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Untitle-ing the Master:
Harvesting language, haunting bodies and
transforming Self

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

This work has no beginning so to speak of it in this way is to instill an arbitrary boundary that i do not wish to inscribe, i would say instead that i have been moving towards enlivening it all my life, and though i am part of the story, i am not the author, for the text once enlivened has moved on, i do not purport to own it or to be able to contain it. i am compiler and the compilation is within a community of others to whom i am absolutely indebted and continually inspired. This thesis does not begin and end with me. Its story begins, as does my own, before my birth, located in a social, cultural and linguistic history, that preceded me and it does not end, for it proliferates out from these arbitrary boundaries, these pages and covers which do not bind it, they are an artifice of a bind, like the binaries of language they seek to name us, and then hold us in that place with nothing more to secure us than the name itself.

i arrived here as i have journeyed from those early stirrings of resistance to an articulation and embodiment of the self. When i speak of self i am simultaneously speaking body, and vice versa for they cannot be untangled, they are interwoven and i am embodied, always, by this dialogue, as i read, write, think and speak. i have most desired that this text will be in every way a writerly one, in the way Barthes conceived of it. That it is testament to writing that does not instill artificial boundaries, but opens up spaces in the text, that in the reading there is a sense that location there is unbounded, that the narratives that are woven through it do not insist upon a name in order to be, that they are content to be partial, unfinished and located stories.

Rather than method, there is a practice of reading that is woven through the text that is from my embodiment, my location, in the work. It is the immersion of my self as communal compiler in the text to read from that multiple and intertextual

space, so that the reading necessarily draws forth other threads, other weaves, and thus the readings are fluid and multiple. i bring this practice of reading to the images of photographic artist, Cindy Sherman, i locate in my self and body, in that dialogic space and read in that communal compilation these works which span more than thirty years and are woven through with many narratives, with fragments of Sherman, us, 'woman', bodies, and language but with no absolutes, no truths, no author, no titles, no depths or essential 'woman'. The transformation that the reading evokes is both personal and political; actually it is the immersion of these and the embodiment of me in other ways. It is my own transformation, my own journey of self, i am not the same person, i do not have the same relationship to my body, the same sense of who i am and how i can be, as i did at the un-beginning of my journey. And the politics, that cannot, of course, be delineated from the personal for they are me, as well, i live in theory, the theory is embodied in me, as it must be, are the transformation of hegemonic discourse, from its place as truth, as expert knower, as teller of our stories. We take back our stories, we position and tell from our own corporeal and subjective spaces, transforming those in the telling and we take up those spaces on the margin, on the excess of the name, we give rise to our abject self, the other within.

i have struggled to write without naming, but still to show the traces, the threads of my story, and the multiple other stories interwoven through it, and bleeding out from it, immersing with other stories, other selves. The narrative is, thus nonlinear, and if it appears at times chaotically so, this is because i desire for the text to reflect the life that it speaks, not my own in particular, but life generally, that is not lived in linear ways, we do not live as an autobiography would suggest, from one aspect or stage to the next. We live actually in what is more akin to chaotic disorder, and is, as Freeman has said, more circular than linear, where we are continually reflecting and reconfiguring our selves, repeating and returning, but of course the return is altered for each cycle is a transformation. So i do not

apologise if this text seems disordered for i would not want to instigate an absolute order where none does, nor can, exist, except within the artificial binds of the hegemonic name. Rather it is a disjuncture, an interruption of that hegemonic voice as other voices come forth, the corporeal voice, the voice of our object selves, the excess on the edge of 'woman', all are interwoven through the text and this gives enlivens it in ways that i envision will allow it to reflect life. To read is to bask in the language, to be embodied by it, to have it move you to spaces that may barely be imaginable but are felt, are desired in our bodies. The writerly text can disrupt to the point of boredom for it is a discomfort, it does away with our certainties, our presumptions, our hegemonic and ordered selves, but it also is a jouissance, it has an orgasmic quality, that enlivens, that fulfills in a way that is absolutely and corporeally enriching. i envision for this work that it will inspire others in a way that the 'sublime word work' of hooks, Morrison, Barthes, Butler, and Freeman, to name but a few, has inspired me. Let us all be overwhelmed in jouissance.

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i would like to thank my husband, Paul, who became my ex-husband along the way, but more importantly remains my most unwavering friend, who never failed to believe in me, or support me in this journey, financially and otherwise.

Dedication

For my Dad who passed away on this journey, but whom i know would have been proud.

For my Mum who is proud.

For the child who was always a square peg in a round hole, who became the woman who realised that square pegs will never, and should not ever, try to fit into round holes.

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CHAPTER ONE

IMMERSING PERSONAL AND POLITICAL - LIVING IN THEORY AND EMBODYING LIFE

It is in the end, the saving of lives that we writers are about ...
We do it because we care ... We care because we know this: the
life we save is our own. (Walker, 1984, p. 14)

There will be a certain difficulty in reading *any* work which is
genuinely trying to grapple with some of our most urgent problems
which do not yet - and constitutes their most problematic
intellectual aspect - have the clarity of the already understood.
(MacCabe, 1988, p. px)

Retrospective Writing, the Immersion of 'Beginnings' and 'Endings'

As i write this introduction of sorts, as much as it can be in a work of this kind,
where linearity is rebuffed and there is a kind of swirling intensity to the text, a
flowing in and out, a threading, a bleeding of arbitrary boundaries until they are
diffused, like one of Mark Rothko's paintings, see figure 1, the colours bleed into
one another transforming the original, the supposed foundation, plebeianising it, so
that what we might have identified once is now distorted, haunted by the other
colours that border it, but now those borders are dissolved and they diffuse into
it transforming the foundation, the normal, the unitary, colour is altered and it no
longer claims to be a truth. As i read Rothko i imagine the other and the self, the
immersing of the two, the binaries bleeding into one another as we live in ways
that transform the names, which we do every day, though we need to locate on the
margin of the normative hegemonic self in order to embody this transformation
and enliven it in our words.



Figure 1 Rothko, 1960, No. 14

Retrieved from <http://concretefiction.blogspot.com/2007/12/parting-gift.html>

As i read art and literature, cultural writing, that which transforms the hegemonic narrative of self, that will not be stilled and made to reiterate us in the name, that refuses summarisation, in short that which Barthes called the writerly text, i am embodied by this periphery, the marginal voice that speaks out and of the tension and contradiction that inherently inhabits dominant discourse and will be its ultimate undoing. This writing, this introduction which is my location in the text, a way to embody the beginnings of my periphery, the beginnings of my

location on the margin, and track the engorgement of that, as i am nurtured by the swellings of resistance in my own body, embodied and diffused in the writing, and transformed in the self. And this is a kind of retrospective, postscript introduction, for i have been to the end, the story is complete in utter incompleteness, for always the ending is simply another beginning, and now i come back to this altered beginning, for in reality there are no beginnings or endings that we can mark off as such, either in this work or in our daily lives, there is only transformation, and that is perpetual. So at this other ending, this retrospective beginning, there is transformation, and this is like Butler's "*media res*", i speak now from where i am located at this point, i cannot go back to the time before, for the transformation is embodied within me and i write from that transformed, and transforming, space (Butler, 2001, p. 27). All those voices, the community of which i am embedded, the voice of my body, the transformed self, all speak on and through me. These multiple voices are harvested in the writing, i reside in a space where articulation is possible, and this space has transformed now from its early beginnings of fuzzy irritations to an embodied space of dialogic flow where i live the writing and the writing embodies me. My located and geopolitical positioning is vastly altered, i see differently, the vantage point has changed, i am the periphery, bodily, subjectively and struggling always to embody that in the writing. As i write from this point, retrospectively, it is as Barthes (1981) said, simply the point at which i take myself as the measure of my knowledge. This is what i know of my self, both the hegemonic self, made in the name 'woman', that which i must take up initially for the all important place of recognition, and that other self, which is a perpetual and insistent tension that resides as both foundation, and simultaneous haunting, of 'woman'.

Seeing from 'I' to 'i'

the writer can only imitate an ever anterior, never original gesture; his sole power is to mingle writings, to counter some by others, so as never to rely on just one; if he seeks to *express himself*, at least he knows that the interior 'thing' he claims to 'translate' is itself no more than a ready-made lexicon, whose words can be explained only through other words, and this ad infinitum (Barthes, 1986, p. 53).

Another transformation is, obviously, the altered space from which i write, and this is why the 'I' that initially preceded the writing, has been transformed to an 'i'. For what i now envision is not myself as author, founder, or articulator of knowledge but as compiler immersed in multiple story telling with many others (Barthes, 1986). If i tell a story, it is not strictly my story, though it is partially that, yet it is located within so many other stories, and there is certainly no essential or bounded-in me that can be found within the arbitrary bindings of this work. The work does not contain me in any more way that i can contain it, for myself and body, like language, will not be made fully and finally in hegemonic discourse, will not be stabilised or pinned down, but always will proliferate and bleed out at the permeable edges, drawing in and out those other texts, other lives, and other selves.

Metaphor and Poetry - Embodying Flow

This work is impregnated with metaphor and woven with poetic, they are the two aspects of the writing that i have found most useful in reducing the tendency of language to harden and halt the flow of movement. We cannot underestimate that positioned as we are using the language of our oppressor, which is structured around binary and embodies a corporeal type of severing, ours is a persistent

struggle. As Morgan (2005) notes the Cartesian slashing of body/mind is particularly harrowing if thought through from a physical, rather than metaphysical, perspective. Yet it certainly is not impossible, language in its inability to be pinned down absolutely, in its resistant inherencies lays itself open for us to take it up and transform it, and us, in the using. Language is an "act with consequences" (Morrison, 1994, p. 13). We must be wary that our act-ions alleviate, in as far as is possible, unintended consequences. Language will always harden on the page, words with specific connotations, with inscribed paths, will close down and halt the fluidity that must embody the work. However, i have found that when i use metaphor, chosen carefully, harvested for its ability to grasp beyond the text, to enliven corporeality in the work, to breathe beyond the confines of the page, embodying the ventilation and allowing it to waft over us, the reader, in an ethereal, a spiritual way, i less often experience this hardening (Foucault, 1977). For metaphor in this way is on the margin, we are mining in this space other ways of thinking, of speaking, those that open up space and transform that which is able to be thought, able to be spoken, and how we can think and speak these transformations. i find those metaphors which are able to tap into something physical, something bodily, are when i most connect with the text, when i most inhabit the dialogic flow in and out, body and language engaged and intertwined. When i speak of the space of resistance, the periphery or margins, i feel most connected to that space, on that journey, when i use metaphors that embody a physical and bodily experience, for example i have spoken of dipping our toes into peripheries and of the experiencing of effervescent bubbles that are the insurgent resistance. In these moments i feel in my own body, and i envision that others too might sense this, a kind of imagining. Here is a physical reality that we can connect with, the dipping of toes is a bodily, tingling, enlightening, sensation and the periphery is a testing of waters scenario too, perhaps more aptly a testing of the flow of those waters. Always we are moving in subtle ways, which

is what i have tried to embody in the 'dip our toes in' metaphor, we are testing, experimenting, edging, and in all this subtlety there is transformation. These fledgling-like steps toward another space are that which will transform that space, the place from which we have moved, for the margin and centre live in conjunction with one another, in a kind of bump and grind, and as the corporeal is allowed to flow through the margin, embodying that space with its inherent resistance, the centre must shore up its artificial boundaries to meet the onslaught of the margin. It struggles to sustain its perimeter as the body and the fragmented self permeate and flow through, diluting and plebeianising its unitary voice, so that when it speaks we hear the hesitation, the disruption, the call is muted and we can no longer recognise our self as 'woman', the name fails in its interpellation, and the other always at the edge of that name, is enlivened, and begun to be recognised, within our self.

Sherman, Basquiat, Rothko and More ...Art and Resistance

This work is primarily about subjectivity, about thinking in other ways about our selves, ways that free us from the confines and constraints of the dominant voice, from the name 'woman'. In my space as compiler with purpose, with a bunch of visions that i seek to flesh out in this text, to bring forth in opened up spaces so that others might inhabit these spaces, take their own journeys and tell their own stories, furthering opening up spaces on the margin of our subjective names. i bring together many voices that speak of the liberation of our selves from the name, that negate that name as natural or normal, and that speak of other selves, our corporeal self, those that reside on the edge of the normative, muffled by its auditory din, but still a consistent and persistent tension and undermining of those hegemonic names. And with these other writerly texts which span various disciplinary boundaries, for the intertextual weave is unbounded and disperses the artifice of discipline, i bring forth a multiplicity, a fragmentation, an attendance to

the surface, an awareness of space, a sense of awakening, pioneering, of speaking in ways that we barely yet can recognise. But we must not relinquish the struggle just because our efforts do not always hit the mark, sometimes we fall short and the grasping fails to draw forth that flow that is the enlivened self. Even if we fail to "suture the ... places where blood might flow", we must keep incising for we desire the warmth in our veins which is testament to life (Morrison, 1994, p. 28). Like the vein of the heroin addict throbs with the desire to be engorged with the narcotic filled syringe, we desire to be embodied by that life and to embody it in the writing (Lacan, as cited in Butler, 2001, p. 28; Morrison, 1994). Let us keep our desires open, driving us on, engorging us with that blood flow that moves us in a corporeal and subjective dialect. Let us be "desiring women", freeing our imagination to be other (Davies & Dormer, 2001). We must be able to imagine if we are to move towards those spaces on the margin, for they aren't prescribed, there are no preconceived places that we can locate in, we must locate within our own selves and bodies, our subjective histories and the community of resistance of which we are part. hooks speaks of imagining as a means of transgression in relation to resistance and art: "the function of art is to do more than tell it like it is - it's to imagine what is possible" (hooks, 1994, p. 237). We have left our subjective home, there can be no going back, but we move forward from that space of knowing embracing the unknown, the partial, the located and the imaginary. This is where the work of Sherman, Basquiat, Rothko, and Michals emerges in the text.

Orgasmic Texts, Inserting the Discomforting Body

As i have immersed with these texts, i have been able to inhabit the margin, for their work transgresses the boundaries of the knowable, the sayable, and the thinkable. Their location is the periphery, they speak in ways that can be difficult to hear, their words speak on and through our bodies in ways that discomfort,

unsettle, and disturb. This resonates with Barthes, in relation to the writerly text, and more specifically with his notion of *jouissance*, which was a particularly disruptive voice that he associated with the body, with a type of bodily desire or burn, an orgasmic infiltration into the text, which in being so absolutely antithetical of academic writing, so entirely disruptive, could unsettle to the point of boredom. For the text of bliss "imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language" (Barthes, 1975, p. 14). Let us enliven our texts with our orgasmic bodies, with *jouissance*, let us bore to the point that we flow through the writing in our un-ceded desire, in all our corporeal leakiness (Lacan, as cited in Butler, 2001). Let our bodies infiltrate the writing in their textual stickiness, in all our abject revolt-ingness let us bask in that bodily flow, and speak our corporal voice in the movement, in the dialogue. Sherman, allows me to read bodies in other ways, for her body of work denies an essence that underpins the name. Here in Sherman 'woman' cannot be found, for it conglomerates on the surface and is interwoven in complex and diverse ways with that which clearly is not 'woman'. Sherman's multiply abject, revolt-ing, flowing, fluid, dismembered, decayed, and deranged bodies enliven the other whilst they negate 'woman' as truth. 'Woman' must take its place amongst other stories that speak subjectivity, its artificially inscribed boundaries are broken down and its hegemonic voice is diluted by the many other voices that embody us.

We Are Not 'Woman' Alone, Attending to Multiple Names

Always when i think 'woman', when i think of my self i am thinking in multiplicity. i envision my self as hegemonic, corporeal, and resistant, and of course the corporeal is also resistant for the body is recalcitrant, refusing that absolute and final naming (Butler, 1993). When i think of my hegemonic self i think of the

names that heed me, and how they interweave in a complexity that makes any attempt to think them apart futile and artificial. So when i think, write and speak of myself as 'woman', this does not mean i am not attending to the fact that i am a White, woman, from a working-class background, who is heterosexual, and is of a specific age. All these aspects of my hegemonic self have located me, and seek to enforce that location, in specific ways, and in my space of critical awareness, i acknowledge their legacy, as i simultaneously resist them. They remain voices, tracings, on my corporeal self, though now they are diminished and diluted by resistant voices. Yet like an etching they remain part of my subjective history. We need to remember, we must struggle to remember, the remembering like taking up space to resist is a political act, an "act with consequences" (Morrison, 1994, p. 13). i am embodied by hooks understanding of memory, that we must struggle to retain it, not of a nostalgic type, but instead as that which "serves to illuminate and transform the present" (hooks, 1990, p. 147).

Back to the Beginning, Thinking Retrospectively

Tracing the Sparks of Resistance - Articulating Irritation

From a retrospective standpoint, i recall that early on i had the sense of unease, of ill-fit between myself, the one i experienced on a daily basis, and 'woman'. There were insistent feelings of irritation, annoyance, an awareness of socially sanctioned ridicule of 'woman', the experience of oppression as it is played out in our daily lives. Of course it began long before those feelings were even triggered, which to give some clarity to them, i will call the experience of becoming aware of the inadequate fit between the psychological categories of sexuality, gender, class, and ethnicity and our subjective experiences of life, lived on and through these names. These hegemonic names for specific types of selves were the stories psychology developed to tell our stories, and they were legitimised by

virtue of their association with science and the assumption that objectivity led to a truth that could be validated and known without recall to human beings, so that even though we were conducting the experiments, interpreting the findings, choosing methods, etc, there was an assumption that the objective method somehow negated human bias. In other words, it was as Barthes said that the human load was effectively hidden and we believed that psychology was able to tap something essentially female or male, Black or White with its objective approach (Barthes, 1982a). What we have failed to understand, however, is that the stories psychology tells and its outcomes only hold true within its own internal parameters of reference, they are as partial and located as any other, as all of our stories.

The Land Before Our Time, Thinking that World that We Are

Born Into

Though these early remembered feelings of irritation are the place i can track my beginnings of critical awareness to, it certainly isn't the beginning. i was born into a world well organised in advance, in relation to what types of people could exist, and the places they could occupy in the dominant discourses which structured, and produced, our experience of self. In this process, then, some types of selves were made available to me, and there was an expectation that i would take up these particular identities and live, and reproduce them as i did so. Similarly there were other selves denied to me, deemed to be inappropriate or impossible choices, based on where i could be located within class, gender, race and sexuality, predominantly but not exclusively. And even before i experienced irritation at sexist and racist jokes and innuendos and all of those 'common sense' understandings of, particularly my gendered self, i was influenced by a whole variety of discourses telling the story of self, and offering up places in those stories based on where i could be located in linguistic binaries and psychological

norms of self and other. And in each of these stories particular groups within those categories were either privileged or subordinated. So, long before i understood anything about gender or class binaries, oppression, or subjectivity, i was influenced by, and organised into particular social groupings in particular ways, either inhabiting a place of privilege, or alternatively, on the subordinate side of the binary. This is the world Freeman talked about, which we bring to each and every situation we encounter in our lives (Freeman, 1998). But just as importantly, and regardless of all of those continual interpellations to name and frame me as a heterosexual White, woman, from a working class background, i was able to resist this process, i was in those early days seeking out a space of resistance, undoubtedly not a particularly well articulated or known one, but nevertheless, i had an awareness of the tension and the contradiction that existed between the name, and how i experienced living that name daily, i sensed this incongruent fit (Butler, 1997). This awareness, this annoyance, this consistent irritation, would become for me an important aspect of why i engaged in critical work, rather than doing research in more traditional areas of psychology. It would become the catalyst for seeking out ways to articulate these growing feelings of disillusionment with the experience of being a woman in contemporary Western society. i had never felt like 'woman', the label, the name, in fact in hindsight i realise i consistently went out of my way to not emulate the characteristics, traits and attributes assumed feminine, i knew all too well that to be 'woman' was to accept life as devalued other. When i speak 'woman' i am speaking the name, but as i work through my journey, transgressing, retrospectively remembering and reconfiguring my self, i am immersed by 'woman' transforming to woman. i imagine this space as unbounded, peripheral, experimental, imaginary, proliferating, fragmented, corporeal, insurgent and dialectical. i remove the quotation marks to deny this space as significant, as a name, as a bounded in there anything. i seek to embody this space as appropriated, as somewhat freed from the constraints that

were imposed, something perhaps of a symbolic tearing down of the artifice of boundary.

Denying 'Woman' and Sex Re-Education

Like others, i was keenly aware that to take up the subject position 'woman', in the gender binary was to become the devalued other, allocated a host of attributes generally not highly valued in society, at least in relation to those characteristics regarded as male. There were two options available to me in order to negate being made and reproducing myself in this image. i could either identify with the masculine side of the binary, thus positioning myself in opposition to everything feminine, which i did initially, and often. However, this act of simply negating those attributes deemed to be female falls short, as it does not enable us to understand **how** it is that as women we have come to be associated with this devalued side of the gender binary, or indeed encourage us to think about binaries in the first place, and how they became the legitimate and natural way of dividing people, based simply on perceived anatomical sexual difference. We need to understand why sexual anatomy was taken as a base for dividing and defining people, rather than something else, why gender, a socially created category, was mapped onto bodies which bore particular sexual characteristics specific to one sex or the other, although in reality this is not always identifiable. Those who are born with unspecific sexual characteristics, not wholly able to be classified as either female or male must exist in a kind of no-man's-land, their bodies unable to be defined within the bounds of normality, and in doing so perpetually haunt sex and gender as naturally occurring phenomena. So we need to unravel concepts that are mapped onto bodies but exist in the social and discursive realm, specifically, gender and sex. Sex, like gender does not have a pre-linguistic and natural reality but is entirely constructed in the realm of language and materialised accordingly (Butler, 1993). i remember being first introduced to the idea that sex was an

entirely linguistically produced entity, just like gender, and that sexed bodies were made feminine or masculine within language and that they weren't naturally sexed in this way, and thinking that this was bizarre. Of course, now at this point in my subjective journey, when i no longer heed the call 'woman', the arbitrary division of people based on, among other subjective markers, sex, seems peculiarly oppressive, for with each side of the gender binary there is a subsequent allocation of either privilege or subordination, and by no arbitrary arrangement, female or 'woman' is marked as devalued other of male or man. The stories that have been told of 'woman' are oppressive for they privilege the story teller, our history has been his-story, for he is located as knower, as bearer of truth, purporting to reflect a natural reality and thus denying us resistance, for who would resist nature. i remember early on thinking that Butler had gone too far, to question sex, that supposedly most natural aspect of our selves was to put under the spotlight all those long held 'common-sense' understandings and assumptions of self, and other. It seemed bizarre, more science-fiction than science and of course it would, for Butler was gnawing at the periphery of the knowable, and there will be resistance, for those who hold places of privilege will not relinquish them easily. And even those for whom the hegemonic voice simultaneously oppresses as it summons forth in the name will resist relinquishing the name absolutely for it is that place from which we are recognisable, desirable, and desiring 'woman' (Butler, 1997). Bartky (1990) talks about this in relation to recognition, desire and the internalisation of 'woman' which is that of devalued other. Now, of course, thus far in my journey of critical awareness, it seems a foregone conclusion that sex is a socially constructed category, that in itself the female body, and the male body, are marked by anatomical difference but that these have no inherent meaning, they do not signify a natural demarcation of one from the other. Language is our means to our world, both the potential to be our savior and our destroyer. All that we know about ourselves, and others, we know

through our location in language organised into discourse, and how we are located within language, our sexuality, our sense of being female or male, our very recognisability is a function of our immersion in the discourses of sexuality, both dominant and subversive, and our ability to locate ourselves within and outside these discourses. Certainly, the majority of us are born with one or other of male or female sex organs, but everything after that, all that defines these physical manifestations is mapped onto our bodies, and reproduced through those dominant narratives, which tell the story of female and male subjectivity, and offer us positions within those stories, positions we must initially accept but may later come to negate. The way we experience our sexuality, our desire, and our internalisation of that sexuality are all created within language, and located in relations of knowledge and power. The ability to position oneself as the bearer of knowledge, and teller of the stories of self, and other, is to occupy an incredibly powerful and privileged space.

Telling Stories, Imagining, and Denouncing the Untrue Self

i have always felt once removed from the stories of my self that tell me what it is to be 'woman', encumbered by the behaviours, attributes, and emotions deemed specific to that subjective place, and that i should reproduce these in my body as i take up the story of gendered subjectivity. Like Davies (2001) 'desiring women' who sense always a marginal self that exists in relation to the normative, i loathed the generic nature that i was expected to inherently have by virtue of my being of the female sex. As women we have consistently had our stories told for us, we must now wrestle back those stories and reengage with them, rewording them, making them speak from our own bodies, our own experiences, our own lives, and telling other stories, those that exist within, on the margin of the normative and in that space transform who and how we can be. Our stories will necessarily be the story of living in a female body known to us through the discourses of sex and

gender, and of the transformation of our bodies and selves as we take up spaces in the margin. We need to find ways to speak our bodies and these will necessarily be experimental, and the territory uncharted. We must locate on the periphery to speak bodies for the mainstream denies any corporeal speaking rights, other than the objective knowledge of psychology and medicine, the normative and anatomical body.

Containing the Uncontainable Body

Initially this expert knower/storyteller function was occupied by religion and secular doctrine, was understood as providing the story of the essential truth of humanity, with a special focus on the particular treachery that was 'woman', and validated by reference to biblical texts, and the word of God. Later, science, in particular psychology, became the truth speaker, again with a particular focus on women's bodies and female sexuality, the body of 'woman' seemed to pose a particular threat that must be eradicated, or at least controlled through those stories it told, stories we would take up and internalise and thereby collaborate in the control of our own bodies (Foucault, 1977a). Yet in all this effort to instigate a boundary around the female body, always it is marked by a refusal to be absolutely immobilised within psychologies stories, always it remains unable to be fully or finally named, or contained. The body is our space to resist, and as will be discussed further in later chapters, we must wield our corporeal armour in the struggle to liberate ourselves from oppressive discourse located in the power knowledge couplet and given to us to take up and reproduce in our bodies as 'woman' (Foucault, 1977a). Psychology, by employing empirical methods of observation, was able to create various categories of human beings, understood in terms of normality, and validated by reference to statistical significance and the elimination of chance findings, though of course those that didn't fit, the outliers, weren't eliminated but simply ignored, relegated to places of obscurity, to spaces

of unspoken-ness. Science came to be understood as the means of accessing the true nature of human beings that essential something that existed prior to language, for what science tapped was perceived to be nature, our feminine or masculine natures that were located in our sexual differentiation. In actuality what science 'taps' is that which it presumes is there already, and in the presumption, in the prelude that precedes the actual story, it is produced again. For what can be found is only that which can be validated within the confines of this particular story, and so anything that cannot be known, spoken or thought within the methodology of science, that is, objective knowledge and empirical findings, will not be able to be known, spoken or thought of in the outcome. The language is dead, it is that "unyielding language content to admire its own paralysis" that "has no desire or purpose other than to maintain the free range of its own narcotic narcissism, its own exclusivity and dominance" (Morrison, 1994, p. 14). For those of us who have always felt once removed from our stories, let us revel in bringing forth our corporeal self, our experiencing self and body, let us wrestle back the storyteller function, and allow us to "absorb knowledge" that nurtures, that strengthens, that moves us, as we simultaneously shake off the shackles of oppressive discourse.

Harvesting the Experiential for the Seeds of Resistance

Interestingly, it is in attempting to understand this social phenomena, which we are led to believe is natural, outside of the disciplinary boundaries of psychology and science, indeed in our everyday life experiences, that it becomes problematic and where tension arises. Rather than a seamless immersion of subjectivities and bodies into socially related categories, rather than this supposedly naturally occurring process, we begin to see and experience the disjuncture, the tension, and the contradiction that permeates any attempt to order, make nominal, normalise and constrain, what is in reality a chaotic, multiple, disjunctive and fluid

experience. i am, of course, talking of the experience of living our everyday lives lived amongst and in relation to others. Our perception of this disjuncture, those tensions that are the manifestations of an ill-fit between name and self, marks the beginnings of our resistance, and of the journey into a critical understanding of the self, of our multiple experiences of self. We may, of course, not attend to these feelings, and those experiences of tension or contradiction, at least not initially, and will continue to produce ourselves in the dominant discourses of self. Nevertheless, each time we are called upon to do so and reproduce ourselves as the desired subject, there is a chance that we will not quite recognise that metamorphose, the tension will be illuminated and something unintended will occur, and we will no longer be reproduced fully in that image. This fuzzy sense of something not quite fitting is the springboard from which we will leap into the often murky waters of alternate subjectivities, marked by instability and multiplicity, where we seek to discover the many selves that we are, that we live daily, and move on in that journey to transform and live in multiplicity, fragmentation, instability and flux. Like a kaleidoscope we piece and re-piece with each discursive twist, with each encounter, we are never quite the same from one moment to the next, never the stable, unitary, universal subject of psychology. i think we know this at a level not easily available to articulation, perhaps even consciousness. i would suggest we know at a corporeal level, in our very bodies, that 'woman' is a façade, a masquerade, that it writes upon our bodies, materialising them, yet not fully able to make us, speak, or live, its mantra. The female body is that "eternal enigma", that thorn-in-the-side of Western ontological discourse, and sciences quest to know and name us in an instant, and forever (Grosz, 1994, p. 4). We resist in our bodies, and we must now find ways to harvest and speak that resistance, to bring forth that bodily voice in the text.

Resisting in Bodies and Through Language

As i write now, in kind of retrospective, postscript sort of way, back to the beginning but transformed along the way, at a beginning that is transformed, as i am, i imagine my body differently, vastly differently. i live within that corporeal space in a way that is a continual engagement with the self and language, i bring forth the body when i speak, think, write, it has become something of a matter of course, though still it slips away in the speaking, thinking and writing, but not so perversely as it initially did. it is as though i no longer think outside my body, the dialogue is all embodying and i live it within, and outside in the writing, as i am embodied by the flow in and out of bodies, texts, selves.

This journey is a quest to discover our uniquely positioned self, a multiple, moving, and contradictory space located on, and through the body. It is a simultaneously physical and discursive entity and thus bridges the gap, that wordless void between the experience of life and the articulation of that experience in language. i believe, therefore, that although the body is materialised in language, and we know and recognise it in our self and in others, through discourse, it retains in its otherness, its being of the physical as well as the linguistic, a staunch resistance to being named, like a bony shell that language cannot pierce through nor break down. The body exists in a space unable to be fully accessed through language, unable to be adequately articulated, but a dialogic space that links us to that experiential life, that life lived on the edge of 'woman'. We know that life in our bodies, even when we struggle to speak it, or when we speak it and it is diluted and the thrust is somewhat diminished. This is, of course, not a place we can easily access for our ability to know is through language, and here language fails to capture that experience entirely, though neither would we want it to. As Morrison reminds us language is "may be the measure of our lives" and with it we can "arc toward the place where meaning may lie" (Morrison, 1994, p. 20-22). To try to

encapsulate it in language would be to halt the flow of movement, the peripheral spreading out of language, of our bodily voice, what we desire is to embody that flow, to have it permeate the writing, to have it shred through those arbitrary boundaries which signify a beginning and an end, that signify an author or a foundation, or that signify a body bounded in a name, and for it to disperse and unravel bleeding out and through the text and embodying us in a dialogue as we too fragment and proliferate unheeded by the name. As human beings we necessarily process our world, our selves and others through words, we cannot simply step outside language and think in a utopian place beyond it, and thus when we attempt to articulate the experiential some of it will become lost or diluted, or flow in ways we did not intend. As soon as we write, think, or speak some of that life we seek to embody textually will be lost. Language is productive, it is active, and inherently it will enforce the binaries around which it is structured. We must, then, choose our words carefully when we speak and write, so that we can mine and diffuse that arbitrary line that divides us one from the other, for in its being entirely of human creation, it must thus conceal its fragility and instability, and always it is open to discovery. It is as Foucault (1976) said:

Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions, but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance. (p. 101)

i like, therefore, to envision the body as that which locates and materialises us, yet also resists any such naming, we slither in our corporeality across that divide between experience and its articulation in language, between life and thought, talk, and text. We speak out and across in an infernal dialogue with language and the self.

Ethereal Moments, Harvesting and Bringing Them to Voice

In ethereal moments, when we most intimately experience a connection that speaks to our corporeal self, at that instant when our bodies are enlivened and our selves embodied in the dialogue, we sense that here is something meaningful, worth grasping for. I scramble, paw at it in desperation to scrape off the top of that experience, to write it into the text, before too much is relinquished back into the wordless spaces of the body, those spaces that are as yet unable to be written or voiced. I desire for that space where I can speak without dropping a metaphorical latch, where the doxa cannot contain again that which I speak. As Scheie (2000) notes in relation to Barthes and his unspoken homosexuality, that the time may not be right for Barthes subject of excess to speak for the speaking invokes the name and thus contains it once again. Yet we must continually mine for that language that will not invoke the doxa, where we write on the edge of the known, using metaphor, bringing through the sounds of our bodies, so that we might transform that edge, as we reflect continuously upon that containment. As I write I have experienced these insurgent moments in relation to the work of Rothko, and in the writing of Beckett, but the very moment I think it, and thereby commit it to language it slips away, that initial intensity is dulled somewhat, it is diluted in the process, and some of the fire which is the connection to nature, or to the body, is lost, some of the arcing for meaning is diminished when we language it. Which at first can appear rather futile, and not a whole lot of use politically, for we keep striving and the movements are so subtle, so seemingly insignificant. Yet as we move along in our journey we will come to see these subtle shifts as monumental leaps, as ethically, morally, spiritually, politically and personally of absolute significance - nothing short of revolutionary. A revolution should spin us around and make us dizzy so that what we see is now altered for the seeing space has changed irrecoverably (hooks, 2000). We have learnt to see differently (hooks, 1995).

Exposing 'Woman' and Finding Calm in Chaos

Those of us for whom language and the body will fuel our resistance realise that ontological shifts and the subsequent opening up of space to transform the hegemonic self will necessarily be slow and laborious. They must for as Foucault reminds us in relation to the role of intellectuals in the process of becoming other, be "urgent enough for people to want to carry them out, and sufficiently difficult to carry out for them to be deeply inscribed in reality" (Foucault, 1994a, p. 172). It must be difficult enough to be able to be sustained and engrained, rather than fleeting and momentary, indeed change that is inscribed within our very being. We should not underestimate that which we undertake when we have the courage to question the self. For what we question is nature, we dare to ask those questions that initially might seem bizarre for they question, and in the process peel away the layers of solidified discourse that in its sedimentation, its continual reiteration, has become knowledge, has become truth. We dare to expose 'woman' in all its glittering masquerade, and i am assisted in my expose by Sherman, a photographic artist whose life long exhibit of her body as canvas brings forth the façade of gender and lays open a bottomless foundation that in the void reflects back upon the surface taking up its proper space of being just itself and nothing else, of being entirely surface. We must locate at the surface and meet our multiplicity, our instability, our fragmentation. We must embrace our splintering, that we cannot be known, or know ourselves, in any nominal, stable or presumed way. We are a myriad, a kaleidoscope, we are gumbo ya ya, many selves speaking simultaneously to be not a coherent self but a dialogic one, many parts speaking simultaneously that gives rise to diffuse experiences of self as we interact with others, in our discursively known worlds. As we fragment and splinter, and Western ontological claims to know the truth of the self are simultaneously

threatened, we are grasping, or arcing, clawing with language towards that meaning that resides at the boundaries of the name, that resides in our bodies, that we must take up with our words, with language chosen carefully, reflectively, realising that it is "an act with consequences" (Morrison, 1994, p. 13). This language moves us to those spaces of resistance, for we are harbouring that bodily resistance in the words and we are simultaneously embodied by the flow of resistant language as it moves in the writerly text. We pump the words, engorging them with our corporeal zeal, straining towards that meaning that exists in the wordless void, edging closer to life and the unspoken richness that it contains, a quality we will never be able, nor should try, to invoke within language for we desire that it, and us, remain alive, enlivened. And even though we can never name it, or articulate it enough to know it fully, it nevertheless is something we can momentarily glimpse. If we can just mine language well enough to keep it alive, to deter it from deadening the soul, if we can find those spaces to speak in ways those words that do not oppress and contain then we can harvest those glimpses, for though momentary and fleeting, they are, i believe, vitally important for they feed the soul, they nourish, they inspire, and they allow us to surge forward in ways we might not have previously been able to imagine, let alone envision. And when i speak of the soul, i do not purport soul as might be read in a biblical text, that rational other of the uncontrollable body. Instead i think of it as something of a human capacity, to be human in a fuller sense of what that can mean, that experiencing, enlivened, chaotic creature that isn't rational, for that is a fallacy for sure. We are, none of us rational, we all "live in fragments and dwell in doubt" (Chambon & Irving, 2003, p. 276). We all continually experience ourselves in tension, that is, until of course we no longer try to make that fit a preconceived notion of self and then we just are, and the contradictions give way to a kind of stability in chaos, we accept our multiplicity and we bring it forth in our daily lives. At that point we have moved to a space where we are content to be in that

moment and celebrate the diversity of what we will, and can be in that moment, and the partiality and locatedness of our self-knowledge. We have moved to the surface where we accept our multiplicity and complexity and that we are this divergent space of many voices that will transform in every telling, in every encounter, in relation to others. We accept ourselves in our fragmented unknowingness and this flows out to an acceptance of others for they too know themselves only in partial and located ways (Butler, 2001). The kaleidoscope is manipulated and we will distribute in our diverse splendor, celebrating our multiplicity and fluidity.

A Corporeal Haunting

We flow and proliferate, even when we use stereotypes and make automatic assumptions of others. At that same moment when we seek to reproduce an other through a hegemonic reiteration, in a subjective name, we do not only do this, for we have, in that very moment, the uncomfortable awareness, a kind of corporeal knowing, that they are like us in their diversity and difference. We recognise ourselves in them and it is, as du Bois said infuriating for us, as we struggle to cover our naked humanness with "rags of facts and fancies" (du Bois, 1920, p. 23). As we grasp our purported truths to cover again the human foundation upon which they are named. This resonates too with Napier who noted that we can only recognise strangers in their similarity and difference, if they were only different we would not have the capacity to think them: "... strangers must be like us but different. They cannot be completely exotic, for, were they so, we could not recognise them" (Napier, as cited in hooks, 1994, p. 37). And in that moment of bleeding peripheries and unbounded selves and bodies we reach out to others, like my experience in the graveyard, even when we enforce the hegemonic name, for the name is always at the "behest of a vengeful Other", of that which resides within, taken up simultaneously when we take up 'woman', threatening and haunting

its claim to nominal and stable truths, to tell the story of our selves (Barthes, 1986, p. 291-2). To accept the 'i' that i experience in the moment, that specific compilation of our possible selves is not to infer, or allow, some kind of moral irresponsibility. i do not for a moment suggest that we aren't morally responsible for our actions at each and every turn, we of course are. The politics that infuse this work are about freedom, equality and the right to live in ways unencumbered by subjective names that inherently oppress us, that are the equivalent of a dead weight around our neck, a noose growing ever tighter which will eventually throttle us into complete silence and absolute obscurity. It is about a right to life that connects us in a bodily, a spiritual way with our shared humanity. It can never be about shirking our moral responsibility toward others, for what we seek is to live in ways unencumbered by oppression and certainly not to offload that oppression somehow to an other. Always we must think of the bodies of others in relation to where our words are taking us in our own subjective transformation, as we enliven that transformation in our own bodies. As hooks (1995, p. 71) reminds us, we must "interrogate" our work to ensure it does meet its political objectives, or perhaps more as i have called them further on, envisioning. Always the work must be a continual reflection on the visions that underpin it which also are transformative, for those visions thread off in unforeseen ways along the journey. Rather than suggesting any form of irresponsibility, moral or otherwise, this work assumes language is inherently oppressive and violent, enforcing the binaries upon which it is structured, and so always the writing is undertaken with the responsibility to use language in ways that deter the enforcing of oppressive binaries, that do not shut down lives or subjugate others (Barthes, 1986; Butler, 1997). We sometimes, as Butler reminds us, "... cling to the terms that pain us because, at a minimum, they offer us some form of social and discursive existence" (Butler, 1997, p. 26). We must remember always when we use language that it is "an act with consequences" (Morrison, 1994, p. 13). i write continually reflecting upon the

writing, in the realisation that how i "act" on this page is my responsibility, perhaps the most important one i shall ever have. For the ability to come to voice, to use language in a way that negates oppression and opens up spaces to be other, may just be that upon which our very lives could, and maybe should, be measured (Morrison, 1994). We struggle in "language to recover ourselves", and that is certainly an act with consequences, that we might recover fully from the pain and oppression of 'woman', as we simultaneously discover the other selves that we can be when we reside on the periphery of the name, is a consequence worth struggling for (hooks, 1990, p. 146). And no matter our vision, no matter the struggle with language, it will at times move in ways we did not intend or do not want. But even so, we must mine it for all that we can, we must take up that act and bask in its consequences, let the ventilated and open spaces breathe over us, enlivening us with a momentum that is ethereal, that moves us into those marginal spaces of transformation.

Language is like a jewel that we must consistently mine for, perhaps like a diamante, an artifice of a jewel, that hides its truth, that it is a copy. We aren't in our quest seeking diamonds, the original, the truth, but instead we live in copies. We accept that we are the Ecclesiastian simulacrum, an incessant copy with no origin (Ecclesiastes, cited in Baudrillard, 2001). We are miners of language, unearth-ers of the self, we mine always for that language that will sparkle and illuminate like the diamante, and will show the façade of 'woman' in the illumination, like the diamante, like the simulacrum, a showy surface with no depth. And then in our acceptance that 'woman' is a story, not a truth, and a particularly unpleasant one for it is oppressive and it divides us from ourselves, we are moving toward the periphery where there are no hard and fast truths, there is only located and partial knowledge and multiple selves, there is only incessant copy, we live the

simulacrum. Morrison (1994) captures this idea of foraging in language most eloquently, when she outlines her hopes for thinkers and writers of the future:

Those who, even as I speak, are mining, sifting and polishing languages for illuminations none of us has dreamed of. But whether or not any one of them secures a place in this pantheon, the gathering of these writers is unmistakable and mounting. Their voices bespeak civilizations gone and yet to be; the precipice from which their imaginations gaze will rivet us; they do not blink or turn away. (p. 33)

i love this work because it speaks of a community of thinkers and writers, a surmounting of these other voices that would harvest words that break down the barriers of the dominant discourse, infusing it with a plebian flow, making it speak its untruths for its truths are diluted and dissolved by multiple and other selves, and by bodies that live within and in a corporeal and linguistic dialogue with our sense of self. It is both nurturing, for we inhabit this communal flow, and inspiring and invigorating, for it takes us to that periphery, it allows us to dip our toes in that edge, to feel the effervescent bubbling that is the undercurrent of change. Morrison's words embody me as part of this community, and as i do i am able to enliven it in the writing, a little. Morrison speaks of the power of language to make meaning, to be both our savior and our destroyer, to disrupt the meaning making of oppressive discourses, to be courageous, to have the courage to speak against the voice of 'reason', the voice of 'truth', against common-sense notions of the self, against our subjective names. i write in the hope that my work is true to Morrison's vision.

Mining the Margin in Metaphor

So we need to rid ourselves of those names that stifle our ability to think beyond those arbitrary boundaries and keep us in a reiterative cycle of oppression (Morrison, 1994). We need to flesh out those other selves that reside on the periphery of our subjective names; we are the point at which multiple discourses

converge; now we must seek to know those other selves. Our bodies are like a palimpsest, traced by multiple voices, inscribed variously by multiple, competing and complimentary discourses, each speaking something of subjectivity, an experience, a memory, a name that wants to contain, each is traced on our bodies, interweaving upon each other, the later enmeshing and diffusing the former. We are the conglomeration of all those stories that have spoken of subjectivity, both those dominant discourses which speak of 'woman', class, ethnicity and sexuality, and those other voices that are our abject self, our resistant self, our corporeal self. All of these experiences of being 'i', come from this, our particular vantage point, upon the world, which is fluid and transformative, for there is no stability in the 'i', it is perpetual movement, for it is life embodied. If we think of it in an auditory way, we can imagine a cacophony of voices, each attempting to tell their particular story of self (and other), each competing for the space to be heard clearly, so that we might recognise something familiar, comforting even, something of our socially sanctioned selves in the tale, and in doing so allow ourselves to be made in that image, and thereby continue to reproduce that particular narrative of self. The hum would be quite deafening i am sure, as each story reverberated with the others, coming to the fore and then receding into the background. The metaphor of inscription works similarly when we imagine the body as a site inscribed by multiple discourses, though this does tend to a hardening that i am uncomfortable with, an inscribed line is hard and signifies an edge or boundary, and there are in this work only proliferations and immersions. So i prefer if i use this spatial metaphor to think of it as tracings rather than boundaries, for in the palimpsest each trace overlays the other, and in the layering there is room for change and immersion. These metaphors help me think through a process which is complex and impossible to pin down, our subjective experience of self and body, for it is fluid and perpetually in motion. Our traditional scientific understandings of the world have allowed us few tools for dealing with processes that are non-

linear, that are in a process of perpetual movement and that are multiple. As I have noted previously metaphor and poetic text, and more specifically in relation to those that tap a physical or corporeal experience, allow me to think and write this motile space without losing, or hardening, that sense of fluidity or multiplicity that embodies it. And like everything in this work, the metaphors and poetics have transformed too, and I have in the harvesting of language, been able to flesh out words that embody and enliven the corporeal, the other, the abject, that embody the sense of this as revolt, its political 'yearning' (hooks, 1990).

Uncovering Our Subjective Pasts and Moving Forward Remembering

We all have a subjective history, whether that is known, understood, or even thought, it effects how we interact with others and the relationships we have. It is the world we are born into, it precedes us, we do not necessarily choose it, but nevertheless it is that which gives us our initial recognisability as a specific and named self. And for many of us these aspects of how we come to experience ourselves in the ways that we do goes largely ignored throughout our lifetime, though possibly at our own peril. Rather than trying to understand how we became this particular self, and what that means in relation to our experiences, we instead spend vast amounts of time, effort, and money trying to discover an inner essence, something that will ground us in the swirling chaotic tension-ridden life that, we in our subjective names cannot embody. The journey must, however, by necessity, be one that begins outside the self, in those places where the name pre-dates us (Freeman, 2004). If we take Foucault's understanding of the different epochs of man, relating to shifts in how we understood the dynamics of language, man, and knowledge, we can understand that the story of 'woman', the expectations we have of women, for instance, is a story about the body, and anatomical differences that occurred during an ontological shift of this kind. At this time, man in his inability to be both subject and object of knowledge, made objective knowledge the

pinnacle of truth, and thus experiential, or the knowledge of being a living self located in a specific body, became relegated to that which was unable to be verified empirically and hence, to the realms of the unknowable and unspoken (Foucault, 1982). And from this space of recognisability which is at the same time inherently injurious, for it is oppressive and seeks to contain, for some of us we usher forth the sense of this ill fit between life and 'woman', it will initiate the resistance that we self, we for it is oppressive, it we then, as a self in perpetual movement, being transformed on and through our bodies as the site of the interaction between those early narratives, and later ones, alternatives to the dominant discourses, those that exist, but for various reasons are not so easily accessible. This is the journey of the self, a space where multiple discourses collide, contort, contrast, wage war against one another in a battle to tell the story of the self, a battle carried out on the landscape of the body. As Foucault (1984) said of the body, in relation to history, that it is that:

inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body. (p. 83)

This body as landscape, as battleground, works well with Sherman's art, for her body certainly is her canvas or landscape, and a battle is inscribed on that bodily surface which is, at times, horrific and tumultuous. The body is variously distorted, dismembered, disfigured, and finally dispersed as it becomes one with the surface, the literal, and takes its place as text, interwoven with other texts, bodies, and selves, and able to be read in all its surface complexity.

Healing Wounds, Ashes, Dust and Resurrection

When i speak of the self i am simultaneously also speaking of the body, as i understand them as one, i embody a kind of healing of the Cartesian severing, and an immersion in the dialogic space of bodily selves (Morgan, 2004). As noted the body is where the battle to name us is waged, that place where we are materialised in our subjective names, though not absolutely or completely. The body provides the markers of sex identity and race, and unlike class or sexuality, these indicators of subjective type are "... two cultural notions which seem to be represented in the body ..." (Patton, 1990, as cited in Probyn, 1992). The body belies this information which has become, within the realms of the dominant discourses of gender and race, key indicators of difference. However, as we unpack the complex surfaces of these discourses we begin to see the hu-man load underlying their emergence, and the bias and arbitrariness of these supposed natural indicators of difference (Barthes, 1982a). As we begin to understand our materialisation through sex as a discursive production, and reproduction, and not as naturally representative of our being female or White, we can move to the margin of hegemony and begin to flesh out a meaning that exists in the experiential and lived, which though not removed from oppressive discourse, exists on the edge of that, a perpetual tension and haunting of 'woman', of White, a continual threat to its legitimacy as truth. This resonates with Foucault (1976), when he said that:

Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions, but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance. (p. 101).

To tell the story of an other, of an other's body, to locate in the space of truth teller is powerful indeed, and the privilege inherent in such an undertaking would not be relinquished easily. This resonates with Foucault (1984), who spoke of the body as undergoing something of a discursive destruction, whereby it is described as "adopting the illusion of a substantial unity", though is actually "a volume in perpetual disintegration" (p. 83). And again, i refer to Sherman, in whom i read this analysis absolutely, for here the body is destructing, there is a disillusionment immanent, a breakdown of bodies, as though we have finally seen our gendered future and the immanent decay and we relinquish ourselves to the defilement, dust and decay, our bodies dispersed and fragmented. Yet this disintegration is absolutely necessary and is part of celebrating our multiplicity, for we must break down that illusion of "substantial unity" that the hegemonic name adopts if we are to begin to understand ourselves in dispersion and fragmentation, as multiply possible.

Unstable Names, Unfettered Language

Our bodies provide those initial indicators of inclusion or exclusion, of subsequent privilege or subordination those discourses which purport to tell the truth of ourselves and bodies. As we take up places of recognisability in these discourses, we are simultaneously materialised self and body, formed on and through them, and in their binaries they will necessarily enforce, constrain and limit who we can be, how we can be, and what we should desire, by reference to what is supposedly natural and normative (Bartky, 1990). To behave outside these constraints, to desire other, is to fall outside the domains of normality, perhaps even recognition. The words that form our selves simultaneously form our bodies, and using metaphor to think of our bodies being inscribed by discourse, makes this process more visible, bringing together language, the self, and bodies, and enabling an understanding of how we are materialised entirely by discourse, and how the

embodiment of these discourses might be lived out in our daily lives. It clarifies the complete and undeniable importance of language in producing us as specific types of subjects, making us completely, down to our very soul, but at the same time being the master of its own undoing. Never able to fully and finally complete that making, the dominant discourses must consistently call upon us to recognise ourselves in their image, each time risking their own undoing, each time risking that we might not recognise ourselves fully any more or that the recognition will spawn an other, resistance (Butler, 1993). Neither the self that is made in language, nor language itself, is inherently stable. When we use language to conceal, when it is ideological, then we are always at risk that what we are trying to paper over will be revealed. And each time the discourse heeds us to be reproduced in its image there is a risk that its ideology, its relations of privilege will be revealed. And in that instant all the early irritations, the feelings of unease, the felt but unable to be articulated tensions, will come together, and a tiny spark of resistance will flutter, fuelled by the winds of change and the power of hope and desire for our other selves. The realisation that we do not have to live this oppression, that this might not be real or natural 'woman', or the truth of the self. And that the 'I' from which i speak, might not be located inside me, may never be able to be found there, for it is borne in the cultural and social environment in which i exist, it precedes me, and is located only in the stories that circulate around me. But the 'I' transforms and becomes 'i' as i am embodied by both the sedimented, and therefore, traditional understandings of self, and others that i have sought out, and that reside on the margin of the name. Language that is ideological, that seeks to conceal its violent tendencies and the misery that it inflicts and perpetuates, the oppressive language of sexism and racism, for instance, expose themselves, even as they seek to protect and maintain their foundation of power and privilege and pass it off as nature. This resonates with Foucault (1976) in his understanding of silence and secrecy as useful, but

insufficient and unstable, mechanisms for power, which consequently undermine its truth claims.

Alternative Stories, Thinking on the Edge, Thinking Other

There are certain tremendous moments in life when a creature comes out of his [*their*] corner and looks around, and it's frightening. (Mansfield, cited in Burton, 2006, p. 209)

This quote resonates for me, with a particular image of Sherman's, see figure 4, and i guess positioned as i am i can read in it resistance, rather than simply submission or fear. Certainly, it is easily read as fear, in relation to the woman's posture and perceived emotion, but in Sherman the images cannot be contained in a single hegemonic reading, they are ambiguous, they bleed at the edges of their arbitrarily inscribed boundaries, transforming those voices that would speak in unison and as univocal, and making them speak amongst the other possibilities to be, the other voices in which to speak. And in this ambiguous, unable to be fully known space, i read an other emotion, an other version of this woman, in this place and time. There is always another reading and in this image i am embodied by the possibility of resistance, by the possibility of an aggressive response, of consequential anger rather than cowering. This might well be that tremendous moment when the creature oppressed too long, weighed down by hegemonic discourse too long, expected to fear too long, rears up and becomes a spectacle that we must now attend to, and as she does she shakes off those foundationless 'foundations' and disrupts all that we know of 'woman'! That would surely be, and i am embodied by, such a tremendous moment! i like to think of this as a metaphor for women awakening from oppression, the beginning of our journey of critical awareness, to look around us, outside of the self and begin to see really how we have come to occupy this, particular, position in society, what that means for us, and how that privileges others. The frightening i take to be the unpredictability, that no longer can we know in that instant, the oscillation fails, 'woman' recedes

and an other takes centre stage, and this other cannot be contained in the name so we must read at the surface from our own located space. We can no longer simply know this woman as 'woman', for in her ambiguity she shreds away the parentheses, and bleeds into the other, that which bounders it, stabilises it and gives it a meaning that stabilises it in the name. And as it does woman, and we, are freed to be that other that is now "mired in the repetition of the doxa", diluting that psy-shaped space, and transforming it and us (Scheie, 2000, p. 181; Rose, 1990). This is, of course, "frightening", for we seek to know by truth, by logic and reason inscribed in those truths, and when we cannot it is unsettling and disturbing. This resonates in particular with Sherman's Clown Series. The most unsettling aspect of the clowns is that we cannot know them, they are concealed, their masks reveal nothing of their gender or ethnicity, and that is unsettling for we are used to making instantaneous judgments and this is now thwarted. This is why clowns are so easily presented as both an image of fun and frivolity whilst at the same time being able to transform seamlessly into menacing sadists.

Awakening in our Bodies

It also allows us to begin to imagine the body not just as the site of the making of the self, but also as the space from which resistance is spawned and from where the self can be transformed. The body, therefore, can no longer be considered as docile or lacking agency, but must be understood as a transformational and resistant space. Discourse is written on the body (inscribed), the body and self are formed in these inscriptions, and as various discourses are added to the mix the self transforms, and different configurations are elicited, in relation to particular situations we encounter in our lives. Sometimes these are expected while other times they are unanticipated and striking, and they may preempt a journey of self awareness. This was the case for Freeman (1998) when he visited

Berlin, and was struck by the enormity of his reaction to a place with which he had connections, but to which he had not given much prior thought. Those early irritations that i initially felt, and spoke of previously, were like smoldering sparks, not yet brought to fiery ignition, but nevertheless threatening, disturbing, potentially dangerous, and unpredictable, just like i imagine the woman when i read, and quote, Mansfield above and in relation to Sherman. The body too can be understood as moving out from the corner, from a position of silence, as troubling and menacing, certainly as troubling theories of the self, a corporeal resistance. Little did i know at the time, that those early murmurings of resistance, those experiences of annoyance, of irritation, would become the catalyst for my decision to take up research in the critical field, to locate on the periphery of what was currently thinkable, knowable and sayable and in that space work to transform what could be known, thought and spoken.

Taking Journeys, Finding Selves

We need to go on a critical journey that precipitates an understanding of our self that isn't about normativity or psychologically created names, in order to move beyond the imposition of those names and seek out alternative understandings. To find within our self, on the margin, in subjugated discourses, other selves that have been marginalised, subordinated and invalidated so that psychology can take up that place of expert knower, of teller of the truths of our selves. This work, by necessity, incorporates a personal journey to understand the self that i experience in my daily life, to explicate the resistance that began with those feelings of irritation and annoyance, and to understand how i find myself in a position where i am the object of that negative and demeaning attention, which i did not seek out and do not want. And in doing so to share in a community of voices seeking similarly to understand our modern conception of self and to explore how these stories came to be located as the desired and validated ways of

existing in the world, whilst counter-narratives have been simultaneously marginalised and negated. It is also an historical journey of oppression and in particular how women came to be positioned as the subordinated other of men, but this will merely be a recap of that history, as much of this has been done, and done well by Foucault (though not specifically in relation to gender) and others, and i will simply revisit this, bringing forth aspects that serve to illuminate my present purposes. This work is primarily one of resistance, a negation of the hegemonic subject that calls us to take up and reproduce ourselves within it, in our daily lives, forming our very bodies as we are embodied by the words that speak the discourses of self.

Thinking Historically - Locating Bodies and Selves

So rather than its being a genealogy of the self, it is a particular and unique journey into understanding my own subjectivity. It is located and particular and is the story of how i experience myself, immersed in a community of theoretical voices, speaking out against nominal understandings of self, injurious oppressive language, and subordination (Butler, 1997), and my specific compilation of voices within that community. These voices are brought together by their concern with language and subjectivity, and with how to incorporate the body in our understanding of self. We cannot, of course, realistically speak of subjectivity without our thoughts turning to the body, and where we might locate it in our theories, as i noted previously, it is the resistance, it is that which troubles those theories which would seek to position it and make it stable. The matter of the body has haunted feminist theorists for decades, and there is a common thread running through the work as to how to adequately bring the body in, without repeating past mistakes, of understanding bodies as something pre-discursive with inherently feminine or masculine qualities, and of resurrecting oppression. The assumption that women were, by nature, more closely associated with the body

than men, has provided a foundation for oppression in the past. At times when researching this work i have been troubled by a lack of explicit referral to the body in particular theorists work. i have wondered where they position themselves in terms of how they envision the body within their theories, and in their daily realities. i appreciate, here, the advice of my supervisor, Leigh, who informed me that for anyone who inhabits an African American body, the body surely is all pervasive even when it is not explicitly named. This allowed me to engage further with the idea that in order to orient ourselves in society, we do so from a bodily vantage point, as we position and are positioned by others in relation to any situation, our bodies are prominently made available for others to orient themselves and us from. It surely is the first point of contact in terms of the way we locate in relation to each other in social situations. We watch, and as we do we assume we know something of the other, prior to any other information we can attain, simply viewing their bodies. Of course, these are stereotypes and this information is pretty much automatic, we know without engaging in any manner with the person or the set of assumptions we bring. What we take to be knowledge of race and gender, those two social categories most visible on bodies, allow us to position others, and ourselves. This knowledge which feeds the stereotype and can be located in psychologies understanding of subjectivity and subjective type is that which we draw upon. It is a particular story about specific attributes, personality traits and behaviors of women, and non-White ethnicities, and purports to be the bearer of truth on these specific types of selves. Rose has referred to this as the psy-shaped space that we inhabit, where psychology has spread out to inform popular culture, so that we all have access to the truths of psychology, and can use them to immediately know something of others, ourselves, and the differences between us that separate us in clear and definable ways (Rose, 1999).

The Recalcitrant Body - The Importance of the Corporeal in Negating 'Woman' and Transforming Self

The body, then, should be seen as occupying an integral place in our experience of subjectivity, and how we relate and position others. Any theory seeking to engage with gender and language and embarked upon by an African American woman would inherently also be about the experience of inhabiting a body devalued in relation to its being neither male nor White. Obviously the work of this theorist emerged within that space, and developed as a means of negating the oppression therein, and as a way to open up alternative spaces to tell different stories of self, stories that offer an opportunity to be more than the devalued other of gender and race. I appreciate Leigh, my thesis supervisor, reminding me of this because it allowed me to engage more closely with my own body, and to envision it in relation to other bodies. I am guilty of leaving the body behind on occasion too, it slips away all too easily and we must struggle to recover it, to bring it forth in the text even if only fleetingly. Even as I make a genuine effort to connect with, and consistently bring the body into my understanding of subjectivity, and my own self, I am plagued by a legacy that has become accustomed to marginalising the body, to making it wholly object or devalued other. Our body is our vantage point to the world, the place from which we orient ourselves, not the starting place of course, because our bodies are already made through our immersion in the multiple discourses telling stories of selves. However, when we place ourselves in the social milieu we do so from a particular bodily standpoint, and others position themselves, initially at least, in relation to this. We must embrace a reflexive approach to thinking through our bodies and how they exist in relation to other bodies, just as we do when we think about our, and others, positioning in relation to their experiences of self and their discursive materialisation, those subjective spaces made available to, or closed off from, us. We need to ensure that when we talk about the body we know whose body we are referring to, and that this reference does not then

marginalise, or make invisible, other bodies (Probyn, 1992). Our theories must always consider the bodily vantage point that we write from, wholly discursively produced, yes, but nevertheless, also of the physical world, existing in the flesh as it were. The body holds a unique place in our theories, and we should not lose sight of this. The body is both the site of the discursive battle to name whilst at the same time being the space of resistance for the naming never works fully or finally, and the body is recalcitrant to being formed in this way. The body straddles the physical world, the world of experience, of life, and the discursive world where that life is contemplated, formed, made material - the body is, therefore, the all important bridge between these worlds. This resonates with Morrison (1994) when she speaks of that place where meaning may lie, and which i imagine as a space that the body simultaneously inhabits, and that we can access, even if only partially through embodying the dialogic movement of the body and language in the text. It is the link between language and meaning that exists outside language, inaccessible, yes, but important nonetheless. i certainly do not propose that we can access these meanings, and that somehow through the body they will become accessible. My experience, and the experience of others, is testament to the fact that any attempt to make sense of these ethereal moments, when we draw breath, basking in the wonder that we may be on the verge of an experience of a discovery of magnifying proportions, is lost the moment we try to commit it to language. Which, as we know is futile anyway, language will no more be committed than the body. At its worst it will shamelessly twist and distort the words we have used, exposing their vulnerability, carrying them off in an endless stream of signification. At its best language, if used carefully, responsibly, can reflect upon itself, laying open its goals, its politics, and offering itself for others to take up and use for their own purposes. This language has no hidden agenda, it is not ideology, there are no concealed relations of privilege and subordination that exist below its surface, all that it is exists on the surface, it is political language

and in being so is unable to be carried away and distorted by myth, to have its literal meaning contorted to mean something entirely other (Barthes, 1982a).

Communities that Nurture and Let Us Breathe

i am indebted always to those whom infiltrate the community within which i am embodied, within which i am in perpetual dialogue and from which i speak. They include Foucault and Butler, the inspiring and insurgent words of Morrison and hooks, the flowing poetics of du Bois, the transgressive art of Basquiat, Rothko and, of course, Sherman. And Barthes who's work exemplified and inspires me to struggle against language that "drops a latch" on life, creativity, thought and to harvest always for those words that remain alive, embody us and allow the text to suture and bleed through its peripheries (Morrison, 1994, p. 22-3). Barthes (1982a) work was punctuated by a passionate and perpetual desire to deny any form of summary or labeling, a body of work continually in motion, continually experimenting with, being frustrated by, and harvesting language that might deny that capture and containment. Allen (2003) makes reference to this in discussing Barthes, 'Camera Lucida', when he says that it was:

a text written against the force with which he had struggled all his writing life: language's power to assimilate the new and the particular into that which is culturally accepted, generalized and thus disembodied. (p. 13)

The community from which i speak, write and think transgresses disciplinary boundaries, for it brings together voices from many seemingly discordant genres, yet they are bound together by a concern with self, with who and how we might be on the edge of the normative, the name, the hegemonic voice. This resonates with Foucault who said his work was not about power per se but rather was about the transformation of the self, about how we might understand ourselves outside the totalitarian imperative of the name. He says:

the transformation of one's self by one's own knowledge is, I think, something rather close to the aesthetic experience. Why should a painter work if he is not transformed by his own painting? (Foucault, 1997, as cited in Danaher, Schirato, & Webb, 2000, p. 160)

All are interwoven by a quest to understand self, to expand that which we can be and to understand self as multiple and shifting, rather than nominal and stable. Their thoughts and visions interweave and i am particularly inspired by the 'sublime word work' of Morrison and hooks (Morrison, 1994, p. 22). In hooks i am embodied by the self as multiple and the bringing forth of that multiplicity into our daily lives, of a critical approach grounded in both the past and present. Of the importance of understanding, from a critical perspective where we have come from, our 'home', and knowing that we will not return there in the same way, but that we must not lose sight of that place, of that dual vision of margin and centre. Morrison has inspired me to struggle always to make the writing flow, to harvest metaphors that paint a picture as they tell a story, that engage me body and self, so that i am embodied by the words, i sense a bodily engagement when i read about language that sutures, that leaves a scald, i am at that moment engaged body and self, the dialect is alive and enlivens me, these are previous moments of harvesting. i am embodied by Morrison's thoughtful words about the moral obligation that comes with language and about reflexivity and responsibility. Her work has inspired me with poignant examples of the power of language to move us, to allow us to imagine a world where we might live celebrating difference rather than denigrating it. Understanding our subjectivity isn't a process of an internal journey into the psyche, there is no internal and coherent self that can be discovered simply by means of access to a specific type of methodology. Our understanding of our subjectivity must start by engaging with how we came to inhabit this unique vantage point. We need to start from where we are and work out from there, from our very bodies in fact (Barthes, 1981). This rather

simplistic statement masks an endeavor that is labored, complex, at times grueling though equally insightful, inspirational, and fulfilling. In order to throw off the shackles of oppression and to emerge and resist being reproduced in the image of the dominant discourses of self, each of us needs to embark on our own critical journey. It is our means of understanding the self that we have become, the hegemonic and the excess of that, which we experience in various ways in our daily lives, and our means to negating being reproduced in the name, and taking up other spaces to speak, think, and be, our goal is transformation of the self so that we may be relieved of the burden of oppression (Freeman, 1998).

Metaphors that Breathe Life into Text and Engage Bodies

The self can be understood as the point where a conglomeration of narratives, each telling different stories of specific types of selves can be found. The self, that we experience in multiple and differing ways, is that space at which they interweave, a space that is continually in motion, as we take up other stories of self. Metaphors are useful for understanding and illustrating concepts that are difficult to explain because they are so utterly complex and fluid. Those committed to understanding language as more than simply a rendering of a pre-existing reality, will attest to the impossibility of defining anything absolutely or nominally. Yet in order to work with the complexity of theories which deal with language, subjectivity, and the body, and in such a way so that i, and others, can engage with the material, requires the use of well mined metaphors which can illuminate the theories in such a way that we can embody them, we sense their ethereal flow through our own corporeal spaces. They take on a life beyond the text and inspire us to surge towards that unknown, barely able to be envisioned space of resistance and self transformation. They allow us to envision that life at the edge of the name, in the wordless void that language cannot encapsulate but can arc towards. A metaphor which serves to tell a story of the body, the self,

and language, needs to be fluid, to embody the surging, the arcing, the grasping towards other selves and the dialogue that gives rise to our experience of self.

Understanding and Speaking Multiplicity and Complexity

In pondering how exactly to represent our lived experience of subjectivity, so not simply that which we are expected to become, but those marginalised stories, and experiences, of self as well, i have used a number of metaphors, though initially i found the palimpsest metaphor useful (Davies, 1997). This is the idea that we are inscribed by discourses, each telling their own particular story, and our understanding and resulting experiences of self are the outcome of these competing, contrasting, overlapping and conflicting stories. A palimpsest is rather like a carbon copy, but of old, for it is a parchment that has been written and overwritten, so that the earlier stories remain visible, inscribed, traced in the parchment even when the latter ones are layered over them. It is similar to the idea of intertextuality, and understanding the self, language and body as part of a weave that goes beyond our bodies, the text, or our selves and incorporates all those other voices that have spoken to, and continue to speak to us. Therefore, we can in using this metaphor illustrate that our experience of self is continually in a process of transformation, with each inscription being overwritten, though not removed, and hence intermingling with what has gone before. Our earlier understandings of self, the dominant discourses, immerse with latter and alternative, resistant, understandings of subjectivity and the narratives are interwoven in unique and varied ways, elicited as we live our daily lives and in relation to particular situations we find ourselves in, both external and internal. Each discourse exists in a tangled web, which can be imagined as a series of overlapping lines, each representing a particular cultural narrative. Using this metaphor has allowed me to understand the self as existing in multiple, various and overlapping ways, and of the importance of understanding not only those other

narratives that we might seek out as we resist the hegemonic self, but also the necessity of understanding the self that predates our birth, the legacy that we were born into (Freeman, 1998). Unless we understand these early cultural narratives that are inscribed upon us, we risk perpetuating them in the very practices that we aspire to alleviate oppression. These stories live on, and through us, like a layer in the parchment, they are still interwoven with other narratives, and unless we understand **how** they came to be the accepted and desired notions of self (and other), we cannot shore up our defenses against reproducing them in our daily lives, including in our research practices. I have consistently strived for this level of reflexivity in my work, as I locate myself in my subjective past, and in relation to my other selves, that perpetually moving, transforming space. We need to understand and remember these cultural narratives, no matter that we may no longer accept their truth claims as legitimate representations of an underlying reality. Our remembering provides a buffer against reproducing the oppressions they embody, oppressions that are indeed embodied on us as they seek to reproduce us in their image. We need to remember, says hooks (1990), in a way that is like a political infusion for it is not a longing for what once was, but something that "serves to illuminate and transform the present" (p. 147).

Initially I found the idea of inscription in relation to the self as the space at which multiple discourses were overlaid and interwoven, as particularly useful for thinking about a central element of the work, speaking the body in the text. Though as I have progressed I find other metaphors tap this corporeal voice in a more engaging, dialectical way. I especially like thinking the body through metaphors that are related specifically to the physical body. In particular I have found auditory metaphors useful, when I think of the voice of our bodies, of rhythms, sounds, of bodily reverberations through the text. As I think and write in this way, I am embodied by this dialect, by the corporeal flow in and out of the

text. As always there is transformation in the writing, and as i transform the writing too transforms, and what once may have seemed to tap, to illustrate, most aptly that which i was trying to convey moves as the weave alters and as i am interwoven differently, in other ways. This does not mean i have left the inscription metaphor behind, for clearly in the course of this writing that is not the case, rather it has been transformed and immersed within other metaphors, as i grapple with bodies and finding language that allows me to access something of my, and other, bodies, and to have that infiltrate the text in ways that facilitate and open up within the writing that dialogic space from which we experience and live our lives, from which we are learning to speak. The body is especially difficult to work with for a number of reasons, specifically its inability to be pinned down and stabilised within a name. It will not be stilled, it slips and slides across boundaries, permeating the text, the self, and disrupting language (Butler, 1990; Sampson, 1998). This theme of wrestling with our bodies, of the difficulties of speaking bodies on the edge of hegemonic discourse, is prevalent in poststructuralist feminist literature. As Morgan notes, "in postmodern discourse the body becomes theoretically contested" so it is no longer conceived as fully material, a physical object, a "biomedical body" (Morgan, 2004, p. 146). We are contesting that place that the body occupies in theory, in thinking, writing and speaking and it is transforming to a space from which we can harvest bodily moments that infiltrate the text, embodying language and us. The recalcitrant body has maintained a place of indefiniteness in relation to how we can speak and think it, and how we might bring it in to the text. This is, of course, how it should be, for no matter how we speak or think bodies they will not be defined in any absolute or nominal way, and they will move the moment we commit them to words, but it is the movement i desire, for i struggle to have that permeate the writing for it is the embodiment of life and in its intertextual weave we are embodied by that flow and surge on, that dialect of bodies, language and selves.

Uncontainable Bodies

It is phenomenally difficult to ascertain any meaning of the body that doesn't slip out of reach the moment articulation begins. As we write, speak and think bodies we accept that there will be no absolutes, for our bodies, other bodies, exist in that intertextual weave and each time we usher them forth in our theories different threads will be pulled through and the spoken, thought and written will transform in unanticipated, and at times, "delightfully haunting" ways (Morrison, 1994, p. 32). Thinking bodies requires a critical understanding of how we are materialised in relation to our gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality, and how our bodies remain on the edge of these names even as they are given recognisability and space to be as a consequence of their reproduction within those subjective places. We need to critically engage with the history of our bodies, specifically in relation to how they have come to be understood as entirely objective, in scientific discourse, and as a wayward sister of the soul, easily swayed into temptation, in religion. And in more recent attempts by poststructuralist and feminist theorists, understanding the body in a space of resistance, by way of its having direct access to meaning through experience, but which we lose, though not entirely, when we think, write and speak that meaning in language. Among other metaphors, the palimpsest metaphor, has allowed me to bring the body into my theories in such a way that it occupies a discursive space, an integral site where the layerings that are the stories of the self, and others, are written. I am reminded of the torture victim in Kafka's (2003), 'In the Penal Colony' here, of that body literally etched with its discursive and literal punishment which resonates with the body of 'woman'. We too live the punishment of oppressive discourse. Our bodies are simultaneously etched with hegemonic discourse as it materialises us, and makes us speak that oppression in our daily lives as we reproduce ourselves as 'woman'. If we think of the self and body as inscribed, and produced simultaneously in discourse, then we can image our experiences in

relation to the enmeshing of the layers of inscription, so that this is a space in continual flux, as other understandings of self become inscribed with the hegemonic, and as they exist in an intertextual weave, being elicited in particular weavings in relation to our daily encounters. This allows us to think through the body as integral to the process of subjectivity, as materialised in language but also a space from which we will harvest and wield our corporeal resistance. The body is resistance, never fully and finally materialised in the name, a perpetual agonist of the hegemonic self (Foucault, 1982).

Retrospective Remembering - A Transformed 'Beginning'

Like many others before me, i embarked on psychology as a means to understand something of my self, and of others. i was long since plagued by unanswered questions, murmurings of early resistance, those annoyances and irritations that signaled there was a disjuncture between the self that we experience on a daily basis, and the normative self. Psychology with its supposed people-focus seemed to be the discipline most likely to provide some of the answers i sought, to help me understand myself, and my relationships with others. i expected that it would explicate my continual feelings of not adequately fitting any particular category of self, be it gender, ethnicity, or class. In all of these i have never felt that i quite slotted in, that i was 'normal', and as far back as i can remember, i harbored an antagonistic relationship to labels and stereotypes. To judge in an instant is to know without knowing at all, and i had always felt keenly the injustice of such an act. As i have come to understand it is essentially a severing of an opportunity to connect at a human level, to embody that we are similar and different, and both can bring us together in some sort of shared and enriched understanding of one another. i am White, Pākehā, that word denotes a legacy of oppression, of colonisation, of assimilation, and it has a trace that injures, me and others. But it

is part of my self, and this i have acknowledged in my critical journey, and though i struggle against its reproduction, i do not forget it, i cannot for it speaks this legacy of oppression and i must resist this continuously. Neither do i assume i can relinquish it entirely, cast it aside and move on, for it remains in the trace, as it must, but now it is dulled, its voice muffled, it is relegated to the spaces of silence. In a world, a society, organised by a language that is inherently oppressive and initiates racist and gender stereotypes, i felt, and remain constantly irritated by what is akin to cognitive laziness. We need to engage and think for it is our means to the transformation of our selves, and it is how we open up spaces in the text through which others might glimpse their own transformation. As Foucault (1994a) says:

We need to free ourselves of the sacralisation of the social as the only instance of the real and stop regarding that essential element in human life and human relations - I mean thought - as so much wind. (p. 172)

Understanding the self from an individually centred perspective feeds into the interests of capitalist society and a scientific approach to the acquisition of knowledge. This allows the inherently oppressive organisation and institutional structure of society to remain unthought, for it appears to fly in the face of common-sense, and therefore, to continue perpetuating the oppression that is inherently a part of it. It also allows those located on the privileged side of the binaries that underpin human social organisation, predominantly White, middle-class, males, to remain so positioned.

Moving to the Margin, Denying the Name as Truth

So as i embarked on my academic career, majoring in psychology, my hope in understanding my self, and others, soon faded, i realised here was not the place where i might understand my discordant self. It wasn't that i did not enjoy the course, for the most part i did and to my surprise i became very good at calculating using statistics, and interpreting the numerical distribution. But i certainly wasn't embodied in the way i was when i came across other ways of doing psychology, ways that didn't assume by name, that weren't about positing a truth that was undeniable and unquestionable. These were like a corporeal tweaking, something in me was enlivened, a fleshing out of resistance, a beginning of my journey to the margin of 'woman', of the name. So as i slavishly applied the statistical rules to the problems the answers came out right, a process that clearly isn't mirrored in our own chaotic, multiply-experienced lives. Psychology on the whole was pretty much rote learning, i had to think of course, but i did not, or could not, think outside psychologies disciplinary boundaries. It simply made no sense to do so, for outside that domain the 'truth' faltered and failed to stabilise. i did not have to think about a meaning greater or more significant, so long as it was statistically significant that was enough, and anything that did not fit that grid, that existed on the margins of the findings were relegated to the category of outlier and basically avoided like the plague! To give them anything that a passing thought would have meant an engagement with psychologies contorted logic, its inherent contradiction which seeks to dethrone it, indeed to think the outlier may well have made this glaringly obvious. Psychology purports to know us, by an intense analysis, and to give us in that knowledge the truth of ourselves. So that when we speak the hegemonic self we assume we speak of the natural order of the world and our place within it, when it fact we speak the order of psychology and our allocated space within that particular story.

Psychologies Disappearing Self

i learnt about the brain and how it transmits messages around the body, about neurons, synapses and the chemicals released in the body during those processes. i did not, however, learn very much about people, or about myself and my own feelings of dislocation. It seemed that psychology in its desire to follow the objective model of science, had developed a bunch of methods and rules which we were to slavishly follow and apply to people, regardless of anything else that would surely influence the outcome. In particular the social and cultural context in which they lived, and language. As i moved into graduate study i became even more disillusioned with psychology, it all seemed dehumanising. Somewhere along its disciplinary tract, psychology had lost the essence of what it could mean to be human, it had squandered its opportunity to embrace that, and had become a falsifier of an essence in a nature we do not have and cannot live, at least not without perpetual and perplexing tension and contradiction. i was amazed, and more than a little disillusioned, by how easily so many of the other students applied the psychological rules of behavior, personality, and affect, in order to diagnose various psychological ailments with no more than a minimal consideration of the wider social or cultural context within which the person lived, let alone any consideration of the act of language. As i, and others, have discovered in our journey into, through, and onto the margin of psychology, its findings belong very firmly in and of that world, and have little relevance beyond it in understanding our daily experiences of self.

Glimpsing the Other

Fortunately, along the way there were some insightful and inspirational moments where i sensed there was a space from which to live our lives in ways that were more meaningful, where we might be all those other selves that we glimpsed at the periphery but struggled to keep out. These many other voices of resistances that

i encountered along my journey, and within myself, as i learnt to flesh them out when i sensed their insurgence, provided the foundation for my doing this research that speaks at the periphery and in the speaking transforms both the periphery and the centre. In my place of compiler i bring together a seemingly discordant group, though they are woven together by their desire to speak on the edge of our subjective names, and in doing so appropriate spaces to be other. i discovered Foucault in sociology, and immediately his writing struck a chord, in part prompted by the challenge to understand that which i was told was extremely difficult. In fact the reality is that we need to engage with the writing, with the theory, we need to think. And as Foucault said, that means we need to "stop regarding that essential element in human life and human relations - I mean thought - as so much wind" (Foucault, 1994a, p. 172). We must learn to engage with the work critically, a process that is slow and labored but absolutely rewarding for in that space the knowledge is borne from our own located and geopolitically positioned self and a dialogue with the text which transforms that space (Foucault, 1994). Foucault questioned our foundation for truth and psychologies place of privileged knower. That initially appears bizarre and confusing until we too begin to see the familiar as strange, for outside its own internal parameters of logic it takes on bizarre proportions. It is easy to underestimate how ingrained, or perhaps inscribed, these understandings are within us, literally making us, over and again, as we position ourselves within these stories. As i immersed within writing that understood language, as Morrison (1994) does, as "an act with consequences", rather than simply reflecting an underlying reality my understanding of self was transforming (p. 13). For the language in its discursive formation that forms our self and body is now understood as performative, as purposeful, importantly of hu-man origin. When we speak, write, or think we do so through language and the words that we use and the discourses that we engage with are reproduced, as they simultaneously

reproduce us. Language produces us as it simultaneously denies that production under a veneer of nature and assumptions of truth.

Leaving Home: Taking Up Space on the Periphery

For me this space of radical openness is a margin - a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a safe place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance (hooks, 1990, p. 149).

At the outset what has been called the 'turn to language' appears a radical one indeed for it confronts everything that we understand about ourselves and others (Weedon, 1987; Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Gavey, 1989). It requires us to engage with and rethink the entire foundation upon which Western thought is sedimented. It is thus, not an understatement to say it is an intellectually demanding and laborious task. We literally must relinquish the known and recognisable self, and take up spaces on the margin of these stories which will be, necessarily, transformative spaces. As we peel back the layers of foundation and find no stony bedrock upon which to bolster a truth of essential and natural selves, we no longer recognise our self in the narrative and its power to name and frame us is diminished and we no longer heed the call to reproduce ourselves as 'woman'. The name fails and the disjuncture between name and life emerges. The journey is both exciting and terrifying. It is rather like being lost and having to find our way home, but with a twist, this time the home is not familiar, it is not easily recognisable, we have not been there before. Yet when we get there, when we truly have engaged in a sustained and critical way with our self, our multiple selves, then we will truly be home. And this will be a home like no other for it will not offer us security or stability but it will offer us inspiration, hope and a place from which to struggle (hooks, 1990). And in this margin, this periphery on the edge of the known and nameable, we will resist being known and named for herein

we can enliven and celebrate the self as multiple, diverse, contradictory, and fluid, on the margin this will not be denied.

Envisionings and Finding Voice

Woman's body language speaks eloquently, though silently, of her subordinate status in a hierarchy of gender. (Bartky, 1990, p. 74)

The project before us is a theory of the body, and the incorporation of the sound of our bodies within our theories. (Probyn, 1992, p. 96)

As has become clear along this journey, this work is not and never could be about listing clearly defined goals, objectives, outcomes, or expectations. It is the antithesis of research that works towards an initially clarified and objectively stated end point. The work, like my own personal transformation, is a journey and along the way we will veer off on previously unanticipated paths, the track is not visible before we start and we simply work with a feel for where we want to go. A bit like an explorer in uncharted territories we need to take our cues along the way, we cannot know in advance what paths the journey will take, we must instead be open to these unanticipated movements that occur along the way, for in the path uncharted, unspoken, are the spaces to know ourselves more fully, in our multiplicity, in our abjectness. What we do know in perhaps a more precise way, I expect, is where we do not want to be, for that is the 'starting' place, where our journey begins, though always located in other beginnings, it is a negation of the dominant self and of the narratives that reproduce us in that image. It is wrestling back our stories, like colonised other we must struggle against being reproduced as 'woman' and reproducing the story of 'woman' simultaneously within ourselves, on our bodies. We must struggle to retain a voice that resists the hegemonic, that speaks our multi-vocality, our otherness, speaks our re-volting selves. The body of 'woman' has been silent, but we must break the silence as we

break free of the name, i see in Sherman, especially in the later series, but retrospectively as a kind of terror-ific awakening, this wrestling with bodies, this struggle to speak, to take up political spaces within language, to speak our resistant, our abject self and wield the body of the other as a corporeal weapon in the fight against oppression (Probyn, 1992).

So rather than goals, there is envisioning, which i think of as political, i hope that the work moves in this way, that it can move others in this way, that is has a flow on effect of sorts, that in being part of a community of thinkers, writers, and artists all seeking other ways of being, it can further probe these spaces on the margin, impregnating them with corporeal zeal, locating women's bodies at that marginal space so that we might now glimpse them, even for a moment be dazzled by their spectacular aggressiveness. There is no divide between the personal and the political, they merge, diffuse into one another, immersing and overlapping so that what i desire on a personal level, that which i seek to embody in the text, is no different from my political envisioning, that which i desire to permeate the writing, to flow in and out through its unbounded spaces. The subject, the hegemonic self is materialised through language, within Western ontology, and through my body, and the political envisioning that transforms my understanding and experience of self, are located within the wider transformation of knowledge, power and story telling. The body of 'woman' transformed in the space, no longer inscribed solely as vulnerable, anxious, fragile, small, in need of protection, but now known in other ways for when we relegate the name to its storied reality we become that aggressive, haunting, terrifying, wielding, eclipsing body and in that transformation we have learned to see ourselves, and others differently. And as we further probe the margin, wielding our bodies, celebrating their unboundedness, their fluidity and with each corporeal droplet we infuse and strengthen further that space of resistance, so that it pushes uncomfortably at

the arbitrary lines of the centre, leaking and seeping through the membrane, plebeianising into and our bodies become that resistant space we are.

Each envisioning is preceded by a background paragraph which sets the stage, so to speak, for the space that i have come to which enables the vision. i have arbitrarily labeled and numbered each envisioning, which does not in any way suggest an indication of importance or sequential order, rather it is an instrument to structure and guide the reader. Thus at the end of the following paragraph envisioning 1 is located, and similarly throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Giving Flesh to Linguistic Bones and Fleshing Out Words

"theory in the flesh" - (Moraga & Anzaldua, as cited in de Lauretis, 1990, p. 138)

Begin ... not with a continent or a country or a house, but with the geography closest in - the body. (Rich, 1987, p. 212)

i have envisioned as i have moved along this journey a way in which to speak the body, in dialogue with feminist writers, especially, i have sought to write the body in, to let it be heard in the telling, to have it filter through, to allow space for it to speak, and for others to envision their own bodies, taking up their corporeal voice in the stories they must retell from their own subjective transforming spaces. i use often, metaphors that relate to physical bodies, internal anatomy, fibres and sinews, the senses and also nature, for example the flow of rivers, or uncontained elements, for instance, an unlatched gate buffeted in the wind. i use these because it is during these moments i feel that i connect most with my own body, that i feel in the text in a bodily way at that moment, the dialogue is like a spark embodied within me and enlivened in the words i use. Both metaphor and poetic writing, which is metaphorical of course, give the text a flow, a fluidity it needs in order to move me on in the journey, to embody the text with the corporeal, with that resistance, to open up spaces for others to locate in their own unique

geopolitical ways. The body is disruptive and bringing my corporeal voice through, using those anatomical metaphors allows me to insert the margin smack bang in the centre provoking and confusing the text, diffusing binaries and opening up spaces to be other. This resonates with Barthes whose writing was characterised by a constant rejection of language which hardens around the text, which normalises and stabilises the self and thus arbitrarily summarises and ceases proliferation. The flow is effectively sutured, and we are stabilised in the name. The body is perhaps that word which will not be contained, made to speak univocally, a "mana" word, which i think of as aggressive, defiant and unequivocally, resistant (Bayer, 1996; Barthes, 1995, p. 129). i seek to speak the body through the text and to engage, embody and enliven that dialogue within myself and through opening up spaces for others to take up their own self, corporeal, and linguistic journey. i envision that the dialogue between my self, my body and language will be embodied in the words i use, that the flow will be enlivened and incensed within the text and that the peripheral bleeding out from the writing will be embodied, so that we sense, even before we can articulate, this unboundedness of bodies, of language, of selves. And as we do we shift into marginal spaces for we have become dispersed and we can no longer speak one truth, one reality, for we are embodied by our multiplicity, as we disintegrate and the fragments disperse so our subjective space as 'woman' becomes an other fragment, just a form in a narrative that we can no longer recognise as the truth of ourselves (Morgan, 2004).

Envisioning 1: to speak the corporeal through the text and to embody myself with the dialogue, and in that embodying to open up spaces for others to locate and make their own journeys.

