by Drs. Stein and Leventhal in the 1940s,² it remained the only one of the four classic symptoms to go untreated until the 1990s. Despite (or in spite of) the prevalence of obesity among women with PCOS, doctors and researchers failed to address the issue scientifically. Enough research existed on the dangers of obesity for doctors to conclude that obesity exacerbated the other aspects of PCOS, therefore, making weight loss the first line of treatment for women with PCOS, but the treatment was placed entirely in the hands of the patients. If they did not lose weight, then they were only hurting themselves and making their PCOS symptoms worse.

21 When the connection between PCOS and obesity began to be explored around 1992, women with PCOS were treated like any other obese patient who was urged to follow the diet and exercise programs popular at the time. Unfortunately, women with PCOS had a great deal of trouble losing weight on low fat, high carbohydrate diets. As a result they were subject to criticism by their health care providers and some were even verbally abused for their inability to lose weight.

22 Of course, not all doctors treat their obese patients with disdain, but many doctors have little respect for their obese patients who to them seem out of control and lazy. Roberta Pollack Seid discusses this attitude in *Never Too Thin: Why Women Are at War with Their Bodies*: "Doctors treat their overweight patients in patronizing and often cruel ways, regarding them as recalcitrant patients who won't follow orders" (23). Further support that fat phobia is

a problem in the medical community is the large number of medical-based Web sites that offer listings of fat-friendly doctors.

23 By the late 1980s and early 1990s, a condition known as insulin resistance attracted the attention of PCOS researchers. The debate about the relationship between insulin resistance and obesity gained more interest in the mid to late 1990s as several studies demonstrated that obesity, at least in women with PCOS, is independent of insulin resistance. It was determined that women with PCOS are, as a group, insulin resistant. Even so, many doctors still believed that obesity caused insulin resistance and continued to treat their obese patients by urging them to lose weight. Other health care providers, however, seriously examined the condition of insulin resistance and began experimenting with insulin resistant treatments, such as drug therapy normally prescribed for diabetic patients. Not all doctors have accepted the insulin resistance theory and even those who have are reluctant to treat it. Whether the reluctance of the medical community to treat insulin resistance with such drugs is the result of a wait-and-see attitude in which doctors give new theories time to be thoroughly analyzed before they try them or as the result of the still strongly-held belief that obesity is the result of high fat, high calorie diets and lack of willpower, most doctors are still treating PCOS in much the same way as they did in the 1980s with birth control pills that simply mask, or make invisible, many of the secondary symptoms of PCOS.

"Diabète des Femme a Barbe," or Bearded Lady Diabetic

24 The title of this section refers to a 1921 article by two French physicians, Achard and Thiers, who studied the prevalence of diabetes in women with excess facial hair. Of course, it is hard to miss the association with the bearded lady of freak shows and circus tents. Women with beards do not go unnoticed and are often the object of ridicule. Although advances in hair removal options, such as electrolysis and home depilatory products, have made it easier for today's bearded ladies to disguise their five o'clock shadows, the intense scrutiny placed on the female body makes even previously "normal" hair growth abnormal.

25 Although Achard and Thiers did not mention PCOS directly, many researchers point to their study one of the earliest appearances of PCOS in medical literature. It is somewhat ironic to think that even at this early date a connection was made between excessive hair growth in women and abnormal glucose levels, yet it would take PCOS researchers more than 60 years to make this connection a valued site of research and treatment for the woman who suffers with PCOS. According to Geoffrey Redmond, a leading PCOS researcher and physician, "the most common underlying condition causing increased hair growth is PCOS."

High male hormone levels are responsible for over 90% of all excess hair growth in women, and women with PCOS generally exhibit high levels of testosterone due to elevated insulin levels. In short, high insulin levels affect the ovaries, which causes an overproduction of testosterone; therefore, women with PCOS have difficulty controlling their weight, getting pregnant, maintaining regular periods, and exhibit excess hair growth, among other symptoms. Given this relationship, it is not surprising that Achard and Thiers were compelled to write about the excessive hair growth of their female diabetic patients, yet there are still many questions surrounding the actual "diagnosis" of abnormal hair growth and determining the proper course of treatment.

26 Hirsutism, the medical term used to describe a *woman* with excessive body hair, is itself gendered in that it "refers to increased hair in the so-called 'sexual distribution.' Sexual distribution simply means skin areas on which men and women have different amounts of hair" (Redmond). While hirsutism is often treated as a medical condition, only 1% of all cases of hirsutism in which women seek medical attention are due to an endocrinologic disorder (Redmond). Health care providers typically do not classify excess hair growth as a disease or even a problem that requires their attention, rather it is women who seek treatment on their own. According to Merran Toerien, whose study on attitudes about body hair I will turn to in the next few paragraphs, "the decision by some physicians to define hirsutism as any hair growth that embarrasses the woman in question, highlights the strongly social element involved in the presumption of female hairlessness." What she makes clear here is further reinforced by Samuel Thatcher who writes matter-of-factly, "Generally, an excess of hair growth is overestimated by the concerned woman and underestimated by her physician" (104). In other words, hirsutism is not a condition that requires medical care, but it *is* a condition that women, influenced by the social meanings of excess hair on their bodies, demand to have remedied. Women simply cannot be hairy!

27 Hair removal and the imperative toward it is, just as we have seen with obesity, irregular menstruation, and infertility, part of the larger system of femininity. The process of hair removal is naturalized, remaining hairless (or very closely cropped) is normalized, and the cultural meaning of a hairless female body is problematically sexualized. Toerien, whose research examines attitudes about body hair in English women, concludes:

female body hair removal is constructed as so obviously necessary as to require no explanation. In this way, the socio-cultural construction of the practice as necessary and normative is obscured; hair removal just is. Particularly indicative of this assumption is the repeated tendency for women who do not shave to be called to account for this 'failure,' rather than for women who do shave to be questioned about their practice.

28 In other words, hair removal has become naturalized. Few women question why they are embarrassed to be seen in shorts if they haven't shaved their legs in a few days. Even fewer question why they find "the hippie girl's hairy pits" to be offensive. Women who do not shave their publicly visible body hair are sometimes called bohemian, dirty, lazy, or lesbian. The practice of hair removal has been going on for so long in many Western countries that to not do it is seen as wrong, as breaking the rules of femininity and good hygiene.

29 In her study, Toerien surveyed 682 women as to their conceptions of female body hair. Julie, a respondent with PCOS, discusses what she feels is the illusion of choice when it comes to body hair removal. As Toerien comments, "[I]n a culture where female hair removal is normative, the options 'to remove or not remove' do not carry the same weight." Many other respondents supported Julie's position about which Toerien concludes, "Described in terms that presume it to be a 'given,' female hair removal is constructed not as a choice, but as a need."

30 Clearly, hair removal among women is culturally laden and is, as Toerien argues, "symbolically linked to 'appropriate' femininity." Women not willing to participate in this act, must face social consequences. And like women who fear becoming fat because of obesity's cultural currency, women also fear that others will be able to see their hair, to discover their secret. Toerien points to a 1993 study conducted by Barth, Catalan, and Day which found that 68% of so-called hirsute women avoided social situations in which they felt their hair "problem" would be exposed.

31 In as much as the hairy female body is marked in our culture, the hairless body, specifically the hairless vulva, is also heavily encoded. A quick trip down the pornographic section of an adult bookstore or a flip through an adult movie catalogue reveals a decidedly large interest in women with hairless vulvas. Although it is easy to argue (and to agree) that hairless vulvas allow for better close ups during filming and photographing x-rated sex scenes, the interest in keeping vulvas shaved and smooth extends beyond the realm of pornography. It is not unusual for a lover to be asked to shave her vagina, nor is it odd for a woman to just do it because she wants to do so. My goal here is not to argue that women can't or shouldn't gain pleasure-aesthetic and/or sexual-from removing her pubic hair, what I am suggesting is that this seemingly extreme interest in mainstream pornographic materials of hairless vulvas is partially due to the vulnerability that it produces in women.

32 In a culture where hair removal has become as common as the daily shower, the hairy and the hairless are at opposite ends of the spectrum. Within the rhetoric of femininity, hirsute women are not acceptably performing femininity. Women with excess or non sex-specific

quantities and/or qualities of hair growth not only defy societal norms, but also call into question their own sexuality and sexual desirability. Yet, the practice of hair removal is very rarely questioned, even among feminists, whose campaign in the early 1970s to equalize the hairy and hairless has never come to fruition.

Subverting the System?: Revealing the PCOS Body

33 I began this essay with a discussion of femininity in the context of Judith Butler's concept of performativity with the possibility of that it might lead to insight into particular ways in which the cultural system of normative femininity can be disrupted. The PCOS body, obese, irregular, infertile, and hairy, attempts to do so, but the body alone is not enough to alter the oppressive system of normative femininity, especially when the body is a "full-figured phantom,"³ invisible in all ways that matter. Rather, it takes an actor to affect change in the way the acts are read and repeated.

34 Many theorists have written about the power of the fat female body as a site of conflicting ideologies. In *Fat is a Feminist Issue*, Susie Orbach argues that being fat itself is a powerful form of resistance. "Getting fat," she insists, can be "a definite and purposeful act; it is a directed, conscious or unconscious, challenge to sex-role stereotyping and culturally defined experience of womanhood" (Orbach 40). Catrina Brown echoes this conclusion by noting that being fat "is an ultimate form of female covert power" (60). In other words, despite its obvious visibility, corpulence, for the female, can become a powerful form of transcendence in that she takes up space and doesn't play by the rules set up for "ladies." Cecilia Hartley adds, "[being fat] allows a woman to nurture herself, to reject sexually-stereotyped roles, to deny society's demand that she be the perfect woman, and to stake a claim on the world, taking up space without having to demand it" (70). Hartley takes this one step further by noting the deliberateness of such an act as becoming or staying fat: "Just as we have come to realize that the thin ideal is not an innocent construction, so we can no longer afford to dismiss the fat body as making no particular response to the society that would construct it otherwise" (70).

35 While there is no doubt that the fat female body and other so-called unfeminine bodies (hairy, disabled, disfigured) resist the norms of femininity by their very existence, I do not think that this alone is enough to make a real difference in terms of the larger project of demystifying and dismantling normative femininity. If it was as easy as simply getting fat, then, according to recent statistics, the problem of femininity would already be defeated,

³ W. Charisse Goodman, *The Invisible Woman: Confronting Weight Prejudice in America* (Carlsbad, CA: Gurze Books, 1995), 1.

given that millions of American women are considered to be overweight. Therefore, destructing femininity must require much more than simply not looking the part. As LeBesco notes, "We need some way of discerning which actions are truly disruptive of so-called normalcy, and which in fact help to maintain the status quo...What performance in what context will help to destabilize naturalized identity categories?" (77). A look at the recent activities of the Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome Association (PCOSA) might reveal the distinction between which acts are actually transgressive and which acts simply appear to be so.