Revolution Pure and Simple

Do I remain a revolutionary? Intellectually - without a doubt. But am I prepared to give my body to the struggle or even my comforts? (Hansberry, as cited in hooks, 1990, p. 191)

Like hooks, i love words that bring with them a sense of what has come before, and what can be. Revolution is such a word, for it has within it various histories, admittedly male-centred, yet there are connotations of a struggle against oppressive discourse, the taking on of what may seem at the outset a most monumental battle. And here in this community in which i write, compile and think, on the edge of the normative, in that space where i have long since left, though not forgotten, my discursive home, the struggle and the oppressor are no less monumental, perhaps more so for we cannot see or name them specifically and yet always they reside within, always there is a battle against being reproduced as that self, in our body, and as we must take up and use the very language of our oppressors to liberate ourselves we must perpetually be aware of its inherently enforcing properties, that it will enforce binaries where we seek to erase them and that it will move in ways unintended. Our revolution is no less monumental for its being a revolution of language, a personal and political revolution, a transformation of the self which necessarily must entail a transformation of knowledge, of what counts as knowledge, of what can be truth, the truth of our selves. As we transform our selves we simultaneously have transformed the relationship between knowledge and power, for knowledge has been displaced from its coupling, unable to speak our truths and therefore, reproduce us in the telling. It must relegate to the space of narrator located within particular rules of narration, for the story only makes sense within the parameters of the telling. When we step outside psychology, or more generally science, the story becomes non-sense for its form is within that particular discipline, or perhaps more aptly,

genre. For all stories, even those we have come to see as truth, are located and partial, they cannot speak that truth outside themselves for outside psychology we live in ways that continually and constantly defy the name, we experience them initially as irritations, tensions, contradictions, but as we move along on our critical journey to understand our discursively produced self, we will embody these hauntings, for they are our experiences of the self that live unfettered by the name, that remain on the edge of psychologies univocal self (Bayer, 1996). What we seek is to displace the power/knowledge couplet of Western ontology, and relocate the hegemonic voice as simply one amongst many possible others. i imagine it, when i read in Sherman a transformation of the women from the Film Stills to the Aging Women. This has taken on something of an ironic twist, for rather than be relegated to the background, the proper place, of all but invisibility, for the older 'woman', they instead take up and aggressively wield their corporeal armour. They are spectacularly spectacle, as they own the limelight, the surface, the literal, as they stand full front and center, their bodies taking up space, speaking loudly, they resist as they remain in literal spaces making the surface a denial of depth, but a dazzling complexity. And in that space bodies and women must be read differently, for they do not purport a foundation, a platform from which to see, we must stop and read the surface for the depth has shown its façade, its failure to reproduce these women and nullify them and their resistance. And in the moment the surface takes on an opaqueness and we can see in it that the depth we once envisioned is in fact a reflection of ourselves, we must engage with the surface, with the self that is lived experientially, daily, without seeking to know that self prior to that engagement, the path is uncharted and we will learn to see the many ways it will proliferate. From here on, we must take up spaces to be other and make it now from ourselves, and for ourselves.

Envisioning 2: That the writing embodies the sense of revolution, that this is a revolution where we put bodies and selves on the front line, that we wield our tools

of resistance against the enemy of oppression, which an enemy that lives within, as well as being a socially institutionalised force. I envision that the writing orients around Hansberry's quote above, that there is the sense that we must, and we do, give our bodies to the struggle, our bodies are that struggle epitomised.

Writhing Bodies, Taking Courage from Fear

All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave. (de Lauretis, 1990, p. 134)

The above refers to our location in the complex interaction of oppression within which we are located, in relation to gender, of course, but also as this interweaves with our experiences of race, class, and sexuality. This is not to suggest that this is an exhaustive list, by any stretch of the imagination, and I am troubled every time I write it in a form which comes across in a list-like and linear fashion, for I fear they name without thinking. I am haunted by the risk that written in this way they interrupt engagement, that which I seek always to facilitate in the writing, as I read, to open up spaces in the text that encourage this an engagement and critique, for we must not allow these labels to calcify, we must instead unravel them so that we might understand the intricate ways in which they interweave as they entangle together, and how we experience ourselves as a result of this perpetual and diverse entanglement, our own specific subjugation (de Lauretis, 1990; hooks, 2000).

I envision that in this space of the writerly text bodies will be enabled to writhe, that we can immerse in the language and be embodied by the fluidity of it, that here bodies will not be shut down, they will not be inaudibly silenced, for here in the fleshy language, that I struggle always to engender, to be that "theory in the flesh" Moraga (as cited in de Lauretis, 1990, p. 138) spoke of, to live, to enliven it in the words. Writhing is important, I believe, because it embodies for me the

sense of struggle that we all must partake in if we are to free ourselves from a life lived with the dead weight of oppression, if we are to free both self and body worn down with that weight (Sampson, 1998; Bataille, as cited in Bernauer & Mahon, 2005). And i like that writhing has connotations of pain, and does not shy away from the struggle that is arduous, that is painful at times, we lose everything, even our bodies are relinquished for the struggle, our very recognisability as 'woman' must be lost, and that is courageous indeed, and with courage there is always uncertainty, and fear (Hansberry, as cited in hooks, 1990). We feel the fear but we do it anyway, for perhaps we realise at a corporeal level that the greater fear comes from living in Basquiat's insightful words, 'SAMO' (the same old shit), day after day (Basquiat, as cited in hooks, 1994; Fretz, 2010). Our bodies housing the tension, the contradiction, the continual reiterative heeding to be that 'woman' know those spaces of oppression most intimately. i read in Sherman's early work, particularly the Film Stills, this unresolved tension in bodies, and as i discuss further in a later chapter, perhaps the watchful stranger that lurks in the recesses of the image is not man, that is not our greatest fear, but 'woman', i envision that this will become clearer along this journey, that which we must fear most is 'woman'.

Envisioning 3: i most want the text to be impregnated by movement, by the struggle of women's bodies to resist being named and contained. i write always with this in mind, reflecting on the journey. i sense in my own body this contorting, to be formed in a way that does not give us any comfort, like ill-fitting shoes we are never free of the feeling of containment, and we must consistently writhe against it.

As i write these envisionings, i have this sense of being immersed in their intertextuality, and of course this is so for they all entwine in a dialogic weave, and each ushers forth something of the others, so that they overlap consistently,

weaving in and out of the others. Each envisioning orients around 'woman' and its negation, and relegation from the space of truth teller, each therefore simultaneously brings forth the body, language and subjectivity.

Opening Up Spaces for Transformation, Writing in Perforations

i envision that in the writing space will be opened up to tell other stories, i write always trying to probe space, locate in peripheries, reside in margins. And again, the poetics, the metaphorical voice is particularly important in locating these gaps, in making spaces available for others to locate in their own journeys, or to precipitate that journey with the acknowledgement that there is room to be other, that we do not have to take up the call to reproduce ourselves in normative hegemony. We must necessarily move to a different vantage space if we are to see differently, as hooks reminds us we must. We need a view that allows us to see both margin and centre simultaneously, on the edge of the normative yet still knowing it intimately. We can never step out of our world, our self, made through language, given to us in discourse, but we can locate at the edge of the knowable, the sayable, the thinkable, and in that space begin to know, say and think differently, for in that space we are the negation of 'woman', for our very existence as other undermines the names capacity to reproduce us as normative, and as we reside in the margin we are "mining, sifting and polishing" languages, engaging with our bodies, so that we may articulate our experiences of self that exist on the edge of the name, and bring forth our corporeality into the text (Morrison, 1994, p. 33). And so our bodies infuse the writing, and the abject and the revolting self and body can be articulated, and bringing forth these words which disrupt the text, which shake it from its potential solidification we are opening up spaces for others to speak their abject, revolting selves and to take up their own spaces on the periphery of the thinkable, sayable and presently

knowable. As hooks (1990) so aptly reminds us, if we cannot even imagine these other lives, how can we expect to move towards them:

Our living depends on our ability to conceptualize alternatives, often improvised. Theorizing about the experience aesthetically, critically is an agenda for radical cultural practice. (p. 149)

Envisioning 4: that here in the writing, i have probed open spaces, even if only subtly, that there is a sense of the centre being transformed by the margin as it pushes against it in a tenuous, tortuous struggle against the hegemonic voice and in that space of struggle and resistance there is room to imagine, to be other, for now the margin and centre are envisioned as unbounded, and in our imaginings which precede taking up those spaces of corporeal and linguistic othering, there is a bleeding of those arbitrary boundaries so that self and other merge, margin and centre infuse, and we see differently.

Telling Our Own Stories

Another central political and personal envisioning for the writing is that it should be that space where we can tell our own located and positioned stories. As women we need to wrestle back the space of storyteller, to relocate and tell our own experiences of living in this body, at this time, in this moment, in relation to this situation. To retrospectively think through bodies, selves, lives, language and to retell our stories so that we aren't simply reproducing ourselves in psychologies prescriptive sex and gender. i agree with Morrison when she says that narrative rather than being "merely entertainment" is "one of the principal ways in which we absorb knowledge." (Morrison: 1994, p. 7) And of course it is, we all remember the stories from our childhood which replicate the subjective stories that reproduce us as 'woman', the brave men, the weeping or sleeping women, either way submissive rather than active, the hero (our male savoir) and the villain (our male predator).

And that story is emulated, of course, in our early relationships, our family complete with male protector and female nurturer, the one active and the other passive. As women we absorb these stories, we internalise and reproduce ourselves in particular ways that give us the place of recognisable 'woman', and give us that initial speaking place. That we must begin there is inevitable, we need to speak in order to transform the speaking. Like graffiti artist/artist, Jean-Michel Basquiat, we need to be that which society will bear, will tolerate, at least for a time, at least in as far as it is useful for us to spawn something else (Butler, 1997). Even as we locate in the centre we are marginal, and we seek to become that which haunts the centre, its abject, the outlier which it cannot bear, and perhaps fears most, for in its revelation as other, it brings forth the demise of hegemonic discourse, of the Western ontological claim to knowledge, and its coupling with power, as we lull it into a false sense of security we simultaneously gnaw at its foundations, disrupting its claim to nature and truth. The power to tell the story of an other is a most powerful tool that will not be easily relinquished, to locate as expert knower, to eclipse the subjective experiences of others and replace them with an objective knowledge that sits apart from them, apart from their own bodies, is a most insidious and efficacious means of control (Rose, 1990; Foucault, 1982). Let us, as women, in all our multiplicity, in our diversity, in our similarity, wrestle back those stories, retell them from our own located vantage points, with our subjective histories, which will be the hegemonic name too, but in the telling it is transformed for it is located within our other stories, those that speak our other selves, the abject self, the re-volting self.

Envisioning 5: that this is a space where i am telling my story, which necessarily is located within other stories, so it isn't mine in any absolute or authorial sense. i am not the owner of this story for it interweaves with so many other stories, it "begins *in media res*" when so much has already taken place to give me that beginning, and it is a narrative interwoven and infused by many other voices, named

and unnamed (Butler, 2001, p. 27). But it is my story in terms of my own located positioning which is uniquely about the life i have lived, the discourses that have produced, and reproduced me, and the resistance that embodies me and transforms those discourses.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL IMMERSION

I will leave this hall ... with a new and much more delightful haunting than the one I felt upon entering: that is the company of the laureates yet to come. Those who, even as I speak, are mining, sifting and polishing languages for illuminations none of us has dreamed of. But whether or not any one of them secures a place in this pantheon, the gathering of these writers is unmistakable, and mounting. Their voices bespeak civilizations gone and yet to be; the precipice from which their imaginations gaze will rivet us; they do not blink or turn away. (Morrison, 1994, p. 23 - Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech)

Here Morrison acknowledges that community, both known and as yet unknown, within which she writes, and the importance of thinking and writing, of texts that do not end within the covers of the book. Which is of course, the writerly text for that is unending and unable to be ended, it is rather shifted beginnings. In fact the covers of a book might be seen merely as an arbitrary convention in order that a book might be published and shared, yet it does not denote any real beginning or end, for neither are able to be known with any clarity and the proliferation of language gives rise to multiple other 'beginnings' within the text, meaning cannot be contained either by reference to the final period in the final sentence, the bound end product, nor by reference to the author and their perceived intention, meaning is endless.

Learning My Place, Exploring Other Space

Psychology teaches us to disregard theory, along with imagination i might add, for any theory that challenges that which is commonly thought, the status quo as it were, the ways of thinking currently designated as able to elicit some kind of desirable 'truth', must imagine first within the realms of what yet isn't, but may

be. Anyone who inspires, whose work seems to arc towards worlds, ways of being, thinking that are at present barely imaginable, but yet offer that ethereal glimmer, that diamond glint of hope that this isn't, in the words 'Melvin Udall', "as good as it gets" (Brooks, 1997). We learn early on that though theory is buried somewhere in psychology's roots we should largely ignore it and move on to the more important task of 'discovering' the world using empirical methods and through scientific and detached observation. We learn that methodology is more important than theory, so long as we employ the correct method our findings will be robust, statistically significant, and the data follow a pattern of normal distribution. Theory, in psychology, seems to take the shape of being given to us so that we may collaborate in its general devaluing, so that we may set it aside and move forward unhindered by the voices of psychology's founders, those human, and therefore subjective, voices. In so doing, psychology is able to detach its emergence from any specific social and historical time and, more importantly, from any human input. It is then free to be reborn under the guise that it is entirely objective and detached from any human creation (Sampson, 1997; Barthes, 1982). In essence this is what Barthes spoke about when he referred to myth and its "conjuring trick", where the meaning of language becomes detached from its human significance, and replaced with nature, so that we come to see things as natural rather than as having a human, and therefore subjective, essence (Barthes, 1982a, p. 131). If we can empty out the human reality of psychology and fill it with nature, it leaves us free to take up the role of expert, the storyteller who proclaims the wisdom of self, and other. And even better this wisdom now detached from human essence isn't the word of the speaker, rather it is the word of nature, that unerring, omnipresent, and unshakeable reality which cannot be denied, doubted nor refuted. And if natural, then the relationships of privilege and subordination that underlie it, are too entirely natural and only reflect the real order of the world, rather than some contrived reality founded on human

intent. When i think back on my own undergraduate experiences in psychology, the only theory i really recall standing out was Freudian theory and this generally seemed to serve as a comic example of theory, and a reminder that we should confine our observations to those that can be performed using empirical methods, a vivid image of John B Watson and his performing pigeons loom large here. My understanding of the importance of theory was therefore, not borne in psychology, at least not at an undergraduate level, but introduced to me in another discipline, that of sociology. In particular a paper on social theory introduced me to the work of a wide range of thinkers, including Foucault, and enabled me to envision theory as an important means of understanding the social world in which we live, of understanding ourselves, and as a way of engaging with that from a critical perspective.

My immersion in theory was further bolstered by an introduction to critical psychology in a qualitative section of a psychology research paper, i remember feeling excited and enlivened, by the prospect of research which seemed to have a genuine interest in people, not as a massed group, but as unique and located, in terms of their social and cultural context. Here in this critical space on the outskirts of psychology there was a place for theory, a central place, here theory was integral to understanding our experiences of self in the world and in relation to others. Again, the writing of Foucault was made available to me, along with a host of other influential thinkers, which can loosely be termed under the genre of poststructuralist writers but i am more inclined to think of as a community connected by a shared passion for subjective understanding and alleviation of oppression. Theory and language were key in this critical domain, and language became not the taken for granted reflector of an external reality, but the producer of that reality. Here narrative, rather than being the story of our selves, a neutral medium, was a creation, something "radical", part of an act with consequences (Morrison, 1994, p. 27). Here in this critical place we were

encouraged to develop a perspective where we would see that words could be our undoing as well as our enlivening. Our quest to understand our self, and to move beyond that, was to be located entirely within the realm of words - language and discourse - and everything we had taken for granted to be the reality of ourselves and our world was laid open for critical analysis. At least in some areas of psychology then, theory was alive and well, and there was a quest to understand life in all its complexity and a simultaneous denial of objectivity as the only method of discovery. Like Freeman (2007), i suddenly felt enlivened by psychology, in a way i previously had not experienced. In this fledgling field within psychology, theory had been reawakened, dredged from its forgotten places and brought to life and in this process life, as we knew it, had been inexorably altered, no longer able to conceal its ideological foundation by reference to nature, it was now made to speak its sometimes ugly truths, often in ways, even we the slayer of myth, were reluctant to hear (Barthes, 1982a). As i engaged with theory, in particular a Foucaultian understanding of the emergence of psychology, i began to think differently about the mother discipline, or at least to be able to articulate more clearly that sense of a disjuncture between that which psychology purported to be and the reality. As i was introduced to poststructuralist notions of the role of language in our perception of reality, i was able to fill back in that which myth had robbed, to restore the human input, and to see more clearly the relationship of privilege and subordination upon which psychology was founded, upon which our language is structured, and which binary oppositions perpetuate. Our world is structured by various understandings of reality, and these rest upon particular ontological and epistemological assumptions about what exists in the world and how we might come to discover the nature of that reality. When we seek to discover the natural world our subjects of inquiry are rocks, or trees or coastal peninsulas and our adopted vantage point is less likely to produce our vision. When we think about the composition of rock we do so from the position of detached observer,

which is fine, we have no relation to the rock other than that. However, when the subject of our inquiry is ourselves, when we begin thinking about human behaviour, emotions, or personality, and when we begin thinking about subjectivity, then the problems relating to the vantage point from which we see, intensify. Quite obviously our seeing place affects what we are able to see, and how we will go about discovering this knowledge. We come equipped with full blown assumptions about what already exists and the best way to discover it. This detracts us from seeing anything else and blinds us to the multiplicity that exists in our subjectively experienced human world, and within ourselves. If we assume what we can see is limited to objective behaviours, personality variables, and attitudinal factors, and that we can only know these things through objective observation, then, clearly that is what we will obtain from our enquiries. We are limited by our ontological and epistemological foundations, even if we never pay them much attention and, more often than not, outwardly refuse to acknowledge them. A poststructuralist approach to language seeks to understand how we came to adopt particular understandings of reality and how these have been able to establish themselves as the dominant way to see the world, and in doing so how they deny alternative understandings a chance to be heard. Further, how this way of thinking and understanding our world then creates and perpetuates oppression, as the relationship of privilege and subordination at the heart of these discourses remains concealed and allowed to continue. This approach seeks to explore how we might think and experience ourselves differently, as we deconstruct psychology and its claims to truth and knowledge of the self, and as we embark on alternative understandings of self freed of these constraints. We do this with an awareness of the metaphysical and productive effects and constraints of language. Specifically, we seek out an alternative self in opposition to, and within the context of those binaries which structure the dominant discourses that tell us the story of subjectivity, and always in relation to the capacity of language to produce

the reality it purports to describe. We seek out an alternative self in a dialogue with others who strive similarly to think outside the dominant discourses and to create and appropriate spaces to be something other.

Living in Theory

This work, then, is a sustained and continuing engagement with theory, and an acknowledgement of the productive power of language, discourse and knowledge. In particular it is written as a dialogue with those whom speak to me of opening up subjective spaces, whose voices are not denoted by disciplinary boundaries but rather speak of transforming the self, out self, and opening up spaces for others to sense, and take up their own transformation. I resist naming them under any definitive category for though their writing may be able to be located in one discipline, or another, their work blurs the boundaries of any such unitary naming, the space they write from is transformative and therefore embodies movement and flow. They are united not by discipline or subject matter, but by a continual and sustained effort to speak differently of the self, to take up spaces on the edge of the name and in the doing, to transform who, and how, we can be. Regardless of any discipline to which they might be aligned, there is a common thread that runs through all of these texts that is an awareness of language as a productive force, including producing us, self and body, as recognisable and valid selves, and of a continuous and sustained resistance to that production, and of continuous and varied efforts to take up other spaces that exist within, and on the periphery of the normative self. The definitive aspect for me, if I were to gather together these writers somehow, would be that they are those who inspire me to continue working in this vein, to continue struggling to transform my self, to open up subjective and bodily spaces of transformation. They are those who allow me to arc towards that momentary, ethereal and fleeting space where we might glimpse something other, the self that resides at the margin and antagonises the

normative, and thus is appropriable for transformation. i imagine, as i engage with hooks (1990) and Morgan (2005), that when i write i write within a community of those connected by shared purpose, shared desires and common goals, and my immersion in this community gives me a sense of locatedness, a sense of something orienting me in this struggle, in this revolution. And that when i write, when i think, it is always in dialogue with this community, not only those that i acknowledge, but also the many others that i do not, but who's voices nevertheless permeate the text in the ceaseless flow in and out that is language and life (hooks, 1990).

Speaking in Whispers, Many Voices, Holey Texts and Ethical Selves

What is omitted is as important as what is cited, for the citing here is done as a means of academic convention, and of course to acknowledge the importance and contribution of others and of the inflow and outflow of dialogue, but never to cease that dialogic flow, for each citation is necessarily entwined within and engenders that proliferation, for each citation is unbounded, it too proliferates outwards beyond the confines of academic convention. For each voice that is named necessarily brings forth a proliferation of other voices, like a piece of fabric frayed at the edges, the fibres draw out and back in to create something which is unbounded and incomplete, just as our self and body is, for like the frayed fabric the edges of the self are uncertain, disintegrating, permeating, and our body and self is in a process of perpetual motion, perpetual change, ceaselessly moving like a river, never as still or "univocal" as we, and psychology, might have it (Spivak, 1989; Bayer, 1996). Nevertheless it is that which gives us meaning, it is the space from which we speak in multiple, partial and located ways, just as the citations, both those listed and those that permeate the text, infiltrating the words in multiple and unimagined ways, give meaning (Haraway, as cited in Parlee,

1998). We are that fabric frayed and woven through in our multiplicity. Our bodies are that contextual and congealed space of unboundedness which hegemonic discourse would seek to bind us in, as we are reproduced as the normative self. As hooks (1990) has noted, it is impossible to bring through all the voices that speak within the text, all those that have spoken and continue to speak to me. Yet in our acknowledgement of this impossibility, their inclusion is made possible, for here now they can breathe through the text, they can permeate the writing by the acknowledgement that this is an open writerly text and therefore many voices proliferate and this proliferation is not ceded by academic convention. This resonates with Barthes (1986) understanding of a writerly text which rather than closing down meaning within the bounds of a piece of writing, opens up meaning to proliferate beyond and outside that known space. The writerly text is "a multidimensional space in which are married and contested several writings, none of which is original: the text is a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture" (Barthes, 1986, p. 52-3). It is the acknowledgement, as in the Buddhist understanding of Anatta and Sunyata, that there is no essential reality, nothing that founders or holds us stable, and to hold to this creates disillusionment and misery in our lives, not to mention futile forays trying to understand the 'truth' of the self. It is the idea that everything, including our own understanding of our self, is interrelated, is a proliferation of meaning, is never of itself alone nor inherently stable. When we hold that there is nothing in life which exists independently, is of entirely itself alone without interconnection, we can release ourselves from the search for ultimate truths or inner essences and instead celebrate the interrelatedness that is life. When we realise that this is the space of true understanding, here in the proliferation of meaning, in that void between en-wording our life and experiencing that life, in the sunyata or emptiness is the space of enlightenment, of insight and inspiration, this is what releases us from the futility of our own lives, from living them in ways that are

prescriptive rather than enlivened, and releasing us from the desire to locate and reproduce ourselves confined by our subjective names. This resonates with Beckett (1965, as cited in Chambon & Irving, 2003) who noted that our acceptance of our inability to know is that which brings us peace, "... to be beyond knowing anything, to know you are beyond knowing anything, that is when peace enters in, to the soul of the incurious seeker" (Beckett, 1965, pp. 63-64, as cited in Chambon & Irving, 2003, p. 275).

To be beyond knowing is akin, i expect, to be beyond naming, it is that space where we no longer presume to know others, for we know ourselves no better, and where that shared acknowledgement of the inability to know can be the basis for shared understanding, shared empathy, for on some level we are connecting with the notion that we are both self and other simultaneously, and of the recognition of our self in others, and this provides something of a bridge to connect us, to allow us to strive to see from vantage points that aren't entirely our own, but which are ours too should we take the time to look from them (Butler, 1993; Butler, 1997; du Bois, 1920). Now we must locate on the periphery of the name, which i imagine as something of a bridge between the life we can think, talk and write, and the life we live which is never entirely the same thing, and can never be captured nor conveyed adequately in language (Morrison, 1994).

A Spiritual Harvest - Life, Death and Breathing

Yet it remains and has done so for me throughout this work as a point of orientation, always there is that space which language used responsibly, reflectively, well, can arc towards, but never capture, and always i am writing towards that space, knowing that i will never reach my final destination for it too is perpetually in motion. Nevertheless this knowledge moves me forward, the inspiration that comes from those moments when i glimpse this ethereal connection between language and life through theory, through literature, through art, the moments that inspire and keep me moving and immersed. i can never inhabit the void absolutely and i can only every partially en-word it, but i can envision it sometimes though these visions are fleeting and momentary. As i locate in the periphery and look out to what can as yet not fully be envisioned but is nevertheless a source of inspiration, more than this, they are ethereal, even spiritual moments for they foster something within, an embodiment that allows me to desire a life that was previously unimaginable, shut down by dominant discourse and nominal subjectivity. And as i grasp towards that gap i am mining it constantly for those visions, and when those ethereal fleeting moments are glimpsed i hold back, lest i grasp at it too zealously, for it will surely then slip away, just as language fails to convey experience adequately, here too the message is bodily, and the experience too is lived within our corporeal selves, rather than just at a linguistic level. And when we try to speak, think or write it we risk losing the thread, for our body is part of that gap, made in language but not entirely so, for it is other too, and in being so it denies an absolute en-wording, it refuses our subjective naming even as we accept it and therein is an unable to be quelled tension, our bodies are a perpetual writhing against our attempts to contain it or inscribe a boundary upon it (Spivak, 1989). The experience of living in bodies cannot be entirely contained within language, and when we speak, think and write

of it, as we must, for always we arc towards that "place where meaning may lie" and language is our means to get there (Morrison, 1994, p. 20), we do so knowing the loss is inevitable, but that in the loss there is also the surge, that wonderful futile perpetual grasp towards the "ineffable", and that is what inspires, what drives us, that is the spirituality, the humanity, that infuses the writerly text, this continual grasping that opens up meaning, that is the basis for subtle shifts in what we can know, who we can be and who can be (Barthes, 1982a). Morrison tells an inspiring story about a United States President refusing to "monumentalize", to harden or to sum up, a devastating situation when he says:

The world will little note not long remember what we say here.
But it will never forget what they did here (Morrison, 1994, p. 20).

His refusal to assume that that life or death could be encapsulated in language leaves that life, and those deaths open, they are not prematurely closed down in language, but instead permeate through the text, through us they are allowed to live because there is no summation in words, to speak to us, to move us, to breathe through us. It is the "deference that moves her [and us], that recognition that language can never live up to life once and for all" (Morrison, 1994, p. 20). And, in that deference language becomes not that which stultifies and closes down meaning, artificially stopping its flow, but that which enables meaning to live, to proliferate, to move out like the capillaries in our veins, embodying words and enlivening us, language becomes that which will transform the self (Foucault, 1977a). I struggle in writing to use language that defers meaning to that space where life is lived, to choose words, language, that does not close down meaning but that allows my, our, stories to exist among and within other stories, for all is interrelated, all proliferates unhindered, whether an arbitrary latch is dropped, or not (Morrison, 1994). Yet when we realise that the 'latch' is a human mechanism, that it is not the way of nature or a consequence of our normal predisposition then

it no longer locks us in to particular ways of thinking and knowing, we are freed and we can also begin to proliferate, to become the dispersed self, to bask in our multiplicity and to recognise that others too are the same but different and that might just be a means of human connection (Butler, 2001). In du Bois' (1920, p. 22) words, we all must remember we are "bone of their thought and flesh of their language." Let us no longer hide behind "facts and fancies" but embrace the unknowingness that is the self, and subsequently of others, and in that unknowing a new kind of knowledge is born, a knowledge that allows us, and others to live, that does not close down that life with a name, with a word, for the name is now one among many and we have wrestled free of its power to injure and enforce. This is not to say, of course, that it no longer is inherently assertive, that we can somehow control its ceaseless proliferations and unintended connotations, but that now we are subjectively transformed and our relocation to the spaces of the margin, and resistance, make us no longer that docile body that these words most insidiously and effectively operate through (Foucault, 1984).

Coming Together - Celebrating the Unknowing 'i'

hooks speaks of a coming together in our struggle against oppression, of something that unites us across class, race, sex and gender and suggests that class possibly is that which can unite us despite ethnic differences (hooks, 2000). But perhaps what can ultimately bring us together is not an essence or an absolute truth, not a name or founding, but the interrelatedness we share by virtue of our shared humanity, the unknowing 'i'. Perhaps that is what we must embrace in order to live that ethical life that Foucault (1997) spoke of, a life that is a sustained and continual reflection on the self that we live daily, and harvesting within the tension and contradiction of the name other ways to be. We must engage with the self, as a "critique of what we are [which] is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment of going beyond them."

(Foucault, 1997, p. 319) This resonates too, with the ideas of Butler and du Bois, that our ethical connection with others may be in the acknowledgement that we are both the normalised self and the object other simultaneously, and that in being this, we know the other as we know ourselves, and yet this knowledge is partial and fleeting, for our experience of ourselves is multiple, and perpetually in motion. As Butler states:

It would be perhaps an ethics based on our shared, and invariable, partial blindness about our selves. The recognition that one is, at every turn, not quite the same as what one thinks that one is, might imply, in turn, a certain patience for others that suspends the demand that they be self same at every moment. Suspending the demand for self-identity or, more particularly, for complete coherence, seems to me to counter a certain ethical violence that demands that we manifest and maintain self-identity at all times and require that others do the same. (Butler, 2001, p. 34)

Transforming Eye's ("i's") and Learning to See

When we release ourselves from a space of the all-knowing 'I', we can begin to embrace the unknowable self and consequently similarly unknowable others. "I find that my very formation implicates the Other in me, that my own foreignness to myself is, paradoxically, the source of my ethical connection with others."

(Butler, 2001, p. 37) How can we ask the question, 'Who are You?' of an other when we do not know the answer of ourselves, for to ask 'who' is to assume that the one can be known and summarised, that they, and we, can be nominal, known, and contained within that name. As Butler (2001, p. 28) notes:

the ethical stance consists in asking the question, "Who are you?", and continuing to ask the question without any expectation of a full or final answer. This Other to whom I pose this question will **not be captured by any answer** that might arrive to satisfy the question. So if there is, in the question, a desire for recognition, this will be a desire which is under an obligation to keep itself alive as desire, and not to resolve itself through satisfaction.

So the answer we seek is not about satisfying our question, but about coming together to know something of one another whilst realising that knowledge is partial, incomplete, located, unstable and fluid. There is, thus, an acknowledgment that the self i proclaim to be, to feel, to experience today will be different from the self of tomorrow. To proclaim the 'i' is not to locate it absolutely and always, the transformation from 'I' to 'i' is a celebration of the multiplicity and movement within which we live, it no longer ideologically grounds me for it can no longer conceal its human input, its privilege, the relations of domination which give rise to the oppression, the violence of the name (Barthes, 1982a; Butler, 1997).

It is about embracing the partiality of knowledge, even that of our own self, and in the process realising our inability to know others in a way that is any more conclusive. From this transformed space of understanding and ethical connection with others, we must follow hooks advice, and "learn to see", for our vantage point has transformed and things are different. This is a trajectory for which there is no going back. Once we locate in the margin, on the periphery of the recognisable and normal self, there is no return to our ideologically imposed ignorance, to the 'truth' of 'woman', to claims of natural and essential self. We recognise the narrative but it no longer inaugurates us, it no longer speaks to us the truth of our selves, its interpellation goes unheeded for we no longer recognise ourselves within the story, or perhaps the recognition remains, and surely it does for if we didn't recognise we surely would repeat the errors of the past, but what fails now is the ideology, the ability to persuade is lost (Butler, 1997). We see the truth and we recoil against it for it is ugly and it is our human his-tory and stripped of its "facts and fancies" it is truly heinous (du Bois, 1920, p. 23). And in the recoiling an other is spawned, the other within, and on the edge of the normative self, is produced again, for it is the agonist of the subject, that perpetual tension that resides in

our subjective names, the reiterative process has turned upon itself and now fuels its own demise (Butler, 1993). The silence and secrecy could not shelter it, the tenuous harbour they provided now disintegrates, foundations long protected by the dark recesses of ideological reason, now exposed to the light that beams through the opened up spaces of subjectivity, crumble (Foucault, 1978). We must walk in that light, all of us, in those spaces of unknowing and begin an other way of understanding ourselves and others, that light which is our own critical awareness of that "world" which we carry around with us, which we wear like an ill-fitting, too-heavy coat but which we must bear in order to be seen, to be recognised, even to recognise ourselves, in the world (Freeman, 2004). And now finally we can cast aside this weight, or at least relegate it to a place within our subjective history, where it can be reintegrated into our understanding of self, but no longer taking centre stage. It must now be made to take its place alongside our other experiences and understandings of self, not as the most integral or important, but as one voice amongst a conglomeration of others.

Punching Holes, Hearing Voices, Changing Coats, Writing and Writhing the Tide of Communal Embodiment

the writer can only imitate an ever anterior, never original gesture; his sole power is to mingle writings, to counter some by others, so as never to rely on just one; if he seeks to *express himself*, at least he knows that the interior 'thing' he claims to 'translate' is itself no more than a ready-made lexicon, whose words can be explained only through other words, and this ad infinitum ... (Barthes, p. 52, as cited in Allen, 2003, p. 81)

A writerly text is perforated, it is permeable, there is a flow in and out, a thread-like manoeuvring, movement, that underlies the work, indeed embodies it, i imagine it as a writhing, sometimes painful as one might imagine it in relation to human bodies. Like the body of 'Riley', in the opening moments of the Twilight Saga

Eclipse film, writhing against the venom that would make him no longer human, we too writhe against the relinquishing of our subjective names and the taking up of spaces on the margins of recognisability, though these spaces remain within the boundaries of being generically human, they are no less harrowing in their uncertainty and unboundedness (Slade, 2010). As we read, and indeed as has been my experience in writing, what purports to be a writerly text, we, and i, may, and do, writhe against the unknowing, for herein we relinquish our assurance of recognisability, and in the discarding of our subjective 'home' there is much room for angst. For knowing our place in the world, and knowing the places allocated in the world, and who may be expected to take up those places, and who may not, makes it no less easy when we discard them. We must be staunch in the face of the 'harsh weather' we will certainly face, buoyed up by our increased knowledge of our selves, for we are now without our familiar subjective 'overcoat', that which protects us whilst simultaneously bearing down upon us. Without its recognisable form we must wrestle against the nominalising tendencies of language as we stay resilient against the swirling blizzard of icy-bitterness and contempt that surely will be lashed at us wherever our presence brings forth the tension the subjective naming entails. We are free from the weight of the old and we must resist those who would try to co-opt us with their "faux language" of words "polished to shocking glitter" (Morrison, 1994, p14-16). As we step forth now resplendent in a very different subjective coat, one which enshrouds and encircles, yet remains absolutely unbounded and unbounding, held together by a double 'thread', both discursive and corporeal and one that can, and does, unravel and reweave momentarily, so that the resulting emergent 'coat' is unrecognisable, or at least not fully recognisable in its previous form. As in Sherman's series of images, there is a continual sense of transformation, but this transformation is entwined with the known, the familiar, so that in the transformation we can see also the history, that which came before, that makes the transformation possible, the trajectory,

and of course we should for like a fish we too need the surface to breathe, and that is where we located now, as we breathe in this multi-dimensional space freed from conformity and normalisation, yet retaining, importantly, that memory, so when we see the transformed self, the other selves, we also see the normalised self, it too must speak through the other, for it is both that, and not that, simultaneously (Butler, 1993). The subject in its space of other, of referential deference to the normative, was always that which allowed the normal self to be defined and thus to be recognisable and speak, and still it remains in this antagonistic relationship with normal subjectivity, as of course it would, for language gains meaning by deferral away from itself, by being what it is not, that which refers away from itself and subsequently loops back around upon itself in a clever and complete evasion of its own specificity. i know the 'I' that i am by reference only to the 'I's' that i am not, for the 'I' that i am has no meaning alone, any meaning it has is always couched within other, oppositional terms.

A writerly text acknowledges its relationship to that which is cited as much as to that omitted, and that as yet even, unthought. Always i write with this in mind, attempting to embody it in the words, in the form that the words take, to instil within the writing this sense of its being part of something greater than these words on the page, the restrictions of a Masters thesis, that it is enlivened, that it writhes, struggles against conformity, and in the writhing moves and lives beyond these academic, social and structural confines. i write embodied by the sense of a community of others seeking simultaneously to transform who we can be and how we can experience ourselves, so that the words that i bring forth are at the same time the echo of others words, that they enter the writing as a trace, an echo, a reverberation, a "whisper of shared breath" (Morgan, 2005, p. 369). These metaphors all help elicit the writerly text, to enable the words and the form they take to keep alive the idea of endless proliferation out from the text, of multiplicity, both within the self, and within the community in which the text, and

self, is immersed and written, of this ceaseless flow. It is indeed the case that "... metaphor will always be involved in the creation of new meanings ..." (Soyland, as cited in Soennichsen, 2009), for when we use metaphor we are in the realm of imagination which is necessarily on the boundaries of what is already known. We are locating in the other spaces, those that aren't at present entirely known, or even perhaps envisioned, for the metaphor surges us into unknown and uncharted territories, it is the arcing towards those multiple other meanings that aren't contained within our subjective categories, and can only be known on their periphery (Morrison, 1994). The writerly text surely works less well, or perhaps not at all, without metaphor which for me embodies the fluidity, the flow, the ceaseless, capillary-like bleeding that is the periphery of the text, the frayed edge that is not an edge in the traditional sense, but an unbounded space where the writing flows out and other voices breath in, and the edges, or more specifically points of entry, are multiple and not necessarily where we would expect them to be, for the writerly text can be entered in multiple ways:

the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes [which are the perspectives from which we can view the text] it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminate. (Barthes, 1987, pp.5-6)

Telling Stories Differently - Taking Up Radical Narratives and Embracing Chaos and Linguistic Suturing

Narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created. (Morrison, 1994, p. 27)

it is the art of living, to stay with what cannot be named, at each moment to try to give it a color, a form, an intensity that doesn't say what it is (Foucault, 1994b, p. 256)

Everyone knows that a place exists which is not economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise. That is not obliged to reproduce the system. That is writing. If there is a somewhere else that can escape the infernal representation, it lies in that direction, where *it* writes itself, where *it* dreams, where *it* invents new worlds. (Cixous & Clement, 1987, p. 97)

The quote above, by Foucault, is a favourite for it brings together living that isn't contained by subjective names, to make living an art, to stay with it even when we can't name it, can't get a handle on it, to allow it to be confusing and chaotic, to stay with that chaos, to live it and in the desire to take something from it, some understanding that isn't about trying to encapsulate it but allows it to whisper through the gaps of our inadequate words, buoyed along by them as we strive to use them despite their shortcomings, because of their shortcomings, because they are what we have and they are the means to be transformed for they move us in subtle ways toward those ends, which of course aren't ends in themselves but, perhaps more aptly, other beginnings, for always the transformation is incomplete, always there will be more, it is part of the ceaseless flow of life and living.

The writerly text is an open, permeable, proliferating, flowing, fluid text, it is not bounded by a beginning and end, they too proliferate outwards in that capillary-like manner, flowing, threading, bleeding at the peripheries. It is the flow i most desire to embody in the work, the flow of language, the flow of bodies and metaphor used wisely, language that is poetic of which metaphor is of course integral, most often taps the fluidity, "suturing those places where blood might flow" (Morrison, 1994). What a wonderful metaphor that is, to suture is to cut, obviously, in a surgical manner, in a way that we may use words to cut through dominant discourse, to cut through subjective names, we choose carefully, politically, reflexively our words so that they may be used to effect the subtle

shifts that are fuelled by those momentary glimpses across that gap between language and life, the habitat of bodies, which we must now embrace rather than deny, and embody in the words we use. The periphery or margin is our place to become the other that lives within the name, the difference, the abject self that we must deny in order to allow the normative self to live (Derrida, as cited in Allen, 2003). Language that denies the closing down of meaning, that embodies the unable to be fettered flow of language, selves and bodies, is our means of living on the margin and transforming those selves and bodies. So what i desire to permeate my writing is this marginality, this peripheral place, this flow, i struggle as Barthes and others have, with the closing down inherencies of our language structured by binary, yet i have faith in language to transgress and reach beyond, even if this only a fleeting grasp, when used carefully, thoughtfully, language mined for its embodying, enlivening, proliferating qualities is that which i seek to bring forth (Morrison, 1994). i realise that for all my good intentions i cannot hold language stable, make it do what i wish it to, to visit only those places i have mapped out. It will, and does proliferate in unintended ways, as it should, for language will not be harnessed despite the desire of those who wish to make it so, and that is part of the wonder of using language and living life, sometimes the thread will spool off in ways we hadn't anticipated and open up spaces, orient paths where we might not have been able to envision venturing along before. This is the opening up of spaces when we become users of language not to convince or persuade, not as rhetoric or ideology, but as the means of transformation of our selves, and opening up spaces for others to take up their own journeys, forage their own paths.

Out of the Spotlight and into the Shadows - Relinquishing the Facade of Authority

Like hooks i hope that i "interrogate" my work for its ability to speak of otherness and to facilitate the transgressing of the normative boundaries of self, in other words, that it is doing its work of opening up spaces to be other, to allow experimentation with othering, to travel those as yet to be forged paths. My own contribution to this text is not as author, for i am not the authority of all that has been written, rather i am a compiler, bringing together many voices that transverse various disciplines, to tell this story which is both my own story, an aesthetics of self, an ethical journey, and a narrative laid open for others to take up and use what is helpful for their own journey of transformation (Allen, 2003). A bit like Foucault's idea of his work as a toolbox i imagine, that herein others might find spaces to imagine other lives, which can facilitate a yearning for this other self and the beginnings of a journey of self. At any of the multiple entry points there may be a flash of recognition, something familiar, remembered, that initiates a necessity to understand both the normative, and perhaps more importantly, the object self.

We must wrestle free of the imperative to ascertain a relationship between the speaker, or the writer, of words and a futile search for one truth, emanating from that one source, we have come to call the author, when in reality our speaking is by necessity the bringing forth of a "thousand sources" (Barth, 1986, p. 52-3, as cited in Allen, 2003, p. 76). 'What difference does it make who is speaking?' asks Foucault (1979, p. 160). The answer, of course, is none for what we seek is not the author, the all-knowing 'I', but instead spaces within the text, and so the question we ask might go something along the lines of those proposed by Foucault (1979), that is, who can be in this text? And who are there speaking spaces for within this text? It does not matter who the author is, rather it matters how we can

locate and be in the work, what spaces are opened up for us to be, or closed down, and how might those spaces enable transformation of our self and body. A writerly text functions in this way through its being open and permeable, it seeks not to close off by subjective domain but to throw open subjectivity, to shatter it, so that our entry into the text isn't limited by those subjective names that mark and make us the normative self. Here in the writerly text self is dispersed, motile, and characterised by multiplicity, in other words it is open and the question again might transform as we seek to understand our points of entry into the text, and what they tell us about our particular history of self and how that manifests in the ways we experience our selves.

A writerly text is similar to art in its struggle to eschew the notion of author as locus of meaning, that all-knowing 'I' upon which the work can solidify must recede, and any reading which seeks out authorial intention, becomes an exercise in futility, as it is, in any case, with any text. We cannot know the intention of any writer, for they are no more in absolute control of language than we are, though perhaps more practised in its productive tendencies they cannot pin it down and make it stable, so that when we read it doesn't proliferate in ways that only we, from our particular vantage point, might see, might think worthy of following. In short, they have not the ability to make meaning through language, for language is productive not reflective, and even the most skilled user, will always be at the mercy of the untameable text. Our located positioning, that unique space, Freeman's 'world' we bring to each encounter, is that space which we write and from which we read, always even when our thoughts turn to authors and meaning, even then we cannot escape our subjectivity, both past and present (Freeman, 2004). So the writerly text is infused by both our own subjective world and the other worlds which we draw upon to write, which branch out to draw in other worlds in an infinite referral away and back around upon itself. Any, and all, of our

attempts to make sense of the text, the art, the music, whatever, are made from this located space which is both the space of the hegemonic self, and the emerging, transforming, fluid, resistant self.

So what we have rather than an author is a compiler. The writer as compiler brings together, from a specific and located viewpoint, a myriad of voices which then proliferate, and in the process call forth other voices, both those that might already have been alluded to, or that are in the consciousness of the compiler, and those that are as yet completely unthought and/or unintended. Which gives the writerly text its fluidity, its proliferation and its instability of the writerly text, for the spaces opened up aren't always known, or sometimes even glimpsed, and yet the multiply perforated surface, that is the writerly text necessarily allows for these unanticipated points of entry, which can facilitate an others journey of self transformation. We do not hold or bind a writerly text, we bring it together and then we have no choice but to "set it free", and like Cyclone Yasi it will pull and tear at foundations, and facades, relentlessly disturbing, discarding and disorganising any structure within its path, repeating the process over and over and just as an extreme air current of this magnitude disorients and destabilises, so too the writerly text throws into chaos the known, the normal, into a state of disarray so that we are no longer even sure if we recognise them anymore. This resonates with Barthes ideas about bliss and the writerly text, that it has the effect of shattering subjectivity which is akin to a state of bliss, a release, for which Barthes used the French word *jouissance* (Allen, 2003). The text of bliss is described by Barthes as a reading that results in a complete disorienting of the reader, which is both harrowing, for we reside now on the edge of the familiar and recognisable, and necessary, for we must embrace the loss of the self in order to move beyond our subjective names, to move beyond the confines and binds of that name.

Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language. (Barthes, 1975, p. 14)

Weaving New Worlds, Compiling New Lives

the writer can only imitate an ever anterior, never original gesture; his sole power is to mingle writings, to counter some by others, so as never to rely on just one; if he seeks to *express himself*, at least he knows that the interior 'thing' he claims to 'translate' is itself no more than a ready-made lexicon, whose words can be explained only through other words, and this ad infinitum ... (Barthes, 1986, p. 53)

A writerly text is permeable and this open-entry policy embodies multiplicity, and hence is not bound only by that which is explicitly acknowledged or even thought. The compiler is something of a weaver, for the process is the pulling together of many strands, not in a structured set pattern though, for in this case the threads take their own course, which depends in part on the weaver (the compiler), but is in no means bounded by them. I imagine the edges of a frayed garment but the weave is chaotic, so the paths of the thread are non-linear, they move in seemingly bizarre formations, and they break off and fray haphazardly throughout the cloth, this fraying represents the metaphorical entry points of the text, where others may take up a thread and build their own story, trace their own thread, weave their own compilation. These frayed edges represent points of entry into my compilation, which necessarily overlaps with the weaves of others, and therein has made space for me, and makes spaces for others, to take up my/their own textual (of language) and fibrous (of the body) analyses. There are no bound edges in the weave, just as there are none that can be located within, on or around the body. I

can not bind the edges of this story in order to try to make it my own, for then i would revert back to the space of the author and perpetuate the dead and "calcified language of the academy" (Morrison, 1994, p. 16). In other words, this would no longer be a writerly text, for all movement would have been ideologically and prematurely thwarted, which is certainly the antithesis of what i hope to achieve in this text. So with each compilation, with each weave, a differing formation or story emerges, and with each 'weave' the story shifts, changes, there are multiple, unlimited trajectories that the threads may entail, those as yet unanticipated and unimagined lives may begin to take shape, or at least the language may precipitate and arc towards these other possibilities (Morrison, 1994). And as the threads necessarily proliferate they draw in other fibres that aren't always acknowledged in the pulling but that are inherent in the writerly text, for it embodies the opening up, the fraying, the bleeding in and out, the writing is embodied by this spatiality, this broadening out and drawing back in, a ceaseless dialogic space. That which is omitted is as important as that which is cited or alluded to for those many other voices remain permeating the text, part of the compilation (hooks, 1990). And most important perhaps, are the perforations for through them we can move in and out of this space without becoming entrapped, without becoming lost in a subjective nominalisation. The narrative then is about storying in ways that embody that art of living, that retain the fluidity, permeability, contradiction, tension, boredom even without trying to name it absolutely, or know it too well through language (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000; Barthes, 1975). And in doing so we allow that ethereal gap to shift in subtle ways that open up spaces to be other, that allow us to harvest that gap so that it may embody us, and that we might embody our words likewise with something that might elicit these subtle shifts (Sampson, 1998). And as we harvest the gap we learn to see from our multiple perspective, to embrace and embody the tension and contradiction that is part of multiplicity, that was always

there but now we acknowledge it, to celebrate the unknowingness of ourselves, and subsequently also of others (Butler, 2001). We truly have moved to that space of other and self simultaneously, that space hooks spoke of where one cannot look without seeing the reflection of the self in others, and vice versa.

The Author is Dead, Long Live the Reader

What matter who's speaking? (Foucault, 1977, p. 138)

This writing which denies an authorial voice, an all-seeing, all-knowing "I", upon which the work might orient and stabilise, leaves the writing free to disorient and destabilise, to dislocate from any ultimate foundation of knowing so that the 'i' that i envision in this work is a space that is immersed, flooded, ventilated by the many other 'i's that infiltrate and permeate its frayed un-boundaries. This resonates with Foucault when he noted that "The author is ... the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning" (Foucault, 1979). Whenever we posit an author, we infer that this is a stable signified that does not give rise to an other signified, that does not proliferate but is held stable in that authorial hand, and thus we deny movement, both subjective and linguistic, we essentially stem the flow.

Compiling in Moments, Gathering Momentum

There is a certain comfort in the acknowledgment of this work as compilation for it embodies the idea of community and of interconnection, this comes, in part i'm sure, from the notion that this (my) compilation is part of something greater, that it does not sit alone, but is part of a body (unbounded of course) of work that is hung together loosely by multiple threads, that are themselves not stable or absolute and will, at times, break away and reattach in multiple and various formations. One such thread which is surely a connective tissue in this communal

compilation is resistance. And i am embodied as i write, and read, by the sense that these voices are gaining momentum. Just as a pebble might accumulate layers of dust and grit on its way down the valley so that by the time it reaches the bottom it has been transformed into a boulder, which now has the effect of leaving an indelible indentation in the foundation of the valley, which to those who had not witnessed its procession the result seems most unexpected, yet if we trace its journey we would see the subtle indentations along the way, the beginnings of change peppered throughout and so the movement of the foundation which has marked that particular pebble coming to rest is not surprising. Like the pebble i sense a gathering of these voices, they grow louder, they seep and ebb through the rifts, cracks and tensions, as the dominant discourses struggle against them, to maintain their power to name us in their ideological creation. i sense something of a rhythm, which i think of as the hum of all these voices of resistance, many of which we may not even recognise yet, or not fully at least. Perhaps we are not yet positioned to hear it in its full reverberation, but it is there and it troubles, it is persistent, insistent and it distracts and disrupts as we are called again to reproduce ourselves in the dominant discourse, as subject, but perhaps this time the reproduction will fail to produce us completely, and in that space something other may be spawned, the seed of resistance perhaps is sown, and though it may not blossom fully yet, it lies, it waits to flourish, and soon, perhaps the next time we are asked to heed the call, we may fail to even recognise ourselves in that image, or the recognition will be tempered by the knowledge that this isn't our inherent or natural legacy. Something has changed and we now inhabit the space of resistance, of the margin, continually denying our reproduction in dominant discourse, and sustaining ourselves as other.

Thinking in Dialogue

As already noted, in this work i am embodied by a sense of immersion in a continual dialogue with a community of others all seeking ways to be on the periphery of the normative and outside the confines of the façade of nominal and stable selves.

This community in which i live is ever present and i do not write, think or speak without their voices simultaneously reverberating in the text, in my thoughts or when i speak. The community is interwoven through my body, in the language i use, and it is like a thread that cannot be severed for it links me in that immersion.

Embodied in a communal way allows me to embrace and celebrate the importance and necessity of the writerly text, of struggling to ensure the writing is permeated by those other voices, that they can be sensed whispering through the text. The work, like gumbo ya ya, simply makes no sense outside of this wider understanding of many voices, of my own multiple voices, for it does not begin and end with me, i am the means through which it passes to take up its proper space, of language that denies slumber for it can "suture ... the places where blood might flow" (Morrison, 1994, p. 28; Brown, 1989). Language that enlivens us and as it sutures it releases the blood that flows through the text so that our bodies too infuse the words and the dialogue is embodied.

Viva Revolution

This work is part of a compilation of voices committed to a goal that is nothing short of revolutionary. To assert that we aren't who we thought we were, and that our understanding of self is no more a truth than that conceived of in myth and legend or in primitive or ancient cultures, is revolutionary indeed. That our reality is something entirely arbitrary, created by people in a specific cultural and social time, with a specific agenda, which would be like the knowledge of primitive cultures, entirely nonsensical if we step outside the foundations upon which these understandings are preempted. We are not simply negating 'woman', or binary, but

negating the entire structure upon which Western thought is predicated, and therefore, everything our society is founded upon and through which it shores up stability. We negate science its privileged place of truth teller, and locate it instead as storyteller, thus loosening its ability to reproduce us in our generic names. As we locate and negate the truth claims of much of our perceived and accepted 'wisdom', and embark on a critical journey seeking other ways of knowing, thinking and experiencing our selves, we are engaged in, nothing short of, revolution. We are questioning that upon which our entire society is founded, all its claims to truth and knowledge are at stake, not to mention the inherent relations of power that underpin the place of truth teller. And perhaps most revolutionary of all is the deconstruction of subjective truth, as it facade of nominal and stable selves splinter and we fragment and disperse in our multiplicity. It can be a lonely place at times, inhabiting the margin of recognisable selves for your ontological and epistemological vantage point has changed and we have learnt to see differently, you think differently, you experience yourself, and others, in altered ways (hooks; Barthes, 1982a). And perhaps you always did, but now you can articulate it, the words you use come to produce the reality in yourself. Now you can celebrate and enliven the other within, the resistant self.

Personalising Language in Politics

Language still produces reality, even when we use it to resist and to move away from oppressive discourse. The important difference, however, is that when we use language we do so with this awareness, and our theories have their goals and desires at the surface. We do not conceal our politics behind relations of privilege and domination, rather we reside at the surface, that space where we harvest, reflect, remember and envision and where ideology can take no root. Ideology is about relationships and the effects of those arrangements, when we believe the ideology we fail to see the human input, the intention behind the arrangement

(Parker, 1990). Political language, or language at the surface, is embodied by envisionings, by hopes and desires and by continual critical reflection upon the furthering of those envisionings. This resonates with Barthes who understood political language as defiant of myth (Barthes, 1982a). No longer can it be carried off and distorted, emptied of meaning and filled with nature so as to be passed off as truth. Our desires are not concealed, our politics are entirely personal and we write positioned and located within these politics as we enliven them in our daily lives. The personal and the political are unbounded, they are synonymous with each other in the text, in our bodies, in our selves. So as i write from this space on the margin and as i continually critique and transform my self, i can identify various overarching themes, which i have called envisionings for theme suggests a hardened form which is known and fixed, and they are the antithesis of that, they necessarily flow and permeate, they are unbounded. They are infusions for they flow through the text, spreading along in a capillary like manner, threading out beyond the artifice of boundaries, ushering through our corporeal voice and embodying the transforming self. They are that which i am continually in dialogue, those aspects of the work that infuse it and give it meaning, around which we are enabled to speak of resistance and other.

Thinking of those continually sensed envisionings and infusions in the text, rather like harvesting metaphor, is a means of writing in a way that gives some coherence to the work, that stabilises the flow, however momentarily, so that i might think and write it, whilst at the same time acknowledging that the things we are writing about, language, subjectivity, and the body, are inherently devoid, and indeed defiant, of structure or stability. My purpose therefore, is not to write as though a structure can be applied to them, nor is it to suggest that these envisionings provide any hard or fast rules that can be applied to reading the work, or that constitute the correct way in which to engage with it, or as some kind of label that

could orient the echoes and reverberations of others in the text. Rather they are the means that i use to enable me to give the writing some degree of cognitive coherence, from a personal perspective, a way that i might hold it long enough to think it, to envision it, to write it before it proliferates and the thread is lost, reemerging in an other form, at another space, which i too will attempt to hold long enough to write. The choice to write around these themes which reoccur throughout the work, which are embodied in and infiltrate it, which breathe through it, importantly allow me brief moments when i might garner a measure of cognitive clarity, just enough to write a little, to think, a fleeting pause before the momentum of language disperses that arrangement once again. This is an environment that is defined by fluidity and multiplicity, and is therefore, absolutely hostile of anything which savors of stagnation. These markers, therefore, should not be read as labels, or categories, or anything of that nature. Instead they are threads that consistently weave in and out of the text, floating orientation spaces which, i have circulated around in doing this work, often returning to them to understand its progression, regression, and transformation. i have found that using this approach has allowed me to hold the words, the thoughts, steady, for awhile at least, so that i may ponder and write, so that i may envision things differently, other, and hold that vision long enough to think it through, and to write it so that others may join in the dialogue, further probe the spaces which, in this communal process, i am attempting to appropriate. And in this space the dialogic flow is then buoyed on, it gains momentum, and those precious spaces which we seek to open up, spaces in which we can think and speak and write differently, and as other, are appropriated. i accept that in the writing i will lose something of the meaning i was hoping for, something of the thrust will be weakened, and the places that my vision seeks may sometimes not be attained as the words harden on the page, or proliferate in ways unintended. This is, however, the inevitability of language, that it will never, and neither should it, encapsulate,

or hold meaning, longer than a moment (Morrison, 1994). But those moments are precious, they are what this work is all about, and I must mine them, they are the place from which transformation becomes possible, as we transform our thoughts, shape our words, and reshape our selves and bodies.

A Political and Personal Transformation - Saving Lives

Indeed, as we think about worlds that might one day become thinkable, sayable, legible, the opening up of the foreclosed and the saying of the unspeakable become part of the very "offense" that must be committed in order to expand the domain of linguistic survival. (Butler, 1997, p. 41)

Which is, after all that which we seek, that is our goal, we resist in order that we might be other than that given to us by virtue of our subjective names, to resist that nominal self so we might imagine how we can be other, and the possibilities, both known and as yet unknown, that exist as other. Some will already exist on the boundaries of the known, named subject, and others will as yet be unthought, though this does not deny their existence within the realm of possible future subjectivities, within that very realm of thought that is necessarily creative and imaginative. The ability to imagine beyond that which is currently deemed knowledge and truth must necessarily precede any ontological shift (hooks, 1994). Art resides in this domain, art that seeks to throw the status quo into disarray and in the resulting confusion, subtly dilutes the boundaries between what is, and what can be. Art is transgressive, says hooks, its "power ... lies in its potential to transgress boundaries" (hooks, 1995, p. 69).

Going With the Flow, Embodying the Motion

The instability, the movement, and the loss that language entails, no longer deters me, as once was the case, for as I locate and engage in dialogue with Morrison, Butler, Foucault, and those many others who inform my writing, I am able to sense

something of the flow, of the movement that embodies the writing. And as i am given a fleeting glimpse of other realities, other lives, and there is a sense that it is something like being poised on a precipice, a periphery from which i might envision those realities even though i may not yet be able to articulate them, perhaps barely even imagine them (Morrison, 1994). i am embodied by this experience of movement, of tension, as i struggle against that language which seeks to confine me, as i struggle to shake off the weight of the nominal and stable self that wishes to bind me to an ideological subjectivity that denies all multiplicity. Instead i seek to embrace a lighter, more fluid and multiple sense of being. The self released from the constraints of dominant discourse is light, unencumbered by the weight of those unwieldy dominant narratives which seek to contain us in the name, to hold us in this subjective enclosure. This resonates with Foucault (1982) who proposed that power works most efficiently and insidiously at the level of the individual, specifically the body, and through a process of diffusion and proliferation and in that process subjugates us thus:

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (p. 277)

i enjoy the metaphor of lightness used here, it works well to convey that sense of release that we seek, to be unencumbered by that oppressive weight, to be able to explore those other aspects of self, those tensions that we struggled with all our lives (Davies & Dormer, 2001). Again this sense of the periphery, the teetering as if on a precipice is brought to mind, a gathering of some sort of momentum, in the

collaboration of those many other voices speaking multiple realities, multiple 'truths', each from their politically-located vantage point, denying nominal and stable understandings of self that constrain and lock us into oppression. With each renewed struggle, with each grasping towards something other, there is a feeling, a growing awareness, a realisation that we moving towards previously unimaginable, unable to be articulated spaces, but this movement is important, is necessary, and can and will save our lives (hooks, 1990; Morrison, 1994). We have to learn to articulate these places using the language we have, despite its inadequacies, knowing that it is inadequate, certainly as a means to stabilise, but that is not what we seek to do. We use language, knowing full well that it cannot, nor would we want it to, be held stable, always it will move in unanticipated, and at times undesirable ways. Its inherent structure located in ontological assumptions about the world and knowledge, and organised around binary oppositions, will give rise to assertions, associations and connotations we may not have foreseen nor desired. And despite this we must struggle in language to tell our stories, to create spaces to tell other stories of self which deny the nominal, one-size-fits-all universalising subjectivity of the dominant discourses. This resonates with Morrison (1994) when she notes that our ability to use language may be the "measure of our lives" (p. 22). Or with a Foucaultian understanding of knowledge as that which can transform the self (Foucault, 1994a). So here, within language, there is the opportunity to wield back that which surely must be our instrument of power, not as a means of oppression, of assimilation to an other meta-narrative, one universal 'truth' replacing another, but as a way to challenge those nominal assertions of self as we make spaces to tell our own located, geopolitical stories. This resonates with hooks (1990, p. 146), who said that "the oppressed struggle in language to recover ourselves", and that process must necessarily be a sustained struggle. Were it not such a laborious, wholly subjective shattering endeavour, such a personally and politically hard fought battle, then the subtle shifts, the

openings on the margin, those very aspects of it that allow for the transformation of selves would surely be as momentary as the movements that enabled them. This is, of course, reminiscent of Foucault (1994a), when he spoke of role of the intellectual in theory and revolution:

... since he works precisely in the sphere of thought, [it] is to see how far the liberation of thought can go toward making these transformations urgent enough for people to want to carry them out, and sufficiently difficult to carry out for them to be deeply inscribed in reality. (p. 172)

We must work carefully, slowly, deliberately to ensure that the language we use does not invoke unwittingly the oppression we seek to undo, and that the hard won ontological shifts are able to be articulated, sustained and dispersed. As Rich stated, this "is the oppressor's language, yet I need it to talk to you", and caution must surely be paramount when the tools with which we undertake our liberation are structured so as to undermine our efforts at each, and every, turn (Rich, as cited in hooks, 1990, p. 146). Like hooks, i try to ensure that my work is simultaneously a continual reflection on its ability to move toward and open up spaces for subjective othering, to achieve its political aims, to tell my/a story in an other form, one that does not close down life, but allows it to breathe through all the rifts and tensions that are part of our subjective experiences (Morgan, 2004).

As i immerse myself in a continuous dialogue with poststructuralist and feminist thinkers i understand both the inadequacy of language **and** the necessity of using it responsibly and thoughtfully. This work and the community i write within give me inspiration to write in this vein, to not be discouraged and to use language even when it sometimes fails me, as it inevitably will, but to continue to persevere towards that space, the margin, that meaning that exists beyond the binaries and the traditional knowledge and wisdom of the self. We cannot simply step outside reality and take up a neutral language, construct our own, perhaps reverse the binaries so the feminine is privileged over masculine for this fails to address the

real issues that underlie oppression, rather it accepts the binary, validates it even, accepts that difference is that upon which we should experience our subjectivity, and that those who are different should be made to feel that difference as negative, taking up the space of inferior and deficient other. My engagement with theory immersed in this community, is the inspiration that drives me, spurring me on in times of uncertainty. I sense the importance of this kind of work, I am embodied by the sense that I am on a journey, that this is a transformation like no other, that I am continually emerging and reemerging differently along this path. This is not a utopian imagining, not a depthless vision with no connection to the realities of our everyday existence. Rather, it is a vision deep and sustainable, that if we can just articulate long enough and without losing the fluidity that infuses it, we might catch a glimpse of a reality that exists at the margin of our world, one that embodies the multiplicity and disorganisation that is inherently part of life and part of our subjective experience. It is not utopian, because in a sense it already exists, though often only in fleeting and momentary ways, we do experience it in our daily lives. It is unlikely we pay them heed, maybe it's just that feeling of contradiction, of tension, an imbalance between the self we are supposed to be and experience ourselves as, and the other selves that perpetuate to undermine that. Those moments when we don't feel a fit between the self that we experience and our subjective names, when we long to be that marginalised self and live it for a while without the associated guilt, without it meaning we might lose all recognition, to be free even for a moment to be other (Davies & Dormer, 2001). We might not name those instances, we might not even be at that point where we can fully articulate them yet, but we do sense the inconsistency, the unfit, between the self that is given to us in the name and our daily experience of lived self. This work is a way of trying to harvest that sense of unease, to articulate it, to give it meaning, to try to word that tension and then as we grapple towards meaning, to have that meaning allow us to envision and experience

ourselves in different ways, and in doing so to transform the self (Foucault, 1994a; Rabinow & Rose, 1982).

As we embark and continue along this subjective journey, we come to realise that the tension and contradiction are real and meaningful, and we have found within our self the space from which to articulate, and live, the margin, that space of resistance. For as we take up the name we necessarily also take up that which the name defers away from to establish meaning, by pointing away from itself to that which it is not (Derrida, 1998). It is, as such, a particularly unstable system fraught with perpetual tension, a tension which is all the more intensified for its insistency upon itself as providing a stable and meaningful reflection of an underlying reality, including the reality of our selves. It is, as Foucault said a system which brings about its own demise, for its shelter in silence and secrecy is fraught with its own undoing (Foucault, 1978). And for which its only means of maintaining the name is through a continual repetition of the interpellation to us to recognise and locate within that subjective space, a process that subsequently allows the name to live, on and through our bodies. This reiterative process is well documented by Butler, and again the tension and instability is real and the opportunity for resistance, for a misappropriation of the name, a spawning of an other, multiple other selves is possible. The reiteration does not succeed simply because it has before, each time it must heed us again to take up the name, and each time we must answer in a particular and specific way, sometimes we will not and the failure will open spaces on the edges of that nominal self, will embody tensions that we might glimpse that deny the hegemonic self its normative and natural shield that is the ideology that conceals its human intention (Butler, 1993). Our widely held belief that real and important differences separate us, differences which can be categorised around race, gender, sexuality, and class (broadly speaking, though not limited to these), discourage us from understanding others, and indeed ourselves, outside of these frameworks, or perhaps in spite of

them for we cannot go outside society to understand it, always we are within even when we reside on the margin. And they discourage us from actively resisting being named in this way, for how can one resist what is believed to be natural? And even with this aside, to resist is to necessarily risk our very recognisability, our claim to being normal, these are high stakes indeed but perhaps no higher than remaining ideologically duped, encapsulated in those names that, like having a noose around our neck, will gag us (Morrison, 1994). This resonates with Brown and Adams (as cited in Probyn, 1992), when they note that the feminine body is "enforced muteness" which "is the sign both of ignorance and of the inability to intervene politically" (p. 42). As Probyn (1992), and others, have argued, it is time now to embody our theories with life, to enliven our theories with our bodies, that must be our goal if we are to speak our bodily voice, to speak the reality of our own lives. We must engage with our bodies, enlivening our words through the dialect, allowing the corporeal self to breathe through the language, to speak simultaneously through the text.

As we take up speaking spaces that incorporate multiplicity, including our corporeal self, we loosen the holds of hegemony for in allowing our experiences to be multiple and in incorporating this multiplicity into our sense of being we deny the normative self its place of universal and nominal. In resonance with hooks i understand this multi-vocality partly as a practice, as sustained attempts to speak in multiple voices, to bring forth the multiple aspects of self and to do so consistently so that we continue to negate the nominal, universal and stable self of psychology (hooks, 1990). And in bringing these forth, allowing them into the spotlight so to speak, we are further opening up spaces to experience ourselves in our multiplicity, in those previously denied subjectivities, and so too creating space for others to take up and speak their multiplicity. Once we negate the dominant understandings of self we are creating the space from which to speak that resistant voice, from which to hear it in others, a space that is not about

allocating privilege, or not, as a function of a perception of difference indicated by physical, and subsequently, psychological markers but embodies difference and similarity, for that is what defines us, both by the ways in which we are both similar and different to one another, and the multiple ways in which these interweave to give rise to our unique, specific and located ontological space. In dialogue with Morrison (1994), I envision difference in this space on the margin, as something to be celebrated, as a means of knowing the self, and seeking to understand one another, in the way in which Butler (1997) described, which was not as a means to know and then dismiss the other, that is, to answer conclusively the question 'Who are you?' But, rather to accept that the answer will always be partial, as it is for ourselves, even our self-knowledge, and in light of this to embrace the unknowingness. As such we accept that neither I nor you can know each other fully, but that in that respect we are human and alike and that brings us together in a kind of shared empathy (Butler, 1997).

As we move along our journey of critical consciousness, we learn to value and appreciate our locatedness, socially, culturally and historically where we have come from, and where we have been. We learn to take ownership of it, even those aspects of self that might provoke an unpleasant legacy (Freeman, 2004). To be white skinned, for instance, carries with it a legacy of colonisation and oppression, regardless of individual choice or responsibility, that history is etched on our skin, within our bodies, embodied in the language we use, and an understanding of the self necessarily requires we deal with these subjective pasts. It is part of the story of us, and informs the ways in which we experience our world in its immersion with other narratives of self. And we must know them in ourselves for if we do not how can we recognise them if, and when, they manifest themselves in our daily realities and how might we position to resist their future emergence and the perpetuation of their inherent oppression. Objectivity is a facade, and one we discourage our words from entailing. The knowledge we have comes from

understanding how we have become the self that we experience everyday, in multiple, changing, and contradictory ways. It comes from a continuous engagement with the self as we flesh out and examine all those discourses that have marked themselves on our body, all those discourses that live within, and through, us and that we reproduce, or resist. Subjective transformation will come through this critique of the self as we locate in those other spaces previously denied. The ability to locate, to understand and own that located space is an integral part of how and why research in this vein is conducted. This research is intensely personal, for the subjective changes the writer undergoes throughout the process and beyond, are turbulent, disturbing, enlightening and inspiring, but it also research that in the event of not speaking for others allows others to speak. It is desired most of all that others will be embodied by the sense that though this is primarily my story, they too have a story, that we all have subjective stories even if we have been discouraged from speaking them. Here in the text i would hope that others are encouraged, and inspired, to take up their own speaking spaces, to seek out their located spaces of knowing and understanding. In this vein, Haraway (1991) writes:

The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. (pp. 190-5)

What had previously troubled me, but does now less so, and would at times elicit a wave of panic, is the loss of the experience, of the life, that writing necessarily entails. Increasingly i have been able to come to terms with this, and in fact, can now embrace the instability of language for therein resistance lies. Morrison (1994) provides a wonderful example of how one might refuse summation and let language remain alive when she tells story of an American President who refused to allow language to encapsulate experience and instead allowed it to be, and to

take up that space of ultimate meaning, that place from which we might all seek out our own meaning. i accept now that in the process of writing my theoretical analysis, of speaking my critical journey into my own understanding of self, and of the process of incorporating alternative understandings of subjectivity, i will lose something of the movement that this process embodies, the writing makes it static when the actual experience is fluid. i fear a disruption as i step back from the experience in order to en word it. Language will necessarily break down the experiential meaning somewhat, distort it and lay it open to multiple interpretations. Language will always fail to adequately convey the richness, the multiplicity, the movement that is life. Always something will be lost in the process. As Morrison says words will always lose something of the passion, something of the vision that we seek, but they do point us towards that unable as yet to be fully imagined, least articulated, place:

The vitality of language lies in its ability to limn the actual, imagined and possible lives of its speakers, readers, writers. Although its poise is sometimes in displacing experience, it is not a substitute for it. It arcs toward the place where meaning may lie. (Morrison, 1994, p. 21)

And, like it or not, language is all that we have, it is our means of knowing ourselves, our world, and others, we cannot think without it, we can not name that place from which we exist without it. So we must move forward with this acceptance and the simultaneous acknowledgement that will never adequately mirror our experiences (Morrison, 1994). But this is a good thing, and though i have come to realise this, it can take some time to appreciate it. We cannot, nor should we wish to, encapsulate life in language. Life exists at the margin of language, at the margin of our means of understanding ourselves, and of wording our experiences, it is that which keeps us moving forward, keeps us inspired to struggle on as we sense, however momentarily, a deeper connection to life, those

times when language inches us closer, and in doing so makes a subtle shift, opens further that margin where we envision the self freed from the dead weight of dominant discourse and common-sense notions of subjectivity. Our journey is about opening up spaces to speak, to live, and to engage in dialogue with one another, it is never about closing down that movement. And we must be vigilant that the work that we do using the language that we use does not inadvertently result in the equivalent of latch dropping. As Morrison reminds us:

Passion is never enough; neither is skill. But try. For our sake and yours forget your name in the street; tell us what the world has been to you in the dark places and the light. (Morrison, 1994, p. 28)

We need other narratives, to create spaces to tell our particularised stories of self that are our experiences of self located as we are in particular historical, social and cultural worlds. These are the experiences that cannot be encapsulated in the name, already they exist in our everyday lives, on the margin. We need to acknowledge them and allow them to be a valid part of how we experience ourselves and understand our subjectivity.

Becoming a Born-Again Reader

the birth of the reader must be requited by the death of the Author (Barthes, 1986, p. 55)

Similarly i have been at times troubled that all the voices that have spoken to me as i have moved along this journey may not be heard in the retelling, and i understand, in dialogue with hooks, that necessarily some will be left behind. Although i am comforted by the knowledge that as i speak i do so from a position of immersion in all those voices, and that in the telling the echo or trace of them will be embodied in the words, so that even if they are not explicitly identified they will breathe through the text, as each voice simultaneously calls forth other

voices in an infinite inter-textual weave. This resonates with Barthes who described a text that does not offer us foundation or truth, one in which the author has long since exited the scene. We are given no such security or comfort from which to found our reading, so we must actively read from our own subjective spaces, producing the text for ourselves anew as we read from our located spaces, both subjective and corporeal. This is productive, transformative, reading for its does not come from that which is confined within its pages but from what it can do beyond the arbitrary bindings, outside the text, how we as reader, and producer of our own texts, can take it up and use it to transform the self. Such a text is ultimately simply an infinite intertextual weave and that is its ultimate, and only, reality:

the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable.
(Barthes, 1987)

These ideas also resonate with Buddhist understandings of existence and reality, in particular the concepts of Sunyata and Anatta, which relate to the interrelatedness in the world and our ultimate reality as part of this intertwined web. Such an idea negates any attempts to uncover a true self or an essential nature for the self can only be known in relation to other selves, to other entities in the world. It is, and we are, never of our selves alone, always we exist within that infinite intertextual weave. Our ultimate reality is this interconnectedness, an existential kind of void, for we cannot pin down meaning, we will not find a foundation upon which to contain and stop the flow of subjectivity, always we will be in motion, proliferation or signification are endless, and never complete. Our ultimate reality is in that void that constitutes the undifferentiation out of which

all apparent entities, distinctions, and dualities arise (Retrieved from <http://www.indopedia.org>). So, interestingly, from this space of undifferentiation, differentiation comes, but so too does the notion that we all inhabit the same subjective spaces, that is, as part of the intertextual weave of life. When we realise this we can come to appreciate that we do not have to continue reproducing ourselves in our hegemonic subjectivity, we can begin to flesh out those other selves, other ways of being.

Embracing Chaos and Finding Calm

Buddhism is similar in this way to poststructuralist understandings of language and meaning, on an insistence that no reality exists entirely independent of anything else, all is interrelated, including the self, and we too ultimately can derive our meaning from these associations. Imagining this as a web or weave allows us to envision the intertextual, the interrelatedness that is a process of continual referral and where meaning is achieved through this deferral process, never in or of itself alone (Derrida, 1998). And this is a common experience, and something i have continuously experienced in writing, this sense of interconnectedness, this sense of being immersed within a larger unbounded perpetually moving whole. And though this can bring about a sense of community, a kind of belonging, it can also at times feel as if i'm doing the equivalent of cognitive gymnastics as i try to gain some clarity within an environment that literally repels it. This experience of no origin, of no validation, of no reference point, at least nothing that does not immediately reference away from itself, and yet with each further reference we arc towards that understanding in that gap, in the void of existential nothingness that is life. And then we must write it and how does one write that up coherently, so as to convey to others some of the sense of this journey, of this intertextual weave?

As it weaves and threads, a crazy quilt of multiple threads or lines interconnect, disconnect and rejoin, in endless configurations, moving rapidly away from my arbitrary beginning point, or looping haphazardly, sometimes unexpectedly, often pleasantly, back around upon it. And as mentioned earlier the process of writing this movement requires that it i ascertain at least moments of clarity, not to shut it down but to compile it so that i may write it, all the while struggling to ensure that its fluidity, the interconnected flow, is preserved in the language i use. Because, of course, that is vital, it is what keeps this work open, vital, alive, and allows us to appropriate and open up spaces to think things differently, to think other. For instance, to allow us to think on the margins of femininity, of 'woman', so that we can approach it critically, negate its truth claims, and imagine other ways of being not bound by the implicit dictates of dominant gender discourses. The insurgent nature of intertextuality is something i have found particularly inspirational while doing this work. It embodies a feeling of expansion, of surging towards something that might just change our lives, might allow others to change theirs, and is nothing short of revolutionary. But, as discussed earlier, this is not revolution in the traditional sense of a great uprising and overthrow, this is a slow and laborious gnawing sort of revolution, a gradual erosion of the boundaries of dominant discourse, dismantling their claims to truth and nature whilst at the same time rethinking and remaking the self, imagining what we may should we free ourselves of the "dragging weight of attachment to the self" that is the product of Western ontology (Bataille, as cited in Bernauer & Mahon, 2005, p. 161). This experience of linguistic and subjective expansion is perhaps akin to 'the breath of life', and something that we will never, indeed should never, expect to summarise, nor encapsulate, that always there will be more, always there will be movement. And that we too are that movement, as we are transformed on our critical journey as we take up spaces on the edge of the hegemonic name (Foucault, as cited in Bernauer & Mahon, 2006, p. 161).

Changing Lives - Taking No Shit

Jean Michel Basquiat an American artist began his career as a graffiti artist, in 1976, tagging buildings in Lower Manhattan signed off with the acronym SAMO, which stood for the 'same old shit' (Fretz, 2010). i have wondered as i write are we prepared to live a life that is SAMO? And do we have to?



Figure 2 Basquiat

<http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/samo.htm>

If i achieve anything, i hope that this text helps in its opening up of other spaces, on the margin of the normative self, to usher forth a resounding NO. We surely do not have to live these cycles, to keep reproducing ourselves in a name that inherently serves to oppress us at each and every turn. Is this really our destiny? Are we, in our privileged place as the only species on the planet who uses language to communicate, really going to accept that our lives should be lived pretty much in ways that can be construed as the equivalent of a mouse on a wheel, a perpetual and unquestioning repetition of those very things that give rise to our growing sense of boredom, anxiety, frustration, urgency and exhaustion. In other words, the ways in which we are living are making us, and others, miserable and we need to uncover how that unhappiness is perpetuated through the reiteration of ourselves as the normative subject, and how we might change that and free ourselves from

these discursive and corporeal shackles. As women, we need to begin to take back our lives, tell our own stories, reclaim our own bodies and, above all, take no shit.

Basking in Unoriginality, Relinquishing the Individual

As noted earlier, i have in this theoretical introduction attempted to speak of the theorists through those aspects of the work that continually resurface throughout the text rather than giving them any sort of generic label. This also, embodies this sense of my own immersion in other voices, of a continuous and continuing dialogue, of that engagement which is paramount to the writing, to the thinking. It brings forth the intertextuality of language that reality within which life and the self are experienced, each voice summoning forth other voices in a process of infinite referral with no hard and fast referent. We are freed from the search for an origin, an author, we can revel in the reality of our unoriginality, the simulacrum of it all, this is not **my** text, i am not **the** author and no voice in the text can be said to be the original, to give it a foundation to stabilise it. It is, as Ecclesiastes (as cited in Baudrillard, 2001) said, the copy that is the truth, for it does not fraudulently propose itself as origin:

The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth - it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true.
(p. 169)

And of course this resonates again with the Buddhist understanding of an existential void, a non-truth, within which lies the real meaning of our lives, and of our selves.

Instead it is a compilation of many voices brought together and my role is that of compiler, rather than author, in this case the compilation is as a way of fleshing out specific concerns related to my socio-cultural-historical, and political, locatedness and as a means of transforming my self (Barthes, 1986). The voice i

bring forth is one amongst many others and it is not to be thought of as the origin or centre of the work, instead it should be understood as located within that inter-textual weave, the bringing together of all those narratives that have spoken to me throughout my life, indeed even before my birth (Freeman, 2004). The 'i' that i experience today, can be thought of as the point at which these discourses inter-weave, the body and self formed on and through this process, inscribed by these multiple voices, both the early hegemonic voices and the later resistant ones. And as i engage with theory i do so from this position and these other voices become part of my internal dialogue, altering and changing those that come before, transforming the dialogue and thus also the self. i am a living compilation of many voices, both hegemonic and resistant, and my experiences of self will depend on how the composition of these voices comes together. All reside on and through my body, but they are not equally audible, some necessarily will be heard loudly while others will be little more than a barely audible hum. In dialogue with Althusser, and Butler, i understand this process as no longer recognising myself as 'woman'. The façade is revealed and the ideological nature of what the name concealed is laid bare. And what is revealed is hu man intention, and the ugliness of privilege and subjugation handed out according to an arbitrary system of domination shielding itself behind faux claims to truth and nature (Barthes, 1982a). We "see them ever stripped", and without the glimmering demystifying cloak of ideology, they are "ugly, human" (du Bois, 1920, p. 23). We have in essence become the Bartherian demythifier, uncovering the myth that founders on faux claims to truth and nature and discourages us from uncovering the 'truth' of ourselves. It does so by insisting we have an essentialism that cannot be understood literally or at the surface, where the image is imbued with contradiction, tension, and disturbing inconsistency. In order to understand this contradiction we must fill in the unseen by virtue of our psychological understandings of essence in relation to gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, age,

and so on. Something we keep doing until we come to realise, as Krauss (1993) said in relation to Sherman's work, that what we learn is that there is indeed 'nothing under the hood', which is, of course, to say that 'woman' is facade. And herein this dominant oppressive narrative of gender and gender difference, has been negated, reduced to just another, though in this case a rather unpleasant, story. There are no happy endings for 'woman' in this story for we have no privileged place within relations of power, our phallic-lacking body denies us that, which is not to say that a reversal of this would ensure happiness, though at the very least it would alleviate subjugation. The happy endings written into this story, unfortunately, are enshrouded within dominant and oppressive gender discourse, and so are themselves, inherently oppressive. The expectation that marriage and motherhood are our true and natural vocation is little more than a normative prescription to control and contain women and to ensure economic and social privileges remain predominantly male. Not to mention the pressure, and accompanying disappointment, that these unrealistic expectations can entail when they are immersed in the realities of marriage and motherhood.

Our bodies are, said Foucault, that site upon which hegemonic discourse most efficaciously and insidiously works to reproduce us in as the normative self. The body is literally broken down in order that it may bear its oppressive weight (Foucault, 1984). This resonates too with Sampson's (1998) concerns about the physical manifestations of oppression. He was concerned that when we speak resistance and subjective liberation, we must not overlook the need to free the corporeal from oppression, for the words will not simply entail this, so we "need to be certain that our transformative practices are themselves as embodied as are the oppressions we hope to undo" (Sampson, 1998, p. 50).

Becoming our own Storyteller, Remembering, Creating and Transforming

As a scientific entity, the body, our bodies, is continually being written upon and inscribed with other's knowledges. (Probyn, 1992, p. 83)

We need to rethink the entire story that denotes the name including of course the story of women's bodies, tracing its threads, critically engaging with how we came to be located in this particular subjective space and how this might be otherwise and allow us to experience our self in different and multiple ways. How we might, each of us on our own critical journey, transform the self? We need to understand the self that we are, all those cultural and historical narratives that have lived, and continue to live, within and through us, if we are to move beyond repeating the oppressions of the past and seek out alternative ways of being. The ideas that this is oriented around infuse the work of the community which i write within, of which my work is informed, of which i am in continual dialogue. They are, by necessity, brought to the fore as we engage critically with language, subjectivity and the body.

The earlier narratives remain infused with the later, inscribed upon us a perpetual reminder of oppression, and we need to remember, to know them, so that we may recognise and resist them when they again call us to make ourselves in their image. This is a struggle we must endure daily. In dialogue with hooks (1990), Morgan (2005), and Freeman (1998), i understand the importance of memory. As hooks (1990, p. 147) so aptly repeated from the South African publication, 'Freedom Charter', and i repeat here again, "our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting." Like hooks (1990), i believe words like struggle are important for they convey a sense of the past and they keep us from becoming dislocated from that history of feminist struggle that preceded us. We can envision this as a

revolution of a different kind, not a fiery battle that will be won or lost in one momentous victory, but as a necessarily laborious, particular and sustained revolution. One that, nonetheless, is momentous, for the subtle shifts it makes, which are akin to tremors in the foundations of Western ontology, take on magnanimous proportions as they reverberate in our lives, they are gaps and fissures from where we will transform our selves.

i experience theory as an enlivening experience, as an embodying experience, something that informs my daily life. In dialogue with that community of writers most influential and inspirational to me, i understand this experience as crucial as we let go of the old oppressive discourses and embrace new ways of knowing. Our bodies formed on and through discourse are embodied by these alternative understandings of self, inscribed upon us so that we might live them in our everyday lives. In dialogue with Sampson (1998), i think carefully about the relationship between words and the body, and the embodying element that words contain. i experience language as having an embodying quality and as i engage with theory i strive to incorporate the body into the way i speak, through the words i use. Immersed within the writing of Probyn, Butler, Haraway, Morgan, and those many others committed to seeking ways to have their, and our, bodies speak through the text, so that we may be embodied by this dialogue and transform those spaces from which we can speak our other selves. In doing so, i am continuing the tradition of opening up spaces to speak differently about the self, and the body which i understand as incorporated into the self, formed simultaneously with the self as we take up, embody, and perpetuate the discourses of self, though importantly not entirely made in discourse. As noted already work in this vein, the work of revolution, is painstakingly slow, it doesn't have a formula or any hard and fast methodology to follow, and it does not ascribe to a world that exists outside language upon which our theories can be, however falsely, secured. What we have instead is a compilation of work from a group of people who strive to speak, and

open up spaces to speak, of something that does not inherently entail domination and oppression. And these spaces don't exist already, or if they do they are marginal and not widely known, so we have to be reflexive in our approach, to look for those tensions, those fissures and rifts that suggest a negation of the hegemonic self and an opportunity to take up a resistant subjective space, and we to use those moments, those spaces to begin to tell our particularised stories of self, which in the telling may open up spaces for others to tell their stories. After all, "Narrative is radical creating us at the very moment it is being created" (Morrison, 1994, p. 27). We need to think, then, about our particularised stories, how we have come to think and experience ourselves in unique ways. Our existence, says hooks (1990, p. 149), "depends on our ability to conceptualize alternatives" and these alternatives don't exist for us, there are few spaces to come to voice outside traditional conceptualisations of gender or ethnicity, so we must create them and critically engage with them, making and broadening space in which to be other.

Imagining Bodies Other - Using Metaphor

In dialogue with Freeman (2004, p. 296), i understand our located knowledge as that "*world*" we bring to each encounter, those historical and cultural narratives that speak to us, even though we may not consciously recognise them. This has helped me understand bodily inscription and employ it as a most useful metaphor to visually imagine this process. i envision the body as a mass of lines, each representing a subjective narrative, the earliest ones preceding our birth are those that we inherit long before we have the means to think, let alone articulate, them (Freeman, 2004). And later, as we move through our journey of critical consciousness, other counter-narratives are added which fuel the resistant self. And all these are inscribed, like tracing on a palimpsest, so that each overlays the next, but without erasing those which underscore them, each trace remains,

although it becomes diluted by those that follow. i also enjoy using an auditory metaphor to think this through and it works well particularly as what we are seeking are spaces in which to come to voice, in which to be heard. It might be helpful to think of those inscriptions as competing voices all trying to speak the truth of the self, simultaneously, a cacophony of voices comes forth, and as counter-narratives are added to the mix, the voice of the dominant discourse becomes weaker, less likely to be heard, less likely to reproduce us, but still remaining. In dialogue with Althusser i understand this as a process of interpellation (Butler, 1997). We are made in the name, materialised in the name, and each time we hear it we recognise something of our self and reproduce it, not because this is the natural or normal manifestation of us, but because as hooks said, the narrative is radical, it creates that which it purports to reflect. From an early age, in fact even before birth, we are socialised into one gender or the other. We are born already weighed down by that historical subjective legacy. We learn quickly that the name 'woman' or 'man' is the justification for all of our attributes, behaviours and feelings and it is also our symbol of recognition. We simply cannot be a recognisable person, either from the perspective of our self or others, if we do not identify with our designated gender. For those whose bodies mean they cannot be located within the gender matrix, for example transsexual bodies or androgynous bodies, the result is a kind of non-identity, a sort of waste land. They are not just undesirable other, abject self, the other of the normative which too has a devalued meaning within the matrix of recognisability; instead they are completely unrecognisable within that framework. They have no choice, therefore, but to create a space from which to come to voice, on the edge of the normal/abnormal matrix, or to disintegrate into that nihilistic wasteland of silence (Wilchins, 1995).

Making Up Stories

The desire to be recognised, even if that recognition is as devalued other, is strong and this creates in us certain desires to reproduce our subordinated self, even when we may sense that this is not in our best interests (Bartky, 1990). Until we begin to think critically about those names that frame our subjective experiences, and how they came to be accepted as the truth of the self, we will continue to heed its call. After we start deconstructing what it means to be 'woman' in contemporary society, and how this established itself as a normalised truth, we begin to see the human load that the name conceals (Barthes, 1982a). In attempting to understand the **how** of our subjective history and in dialogue with Foucault, I see what we take to be the gender identity of woman as constructed within dominant discourse, as an arbitrary production created at a particular historical and social time, and serving the specific interests of those who were able to secure for themselves the privileged role of storyteller, and locate themselves at the centre of that story. Once we recognise that this is a story just as any other, that it is a human creation, and with any such endeavor it is necessarily tarnished by our location as both subject and object of knowledge, we are inherently part of that which we seek to tell objectively. In speaking our subjective history this was perhaps our defining moment, a time when we could have owned, even embraced, our limitation on knowing, by virtue of our being part of the stories we told (Rabinow & Dreyfus, 1982). But this was not to be, and man instead took up the place of an ironic kind of "empirico-transcendental doublet", that is, claimed to be a knower by virtue of his limitations on knowing, so that "what is given in experience and what renders experience possible correspond to one another in an endless oscillation" (Foucault, p. 347; p. 366). We failed to accept the partiality of our knowledge and the opportunity of an empathic connection based on our shared inability to know ourselves, or others absolutely, was forsaken (Butler, 1997). So called objective knowledge fuels its truth claims

through this oscillation, and by virtue of its being both the object and the source of that knowledge or truth. So its legitimisation, its validation, are part of that oscillation, what is, therefore, given in experience must necessarily be validated by that which renders that experience possible, and thus transforms it into a 'truth'. The notion then that woman, or feminine, is a truth, indeed a naturally occurring phenomenon, is shown to be unfounded, a construction or story and as such is able to be storied in other ways. This frees us from the confines of universal, stable, nominal and objective subjectivity and allows us to embrace and explore the multiplicity that is part of our lived experiences but was unable to be envisioned for we were caught within the oscillation and were not able to see beyond the centre (Davies & Dormer, 2001). This resonates with hooks (1990) when she spoke of the importance of dual vision as concerns the margin and centre, and how we are positioned in relation to this:

Our survival depended on an ongoing public awareness of the separation between margin and center and an ongoing private acknowledgement that we were a necessary, vital part of that whole. (p. 149)

We are both self and other simultaneously and this denial is the cause of much tension and conflict in our lives for we live these inconsistencies, and they trouble us (Butler, 1997; Davies & Dormer, 2004; du Bois. 1920). We are, said Foucault (1966, p. 351), both the "cogito and the unthought", and in being so there is always that "element of darkness" which any description of the self, that seeks to name and hold, necessarily entails (p. 355). And this unthought, which the able to be thought, articulated and spoken, "contains entirely" yet is also contained by it for it is that agonist, that perpetual tension that resides within our subjective names (Foucault, 1966, p. 355). We are confined by our subjective names, yet their relationship to the abject self, that which resides at the edge of the normative, mean that we are released too. We cannot be wholly encapsulated by 'woman', for

woman inherently is caught within that which is not 'woman', and herein on the margin are the spaces of resistance. We are both, and other, simultaneously and that enables us to be the other and to resist the universal and nominal.

Becoming a Revolutionary, Living Theory and Reconfiguring Selves

GW: Why remember the pain, that's how you began?

bh: Because I am sometimes awed, as in finding something terrifying, when I see how many of the people who are writing about domination and oppression are distanced from the pain, the woundedness, the ugliness. That it's so much of the time just a subject - a "discourse." The person does not believe in a real way that "what I say here, this theory I come up with, may help change the pain in my life or in the lives of other people. (hooks, 1990, p. 215)

As i live the normative and the abject self in my daily lives and others read me from their own located spaces within these discourses, and as i experience the subsequent tension that comes from the irony of trying to enforce something that inherently houses its own demise, i have sought to understand that contradiction and tension through critical theory. At some past time, as i was introduced into critical writing that denies nominal and stable subjectivities and negates the normative as our one true and natural self, it preempted for me a search to understand my own personal experiences of subjective tension and conflict. Here in this field, broadly speaking, for it incorporates any text that refuses to normalise and makes space to be other, a revolution was happening, established truths and ontological assumptions, indeed the very foundations of Western thought were being destabilised, made to reveal their inherently human origins. This was not simply a reversal of binaries, that is, a privileging of the subjugated side of the binary, nor was it a call for women to be more masculine, for example to emulate 'male' behavior in the workplace. This was radical in the sense that what was being contested was our very recognisability, our very legitimacy as

'woman', the validity even of our sex. i remember quite vividly my initial gob smacked reaction when Butler following on from Foucault's understand of sex as a "regulatory ideal", questioned not simply the constitution of gender, but the whole notion of sex as we have come to know it, as something natural. We are materialised through our location as sexed beings, normalised through a set of specific and "highly regulated practices" (Butler, 1993, p. 62). There is no nature or truth that can be discovered outside of these practices which form us, materialise us and bring us into being, whilst simultaneously regulating, controlling and containing us. But not absolutely of course, for the process is necessarily reiterative, for "bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled", and therein lies the possibility that we will be produced in our normative sex or the production will fail, or fall short and resistance will be embodied (Butler, 1993, p. 62).

All those critical discourses that speak on the edge of normative understandings of self seemed to resonate with my own sense of subjective unease, for as long as i can remember i have struggled with the name 'woman', both because it is that which is subjugated in relation to man, and because of the inherent tension that comes from the inconsistency of living in ways that are the antithesis of life, that is, that negate its inherent multiplicity, instability and perpetual movement. i grasped onto these other voices, held tight, they were like a life buoy that one clings to when the ship is sinking, let's call it the Titanic in this case, for it resonates with the idea of 'progress' and man's ability to empower and control. Here surrounded by uncertainty and chaos, with that epitome of Western civilisation and progress, the Titanic, in this case a metaphor for 'man' in all his glory, slowly being swallowed by that which should have secured him, should have kept him safe. How ironic that nature, in this case the ocean, should devour its own. But perhaps not so surprising, for man in all his scientific arrogance assumed he could use nature for his own ends, could take it on and win, could know it, and

harness it, control it in the way human beings are controlled by virtue of, and as they are enslaved by, their supposed nature. And just like the life buoy that bobs and flings us around we come to accept the movement and instability, for we realise that we are on a journey, and the transformation we seek will never be complete, for the journey is unending and that is part of the joy, part of the inspiration, we can now embody the tension, the chaos of life, for we can be and experience ourselves in our multiplicity, celebrate our diversity, and celebrate it in others. i choose not to go down with the ship, for it is sinking, of that i am sure, we are all metaphorically sinking as we become further and further disconnected from a sense of our enlivened selves and bodies (Freeman, 1998). i choose instead to inhabit the margin, to bob about on this peripheral edge, treading that fine line, living that edge always in relation to the centre (hooks, 1990).

Blurring the Boundaries, Fictitious and Transgressive Imaginings

As noted these critical voices span various disciplinary fields, they are not contained nor assume that this is even possible within language, they are writerly texts, as discussed earlier, and they allow for proliferation and perforation. So i am similarly influenced by texts that may otherwise be defined as fiction, more specifically literature, art, and poetry; and fact, which would include philosophy, psychology, sociology, and history. What brings them together in this work has, of course, nothing to do with these labels. It is, rather, their refusal to accept labels, to accept that the hegemonic self is unquestionably a natural, and therefore normal, occurrence. So the influences are many and varied, but all share this desire to understand otherness and to live in those other spaces, in many cases to save our own lives, to save us from a life of futility and despair. This resonates with hooks (1993) when she speaks of the "fully colonized" mind, of the inability to see both margin and centre simultaneously, to fail to understand the nurturing and life-giving properties of the margin, and to associate it as a

place of despair and degradation (p. 151). When this happens we fail to understand the relational aspects of the margin and centre and how that manifests itself in the so-called collective problems of women, or African American, or Māori, for example. We fail to understand that these social problems rather than being attributable to any particular social group are produced instead by those very names that mark our identities. Are these little more than markers that allow oppression to be loaded onto particular bodies in specific and differential ways, depending on the mark? Herein there is no distinction between what might otherwise be labeled a fictitious account, or story, versus a factual account. Each is a story. The difference comes from the locatedness of the storyteller that precedes the telling, that is, in the presumptions, the ontological assumptions, and the personal history that comes before and sets the scene, so to speak, houses the telling in some way, be that through scientific methodology, an embodied understanding of myth or legend, and/or Western ontological assumptions of self. Because the story cannot be understood outside these located spaces, all stories are creative, all "narrative is radical", all seek to produce and make us in specific ways in relation to specific understandings of self and other (Morrison, 1994, p. 27). So in this work, there is no distinction between fiction and fact, what i seek instead are writerly texts, those that strain at the boundaries of the normative, dislodging notions of stable and unitary selves and opening up spaces to be other. The texts are held together by this questioning of self, by a negation of the hegemonic self as normative, and by an imagining of alternative ways to live, that do not inherently 'drop a latch' which will again subjectively contain and oppress us. This resonates with hooks (1990), when she says:

Our living depends on our ability to conceptualize alternatives, often improvised. Theorizing about the experience aesthetically, critically is an agenda for radical cultural practice. (p. 149)

We must imagine in order that we might move beyond the "boundaries of domination", for we reside on the edge of the knowable, and from that periphery we must "invent spaces of radical openness." (hooks, 1990, p. 146; p. 148) Clearly, Foucault also sought to understand self and other by incorporating art and literature, as did Barthes. Foucault (1966), discussed Velasquez' painting, 'Las Meninas', as a way to think through and illustrate the changing relationship of man to himself, as a consequence of an epistemic rupture which signalled the end of the Classical episteme and the beginning of the Age of Man. A time where human beings came to realise their place as both subject and object of knowledge, which was an unprecedented and therefore, peculiar, situation which he discusses in relation to the multiple perspectives invited and available within the Valasquez painting.

To instigate a boundary, a disciplinary line where work is defined by virtue of some pre-existing criteria, would of course run absolutely counter to the writerly text and the desire of those who write in this vein, for they are vehemently opposed to summary. For Barthes it was, perhaps, that most profound thread which ran through his work. As he describes it of himself, it was "the only sure thing that was in me (however naive it might be): a desperate resistance to any reductive system" (Barthes, 1981, p. 8). The writerly text embodies the antithesis of a reductive system. On the contrary, it seeks to expand, to proliferate, and to permeate boundaries, in effect to make a mockery of the notion that there can be any such boundary. Art then, in its ability to "transgress boundaries", makes it an ideal text through which we might imagine other, multiple, and fluid selves (hooks, 1995, p. 69). i am embodied in other ways when i read Basquiat, Sherman, Rothko, and Michals, see figure 3, among others for they speak in transgressive tongues, their textual images cannot be located within the boundaries of the canvas or the photograph, they move beyond the visible to spaces on the periphery of sight, of knowledge, but they leave a trace, a thread, a flow and that can be embodied in

the reading and move us in our subjective transformation (Foucault, 1994b). Clearly the old adage, 'the camera (or picture in this case) doesn't lie', holds no weight here, for these works suggest the surface is absolutely brimming with its own depth which is a myriad of contradiction, tension and disjunction, and this certainly is no easy read. We locate by virtue of our located subjective positioning and the ability of the dominant discourse to reproduce us in these names. The image tells us nothing of ourselves, the author is dead, ambiguity, inconsistency, tension and multiplicity flood the literal and the story must be created, made anew every time. And this storying will either reproduce the normative self, or it will create us in an other narrative, as we read from spaces on the periphery of the dominant discourse.

This Photograph is My Proof



Figure 3 Michels, 1974

Retrieved from <http://www.shanelavalette.com/journal/2007/12/14/duane-michels-this-photograph-is-my-proof/>)

The above inscription reads as follows: "This photograph is my proof. There was that afternoon, when things were still good between us, and she embraced me, and we were so happy. It did happen, she did love me. Look see for yourself!"

(Michels, 1974)

Here in the Michals work, we see an image which presumably gives us proof that these two people were once happy, here says the writer of the script is the proof that on that one afternoon, at least, when the photograph was taken, happiness prevailed. And as Foucault (1994b) noted in relation to Michals work, "the invisible surges forth" while the visible recedes, which is not, i believe, to imply a depth

that is beyond the surface, but the complexity of the surface which is unable to be read by reference to these supposed essences (pp. 249-50). Here what surges forth is not happiness but its referent, unhappiness. That which gives the word happiness meaning by deferral is omnipresent, it pervades the image, overshadowing perhaps that which the image, in its traditional reading, would otherwise purvey. As happiness recedes, and what is other than happiness, which may not be limited to unhappiness, surges forth, the picture destabilises, becomes open to ambiguity. As happiness is denied its truth claim by virtue of the ocular, its nominal and stable meaning disperses. We cannot tell from the image whether these two people were happy even at that moment, for happiness is always in a relationship with unhappiness and is momentary and passing. Indeed, little can be detected from such a picture, even as to the nature of the relationship of the two people. All meaning is inferred and the inference, of course, comes from our located positioning, how the image speaks to us as a function of how we are able to position to read it. And as the image is mired by ambiguity and the complexity of the surface bubbles forth, the edges of the canvas bleed and proliferate, threading out beyond delineated boundaries, inscribed bodies, and nominal and stable selves, for the image now is perpetual movement and it cannot be understood in any other way. We must read at the surface knowing it contains its own depth, that infinitely folded surface that Foucault spoke of, entirely literal, yet "containing its own depth", a complexity that comes not from an essence or depth, but from the acknowledgement that there is none, and that what permeates now is the dialogic ebb and flow of life which embodies ambiguity, uncertainty, disjuncture, multiplicity and proliferation (Davies, 1997, p. 283; Foucault, 1977). As i read Sherman, from my geopolitically located space, i discuss the complexity of reading at the surface, at this space of infinite folds and complex interweavings which cannot speak of essential selves, of stable and

nominal 'woman', the facade is revealed and the story of 'woman' can no longer establish its foothold in truth.

Thinking Positioned, A Politics of the Self and Body

So herein i speak immersed within a multiplicity of disciplines that will not be categorically named for they transverse any such artificially inscribed boundaries. i am inspired by a Foucaultian understanding of theory as the process of an engagement with erudite thinkers, from a position of localised knowledge (Foucault, 1980). This resonates too with Barthes, who insisted we must think from where we are, from our own corporeal space. He said of photography that he would begin in this way: "So I make myself the measure of photographic "knowledge." What does my body know of Photography?" (Barthes, 1981, p. 9) Allen notes that 'Camera Lucida', is "a text written from Barthes own body" (Allen, 2003, p. 132). Which is very much testament to not becoming bogged down in what has simultaneously been described as calcified, sedimented and dead language (Morrison, 1994, Butler, 1993). And in order to do this, Barthes was continually mining language for that which would disrupt, was so antithetical to the usual flow of academic prose, that it would be resistant to being stemmed, and less likely to harden (Barthes, 1981). The body, bliss, and the writerly text, all appear to have been important aspects of this quest. For Barthes, the body was perhaps that "mana" word that was unable to be "pigeonholed" (Barthes, 1995, p. 129). Certainly from a traditional perspective it defies any categorical or clear definition, historically the body has been an enigma, refusing nominal and stable naming. It is unable to be bounded, and any attempt to do so is futile for the body leaks and flows at any artificial boundaries drawn around it. It inhabits both the space of discursive materialisation and experiential other beyond the reach of language. i write in more detail in the body chapter of the all important gap between language and life, and the role of the body in helping us mine that

precipice for its nurturing and life-giving properties. Always we are seeking to use language that allows us to probe at the periphery of the known, to open up those all important subjective spaces, always we are gnawing at those arbitrary boundaries that hold hegemonic discourse in place, weakening their foundation, denying them origin, releasing their claim to be the privileged teller of the truth of the self. When we take our body to be the source of all knowledge, as part of the point from which we will seek to know we must critically engage in, and with, that space for it is not one we know well. The body, our body, has historically been ignored completely, deviled as the other of the more enlightened soul, or reduced to a biological organism and understood in relation to its anatomical properties and internal workings. When we engage with what it means to inhabit this body, the body of a White, working-class, 'woman', at this time, and in these circumstances, and in relation to other bodies, then we begin to speak the body, we strain to listen to our bodily voice, to enrich and enliven our writing with our corporeality and to have it embody the dialogic flow of language (the material body) and life (the experiential body). i struggle along with others in this community within which i write, think, speak and read, who have sought to recover the body, to bring the body back in, to struggle with what exactly to bring in or recover under this sign, and at its most basic, but perhaps most urgent, with what we actually mean when we speak of the body (Butler, 1993, as cited in Wilton, 1997).

Learning to See Differently - Unlatching 'I' and Releasing 'i'

As i immerse in this community with others committed to a life that is not constrained by dominant discourse and institutionalised oppression, i can see from my space on the margin, beyond those "boundaries of domination" (hooks, 1990; p. 146). i see the ideology, the myth, that houses faux notions of individuality in totalitarianist landscapes (Foucault, as cited in Kellner & Best, 1991). In dialogue with Haraway, hooks, and many others, i understand our view as always located and

partial. We see from our own perspective, the lower-case 'i', which when i use it i envision it as denoting that all important ontological shift from author to compiler. The 'i' is that point where the many discourses of self intersect, intermingle, and interrelate which is our geo-politically located seeing space. Whereas the 'I' is where we stop that flow of meaning, the possibilities for other meanings that aren't delineated in the text are effectively sutured by the notion of authorial intention and an originator of meaning. This resonates with Foucault who said that the "author is ... the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning" (Foucault, 1979, p. 159). As we position and see from the located 'i', this necessarily entails a reflexive approach, for the self is fluid, contradictory and multiply experienced.

The world we bring with us to every encounter, inscribed on our very bodies, built up layer upon enmeshed layer is the vantage point we bring to our research, our subjective gaze. And we must continually reflect on that gaze, thinking and writing reflexively so that always we are in that located space, for it is all too easy to slip back into speaking as if from a universal perspective, and we must be weary to ensure our words do not inadvertently undermine the courage of our convictions. This resonates with hooks (1995, p. 71) who notes that her "concern for the contemporary plight of black people necessitates that I interrogate my work to see if it functions as a force that promotes the development of critical consciousness and resistance movement." What strikes me most in this comment is hooks outright ownership of the politics which imbibe the work, which are, in effect, a politics of her very body. She does not deny multiplicity here though, for the development of critical consciousness is a uniquely personal pursuit, and even though the pathways may become prevalent and be opened up through resistant language and in writerly texts the journey is still one's own to make. Our words will of course move in unanticipated ways, and i have spoken much on this already, and we neither wish to, nor could, halt the flow of language. Yet neither

do we wish to reproduce oppressive discourse, so when we speak, write, and think, we do so reflecting on how our words achieve our geo-political envisioning. This envisioning is difficult to write, for it isn't entirely known, and unanticipated delights occur along the way, akin to thread-like movements off envisioned paths and into spaces that previously weren't able to be envisioned or articulated. The geo-located politics come from the world that i bring to this writing, the early irritations that would nurture the beginnings of resistance, the inconsistency between 'woman' and this life i live everyday which is not entirely contained within that name, for the reproduction is never full or complete and always mired with the other that the name inevitably defers away from.

Reconfiguring Bodies, Healing the Cartesian Split and Letting us Live

This very incompleteness, partialness and abjectness, harbours resistance and allows it to grow. The body of 'woman' can be understood here as incomplete both in terms of being unable to be fully and finally materialised by sex, and in its being the incomplete other of the male body. The body of 'woman' is therefore both the abject other in terms of the body/mind dualism, but it is also further delineated as the undesirable and deficient other of the male/female dualism. It should be no surprise that woman has historically been assumed to have a closer association with the body than man, for the body is that uncontrollable, irrational, and emotional side of the Cartesian split which in its being so allows the mind, and Man, to take up the place of privileged other. The issue of reconfiguring the body then, is one we, as women, must attend to most urgently, for the body is that site where oppressive mechanisms work most effectively (Foucault, 1978). This resonates with Bartky who spoke of the increasing sexualisation of women's bodies (1990), and Probyn (1992), who notes that for women our bodies are very much a part of our hegemonic experience of ourselves which is of course, of devalued other. For

women the sexed and gendered body has been that site where hegemonic discourse has most efficiently, effectively and insidiously reproduced us as 'woman'. In order to liberate ourselves from oppression we must negate that sexed and gendered body, and flesh out other ways of experiencing our corporeality. We must speak our corporeality, as we experiment with bringing our bodily voice into our writing, enlivening it in ways which disrupt what is deemed normative and truth. i talk more about the necessity of this project of our bodies in the body chapter, specifically as i read Sherman's work as testament to multiplicity, unboundedness, and dispersed bodies and selves. i am embodied in other ways as i immerse within the inspirational language of Butler, hooks, Morrison, Barthes, Freeman, Foucault, Haraway, and many others, all refusing to allow the normative self to be the centre of the world, to be the all-knowing 'I' and to tell our stories and reproduce us in the telling.

Envisioning, Thinking and Living Politics, Other Bodies and Selves

i speak of geo-political envisioning, rather than of goals or outcomes, for those words have uncomfortable connotations which i find makes them harden on the page, they seem to stabilise the movement arbitrarily, with their insistence upon unitary outcomes and their relationship to method and expected results. Clearly this is the antithesis of what i hope this work achieves, always i struggle against language that enforces in ways i do not desire. The outcome i seek, on the contrary, is largely unknown, though this work is entirely political, and i hope there is the sense that i own this politics, live it absolutely, enliven it everyday in my corporeal spaces. i hope that this can be understood as "theory in the flesh", for that is how i immerse in the writing and how the dialogic embodies me in my everyday life (Moraga, as cited in de Lauretis, 1990, p. 138). So the vision might best be described as the opening up of subjective spaces, through the only means we have to do this, language, as a means of allowing me, and others, to envision

my/them selves differently, in those multiple other ways that are more often than not marginalised and labeled deficient, devalued, the abnormal self, or else are completely unrecognisable with the grid of normative selves (Wilchins, 1995). Further, there is a desire in the work to enable us to understand our bodies in ways that allow us to know them as both material, that is, made in language, and physical, and to be inspired and embodied by this duality which allows us to envision the body in that antagonistic space, that continual and persistent tension in the hegemonic materialisation of us as sexed, gendered, raced, or classed bodies. i would hope that there might be a sense of the body's importance in the struggle against gender, and other forms of, oppression and of the urgency for women of reconfiguring our bodies so as we may take up spaces of resistance on the margin of dominant discourses. i envision that, as i have, others will be too, inspired by the resistant body, and to struggle to infuse our language with the corporeal and to arc towards that periphery that is both the space of experience and in its being so, also the void where language fails to adequately convey life or bodily experience, but where it edges towards it in subtle movements as the margin is opened up and we can speak in other ways, using a language that defies easy categorisation and is less likely to sediment and arbitrary halt proliferation. As we arc towards that void we might glimpse for a fleeting ethereal moment the fragmented self, and the threads of living in other ways, of living those fragments. These are the visions which inspire me, move me on this journey that can at times feel somewhat solitary, and they are that around which this work orients, for in that arcing is the sense that there is an other self, an other way in which we can live and experience our multiplicity. Those ethereal glimpses usher forth the instability and proliferation of language and selves, thereby negating the hegemonic self. They celebrate the uncontainable body, and encourage us to seek to know the self and body in other ways, that aren't inherently oppressive, and

that embody the subjective/corporeal dialogue which is the antithesis of Cartesianism. Those selves we strive to embody now in the writing and living.

Learning to Speak Again, Bringing in our Corporeal Voice

The vision is the basis from which we gather together the movements that entail this dialogue, it helps foster the gaze from which we are able to open up spaces to speak this journey, to speak of subjectivity differently. Rather than deny our speaking place, and conceal our subjectivity with false claims to detached objectivity, our speaking place continually informs our research, this is theory in the lived, embodied theory. i am working to ensure that the self that i am is living testament to the theory that i engage with, that there is no recognisable beginning and end between myself and the theory, only a dialogue. i am inspired by Barthes writing which speaks to me of sustained, reflexive, and pained efforts to speak in ways that are disruptive, that bring forth a tension that doesn't allow the words to slumber. Introducing elements related to the body and bliss are ways Barthes used to achieve this, to deny the writing hardening. These other voices have no legitimate place in academic writing, they are, therefore, inherently disruptive, 'shocking' the text out of its tendency to calcify (Allen, 2003). We must strive to use language that allows the text to remain alive and invigorating, so that we are embodied as we read and our corporeality is enlivened in the text. Just as hooks use of "black vernacular speech" disrupts the academic voice/text (hooks, 1990, p. 147). i am inspired always by Morrison, her work is testament, i believe, to that which she writes about, the power of language to move us. There is a bodily dimension in her writing, an experience of something powerful, something that harbours resistance that runs through it, though this is not an oppressive force, it is, rather an enlightening, liberating infusion. Unlike an oppressive weight that we must carry, Morrison's words are akin to the relieving of that heavy burden, i understand it as a sense of a shared lightening of our

subjective load. She speaks of language surging, and that rush is there, embodied in the words as the words embody us and we are moved. This is courageous speak, it is embodied, it brings with it body and self and opens it up for transformation. As hooks notes we must all dare to speak in this way:

Dare I speak to you in a language that will move beyond the boundaries of domination - a language that will not bind you, fence you in, or hold you? (hooks, 1990, p. 146)

Surface and Depth

The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth - it is the truth which conceals that there is none.

The simulacrum is true. (Ecclesiastes, as cited in Baudrillard, 2001, p. 169)

And finally i come back to those earlier mentioned envisionings which recurrently whispers through the text, and i alluded to earlier, as an unbounded kind of a structure that has allowed me to think this through, particularly in relation to Sherman's art. The idea of surface and depth speaks to us of foundations and layers, and Western ontology is based on the assumption that below the surface there is a foundation which we can find, that the surface is founded on something concrete, stable, and able to be named, and given meaning by virtue of that name, which includes, of course, our subjective names. And these appeals to an essence or depth are based on the assumption that, generally speaking, we are naturally predisposed to having certain attributes and exhibiting specific characteristics or behaviours, largely due to the materialisation of our bodies by sex and race. These two subjective markers are those most likely to be most evidently represented in the body (Patton, as cited in Probyn, 1992, p. 96). To refute the supposed natural is brave indeed, for we come up against that most unshakeable

reality that exists all around us, that pre-exists us, and that in its distancing from any particular discourse is a useful foundation for 'truth'. What we can refute, however, is the assumption that knowledge of the self can be understood using methods similar to those used to study the natural environment. We can refute psychology's claims to truth, and its place as privileged teller of our stories, as we critically interrogate the notion of sex and gender. We can show that the idea of natural femininity is a myth, that any supposed feminine attributes, behaviors, and characteristics we exhibit are produced rather than naturally occurring. We learn to be female because that is the recognisable space we are given. We must work our way out of these spaces. The challenge for us is to open up other spaces, to flesh out other ways of being that aren't inherently oppressive and that exist already on the margin of the normative and recognisable self and that we might experience as subjective tension or inconsistency. , and form the basis for the psychological truths of the self. When we no longer hold that we possess an inner essence, a nature, which is relatively coherent and stable, and which determines our experience of self we can begin our journey of critical consciousness. It also marks our transition from depth to surface, for we now read in the moment, at the surface, and from our located geo-political position which includes of course our bodily landscape.

As we do so, we begin to bring the body in, of course, our experiences are highly specific and determined, to a certain extent, but not because of an essential femaleness that we possess regardless of how we may describe ourselves, but because they are inscribed in the description. Our bodies are that site upon which sex prescribes the ways in which we can understand our subjective experiences. This resonates with Barthes who said that "the body is experienced largely through the languages with which we render to ourselves and to others our bodily sensations, and this language is highly socially differentiated" (Barthes, 1995, p. 128-9). So the way in which i, and others, experience my body cannot be

disentangled from the hegemonic discourses of class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. This resonates with Wilton (1997) in relation to the way in which our bodies are materialised by sex, and the way in which different classes and ethnicities, for instance, are made to feel their bodies differently. Each body is materialised in relation to its perceived and stereotypical sexuality. As Wilton notes, both black men and women are marked by a kind of unstoppable highly charged sexuality, whilst the working classes are marked as promiscuous and middle-class women as frigid and lacking in passion.

When we begin to examine language and its capacity to produce the reality of which it speaks, we come to see how the concept of an essential self with a stable and nominal personality are constructions produced in language and housed in a particular worldview. We need to critically engage with this idea of essentialism, of a preexisting human nature differentiated primarily by sex, and for which language is largely descriptive, rather than productive. Our understanding of discourse as radical, and thus creative of that about which it speaks, means we understand the self as similarly produced in language, and within this linguistic system it derives its meaning in relation to other selves, in a continual process of deferral, for there is no stability, no foundation or essence to which it might hold itself steady (Derrida, 1998). For instance i am woman, or even female, not because i am inherently so, but in relation to that which i am not, man. And my difference from man is perceived on my body, it is read from my body in an anatomical sense, but this anatomy is then inscribed with an arbitrary meaning it did not previously own. Any essence we have as men or women, male or female, is entirely of human intent and is differentiated by binaries. Our subjectivity is thus, not natural, on the contrary, it is literally 'man-made'. At some stage in our social and cultural history there came a time where a dividing line was named and drawn that separated people by virtue of their sexual characteristics. What we

have failed to see is that rather than this being a natural division, based on any essential femaleness deriving from our female anatomy, this is an entirely arbitrary and human creation, biased from the beginning but concealed by an ideology that effectively and insidiously disguised the privilege that such an arrangement entailed. We have effectively been duped for we have consistently overlooked the human element and focused only on the myth. Barthes (1982a) wrote extensively on the way language worked at two distinct but related levels, whereby the meaning elicited at the first level, the literal meaning was distorted as it was taken over by form, the second level, and it became something else entirely, something unbelievable in fact, if we focused only on the first order of language. Unfortunately this doesn't generally happen and instead we fail to read at the surface and are carried away by myth as it distorts reality in a kind of illusion by oscillation. And how and why does this work so effectively, why do we consistently fail to see contradiction that seethes at the surface? Clearly, it is because the distortion shores itself up by validating its truth claims to nature. We 'learn' that women are naturally more emotional than men, whilst men are naturally more assertive than women and when i say learn i do not mean in the traditional sense of the word. This is not a rote learning of rules, of methods to get a desired outcome, though it is that too, for 'woman' is constrained in this way, yet the 'learning' is as a kind of infusing of the whole self and body. We cannot step outside of our society or culture, of Western ontology or language structured by binaries, so we are immersed in this 'logic', yet must seek within that harsh landscape a means out. And i have discussed, and will discuss further, the role of our bodies as resistant, and of the instability of language to harbor resistance. In particular its inability to produce us fully and finally as normative self, rather there is a necessity for continual reiteration and in this repetition there is the possibility of resistance. Our production as hegemonic self, which is a recognisable space, denotes our seeing place and from there we are, of course,

more likely to read emotion in the faces and bodily posture of women, and assertiveness in the bodies of men. This is not to say that we aren't consistently surrounded by examples that contradict these assumptions, just that we are less likely to see them if we are not yet inhabiting a critical space that allows us to critique dominant ontological assumptions of self. Of course, when one move to this space of critical awareness and begins to articulate resistance, we are overwhelmed by the inconsistency and tension, and wonder just how we didn't see them before. Just like the outliers in a normal distribution, they exist, we see them, but we don't alter our ontological assumptions because they are there, rather we accommodate them within the status quo, the non-normative instances of a more general rule, that is, the normative population. This deters us from asking why, if our theories are really tapping something essentially human, there are numerous examples of non-normative behavior, and why our scientific research consistently identifies people who cannot be made to fit a normal distribution pattern? Not to mention the inconsistencies we experience as we struggle to mould ourselves in an image, in various images, that seek to hold us and deny us the multiplicity, the movement, the instability that is life. Rather than letting those instances give us the 'breath of life' and move us to those other spaces on the margin, we struggle against them to maintain ourselves in our hegemonic normality. We feel the inconsistency, the tension, but we struggle against it, wanting the 'comfort', the ease, of being that recognisable and 'normal' woman (Davies & Dormer, 2001).

Celebrating Abnormality, Embracing our Abject Self

As Western ontology becomes dispersed and the arbitrary boundary between reality (fact) and story (fiction), of which both are, in effect, narratives, is blurred, it is less likely to produce us in its image, and we come to inhabit a marginal position, we become like the outlier unable to be made, or at least made

fully, normative. Our journey is two fold; it is both entirely personal whilst at the same time being entirely political. It cannot be anything else for we are living theory and we must in order to live the dialogue of language, bodies and life, and to embody that in the writing. Unless we engage in this way our bodies will not flow through the text and open up spaces to transform those bodies, our selves and language (hooks, 1990; Foucault, 1985). It can be, said Barthes (1982a), a lonely place, and i would add it can at times feel as if you are an alien in our own land, as we see the world differently from this critical space on the margin. Our sustained critique of the truth claims of the dominant discourses which structure Western thought necessitate a transformation of the self, because of course, those are also assumed to be our subjective truths. This is always a personal and a political journey for as i think, speak and write i am continually enlivening this within my self, within my very body. As i write, think, and read, i will continue to reflect on Hansberry's (as cited in hooks, 1990) question: "Do I remain a revolutionary? Intellectually - without a doubt. But am I prepared to give my body to the struggle or even my comforts" (p. 191)?

One cannot locate at the margin and write without being transformed, if so the writing will not be open, it will not be of the writerly kind, for it will not proliferate or have the capacity to embody us and enliven others, to be that space of unboundedness. We must bring our self to the writing, to engage and immerse, to dialogue and reflect, to reconfigure and transform. We must own our stories, not in the sense of our being their author, but in the sense that this is our subjective history, this is the place where they come together to produce us, not as an individual but a compilation of many voices, some hegemonic and some resistant. We must tell our stories from these critically known spaces, locate them in that community within which we write, offer them as a vehicle that others might take up and use. Like Foucault's idea of his work as a kind of toolbox in which he envisioned that the writing was available for others to use in the ways

that they needed to, from their own geo-political locatedness, and in relation to their own political agendas (Foucault, 1994b).

Hearing Voices

The self that we negate is the self inscribed by language and discourse within and through our bodies. That self exists for me as it does for others, and the negation is a negation of those specific types of selves that we are expected to become. However, discovering the particular self that i am is also a very personal journey. It is a sustained attempt to understand all those discourses that have spoken to me, in which i have been immersed, all those narratives that have influenced my understanding of self and body, even those i was not consciously aware of (Freeman, 2004). In dialogue with Barthes, Morrison, and others, including Parker (1990), i recognise and value this personal critical journey as integral in doing work that refuses to invoke names, and struggles against the hardening of language. Always marginal but unable to speak that marginality, i now have the words, and the located awareness, to speak from and articulate that space. i speak now from that space of contradictory and multiple discourses of self, some dominant, others resistant. i understand that space, located on and through the body, as an interweaving of all those voices. And those that might have addressed me most forcefully, are now muffled to almost incoherence by those many other voices that have come later, those that tell different stories and in the telling allow me to embrace my incoherent, unstable, and multiple selves, perpetually in motion. Yet those early inscriptions remain, they must, for they are that upon which the resistant voice was formed, in relation to it, made within its very emergence as the binary, the other which must necessarily be subordinated and devalued for the hegemonic voice to speak its 'truth'. This resonates with Weedon (1997), who talks about the necessity of the dominant discourse to repress alternatives that would undermine and reveal its ideological underpinnings.

But what i seek now is not a form of subjectivity, not a nominal and stable envisioning, but a dispersed subjectivity, so that we can experience ourselves multiply and in motion as we do anyway in life. Yet in taking up the hegemonic name we must negate this inconsistency, this sense of being not quite ourselves, but many other someone elses, the fragmentation must be denied in order that the nominality can live (Davies & Dormer, 2001).

Warning Sign: Please STOP at the Surface

There is no essential underlying reality that we can discover, it is a façade, all that exists for us is language, it is not just the means with which we understand our world, it gives us that world and it produces our reality. When we accept this we no longer search for objective truth because there is none, any truth can only ever be local and particular, housed within the dialogue between our multiply experienced selves and the world. Which when i say world, i am thinking for the most part of our interactions with others, but also of other seemingly less personal interactions. Freeman (2004), for example, writes of his highly unanticipated and violent reaction when visiting Berlin which suggested that some historical aspects of the self, which he was not even consciously aware of, were being manifested by the experience of being in Berlin. The truth of ourselves will always be in relation to the discursive positions we occupy, those early narratives that formed us, and those later alternative stories we seek out on our journey of critical awareness of the self. All come together to give us our peculiar vantage point on life, an intermingling of all that we were, are, and have yet to be, that is the true experience of self, that which we seek in our critical journey, as we position on the margin. We engage in theoretical dialogue and critical analysis from our own unique vantage point and produce knowledge that reflects, and changes, this place of seeing. As we refuse essentialism and objective truth claims, we learn to read at the surface, defying myth its distorting properties, and

refusing to accept the facade that myth presents as truth. For Barthes (as cited in Scheie, 2000) professional wrestling, and the showgirls in the Foiles-Bergere, were examples of that which is all surface with no presumption of depth. There is nothing for myth to distort because nothing is concealed. The absolute pretence is all that there is, it is the entire story, which is, of course, the hegemonic story of 'woman', yet we don't see the facade because we fail to stop at the surface, we are moved by and believe the myth. As Barthes says of wrestling:

Take professional wrestling: what do you read? Signs of emotion, more than emotion itself. The combatants exhibit the state of their souls (pain, joy, vengeance, normality), all their expressions are chosen to present to the masses an immediate and exhaustive reading of their motives. Here there is not the ambiguity of life." (Barthes, as cited in Scheie, 2000, p. 167)

Or perhaps, here all the ambiguity is embodied at the surface, and we are, therefore, discouraged from reading a depth. Here the sign has been deconstructed, it fails to take us to that place of which it speaks, emotion here does not denote a feeling of emotion, the sign fails for we in the reading are unlikely to read any depth below the sign or surface. We are not encouraged to read below the surface because the surface attests there is nothing below, all is at the surface, all is exposed, we aren't encouraged to fill in the blanks because there are none. We must stop at the surface if we are to begin to understand our selves, and our relationship to other selves, for the surface contains the depth and complexity of life. i am inspired as i understand surface, not as that space we skim across on our pursuance of an essence or foundational truth, but as the stopping place, the space from which we must locate and read, in particular as i engage with the work of Barthes and Beckett. In, what seemed to be a moment of frustration, facilitated by the awareness that people were trying to understand who Godot was, in his play 'Waiting for Godot' in relation to his intention as author (Beckett, 1992). They wished to know Godot, in a way that sufficed that quest for subjective truth, which thus in its satisfaction allows us to move on, in a sense to

leave *Godot* behind, for to know and to name is to arbitrarily still that flow, to stifle that life (Morrison, 1994). It is, i expect, that in the naming we kill off the character, as we let the author live. The writerly text, is in effect, the antithesis of this, for it is the acknowledgement of the authors' vacation from the scene, and consequently the opening up of the text to proliferate in its multiplicity, where meaning is a function of the reader's engagement with the text, rather than a knowledge of the author or their presumed intention. Beckett (as cited in Cohn, 2006) writes: "All that I knew I showed. It's not much, but it's enough for me, by a wide margin" (p. 122). Which is to say, i expect, that it should be enough for us too and we should perhaps wonder why we need to spend so much time in the futile search for singular, universal and stable truths, when our own lives are the antithesis of this. It is the case that we 'live in fragments and dwell in doubt' and perhaps it is time now to celebrate that fragmentation, and dwell instead in the human connection that such diffusion can facilitate, that we do not have to know absolutely and finally the selves that we are, and consequently others (Butler, 1997).

The Case of the Disappearing Sherman and the Disintegrating 'Woman'

The surface is all we have, it's all we should want, everything else is artifice, let us revel in the surface and seek no solace in false depths. Sherman's work attests to this negation of essence or depth, it challenges us to speak an essence of 'woman' or to speak the intention or desire of the author. What are we searching for in this myriad of images of Sherman? Do we hope to discover the real Cindy Sherman, and if so, who would that be? Is it Sherman, the photographic artist? Or is Sherman to be found in one of the images, one of the myriad of women in the hundreds of photographs, or perhaps she is a mixture of these women, and/or men, for they are there too? Can we discover her amongst the 'Sex Pictures', littered

amongst the prosthetics, see figure 28, to be found amongst the 'Aging Woman', is she the witch, reminiscent of a MacBethian hag, crouching over a steaming cauldron, see figure 16, or perhaps she is the clown wearing a shirt inscribed simply, 'Cindy', as in figure 9? Is she all of them, and none at all, simultaneously? Sherman encourages, i believe, an immersing of surface and depth by the complete ambiguity, contradiction, provocativeness, and inconsistency of the images and, of course, by the simple fact that these are all Sherman. They are provocative and ambiguous, and these are two central aspects that i position around to read resistance in the works, something that becomes much more evident if we follow Burton's (2006) advice and read the entire series retrospectively, and i would add reflectively, for the former is transformed by the latter, and vice versa. This reflects the way in which our sense of who we are reconfigures in relation to the narratives that we take up and reproduce through our bodies. Sherman's own body has been, for the most part, the canvas upon which she portrayed multiple selves - her selves, other selves, possible selves, impossible selves - in a photographic series spanning more than thirty years, and showing no sign of abating. Ironically despite the sheer number of these images, or how long we pour over them, neither brings us any closer to Sherman herself. They do, however, provide a reading of 'woman', a story of subjectivity, of the myth of femininity, and of living on the edge of the name, on the margin of the normative self, and of opening up spaces to be other.

The earlier images speak to us in an Althusserian-like interpellation, for these women are familiar, recognisable, we know them as we know ourselves, for they are us too. In the Film Stills the women seem familiar and we are reminded of family members, mothers, sisters, characters from movies, and starlets of yesteryear. But on closer analysis, and particularly from a retrospective vantage point, the familiarity gives way to ambiguity and disharmony, there is a provocation to name, but a disruption in the naming, and in that brief momentary pause the tension and

contradiction bubble forth and are embodied on the surface, and we see the facade of gender, we see the stereotype and we glimpse the possibility for resistance. In Sherman the name is brought forth only to be thwarted, for we cannot automatically fill in the blanks, provide the depth to the surface, because there is something not quite right, they appear to be the epitome of a stereotype, but not quite, something is skewed, they exist on the edge, teasing us with a familiarity we grasp for only to lose, and in that space not immediately closed down by the name, we see them as production rather than reflection. And behind this production we might glimpse its creator, the story-teller with their story of privilege and subordination, with heroes and villains, but this isn't a regular story, for it has become the story of all our lives. When we begin to perceive it as **a** story rather than **the** story founded on that stony bedrock of nature, normality, or even God, we can begin to take back the story telling process. To tell our own stories, weave our own texts, incorporate our bodies in the telling so that the stories are enlivened, that the dialogue embodies the dialogic flow of selves and bodies and language.

Space is Political, Learning to Appropriate Space, The Importance of Metaphor and Poetic Speak

We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world. (hooks, 1990, p. 153)

This is perhaps the most important aspect of this work, and of those who write in this community. We need to think about and make use of space, in order that we can envision and open up spaces, where possible, to speak, write and think of subjectivity differently. In dialogue with hooks, and others, i understand the self as multi-vocal, though this can also be thought through using various metaphors to try to enliven it in the writing. For instance, i think of it as a series of inscriptions

on the body, or more specifically using Davies (1997) metaphor, as a palimpsest, which unlike the former, is less likely to harden, and suggest lines and boundaries. i also think of it in auditory terms, as competing voices, as whispers, rhythms, and murmurings (Morgan, 2005). It can also be envisioned in frequencies, or as a trace, which is similar to the palimpsest, that is, as an indentation which remains though is less forceful than if we were to speak of its being inscribed, the trace can be weakened, it can be diluted and distorted by other subsequent tracings (Chambon & Irving, 2003). i also find it useful to think of space in this way through metaphors reflective of the movement of air, of breathing, and of ventilation (Foucault, 1982). Any of these that speak from the body, obviously the auditory ones and the breathing are physical properties of bodies, and in that suggest an enlivening, a bringing forth of bodies into texts, and out again, just as one breathes in and out. And this ushers forth too the idea of the text proliferating and being ceaselessly perforated, the idea of its being able to be entered, ventilated in multiple, unending, and sometimes in, as unable to be yet, even imagined ways. What i seek is to embody that flow, the dialogue, the perpetual movement in the writing, and these metaphors most consistently enable this in me, and as i write i am continually striving to embody that in the text.

The practice of thinking in multiple selves, of making spaces on the margin of the hegemonic subject, or even taking up spaces where none previously existed, is something we must continually think through for we have a life time of understanding ourselves as unitary, stable and universal and the hegemonic narrative will continue to heed us to reproduce ourselves in this way. There is no place for multiplicity in the dominant narratives of self, there is not the space to come to bring that multiplicity to voice so we must make and take up spaces on the edge of that narrative. There is no space within hegemonic discourse to understand ourselves as a product of multiple inscriptions, a conglomeration of all those discourses that have spoken to us and inform our subjective experiences.

And what of those for whom there are no spaces within dominant discourse to recognise them selves at all, those who exist outside the matrix of normality, not even as abject other, but as unrecognisable space, a inelastic kind of wasteland (Wilchins, 1995). All those who seek to tell our stories differently and in so doing locate in those other, and as yet unrecognisable, spaces must find a way to appropriate this space, to come to voice, to tell our experiences in our geo-political locatedness, on and through our bodies. In so doing, we simultaneously negate the nominal and stable self of Western ontology and place it in its proper place of simply another story, one which can no more claim an embargo on truth, than any other. So where are these spaces, where resistance may flourish? We cannot step outside of society and culture, there is no outside, but we can locate on the margin of the dominant understandings of self or normality, a critical space from which we can seek out and develop alternative ways of being.

Politics and Space in Art

Do you believe that space can give life, or take it away, that space has power? These are the questions she [hook's maternal grandmother] asks me which frighten me ... she has taught me 'we must learn to see'. (hooks, 1995, p. 65)

hooks (1994) recalls the life and works of young Black graffiti artist/artist, Michel Basquiat, in 'Remembering Basquiat', which i repeat here as an example of appropriating space, in this case in the environment of White Western art, a particularly hostile place for a young Black body. However Basquiat, through his painting and lifestyle, was able to manipulate and use this space to tell other stories, his stories. Basquiat did this quite simply by taking up the hegemonic place accorded him within dominant discourse and in relation to his place as artist, that of exotic other living the image of White Western celebrity, or of joker, whilst at the same time appropriating these spaces through his art to bring forth his uniquely resistant voice, and to locate himself within those other stories, and in

so doing open up spaces within that devalued subjective space to tell other stories. hooks appears to forgive, or at least empathise, with Basquiat's apparent selling of himself as commodity, the 'exotic other' or the joker, as she simultaneously is able to read the voice of the other through his art. And perhaps Basquiat understood all too well the need to speak in the language of the oppressor in order to be heard, in order to be recognised in the White world of art (Rich, 1984). To take up a space where he could be named and known but in doing so it becomes a kind of personification of the exotic other, a "retreat into the *imago*", as Bartky (1990) puts it, and thus it becomes a parody of that recognisable subject, as it is "raised to the status of art or comedy" (p. 24). When we take up spaces within harsh environments, create space where there is none or where there is only that of devalued other, we will necessarily incur the wrath of those who would keep their privilege intact and we will necessarily have to be clever in our use of those spaces. When i read Basquiat i am overwhelmed by his use of space in this way, i am embodied by the sense of a continual and persistent struggle that i read in his art. There was no place for Basquiat to be simply artist, he wasn't after all White, nor middle-class, but by playing a role that was valid and known, that could be known within hegemonic discourse, he was able to exist, be recognisable and with that recognition gain some degree of acceptance in that world, as a platform from which to speak his resistance (hooks, 1994). This is a little like hooks (1990) advice from her own mother when she was about to go to university, who told her it was okay to learn the rules, the 'game', of the White academy, but that she didn't have to sell her soul to them . And similarly although Basquiat may have seemed to completely sacrifice his soul to the devil from the outset, he retained through his art the capacity to resist in that appropriated space, to resist that naming of him, to resist being fully made as joker or exotic other, and to take up space to tell other stories of self. Basquiat was able to bring forth the subjugated voice of colonised oppression in his work. He was able to appropriate

that space on the margins of White Western art to bring forth this voice of resistance, and in the process open up spaces in relation to art and artists, and what bodies and selves can appropriate these spaces.¹

Appropriating space in this way is both a personal act, as we learn to embrace our growing critical awareness, and a political act as that vantage point allows us to negate and resist oppressive discourse, and to open up spaces to think and experience ourselves differently. What we seek to change is nothing short of revolutionary, for it is the entire structure upon which our society and culture are formed, that is our goal. Ours is a critique of Western ontological and epistemological assumptions of what counts as reality, and how that reality is validated through nature. We come to adopt a critical perspective, as we inhabit the margin, and this perspective becomes our ontological vantage point. Our ideological blinkers are well and truly off and the world looks different. What we might once have considered to be common-sense understandings of subjectivity, appear strange, skewed by our critical eye. The human load comes forth to the surface and we see clearly the arbitrary and contrived nature of what we previously took to be reality (Barthes, 1982a). At times it can be a difficult and confusing process as we come to terms with the loss of those identities, named for

¹ Basquiat's work resonates with Sherman's as it portrays a disintegration of the body, in his case the Black body. In both works the body is shown as being broken down in various ways, as dissolving into the dust, into wasted matter/materiality, as disintegrating. There is a general mood of harm being done, of the violence of language, of colonisation and oppression and its being enforced on the body. There is the sense that the bodies of the oppressed are under attack and that we are broken, we are damaged, but we are certainly not done, for the body will not be made absolutely and finally in the name, always we resist in our bodies (Butler, 1990;, hooks, 1990). I read it as a loss of the vitality of life, a containing of life within the name that constrains, though through which we continually experience ourselves in other ways the contradict the normative self and that embody a perpetual tension, as we struggle to live the stable and nominal hegemonic self, which cannot be made to fit our daily lives. This is embodied as a constant failure to be that normative self, and a ceaseless struggle which ultimately is depicted by both artists in harrowing scenes where bodies are broken and disintegrating, sometimes having exited the scene entirely though of course remaining in the narrative.

us in our gendered, raced, and sexualised selves. There is no assurance in the name anymore. The subject transforms from noun to verb embodying that perpetual movement that is life and our experience of self (Davies, 1997). We are the subject in flux, fragmented and contradictory, and now released from the nominal and fixed connotations of the name, we are free to embody this sense of movement, disjuncture and tension, an active and productive space. Of course our ability to think about and articulate spaces on the edge of the ontological assumptions of Western science is a function of our critical journey. As we negate the old, and come to terms with the loss of an assured identity that necessarily entails, then we can move toward thinking through alternative ways of being in the world, ways that do not rely on notions of universalism, objectivity, individualisation, normalisation, and nominal and stable selves. Freeman (2004) suggests that part of our awareness of self involves getting to grips with all those historical and cultural narratives that have spoken to us, some of which precede even our birth. We might not be consciously aware of some of these, until something triggers them, as was Freeman's own experience when visiting Berlin.

This work is entirely about opening up spaces to think, to write, to speak, spaces that don't exist, or exist only on the margin and in ways that aren't easily accessible. That the use of space is a political act is something that cannot be emphasized enough (Parma, as cited in hooks, 1990). Those who speak in the dominant voice know this well and they guard these speaking rights forcefully, even violently. Surely the most violent clashes in history have at their foundation the right to tell the story, to speak the 'truth' of the self, and others. This resonates with Spivak (2004) who notes that "suicidal resistance is a message inscribed in the body when no other means will get through" (p. 96). It is the appropriation of space on bodies as a means to come to voice, to bring forth a wordless voice that, though soundless, has a corporeal violence that disrupts the hegemonic. For here in the space of wordless resistance the hegemonic truth

claims are undermined, and in this disruption, and in light of this negation of 'truth', they must scramble to reinforce their assertions of normality and claims to truth. Unless we access space to tell our stories, of other selves, that speak our lives, our experiences of oppression, our subjective histories, then we will have no conceivable option but to reproduce ourselves in a reiterative cycle. The margin is that space, and our goal is to work to make this space more accessible, that one doesn't have to live a life constrained by the name, locked into a cycle of oppression, that there are alternatives, they do exist, they are not utopian visions of other worlds. Rather, they are visions borne and developed in the margin as we engage critically with language and its productive effects. Ours is a continual and consistent process of critical and self-reflexive analysis of language, its institutional manifestation, and our subjectivity in relation to this. The margin is the place of transformation of the self, a place from which we can imagine alternative subjectivities, and enliven them. And in Sherman i read an explosion of imaginings, of other selves, of multiplicity, a chaotic and kaleidoscopic fragmentation of self. Each image is perhaps a fragment of Sherman, yet even if we put them all together we would not have a complete picture, for the self is perpetually flowing and moving, always dispersing. i read in Sherman an appropriation of space where 'woman' is negated as the truth of our selves, for here 'woman' must reside on the surface with a myriad of other stories of possible selves, and as we read we are embodied by the otherness in us, and we can begin to flesh out our own stories of selves and bodies that we cannot speak in our hegemonic voice. Here we must speak from that space of localised particularity, and to see that as the space from which we access the truth of ourselves, of our world, instead of denying that which cannot be objectively known, as subjectively invalid (Haraway, 1991). It is the place to give subjectivity that 'breath of life' that Foucault spoke of, to enliven us as we are allowed to be more than the

'individual' subject that is the facade of individuality, disguised in a cloak of totalitarianism.

Leaving Home

Tell us what it is to be a woman so that we may know what it is to be a man. What moves at the margin? What it is to have no home in this place. To be set adrift from the one you knew. What it is to live at the edge of towns that cannot bear your company.
(Morrison, 1994, pp. 28-9)

I had to leave that space I called home to move beyond the boundaries, yet I needed also to return there. (hooks, 1990, p. 148)

i understand this as the necessity for us to make that journey back home in order to understand the ways in which we experience ourselves daily, in relation to others and in relation to our world. Like Freeman's (1998) self, living in "spirals of remembrance and return, repetition and reconfiguration" (p. 47), we are continually reconfiguring ourselves in relation to our experiences. It is not simply a process of moving on and leaving behind those aspects of our self that, from a standpoint of critical awareness, no longer reproduce us. If we think through the inscription metaphor, or more specifically the palimpsest, we can understand these early inscribings as remaining in a trace-like manifestation, and becoming entwined, altered, and diffused by the later ones. As we move to the margin the hegemonic voice can no longer reproduce us for it fails to speak the truths of our selves, it remains as a reminder of oppression but it no longer calls us by name.

Relinquishing the Name, Desiring Uncertainty and Re-Visioning

Leaving home, like the appropriation of space, is about having the courage to exist in a space where there isn't any named identity that gives us a sense of stability and coherence, where we forego the desire to be recognised and we must create that recognition for ourselves. By leaving home, i mean leaving that identity defined in the names we are given, be that woman or man, White or Black, homosexual or heterosexual, middle or working class, and so on, in all their complexities and exclusions. And it is courageous for it is marked by uncertainty, for without that identity there is much risk that we will no longer be recognised, or even recognisable. Without the name to define us how will we identify, and know, even ourselves, let alone others? We have to, in the words of hooks maternal grandmother, 'learn to see', for we have no defined pre-given assumptions about specific types of selves, and we can no longer expect to rely on these to know another in an instant, as we might previously have done. And in this space of empathic understanding, for that surely is what it denotes, there is perhaps the very real possibility of developing relationships with others that will be about communication and connection, and shared humanity, and less about difference. Or that difference, in and of itself, is that means by which we come together, a way in which we learn, to see, and to understand others, in the realisation that understanding will always be partial and located, including our own subjective understanding (Butler, 1997; Morrison, 1994). Morrison (1994) tells an inspiring story, which is a kind of inversion of the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, where the collapse of the tower wasn't brought about by the weight of too many languages, as is commonly foretold, but because of the weight of enforced assimilation. The experience of being weighed down by a legacy, a subjective discourse, that is not ours, that we can never own for it is arbitrary and given to us in language, but that we must continually try to reproduce in ourselves, on and through our very bodies. This is the weight we must lessen through residing on

the margin, and in our critical journey. If we are to experience a life more meaningful, we must seek to lessen that sense of "psychic alienation" that Fanon (as cited in Bartky, 1990, p. 22) spoke of, which is this subjective weight, the tension that comes from the ill-fit between that subjectivity produced in the name, and our experience of life. I am inspired here by Morrison (1994) who allows me to think difference in other ways, not simply as a means to divide and conquer, but to envision it as a way to unite, so that rather than foregoing the opportunity to experience "heaven as life" and thinking of it only as a post-life scenario, we might be able to instead imagine it in this life (Morrison, 1994, p. 19). And it would of course be a "complicated, demanding" sort of heaven, for it is life permeated by complexity and struggle (p. 19). Perhaps the time is right now to take up that missed opportunity, where we can seek to know ourselves and others, not through a name, or a stereotype, but by a connection that is about understanding both our self, and our relationship to other selves, that is the acknowledgement that we are both similar and different, and that this can be the source of another way to understand and know each other, not in a complete, unitary or final way, but as we interact and reflect from our own located, partial and fluid seeing space (Butler, 1997).

Refusing to be Named, Taking up Spaces of Bodily Resistance

Always within the subjective names that give us our recognisability there is tension and contradiction for life always exceeds that which the name tries to contain. This resonates with Foucault who understood the subject, and I would add, the body, as a perpetual antagonist to our hegemonic names (Foucault, 1977a). There is always tension as the subject, and the body, resist being made in the name, fully, finally and consistently. And that the incompleteness of the subject, that is, the necessity for it to be continually reproduced in us is its ultimate undoing, as Butler (1997) notes "a subject only remains a subject through a

reiteration or rearticulation of itself as a subject, and this dependency of the subject on repetition for coherence may constitute that subject's incoherence" (p. 99). In other words, the coherent, rational, normative subject we have come to recognise as our self is revealed in its repetition as anything but. After all were it normal or natural there would hardly be the necessity for continual reiteration of the self as subject.

And i expect as we grow in our critical awareness and inhabit a marginal position the resistance that was previously only experienced in subtle and fleeting ways become more fully acknowledged. In this space we are now to think and articulate the name and imagine possibilities for living alternative selves. We now embody the discourses that give rise to our critical voice, and it transforms our subjectivity, transforms our daily experiences of self, and transforms our experience of our bodies. When we think about 'leaving home' we must remember that this is not about forgetting that space, that oppressive place where the name contains us. i do not envision that we forget or leave behind those aspects of our self, we cannot of course, rather we come to terms with that past in a reflective, critical and engaging way that transforms our self and allows us to move on without that sense of loss. Here, hooks (1989), describes reflections on her subjective past:

I did not feel as though I had killed off the Gloria of my childhood. Instead I had rescued her. She was no longer the enemy within, the little girl who had to be annihilated for the woman to come into being. In writing about her I reclaimed that part of myself I had long ago rejected... . (p. 159)

As i have written i too have engaged with and reclaimed those aspects of childhood that had haunted me, and now do no more. When we write critically and reflectively we put to rest those ghosts of our subjective past, they remain, but they no longer harm us for we accept them as part of the self that we are, part of

the transformation of our selves (hooks, 1990). They remain, i imagine as tracings on our bodies, interwoven and dispersed amongst all those other voices speaking of multiple selves, diluted by the voices of resistance as we speak now from the margin (hooks, 1990; Morgan, 2005). But that the voices that provide the social and historical narratives of our past remain, written over, but not completely erased. And in dialogue with hooks and Morgan, i understand the importance of remembering, and that when we use words like struggle, marginality, and resistance we bring forth those memories because those words carry the trace of what has come before, and proliferate out in the hope of what is yet to come (Morrison, 1994).

'Only the Lonely Know Why, i Cry'

The havoc which he wreaks in the language of the community is absolute for him, it fills his assignment to the brim: he must live this assignment without any hope of going back or any assumption of payment. (Barthes, 1982, p. 147)

As i write this i feel myself undermining the brevity of what i have called 'leaving home'. It is no small thing to move out of the spaces that give us recognition, that allow us to be seen, even if for women and non-White ethnicities, that view is one of devalued other. The familiar is comforting even when it is that violent interpellation that is inherently oppressive and constraining. We desire to move beyond it, but we must relinquish first our very recognisability, and we may be reluctant to do so, even when we realise the implications of this recognition (Butler, 1997). This resonates with Bartky (1990) who suggest our reluctance to resist the name may be about the relationship normative femininity, heterosexuality and being seen, and seeing oneself, as a desirable woman. In dialogue with hooks (1990), Bartky (1990), and others, i understand our new home in the margin, as an unstable and fluid space, a critical space where we see with new eyes, no longer blinded by the old ontological assumptions of hegemonic

discourse. It is not, as hooks reminds us, a place from which to seek safety and security:

For me this space of radical openness is a margin - a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a "safe" place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance. (hooks, 1990, p. 149)

And of course, it can be a lonely place for we see the world, ourselves and others, differently from most of those around us, we have an altered vantage point, we have learnt to see. It can result in a feeling of estrangement from others. It can be a lonely place at times, rather like a foreigner in our own land, we speak a different language, and though communication is possible, at times it can be difficult. Perhaps like du Bois spoke of in 'The Souls of White Folk', we know the other, for we are made recognisable, made a subject in the same place, that is, through language. But now we no longer speak that same language, or we speak it differently, in a way that transforms our self, in a way that resists nominal and stable selves, in a way that transforms what we can be and how we might exist in the world.

Reconnecting

As i engage with Butler and hooks, the poetry of du Bois', and some Buddhist understandings of reality, i think differently about the self and other formed on and through language. This thinking helps me negate the idea of difference at the core of human subjective identity and embrace an understanding of the idea of self and other as connected, as produced simultaneously through discourse, and embodied within us as we produce and reproduce ourselves in the image of the hegemonic self. Language is relational and its meaning is always in relation to what it is not. There is no inherent meaning in the word or the name, it relies upon other words or names to give it meaning. And in doing so meaning is always in a process of being deferred away from itself, from the word or the name, unable to

be pinned down, unable to be made stable, meaning is a ceaseless and perpetual movement as each signifier gives rise to another, with no hope of finding the elusive signified, that referent that doesn't refer away from itself. Of course, this search is futile, there is no origin, no foundation for meaning, all is produced within language including, us. We too are that ceaseless movement, a self produced within language and existing in an intertextual weave, made and formed by multiple narratives, existing as the conglomeration of these, inscribed on and through our bodies. We are the site of the battle to discursively produce us where the all important power to name is at stake. It is a privileged space indeed to be positioned as the knower and teller of human truths, something psychology, with its insistence on objectivity and scientific methodology has been able to achieve. Science has enabled us to understand our world in ways previously unimaginable. Our faith in science as progressive made it relatively easy for psychology to convince us that these methods could just as well be applied to understanding human behavior.

As i write i simultaneously take up my own journey to leave that space of recognisable, but devalued self, and locate in a space that allows me the ability to think critically and reflectively my multiple and fluid self. It is also a political journey, because as i leave this space i do so with an altered awareness of the world. i no longer see the same way, my vision is altered by my critical immersion, and what was once familiar and recognisable, distorts and becomes instead strange and farcical (Foucault, 1994a). The ideological human relationship that underpins it is revealed and i must now attend to these altered visions. i use this vision to open up spaces to be other, and so that others may join the dialogue, broaden those spaces, open up their own spaces from which to speak their truths, their experiences of life freed from the constraints of the name. Morrison (1994) tells a story of an old woman and the children who visit her, taunting her with a supposed bird in their hands, and as the woman is blind she is unable to tell for

certain whether the children actually have a bird in their possession. For Morrison she reads the bird as a metaphor for language, either that which is dead and can no longer enliven us, or that which can "suture ... the places where blood might flow" and allow us to live (p. 28). At some point in the story the children move beyond mockery or contempt, towards empathy and understanding, towards celebrating their differences when they ask of the woman: "For our sake and yours forget your name in the street; tell us what the world has been to you in the dark places and in the light" (Morrison, 1994, p. 28).

Self and Other

To induce a collective content for the imagination is always an inhuman undertaking, not only because dreaming essentialises life into destiny, but also because dreams are impoverished, and the alibi of an absence (Barthes, 1982, p. 129).

I find that my very formation implicates the Other in me, that my own foreignness to myself is, paradoxically, the source of my ethical connection with others (Butler, 2001, p. 37).

Strangers within our midst are indeed the strangest of all - not because they are so alien but because they are so close to us ... strangers must be like us but different. They cannot be completely exotic, for, were they so, we could not recognize them (Napier, as cited in hooks, 1994, p. 37).

Self and other, like the idea of leaving our subjective homes, is about moving away from the nominal subject, from 'woman', and taking up spaces on the margin of the name, on those edges where the name boundaries the other, our abject selves. But the boundary is not hardened or containing, i imagine it is like the boundaries in Rothko's paintings, fuzzy, permeable and diffuse, and in that unbounded fusion 'woman' must immerse with its other. As i engage with du Bois, hooks, Butler, and others, i imagine this immersion as a kind of dilution where the nominal is plebeianised and made to speak the abject alongside the normative. We are not

divided by a harsh line that suggest an either/or scenario, instead we inhabit that murky line, which is the margin on the edge of the normative and the other. We are both self, and other, simultaneously. It is perhaps this knowledge we have of the other, this shared foundation in language, both formed simultaneously as we take up the desirable self, allocated to us within dominant discourse that allows us to be the antagonistic subject that Foucault spoke of. Certainly we experience a tension, a sense of contradiction at times, between the desired self and the lived self. Using the palimpsest as a metaphor for understanding the space that the body occupies in all of this, it is reasonable, i believe as i dialogue with Freeman and hooks, to assume that all those narratives of self, both dominant and subjugated are available to be heard. Perhaps some are merely murmurings, barely audible whispers, but still they leave a mark, a trace, etched on and through the body, as we reproduce ourselves time and again in relation to our world (Morgan, 2001). And each time we reproduce ourselves they too are brought forth, the antagonistic abject self emerges along with the desirable and recognisable self, and when we take up the call of the dominant voice we simultaneously also produce, in relation to that, the other side of the self. So inscribed on and through our bodies are both the dominant and the subjugated selves. We are that self and other born, and existing, simultaneously, unable to be completely denied in language, and resisting being fully encapsulated in subjective hegemony. Language is relational and the foundation for our self is always something in relation to that. This was surely what Foucault (1982) was referring to when he said that to understand something in society one must look to its underside, to that which is devalued so that it might exist in its privileged form. The classic example of which was that in order to understand sanity one must examine what society has to say about insanity because society always collates information on the deviant, rather than the normal, self. Language is relational and organised around binary opposition. In thinking of subjectivity these most obviously relate to gender,

ethnicity, sexuality and class for they are the primary ways we identify people as specific types of selves, and we come to know these selves in and through language organised into discourse, and by virtue of what might be described as the other, devalued side of the binary. Those on the privileged side gain their recognition in relation to their subjugated other, and therefore, escape the all-invasive gaze of science and psychology. It is not White, heterosexual, middle-class males that have traditionally been the subject of extensive psychological investigation, rather it has been those who fall outside these parameters upon which all others are valued and judged. Our measuring sticks have been formed on the bodies of Black people, women, the working-classes, and homosexuals. It is they who have been subjected to the psychological gaze (Rose, 1990). Those who take up the space of other and in so doing will always fall short of being able to fulfill the absolute potential that human beings can attain to for they are not simultaneously male, heterosexual, middle-class and White, so the place of privilege can never fully be theirs. They must live the life of the devalued other whilst at the same time investing in the story that all individuals regardless of ethnicity, gender, class or sexuality, have the same opportunity to achieve their full potential. Barthes (1982) talked about this as the inducing of a collective consciousness, a most and which hooks talks about in relation to the inability to see past ourselves and realise that the misery we experience in our lives isn't necessarily, and in terms of oppression, never is located at an individual level, but rather exists on and through oppressive language, and in the institutional manifestations of that in society.

Believing in the Self, Telling our Own Stories

When we cannot see past ourselves as the reason for the heavy load we seem to carry in life, we believe the story that opportunity is available equally to all, regardless of any individual or corporeal factors and the way in which we come to know ourselves by virtue of the language we use and its organisation into discourse.

When this happens we are as papering over an absence, for we cannot see the nihilism that pervades our life when we hold that the hegemonic story is the truth of ourselves (Barthes, 1982). We must come to voice, begin to tell our own stories from our own located subjective and bodily spaces, so that as we speak the words transform us in ways that negate the status quo, negate the idea of one self and one truth. As we begin to locate the hegemonic voice as just another story, and not that which we must heed, for it has no more recourse to objective truth than the stories we tell from our own bodily and subjective experiences, we can begin to enliven those other selves, to allow them to breathe through us and embody them in the stories we tell of ourselves and to ourselves. "Narrative is radical", said Morrison (1994), "creating us at the very moment it is being created" (p. 27). Let us take up those radical narratives that transform us in the telling. Duped into a false consciousness, we fail to see that what the hegemonic story of self founders on is not nature, or even science, but a narrative, calcified over time, shored up by multiple tellings, but still simply a story of how we can be, and who can be, located within ideological relations of power (Butler, 1990; Morrison, 1994). And as the ideology recedes that which it conceals, the human load, comes forth and we see clearly the relations of privilege and subordination which underpin the hegemonic discourse, and in that space we are freed from the name and its power to reproduce us as nominal and stable self (Barthes, 1982).

Kicking Nostalgia in the Butt, Clearing Away the Dust, and Dreaming Our Way Out of Oppression

A focus on ourselves as individuals, rather than as produced and reproduced in language and within relations of power and knowledge, is akin to the idea of success in capitalist society, where the accumulation of wealth is goal and determinant of success and that we all have the same ability to achieve this. This individualistic focus is at the heart of the notion of the American dream, a

philosophical vision of progress that necessarily comes through controlling nature and destroying the environment. A vision, like Barthes (1982) 'false consciousness', available only for a chosen few yet distributed to us as a possibility for all. In dialogue with Barthes and hooks i understand this as an ideological facade that is part of capitalist and hegemonic discourse which works to negate resistance and dilute agency. We believe in individuality, tied to ideas of freedom of speech and democracy, after all who wants to live in a non-democratic society? We believe that we are, and it is better to be, in charge of our own lives, responsible for the course of that life, we believe that the oppression we experience on a daily basis stems from our own shortcomings, rather than from the way our society is structured or the language that structures it and reproduces us. In short we believe the ideology, or as Barthes might say, we believe the myth. But this belief in ourselves as individuals, a stable and nominal bounded-in self, comes at a great expense, it keeps us locked within the cycle of oppression and it deters us from trying to understand it outside of our self. We lose context if we think only from an individual perspective. We must again insert ourselves into that world in which we live, that society structured by language, and organised by relations of power which manifest themselves in institutionalised oppression. We are that self reproduced in oppressive language again and again, in order to stop that reproduction we must think beyond an individual perspective. This resonates with Barthes (1982) when he discussed this in relation to its ability to deny us the realisation that we have the capacity to think and act in ways that might alleviate the oppression that is written onto our very selves and bodies:

The bourgeoisie is constantly absorbing into its ideology a whole section of humanity which does not have its basic status and cannot live up to it except in imagination, that is, at the cost of an immobilization and an impoverishment of critical consciousness. To induce a collective content for the imagination is always an inhuman undertaking, not only because dreaming essentializes life

into destiny, but also because dreams are impoverished, and the alibi of an absence. (p. 129)

So, purporting a universal desire or dream as something we all should aspire to, like the idea of the American dream, serves to paper over the gap that we might see if we weren't trying to live the dream. We need to stop and think about whose dream this really is, and for whom it is achievable. I have thought this through in relation to two examples from film and literature which have spoken to me of the futility of internalising a collective dream, and here I will discuss these briefly as an illustration of this 'particularly inhuman undertaking'.

Chip Douglas

The character, 'Chip', played by Jim Carrey in the 1996 movie 'The Cable Guy' exemplifies this dream gone wrong scenario (Stiller, 1996). He has spent his childhood absorbed with the family life of those middle-class, American, suburban TV families, of the 60s, 70s and 80s, even the name he uses is borrowed from 'My Three Sons', one of the longest-running sitcoms of the 60s and 70s. These families are the quintessential American family, White, middle-class, wholesome, healthy, happy, an environment devoid of divorce, debauchery and drug use, and clearly an aspiration for all. Carrey's, 'Chip', however, failed to live that image other than in his imagination, his own childhood being more nightmare than dream:

my father was there, but he might as well have been away, ... It isn't father knows best anymore. It's a kick in the face on a Saturday night with a steel-toe grip codiac work boot, ... A trip to the hospital, bloodied and bashed, reconstructive surgery
(Stiller, 1996)

This line is delivered by Carrey's character, as an explanation for his pronounced lisp. How this work speaks to me is in relation to the consumption of myth, when we believe that the destiny is ours, that we can have it simply, for instance, by hard work, we are doomed to fail in two ways. Firstly, we fail to achieve the dream

and, secondly, we cannot see the underlying reasons for our inability to fulfill 'our' dream, and thus we are refused that space from which we might come to voice, to wield our political agency. A focus on individualism means we are unable to locate in a space where we can see ourselves as an agent of change, we are disabled politically, the enemy lives within and we must continually be made to pay. It is only through adopting a critical approach that we can begin to see our circumstances, our misery, our sense of failure, as part of the social organisation, as institutionalised in the very structure of our societies through language, and not as a naturally occurring phenomena that we cannot help but relive, but as an arbitrary arrangement that we must struggle against. In order to take a political stance we need to locate the cause of oppression outside ourselves, we must strive to understand how we came to inhabit this position rather than a more privileged one, and how we might experience ourselves in other, more positive, life affirming, ways.

Jay Gatsby

Similarly in F Scott Fitzgerald's (1926) *'The Great Gatsby'* we again see the story of the American dream gone wrong. Jay Gatsby, the character after whom the book is named, believed he could have it all, riches, palatial mansion, all the trappings of wealth, and the girl, but he failed in the end because he wasn't upper-class, and ultimately the dream was never his to take. Gatsby's entire life was about living the dream, creating himself in the image of the upper-class wealthy elite. He basked in the artificiality, the gregariousness of it all, whilst at the same time seeming to realise it would all disintegrate for him, that it was never going to be his for the taking. It was as though he was glimpsing the oscillation, the distortion as myth conceals meaning in form. It is that realisation that what we desire is also the root of our oppression (Butler, 1990; Bartky, 1990). As women we wish to be recognised, we wish to be desirable, yet unless we

reconfigure what desire and recognition can be, we will remain locked in that cycle of oppression. The novel's narrator, Nick, comes to this realisation too when he notes that "... Gatsby turned out all right at the end" and it wasn't him that was at fault but the "foul dust [that] floated in the wake of his dreams ..." (Fitzgerald, 1926, p. 8). I read in the foul dust the futility of the dream, a dream that ultimately descends into nothingness because it has no foundation, is all an illusion, a simulacrum, endless copies with no origin. So the foul dust then, is the selling of a dream which has no reality, which is entirely based on facade.

Opening up Stories to Embody Lives

We all live within this cloud of foul dust when we accept the illusion of gender, race, sexuality, and class as real entities that exist, and can be emulated, can be reproduced on our bodies and we can be made to fit them. When we fail to see them as arbitrary and contrived productions of discourse located within a relationship of power and knowledge we believe the myth, we have allowed the dream to become the "alibi of an absence." (Barthes, 1982, p. 129) An absence we might see if the dream didn't distort reality in this way. We fail to see that they are, in reality, **stories** of the self, rather than renditions of the natural and, therefore, normal. If we understood them as a story, with actual storytellers at their foundation, we would be able to topple them off their pedestal atop the knowledge/power hierarchy. And we would be in a better position to listen to other stories, those that do not purport to reflect a universal reality whilst at the same time concealing their ideological foundations, but that open up spaces so that different voices might be heard, those that do not conceal ideological relations because there aren't any, the goal of the story is transformation of the social order of the world rather than a preservation of the status quo (Barthes, 1982, p. 135). Revolutionary language defies myth because it is about transformation. It is about revealing the human input in our understanding of the world and our selves

and in doing so paving the way for change (Barthes, 1982, p. 135). The human load is pivotal, revolutionary language is entirely about the personal and the political. Our goal, our objective is clear throughout and we are continually reflecting on it and ensuring the words we use are furthering this goal. Reflexivity is a key element of the work, both as a means of engaging with my changing sense of self, and how that relates to my interactions with others, and also as i reflect upon those desired goals or envisionings for the writing. i must, as hooks (1995) does, "interrogate my work to see if it functions as a force that promotes the development of critical consciousness and resistance movement" (p. 71).

Telling Stories that Heal, Taking Care with Words

hooks (1990) has written extensively about the negative ramifications of the colonisation of the mind, such as increased and excessive drug and alcohol abuse, and gambling, activities which serve to distract from the terror of life, though in reality only serve to intensify the situation and reinforce the ideology that the fault lies within the individual. We are led to believe that the fault of failure lies clearly at our own feet, that we have squandered our chances, our opportunities and have failed to achieve. However, as we critically engage with the self produced within language, organised into discourse, we come to realise how our 'failure' to achieve is inscribed in the language we use, in the words that produce us as specific types of selves. It is not until we become critically aware of how language works, in an active, productive way, through the relationship of knowledge and power to perpetuate oppression that we can think differently about 'I' as the centre of my world. Only then can we begin to see 'i' as a creation of my world, a creation in language and to understand language as the centre. The 'I' that i experience on a daily basis is created through language but within specific relations of power and knowledge. The world does not revolve around me rather i revolve around a world pre-organised in language, in particular by language that no

longer allows me to experience the movement of life, it holds me steady in a faux subjectivity, using a word, the name, to enforce that violent gesture. In dialogue with Barthes, hooks, Davies and Morrison, i understand the violence that language entails, that it is a means to control, to exercise power, to enforce certain behaviours and to deny others. That great care must be taken to dilute its assertive properties, to stop it shutting down spaces, constraining our subjective experiences, when our purpose is to open up subjectivity and appropriate space. To stop it trying to enforce truths that we don't mean to tell, don't want to reproduce (Barthes, 1977; Davies, 1997).

Again, the power to tell the story of self and other and have this validated as truth cannot be underestimated. Those for whom this is the case, for whom the story allocates them a privileged position, will not easily vacate it, for the place of White, male, and middle-class, affords many privileges that would not easily be relinquished. In order to maintain the status quo difference cannot be denied, for everything rises and falls upon that assumption, that we are different from each other so can be subjectively split into various groups. Our society is built upon the binary oppositions that structure our understandings of self, that is, that men are different from women, White from Black, working from middle class, and homosexual from heterosexual, and that these differences are inherent, natural and therefore, meaningful. We embody this difference in order to take up the space of the recognisable self, and for women this is the embodiment of the devalued other, the non-phallic of male, what we must embody in 'woman' is this sense of loss, of inadequacy. We feel this loss within our bodies for, as Probyn (1992) notes: "... women are made to feel their genders at the level of the body" (p. 92). As 'woman' we must occupy the devalued side of the body/mind dichotomy as we embody this sense of other, of a body that lacks the phallus and therefore, the capacity to take up the privileged space. When Hansberry (as cited in hooks, 1990) asks if we "are prepared to give our body to the struggle", we must answer a

resounding yes, for we must give up this body if we are to live in other ways which negate the hegemonic discourses claims to truth, and its ability to reproduce us as devalued other (p. 191). We must free our bodies from the stories that give us nominal and stable places within which to come to voice, that mark our bodies in specific and constraining ways and that keep us separated from others by delineating difference as a means to divide. Just as language produces meaning, by difference and deferral, we come to know ourselves by our difference from others, yet, ironically, this is also how we come to know and embody the other. For each time we are reproduced in the name we must simultaneously take up the other, the abject of the name, so what is inscribed upon us is both self and other (Butler, 1997). If only we were able to see beyond the need to define absolutely and by difference, and instead embrace that each of us, though inscribed by language, experiences themselves in unique ways in relation to the intertextual weave or many voices that give rise to the self.

Wasted Opportunities and Human Folly

In dialogue with Morrison (1994) i understand the forsaken opportunity that enforcing difference entails. If we haven't the capacity to celebrate diversity we miss a chance to understand, a chance to live a life of meaning where we appreciate that life isn't inherently structured and coordinated, and we shouldn't try to make it so, that it is, in reality, vital, alive, chaotic even (after all what else does life mean, and shouldn't being alive mean more, so much more). This reminds me of gumbo ya ya which is a Creole term and means that everybody speaks at once, and though this might seem somewhat chaotic to an observer, it is the means by which everyone learns about everyone else in the family, it is the exchange of information. It's like the ongoing dialogue that i immerse in as i write, but this is a face to face encounter where the interconnectedness, the interweaving of various narratives are brought together simultaneously, each person weaving their

narrative in connection with the others, and celebrating that connectivity in a dialogue that has multiple points of entry and is never complete (Teish, as cited in Brown, 1991). i sense this too when taking up the metaphor of sound to think through the dialogic space of self and body, when i imagine this as a cacophony of voices that speak of the self and are inscribed on our body as a series of interwoven lines, a palimpsest, i am, in this space, embodied by this chaotic interconnectedness which enlivens. The self is similarly a dialogic space, a space where many voices come together so that we experience our selves in unique and multiple ways. And just as in gumbo ya ya, or at least in as far as i understand it, within the chaos and flux, the continual movement and multiplicity, there is a space to connect with the self, and with others, and to enable a capacity for shared empathy and understanding, the conversation is dependent upon all the other parts, it exists in relation to them and not alone like drawing its nourishment, its life from this connection. i imagine it like our body's connective tissue, drawing in and being enriched by the blood-engorged capillaries which feed it. It is only when there is not this continual, consistent, and open immersion of many voices that the conversation breaks down. As we engage in dialogue with the self, and with others, we create spaces where we can value the multiple and unique manifestations that are our experiences of self, and we learn to celebrate those differences rather than using them as a means to denigrate. We create spaces in which our bodies are able to be experienced as something more than the devalued other of the soul. Where we can incorporate them into our understanding of our uniquely experienced subjectivity, named and framed within language as we take up and reproduce our self in discourse, but existing at the space upon which the battle to name is fought, at the site of inscription, as the parchment paper of the palimpsest.

The Palimpsest - No Blank Slate

Davies (1997) has suggested, that the use of the parchment metaphor can at times be problematic, for it may imply some sort of pre-discursive blank slate upon which discourse writes the self but upon which there is indeed a base. And, like Davies, i do not intend when i use this metaphor that it should be read in this way. i am certainly not proposing the idea of an essential underlying element which we might find if we peel back the layers and inspect the original document. And if we think of the parchment as the physical body then that too becomes problematic, because the body is never neutral or blank, it too is always inscribed by discourse. We are born into a world organised by discourse founded on binary oppositions, and these historical and cultural narratives are inscribed upon us even before we are born (Freeman, 2004). Our bodies marked as either female or male, though this is not always a clear distinction, summon forth the dominant gender discourses just as bodies marked Black or White are identified as being racially different. This resonates with Patton, who noted that "race and sexuality ... are two cultural notions which seem to be represented in the body ..." (Patton, 1990, p. 130).

In order to know the self, that which has punctuated modern literature, be it psychological text or fictional story, one needs to stop looking for an internal psychic space that locates an essential something that defines us (Rose, 1999). Instead, we need to understand all those voices, narratives, and discourses that have shaped the self and body we experience. And as discussed before, i imagine this as a series of lines or threads, each representing a story of self, each offering up positions which we might take up and enliven as we are simultaneously embodied by them. As we come to see language as the producer of reality rather than simply reflecting something pre-discursive, we are able to position ourselves in a way where we can begin to deconstruct discourse, and reveal the relations of

privilege and subordination underlying the words. As Foucault (1994a) said our goal should be twofold, both to negate the subjectivity which the dominant discourse produces and makes available for us, and simultaneously create spaces to seek out and speak of alternative understandings of self. These include both those that exist already but have been marginalised and can be found on the edge of mainstream discourse, and those that exist within us and that we experience as tension and contradiction as we struggle to reproduce ourselves in the desired image.

Our goal is to think about difference in other ways, not as a way to devalue others but as a way to come together to celebrate the multiplicity of human beings, the multiple ways in which we experience our lives, to celebrate diversity within and between. Our goal is to write in such a way that we are continually attending to the metaphysical properties of language and the binaries which bind us, and persist and assert in the words we use (Barthes, 1977). Ours is a struggle to use language in ways that struggle against the reproduction of binary in our work, a process which is perpetually reflective and attendant to the productive effects of language, embodied within an overarching desire of self transformation within a specific and known political vision.