36 It has been a long-term goal of the Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome Association (PCOSA) to make PCOS visible.⁴ A national non-profit organization created to support and educate the public, including patients, friends, and health care providers, about PCOS, the PCOSA has long realized the importance of making others aware of the syndrome. From its genesis as Internet-based support group in 1995, the PCOSA's aims were to make others aware of the prevalence of the syndrome and its long-term health risks, including heart disease and diabetes. As the organization has grown in membership and status, its efforts to increase awareness of PCOS have shifted as well. From yearly conferences to an Oprah campaign to adopting a spokeswoman, the PCOSA has attempted to educate the world about PCOS. Unfortunately, not all of their projects have been successful, and in fact, some of their more recent ventures have led to further abjection of the PCOS body.

37 One of the most effective events organized by the PCOSA is the international conference this it has held every year since 1998. These conferences are held with the purpose of bringing together women with PCOS and doctors who treat the syndrome. Physicians and other health practitioners have presented topics ranging from diet to infertility to hair growth to alternative therapies, such as Tai Chi and acupuncture. While these conferences have been useful in disseminating information about the syndrome, especially the latest developments in treatments, the most useful aspect of these conferences has been visibility. For perhaps the first time outside of their family situation, the women who attend these conferences are in the same room with more than 200 other women who look like them.⁵ I remember my own reaction to walking into the conference hall in 2001. For the first time in my life, I felt

⁴ The PCOSA's website is located at <http://www.pcosupport.org>.

⁵ It should be noted that not all women with PCOS are overweight. A small percentage of women with the syndrome are thin. These women in some ways have a more difficult time dealing with PCOS, because it typically takes them longer to get diagnosed. The syndrome is not expected in a thin body. Also, because they are in a minority, it is more difficult for thin women with PCOS to relate to other women with the syndrome. According to Mary, a thin woman with PCOS that I interviewed a few years ago, "It's like [fat women with PCOS] don't believe that I have it too. They can't understand how I got so lucky. I try to explain to them that I have the other symptoms. I can't get pregnant. I have hairy face. But, that doesn't seem to matter."

average, unbelievably average. I didn't feel like the chairs would be too small or that everyone would stare at me as I walked down the center aisle to take my seat. At my table sat four other women, all over 250 pounds. I saw myself in them. I saw thinning hair, acne, stubbly mustaches, and double chins. I felt liberated and powerful knowing that there were other women on this planet that were like me. Yet, I know that my own willingness to identify with these undesirable, abject bodies is not necessarily the most common reaction of other participants. After all, identifying and being empowered by the fat, hairy, PCOS body is admitting to doing femininity wrong. It is rejoicing in, reveling in a socially objectionable body. Fat, hairy women are not supposed to like being fat and hairy-that's just unfeminine.

38 A conversation held on a PCOSA message board illustrates this type of resistance. Soon after *Shrek II* came out in the theaters, I advanced the idea on one of the PCOSA's message boards that perhaps Fiona should become the spokesperson for PCOS. Fiona is an ogre, like Shrek, who, we learn in the first movie, had been cursed as a child to take one form by day (beautiful princess) and one form by night (ogre) taking her true form with true love's first kiss. As you may have guessed, Shrek's kiss at the end of the first movie prompted Fiona to take her true form as an ogre. When we meet her in the second movie, she and Shrek are on their way to a party hosted by her royal family. We see Fiona in this movie in her true form. We see her belching, shaving, and eating as much as and what she wants. To me, it is a liberating, though conflicting view of alternative femininity. In one respect, it is perhaps troubling to see a fat "woman" engaged in what society might think are disgusting acts: eating fried field rats, belching and farting. In another respect, however, we see a fat woman being herself, enjoying her life, and being loved.⁶

39 When I saw the movie, I thought that Fiona would make a wonderful spokeswoman. She has a round body, and she even shaves her face each morning! Although some women thought my idea was terrific, many women grew angry at the mere suggestion. One woman wrote, "Who wants a smelly, stinking, green ogre representing us!" Another woman wrote, "I don't want people thinking that I am like Fiona. I try hard to get people to see me as normal." As these comments illustrate, some women with PCOS certainly do not want to be identified with any figure that is abnormal or thought to be disgusting. And, honestly, I cannot blame these women. After all, the consequences of doing femininity *that wrong* are severe.

40 Nonetheless, the PCOSA's conferences remain potential sites of agency establishment for women with PCOS. Being able to see other women who look like you with their partners and children and friends is a powerful way of substantiating the PCOSA's motto, "You are not

⁶ There are many troubling aspects of this movie that space does not allow me to expand upon.

alone." Women who attend these conferences often return to their home chapters and begin new educational programs to bring what they have learned back to their chapter members, including regional health care providers. In addition, many women leave these conferences feeling empowered for perhaps the first time to demand better health care, to educate others about the syndrome, and, as I did after the 2001 conference, to go swimming without a cover up for the very first time. Therefore, the PCOSA's annual conferences do provide opportunities for subversion, because they not only encourage women with PCOS to perform alternative acts, such as modeling plus-size fashions and taking the stage to the presentations, but to also make changes in the way in which people across the world think about the PCOS body by encouraging them to educate others and hold their own events in their areas of the world.

41 One of the major methods by which the PCOSA educates the public is by press releases and encouraging women all over the world to tell their stories to their local news outlets. Over the past several years, articles about PCOS have appeared in publications ranging from the *Washington Post* to *Self* magazine to *Woman's Day*. PCOS has also been featured on the *Today Show* and on various regional television programs. In 1999, Heather Lubinsky, a PCOSA volunteer, went on *Jenny Jones* to talk about PCOS as part of a show focusing on women's health issues. It was a liberating segment in many ways, because Lubinsky did not attempt to hide or otherwise mask the effects of PCOS on her body. Instead, she attempted to fully articulate the toll the syndrome has taken on her body. She pointed to her thinning hair, the hair growth on her face, and to the fact that she has been unable to conceive. She even related stories about her difficulty in the workplace with having excess facial hair. The success of the show, in terms of raising awareness about the syndrome, was quickly noticed by the large volume of hits on the PCOSA website immediately following the show. Unfortunately, however, not all media provide such a positive outlet to discuss PCOS or fat bodies.

42 An episode of *Oprah* from January 2001 is one such example.⁷ Before Dr. Phil McGraw got his own show, he was regularly "unleashed" on *Oprah's* audience every Tuesday. A psychologist known for his hard hitting, tell-it-like-it-is rhetoric, Dr. Phil is not afraid to make the guests angry, and he does not hold back his thoughts on the questions at hand. During this episode, Dr. Phil told weeping woman after weeping woman that they were overweight because they wanted to be. That fat women choose to be fat and that they can only

⁷ Parts of this section on Phil McGraw were presented at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in Chicago, Illinois in March 2001 under the title "Women's Bodies, Oprah, and the Power of an Online Community."

become thin if they "wake up." At one point, an audience member asked if there were any true medical reasons for obesity. According to Dr. Phil, there is no medical reason for obesity. Obesity is always the result of emotional trauma, and it is possible to be thin only if the emotional trauma is resolved. He told the tearing woman, "You choose to be overweight. Accept that your lifestyle is contributing to your obesity." I was shocked, not only because he was hurting so many women, but because he had just misled the hundreds of thousands of viewers that watch Oprah's show each day. There are many diseases that promote obesity in those who suffer from them, such as Crohn's disease, Graves disease, thyroid disease, and Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS). Not to mention the fact that he clearly dismissed the many women who choose to be obese and do not see their weight as a problem or a cause for concern. Like so many other Americans, Dr. Phil obviously finds it hard to believe that fat women can be content with being fat. I nearly turned off the TV, but then the camera panned to Oprah, who was nodding her head in agreement with everything Dr. Phil was saying, which made me wonder how a woman who has suffered, publicly and privately, with weight issues for so many years could agree with such false statements. And, I wondered how a woman who knows that her show is seen by 21 million viewers a week and is shown in 21 countries around the world can allow such harmful words to be stated as fact and then agree with those statements (Push).

43 By the time the closing credits began to roll, I was online, hoping that the women on the PCOS Main List (PCOSM-L), an e-mail-based discussion list for women who suffer from the syndrome, had seen the show, too. By the time I got there, a rush of e-mails had already been sent. They wondered, as I did, why Oprah would allow Dr. Phil to say such things? We wondered why Dr. Phil felt he was qualified to make such statements? And, we wondered how the hundreds of thousands of women all over the world who might have PCOS or another disease that was linked to obesity must be feeling? Did they feel bad about their bodies all over again (or even more so)? It wasn't enough that these women were chastised about their weight from their health care providers, families and others, but now, on national television they were being told once again that they were fat because they were lazy emotional victims, not because their illnesses prevented them from losing weight or because they chose to be fat.

44 Before midnight that night, the list was abuzz with deciding what sort of action should take place to let Oprah and Dr. Phil know that what they had done was wrong. Soon women were sending copies of e-mails that they intended to send to Oprah, Dr. Phil, and Harpo Entertainment Group, Oprah's production company. They were asking for critiques of their

messages, making sure that what they were saying was on the right track and offering to read other messages to get them ready to send. Within twenty-four hours of the airing of that show, hundreds of messages were sent letting Dr. Phil, Oprah and others know that there are medical reasons for obesity and that it is not all "in the heads" of the women who were overweight.

45 Then, someone suggested that we turn to the message boards on Oprah's website and spread the message not only about obesity possibly having endocrinologic and metabolic causes, but also to let other women know about PCOS. It is well known that an untold number of women not only have no idea that they have PCOS. Several of us posted messages about the erroneous message of Dr. Phil and explained that there were real medical conditions that contributed to uncontrollable weight loss. We talked about PCOS, left our e-mail addresses, and the PCOSA's website address for more information. Many of us received e-mails from women who visited the message boards at www.oprah.com. Not all of them were positive. Some of the responders felt that we should not have posted our "anti-Phil" and "anti-Oprah" messages. Others felt that we disrupted the conversation that was taking place on those boards. But, most of the messages that we received were positive and asked for more information about PCOS. As an online community, we discussed the responses that we received, feeling that if we had done nothing other than get one more woman diagnosed then we had accomplished something vital.

46 The CEO of the PCOSA had been reading about our struggles with Dr. Phil's message. To help us in our efforts, she decided that the PCOSA should write a formal letter to Oprah to let her know of our frustrations and to ask her help in educating the public about PCOS. Once drafted, the letter, addressed from the PCOSA officers and its members, was posted on the PCOSA's website for member critique. The final draft was very powerful. Basically, we stated that what Dr. Phil had said was wrong and dangerous to the women in Oprah's viewing audience. We firmly stated:

Overweight women have suffered enough mistreatment and misunderstanding. Propagating false information, as Dr. Phil has, is not only irresponsible, but in this case serves to perpetuate the notion of blaming the victim. Is this really a message that Oprah wants to send the millions of viewers who tune in daily and who are trying to be the best that they can be? ("Letter")

Just explaining the problem was not enough. We demanded that, "[Oprah's] show take responsibility for this misinformation and correct it. Wouldn't it be better to let women know they may have this disorder? [...] Blanket statements that are medically erroneous are dangerous to the millions of women who have PCOS and don't yet know it" ("Letter").