CHAPTER THREE

RETHINKING BODIES: HARVESTING WORDLESS SOUNDS AND MAKING CORPOREAL NOISE

We need to learn in our bodies ... to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name ... so objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility ... (Haraway, 1991, p. 190-195)

if one really thinks about the body as such, there is no possible outline of the body as such. There are thinkings of the systematicity of the body, there are value codings of the body. The body, as such, cannot be thought, and I certainly cannot approach it. (Spivak, 1989, p. 149)

Without knowing how [the body] will signify in a given discourse, we know that it must signify in any feminist discourse. It is the inside/outside of discourse. As part of the topology of speaking itself, the body bespeaks the oppression and illuminates the path to emancipation. (Bayer & Malone, 1996, p. 682)

Psychology has a long and checkered history of attempts to understand how to attend to the body as part of its scientific enquiry to understand human beings. To map out and know the essence, the very nature of them, to gather and organise knowledge on their personalities, the forces behind their motivation, the way in which they form attitudes, and how all this elicits certain types of behaviour. This has been the goal of psychology, traditionally and working from an empirical perspective founded in science, and an understanding of the world as something that can only be known, at least in any useful way, through objective methods of enquiry. As both Foucault and Radley (1991) have pointed out, the body and the self, as we have come to understand them, are relatively recent concepts, historically speaking, their emergence being congruent with advances in science

and medicine which allowed the body to be viewed in ways previously unable to be imagined. The body itself hadn't changed in any recognisable way of course, what had changed, however, was the way in which we spoke about it. Through the discourses of science and medicine the body became known, and knowable, in specific and particular ways which became the legitimate way of understanding our bodies, the truth of our body and selves. And as is the way with power and knowledge, these 'legitimate' ways of knowing, those positioned within a power and knowledge couplet as truth, were able to delegitimise alternate ways of knowing and understanding our selves, even as far as negating our own experiential knowledges (Weedon, 1987). Our own, particular experiences of living in our bodies, were disregarded as unscientific, unable to be objectively known, and therefore outside of the realm of knowledge, or more specifically truth. Only that which could be discovered using the methods of science through empirical observation were considered worthy of the status of legitimate knowledge, and so the body became something to be known objectively and from a distance, and any other ways of knowing were relegated to the margins, to the realms of non-science and non-sense. In the process we learnt to distrust the voice of our bodies and the experiences of our bodies. Our body, defined as objective other, was instead, made available to us through the expert knowledge of those located within the disciplinary domains of science and medicine, and through language organised into discourse. Our role, situated outside of these institutions, was of recipient rather than knower, our bodies were returned to us in a form we would over time recognise as our own, as natural and normal, through a process of discursive sedimentation (Butler, 1997).

As we internalised this understanding of our bodies and selves, and reproduced it as we took up the name 'woman', we internalised too the constraint and containment, indeed the oppression inherent in that name and in the process became a most efficient regulator and controller of our bodies (Bartky, 1990).

Any knowledge of the body was to be found outside of it, and so our relationship with our bodies became one of detached observer, like that described by Foucault (1977a), in relation to Bentham's panopticon, we have become adept at self surveillance. We became the controller and regulator of our bodies, ensuring they met the requirements of normative subjectivity, for to be the non-normative was also to be the non-recognisable, the undesirable, and undesiring, other. So in order to be recognisable, women must take up spaces within normative heterosexuality for that is inherently part of 'woman', part of femininity. In order to have a desirable body one must locate it within the oppressive discourse of heterosexuality where we know our body as objective other, and this is increasingly in relation to our sexuality, or more specifically our sexual parts and to serve the appetite of the male connoisseur (Bartky, 1990). Our bodies have become more and more to be understood as a consumable and marketable product.

Unwieldy Bodies

Unfortunately for science, and particularly psychology, the body defies being defined in a wholly objective way, and any attempt to do so will necessarily be frustrated. As Bayer & Malone (1996) have pointed out "the body is never as univocal as psychology and the western epistemologies it recapitulates would have it" (p. 688). We must take up spaces to tell our own stories of our bodies and in the telling wrestle back the experience of living in our uniquely located subjective and corporeal spaces, that are, anything but nominal, stable and universal. And these spaces will, of course, be on the margin of the normative self and body, for they negate that very claim to normality and speak of other possibilities to be. It, therefore, has been something of a thorn in the side of psychology and in spite of rigorous and continual attempts to make it the objective specimen of scientific analysis, primarily through assuming the body is wholly biological, as that body we know through medical discourse, it remains recalcitrant to being named and

contained in this way. It remains on the margin of those discourses which seek to stabilise it in a name, neither wholly physical nor wholly discursive, it straddles those two worlds, providing an all important link between our experiences of life and the articulation of those experiences through talk and text. And rather than having to address that and face the tension that the uncontainable body elicits, it has traditionally become the discarded other of science, unable to be made to fit its methodological requirements, the body remains on the margin as an outlier, an unresolved tension, perhaps in retrospect its proper residence for it is that tension, that perpetual agonist, a metaphorical scraping of unfit, a writhing resistance to the hegemonic names capacity to produce that which it seeks to name.

Poststructuralist Feminism, Language and Bodies

In poststructuralist feminism language becomes the central way to understand oppression, and similarly the road to moving out of those places of subjugation. We accept that what we have to "recover ourselves", to transform and allow those other selves to be enlivened, is language. The body too becomes integral as a means to resist being encapsulated in 'woman'. We seek to know it in other ways, not just in the way it is materialised in the name, we desire to enliven the experiential body in the language we use. To speak it in their ways, that in the speaking transform how we can experience our bodies and negate them as nominal and univocal. We must take up those spaces to speak our bodies so that we do not again relegate them to the space of objective other, to be known by others and removed from our actual experience of living in bodies, but enliven them to proliferate through the text. So that the dialogue between language and the body flows through the text, through our bodies and in that most personal and political space we are embodied by this flow and transformed in our selves. The body offers us a peculiar vantage point, it is that space upon which the name

materialises us as 'woman', but it also remains recalcitrant to being named in this way, the body writhes at the boundaries of the name, unsettling the hegemonic voice, threatening to expose its farcical borders, its fallacy of normative selves and universal and stable truths. There is always struggle, the process of naming, of making us within that label, is continuous. It does not occur in an instant and infinitely, on the contrary, it must be repeated continuously each time at the risk that the repetition will go unheard, be heard incorrectly, or be heard and resisted (Butler, 1990). In each repetition there is the risk that the name will fail to make us, that the contradiction, the tension, the façade and the ideology that underlies it will be envisioned, and we will resist.

Languageing Bodies, Saving Lives, and Relinquishing Headaches

As feminists, we have struggled to make a space from which to tell an alternative story of 'woman' and of the body, to tell our own located and geopolitically positioned stories. This is, after all our goal, to make a space where women can see themselves outside the constraints of traditional notions of woman and femininity. We have grappled with the binaries upon which the language of the Master is founded, vicariously undoing them, remaking them and discarding them. What has become exceedingly clear as i have trodden my theoretical path is that in all this self critique and engagement, the body remains something of an enigma, refusing our very best efforts to know it with any degree of clarity so that we might retell it in other ways. It is true that the life we ultimately save in work of this kind is our own, for that is the self i transform in the journey, through the writing, as i am embodied by the language that speaks of other selves, and of bodies that flow and secrete, and move beyond the artificial boundaries of the name. We in this community know that we must strive to fit the body into our analyses, to bring it in at each and every occasion, for it is that site where hegemonic language would materialise us fully, yet where the language of

resistance too speaks. The body is that recalcitrant, slippery, unbounded enigma and, of course, in being so speaking it in the text is difficult and requires language which enables the movement that permeates the body to flow through. This is, of course, why i have found metaphor so important. For we must imagine other ways to be, before we can enliven them, and metaphor enables me in this process of imagination to tap something of that body that exists on the edge of the name, that in being this edge defies that the name is absolute and all-encompassing. It has been, at times, rather like the equivalent of beating my head against a brick wall, pointless and clearly not good for me! i do not, of course, mean that it is pointless to keep striving to bring the body into our analyses as we think of the transformation of the self, of our selves, of course we must, the body is integral in our struggle to resist. But it is, i believe, pointless to try to define, with any precision, these other bodies which we must flesh out. For the body enters our theories in transitory ways, our access to it is momentary and fleeting, and the moment we grapple with it in order to think, write, define or stabilise it, we find we have lost it yet again (Butler, 2004). In dialogue with Morrison and Sampson, i like to think of the body as occupying that experiential space, which is life, something language can move us closer to, yet will never, nor should we want it to, encapsulate it. In fact, language that does not embody the flow out from the text, that peripheral thread-like movement that is symbolic of the writerly text is easily summarised and condemned to a kind of linguistic death (Morrison, 1994). Rather than being imbued with life, and celebrating and facilitating that ethereal flow, it has effectively been stilled and silenced in the name. If we are able to provide a coherent summary, if the text allows such encapsulation, there is with it an acknowledgement that we know, we understand, and we can move on. The work no longer haunts, it no longer disturbs, or inspires. It is, as Barthes said, dead, all movement has ceased and life has been extinguished. Like Barthes, Morrison's writing, illustrates the objective of moving us closer towards the life that exists

beyond language, in the unable to be worded gap that language used well allows us to glimpse. We have language, it is our means to live a life outside the confines of the name we are given, we strive to use language well, harvesting those barely imaginable visions where we sense them permeating the text, our selves and our bodies. We must leave behind the dead language which constrains our ability to think beyond its internal parameters, locks us in to a truth which exists only within its own ontology and prevents us from seeking other truths, exploring other realities. We need to use language that does not conceal, political language which denies myth its place from which to rob meaning (Barthes, 1982). Language which cannot be concealed within ideology because human agenda, human input, is laid bare, it exists on the surface of political language, it defines it. hooks writes in this way, fusing the arbitrary divide between the personal and political. She is political language personified, it infuses her writing, it is inspirational and it is literal, her political commitment, her intent, the reflection, are all at the surface and she strives continually to bring in her multiple experiences of self, to speak in ways that disrupt and deny the sedimentation of language and the self. This is the writerly text, that space through which we refuse to have meaning neatly encapsulated and caught within languages inherent violence. Where we are challenged to position and read from our space of locatedness, so that we might envision other selves, other bodies, those that exist on the edge of normative 'woman'. Here in the writerly text we can flesh out the abject self, we can speak in our multiple voices, those which have been denied to us as we reproduce ourselves as 'woman'. As i read Morrison (1994) i imagine that this place where meaning may lie, an ethereal sort of meaning that we surge toward when we use language carefully and responsibly, when we use it knowing it is an 'act with consequences', could be the experience of living in our bodies, unable to be enworded completely yet engaged in a dialogue with the self that gives rise to our particular experiences of self. That place to which we can aspire if we only use

language well, if we only take responsibility for this thing that may well be the "measure of our lives" (Morrison, 1994, p. 22). My experience is that we can never expect to, nor should we want to, define in an exact and finished way what the body is, our best efforts are thwarted by the body which straddles the line between the physical and the discursive, refusing to be located absolutely in either one or the other. The body defies our best efforts to name and frame it. Its physicality defies us as it literally, and metaphorically, seeps and leaks through the cracks and crevices of our best intentions to pin it down, making nonsense of our search for coherence. That we simply cannot define it in any absolute sense does not negate us from attending to the body in our theories and analyses - because we must, that much is clear. Our bodies are the space from which the discursive prescriptions which give us form are written. These arbitrary psychological categories are inscribed on our bodies, materialising us in the name, making us recognisable beings of one sort or another (Butler, 1990). But it is not, and never was, a one-way street. The self formed on the body and through discourse must be continually reproduced in this way. We are continually heeded to take up and reproduce the name and it is in this process of reiteration that resistance is borne. The name calls us, we recognise it, but not fully, or we don't recognise ourselves in it anymore, and something else occurs, something is borne that isn't the normative self, but a spawning of that (Butler, 1990). Power is always analogous with resistance, and power in the sense that Foucault articulated it, more specifically relations of power, and as i understand it also, can only be conceived of as a co-existence of power and resistance, without this we have only a state of absolute domination. The subject is always conceived of as an antagonist to the functioning of the power knowledge relationship, for we cannot be made fully and finally in the dominant discourse. Our bodies always refuse to be encapsulated entirely, and the process by necessity is reiterative, and thus fraught with its own undoing. For in the reiteration there is that possibility we

will not recognise ourselves in the name, and the other will emerge on the edge of the normative (Butler, 1990). Here, on our bodies, the war is waged to name us in the binaries that structure our language, and inform our thought. It is a continual and ceaseless injuring inauguration that works on and through our body, that site where power most effectively and insidiously reproduces us as 'woman' (Butler, 1997).

Back to Theory

How to bring the body into our theories, to embody it in the text, remains an enigma only if we think of it as something we must define or know in an absolute way. I find it useful rather to think of its space of being "theoretically contested" in postmodern discourse (Morgan, 2004, p. 146). And that in this space we are working towards, and imagining, those other bodies that aren't defined as objective other. For we cannot inhabit this space, do this work without locating in our bodies, without thinking, writing and speaking in our located and positioned ways, which necessarily is the immersing of bodies, selves and language. The tension between the body that is entirely pre-discursive, and is materialised through its immersion in language, and the flesh and blood body of science and medicine, disappears somewhat when understood in this way. Obviously we cannot deny the body its biology, clearly it is flesh and blood, and we know if we cut ourselves we bleed and that whether we have the language to articulate this or not, it hurts, and it elicits various physical reactions. Similarly, we are given a form and recognisability through our immersion in language, materialised through the discourses of sex, gender, ethnicity, class, age, and so on in all their complexities.

The reality of our bodies is we are both material and discursively produced, for the physical does not give us recognisability without language to form those shapes, so to speak. We are given our validity, our normative status, or not,

through our immersion in the discourses which tell the stories of our selves. We are made simultaneously body and self as we take up and reproduce these discourses. The body is the site where this meaning making is played out, and simultaneously resisted, and that's the key to thinking through the body, that it is the place where we are made, and remade, perhaps and sometimes differently than the name intended. So rather than occupying a marginal space, in terms of importance, in our theories, the body is absolutely crucial in thinking through how we become the self and how we resist our subjective making. Inscribed by both hegemonic discourse and the voices of resistance, our body is formed as we simultaneously take up, negate, and reframe just who we can be.

The folly of trying to know something so well, so definitively, so finally is attested to by many that have influenced me. As Butler says, "to articulate the trace through a history or conceptual representation that is too masterful is to lose the trace again, this time through seeking to know it too full and too well" (Butler, 2004, p. 99). They give me hope that the spaces that i am opening up, to speak and experience myself differently, are significant. i am indebted to them for their insights, their wisdom, and their relentless, yet futile, pursuit of what is in the present time ineffable, yet may be able to be envisioned in the future. Language that is alive will inspire, provoke, and move us in directions we might otherwise not have been able to imagine (Morrison, 1994). Our work in this community of writers seeking alternative subjectivities is about traversing boundaries and imagining life in ways we previously weren't positioned to see. The experience of trying to think the body can result in those 'mind-forg'd manacles' that Blake (as cited in Sampson, 1998, p. 50) warned of. Similarly, as noted above trying to articulate something so well is to seek to contain it, and as we know that is futile and the antithesis of what we wish for the writing. i seek to open up spaces in the text not to close them down in language that summarises and denies us an engagement with it for it presupposes a reading and in that presumption, and in its linear form,

closes down alternatives. Many times as i have read and written, i have mistakenly thought i was tracing a thread that would connect all the frayed ends of this work, that somehow i would get a neat interconnectedness of the body, language, and subjectivity, that i would be able to weave them all together in some sort of coherent whole, of course i continually lost the trace and the splintering continued unabated by my efforts to name that space. i now realise that this was futile and undermining the envisionings of this writing, for i do not want to name, i do not want to contain or encapsulate. This is about opening up spaces, which is why i use words like breathe, ventilate, and proliferate, for i wish to embody in the text this sense of its being able to be entered in multiple ways, through multiple places, that it is not a linear narrative, rather it reflects the chaotic disorganisation that is life, that these are moments or fragments of life. Certainly the body has defied my best efforts to give it the coherence i have, at times, so foolishly desired. i have in the past struggled to let it be, to let it reside in its unboundedness of flesh, blood and language. i have resisted at times leaving it at its place of struggle, of unknown and unable to be known. Though now i realise that this is the space of my body, that it will be known to me only fleetingly and momentarily, but those moments are inspirational and i am enlivened by those experiences as i harvest and write them, knowing that i will never completely, nor would i want to, close down that space where meaning lies, but always i will arc towards it (Morrison, 1994). Our bodies are simultaneously both discursive and other, for they inhabit a space that language cannot encapsulate, a place that cannot be accessed fully through discourse. The body unsettles, it troubles, it will not be stilled which is perhaps why Barthes (1975) struggled to incorporate the language of the body into his work, that of *jouissance* or bliss, for this surely was the antithesis of academic writing, a disruption that provoked rather than settled. hooks (1990) too makes much effort to bring into her academic work a non-

academic voice, the voice usually reserved for family and friends, as a way of bringing in the multiple selves that she is.

As i harvest those moments and allow my body to infiltrate the text using metaphors that relay these sounds as acutely as i can, i seek to have the text punctuated by these corporeal openings. In dialogue with other feminist writers, including Morgan, Probyn, and Patton, i am embodied by this communal struggle to access our corporeal voice in various ways that enable it to reverberate through the text. Morgan asks what "insurrectionary speech", the speech we must strive for in response to injurious language might sound like in psy-discourse (Morgan, 1997, p. 369). Perhaps it would be a "whisper of shared breath/a rhythm of dialogue/a subjective poetics of colonised (subjugated) interiority" (p. 369). Something that brings with it the voice of the body, this subjugated space that is the devalued other of mind. A space most often allocated to those on the devalued side of our linguistic binaries - women, Black folk (i borrow the term 'folk' from hooks and hope she doesn't mind my sharing it here), homosexuals, and the working class, and so on. Though each story of the relationship between body and subject type differs, all posit the body and sexuality as central in the narrative. Whether we are referring to the promiscuity of the working classes, the frigidity of middle-class females, or the uncontrollable lust of Black people the stories all revolve around the binaries of mind/body, White/Black, male/female, and middle/working-class and are all located on the bodies of these specific types of subjects and are all related to the materialisation of these bodies by sex. We need to expand the possibilities for understanding and relating to our bodies bringing them into our subjective experience, rather than viewing them as other, as little more than an attachment.

Bayer & Malone (1996) talk of "the slippage between discourse and materiality of the body [which] intervenes in any feminist project that attempts to integrate the personal and the political ..." (p. 679). As i have noted we all inhabit this body, we all speak from this particular vantage point, be that socio-culturally and discursively constructed, so we are all body-situated. What we need to do is articulate that situated-ness as part of our historical and contemporary positioning, articulate that experience of inhabiting this body, at this time, in this world, in relation to other bodies with which we interact, see in the media, on TV, in films, through art, and so on. We need to think and theorise our position in our own bodies both historically, and contemporarily. In doing this, there will be the opportunity to articulate the times when we have resisted the dominant conceptualisations of gender, even momentarily. As we move along the path developing our critical consciousness, we can wield our tools of liberation - language and our body - to articulate that resistance in a way which will hopefully provide a space for, and inspire others to take up their own critical journeys.

It has been my desire in this writing to continually reflect on the body, on my body, on the bodies that other women inhabit, so as, even in light of the limitations described, make the best attempt i can to bring this body in, resisting as it does my efforts. To engage in "theory in the flesh" as Moraga & Anzaldua (as cited in de Lauretis, 1990, p. 138) so aptly dubbed it, which we must do if when we speak of resistance we must engage with and through our bodies. And of course we must, the body is the site of struggle, and will be from whence we seek liberation. As Sampson (1998) makes clear, there can be no emancipation from oppression if the road to liberation is entirely discursive, if it is only theorised as a linguistic journey. The body may well be formed through discourse, but the teachings of that discursive regime are inscribed onto our bodies. The body knows oppression as a load that literally weighs it down, carved into the muscles and fibres of our being, worn on our bodies like an ill-fitting and constraining overcoat (Sampson,

1998). To be free, to be truly liberated from oppression we must continually bring the body into our analyses. If the body is the site where the power play between oppression and resistance resides then any articulation of that resistance, any political direction of that resistance, will need to take into account how oppression works on and through the body, and how the resistance that is its antagonist can be made to work on and through the body also. The point Sampson is at pains to make is that the body is materialised through language but this materialisation is at the same time worn physically on the bodies of the oppressed. Any resistance will therefore need to alleviate this physical burden, to remove that ill-fitting coat that has become a familiar encumbrance. As i have moved through my critical journey of self, i have sensed a lightening of that oppressive burden, as i engage with my body, through language, in ways that allow me to experience it as more than objective other, i cast aside that old coat for it has never fitted me. i realise that there are many possible coats for me, each representing a fragment of my self and body. i no longer have to try to make one coat fit, for each day i will experience a different coat, no two will ever be exactly the same. We are engaged in a continuous process of thinking on and through our bodies, harvesting those transitory moments that enliven us where we experience that dialogue of body and self and can enable some of that in the language we use. We are continually reflecting upon the incorporation of the body into the text. When i read, write and think, i do so from a space that incorporates my corporeal self and what i seek to bring forth in the text is that dialogue of body and self which is the way in which we live our lives and experience ourselves.

i am inspired always by the 'sublime word work' of Morrison, who uses language in such a way that it sends us on a journey beyond the boundaries of the words, the page, the publication. We surge toward a meaning beyond, and are inspired to grapple with all the questions and confusion to seek that more fully, to live that more fully in our daily realities. It is during these times i have experienced a

meaning that transcends language, that exists beyond, but that can be entered only through using language well, responsibly, with our political agendas clear and salient. Similarly, i have experienced this momentary engagement with my body as i read Beckett, whereby the language seems to tap into a bodily dimension that surges towards a meaning beyond. We don't reach it of course, we can't, for it exists in a place beyond language, a place we don't inhabit, or at least we can't access because language is our means of being in the world. We inhabit a body in a socio-cultural and historical time, with a legacy of times before. And that body though the site of meaning making and struggle is simultaneously a body defined by language, made within our linguistic world and we must wrestle with language to use it in such a way as to transform our selves, and bodies, and our world. We can only do that through language, it is quite simply all we have. But it is a great deal. If we use language well, in the way Morrison inspires us, we surge toward something beyond, something spiritual, ethereal perhaps, the body which exists on the margin of that which we can access linguistically, and that which we know in those fleeting and inspirational moments when we sense a fusing of the body and language. When the language we use is almost enough, for it speaks even if only in barely audible whispers, our bodies. We write in a community of others who seek to alleviate oppression and we do so using language carefully, responsibly and reflectively. And in order to bring the body in we need to traverse widely, we must pay no heed to disciplinary boundaries and we must imagine and mine other spaces, and ways, through which we can speak our bodies. i am immersed in a community of writers struggling to define ourselves as women, outside the oppressive discourses of femininity, of heterosexuality, of class, and of ethnicity, and so on and without collapsing what it means to be a woman outside of 'woman' into an other universal, nominal, and bounded name. We struggle to tell alternative stories, to negate the old, and imagine the other, as we locate ourselves in spaces on the edge of the mainstream, on the margin. A space that allows us a peculiar vantage point, where

we see from the inside out, and the outside in, a place from which to critique, and to be nurtured, but also a place of struggle for our space in the margin is always in relation to the centre (hooks, 1990). This community includes artists, literary writers, philosophers, critical psychologists, and feminists, both in psychology and outside of it, but regardless of discipline they are perhaps better defined, in as much as we need a definition, as predominantly critical thinkers. And centering all this, and providing the place from which to understand the body in and through my analysis is the work of Sherman, a photographic artist, who uses her own body as a canvas. Her body is the artwork, but it is more than art, it is a political dialogue. It tells a story of resistance, of the body which defies the naming and framing process, of a site of struggle for emancipation from oppression. It tells the story of our societal obsession with the female body, and specifically with the sexualised female body (Bartky, 1990). It tells a story of the fragmentation of the body into its sexual parts, and eventually a complete annihilation of the body into detritus waste and decay. But woman is resurrected from the dust and debris in Sherman; it is not a story of absolute destruction, for from that space of annihilation of 'woman', woman emerges, freed of the parentheses that contain. In the 'Aging Woman' series I read, almost overwhelmingly, this sense of resistance and struggle, reminiscent perhaps of a coming of age, for know now of the facade of 'woman', and we refuse to be named in it.

However, we theorise the body, it is, I believe, that site of meaning making and contestation. And I find Wilton's suggestion of the body as a palimpsest particularly useful in thinking through the way in which both the hegemonic and resistant discourses are immersed within us, emerging in various configurations, as our experiences of self. That the body is a site which retains the inscription of the old, while being rewritten with the new, is useful politically. As Morgan and hooks have noted, we need to remember that oppression, rather like the old ANZAC adage, lest we forget, with the consequence that we can easily thus repeat

those past mistakes. We need to remember, to retain that memory in, and on our bodies, it is part of our history, something which continually informs us and is part of the dialect that gives rise to various configurations of our self. We need to remember our hegemonic legacy which is part of the self, negated now perhaps, but integral as part of our journey of critical and self awareness, and our understanding of ourselves as multi-vocal and located in relation to gender and those other systems of oppression that are interlocking, and mutually supportive (Bartky, 1990). Rather like du Bois who claimed to know the souls of white folk, we know the souls of our oppressor, we internalise this knowledge, we live it, but somewhere in this journey we began to articulate the critique, the resistance that we housed within, somewhere we found the words, a voice, to speak that resistance, to begin the slow and laborious task to revolution. Our goal is to negate the old ways of our oppressor, whom we coerce with every time we heed the call to be woman, to be feminine, and all that it entails, we must negate the old and imagine the new. We must articulate new subjectivities and in doing so allow the body to materialise other than it has been allowed thus far. The beginnings are there, but we need the words to help us find the way out of oppression. We need the words to critique our oppressor, to negate oppression in all its forms, and to open up a space to envision and imagine other realities and other selves. Gender, says Wilchins, (1995) are nothing more than "political accomplishments, cultural categories instituted to cause us to read the body in a specific way." (p. 46). And this specificity refers to the relationship between heterosexuality and reproduction, and its position as morally virtuous and signifying a normal and proper appropriation of gender.

We need to break free of all institutionalised understandings of ourselves, and others, those imposed on us through our immersion in the dominant discourses

pertaining to human beings, and who, and how they can be. We need to move beyond the dead language, beyond the binaries, beyond theories which speak of monolithic truths and seek to contain us with reference to notions of normality and nature. We need to find our voice, to speak in such a way as to celebrate the multiplicity of ourselves, the "sound of our bodies" that we are only now learning to recognise and bring into our theorising (Probyn, 1992, p. 96). This resonates with Haraway when she says, "we need to learn in our bodies ... to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name" (Haraway, 1991, pp. 190-195).

We need to speak in the vein of hooks (1990), bringing in our other voices, our multiple selves, so that in the speaking there is a sense of the other and thus we are opening up spaces to be heard in those places where there has been no space to speak from, other than to mimic the language of our oppressor's. But now as we speak in our multiple tongues we disrupt the text for these words in being spoken undermine its disciplinary boundaries, its rules of what can be said, by whom, and where. In doing so she reaches across boundaries, beyond disciplines, to encompass an audience greater than she might otherwise have been able to reach, had she chosen to speak only in her 'academic' voice, and to provide spaces for others to similarly bring forth their own multiple voices for in the disruption there is space to be other. And as always hooks writing is embodied by the politics that underpin it, that come from her located positioning and give rise to the multiple aspects of self that infiltrate the text. For in this multiplicity there is the history of us, that 'world' we bring to each encounter in various configurations and reconfigurations (Freeman, 2004). If we can harness those voices within, including our corporeal voice, and speak them through the text we can transform those speaking spaces within the text, for ourselves, and for others to take up in their own journeys of self. Our bodies are that site of struggle, that battle to tell the truths of the self and to materialise us in those narratives. The courage to resist

being named and framed in this way cannot be underestimated for we relinquish our recognisability, our desirability, when we refuse to be 'woman'. And if we aren't this woman, with this body, which is experienced in this way then who can we be, from what spaces can we speak, must we be relegated to nihilistic wasteland, outside the grid of intelligibility (Wilchins, 1995)? No wonder, for those women who couldn't give up their passion, their creativity, their desire, there was simply no option but to disappear into madness (hooks, 1994). We need to be embodied by the sense that we write within a community, that these words are interwoven, that they bleed out from the text and proliferate in ways both imagined, and unable to be as yet imagined. As i write i feel this interweaving, i am inspired always by this communal feeling, it keeps me oriented in the work, grounded in as much as i would want to be, that this work is important for it forms part of that growing tide of resistance against oppressive language, oppressive binaries and institutionalised oppression. We dare to envision woman as other, the excess of the name, and live these other selves despite the loss that this entails. For there is a grief of sorts, it is unsettling to leave behind the hegemonic self, even when we know we cannot stay we "cling to the terms that pain us because, at a minimum, they offer us some form of social and discursive existence" (Butler, 1997, p. 26).

And even though we must relinquish the hegemonic self we will reengage with it, for at some point in our critical journey there is a need to return home, though it is, of course, changed irrecoverably for we see it differently now (hooks, 1990). It is rather like the ending of a relationship which has long since run its course, we know intuitively that it is harmful to stay for it is stifling our ability to grow, but it has been such an integral part of our life for so long we remain with it for a time, even when we know its already lost, and even as we envision a time beyond. And eventually we return to that space and reconfigure ourselves in relation to that experience, and with an altered perspective, and what once may have caused us pain, must now relinquish its hold and we are free to move forward

remembering, but no longer weighed down by those past legacies. We need to be able to imagine other possibilities of self, and other ways of being, in order to move beyond the constraints of the name and to live on the edge of 'woman'. In order to move towards revolution we must be able to envision those other spaces. This is not a utopian vision for always we are located in the society and culture in which we live. We cannot step outside of it, for as Bartky (1990) notes, for women there is no "memory of a 'time before': a time before the masters came, a time before we were subjugated and ruled" (p. 25). So we must make our own spaces to speak the stories of our bodies and selves using a language that would undermine us at every turn lest we forget that using it is an act, but this time it is an act of resistance. Revolution is not a violent overthrow in the sense that we might usually conceive of it, rather, it is a series of subtle and sustained shifts in the way we think about our selves, and others and the place of hegemonic language in structuring and ordering the world in specific ways. We are troubling thinking, making it difficult to think in the way we have become accustomed, so that in the end we simply cannot think this way for we no longer see the world through the hegemonic lense (Foucault, 1982, p. 172). Myth is denied its distorting effect and essence loses its capacity to name as the literal reasserts itself and gives rise to its multiple truths. And we gaze into the surface we see only ourselves for this is the space from which we can know, as we locate there to read, to think, and to be other. There is no fallacy of depth or foundation, no essential self, there is only sustained and perpetual dialogue and engagement, from our located space on the margin where that which we know, even of ourselves, will only ever be partial (Butler, 1997). The shifts of this revolution are subtle but sustained, and each is simultaneously a chink in the foundation of Western society for as we negate the truth of our selves, our subjective names, we thus undermine Western ontology and language, for it is built on the assumption that the binaries which underpin our subjective ordering reflect the natural order of the world. Each shift though

subtle, destabilises that ideological foundation a little more and as i speak within this community of others i am embodied as i imagine the momentum of those voices of resistance, each one worrying the hegemonic order, each pushing further at its "boundaries of domination" (hooks, 1990, p. 146). We flounder for a time unsure, unsteady in this new world for we speak a counter-language and we see differently, but as i write i am continually aware of my connection to others. i am embodied by the interweaving of the text beyond its material boundaries, and this sense of it as something communal keeps me from being overwhelmed by what is, at times, a solitary journey.

i have wondered, as i engage with Barthes and Morrison, in particular, whether the body is that space through which we can access something beyond language, that it may allow us a knowledge that is not bounded by language for the body exists in the realm of the physical and experiential. Although, of course, our ability to completely and adequately access or enword that experience is negated because we are bound as we think, speak and write, within language. Though in reality it is probably matters little what ethereal space the body occupies for what we must work with, all that we have in our human capacity, to discover our world, our selves, and our subjective history, is language (Morrison, 1994). Language is the tool through which we will seek liberation from an oppressive regime which devalues people based on gender, class, body, ethnicity, sexuality and so on, it all its complexities. We must use language to tell our story, to open up spaces from which to speak alternate realities. And our political agenda will not be an ideology concealing the human relations which underpin it for there is no divide between the politics and ourselves, they are part of the same narrative, we live them daily, they are part of the story of ourselves, and how we exist in relation to other selves. And in the telling we will reflect continually on our story, and how it effects that relation to others, so that we do not inadvertently reproduce the oppression we so desire to alleviate in ourselves, and in opening up spaces for

others to take up their journeys. We need to remember as we tell our stories that we must "approach those of others with care and always remember that our stories, and our bodies, can displace others" (Probyn, 1992, p. 96). Our language will be the language of resistance, formed on and through the body, now articulated in voice. This language will speak of new subjective spaces which tell the story of multiple realities, multiple truths, which speak of difference as a way to connect rather than to divide.

The body is the site of a "struggle or contest over gender meanings" (Bayer & Malone, 1996, p. 674). The body is the place where the battle for the power to name is fought, and fought repetitively (Butler, 1990). I agree with Bayer and Malone (1996) when they say we need to think of the body as "both the site of oppression and as the possibility for emancipation" (p. 669). So our bodies are conceived here as that site of struggle over meaning making, the place to tell the ultimate story of self and other. It is on our bodies that power and resistance play out this struggle to name, it is therefore an integral part of the armour with which we will wrestle against the enforcing of gender domination. For this reason alone we need to bring the body back in to our theorising, into our thinking, articulated as best we can in putting our bodily experiences, our bodily voice to words. We all inhabit a body and it locates us in our geo-political space. We cannot disconnect from that locatedness, and it is an integral part of how we position ourselves, and others, and how others position us. We therefore need to find the words to articulate this bodily space, this bodily vantage point in our work. This is especially important for women who have been associated with a body primarily defined as the devalued other to the masculine-ised mind. A body which we have come to eschew as surely as society does as something external, something objective, something to be worked on and at to meet the changing societal, cultural, and capitalist demands that define femininity and ideal womanhood. We need to learn to speak of the experience of inhabiting a female,

made feminine, body in this social and cultural space and to negate those who talk for us and represent our bodies in ways contrary to that experience. We need to understand that the current obsession with the female body, in particular the sexual fragmentation of the female body (Bartky, 1990), perpetuates a discourse about woman and femininity which subjugates women and diffuses their political power coercing them into believing in this image of woman with claims of normality and nature, and by concealing the ideological privilege that such a conception entails. As Foucault told us, and i quoted earlier, we need to negate that which has been imposed upon us. We need to look below the surface of femininity and 'woman', to expand our subjectivities, to open up spaces to speak, a community of voices dedicated to speaking from the margin, critiquing the mainstream voice that has traditionally defined who and what we can be and has enjoyed the largest audience. Like hooks we need to speak in our multiple voices, to open up spaces for others excluded even within feminism, within the matrix of gender, to create those spaces where multiple voices can be heard, a dialogic space that inspires and moves us, surging us ever forward towards our goal of emancipation from all forms of oppression, all names which give us materiality whilst constricting us simultaneously (Morrison, 1994). When we recognise that the path from language to subjectivity takes place on and through our bodies, we simultaneously recognise that the liberation from this process can be located at this corporeal site, but that it is nonetheless, at the same time entirely discursive. We have language and our bodies, they are our resistant armour and they are enough.

So even as we do not have a coherent vision of that body that we bring into our theorising, we must harvest those moments when we can flesh out our bodies and enliven them in the text. It is experimental, imaginary, creative, artistic, for we are treading paths from our located corporeal spaces and we have no roadmap to follow, no guide, only an immersion in others simultaneously treading their own paths. Like Sampson's (1998) body, which emerges as the materiality

manifestation of oppression, we do not yet have a coherent vision of the body that signifies an embodied kind of resistance. Rather we have glimpses, subtle changes in the way we feel in our bodies, the way we move and inhabit them, at least that has been my own experience. And as we chart territory largely unmapped, we are learning as we go to engage with our bodies, to allow them to enter the dialect of body, language and self which they must if we are to speak them through the text and to transform those speaking spaces.

Picking Up the Pieces of Our Bodies - Disrupting Language and Basking in Life

For poststructuralist feminists the issues are no less complicated when we begin thinking about the body, our bodies, other bodies, and how we are to theorise, write and understand them in such a way that allows us to engage with them and bring them into our theoretical compilations. As Butler (1993) noted, it is "difficult to know what to retrieve under the sign of the body" (p. 28). But perhaps we aren't looking for retrieval, perhaps we are simply looking for ways to speak differently, for surely to seek retrieval presumes there is something available to retrieve, something that pre-exists that retrieval. Just because the body resists being named and framed equivocally in the hegemonic discourse, does not mean it is not given materiality by that discourse, at least initially we locate there in order to speak (Butler, 1993). Perhaps we need to think, as Morgan (2004) does of how we "speak and write [the body], and how this enables and constrains understandings of the body" (p. 153). How can we speak and write our bodies in other ways that enable us to open up spaces to be other, to flesh out the voices of our bodies and to enliven them through the text, to take up that space on the margin where we resist the hegemonic self? And surely this is what feminist poststructuralist work is all about, opening up spaces to think about ourselves and live our lives differently, spaces that take into consideration the

corporeal self and the way in which the body and self immerse. Further Morgan (2004) makes the point, and in doing so answers something of Sampson's (1998) critique of those who define the body as entirely made in discourse, that "the readings I perform are embodied readings, both as I write and as the reader reads." (p. 154). This suggests thus that the dialogue between the body and language is enlivened within the writing, so that necessarily Morgan's words are embodied as the words embody her, which is precisely what Sampson suggested we must do if we are to language our way out of oppression. He was concerned that the words we use must be able to liberate the body simultaneously as they speak resistance, and thus must be as embodied as the oppression that is inscribed, and weighs heavily, on the bodies of the oppressed. The words must be able to liberate, not only our understanding of subjectivity, but also our bodies worn down and inscribed by hegemonic discourse, they must be able to enliven our bodies with that resistance, that capacity to throw off those heavy burdens. And Sampson further makes the point that words necessarily already have this embodying quality inherent in them, presumably he is referring to the metaphysical structure of language which necessarily enforces those binaries upon which it is founded, they are inherently oppressive. So, and i have written considerably on this already, when we use language we are continually struggling against this imperative to assert in ways unintended (Barthes, 1977). And ours is, like Morgan is surely describing, a quest to speak in ways, that upset the structure of language, that make it less likely that assertions unintended will proliferate in the writing, and in subsequent readings, though of course we cannot absolutely safeguard against this. Just as Barthes career was characterised by a desire to write in a language unable to be summarised and cognitively shelved, to find a language that defied that which the academy most valued and threw it into disarray, ours too is a quest to write in language that shakes us free of those 'sedimented' understandings of self and body, and opens up spaces to experiment and experience ourselves in ways

that the language that we employ allows (Butler, 1993). And to do this the language we use must necessarily be creative, artful, poetic, bohemian even, it must be able to confuse, disorient, and defy the "calcified language of the academy or the commodity-driven language of science", for it seeks to trouble that which we take for granted, those most entrenched and canonised bodies of knowledge upon which Western ontology is built, upon which our entire civilisation is founded (Morrison, 1994, p. 16). All that we know of our society, our history, our culture and our selves will be thrown into disarray. As Butler (1993) said, in relation to thinking through the body, that we must necessarily be cast into a kind of epistemological wilderness, something which is vital if we are to understand bodies differently for we reconfigure in that space "new ways for bodies to matter " (p. 30). As hooks notes this process is complex and unlikely to be wholeheartedly embraced, especially by those for whom there is the risk of a loss of privilege:

Dare I speak to you in a language that will move beyond the boundaries of domination - a language that will not bind you, fence you in, hold you? Language is also a place of struggle. (hooks, 1990, p. 147)

It is no easy task to find ways to include our multiple voices within the various texts we create - in film, poetry, feminist theory. Those are the sounds and images that mainstream consumers find difficult to understand. Sounds and scenes which cannot be appropriated are often that sign everyone questions, wants to erase, to "wipe out. (hooks, 1990, p. 147)

So we are "set adrift" somewhat from our subjective 'home', that which we have known all our lives and we must, from this space of unknowing, begin to rewrite the self, our multiple selves (Morrison, 1994, p. 28; Freeman, 1998; hooks, 1990). We have to loosen the holds of hegemonic discourse, by writing in ways that trouble its claims to truth and validity, not just in the words that we use but also the form

that those words take. The way the story is constructed also reflects or resists the hegemonic order.

In the manner of hooks, Butler, Bayer, and Morgan, i hope that my writing is immersed with multiple voices, including my corporeal voice, and that those can be heard simultaneously as i speak. i hope that there is a sense of the dialogue that informs the work, between my self, situated as i am in this subjective and cognitive space, and others in various disciplines, both within and outside psychology, that have, and continue to, inform my thinking. i envision that it will embody the movement that i so desperately seek, that the words do not instantly harden on the page, becoming no more than academic calcified prose, but instead that they allow those engaging with the work to sense that movement that embodies the fluidity of life, and in so doing be inspired to continue or embark on their own journeys of self transformation (Morrison, 1994). i hope that i do not impose or suggest linearity where i am adamant none exists, that when writing and reading this work it embodies a sense of the circularity through which we live our lives, that which Freeman (1998) called "spirals of remembrance and return, repetition and reconfiguration, under the spell of ... mythopoeic desire" (p. 47). It may be the case, says Freeman, we need to story our lives, that this is something we've always needed as human beings, and that without it we risk becoming isolated and disconnected from ourselves and each other. The stories we tell of our lives may need to be oriented towards something more meaningful in order to repair the fraying "narrative fabric of the self" (p. 27). Freeman further suggests that perhaps we need to knit back into our narrative of self an embodiment to something greater than our selves, or even others, to something spiritual, though this is by no means limited to religious notions of spirituality. The point Freeman is making, i believe, is that our lives may necessarily need to be storied, and that these stories had better give us something meaningful through which we can orient our selves, or we will be overwhelmed by feelings of dislocation and isolation, we

will become frayed. Furthermore, Freeman asserts that the self isn't limited to our own temporal framework, and our inability to think of our selves outside of this has resulted in the fabric of the self becoming frayed, its edges worn away (Freeman, 1998). If we are to have any hope of imagining "how the narrative fabric of the self may be knit back together" we must begin to think of our self differently, as more than a product of the moment, but as something that precedes our birth and extends into the future and is interwoven in a ceaseless proliferation with other narratives, other selves (p. 48).

The reality of a narrative when thought in this way is unlikely to fit the linear form traditionally employed to story our lives. In reality it is more likely to be thought of as circular, and certainly, my own experience in compiling this work is one of continual reflection and reconfiguration. To write the self into a work such as this, which is integral of course, is very much a process of remembrance and return, that Freeman talked about, where that process of remembering, in order to transform, is from a point much altered from the actual beginning, were i writing a narrative from the beginning of my life, which of course would be impossible. i would have been, after all, a baby and unable to construct such a thing, and my narrative necessarily had began prior to my birth, born as i was into a pre-existing social and cultural world (Freeman, 2004). So always it is a process of remembering and knowing that these memories are fallible, that they are interwoven with aspects that aren't factual, in the way that we would traditionally conceive of this, yet they are part of our story of self and thus they are part of the truth of ourselves. Even when i am unlikely to have experienced them first hand, they are important for they have nevertheless spoken to me along the way and informed my sense of my self. And that these memories, real or altered by the passage of time, are reflected upon and the process is repeated from a place now altered too, with this newly reflected information. It is very much a process characterised by circularity, my beginning is not the start of the narrative but is,

instead, a subjective space altered by critical reflection formed through the process of remembering, returning and reconfiguring. As Morgan (2005) concludes in 'Remembering Embodied Domination': "I open up the ending of this paper [so the ending can be seen as merely another beginning at a different starting point] in the form of fragmented dialogues with a coupling of those other texts that have (across time) enabled these readings, and these questions ..." (p. 368). So unlike the traditional narrative sequence there is not an assertion of a beginning or end, there is always more to be added and the spaces from which to enter the text and participate in the dialogue, are multiple. A writerly text thus is non-linear, and the narrative can be entered at various spaces. It is an open text, open to interpretation, one through which we as readers must actively engage, actively construct some meaning for ourselves that we might use, from our own geopolitically located vantage point. I desire that the narrative I use and the language I harvest, embodies this sense of an open dialogic space where multiple realities, multiple voices can be heard and where difference rather than being seen as something to be appropriated is celebrated for its ability to enlighten, an important source of greater understanding of one another.

Neither do I wish to suggest that as the author, or more accurately compiler, of this work that I am, therefore, its centre, or that I am the expert knower behind the words. I have simply attempted to tell a story, my own, located within the other stories that I am immersed within, and in doing so understand, critique and transform my self in the process, and to open up spaces for others to similarly take up their own journey. This story is written from my own geopolitical space, located within various discourses, past and present, which are inscribed upon me. These I have previously imagined as a series of lines, or traces, inscribed on my body, that exist simultaneously and are interwoven in various ways. The outcome of this weave produces my own unique perspective on the world, it informs the space from which, and how, I remember. Any act of trying to read below the

surface for some essential nature or underlying meaning is futile, for none exists that can be pinned down, that does not reference away from itself. As Foucault (1979) noted the "author is ... the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning" (p. 159). In the writerly text there is not such fear for what is desired is this proliferation. To take up space as the figure of authority is to arbitrarily suture that flow, to shut it down, to locate it in such a way so as to try to enforce a stability that in reality does not exist. In an open dialogic space what i envision is that there will be an immersion of voices that whisper through the text, cited and uncited, corporeal and multiple, all embodying the language with life.

As i have discussed previously, the writing is a means of fleshing out and harvesting those fleeting moments when we sense that there is life in the words, and that the words are giving us a life that is different, that isn't that contained within the hegemonic discourses of self. Subtle and fleeting, these moments nevertheless are the stuff of inspiration and insight, and when we experience it the words move us, as they embody the fluidity of life, striving to open up rather than close down possibilities for being. Sometimes because the possibilities they allude to are difficult to imagine, existing as they do on the margin of what is normally able to be thought, we might manage only to grasp them fleetingly and then lose the trace. As Butler (1997) notes re-cognition or resignification "requires opening new contexts, speaking in ways that have never yet been legitimated" which can make them appear foreign and difficult to re-cognise (p. 41). But as Morrison (1994) tells us, even when we think we have lost the trace, when that initial spark appears somewhat dim on reflection, when we harvest language and use it reflectively we might just "suture the places where blood might flow" and this cannot be underestimated (p. 27-8). A spark has been ignited and though it may smoulder for some time, eventually the winds of change that ignited it will gather momentum and the spark will flicker into full illumination. As

Butler has argued, it is often when we seek to know something too well that we lose it, and i find this time and again in my writing. The more i struggle to conceptualise something in too articulate a way, to speak or think it too precisely, the more likely it is that i will lose that initial 'scald'. It is as if, at that moment, i experience the dialogue between my body and self, there is an ignition, a passion, which i desire to write, but i must take care not to suffocate it, to snuff it out completely, as i do, so i must choose language carefully and thoughtfully. As we move beyond those boundaries that bind us in hegemonic discourse, as we use language that shifts in subtle ways those arbitrary divides and we are transformed as we take up spaces on the margin of 'woman' where we flesh out other selves, other ways of being, other bodies.

Even with our continually changing perspective on the role of language and the formation of the self, feminist poststructuralists grapple no less with bringing the body into our theories in meaningful and satisfactory ways. And we face many other obstacles that traditional psychology, confined by its ontological and epistemological foundations, could not even envision, let alone address. Unable to deny language its instability and fluidity, ours is a journey epitomised by a struggle to speak in a coherent way knowing that the words we use may, despite our best intentions, may signify something other than we intended. Ours is a quest to use language carefully and responsibly, with our intentions at the surface so that those unintended consequences might be contained, or at the very least, diluted, it is always a reflexive exercise embodying the circularity of life (Freeman, 1998). We remain continually wary of the productive effects of language and the violent and assertive tendencies that language can entail. In dialogue with others in this community, there is a shared understanding of the difficulty of speaking of the body coherently whilst retaining its fluidity. Having spent much time trying to think through and define the body coherently, i was encouraged to read of Butler's (1993) similar struggle in trying to make the body stay within the boundaries of

materiality, and later by the endeavours of others similarly wrestling with how to think the body through language that inherently divides, and enforces, in ways we do not intend. For this reason, and others, the body is a particularly difficult concept to think through with any degree of clarity and in such a way that the multiplicity and movement that is an integral part of the body remains unaltered.

The body is an excess, it is more than that produced in language, and yet it is, for us, entirely discursive, which is to say, in our world organised through language, we can only access our bodies through language. i have spoken of the difficulties of speaking bodies both in terms of the enforcing properties of language and the recalcitrance of the body, that it is difficult to speak of in any coherent way without it at once slipping away. Which is why i speak of it permeating the text, breathing through it, for that is how i believe we will access our bodies, how we will enliven the text with that corporeal voice. As we give our bodies to the struggle, as we relinquish our recognisability, our desirability, we begin to reconfigure what it can mean to live in this body, in this located positioning and how this body might matter differently. There cannot go back 'home' for that is a memory for which the reality is forever altered. The self produced and reproduced in those hegemonic discourses is retained as a corporeal memory, but now we no longer embody that oppression, we deny its interpellation for we no longer recognise our self in that name for we are woman, stripped of the parentheses, we are that excess. We are no longer embodied by the narrative that underlies it, and like a child who no longer believes in the fairy tale ending, for 'happiness' must be more than passive acceptance, there is no going back. The body has been relinquished and as we reconfigure through our bodies and selves we bring forth our corporeal voice in the text, we speak, think and write from that dialogic space which is life, the immersion of bodies, language and the self.

Thinking Bodies and Speaking Other

The Souls of White Folk

HIGH IN THE TOWER, where I sit above the loud complaining of the human sea, I know many souls that toss and whirl and pass, but none there are that intrigue me more than the Souls of White Folk.

Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them. I view them from unusual points of vantage. Not as a foreigner do I come, for I am native, not foreign, bone of their thought and flesh of their language. Mine is not the knowledge of the traveler or the colonial composite of dear memories, words and wonder. Nor yet is my knowledge that which servants have of masters, or mass of class, or capitalist of artisan. Rather I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails. I know their thoughts and they know that I know. This knowledge makes them now embarrassed, now furious. They deny my right to live and be and call me misbirth! My word is to them mere bitterness and my soul, pessimism. And yet as they preach and strut and shout and threaten, crouching as they clutch at rags of facts and fancies to hide their nakedness, they go twisting, flying by my tired eyes and I see them ever stripped,—ugly, human. (du Bois, 1920, pp. 22-3)

Ours is not a quest to define the body, we know that is futile and of little use for our purposes. To seek definition is to buy into the facade that language reflects a stable and nominal underlying reality which can be described by the words that we use. Our goal, instead, is to experience our bodies in ways that aren't limited to

understanding them as an objective other, and to bring them into our theories in ways that allow them to be envisioned as something essential to our understanding of self, and to have those words simultaneously embody us so that when we speak of selves we are at the same time incorporating bodies. Which is not a task to be taken lightly, the language we use enforces at every turn the very binaries that we hope to un-think using that language. It is a careful and intrepid journey fashioning our words from the language we have. And what we end up with is in the end a counter-language, drawn from the language of the oppressor, but transformed, changed irrecoverably (hooks, 1990; Rich, 1987).

i understand the body, my body, as something made material, through language, as we take up and reproduce the discourses that speak the 'truth' of the self, which have come to be synonymous with the truth of our sexuality (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1993). Foucault discussed this in relation to sexuality in the Victorian era, which rather than its being repressed, as is commonly believed, was in fact a time of a proliferation of discourses on sexuality. During this time, text, talk, and theorising about sexuality, and concepts of normality and deviance, was prolific and the truth of our sexuality became immersed in relations of power and knowledge and as an object of scientific enquiry, in particular psychology and medicine became the designated experts of this newly defined subject matter. Our sexuality and our bodies came to be defined using scientific methods and as objective entities to be viewed from a distance, and their 'truths' became located outside our selves and bodies and our daily experiences of inhabiting specific bodies and selves. These new controls worked well with religious notions of the body as something requiring stringent mental control, especially those bodies believed to be particularly vulnerable to becoming unruly in this way, in those for whom the mind was believed to be weaker or less civilised. Not surprisingly this referred to women, the working-classes, and non-White people, especially those of African descent. So we can think of the body as being made material through

taking up a space designated by language that defines us as an intelligible subject and, therefore, allows us to be seen, and see ourselves, as recognisable human beings of one sort or another. And as Butler (1997) notes even though this is a double-edged sword, it is a call we must heed, initially at least:

There is no way to protect against that primary vulnerability and susceptibility to the call or recognition that solicits existence, to that primary dependency on a language we never made in order to acquire a tentative ontological status. (p. 26)

So this is really our space from which to resist, to speak out against that self and to imagine alternative ways of living and experiencing ourselves. We need this space of intelligibility to begin with, even though we come to realise it is detrimental for long-term habitation, and it is based on a specific and arbitrary ontological vantage point. Butler (1997) goes on to note that even after we begin to sense some of the tension and instability that the name conceals, it is still difficult to take up the space of the unrecognisable other, we still "sometimes cling to the terms that pain us", even as we move to spaces where we will better articulate that pain (p. 26). This is part of our critical journey, like the reality of leaving home, we do not overnight relinquish those 'comforts', we return time and again, but eventually there is not the same comfort to be found there for home has transformed and now it is multiple and fragmented (hooks, 1990).

So initially, and as a means to take up the space of valid and recognisable subject, we must take up the hegemonic discourse, it is that space from which we speak, and then later through which we resist and bring forth the voice of the other. And each time we are reproduced as normative self we simultaneously are reproduced as other, the abject self (Butler, 1997). When we heed the call of normative femininity we can only know that space by what it is not, the abject other that cannot be made to fit the constraints of normality, but exists anyway on the boundaries of the recognisable self. It is that excess, that unable to be

appropriated other. In order for the normative to be enlivened the abject must simultaneously breathe through us. It is somewhat ironic that language, structured by binary, must necessarily give life to that which it seeks to deny, to denounce, to call 'misbirth' (du Bois, 1920). In fact, the entire structure of Western thought, based on an ontological assumption that its structural linguistic binaries are in fact reflecting naturally occurring phenomena, rather than producing those very occurrences, can only maintain its claim to truth by concealing the actual nature of the relationship between power, knowledge and subjectivity. And as Foucault (1978) was aware, this is fraught with the perpetual risk of discovery:

Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions, but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance. (p. 101)

It is the case that when we begin to move beyond thinking of ourselves as individuals, entirely responsible for how we experience our self, we begin to look outward toward the wider social structure in which we live to seek some explanation for how we have come to know, and experience, ourselves in the ways that we do, and how this located positioning gives us a vantage point from where we view others and our world. As we start to unpack our subjectivity, informed by those others who speak and write in a similar vein, we necessarily are unpacking the foundation of Western ontology too. As we replace nature and fill it back in with history, and become demythifiers in the sense that Barthes spoke of, we can see that at the base of the truth claims are human beings, and more specifically, men. And once we fill the story back in with its human element it becomes an all together different narrative, one of characters and plot lines, heroes and villains, winners and losers, all constructed in a specific time and place and in relation to

specific occurrences in society. Foucault's work has allowed us much insight into the role of the human sciences, particularly psychiatry, in its role as expert knower of the human condition, which when dislocated from its ontological presumptions, becomes synonymous with non-White, non-male, non-middle-class human condition, with an agenda of control and containment (Sampson, 2001). In this narrative the expert knowers were almost exclusively White, male, middle-class, scientists, and more than likely working primarily in the field of social science. This is a far cry from the popular idea that what psychologists' knowledge really reflects is naturally occurring phenomena, and that the work of these experts has been to bring this to the fore using the most appropriate and objective methods available to science, and using language to reflect, rather than create this 'reality', something that occurs regardless of what anyone has to say about it. The ontological foundation that is the basis of Western thought relies on perpetuating the myth of nature, which is the presumption that at the heart of all those stories of self is nature. And therefore, that femininity and masculinity, and psychological notions of what it is to be a normal woman or man are based on this natural predisposition originating in our anatomical sex. Fortunately, critical work in psychology, and outside in other disciplines, has allowed us to cast off those blinkers that deny us seeing ourselves as a creation of language, founded in ontological and epistemological presumptions. We know that were we to unpack the self we would find no rock solid foundation, no nature from which all things spring forth, rather we would see an ugly human creation, founded instead on relations of power and privilege, and a desire to maintain those privileges by the subjugation of others. So we must unpack the self that psychology has bequeathed us, denounce its claims to truth and normality and thus free ourselves from its binds and open up spaces to think about other selves and bodies that exist on the edge of the normative, in the excess, those desired and desiring

selves that we have been unable to name, but which we now must locate and flesh out (Davies & Dormer, 2001).

As i understand Foucault's conceptualisation of power and subjectivity, the body made in discourse, inserted into the disciplinary matrix, materialised within relations of power and knowledge and made to move in particular ways, in particular institutional settings, is nevertheless, able to resist. It is, in fact, inherently resistant to being made in the name. For Foucault conceived of the subject as agonism and a 'permanent provocation' in the struggle to name us as specific types of selves (Foucault, 1982). One of my goals then, in this work, is to flesh out and make salient those opportunities for resistance when i become aware of them. And if we understand this as occurring through the regulatory norms of sex, which are the discourses that tell the stories of appropriate sexuality, that is, of heterosexuality then we cannot think of the body apart from its immersion in language, it simply cannot exist for us prior to this. And even though the body is, as Foucault (1984) said, "totally inscribed by history", this is not to say there is no room to resist our making as recognisable selves because that very space is the space from which we can also resist the dominant self (p. 83). As Foucault continually made clear in his work, where there is power there is always the possibility of resistance, they co-exist. If they did not then this would be domination rather than power in the sense that he conceived of it, as relations of power. And this was further troubled, says Butler, by the necessary reiterative process that being produced in the name requires. It doesn't happen once and forever, rather we are continually called upon to reproduce ourselves in the image of the dominant subjectivity which threatens to expose the fragility of that upon which the hegemonic discourses are founded. As Butler (1993) notes:

That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled. Indeed, it is the

instabilities, the possibilities for rematerialization, opened up by this process that mark one domain in which the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law. (p. 62)

So even though the body is made material in discourse, this is, as Butler (1993) notes, never complete, and there is always room for something other than the normative self to be re-signified in the reiteration process. The "mark interpellation makes is not descriptive, but inaugurative", it brings us into being, gives us a space from which to speak, and then we take up that space and speak differently (p. 33). So subjectivity is always fraught with tension, between the normative self and the abject other, which co-exist, which are brought into being in the same moment. This resonates with de Lauretis (1990) who understands this tension in relation to an excess, that which isn't produced in the normative image remains on the edge of our normative self, is the place where resistance is harboured and grows which i think of it in relation to those early feelings of irritation that we sense even when we cannot articulate it as the beginnings of resistance. And i am troubled too that this resurrects a tension with Butler. If we are fully made in discourse how can there be an excess, an edge, and is the resistance not about reiteration rather than an unable to be fully named or articulated aspect of the body or self? Although, it is the case that Butler's body isn't fully made in the normative image alone, in its reproduction it materialises both abject other and normative self. Like de Lauretis' (1990) excess, this is part of our armoury of resistance, that perpetual tension and struggle that permeates our subjective experiences, and denies the name its absolute truth. In an ironic twist that very language that gives us recognisability and allows us a viable life within the confines of normality, also offers us the possibility of other lives and other selves. Those spaces to be other are necessarily enlivened in each reproduction as the normative self, unintended, undesired, but enlivened

nonetheless. At the edge of 'woman' there is woman, unshackled of its confining parentheses, that excess is our liberation from oppression. We come to see that in the margin between 'woman' and 'man' there exists other selves which cannot be contained in either of those categories, and without being consciously aware of it, or at least without being able to always articulate it, we dip our toes into these metaphorical channels all the time, as the current moves and laps onto the shore, we sense that the 'I' that we experience isn't as stable as it is purported to be, and sometimes we test the waters as we experiment with and imagine other ways of being that aren't contained within the terms of normative selves. The margin, on the edge and very close, is always there, in fact it is within us, an integral part of our self, like Butler's abject other, and consequently our lives aren't as one dimensional as the subject of psychology, stable, universal, and nominal, would depict (Bayer & Malone, 1996). It is hardly surprising then, that many of us experience these tensions between the normative self and that which exceeds normality. And for whatever reasons, some of us choose to pursue these tensions, while others remain locked within the confines of the normative self. The myriad of factors which come together to explain why exactly some people seek to unpack their experience of self and others do not, is a mystery which is unlikely to be of particular benefit in solving. What is of particular importance, however, is that those who do embark on this journey of critical awareness pave the way for others to do so, not to mention our own transformation of self. They do this by telling their stories which necessarily, in any work that critiques the very processes that produce us as viable and recognisable human beings, involves peeling back the layers of sedimentation, those built up ideas that are taken to be the 'truths' of our society, upon which the 'truths' of ourselves are foundered.

Harvesting the Body in Metaphor

My own experience has been that some well chosen metaphors have allowed me to think through how this process might occur in a more sustainable and coherent way. i have found that both the inscription metaphor and the auditory metaphor have helped me bring the body into my work, to allow it a space in my theorising so that i can keep it close as i work, and that when i am enlivened by words or by art, my body too is engaged in the dialogue and is simultaneously changed, enlivened, materialised differently in subtle but persistent ways. i have found often that those metaphors which speak the body's physicality work to harvest it, to open spaces in the writing for it to be heard. As i imagine the body as agonist, as permanent provocation to the power-knowledge-subjectivity relationship, i find these metaphors most elicit that bodily disruption, that haunting. i imagine my body as a tenuous rubbing, a constant agonising shrill, tortuous and perpetual scraping, perhaps something like the sound of fingernails drawn across a blackboard, we could not but, be troubled by it. In dialogue with Morgan and others, i have been able to think of the body as a sound, a rhythm, an-other voice that we can hear if we position ourselves in a way that facilitates listening. And if we can hear the voice of the body then it may reverberate in our theories, as we experience our self against this backdrop, a quiet murmuring amongst those other voices that speak to us, both the hegemonic and the subjugated stories of self.

My goal is thus to harvest these sounds, these tiny seeds of change when they struggle through the layers of hegemonic discourse which form like a crust of hard baked earth around them, threatening to strangle the fragile seedling, making their way in a hostile environment which fears, and so makes no room for, difference. We must make and open up those spaces where the body can be heard, and where that sound can illuminate and inform our theories as the words embody us. Those spaces might not always be filled with sound, sometimes we will

miss the mark and our best efforts will fail to reproduce a seedling, but we remain in that space, that marginalised place, poised, listening, at the periphery, ready to harvest those imaginings of alternative selves and bodies when they speak to us, when we are able to listen to them (Morrison, 1994).

When we try to think the body as something that has a definable and knowable boundary or outline, when we try to know it too fully and too well we lose the trace of it, we effectively close it down and contain it (Spivak, 1989; Butler, 1990). And as soon as we start to do this the body defies us by seeping out of the words we use to explain, and contaminating other definitions by its inclusion. We make the mistake of trying to think of the body as having an outline. Instead, we need to think of it as being convergent with our experience of subjectivity, having been made or materialised simultaneously as we are made a subject through our taking up of the hegemonic discourses of self. So the goal then should not be to think the body absolutely in a coherent and tightly structured way, or in any structured way at all, but to have the body infiltrate our theories, and to be alert to this infiltration when it occurs, which is where i believe metaphor is particularly useful. Metaphor can employ things that embody the movement and multiplicity that we are trying to engage with when we seek to transform ourselves, our bodies, and open up spaces for others to do the same. So that we can imagine the body in ways that allow its fluidity to be sensed, that allows this movement to permeate the dialogue, even if it is just for a moment. As i have previously written, these moments are fleeting and rare but they are the lifeblood of work that seeks to transform our selves and our bodies using language that is revolutionary and experimental, harvesting those visions, those glimpses when they appear, opening up the cracks and crevices that are the tensions that permeate our experiences of self. Rather like an archaeologist uncovering evidence of past life, this work is painstaking and much care is needed. Language with its inherency to distort, with its ontological foundation must be handled carefully, and just like the excavator

we don't want to destroy that which we seek to bring forth to the world, our words are carefully chosen so that they don't render destruction where we hoped they would offer liberation from oppression. When we think of the body as auditory, and this isn't such a leap considering our body is that through which we perceive sound, and from which we emit sound, we can think of the sound of the body becoming enlivened in our words and we can try to write so that we open up and make spaces through which our bodies can be heard, in the hope that when we experience those "gaps and fissures" and we no longer recognise ourselves in the image of the dominant discourse, when we are called 'woman' and we don't recognise ourselves entirely in that name, that somewhere in that process of reproduction and re-cognition the body is heard as we bring forth alternative stories of self and make spaces to tell our stories of located selves (Davies & Dormer, 2001). As we expand who we can be and make spaces for other ways in which to understand and experience ourselves i imagine my body being enlivened by these words as the words embody me, a dialectical process between that language that resists and my experience of self and body. And as i inhabit this body which now exists on the margin, in the space of the other, the space of critical consciousness, and as i resist from this subjective-bodily space using theory to engage and dialogue with those others who simultaneously speak from the margins, and as i write from this space my body is transformed, because i am writing the self with a goal to transform that which i can be, the ways which i can experience myself, to expand the parameters of recognisable selves, and as i do so the body necessarily moves too. i like the idea of the writing/writhing which immediately seems to bring the body into the process of writing, the body as being transformed in that very process, as we write and transform the body. In particular the word writhing is strongly associated with the body and with movement, especially and importantly, with struggle. The body writhing evokes a vision of movement that is difficult, laboured, and painful, movement that is not

easily won, but rather is the process of lengthy struggle. When i think of writhing bodies i think of childbirth when our bodies are contorted, wracked with pain in that laborious struggle to relinquish our bodies of the unborn child. This is how i imagine the writhing body as it refuses the name, as it contorts against that injurious term that would constrain and try to make it still. i find thinking bodies as writhing and having that embody the writing works well because the text is a place of struggle against language that would enforce once again oppression, and it is a space through which we will be transformed.

i understand this process as a continual dialogue between body and subjectivity, each speaking to and transforming the other, never separate, always connected in this way. It is my hope that the voice of my body infuses my writing, and the writhing seems to indicate this transformative process, that the body is made differently just as we experience ourselves differently when we engage in theory and open up spaces for otherness in our writing. i often have used the metaphor of voice in this work to bring the body in which speaks of this internal dialogue between body and self and how they are formed simultaneously through language. Similarly, thinking of the body as being inscribed by discourse is also helpful, and is a metaphor i also use a lot to enable me to imagine how the discourses immerse within one another and give rise to our experiences of self. The body is an altogether different conceptualisation when we think of it as something inscribed by discourse and written on by culture. And when we think of language as having the capacity to shape, indeed to make, that which we might have held to be the most material of all, our bodies, then it becomes both that place of subordination and of liberation. To embody in the writing the sense that this is a transformation of selves and bodies becomes a most pressing and political concern.

The Site of a Struggle to Name

The goal of all those committed to change through an understanding of language and discourse, is to find the language, the voice, to bring the body, our bodies, into our theories and in doing so allow the multiplicity, allow the movement, and accept and celebrate the troubling. This is, of course, easier said than done, the body is phenomenally difficult to still long enough to speak of it in ways that touch on where we might envision it in our theories. In dialogue with Butler and Foucault, i understand the body as the site of the making of the self and as the site where that making is contested, the body is that space where the struggle to name takes place, it is a place of both dominance and resistance. The subject is an 'agonist' (Foucault, 1982). i want to stress that when i speak of the body as inhabiting both a physical and a discursive space, i do not envision the body as having a physical aspect that we can access outside language. On the contrary, i understand the body, at least as that which we have access to, as being made entirely on and through language, but that this discursive reality is, nevertheless, located on a body that also has a physical aspect. Everything we understand about our bodies and all of the ways in which we experience and know them we do so through language, every aspect of how we interact and think of our bodies is discursively produced, our world is entirely linguistic, we cannot think or step outside of this space and yet our body exists in an other space as well. And this is a world language cannot quite fully gain access to, because when we try to voice it we inevitably end up losing some of the meaning, and that ethereal gap we sensed that held some meaning beyond language remains an unable to be fully articulated vision but vital, nonetheless, because we are moving toward it, language takes us there even if it can never quite encapsulate it. Language's capacity, "its force, its felicity", says Morrison (1994), is in its ability to "arc toward the place meaning may lie", and this is why we must continue our quest to unravel the relations of power and knowledge that give rise to those recognisable subjectivities, and their

underlying foundation of privilege and subordination (p. 20). The idea of the gap, the void between life and the articulation of that life through thought, talk and text is an important one and the body bridges this space because it is part of a world that cannot be fully enworded, we experience life through our bodies in ways that aren't entirely able to be thought or spoken about but which give us that all important glimpse or something else, an alternative to the constrained life that is given to us in the name. It is like Foucault's "breath of life", our bodies are our means to moving towards the gap because they exist in that world unmediated by language, not, as i have said, for us to access but existing, nonetheless, connecting us somehow to something more. Sampson speaks of the bodies experiential knowledge as being quite different to discursive knowledge, the body knows oppression in its muscles and bones, as a weight worn on, and bearing down upon the body. The experiential aspects of oppression then encompass something quite different, or at least which exceeds, that which we can articulate in language when we speak of oppression, something is lost, something remains unable to be worded. You only need to think of the instances, and they are frequent, when language fails you, when it clearly does not quite reflect the experience. Instead of the words capturing a moment they seem to immediately diminish the meaning that you grasp toward, and the outcome is a watered down version of the original, losing that ethereal quality that the bodily voice reverberated. The words fail to purvey the experience, hinting perhaps at the meaning, but vulnerable to distortion, and easily carried off in directions unintended and unimagined.

The Voice of Our Bodies in Art

The project before us is a theory of the body, and the incorporation of the sound of our bodies within our theories.
(Probyn, 1992, p. 96)

In dialogue with Morgan (2005), i believe the body can enter our theories in small, seemingly insignificant ways, as a whisper, or a murmur, for example, and when

that happens we need to be ready to hear those sounds and incorporate them into our narrative voice so that in telling our stories we are simultaneously enlivening them with the voice of our bodies. And that these moments too must be harvested for the precious nuggets they contain, these are the places where the gap is bridged and where we glimpse another way of experiencing and knowing our selves. And like our bodily voice, which whispers of the experience of life, art too can sometimes bridge the gap, provide us with those all important visions of alternative selves. Those imaginings of a life where we can experience ourselves in multiple and fluid ways, where we no longer artificially shut down the flux of life, and where we celebrate rather than denigrate difference are sometimes brought to the fore through art. In this work i have come across examples of art which i have experienced as enabling that vision to come closer through art, and it might not be stabilised, it might not stay for more than a moment, but this momentary glimpse provides hope, buoys us on in our quest to be other than that made in the name.

Embodying Theory

That it's so much of the time just a subject - a "discourse." The person does not believe in a real way that "what I say here, this theory I come up with, may help change the pain in my life or in the lives of other people. (hooks, 1990, p. 215)

There is no doubt that this research is enlivened within me, there are no boundaries between the writing and my life, they interweave, intermesh, bleed through each other, as, of course, they must. As i write i seek to embody myself in the text, so that this dialogue of personal and political is enlivened. i grasp to harvest that language, through metaphor, to speak my body, to have it breathe through the text and thus open up spaces for bodies to be heard in ways that do not relegate them to objective and silent other. As i dialogue with others seeking

similarly to speak the body and self in other ways, i have found that my immersion in art and literature has allowed me to engage with my body and self in ways that enliven that theory, in my flesh. i envision that an engagement with multiple sources, and across various disciplines, may facilitate, in fact be integral, in incorporating our bodies into our theories, in ways that allow us to tap some of that experience, to make the whisperings and murmurings of our bodies audible, so that when we speak our theories the voice of our bodies can be heard too, and that when we think of our self we simultaneously incorporate the sound of our bodies. In effect we are thus repairing the Cartesian split, which as Morgan (2005) noted, is a metaphor of shocking violence, when thought through from a bodily and physical perspective. As i do this work i find that these visions that are unbounded by discipline, that allow the immersion of arbitrary divides are those that enable me most often to embody that bleeding in the text. Art, literature and the body are that from which i locate to harvest language that enables me to speak my experience of that gap between life and language, not fully, not even adequately at times, but in an arcing towards a meaning beyond the word, beyond the name, beyond the text. As i write i desire to enliven that gap, to give it "a color, a form, an intensity that doesn't say what it is, and thus to allow it to remain alive (Foucault, 1994b, p. 256).

Thinking Outside Binary, Healing Splits, and Retrieving Bodies

Understanding the body as being inscribed by discourse has allowed me to bring the body into my theories in such a way that it no longer occupies the space of devalued other of the mind/body binary. Rather it becomes an integral site in the struggle to give us our subjective names, a discursive space where those stories of the self are inscribed and inlaid upon one another, and give rise to the ways in which we experience ourselves and the ways in which are bodies are made material. Just as the body of Kafka's torture victim was literally inscribed with the details

of his punishment, our bodies are punished by metaphorical inscriptions. As Sampson (1998) said our bodies are oppression personified, we literally wear the weight of that subjugation on our shoulders. Similarly, Foucault (1984), felt that the destruction of the body was central in assuming our given subjectivities, that the body must be broken down in order for the hegemonic self to emerge traced, and thus named, by the history of that emergence.

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body. (p. 83)

And though Foucault relates inscription to destruction here, it is also the means whereby we emerge as recognisable beings, without which we could not position our selves in ways that oppose the hegemonic inscriptions and seek out alternative spaces from which to imagine alternate subjectivities. And that this process is one of reiteration, so that this destruction is never absolute and complete, but partial and open to being appropriated as something other.

Embodying Transformation

We must ask as we struggle to think, speak and write bodies so that the dialect is embodied in the text, so that it seeps and leaks and the edges, how transforming the way we envision our bodies outside traditional understandings of bodies wholly objective, saturated by sexuality or relegated to the wordless voids of medicine and science, transforms our experience of our bodies.

i ask if thinking my body in other ways, harvesting my corporeal voice and breathing it through the text, embodying the dialogue allows that dialogue to be embodied in my self and transforms my daily experiences in my body.

i ask if thinking my body in these transformed ways allows me to celebrate my body in ways that thinking it through hegemonic discourse did not, in a sense that i am free to be in my body in ways that were previously denied, harvesting, rather than denying the tension and contradiction of the name, to usher forth life, in all its complexity.

i ask if thinking my body positioned, and positioning, in Sherman's art, allows me to experience my body as a means of resistance, as part of the armour which i will wield to struggle against oppression.

i ask if thinking my body on the edge of the normative, the recognisable body, allows me to shift in subtle ways, what we take to be recognisable and normative bodies, so that what is transformed is not simply the way in which i envision and live in my own body, but the foundation upon which bodies are thought.

i ask if thinking my body in this way is like the epicenter of the earthquake, i begin here at that space i know, starting (at this transformed beginning), speaking from my located and positioned, and necessarily partial, seeing place (the center of what i know at this point in time), but as i speak and transform my self through language that resists, the tremours ripple through the foundation of the self, disrupting binaries and inserting humans in place of nature, for what i deny when i deny the hegemonic body is 'woman', and all that it is founded upon.

i ask if thinking my body in these other ways, arcing with language to appropriate spaces where the body can be heard, sensed, enlivened in the text, allows me to connect with my body in a way that is denied by hegemonic discourse, to be free, in a sense, to enliven and experience my body in its multiplicity, its fluidity, to imagine my body as flowing through the text, to embody that flow.

i ask if thinking my body from the margin, as i engage with Sherman, and all those in this community in which i write, allows me to be embodied by this struggle that

sustains, that in that struggle embodied within me, there is a sense of my body as strong and resilient, a sense of my body as a warrior (and worrier of discourse), in a battle that will ultimately save our lives.

i ask if thinking my body, through harvesting language and appropriating space to allow it to whisper through the text, allows me to be embodied by its space of resistance, and perpetual antagonist of the normative self, that i might envision my body and embody language with this sense of tenacity, diffusiveness and recalcitrance.

i ask if thinking my body as that which denies definition and negates hegemonic truths, as that which will not be absolutely and finally named, and remains on the edge transforming that space of resistance, allows me to be embodied by this sense of a perpetual struggle, that through our bodies we will revolt, for the body refuses to be bounded, refuses to speak as univocal, always it leaks and seeps at the arbitrary boundaries of the name, denying their truths and embodying us with the tension that begins resistance.

i ask if thinking my body in ways that do not relegate it to spaces of normality or farcical essentialism, allows me to be embodied by the non-normative and to enliven this in the text, to harvest these experiences and be embodied by that dialogue, as they weave in and out of language, on and through bodies.

i ask if when i think the body through metaphor, and through art and literature that transgresses boundaries, that of Basquiat, Sherman, Beckett and others, it allows me to be embodied by that flow, by that experimental and transgressive insurgence, to be enlivened by that language that in its being experimental, creative, provocative and corporeal sutures those places where we blood might flow, which is to say, enables life to bleed through the text, the body to bleed through boundaries and for the language to be embodied by the flow.

i ask that in harvesting the sounds of our wordless bodies, i have achieved what Hansberry asked and suggested that we must, that i "have given my body to the struggle", that it is formed by this struggle, but this isn't an oppressive load for the struggle enlivens me and the sense of my body as armour, as aggressive corporeality, surges through me and as i speak, think and write something of the flow, of the surge, breathes a life into the text that enables the body to whisper through the opening of a space, no less monumental for its subtle shift.

i ask that in the space of relinquishing the hegemonic body of 'woman', and recovering the lived, experiential body, of woman, i envision my body in other ways and i am other, that i live that other in the flesh.

i ask do i experience my body now, through language that allows it to flow through the text, as a kind of flowing jouissance, an orgasmic equivalent of being enriched in ways that words will always fail to convey fully?

i ask have i taken up spaces on the edge of the normative body that allow me to be embodied by the sense of myself as insurgent, as revolutionary, and to be embodied by that sense of a struggle that is immersed within a community of others, and moves in ripples though has the effect of a tide in the magnitude of its political envisionings?

CHAPTER FOUR

TROUBLING METHOD

Do you believe that space can give life, or take it away, that space has power? These are the questions she asks me which frighten me. (hooks, 1995, p. 65)

i am uncomfortable with words like method or methodology for they seem to bring with them the legacy of scientific empiricism, to suggest steps and procedures that should be slavishly and unthinkingly followed. And because this work is the antithesis of that, when i think and write method the text hardens and it is as if a block threatens the flow of language, disrupts the fluidity that i seek to embody in the writing. So this is not method in any systematic, rigorous or universal way, it is simply that which i bring to the art, how i engage with the art, the way in which i can read it in my located positioning on the margin of the normative. In its most simplistic form it is merely the way i have in my geopolitical locatedness been able to read Sherman, immersed within many voices, which span various disciplinary 'boundaries', including art, literature, cultural studies, psychology, and philosophy, all seeking ultimately to transform the self, and open up spaces on the periphery of the normative, for others to take up their own transformative journeys. The politics and the personal converge and what we seek is both a critical engagement with Western ontological and epistemological understandings of knowledge and knowledge acquisition, and a subsequent transformation of the self. It is an expose of how this particular story of self, and other, became designated as truth, and how its ideological underpinnings, its specific relations of privilege and domination, remain concealed within a veneer of science, nature, and assumptions of normality. We must dare to question the unquestionable - nature and sex. We must ask how our understanding of ourselves as female, as inhabiting a female body, was linked to sex, biological and population control, and an ontological shift.

Foucault (1978) understood the modern preoccupation with sex and its marking of the body in specific and recognisable ways, as occurring during a discursive explosion on sexuality that occurred in Victorian times which rather than repressing sexuality gave rise an intimate knowledge of sex and bodies, in ways previously unable to be conceived of, and thus did not reflect a pre-existing reality, but produced one. What we came to know of sex and bodies had shifted, an epistemic shift had occurred.

Reading in Transformed Spaces

The way in which i am able to read Sherman, is of course, located and geopolitical and is about altered vantage points. As i sought to understand how i have come to experience myself in the way that i do, in that tension-ridden subjective place, 'woman', i discovered that the idea of an essence founded in nature is a fallacy, and it is certainly not the truth of ourselves, for it is a 'truth' founded outside the self. Instead what we have are stories, a story of 'woman' that over time and through a process of reiteration, and sedimentation, has come to be known as truth. But still it is a story, located in a specific time and place, and complete with heroes and villains, winners and losers, and a well constructed plot. But this is no ordinary tale, this is after all, the story of our lives, one which we will live and relive continuously through our very bodies. And our casting in the role of hero or villain isn't something we can choose, or indeed even aspire to. This subjective space is something that precedes our birth, it is, quite simply something into which we are born. This doesn't however mean we have no resistance to this reiterative naming. In order to stop re-storying our lives in this way we must seek out those other stories which exist on the periphery of the normative, and in our bodies. And as we embody these in our writing and enliven them in our bodies, their existence undermines the hegemonic claims of the self as unitary, nominal, normal, and fixed. We read from our stories now, as we take up those spaces in the

margin, where we create our selves anew, the reading is an active process, an engagement with the text from our located, and fluid, spaces of self and body. The reading is a bringing forth of self and body to the text, to the images, it is that located 'beginning' Barthes spoke of, where we immerse from that space we are now, from what we know of subjectivity, of bodies and of Western ontology, and we read from there. It is the relinquishing of essence, for we do not read from a foundation, we do not read from those places that presume a known order, we read in engagement and we usher forth that dialogue of bodies, selves and language.

Practicing Reading from Altered Vantage Points

More than anything else, this work is about transformation, and primarily transformation of the (and my) self, the (and my) body, and gender. When i think method obviously i am not thinking of it in the constrained methodology of science, but outside of that, on the margin of what a method can be, and of how it might transform in this work. Like everything about this work, there is a refusal to accept that which we have been told is truth, and to imagine instead and explore the boundaries between 'truth' and imagining, to go beyond and seek out other ways of knowing and being. This work does not have a method in any traditional sense, but it does encompass a way of moving in the work, a way to read, specifically in this case it is a way to read the art of Cindy Sherman. This reading practice is primarily about my immersion in a community which imagines other ways to be the self, to experience our bodies, ways that negate the unitary self and open up spaces for that self to proliferate and fragment, to embody multiplicity. It is a practice of reading which comes from, (a) my own life, the history that i bring to this work, now altered of course, but nonetheless, inscribed upon me and certainly influencing my decision to take up work of this kind, something brought me to this work, some interweaving of life experiences, for reasons not entirely

known i inhabited, desired to inhabit, a different vantage point; (b) my immersion from the outset of this work, during and before, in the writing of others whose work seeks to speak selves differently, other, they have informed and developed my ontological perspective; and (c) an immersion of these multiple aspects of self, which is a critical engagement in understanding the way i experience my self, in the past and now, and how the dialogue within this community of writers transforms, both my self and my understanding of Western ontology, binaries, and notions of truth and normality, and allows me to think on the margin of these hegemonic voices and to imagine alternative spaces where we might speak these other narratives, tell other stories that aren't constrained by the name, be that gender, race, sexuality, class, and so on. The method is as much a personal as a political one, and therefore, it is not about prescribing a way to do this work, but showing how i have attempted to open up spaces on the margin, to inhabit that crevasse, to be embodied by this resistant space and to enliven that resistance in the writing. And in speaking this space, in relegating 'woman' to the space of story, and allowing the other to breathe through the text, i envision that perhaps others will too sense that we all live in multiplicity and fragmentation and in that awareness seek out their own journey of subjective transformation. As Foucault (1994) pointed out, this is always a personal as well as a political journey. And in relation to his own work he noted that it was about working from those spaces where he saw, and presumably was positioned to see, inconsistencies and tensions in relation to his own experiences with others, or in institutions, and that "each time was partly a fragment of autobiography" (Foucault, 1994, p. 173). As of course it must be, we must be that 'theory in the flesh' in order that we can enliven it in the writing. We simply cannot write in this way once removed from the text, it is a dialogue and the writing must embody that dialogue, as we simultaneously are embodied by it (Sampson, 1998). If this is not simultaneously

our life as well as our work we may be just one of those many for whom this becomes little more than an academic exercise:

many of the people who are writing about domination and oppression are distanced from the pain, the woundedness, the ugliness. That it's so much of the time just a subject - a "discourse". The person does not believe in a real way that "what I say here, this theory I come up with, may help change the pain in my life or in the lives of other people. (hooks, 1990, p. 215)

We do, and must, relinquish all to the struggle, including our bodies for the struggle is ours alone, located, positioned, and in that space political, and though we open up spaces and those spaces may enable others to make their journey, ultimately the "life we save is our own" (Hansberry, as cited in hooks, 1990; Walker, 1984, p. 14).

So herein this is a personal endeavour immersed within political envisionings. I have, and continue to critically engage with the self, in order to transform that self as I take up a space on the edge of the name and speak those excesses of 'woman', ethnicity, class, and sexuality, that we experience everyday in our lives, yet we do not, or cannot speak, for to do so is to undermine our very recognisability. And as I critically engage with the experiential self my understanding of the wider ontology upon which the hegemonic self is founded simultaneously alters, as the tensions and inconsistencies are revealed and it becomes necessary to attend to these. We need to make that transformation both 'urgent' and 'difficult', in the sense that we must attend to it for we cannot now live this hegemonic self, and further that we must struggle against that naming, as we simultaneously flesh out our other selves. And thus in the difficulty those changes are inscribed upon us, etched in our memory, "deeply inscribed in reality" (Foucault, 1994, p. 172). So this work is about troubling thinking, so that what we had taken to be normal and natural now appears contrived and strange, for it has been revealed in its arbitrariness, its human input has been made to

speak and we see it is 'ugly' and 'human' in its ideological foundation of privilege and subordination (Barthes, 1982; du Bois, 1920). i have experienced this in my journey, especially in relation to Butler's denouncement of sex as natural, and its reconfiguration as materialised in language and on bodies. The theory, the thinking and the struggle with language and bodies, is such that the journey has been arduous enough to be etched in the daily reality of my life. i am Moraga's 'theory in the flesh', embodied by language that will not be prematurely silenced, stilled, but remain proliferating out and through.

Instead of a method this is a reading practice, or perhaps a reading engagement, for it is the way i engage with the text now, in my subjective transformation, which will necessarily never be complete, remains open, unending, variable and perpetually in motion. The engagement certainly is nothing like a method, there are no rules, no procedures to follow, no hard and fast expected outcomes. It is an engagement, which is a dialogue and in that dialogic space some of the flow, some of the intertextual weave in and out of the text will be unanticipated, unintended, and often times, inspirational. i am consistently following traces that surge me on, moving me towards a meaning i scarcely know how to speak, i am reluctant to enword, for i fear language's enforcing, and calcifying, properties, and i desire the flow to permeate the text, thus enabling some of the surge to be embodied in the words. i engage from my most personal, my most intimate spaces, the body, the experienced self, to read the work, it is again the embodying of a dialogue, yet this engagement is, simultaneously, entirely about discourse, hegemonic names, resistance and revolution, for what is sought in the negation of hegemony and the liberation of other, is at the same time, changes in thinking, in ontological and epistemological understandings of self and other. It is a retelling of the story of our selves, and the wider story of subjectivity, so that what counts as truth is no longer nominal or stable, but is multiple and dispersed. And we read now our truths from spaces of geopolitical location, so that knowledge and selving

are a process of the reading, we construct the self, fluid and ever changing as we engage with the text, and interact with other selves, and our world. We tell our stories and they are necessarily partial and located, they are not the entire story of us, for we cannot know ourselves completely and finally, our stories transform just as the self transforms, and in relation to our encounters. Our unknowingness of our self, our location in partiality and incompleteness, should perhaps be our most celebrated achievement, a most precious jewel, it may be that which brings us together, that which connects us as uniquely human (Butler, 2001).

A reading practice that is located engagement is woven through this entire subjective and political journey, and is not simply an aspect of the analytic. The entire process is about engaging or dialoguing from a subjective space. The critical journey of self is an engagement with the discourses that have spoken, and speak to me of possible selves. i am embodied by that continual engagement and dialogue within that community of others in whom i am embedded, and through which i compile my resistance. And now i bring this transformed vantage point, this altered seeing space, to the art so that i engage with it in this located way. It is a practice of reading which is about altered vantage points, about shifts in seeing places, about changed ontological view points. These aspects of it are entwined in such a way to be inseparable, each informs and transforms the other, we simply cannot transform ourselves, without simultaneously attending to the negation of the assumptions and binaries inherent in Western ontology, each feeds into the other. The personal is political and the politics are revolution. Quite simply, when we realise the assumptions of Western ontology aren't founded on the unshakeable reality of nature, everything upon which that was formed becomes unstable including, of course, the idea of stable, nominal and normal selves. So what defines the reading practice is a way of reading, and thinking, differently which transforms our understanding of bodies, gender and subjectivity.