47 Included in our package, now called "Project Oprah," was a statement from Dr.

Samuel Thatcher, the medical director of the PCOSA. In "With Extreme Prejudice: A Perspective on Weight and Weight Loss," he took a much stronger approach against Dr. Phil's statements than we did on the PCOS site and allowed his credibility as a well-respected physician to make his case that "obesity is not a psychiatric diagnosis [...] weight and its control are much more than either self-will or emotion can explain or direct." He asserts that diets composed of processed carbohydrates and not enough protein and vegetables coupled with a lack of necessarily daily activity is partly responsible for the crisis that is obesity. He goes on to say that "Obesity should be considered a legitimate, chronic, lifelong medical disorder and approached as such" (Thatcher, "With Prejudice"). He closes by arguing that "Many PCOS patients have a lifelong battle to maintain weight that many still would consider 'fat.' The ignorance of Dr. McGraw's statements just sent another arrow flying and another wound as been inflicted on these women" (Thatcher, "With Prejudice").

48 Neither Oprah nor Dr. Phil nor her production company responded to these letters or our individual e-mails. We wondered as a group how she could just ignore the cries of so many women. All we wanted was for her and Dr. Phil to set the record straight so that the thousands or perhaps millions of women watching could understand that they, too, could be suffering from a real medical condition that needs treatment. In the case of PCOS, not getting treatment can lead to reproductive cancers, diabetes, and heart disease.⁸

49 Although our efforts ultimately failed, "Project Oprah" provides an example of the willingness of the PCOSA to publicly display the PCOS body. Many of the letters from women with PCOS were about daily living with the syndrome and even included tweezers and hair removal creams and special hair growth shampoos along with other "tricks of the trade." There was no effort to suppress or to regulate the ways in which the PCOS body was displayed. In fact, women were encouraged be as demonstrative as possible in the hopes of convincing Oprah that PCOS is an issue that is in need to attention.

50 I have to wonder, then, if this refused acknowledgement is what led the PCOSA to focus many of their recent efforts on finding a well-known, but acceptably feminine, spokeswoman to represent the organization. The quest for a celebrity spokeswoman went on for quite some time. It is believed that someone in the public eye would be most effective in calling attention to PCOS. After all, many non-profit organizations have celebrity spokespersons who are essential in raising awareness and funding for their causes. The

⁸ For an argument about the possible reasons that Oprah refused to educate her viewing audience about PCOS, see my article, "One thing I know for sure: Oprah is Fat Phobic," in the Spring 2005 issue of *Feminist Media Studies*. In it, I closely examine an episode of *Oprah* that focuses on fat women and conclude that Oprah is fat phobic as evidenced by treatment of fat guests.

trouble was in finding a famous woman who has PCOS. It is not a syndrome that women talk about in private let alone in public. When chef Jamie Oliver's wife, Jools, began discussing PCOS publicly because they were having trouble conceiving a child, many members of the PCOSA thought she would make a great spokeswoman. It is not known if the PCOSA's officers contacted her or not, but the search for a spokeswoman continued.

51 In 2004, the PCOSA announced that they had found their spokeswoman.⁹ Tulin Reid, well-known plus-size fashion model, accepted the title and intends "to travel throughout the United States to promote PCOSA and its mission to support the millions of women and girls worldwide with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome" ("Tulin Reid"). Reid is a beautiful woman who, despite weighing around 160 pounds, conforms to many of the standards of femininity. She has full, shiny hair, no facial hair, smooth, clear skin, and well-proportioned hips and thighs. Although she "plans to speak very openly about her struggle, symptoms and avenues she has taken to live a healthier life with the syndrome," it is obvious that the woman that she was before "dealing with" the syndrome, when her "hair was falling out in hand fulls, I had acne and my weight exploded from a fit 160 pounds to 250+ pounds in less than two months," and after, "a workout and eating plan," clearly represents the before and after pictures that fat women are all too familiar with ("Tulin Reid"). In her "after" mode, Reid is not dangerous or disturbing or transgressive. She is a beautiful woman talking about the way she looked "before," when she was "unfit." In Kent's words about this "before and after" phenomenon, the fat person in this scenario does not exist. In essence, by choosing Tulin Reid as the spokeswoman for PCOS, the PCOSA has effectively made the PCOS body invisible, erased it out of existence. This is not to say that Reid or the PCOSA have deliberately negated the PCOS body, but what I am saying is that by making her spokeswoman, they have obeyed the rules of femininity.

52 I am not attempting to reduce or demean Reid or the PCOSA, but rather, I am trying to illuminate the distinction between choosing a publicly acceptable body as opposed to an unacceptable one to represent women who have a syndrome that makes their bodies unfeminine in so many ways. Reid represents the "after" picture; the possibilities of what you can look like if you beat the syndrome, which far too few women manage to do. At once we have a woman telling the world about her struggles with a syndrome that defeminizes women, and yet, who does not have an unfeminine body. Perhaps some women, like those who objected to Fiona as spokeswoman, might find Reid inspiring, but to others she may simply represent all that they wish, but will never be. I am not trying to essentialize the PCOS body,

⁹ In April 2005, Reid stepped down from her PCOSA spokesperson position to devote her time to promoting her website, www.PCOSLiving.com.

because it certainly can take many forms, including thin, clear skinned, and thick haired, but I am saying that the PCOSA's choice of spokeswoman is not a representative with which most women with PCOS will clearly identify.

53 Many questions arise from the PCOSA's endeavors to make PCOS visible. Certainly, they desire to spread the word about PCOS and make the medical community and the general public aware of the syndrome, but at the same time, there is a real desire for the body that represents the PCOS body to be acceptable, to try as much as possible to conform to the standards of normative femininity. Is it to make the PCOSA and PCOS seem as credible as possible? After all, American culture sees fat women as silly, sloppy, lazy, dishonest, among other negative qualities. And, to have a hairy woman as a representative? Unseemly.

54 Then again, if these are truly the cultural interpretations of the PCOS body, could displaying such a body be transgressive? If the PCOSA chose to use the body of an everyday woman with PCOS (and really, who would that be? What would she look like?), as its representative, then wouldn't it be easy for her to be ignored, disregarded, not taken seriously because of the way her body is marked? Or, could her very presence as a representative of a syndrome give her form credibility, and thereby give credibility to the bodies of other women who have the syndrome? Could challenging the idea that obesity is always a condition of laziness and sloppiness and may in fact be the result of a real medical condition transform the way in which we think of fat women?

55 It seems that there is much potential at the site of the PCOS body to transgress the boundaries of normative femininity. In many ways, the PCOS body already does just that. In all of its hairy, balding fatness, the PCOS body represents a challenge to what is expected of the female body. The problem is that it lacks visibility. It is hidden within the matrix of cultural expectations, and attempts to make the PCOS body visible are regulated not only by society but by women with PCOS as well. Will future attempts by the PCOSA and other organizations like it ever make the PCOS body a body that matters? Perhaps working in conjunction with NAAFA or other organizations fighting for the acceptance of diversity in body type and kind is one way of doing so, but until then, the PCOS body will remain invisible, a hairy, balding, infertile fat body shuffling along in the dark made visible only when subject to ridicule and regulation.

Works Cited

- Achard, C., and J. Thiers. "Le virilisme pileire et son association à l'insuffisance glycolytique (diabète des femme à barbe)." *Bulletin of the Academy of National Medicine* 86 (1921): 51-83.
- Bartky, Sandra. "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power." Conboy, Medina, and Stanbury 129-54.
- Bordo, Susan. "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity." Conboy, Medina, and Stanbury 90-110.
- Brazier, Jana Evans. "Sex and Fat Chics: Deteritorializing the Fat Female Body." Brazier and LeBesco 231-56.
- , and Kathleen LeBesco, ed. *Bodies Out of Bounds: Fatness and Transgression*. Berkley: U of California P, 2001.
- Brown, Catrina. "Fat Opression." *Consuming Passions: Feminist Approaches to Weight Preoccupation and Eating Disorders*. Ed. Catrina Brown and Karin Jasper. Toronto, Canada: Second Story P, 1993. 45-60.
- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." Conboy, Medina, and Stanbury 401-17.
- Conboy, Katie, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury, ed. *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997.
- Cussins, Charis. "Producing Reproduction: Techniques of Normalization and Naturalization in Infertility Clinics." *Reproducing Reproduction: Kinship, Power, and Technological Innovation*. Ed. Sarah Franklin and Helen Ragoné. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1998. 66-101.
- Dunaif, Andrea et. al. "Characterization of Groups of Hyperandrogenic Women with Acanthosis Nigricans, Impaired Glucose Tolerance and/or Hyperinsulinemia." *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* 65 (1987): 499-507.
- Futterweit, Walter and J. L. Mechanick. "Polycystic Ovarian Disease: Etiology, Diagnosis, and Treatment." *Comp Therapy* 14 (1988): 12-20.
- Goodman, W. Charisse. *The Invisible Woman: Confronting Weight Prejudice in America*. Carlsbad, CA: Gurze Books, 1995.
- Hartley, Cecilia. "Letting Ourselves Go: Making Room for the Fat Body in Feminist Scholarship." Brazier and LeBesco 60-73.
- Kent, Le'a. "Fighting Abjection: Representing Fat Women." Brazier and LeBesco 130-52.
- LeBesco, Kathleen. "Queering Fat Bodies/Politics." Brazier and LeBesco 74-90.

Lee, Christina. *Women's Health: Psychological and Social Perspectives*. London: SAGE, 1998.

"Letter to Oprah Winfrey." *Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome Association* 1 Apr. 2002. <http://www.pcosupport.org/oprah.php>

Orbach, Susie. *Fat is a Feminist Issue*. London: Hamlyn, 1979.

Push, Luise F. "Fem-Biography: Oprah Winfrey." *Fem-Bio: Notable Women*. 14 Feb. 2005.

Redmond, Geoffrey P. "Hormones and Unwanted Hair." Hormone Help Center. 10 Sept. 2004 <http://www.hormonehelpny.com/column/hirsutism.htm>

Seid, Roberta Pollack. *Never too Thin: Why Women Are at War with Their Bodies*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1989.

Stearns, Peter. *Fat History: Bodies and Beauty in the Modern West*. New York : New York UP, 1997.

Toerien, Merran. "'You've Got Worse Side-Burns Than a Man!': The Social Construction of Feminine Hairlessness." Paper presented to the 8th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women. Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, July 2002. 5 May 2003 <http://www.makerere.ac.ug/womenstudies/full%20papers/merran.htm>

Thatcher, Samuel. *PCOS, Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome: The Hidden Epidemic*. Indianapolis, IN: Perspectives P, 2000.

-----, "With Extreme Prejudice: A Perspective on Weight and Weight Loss." Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome Association. 1 Apr. 2002 <http://www.pcosupport.org/thatcher.php>

"Tulin Reid Named as National Spokesperson for PCOSA." Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome Association. 12 Feb. 2004 <http://www.pcosupport.org/spokesperson.php>

**"Crippling up is the twenty-first century's answer to blacking up":
Conversation with Kaite O'Reilly on theatre, feminism and disability**

By Jozefina Komporály, De Montfort University, Leicester

Kaite O'Reilly was the winner of the Peggy Ramsay award for *Yard* (Bush Theatre, 1998), a major success both in the UK and abroad, running for over two years at the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin. Her other theatre work includes *Banshees* (Royal Court Young Writers Festival), *Belonging* (Birmingham Rep, 2000), *Peeling* (Birmingham Rep, 2003), *SMAC2K* (Disability Arts commission 2003), *Perfect* (Contact Theatre, Manchester 2004; Manchester Evening News best new play) and *Henhouse* (Arcola Theatre, 2004). Germany, Austria, Poland, France, Spain and Australia. She has written *Lives Out Of Step* for Radio 3, and wrote and directed the screenplay *Mouth* for British Screen/Channel 4. Her short story "Sight" included in the *Mustn't Grumble* anthology (The Women's Press) won the MIND/Allan award.

O'Reilly, who was previously visually impaired, has been experimenting with the dramaturgical potential of juxtaposing spoken English, British Sign Language and Sign Supported English for many years. She has worked as a writer and director with Common Ground Sign Dance Theatre and as a dramaturg/tutor on *Off The Page*, developing disabled writers with North West Disability Arts Forum. She was also involved with disPlay4, a two year development project with writernet.org, Graeae Theatre Company and Soho Theatre, mentoring four disabled writers. She is editor of *Shelf Life*, an anthology by writers with a reduced life expectancy for the National Disability Arts Forum (www.ndaf.org). Currently she is the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Creative Fellow in the School of Performance Arts at Exeter University, working on the research through practice project "Alternative Dramaturgies Informed by a Disability and d/Deaf Perspective" and tutoring on the MA in Playwriting and Script Development.

This interview was prompted by O'Reilly's collaboration with Graeae, Britain's leading theatre company of practitioners with physical and sensory impairments. *Peeling*, scripted by O'Reilly, was directed and designed by Jenny Sealey, costume design by Kevin Freeman, and premiered at The Door, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, in February 2002 before embarking on a national tour ending at the Soho Theatre, London. The play toured to the Edinburgh Festival as part of the British Council "best of British" showcase in 2003 and also performed

in Ireland (The Project, Dublin) and France. The play won the www.theatre-in-wales best drama award in 2003, and was published by Faber in 2002 and adapted by O'Reilly for BBC Radio 3 (aired on 28 September 2003). Photos of *Peeling* courtesy of Patrick Baldwin (<http://www.patrickbaldwin.com>).

Interview taken on 6 June 2005 at the British Library, London.

JK: How do you negotiate being a theatre practitioner with your affiliation to academia?

KO'R: I am the recipient of an AHRC Creative at Exeter University. This is the best gig I ever had, because it allows me to follow my research through practice and to reflect on practice, publishing essays on the topic. I have taught on several playwriting courses, but I am usually in a particular department for a short time, because it is very hard to be a full-time academic and a practitioner at the same time. Doors are opening more to practitioners to reflect on their own processes, research as practice is viable now. My attachments are usually as writer in residence, and this fellowship is for three years, thus finite, and allows me to focus on a project that wouldn't normally get funded outside this marriage between university, the AHRC and the profession. It really allows for interesting work to happen. Practitioners like myself, who are rather mercurial and maverick, are encouraged to stop and reflect and actually start writing about their practice. The AHRC and academic connection particularly helps my more experimental work, usually unfunded and invisible, within disability and deaf culture. At the moment I am trying to bring this experimental strand in line with the profile I have as a mainstream playwright. I am also supervising students on the MA in Playwriting and Script Development, which makes you as a tutor reflect on your own process as well; working closely with a handful of students is a symbiotic, cyclical connection. My attachment, however, is as a practitioner, I don't do lectures or theoretical modules.

JK: How do you see the relationship between your own creative work and women's theatre/women in theatre/feminist theatre?

KO'R: I am a feminist without a doubt. I gave a lecture to some students on feminist theatre a few years ago, saying provocatively that I am a "fucking feminist"; people were shocked by the "F" word: "feminist". It was a dirty word for a very long time. I know that I learned a lot, and I want to acknowledge and be respectful to my ancestors (as in Eugenio Barba's meaning of "ancestors"): the women playwrights who have influenced/inspired me. I don't like being boxed though, because people either go are you a feminist or an Irish or a disabled writer? I am all of these. Although I'm comfortable and even proud to be connected with feminist theatre and with writers who are feminist, I get worried that we are limited by being seen just

in that box. For instance, I did a play at the Birmingham Rep on the relationship of the Irish community in Birmingham to the English community at the time of the Birmingham pub bombing and I was seen as an Irish writer. When *Peeling* came out, people went "she is the Irish writer how come she is doing this strange feminist disabled stuff?" Then I got labelled as the disabled writer. A year later I did a piece called *Perfect* at the Contact Theatre in Manchester which was an extraordinary piece of collaboration, it used computer-generated imagery with live action on the stage and people just did not know where to put me. I think people like to have a convenient label to stick on your forehead. It makes things easy and it's lazy. I do my utmost to keep surprising people and to keep reinventing myself. I am affiliated to all these things, and I am very strong in my politics, but I don't want to be just one thing.

JK: Would you consider yourself influenced by feminist theory or by writers with a feminist agenda writing in other genres?

KO'R: By Hroswitha, the wonderful, tenth century German woman playwright. She was writing drama at a time when drama was thought not to be written. I like using humour and intimidation in comedy as Franca Rame does. Influences include Caryl Churchill, constantly reinventing herself; Anna Furse through Blood Group; the Magdalena Project and Jill Greenhalgh; the female playwrights working towards the vote and writing under pseudonyms; Cunniff Stunts. I would not necessarily quote any particular approach or theorist, but with *Peeling* the politics of the gaze was important. The three women characters are professional performers, thereby deliberately placed in a context and profession which is about appearance, youth, vitality and being desirable. Yet these three women are unconventional to look at from a mainstream perspective and its notions of beauty. Part of what I wanted to do was to explore notions of appearance, to challenge and allow different notions of beauty and what a female body may look like on stage, and for the audience to look at these women who I personally find beautiful. One of my favourite moments is when the least powerful person in the room, Sophie Partridge playing Coral, becomes the most powerful as she interrogates the audience, returning their gaze: "I watch them - the audience - their heads sleek in the dark [...] it's transgressive - I'm to be stared at, not them. But I want to ask, who are you? [...] What do you think of me? [...] Am I just another performer?" (*Peeling*, p. 48).

JK: An affinity with Beckett - entrapment, inertia, dark humour - has been repeatedly pointed out by critics in their reviews of *Peeling*. How do you react to such a parallel?

KO'R: I see Beckett as one of my ancestors, alongside a very strong female line, the influence of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and the 1950s playwrights such as Ionesco, Genet, Cocteau. I really believe that although Beckett wrote in French there is an Irish sensibility in his work

that I understand; I believe there is something that speaks very deeply to me. This comparison, however, can become a very lazy label, and several of my playwright friends (all writing in very different styles) have been compared to Beckett at some point. I don't want to consciously write like Beckett. Unfortunately, if critics are going to see three large empty dresses on stage they will immediately think of *Play*. That's actually not my fault; I did not design the show. I don't see the references to *Play* or *Happy Days* in *Peeling* because of the simple fact that the design was not integral to my script. It was Jenny Sealey's superb design, and Kevin Freeman made the costumes. Then you find other people who are a bit deeper in their comparison, look at the dark humour, the viciousness, the punch in the stomach. You want that extraordinary rollercoaster experience, you want people to be aware that they have seen something when they come out of *Peeling*. Beckett did the same, and I think that's partly an Irish sensibility where you can do the laughing and then the punching.



Fig. 1.: *Peeling*

JK: Where did the idea for *Peeling* come from? Was there a collaborative devising process with Graeae?

KO'R: Jenny [Sealey] and I met as actors working on a show in 1986 directed by Anna Furse, but we did not work together until 2000 when we wondered what would happen if two practitioners with our own perspectives and impairments [visual and aural] got together, what kind of an aesthetic would we create. I trained as an actor, in a physical theatre background,

and Jenny has a more visual perspective. Jenny was to direct and design, and we had an image of three women tied to very high chairs, against their will. We talked about having Marie Antoinette ball gowns or crinolines; and I had this fantasy of the signing hands coming through the skirts. This image was located on stage, but at the back, with a performance going on in the front. I wanted to do something metatheatrical. I loved the idea of writing a piece of theatre about a piece of theatre. I already knew two of the performers directly, and I wrote a draft script which was a chorus, an ancient Greek piece, a Robert Lepage-style big scale cut and paste post-modern production. We got together in the rehearsal space because I wanted to see the performers' dynamic, how bitchy they were, what their voices were. Caroline Parker was a long-term collaborator and I knew I had to use certain structures that worked well with her voice, and I wanted to hear Lisa Hammond and Sophie Partridge as well; all very strong and very distinct women. We did not devise as such, we just played status games, then I wrote a full draft which happens to be the version published, without being revised in the light of rehearsals.

JK: *Peeling* integrates verbal communication with sign language interpretation and audio description. How does this increased communicative potential impact on you as a playwright?

KO'R: I incorporated audio description, because as a visually impaired person I felt that previous attempts were done badly. I wanted to script it into the text, making it an integral experience for all. I hate when any device, such as audio description, is just stuck on the side. In fact, it is this that is driving me currently, to explore how can the playwright dramaturgically take on these so-call access devices. To my knowledge, I have been the first playwright doing this to a developed level, though there have been others since. Graeae has been exploring the use of audio description and BSL (British Sign Language) for some time, but had not done it as part of the script. A little of that happens in *On Blindness*, but it was after *Peeling*, and I felt that it wasn't properly integrated. With *Peeling* Jenny wanted to avoid sign language and to have the whole of the script projected on the back wall, because there are some people who use BSL and others sign-supported English, yet others lip-read. I wanted to have sections that are signed but not spoken on stage, which was actually very difficult because it's not seen as best practice, it is not politically correct. The right way to do it is that somebody is speaking and somebody is sign interpreting. I wanted to subvert that. I wanted to use sign theatre to talk about Deaf peoples' experience of Hitler's "Final Solution" - this is part of Deaf history which is only really emerging now into the mainstream - but not to have a voice over or text projected at the back. Everybody got a bit nervous about that, because this way you are denying access to half of the audience. I basically said that this is a dramaturgical

device and let's privilege deaf people and those who sign, and then use the same speech at the end in a different form. It also creates a dynamic in the auditorium, and many Deaf people felt this was a political act - to have this "secret" part of Deaf history told first solely to the Deaf or signing community, then re-telling this story, for all, at the climax of the play. As a dramatist it is more interesting to see what happens if everyone gets the same information but not at the same time. You can then shift the politics and the focus from the stage to the audience, because you have part of the audience having information - people with access to sign language who will see the signing of this invisible history - to which the predominantly hearing audience will be oblivious. At the end when the story is retold I wanted it in direct translation from BSL (British Sign Language). The notion of voicing from BSL was very important to a hearing ear, and to that whole fragmentation that is happening at the end of the play. I was trying to do something that pushed the boundaries of dramaturgy generally, and not necessarily having to do only with disability. I had this theoretical and dramaturgical desire, coming from a political as well as theatrical experience, wanting an integrated audience and a deaf and hearing cast.

JK: *Peeling* integrates verbal communication with sign language interpretation and audio description. How does this increased communicative potential impact on you as a playwright?