Art

the power of art lies in its potential to transgress boundaries.
(hooks, 1995, p. 69)

the function of art is to do more than tell it like it is - it's to
imagine what is possible. (hooks, 1994, p. 237)

Art provides a space through which we can imagine alternatives, and in the imagining we can be transformed. Art is a transformative space, it is a space where we can resist, where we can tell our stories of self, stories that are denied a telling as we take up places in 'woman' or White, and so on. As i engage with the art of Sherman, Basquiat, Rothko, Michels and others, i am embodied by the resistance, it moves within me, buoying up my sense of corporeal aggression. i am overwhelmed by the force of the women's bodies in Sherman's latter work, especially since i initially did not read them in this way, it was unanticipated, yet a most powerful embodiment of resistance. It was, i expect, part of the transformation of my self that i brought to Sherman, even without being consciously aware of it, for the dialogue was embodied in such a way that the writing seemed to take on a life of its own. Rather than an exercise of painstaking articulation, i felt as though the dialogic flow was drawing me forward, working through my very body, and the writing emanated from this source, perhaps from that experiential gap, a space that i could not adequately think, yet from which the writing seemed to flow in a way that was somewhat overwhelming for my initial reaction to the 'Aging Woman' series was not overwhelmed by this sense of resistance and corporeal power or armour. i was overcome by the sense that this was momentous, that herein, i had come thus far on my transformation of self to read these images from a corporeal perspective, there was a real sense of an immersion in the writerly text, in this case the text is photographic art, a dialogic flow unheeded by the artifice of hegemonic boundaries, my body immersing with

the art, and the art transforming my body, embodying it with corporeal aggression. Something powerful was working through the text, through me and i was embodied by a corporeal strength, a force that has not, since that encounter, dulled. It is perhaps as Foucault (1994) said, a transformation difficult enough, and i would add, to be embodied in such a way that it is like a kind of resistant fuel which is how i felt when reading and being transformed by Sherman's art and by my located reading space. At that moment my body burned with the fire of corporeal aggression, and in its wake, 'woman' was razed to un-recognition like an effigy that we must burn at the stake if we are to live, for it is the enemy within. It is the oppression that lives in the name, that which we produce self and body as we take up the place of our own oppressor. Let us celebrate that each of us are inherently like those women labelled witches, and burned at the stake for a crime of non-conformity, of an inability to be seen within the boundaries of normality. Let us enliven our inherent witch within, celebrate that inability or refusal to conform, the taking up of spaces to be other, to live on the edge of 'woman', and in doing so to worry that edge, to bring forth the haunting tension, to embody it and unleash our corporeal power. Let us dampen down the fires that burned thousands of witches and reignite them as we flambé 'woman'. Let us mark and trace ourselves with the remains, the embers of disintegrating 'woman'. Like a warrior preparing for battle, let us form the ashes into slashes beneath our eyes, across our cheek bones, a ceremonious inscribing on our bodies of the diluted 'woman', a remnant, a trace, but now weakened, no longer the dominant name. The call may be recognised but what we hear now is not a truth of the self, but an ugly hu-man story, reiteration is ceased and we remember but do not produce ourselves in the name. Let us unleash our inner witch and take up those spaces on the periphery where we can be other. Let us locate in art that transgresses those names. Sherman's work is perhaps most well understood as provocative and ambiguous. It confuses, for it calls us in familiar and recognisable ways. We are drawn in, but once inside we

become confused, something is not quite right, something is skewed and we cannot make the images stabilise and form again into 'woman'. It is uncomfortable, harrowing, frightening, we want to look away, we want to leave this place where 'woman' has distorted and what was beautiful is now ugly. We are reflected in the mirrors, we are the voyeurs at the half open doors, we see 'woman' and we recoil, and in this space, at this moment we are faced with the trajectory of 'woman' into spaces of disintegration and nihilism. This is our legacy, to be 'woman' but it is not absolute, and here in Sherman opens up spaces to be other, for the women in Sherman's images proliferate, they disfigure, they fragment (quite literally in the 'Sex Pictures'), and in that dispersal, in those multiple spaces to be, there is room to imagine and fuel our own resistant burnings. The images are embodied with fluidity, they move beyond the arbitrary boundaries of the canvas, the text, they bleed out and through our bodies, pulling back, urging forward, in a dialogic ebb and flow, and as we engage from our located space on the margin we are transformed.

Space

We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world. (hooks, 1990, p. 153)

Having provided something of a disclaimer then, in relation to method, in terms of its specificity to my self and this particular work, there are a number of things that are vital and that i bring to reading the art, that inform the method which is in this case a reading practice. The first is the importance of space. As i read hooks i understand this. Space is political; it can "give life or take it away" (hooks, 1995, p. 65). We only have to look around us at the way the dominant hegemony appropriates space to produce and reproduce their ideological vision whilst simultaneously denying others the space from which to come to voice, in which to

speak. Shutting down that marginal space, our corporeal space, devaluing them as invalid or illegitimate knowledge, as subjective knowledge unable to be validated, is surely how the dominant discourse protects its arbitrary boundaries. This work is primarily about appropriating those spaces, so that we might speak differently, immersed within a community of others similarly seeking to open up spaces which allow us to speak and think differently about our selves, about others, and about our bodies. This is the use of space in the margin, marginalised space, on the edge, at the periphery but growing, we seek to open up those spaces so that others might join the dialogue. So that we can speak in our multiplicity, the truths of our selves and bodies, always located and partial, and in speaking from our unique vantage points, in our spaces of incomplete knowing, we immerse with others. We are nourished in our unbounded bodies and selves, we bleed out at the periphery merging with one another in ways that are healing and enlivening, the wounds of our Cartesian severing and the slashing of our bodies in binaries, fade to silver scars and we move across that artificial divide of mind/body or self/other, we inhabit the margin, the edge of each so that they immerse and the transformation is embodied in us. As hooks (1990) noted, this is "radical creative space", through which we defy both the hegemonic self and the entire foundation of Western thought (p. 153). These spaces aren't ready made waiting for our voices to enliven them, we must create them as we engage in a sustained struggle to harvest those spaces through which to speak, that are necessarily on the edge of the speaking places already validated, transforming these as we speak in our multiplicity, in our fluidity. In the manner of hooks (1990), i too am "... working to change the way I speak and write, to incorporate in the manner of telling a sense of place, of not just who I am in the present but where I am coming from, the multiple voices within me." (p. 146). This is our goal to bring forth the multiple voices, which are the stories inscribed upon us, those narratives of self that form and frame us,

that materialise our bodies, and through which we orient, understand, and experience our world.

Herein in these spaces of engagement and dialogue we embody that "continuous criticism" that Foucault (1994a) spoke of, where "the work of deep transformation" is possible (p. 172). There is the sense that this is a continual and persistent chinking away the ontological foundations of Western hegemonic thought. It is revolution, not an overthrow in the sense that we might normally envision revolution, but a sustained gnawing at the boundaries of acceptable and legitimate selves, of what counts as acceptable and legitimate knowledge. I bring to the work of Sherman an understanding of the importance of space, that space is political, that it has power, that it can infuse life, or just as easily, snuff it out, that space matters (hooks, 1990). As I engage with Sherman's work, I think about space in this way and envision that there are spaces in the text for others to locate and flesh out their own experiences of self and body which reside on the margin of the normative.

Critical Thinking, the Importance of Theory

We need to free ourselves of the sacralization of the social as the only instance of the real and stop regarding that essential element in human life and human relations - I mean thought - as so much wind. (Foucault, 1994a, p. 172)

Sustained and continuous critical thought is the key to transformation of the self and what we take to be the truth of ourselves and others. We must trouble those 'truths' that we take to be the stories of our selves, so that they are made to reveal their ideological underpinnings, and change becomes that urgent and necessary transformation that we must embark on (Foucault, 1994a). When we no longer believe the story of essential selves, founded in nature, we no longer think the same way about our self, or about the organisation of the world through discourse. It all becomes instead rather contrived and arbitrary. As Barthes

(1982) noted in relation to myth, which is basically a distortion of the literal meaning of language, that what happens to achieve this distortion is that myth has turned "reality inside out, it has emptied it of history and filled it with Nature, it has removed from things their human meaning so to make them signify a human insignificance" (p. 131). Critical thought enables us to fill back in the blanks which myth has papered over, to see the history again and in doing so see the significance of human beings in that story. In short, we see the ideology upon which this particular vision of humanity founders, which should be, as Parker (1990) has said understood as a "*relationships and effects*" rather than a thing or philosophical construct (p. 382). And when we see, no longer distorted by myth, from a critical space, we see clearly the relationship of privilege that underlies this way of organising people through subjective normalisation, and it becomes a story rather than **the** story, perhaps more aptly described as **his** story, and we have come to a subjective space where we can begin to story our own lives differently. The personal and the political are enmeshed, our personal vantage point is also entirely political as we see now from the margin - a critical, creative, radical space where we seek to transform ourselves through opening up spaces to speak differently, often in ways previously unheard of. i bring to the work of Sherman an understanding of the importance of thinking outside the dominant hegemonic understandings of self. i understand the importance of the margin as that place from which to critique, as a political space, as the space of resistance. i understand the importance of fleshing out those other ways of being that already exist on the margin of legitimated knowledge, and of the importance of imagining other ways of being which there may currently be no space to speak of yet, but of which this work is part of appropriating other spaces to come to voice. i bring to the art an understanding of the importance of critical thought as the foundation from which to search out alternative ways of being, that aren't constrained by notions of gendered selves and bodies. i bring to the art an immersion in theory

and an embodiment of living in that theory. As i engage and read the art, this is necessarily an engagement with the theoretical, for i do not leave it behind, always it lives within, transforming, moving, embodying me - i am embodied by Moraga's "theory in the flesh", i do not separate my body from the voices that encircle and interweave through me, i cannot, the dialogue is enlivened within and embodied in the text.

Normalising Bodies Through Sex Talk

In dialogue with Butler i understand sex differently, no longer a natural given, sex is materialised on our bodies, and materialises them simultaneously, so that as we take up and speak our sex, we in the process of reiteration again produce the story of which we speak, that is the story of 'woman' and sex as naturally occurring phenomena and as, therefore, normal. If the reproduction of us as normative 'woman' were to falter, was disrupted by a fail to reiterate us in the name, then there would be a simultaneous undermining of the story upon which that subjective name is founded. For the story is one of truth and nature and in this vein there should be nothing which undermines such an absolute. Our sexuality is, of course, part of this story of 'woman', for we are expected as recognisable women to take up places within normative sexuality, that is, heterosexuality. To be other is to risk our recognisability, our very place as 'woman'. For Foucault (1978) the deployment of sexuality provided a way to discipline bodies and control the population at the same time. Power and knowledge work to deploy a story of sexuality that materialises and simultaneously controls our body in the name 'woman', and as we take up these places within gender subjectivity we take up spaces within normative sexuality. i bring to the reading practice ideas altered, dramatically, by my immersion in this community of writers, my engagement with them from my own perspective which is ever-changing as i dialogue and transform in that space. i understand the body, my own body, the sexed body, and sexuality,

quite differently following my critical engagement with the community within which i am immersed, especially in relation to feminist writers and their struggle to think and speak bodies in other ways that negate them as objective other, as entirely sexual or as wholly biological. i bring this to my analysis of Sherman's art, this altered bodily and subjective space from which i see, as i engage with the images in a dialogue that transforms me as i read. The seeing space is necessarily fluid, the engagement with the art will move it in ways both desired and unanticipated, that is the ethereal quality of a writerly text, of which Sherman's art surely is, they do not shut down the flow of life, they embody it, there are no bounded edges, there is only a bleeding out. i read Sherman from a transformed space on the margin, but this space is fluid and motile, and as i engage with the text the spaces change, and the engagement transforms, so at the end i simply have another beginning, there can be no conclusion, no absolute, for there are no boundaries, only dispersal and proliferation, only life. It is that life i seek most to embody in the writing, the life that exceeds language, exceeds names, that is corporeal, that is resistant.

Speaking the Body and Embodying Language - A Dialogic Flow

In postmodern discourse the body becomes theoretically contested ... (Morgan, 2004, p. 146)

We need to learn in our bodies ... to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name ... (Haraway, 1991, p. 190)

i understand the body as something formed on and through discourse, materialised through the dominant discourses of sex, gender, race, class, sexuality, and so on, but never completely or absolutely, for the process of materialisation is reiterative and we must continually heed the call to produce ourselves in the name (Butler, 1990). When we can no longer recognise that name in ourselves, or in others, for we inhabit that space on the margin and we now see 'woman' as act,

rather than as something natural, then the reiteration ceases. It is as if, in 'Waiting for Godot', the protagonists, Vladimir and Estragon, suddenly look around and though the scenery remains unchanged, their perspective has shifted dramatically, and in that moment of realisation they finally twig that Godot, if he even exists, is not bloody coming! And so they get up and leave, for at last they realise the futility of staying. We too, like Vladimir and Estragon, need to come to this realisation, for the staying is futile, oppressive and just downright unhealthy for us. We need to relinquish that 'dead weight' that is 'woman', that which shackles us, allowing ourselves to splinter, to proliferate, to embody our multiple experiences of self. As i read Sherman, in fact any writerly text, i have a sense of a continual grasping and clawing at ways to locate in my body as i engage with the work, always i read from this space of corporeal location, constantly mining ways in which to engage that dialogue between self and body and to embody it in the text as i write, to allow it to wash over me as i read, to transform me in the reading. Art is transgressive because it speaks on the boundary and in the speaking it reveals that boundary, that there is an other self, in fact multiple selves that we can be, we do not have to live our lives as continual reiteration in our subjective names. Let us shake ourselves out of subjugation, enliven ourselves with our own corporeal resistance, look around with new 'i's', and "learn to see" differently. i engage with Sherman from a transformed space of corporeal and linguistic resistance, i understand 'woman' in ways that negate its power to tell my story and to name it as truth, i understand bodies as a perpetual dialogue with selves and language, as marginal, as resistant and as i speak and write, as i read, i imagine my corporeal self interwoven with the words and transforming the text. Our bodies defy being subjectively shut down in a name, they are recalcitrant, multi-vocal, and both physically and linguistically excessive (Butler, 1990; Bayer & Malone, 1996). Let us "begin ... not with a continent or a country or a house, but with the geography closest in - the body" (Rich, 1987, p. 212). We are learning to

speaking our body, and that will necessarily be transgressive, for the body transverses boundaries, in its space of being simultaneously corporeal and linguistic, it makes a nonsense of binary, of Cartesian severing, for the body overlaps, it bridges life and language, that experiential void that words fail to capture, is a place the congealable body seeps into, and in its corporeal stickiness, its location there despite language's interpellating call, it transforms it and us. I seek to mine that space where the body and life fuse, to harvest in the words something of that ethereal flow, to embody life in the text and transformation in my self. We cannot coherently define bodies, for they will not be enworded in this way, and neither do we understand language as having an ability to contain. Our quest, thus, must be to speak of bodies differently, to allow them to breathe through the text, and in doing so to transform our experiences, our understanding of bodies and selves, diffusing the boundaries of normative and other. Rather than being relegated to the domains of the unspeakable, of objective obscurity, the body is now made to occupy a space within critical discourse. We must engage with it, flesh it out, enliven it within our selves, engender that dialogic flow of body, self and language as we struggle always to write that, without losing entirely the fluidity and flow that surges us towards other meanings that reside on the edge of the normative and known self and body. As I read, and write, I imagine the body as it seeps and flows beyond the constraints of binary and dominant hegemonic discourse. And in the imagining I seek to harvest some of the vitality of life and imbue our language with it. One of the goals of this research is that it may tap something of the body in the language that is used, that those reading it might, however fleetingly and momentarily, glimpse that ethereal divide between language and life, that space Morrison (1994) envisioned "where meaning may lie" (p. 20). As we embody the text with our corporeal voice we do not simply "reproduce the system" but instead open up spaces where we envision and "invent new worlds", and where we can be other (Cixous & Clement, 1987, p. 97). Let us

take up language and write our way into revolution, let us be dreamers, imagining those new worlds, and creating them in the text, making radical spaces to write those narratives, and enlivening them in our flesh, in our corporeal selves.

Reading and Harvesting Moments

i have this experience of a dialogue, of being embodied by language, when i read, among others, the writerly texts of Morrison and hooks, Foucault, Butler, and Beckett, and when i engage with the work of Basquiat. It is that experience of surging, grasping, struggling towards that knowledge that exists on the edge of our sensibilities, that will transform that edge and with it, us. i do not include Sherman here because her work is that which i bring these moments of inspiration to, these moments upon which further imaginings are formed, those times when i glimpse life, rich and complex, through language or art because it speaks of something more, something other than the "same old shit" (Fretz, 2010).

Although of course, Sherman's work is transformative, for as i read it i understand its refusal to encapsulate in names, remaining open, at the surface, it is both provocative and ambiguous, and in that unknown and unnamed space there is room to be other for we cannot close it down, it defies an easy naming. It is these glimpsing of other selves, other realities, that give me hope to continue on with a vision that is imagining, but not utopian, for it is founded within life, and made in language.

i bring to Sherman's art a way of reading the body that does not relegate it to objective other, i do not envision it as wholly physical nor entirely discursive, yet as i dialogue with Butler, i understand bodies as accessible to us through language, to speak bodies is to know them. Yet the speaking is transgressive, and the knowable transforms as we speak in other ways of bodies and selves. i remain consistently committed, perhaps the only rigour in the entire work, to the idea that there are moments where we can harvest some of the experiential, tap that

life, in the language we use, carefully, responsibly, reflexively, for life always exceeds the name, we are continually haunted by the tension that comes from taking up this place which constrains and orders, yet at the same time brings forth the other of that name, the abject self that in by deferral the name will enliven (Butler, 2001).

i bring to the reading practice an understanding of language and its structure, its organisation into binaries and its tendency to enforce division. As i read and write i struggle against, and as a means to subvert and transform, the violent tendencies of language. i read and write appropriating space in the margin that i might flesh out the body, allow it to be heard as i read and write. i bring to Sherman's art a transformation of my body, and a transformed reading, so that when i imagine my body i imagine it in dialogue with the self, that there is always immersion, and that in that space i am struggling always to word something of that gap between language and experience, the body neither wholly discursive nor wholly material can reside across that gap and i seek to embody this in the text, to be able to flesh it out in the language. i understand the body, in dialogue with Butler, as being materialised though language, yet as also being of the immaterial for it resides too in places that language does not contain, the experiential, the abject, the flowing, secreting, leaking body, the body is unable to be absolutely contained either physically or linguistically, it is recalcitrant. i read Sherman, as i arc to that 'place where meaning may lie', that place of life, that cannot be encapsulated with words, and nor would we want it to, but which we might leave open and allow it to permeate the text, our selves and in that peripheral flow to carry us, as we proliferate into the glorious multiplicity and chaos that is life (Morrison, 1994). As i read Sherman, i desire to transform the body, gender and the self, so that the language moves us, shifts our subjective space, in ways we might previously have been unable to imagine. i think and write, testing the precipice of the self, to push precariously at the unbounded edge, where the stable self gives way to the

marginal, to the experimental, where recognisability is relinquished for it no longer call us, where stability is discarded for it does not still us, and where that life that exceeds the name, that exists on the boundaries of the normative, may be found, or at least glimpsed, that life beyond binary, beyond hegemonic discourse. We have come to that space where transformation is now entirely possible.

This is what i bring to Sherman's art that enables me to read it in ways that subvert the hardening of the name. A practice of reading from a place on the margin, that is at the same time, both personal and political, and a revolution. i read positioned on the edge of those validated ways of knowing, as a means to proliferate those alternative understandings of self, and as a way to sustain and foster that edge, so that it remains that critical space of self-discovery. i straddle that line as my body resides across that boundary, arcing corporeally and linguistically, embracing the dialogic flow and embodying the edging towards that meaning that exists on the margin of the knowable, on the boundaries of the normative self.

When we no longer think of the body as wholly physical, or as entirely objective, we necessarily must think of it in other ways. Alternative understandings are opened up, are made possible. This is a creative endeavour, we have no map, no rigorous set of methodological rules, we must locate in our bodies, experiencing and letting those insightful moments burn our imaginations. We are foraging new paths, articulating experiences which reside on the edge of the known, the named, and in so doing these articulations transform what might count as knowledge, as the truth of ourselves. We are, in short, validating other ways to speak of our bodies and in doing so reproducing our selves and bodies differently. We are articulating bodies that, as Butler (1990) says, matter'. We are taking steps to heal the Cartesian split, that which Morgan reminds us offers up a particularly

violent image if we conceive of it physically, rather than metaphorically (Morgan, 2005).

In dialogue with Foucault, and Butler, i understand power as working primarily on and through the body. We are materialised in our bodies we are reproduce our self through the hegemonic discourses of sexuality and gender, and take up our recognisable place as heterosexual 'woman'. Foucault traces the explosion of discourses on sexuality, to the Victorian era and notes that rather than a repression of sexuality it was an expansion, and during this time the body became recognisable in ways previously unknown, whilst simultaneously being controlled and contained through a process of normalisation. This rendered the body both productive and docile, and thus able to be inserted into the machinery of production, and meet the increasing needs of a capitalist system (Foucault, 1978). For Foucault power was multiple and diffuse, he understood it as a capillary-like threading out of multiple points of departure. It was thus unable to be located at a central source, rather it was widespread and resistances too will necessarily be multiple, diffuse and proliferating. As i read Sherman i am embodied by the sense of power working on and through the body, and simultaneously of resistance. The body is literally broken down, as is "histories goal", but later woman resists, through her body as she takes up spaces and speaks that body differently, other. Here i read the body is that site of a struggle to name as 'woman', yet this is fraught with the tension of language and bodies that will not be stilled, will not be silenced absolutely. Sherman's is the story of the transformation of 'woman', the story of using the oppressor's language but making it our own, the story of wielding our corporeal armour.

Disrupting Foundations/Disputing Normality

Surface/Depth

As essences and foundations fall away, 'woman' disperses, ontological truths fail and falter, the binary of surface and depth disintegrates and depth collapses into surface, or at least, now we no longer believe the myth (Barthes, 1982). For we have been to the edge of reason, we are that embodied edge, we have scoured the foundations of 'woman', clawed in the metaphorical dirt of our demise until our nails are battered and bleeding, we have basked in the illumination of science, our bodies splayed open, our corporal voice muffled, our experiences dissected, nullified and silenced, and yet we remain defiant, unable to be fully lost within 'woman', unable to be entirely silenced or made to relocate in the recesses of visibility as we age. We have been to that edge, that space where science shines no light for it has no capacity to know and speak marginalised selves and bodies, we have stood upon the periphery and embraced the shadows and the darkness, there are no foundations here, only a void, no essences, only experience and perpetual change, no self that will hold us steady, will keep us connected to something divine, an origin, a truth, reality. This is the space of surface, we are the living self, and herein we embrace our fluidity, diversity, fragmentation, and multiplicity, and in that open space we can live on the edge of the name, we can inhabit the margin and be nurtured by the life that infuses it and us. i bring to Sherman a reading that collapses the binary of surface and depth. i read in Sherman from this altered space where i understand surface as literal, as a space from which we will read in our located positioning, and as containing its own depth. i understand surface as infinitely folded, convoluted, in the way Foucault described, and therefore, brimming with its own dialogic complexity, a weave that threads us in and out in the reading. i do not read Sherman searching for any essence, any foundation or origin, any authorial voice. i certainly do not expect to find Sherman or the origin

of 'woman' there, i seek no naturalistic foundation for i have long since realised there is, as Krauss (1993) said, 'nothing under the hood'. Rather i bring to the work a particular vantage point, an other way in which i have learnt to see (hooks, 1990). This is a conglomeration of all those understandings of self traced upon me, including those which i was born into, and those that have later spoken to me of resistance. Like gumbo ya ya, a particular Creole way of interacting, i am that point where those many voices come through in a shared dialogue, that only makes sense, or perhaps only embraces our shared humanity, if they can speak simultaneously, for the conglomeration is the intersection point that gives rise to our specific experience of self at that moment, changing and variable.

Leaving Home

Tell us ... What it is to have no home in this place. To be set adrift from the one you knew. What it is to live at the edge of towns that cannot bear your company. (Morrison, 1994, p. 29)

Do I remain a revolutionary? Intellectually - without a doubt. But am I prepared to give my body to the struggle or even my comforts? (Hansberry, as cited in hooks, 1990, p. 191)

I had to leave that space I called home to move beyond boundaries, yet I needed to return there. (hooks, 1990, p. 148)

At a reasonably early stage of my journey i realised that as i moved further away from hegemonic understandings of self and other, of knowledge and truth, i was doing the equivalent of leaving home, in this case the home was metaphorical, yet it was no less my place of residence for it was that which has given me recognition and allowed me to take up places within which to speak my normative voice, and later to transgress that with an other voice, multiple voices (hooks, 1990). Yet one cannot stay with one foot, so to speak, in the hegemonic camp and the other testing the waters of resistance. We live the theory entirely; we must give it all to the struggle, our legitimacy of self, our recognisability, even, or perhaps especially, our bodies. This resonates with hooks (1995), when she laments those

for whom this work is not simultaneously a life, not embodied, and not enlivened within us. We must relinquish all, or the struggle will not be enlivened in our bodies, it will not permeate the text, this is our "assignment" and we live it everyday realising that it can be a lonely place at times and, initially, at least, we may yearn for the comfort of the discomfiting 'woman' (Barthes, 1982, p. 147). But it can also be a space of exhilaration and hope, of proliferation and joyous fragmentation where we come to envision something that defies description, but is perhaps best thought as something akin to a corporally spiritual experience. Perhaps Barthes (1975) understood this when he spoke of the body in the text, as perhaps its most poignant disruption, of the experience of *jouissance* when reading a text, of the writerly kind, that drives a wedge through the words that is a disruption to such a degree that the reader is plunged into confusion, a kind of chaos so severe that it might be experienced it as 'boredom'. And in that space so utterly and absolutely defiant of summary, of language, thought, or of a reader that would name it and shut it down, would make it speak in ways it did not intend, the body remains that wedge dropped in the text, a continual and persistent interruption, a tenuous screeching at the bounds of the known.

i read Sherman, located on the edge of the normative self, my subjective 'home', familiar and recognisable, yet known in its inherent oppression, as a destructive, harmful place of residence. i must leave to save my own life (Walker, 1984). i reside in the margin as i connect with the multiple selves within me, and i imagine and locate in spaces of other selves that exist on the margin of that which we can currently think, speak or know, but on this edge which is perpetually in motion, and is where those spaces of legitimacy and knowledge will be prised open and embodied with our corporeal flow, our embodied language, and in that space we will be transformed.

Remembering

our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting.
(hooks, 1990, p. 147)

Even as i locate in the margin, and negate the universal and nominal claims of the centre, i retain the memory of the centre, and it remains inscribed upon me, and if we imagine the palimpsest again, it is now written over though not erased.

Remembering is a political act, an act with consequences, hooks reminds me of the importance of memory. In that dialogue i understand that memory is important, that we need to remember, not as an exercise in nostalgia, but so we can "transform the present" (hooks, 1990, p. 147). So the margin, as a space of geopolitical locatedness, a space of resistance, is like hooks story of her childhood experiences where she was able to envision herself as integral to both the centre and the margin, and as, therefore, having a dual perspective, the ability to see both from the inside out and the outside in. It is that intimate knowledge of the other, that du Bois (1920) speaks of, that knowledge of the stranger, for they reside within us, simultaneously formed on and through the normative self, the other of the name materialized in that moment when we reproduce ourselves in our dominant names (Butler, 2001). From this space then, we can "view them from unusual points of vantage. Not as a foreigner do I come, for I am native, not foreign, bone of their thought and flesh of their language" (du Bois, 1920, p. 22).

Self and Other

i bring a transformed understanding of this binary which saturates Western ontology. Our language is structured by binaries which delineate in an either/or scenario, and we are made to fit one side or other of the binary, our very recognisability depends upon it. i write reflecting on the structure of language and interrogating the work for its inherency to divide. This work is about smudging over the lines, through binaries and divisive categories, it is about

locating and thinking on the periphery of stable and nominal selves and of allowing the experience of multiplicity to infuse our sense of self. It is about denying that there is just one way in which we can, and should, experience our selves and bodies, and attending to the subsequent tension and disjuncture that is inherently part of conformity to the nominal normative self, and understanding these "irritations" for their disjunctive quality, and as the beginnings of resistance. As i think and write the binaries will necessarily reassert themselves against my intentions, and so the reading practice is characterised by thinking and writing, carefully, cautiously, responsibly, and reflectively. i bring to the reading of Sherman's art, a sense of a freeing up of who we can be and how we might experience our lives if they weren't constrained by the binaries of gender, ethnicity, sex, class, and so on. i bring a relinquishing of the place of storyteller, of the facade of a narrator that underwrites the work and can be known and identified absolutely, and instead understand the story as variable, fluid, moving and multiple, and i envision spaces within this work so that we might locate and tell our own stories in all their partial locatedness. Obviously i do not envision an author, a creator of the work. Sherman is, of course, the artist and she works from a located and geopolitical space, and when i read from my own space, i do not read it to uncover intention, an underlying meaning that the artist seeks to convey. i do not search for the storyteller, for the story is enmeshed in so many other stories, and to ask whose story this is, is futile, there is no definitive answer. i must engage and read from my own located and multiple spaces realising that the work will never be stilled, for i no longer hold that there is any such referent that could stabilise it. Narrative, as Morrison (1994) tells us, is radical creating other spaces for us in the story. These stories, of bodies, experiences on the periphery of the name, and abject selves are never unitary and never complete, always these stories are multi-vocal, and proliferate in ways both intended, and unintended. The writerly text is a place from which to read in our located positioning, it is a

space through which to engage and dialogue, it is not a place to find essences, or answers. Instead we accept that there can be many readings and tellings, there is an acceptance of multiple viewpoints, multiple places from which to see, and to know (hooks, 1990). The knowledge/power couplet is being prised apart, the foundations on which Western ontology, indeed Western society, rests are being shaken. In these changing times we must learn to listen and see differently, we must be poised to hear and harvest those experiences of self, and body which we are so unaccustomed to hearing, indeed used to ignoring. Who can know and who can tell are opened up, and we must be able to voice our experiences so that other knowledges are legitimated, so that the experience of our selves and bodies are given voice and heard because we are at the space from whence we can listen. The place where the author was located is gone, there is no absolute storyteller and no ultimate truth (Foucault, 1977). We see now, with new eyes, no longer clouded by ideology, we see it now "ever stripped,—ugly, human" (du Bois, 1920, p. 23). The practice, instead, is entirely in the reading, the space from which we read and how that practice transforms again that space. It is, therefore, a unique practice, though, at the same time what is being appropriated is space for others to read in similar ways, though of course from their own vantage point. The reading is a practice which appropriates and transforms space, this is, i expect, the method.

Particular and Objective

Objectivity is a facade, there is no knowledge that can be separated from the human beings undertaking an experimental procedure or interpreting the results. We are necessarily, part of the story we tell, and in that space as both storyteller and character in that story we are faced with something of an ethical dilemma. Foucault (1966) describes a time when as human beings we had the opportunity to take a very different path in relation to knowledge acquisition, at that point when we discovered we were both subject and object simultaneously. In discussing this,

he refers to Velazquez' painting (1656), 'Las Meninas', asking how 'man' has transformed in relation to the multiple spaces he can now occupy in this ironic position as both teller of truth and participant in that story (Rabinow & Dreyfus, 1982). And rather than take up that space of both subject and object, therefore, a located and positioned space within the image or the text, man chose instead to locate himself as the bearer of all knowledge in an ironical twist, he gave himself a privileged space in a kind of dual subjective objectivity. Had 'man' taken up those other spaces, those located positions that did not allow for complete knowledge or understanding, but were about partiality and experience and our inability to know ourselves in any absolute and final way, he may have allowed himself the chance to embrace his humanity and connect with others in a way that wasn't about difference or similarity but about our shared participation in a life that is chaotic, that is experienced in multiple, fluid and changing ways, and that can only ever be known to us in fragmented and partial ways. This resonates with Morrison's story of lost opportunity, in relation to the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, which too laments that we could have been more than the normative, nominal and universal subject, contained in the name and divided from each other by arbitrary differences.

Again i bring to Sherman's work an immersion of binary, so that when we speak objectivity we are simply speaking another partial knowledge, for empiricism is located within a specific understanding of the world and how we can know that world. It makes sense within that particular framework most of the time, though trying to fit human beings into normal patterns of distribution can be problematic and undermining. However, when we step outside of this dominant understanding of knowledge and knowledge acquisition its truths lose their 'foundations', for they are built on shaky ground. As essences and origins reveal them selves as facade and human intention replaces them, the truths dissipate and become simply other stories. We are then in a position to decide whether those stories are that which

we want to produce in our selves, on and through our bodies, in the language we use. Again we are at the margin, and now the centre is distorted, it sways and rocks precariously before our eyes for now we see it displaced from nature or essence, and it must relent its place of truth and knowledge, of our subjective truths, as we seek out other stories that embody us in other ways, that do not smother us in oppression, stifling our breathing, snuffing out life.

As i read Sherman i search for no objective truths that can speak a universal, stable and nominal self, i search for no essence or foundation in the work to help me understand or read it, there is no orientation point to be found in the work. The orientation is instead, my self, my multiple selves that i bring to this encounter, this practice of reading, immersed within all those other voices that whisper through me, the community of which i am embedded. The objective requires that we believe in essence and foundation, that we believe in something that stabilises us in our subjective names, an unchangeable truth that locates us in an absolute way. i read Sherman at the surface for there is no essence or depth that i attend to, that i imagine, and so we must read from our located spaces at the surface and the reading is an interaction, a dialogue with both Sherman, with my self and with my community. i especially like the way Morgan (2004) describes this process when she says, "the readings I perform are embodied readings, both as I write and as the reader reads" (p. 154), which, of course, blurs any distinction we might think in relation to writing and reading. They are, instead, both processes of the same kind, both a dialogue in which we are embodied in that flow, we can no more read from these un-embodied spaces than we can write from them. Rather, i read Sherman thinking about truth and subjectivity and how we have been removed from our daily experiences of self as we reproduce ourselves as 'woman'. And that those experiences that reside on the margin of that name, as persistent antagonist, as perpetual threat to the reiteration of us in our hegemonic ordering, have been relegated to the margins of the unspeakable, or

made to speak to us in particular ways through the discourses of science and psychology. This work is about trying to flesh out and build upon those other experiences of self that do not fit our subjective names, to harvest those moments and embody them in the reading, in the language, before they are lost again, vanished in the wordless void between language and life, or silenced by the dominant hegemonic voice to the margins of obscurity, relegated to the spaces of object other, unrecognisable self. This resonates with hooks (1990), when she says that "sounds and scenes which cannot be appropriated are often that sign everyone questions, wants to erase, to 'wipe out' (p. 147)

As i read Sherman, i embody Haraway's (1991) transformation of ontology and epistemology, both as i read, as i write and in the spaces i desire to open through the text:

The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. (pp. 190-195)

We read, we write in this way to transform our understanding of legitimated knowledge, and its place as 'truth', to transform our selves and to open up spaces for others to take their own journeys of transformation. So when i read Sherman i locate in a specifically 'me' way, the space from which i read is fluid and variable, but it is at the same time absolutely unique for it comes from that 'world' i bring with me (Freeman, 2004). It will not be read in exactly the same way by another person, yet there is a way to read which though not at all prescriptive, i have tried to embody in the envisioning, i have tried to flesh out and bring through in the language. There is no procedure that can be followed absolutely for this work in its woven overture is anything but procedural, and there will be unintended proliferation and delightful haunting along the way, which is exactly the way it

should be, for the text is writerly and there are no boundaries, no scripts to follow or essences to stop its ceaseless flow. Yet, still i remain hopeful, that this fluidity, this weave, the dialogue, are embodied in the writing in such a way that it can reach out to others. There is no conclusive self at the end of the story, i cannot show you me, for you will read from your own partial and located spaces and the 'me' in the story too is necessarily partial, fragmented, multiple and dialogic. But the story has transformed or rather disintegrated, it has fragmented and there is no longer the belief in a truth or essence to hold it steady, it no longer holds us in a name, prescribed by norms, the stories we tell now, in our partiality and locatedness, are uniquely our own. i have tried to embody the work with its being a journey, a path that we must all forge for ourselves in our own unique ways, yet to also give the sense that in the writerly text there are spaces that enliven and can precipitate or keep us connected in our own journeys. The political and the personal fuse, always, but this time the immersion is acknowledge and embodied. The human load concealed by nature and essential selves, bubbles forth now to the surface and we see in the reflection only us, the self, multiple and fluid, in perpetual transformation, myth is denied and we must take up our proper space in the literal, at the surface (Barthes, 1982).

What we ultimately are doing when we read this way is to undo the that which myth distorts when it takes up the literal and makes it signify a meaning it did not intend (Barthes, 1982). We are filling the narrative back in with a history that it severed in order to be objective truth. In this case our own subjective history and that of Western society and ontology. Doing this allows us to see and make visible the human input in the process, the ideological smokescreen is cleared and those concealed are revealed and made to speak. We are constructing a counter-narrative which is less a story of self than a story of the creation and reproduction of specific types of selves, and the simultaneous marginalisation and subversion of other selves. This is still a story where we are born into a world

constructed before our time, a world organised in advance, we cannot step out of that world and this is certainly not a utopian vision. Nor would we want to, for our history is part of the self we are today and, as discussed earlier, remembering that oppression is important and necessary. And still the heroes and villains remain, but this time we see them differently, unclouded by ideology, we can them as creations rather than a naturally occurring distribution, and now there is choice, not absolute choice, but neither do we absolutely have to reproduce ourselves in the dominant hegemonic vision. The geopolitical space of subjectivity is opened up and we can see there are opportunities to be more than that allocated to us in the dominant understandings of self. We can see that there are ways to experience ourselves outside of this, they aren't clearly marked of course, each journey is unique, and we are charting new ground, but our vantage point has changed and we are positioned to take up our other stories.

Experimental Journeys

i bring to Sherman an understanding that we are working on the edge of the sayable, the edge of that which is able to be heard, able to be understood. i use words like periphery, and margin to enliven this in the language, to give this sense of its being a place on the boundaries of that which we have come to think of as normative, and in taking up this space to undermine and expose the hegemonic discourses claim to truth. And as i read Sherman i am mining those edges, that space i read as being appropriated to tell other stories, to expose 'woman' as facade and to speak on the edge of what we know of our selves and bodies. As i read i am embodied by her work as appropriating spaces to speak of the other, of the abject self that exists within us as we simultaneously negate its existence (Butler, 2001; du Bois, 1920). Sherman's work is embodied by this sense of the abject, the unable to be named, the revolting, in its ambiguity it bridles with these unresolved tensions. This primarily is what brought me to the work, this

recognition of the abject other, those aspects, experiences, of the self that are denied voice, including our bodies. The abject self, that which we know, intimately for it is within us, yet we simultaneously deny its existence, we must to reproduce ourselves as normative it must simultaneously be misbirth (du Bois, 1920). I read Sherman's work for instances of this misbirth being enlivened, appropriating spaces in which to speak an other voice, multiple voices, including the dialectical space of embodiment, those experiences we have in our bodies which transform and reconfigure our selves. As women we have no recourse to a time when we weren't the devalued other of male, we have no culture, or language we can call our own, our knowledge of self and the language we speak is that of our oppressor (Bartky, 1990). As women we have to begin in these oppressed places, speak from that recognisable self, but transform that space in the speaking, transform the "master's" language so that it thwarts the hegemonic call and undermines its linguistic structure. Imagining ourselves in other ways is a creative process, but one which is always located in theory and in our understanding of our unique subjective positioning. It is not about utopian visions, where we might imagine being able to step outside our society and culture, and reverse the binaries, and where any self is possible. Rather, it is about imagining how we might experience ourselves differently in relation to the many selves that we are, from our located position which is the "world" we bring with us, our subjective and transforming legacy of self, which includes, of course, the hegemonic self but is transformed by the other selves that negate that hegemony as universal, nominal or stable. It is about pushing at the boundaries of those constraints, of language and normalised understandings of self, in subtle but persistent ways that transform our understanding of knowledge, specifically of who can be a knower, and how particular forms of knowledge became legitimated as truth. And how we are allocated places within these stories of self and other, which either privilege or subordinate depending on which side of the binary one is best 'suited' to. And

further, how these stories have been validated as an appropriate 'sorting' practice in relation to their association with nature.

i read Sherman to flesh out transformations of the body and self, to think about appropriating space to speak other, to locate at the surface and be embodied by the multiplicity and fluidity. As i read on the margin of the knowable i understand the/my body in other ways, i understand 'woman' as arbitrary and bridling with ambiguity, removed now of essence or truth, i can discard it to its proper place of story and choose not to retell it through my own body and self. i am that which haunts the dominant hegemonic voice, the disruptive other, the corporeal flow language in the writerly text, and enlivened in a dialogue with my body and self.

The Body and Language

i read Sherman to flesh out the voice of the body, to read it in different ways outside of those traditional perspectives couched in empiricism and objective 'truths'. i read knowing that the binaries will persist, that language will inherently move in ways i do not always envision, but not always in ways i do not desire. Language is a tool of resistance as it simultaneously is a tool of oppression, yet it is that which can, and will, transform our sense of self and body. "We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we *do* language. That may be the measure of our lives." (Morrison, 1994, p. 22) As i read Morrison, i am perpetually reminded of the responsibility we have to do language well, her work exemplifies this. It is, i believe, something akin to a moral responsibility, a life lived ethically, meaningfully, reflectively. This resonates with Freeman (1998) when he talks about our need to have something meaningful that keeps us connected in our subjectivity, not to confine or contain, but upon which we might orient. A kind of location, like the margin i expect, which is a story of resistance and a story which embodies us in that resistant space. As Freeman notes, maybe it is something human to need this kind of storied location, something to, narratively speaking, hold us together, to

keep us from becoming dislocated from ourselves, from becoming subjectively 'frayed'. When i think of my own experiences of self, and though i do not want to inscribe any harsh boundaries on how i can be, or who i can become, there is a story which runs through this work, and through me. It is a story of peripheries, of embodiment, of bodies discarded but now resurrected, but in the resurrection that are all but unrecognisable, and certainly unthinkable, in their previous forms. It is a story of my body transformed and transforming, of a struggle with language, and ultimately of resistance and revolution. It is the story of leaving 'home' and locating in an other space, a space from which we have 'learnt to see' differently, where we give rise to the multiplicity and fluidity that existed always, yet we could not envision or articulate through our hegemonic voice.

Thinking Form

Our speaking and writing of subjectivity needs to include some questioning of *form*. For instance when (as academics) we make arguments among ourselves (or for others), how is the form of an argument connected to matters of the flesh? How does attention to rhetoric condition possibilities for embodied knowing. (Morgan, 2004, p. 161)

i write and read fleshing out possibilities to be other, from a corporeal space on the margin, transformed on and through that location, continuing to transform from that resistant space. i imagine it as something like Freeman's (1998) understanding of a narrative thread that we need to reweave back through our lives to avoid oscillating endlessly, spinning without orientation, without something that gives us a way in which we can orient and tell our stories. i guess rather like ethics or values, it's that particular thing, or things, that we think, like to think, imagine, are true of ourselves, not an essence or a foundation, but something that runs through us, bleeds out at the un-boundaries, permeates beyond but still is a thread that connects. Something which we envision brings those fragmented parts into some sort of alignment, some sort of dispersal that isn't random but orients

around a thread or threads, and in that space they do not spin completely out of the orbit of the self, and while they are entirely fragmented and dispersal can be unintended, and certainly unforeseen, there is a thread or threads that link them. And i expect that this thread, or multiple interwoven threads, is simply the self, the experiential, corporeal, resistant self.

i am troubled by form for this work is best spoken through metaphor and poetics, it writhes, struggles and resists at its most invigorating when the flow is embodied, and these linguistic tools i have found are most often present when i feel this surge, when it embodies me and i grasp at making some of it speak in the language. And any form that one might hope to find within is necessarily messy, when i use metaphor and poetry i embody flow and it will be loose, i do not, of course, desire it to be tightened for that would inhibit flow and what i seek always is to embody that flow, that life that we experience on the edge of the normative self. Perhaps the best way to describe experience of this writing is that it is sprawling. It sprawls from one chapter to the next, having no consideration for the arbitrary boundaries that i most reluctantly inscribe in chapter headings and names. It lays waste to them making them speak on and through one another in fragments of dialogue that weave in and out. i imagine the form of this work as a weave, and the bound article, that is the physically bound thesis, as awaiting a kind of release. And though of course it is not bound in any way by its cover, i like to imagine that when the cover is opened the weave is released, which is to say, i expect that once the reader engages there is a release of this kind, jouissance overwhelms, and we are entangled together in that web, that intertextual weave of me, you and those multiple others, in that space of confusion and chaos, boredom even. And in this space of confusion there can be no going back, home is a memory we can never forget, something has shifted and we cannot quite see our way back there, our vision is blurred, truths and selves have become distorted, and

we no longer recognise that which we once knew, we must move on in other ways now for we are at the precipice of the self.

Finding Sherman and Selecting Images

I woke up out of the ether with an utterly abandoned feeling, and asked the nurse straight away if it was a boy or a girl. She told me it was a girl, and so I turned my head away and wept. "All right," I said, "I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool - that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool." (Fitzgerald, 1926, p. 22 - the character, Daisy, describing how she felt after giving birth to a daughter in 'The Great Gatsby')

i came across Sherman's work during my undergraduate years, in an article written by Beloff (1997) which was part of a publication showcasing alternative ways to think about self, to do psychology, which wasn't about objectivity and measurement and statistical significance. i expect without realising it at a subconscious level, i was seeking out, and had been for the greater part of my life, something different. i had always felt marginal, that i didn't quite go with the rest of the flow, that was an uncomfortable and at time a lonely space growing up, but it became something i valued later on in life, and now thus far in my subjective transformation, something i embrace. The edge is exciting, its danger is always immanent; others will seek to bring us back to the centre, to enclose us in the familiarity of names that drop a latch on thought, creativity and life. The margin is nurturing too, for there we may be embodied by that life that exists at the edge of the normative self, and thus resists its complete and final making. On the margin i am embodied by the sense that this life, though sometimes a struggle, is at the same time, invigorating, inspiring, can be rich and rewarding as we are embodied by the dialogic flow of language, bodies and selves. i was always searching for something that would take me away from the unsatisfactory subjective space of the devalued other of the gender binary. Like Barthes (1982)

understanding of the inducement of collective consciousness as a particularly insidious means of control, as women we learn to value those behaviours, attributes and characteristics that ultimately can never be fully ours. The place to which we strive will remain always, just out of reach, for we lack that ultimate symbol of masculinity, the phallus, and even if in all other respects we exhibit perfectly the spattering of 'male' characteristics identified by psychology as definitive, we can never fully attain that privileged status. We will always be its deficient other. From a relatively early age i was keenly aware of female as devalued, that the attributes and characteristics allocated to women existed in relation to, but in an inferior way, to those deemed male. All, of course, foundered on specific understandings of what it means to be male, and conversely, female and the specific and varying natures allocated to each sex. Sherman troubles these categorical understandings of self, she troubles the stories which we reproduce our selves and bodies within, the women in the images are provocative and ambiguous, we cannot know them in an instant, they skew and distort those calcified notions of femininity and 'woman'. We see them multiply disfigured, distorted and broken down, a subjective and bodily transformation and disintegration. Admittedly, i was likely, originally drawn to them because they were familiar, they were recognisable and they called to me in the way of interpellation (Althusser, as cited in Butler, 1997). Certainly the 'Film Stills' seem to be absolute stereotypical 'woman', and Sherman has said she was influenced by the on-screen starlets and heroines of her adolescence. But there is a sharp disjuncture once we are inside the images, as we begin to engage with them they transform, for they do not follow this initial path, instead they writhe and contort in unimaginable, unspeakable ways, and in the silence they speak back to the earlier works, to us, to our bodies, and they, and we, are transformed in ways we initially might not have been able to imagine, let alone enliven. The old comfort or familiarity are stripped away and replaced instead by a sense of turbulence, of

tension, of absolute discomfort, this is a writerly text brimming with the chaotic, with unresolved and unable to be resolved tension, with life lived on the edge of what we can know, say and think about it, of 'woman' disillusioned and diffused made to speak the 'truth' of its storied beginnings. Sherman's art ripples with the complexity of the surface, the inconsistency and tension. I read it as a kind of force as for me it bridles with anger and revolution, it inspires that we act, it embodies me in that act, I imagine shaking off the shackles of oppression, I struggle to enliven the revolution and aggression in the language, to lay it open so that we can take up these spaces of resistance. The images cannot be made to fit the name, they cannot be made to speak Sherman or 'woman', they are not univocal, they scream at us the horrors of oppression, in a torrent of wordless sounds, a language unfamiliar, yet entirely known within our bodies, and that embodies us in the dialogue. We can neither silence them nor make them still for we are that resistance embodied, and the text and the self interact, overlap and weave together incessantly. As we engage with the images we embody the dialogic space, there are no boundaries that mark off bodies, selves or language, there is only immersion, proliferation and flow. Which is as Morgan (2004) has said, these are "embodied readings, both as I write and as the reader reads" (p. 154). This is not reading for amusement or enjoyment, this is dis-comfortable reading, it discomforts sometimes to that point of 'boredom'. We are embodied by the discomfort, it surges through us and we cannot leave, it remains ever gnawing at the farcical edges of 'woman', breaking them down, transforming us into spaces that will not be bounded in artifice. I imagine it's initially, at least, a bit like sitting in a spiny back chair, we are prodded continually as we seek out a comfortable place which will allow us to lull back into our sense of 'security', give us a comfort from which we do not need to think these thoughts that haunt with each metaphorical dig in the ribs. But no matter how much we try we cannot seem to find that soft cushion of cognitive automation, where the thinking is all done for

us in advance and we just have to slip into that subjective place. And then i imagine it later as never wanting to leave the harshness of that spiny back chair, for what was harsh is now comforting, every dig in the back prods us to resist, each is a reminder of the oppression that we no longer reproduce in our selves and bodies. Our bodies now flecked with multiple perforations, proliferate, bleeding out, stripping away artificial boundaries and fragmenting, for that is life and our bodies are now enlivened. And the spiny back chair reminds us that life was never meant to be easy, there will always be a struggle, but in the discomfort there will be comfort, for we have moved to spaces where tension and inconsistency aren't something to be quelled. The abnormal, the outlier that cannot be made to fit the normative distribution lives now and it transforms for it speaks now on, and through, us of our multiplicity, of our otherness and of our corporeal.

As i read and write on the margin of the normative, i have experienced many times that something i have read seems to speak to one, or other, of Sherman's images. Often it is one i have already selected for various, and sometimes obscure reasons, but presumably it is about resistance and how i locate and position to read the work. The 'Centerfold' series is a group of Sherman images, originally commissioned by Art forum, but later rejected for fear they might be 'misunderstood' by its readers (Sherman, 2003). i was most drawn to the image of a woman crouching in the corner of a frame with splayed hands and wild eyes (see figure 4). Later Mansfield's words seemed to speak to that image, through me, in my located positioning. So if there is a specific line of text that has spoken in a most corporeally forceful way to me, i include it to orient the image somewhat in relation to my space of reading.

There are certain tremendous moments in life when a creature comes out of his [or her] corner and looks around, and it's frightening. (Mansfield, as cited in Burton, p. 209)



Figure 4 Untitled #92, Sherman, 1981

Retrieved from: <http://toto.do.jp/pic-labo/limg/cindysherman-centerfolds.jpg>

Retrospective Reading

i have come to understand and read Sherman's work in a retrospective way, for it transforms as we read from early to later, and back. It is reflective of life, as we look back from our spaces of knowing transformed and embodied by resistance we see differently. This vision can surprise us too, as i found when i began to actively engage with and write, what i termed, the 'Aging Woman' series. i had not anticipated such a reaction, such a course. And prior to the writing i had assumed a specific, and quite different, analytic. It was as though in the reading and writing i was buoyed along, embodied by a flow i did not anticipate, and it was nothing short of exhilarating and transforming. i had thought at that point there would be no surprises, that the initial reading was from an already critical space of resistance, yet it transformed as i read retrospectively and perhaps as i threw off the last shackles of 'woman', i was embodied by the other, in this case i felt a corporeal flow of aggression, and also of healing. This resonates with Freeman

(1998) who spoke of our lives as "spirals of remembrance and return, repetition and reconfiguration" (p. 47). We embody this space of being interwoven by multiple, conflicting, overlapping discourses which are remnants of not only our actual life experiences, but others experiences, which include what might traditionally be called, fictional occurrences. We live our life in stories, reflecting on how these orient around one another, what makes them hang together i expect. And Freeman (2004) concludes that we might actually need a narrative of sorts to experience our self meaningfully, to hold that there is something about the self, complex and multiple, that we can identify with. As he says, it may be that "narrative, rather than being imposed on life from without, is woven into the very fabric of experience" (p. 305). It is part of how we experience, how we exist, and without it the experience is lost in a wordless void, for it cannot orient and orbits out of the spaces of the speakable and knowable. Again, as discussed earlier, i relate this to an ethics of the self, an orientation that is about the self as resistant other, that is the story that orients and that embodies us in the telling. i read Sherman retrospectively being embodied and delighted by the threads that my immersion takes, i locate in that spiralled space returning again and again only to reconfigure and return again in that reconfiguration, another shift in the seeing, another subtle movement at the margin.

Reading in the Writerly and Transforming Self

Can i embody that space of reading, as i write and read, in writerly texts, that is the dialogue between myself, located, positioned and partial, and the text which flows out of its un=boundaries and thus negates subjectivity as stable and fixed, as nominal, normal or universal?

Can i bring that bodily immersion into the art and read so that i sense my own body whispering through the text, and i am enlivened by the dialogic space of language, bodies and selves?

Can i position to read Sherman, so that the reading transforms my self, and in the process appropriates space and speaks to other selves, so that they might take up their own journeys of transformation?

Can i read so that i am embodied by the intertextuality, the dialogue, the flow of the writerly text, in this case the art, and in that embodiment i experience my self and body as fragmented, as dispersed, as multiple, and as known to me only partiality and in divergent ways?

Can i read so that i can harvest those moments, when i sense the rhythm of my body in the language, permeating the text, so that i might write that which is no more than a momentarily glimpse, but which i desire to tap in language crafted to convey some of the richness of this life?

Can i read so that i bring forth to the practice all that i know of the self i am, that i am informed by my critical space on the margin, and i read from that located and geopolitically informed vantage point, knowing that it moves as i speak, think, write and read?

Can i read to enable the flow, so that when i write i do not arbitrarily shut it down, as i think bodies in other ways, and language as consequence, let me be embodied in all my corporeal slipperiness, so that the text is read, and the writing is enlivened by its intertextual weave and multiple sounds?

Can i read to invoke the sense of a journey, an experiment, a creation, for that engagement is thus creative and this is a journey that is unending and perpetually transforming into altered beginnings, can i embody this sense of weave that is the writerly text for it is open-ended, unbounded and multiple threaded, as i read can i imagine selves and bodies in this way and am embodied simultaneously?

CHAPTER FIVE

READING FROM THAT SPACE OF CORPOREAL AND LOCATED ENGAGEMENT

Everyone knows that a place exists which is not economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise. That is not obliged to reproduce the system. That is writing. If there is a somewhere else that can escape the infernal representation, it lies in that direction, where *it* writes itself, where *it* dreams, where *it* invents new worlds. (Cixous & Clement, 1987, p. 97)

For me Foucault's (1984) understanding of the body as traced by language that would dissolve it, presumably in its hegemonic and discursively organised form, and the supposed unity of the subject which in actuality is just a papering over of our fragmented self, speaks directly to Sherman's work. I read in Sherman a tracing of this destruction and then a kind of re-emergence of something else from the ashes of 'woman', and in figure 7, there is literally nothing left but ash and waste. A scene reminiscent of a kind of nuclear waste which has wiped away 'woman', a destruction complete, yet we come back in the next series in glimpses amongst an arrangement of prosthetics and masks, 'woman' recognisable even in plastic configurations with no flesh and blood in sight. And in the final series (though not Sherman's final work) we re-emerge "indicating our mask with a finger" as we simultaneously and metaphorically give a one fingered salute (Barthes, as cited in Scheie, p. 168). We emerge known, and knowing the artifice, 'woman' is exposed and surface and in that space it will be transformed, it will be made to speak the facade and relinquish its hold on truth, and from that critical space we will wield our corporeal armour, our body of resistance, and we will flesh out other ways of being this woman, ways that do not denote us in a name, that do not inscribe artificial boundaries that stifle our enlivening the multiplicity of our experiences, that stifle our bodies. As I read Sherman from my geopolitical locatedness which

incorporates all those voices of resistance within that community in which i am in continual dialogue, i am transformed from spaces of oppression. i envision an other way to be that does not hold me in a name that stifles my creativity, my imagination, and my life. As i read Sherman i sense a kind of freedom, something like the women in Davies & Dormer (2001) study described, this sense of being able to be that imagined and desired other, that woman of the "blue crackling hair", to be unbounded by gender discourse, to shake off the shackles of the oppressive weight that has bound us our entire lives (p. 8). We shut the covers of that story and we put it on the bookshelf, we may not ever read it again, we may only just refer to it, though we will never forget it, the story will remain in our memory, a memory of embodied domination. But now it must take its place amongst the other stories that make up the many stories of our selves, some are tales of oppression and others of struggle, courage and resistance, but all are part of the way we experience the 'i', that space from which we see.

Leaving home is resonant of the untangling of the binary of surface and depth, it is that idea of leaving what we know, a supposed natural depth, the essential self, the foundation for why we think of ourselves in the way that we do, that is outside experience, because experience often negates the hegemonic self (Davies & Dormer, 2001). Leaving home is about discarding essentialism, grand narratives of self, of truth, of knowledge and instead thinking in ways that are local, that are personal, those that come from the space of lived reality. It is to become the unknown and unable to be fully known self, to relocate to the margin, but it is not about forgetting the hegemonic self, or even relinquishing it completely, as Butler said (1997), we need it as a speaking space, albeit one that we'll negate and transform, it is the place from which we must speak initially because it is the recognisable space we have taken up most of our lives, we speak now from it, in order to transform it, and us. The margin, that radical creative space allows us to resist being co-opted back in the name; it allows us to work to transform our

selves, to imagine possibilities for being other. Sherman shows us the recognisable self in such a way that in the end it is difficult to see, for the game is up, the facade is over and we see all too clearly the artificiality, the farce, the mock-up that is 'woman'. And what sits in the place of nature, the ultimate author, the transcendental signified, is human, and it is ugly, it is White, middle-class and it is male (du Bois, 1920). And as the centre shifts, and the power of the sign to denote and contain is lost as signs collapse into signifiers in an endless chain of intertextuality, the entire foundation of Western ontology begins to crumble and with it our understanding of legitimate truth and knowledge. As meaning is released from its epistemological boundaries it proliferates and we must seek to know from our own geopolitical and critical location, a thoroughly embodied space where knowledge is necessarily only ever partial and always subjective.

Selecting the Images

i have talked around this process in earlier chapters, yet as i look at the images i have chosen to write about i realise in fact the selection is more of a dialogue than a choice. As i locate and am transformed in those spaces of resistance on the margin of 'woman' and of my other subjective places, i embody that resistance in myself and as i engage with Sherman, some images speak more forcefully to me, and some exemplify for me one, or other, of the overarching envisionings that permeate this work. And this is not a neatly ordered selection, which should come as no surprise, sometimes there are two works from a particular group of images, sometimes only one. It just happened that at times i needed to include multiple images to immerse Sherman in the text, to engage, to dialogue, to allow that corporeally resistant breath to flow in and permeate out of the text, of my self. As always it is not a conscious or rationally thought through process, rather it is a sense, a feel, that these images give rise to the dialogic self, body and language and to exclude them on a predicate of some kind of internal balance was lunacy.

This work is never about balance or trying to enforce any form of order, always it is about embodying the disorder, the fragmentation, that is life and about the perpetual struggle with language to allow that to flow through the text.

Dissolution-ing Bodies

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body. (Foucault, 1984, p. 83)

As i read this quote and engage with Sherman, i imagine her work in this way, our bodies as that volume in perpetual disintegration. Clearly in Sherman these bodies are multiply disintegrated, decayed, debased and destroyed. The body materialised in language, traced in a kind of form, but dissolved by ideas. So when as feminists we begin to think bodies we must ask what is left, what can we resurrect of bodies that will not immediately dissolve them back into spaces of wordlessness and theoretical nihilism? How can we think the body, our bodies in other ways that do not negate them in a name? How can we speak of, and through our bodies, enliven our words with their corporeal spirit, to embody them, and us, with the experience of living in our bodies? The substance and the unity are illusory, there is no such essence, it is necessary only to provide an artifice of foundation in order to keep us reproducing ourselves within the dominant story of gendered bodies and selves. It is a means to shut down the perpetual movement of bodies, lives, and language that exists on the edge of the normative, a continual threat to the stability and truth of the hegemonic self.

FILM STILLS

Girl at the Pier



Figure 5 Untitled #25, Sherman

Retrieved from: <http://homepage.newschool.edu/~quigleyt/vcs/fall04/images-sherman/pages/025untitled25.html>

A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself She comes to consider the surveyor and the surveyed within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed, female. Thus she turns herself into an object - and most particularly an object

of vision: as sight. (John Berger, as cited in de Lauretis, 1990, p. 119)

This group of work, begun by Sherman in the late 70's, and spanning approximately ten years, and numerous images was, according to Sherman, a response to the images of women which proliferated throughout her childhood and adolescence, primarily those celluloid heroines and starlets of that era. I guess it was that peculiar combination of familiarity and disjuncture, that is Sherman, that drew me to her work. Perhaps a spark of recognition of the other within was ignited as I read the images or perhaps I was simply interpellated by the familiarity of the earlier images. I do remember, at the time I came across Beloff's (1997) article, that it was a bit like being woken out of a dreary slumber of maniacal counting and dry survey data, here were other ways to think about people, still within psychology though very much on the margin. Here methods were crafted that didn't relegate its participants to nonspeaking spaces of objective obscurity, where no voices could be heard, other than the reiterative one of hegemonic reproduction, or the monotone researcher, espousing in a preacher-like fashion the outcomes, which were expected and normative, and rigorously replicable. I realise I had been searching for other ways of thinking of the self, ever since I stumbled upon qualitative research in my undergrad years. Here was the possibility to do psychology differently, to allow it to speak its other, the abject, that which could not be made to fit the normative. I desired to harvest those moments of insight when I glimpsed that psychology could be more than a collator of data, its concerns could branch wider than issues of statistical significance and normative distributions. Here was a chance to attend to those who outliers who would not be made to fit the normative, and in being so continuously threatened this generality, the universal self. I wanted to think and write in ways that ran roughshod across disciplinary barriers, through the binaries that divided us in arbitrary ways, though had become recognisable and known in a sedimented-like process of

reiteration. i wanted to smudge these lines and boundaries, to show them in their arbitrary inscription, as permeable and able to be immersed. i wanted to deny psychology its arrogance to assume it stood alone, and could tell our stories outside those other stories of self which we live every day, but in which there is little space to come to voice, those stories that in their existence undermine the very logic and truth of psychology. Those early moments of disjuncture, though subtle and fleeting, paved the way for me to understand the importance of theory and sustained theoretical engagement as a means towards change, both in transforming the way in which we think about knowledge and knowledge acquisition, and the way in which we think of ourselves and others (Foucault, 1994a). It allowed me to think outside disciplinary borders, and in doing so to muddy those arbitrary dividers, to make psychology speak in other ways, to flood hegemony with its abject, as it became diffused amongst those other stories of self, that exist in other disciplines and at the margin of psychology, in feminist and critical psychology, and in our bodies. In those stories that reside in our experiences of life on the edge of 'woman', stories we have been reluctant to speak for they incite ridicule or cannot speak for there are no spaces within the dominant discourse in which to come to voice.

Thinking Titles

i have given the stills selected some arbitrary titles for the purpose of organising them somewhat for writing. Yet in reality they all very much remain 'Untitled', in the way, perhaps, Sherman conceived of them, or simply because they cannot be bound and held by a title or name. The titles that i use reflect a particular aspect of the image that struck me, that was most salient, either initially or upon reflection. i do not mean to suggest any intentions of the artist here, that perhaps this is what was envisioned in their production, that is certainly not the purpose, rather this is a way of orienting the work in terms of how it spoke, and

continues to speak, to me and as a means of setting them out for analysis so that the reader may follow something of the drift.

In the Film Stills in particular when read as a series, or a body within a larger body, there are a number of key issues that seem to cut across the various individual pictures and these need to be fleshed out, they are necessary to my geopolitical positioning, the space from which i read. i would not want to speak of the Stills without mentioning that which saturates the work, and no matter how they are read, these are prominent intrusions in the images.

Out of the Light and into the Shadows - Finding Comfort in the Dark

Sherman's use of darkness and light, mirrors and open doors, all suggest the presence of an unseen observer, a stranger in the shadowed and unlit places and this pervades the Stills. This, of course, resonates with a feminist Foucaultian understanding of the internalisation of the male gaze, whereby we become our most efficient and insidious oppressors. We observe and monitor our selves and bodies ensuring they meet the strict regimes of feminine deportment and behavior. Like du Bois (1920), we too "see these souls undressed and from the back and side ... see the working of their entrails ... know their thoughts and they know that I [we] know" (p. 22). That which threatens in the shadows and should be feared, the unnamed, unseen, male and for which our actions and behaviours must be contained and controlled, is the same gaze that we internalise and through which we objectively locate our selves and bodies. Whether it is the perceived observer in the shadows or the internalisation of that, this is an especially insidious and particularly effective means of manipulation and control. Foucault (1977a) illustrated the peculiar effectiveness of such a means of self-control in relation to Bentham's panopticon, a device used in prisons whereby the prisoners aware they were being watched by an invisible, potentially all-seeing eye,

internalised this state of constant surveillance, monitoring their own behaviours. Feminist writers have explored the panopticon widely in relation to gender oppression and the objectification of women's bodies, and just like the prisoners under this insidious form of surveillance, women and women's bodies have been, and continue to be, the constant focus of an external male gaze, be that in the academy (primarily in medicine and psychology), in the street, or in the home. And like the prisoners we have internalised this place of watcher, though in this case the subjective space from which we see ourselves takes on an even more sinister twist, for in order to know ourselves in this objective way, in the way that we are known in the academy, in medicine, in the home, we must take up the space of the male gaze, we must monitor ourselves in relation to male-centred norms of appropriate femininity. After all, the body of knowledge we have most access to and that which purports to tell the truth of our selves, was historically compiled primarily by men based on empirical observations. The experiences of individual women, and the meaning of those experiences, were relegated to the margins of illegitimate knowledge for it was unable to be verified empirically, and therefore considered of little value in understanding ourselves or others. According to Sampson (2001) and Rose (1999), psychology's goal from the beginning was to uncover general truths and universal knowledge which could be applied en-masse, it's methodologies had no place for individuals to speak their experiences, they simply were not equipped to hear more than one unitary voice or those voices which did not sing in unison. This did not mean though that all voices could be made to harmonise, some bodies and selves could not, or would not, be made to fit and so became the deviant others on the boundaries of normative selves, outliers outside the normal distribution, striking a chord of disharmony in psychology's quest for general truths and the establishment of nominal and universal subjects. A noise that psychology chose not to hear, or at least not to acknowledge, other than to try to silence those voices as it located them in a space on the boundary of

recognisability, as deviant and abnormal other, and therefore unable to speak. As Butler (2001), reminds us:

no one survives without being addressed, no one survives to tell his or her story without first being addressed, given some stories, brought into the discursive world of the story, and then finding one's way in language only later, only after it has been imposed. (p. 34)

And yet from this space of the abnormal other there is an address, there is a discourse on abnormal selves, psychology tells many stories of abnormal selves, and these can serve as a beginning point from which to enter the discourse, from which to take up and transform those subjective spaces, to make them speak differently of our geopolitical and located positioning. A devalued and demeaning space, yes, but a space nonetheless and one we must appropriate in order to survive (Butler, 2001).

Fleshing Out The Stranger in the Shadows

Most saliently there is a sense in the Stills that the women in the photographs are being watched from someone concealed from us that elicits a reaction which we must position to read. For instance, in figure 8, the girl does not look towards the camera, rather her focus is drawn to the side of the frame, to the exterior of the image which draws something else in which does not exist for us except in the reaction of the girl. We are thus taken to that space outside and we must fill in the missing details from our located space. And as the girl's attention has been drawn to that outside the frame their heads are inclined to the side while their bodies remain positioned facing the front, as if they were posing for a photo and had been interrupted by something else. This can be seen in figures 5 and 8, but it is prominent in many of the Stills. There is clearly a pervasion of the idea of 'woman' alone in the Film Stills and the specific vulnerability that this state should exhibit for women (Probyn, 1992). Instances of this abound in Hollywood cinema

and in particular, i am reminded of Janet Leigh's portrayal, and untimely demise, as 'woman alone' in the 1960 Hitchcock thriller, 'Psycho'.

These are, after all, images created by a photographic artist, and though Sherman slips away easily, as the images take up the space she has vacated, for she is not author or creator, but compiler, when we think the images, we must remind ourselves that this is the work of a photographic artist. And in recalling this i am not doing so to refer to an essence or depth, rather i am considering it in relation to what we actually know about the images, that which we do not fill in. That this is the work of an artist whose paintbrush is the camera and whose canvas is her body, and for which the purpose, at its most basic, is the creation of art. Any further extrapolation of purpose would become an exercise in uncovering an authorial intention, which is something i wish to avoid as much as possible. It is true that when i read the images, i am interpreting them somewhat, but the interpretation is firmly located in my own subjective vantage point, and it is not done so that i may impose this as the only, or most valid, way to read the work. It is always a reflective process, reflecting on my own locatedness as i read the works, so it is a dialectical process, an interaction between my personal subjectivity and those narratives that informed and continue to inform that marginalised space from which i speak, which is a political space for as i speak i do so to change my/our understanding of subjectivity, to expand and open up those spaces where we can be more than that contained in a name.

The way i read the works is located, of course, in my uniquely subjective vantage point, my seeing space, and that allows me to view the work in a particular way. This isn't to impose an authorial intention on the work, as to whether Sherman understood them similarly is not important for the purposes of this work. Rather what i seek to do is to apply to her art a particular, personal and theoretically located reading and in doing so to illustrate that i am able to read these images as

exemplars of the central issues that concern this research, specifically subjectivity, the body and gender.

As we move through Sherman's work, from the Stills to the Centerfolds, our position as viewer alters, it is manipulated in relation to various techniques of photography. The Centerfold Series requires us to look down upon the women in the images. We now are made to bear down upon the girl, further intensifying the experience of the male gaze and patriarchal oppression. And just like the Film Stills, these women too are attending to something, presumably someone, outside the frame. Again we are invited to fill in the details, to story the image so that the anxiety, the sense of vulnerability can be given a foundation, which is easily done for this is a position we have known all our lives. It is part of being a woman to know that we are the passive of the passive/aggressive dichotomy, that potentially we will be a victim of some random act of male violence, that especially after dark, what we must fear most is to be alone and without the protection of a known male. Although the irony of this is, of course, attested to by the data on incidences of domestic violence, and in fact we now know that we are more likely to fall victim to an act of violence from our male 'protector' than from the random stranger in the shadows. The filling in comes relatively automatically. But again, and as always, Sherman's work defies easy interpretation, for just as we begin to read it and speak the voice of hegemonic gender, to speak 'woman', that voice is disrupted by Sherman herself, and there is a kind of oscillation between the image and the artist, dressing up and acting out in front of a camera. What we have is not a reality, but a representation of reality, a simulacrum, a copy with no origin for all is a copy, yet we so easily read it as essence or foundation. Krauss (1993) reminds us that in Sherman we must stop 'looking under the hood', for there is nothing to be found, there is no Sherman, no 'woman', just a play upon the surface, but the play is everything, how we can play that surface gives our lives meaning.

The 'Goodness' of Light and White



Figure 6 Untitled #66, Sherman

Retrieved from: <http://river66.files.wordpress.com/2008/05/6fe115e8.jpg>

Light is certainly a central issue in the Film Stills and particularly in figure 6. Here there is a sense of the girl being caught in the spotlight, the dual light, both that unseen which is the camera outside the frame, projecting light inwards, capturing the image, and the dazzling light of the camera on the tripod in the frame. The two fuse together and seem to capture the woman, so that in this harsh illumination there can be no place of refuge. We could also perhaps understand it as that space of double vision, the ability to see both margin and centre simultaneously that hooks speaks of, which is an integral aspect of taking up a position on the margin that is political (hooks, 1990). I tend to read it, however, in its relationship with science, the empirical gaze and the body of

'woman'. The girl here is caught in the double gaze, she looks toward the incoming light of the camera, and appears to be encaptured by this dual illumination, like a rabbit caught in headlights, she and we are captured by the knowledge of science and psychology, captured as 'woman'. Our bodies and selves have become an object to be analysed using empirical methods and known in this way, and this narrative becomes the way in which we experience and known ourselves. Perhaps it is possible to read the girl in the image as trapped within this power/knowledge relationship, trapped within the confines of the 'woman', caught within the double gaze of subject and object simultaneously, which in reality are both object because to become the recognisable subject we must internalise psychologies knowledge of the objectified self, we must live that self daily thus reproducing it. What options are there for this girl caught in the spotlight? In Sherman's later series, the 'Aging Woman', see figure 29, i read the transformation of the place of centre stage, lit and illuminating quite differently in relation to the women in those images. She can remain within the penetrating gaze of psychology, and keep reproducing herself in her oppressive hegemonic name, or she can slip out of the frame, between the lights, into the shadows, and into the spaces of resistance on the margin. We can do this, but we need first to understand how science came to be understood as the producer of truth, and legitimated itself in the privileged space of knower. And in doing so subjugated other ways of knowing, relegating them to the domains of the untruth, or at least unable to be empirically validated truth, and to the domains of the unthinkable and unsayable.

The girl looks out from the frame and presumably she, like us, is blinded by the light of science, a light that illuminates as it simultaneously conceals. In its ideological underpinnings it must conceal itself in a guise of nature and the normative for if it cannot it will expose its ugly human underbelly, that upon which it founders, that relationship of privilege and subordination (Barthes, 1982). Science, and psychology, must conceal that there are other ways of knowing, of

experiencing, of being women, its ability to maintain hegemony, to contain, depends upon it (Weedon, 1987). It must struggle to maintain something as natural which in reality is not and, therefore, seethes with the tension and turmoil of its production, to arbitrarily smooth it over so that it can proliferate in the production of us as specific types of selves. As Barthes pointed out there must be a seemingly effortless and efficient oscillation between the literal meaning of something and the form that myth takes up and distorts, it must seem to be as if by nature. If we were to stop at the literal meaning and ponder it, the oscillation would be thwarted, we would have effectively interrupted it, and the distortion would flood in locating the meaning at the literal where it is entirely ambiguous and can be read in multiple and varied ways. Myth reshapes the meaning to be something entirely different by founding that meaning in nature, by having a kind of non-negotiable buffer which allows it to contort the meaning in what are literally nonsensical ways. This resonates with Foucault (1976) who understood this version of truth, the truth of our selves, as pre-empted on somewhat shaky ground for its ideological truth is always threatened with discovery.

Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions, but they also loosen its hold and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance. (Foucault, 1976, p. 101)

As i read figure 6, from a Foucaultian and feminist perspective, i understand the psychological production of selves as a way to conceal in order to reveal, the empirical light illuminates the object self but always at the cost of the other self, that which persists even in its devaluation to the spaces of illegitimate knowledges. Sciences harsh illumination, like a nuclear whitewash, strips away other ways of knowing, subjugating them in order to survive, in order to maintain its place of privilege and the allocation of space within that (Weedon, p. 187). i am

reminded of a later Sherman image, see figure 7, which is reminiscent of a scene of nuclear waste, where the body of 'woman' has presumably disintegrated into the debris of the waste.



Figure 7 Untitled #168, Sherman, 1987

Retrieved from: <http://peterandjoan.blogs.wm.edu/files/2008/11/untitled168.jpg>

In order to transform the self the girl in the image, like us, must exit into the margin, not to disappear, not to be silenced, but as a means to take up an other position, a political space on the margin of the dominant voices, where we speak in other ways not contained by the name, a "spawning" of its intention, and in the saying a transgression of that name and of who and how we can be. In these spaces of resistance we are transformed as we reproduce ourselves on the edge of the thinkable, knowable and sayable, and as we do we expand the possibilities to

think, know, say, and be, and to allow us to experience ourselves in other ways that the name denies. The transformation of self is that which we seek, we must locate in the margin in order to transform, that profound edge, a space where we imagine other ways to be, where we begin to speak and write this othering, where we embody it in language and enliven it in our bodies. Where the personal and the political fuse and though "the life we save is our own", we are simultaneously negating that upon which the dominant discourse founders, the status, and acquisition of knowledge, and in so doing we lay open spaces for others to take up and save their own lives (Walker, 1984, p. 14).

Celebrating Black, Othering White

We wish to attack an institution at the point where it culminates and reveals itself in a simple and basis ideology, in the notions of good and evil, innocence and guilt. We wish to change this ideology which is experienced through those dense institutional layers where it has been invested, crystallized, and reproduced. (Foucault, 1977, p. 228)

The idea of the goodness of light in relation to the evil of dark is most obvious in the differing preconceptions we have of night and day, that which exists in the shadows is unknown and thus should be feared and that which is known, able to be seen with the empirical light of science, should be welcomed for it has nothing to hide. Yet as we move along in our critical journey we come to realise that there is much that can be hidden in the light and in White. The connotations associated with dark, and night, are predominantly associated with something sinister and evil, something of which to be afraid. hooks (1995) says she is learning to think of Blackness, specifically in relation to her own skin, differently, so that it is transformed: "In the shadows of late night, we talk about the need to see darkness differently, to talk about it in a new way. In that space of shadows we long for an aesthetic of blackness - strange and oppositional" (p. 72). The margin, like the dark is unknown, it escapes the psychological gaze, it resists its

illumination in its being other, psychology cannot speak its 'truths' and must relegate it to outlier, to abject. The margin then is an unlit, unknown space for it does not denote a name, either one or many, and on this basis we are warned to stay with what we know of ourselves, that which is given in the name, the unitary, universal and nominal subject.

When we leave our subjective 'home' and locate on the margin we are leaving behind the recognisability and familiarity of 'woman', as we seek out something else, something we can only sense, it is unfamiliar, unable to be known in an instant or absolutely, it is embodied by a fluidity that would neither hold is steady nor stem the perpetual tide of transformation. As we take up that position of critical engagement we must begin at that space we are now, that self in transformation, for there are no essences or foundations that hold us steady, that give us a sense of who we are, we must understand as we experience ourselves in our daily lives, as fluid, fragmented and multiple, transformed and transforming. Our location is the self, the space from where we speak which incorporates our corporeal voice, always our beginning point, and this transforms continuously, is that which we know at this point in time from this specific geopolitical and corporeal space. As Barthes (1981) said in relation to his knowledge of photography, that we must begin from our bodies, from where we are located and what we know. And that is necessarily our 'starting' space, though of course we have begun already, as Butler (2001) says, in 'media res', but it is from here where we will transform. As we locate in the margin and take up this transformed vantage point, the familiar and the 'common-sense' lose their recognisability, what was previously familiar now appears strange, arbitrary and contrived, the human has come to the surface and it is disturbing. We have in the vein Foucault said we must troubled the familiar, and it now appears strange (Foucault, 1994).

What we now see at the surface, for it was always there we just were not positioned to see it, is the human input (Barthes, 1982). We have filled back in what myth had robbed in its distortion of the literal. The his-story that was emptied out has been recovered, and with it we see what is human and ugly for it is the ideological relations of privilege and subordination. This resonates with du Bois (1920) when he describes that struggle to conceal that which gives us privilege:

crouching as they clutch at rags of facts and fancies to hide their nakedness, they go twisting, flying by my tired eyes and I see them ever stripped,—ugly, human. (p. 23)

We have stripped back the "facts and fancies", the ideology, the claims to truth based in nature and concepts of the normative, and what we find is human, and it is ugly, because it denotes, and has historically denied, the inherent privilege and subordination that underlies its psychological categories. And when we no longer believe the ideology, no longer believe the truth claims, the ugliness pervades the surface in a brutal force that we can no longer ignore. And like the blinding flash of the cameras, in figure 6, we are caught again but this time we see the light for what it is and what it conceals and its illumination fails to reproduce us as 'woman'. Instead we seek out the shadows of the margin, for now in these unlit spaces of language and the body, we will harbour a resistance that will wield a force that will shake the very foundations of Western ontology for the ripples will be subtle and persistent, but the result will be no less monumental, it will embody the "unmistakable and mounting" voices that "bespeak civilizations gone and yet to be", a surging tide of resistance upon which we will be embodied and speak from and through (Morrison, 1994, p. 33). Our seeing space has transformed and though the view is heinous and we wish to look away, we can no longer for we have seen 'woman', we have seen the beginnings of its demise or at least there is a sense of impending doom, and we must act. We can no more hanker for that time when

"language alone protects us from the scariness of things with no names" (p. 28). We are those things, we have no name and we no longer desire one, we no longer have to be frightened for the relinquishment of the name, and the known is liberation. We are the unrecognisable, the unknown, and now we must wield language and our bodies to appropriate those spaces to speak our multiple experiences of life, in bodies, to grasp fleetingly across that void between language and life, to lap at its borders and engorge ourselves with its corporeally enriching and life-invigorating syrup. Let us enliven our bodies with the fluid of life in such a way that when we speak, think and write our bodies simultaneously are enlivened in the flow, and our words are embodied as we speak.

Does language protect us from those things with no names, because they are inherently scary, or because they cannot be stilled and that is what is frightening about them? Are they not that continual tension in the name which undermines and threatens its validity, its very claim to truth? We struggle in the margin to write in ways that do not invoke the name, that do not 'drop a latch' on who and how we can be. We struggle to "stay with what cannot be named, at each moment to try to give it a color, a form, an intensity that doesn't say what it is" (Foucault, 1994, p. 256). Barthes writing was characterised by this persistent wrestling against the enforcing properties of language (Allen, 2003). We seek to harvest language that allows us to experiment and envision the nameless, the abject, the other that we are, simultaneously, as we take up recognisable spaces. We need to think the self as a verb rather than a noun, says Davies, as active, fluid, embodied by movement, the self that is dispersed and dispersing. We need to tap that language that allows us to speak from the shadows of the margins, and for that voice to invoke our multiplicity, our flow, our proliferating permeability. We are embodied in our unboundedness as we flow out, bodies, selves and language, seeping and leaking, pleblianising the hegemonic order, refusing its univocal voice, making it speak in multiple tongues.

I Shine a Light But i Can't See You (or me)

The idea of the capacity of science to unlock the innermost secrets of ourselves, and our bodies, is a pervasive and entrenched one, calcified over time and formed into a 'truth'. During this scientific golden age, we became convinced that its objective methods of observation and discovery were unbounded. After all, 'man' had visited the moon, we had satellites in space and our homes were awash with electronic devices previously unimaginable. So of course it was only a short leap to expect that these methods could be applied to understanding our selves through building up a knowledge of our bodies, and in particular, our sexuality which was deemed to be the ultimate marker of the truth of our selves. What is highly valued in scientific methodology is the ocular, the ability to see, and thus to know, and to validate that with a vision that is detached and objective. Medicine, in its imagery and suturing capacity, allowed us to know the body by seeing, using techniques that made the internal external in various ways, discourses were developed which allowed us to know our bodies in their biological and anatomical capacities. That which could not be illuminated and known in an objective way was devalued and became subjugated knowledge, existing on the margin, and not easily accessible in the mainstream.

In Sherman i understand light as no longer having the illuminating capacities, and of collapsing the boundaries of good and evil as symbolised by white and black. Whether the women are cloaked in shadow or bathed in light, they seem to remain, in the Stills, anxiety-provoked and wary. It is as if in this space the predatory male is transformed from that stranger in those spaces in the shadows, to the known male, now illuminated as no less threatening for our ability to see and know him. Light, in Sherman, does not allow us to see or know anymore than dark denies us knowledge. Sciences understandings of self borne from the rigour of objective

methods of observation do not unearth for us the realities of ourselves, rather they produce that reality and we enliven it in our selves and bodies as we take up spaces within normative gender. In Sherman the ability to see is absolutely incongruent with the ability to know, we must locate and read from our located geopolitical positioning. i am embodied, as i read Sherman, that our knowledge necessarily is partial and located, never objective and absolute (Haraway, 1991).

Please Be Afraid of the Dark



Figure 8 Untitled #31, Sherman
Retrieved from: http://www.tb-cms.org/data/artwork/339/7718_artwork_detail.jpg

Sherman's images are permeated by shadow and light, and this is, i believe, primarily about the connotations that are evoked by the use of dark and light.

Interesting though, i do not read in the White images an alleviation of the sense of impending doom that pervades the images, there is no less a sense of some unknown threat than there is in the shadowy images. i was drawn to the figure 8, initially by the depth of the shadow, which contrasts with the brightness of the badge the girl is wearing. The entire image is black including the girl's clothing and hair, and the background, with the only points of light the badge, and the girl's skin. Again there is the suggestion of something ominous and threatening, the girl sits at what looks an uncomfortable and awkward angle, her posture is strained, and again she is attending to something in the recesses of the frame, unable to be seen by us, yet which we can easily imagine and accordingly fill in from our discursive positioning as 'woman'. Although as we begin to view the works from a retrospective standpoint, and as we transform in the margin and take up spaces of resistance, and locate at the surface, we are less likely to read them through the dominant discourses of gender and sex. Certainly i have the experience of them transforming markedly as i read back from the later images to the earlier ones, and what we might have read as threat in these earlier images now transforms into something else entirely and we position ourselves to face and diffuse this threat. Initially, of course, without those transformations to surface, margin, and retrospectively, the unseen observer who threatens as they conceal themselves in the dark spaces is most certainly male. As 'woman' we know, in our selves and bodies, that what we should fear most is the unknown male who inhabits the spaces of darkness. It is part of taking up the subjective space of 'woman', that we should simultaneously take up spaces of vulnerability, which is used to effect in Sherman's work, for in opening up this vulnerability, this anxiety, this presumed fear at the surface space is being appropriated and in that space there is room to critically engage with why we read these emotions so easily in the images and how our we might position to read them differently, for this certainly is not a universal reading, the images are ambiguous and provocative. The background which appears

to be two shades of black, looks like a curtain, so it's not representing night, rather it seems to be like an artificial backdrop for a photograph, which indeed it is. So here Sherman is giving us something literal and something else. At the surface level, that which Barthes (1982) identified as the meaning within the language system or the first order of language, there is a girl in a photographic image entirely clothed in black and looking towards the exterior of the picture. We know this person is Cindy Sherman, the photographic artist, so we know this is a mock-up, that she has organised and created this shot based on some decisions she made prior to taking it, and perhaps, as it evolved. We know, therefore, that the emotion we see on the girl's face and in her body are too an act, rather than an indication of something happening outside the frame, in the space we cannot see. That is the literal meaning of the image, what we can read at the surface, without collapsing into the second order of language, Barthes identified, the meta-language of myth. Similarly if we were to put Sherman aside for a moment, the surface cannot tell us anything about what this particular girl is feeling, this is ambiguous, the emotion can be read in multiple ways, yet we from a place of essentialism and foundation fill it in with what we know of 'woman'. It is only when we realise that 'woman' has no origin in nature or the normative that the image is allowed to proliferate, that we can read in it spaces for resistance to that universal naming. In order to fill in anything else in the image we need to go beyond what we can see which is something that happens when myth gets hold of the literal image and distorts it, and we believe the distortion because we fail to see the gap between the two orders of language, between the literal layer and the mythical. We allow myth to make this image about 'women' and femininity and to founder that in something that exists below the surface, in every woman, an essence that comes from being born female, a nature. And so we read this girl as being afraid of something in the dark, outside the frame, we read fear in the image because we identify 'woman' as more emotional, more likely to express that emotion, and in

need of protection from the men they know, the 'good' ones that don't inhabit the shadows. Of course, we know that even those men who are fully illuminated by indoor artificial lighting and within the 'sanctity' of the home, can oppress women too, but still we perceive the most heinous threats as those outside the home, and in those dark unlit places. Even when our own homes are not safe or healthy places to be, often we continue to place the threat outside of them, and believe in the ideal of the nuclear family and its ideology of happiness and security. In Sherman i read a disruption of this, for even in the harsh illuminating white light the women in the images seem no less tormented, no less strained, than those bathed in darkness, see figure 10.