KO'R: I incorporated audio description, because as a visually impaired person I felt that previous attempts were done badly. I wanted to script it into the text, making it an integral experience for all. I hate when any device, such as audio description, is just stuck on the side. In fact, it is this that is driving me currently, to explore how can the playwright dramaturgically take on these so-call access devices. To my knowledge, I have been the first playwright doing this to a developed level, though there have been others since. Graeae has been exploring the use of audio description and BSL (British Sign Language) for some time, but had not done it as part of the script. A little of that happens in *On Blindness*, but it was after *Peeling*, and I felt that it wasn't properly integrated. With *Peeling* Jenny wanted to avoid sign language and to have the whole of the script projected on the back wall, because there are some people who use BSL and others sign-supported English, yet others lip-read. I wanted to have sections that are signed but not spoken on stage, which was actually very difficult because it's not seen as best practice, it is not politically correct. The right way to do it is that somebody is speaking and somebody is sign interpreting. I wanted to subvert that. I wanted to use sign theatre to talk about Deaf peoples' experience of Hitler's "Final Solution" - this is part of Deaf history which is only really emerging now into the mainstream - but not to have a voice over or text projected at the back. Everybody got a bit nervous about that, because this

way you are denying access to half of the audience. I basically said that this is a dramaturgical device and let's privilege deaf people and those who sign, and then use the same speech at the end in a different form. It also creates a dynamic in the auditorium, and many Deaf people felt this was a political act - to have this "secret" part of Deaf history told first solely to the Deaf or signing community, then re-telling this story, for all, at the climax of the play. As a dramatist it is more interesting to see what happens if everyone gets the same information but not at the same time. You can then shift the politics and the focus from the stage to the audience, because you have part of the audience having information - people with access to sign language who will see the signing of this invisible history - to which the predominantly hearing audience will be oblivious. At the end when the story is retold I wanted it in direct translation from BSL (British Sign Language). The notion of voicing from BSL was very important to a hearing ear, and to that whole fragmentation that is happening at the end of the play. I was trying to do something that pushed the boundaries of dramaturgy generally, and not necessarily having to do only with disability. I had this theoretical and dramaturgical desire, coming from a political as well as theatrical experience, wanting an integrated audience and a deaf and hearing cast.

JK: Could you compare and contrast the stage performance of *Peeling*, on the one hand, and the radio play, on the other? What were your priorities in tailoring your material to the specificities of each medium? To what extent, if at all, were you prepared to satisfy the different audience expectations?

KO'R: This was my first time to adapt my own script. I was basically thinking of what's possible in the given medium. My favourite section is when Coral interrogates the audience and says: "I watch them." (*Peeling*, p. 48) She becomes powerful, while people begin shifting and getting uncomfortable. Before that they were scrutinising her. This reversal of the gaze in confrontation worked well in the theatre, the weakest person becoming the strongest. One can't confront on the radio, so I made the audience Coral's confidante. This softened the play, but made Coral powerful, central. On the radio she gets into the heart of the listener. Moving to radio also made the play more naturalistic. The chorus becomes the play in the last act, it is a shift in form, place and theatrical style (like Sarah Kane's Leeds hotel room becoming a killing field in the Balkans in *Blasted*). In the theatre we had Beaty's line "all men know that children are more than life, which is why they kill them", (*Peeling*, p. 61) followed by a wall of sound, signifying the shift to somewhere else. In theatre we can go somewhere else but not so, in the same way, in radio. So it becomes more literal and naturalistic - was there an attack? Has the theatre been hit? The women are banging on the fire curtain that has come down. I

later tried to move them, referring to the high planes of Troy with the wind blowing round them, it becomes more poetic but the characters haven't become the embodiment of the women of Troy and all women who have experienced warfare - as they do in the theatre version. I hoped I was able to move the ending somewhere else imaginatively but it didn't have the metaphorical and metatheatrical power or the emotional punch of the live performance.

We could, however, mess around with the beginning. I had the stage manager make an announcement and thus became far more provocative and in your face with my politics, by including references such as "in the European Year of the Disabled Person we give lip service to disability politics". I am delighted that disabled performers get work, but overall it can be lip service. It felt good to put that in the radio version because I know one reason why the BBC wanted the play, apart from Sunday Night Theatre Season, was they could also tick the box in the equal opportunities form: It's the European Year of the Disabled Person and we have a Graeae show! I wanted to be able to write in an acknowledgement of that, as I saw it.



Fig. 2.: *Peeling*

KO'R: I am trying to marry my so-called experimental work with me being a playwright. I don't write what's known as "the well-made play", but I am good at structure, informed by the well-made play. There is a lot happening in deaf and disability culture, and I'm encouraged in

my endeavours as a lot of people claim that the bar was raised by *Peeling*. Work with deaf collaborators, for example, could be put in a ghetto, but could also be seen as avant-garde. The problem with quite a lot of work from within disability and Deaf arts and culture is that it is often of not very good quality. We know historically and politically why this is the case - for a very long time disabled and deaf artists have been denied access to training, education, opportunities and employment. Society has followed the Medical model of Disability, which claims there is something "wrong" with the individual rather than the Social Model of Disability (which I believe and follow) which sees it is society, its structures, prejudices, inaccessible buildings and other constructs which disables the individual, not the condition or impairment. How, as disabled artists, can we access training or keep up to date with developments when it is impossible just to get into the building! For similar reasons of access and opportunity, disabled artists lag behind mainstream art. (The Disability Discrimination Act was only fully passed in October 2004. The employment rights and first rights of access came into force on 2 December 1996, further rights of access came into force on 1 October 1999, and the final rights of access in October 2004.). I am fortunate as by having a partial, invisible sensory impairment I have had access to mainstream education and training, and there has been no bar to my development or imagination put into practice. However, this may not have been the case for others who may have been secreted away in "special schools" or been denied access to experience owing to prejudice or inaccessible architecture. I attended the Vienna Deaf Theatre Festival at Easter 2005, where many people thought they were making work that was new, but it was in fact sometimes 50 years out of date. It's like constantly reinventing the wheel. If you have been unable to access theatre history or styles, it's impossible to develop work in the manner that Barba and Odin Teatret did for example - as you don't know who your "ancestors" were, what they achieved.

Disabled practitioners are emerging, however, but have had little if no formal training. We are having to catch up. I went through the mainstream first and was involved in the disability culture on the side, now I am trying to marry the two. Things are slowly happening, but people are not always aware of disability politics. "Inclusion" and "integrated" are the vogue terms of our times, yet often in dance companies wheelchairs are still used just to pirouette off, ticking boxes an equal opportunities forms. I'd love to see a disabled Hedda or a Nora. It's like the movement in black theatre, the RSC casting their first black Othello. Cross-racial casting is not such a big deal any more, so hopefully we'll reach that stage with disability as well, disabled actors not just playing Richard III or a non-disabled person crippling up but disabled actors doing a piece because they bring a new perspective to it. We

might not necessarily need to have disabled theatre as such, just as we might not have women's/black theatre any more, it's all entering the mainstream. The disability movement is fifteen to twenty years behind the other movements that started in the 1960s, activism starting only in the 80s. Ideally, in the future, disability theatre will also enter the mainstream.

JK: On this optimistic note, I would like to thank for the conversation and wish you all the best with your future work.

Margaret Sönsen Breen and Warren J. Blumfeld, eds.: *Butler Matters: Judith Butler's Impact on Feminist and Queer Studies*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

By Christina Wald, University of Cologne, Germany

1 The title's witty declaration "Butler matters" in combination with Butler's portrait as frontispiece, and the collection's final sentence that confirms, "the lesbian and gay movement needs, among its advocates, scholars like Judith Butler" (204), suggests more dedication than Breen and Blumfeld's collection of essays actually has. Although the majority of the thirteen articles maintains the importance of Butler's thinking for a number of disciplines, among which Feminist and Queer Studies are only the most prominent ones, Vicky Kirby's and Kirsten Campbell's contributions probe into inadequacies and inconsistencies of Butler's theory.

2 The collection opens with Judith Butler compiled by some of the essay contributors and Susanne Baer, Lynda Hall, and Robert Shail. In this interview, Butler addresses a number of issues which she explores in more detail in her recent book *Undoing Gender* (see the review by Dirk Schulz in this issue), such as transsexuality, disability, the performativity of race, the return of essentialism in feminist and queer studies that she sees at work in debates on the "gay gene", and gay marriage, which Butler considers an "assimilation to the norm" (20). Butler emphasises that the fight for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual rights does not need to be based on essentialised identity politics: "One can still organize as a lesbian, but one has to be open to the notion that we don't yet know who else will ally with that sign, or when that sign will have to be relinquished in order to promote another potential goal" (23). In the collection's first essay, "Becoming Butlerian," Frederick S. Roden examines the popularity of *Gender Trouble* and argues that not only Butler's theses but also the philosophical tradition of acclaimed thinkers she places herself in contributed to the book's broad reception, which exceeded the usual readership within Queer and Gender Studies. Roden comments on the controversy which *Gender Trouble* caused internationally among feminists, paying particular attention to Martha Nussbaum's polemical critique in *The New Republic*, "The Professor of Parody: The Hip Defeatism of Judith Butler." A number of the essays return to this article and make Nussbaum the figurehead for those feminists who oppose Butler's theory on the ground of its supposedly non-political and playful character.

3 The most critical assessments of Butler's impact are gathered in the collection's second part on language, melancholia, and subjectivity. In "When All That is Solid Melts into

Language," Vicky Kirby revisits her criticism of Butler's foreclosure of matter that she previously elaborated in her study *Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal* (1997). Kirby argues that notwithstanding Butler's critique of Žižek's concepts of foreclosure, she repeats the psychoanalytic logic when her theory forecloses everything that is not language. Therefore, according to Kirby, "our sense of the materiality of matter, its palpability and physical insistence, is rendered unspeakable and unthinkable in Butler's account" (45). Kirby states that Butler restricts her considerations to the changing morphology of the body, i.e. its matter, rather than its "vulgar, lived sense of bodily substance" (54), and therefore remains at "the surface of the surface" of the body and "stops short of going all the way" (54). Although Kirby's valid criticism is well-argued, she herself does not seem to go all the way, either, by pointing out the supposed inadequacies of Butler's theory rather than offering an — however provisional - account of "substance." Accordingly, her concluding sentence is rather evasive and vague: "by putting the sign [of matter] into question and exploring and exploding identity on the atomic level of its constitution, matter may well become a curious subject" (56). While Kirby contests basic assumptions of Butler's theory from without, Kirsten Campbell's "The Plague of the Subject: Subjects, Politics, and the Power of Psychic Life" criticises Butler's thinking from within Butler's framework. Campbell exposes one of the troubling contradictions in Butler's theory of subject formation: If the prohibition of the same-sex parent as object of love triggers the melancholic incorporation which results in the assumption of gender, how can the as yet non-sexed child be forbidden to love the same-sex parent? Likewise, Campbell shows that Butler fails to theorise the outside of social intelligibility, i.e. the realm of the bodies that do not matter. Moreover, she argues that Butler conceptualises the subject as the conscious self, thus offering a theory of identity rather than the psychoanalytic self. I would contest Campbell's claim that "the unconscious remains the unthought in Butler's theory, functioning as its aporia" (91), as the very concept of gender melancholy, tackled by Campbell herself, is based on unconscious processes; thus, Butler argues in *The Psychic Life of Power* that "what is most apparently performed as gender is the sign and symptom of a pervasive disavowal" (147).

4 In "Excitable Speech: Judith Butler, Mae West, and Sexual Innuendo," which at times tacitly contradicts Campbell's stance, Angela Failler offers a convincing and entertaining account of Mae West's comedy in terms of Butler's concept of resignification. Failler aligns Butler's assumption that speech involves but is unconscious of its foreclosures and that "the unspeakable lingers as a silent but animating presence" (98) in all speech acts, with West's sexual innuendo, which is principally based on the unspoken but implied. Apart from offering

West's memorable punch lines, such as "Women with 'pasts' interest men because they hope that history will repeat itself" and "Between two evils, I always pick the one I never tried before," Failler convincingly illustrates the workings of (queer) resignification in West's oeuvre and its adaptations. Failler's contribution is one of the articles which fit the collection's dedication "For our students," in that it provides accessible and even entertaining examples that could help to teach Butler's complex and abstract theory. In "Judith Butler and the Images of Theory," Mena Mitrano examines Butler's thinking from the unusual perspective of painting and literary images. Taking into account Kafka's notion of subjectivity and contrasting it with the paintings of Willem de Kooning, Mitrano identifies "an affinity to the visual reactions against European modernism" (61) in Butler's writing and places it in a tradition of "American gestural, expressive poetics that reacts to European anxieties" (61). According to Mitrano, Butler, like de Kooning, substitutes the European immobility of the subject before the law — as represented in Kafka's texts but also in theoretical European writing such as Kristeva's — with the "glamorous negativity" (65) of performativity. Although Mitrano's analysis of Butler's philosophical influences is convincing and the association of her theory with art is original, her insistence on the difference between Europe's "old starving guardians" and Northern American theory's "contemporary intellectual nurture" is irritatingly reminiscent of Donald Rumsfeld's phrases about "old Europe" — an "intellectual nurture" hardly to be associated with Butler's thought.

5 The collection's third part, "Body Matters," assembles articles which investigate Butler's impact on archaeology, literary studies, and pedagogy. In their article "Past Performances," Elizabeth M. Perry and Rosemary A. Joyce examine the benefit of Butler's theory for archaeology. Although only a small number of archaeologists employ Butler's work in their field, their research has become an important direction in the archaeology of gender according to Perry and Joyce. The authors show that because Butler's work questions categories that have been naturalised, it offers a groundbreaking theoretical basis for archaeology, in which otherwise "unanticipated diversity in past gender expressions may be conflated into socially preconceived categories of 'feminine' and 'masculine'" (114). As archaeology invariably has to examine material remains, the discipline demands an adaptation of Butler's theory that takes into account materiality. The article offers interesting examples of reconstructed gender identities that depart from the naturalised binary, such as the transgendered Kolhamana in historic Zuni communities. Belinda Johnston's "Renaissance Body Matters" draws together the performative model of gender in Renaissance theatre and the practice of witch-hunting, which increasingly naturalised the female body. Johnston

employs Butler to illuminate the discursive association of witchcraft with the maternal body, which involved a biologically grounded sexual difference that already departed from the one-sex-model (see also the gender forum article "Performing the Demonic" by Kramer for a association of Butler's theory and the discourse on witchcraft). Taking into account the notion of the abject, Johnston demonstrates how "the discourse of female witchcraft worked to promote appropriate maternity and to suggest the radical difference of maternity itself" (136) and argues that theatrical stagings of witchcraft, such as Macbeth and Middleton's *The Witch*, performed a subversive reiteration of the discourse and depicted gender as a much less stable category.

6 Breen's article "*Gender Trouble* in the Classroom" argues that the epistemological entrenchment of gender prejudice makes the reading of *Gender Trouble* in the classroom difficult but rewarding. Breen does not address the theoretical complexity and the challenging style of Butler's writing, which additionally complicate the reading for students, but her subsequent analyses of literary texts in the light of Butler's theory show ways of making Butler accessible for students. Reading Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* together with Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* and Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* as intertexts, Breen not only offers a convincing and innovative reading of Kafka's story, but also proves the merit of Butler's theory for literary analysis. Her reading of Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* shows how the novel subverts contemporary sexological theses and participates in a Butlerian destabilisation of gender. Breen highlights the astonishing parallels to Stoker's *The Man*, which, however, provides a more normative account of gender transgression. In contrast to Kirby's claims, Nathalie Wilson's article "Butler's Corporeal Politics: Matters of Politicised Abjection" argues that Butler does consider matter as substance in her theory of abject bodies. In her illuminating readings of abject physicality in Barbara Gowdy's *Mister Sandman* and Katherine Dunne's *Geek Love*, Wilson demonstrates that Butler's theory of the intersection of language and matter is a helpful tool for literary analysis.

7 The final part of the collection investigates agency, poststructuralism, and political pragmatism in Butler's work. In "Strange Tempest: Agency, Poststructuralism, and the Shape of Feminist Politics to Come," Edwina Barvosa-Carter argues that Butler's concept of agency beyond autonomy was one of the crucial reasons for the unusually intense response to her writing. Barvosa-Carter criticises that Butler has as yet left unanswered which factors enable agency within iteration and proposes to expand Butler's notion of cultural "tools" in order to theorise agency. Contesting Nussbaum's assertion that Butler's theory cannot be put to use in political practice, Barvosa-Carter claims that Butler offers the philosophical weapons and

radical perspective needed by political practice. The final article "Changing Signs: The Political Pragmatism of Poststructuralism" follows the same trajectory and offers more concrete examples of how to use Butler's philosophical weapons. Robert Alan Brooke and Diane Helene Miller argue that poststructuralist gender theory has merits for the fight for sexual rights and that it should complement identity politics, whose drawbacks, such as the marginalisation of minorities within a minority and the "errors in essentialism" (197), the authors highlight. As an example for the political efficacy of Butler's theory, Brooke and Miller expand the Butlerian inversion through which heterosexuality becomes a copy rather than the origin of which homosexuality is an imperfect copy: "By performing the type of political inversion outlined by Butler, sexual rights advocates can begin to shift the argumentative burden so that the issue of discrimination, rather than sexual identity, becomes the primary focus of the debate" (201).

8 Through its three thematic foci and its interdisciplinary approach, *Butler Matters* offers a complex and stimulating account of Butler's controversial reception, although it concentrates, with a few exceptions, on the reception within the USA. The only drawbacks of the study are its somewhat belated publication and its unclear addressee. All contributions but Mirano's and Breen's have first appeared in a special issue on Butler in the *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* in 2001, also edited by Breen and Blumfeld, or elsewhere. As a result, the collection does not take into account Butler's more recent work, such as *Antigone's Claim* (2000), her response to 9/11 *Precarious Life* (2004), *Undoing Gender* (2004), and *Contingency, Hegemony, and Universality* (2000), co-authored with Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek. Moreover, the selected essays address dissimilar readerships. While some articles, such as Roden's introductory survey and Breen's and Failler's contributions, meet the volume's dedication, others, such as Kirby's and Campbell's articles, clearly call for scholars who are intimate with Butler's oeuvre. Nonetheless, *Butler Matters* is an important contribution to the field of Gender Studies, which ideally complements earlier studies on Butler, which focus on the explanation of Butler's theory and do not, as *Butler Matters*, mainly explore the fruitfulness of Butler's thinking both for a variety of academic disciplines and for political practice.

Helma Järviluoma, Pirkko Moisala & Anni Vilkkö: *Gender and Qualitative Methods*. London: Sage Publications, 2003

By Alyson Tyler, University of Wales at Aberystwyth, Wales, UK

1 *Gender and Qualitative Methods* forms part of a series entitled "Introducing Qualitative Methods", which, it is stated, has an "interdisciplinary and international" (p. 2) approach. The volume under consideration here clearly ties in with this scope. The series is aimed at the student and beginning researcher, providing an accessible yet informative introduction to the consideration of gender within qualitative research. The authors illustrate how gender can be approached, seen, and researched in a variety of settings through the use of their personal research experience, case study examples, and thorough discussions of theories and positions. Each chapter is a theoretical introduction to a particular method, illustrated with practical and real examples of the research method. The case study examples are diverse in nature, showing the richness and possibilities within gender studies. Each of the three authors has her own research expertise, and this is evident in the varied chapters and research methods chosen. Their aim is to "introduce different methods for recognizing gender/ing in qualitative research" (p.7).

2 Useful exercises are given at the end of each chapter to encourage the student or researcher to explore the methods for themselves. This provides the researcher with a constructive starting point if they wish to understand more about a particular method and can be very useful for students new to the field of gender studies. For example, the first exercise from Chapter 1 is to write one's own biography from the perspective of gender, and one exercise from Chapter 5 is the gendered analysis of an advertisement jingle.

3 Chapter 1, Performing and negotiating gender, acts as an introduction to gender studies, and the book as a whole. For those new to gender studies this is a useful overview, whilst to those familiar with the field it provides a new and constructive account of gender in research. The authors establish their position of regarding gender as a social construction and that "in order to be able to question, that is, to analyse, gender, one has to seek to distance oneself from one's own gender system" (p. 19). This is one reason why they argue that research is never neutral. The authors also provide a useful gendered critique of the division between quantitative and qualitative methods, citing Ann Oakley and her changes in approaches over time as being instrumental in changing the way methods are viewed. The chapter therefore provides a useful overview of how gender is something that is "constantly being maintained, performed, and renegotiated" (p.24) and that it can be "read" and

"interpreted" (p.24) from a variety of sources, texts and contexts.

4 Chapter 2 focuses on gender and field work and as such is the first of the more specific chapters, dealing with a specific method. Here, the authors are "not using gender as an explanation for different 'objective conditions' but rather as an analytical concept to focus on the construction of gender in field research" (p.27). The field work of the chapter title is primarily discussed from an ethnographic perspective which provides an interesting context for those perhaps unfamiliar with this type of approach. The case studies presented here provide distinctive examples of cases where the intricacies of race, gender and culture collide in practical fieldwork, producing varying power relationships. Physical and literal postures in the field are constantly negotiated and renegotiated along many social, cultural and gender lines during fieldwork, and "the intertwining of the research and the researcher is particularly obvious" (p.33). Female (and male) researches may find themselves in situations where personal social or cultural attributes are used to locate the person in a position which may be unfamiliar or unusual for them - this can focus attention not only on analysing the actual situation, but also encourages inward observation in terms of their reactions to the different situations.

5 Chapter 3 focusing on gender and life stories continues the theme of differing gendered approaches by females and males, but from the perspective of the telling of life histories and how these autobiographies or oral histories are used as research texts. The authors argue that the telling of life stories can be gendered by the narrator. But, they warn that a gendered interpretation is not simple as narrators can 'adopt' voices, styles or patterns that are contradictory and can mask their gender. Autobiographies and life histories, they argue, can be useful not only for the social and historical evidence they provide on the surface, but also for the possibility of reading them from a gendered perspective: "autobiography is not just research material among other data, but also a set of practices which produce knowledge in accordance with its own protocols, implicating the reader in this process" (p.53). Feminists have therefore used life histories as a way of furthering the field of feminist studies because autobiographies give a voice to (previously silenced) women and have an "emancipatory function" (p.60). The authors here also show how recent debate within this field has led to more "discursive" and "performative" (p. 66) approaches of the reading of life narratives.