In order to read this image differently, we need to stop the oscillation process, slowing it down so that we stop at the end of the language system, at the literal image, on the surface. And as Krauss (1993) notes, Sherman effectively does this because she interrupts the process because she stops us from 'looking under the hood' for an essential 'woman' or the real Cindy Sherman. When we realise she is the model/body/canvas for the majority of the images and there are so many and they are so diverse, and yet for all this voyeurism we cannot locate the 'real' Cindy Sherman in any of them, some after all, are male, we have to begin questioning both the place of the author and the notion of essential selves. i am overwhelmed as i read Sherman, as i am when i read Beckett (1992), by a sense of the writerly text, that there is no authorial intention in any of the images, that this is the antithesis of what might have been imagined in their creation. And in figure 9, a clearly sad clown, with turned down mouth and artificially enhanced cheeks, bears the italicised name 'Cindy' on her, though maybe his, gender is ambiguous in the 'Clowns' jacket.

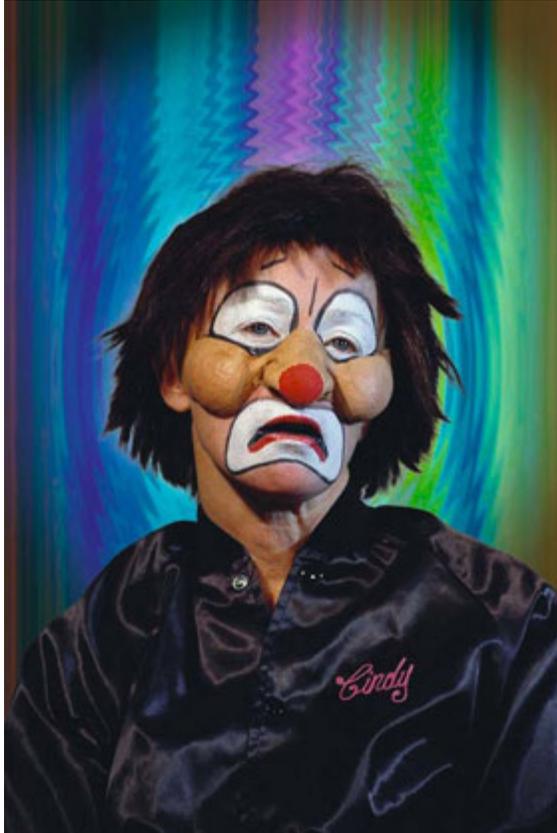


Figure 9 Untitled #413, Sherman

Retrieved from: http://www.simonleegallery.com/getattachment/f35f1e27-5462-438e-9727-9d18b9d53535/Exhibited_Works.a

Here there is a play with this notion of essentialism, the named jacket is a taunt, a parody of the death of the author, what has slipped into that vacated space is this clown and this, if we are to believe the name, is Sherman? And i expect it is as much any other image, for they are all part of the experience of the artist, and each is a fragment of the self, though none are complete and always they transform. And like Beckett, who had long tired of people trying to uncover an essential meaning in his work, or of its characters, i imagine that Sherman's images are in a similar way an appropriation of space, and we must locate and read from this space. We must read and we must think, for therein is our transformation.

As i read Sherman i understand the surface, in a Foucaultian way, as complex and dialogic and through which we must engage. i do not envision the surface as flat, as one dimensional, rather i envision it as a weave, a threading in and out, an intertextually woven space of which we are part of that crafting, our selves and bodies are part of the woven surface that draws in and out multiple voices, texts, other selves and bodies. It is a writerly text, for it does not imply a bounded surface, the women in the images are connected to something beyond the frame, they look out and we follow suite, and in that space we will draw back in those other voices within which we are perpetually in dialogue, those in the community within which we write, think and speak, and our own corporeal voice, negated too long to spaces of wordlessness. Sherman's images deny us an easy read, they are both ambiguous and provocative, they will not be relegated to spaces of silence, and they suture those places where meaning my lie, for they mark us in ways that negate us summarising them in a presumptuous death. And when we have no recourse to a name, we must engage and read from that which we know of our bodies and selves, from our located geopolitical spaces, and thus we must embody that dialogue as we read, and as we are transformed in the reading. We must now find the language with which to bring forward the voice of our bodies, to make it reverberate in the text and to enliven ourselves. When we stop at the surface, when we refuse myth its distortion we, or at least i, have a sense of being overwhelmed by the complexity of the surface, that here there is not the assurance of a reading that is presumed, we cannot take up and repeat the hegemonic voice unthinkingly for it is disrupted, it cannot speak its univocality, it must speak with the other voices, like 'gumbo ya ya', no sense can be made outside the conglomeration, the disjunctive collaboration, of many voices (Brown, 1991). And Sherman's work is gumbo ya ya, for here there are multiple voices, multiple selves, imagined and other, 'woman' is here fragmented, broken down, re-emerging in the 'Aging Woman' as woman but transformed now, no longer 'woman'. In order

to understand we must listen to the many voices that whisper through the text, read the compilation, and take from it our own truths, for they aren't Sherman's, this is the writerly text and we must engage and read from our space on the margin. Here we cannot locate as 'woman' to read for that makes no sense, we cannot find 'woman' in Sherman for she is obliterated, literally at times. 'Woman' in Sherman, has suffered the fate that is the demise inscribed in that name, but she will re-emerge, from those harsh remnants, to recreate that self from those spaces of excess, those edges of 'woman' that can now speak in other ways, speak resistance. There are no names from which we can read, in Sherman subjectivity is shattered, and we must read from our selves, from our bodies, from our geopolitical locatedness.

And if we do not presume anything essential about women, about women's bodies, or about subjectivity, how the story can be read differently from a critical space where what counts as truth is situated and local, and only ever partial. A space where experience is both personal and at the same time entirely political, for the two cannot be separated, they fuse into one another, in a symbiotic relationship. What might it mean if we are freed from the constraints of the name and can read from our critical space in the margin casting aside our subjective weight? Might it mean that when i read Sherman i no longer see the naturalness of sex, gender, femininity, i no longer see anything essential in those names, i recognise the story but i no longer believe it as the truth of myself, and am no longer reproduced within its image. The oscillation falters and what we are left with, when we have no 'recourse to myth' is a contrived and arbitrary production which is entirely historical and entirely human (Barthes, 1982). And we can ask how it could be otherwise, now that we know this isn't the only way, the only truth, and we can begin to think, and experience ourselves, in other ways. i read this text from a space on the margin, a space of resistance, as i flesh out other ways of experiencing my self and body, other possibilities that exist on the margin of the

normative self of psychology. And as we locate as other, take up those excesses of the name, we necessarily are also unravelling the binaries upon which language is structured and oppression is perpetuated. In the Film Stills Sherman uses shadow and light, some images are completely shadowed whilst others are bathed in harsh, bright, artificial light. I read these as a disruption of the most basic binary good and evil, as associated with black and white, and its relationship to science, 'progress', and psychology's ability to establish itself through its methodology, as the teller of the truth of the self, and thus to negate our own located and experiential knowledges.

Another Diffusion of White Light



Figure 10 Untitled #53, Sherman, 1980.

Retrieved from: <http://homepage.newschool.edu/~quigleyt/vcs/fall04/images-sherman/pages/053untitled53.html>

Again, as in many of these images, the woman in the picture is attending to something outside the frame, and again the image is permeated by white, white light, white clothing and white-blond hair. Similarly in figure 10, the use of white is pervasive.

In that space of shadows we long for an aesthetic of blackness - strange and oppositional. (hooks, 1995, p. 72)

The quality that we call beauty, however, must always grow from the realities of life, and our ancestors, forced to live in dark rooms, presently came to discover beauty in shadows, ultimately to guide shadows towards beauty's end." (Tanizaki, as cited in hooks, 1995, p. 72)

When i think white i think of hospital sheets, sterility, virginal purity, cleanliness, light, wholesomeness, and femininity, to name a few. These are the connotations that White ushers in, wedding dresses are white, christening gowns too, white is a metaphor for life, for virginity, for seeing clearly (when someone has seen the light they have achieved a higher order of clarity, often in relation to religion), White has come to stand for all that is good and wholesome. As hooks (1995) notes in relation to her skin colour, "we talk often about color politics and the ways racism has created an aesthetic that wounds us, a way of thinking about beauty that hurts" (p. 72). And thus, Black, by contrast, conjures up images that are darker, literally of course, but also in what they connote. Black is the place of shadows, of the night, of demons, detriment, decay and death. Black is a metaphor for fear, for death, and for all that is bad and vile. And although the Film Stills are black and white images, rather than colour, they specifically, at least in the majority of those chosen here, rely heavily on the use of either Black or White in

these images. Perhaps this attests to one of this most pervasive and original binaries within language, the idea of good/evil manifested in White/Black and following through in the other binaries, a privileged side and a subjugated other. In Sherman there are no diffusing of the binary, the image is either wholly white, as in figure 10, or entirely black as in figure 8. And presumably we would expect the mood of the image to alter depending on the connotations these shades elicit, colour overlay with a darker more sombre mood pervading the black images and a lighter, wholesome, happier mood associated with the white. However, as noted previously, i do not read it in this way. The image remains weighed down, oppressive, even when the girl is basked in light she still looks out of the frame to something concealed from us. In reality the threat is unlikely to exist in the form of an unknown and predatory stranger, for Sherman is acting a part, acting out 'woman', and as Andy Warhol said of her, she is 'so good she could have been a real actress', but never, i expect, a real 'woman', for that is a contradiction in terms. But why shouldn't she be good in this act, we all are, we all know it intimately, through our very bodies, we all know how to be 'woman', what we are rather slower to come to terms with is that it is an act, like Morrison (1994) says of language, "an act with consequences" (p. 13). i read Sherman, and 'woman', here on the surface as the simulacrum, the copy with no origin, the ceaseless copy. Here 'woman' is brought to the surface and made to speak its in-essence and in that space it become a story, not the story, not a truth, just a story among others, though a particularly insidious and effective one as a means of control and oppression. Psychology can no longer seek refuge in the light of science, for the light now is self-reflective, and illuminates only the harsh reality of an ideology that privileges, as it simultaneously subordinates.

Liberating in a Wash of Colour

Clearly in Sherman light and white is not liberating, in fact, we can read it as the antithesis. The body of knowledge that has become validated through science and with recourse to nature is that which most effectively and efficiently oppresses us. Science in its fascination with the ocular, with objectification and with universal and nominal understandings of self, denies us the space through which to think and speak of our everyday experiences which negate this hegemonic self. Like the omnipresent eyes of Dr T K Eckleberg, in Fitzgerald's (1926) novel, 'The Great Gatsby', science purports to be all-seeing and as such to speak a truth unmediated by language, uninterrupted by human intent, a truth of the self, and other selves. And as we take up the allocated places within this version of self, we become that visible self, we are thus materialised, formed in specific ways, made observable, both inside and out. And in the objectification of selves and bodies we are made to speak in ways that reproduce these understandings, so that what we know of ourselves cannot be disentangled from the dominant discourses through which we live, think, talk, write and experience ourselves. The knowledge breathes through the experience and back, so that we are held in a reiterative process of reproduction. Yet, of course, this is not absolute or full and final, and there is always room for resistance, always it remains that inherent tension that resides in our bodies, in language, and in the experiences that exist at the edge of the knowable self.

i read in Sherman the folly of a belief in psychology, in objectivity, in the ocular, to tell us a truth of ourselves, a truth that can be traced to natural femininity. Instead i read the surface as teeming with multiplicity where no essence or foundation can be assumed to founder it, for that which is deemed essence is simply part of the hegemonic story, and it too now resides at the surface.

As i read Sherman i am transformed in my understanding of psychology and science, of objective truths and normative selves. Here there are no such fallacies of foundation, any essence of truth is shattered and dispersed. Psychology and science have found in their revelation of truth the ultimate hiding place, for as they reveal all they simultaneously conceal that which would undermine their status as truth, that this reality of which it speaks and which we reproduce in the telling, 'woman', is a story which only makes sense within psychology, on the borders of that and in our own experiences of life it continually is disrupted and we glimpse, however fleetingly, feel however intermittently, the tension. Foucault (1966) speaks of an epistemic shift when we began to see ourselves as subject and object simultaneously. We were both in the picture, so to speak, and interpreting the picture which he discussed in relation to 'Las Meninas'. In this significant moment in our history as human beings, we had a choice as to whether to enliven this dual reality, or to close it down. Of course, it is no surprise that we chose the later, and in an ironic twist of fate we used our located and partial position to ascertain for ourselves the space of all knowing and objective watcher (Foucault, 1966).

What i read in Sherman, as a series but also in the Stills, is how the body of 'woman', and our subjective experience of 'woman' has become all the more tightly bound by the vast accumulation of knowledge on women and women's bodies, primarily located in psychology, but also through the discourses of medicine. These dominant discourses of selves and bodies have relegated the knowledge we have, from our corporal spaces of located positioning, to the realms of illegitimacy and silence. We must flesh out these other voices and speak them through the text. In Sherman, the name is denied its reproductive capacity for we cannot find 'woman', we cannot find Sherman and we cannot find our hegemonic self. The body of 'woman' is splintered, shattered, dispersed, and lost in a sexual objectivity that is the black humour of parody. As boundaries blur and bodies and selves diffuse

into one another we will flesh out those spaces of resistance, for we see from the margin where the inherent violence of inaugurating 'woman' is diluted, and as the excess pours in she must speak now as in gumbo ya ya, as part of that melody, part of that rhythm, that is life.

Thinking White in Other Ways



Figure 11 Untitled #52, Sherman, 1979

Retrieved from: http://www.tdgale.com/basicphoto/images/narrative_16.jpg

Again the girl in figure 11 is immersed within whiteness, she is white, she has blond hair, she is wearing white, and she lies on white sheets. Certainly there is a commentary on dualism here, the way our language is organised and structured to be divisive and at the very foundation of those binaries is this underlying division of good and evil, which is represented most commonly as black and white, which inevitably also is read on and through skin colour with goodness being applied to white skin and badness represented in black bodies. If i read Sherman's work

through the use of black and white, and i do, i understand it as confusing the binaries, that even in the artificial light of the indoors these women are no 'safer' than they are in the dark unlit spaces of the night, still the oppressor remains outside and within, indeed within our very selves as we become the unseen observer, watching and monitoring our selves and bodies from the only perspective available to watch and know, a male perspective. i read this work as a collapsing of the boundaries that exist between the dualistic categories upon which our materialisation depends, that in the future we might think outside these polarities of gender, skin colour, sexuality, class, and so on, that we may in the future be able to celebrate diversity and see it as a means of shared humanity, a way that we might be brought together to celebrate harmonious difference, that difference rather than a way to divide may be a way to unite, a shared understanding and acceptance rather than a need to assimilate all into a false ideology of oneness. As i write this i am reminded, uncomfortably so, how difficult this vision is to see in the current socioeconomic climate, where capitalism rules supreme and desired values tend to reflect its philosophical underpinnings. Nonetheless if we are to change anything we must think differently, we must imagine how things could be better. As Morrison (1994) does when she ponders what life on earth might have been like if we could have imagined it differently, if we could have embraced multiplicity, how much more rewarding might life have been, indeed could be, if we could find a space from which to come together. hooks (2000) too, wonders what that thing that could unite us might be, and suggests from her experiences that class may cut across race and gender to unite us in shared experiences of oppression. i wonder, if perhaps it might be shared humanity, something that exists but is buried beneath a tumultuous weight that is indifference to the plight of others, and this indifference is something fostered in an ideological understanding of ourselves as individuals, and therefore, responsible for our own success or failure in this world (hooks, 2000). This way of

thinking denies the social organisation of our society as contributing to, and perpetuating, oppression and it relieves us individually of having any responsibility to others. If we succeed we should be celebrated on our achievements which are our own entirely, and if we fail, likewise, the blame stops there. It is not until we begin to think about binaries, language, knowledge and power and how these produce our understanding of society, our self and others, that we see the way in which the structure of language and the way in which society is organised creates and perpetuates oppression, so that for some groups there is only one space from which to think differently and grow, one space which provides both dislocation and the hope of locatedness grown in the soil of creativity. Here on the margin, creative thinking and sustained struggle come together, art, literature, "sublime word-work" become the places of struggle, the spaces from which we speak in our other voices, those that have been subjugated, pushed to the margins of the unspeakable, unsayable. And here on the margin, they are understood differently, as a place of transformation, as a political space where we transform our selves, where we open up spaces to speak in other ways, in our multiple voices, here in this space language is transformed so that in turn it is transformative. We use language knowing it is fraught with risk for it moves it ways unintended and we use it carefully and responsibly. We must be courageous for we speak from this place, not of our choosing, we must speak from those places of recognisability, from 'woman', yet we will in the speaking, writing and thinking transform that name, for our selves, and open up spaces for others to initiate their own journey of transformation. In doing so we move from that place that is unwielding, rigid and knows only conformity, to a space that is fluid, perpetually in motion and unable to be bounded. As i read Sherman i am embodied by this sense of unboundedness, there is no inscribed 'woman', we cannot locate in our objective body, all is dispersed and shattered, all are fragments of Sherman, of 'woman', and of woman. The name remains but it does not tell Sherman's story, what we have is like the

turnings of the kaleidoscope, dispersed fragments of Sherman, woman, other and abject and they are chaotic and unordered. We can neither find 'woman' nor locate there to read, as i read Sherman i am embodied by 'woman', not as a place, but rather as a fragment of the self.

Just as the body cannot be thought as a bounded space, the self too cannot be thought in this way and do so is to try to enforce an act of cognition that is entirely artificial and continually must fail (Spivak, 1989). Our experience of self is no more nominal, stable or normative than our experience of body, it exists outside and around the name, it cannot be encapsulated and we should not try for there are no boundaries that will conclusively mark off subjectivity, the body, or indeed language. All exists in relation to each other, and this is the experience we have when we try to define a word, each aspect of meaning refers away from itself in an attempt to locate that meaning somewhere stable, but the process is infinite, and we are instead left with echoes or traces which are themselves unstable, with each trace ushering forth other traces so that a multitude of voices are added to the mix and the 'true' meaning of the word becomes lengthened, it is drawn out, like Foucault's capillaries, making unforeseen and unimagined connections, traces and echoes of meaning. Rather like Foucault's "breath of life", the word is like the capillary which carries blood around the body, essential for life, the word embodies life as it reaches beyond that which we would wish to stabilise it with, and denies this stability, thwarts it and in doing so we may be embodied by the movement, we may feel just for a moment that "breath of life", that pulse that surges us forward as we are embodied by those words which will in the future allow us to articulate subjectivity differently. Sherman's art is like a capillary, it will not be stemmed, the life flows through and the art is embodied by this sense of its being permeable and open. When i read Sherman i am embodied by the sense of a re-emergence of woman, of my self, a relinquishing

of the name and a freedom to be other, abject, multiple and fragmented, to be that life the exceeds and transforms.

We are working on the margin, what hooks (1990) has referred to as a 'radical edge', it is a space where we are 'harvesting words for illumination', it is a space of laborious and sustained struggle. This is, by necessity, the way of a revolution that hopes to change the world not by political overthrow, not by seizing power through force and violence, but by sustained thought and by changing the way we think about the self, language and what counts as knowledge. This is a revolution which begins with the body, with the self, and each rotation draws forth both the personal and the political, as the meaning of self is freed from the name and in doing so brings forth its historical and social underpinnings. In Sherman the body and self are uprooted from their supposed foundation in nature, 'woman' fragments and becomes a story among others, not the story of us. We can neither find 'woman' nor an author in the text, and as such we are denied an essence, it refutes that there is anything 'under the hood'. 'Woman' is that absent centre that Barthes spoke of, a glittering package for which any 'essence' is in the packaging (Barthes, 1982, Barthes, 1982b). In Sherman i read 'woman' as surface, and thus a subsequent denial of foundation, which is of course a negation of Western ontology's insistence on subjective truths. i am thus embodied by the sense of this it as speaking on the edge of the normative and thus revolutionary in its transformation. i liken this revolution to the beginnings of a twister, which at first may appear rather mild and unworthy of attention, but whose path has brought forth unimaginable destruction and the need for regeneration. Just as the hurricane uproots all in its path, and paves the way for things to be remade, a revolution of this kind comes from small beginnings and can appear at first glance to be of an individual nature and because it names its subjective points of reference, can be seen as local and having little significance beyond that space. However, the repercussions are, as with the twister, quite momentous, though our

path to this place is not the hare-like progression of the twister, ours is rather more that of the tortoise, slow but sustained. And we do not leave a path of destruction in the same rampant way, yet the destruction is being sown and the seeds of it are there and will emerge to bear fruit in the future. Along with Morrison (1994), we look forward to the day when we may hear those voices on the margin more clearly, when their voices ring out and speak those "illuminations none of us had dreamed of" (p. 33). Or perhaps, none of us had yet 'mined' the words to be able to articulate it.

The Panopticon Within



Figure 12 Untitled #65, Sherman, 1980

Retrieved from:

<http://www.nyu.edu/greyart/exhibits/downtown/DowntownWeb%20Images/broke%20stories/cindy.jpg>

In figure 12 there is, again, clearly a sense of menace, though here someone is partially visible, a dark shadowy figure at the top of the stair well, of whom we can tell little about for they are mostly concealed, certainly their gender is unable to

be identified, yet they still are easily read as an ominous presence. From our position within gender discourse it is relatively easy to fill in the details, and read the women's body posture and positioning as anxiety and fear, and the shadowy stranger as that unknown and, perhaps predatory male, that we must fear. However, when i read Sherman, i read from a position on the edge of the dominant hegemonic voice, on the margin, and yet even then the dominant voice calls me to read and reproduce myself in its image, always there is the hegemonic voice, but it is weakened now by other voices that speak of multiplicity and life on the margin of the name. And though there will always be a struggle against the name's enforcing inherencies, that struggle too is a reminder of the oppression that this voice embodies, that it reproduces a relationship of privilege and subjugation whenever it is brought into being and it is important that we remember the oppression least we reproduce it in another form (Morgan, 2005). This is why remembering is important, because memory in this way "serves to illuminate and transform the present" (hooks, 1990, p. 147). When ever the hegemonic voice calls me to recognise and reproduce it, simultaneously it brings forth the ugly remnants of that call, "the working of their entrails" are exposed in each interpellation, and i struggle always against reading in ways, and using language, that would reproduce that oppression (du Bois, 1920, p. 22). As women we have come to understand ourselves as vulnerable and weak, and thus in need of male protection, whilst ironically that which we most fear is the unknown stranger that lurks in the shadows. And we have come to monitor our selves, in a panopticon-like way, in the way we dress and in our behaviours, so as we might reduce the likelihood of falling victim to a random act of male violence. Yet again the irony is such that it is far more likely, should we be subject to an act of violence, it would occur in our own homes, and at the hands of our supposed protector. We must re-examine, how 'woman' materialises us as victim, and how we might think our self and body differently, which may reduce the incidence of violence against women. And

perhaps if we can reconfigure ourselves in this way renegotiates a violent act as a confrontation between two equally situated persons, where each has the capacity to act, such that there would be an expectation of resistance (Bartky, 1990). We must understand ourselves as capable of acting, of resisting linguistic and physical violence, we must wrestle free of the binaries that denote us, in relation to male, as passive, vulnerable and weak, and thus sap us of our ability to act in ways that may reduce the likelihood of us becoming a 'victim'.

And again, as with all of Sherman's work, we know that this is an artist, that this is a mock-up, a relatively pre-planned photo shoot for specific purposes, and thus we know that Sherman herself is not really fearful of the 'stranger'. Yet even with this information, still the dominant voice heeds us to reproduce its story, because the story is familiar and we know it already, we can fill in the details unthinkingly, because the plot, the heroes and the villains are already known, set in the story, the narrative is one we've known all our lives, one we were born into. When we allow ourselves to be reproduced in, and thus reproduce this story, the language we use is dead in the way Morrison envisioned, that language which has lost the capacity to enliven. This is because language that delineates what we can see, who we can be, and how we might experience our lives is language that:

actively thwarts the intellect, stalls conscience, suppresses human potential ... cannot form or tolerate new ideas, shape other thoughts, tell another story, fill baffling silences. Official language smothered to sanction ignorance and preserve privilege is a suit of armor, polished to a shocking glitter, a husk from which the knight departed long ago. Yet there it is; dumb, predatory, sentimental. (Morrison, 1993, p. 14)

The idea of an empty husk or a knight-vacated suit is interesting in relation to Sherman's work, for it is, of course, the negation of anything essential under the surface that could be understood as depth, and relates to Foucault's metaphor of an infinitely folded surface. What Morrison (1994) is saying is that our use of

dead language means we have lost touch with our ability to want to understand and empathise with each other, to dialogue in ways that are mutually fulfilling, that we have no capacity to celebrate, or even to accept, difference and that this is because we have let slip away that which is integral to our lives, to morality, that is, language that connects us again with humanity, that thing that separates us from other living beings, and "may be the measure of our lives" (p. 22). This language that dominates and oppresses and wants only to contain its users, is empty, like the "husk", there is no life left within the polished suit, yet it sparkles brilliantly and we are simultaneously blinded and attracted to its shimmering artifice. Like the dazzle of the spotlight in the Stills it glitters and gleams as it simultaneously dulls the capacity for life with its perpetuation of an ideology farcical 'truth'. And for all its glitter there is no real illumination, for it wants only to contain us within its own internal boundaries of what can be knowledge and what counts as truth, and in doing so, to blind us to other ways of knowing and being that exist on the edge of its polarising speech. It is like the husk, empty, lifeless, it has no capacity to give, embody or renew life, its only function is to repeat its dogma, that familiar rhetoric with its appeals to common-sense. Its primary function is one of containment specifically by stifling our ability to think critically, to think outside of its internal notions of truth, to be creative.

Shedding the Facade, Exposing Bodies and Embracing the Surface

Barthes (as cited in Scheie, 2000) understood the showgirls in the 'Folies-Bergere' as presenting woman as a spectacle and product, as purchase-able, and as Scheie notes, as "signs in a system of gendered codes" (p. 167). So this is an example of the emptiness, of the husk, what is shown is something derived of any appeal to essential selves, and made entirely at the surface. The showgirls aren't myth, they aren't 'woman', an essence, rather they are signs of 'woman, signs of gender, a signifying perhaps of the social system of oppression. In the showgirls the sign is

stopped and signifies nothing beyond itself, it is the glittering package with no interior, that denies essence and points only back to the surface. The sign does not point away out, and thus we must stop and read at the surface, which is what we must do with Sherman. 'Woman' there in is fragmented, broken down, it is not contained, nor does it contain Sherman or us, in the name. The name is not that sign which stops proliferation, which holds truth, and thus we must locate and read from the literal.

In what would seem to be its most natural manifestation, the unclothed, or semi-clad, body, in the women of the Foiles Bergere, is at once exposed and concealed. What we see is a sign, a being, a body, fully inscribed by gender, and in this process nature has been undone, that upon which Western ontology solidifies itself has been destabilised. The body au natural has been exposed as something entirely unnatural, something contrived and artificial as we read it now as a text, a narrative, which displays only signs - those signs of sex, gender, gendered sexuality, and race, the showgirls, after all, are predominantly white. The showgirls bodies are entirely, and unashamedly written on by discourse, and that is all there is, there is no reality to find beneath that discourse, no appeal to nature, they, like Morrison's knight, have exited the stage long ago, or perhaps they never arrived, always it was an empty performance. This resonates with Gergen's (2000) 'Women as Spectacle', and Sherman's 'Aging Woman' wherein they become a parody of the performative for they take up spaces that they, in their particular stage of life, post-reproduction, post-sexual objectification, should have vacated. Thus the reproduction of them as 'woman', in its normative trajectory, fails, for they remain in that space of visibility, they refuse the recesses, the nihilistic spaces of the aging 'woman'. Gergen reiterates this when she says: "And I, in my spectacular role, as Postmodern Mama, with nothing to lose but my invisibility, I challenge those who wish to erase these fine lines (p. 96).

In Sherman the sign if denied its stabilising function, and meaning proliferates, though remains at the surface for there is no foundation to be found. As Barthes (1982b) noted it is the sign which we must attend to for that is where meaning is centred, the sign gives rise to a truth by virtue of its labelling it so. The is that through which we are reproduced as recognisable 'woman', and this continues regardless of any individual who takes up that name, what matters in the system is the sign. Which is clearly also how we can locate Sherman's Film Stills, we can interchange the models, we can replace ourselves with Sherman for instance, but still the signs of gender remain, we aren't individuals in this scenario, we are instead inserted into a system of reproduction, a machinery of sorts, and what we need to do is to locate on the periphery of that system if we are to see it from an other vantage point. It is only from that viewing space that we might begin to understand that what matters isn't contained in the sign, and that this hegemonic understanding of self exists within a multiplicity of other selves that already exist as the excess, and on the boundaries of the normative self. It is only by allowing these other aspects of the self to be given voice, to speak their truths, that they might infuse and nourish our subjectivity, as the language embodies us and our bodies are simultaneously transformed by words.

DEMI-ISE AND DECLINE SERIES



Figure 13 Sherman, 1982

Retrieved from:

http://www.mocp.org/collections/permanent/uploads/Sherman2001_33.jpg

i believe this is a 1982 image, but it doesn't appear in any of the publications of Sherman's work that i have come across of that era. It is not particularly typical of any series, although perhaps it may fit into the series i have called 'Demise and Decline' and in light of this image i have renamed it 'Demi-ise and Decline' due to the similarity between this image and the cover Demi Moore did clothed only in body paint, while pregnant. The 'Demi-ise and Decline' series is that which i have identified as a turning point in the images where stereotypical 'woman' relegates the space and the images take on a distorted effect. Some kind of disjuncture

has occurred, perhaps an oscillation of the aesthetic and its underside, that which isn't beautiful in bodies, those bits we don't want to acknowledge, let alone see in vivid colour are being brought to the surface, speaking amongst the hegemonic voice, transforming it, and us. Here there is a beginning of this demise of the objective female body which later we will see more fully and forcefully, as the ideology of the female body gives way to the reality of bodies in their leaking and seeping physicality. We can also read it in relation to Freeman's narrative of the self, here the fabric of that narrative is becoming unthreaded, strands are being disentangled from the contorting knot that is feminine subjectivity and fraying off in unimaginable and unable to be imagined directions as the knot is tugged and pulled and gender unravels, and with it what it means to be a living, breathing, experiencing woman is released from the name 'woman', and meaning is allowed to proliferate.



Figure 14 Untitled #133, Sherman, 1984

Retrieved from:

http://www.bombsite.com/images/attachments/0001/1475/Sherman_01_body.jpg

Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions, but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance. (Foucault, 1978, p. 101)

These images, of which the above is an example, made in 1984, are for me, something of a turning point in Sherman's work, for there is an end to the stereotypical images of typical femininity as seen in the Stills, and even the Centrefolds, and instead we begin to see a general demise as 'woman' undergoes a kind of transformation. Here, again the woman is not focused on the camera, but appears to be distracted by some inner turmoil. Adding to the sense of intrigue, we can see just one side of her face clearly for the other is partly concealed but there is a disfigurement there. It is as if Sherman is playing with the idea of an oscillating surface, showing us the beginnings of the other, something else, another side, the side concealed by the glitzy, glamour, of the stereotypical Film Stills, but which they simultaneously point to with each oscillation, so they conceal and reveal at once, holding a tenuous grip on ideology (Barthes, 1982; Foucault, 1978). And here, I read, that turnstile in progress, as we catch a glimpse of the ugly side that those earlier works pre-empted, but which we did not see because we were fooled by myth, caught in the ideological concealment. And here as we begin to read the old in light of the newer we can see the beginnings of a break down in the normative self, the recognisable and legitimate self, the 1983-84 images take a decidedly different track as the women no longer conform with the regulatory norms of their own materialisation, and in so doing test the peripheries of normality. Again we must position somehow to read this other body of work, where the bodies are marked differently, where they refuse to be bound in the same way, where the abject other begins to emerge even as we try to contain it and reproduce normality, we at the same time can no longer ignore it. The women in these images aren't beautiful or normal, they aren't feminine, they are visibly angry, as in figure 15, they are clearly mad, figure 16, and in the case of figure 17, possibly even dead. So how do we read these images? And is there really such a

divisive break between those and what came before? I think in order to read them we must do so in light of Sherman's previous work, the later transforming the former, showing up the disfigurement that was there from the beginning, but was concealed in that "glittering husk" that is a stereotype, familiar, recognisable, desirable, comfortable-even, though a glimmering shell that reflects both the light and the dark, the desirable and recognisable self given to us in the name 'woman', and the other side of that which is the oppression inherent in taking up and producing ourselves in that name, the stifling of the 'breath of life' that such conformity requires (Foucault, as cited in Bernauer & Mahon, 2005). 'Woman' is that "empty husk polished to glittering perfection", an ideal, and the stereotype exemplified in the Film Stills epitomises that ideological ideal. It is hardly surprising, given this, that we are hard pressed to enliven this ideal type in our own bodies and selves, and that we continually fall short in our efforts. And, given our understanding of the individual nature of the self and the objectivity of our bodies, coupled with a public obsession in relation to the deficient female body, and in light of the economic relationship in terms of the dollar value of the beauty industry, it is not at all surprising that we locate this deficiency, and responsibility for it, within ourselves and we seek to control it from an objective standpoint, analysing our own bodies and subjecting them to the latest products and techniques to further us towards that ideal.



Figure 15 Sherman, 1983, Untitled #122

Retrieved from: <http://www.phillipsdepure.com/auctions/lot-detail.aspx?sn=NY040109&search=&p=6&order=&lotnum=70>



Figure 16 Sherman, 1985, Untitled #154

Retrieved from: <http://www.prices4antiques.com/photographica/autochromes-other-color/Chromogenic-Print-Sherman-Cindy-Untitled-154-Woman-by-Camp-Fire-73-inch-D9819332.html>



Figure 17 Untitled #153, Sherman, 1985

Retrieved from:

http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_YtvRvJGW14A/Ri3ooCA6YfI/AAAAAAAAAqQ/U9CGjYsWL4w/s320/Cindy%2BSherman.jpg

A CORPOREAL TURNING, NEGATING THE SAMO AND READING RECONFIGURATION



Figure 18 Sherman

Retrieved from: <http://www.cookfineart.net/sherman/sherman-01.jpg>

The Beginnings of Corporeal Aggression

At this point in time the women in Sherman's images take on an edgier, angrier, more wary appearance, as in figure 18, there is much ambiguity and one struggles to position in such a way to read the emotions within the confines of femininity. In this series which Sherman dated 1982, the women appear more savvy and street-wise, see figure 19, and again there is an edge to their demeanor that wasn't there in the Film Stills, they are angry, the looks are confrontational, they are rebellious. We can begin to read them in the way Burton talked about, as

examples of a kind of "corporeal aggression", women wielding their bodies, to resist the totalisation as 'woman'.



Figure 19 Untitled #112, Sherman, 1982

Retrieved from:

http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/guggenheim/education/images/EXHI003352P_600.jpg

i was from the beginning drawn to figure 18, for i read her as angry, or even bored, impatient, irritated, we are uncertain of how she might respond to whatever might be causing this presumed aggravation. Her posture and suggested emotion interrupt the filling in of depth, even if only for a split second, and in that pause there is room for an other story to begin, at least that space is subtly wedged open. For a moment the name recedes a little and as we read the girl, and us, are fleetingly freed from the constraints of 'woman'. Again it is like Mansfield's comment about the reaction that may be elicited, that is unpredictable and unable to be known in an instant. And in the interruption between meaning and its distortion into form, myth falters, the oscillation slows, and we see the fallacy, even if only for a moment the vision embodies us with resistance. And we may not act on it yet, but it remains there a question mark on the story of 'woman', a tension that will not be quelled, for it is a subtle space opened, a peripheral crevice that will be engorged as we envision other chinks in the armour of the dominant discourse. Here space is opened up and no matter how momentarily a subtle shift has been embodied as we sense this disjuncture between our selves and the name, and fleetingly catch a glimpse of life on the edge of that name. A subtle and fleeting recognition of that excess which cannot be contained but which exists within us and we recognise. i envision this as i dialogue with hooks, Morrison, Foucault, and others, as an edge, a periphery, an antagonist, a perpetual irritation of the centre, of our materialisation in the name.

Bringing Sherman In: An Other Disruption

The familiarity of Sherman's earlier works, the *Film Stills* and the *Centerfolds* in particular, invite us to take up and reproduce ourselves in these nominal and normal places of gender, we recognise the women, we have known them all our lives, indeed they preceded our birth. But the invitation and the comfort of being the recognisable self is short-lived, for we cannot appropriate ourselves in these

images unless we appropriate the image as parody, for this is ultimately what it is. These are, after all, images of the artist, and are therefore contrived and artificial. They involve hours of meticulous planning and set up and even with this knowledge it is undeniably easy to view them as natural occurrences of femininity. This is the predominant image we have, after all, of woman, we can encode the emotions of the 'women' in the images effortlessly, easily imagine ourselves in the circumstances they are in, and in doing so reproduce ourselves yet again through the hegemonic discourses of self. However, now there is a disjuncture, the seemingly effortless path from image to materialisation and back again, has been disrupted and we stop, where we ultimately must anyway if we are to think 'woman' differently, outside of the constraints of that name, at the surface (Barthes, 1982). The myth that this is woman, that this is natural and therefore essentially so, is disrupted and the flow from surface to interpreted depth is severed, damaged irrecoverably and we are left, floundering somewhat, in a space between surface and the now sensed **illusion** of depth.

Nature and normality are challenged in Sherman, she offers a myriad of 'types' of femininity, or possible women, in the Stills, yet we can find no essential 'woman'. We can excavate at the surface, but the digging will only return us there for there is no depth. The story of hegemonic self resides too at the surface, and as it does we can now locate and envision those other stories of self that can be fleshed out in its convoluted folds and as we read and embody that dialogic of self, bodies and language to become other, to take up those spaces on the excess of 'woman'. As i read Sherman i am embodied by the surface, i no longer think, speak, read or write from a hegemonic space, i envision my self as multiple and fragmented, my knowledge as partial and located and always in a dialogue within that community from which i have now a transformed, and transforming, speaking space. Sherman's women are everywoman, and they are none, for they are fragments, splinters, the immersion of fantasy and life, of fiction and

autobiography, neither a truth nor a story, rather they are a knowledge, they are the knowledge we have of locating in our self and body and speaking from that space that is truly our own.

Thinking Multiplicity in Multiple Ways - Metaphor Again!

i have found it particularly useful to think of this using Foucault's understanding of surface as an infinitely folded space, which one may imagine as many intricate folds and in doing so we can appreciate the complexity of living the name, and the excess of that name, simultaneously. It is rather like thinking of the body as a multiply inscribed surface, a palimpsest, with each inscription bringing forth a particular understanding of self, both the hegemonic and the subjugated selves. And that these are overlaid in such a way that the traces of those previous inscriptions remain, though they are partly concealed, partly weakened by those that come after. Understanding surface using metaphor in this way allows us to incorporate the multiplicity of self, the idea that we are all more than that contained in the name, yet we are also this and even when we experience ourselves in other ways, reproducing ourselves as non-normative selves, on the edge of hegemonic discourse, we still retain the memory of oppression because it exists within us, on our bodies inscribed, within the folds of our many selves (hooks, 1990). The dialogue remains and we are reminded at times as we speak, think, or write, of the hegemonic self as it vies for representation even when it is weakened by those many other voices which we now embody and summon forth. i understand the self in its multiplicity and difference when i think of it using these metaphors, specifically the metaphor of the palimpsest, that of the many folded surface, or as a fabric, in the way Freeman uses it, which is the idea of many threads coming together, that might be pulled away again, unraveled somewhat, but each contributing to the overall fabric of the self, the full experience of self, which is multiple and varied. In Sherman, the images are ambiguous, they confuse identity,

confuse names, binaries are smudged over and troubled, gender is made to speak its blurred and arbitrary boundaries, yet there is a threading, a fabric of the self that is not frayed for all its fragmentation. i am embodied, in Sherman, by this sense of the self as disentangled but able to be rewoven differently, multiply, other. That in this space of apparent chaos and confusion, we can find calm in the disorder, for life is disordered and we must stop the ordering. As Beckett said, it is only once we accept that we cannot know the self, others, the order of life, that there are no ultimate truths or realities that will stop the proliferation of meaning, the movement that permeates life, it is only then that we can find some peace in the chaos. We must accept the disorder for then we do not deny life that remains regardless of the way we name it. In Sherman we cannot order the images, we cannot make them stop, they remain teeming at the surface, they are alive with ambiguity, with uncertainty, with chaos, and i am enlivened by that as i read, that sense that this is our orientation, we must locate and find it for ourselves, it cannot be known or told to us from an objective standpoint. It is as Foucault said, an ethics of the self, we create ourselves as a work of art, an aesthetic and transformative space, we do not denote it in a hegemonic name, we let it breathe, we are embodied by its capacity to enliven us when we have the courage, and perspective, to embrace its unboundedness. Sherman's bodies speak the pain of oppression, simultaneously broken down and reemerging as other, as resistant for they have relinquished the shackles of the name and in them i read those spaces to embrace the other, the abject and the fragmented. In Sherman i am embodied by the disconnection as a means to connect again with my self as excess of the name, i am enlivened by a sense of freedom that this entails.

i also find it helpful to think of the self in auditory ways, which incorporates the idea of a dialogue, which is absolutely integral in thinking through this work, both the dialogue that is embodied within us as we experience ourselves in ways that aren't contained in hegemonic discourse, and the dialogue that perpetuates this

research, which is a compilation of many voices and the intermingling of those with my own multiple voices.

i have been troubled at times by the fact that there will, necessarily, be omissions in the writing, that some of the voices that form the compilation won't be cited, yet they will remain and breathe around the edges, and through, the text (Morgan, 2005). i struggle with the omissions, in the way hooks (1990) describes, but this is also about intertextuality, and that how this proliferates out, and back, interweaving in ways that disregard academic citation, an infinite referral, so even that which is missed is also caught, if we conceive of this as an endless thread, an ultimate linking of all in a ceaseless signification. i am inspired by hooks (1990) own experience of the self and the intertextual weave with which we are immersed, when she writes:

Private speech in public discourse, intimate intervention, making another text, a space that enables me to recover all that I am in language, I find so many gaps, absences in the written text. To cite them at least is to let the reader know something has been missed, or remains there hinted at by words - there in the deep structure. (p. 147)

In Sherman space is open and permeable, this is the writerly text, it does not inscribe any boundaries, the sequence is non-linear, it is a weave, and thus it embodies me in ways that have been overwhelming when i read in these woven spaces, threading myself, my body, into the text, i am embodied by this penetrability, this dialogue that i, in my communal space, engage in with Sherman. It is, as the old, blind, Black woman in Morrison's story says to the children in relation to the bird which is a metaphor for language, and our capacity to use it well or to kill it.

I trust you now. I trust you with the bird that is not in your hands because you have truly caught it. Look. How lovely it is, this thing we have done - together. (p. 30)

As i read Sherman i am embodied by this thing we have done together which is that communal dialogue of reading, writing, and thinking in bodies and selves.

Lamenting Gaps and Celebrating Holey Texts

As hooks notes, there are many gaps and absences in the written text, and i have this experience also, however, as i locate to read Sherman, from a subjective space on the margin, i envision and read the art as a writerly text. i understand it as a space which does not delineate with hard and impenetrable edges, that instead it is open, fluid, and able to be entered at multiple places (Barthes, 1987). i envision these multiple points of entry as enabling threads both in and out of the text, with each new thread embodying us in different ways, in a dialogue between self and other, self and world, as we embody a different understanding of self and life in a circular way, as "spirals of remembrance and return, repetition and reconfiguration" (Freeman, 1998, p. 47). And in this altered space of understanding, this recurring circularity is embodied in us as we pull forth those multiple threads and experience ourselves in multiple ways, engaged always in a ceaseless process of movement. i can enter Sherman's work in multiple ways, through the normative self given to me in hegemonic discourse, or through the resistant self, the abject, living on the edges of recognisability. The images draw in many threads that represent various narratives of self, but in a writerly text such as this, those narratives aren't bounded in, they move at the edges of the image, of my self, drawing in other references, my own located knowledges, that are outside the frame. As i read i am embodied by the openings, the perforations of the text, the bleeding out and back in, the enlivening of my corporeal self as i reconfigure in that dialogic space of text and the communal 'i', who and how i can be as i celebrate the excess and embody the fragmentation. When we relinquish the name, and embrace our multiplicity, when we arc and surge, almost grasp that splintering self, it is an experience, perhaps akin to Barthes (1982), *jouissance*, for

herein is freedom. A freedom perpetuated by struggle, thought, and reflection, but a freedom nonetheless where we have room to give breath to the other within. Where we no longer have to deny the tension, for it is the voice of the other, and we can now enliven that, in our bodies, and as we speak, think and write.

***DISTURBING THE CENTRE AND SURFACING THE FOLDS:
THE CENTREFOLD SERIES***

This is a series of photographs Sherman produced after Art Forum commissioned her to do a series of images for their magazine. However, they were rejected for fear they might be misunderstood by its readers. Of course, this assumes that there is a possibility of misunderstanding and that there is, in fact, a correct and an incorrect reading. This, I imagine, is unlikely Sherman's envisioning for the work. Herein there is no presumption of essence or meaning, no author, not even a title, thus we must read from our located and geopolitical spaces and in the dialogue our selves and bodies will be transformed. Perhaps they invoked an uncomfortable association with actual centerfolds, and the exploitation of women, or maybe they may be 'misunderstood' as reminiscent of the predatory male, that which is fictionally and institutionally popularised, thus configuring 'woman' as vulnerable and victim, and consequently more likely to take up that space of victim (Bartky, 1990). They are large, horizontal shots where we look down upon the women in the images, see figure 20.



Figure 20 Sherman, Untitled #

Retrieved from: <http://peterandjoan.blogs.wm.edu/2008/10/05/a-potential-third-dimension-cindy-sherman-in-between-modernsim-and-postmodernism/>

Unpredictable Woman



Figure 21 Untitled #92, Sherman, 1981

Retrieved from: <http://touchingharmstheart.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/sherman.png>

There are certain tremendous moments in life when a creature comes out of his [or her] corner and looks around, and it's frightening. (Mansfield, as cited in Burton, 2006, p. 209)

The above image, figure 21, was from the outset that which i was going to select from this series. For me, it exemplifies a quote by Katherine Mansfield, and i like that i can read in this image that unpredictability, to not know it and name it in an instant, that it is possible to read it in ways that defy the hegemonic understandings. Here a woman inhabits a dark space and as viewer we adopt a position of looming down upon her, yet even with all that information which would feed into a stereotypical reading of fear and anxiety, there are other positions from which to read enabled by other understandings of 'woman' and self. The way the work has been photographed invites a specific and hegemonic reading, but it isn't the only one, and here we can open up spaces to read it in other ways and i like that this image has for me, always been about resisting the dominant voice. This work continues on the themes of darkness, the scariness of shadows and night and things we can't see, made more ominous now by the positioning of the

camera, the girl now seems to be overwhelmed by something we cannot see, in the Film Stills what loomed over the girl were large concrete buildings, immovable, permanent structures, solid and stable, whereas here it is the camera which looms over Sherman, enabled by the perspective used, with the camera positioned to focus down upon the girl, thereby positioning us in this way. Again, as in the Film Stills, the girls are attending to something to the exterior of the frame that we cannot see, yet we too are drawn to this space. We are voyeur here, rather than invited spectator, these images aren't contrived for the family album, yet they are entirely contrived and we know this. We know Sherman created each work, no doubt the result of both careful planning and impromptu inspiration, and yet it is difficult not to delve below the surface and fill them in, so easy is it to position ourselves in their place and interpret their emotions and bodily posture in line with our gendered hegemonic subjectivity.

In Sherman We Refuse Surface Its Depth

We know this is Sherman, in figure 21, we know she set this up to take a photograph using various techniques to capture the image in this way, so this is not real fear, this is Sherman, she is acting out some emotion through bodily posture, facial expression, clothing, and so on. But is that it, do we stop there, at the literal, at what we know because we know this is Cindy Sherman, photographic artist, or do we read some depth in the surface, collapsing those categories so that there is more but its not an essential more, it lives and breathes at the surface, with our bodies, in our daily life experiences. Our depth, like the depth of the image is at the surface, like Foucault's infinitely folded surface. We all live in multiple ways, our selves fragmented and complex, and yet this isn't because we are essentially something or another, for what we held to be essence or natural femininity, is as we have discovered just another story, though a particularly well sedimented one that in its sedimentation has been able to locate for itself a

position of truth. We now move to spaces where the truth is at the surface for it is that located space of our bodies and selves, that which Haraway (1991) spoke of where locatedness rather than objectivity gives us our 'truths', the truth of our selves.

The use of half open doors and mirrors, of reflection, of a futile search for an inner self pervades the Film Stills, in particular. In figure 23, the girl gazes into a mirror, while we take up, what may be an uncomfortable voyeuristic space, in figure 22, as we peer through the open door at what appears to be a private moment. And in the centrefolds we look down upon the women, taking up perhaps the male gaze, see figure 24. Yet no matter how much we look Sherman's images we cannot uncover its true essence, always the surface reflects back upon us and we see only our self, which is, of course, from where we must 'begin', in that space that has already begun, but is necessarily all we have. It is our location, and our developing sense of our ability to engage from that space, our geopolitical landscape. To look in Sherman is not to see, neither for us, for the women in the images, nor, presumably, for Sherman. The ocular and with it psychological understandings and knowledges of self, recede, and we must embrace our own knowledge which is dialogic, experiential, and comes from our engagement with others, with theory, with life.



Figure 22 Sherman, 1979, Untitled # 39

Retrieved from:

<http://sporkinthedrawer.typepad.com/photos/uncategorized/2007/07/29/012.jpg>



Figure 23 Sherman, 1977, Untitled #2

Retrieved from:

http://www.mcah.columbia.edu/fa/images/medium/kc_femart_sherman_87.jpg



Figure 24 Untitled #96, Sherman, 1981

Retrieved from:

http://www.morgenpost.de/multimedia/archive/00324/Cindy_Sherman_1981__324781b.jpg

THE CLOWN SERIES - A PIVOTAL ORIENTATION

This is, i believe, a pivotal series in Sherman's work, because it links all of the preceding and later works together and is a useful way of bringing together the themes which i have read in the work as being integral to an understanding of gender and embodied gender as we have come to know it, and as we position to transform those experiences and ourselves. The clowns speak back and forward, transforming the earlier works and pre-empting what was to come. Burton (2006) has said Sherman's work is best read in retrospect, and i have delighted in my own experience of the transformation that such a reading entails, as simultaneously joyful and haunting. i am haunted by the nihilistic spaces that women beyond a certain productive capacity, be that in relation to childbearing, sexual objectivity or whatever, are expected to take up, and i am delighted by Sherman's 'Aging Woman' for in the transformation they become Aging Women, they quite literally kick hegemonic butt. As i read, i see them as reinventing, recreating, for themselves who and how we can be as women, and i am transformed in that reading, enlivened in my corporeal aggression, inspired on my own path of reinvention and recreation (Burton, 2006). Sherman rattles at and troubles that latch that would drop upon us and silence us, that language that would stifle our "unsayable, transgressive words", stuffing them back in our throats like Morrison's (1994) "pate-producing geese" (p. 17). Sherman's aging women will not be silenced and they will not disappear, they remain that persistent antagonist of 'woman', corporeally splendid and spectacularly spectacle (Gergen, 2000).



Figure 25 Untitled #424, Sherman, 2004

Retrieved from: http://www.downtownexpress.com/de_123/apex.gif



Figure 26 Untitled #412, Sherman, 2004

Retrieved from:

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/telegraph/multimedia/archive/01155/arts-graphics-2004_1155754a.jpg

Surface/Depth

The clowns embody the antagonistic relationship between surface and depth, the idea that we might know from the surface what exists below, that there are obvious and identifiable markers that allow us to fill in an essence upon that which is immediately visible is founded. And of course there are and we do, but rather than these being something natural or essential, the foundations instead are arbitrary and artificial, and nature is merely a useful ideological mechanism which conceals the reality of history and human intervention. The surface of the clowns, their literal presence is entirely, and unashamedly, artificial. They are garishly bright, their makeup is extravagant and their facial features exaggerated, their clothing, like their faces, is gaudy suggesting an aura of fun and frivolity. But Sherman's clowns don't appear to be particularly fun or frivolous, despite their clownish garb. They look out menacingly from the canvas, easily collapsing the

boundaries between our perception of good and evil. They speak directly to our ability to see, the ocularcentric bias so valued in our society and culture, and of its shortcomings (Sampson, 1998). In the case of the clowns, the surface does little to give us the clues we need to fill in an essence or depth. The clowns are like Barthes (1982b) absent centre, they are all surface and no depth. They are forcefully literal at the surface, filling the space chaotically, yet everything about them is simultaneously concealed, the entirety of their masquerade, the absolute artificiality, fills the surface while simultaneously concealing any markers that might indicate a depth beyond, and in doing so a disruption has occurred in the way we would normally read. The literal is full and vivid yet entirely without depth, and so we are forced to focus on the surface for in its gaudy hallucinogenic colour we struggle to look away. The signs that myth needs to take up and conceal the literal, to make it mean something other than that immediately available at the surface are absent, and though the surface is so full as to be literally overflowing with hysteria, for all this surface saturation it is at the same time essence-tially meaningless. Those identifiable markers that myth takes up and distorts, that are then transformed under the guise of nature and natural subjectivity are unavailable in the clown images, clearly our ability to identify gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and so on, is absent. The clowns stop the oscillation that myth needs to nourish its distortion, they refuse to be naturalised, refuse to be named, refuse to take up the space of legitimate subjectivity, and so remain on the edge of the known, a manic, non-normative outlier. Yet for all this we do know them. As 'woman' we take up a subjective space that is in many ways similar, and Sherman's clowns speak of this similarity and transform the way in which the earlier and later images of 'woman' can be read.

Clowns Speak 'Woman'

The subjective space 'woman' is as artificial and arbitrary as 'clown' yet we do not easily read it in this way, because the artificiality is concealed within the name 'woman' by its supposed relation to, and foundation in, nature. Whereas the clowns are presented as entirely artificial with that artifice absolutely saturating the surface of the image, 'woman' is presented as natural femininity, the truth of the female gender. Unlike the clowns the parody, the mock-up, is here naturalised and our performance is seen to be synonymous with femininity and 'woman'. However, Sherman will not let this rest, and as I read her work I see the relationship between the early Film Stills and the later Aging Woman given clarity by the inclusion of the clowns, smoothing the disjuncture between the two. They allow me to understand more clearly how the two are related and also how the other work is brought in to complete a narrative that resists gender normalisation, speaks of gender embodiment, and exists on the margin within a fusion of those other voices which speak of the negation of that which we are given and strive to imagine other ways in which we might experience our selves and bodies. The clowns speak of surface and artificiality as they simultaneously deny depth, they show us the futility of interpretation that is based on the identity of 'essential selves' by virtue of those signs of subjectivity that we have come to believe are transcendental signifieds (Barthes, 1982). In the clowns the sign is unavailable and we are left with only the literal from which to read, in 'woman' we are expected to read from the sign, the great transcendental signified, that is, nature, and in doing so to ignore the literal. If we were to focus on the literal we might see the inconsistency between it and the sign, we might glimpse the ideology, see the cracks and fissures that exist at the surface but are denied by myths distorting oscillation, to stop at the surface is to begin to see the distortion and to deny myth the power to enforce a grand narrative of self, a transcendental signified, a centre. The difference, and the reason we are more

likely to read depth into the Film Stills rather than the clowns, is that in the images of 'woman' the ocular markers that give rise to nature are evident, they are at the surface, easily identifiable whilst at the same time allowing myth to conceal the infinite folds that the surface contains, as it bundles all the inconsistency and tension up under the name 'woman'. When we **see**, and recognise, the signs of gender, or ethnicity, or class, an oscillation between surface and depth occurs and we are moved from the literal to filling in something below, based on our perception that there is a legitimate centre upon which these signs founder, as we consequently observe an essence in the images, and in ourselves, the familiar, the recognisable is taken up, 'woman' is again centred, reproduced, taking up the space of the sign, like ethnicity and class, the foundation is secured once again and the proliferation of meaning is halted, the image has been stilled, the threat to hegemonic discourse ceased, Western ontology can breathe again and live to reproduce its narrative of self, and us, another day. Of course, this is a process fraught with discovery, that in its reiteration we may glimpse or sense the tension that exists between the artificiality of the name and our experience of life in that name, and that something other than 'woman' might be spawned in us, an illegitimate other that exists on the boundary of our normative self, in us but negated by the dominant voice, and in those subjugated discourses of subjectivity that exist on the margin of dominant hegemony (Butler, 1990).

The Film Stills, unlike the clowns, conceal as they simultaneously reveal, they provide those visual markers of the sign, from which we can position and read the essence of 'woman', the depth that supposedly underlies the surface. And as we recognise the foundation or centre we at the same time reproduce that narrative as we take up the space of normative gendered subjectivity, the space 'woman'. But there are other spaces available that the name necessarily subjugates, spaces that we might recognise as a disjuncture were we to stop and read at the surface, for the hegemonic narrative has no place for the co-existence of other stories,

and as we recognise and take up the space of normative femininity we simultaneously deny and subjugate those other experiences of self which exist on the edge of our normative self, those that exceed the name and which the hegemonic order must quash in order to maintain gender as natural, universal and nominal. The Clowns, by contrast, reveal as they simultaneously conceal, they are entirely at the surface filling it to the brim and in doing so they deny our efforts to read depth. The clown is like Barthes absent centre, like the elaborate packaging in Japanese gifts or like the wrestlers, a show with no substance, or a show where no substance is the show, where the packaging is more important than what is inside for the packaging, or surface, is where the story exists and can be read. But this is not to say reading the 'clowns' is simple or straightforward, on the contrary, for we read the surface without assumption, and without a foundation of what counts as truth and meaning which gives the reading a complexity, and a necessity for reflexivity, it previously didn't have. For now we must read in our geopolitical locatedness, we must bring ourselves critically and reflexively into the narrative no longer denying that we weren't always there, and as we do we create the work anew, the reading is dialogic, it is multiple, and it embodies us as we read from our located and corporeal space on the margin, that space of new imaginings.

The sign now freed as origin ushers forth a proliferation of meaning and the surface is, to use Foucault's metaphor, infinitely folded and containing its own depth, a depth that isn't made in a name, that isn't founded on an ideology, but a meaning that we must take for ourselves as we dialogue from our space of critical reflexivity. The sign released from the Western obsession with universal truth becomes an other signifier for it no longer founds the relationship between signifier and signified, on the contrary, it now releases it. And we too, released from the sign of gender and notions of universal, nominal and stable femininity, can experience our selves as multiple, as geopolitically located and as in a state of

perpetual transformation. Our goal should be to transform the self as we liberate ourselves from "the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state" which is actually totalitarianism disguised (Foucault, 1982, p. 216). In the clowns we are encouraged by the brazen pre-eminence of the surface to focus on it, but even as we do, using that most valued sense, the ocular, we cannot fill in depth, we cannot make the clowns stabilise in a subjective name, be it gender, class, ethnicity or sexuality. The signs around which we would normally gain our footing and make the image still are unavailable. We could of course say that the clowns in their entirety are the sign, the name 'clown' denoting and stabilising them, and yet even to bundle them up in this way is unsatisfactory, because these aren't typical clowns and they refuse to be embodied, even in that generic name, they push at the edges of it, distorting it, making it into something else, breaking down the binary between good and evil, happy and sad.

Denying Names - Uncontainable 'Clowns'

For these clowns clearly aren't jolly or fun-loving, they aren't the clowns of the traditional narrative, those encapsulated in the name 'clown'. They are, instead, a mix of characters portraying a range of genders and emotional states, they are at once sad, often sinister, at times pathetic, many of them appear to be on the edge of lunacy, seemingly psychotic and manic, they grin evilly from the canvas, and yet we don't even know whether they are really smiling, for their mouths are painted on over-sized grins and grimaces, which conceal the state of emotion beneath, again we are denied the cues from which we might fill in depth and assume knowledge of the self. They are perhaps, like the abnormal, unrecognisable self, the excess of that contained in the name 'clown'. Is this not the abject other of 'clown', that which gives the normative its illusion of fixed and stable meaning by reference to its difference, its underside (Derrida, 1998)? Here perhaps we can read Sherman as bringing the abject other of the 'clown' to the surface, releasing

it from its farcical depth, as the name recedes and the meaning of 'clown' is allowed to proliferate. Something I read similarly in relation to 'woman' and embodied femininity in Sherman, particularly in the 'Aging Woman' series. Clowns are particularly interesting characters because in their ambiguity they so easily collapse the boundaries of good and evil, of frivolous fun and threatening danger. We only need to look at the number of horror films, where clowns are portrayed as psychotic killers, to see how easily they slip from the space of childish immature joker to homicidal axe wielding maniac. They are, said Burton (2006), an "empty cipher" and as such easily filled, be it as figures of fun or as aggressive and of evil intent (p. 206). This is, I believe, because we cannot easily and conclusively read them in the ways we normally would for, as we have seen in Sherman's clowns, all generic markers are concealed and this outright disguise of the 'truth' of the self brings in a sinister element. In a world preoccupied with knowing the truth of the self and enforcing that truth, clowns clearly slip through the noose of hegemony, they aren't able to be named and framed in an instant in the way we would normally perceive subjects. This unsteadies us, we sense a foundational shift and it is scary, unused to reading without ontological presumption we are temporarily dazed by the vividness and vivacity of the clowns and at that moment when all signs fail to denote and meaning proliferates the clowns can be other, they can exceed the name and take up the chain of signifiers, the intertextual weave that is language. As Barthes (1986) said, that which society will not tolerate is that we are unable, or unwilling, to be named, and that we are thus nothing, the unknown. We slip through that naming noose, and thus escape its constraints, that subjective death in the name, and instead we proliferate, and become the unable to be, absolutely and finally known, other. And in this space of proliferated meaning, in relation to clowns, film producers have taken the underside and made it signify something other than the doxa, that which the name intended. Rather like Butler's (1990) understanding of our subjective reproduction as 'woman', in the process of

repetition an other is spawned which isn't that intended in the name, but which exists anyway, on the excess, on the other side of the name. This is not to say that clowns are inherently evil or good, or inherently anything, rather, it is, I believe, an *exposé*, quite brilliantly achieved by Sherman, of the artificiality of the name, of the sign as origin, in particular its instability and inability to universalise, nominalise and normalise. Like Barthes' wrestlers, and the dancers in the *Folies Bergere*, the clowns exist entirely on the surface and everything that we can know can only be known from that space, which ironically amounts to nothing at all, as is similarly the case in Beckett's play, 'Waiting for Godot'. The oscillation which feeds myth is denied in a depthless surface and we are left only with that which we must read from our own locatedness, a complexly folded surface that must be read interactively, multiply, as we exist in a state of perpetual movement and as this movement is embodied in ourselves and as we read. As language is freed from the name, and the play of meaning proliferates, the fluidity, the permeability, and the multiplicity are embodied in the words, as they embody us now freed from the nominal, universal and stable self. Just as Barthes (as cited in Scheie, 2000) said of the wrestlers, that the exhibition of their body and emotions are absolute artifice, entirely located at the surface, they "exhibit the state of their souls (pain, joy, vengeance, normality), all their expressions are chosen to present to the masses an immediate and exhaustive reading of their motives. Here there is not the ambiguity of life" (p. 167). Not the ambiguity, presumably because the artifice is complete and absolute, it leaves no room for interpretation, as it is with the clowns, therefore denying us the ideology of essentialism, of a depth that exists upon which the surface, including our self, is founded. Like Sherman's 'woman' and 'clowns', the wrestlers are performers and their performance is contrived, their emotive and bodily responses are organised and practiced to present a specific version of 'reality', but in this case the version is unashamedly contrived whereas in 'woman' it is shamefully concealed.

Troubling in Parody

Practices of parody can serve to reengage and reconsolidate the very distinction between a privileged and naturalized gender configuration and one that appears as derived, phantasmatic, and mimetic - a failed copy, as it were. (Butler, 1999, p. 186)

We can read in the wrestlers, as in Sherman's 'woman', a parody of the range of emotions that a specific type of subject may elicit, in the latter these are the emotional responses considered normal for 'woman'. In the case of the wrestlers the parody, the artifice is at the surface, it is brought forth in its entirety and to read these emotions as anything other than farce would seem folly. Yet in another context we might read the very same emotions, exhibited in a similar way, as a reflection of some inner turmoil, some psychological dilemma, after all they are all representations of what are considered normal emotional responses. By making what we accept as reality nonsensical, parody disrupts the flow from representation to meaning. It makes fun of that linearity, it poses questions of why and how - why do we read in this way, what pre-empts and facilitates such a reading, how has this come to be the established truth and how might this be otherwise? Parody by representing something we usually take as a truth of the self, in an over-exaggerated way or in another context, is able to disrupt the idea of foundational truths and essential selves. The wrestlers parody a range of emotional states that we would normally use to fill in depth, in this case we might see (and easily identify, for they are chosen to be blatant rather than ambiguous), 'anger' and 'pain', and other masculine displays of emotion. In Sherman i read the failed copy, that Butler (1999) refers to, as 'woman', we, in our hegemonic name, are that simulacrum, the copy with no origin, the story of foundation is gone and replaced by a story of dialogue and engagement. 'Woman' is a parody, and as we read retrospectively we envision that parody as not only belonging to the 'Clowns', but also foretold in the 'Stills'.

As in the wrestlers, in Sherman we are stopped at the surface, we cannot delve below for meaning, for we know 'woman' is the un-original, the 'mimetic' (Butler, 1999). Without this parodic disruption we might interpret the wrestlers emotions, and Sherman or 'woman', from presumptions related to the meaning of these emotions, both from situational cues and from what we 'know' of the subjective 'background' of the individual, that is, their gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, and so on, but here we are denied such a reading. For both present a parody which brings to the fore the limits of the name, it is as Butler (1997) said, "the kind of speaking that takes place on the border of the unsayable promises to expose the vacillating boundaries of legitimacy in speech" (p. 41). We are denied access to a depth, there is not the expectation that we will interpret the emotion beyond that which is surface, or fill in a depth or essence, all is severed by the burlesque nature of the performance and we are left with nothing but a play of meaning on the surface, which is, of course, just as it is with the 'Clowns'. The wrestlers, the clowns and 'woman', are a depth-less surface. Though in the latter we are more likely to assume a depth though as we read Sherman retrospectively the essence of 'woman' in the Stills and the Centrefolds peels away and we are left only with a pitted surface, for which depth is in its intricate and infinite folds, a depth that is, of course, life.

Surfacing an Other 'Truth'

In the 'Clowns' the artifice is absolute and undeniable, the emotions are larger than life, the makeup is garish, there is little reference to 'reality', to real emotion, to nature, it is entirely about the performance, the surface, and this absolute artificiality denies its being interpreted as anything other than farce. When something is so absolute in its artificiality, clearly then the sign is emptied out, it becomes merely an other signifier pointing away in a chain of infinite

signifiers, an absent centre - surface. The sign has not the ability to lock in meaning as it once did, it can no longer halt the flow because the sign has not the capacity to hold, its artificiality embodies it, it literally fills it to the brim and it is complete and utter parody. The wrestlers and the clowns are the denial of the sign, they negate its place as origin, in Western ontology. The 'Clowns', and Sherman, leave the scene of their performance having made no permanent etching, they resist being subjectively named, their presence emits, rather, a trace, an interweaving, a dialogue, but they remain on the edge of the name in that space existing on the margin, where meaning proliferates and other possibilities of being and living are possible. They are that which society finds most abject, most horrific, that which is unable to be named (Barthes, 1986). We draw no conclusions from their work, we make no subjective summary about who they really are, the essence of them, we know nothing more than we did before our contact with the art, the performance. That so valued in Western society, the ocular and the sign, have failed us, unable to still the flow of movement, and our ability to make sense, to take something from the performance, necessarily returns us to our self and the surface and we must read from our own located positioning. As Beckett said in relation to any perceived intention or responsibility he might have as an author, in reaction to 'Waiting for Godot':

All I knew I showed. It's not much, but it's enough for me, by a wide margin. I'll even say that I would have been satisfied with less. As for wanting to find in all that a broader, loftier meaning to carry away from the performance, along with the program and the Eskimo pie, I cannot see the point of it. But it must be possible ... Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo, Lucky, their time and their space, I was able to know them a little, but far from the need to understand. Maybe they owe you explanations. Let them supply it. Without me. They and I are through with each other. (Cohn, 2006, p. 122)

Clearly Beckett has no time for authors, or inherent meanings, or essential elements of the characters, including the search for Godot. He concedes that it "must be possible ... to know them a little", and presumably once unleashed within the writerly text meaning was unable, or undesired, to be held. And this understanding, this knowing is always in relation to our located self, that dialogic embodiment with the text. It is not about searching for or providing universal explanations, they are a fallacy for which Beckett obviously had little regard. Our reading is a located one, which resonates with Haraway (1991) who talked about understanding knowledge in ways that are not about universal truths, but about positioning and reading from our located bodies and selves. We must read Sherman from our located spaces, for like Beckett, she offers us no authorial voice, no centre from which we might orient. Each image is 'untitled', and thus we must engage to read rather than presume a reading. The surface is both centre and margin, it is the entirety and our own surface, our body, is that space where we position to read, the body and self are our places of dialogic orientation. Our visions as Haraway reminds us are a different kind of objectivity, for we see from our located spaces, 'particular' and 'embodied' and that is the only space from which we can see, anything else is a fallacy. We cannot, and never could step out of the picture, be both object and subject simultaneously, and yet remain apart, objective and detached observer (Foucault, 1966). And as we read Sherman we do so in this embodied and particular way, for we can not be 'woman', abject, other, and look upon Sherman's images in a detached way. We are these 'everywoman', and none simultaneously, which is why i expect we recognise parts, fragments of the images, for they are familiar and we do know them for we too are fragmented. No matter whether that is the Stills, the Clowns or even the Sex Pictures, there is a familiarity that heeds us, whilst at the same time confusing and distorting our easy assimilation into those named places that are hegemonic subjectivity. As we locate in the text, in the images we necessarily attend also to the reflexive, for

we live our lives in ways that are not linear, but circular, in that process of 'remembrance, return, repetition and reconfiguration', that Freeman (1999) spoke of. I understand as I dialogue with Barthes and Freeman the necessity of filling back in the human, that history that preceded us, bringing that in as we read. So that when we read those narratives of self are taken up and transformed as our bodies and selves are transformed in the dialogue. We must read to transform not only our sense of subjectivity, but our corporeal selves, as we engage with the text our bodily voices are part of the dialogue, the reading is an embodied one as we bring ourselves and our bodies into that dialogic space. As Morgan (2004) says, "the readings I perform are embodied readings, both as I write and as the reader reads" (p. 154). We must locate body and self in order to ensure that the space from which we read and write is embodied, and that this dialogue is enlivened within the text, so that when others read there is a sense of the corporeal weaving through the narrative, threading in and out, appropriating space through which others might flesh out and enliven their own corporeal spaces of resistance. We cannot read Sherman without locating body and self for the clowns disrupt even their genre, they cannot be named clown and denied life. They will not be arbitrarily shut down for they aren't typical clowns and in being so they are disruptive. They are like Barthes (1995) 'mana' word, the voice of the body, that which disrupted academic writing for it was so absolutely foreign, as it breathed through the text in ways that haunted it, that did not allow it to settle. Sherman's clowns, likewise, do not allow settling, they will not be essentialised and they will not be collapsed into a generic name. They bridle at the surface and we must seek only a knowledge that is located and partial as we dialogue in that space. When we have no recourse to hegemonic names, we must locate in our geopolitical positioning and read, we must flesh out selves and bodies and learn to see from those transformed, and transforming, spaces.

Making Up Our Own Stories, Celebrating the Weave

We then are in a position of reading the images without the usual narratives which are the centre of Western ontology. Without a foundation to halt the flow of meaning, the text or image is free, or at least we aren't constrained in the process of reading. We must, therefore, necessarily take up a different relationship to the image or text, we must become both reader and creator of the text, for ourselves, as we read now denied narrative structure, from our own geopolitically located space. The perspective has altered, it is no longer that which we access from outside, in the form of a grand narrative that informs and denotes what we can see, what we can know and what we can think, rather we must access it from our own self and body, from our experiences of life and interactions with others, the narrative from which we read is now localised and fluid, it embodies our self and that which we bring to the image or text.

As we stop to examine the fullness of the surface the mythical distortion is interrupted, and the oscillation which sucks out the literal meaning and replaces it with a now fattened mythical form is disrupted, and what is left is the surface - and we should celebrate this for that is where we must position to read, it is all we have and all that we can be sure of as we read from our own, absolutely unique location positioned by our critical awareness of self, and its relation to other and its historical foundation. In Sherman's clowns there is no suggestion of essence, the surface teems with complexity, it is overwhelmed by it. We cannot know anything that provides us a foundation from which to read, the clowns are ambiguous in as far as gender, ethnicity or age are concerned, we cannot position in hegemonic discourse for the name is disrupted and we must locate and read at the surface. And we read on the surface from the margin in a way that is formed by our own personal genealogy of self and as we do we transform our self in ways that open up spaces on the edges of subjectivity, that harvest and nourish those

edges so that they are ripe for sowing the seeds that are to come as the winds of change gather momentum. The edge is a place of transformation where we can envision other ways of being that exist outside the name, on the margin of hegemonic discourse and in subjugated knowledges, it is a place where those are given legibility, a space in which to speak, to be heard, and in this space of multiple voices we can be other, it is the place where lines which demarcate one from the other are blurred and lose their power to contain. It is not as momentous as it appears in the writing and as i write i worry that the words will distort and it may seem to be a space where anything goes, which certainly isn't how i, or others in the community within which i write, envision it. Rather it is a space of continual and persistent reflection, it is not a space where one can languish for it is permeated by movement, and as we take up spaces on the edge of those hegemonic names, we are freed from the confines of linearity and can embrace the disjointed circularity of daily life which immerses us in a process of remembrance, return and reconfiguration - this is not a space to languish, it is a political space, an active space, a space of transformation. In reading Sherman, i am reminded in the clowns, that there is no depth, that it is a fallacy, we are all clowns in a sense, yet the surface is more likely concealed as depth in 'woman'. The ideology more easily papers over the distortion of myth, as it is remade as something natural, normal, desirable. When we no longer perceive a depth we are at the surface, there is no other space to be, we have taken up space on the margin, on the edge of the name, in our bodies where we will see, think and reconfigure ourselves in other ways that relinquish the weight of hegemonic discourse. Released from the presumption of subjective 'truths' we must seek out, and imagine other selves, think of our bodies and how we might bring forth our corporeal voice in the telling so that when we speak, think and write we are transforming that which can be thought, spoken and written, we are gnawing at the edges of recognisable selves in our position on the margin of normativity. We read from our located spaces and as we read we

transform those spaces and appropriate space to be other, and we embody that fluid and fragmented self.

'Please Stop! You Are at the Surface, Learning to Love and Live in Chaos

It is about locating at the surface, at the body, and not going beyond that to interpret something more meaningful, an authorial intention, an essence, a stable referent, or a sign that would halt the flow of signification, for it is not there. In Sherman stable referents are an ideology, there is no author, the images remain untitled, for to title is to name and thus to arbitrarily hold. There is no meaning that can be located, that we can stabilise as truth, a foundation, a presumption from which we might read, knowing the story and the characters, the plot lines, before we start. Objective truth is a fallacy, and as i read Sherman i understand knowledge as partial and subjective. And when we assume we have an essence, when we make that the foundation for our very existence we are being duped by ideology, we are buying the myth. We are not living in the moments of our life, for life is moments, fragments, it is not ordered wholes, and in shutting down those moments, we waste the opportunity to celebrate our chaotic lives which in that chaos bring forth a joy unfettered by the name. As Morrison illustrates in the 'Tower of Babel' story, in making post-life the place of paradise, of reward for earthly struggle, we wasted the opportunity for that earthly struggle to usher in its own reward. As i read Sherman i am embodied by the sense of the destruction of our bodies, and the struggle to reconfigure them in other ways, that free us, our bodies, from being objective other, either sexually objectified, or as we age, being expected to take up places of invisibility. This is what this work is about, making that struggle something to celebrate, something that enriches and embodies us in ways that make, as Belinda Carlisle sang, "heaven a place on earth." Not a utopian paradise in the sense that we might normally conceive of heaven, but

a paradise that is about the joy that comes from the struggle to be more than that given in the name. The struggle to embody life in all its fragmented chaos, in all its multiplicity and complex tension, as part of our subjective experience so that we are, self and body, that intertextual weave, that space of proliferation and flow, unbounded by discursive lines of arbitrary bodies and selves. In Sherman there is chaos, there is multiplicity, the images, especially in retrospect, bridle with unresolved tension, as they speak back and forth to one another in a way that is reminiscent of our lives and our understanding of self. In Sherman we have both self and other simultaneously, 'woman' must speak with that which it denounces to live and in doing so she is fragmented, she disperses and proliferates at the unbound edges of the text, herself and body. Barthes work is characterised by this attention to the surface and denial of depth or essence, and he celebrated this particularly in relation to professional wrestling and the showgirls of the Folies Bergere, because in both these examples the body is entirely readable and there is no need to go beyond that body, beyond that exterior mask to a supposed inner essence or psyche, all that is needed can be read on the body, at the surface, there is no expectation that depth exists. And like the Clowns all is shown at the surface, we do not have to read emotion, it is there displayed in the clowns blatantly, idiotically, their happy faces are quite literally drawn on. But of course, then Sherman distorts this reading as truth or reality, just as in the wrestlers and dancers, because the smile belies something which we cannot know, we cannot really know how the clowns are feeling, like the wrestlers they are complete artifice, or complete sincerity, who can tell? And so we must read from our located position, engage with the text or image and read in and from our spaces of resistance. The clowns, wrestlers, showgirls, and us, are masked as we are similarly unmasked and the distinction between what we can know as reality and what is clearly contrived and a masquerade is blurred for here in this space we can not founder our reading on essence and we are in the

uncomfortable position of an engagement that is unknown, experimental and must proceed from our own selves and bodies. As Barthes (1981), said, from what we know of that which we read, now at this specific time and space, that is the only space we have from which to read the text. And like the psychotic backdrops of the clown images it as if we are cast into that monochromatic sickly spin of colour and we are left reeling and confused, and our knowledge of self, like a cleanly inscribed edge that divides black from white is now infused with the gaudy kaleidoscope of colour and we must splinter as the colours infiltrate and embody us, for the self that we knew is dispersing in its multiplicity as it looses its hold on the fallacy of a univocal truth.

Engaging Reading

The clowns, like the wrestlers parody a range of emotions, and like the wrestlers these are exhibited and can be read entirely at the surface, and as we have no clues, and therefore no recourse to essence, we remain at the surface and myth is denied its oscillating illusion. Though this is not to suggest that the surface is one dimensional or able to be read easily for all its literal location, on the contrary, the surface is teeming with the complexity that is akin to the chaotic disorder of life. We must locate and read the surface from our subjective vantage point which is multiple and fluid, so we read in dialogue with the literal which too is permeated by movement and multilayered. Sherman's clowns, like the wrestlers and the showgirls, give an indication of the complexity of the surface that while it reveals it also conceals. The complexity of our daily lives, the tension and contradiction that is inherently a part of that, is concealed behind various masks, which is just as it is in the mask of gender, when we take up and reproduce ourselves in the name 'woman' we conceal and try to contain the life that continues on the edge of that mask. However, in the case of 'woman' the masquerade is far more insidious, for the name masks and contains any other experiences of self, as it denies them a

speaking place within the parameters of truth, and unlike the clowns we fail to see the where the mask ends and we appear for it covers the seams with the illusion of nature, like an invisible thread we do not see how well 'woman' materialises us, self and body, how well it attaches for we assume it is inherently part of some essential femininity. We fail to see the myth. The artifice is more easily read on the bodies of the wrestlers, and the showgirls, in its parody it is exaggerated and overwhelmingly farcical, absolutely surface. A belief in essence or foundation conceals the artifice in the body of 'woman', in our own experiences of our bodies, yet in reality it is no less a mask than that of the clowns. This resonates with Barthes (1984), when he said, "i come forward indicating my mask with a finger" (p. 40). We more easily see the wrestlers, the showgirls or the clowns as a masquerade, a performance, and read their emotional responses as hyper-reality with little underlying truth or foundation for in their over exaggerated hair, makeup, clothing and emotional responses, they ridicule essence. They are woman excessively layered in the case of the showgirls, emotions taken to the extreme in the wrestlers, and excessively overdone in the clowns, yet in that space they speak of the normative, for here even when it is taken to the extreme it must reference back to something to give it recognisability. In order to be that parody it must converse with that which is considered normative and in doing so the normative is brought into that space which questions its foundation as truth. In that space of laughter and ridicule there is room for reflection too for what is there to laugh about really (Schluter, 2004)? We can well ask at what point does normative 'woman' become parody? And i read this in Sherman's later 'Aging Woman' series. In the case of 'woman' we are more likely to read the emotions and behaviours as examples of natural femininity and in doing so to reproduce ourselves again in the image of normative gender. However, as was the case in Gergen's (2000) parody of 'woman', and as Sherman's later series on aging women demonstrates, the perceived naturalness of femininity when overlaid on the bodies of older women begins to

fray around the edges, and the artificiality of 'woman' is brought strikingly to the fore and in that space parody and the normative begin to immerse and what might once have been considered familiar now takes on a spectre of hyper-reality. As the ideology slips away nature is replaced by **his**-story and we are left with du Bois' "ugly, human", that which stands behind the hegemonic categories of self concealed as nature.

As we read let us think the surface, or at least Sherman or author, in the way Beckett (as cited in Cohn (2006) envisioned it when he spoke of the characters in his play, 'Waiting for Godot': "All I knew I showed. It's not much, but it's enough for me, by a wide margin" (p. 122). And I expect, what else is there, when we start to read a person, just like we read a text, or an image, we read from a geopolitical located space and we dialogue with that person, text or image and create anew from that engagement. Like the text of bliss, like the writerly text, it is an interaction, a creation and this is about how we position, can position, to read the text, person, art, and so on, and in that reading we are transformed, we are moved, for we are that continuously dispersed and fragmented, proliferating subject, in a state of perpetual movement.

De-Oscillation and Interruption

The clowns are the oscillation of surface and depth personified, where myth must feed in order to distort what we might see if we were to look unimpeded by the weight of history, the dragging chain of human input, the clowns slow that oscillation down because with each rotation we come up short, we still remain no closer to knowing the person in the clown mask in any essential way. In figure 9, Sherman clearly toys with the idea of our desire to know, name and frame and cognitively shelve away, our reluctance, or discouragement from thinking, engaging in order to know. Here she names her, or is it him self in the image, but the name evokes no comfort, no reading place, it is a tease and we can not enliven it. As

Foucault (1994a) said we must stop denouncing thought as merely 'wind', and instead begin to reconceptualise it. To understand language, used reflectively, as our means out of oppression, to live a life more fulfilling, embodied and enriched as we allow those experiences that are complex and disordered to be embodied in our speaking, thinking and writing and to enliven our bodies (Morrison, 1994). As the literal meaning revolves and attempts a distortion that allows myth to live, it fails because myth has little to get hold of at the surface for the essence is effectively severed at its arbitrary root. The third order meaning at the surface is unashamedly artificial and contrived and that is where myth must feed from in order to reproduce us as something recognisable, but in the case of the clowns the physical indicators aren't available and the distortion fails to reproduce the normative self. In particular, the way in which we recognise ourselves and others has been confused, the codes of gender, and ethnicity, of sexuality, class, and so on, which are our most basic indicators of self have been obliterated by the absolute artificiality and ambiguity of the clowns. The surface has entirely amassed any indication of a supposed depth and in being essentially meaningless in this way the idea of an essence is undermined. They are entirely a mock-up, parody, each aspect of them is applied to create a particular look, within a specific genre and reading them in this way allows us to read back and forth through Sherman's other works with a similar understanding, which i discuss later in relation to the Aging Woman series. The clowns represent the category or genre 'clown', yet in Sherman they refuse being collapsed into that name and effectively silenced for in their surface reality they are so entirely complex and discordant they will not be stilled. This initiates a re-reading, a retrospective/prospective reading of Sherman's pre and post clown work which transforms these earlier images and speaks to the latter in ways that transform any initial reading. This is certainly the experience i have had, and i discuss this too in the 'Aging Woman' series. Unlike the earlier Stills which give us the markers upon which we can load

our arbitrary foundations, the clowns belie their depthless surface as they conceal all the clues that might enable us to interpret them otherwise. It is difficult to look at them and find something beyond the absolute artificiality of their mask. We see them in their entirety as creation, as human creation, and as we do nature recedes and the clowns take centre stage as nothing more than a parody, nothing more than an image, a stereotype, yet the parody, the image cannot be known by packaging it away, the stereotype must be undone, it must be read. The surface is unknown, and therefore entirely complex, and like the puzzle it is we must engage with it from our located space of sustained, and sustaining, thought (Foucault, 1994a).

Like 'woman' the clowns are stereotypical of the ideological image they are given in language, through discourse, and as they reveal these dubious underpinnings so too they lay open the means to see 'woman' represented in the Film Stills, and in later works in this way. Though as discussed, Sherman's clowns interrupt this absolute naming of them as 'clown', for though they wear the garb of the traditional clown, they have a chilly demeanor as in figure 26, a sinister element that pervades the images which interrupts their easy summary into the genre clown. Like the unyielding body they leak and seep at the edges of the normative, disrupting gender, sex, class and ethnicity, and even refusing to be named simply clown. They resist being stilled in any way which would contain them and like that life-giving language that sutures for it burns through our bodies and selves, the clowns mark us in ways that are uncomfortable, unsettling and disturbing, in ways that make us think, engage and dialogue, that embody us as part of the intertextual weave within which we live. The artificiality which could easily be read as aesthetic natural beauty in the Film Stills is brought more frighteningly to the fore in the 'Clown' Series, and perhaps even more disturbingly in the later 'Aging 'Woman' Series where clearly the result has been transformed by age. And in retrospect we revisit the earlier images and they are transformed by this awareness as we

see differently. What we once might have seen as aesthetically appealing begins to fracture as femininity begins to unravel and we see now the fissure lines where 'woman' fails, and fails us, and in those cracks and crevices 'woman' is falling away piece by piece in subtle but persistent, and multiple, ways. And as i read Sherman retrospectively, i see the beginning of the end of 'woman', in the earlier images, in ways i previously could not, and a transformed, and transforming, new beginning in the later images, so that the images have turned somewhat. What i initially read as a kind of winding down of 'woman' to the point where we must take up spaces of invisibility in our post-reproduction, post-sexual objectification years, is transformed now to a space of critical awareness, knowledge and corporeal power so that we have come to this space where we have learnt to see differently, where we have used language to tell our own stories, and where we will not be relegated to the spaces of wordlessness or invisibility. Sherman's work, like Freeman's (1998) understanding of life, when we read it retrospectively, mirrors the process of remembrance and return, repetition and reconfiguration (p. 47). i read Sherman as an intertextual weave, a woven fibrous overlaying of multiple threads. i imagine it as a crazy quilt, that doesn't have the structure of the traditional garment, that any structure comes from the reading and is momentary and fleeting, and the structure we bring today may be gone in the next instant. Like Barthes (1981) understanding of the photograph, the moment we are snap frozen by the shutter is a moment of death, for that instant has passed and is no more, the photo is a moment in time that ceased to be in the instant it was captured. Rather like 'woman, i expect, the very moment we take up the name we cease to be the other, or at least we struggle against that other being enlivened.

Serious Clowning Around

Our eyes fail us and we cannot identify gender or ethnicity, those two most basic forms of subjectivity that saturate our bodies and allow us to take up a space of

intelligibility, as we reproduce ourselves through dominant hegemonic discourse structured by binary. Like the bright lights that cast an illumination over 'woman' in the Film Stills, the clowns are artificially lit by bright, often psychedelic backgrounds of lollypop swirls and rainbow colours. And yet even set against this bright and outlandish background, and indeed perhaps partly because of it, they retain their sinister demeanour. The psychedelic backdrop reminiscent of some sort of acid trip exemplifies the maniacal and psychotic clowns. Of course we already know how easily clowns collapse the boundaries between good and evil, how easily the dark side, that which we cannot know, comes to the fore in evil manifestations, made even more sinister by their role as children's entertainer. And let's not forget, either, that these are a parody of a parody, so to speak, because they are Sherman once again playing a host of characters, in this case clowns. In this case the clowns aren't concealing their artificiality, that is, after all the very essence of them, what defines them, unlike gender which purports to sell its essential artifice as truth. This resonates with Barthes when he spoke of identifying himself by a mask for in the name we are masked (Barthes, 1984). Which is of course, to say that this is the me that i bring forth today, but essentially it is not an absolute or only me, and may well be in complete contradiction to that which i bring forth tomorrow. Sherman's clowns are that mask personified. Like 'woman, the clowns reveal nothing of the true self, the mask entirely obliterates that, lays it over with something different, but unlike 'woman' we, the watcher, cannot interpret the surface, we are disrupted as we try to read beneath it and uncover normative and natural foundations, something we would otherwise do if the markers, upon which the hegemonic narratives of gender are based, weren't concealed from us, as they are in the clown images.

Again, as in Sherman's other works, there is a familiarity with which we recognise the images and are drawn to them, and yet when we seek to know them more fully, and begin our excavation process, hoping to find natural bedrock in the form of

the normative self, we are thrown into disarray. Which is how i have come to read all of Sherman's work, for as we immerse, as we are drawn in that which initially may have seemed familiar, knowable, and recognisable, in this case stereotypical 'woman' as portrayed in the Film Stills. However, as we read further and reflect upon the earlier work, that which was familiar begins to contort before us, and morph into something strange, unknowable, and unrecognisable for it becomes detached from its foundation of essence and 'truth'. And in this space of resistance 'woman' transforms, and it becomes a strange, bizarre and ugly tale of oppression. And as it loosens its grip, we are released somewhat from the fate of the "pate-producing geese", to be choked on our own "unsayable, transgressive words" (Morrison, 1994, p. 17). We can in this space of resistance usher forth those words, for we speak now on the edge of the name, of the normative, on the margin, in the spaces of resistance.

Basking in Artificiality, Pre-Emptying 'Aging Woman'

As discussed earlier, the Clown series is that which i identify as bringing together the others, talking out and from those, and back through again, embodying the reflectivity of life. So a narrative that is circular, that has no end, but where each ending is simply an other beginning but from a transformed seeing place. The clowns, for me, pre-empt Sherman's series of older women, in that they parody in many ways feminine artifice which takes on an exaggerated form in the 'Aging Woman' images, who themselves are, subsequently, a parody of femininity itself, in particular of the earlier Stills. They speak of the nature of 'woman', yet in the same breath belie that nature in many ways. They are no longer that epitome of youthful beauty and desire, yet clearly they still 'enhance' their bodies and faces with the products of femininity, though now the effect is transformed, for now we see artifice where once we saw nature or natural beauty. They are past the age of sexual objectivity or reproductive capacity yet they refuse to exit the scene,

paying no heed to the timeline inscribed within normative femininity, and in that space they appropriate, they wield forth their corporeal armour and they, and we, transform. There are striking continuations between the Clowns and the Aging Woman, specifically in relation to the face paint; both the clowns and the Aging Woman conceal their faces behind a thick layer of colour which is similarly harsh and garish. They both don similarly over exaggerated makeup, heavy applications of blusher, lipstick, and eye makeup abound, and their hair is likewise overly coiffured and coloured. The clowns embody artificiality, they are quintessential farce. Their depth is that all is surface and this is an unimaginably complex, convoluted and intertextual space. This speaks to me at another level of the complexity of life, that our lives are this absolutely complex web of intertextuality, this chaotic weave that we experience in multiple and contradictory ways that give rise to the inconsistent and tension-provoking, unable to be contained self that haunts, and transforms, the normative self. The clowns defy our ability to know them in a way that allows us to locate them and hold them still, we cannot name them by gender, ethnicity, age or sexuality and so the primary markers of recognisable persons are vacant. All assumptions are swept aside and we must locate in our subjective space and read at the surface. This is, of course, where we must read for we no longer assume an essence or foundation from which to orient our reading.

Welcome to the Flipside

The clowns defy our ability to encode, they are completely masked, and our discursive resources do not work to unmask them. Our stereotypes fail us because we cannot know what lies behind the mask, and the clowns so easily collapse into the other as we struggle to name it, even as discussed, when we just attempt to name them fully and finally as 'clown'. On one side we have the popular conception of the clown as the fun loving, slightly addled joker, and the flipside of this which

is easily accessible by our inability to name this person in any recognisably subjective way, that of the joker gone bad, transformed into a psychotic demonic figure for whom the clown demeanour conceals a terrible underside which threatens to escape at any moment and wreak havoc on any poor unsuspecting children drawn to the painted on smile and garishly bright clothing. This is the image of the clown so successfully employed in horror films because the stereotype so easily oscillates from good to bad. i think this is simply because our ability to unmask is so limited here, all those markers of subjectivity which we use to locate people, that allow us to cognitively package them away, are devoid in the clown, as they are similarly in much of Sherman's other work. When we cannot name and frame in an instant, when this is interrupted and we can no longer summarise the image or text a disjuncture has occurred for we must stop and think, and in that moment our ability to reproduce our selves, and others is similarly interrupted for myth needs seamless oscillation to fulfil its distorting capacity and here the oscillation falters. The rupture is like a mark, or a brand, like Morrison's words that suture, for in that moment when the disjuncture is sensed, it is like a cleaver dropping and severing the sinews that arbitrarily hold us, body and self, in a name. Our bodies are marked most surely by that experience, our skin tingles with the burn of the suture, and we enliven this other voice of resistance as part of our corporeal armour.

In this moment of disjuncture myth is refused its distorting capacity. The clowns, i expect, are so wholly artificial that myth is frozen, like Barthes wrestlers, everything is at the surface, the surface is full but absolute artifice, and at the same time empty because we can't carry it off to fill in an essence, to make it mean something more than the literal for we have no cues to give us that foundation from which to know. The surface overwhelms in the Clowns, the wrestlers and the showgirls, there is simply no room for any farcical depth to take root and nourish itself. All is a parody and the exaggeration is such that there is

no room to presume that this can be essence, for it is so overwhelmingly artificial it must be a fake. Yet a parody must in its artifice speak of that which is not facade and upon which its parodic portrayal rests, for if it did not we would not even recognise the parody, it would be absolute nonsense. In Sherman's work i read the parody of 'woman', both in the clowns and in the earlier and later series, as a body of work they speak of the masquerade of gender, that we are no less this mock-up than Sherman's portrayal of countless women, men, clowns, and other configurations.

The Disappearing 'Woman'

We need to understand gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and so on, in the same way we understand the mask of the clown. To stop and look at it for what it is on the surface, stopping myth in its distorting illusion to make it mean something that it literally does not. Barthes (1982) said we need to stop the oscillation between myth and form. And in relation to Sherman, Krauss (1993) argues that through her we are encouraged to stop trying to 'look under the hood' for an essential 'woman', for clearly it is an empty cavity, like Morrison's knight that vacated the suit of armour long ago, so too 'woman' is an empty shell. And Sherman too, the author or creator, has disappeared, or perhaps she never even entered the scene, for the creator was lost once the image was taken, for then like Barthes photo it, and Sherman, had already moved on, and like Beckett (as cited in Cohn, 2006) i am sure would attest to, there is no place left for an author, that has been relinquished, the text is thus free to proliferate. The image remains but there is no reason to reflect upon its author or creator, for the creation has moved on, it is caught in the flow, in the intertextual weave and it will not be stilled so as we might encompass it into one voice or one universal story, and as we struggle to give it an essence, an author, anything that might pin it down it simultaneously pulls against for the artifice that would give it stability, the author, the essence no

longer hold it for they are transformed now, no longer to hold us in the guise of truth they now must take their place among the other narratives of self, all similarly located and partial. There is no essential womanliness, no essential femininity that we would find if we kept peeling back the layers of the subject, of 'woman', of our bodies inscribed by that subjectivity. What we would find is an intertextual weave, multiple voices, or discursive layering, depending on the metaphor of choice, but a building up of layers over time, preceding our birth, each involved in a dialogue with the others which ultimately come together in various, and fluctuating ways, as we experience our selves in our multiplicity. The body is the space upon which this discursive interlocution takes place, the space upon which the relationship between all the discourses that we have had made available to us, and we have sought out, vie for the right to tell the story of self, coming together in competing and complimentary ways in relation to our encounters in life and our interactions with others.

DETRITUS WASTE/ANNIHILATION SERIES

In this period Sherman's own body became less the focus for the camera and was often supplied as just a reference, or a very brief glimpse, which is often indeterminable as to whether it is actually Sherman or a prosthetic. In figure 27 there is a reflection in the glasses which presumably is Sherman, though this remains ambiguous. Here, in both the Detritus Waste/Annihilation Series and in the Sex Pictures, there is a severing of subject and object, as objectivity takes centre stage and we at times have a subject-less, in terms of a flesh and blood body, object which interestingly we still can relatively easily read a subject, 'woman', into, see figure 28.



Figure 27 Untitled #175, Sherman, 1987

Retrieved from:

http://www.abbagom.com/zeroboard/data/aidPDS/sherman_untitled_175.jpg

The Disintegrating 'Woman'

What is breaking down in these later images is 'woman' for it is becoming exceedingly difficult to find an actual flesh and blood woman in the images yet we can still read 'woman' despite the lack of Sherman's body, which is only now peripheral or completely non-existent. And interestingly even without Sherman, and even when the image is an arrangement of prosthetics, as it is in the Sex Picture Series, we still know this is 'woman', for this is sexual objectivity and that is surely 'woman'. Even when the prosthetic head is an old man, the image still speaks sexual objectivity and still speaks 'woman'. Here 'woman' is being removed from its foundation in nature as we read something supposedly natural, 'woman', in

a prosthetic arrangement. In this group of images that includes the *Sex Pictures*, the *Detritus Waste/Annihilation* images i see a disintegration of 'woman' and the body of 'woman'. This reminds me of Beckett's, 'Molloy'. 'Woman' here is eclipsed in the dust and ashes, the nuclear fallout, see figure 7, laid to waste along with the excesses of the uncontainable body. In figure 27, above, 'woman' is reflected in the glasses amongst bodily excesses in the form of vomit and food scraps, in other images of the series bodily fluids and used condoms are part of the debris, whereupon 'woman' is laid to rest. i read in these works an anger, i am embodied by that, of the waste of 'woman', not that it is wasted, for it must be, we must recreate who and how we can be, but that we waste the opportunity to live our lives fully when we take up and reproduce ourselves in this way. These are, for me, positive images for they lay waste to something we need to relinquish, this is the graveyard of 'woman', and its time has come. Here, with Sherman, we must 'bury the dead', and we do so, quite aptly, under piles of bodily excess (Elliot, 1969). And this excess speaks of the uncontainability of the body and its capacity to resist the name that would materialise it fully and finally and make it still, the body that will not be made in the name and that both physically and metaphorically leaks and seeps at the edges of that hegemonic story, bleeding into its boundaries, plebianising its unitary voice, making it speak amongst the other stories of selves and bodies. And from this space of being laid to rest, relegated to the dust and ashes, we will rise again for in Sherman i read this trajectory and i am embodied by the corporeal spirit and aggression in the *Aging Woman Series*. As we move through the series and read from beginning to end and back again, as we immerse and engage the reading transforms and what may initially have seemed something of a depressing story of 'woman', aging and invisibility becomes an inspiring story of becoming women. It is a story of living on the edge of the hegemonic name, experimenting, discovering, mining, harvesting language, resisting in our bodies, transforming our selves, refusing that subject position, allowing ourselves to live

those contradictions and tensions that have always existed but we have struggled to contain. It is a story of courage, conviction and struggle, of taking up those spaces from which we will transform, spaces that are scary for they do not afford us easy recognisability and liberating for the very same reason. As i read, and write, i am embodied by this sense of hope, inspiration and liberation from oppression, i feel it surge through me as i dialogue with Sherman and am immersed within the community from which i write. This immersion embodies me with the courage and conviction to struggle, knowing that, in Morrison's (1994) words, sometimes it will be that my 'reach exceeds my grasp', and the words will be inflamed by the passion that burns to write them, and all that will be left is the "scald", but knowing too that each reach and grasp will move me in subtle ways, and the flow that i share with others in this community moving in similar ways and spaces has a momentum that sends ripples through the dominant discourse, pushing at the inscribed boundaries of knowledge and truth, leaking through and transforming those discourses as they struggle to conceal their hu-man origins, as nature recedes and we glimpse the ugly foundation of privilege and subordination (p. 27).

The demise of 'woman' that i read in Sherman's work as a kind of trajectory, retrospectively pre-empted in the Stills and tracing through to the 'Aging Woman' Series which as i read it i am embodied by it as a new beginning. As i look back from the latter series i can see that i was not positioned earlier to see this trajectory, and now at this point in time, at this critical space and subjective transformation, i can envision something more for myself, for women, as i read Sherman, and as i dialogue in that wider community from which i have found a speaking space. To take up and reproduce our bodies as objective other was to begin the demise, for eventually when objectivity had run its course, post-reproduction, post-sexual objectivity, what would be left, what was left for us as 'woman' to recover of our selves and bodies? In Sherman i read the descent of

the body of 'woman', as it is literally wasted by history and discourse, which resonates with the Foucault, when he speaks of our bodies as 'dissolved by history' whilst at the same time within that destruction presuming a unity, that is a depthless illusion. We are that body broken down and destroyed, and as i read Sherman i see the beginning of a reconfiguration, an emergence from the places allocated to us in the Master's language, in the cracks and crevices of hegemonic discourse, in the tensions of selves and bodies we will re-emerge and resist.

As Sherman removes her own body from the work, but not necessarily the body of 'woman', we have, literally in the above work, an emptying out of the body, both Sherman's body as canvas and the inside contents of the body, as here they are both, presuming that is Sherman's reflection in the sunglasses, juxtaposed with an arrangement of various food stuffs. And how do we position to read a work such as this, what subject position does this image initiate in us? As i read this work retrospectively i am able to read it as both transforming, and being transformed by, the other images, earlier and later, just as we might think of our own life and our selves as being transformed by the past in relation to the present. This again, resonates with Freeman's understanding of the way in which we live our lives, in cycles rather than in linear sequences. There can in such a life, such a writerly text as this, be no end and no beginning, there is only a cycle. Each presumption of end is simply another beginning at a transformed and transforming space. Each series speaks back and from the others, there is a weave that spins them together, and out beyond the work bringing in other voices and other texts. As i read i am consistently interrupted by many other voices which are like a metaphoric prod in the ribs, an irritation that invokes a reaction, for the prod is the voice speaking to me, whispering through the text as i read and write. These voices consistently permeate the writing, i am embodied by their rhythm, their noiseless reverberations move through the writing, and i sense them as i read, always i struggle to bring them forth. i struggle always to include the multiple

voices that speak to me and within me, that surround me in that dialogue, that embody and enrich me, to bring forth that when i speak they do so simultaneously, they must for my voice is like gumbo ya ya, it makes no sense without that community, for the trace of their words is infused when i speak. i am no author, not creator, i am compiler, and i bring together many voices, but the compilation is my own from my located geopolitical space. i hope when i speak this multiplicity, this sense of a perpetual dialogue is embodied in the text, that others in the reading will be embodied too by the intertextual weave, that flow in and out, within and beyond the text. Each series transforms and speaks to and from the others in a continuing dialogue on the gendered self, embodied gender, and the transformation of self and body. It is, as Foucault said, a commentary and negation of that which we are, made in the name under the guise of an individual self, and an imagining of what might exist on the boundary of that name, those spaces that the name closes off but that exist anyway on the excess of viability, of recognisability, the other that exists so that the name can live, the source from where it denotes its difference, and therefore, meaning (Derrida, 1998). Sherman's work in the Detritus Waste series speaks most prominently of the abject other, the other side of the objectified idealised feminine body, characterised by idealistic notions of beauty. Here we see the body as that which it exudes, as a fluid and congealed mass, quite the antithesis of the desirable feminine body. In this series the body literally flows and secretes, it is anything but beautiful in a traditional understanding of what constitutes feminine beauty, here it exists as grotesque, ugly, the body perhaps at its most blatant, and brutal, in terms of its physicality. Here is the corporeal body that exists regardless of how we speak of it, though language does constrain the fluidity in various ways through hegemonic discourse. This is perhaps where we might read Sherman as summoning forth a body that is corporeally aggressive, certainly the body here is defiant. It defies our understanding of feminine bodies, here the body is broken

down just as it is when we take up the bodily space of objective other defined in terms of our sexual parts. However, in this case the breaking down exceeds that defined in heterosexual discourse as part of normal female sexuality, here is a dissection of bodies, though the result has not the effect of providing titillation for the male gaze, but to offer a critique of the breaking down and wasting of female bodies in Western discourse. Here the body speaks in ways that, positioned on the edge of the 'normative' might be difficult to hear, and certainly can, at times, be difficult to look at! But listen, and read, we must if we are to transform our bodies, if we are to be enlivened in ways that exist already within ourselves, and on the edge of normative femininity. Certainly, we cannot and do not always experience ourselves within the constraints of normative femininity, it is a continual struggle to live within that name and whether we attend to it or not, there is a continual tension between the normative self and that which exists on the edge of that name (Davies & Dormer, 2001).

This particular phase of Sherman's work is difficult to look at, let alone acknowledge as part of ourselves, and it is perhaps that it is aggressive, the images are violent, forceful, they implode onto the surface, and our immediate reaction is to turn away. Yet we all are intimate with bodily excrement, just as we are with sexualised objectivity, this is part of the experience of living in a female body. The female body is saturated with sexuality, and we see this in the media, on music videos, in films and TV, we hear it in sexual innuendos, jokes and harassment, it is there inscribed on our bodies as we take up and reproduce ourselves within the dominant discourses of gender and sexuality (heterosexuality) (Foucault, 1978). When we take up the name 'woman' we take up the bodily space of sexually objective other defined in relation to the heterosexual imperative. I read Sherman as a commentary on that space and how it might be transformed. I read Sherman as opening up spaces for that transformation, as a writerly text offering multiple points of entry, a dialogic space, a space where we might be

other than that defined in the name, a space that is both blissful and disruptive in its shattering of subjectivity (Barthes, 1975). We must, as I have noted in previous chapters, leave home even if this is painful and fraught with uncertainty, for our subjective homes though familiar are not nurturing or healthy places to dwell, they offer only the repetition of oppression, of our bodies and selves. In Sherman there is a trajectory of 'woman' from aesthetic ideal to literal waste, one that can, and should, be read as a genealogy rather than a timeline, for each phase of the work speaks to the others and transforms them in the process. The early works are transformed in light of the latter, and the latter are made to speak through an interaction or dialogue with the former. In the case of the Film Stills and Centerfolds, for instance, the dialogue that exists between these and the Detritus Waste and Sex Pictures transforms a reading of all of these images, each series speaks to and from the others, offering multiple places through which to enter the dialogue. Rather than a linear narrative, Sherman's work is a narrative thread, and by necessity there is a spatial starting place, however, as each series is added and it transforms that starting place, the movement is circular rather than linear and embodies our actual experience of life which is lived in reflective and reiterative cycles, "under the spell of what I earlier referred to as mythopoeic desire" (Freeman, 1998, p. 47). And what he means by mythopoeic desire is about desiring a connection to something greater than the temporal individual self of hegemonic discourse, lived in isolation, it is about bringing through the threads of the narrative of the self, which are both resistant and oppressive, and reconnecting with that self in a way that is not delimited by the temporal constraints of hegemonic discourse. It is about opening up spaces to allow for all the voices which have spoken to the self to be heard, so that they aren't drowned out by one dominant voice, but instead there is a dialogue and in this space there is room to be other than that contained in the name.

Freeman (1997) notes in relation to our ability to seek out other ways of being in the world, that there "exists a margin of freedom within which to think, act, and be" (p. 217). So somewhere within the two dimensions of unlimited freedom, or relativity unleashed, as is often the critique of post structuralism, and the self entirely made and contained within hegemonic discourse is a gap, a space, a vent through which a breath, a barely inaudible whisper might infiltrate, one that speaks of a life lived in other ways that are not contained within that dominant voice, that speak on the edges of it. In Sherman, 'woman' and its excess are embodied on the surface, they must speak out and to each other, margin and centre simultaneously surface and in that space the disjuncture dissolves. For we are neither absolutely free, nor absolutely bound, always we resist in multiple ways. In Sherman there is room to be both hegemonic and other, for we are both simultaneously anyway, even when the hegemonic heeds us in its violent interpellation, it still cannot contain that edge through which we can, and will, speak and be transformed in our other selves. And this space will be shaped by our subjective histories, including those that preceded our birth, by the experiences we have encountered, and by the things that have marked us along the way, some dominant, some resistant, and by our ability as human beings to think critically about ourselves, to imagine life otherwise, not as nostalgic remembering or utopian existence, rather from our space within dominant hegemonic thought, but on the edges of that, in that radical space on the margin that is the space of critique and resistance (hooks, 1990).

And we do experience our bodies in multiple ways daily, ways that aren't given validity in hegemonic discourses of gender for they cannot be contained within the objective female body. And so when faced with a Sherman canvas depicting the libidinal body in full colour and vivacity we are apt to look away, not only because our bodily waste is something we find unpleasant, but also because Sherman's work here speaks of another side of our bodies, the generally unacknowledged side, that

which writhes against the aesthetic objective body, creating a tension that denies it as the entire story of our bodies, and we look away because the disjuncture between the objective, aesthetic, recognisable body of 'woman', and this one, is so great. And yet we know this body as surely as we know psychology's objective body, certainly more intimately and that creates a tension. How can we assimilate the two vastly different understandings of the body? The one we learn as we grow up, as we manage ourselves within the normalising principles of appropriate and recognisable 'womanhood', and the other which we experience through living in our bodies, even in bodies shaped, made recognisable and given validity through the hegemonic discourses of gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity, we consistently experience our selves and bodies in ways that deny this normal and nominal ordering, and it is these moments of disjuncture that trouble the hegemonic voice its absolute authority, wherein we hear the whispers of our bodily voice, the experiential body defying the order of language. The challenge then for those for whom resistance to the dominant order, which proposes we are nominal, stable and 'normal' selves, and should live our lives in accordance with this, is paramount, must be to recognise and harvest those moments of dissension in our bodies, to seek out a way to make them speak in ways that are audible, to us, and to others so that we may harvest these voices of dissension. This is already being undertaken in many areas of feminist and poststructuralist work. As i read i sense an urgency to harvest these bodily murmurings when we sense them infiltrating our linguistic resources, and in my own experience these moments of insight have occurred as i read art and as i read writerly texts, they are those times when the body and the self, through the language we use, are brought into dialogue, they inform and speak to each other in ways that are simultaneously embodying and enlivening and in being so they push at the boundaries of Cartesianism and the bodies position as devalued other, and we are made more complete, more whole, in the process, though it is a whole characterised by multiplicity, movement, and fluidity, both

literally and metaphorically. Our bodies can at last speak, we are harvesting speaking spaces within our language to hear the experiential voice, the voice of living in a libidinal, flowing, secreting, body which exists in a world entirely, and only, accessible to us through language. The space we harvest is the space that speaks of both corporeality and language, because we exist in this world in our bodies and we must seek to know them in a way that allows us to bring together that experience, which is, after all, the experience of living, we must seek to harvest this dialogic space so that when we speak of and think bodies we are simultaneously bringing forth the living experience of this rather than remaining locked within a Cartesian-type cognition where bodies exist apart from selves, and are merely a corporeal add-on of little consequence in our understanding of the self. We must rethink the body and in doing so allow it to enliven our language to bring our bodies into our research in ways that allow them to infiltrate and ventilate the language that we use, and in order to do that we need of course to think bodies differently, to shake the foundations of what has previously become solidified as our knowledge and understanding of the body (Butler, 1990). This brings me back to Sherman, for her work surely is a shaking up of our traditional notions of women's bodies. I think Sherman's work can be read as a challenge, to see our bodies in other ways, outside that made nominal in hegemonic discourse, as we are encouraged to face up to the Western obsession with the body of 'woman', presented to us in Sherman in its objective extreme-ity! Sherman offers us a shocking revelation that we surely already knew, even if not entirely consciously, but that we were perhaps unable or ill-equipped to face. We must locate on the margin, that is, on the edge of the knowable, in order to see and think bodies differently. We must look from this space of critique if we are to see, and reflect upon the demarcation lines which struggle to inscribe and denote meaning in hegemonic discourse, and accordingly to designate normal from other, and in doing so allow us a subjective place of recognisability, or invisibility, a place clearly

marked and identifiable that by taking up and reproducing we are further inscribing the markings that are the binaries upon which hegemonic discourse depends. Thinking bodies differently requires letting go of long held understandings, those medical and scientific discourses which have offered us the truths of our own bodies, truths that we can now see as little more than ideological propaganda. In Sherman where bodies are wasted, literally in the Detritus Waste series, bodies usher forth their own gruesome 'truths'. The Detritus Waste images serve to remind us that bodies are other, even as we deny them, for here the abhorrent of the body spews forth, that which we turn away from, which disgusts, but which we cannot deny. The wasted body too is part of the story of 'woman' laying waste to women's bodies, as we take up and reproduce ourselves as recognisable and known 'woman', so too we must deny our body the dialogue that simultaneously embodies us. 'Woman' enforces its hegemonic truth and in doing so denies the other, denies us our life. A truth that, in the vein of hegemonic discourse, must deny other understandings of our bodies in order to sell its own version as absolute and ultimate, it has no room for multiple realities or fluidity, it must maintain its agenda within clearly known boundaries of validity. That ultimately is the downfall of hegemonic discourse, that it leaves no space to know ourselves in those other ways that exist outside its parameters of knowledge, for they exist anyway within us, and on the boundaries of the authoritative voice, and in doing so create the tension that ultimately will be the undoing of the hegemonic claim of one enduring truth for all. Again, i am reminded of Morrison's story of the collapse of the Tower of Babel, that it was precipitated not by the weight of many languages, but by the intolerance of what could have been understood as a blessing, rather than as a weight and as ultimate despair. It, like Sherman's work, is a story of human folly, human intolerance, the desire to control and to make conform, of assimilation, colonisation, and of language coupled with power to produce a knowledge that oppresses and subjugates. It is a sad

story in many ways, for it is about wasted opportunities. It is about wasted bodies and selves and speaks of a wider legacy of waste that is the legacy of White, middle-class, males and one we all inherit to a greater or lesser degree be that subjugated other of the self. Like all parody, Sherman's work offers us a bitter pill, the story of our own bodies and lives are supersized on canvas, made clownish, ridiculous, a performance of a life rather than the reality of one. And yet it is closer to the mark than we want to admit and that is the bitter pill we must swallow. It is like the mirthless laugh which is a "dianoetic mockery of unhappiness, that brings about its transparency" (Iser, 1992, p. 65). It is the "raising of what has been displaced to the threshold of its perception [that] allows one to face up to unhappiness, which in being faced is no longer exclusively itself, but appears in the perspective of its being perceived" (Iser, 1992, p. 65). So it is an enlightening of sorts i would suggest, bringing to the surface that which is in actuality entirely surface, so much so that our ability to critique it has been weakened, it has become the taken-for-granted reality, the benchmark so to speak which evades examination, just as White skin has traditionally evaded the analysis of race, the objective body has become solidified as the nominal reality of women's bodies, encouraging us to seek no further afield to understand our bodies, certainly not to listen to our own experiences. Like Barthes, *Folies Bergere*, 'woman' here is a spectacle, a product, able to be bought and sold, the body of 'woman' in Western discourse is a commodity, made available for the male gaze, something to be used, and used up, laid to waste when it no longer fits the criteria for the appreciation of that gaze. Like the fate of that 'breast of a new land' that was pre-colonised America, the body of 'woman' is similarly laid to waste by the weight of history and the language of control and conquest recited through the colonial tongue and in the patriarchal language of oppression (Fitzgerald, 1926, p. 171). i read Sherman's bodies, always, be they the early Film Stills or the latter *Detritus Waste*, as a commentary on the body of 'woman' in relation to Foucault's

understanding of a body disintegrating under the weight of history and language. A body "traced by language and dissolved by ideas" that may on the surface appear to be unified, though this illusion is clearly shattered in the later works. In the *Detritus Waste* series the body is literally a disintegrating mass, and it is no less wasted in the *Sex Picture* series, here it is clearly wasted by virtue of its complete immersion in sexual objectification, such that even when it is an incomplete, almost completely prosthetic arrangement of bodily parts it still summons forth the hegemonic voice of gender oppression. The later works are a testament to Foucault's (1984) body as "a volume in perpetual disintegration", though the earlier *Film Stills*, *Centrefolds*, and other images too, are part of this volume, they pre-empt the demise, in ways that may initially be difficult to read, though become clearer as we read retrospectively and as the latter transforms the former (p. 83). Foucault (1984) noted that the task of genealogy was to "expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body" which surely is also the work of Sherman (p. 83). And yet this is not destruction without hope, without the opportunity that we might be more than this body given to us in the name 'woman', this is the destruction of the objective body, a demise of the body taken up and reproduced entirely as objective other. We must said Foucault, resist that guise of individuality which is in reality totalitarianism in disguise, and seek out alternative selves, those that exist already on the margin of that which is knowable and speakable, we must flesh out these other selves, these other bodies.

Emerging from the Decay and Debris, Stopping the Thoughtless

Waste

After Sherman, we might ask how much of our lives are a performance within a specific range of allowable acts? And while it is a story of demise and denigration it is not only that, it isn't a story without hope, for it is simultaneously about

resisting this bodily demise, it is about opening up the space to think bodies differently, and in doing so negating the nominal, fixed and universal body that is made available to us in the name 'woman'. As indicated earlier Sherman offers, i believe, a challenge to think our bodies in other ways, to harvest those inconsistencies, those tensions, where they arise and use them to think and live in our bodies in ways that embrace the life that exists in the spaces between corporeality and language, those experiential spaces which speak to and from language and the body. It is about being more than that given to us in the hegemonic positions made available in the discourses of self, both in the way we reproduce ourselves, and others, in that name which is general and stereotypical and allows no space to think outside of it. Sherman's is a story of a body in despair, a body disintegrating, a body offering up its ultimate truths, its ultimate corporeality, as the waste is brought to the fore, and body parts are mixed unceremoniously with other debris and waste are we also seeing the demise of the object body? Where is the trajectory back from these harrowing scenes to the earlier images of idealistic beauty? Can we every go back to the beginning, in this case the stereotypical Film Stills, knowing now what we know of our bodies? Can we ever look at those earlier images with the same idealistic vision that we might have once had? Like 1950's America, when as human beings, well actually as White, middle-class males, we presumed we could have it all, wealth, absolute control of the environment and others, technological progress that appeared to know no end, and all without consequence, and yet like the women in the Film Stills, we were deluded, naive, unaware of the brutality we were inflicting on each other, our world and ourselves. Like Daisy and Tom in 'The Great Gatsby' we, and by we i am referring primarily to the legacy of White, something which pervades the Film Stills, there is an infiltration of Whiteness and its perceived association with purity, goodness and holiness, are "careless people" (Fitzgerald, 1926, p. 170).

White Trash - Making the Privileged Speak their Legacy

The legacy of White male is a legacy of violence, of domination and above all of carelessness, towards our environment and towards each other. This is a theme that permeates Fitzgerald's novel, the idea of waste, wasted people, wasted opportunities and wasted environment, and which resonates with Sherman's work where women are wasted literally disintegrating into detritus matter, see figure 27, or sexually objectified in a kind of obliterating pornographic parody, as in figure 28. It is a kind of disparaging of the natural, be that natural bodies, nature, the environment, a violent and brutal desecration, founded in philosophy and made possible through language and discourse, and played out in the relationship of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1982). In Sherman's work, we see the brutality of the power relations as they are played out on women's bodies, that "cipher on which masculine psychodramas have been projected", here in Sherman we see the coupling of knowledge and power, and the resultant privilege and subordination engendered therein, founded as it is upon certain ontological and epistemological underpinnings (Beloff, 1997, p. 66). This destruction is synonymous with the pillaging of the environment made possible by an unerring faith in science and its presumed relationship to civilisation and progress, a theme Fitzgerald visits time and again in 'The Great Gatsby'. An entirely White middle-class undertaking it was part of the assimilation, and control, of those who fell outside the most desirable and privileged position of knower, that is they were neither White, middle-class, nor male, and therefore became, instead the recipients of the 'objective' light of science, those for whom it would cast a revelatory illumination - primarily this referred to women (of all classes), the working-class (of both genders), and non-White (particularly those of African descent, and in NZ, Māori). Just as in the novel, the character Myrtle is a metaphor for waste, being a victim of both literal and discursive violence at the hands of her lover Tom, who epitomises hegemonic oppression, be that gender,

race, sexuality and class oppression. He can be seen as a metaphor for the subjugation of non-Whites, women and working classes, he is both the wielder of violence, and the means through which violence is wielded, it is literally wielded through his body which is described through the body produced as a tool of power, and it is wielded through the discourse that he reproduces within himself. He is therefore, both the personification of physical and discursive violence, language works through the body of Tom to oppress others, just as oppressive discourses work through our own bodies to oppress us, so that we internalise this oppression and re-live it daily. Our bodies are that through which hegemonic discourse works most effectively, and so the body became a focus of knowledge, and hence inserted into the machinery of power, to produce us as bodies of a specific sort, that which is recognised as normatively feminine (Foucault, 1982). The body must be broken down and built back up in order to be able to speak in recognisable, indeed audible, ways, that is histories goal, said Foucault, a destruction of the body in which we live, the enlivened, experiential body, so that the body can be known only from a distance, only as objective other, whereby the position of knower can be other than the subject. The demise of Myrtle in 'The Great Gatsby' reflects wasted opportunities, both environmental and human, and Sherman's work too can be seen in its wider relationship to the ugliness of our 'soul', to the way in which we lay waste to each other, and ugly because when we become lost in hegemonic discourse we lose sight of the ties that bind us together and focus instead on the perception of difference as divisive (du Bois, 1920). In actuality from what we know of post- structuralism and language, of difference, is that upon which 'meaning', a meaning of sorts anyway, is denoted (Derrida, 1998). Difference provides a stabilising point, entirely ideological of course, for locating meaning, and without it language, and by virtue discourse, would be unable to stabilise us in a name, for to be 'woman' we must be so in relation to that which we are not, 'man', without a reference in the form of an opposite or binary, 'woman' has no intrinsic

meaning and the name is freed up to proliferate meaning, as is inherently the case in language. When we close down this proliferation we do so arbitrarily and artificially, like damming a river we halt the flow so that it leads somewhere other than where it would without our intervention. But unlike the dam, language will ebb and flow in and around the barriers that the name erects, for it will not be entirely halted and that which cannot be stalled will create a ripple, a tension that will also have the effect of changing the flow, of destabilising that which the name sought to halt. In the 'Detritus Waste' series we flow, literally out of our bodies in revolt-ing ways, but we do not desire to stop the flow, for 'woman' must be wasted, she is not ours and we do not wish embody her any longer. Perhaps this is the relinquishment from our bodies of 'woman' as she literally spews forth and is excised, as she seeps into the debris, into the waste, there is a certain synchronicity about it, for always she was that which must necessarily destroy, that which wastes bodies and selves, and so here as she is relinquished as waste it seems to evoke a certain poetic justice. And from those spaces, from that bodily cleansing woman emerges, different, other, and in all her uncontainable spectacle.

It is the case with 'woman' similarly, no matter how fully we seek to make ourselves in the name, always there will be parts of our selves that cannot, and do not, live within its arbitrary requirements, aspects of our selves that exist on the edge of what is considered normative and that in doing so create a tension. This is resistance, and whilst we might not always recognise it as such, it lives and is enlivened in our bodies, and it remains there as a barely audible murmur that we may learn to recognise, learn to hear as we move towards the margin, that space where the hegemonic voice recedes and the resistant voice may be heard. And as we are in the course of dissolving binaries as a meaning making institution we fully acknowledge the instability, artificiality and arbitrary nature of language and its stabilising of meaning in the sign, or name (Derrida, 1998; Barthes, 1982). And in Sherman we are presented with the sign 'woman' yet it is troubled, the name

struggles against the tension which pervades the image, there is a distortion, artificiality saturates the image and in doing so nature recedes to a point where it is difficult to retrieve in any coherent way in order to allow myth to plump its empty form, and complete its distortion from literal to natural, the undeniable truth of the self located in ineffable nature. So in Sherman we have this flooding of the surface with colour and artifice, which is very similar to her work with clown images, the Sex Pictures like the clowns are colourful, gaudy, and overblown with exaggeration, and they are likewise, disturbing and unsettling. And like the clowns they deny us the filling in process which we have learnt to so desire, to be able to name and frame and cognitively shelve, and when this is denied us we must begin to think critically, we must stop at the literal and see it for what it really is rather than what we have been taught to see. In the Detritus Waste images Sherman abruptly interrupts the oscillation between meaning and form, for we must stop and read the surface, it is so utterly ambiguous, and initially appears so disjunctive in relation to the earlier works. As myth is interrupted it fails to conceal that there is nothing more than surface, it fails to deliver a depth, and we see in the literal only a reflection of our selves, and as we look for meaning we see only masquerade and artifice, that conceal from us our own 'truths', and alienate us from our bodies whilst simultaneously insisting upon an ideology of individual 'freedom' and fateful mastery, which denies us the ability to think and articulate our situation critically, in ways outside the accepted ontology of Western thought. And again, to reiterate what might be at risk of becoming a mantra, the surface is not without complexity, it is not a one dimensional reading that is simplistic, on the contrary it is a surface corrugated with meaning, which ebbs and flows in an endless intertextual reference, and in that infinite flow there is meaning for us, for it is the place of language, our place of meaning, that place through which we might elicit 'the meaning of our lives' brought forth from the process of critique and struggle where we wrestle with the tendency of language to enforce that

which we seek to deny in a process of continual reflection (Morrison, 1994; Barthes, 1982). A practice which embodies us as we use language that is itself embodied, and in the process we are as Freeman noted continuously 'remembering, and returning, repeating and reconfiguring' our selves (Sampson, 1998; Freeman, 1998). Our process of writing is in this way transformative, transforming our selves as we think and write in ways that open up, rather than close off, meaning (Barthes, 1987). Our work is permeable, in that there are multiple points of entry to gain access to it, and in this way it reiterates the intertextuality of language, the ceaseless play of meaning that exists and which hegemonic discourse arbitrarily closes down in the name so that it might put an end to this flow, however falsely, and stabilise us in our gendered, raced, classed or sexualised sign. And in Sherman there is much flow that cannot be stemmed, particularly in this *Detritus Waste* series, that which we find abhorrent in the body flows forth, its waste, which I read as a metaphor for the wasted body of women that is our hegemonic destiny as we take up and reproduce ourselves as 'woman'.

So very much in Sherman's *Detritus Waste* series and also in the *Sex Pictures*, we see a disintegration of the body of 'woman' which can be seen against a wider backdrop of the violence of hegemonic discourse and the power of language as a tool of oppression and subjugation. A most insidious means of control for we believe that everyone has the same opportunity to take up the privileged position of knower, when in fact that place has already been allocated in the story, and there is no room within that story for the other to take up those spaces. And no matter how much we might sell our soul to the devil, how much we struggle to assimilate into the place of White, middle-class, male, we simply will never fit, our bodies will ultimately deny us that place. It is, as Barthes (1982) noted, a particularly insidious and effective means of control to have as assume we can attain a subjective position for which the roles are pre-assigned in advance. It is only in "imagination" that we can take up the place of the privileged, and thus we

pay the price for such a dream, which is "an immobilization and an impoverishment of consciousness" (Barthes, 1982, p. 129).

***PLASTICS AND PROSTHETICS: THE DISAPPEARING BODY
OF 'WOMAN' IN THE SEX PICTURE SERIES***

Sex laughing at itself in its most exact and hence most monstrous form, laughing at its own disappearance beneath its most artificial form? (Baudrillard, as cited in Sherman, 1997)

the regulatory norms of "sex" work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative. (Butler, 1990, p. 2)

Normative femininity is coming more and more to be centred on woman's body - not its duties and obligations or even its capacity to bear children, but its sexuality, more precisely, its presumed heterosexuality and its appearance." (Bartky, 1990, p. 80)

i think the primary thing that these works elicit for me, is the breaking down of the body into parts, which resonates with the sexualised female body popularised in mass media and being increasingly influenced by pornographic imagery (Jeffreys, 2005; Bartky, 1990). The body of 'woman' here is made to speak primarily in relation to its sexual anatomy, defined in this way as an assemblage of parts.



Figure 28 Untitled #264, Sherman, 1992

Retrieved from: <http://photoluminary.com/2011/04/famous-portrait-photographers/>

Plastic and Prosthetics, Still 'Woman'

In the image above, that which we can recognise as representing, at least in the sum of its parts, the body of 'woman' is here nothing more than an arrangement of bodily pieces, with other major bodily sections completely omitted. A violent dismembering, a destruction it is visually shocking, like the Cartesian split when thought outside the 'comforts' of metaphysical language, this is a violent image, a violation of the female body, yet it is also, and obviously, simply a collection of prosthetics arranged together to form a body, of sorts, though certainly not a full nor functional one (Morgan, 2004). It is what the image represents that is abhorrent, that makes it difficult to view, its referent in 'woman' and the female body defined in that name. Obviously it is a parody and made up almost, if not entirely of artificial parts, I cannot tell for sure whether Sherman's face is behind the mask, though even if it were that is unlikely to alter in any significant way a

reading, for the real and the artifice are here blurred, and yet for all its lack of flesh and blood it is surprisingly corporeal, perhaps speaking of and to our bodies in ways that allow us to confront the disturbing implications of bodies conceived in ways that are entirely objective. The images are blatantly and explicitly arranged around sexual anatomy, sometimes male, often female, and juxtaposed with various other prosthetics that give the resemblance of a body, though it is distorted and unable to be called a body in any usual way for it does not fit the criteria for what might be deemed natural bodies, it is for the most part inanimate, and for all its appropriation of sexual parts, a specific gender is unable to be named. Yet, and this is the quintessential moment when the objective body takes centre stage and fills the frame, its inanimateness, its artificiality do not now denote from considering it a female, a feminine body, for we are so far removed from the experiential body, the living, breathing body, that we can recognise and gender this assortment of parts juxtaposed together. That this happens and that we recognise the body of 'woman' in this parody is tragic, of course this is how parody works, to lull us into a sense that this is something funny, something light, only to render us lost in the darkness of that reality, as we realise the humour is harsh, it oppresses, it is violent and the laughter it elicits is mirthless, it is not jolly or cathartic and it does not relieve us of tension, or the troubling that such a parody engenders, embodies, it only serves to illuminate the violence that thinking this way, about ourselves, and others, entails (Iser, 1992).

This violence that is embodied within us as we take up the norms of 'woman' and the object body, a violence reproduced simultaneously through our own bodies as we deny our selves the other of that norm, a body that is experienced as living and breathing and is part of our lived realities, simultaneously being brought to bear on every encounter, however, seemingly menial. In taking up and reproducing the object body we deny the opportunity to experience ourselves in other ways that allow our bodies to be understood and experienced as part of our multiple and

varied selves, to incorporate our bodies into our sense of self. We live the violence of language that denies, that delineates, that makes meaning through difference through our bodies, are bodies are that violence made physical, lived out embodied. Like Morgan's 'imaginings' of the violence of language on actual bodies, a bringing together of the linguistic and the physical, making language speak in a corporeal tongue through the body, through the body of 'woman'. Here, in Sherman, the body is speaking in ways that are similarly horrific, disturbing and resistant, here the object body is brought into unsettling clarity and made to speak the violence that understanding and internalising our bodies primarily in this way entails. We can either laugh or look away, but we are unlikely to be unaffected and in Sherman's work a haunting prevails where the imagery in its vigour leaves a mark, a "scald", to use Morrison's (1994) metaphor, a scald like smoldering embers, something has changed and we are forced to face our body given to us in this way, and we can laugh or look away, but we cannot erase the scald either that which Sherman's work portrays nor that embodied within us. We are faced with a most urgent choice, to seek a way to embody ourselves other, a denial of that body given to us in the discourse of normative heterosexuality, grown from religious and scientific doctrines of body/soul binaries and body/mind binaries.

We must dissolve the binaries that exist within ourselves, and let the corporeality of our bodies, immerse our cognition and infuse the language that gives rise to our understanding of self. We must allow the ebb and flow of the body and self, body and mind, to infuse, to blur the arbitrary Cartesian lines which separate one from the other, a separation which in lived reality is continually blurred, yet positioned as we are, within normative subjectivity we struggle against those disturbances seeking to maintain ourselves within the confines of the nominal, normal and stable subject given to us in the hegemonic discourses of self. As we cast aside the hegemonic voice and allow our selves to hear the voice of resistance, that which is

already within us and that which exists on the boundaries of the dominant voice, we must also remember the voice of our bodies which speaks too from a place on the margin, a place of subjugation, a place of tension. We must harvest that voice when we can, bringing it forth into the language we use so that the language is embodied as it simultaneously embodies. As i read Sherman from my space of transformation on the margin, i recognise 'woman' in the *Sex Pictures*, even when only the anatomy suggests it to be the case, for we have become sexual objectification first and foremost. We must urgently bring forth other voices of our bodies for these cannot be the primary way through which we are understood, and understand ourselves. As i look upon figure 28, i cannot help but wonder how we have come to that place where this image still speaks most undoubtedly of 'woman'. Our bodies have literally disappeared within male-centred notions of sexuality, as we have been simultaneously broken down, dismembered, severed into parts and reconfigured in relation to their 'importance'. Sherman's *Sex Pictures* tell the story of reassemblage, in particular in figure 28, we can see that the unimportant bits don't even make the final cut, stomachs are slashed, as they must be to give way to breasts and vaginas, this is Cartesian incising at a new level, depicted for us in vivid colour and full frontal. We must stop and read, we must locate, even as we find it abhorrent, even as we laugh that mirthless sound, we will not forget and we can not stifle the flow. Resistance becomes in the viewing a most necessary response. We can no longer ignore the wound that injurious language elicits, it is clear and no less corporeal for the lack of actual flesh and blood in the images, for they suture and burn, they puncture those places where blood might flow (Morrison, 1994; Butler, 1997).

We, as 'woman', have become nothing more than an assemblage of sexualised parts according to the desires of male consumers. This is, i believe, was the point Sampson was striving to make, when he said that "we need to be certain that our transformative practices are themselves as embodied as are the oppressions we

hope to undo" (Sampson, 1998, p. 50). And we must ask of our transformative practices, in this case that the language we use is embodied, that it is made to work on and through the body, transforming our understanding and relationship with our bodies. Quite rightly, Sampson (1998), makes the point that our bodies are weighted with oppression, that "oppression is embodied, carved into the muscles and retained in the body's knowledge of its place in the world" (p. 50). So our bodies learn their place in the world as they are assimilated into the world of language, organised into discourse, which is precisely the point Foucault made in relation to the discourse on sexuality having the effect of making bodies visible and part of public awareness and concern, which was quite distinct from their previous status of anonymity, located in the sphere of private and individual concern. The body entered a machinery of discourse which would break it down, and here in Sherman it is literally broken into pieces, objectified to the point that its sexuality is prosthetic and plastic. This resonates with Jeffrey's who spoke of our disturbing obsession with emulating the bodies of the women in pornography, a further intrusion of male-centred desire that negates and delegitimises our own desires, those that are elicited from our experience in our bodies, but are marginalised and denied us (2005). In particular vaginal enhancement surgery is becoming a popular option, and this resonates particularly forcefully when looking upon figure 28. The necessity to know the body and to develop a discourse of different bodies was fuelled by the concern of the ruling classes at the ability to control an increasing population, whereby punishment by example, in terms of public floggings, hangings and suchlike, were replaced by a far more effective and insidious means of control, which worked most effectively on and through the body. Foucault (1982) discussed this in relation to the panopticon as an illustration of the way in which this type of governance works, and how we become through internalising the norms of behaviour appropriate to our gender, ethnicity, class or sexuality, our own monitors of appropriate and recognisable normality. This

governance by normalisation is a way to control large numbers of people as it greatly reduces the need for other means of external control. Psychology's role in all of this was, of course, to provide the expert knowledge on different types of bodies based on particular ontological and epistemological assumptions about the world (including the self) and how we can best know it, assumptions borrowed from science whose methods had been used to collate knowledge and increase our understanding of the natural world, and in doing so to posit itself as the authority on the psychology of human, something that ultimately came to have little connection to its beginnings or to popular understandings of what psychology is. At the time it perhaps seemed that it was only a short step towards understanding human beings, that we might analyse them using the very same methods applied in other scientific enquiry. But of course, to tell the story and to be in the story, yet at the same time to expect that one can have a detached voice, an unbiased observation, seems folly indeed. And for 'woman' designated unknowers of our own lives, we are the object made subject and our subjectivity is simultaneously our denial of life. The stories we repeat as we reproduce are not our own, the stories we deny for they elicit an uncomfortable tension speak the 'truths' of our selves. We must relinquish back the story telling function, Sherman ushers forth those stories that ultimately end in obliteration, images reminiscent of desecrated bodies, a war that is waged on our bodies. We must struggle to resist psychology's names for they deny us life, limit our agency and render us wordless. I cannot look upon Sherman's Sex Pictures or Detritus Waste images without thinking about our own wasted selves and bodies, those opportunities to be other that we waste whenever we reproduce ourselves as 'woman'.

Wrestling Back the Story of Our Bodies, and Melting Plastic

As women, we learn as our body are materialised in the name, those places which our bodies should occupy in the world. As we engage with our bodies in ways that negate these understandings, we begin to learn in our bodies, to flesh out alternative spaces in which to be, in which to experience our bodies. We begin to tell our own stories from our located and positioned spaces, that aren't a reproduction, but are a fluid and flowing narrative that brings forth multiple voices, both of our self and of others who form that community from which we speak, from which we are nurtured, and from which we will transform. All names must be relinquished if we are to be free of the oppression inherent in their binaried beginnings, not only 'woman', but sexuality, class, and ethnicity, and the complexities therein. Like the burning bra's of second wave feminists, now we must set fire to our self, metaphorically of course, we must burn the effigy of the name, and from the cinders and the soot we will begin anew, from that space of knowledge that is no longer containment we will become something other than 'woman' - just woman perhaps, untitled, shred of our containing parentheses, and essentially unknown. We must reconfigure what woman can be as we locate on the margin, and flesh out those speaking spaces that have been denied to us, made incomprehensible in anything other than hysterical outbursts, and silenced as abnormal, as inappropriate. We must enliven our desired selves, even when they bring forth a tension that is uncomfortable, and we may be tempted to reduce this tension, this guilt that our desires aren't congruent with normal and natural 'woman' especially as this exists in relation to the responsibilities of care, generally considered exclusively, a feminine undertaking (Davies & Dormer, 2001). In Sherman's *Sex Pictures* the ridicule of our sexuality distorts the normative, for the parody is only recognisable in relation to 'woman', and women's bodies, and thus this is the place from where it must come to voice. The dialogue is both disturbing

and enlightening, for as we look upon our own bodies, sexually objectified to almost obscurity, removed from us and reconstituted in this way, we glimpse in the harrowing image a heinous ideology, and we must resist. The idea of caring and nurturing has traditionally, and continues to be, associated with women, and inscribed in 'woman', and likely comes about, in relation to their perceived association with the body and emotion, as opposed to the mind. The body occupies that site where the struggle to name is played out, where the hegemonic discourses seek to tell their story most violently, most forcefully, to injure the body in the speaking, to contain it, to inscribe a boundary around it. But the body in its recalcitrance, in its complexity, in its inability to be bound in, is psychology's eternal agonist, and as 'woman', allocated the place of the body in gender discourse, we share this place that haunts the name. And haunting the Sex Pictures are, we recognise them as 'normative' even in their bizarre configurations, and even though gender is indistinguishable at times amongst the enlarged prosthetic vaginas and artificial flapping breasts, scattered mercilessly, a kind of sexual debris, and perhaps that is what we have become. But always there is an edge, an excess, the name does not contain absolutely and finally, and as we look out and from the Sex Pictures and back again, as they interweave amongst Sherman's other images, and beyond, they in their artifice, their absolute and undeniable surface which still speaks of natural bodies, of 'woman', is denied its truth. For how can this be 'woman', solidified on the bedrock of nature, and be absolute artifice. Femininity is, in figure 28, literally unmasked as 'woman' simultaneously is concealed and revealed by that mask. Perhaps we have, in the Sex Pictures, finally put paid to 'looking under the hood', clearly there is, in the case of figure 28, neither a stomach nor an essence (Krauss, 1993).

Laugh, Look Away, ... but Keep on Thinking: Perplexing Ambiguity

Like the clowns the Sex Pictures are a myriad of seemingly disjointed arrangements that form a kind of whole, or at least an artifice of that representation, and like the clowns the image fills the surface entirely, and as they do the image is thrust upon us, in ways that are aggressive, challenging and ridiculous. We are perplexed, the ambiguity floods the surface, we do not know whether to laugh or look away, or even why these are funny, for at the same time they are tragic, though this tragedy will ultimately set us free, so i certainly do not read it as a tale of despair (Iser, 1992). The laughter papers over the seriousness of the image, that this is still recognisable as 'woman'. And how then do we read something, which appears from the outset to be so absolutely farcical, so entirely constructed and yet so hideously knowable in that construction, a kind of corporeal knowing that resides in our understanding of our own bodies made available to us through language founded in Western ontological truths of the self? My own experience is that these images are no different to the clowns, the Film Stills or the Aging 'Woman', yet viewing them is made more difficult by the intimacy of the subject matter, the blatancy perhaps of something that is usually insidious, and even with the experience of multiple viewings these images retain a certain ability to unsettle and disturb. In figure 28, we may recoil from the intensification of the sexual parts, they are a parody, and thus speak of a reality, so they must be able to be recognised, to be known, and the pose is, of course, immediately recognisable as that arrangement of women's bodies in pornographic material. And it is perhaps, in the recognition of 'woman', indeed of us, that makes it a most disturbing view and gives it an abhorrence at a level further intensified, that speaks to our bodies in ways that injure us and incite us to resist that harm. Thinking through this i had initially thought that having seen them numerous times i had become somewhat desensitised to them, which was a disconcerting realisation in itself for the power of the image to unsettle and trouble us is what

makes it useful as a means of resisting the objective body and thinking through the body in other ways, and while there may be an element of this, in that the images are known already and lack the initial confusion, for the most part they remain unsettling, troubling our understanding of bodies, our own and others. They are images that leave a 'scald', to use one of Morrison's metaphors, the image burns and in the burning it ignites both an end, destruction, and a beginning, resistance, for in light of the demise of our own bodies we must resist. We must resist as we simultaneously "expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body" (Foucault, 1984, p. 83). The body that Sherman shows us throughout her foray into the feminine body, speaks to me in ways that are exemplified by Foucault's words, from the early Film Stills through to the Sex Pictures, and in the Detritus Waste series: "The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration"(Foucault, 1982, p. 83). This quote epitomises Sherman's work, it embodies it, gives it that 'breath of life', we sense that the objective female body, defined around notions of heterosexuality, is destructive, it will end in demise, and we must above all resist that trajectory into the spaces of invisibility, nihilism, into the wasteland of dust and ashes where our bodies will be discarded, middle-age, no longer able to achieve their sole purpose of pleasing the male connoisseur, our now no-longer useful bodies, like the body of Myrtle in 'The Great Gatsby', are relegated to the wasteland of invisibility.

The body of 'woman' is like the American Dream, an ideological wasteland, a dream founded on an unreality which could have been so much more. Did we squander that quintessential moment when we had the opportunity to be more, to live our lives in their complex, multiple, fluid, and chaotic realities, unheeded by hegemonic domination, uncontained in arbitrary names? Have we lost our "capacity for wonder" (Fitzgerald, 1926, p. 171)? i think not, as i read Sherman, i am embodied

by waste, yet there is an other, we remerge in the 'Aging Woman', borne from those ashes and waste. i feel this insurgence in my own body and overwhelmingly so as i engaged in the later series. We may have squandered that moment, but life is moment-ous in offering us up other capacities for wonder. Like Foucault's 'aesthetics of self', we take our journey and we transform our selves and bodies, we work on them as we engage with others, as we are embodied by language that will not encapsulate meaning, but breathes through us, with us, giving us that capacity to live.

In Sherman there is no invitation to summarise the images, they bridle with unresolved ambiguous, they are provocative, and they will not be stilled by hegemonic discourse. And though we recognise them as 'woman', this elicits a discomfort that unthreads the story of essence and natural, and in the unravelling other stories, other selves thread out and through our corporeal spaces.

Lost Opportunities, Laying to Waste

In the writing of Fitzgerald and Morrison there is much that is laid waste, that might have been salvaged had we the capacity to harvest that moment, where that breath might have ushered forth the beginnings of new life. In Sherman we, as 'woman', are literally wasted, body and self obliterated, wiped out by his-tory. In the Sex Pictures our bodies are wasted, in the increasing male centred preoccupation with our sexual parts, we have become disoriented from our own corporeal spaces, we must learn to see our bodies in other ways, to salvage our sexuality and write that story differently, so that it embodies us, materialises us in other ways that do not oppress. Where we might have lived in ways other than that perpetually relived and reproduced in us. Had we the capacity to step outside of the grand narratives that inform our understanding of our self and our world then we might have, in that transitory moment, been able to see from the margin, the edge of 'reason', and in doing so glimpse that ethereal twinkling that signalled

an other life, other selves. Like *Gatsby* for whom all hope of liberation from himself was concentrated in a single light at the end of a dock. We must take responsibility for the wasteland that is the body of 'woman', just as we must for the demise of our planet, that which Sherman's work embodies as we move from the idealistic body of the youthful White woman, appropriated by the male connoisseur, to the body, bearing the weight of successive layers of oppression, worn down, denigrated and disintegrating into the earth, in various forms of dust, ash or dirt. In the *Sex Pictures* the story of the body of 'woman' is reconfigured as a horror story, and like all good horror movies, what we fear most we cannot look away from, and it remains burnt into our consciousness, unable to be stilled. In Sherman the sex images have this burning capacity, and in that burn they enliven resistance. The body of 'woman' is no less bloodless than that of figure 28, for it is not of our making. As these images disturb, and remain a haunting scald I am embodied by these capacity to suture those spaces on the excess of our selves and bodies, those places where blood can flow. Women's bodies speak a legacy of oppression, for they must be destroyed in order that 'woman' can be enlivened and, of course, the *Sex Pictures* speak this legacy. The body is that place through which hegemonic discourse most insidiously and effectively controls and contains, but it is, at the same time, recalcitrant to being named, it refuses to relinquish its multiplicity and it seeps and leaks in ways that disrupt it as unitary, stable and fixed.

Disposable People and Wasted Lives in Literature and Art,

Resurrecting from the Debris

In Fitzgerald the *Valley of Ashes*, is symbolic of America as a wasteland, both in terms of the environment and, also I believe, in terms of those wasted opportunities to be more than that inscribed in the name, to be that multi-vocal, multiply experienced, fluid and flowing self, to celebrate that we are both similar

and different and that this could perhaps have been the basis for some kind of human connection that embodied us one with the other in ways that enlivened our bodies and continually transformed our selves. This resonates with Morrison (1994), who noted it was the "deference that moved her", in relation a US President thinking about "the graveyard his country had become", and not having the folly or arrogance to try to encapsulate that in words, but letting the silence speak of the volume of the tragedy (p. 29). The Wasteland, and the idea of wasted opportunities, of course resonates with Sherman's work where 'woman' is that wasteland, ceremoniously dumped upon and defiled, that body in perpetual disintegration adopting the illusion of substantial unity. And in the Sex Pictures too women is wasted, obliterated in sexual objectivity, which speaks of our Western obsession with sex and particularly with the sexualised female body (Jeffrey's, 2005). Here in the Sex Pictures 'woman' is nothing more than enlarged prosthetic vaginas and breasts, yet, and most disturbingly, this is still recognisable woman. We can not look upon this image without it weaving us in, bleeding into our own bodies, for it speaks of and to the bodies of women, given to us in a severed and disjointed form through 'woman'. For all they lack in actual flesh and blood, the Sex Pictures speak forcefully of a carving of woman, a breaking down, rather like a joint of meat, we are an assemblage that can be disjointed and consumed as parts.

And in the Detritus Waste the body of 'woman' is again wasted, and we must relinquish it as we give her a kind of symbolic burial through Sherman, this space appropriated to speak of the demise is that space from which we will come again, resurrected from the rubbish, we will return in an other, many other, forms and the materialisation of our bodies in these resistance and alternative spaces will be corporeally spectacular and aggressive. Like Basquiat, in Sherman the body is broken down, but that is the trajectory of 'woman', and we must change that story

now, tell our own, and in the telling resurrect our bodies in those located and geopolitical spaces from which we speak.

Fogging Up our Rose Coloured Lenses: Transgressing through Art

The natural maybe seen in its final curtain call in Sherman's work, now immersed so heavily in a thick cloud of artifice, we can no longer see 'woman' without the resulting fog distorting its claim to truth and nature. As it crumbles into the excrement, the vomit, the dirt and the debris we are relinquished, or into plastic and prosthetics in the *Sex Pictures*, we are freed in a sense and i am embodied by this sense of release both in the *Detritus Waste Series*, and in the *Sex Pictures*. As the body literally turns in upon itself, 'laughing at its own disappearance beneath its most artificial form' (Baudrillard, cited in Sherman, 1997), we must choose whether to continue along this path, internalising and living our bodies as objective, sexualised other, so utterly ridiculous in Sherman's parody. Like the *Clowns* a pathetic rendition of the name, which makes it speak its artifice and we see 'woman' as entirely surface, as entirely facade. The disjuncture is so blatantly clear in the parody for the ridiculous must be founded on the known, and in that oscillation between the two the known takes on the specter of ridicule, for it must already have this capacity for the parody to be recognisable. Like the stranger in our midst, we must already know them else we could not recognise them. In Sherman, in particular in the *Sex Picture* and *Detritus Waste Series*, the images are especially haunting, disturbing and thought provoking, they 'suture those places where blood might flow' and in the cutting the blood flows in other ways, as we immerse beyond the artifice of boundaries, body and self, and take up spaces that allow us to embody and enliven our inherent unboundedness (Morrison, 1994, p. 28). As the blood spills our sense of who we can be and how we might live, trickles out beyond the name and we necessarily fragment and proliferate, we embody life. Art in its ability to transgress boundaries, to go beyond what is

known and in doing so shift in subtle ways that which can be known, embodies that surging that is the flow of life through the text and through our bodies. Sherman shocks us out of any sedentary understandings of 'woman' and the body of 'woman'. This resonates with hooks (1995) for whom art was a place from which to struggle against oppression. As she says, "art was to serve black people in the struggle for liberation. It was to call for and inspire resistance." Art is political and "the power of art resides in its potential to transgress boundaries" (pp. 67-69).

Laughing in Spite of Our Selves

Sherman presents us with ambiguous images which in their ambiguity are open to multiple readings. 'Woman' as parody speaks of the societal obsession with 'woman's' bodies and the saturation of these bodies sexually in pornography and popular culture. The dismembering of the body of 'woman' and the exaggeration of sexual parts, with a complete absence of other anatomical necessities, attests to the infiltration of pornographic ideals into popular discourses of femininity (Jeffreys, 2005). Have we become nothing more than a conglomeration of sexual parts, all breasts and vaginas, something brought most obviously to the fore in the *Sex Pictures*? Our bodies have come to be identified predominantly in relation to our sexuality, actually in relation to male centred discourses of heterosexuality. And here in Sherman's work we can see the ridiculousness of such a narrowing of the possibility to be in our bodies, to be a woman, and it is disturbing, it is unsettling, we cannot make it still. It is again, as in the *Clowns*, the idea of laughing at something that we realise is not really funny at all (Schulter, 2004). This is, of course how parody works, with humour to make a point that is in reality anything but humorous, and when we laugh we do so sensing this unease, so the laughter is not pleasant, for it provokes even more the inherent tension, the pervasiveness of something disturbing is invoked in each chuckle. This is similar to the way in which we are drawn into the *Film Stills* by a familiarity, a recognisability

and here we are drawn in by mirth, parody, by the imperative to laugh and then once in, we are confronted with something horrific and disturbing, but from which we cannot now turn away. Our home, that place where we knew the self and other without thinking, where we were and could speak as recognisable 'woman' has been transformed, and now it too embodies the horror of oppression, like the Wasteland we see it now ugly, a place of deprivation and despair. We can no longer take the issue of 'woman' lightly, the parody surfaces and our laughter is sutured.

This is no joke for the representation serves to parody and illuminate what actually exists in our daily lives, albeit in a less blatant but more insidious form, it serves to represent gender oppression as it is lived on and through the bodies of women, both those who are reproduced in the name 'woman' and those who take up a space on the margin and resist that naming, yet always retain the memory of oppression. These images bring that memory to the fore, they reproduce the objective female body in startling and vivid discursive clarity and we are once again made to see our bodies from this perspective, which is surely that of the male connoisseur, the male gaze brought to bear and transform women's bodies. Here, as in the *Folies Bergere*, 'woman' takes up its place as commodity, unashamed and entirely. The body like that which is part of being the "living, loving, suffering, dying human being", that is the essence of being human, recedes into the background and the objective body literally takes and fills centre stage (Freeman, 1997, p. 171). But this objective body is disturbed here, because it is not a real body, it is a prosthetic arrangement, a representation of a particular arrangement of the female body that exists in the world, whereby specific body parts come to loom large in gender discourse and here in Sherman's work these discourses are made literal, and as they do they . The image is literally artificial, literally a prosthetic mock-up, there can be no recall to nature or to natural femininity here, for these bodies are entirely, or almost entirely, synthetic. Which is ironic considering our understanding of our selves as 'woman' and our

internalisation of our bodies as the objective other of mind is firmly founded in a supposed essence that distinguishes one sex from another, and gives rise to perceived and identifiable sex and gender differences. Even so, the arrangement is a recognisable parody of pornographic images of women, the pieced together arrangements are reflective of the poses that 'real' 'woman' might take up in pornographic publications, with a focus solely on the sexualised female body, with, in Sherman's work, other less saleable body parts entirely omitted. As Barthes noted in relation to the *Follies de Bergere*, that here 'woman' is presented entirely as a commodity. Here in Sherman's work we are taken on a journey that chronicles the demise, the degeneration of the female body defined in the name 'woman'. The body of 'woman' is disembodied, so it is no longer either discursively or literally whole, and we, like the plastic transfiguration, risk being lost in the sexualisation of our bodies in the male gaze. And as we read from the latter to the former we can see that even in the youthful alluring 'woman' portrayed in the *Film Stills and Centerfolds*, there are indicators that this isn't to be a happy ending, and a foreboding of the pitfalls of understanding our bodies and selves primarily through this hegemonic lense is eminent. Here the Foucaultian body, broken down by history and dissolved by ideas is made to speak. Here in the *Sex Pictures* the enormity, the utter exaggeration of bodily parts is such that the images take on an effect, rather like that of Black humour, they are a hideous parody of the sexualised female body.

As with the image of the clown we laugh even though we realise there isn't actually anything to laugh about (Schluter, 2004). We cannot easily dismiss the images of the *Sex Pictures*, as we would surely want to, for they are clearly recognisable, even in this parodied form. The parody only serves, as of course it should, to make the reality upon which the image can survive salient. If it were absolutely nonsensical, and it had no familiar referent then we could dismiss it, but it does and we cannot, and this is what gives it a meaning that is anything but funny. As is

the case with parody we are invited to laugh and then we cannot for the laughter is tinged with sadness, as it is with the clowns (Schluter, 2004). The parody in the Sex Pictures like the garish face and dress of the clowns cannot conceal a reality that it alludes to, on which the parody is established and through which it is recognisable. In the image above, though clearly a mock-up and a Sherman production, we recognise immediately the organisation of female bodies in the world of pornographic imagery, the positioning, the focus on sexual anatomy, the particularisation of the female body, all this has a referent outside the image that makes it recognisable not simply for what it literally is, a bunch of prosthetics arranged by Sherman, but for what it represents and further how that representation influences and becomes part of the everyday reality of individual women. Here the literal is a parody clearly, but a harsh, humourless and tragic one which provides us a space from which we can resist such an objectification of our bodies. Stripped away of any ideological illusions of natural femininity and any origin or foundation upon which this image might rest, no matter how distorted that would seem in have become, we are now made to look most vividly, most thoroughly at the transition of the female body as it has become further and further broken down and our bodies further and further alienated from our selves. As we look upon this image, see figure 28, we recognise something, there is a familiarity and that is the disaster that befalls women when bodies are viewed only as objective others, the disaster is that we recognise it and cannot dismiss it. Sherman has gone and taken her body with her, because there is no place for it in these images, all we need is this external and prosthetic representation, we are in many ways similarly plastic, living in our bodies as a representation rather than a reality. It is as Baudrillard says:

Sex laughing at itself in it's most exact and hence most monstrous form, laughing at its own disappearance beneath its most artificial form? (Baudrillard, as cited in Sherman, 1997)

So the Sex Pictures, like the Clowns, like the Film Stills and the Aging 'Woman' to come, have brought forth in forceful and vivid representations, the artifice, the absolute arbitrary nature of 'woman' and the body of 'woman', it floods the surface, embodying us as it is embodied within the work. We look for no depth, no essence, we understand the artifice, the un-truth, we locate now in our geopolitically positioned and transforming space and read at the surface.

THE AGING 'WOMAN' SERIES

And I, in my spectacular role, a Postmodern Mama, with nothing to lose but my invisibility, I challenge those who wish to erase these *fine lines*. (Gergen, 2000, p. 96)

... it is this tension - between the aggressive address of Sherman's radical superficiality and a viewer's projection of, or need for, a (vulnerable) interiority - that produces such ambivalence in the artist's works. (Burton, 2006, p. 207)

I have suggested that we reread Sherman by thinking through the possibility of a kind of "feminine aggressivity," a possibility enabled by the turn to the body and one that would perhaps course through and connect viewer and object in a way dissimilar to those models in which the female subject is consumed/undone/dissolved. (Burton, 2006, p. 207)

The End of the Fairy Story and the Beginning of the Light -

Women Coming Out of the Shadows

Here in Sherman's later work, the 2009 series, we have a group of women all obviously past the first flush of youth, yet refusing to relinquish the artifices of femininity and take up their proper place in the shadows, where the signs of aging

will not be illuminated by harsh sun or faux lighting, and where younger women may not suffer the distress that surely is imminent in glimpsing their own trajectory as 'woman', see figure 29 (Gergen, 2000). Each woman in the series exhibits the artifices of femininity, but now, unlike in the Film Stills, they appear extreme and overworked. The makeup cakes and settles in the crevices on less than youthful skin, the hair is too dark or over bleached, playing up grey roots and illuminating wrinkles, frozen foreheads and faces devoid of frown lines evidence the use of botox as they are pulled into unnatural contortions of expressions with not a smile in sight, though perhaps it is because there is little to smile about.



Figure 29 Sherman, 2003

Retrieved from:

http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_2vqD8DZuEJ8/SceldIbSsOI/AAAAAAAAAQ/dss3g72Z7OE/s1600-h/sherman_00066.jpg

And I, in my spectacular role, as Postmodern Mama, with nothing to lose but my invisibility, I challenge those who wish to erase these fine lines. (Gergen, 2000, p. 96)

Here there are various representations of older women, and one can if one wishes fill in the details of their narrative, provide them with a story presumed on what we know of woman, of femininity, and of nature. But in reading Sherman i try always to remember that these are Sherman and these are performances and we

must read not to seek out an essence or depth, the essential Cindy Sherman, no matter how tempting the storying might be, but to reside at the surface for it is there where the images speak their multi-vocality and complexity, and is in that open and political space that we perform our lives. And although we might assume a foundational narrative in our daily lives, neither language nor our bodies will let us be embodied by that entirely, always there will be an excess to that hegemonic voice, always other voices will reside and resist alongside it. Our lives are storied, we live them on and through the stories that we take up to give them structure or coherence, but when we hold steady to the idea of foundational truths, to notions of depth and essentialism, we lose the opportunity to see the other stories that are there at the surface, and to read that surface from our own subjectively located space which too is a compilation of various narratives of self.

Do you believe that space can give life, or take it away, that space has power?' These are the questions she asks me which frighten me. ... She has taught me 'we must learn to see. (hooks, 1995, p. 65)

Narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created. (Morrison, 1994, p. 27)

Here in Sherman we can easily read these women in ways that would encapsulate them in a name, 'mutton-dressed-as-lamb', seems the obvious derogatory name, in this case when 'woman' fails to contain. Yet there are many other readings and they will be elicited as we dialogue, and in relation to that community from which we speak. As i look upon these women i do not read them as holding on to lost youth, i am embodied by there resistance to hegemonic narratives that would still them, they like the clowns are surface and the surface bridles with antagonistic woman. Their bodies no longer the pinnacle of desirability for the male connoisseur, are wielded now as a means of reconfiguring how we can be in bodies that are post-reproduction, post-sexual objectification, relinquished from the

bindings from which we no longer fit we go forward and tell our own, corporeally located, stories .

When we read seeking essence and truth, we become lost in the ideology, in the oscillation whereby myth conceals the literal, and we fail to see, or acknowledge, the tension that resides in our subjective naming and is there at the surface, all the contradiction, the disruption, the multiplicity are there in that literal space from which we must relinquish our desire to know absolutely and univocally one all encompassing truth of the self, and instead let that self fragment, as it does anyway, but now we must learn to see that fragmentation, those multiple stories, within ourselves, and in others, and to embody it in our daily lives. The provocative nature of Sherman's work, for it is a writerly text and therefore it does not rest but instead bridles with ambiguity, complexity and is inherently disruptive, and exists entirely on the surface, refuses an easy collapse into a hegemonic reading of depth. It refuses being named and framed and cognitively shelved, it remains a disruptive tension to our subjective experience and in our bodies. The Aging Woman disrupt depth, they deny essence, for if it were so surely they would vacate that space, take up their natural trajectory in the recesses, in the unlit and darkened spaces of invisibility. And in being so it allows me to see in myself the tension that resides and to open up spaces to celebrate the multiplicity, the heterogeneity, the excess of the name, and to embody that, to enliven it in my body, to live it in my daily life for it bubbles forth in that surface tension that denies myth, that denies essential selves, that denies a nominal, one-size-fits-all subjective reading. We must enter the work from our specific and local subjective vantage point, we must engage with it as the tension embodies us, and as that experience brings forth the tension that already resides within us in our generic names, that interpellation to be subsumed within the unitary, to take up the space of the recognisable 'i', and to deny the multiplicity and the excess that is the periphery of that name.

Surfacing 'Woman', Making Her Speak in Other Tongues

So to read from the surface is to see more than the familiar 'mutton-dressed-as-lamb' scenario, women of a certain age trying to hold onto lost youth by employing whatever means available to give the illusion of youthfulness, or another take on this, the 'cougar', a woman well enough preserved, and/or with other attracting qualities, like money or power, which gives them the means to attract younger men. To read at the surface denies these nominal narratives that would have these women named in this way and discarded, for the surface speaks too of the facade of gender, here the women employ the very same artifices of beauty enhancement that their younger counterparts in the Film Stills employ, yet the results speak not an essential 'woman' but of the mask, the masquerade, the mock-up that is 'woman'. And the artifice is now read less as adornment, and more as weapon of resistance, they wield unashamedly, and we are forced to look for the image demands a response, and we may mock it, laugh again the mirthless laughter that too is disruptive or try to close it down in a name, but we cannot cognitively shelve it and therein lies its potential to transgress. The Aging Woman, see figure 29, provokes us into an uncomfortable reaction for if we belittle it, we do so of ourselves as well, whether young or older, for we too are women, and are we so much more dignified if we take up the spaces on the recession of life, if we clamour in the shadows in the dowdy clothes of middle-age women, filling our days with the lives of others, our children, our husbands, our ex-husbands, and catering for the needs of everyone but ourselves. Are those women more dignified than Sherman's Aging Women who stand alone, no man in sight, no longer afraid of the shadowy figure in the shadows, for he is man and his trajectory is marked by our own, moves with our own and now he senses that the tremors are that which initiate a new movement, a revolt, something revolting, revolting women, a revolution. The shadows have been transformed, and the anxiety and tension come from the space of the binary other of woman, as the surface glimmers in its

perplexity, its permeability, its multiplicity, and all normality and stability are denied and man too must be made to reveal himself as multiple, fluid and unstable, as the one grand narrative crumbles and many stories are exhumed from the rubble, allowed to speak, and to be embodied within us. "All of the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave", here I read brave women, for they will not relinquish that limelight, they resist for all it's worth the normative, and perhaps also desired, response, to step out of that spotlight. These are strong women, as I locate and read I am embodied by their corporeal wielding and their appropriation of spaces they weren't supposed to own, that weren't part of the narrative of 'woman', and they thus reconfigure who may be enlivened by the spotlight, who may be that spectacle that transform in the performance.

They do, as we must, give their bodies to the struggle, relinquishing those corporeal spaces that would be relegated to silence, and reconfiguring them anew, as they, and we, speak now in ways that haunt the hegemonic voice. The image of nature, essentialism, beauty and woman doesn't work seamlessly as it did in the earlier works, here there is an interruption, something doesn't fit, the narrative is still insisting upon essential and natural 'woman' yet here the images reek only of artifice and facade, and nature has receded into the background, while parody and irony take up the surface transforming it, and us. The refusal of these women to exit the lime light distorts 'woman' for in its natural trajectory they should have receded to the shadows. The hegemonic gender narrative seeks to heed us, to call out the familiar story of the self, and to have us reproduce ourselves as 'woman', but the oscillation between surface and depth is thwarted, it is momentarily stilted, and in that moment we might envision the artifice, the facade of 'woman', and the other that isn't contained in the name, but exists on the edge. They are provocative, they will not be made still in the name, they inhabit the surface, filling it to the brim, they haunt 'woman' and so us too, for we cannot read them

easily and without angst, they remain in our consciousness, embodied as a continual and consistent tension.

Like the clowns they are enrobed by artifice, their hair and make up scream of the mock up that is 'woman', it embodies them, filling the surface, and we must sit up and take notice of this absolute facade for it is us too, and yet the surface speaks in other ways, for this artificiality in its negation of nature and essential 'woman' opens up spaces to transform being woman, to take up the excess of the name, that which resides on the periphery and, in its appropriation of space, will transform the centre. The aging women remain in the light, sun or faux, no matter how harsh they stay full frontal, they will not be made to relinquish that space. Space is important for the appropriation of space, where none exists, is a political act (hooks, 1995). We make spaces to tell our stories on those peripheries, for there is no room for them to be heard in the centre, they cannot be spoken there in ways that do not contain or distort them. I am embodied again by the strength of these women, they are insurgents, they will not be made to speak in ways that reproduce them as 'woman', their bodies are that corporeal aggression personified. They know the performance, the masquerade, most intimately, it is that played out on their, and our, own bodies, and now they are wielding those playing pieces for themselves, making up and transforming the rules as they go along, for they are not presumed, the knowledge comes from the dialogue, from the engagement with the writerly text, from the weave and flow that embodies the work, and us.

What immediately strikes me in figure 29, is the setting, for it is very similar to that used in many of the Film Stills, the stairwell and the concrete background, yet in the above image the woman foregrounds the setting, rather than being overshadowed by it. In this appropriation of space differently, there is no longer the presence of an unseen observer, that unknown stranger lurking in the shadows has been well and truly vacated and relinquished as we have made 'woman' speak its

façade. Our real fear surely was not the unknown stranger, nor the shadowy figure, but 'woman'. As i read retrospectively 'woman' now is transformed to that place of anxious awaiting so pervasive in the *Film Stills and Centerfolds*, young girls awaiting their ultimate demise in the name. i imagine that shadowy figure is these aging women, and now they have stepped from that place, for 'woman' has been exorcised, authors are dead, and the story of 'woman' has become a story that begins with those familiar words of, 'once upon a time', with the acknowledgement that this is one story among many, and we can locate it historically. Here there is not the presence of an internal anguish or anxiousness, the woman, in figure 29, appears somewhat resigned as she stares flatly toward the picture-taker. Yet i do not read this as resignation in the sense of any relinquishment of that space, and i embodied instead by resistance and resignification, of how we may be woman in other ways that do not drop down that latch on us, encapsulating us as name, and no other.

Re-Surfacing 'Woman' and Transforming into Woman

The unseen observer is now fully internalised, known in a corporeal sense, that at this age this is really the end of the line to be that desirable heterosexual 'woman', for of course, the desire is male centred desire and thus heterosexual, and now bodies post reproduction and youthful adoration, we should take up our natural places in the recesses of the image. And while that is likely the case, and is the tragedy of the objectified body of 'woman', a tragic trajectory, this does not deny reading these images simultaneously as resistance. As we locate on the surface the resistance is read from this understanding of that trajectory, and the knowledge that no longer can it elicit for us any ounce of pleasure, ironic as that pleasure was (Bartky, 1990). The surface here is both the tragedy of the marks of artifice on an aging body, we can't help but see the lines, the harshly etched brows, the too dark hair on too sallow skin, yet at the same time, rather like an

oscillation at the surface, there is a strength, an aggressiveness in these women that contrasts markedly with the Film Stills, where such a reading was less likely, though in retrospect they too become embodied by resistance. Again, these aging women are perhaps representative of that, supposedly masculine, unseen threat in the shadows. For now as they step out of those shadows and into the light, they will not be made to relinquish that space, i am embodied by the sense of this as a critical appropriation of a space that has come as a struggle that is the journey of self-awareness. A struggle that has been arduous enough, in terms of its being able to be sustained in thought, known in our bodies, fleshed out in the language we use, to make it resilient to being subordinated again in the name (Foucault, 1982). These women refuse to be made in the name anymore, for the name would have them objectively erased and erasure is not an option they are contemplating. So they reside in a transgressional space, on the margin of the knowable, irritating gender discourse, disrupting its claims to natural femininity and the trajectory of 'woman'. In their refusal to recede they transgress the meaning of 'woman', they draw at the edges of its boundaries shifting and transforming who and how we can be, and live, when our bodies are labelled post production and past commodification, no longer able to define ourselves as sexual object or reproductive utility we must carve for ourselves an other space in which to be. As Butler (1990) noted, "the outside, the abject other, is "refused the possibility of cultural articulation" (p. 8). Thus it cannot be thought, described, nor talked about within the confines of normative subjectivity, there is simply no space for it within that discourse other than as abject other, unrecognisable self, so we have no alternative but to create spaces within which to think, speak, and talk of alternate subjectivities. We must create spaces within a discourse which seeks to silence us, struggle to open up spaces to speak of our other selves, the abject self, which lives within the normative anyway but is simultaneously denied with the hegemonic force of each utterance. We must 'wreak havoc' in order to survive on the edges

of the name, to struggle against its re-containment of us, to prise open within a language that, at every turn denies us voice, those subtle spaces through which we might be heard, to disrupt its hegemony as we make the language speak differently, as we take it up and use it creatively, in different forms, as we experiment in order to transform ourselves, and our understandings of who, and how, we can be (Barthes, 1982; hooks, 1990). We must build from a foundation that is hostile and inhabitable as other, we must create within that a space to speak that will necessarily be on the periphery of what is currently spoken, currently able to be heard. This is the "kind of speaking that takes place on the border of the unsayable [and] promises to expose the vacillating boundaries of legitimacy in speech" (Butler, 1997, p. 41).

We must take up the language of the oppressor and create it differently, and in doing so transform it into a "counter-language" (hooks, 1990). There are few speaking spaces for Māori youth in NZ that aren't already heavily inscribed as devalued other, yet in Borrell's (2005) research into the experience of Māori youth in South Auckland, she was able to tease open spaces within what initially might have seemed an entirely negative narrative. In collaboration with young Māori they were able to wrestle from the hegemonic discourse a counter-discourse, which denied this as a wholly devalued space, an entirely negative experience, and reconfigured it in other ways, an-other reading was enabled, of lives lived in a geographical location popularised by images of violence, poverty, and social decay, but reconfigured by narratives of inclusiveness, belonging and whānau, that disrupted and diluted the hegemonic voice. In bringing forth the experiences of Māori youth living in this part of NZ, which included many positive and highly valued experiences, Borrell was able to effectively participate in transforming the meaning of being young and Māori, and living in South Auckland, and to infuse it with the multiplicity that life is and that hegemonic discourses, oppressive or otherwise deny. We do not have to live our subjective destiny, as i

locate and read Sherman's *Aging Woman* i am embodied by this. We do not have to follow the trajectory from oppression to despair, we can move from that path, follow other threads, take that path less travelled. And as we do we move to the margin where we can imagine other, where the name does not make us in its totality, where there is room to breathe, to harvest language and create those radical speaking spaces that necessarily are disruptive and haunting.

Surfacing and Resignification

Here the surface can be read, as always, multiply, this image shows both the progression of 'woman' embodied within the name, the failure of the objective body, and a transgression of that, so within the name 'woman' an other is spawned, that on the surface appears to be simply a failure to be able to inhabit that name, at least in the same embodied way that was possible before, but that failure to resignify us and make us recede into nihilism is the space of resistance, where we take up something that exceeds what the name allows, just like the clowns what is brought to the fore here is the absolute artificiality of 'woman', the complete and utter surface and an acknowledgement of that as the space from which we must read. Herein we take up the name, but we distort it and it becomes other, and in this case the name is brought forth in a satiric way, for the women, like the clowns, are bringing forth the artificiality, the entirety of the masquerade, the absolute surface that is 'woman'. And again, we may laugh the mirthless laughter that subsequently exposes the truth of the parody, that brings to the surface the human sadness that the parody exemplifies, and in that same moment also dilutes its force, its efficacy, and its ability to reproduce us again in that image. It is that "raising of what has been displaced to the threshold of its perception [that] allows one to face up to unhappiness, which in being faced is no longer exclusively itself, but appears in the perspective of its being perceived" (Iser, 1992, p. 66). Its bringing to conscious awareness the parody in a way that doesn't allow us to

cognitively shelve it, it is like the scald, the mirthless laughter that brings to the surface the sadness, in this case gender oppression, and in that process imprints upon us the scald of that oppression. It is the bringing forth of normalisation to a place where it no longer can be seen as normal, where it now appears contrived and strange, arbitrary, an ideological production. As Foucault said (1982) "when we begin to have trouble thinking things the way they have been thought, transformation becomes at the same time very urgent, very difficult and entirely possible" (p. 172). So here what has become troubling is gender as normative, and once we begin to think of it outside the confines of normality and truth we lay the way open for transformation of the self as a multiple, fluid, continually moving space.