6 A possibly new method for some students and researches is that of membership categorization analysis that is explored in Chapter 4. A brief history of this method is provided, along with an outline of the various concepts of membership categorization analysis

(MCA). Although postmodernists, and many feminists, would argue against the use of categories and labels, MCA enables researchers to look beyond the labels by seeking to understand how "these categories are constantly being constructed and maintained through everyday interactions" (p.70). Using a variety of examples, the authors show how individuals, the media, society etc construct and use categories, and how we all react to such labels, even when we think we, as feminists or researchers, are not susceptible to the use of categories and labels!

7 Chapter 5 which analyses sound and vision from the perspective of gender may be another method that is new to many researchers as the authors state that the analysis of such forms is frequently neglected in ethnographic and media studies. They focus on how gender categories "are performed and reshaped in film soundtracks and music videos" (p.84) and argue that not only does music have meanings on its own, but that sounds can also change our interpretations, feelings, and reactions to visual situations e.g. the use of particular sounds to accompany particular scenes in films. This can be studied from a gender perspective such as analysing the types of sounds associated with different types of women when they appear in a film. Gender in sound and vision also encompasses approaches including studying neglected female composers as well as the position of women in the music world today e.g. women in rock music. Detailed case study examples and guides to reading the gender construction of film or video soundtracks provide sufficient material to show the researcher how sounds are interpreted consciously and unconsciously and how we react to aural stimuli.

8 In Chapter 6 on Research Reporting and Gender the authors consider the gendered process of writing research and discuss the issues surrounding the dichotomy of objective (masculine) and subjective (feminine) research writing. They also consider the differences between what they term American and French styles of feminist thought and writing and look at experimental hybrid models as a possible way forward to avoid the tired traditional dichotomy of neutral or subjective research writing.

9 Despite a few unfortunate typographical errors e.g. 'femininity', Okeley rather than Okely, and the lack of a concluding chapter on gender and qualitative methods, this book shows how important it is that "gender must be taken seriously in every kind and at every level of research, from practical choices to methodological questions, as well as at every stage of the research process" (p.1). This book exemplifies ways of analysing gender as a socially constructed and performed interaction from a variety of different methods, most of which are usually left out of research textbooks. Whilst it is not a general how-to book on gender and

qualitative methods (which could be possible, given its title), it is a valuable introductory exploration into several research methods from a gendered perspective.

Judith Butler: *Undoing Gender*. Routledge: New York. 2004

By Dirk Schulz, University of Cologne

1 *Undoing Gender* assembles eleven of Butler's most recent contributions to debates on gender and sexuality, in her own words, "on the question of what it might mean to undo restrictively normative conceptions of sexual and gendered life" (1). The title henceforth already marks Butler's slight shift in perspective. If her landmark study *Gender Trouble* (1990) for the most part investigates how gender is performatively reiterated, *Undoing Gender* focuses on how gender rather is continuously undone. The issues she takes up to illustrate possible disruptions of binary gender concepts concern the socio political implications of transgender identity and transsexuality, gay marriage, questions arising from new arrays of kinship, as well as feminist/queer psychoanalysis and their status within philosophical frameworks. In most of these essays she expounds the problems of the continuous and often ambivalent negotiation between individual autonomy and governing social norms. As she expounds, her reflections are always "guided by the question of what maximizes the possibilities for a livable life, what minimizes the possibilities of unbearable life, or, indeed, social or literal death" (8). What Butler highlights in *Undoing Gender* is how "human rights" often entail the risk of exclusion, or worse, of degrading those who fail to comply.

2 The title of the introductory chapter is "Acting in Concert" and designates both a plea for collective political activism and an attempt at bringing together the main concerns of the following articles that circle around four current debates: 1) the effects of recent transgender/transsexual politics on gender conceptions, 2) the conflicting consequences of the legalisation of gay marriage in many Western countries, 3) new psychoanalytic approaches to sexuality and gender addressing the alleged inevitability of the heteronormative structuring of the symbolic, and 4) the relation of current developments within gender politics to academia. What binds these issues for Butler is their relation to our notion of who counts as "human." As she states, "the human is not captured once and for all. That the category is crafted in time, and that it works through excluding a wide range of minorities means that its rearticulation will begin precisely at the point where the excluded speak to and from such a category" (13). This is precisely the enterprise she undertakes throughout the book.

3 In the second chapter, "Beside Oneself: On the Limits of Sexual Autonomy," Butler explains her notion of inclusive transformation, a recurring concept in the book, by which she understands a continuous critical disruption of "what has become settled knowledge and

knowable reality, and to use, as it were, one's unreality to make an otherwise impossible or illegible claim [so that] something other than a simple assimilation into prevailing norms can and does take place" (27). Butler here emphatically argues for an ethics of integration, where the claims to individual autonomy and social recognition do not finalise but perpetuate a productive and shifting dialogue between ego and other. She states that such an integral process is possible when one embraces "the value of being beside oneself, given over to others, finding oneself in a trajectory of desire in which one is taken out of oneself, resituated irreversibly in a field of others in which one is not the presumptive center" (25). Being aware of this constitution of human sociality becomes a prerequisite for a careful rethinking of its often limiting capacity.

4 In the following chapter "Gender Regulations" Butler opposes any clear cut distinction between a cultural and a psychological analysis of gender and sexuality, pointing out how the Lacanian symbolic rather might be seen as "the sedimentation of social practices" (44) perpetuating cultural heteronormativity through its insistence on an oedipalised family structure. "In other words, the authoritative force that shores up the incontestability of the symbolic law is itself an exercise of that symbolic law, a further instance of the place of the father, as it were, indisputable and incontestable" (46). Leaving alternative forms of kinship aside as far as possible from its theorisations, psychoanalysis contributes to the (re)production of laws that it purports to describe. While embracing some of the tools that psychoanalysis offers for a thorough social critique, such as the triangulation of desire, Butler argues for a "queer poststructuralism of the psyche" (44) and of gender which includes a conceptual separation of gender from sexuality (where one does not follow from the other) as well as an undermining of gender's alleged heteronormative binariness through its decontextualisation in queer sexualities.

5 The following two papers, "Doing Justice to Someone" and "Undiagnosing Gender" both address the issue of trans politics. Offering two examples which testify to the pathologising and heteronormalising treatment of transpeople in medical as well as juridical discourses Butler convincingly highlights and accentuates the conflicting impulses which emerge from different conceptualisations of transgendered concerns. Rather than complicating and disrupting notions of binary genders, their life stories and demands are often employed as "proof" for an inborn and coherent gender identity. One problem Butler outlines is that in order to receive funding for sex-change operations, one literally subscribes to a view of "transgendered identity" as a psychopathological disease which can be cured by an operation "adjusting" the body to the "given" gender of a person. Individual autonomy thus

requires a subscription to one's own abnormalcy opposed to an otherwise alleged coherence between body and gender.

6 In "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual" Butler takes the legislation of gay marriage as a starting point for reflections concerning the consequences the granting of legal rights to married couples has for those who live in alternative familial arrangements. The dilemma between achieving social recognition and legal equality of homosexual couples on the one hand without rendering other sexual constellations illegible on the other is Butler's main concern here. While her arguments accentuate this problem in profound ways and some of her points cannot be dismissed, the debates concerning gay marriage, in my opinion, sometimes centre too much on the alleged impositional character this development is said to confer upon individuals. In Butler's opinion "the sexual field is circumscribed in such a way that sexuality is already thought of in terms of marriage" (106). I wonder whether institutionalised marriage really holds this power over individual conceptions of sexuality. Does gay marriage really foreclose new possibilities for thinking about more imaginable kinship and familial arrangements or might it not be that it rather opens up further conceptualisations of intimate configurations? Surely, to argue in favour of a more inclusive, non-favouring politics is important but different from arguing against a new legislative option for non-heterosexual arrangements.

7 In the following chapters Butler further elaborates on questions that she already addressed in her landmark study *Gender Trouble*. She engages in the critical dialogue that has originated from that publication in a sometimes surprisingly personal manner, which appear to be part of a new biographically founded rhetorics, adapted in answer to the constant attacks on her for being an a-political philosopher. Thus, besides of a theoretical update of Butler's main point of critical investigation, namely heteronormativity and its constituting effects on human sociality along with the way it seeks to naturalise its own doings, we can discern a more biographically founded argumentation here. While shifting in their focus or imagined addressee, distinguishing the chapters' theses from each other is not always easy, not only because the foregrounded discourses gain through their critical alliance and are difficult to sever in any event, but also because the essays were written for different occasions and therefore some key concerns are repeated throughout.

8 Taking recourse to the "new issues" approached in the first half of the book as well as responding to criticism of her own work, "Longing for Recognition," "Quandaries of the Incest Taboo," "The End of Sexual Difference," "Bodily Confessions," and "The Question of Social Transformation" tackle the discursive intersections and interstices of psychoanalysis

and philosophy, performativity, representation, and illegibility, body and language, feminism, sexuality and gender. Addressing her critics directly, she states what to her appears to be the central question of gender, feminist and queer studies:

Sexual difference, [...] as a question that prompts feminist inquiry, [...] is something that cannot be quite stated, that troubles the grammar of the statement, and that remains, more or less permanently, to interrogate [...]. If one calls such terms into question, does that mean they cannot be used anymore? [...] [I]t means only that the term is not simply a stumbling block on which we rely, an uninterrogated premise for political argument. (178-179)

Butler's main interest remains the unsettling of heteronormative gender and sexuality conceptions. But contrary to what many critics of her work believe her approach to the subject does not lead to an a-political voluntarism, but rather her deconstructive impetus takes into account the discursive context, in which feminist inquiry is situated and in which these terms need to be interrogated accordingly.

9 The closing article of *Undoing Gender*, "Can the 'Other' of Philosophy Speak" is the one least overtly concerned with gender in the collection. It is a personal reflection upon the changing contour of critical philosophical interrogation, which, in Butler's opinion, increasingly takes place outside of the departments of philosophy. Since she as much as her work have often been denied a place within philosophical academia proper, a fate that she shares with other big names of feminist inquiry, she embraces the growing amount of linkages within the humanities that bring about "so many more unexpected conversations across disciplines, such extraordinary movements of thought that surpass the barriers of departmentalization, posing a vital question for those who remain behind" (250). Here again, Butler seems to speak from the position of the excluded, which ironically gives her the possibility of leaving structural confinements behind, making room for a critical distance and forward moving attitude at the same time.

10 The assembled essays in *Undoing Gender* clarify once more why Butler maintains a heavyweight albeit controversial position within (feminist) philosophy. She appears to be collaborative with and politically dedicated to many areas of human rights. Her resistance to settle anywhere for good, her proposition of a constant rethinking of one's own position continue to make it difficult to usurp her. Considering her philosophical and political framework though, this is obviously only consistent. Minor flaws I find with *Undoing Gender* are repetitive arguments, probably due to its being a collection rather than a singular book, and its sometimes incongruously interwoven autobiographical stories. While Butler's personal circumstances are certainly interesting and often moving and do not diminish the clarity and seriousness of her arguments, in this context they create mythologies, which she in other

places aims to disrupt. But, to rephrase one chapter of the book, "doing justice to Butler" in a review is hardly possible and *Undoing Gender*, as a consequential and even more accessible continuation of concerns already put forward in earlier works such as *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*, is a highly recommended publication.

Peeling (Excerpt)

By Kaite O'Reilly

Coral, Alfa and Beaty are three performers, 'the ticked boxes on an equal opportunities form', members of the chorus in a large post-modern production of *The Trojan Women*, shoved at the back, unlit, on-stage. The following excerpt is during the interval, where, owing to access issues, the characters are still stuck in their ridiculous crinoline costumes on stage, hidden behind a screen. Alfa is making soup and Beaty is customising her X-rated underwear.

Coral: Make do and mend.

(New thought) Preferably with cat gut.

My body is criss-crossed with scars like a railway track. Like Crewe station, seen from the air: Single tracks, with no apparent destination; major interlocking junctions, where intercity, sleepers and local lines all connect. Puckering scar tissue, hand-sewn with careless, clumsy stitches. I like to finger it, trace the journeys. That unborn skin: smooth, intimate - the coral-pink colour of mice feet.

It's beautiful.

I love it.

Given the choice, I'd never have it any other way, now.

(pause) Are you listening, Mother?

(pause) Do you hear me, Mother?

Several beats. Alfa, preparing her soup, uses her blender as punctuation during the following:

Alfa: Mine used to warn me about men. (as her Mother) "You keep your hand on your ha'penny. You'll have to if you want any kind of chance with a man. It's bad enough you being damaged goods. He'll not want you if you're second-hand, thumbbed through and used already."

Couch: Ouch!

Alfa: I didn't pay any attention, though. You wouldn't, either, if you saw the cardigans she wore. But bless...I love my Mum....

Coral: (A.D) Beaty and Coral exchange a look of....

Beaty/Coral: (A.D) Envy.

Beaty: (as her mother) "You have to entice; you have to beguile. Put it all in the shop window Beatrice, though god knows you have little enough. Put yourself on special offer, dear."

Coral: Mothers...who'd be one, eh?

Beaty: They love to maim.

Alfa: But they think it's for our own good. Tough love. They're trying to help.

Beaty: Absolutely. Because we don't want to get too big for our boots, do we?

Coral: And we mustn't aspire for other things... We have to be kept in our places.

Beaty: (as her mother) "Keep your aim low and you'll never be disappointed... You have a short shelf life, Beatrice, though you'd never know by looking at you. So keep smiling dear, and remember, it's quality of life, not quantity."

Coral: She's got a way with words, your mother.

Beaty: When they buried her, I had the greatest temptation to laugh down into that hole they were putting her in: "So who was it survived the longest, then?" She was convinced she'd see me out.

Coral: Was it sudden, then?

Beaty: For her, yes. Had no idea she was going. But I knew. To the tick. It's a talent I have - I've been thoroughly trained in it - to sense time passing and my old mate, the grim reaper, stalking close behind. All my life, thanks to my mum, I've felt the tip of his scythe touching the nape of my neck. My mother was so focused on that, waiting for me to croak, she didn't

notice the big fingers come to snuff her out. So I buried her. There's not many with "reduced life expectancy" can say that. It's an achievement. There's not many like me can press the earth down on their mother's face. Stamp on the grave. Put a layer of concrete over so she can't rise again. I joke of course.

Coral: Of course.

Beaty: Though she was the joker in our family.

She'd call me into the bathroom and make me stare at her face. She was getting deep crow's feet around her eyes - she hated it - and the skin around her jaw line was beginning to soften - sag a bit - her face covered in fine hairs, like the fur of a peach. And she'd cradle her face in her hands and stretch back the skin so the wrinkles would disappear and she'd say 'That's what I looked like when I was 16. You're lucky, Beatrice. Just think, you'll never have lines on your face like me - you'll never see your features blurring, you'll never suffer from the ravages of age. You're so lucky, Beatrice. You're so lucky you'll die when you're young. You're so lucky you'll never live to be old.'

The characters have been watching the main action through a spy-hole in the screen

Coral: In a performance, when it's happening, do you ever watch the audience watching the show?

Beaty: Yes. I make a mental note of who yawned and who forgot to switch off their mobile phone, then I have a contract taken out on them.

Alfa: The magic of theatre. Live performance as a collaborative act, the dynamic created by the relationship between the spectacle and the spectators. That's why no two performances are the same.

It's symbiotic.

Beaty: Exactly. And if the audience don't respect that, they're asking for their legs to be broken... (A.D) We look out at the audience expectantly.

Several beats as they stare at the audience expectantly.

Beaty: (A.D) Slowly the expectation turns to boredom and disappointment. Only

Coral remains staring

Coral: I watch them - the audience - their heads sleek in the dark - furtive - secretive, with their little habits, tics, inappropriate coughs, gaze. I watch them - but it's transgressive - I'm to be stared at, not them. But I look and I want to ask who are you? why are you here? what do you think of me? As you sit there in your rows in the dark rubbing shoulders with strangers, looking, listening - what do you think of me? Am I just another performer? What am I? My Mother could never find the exact word for me - even though she's still searching - (as Mother) 'what are you like Coral? I'll tell you what you're like: A disappointment. A let-down. And after all my sacrifices....'

(to audience as self) I'm watching you.

©Kaite O'Reilly 2001. Not to be used or reproduced without permission of the author. For any enquiries or the definitive script of Peeling, please e-mail office@kaiteoreilly.com or www.kaiteoreilly.com

List of Contributors

PD Dr. Elisabeth Strohwick, Humboldt-Fellow and Lecturer at the Department of German, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore; Privatdozentin of German Literature and Literary Theory at the University of Basel, Switzerland. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Hamburg and her *venia legendi* in German Literature and Literary Theory from the University of Basel. She held several academic positions and taught German Literature at Yale University, at the University of Hamburg, the University of Greifswald, and the University of Trier. Fields of interest: Literary Theory, 19th/20th Century German Literature to Contemporary German Literature, Cultural Theory, Rhetoric, Psychoanalysis, Poetics of Knowledge, and Gender Studies. Her publications include (selection): *Passagen der Wiederholung. Kierkegaard - Lacan - Freud* (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler 1999); Co-ed., with Walter Erhart/Tanja Nusser, *Der Deutschunterricht*, issue: 5/2003: *Literatur - Medizin*; Co-ed., with Marianne Schuller, *Singularitäten. Literatur - Wissenschaft - Verantwortung* (Freiburg i.Br.: Rombach [Reihe: Litterae] 2001); Co-ed., with Tanja Nusser, *Krankheit und Geschlecht. Diskursive Affären von Literatur und Medizin* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2002). She has published articles on Fontane, Stifter, Nietzsche, Kafka, Thomas Mann, and Thomas Bernhard.

Tanja Nusser studied German literature and Philosophy in Berlin. In 2000 she completed her PhD thesis on the film maker Ulrike Ottinger. After teaching German literature at the HU Berlin, she was associated with the post-doctoral Kolleg "Krankheit und Geschlecht" at the University of Greifswald from 2001 to 2004 where she currently teaches German literature. Her research and teaching interests include 19th and 20th century literature, gender studies, history of science, reproduction technologies, film studies, theories of travel, and postcolonial studies. Her book publications include *Von und zu anderen Ufern. Ulrike Ottingers filmische Reiseerzählungen* (Köln: Böhlau 2002); (co-ed.): *KorpoRealitäten. In(ter)ventionen zu einem omnipräsenten Thema* (Königstein/T.: Ulrike Helmer 2002); ed. with E. Strohwick: *Krankheit und Geschlecht: Diskursive Affären zwischen Literatur und Medizin* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2002); ed. with U. Bergermann/C. Breger: *Techniken der Reproduktion: Leben, Medien, Diskurse* (Königstein/T.: Ulrike Helmer 2002); ed. with E. Strohwick: *Rasterfahndungen. Darstellungstechniken - Normierungsverfahren - Wahrnehmungskonstitution* (Bielefeld: Transcript 2003); ed. with I. M. Krüger-Fürhoff: *Askese. Geschlecht und Geschichte der Selbstdisziplinierung* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis 2005). In

addition, she has published essays on 19th and 20th century literature, film and intermediality, and representations of biotechnology in literature and film.

Christina Fisanick is an assistant professor of English at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. Her teaching and scholarship focuses on embodiment, composition and rhetoric, and memoir. Her most recent articles have appeared in *Feminist Media Studies* and *Lore: An E-Journal for Teachers of Writing*.

Jozefina Komporály is lecturer in drama at De Montfort University in Leicester. She teaches modern and contemporary British and European theatre and performance, and has taught previously at Goldsmiths College, University of London, the University of Warwick and the University of Hertfordshire. Jozefina has a PhD in gender and dramatic representation from the University of Warwick and post-doctoral research experience in theatre and translation (Drama Department, University of Hull). Her research interests include women's writing; theories of gender; 19th and 20th century British and European theatre; women in British theatre; literature and translation; translation for the stage. Jozefina's publications include the monograph *Staging Motherhood* (forthcoming from Palgrave) and articles in *European Journal of Gender Studies*, *Gramma*, *Journal of Gender Studies*, *New Theatre Quarterly*.

Christina Wald

Alyson Tyler

Dirk Schulz

Kaite O'Reilly (<http://www.kaiteoreilly.com>) was the winner of the Peggy Ramsay award for *Yard* (Bush Theatre, 1998), a major success both in the UK and abroad, running for over two years at the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin. Her other theatre work includes *Banshees* (Royal Court Young Writers Festival), *Belonging* (Birmingham Rep, 2000), *Peeling* (Birmingham Rep, 2003), *SMAC2K* (Disability Arts commission 2003), *Perfect* (Contact Theatre, Manchester 2004; Manchester Evening News best new play) and *Henhouse* (Arcola Theatre, 2004). Germany, Austria, Poland, France, Spain and Australia. She has written *Lives Out Of Step* for Radio 3, and wrote and directed the screenplay *Mouth* for British Screen/Channel 4. Her short story "Sight" included in the *Mustn't Grumble* anthology (The Women's Press) won

the MIND/Allan award.

O'Reilly, who was previously visually impaired, has been experimenting with the dramaturgical potential of juxtaposing spoken English, British Sign Language and Sign Supported English for many years. She has worked as a writer and director with Common Ground Sign Dance Theatre and as a dramaturg/tutor on *Off The Page*, developing disabled writers with North West Disability Arts Forum. She was also involved with disPlay4, a two year development project with writernet.org, Graeae Theatre Company and Soho Theatre, mentoring four disabled writers. She is editor of *Shelf Life*, an anthology by writers with a reduced life expectancy for the National Disability Arts Forum (www.ndaf.org). Currently she is the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Creative Fellow in the School of Performance Arts at Exeter University, working on the research through practice project "Alternative Dramaturgies Informed by a Disability and d/Deaf Perspective" and tutoring on the MA in Playwriting and Script Development.