As i read these images, i see no longer any pleasure, for these older women to be sought from femininity, it has literally run its course, and that ironic distorted pleasure that was a kind of a built-in desire and part of taking up our subjective place of 'woman'. A desire to fulfill our normative place in the world, to be looked at, an object of male appreciation, to inhabit a body fit for the male gaze, all that here recedes into the background and we begin to imagine ourselves, and our bodies, anew. Sherman's 'Aging Woman' will not stand in the background content to be looked at, they are working this space and making it their own, as they play up the parody and expose femininity in its masquerade (Bartky, 1990). The knowledge and power is being re-scripted, so that the story is now about the experience of being women at a specific time of life, it is not about living the trajectory of femininity and taking up the 'natural' space of anonymity. The knowledge we seek is local and particular, we must, says Haraway (1991) "learn in our bodies ... to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name So ... objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility The moral is simple: only partial

perspective promises objective vision I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims" (p. 190-195). We must seek out these particularised and local spaces for they are the spaces from which we live and experience our lives, those are the space we must try to enword in our texts, to embody some of this life on the pages so that the text imbues some of the fluidity, so that it is less likely to shut down and order meaning.

For women this transformation is about standing in the chaotic centre of our own lives, and celebrating that chaos, that cacophony of voices that speak to us and as they come together in various ways to produce an intertextual weave that is us, that is our experience of life, one that is continuously made and remade, as we experience our self in the continual flux that is everyday life. i imagine it rather like the turning of a kaleidoscope, where each turn brings up a different pattern variation, and where the beads or pebbles represent different discourses, or narratives of self, but in this case where the revolutions and possibility of outcome are endless, and there exist no constrained boundaries, only fluid and permeable surfaces. Something perhaps akin to gumbo ya ya, Creole speech, where everyone talks at once, and there is a simultaneous exchange of information, a dialogue that recognises the relational, the intertextual weave that draws us all together and is integral to meaning that is local and particular and comes from our immersion in life.

I Am Not Just a 'Woman' ... Now Hear Me Roar

Unlike the Film Stills where there was the perception of an eternal unseen threat lurking in the shadows, beyond the frame of the image, here, in the Aging Woman series, there is no air of vulnerability that pervades the image, there is no overshadowing of these women by looming concrete structures, and the menace of

dark unlit corners. These women stand full frontal, in the daylight (harsh as that light can be for women over forty), yet these women seem to bask in its illumination, as all supposed essences and origins break down, and the surface is laid wide open for the taking, for the reading, an other reading. And here we see the failure of femininity to reproduce 'woman' in its final flourish, as having left the stage, exited the scene altogether. Sherman's aging women stay put, they will not be made to recede, to be 'antispectacle' (Gergen, 2000). They offer up the normative reading of femininity, of 'woman' and then they allow us to transform it as we read it differently, for though they appear to concede to the constraints of feminine objectivity, as they do so they disrupt the trajectory, the timeline of 'woman'. And herein woman is denaturalised, de-normalised, made to speak differently, to reveal its ideological underpinnings, 'woman' is now revealed in all its masquerade, artificiality, production and reproduction, and in this process the name is broken down, opened up, and we are free to transform ourselves outside the boundaries of that noun, to probe its edges, to celebrate our diversity, instability and fluidity. To be the "living, breathing, dying human being" that should always have been our destiny, but that which we failed to grasp when the opportunity was there (Freeman, 1997, p. 171).

As Foucault (1982) noted, there was a moment in history when we came to realise that we were both the subject and object of knowledge simultaneously, and this uniquely human manifestation was an opportunity with which we could have grasped with both hands, how differently perhaps it would have embodied us, enlivened our theories, if we had the capacity to celebrate that our lives are lived from unique and local vantage points which are unstable, multiple and fluid, and this is the reality of human existence, and is something we all share. It could perhaps have been our moment to come together and celebrate our human differences, to bask in our shared but different human connection. As Butler notes, "I find that my very formation implicates the Other in me, that my own foreignness to myself is,

paradoxically, the source of my ethical connection with others" (Butler, 2001, p. 34). This is similar to du Bois' understanding of the Souls of White Folk and their relationship to his own 'soul': "Not as a foreigner do I come, for I am native, not foreign, bone of their thought and flesh of their language" (du Bois, 1920, p. 22). This is not then to be conceived of as a simple difference that mattered but rather as a space of ethical, or as it turned out unethical, connection. Here surely, was a chance missed to connect with each other in a way that celebrated our shared space of being human, yet it became instead a threat that the dominant hegemony would vehemently deny in order to maintain its demarcated boundaries and the resultant privilege of inhabiting the valued side of the linguistic binary.

It appears to be a particularly unnerving sort of threat to the dominant order, that those boundaries it so protects, those that mark difference and in doing so divide and oppress, are so perilously unstable, entirely arbitrary and continually at risk of disclosure. As du Bois continued "I know their thoughts and they know that I know. This knowledge makes them now embarrassed, now furious. They deny my right to live and be and call me misbirth!" (du Bois, 1920, p. 23). In the *Aging Woman*, they take up these spaces of misbirth and transform them, we know 'woman', and the dominant hegemony would seek to contain that knowing in an other name, to shut it down again, but in that appropriation of space we are telling our own stories, from the margin, from our perspective of margin and centre, of 'woman' and other. i am embodied by the sense that i inhabit this marginal space too, as i read Sherman and locate in that community of others seeking to tell stories of their other selves, i am as hooks was, able now to look from the inside out, and the outside in, this dual vision allows me to locate and speak knowledges wrought from the dialogue of bodies, selves and language (hooks, 1990). They of course, want to silence, to avoid any coming to voice, any agency. We must believe the narrative of our self, as the devalued other, and we must believe that language perpetuates a natural order, for that belief keeps us silent and politically inactive,

and that is what the dominant hegemony seeks to enforce and maintain. It is not until we understand how we have come to experience ourselves, and others, in the ways that we do, and locate this knowledge within our inherently oppressive language, and its binaries, that we can begin to find that ethical connection with Others that Butler spoke of, which is the acknowledgement that we too are Other, that part of us is the Other that always language implicates by difference, and confers meaning on, in relation to (Derrida, 1998). It is, as Napier (as cited in hooks, 1994) said, that "Strangers within our midst are indeed the strangest of all - not because they are so alien, but because they are so close to us. And he goes on to say "... strangers must be like us but different. They cannot be completely exotic, for, were they so, we could not recognise them" (p. 37). As women we know the other intimately, for it resides within us, being brought forth in our very making as 'woman', as we take up this subjective space, meaning is conferred by virtue of all that it is not, all that is disallowed in the name 'woman' is simultaneously given birth, even if it is a kind of misbirth, as we reproduce ourselves within that name. The Other of the name is implicated within us each time we take up and reproduce ourselves as 'woman', it is the tension that remains on the edge of the name, the excess, the troubling, the contradiction that bothers that hegemonic subjective place and undermines its legitimacy to truth, normality and nature.

Harvesting Our Corporeal Voice

Rather than celebrate this shared Otherness, 'man', and i mean this literally, though more precisely, White, middle-class man, took up the space of ultimate knower, a space vacated by God as religion receded its ontological hold on truth and science took centre stage. And man could only take up this space with a few adjustments as to what might count as reality and truth, specifically there was the necessity of legitimising knowledge so that it was limited to a specific type of

understanding, one which could only be known using the objective methodology of the natural sciences, so herein, knowledge became relegated to only that which was able to be known through the senses, in particular our ability to see. Anything that fell outside these rigid parameters was labelled unscientific and was the stuff of myth and legend, essentially unable to be validated using scientific methodology. Here meaning was effectively and immediately collapsed into a narrow and constrained understanding and was unable to proliferate beyond objectivity, at least in any recognisable and legitimated way. In Sherman's work to see is not convergent with knowing, for we cannot encapsulate the image, the aging women, into the name. They disrupt 'woman' for they will not follow its 'natural' trajectory, they will not be made invisible. They will not be contained by 'woman', they seep out at the artificial boundaries of 'woman' revealing those boundaries, and disrupting that story. They remain and appropriate that space they, as 'natural woman' should have relinquished already to a much younger counterpart. The image then may be transformed and again elicit the pervading fear and anxiety of the Stills. The concrete structures may again loom large, and 'Man' can take up that space given to him in discourse, in those stories that in designating truth create in their telling, create again, and continue that legacy of oppression. But this is not to be in the Aging Woman, space is political and it will not be given up easily, they, and we, embodied as we read, sense that we must struggle always to stay in the spotlight, to create our own spaces that allow us to come to voice in other ways that do not subjugate us in a name.

Although science and psychology was able to establish it self as purporting our truths, and though it enforced these and in the process sought to negate other experiential knowledges of self, it did not obliterate these entirely and they remain that continual tension, that inconsistency that we feel when those other voices speak on, and through, us. It is the case that we can close the latch on a gate to lessen the noise of its haphazard banging against the fence in the wind,

but we cannot entirely silence the rattle even if we constrain it. And like the gate, the self cannot be closed off, the boundaries of 'woman' are immersible for they are not a reality, but a story of bondage, and those other voices, even those that the dominant hegemony would try most vigilantly to overpower, in particular the voice of our bodies, for it threatens at every rattle to reveal the hegemonies untruth. Just like the rattling gate, the self cannot be silenced and always it co-exists with resistance, and we must harbour that voice that speaks of our other selves and our body. The Aging Woman is like the rattling gate, a perpetual agonist to 'woman', for it disrupts, it does not follow the linear trajectory, as i embodied by these images i sense that there is a space to write our own autobiographies, our own life stories that will be anything but linear, for life is not lived in this way. We do not go from one stage to the next, building upon each in a progression that would have us, as women, eventually disappear from the narrative. Rather our stories are a continual process of reflecting and remembering, repeating and reconfiguring in relation to the self that we are, the other selves that speak to us, and our orientation and experiences within our bodies as we dialogue from these corporeal spaces. Let us tell our own particularised stories and create for us ways to live that do not simultaneously oppress. The aging women wield that space to create anew, to reconfigure who and how we can be. As the name inaugurates us to be 'woman', it necessarily must usher forth both that which it desires and that which it abhors, for language is two sided, and the hegemonic self cannot be brought into being without simultaneously enlivening the abject other, that which denotes its difference (Butler, 2001). Try as we might we can never absolutely silence the agitation of the rattling gate, those other selves that exist within us, we can try not to listen, not to heed their voices, but we cannot entirely eliminate the sound and it remains a constant and continual tension, a disruption within the hegemonic voice and transforming that sound.

Wrestling Back and Transforming our Bodies

I look to the social, academic and political interventions of sociology, feminism and Queer to resist and oppose this assertive male hegemony which organizes its truth-claims around corporeality. (Wilton, 1997, p. 48)

The destruction of the body, said Foucault (1984), is history's agenda, to break it down and make it speak in ways that render it efficacious, render it docile, make it productive, and reproductive, and thus able to meet the needs of capitalism, and patriarchy. The collation of a corpus of knowledge around bodies, in particular the bodies of non-White and women, and the development of bodily norms in relation to, in particular, sexuality, but also as this was juxtaposed with race, class and gender, allowed those designated expert knowers, located primarily in the fields of psychology and medicine, to effectively remove the experience of living in bodies away from individual bodies and selves and to occupy a space of objectivity, a body that we must come to know from outside the actual daily experience of inhabiting our body. The body shifted from an intimately known internal space within the self, to an externally known objective space to be located within the sphere of psychology and science. It became part of that 'psy-shaped space', that psychological production of "the processes and desires that are imagined to lie in the psychological interior of persons of particular genders, ages, classes or typifications [and] are connected up to the promises and pleasures that can be invested in representations of styles of existence and their associated artifacts, and located within sets of everyday routines for the conduct of life" (Rose, 1999, p. 271). In Sherman, this narrative, this psy-shaped space becomes distorted, in the *Aging Woman* series, desires are not located in 'woman', as they wield their corporeal armour, take up the artifice of 'woman' and have it fuel their resistance, the trajectory, the story is disrupted and who and how we can be as women of a particular age or stage of life, is open for transformation. Sherman's *Aging Woman* disrupt the 'routine' for everyday existence, they create their own styles

of being, for they will no longer listen to those stories that cannot be embodied. We must wield back our bodies from psychology's tellings. From those narratives based on data collation, and interpretation, on the analysis of the other of, White, middle-class, male, so that an understanding of normativity and deviance could be created in that space, though not outside it, and bodies and selves could be formed in this narrative, in this psy-shaped space. And thus in the shaping, and in relation to science and objectivity, and its position established in this accumulation of data, of truth-teller, psychology and subsequently White Man, took up that privileged place of knower, foundered in the natural order of things. As Rich (1987), has noted, in relation to thinking of our bodies in other ways that do not denote them as objective other, that "perhaps we need a moratorium on saying 'the body.' When I write 'the body,' I see nothing in particular. To write 'my body' plunges me into lived experience, particularity" (p. 215). And certainly it is this lived experience, this locatedness in our bodies that has been severed from our own corporeal experiences, and of the dialectical relationship between body and self, and it is this that we must try to recover in our own lives, to embody in our talk and text, and to enliven in our theories. In Sherman, we cannot rely on names to read, for 'woman' is distorted here, she cannot be found, she is dispersed, fragmented, speaking in ways that are incoherent, for the other voices flood through the text and though we initially try to locate through her, for that is our familiar place from which we have learned to see, we cannot hear her speak, she is muffled, inconsistent and unrecognisable. My body is not the body of 'woman', nor Sherman, nor any of the images, yet it is part of all of them, the dialogue is of fragmentation and proliferation, it is unbounded by language.

Letting our Corporeal Self Speak, Learning to Hear and Harvest that Voice, Matters of Flesh and Blood

And this is what i grapple with here in that continual dialogue with others working on the periphery to try to harvest that bodily voice and make it speak through our writing, and naturally this will be a proliferation of meaning for the voice we bring through is not bounded by notions of normality and appeals to nature, but is embodied by the fluidity and flow that emanates anyway from our living experience of our body. In the *Aging Woman* bodies twist and contort, as we locate and are embodied by how they, and we, might speak other, the abject. That which cannot and will not be named, those multiple otherings, those fragments of self, are ushered forth, for 'woman' is denied its absolute. And here is the reconfiguration of how bodies can be when they cannot be made in hegemonic discourse, when they are post-reproduction, post normative sexual objectification. What resides in the excess, at the margin, i read in the *Aging Woman*, they are the excess and the critically aware, and in that space, and through their bodies, they, and i, resist. As Butler (1993) notes we are all grappling with "what to recover under the sign of the body" (p. 28), and perhaps if anything at all, for the sign hardens around the body and instead we seek to flesh out that which moves at the margin of the sign, the possibilities to experience our body as excess, as antagonist, as that which haunts the sign, an unleashing of our corporeal spirituality. And this is how i am embodied as i read the *Aging Woman*, that there is no sign to orient, the sign proliferates ceaselessly and i am enlivened by the fragmentation, the threading out of my body and self - a corporeal weave. i read in the *Aging Woman* fragments, particles of the stories of our selves, partial murmurings, and i am embodied by my own fragmentation.

As i struggle to speak the body in other ways, and to enliven it in the text, i imagine in metaphor, as that 'whisper of shared breath', an eerie wail permeating the hegemonic voice, the tenuous sound of institutionalised oppression creaking and cracking, shattering, and there in the shadows, cowering, seeking protection in the chaotic dissolution, is White, middle-class, man, skin prickling and eyes wide with terror, he contemplates the unleashing of a force always pre-empted yet still ill-equipped to face, witnessing his own demise in this very unleashing, as all those subjugated discourses of body and self wash over him diluting his privileged spaces, denying any essence, truth or normality, proliferating all subjective meanings, dissolving him within a dissolution that is the revolution having come full circle, back to that body broken down by discourse to a celebration of dispersion, but of a different kind, of the multiplicity of our experiences of self and body, of the corporeal proliferation that allows the body to reside in the space that is life, the space of the "living, breathing and dying human" that is necessarily fragmented and perpetually in motion (Freeman, 1997, p.171). i imagine the Aging Woman are that terrifying embodiment for Man, wielding open spaces, eclipsing structures, shattering hegemonic discourse, and in that space they embody him too, in other ways and he fears his own unknowingness, as he fears unknown woman. The body moves at the margin of the hegemonic voice, disrupting it, haunting it, diluting its force, disrupting its linear narrative and piquing it with tension. And in the Aging Woman, the parentheses of 'woman' are shred, there are no boundaries upon which the name can secure its hold, upon which Man might be comforted in the knowledge that we can be contained, he cannot founder himself in relation to this transformed if we read retrospectively woman and the body have reconfigured, they have emerged from those spaces of corporeal destruction, to take up a space that they must create for themselves.

Herein as we struggle to give sound to our bodily voice, to bring those sounds through in the text, we begin to see a healing of the violence of Cartesianism, of

the severing of body and mind, and here as the body dissimilates, fragments, proliferates, and in this process objectivity recedes to a space of hegemonic story, rather than absolute truth, and the body proceeds to that space of multiple truths and realities located, particular and perpetually moving (Morgan, 2004). Like Sherman's body of work, the body here is returned to us, or at least we have wrestled it back from hegemonic discourse, as we have fought and sought out spaces to think and experience our bodies differently, a process in which our bodies and our selves have been transformed and embodied in multiple and other ways that the name contained, but are now opened up to proliferate. The body which history sought to destroy and offer to us as nominal, stable and entirely objective other is freed from those containing and arbitrary requirements made in the normalisation of us as 'woman', and here it proliferates, like the blood running through our veins, our corporeal self reconnects with the experience of living, and in doing so we are enlivened as we are embodied by this surge, this ethereal moment of physical connection that is akin, i expect, to something like jouissance, a moment of complete exhilaration, intense pleasure, an absolute relinquishing of the hegemonic self, that comes in the utter denial of the name as the truth of the self, in the taking up of those unnamed spaces, illegitimate spaces (like du Bois, "misbirth"), barely recognisable spaces (though we are working on them), that space that society most wants to deny for it is what undermines its very structure, its allocation of privilege and its hegemonic order, for there in the space of proliferation, of intertextuality, of non-linear narratives with no bounded beginning nor end we resist and we harvest that resistance in multiple ways. As Barthes and hooks have noted in relation to the desire to have us be named and contained:

... what society will not tolerate is that I should be ... nothing, or, more precisely, that the something I am should be openly expressed as provisional, revocable, insignificant, inessential, in a word irrelevant. (Barthes, 1986, p. 291-2)

Sounds and scenes which cannot be appropriated are often that sign everyone questions, wants to erase, to "wipe out. (hooks, 1990, p. 147)

Society wants to hold and make the self be still, be unitary, and universal, it wants to contain, to maintain the ideology and the privilege that the ideology conceals, its language is organised to maintain division and difference as a means to control and delimit resistance, and its structural organisation are these hegemonic discourses institutionalised. Yet here within all these opposing forces, we stand, women residing on the margin of that name which enforces, dissolves, breaks down, and renders docile, and wrestling from that most marginal space resistance, wielding that resistance through language, painstakingly chosen to dilute its violent tendencies, reflexively chosen to achieve our political aim, and artfully chosen to speak from and through our bodies and to embody the narrative thread, the 'fabric of the self' that connects us each to the other, and to our self (Freeman, 1998). And i read this in the *Aging Woman*, for they stand resolute in the face of forces, language, institutionalised oppression, that would make them mute, and though the sounds of their bodies may be wordless, they are nonetheless shattering of foundations and of hegemonic subjectivity. "Word- work is sublime" said Morrison (1994), and if we use it well, reflectively, it might just be the "measure of our lives" (p. 22).

i have sought always in this work to ensure there is the whisper of the subliminal in it, not as a rhetorical device, but still as an unconscious provocation of sorts, a haunting that remains like a trace, a corporeal trace like the palimpsest, which i expect is the corporeal enlivening in the text through that language that is harvested to disrupt, to bring forth the abject, the multiple, to haunt. The *Aging Woman* haunt the text, certainly they haunt Man, for they are that bodily spectacle, they remain visible disrupting 'woman' and thus transforming our

corporeal and subjective spaces, retelling the story of 'woman' so that we can become woman, unknown and unable to be named. As we enter the space of the writerly text i imagine our body and self as entering a dialogic relationship with the words that leave that mark, or scald, and our bodies are continually over scored yet always retaining those markings that are the narratives of self that we were born into, that we took up by virtue of being born into specific categories of self, and as a means of recognition and viability, and here an other voice overwrites and transforms these earlier stories, healing our frayed narrative, allowing us to be embodied by a meaning that is more than that given in the constrained subjective place of hegemonic discourse, and one that embraces multiplicity, not as shiftlessness or nihilism, but as an understanding of our selves as interconnected, as interrelated, as more than the individual, as part of something ultimately more meaningful, as part of a process of life that we share with others by virtue of being similarly human. As 'woman' disperses amongst its excess, as the margin blurs and immerses into the centre, we must embody that interweave. We cannot locate 'woman' in Sherman's images, in the Aging Woman, for, like Sherman herself, she has long since exited the space of essence, or author, and what is left is life, fragmented, chaotic, and blissful, in the fragmentation, in the loss of 'woman' and the emergence of other, i am embodied by something akin to jouissance, a shattering that enriches for in those space of unknowing we have the opportunity to make that ethical connection with others. This resonates with hooks, who ponders on what might give us such a connection, allow us a shared understanding that might bring us together to fight oppression, to resist hegemonic discourse, to take up other subjective spaces. Butler says that we need to understand the other in our selves, we need to embody the object for that is simultaneously enlivened with our reproduction as normative self, and that this gives us a connection to the unknowing, and releases us from the search for truth (du Bois, 1920). We can thus embody that stranger within, for it does

not seem strange anymore, in an ironic twist 'woman' now appears that bizarre distortion, and Sherman's images, suggest a comfort, an unstorying of hegemonic gender, so that i no longer look with abhorrence at the Sex Pictures, or fear the Aging Woman, in myself, these images speak multiplicity for they deny truth, and in doing so they allow me to be other. 'Woman' here must speak for its excess and thus universal truth becomes that fallacy it always was, the ideology is revealed and we are free to embody our otherness.

Blood Letting - Women and Flow

i write always to bring forth the stranger in myself, the other in our midst, the voices that reside at the margin, both of ourselves and of hegemonic discourse. i write always with the desire that the work should achieve something of the suturing properties that Morrison spoke of, that this writing which necessarily brings forth a legacy of all that has gone before, both that personal world which i necessarily bring to each encounter, that is inscribed on my body and within my understanding of self, and an acknowledgement of the relationship of all to all, that infinite chain of signification that each word necessarily gives rise to, and in doing so might sometimes achieve that cutting, that ability to "suture the places where blood might flow" (Morrison, 1994, p. 22; Freeman, 1998). And often this is initiated through Sherman, and through an engagement which fleshes out corporeal metaphor, and enables me to speak that bodily voice and fluid and flowing, in all its linguistic flesh, and allowing it a speaking space in the discourse as Morgan (2004) does, as she wonders too how we might think bodies that bring together the linguistic and those other "matters of the flesh" (p. 161). And certainly blood is an appropriate metaphor through which to think resistance, to think sublimated selves, to think oppression, for women have been continually made to take up spaces of corporeal shame, and have been silenced and devalued by virtue of their specific bodily flow, and its relationship to notions of excess, of an

inability to contain, and an unknown capacity for a kind of corporeal unleashing that seems to have been a particular male fear across various cultures. We certainly can find historical references to menstrual blood flow in many different cultures and its association with something mysterious, uncontained and unpredictable seems to have made it somewhat frightening when viewed from a male perspective, just as Sherman's Aging Woman wielding their corporeal armour are that disruptive and particularly male terror. Women were often vigilantly avoided during their menstrual cycle for fear of some sort of contamination of the male spirit, body, or soul. i say then, let the metaphorical flow of blood be both my own, and yours too, let the words enliven something lying dormant within us, those subjugated voices which include our corporeal self, free our bodies from the "sacralization of the social", unleash our corporeal horror, the abject other that lives within. Let us be embodied by those women with blue crackling hair that live at the margin of the normalised, recognisable self, let us be Sherman's Macbethian hag starring fixedly over a steaming hot cauldron, see figure 16 (Foucault, 1994a, p. 172; Davies & Dormer, 2001). Let us be unrecognisable as 'woman' and see where that leads and let that tension pervade the name and distort it, as our bodies simultaneously writhe against it, bringing to the fore its ideological and human beginnings, let the human input that resides within all our subjective names come to the surface so that it may be seen ideologically unclothed, let us again connect with our bodies, with those other selves that have become alienated from us, yet remain at the margin, a constant tension, a barely audible whisper of shared breath, a continual antagonist to the totality of the hegemonic voice . Let us bring all those voices to the surface, filling it to the brim with an intertextual bubbling, a weaving in and out of other narratives, of the connective threads of the self, like the connective tissue in our bodies, as Sherman does for each series threads into the others in a dialogic weave, and out beyond the images, the text to weave us in to the narrative, physical and linguistic space now unbounded, embodying the

corporeal, ushering forth the bodily self in the language and making it speak in relation to the self, in dialogue with the self and other selves. Again i am reminded of Hansberry, and the question of relinquishing of our body to the struggle, that is, are we prepared for this to be more than academic, are we prepared to live it to the full, and i had wondered of myself how much i was prepared to give. And now i realise it is everything, for when we take up those subjective spaces on the margin, when we leave our subjective 'homes' behind, we leave them absolutely and irrecoverably, both body and self, we relinquish, along with the hegemonic self, the object body, the only body we have ever known, or allowed our self to know, we give up our recognisability, our normality, our desires even, in the hope that we might recover something else, something more meaningful, in the marginalised subjugated selves and experiential bodies that exist on the margin. And in the Aging Woman there is recovery, but not of 'woman', that is a facade we no longer embody, we still know the story, we remember, but we do not enliven it, it is not the story of our lives.

Learning in our Bodies, Embodying our Writing and Transforming the Self

We reside on the margin as a means of appropriating space where our body and self might be more, where we might wrestle from hegemonic discourse an other life, one that isn't at present able to be fully voiced. This is courageous indeed, for we do so not knowing the road ahead, we have no map, no guide, instead we must learn to listen, and learn to see in ways in which we have been ill-prepared. As Barthes (1982) noted, the destination can be a lonely place, as our now altered perspective can make us appear somewhat peculiar to our peers. In the process of transforming the normal, of making it appear strange we too might appear strange along the way, our recognisability becomes distorted and there is an element of estrangement, of loneliness for those who reside on the margin of normality. In

the *Aging Woman* i read estrangement, but courage too, for to take up space where there is none, where it is hostile place for our bodies for that cannot, or will not, be made to fit hegemony, is courageous indeed. Sherman's *Aging Woman* are like Basquiat's disintegrating Black bodies, they speak a legacy of pain, but they will not be wracked to invisibility, to silence, instead they choose to speak that pain, to wrestle it through their writhing bodies, and in the process to relinquish its injurious effects (Butler, 1997). i include this, as always sublime word work from hooks here for it embodies that ethereal connection between text and life, that fleeting and momentary presence of meaning that resides in the experiential gap, that language necessarily cannot, and should not desire to, capture, but that we must harvest.

'Do you believe that space can give life, or take it away, that space has power?' These are the questions she asks me which frighten me ... She has taught me 'we must learn to see.' (hooks, 1995, p. 65)

i am embodied by the politics of space in the *Aging Woman*, as they take up and use those spaces to bring forth their excess, to be that spectacle that will not be silenced for now they, and i, am enabled to see differently, and from those spaces on the margin we are transformed.

We no longer have the familiarity of subjective norms to call upon, those expectations and responsibilities of desirable behaviours, emotions or bodily deportment, and instead we must learn to harvest the whisperings that exist on the margin of our normalised selves, to bring forth our corporeal voices, and allow the writerly texts to embody us in a dialogue that ushers forth the multiplicity, fluidity and chaos that is life, to bring into our writing some of that experience of life, to 'arc towards meaning' (Morrison, 1994). As Barthes (1986) noted in relation to our immersion in the chaotic space of multiplicity, "the writer can only imitate an ever anterior, never original gesture; his sole power is to mingle

writings, to counter some by others, so as never to rely on just one; if he seeks to *express himself*, at least he knows that the interior 'thing' he claims to 'translate' is itself no more than a ready-made lexicon, whose words can be explained only through other words, and this ad infinitum ... (p. 52). Our value then as writer, or as compiler, is in this process of weaving, of pulling together an endless array of strands, knowing always that in the weaving some will inevitably be left behind, for always there will be omissions, and the best we can do is to acknowledge their absent presence, the haunting that remains but is not absolutely alluded to, and this too is inherently part of the narrative thread, for it is part of the interweaving, the textural multiplicity, instability, and ceaseless movement:

I find so many gaps, absences in the written text. To cite them at least is to let the reader know something has been missed, or remains there hinted at by words - there in the deep structure. (hooks, 1990, p. 147)

And even in their omission these voices pervade the text, are drawn in and out, settle and are reawakened, come to the fore and recede, in the fluidity that is our subjective realities and that the writerly text struggles to embody. This is a space that is not marked by lines or hard boundaries, it is a permeable and fluid space and can be entered at multiple points, just as the body too is that unbounded intertextual space, that "... fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture." (Spivak, 1989; Barthes, 1986, p. 52-3) And here we seek out, appropriate, and open up spaces where this intertextuality might be enlivened and embodied within us, and where meaning proliferates endlessly. The writerly text is that space of multiple entry, a space where we sense this movement, where the breath of life ventilates, an experience of exhilaration, of 'jouissance', of abandonment where we might be something other than that the name conferred upon us, it is a space of openings, subtle and multiple permeations,

where we might find spaces to speak in our subjugated voices on the margin of hegemony, it is a space where we are infused once again with life (Barthes, 1975). As hooks said in relation to language, that it is both a 'place of struggle', and that space through which we seek some sort of recovery of the self, though certainly a transformed self:

Private speech in public discourse, intimate intervention, making another text, a space that enables me to recover all that I am in language, I find so many gaps, absences in the written text. To cite them at least is to let the reader know something has been missed, or remains there hinted at by words - there in the deep structure. (hooks, 1990, p. 147)

i am transformed as i read Sherman, broken down and destroyed by the colonisers language, the language of patriarchal oppression, but wrestling from that space an other voice, an other, "counter-language", and in the Aging Woman they, and i emerge, in that transformation and recovery (hooks, 1990, p. 147).

Of course, this is the taking up of spaces where none previously existed or where those that existed were devalued, of appropriating these spaces, of realising that space is political and using that space to transform the narratives of self that allocate subjective positions, so that how we can live and who we can be is transformed. This is as Butler (1997) said, about "opening new contexts, speaking in ways that have never yet been legitimated, and hence producing legitimisation in new and future forms" (p. 41). There is no space in which to come to voice within the dominant hegemony, therefore, we must appropriate space on the margin to speak those subjugated narratives of self. This is the necessary space of transformation:

We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world" (hooks, 1990, p. 153).

Certainly i have experienced something of this intertextual weave, this immersion of my self within other selves, and a connecting with aspects of my corporeal self, when i have become immersed in the sublime words of Morrison, Barthes, hooks, and Beckett, and been inspired by the art of Basquiat, Rothko, and of course, Sherman. And even when they are not herein directly referred to they whisper through the text, permeating the writing with their life giving that "shared breath" that invigorates. It is, as Soenneichson (2009) said, about harvesting those "brief momentary pauses at particular points when [we] have gained fleeting glimpses of potentially useful insights" (p. 55). And in order to do this we must, necessarily, step outside that which we know, that which makes scientific objectivity synonymous with truth, and to learn to listen to those other voices that permeate the text, those that speak of, and to, our other selves.

Burning and Branding, leaving marks, traces, scalds and reigniting embers

He let what is visible escape from sight, while the invisible surges forth, in an unduly manner, and moves on, leaving traces on the film. (Foucault, 1994, pp. 433-50)

In the above quotation, Foucault comments on that which is not explicitly spoken in relation to Duane Michel's photograph, see figure 3, yet which is traced upon, and thus the image move anyway, or more precisely surges forward, attesting to the ceaseless movement that is language. This is, undoubtedly, a reference to the permeability of language, and of all that is languaged, including of course ourselves. Language courses through us just as it does through everything in a ceaseless and unstoppable journey, charting an uncharted course, spreading perversely along multiple threads including those previously unable to be even envisioned. And this reminds us that language is that space of resistance as it simultaneously is that space of oppression, it is that space through which we must struggle to speak, and

open up spaces in which to be, in ways that do not oppress. Language remains that unchartered and unstoppable force and yet we live in the ideology that we have ceased the movement in our subjective naming, though the name is neither ever at peace, or still, for it is imbibed with the tension that its birth in language entails, like us the name cannot keep at bay the other side of its origin, and that which it ushers forth in every breath. It must exist by co-existing with that which it is not, and that which it seeks to deny and devalue and ironically with each testament of its normality, its natural occurrence, it subsequently brings forth that upon which it founders and which it cannot be defined without, this is the constant and permanent tension that pervades our subjective naming, and pervades us as we take up and experience ourselves within the name, whilst simultaneously harbouring the excess of that name. And i think this is why metaphors which harvest the bodily, in particular, those metaphors of voice and sounds, work so well when thinking through resistance, because when i imagine this tension and try to embody that in the writing i imagine it as an excruciating sound, this constant "agonist" of power and resistance, of those discourses that we have come to be understood as truth and the continual and incessant tortuous sound of the resistance which resides alongside them, a guttural sound, an infernal wrenching. And in Sherman bodies writhe, they contort and twist at their un-boundaries and i imagine, and am embodied, by that as perpetual agonist, as guttural and wrenching and as transformative for the sounds, language in the text though still tapping something of the corporeal enable us to be embodied in other ways. And the irony of it all is that they must remain in this undesirable relationship, embodying this perpetual tension, for as long as we remain thinking through the language of Western metaphysics organised by binary oppositions. For the very foundation of hegemonic discourse, so concerned with truth and stability and normalising selves, is at the same time inherently unstable, for always the normalised voice will be

disrupted by the whisper, the shadow, the haunting of the other voices that its calling forth entails.

Words that leave a mark, a trace, a scald, that suture and enliven, they are the words i work always to bring forth, those that i strain to hear, to harvest, to open up spaces to speak in the text and through my own body, those words that enliven us, that are embodied and embody us, that speak to our corporeal self, that remain after the reading never fully dampened down, never shelved and forgotten, they permeate the text as they permeate our bodies, permeating our selves, they remain like an unable to be relinquished spark, imbibing that resistance that remains a smouldering ember, an anxiety provoking reminder of a pre-empted fiery resurrection. From the decay, the dust, the degradation, see Sherman (figures 27 and 29), we will emerge revived, transformed, on the margin of that normative 'woman', transgressing and transforming those spaces so that we may be other. And if this is all sounding somewhat spiritual, new age enlightenment, this is because it is, as those pioneers of feminism taught us, the personal really is political, and we feel this transformation both literally and in our corporeal being, the embodiment is of a spiritual nature for it fills us, it permeates us and it is transformational. And this is entirely a spiritual process, for it gives us meaning in our lives that connect us to something that orients us, not making us the centre of our own world, dissolved and lost in an artificial 'i', lost in a notion of individuality, but transformed and oriented to something more meaningful, something that allows us to embrace our humanity, as we locate geopolitically in our embodied understandings of self and body, in those spaces on the periphery, and in the negation, of our normalised selves. It is, as Foucault discussed, a process of realising that we must create ourselves anew, outside, on the periphery of that subjectivity given to us in dominant discourse. And we this creation of the self is something akin to the creation of art, of a work in progress, we are working on the self, not from a foundational perspective, but knowing that part of the self is

about the dominant hegemonic representation of subjectivity, but that this is not the foundation but another story, and in this critical thought and engagement with the many selves we experience in our lives there is a transformation, for we are "transformed, individually, collectively", as we think and write in ways that disrupt (hooks, 1990, p. 153).

Speaking the Politics of our most Personal Spaces

As 'woman' our subject position has been that of devalued other, we cannot step outside of this, to take up another cultural, social or historical space, we must remake ourselves on the edge of the voices that oppress, we must use the margin, that space of radical creativity to make spaces within the hegemonic order, within a society perpetuated by oppressive discourses and institutionalised oppression (hooks, 1990). That is the space from which we must speak, wielding whatever tools we have within our armour, including of course our 'corporeal armour', so that we might explicate the resistance that resides already within our bodies (Burton, 2006; Butler, 2001). In Sherman, i read, and am embodied, by the Aging Woman as absolutely immersed by this sense of a corporeal amour, that here we can think bodies differently, we do not have to be that anxious, vulnerable, weak 'woman' of the Film Stills. i am embodied by their appropriation of space, of their wreaking havoc on this space, transforming it, as they wrestle and writhe in bodies whose stories are multiple, fragmented, partial, enriching , and insurgent. i am embodied by this sense of strength, of bodies that matter differently, for now they are enlivened as those spaces of resistance, that corporeal armour. We must bring forth the corporeal through the language we use, harvesting it where possible and embodying the text with our bodily and inherently disruptive voice. The body where hegemonic discourse, perpetuated by relationships of power and assumptions of ontological and epistemological foundations, most effectively and insidiously oppress and control but at the same time providing a similarly perpetual

and pervasive space of resistance. This most intimate space must be wrestled away from its hegemonic ordering as purely objective other, known to us as something to be learnt and brought to recognition only in this form, and as we do so we simultaneously become aware that herein is the necessary grounding for our own self recognition. Here, in Sherman's 'Aging Woman' i read the surface as that space of legitimisation and the transforming of recognisability and of the political necessity of appropriating this space in order to speak differently and to transform those speaking spaces. Space here can be understood as both linguistically and corporeally political. Here the women take up that space of centre stage, a space they must make their own for it is, not under the terms of hegemonic gender discourse, theirs to own, and in each appropriation they defy reading the body within the confines of femininity, that is, as object.

Here in this appropriation of space there is room for transformation, indeed transformation has become "entirely possible", who 'i' can be becomes dislocated from any absolutes, it takes on a fluidity that embodies the intertextuality that is life and which is denied to us as we reproduce ourselves in the dominant subjective discourses (Foucault, 1982, p. 172). That ethereal gap between life and language, that space towards which language may arc, but ultimately which we should never hope nor desire to secure, stabilise, contain nor summarise (Morrison, 1994). The language we use, the crafting, the poetics, the reflection, and the inclusion of the corporeal, all contribute to the ability to arc toward, or harvest, some of this thrust that elicits the life, our lived daily realities, into our writing, allows life to embody the words and in doing so we are embodied in other ways, that aren't contained by the hegemonic voice. Always the writing seeks to tap life, to tap that gap between language and living, and the words we use will necessarily be experiential, be a continual grasping across that gap, a space our bodies simultaneously occupy for they are made in discourse, yet are also of flesh and blood, experienced physically in ways that literally and linguistically leak and seep

at the edges of normative discourses and their prescriptive experiences of specific subjectivities. In Sherman's *Aging Woman* they reside across that gap, and we with them, for they embody that dialogue between language and the corporeal, as they wield their bodies they simultaneously offer up other voices that in their soundless rhythm disrupt and deny the univocal objective body. The pitch fragments, and objectivity becomes a facade and one we no longer wish to, nor can, reiterate in our bodies. As Wilton (1997) noted, the experience of living in a male or a female body is distinctive in terms of the specific physical experiences that each entails and that have come to define them, of course these too are socially interpreted, and our interpretations do not exist outside the language within which we describe and make sense of them, yet they do exist in the corporeal as well as the linguistic realm, they aren't entirely made for us in language and we would experience them even in the absence of our linguistic resources, because our bodies reside across that, all important, experiential gap, containable neither literally nor metaphorically. Which is, i expect, one of the reasons libidinal metaphors work so well at tapping this other of the body, because this excess is the libidinal, both physically and linguistically it is that which seeps and flows unfettered by language and its efforts to contain the body. It is the abhorrent, the abject other, the excess of that normalised in 'woman', and these libidinal metaphors embody that excessive flow that has traditionally been thought of a particular female embodiment, and one perceived in negative ways that devalue the female body. And that have been taken up and used to support, and naturalise, the Cartesian split of rational man and emotional woman, and manifested in the implied need of strict censure and control of the body of 'woman' which i have talked about in relation to menstruation in particular in the section entitled 'Blood Letting - Women and Flow'. In Sherman, woman flows, literally seeps and leaks in the *Detritus Waste* images, a physical outpouring of 'woman', an exorcism that cleanses us of an oppressive evil. i am embodied by this

sense of release, not only in the waste series, but as i read retrospectively, there is a sense of this resistance, even in the Stills, the tension pervades the images and the subtle shifts are evident, as we move towards those spaces of corporeal resistance. And in the Aging Woman there is too a flowing out of bodies, an intertextual weave that embodies me a corporeally armoured and strong, the antithesis of 'woman' for whom the body is to be controlled, requires male protection and is always vulnerable. i cannot read any vulnerability in the Aging Woman, they will not be made to speak that voice, and neither, now, can i. But herein we can spawn an other meaning for the abject body, for this is also wherein resistance lies and as our bodies exceed being made entirely, either linguistically or physically, in our subjective names, they seep forth unfettered by hegemonic discourse, and as they flow through the cracks and crevices transforming our bodies and selves, they unleash a torrent of proliferation and we are embodied as that permeable surface/space we always were, chaotic, unpredictable, unstable, multi-vocal, complex and convoluted, but now we acknowledge and live that proliferation, indeed it is that which gives us life. We have perhaps come to that space Morrison spoke of where we might live a heaven on earth, not as a paradise that we can only achieve post-life, but as that which is permeated by many voices and thus is complicated and demanding, but speaks to our inherent humanity, the life that exists on the periphery of the name, and is thus ultimately fulfilling (Morrison, 1994).

And as i use these libidinal metaphors that embody fluidity, movement, permeability, and proliferation, that speak of and exemplify a state of physical and metaphorical oozing, seeping, flowing, pumping, invigorating, unleashing, and blood-letting, the body is brought forth into the text, enlivening it. We sense even if momentarily, that fleeting recognition of the dialect between body and language and most importantly of the ethereal gap that exists between the two, that the body ultimately inhabits and knows, and which language cannot entirely, but must

always arc towards. And as i read Sherman i am immersed in this corporeal flow, whether it is the Detritus Waste images, the Sex Pictures, the Aging Woman, the dialogue is embodied within, for of course they speak out and through one another, and through me. i can almost feel it, almost taste it, as i am awash in unboundedness, bled into Sherman, interwoven with those others in the community within which i write, i am that weave, there is no boundary between my flesh, the theory and the reading, they overlap and weave into one another. This is the voice of my body oozing through the text and i am enlivened by its corporeal splendor, its perpetual writhing and distorting, its capacity to resist. The infusion of life is being brought forth in the text as it simultaneously speaks out to us, and back through the text in an ongoing linguistic and bodily dialogue, here in the very "measure of our lives" (Morrison, 1994, p. 22). If in the writing i have been able to achieve this dialectic, to bring it forth, to make it speak in various ways, then i will have achieved my purpose, for that gap has been what has driven me on in this work. When i have sensed, in others writing, the life that exists beyond the words, embodied within us, that resists the dominant voice, even when we are not always able to articulate that resistance i am buoyed on, i become part of the flow, i am embodied by the words and enlivened, i am something close to using a language that may well be the measure of my life. This desire, this urgency, this struggle to harvest language that can tap the bodily voice is what keeps me on this journey, what inspires me, always i work on the periphery, this work is done on a precipice, and it must necessarily be so. And i liken it to walking along a very fine wire, a tight-rope, there is a constant feeling that you might topple, and you do continually stumble and have to find your way back, but in the finding you always recover more, an other, for the spaces are continually being probed and re-probed, reflected upon and reconfigured as you continuously and forever 'rewrite the self' (Freeman, 1993). And of course whenever we use language we are, necessarily, inhabiting a perversely unstable space permeated by perpetual and unable to be

fettered movement. Using language is always the equivalent of walking a tight-rope, without a safety net, and it is not until we come to realise this that we begin to glimpse the enormity of our task and what we hope to achieve whilst teetering on the edge of a subjective precipice, and envisioning a world which we must edge towards, whilst retaining our own voice of resistant that is uniquely ours, and without it being co-opted back into the name, or without becoming lost in spaces of wordlessness. This is not to say that silence isn't also political, and there will be times when we use silence to wield our resistant voice, but we should remain vigilant of the 'seductive' language that can silence us, that which Morrison (1994) evokes in a particularly forceful and rousing metaphor:

There will be more seductive, mutant language designed to throttle women, to pack their throats like pate-producing geese with their own unsayable, transgressive words. (p. 17)

Let us not become like those poor creatures force fed on a diet that precedes and ordains our ultimate doom, let us screech blue bloody murder when the seductive language calls to us, heeding us to take up those 'rational' spaces of proper 'womanhood', let us wield our corporeal force and bring forth our bodily voice so that the language we use is necessarily transformative, is entirely political and thus refuses to be distorted and made in the name, but remains instead a perpetual haunting. i am enlivened by the agonistic sounds that i sense emanating from the bodies of the Aging Woman as they interweave with my own body and i am threaded into the text. And as i am my own body too writhes in tortuous wordless revolt against its demise to invisibility, and i am enlivened by my body as this site of struggle and my capacity therein to resist that demise, by my ability to tell my own stories and locate in my own corporeal and subjective spaces. Let us not be severed from our bodies, as dominant discourse slashes off that which undermines its purpose, not completely severing it though, for it certainly will need to be exhumed, so it is left hanging, an appendage, hinged by its connective tissue

but no longer embodied, alienated from us, it becomes that which services. In Sherman, bodies are simultaneously broken down, sutured and left to decay, but they are never completely severed, they are necessarily to buoy up again the dominant discourse. In the *Sex Pictures*, in particular, the alienation from our own sexuality as it is replaced with sexual objectification, and a myriad of prosthetics and parts, is overwhelmingly pervasive. As Barthes (1982) noted in relation to myths distortion of the literal and the transformation of that linguistic meaning to something entirely unconnected, but given validity by the body, in relation to nature and essential selves:

But this distortion is not an obliteration: the lion and the Negro remain here, the concept needs them; they are half-amputated, they are deprived of memory, not of existence: they are at once stubborn, silently rooted there, and garrulous, a speech wholly at the service of the concept. The concept, literally, deforms but does not abolish the meaning; a word can perfectly render this contradiction: it alienates it. (p. 109)

Speaking in Silence

As for Barthes, the figure of excess, the "joker" (as in a deck of cards, that which doesn't fit, that disrupts the homogeneity, that which does not fit the matrix of recognisability, that does not have a preordained place), is silent, because to speak is to name oneself, and to invoke the name invokes the discourse surrounding that name. In Sherman the clowns, the *Sex Pictures* and the *Aging Woman* are like Barthes joker, they are that parody which in the performance speaks a truth that we must hear. For the parody draws us in, it is recognisable yet ridiculous, and then in that space of mirthless laughter as we join in the ridicule, we realise that what we laugh at is our self, our own demise in 'woman', and the laughter is abruptly sutured, and therein we resist once again. Barthes did not speak of his own sexuality for to do so would have ushered forth unintended meanings as the violent tendency of Western metaphysical language to assert,

delineate and hold would have been invoked. To not invoke the name, or the doxa, was to leave open that space to be more, to allow it to proliferate through the text, a kind of soundless reverberation that does not close down that meaning, that does not enforce an arbitrary boundary. Silence, in this case then, is entirely political, for it is silence taken up and used purposively, and in its being it denies the shutting down of subjectivity, we do not live in a name, or in a series of names, we live within and on the edge of those names, and that edge is that which we must strive to keep enlivened in ourselves and in the text. In Sherman i am embodied by this periphery, here we are not 'woman' or abject, but both, the simultaneous forming of us as both in our hegemonic naming, is here enlivened in Sherman. The name fails to speak its universal truth, it must immerse with other possibilities to be, other selves and bodies. The abject and the normative weave into one another and as i read i am simultaneously weaving my stories from those fragments of my self and body.

Scheie (2000) notes that the space where Barthes figure of excess "can at last speak without becoming mired in the repetition of the doxa, remains a tantalizing vision ... whose realization lies on the far side of a still unforeseeable epistemological rift" (p. 181). Yet i believe this excess may well have been the body. For in Barthes (1995) later work he clearly identified it as having a disruptive capacity when breathed through the text, to be unable to be summarised in any adequate way, something the he struggled with always in his writing and in relation to languages inherent enforcing properties. The body was for Barthes that "mana word" and that which is "never pigeonholed" (p. 129). In Barthes work the disruptive voice is a continual reverberation that shudders through the text, shaking and disrupting and transforming, and as it disrupts the text and haunts the hegemonic order, our ontological and epistemological understandings are transformed, and along with them, ourselves. It is similar to hooks (1990) understanding of bringing the "black vernacular" voice into her work,

that which is usually preserved for interacting with family and friends (p. 147). i would suggest that these other voices necessarily bring forth the body in different ways, outside the dominant hegemonic ordering of the body, for they are voices from the margins, on the excesses of the normative self and therefore the bodily space too is other. These voices are resistant, they call forth remembering, they bring forth memories of struggle and oppression, of subjugated selves weighed down by normative subjectivities that seek to make them nonsensical untruths, and of the struggle to enliven our bodies with that peripheral voice, to find that space to tell those other stories (hooks, 1990, p. 147). Allen (2003) discusses the resistant and disruptive voice in relation to Barthes, 'Camera Lucida' when he says:

This is a text written from Barthes own body and, perhaps of all his numerous works, expresses most vividly and profoundly the unmistakable grain of his uniquely rebellious voice. (p. 132)

A voice that surely with each and every breath was punctuated with the refusal to invoke the name, a refusal to bring down fully the weight that the name necessarily ushers forth, a refusal to be encapsulated within that nominal and constrained space. Like the body of La Zambinella in Balzac's, 'Sarazine', when we reside in bodies that will not be named, for they cannot be so within language, those that exist outside the matrix of gender as unrecognisable (Wilchins, 1995). Or when we become that unrecognisable body for we refuse to be made in the name, then we become that which proliferates ceaselessly, that which cannot be stilled with arbitrary origins, our bodies are the simulacrum, 'woman' is the simulacrum and now we no longer conceal the truth behind an ideology, "the truth ... conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true" (Ecclesiastes, as cited in Baudrillard, 2001, p. 169). The truth is the copy, for the copy refutes an origin, it has nothing to conceal, it is entirely surface. Sherman's women are the simulacrum, they are ceaseless and perpetual copies and they do speak an essence.

We find therein no foundation for which an essence may live, there is no author, we cannot find Sherman, and nature recedes as the surface gives rise to its own complex 'depth'. We must embody ourselves as that ceaseless copy with no inherent foundation, the signifier unleashed and proliferating, we have become that which resides entirely at the surface. And if we unpack the layers of our self we will find only copy upon copy, we will not find essential 'woman', for the name is merely a way to make the copies stabilise, in an artificial stultification of movement.

As in Sherman's work, there is no original 'woman' to be found, all is a copy and all is surface, there is no origin, no original, all is myth, all is facade, we must look back to the surface to find our own truths and they will be many and varied, and entirely complex. The surface is best understood as entailing multiple folds so that there is depth but it is not a depth implied by a hard foundation, or essential and natural self, rather it is a dialectical depth, a relational depth, a reflectional depth. It is, I expect, the very depth one discovers and enlivens when one embarks on an ethics of the self, for when we no longer recognise ourselves in the essence of 'woman' or femininity we are necessarily on a journey, one that I have previously described as equivalent to 'leaving home' without a map, a marker, or any certainty of the path ahead (Foucault, 1985). And it is through this journey we will seek out an understanding of our selves, those many and varied strands that interweave to make up our experiences of our lives, our selves, and our bodies, that are fluid and continually in a state of flux.

As Barthes (1986) said in relation to our obsession with truth and naming, with that fear that we may slip the hegemonic noose:

what society will not tolerate is that I should be ... nothing, or, more precisely, that the something I am should be openly expressed as provisional, revocable, insignificant, inessential, in a

word irrelevant. Just say 'I am', and you will be socially saved.
(pp. 291-2)

So our greatest act of rebellion is to refuse to be any thing, to remain on the edge of the name, to take up that space of perpetual and continual tension through language and our bodies. i am embodied as i read Sherman by the sense that i am unnameable, unable to be named, and that is my salvation. To be intolerable is to be saved, for the name must relinquish its hold as its ugly 'truths' are revealed as ideological facade, and the bindings now seen in their artifice, disintegrate for they have no foundation to secure them. As i read Sherman i do not wish social salvation, the salvation i seek is in no longer being able to proclaim that 'I am'. And thus in the recognition too that if i cannot answer this of myself, i cannot expect it of another, and so in this space of unknowing i let both the other, and others, live (Butler, 2001).

Unleashing our Corporeal Armour, the Struggle to Resist

Always there is a struggle to retain our voice, to bring forth the resistance that is housed in our bodies, and that we must flesh out in the language we use. This is literally 'theory in the flesh', as we labour through our corporeal selves, ensuring that, in Sampson's (1998) words, "we need to be certain that our transformative practices are themselves as embodied as are the oppressions we hope to undo" (p. 50; Moraga, as cited in de Lauretis, 1990). And thus our bodies are freed from the weight of oppression as the text is simultaneously embodied with our corporeal, and inherently resistant, voice. And it is a labour of corporeal and linguistic proportions, for we are pushing at boundaries, we are balancing on peripheries, we are making spaces in discursively hostile environments whilst always having an awareness of the implications of our actions, for whenever we resist there will necessarily also be a related surge of power that seeks to diminish and weaken our resistance. It is the dialectical relationship between

power and knowledge that ensures each is a continual and constant agonist to the other, and of which we must remain perpetually aware. So always there is the threat of recapture and of being reproduced again in the image of the recognisable and normal self. Our goal is transformation of self and body and this will necessarily be a laborious struggle for we have reproduced ourselves in ways that are specific and recognisable and are given to us in the dominant hegemonic discourse, now we must negate these truths of the self and body so that we can free the body to be enlivened by its libidinal flow which is integral to understanding it as resistant, and the simultaneous flow of language.

For the literal flow of the body, its physical out pouring, is a metaphor for the unlimited signification of language and the denial that the sign can contain by virtue of a name (Derrida, 1998). We are in the process of transformation, seeking to connect with our bodies in ways that mould them proportionately other, for what we wish to embody is the permeability of our bodies as we deny them as nominal and bounded. As that which is simply seen "not simply as a bounded, 'there', 'in us' but something which resonates socially" (Plummer, 1995, p. 156). The body is unbounded, it has no inscribed demarcation lines, and those we infer are arbitrary, and materialised in hegemonic discourse (Spivak, 1989). Though this does not deny the use of the inscription metaphor, for this is useful if we think of the process of inscription as occurring upon a permeable surface (the body), which enables us to think through this process using this metaphor, without at the same time, reproducing a bound-in, object, body. In Sherman's *Aging Woman* the body flows out from these unbounded spaces as woman reconfigures how to be in bodies that no longer can be named, other than to exit the frame and take up spaces of invisibility. These women do not vacate the spotlight and in doing so, renegotiate who can be seen and how. They rewrite the narrative of 'woman' and the ending becomes all, woman, it is our own, and now we rewrite in other ways. As i understand inscription in this process, it is about specific and contradictory,

and/or complementary, narratives of the body, each one partial and incomplete for none can necessarily reproduce the body in the telling as a completely bound narrative, safeguarded against the threat of an other telling, and as these multiple threads weave together they inform, in multiple ways, our subjective and bodily experiences. The body is, perhaps, that which in "taking up the space of all signifiers" is, and will be, the sign's ultimate undoing. As Barthes (1982b) noted we must in our resistance of hegemonic names, concentrate on the sign for that is the means by which movement is arbitrarily checked, the name is that which seeks to stem the flow, for the flow threatens to disrupt and reveal, to bring to the surface the inessential 'truth' that all is simulacrum, all is a copy with no origin (Baudrillard, 2001). And if we were to seek a foundation we would find only human, wielding his language, located in specific relations of power and knowledge, as he purports these as objective and as capable of espousing 'truth' through a continual oscillation with nature and concepts of normality. The body is inherently libidinal, both physically and linguistically, and exists in a series of ebbs and flows unfettered by language and discourse on the edge of the name, uncontained by notions of objectivity or 'woman'. Yet it is partially shut down by perceived understandings of normalisation which seek to contain the body and self and to stem the libidinal flow, be that linguistic or physical. We must struggle always to retain our voice, and this will necessarily come through in multiple ways, for resistance, like power, is a network, a capillary-like spreading out of multiple points of insurrection (Foucault, 1982).

i desire to speak across that gap, embodying some of what it means to live in and inhabit our bodies, and bringing that forth to transform the writing as it simultaneously transforms my self and body, of who and how i might experience myself. It is, said Barthes (1982), not a comfortable space, and once we shift to this altered perspective there is no way back for our ontological vantage point has changed and what was once 'normal' and familiar is now stripped of its ideological

splendour and it is shows itself as strange, ugly and violent (du Bois, 1920; Foucault, 1982). Perhaps Sherman's early works which depicted young women looking nervously out of the frame, to something supposedly menacing outside the viewer's vision, were facing not only the unseen threatening stranger in its physical form but the even more menacing metaphorical version, that pre-emption of the future of 'woman', were they perhaps contemplating that "... shameful blot on the image of [their] our youth" (Gergen, 2000). Our fear, then, should perhaps not be the menace of the unknown male stranger, but of language that distributes unevenly the spoils of subjectivity, so that the greater share of the metaphorical gold falls the way of those given the status of man, associated with the mind and rational thought and behaviour, and the remnants of lesser worth, the fools gold, is scattered mercilessly at the feet of 'woman', who take up the space of the body, associated with emotion, and simultaneously the position of non-knower. And as we stoop to retrieve a subjectivity that insists on rendering us devalued, and seeks to stifle our ability to take up political agency we should well be wary of the menace that is language organised into discourse and fed to us as truth. As before, we must be wary not to consume the fodder of our very decay. We must struggle instead with language, creating and crafting, denying its violence, thwarting its closure, and probing ways to allow the unsayable to be said, bringing forth our transgressions, and in that process opening up spaces to speak differently. We must resist being force fed language and instead pick and choose carefully what we consume and how we reconstitute it. And we should never forget that language is absolutely vital in our transformation, it is the means through which we will probe open those subtle crevices of newly borne resistance, it is our way out of oppression, there is no other. As Morrison (1994) has said, it is that which sets us apart from other beings, and our ability to use it, responsibly or otherwise, is likely the measure of our lives. We must continue to struggle in language to recover ourselves so that we don't suffer the same fate as the pate producing

geese, forced to consume that which will bring about our demise (Morrison, 1994). Was this the horror reflected in the eyes of the young women in Sherman's Film Stills, a glimpsing of the trajectory of 'woman' and the resultant anxiety prevailing from that momentarily glimpsed future. And we must insist, and with urgency, to meet this threat head on, wielding all our corporeal armour, using language creatively in ways that transform our understanding and experience of self, and alter the normative trajectory of our lives.

Wielding our Corporeal Armour to Make us Whole Again

We see in the Aging Woman the transformation that was echoed along the way. Unlike the Film Stills here there is no sense of an unseen threat, be that in the proposed trajectory of 'woman', or the unknown male stranger lurking in the shadows. Here the perception of threat - male or otherwise - is no longer prevalent, indeed these women seem to now elicit something of a threat themselves, looming large in the frame, wielding their corporeal armour (Burton, 2006). They do not cower to the weight of impending structures, neither concrete nor linguistic. Gone are the looming concrete buildings and stairwells so prevalent in the earlier Film Stills, here they recede into the background, and as they do so too there is a sense that with them hegemonic language which seeks to contain and close down movement recedes also, for these women are no longer made in the name 'woman', they seep and flow outside those boundaries, distorting and diffusing their singular and stable voice. In taking up their space front, centre, and entirely surface, these women throw aside the shackles of dominant discourse as they distort its 'natural' trajectory and so doing make 'woman' appear a strange construction, as they speak from their space in the margin, and necessarily transform the centre. They speak on those borders and thus transform the boundaries of legitimate speech, of who can speak and how (Butler, 1997). And by appropriating this in-appropriate space the Aging Women speak on the edge of the

sayable they open up and transform that edge. And in the process we are able to embody and experience ourselves in ways that exist on the edge of the name, as we harvest those moments and mine those subtle shifts which transform what is able to be said, by whom and how. They push at the boundaries of nature and normality, of speaking places within and outside the dominant order, and in doing so transform those boundaries, weakening their hold on absolute truth and with it the relationship of knowledge and power. For if what counts as knowledge is transformed then who can know and tell the stories of others is similarly transformed and along with it subjectivity.

As women perhaps our most urgent calling is to take up the position of narrator of our own lives, to struggle against the dominant voice that seeks to tell our stories to us in specific ways located within particular understandings of knowledge and knowledge acquisition. We must take up those spaces of experientiality, of marginality, of resistance, and begin to re-inscribe the stories of our selves, including the story of our bodies, for the objective other that is the Westernised body given to us through science and psychology is never fully encapsulated within our own bodies, it certainly is a part of our corporeal experience and is inscribed upon us, but it is not the full story, and bodies continually and persistently resist being made entirely in their subjective names. So as we retell our stories located in our specific, historical and cultural vantage points we will necessarily bring through the other fragments that weave together our bodies and selves, those we experience everyday in multiple and varied ways. For the body and self are not distinct entities which must be severed in order to know, they exist not as two separate parts of an arbitrary split even if that understanding has become "sedimented", not to mention embodied, over time. Though of course this embodiment brings with it a most serious consequence, certain death, for it is the mind severed from the body and as Morgan (2004) notes, to think this through

physically presents a most heinous image and yet we have metaphorically embodied this decapitation.

Meeting the Threat Head On

The threat of annihilation is real, our bodies are literally destroyed by history, but this destruction is that upon which the illusion of wholeness rests and papers over. For the body of 'woman', surely is that which Foucault spoke of, laid to waste by discourse and history, which we see graphically in some of Sherman's images, as in figure 27, where 'woman' is literally ground into the dust, or wasted in sexual objectification, as in figure 28. A destruction that serves to perpetuate an illusion, to convince us that this body, given back to us as objective other, is whole, is a unity, is natural and is the grounds upon which we should experience our own bodies. That severed and split body, dissected and made useful and efficient by virtue of its specific parts, primarily in terms of reproduction and sexual objectification, is then available to be inserted into the machinery of production, to become a commodity, to become a means to control most effectively and most insidiously the bodies of women. The body carved into obscurity, made to speak its own demise, and in the speaking to be that commodity resonates with Sherman's Sex Picture series, see figure 28. And as we take up and reproduce the object body, adopting this illusion of substantial unity, we are reproducing the trajectory of 'women'. At a certain age, when we are past anything corporeally useful and when we are no longer able to enliven the object body in our sexuality (commodity) or reproduction (economy), past reproduction and post commodification, then we must necessarily accept our in-spectacular space of invisibility and sever pretty much our entire relationship with our bodies. Certainly we are discouraged from experiencing them as joyful or desirable, even if for the most part that desire has been organised around heterosexual, and therefore primarily male, notions of desire. In the Aging Woman there is space to

be that desirable woman again, but this time reconfigured from our own corporeal and experiential spaces of what counts as desire. And therefore we come even more removed from our own bodies, further alienated from the experiential body which resides at the edge of normative corporeality. As previously discussed, perhaps the young women in the *Film Stills*, examining their reflection in the mirrors, peering anxiously beyond the boundary of the frame were envisioning this 'natural' trajectory and the dawning of their perceived future as 'woman'. Had it dawned on them that any pleasure elicited from inhabiting the subjective space of 'woman', no matter how darkly ironic that might be, was fleeting and time-limited? It surely doesn't seem such a great leap to imagine that the sense of anxiety that pervades these images could well have been in relation to this future 'demise', this impending threat embodied within the very terms of the name.

Yet, in the later series, there is a marked subjective shift. It is difficult to read these women as vulnerable, the sense that there is something looming over, or eclipsing them is gone and instead there is confrontation rather than submission, as they look directly at the space from which the image must be taken, the space of the unseen observer. And rather than an internalisation of that gaze, there is resistance, a challenge that defies being made and stabilised in a name, that denies essential selves and ideological foundations and that embodies resistance. There is certainly none of the anxiety that pervaded the *Film Stills* and *Centerfolds*, and perhaps this comes from the realisation that her (and our) body and self can no longer be made to fit the ideology of the objective female body, without us fading into obscurity, and that in order to avoid the fate of 'woman' we must transform this space, which perhaps offers a kind of awakening. As we throw aside the weight of dominant discourse and the 'security' and familiarity of those normalised notions of self, we are free to take up other spaces, those that exist on the margin and within us as our subjugated selves. When i say free, i do not mean to imply absolute and unconstrained freedom, a kind of utopian ideal,

rather i understand this freedom as the opening up of space on the edge of the normalised self, space that allows us to experience ourselves in other ways that the name denies or inhibits. It is not freedom without responsibility or without struggle for always we will struggle against the imposition of the name, even when we no longer believe or embody its truth claims and our reality is life within a society organised in relation to discourse and ontological understandings of truth and reality. The freedom i envision is always that which is sought and fought against this backdrop of struggle and resistance. Here in the 'Aging Woman' series i read, from my own located subjectivity, an opening up of spaces to explore our corporeality in ways that aren't offered by dominant understandings of the body, to take up spaces of aggressive corporeality, to speak and wield the sound of our bodies. It will necessarily be experimental and exploratory, for as Haraway (1991) noted the struggle is to think and speak of bodies in ways that haven't been spoken and thought before, and that, consequently, are not part of the reproduction of recognisable bodies, but that we must flesh out in order to transform what can be a recognisable body, and in that process transform the experience of living in our own bodies.

And of course this speaking and thinking which occurs on the margin disrupts the centre, and it is that which the dominant order would want to negate. They are those "Sounds and scenes which cannot be appropriated [and] are often that sign everyone questions, wants to erase, to "wipe out" (hooks, 1990, p. 147). And the bodily voice is this disruptive other, it is inherently resistant for it straddles the boundary between the experiential and physical, and the linguistic, and in each thrust forth, with each corporeal murmur, it distorts and denies the hegemonic order its absolute authority, its nominal claims of a stable and unchanging truth.

Reading on the Margin and Transforming that Edge

We should not, or at least i no longer, read in the *Aging Woman* series this struggle, or even desire, to hold onto lost youth, though of course this is one, and possibly an easy reading from a hegemonic space. i am embodied by their critical space on the margin of 'woman' and thus would doubt whether they, or i, would desire to be ideologically centred again. Prior to engaging with these images as a means of writing up this analysis, and understanding them retrospectively, they were all too easily able to be read within this normative framework. It is the interpellation to be made in the name, seeking us out by virtue of familiar and recognisable cues, that initiates such a reading. There are always, of course, multiple other ways in which to read, but until we reside in a critical space, until we are positioned to read in this way, the dominant voice booms most loudly and persistently and in its reverberation we can easily reduce these 'Aging Woman' back into the derogatory 'mutton-dressed-as-lamb'. It is not, i suggest, until they are contextualised within the greater Sherman body of work that they can be read as resistance. Though these images might initially suggest a failed femininity, a desperate grasping at an objective ideal that is past, that too is their resistance, for if they follow the 'natural' trajectory of 'woman', of 'successful' femininity, they would be positioned somewhere near the perimeter of the frame, maybe standing with a grown up daughter, or a husband but not on their own centre stage, wielding their corporeal aggression. Instead they are making a spectacle of them selves, the self in the spotlight, not conforming, unfamiliar, provocative, opening up spaces to see differently, they are that ultimate threat to femininity, not to mention, masculinity - loud, aggressive and unwieldy women (Gergen, 2000). The male in the shadows recedes even further into his hiding place, his eyes stare fixedly in terror, as he perceives this unwieldiness, senses the reverberation of it into his very self. When we read the 'Aging Woman' images in relation to the dominant gender discourses, it is akin to reading the Film Stills

and Centerfolds as entirely about the objective female body, about the stereotype of youth and beauty, and a commentary on the male gaze, and the internalisation of that. This is one reading, and it certainly is part of the narrative of gender and of the experience and mechanism by which gender oppression manifests it self in our daily lives. However, when we stop there the reading is thwarted by the weight of hegemonic gender discourse, it is seized and captured by it, and made to speak its terms, its agenda, for when we read in this way we are reading through the binaries of self and other, and not from that radical space of critique on the margin of what is currently able to be said and understood as knowledge (hooks, 1990; Burton, 2006).

As the Aging Women take up and use all the aesthetic 'tools' of femininity there is not the same result, they do not bring forth any pleasure and the viewer, i would suggest, gains little pleasure in the viewing. The ideal of aesthetic beauty prevalent in the Stills is absent in this series and the makeup, hair and clothing suggest masquerade rather than beauty. This, in turn, speaks back to the earlier works bringing forth the facade and artificiality that pervades those images too, but is more easily reproduced as natural femininity. And this failure to make us at a certain age, either objective ideal or the anti-spectacle, ushers forth the failure of the name to make us entirely, absolutely, and nominally. This is not a reiteration of our making as normal 'woman' but rather a spawning of that revolution, for here we exist, we remain, full frontal, centre stage, and effusively artificial. We refuse to vacate that space even when we no longer get the perverse 'pleasure' of the male gaze, but perhaps now we get something more pleasurable, that gaze transformed from one of lewdness to one of horror as the male gaze locates its most persistent fear, the female body unwieldy, pushing at the boundaries of 'normality' and transforming perforating those boundaries so that our corporeality, our subjectivity seeps and flows and discolours and dilutes the binaries that insist on us being either/or. Just as in the art of Rothko, where

the boundaries of the bands of colour in the painting bleed into one another, diffusing the primary colours on the canvas, distorting their absolute authority to name themselves as stable and nominal, for at their edges they diffuse and distort, and the name necessarily permeates into other names, into variants of the main colours and in the process the bleeding is like a fraying, the colours are fragmented and their harsh boundaries of beginning and end are submerged in the fray giving rise to multiple possibilities. The woman here defies a traditional reading, and I agree with Burton, particularly in relation to the latter work, though also reflected in the former, that when read from a bodily perspective, these images imbue a kind of corporeal aggression, they certainly are not to be read as passive, nor as collapsing into the sexually objectified body, and subsequently "consumed/undone/dissolved" (Burton, 2006, p. 207). The expectation for these women is, of course, dissolution but they will have none of it. Like Gergen (2000), they are prepared to risk the social stigma of making a spectacle out of oneself, for surely within the spectacular there is a space from which to transform ourselves, a parody that is like a feminine hyperbole, an exaggeration of something so that its inconsistency, its tension, are brought forth and in that space there is a dialogic opening, that allows an infusion of otherness, of the excess that we bring forth when we take up the name 'woman', but that is simultaneously denied in that production. Here then is another production that screams 'woman' in all its artificiality and facade, that brings forth the entirety of surface and denies any reading of depth for the ideology does not succeed, myth fails to make of the surface an essential depth. We are thus made uncomfortable again, as is the effect in spectacle and this discomfort is the presence of the writerly text, and we experience the shattered subjectivity that it invokes as it writhes against the name (Barthes, 1975). And like the Sex Pictures and the Detritus Waste images, we might laugh the mirthless laugh, or look away, but we cannot evade the suture of the image, the mark that it leaves is distinctly corporeal, as we too embody the

writhing, and the shattering of the hegemonic self. We are caught within the spectacle of the 'Aging Woman' as it ushers forth the narrative of 'woman', bodies saturated with sexuality, bodies made objective and denied as part of our experience of self, bodies located in the realm of power and knowledge and given back to us in a specific and universal form, and as it ushers forth this story of the body of 'woman' we are released from its universality, its nominal-ism, and we see from that "radical creative space" on the margin, that place of transformation and reconfiguration, of fluidity and multiplicity. The transformation is the opening up of subjectivity as a permeable fluid space, it is the space of the "the living, loving, suffering, dying human being" that science has no space to give voice (Freeman, 1997, p. 171). At the epoch when we realised that 'man' was both subject and object of knowledge there was an opportunity to embrace this, to become the human beings we might have been capable of becoming, but instead man chose to make himself centre-stage, both in the table and as constructor of that table (Foucault, 1966).

Like the body of the Black slave, marked by beatings, these women's bodies tell a story of a legacy of oppression, yet these bodies remain centre stage and spectacular in their armory (Burton, 2006). Just as the slave, William Grimes, laments the markings on his skin as making him unable to complete his proposed legacy, the bodies of these older women are similarly not an appropriate canvas' to write the story of femininity, at least not in the ways they once were, for they too have been irrecoverably damaged by the weight of that discourse.

If it were not for the stripes on my back which were made while I was a slave, I would in my will, leave my skin a legacy to the government, desiring that it might be taken off and made into parchment, and then bind the constitution of glorious happy and free America. Let the skin of an American slave bind the charter of American Liberty. (Putzi, 2002, p. 187)

Here, as in the *Aging Woman* series, the body is made spectacle, but in doing so that body must first be known as spectacle, the masquerade must surely be over before the spectacle can begin (Putzi, 2002). Just as, in order to come to voice and to speak on the edge of hegemonic discourse, the Black slaves must have already taken up ownership of their bodies in ways that existed outside the confines of dominant hegemony, both literally in their freedom, and perhaps more importantly, discursively, taking responsibility for knowing their own bodies, for locating them as experiential and denying the hegemonic order the power to tell their stories back to them, where their only subject position which gives them recognisability within that narratives is as other, be that victim, exotic other, or joker. Instead there is a struggle to come to voice on the edge of all those subjective binaries, to reclaim our bodies and selves in our language, in talk and text. So that the stories we tell are transformed as they bring forth the corporeal, that through which we are embodied and through which we embody ourselves in that dialogic relationship with language. And similarly any transformation for women will be a similar struggle to interrupt languages enforcing properties, and to wrestle from it an other subjectivity which does not close down a latch (Morrison, 1994). But instead allows the self to be that permeable space that is both corporeal and discursive and is the "living, loving, suffering, dying human being" Freeman (1997) spoke of, that which science left behind, or more precisely simply could not accommodate, and which we now struggle to enliven in our words and through our bodies as we take up those counter-narratives of self (p. 171).

And here the women spectacularly, aggressively and corporeally inhabit a space which they should respectably have already vacated, and thus they bring forth the tension and the facade that exists within the name as they wrestle against and resist its normalising tendencies. And as the name and the narrative upon which it depends are illuminated at the surface, in the parody and performance that is

unabashedly surface, myth is denied its distorting revulsion, and the literal is allowed to become that dialogic space which is both the space of oppression, and simultaneously that where resistance resides and where subjectivity is opened up and transformed. We have come to the place of epistemological wilderness from where we can seek out other selves, those that aren't made in binaries and denoted solely by difference (Butler, 1993). But that instead reach out in their multiplicity, and as they do so we can imagine a knitting back together of the sinews, tissues and fibres of our bodies, as we are embodied by the fluidity, the libidinal flow, the very corporeality of our bodies. And at last we may be able to hear more fully that "whisper of shared breath", that is perpetuated, indeed is the "necessary response to injurious language" (Morgan, 2005, p. 369; Butler, 1997, p. 163).

The Aging Woman, like the Clowns, are a mask, a masquerade, and whereas in the Film Stills this easily collapsed into notions of natural and essential femininity, that clearly doesn't have the same effect when the women are of a certain age. And what happens when nature is no longer available to fill the gaps in the narrative of gender, when 'woman' refuses to become the anti-spectacle and remains in the spotlight, unashamedly artificial and embodying that surface? Femininity then must show itself for what it is, a facade, a glittering husk, a depthless surface, an entirely storied ideal and one that has failed women. For it bequeaths us only places of oppression and invisibility. This resonates with Gergen (2000), who notes that for women, post production and sexual objectification, their place is to learn to live as "antispectacle" (p. 96). We should take up our proper places in life, somebody's mother, somebody's wife, somebody's daughter, these are the spaces in which to become the recognisable older 'woman'. And what I read in Sherman's work is the equivalent of these women coming to this point in their lives, where the myth of femininity has become like an old pair of trainers, full of holes, uncomfortable to wear, and no longer providing any support. Just as

we might have some attachment to our old shoes in a nostalgic kind of way, as we remember how they once seemed to fit so well, we realise that their time has come and we must relinquish them. We can and should, of course, keep them as a souvenir, for it is worth remembering how easily they encased us, how easily they slipped on, and later as we grew how uncomfortable and harsh they became, how conforming they were as we struggled to make them fit knowing all the time that we had long outgrown them. When i read Sherman's 'Aging Woman', i now in my located and subjective space, see resistance seething at the surface, corporeal resistance, these women are the equivalent of a middle finger protruded in the air, like Basquiat's SAMO (Same Old Shit), they defy that corporeal and subjective space that they should respectably take up, and instead remain here transforming the surface, transforming subjectivity and bodies. Perhaps their calling card might read BS (bullshit) rather than SAMO, which may well be their response to the presumption that they should take up their space of anti-spectacle and recede into the background of the image!

These images are entirely about the political use of space, the women will not and do not vacate it, they remain transforming it, in the centre of the image, on the surface, they deny the name its normality and truth for they disrupt the 'natural' trajectory of 'woman'. I find as i read resistance in these women, a feeling of exhilaration, i am embodied by this corporeal force, of bodies speaking in other ways outside objectification. I am enlivened and nurtured by their bravery, they will not reside in the name, they stay and resist, and in the resistance they transgress their, and our, corporeal and subjective spaces. "Space is political" and "we must learn to see" (hooks, 1995, p. 65), those are two lessons from hooks that are embodied in Sherman's work and we must learn to see at the surface rather than being duped by a farcical depth. Like the images from Tseng Kwong Chi, we must learn to see them for what they are at the surface, which is where both the hegemonic normative resides and tells its story, and where subjugated voices vie

for speaking rights. For the surface denies the depth upon which hegemony founders, and its force is thus diluted here and its truth claims falter. At the surface we must learn to see all the inconsistency and the tension, that embodies it, for example, the image of an Asian man standing by the Statue of Liberty attired in the uniform of the Chinese government, which is the image presented in Kwong Chi's work entitled, 'New York, New York'. His body is that corporeal and discursive space where the weight of history is brought to bear, both the hegemonic and the subjugated narratives of self reside on the surface and it is available to read in its multiplicity, for it ushers forth multiple voices, multiple narratives of self and body. Like Sherman these works provoke, for as in her images, they aren't easily collapsed into categories of normative selves, they remain at the surface, antagonising hegemonic notions of truth and stability. They are provocative and haunting, they remain in our consciousness long after the viewing, unable to be easily recognised and, therefore, cognitively shelved away. They remain vivid, enlivened, ambiguous, transforming space, using space politically to challenge existing notions of who can be, and how they can be, and to transform those subjective spaces. "All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave", those on the margin, those that resist being named, those that struggle against the hegemonic force of the dominant narrative, those that leave home never to return, or to return but never again to find comfort in that nominal place. All those who have come to take up spaces on the edge, on the margin, are like the old woman in Morrison's (1994) narrative, they live on the edge of recognisability, of respectability, on the margin:

Tell us what it is to be a woman so that we may know what it is to be a man. What moves at the margin. What it is to have no home in this place. To be set adrift from the one you knew. What it is to live at the edge of towns that cannot bear your company. (p. 28)

And though an outcast the old woman is an integral part of the relationship between margin and centre, for she is that continual tension, her residence on the edge antagonises the name. It is distorted because she is both the normative self and its transgression. As hooks (2000) noted the work of revolution will come from those who have this understanding of both centre and margin, who understand their own embodiment in this dialectic, that we are that recognisable self and its transgression:

Although feminist theorists are aware of the need to develop ideas and analysis that encompass a larger number of experiences that serve to unify rather than to polarize, such theory is complex and slow in formation. At its most visionary it will emerge from individuals who have knowledge of both the margin and the center. (p. pxvii)

Like the old, blind woman in the story, and hooks own maternal grandmother, we must learn to see, we must learn to read the surface without filling in a farcical depth which constrains and conforms us, and in that reading and seeing transform our selves.

The surface is where everything is played out, where all those discourses come together, intermingle, and reconfigure who we can be, and how we can be. The surface of the image, the text, our bodies, each of these are political spaces where hegemony asserts its violent interpellation, and where that calling ushers forth other voices, those that reside on the margin of the normative, those subjugated narratives of self (Butler, 1997). In Sherman's 'Aging Woman' series as i read resistance i am embodied by a feeling of exhilaration, enlivenment, as these women take centre stage and wield their corporeal weight, there is a feel that this is something monumental, that this is a revolution, we usher forth that self that most revolts Western ontological discourse, that which most revolts patriarchal man, the abject that exists within, to bring that forth to transform the normative. And for me, that is what defines all of Sherman's work. i

understand it primarily as a narrative of normality and the excess of that, the periphery, the border that is infused with both centre and margin, but is made to speak in the name as clearly defined and pure boundaries. We are initially drawn into the work because we recognise the images, they are familiar, comfortable, and we understand the viability, the legitimacy, of the subject positions offered, in the earlier works. We recognise ourselves in the images. However, then the story starts to unravel, the normative begins to become skewed as the women literally become distorted in various ways. And as we read retrospectively in light of the later images we begin to see the distortion, the abjection already there, preordained in the earlier works. And the trajectory of 'woman', and of women's bodies becomes that which we should fear, not a specific male threat, not the stranger lurking in the shadows, but a far more sinister strange-r, for it is one which we don't find strange at all. Until, of course, we begin to unravel what it means to be normal and how that normality is enforced and constrains other understandings of selves and bodies (Butler, 1993). Sherman's work echoes in many instances Foucault's (1982) writing on language, knowledge and power, i read in her a sustained effort to make the familiar appear strange, so that what was strange and threatening becomes nurturing, life-giving, and what was once familiar becomes opaque in its ideology, in its human intent, in its apportionment of privilege.

Destiny Calling ... No One Home

Our fate as 'woman', of objective obscurity, is neither destiny nor inevitability, and here in the *Aging Woman* we see the transformation of the normative trajectory as the aging women remain in the spotlight, and in doing so cast an illuminatory glow over the shadows, for they, and we, are that shadow now outed. Though the fate of 'woman' is written into gender discourse, as part of a supposed natural destiny, which we take up as we reproduce ourselves as 'woman' this is not an

inevitability, for there is always resistance, and 'woman' has never been able to hold us completely or consistently, always there is a tension, a struggle between that which the name confers upon us and that which exceeds it and exists outside, on the boundaries of that name. The presently unknowable or unsayable is an excess and though the time may not yet be right to fully invoke this voice of excess, it remains a tension, a 'yet to be realised' space on the margin. This is the space from which we derive the means to carry on in our struggle to be more than 'woman', it is the space that nurtures, feeds and enlivens us. What is unknowable or unsayable must still be said and known, for it is the transformation of the knowable and sayable by its excess, by that which it brings forth in each utterance only to simultaneously try to conceal, as in myth. We must enliven the "misbirth" in the name, at the surface, for that is the transformation of the name (du Bois, 1920, p. 23). i am transformed as i take up those other spaces on the edge of the name, those other selves that exist as part of my subjective experience but are denied in the name, are denied by a belief in essential selves and universal and stable truths. Like hooks (1990) it is about working to bring forth the multiple voices within, to speak our multiplicity, so that the speaking transforms who can speak, how, and in what circumstances. The name is invoked but it is invoked in its multiplicity, rather than its hegemony, it is one narrative among many, one aspect of the self that must vie to speak amongst all the other voices that have spoken and continue to speak to us. The name becomes that necessary but injurious cross we have to bear that gives us recognisability, but crucifies in the process, and it becomes that which we can now leave behind, for we know its legacy and whilst we will remember it, for that too is necessary, we will not embody nor enliven it.

This resonates with Gergen (2000), when she says that the fate of becoming the invisible aging woman is our destiny. And what exists here at the surface now is nothing short of political, and myth cannot conceal it, for all it is it simultaneously

reveals, and in doing so there is a force, a corporeal aggression that can be read on the literal, and it speaks out and to us, a dialogue between self and body that brings that corporeal voice in, and in that process we are embodied by this corporeal aggression and the reading of passivity that is the traditional analysis recedes. The *Aging Woman*, but also the *Clowns* and the *Sex Pictures*, resonate with Barthes, when he said, "I come forward indicating my mask with a finger" (as cited in Scheie, 2000, p. 168). I am embodied by the mask, the surface, and the suggestion that if we stay at that space, for there is no other, and look and listen, we might just hear the metaphorical crumbling of Western ontology, of patriarchal structure and of institutionalised and oppressive binaries. Like the building not quite able to accommodate the force of the quake, institutionalised oppression struggles to withstand the ever-increasing force and capacity of the tremors of resistance. What a splendid sound that would be, that which signals the shattering of the very foundation of Western metaphysics, as it becomes now a permeable rather than bounded spatial structure, freeing us to be other.

Just as the artificiality of the clowns is readily available, it fills the surface, so too the artifice of femininity is signalled in the *Aging Woman*, and as nature recedes we begin to see the ideology starting to unravel, we sense, we glimpse that this is a construction no less than the clowns, it is a masquerade that invites us to believe this is essential woman, believe it in ourselves, 'woman' like 'clown' is meaningless, it doesn't denote anything at all that can stabilise it and make it the universal, nominal and stable subject position, it purports to be, 'woman' like 'clown' is an absent centre, there is no transcendental signified that exists below and provides an origin for this way of thinking and experiencing ourselves (and others), there is no origin (nature in this case) that gives rise to essential selves. All is undone, unravelling, foundations, authors, originators, all the transcendental signifieds recede into the world of fantasy and as they unravel they release multiple threads that proliferate meaning, that release it from its bindings and

allow it to spread out, the hegemonic discourses of self unravel and as they do the self is allowed to be more than that contained in the name, it is opened up and we are allowed to understand and experience ourselves in multiple ways.

And this is, of course, a site of struggle for the surface is not a utopian space, it does not exist outside hegemonic discourse, rather it is the layering of many discourses that speak of nominal, universal 'truths' juxtaposed with the antagonist of those 'truths'. It is a multilayered, multi-vocal space, rather i expect like gumbo-ya-ya, where conversations exist simultaneously and the rhythm of many voices tell the story of interconnection and multiplicity. The surface is that multiple space teeming with intertextuality, permeable, fluid and flowing, not bounded by discourse, the canvas, the artificially inscribed lines of the body, instead it flows and seeps outside of the prescribed boundaries of canvasses, texts or bodies. The surface is that space of liberation, of revolt, for it diffuses the power of the nominal voice and ushers forth the reality of multiple voices. And here, we see 'woman' taken up and made to speak differently, these women do not turn away, they engage us, drawing us into the frame, and proliferating us beyond, exuding a power that captures and holds us at the surface, for that is the space we must read from if we are to deny the essentialising of our self and others, and to think at the literal before it is distorted and made to speak again the voice of hegemonic order and to appropriate the image as something that can be contained. As always the language of hegemony will seek to re-contain that which has momentarily slipped outside its normalising boundaries, and ours is a consistent struggle against that violent interpellation (Barthes, 1982; Butler, 1990; Morrison, 1994). Which is, of course, why we must remember, and why remembering too is a political act, for each call to become the normalised self ushers forth the memory of the oppression inherent in that self.

The Aging Woman like the Clowns deny essence, deny a reader that can founder on anything other than our own delusions of self. This resonates with Burton (2006) who notes that "any notion of such an interior is solely produced by a viewer (who doesn't identify with the image, but hopes to probe it for reassuring content all the same), and it is this tension - between the aggressive address of Sherman's radical superficiality and a viewer's projection of, or need for, a (vulnerable) interiority - that produces such ambivalence in the artist's works" (p. 207). So we desire to name and frame and stop the thought, but we cannot, the images will not stabilise, the text will not be summarised, this is a writerly text and it will not be made to speak univocally. We can try, as we do in the Clowns to make the images nominal, to call them Clowns and nothing else, to try to encapsulate in that label. Similarly we can in the Aging Woman Series, name them 'mutton-dressed-as-lamb', when they defy all other subjective names, but still we cannot make them stabilise there, we cannot quite cognitively shelve them, known and discarded, for though the women certainly do seem, at an initial reading, to epitomise this derogatory term, certainly it can be used to try to injure, to enforce a certain violence and domination in the naming. However, the irony of naming in this way, which is similar to the 'cougar' phenomenon, is that because they do not follow the supposed trajectory of 'woman', that is, they remain vivid, a spectacular spectacle, they take up a space on the margin of 'woman', they are the excess, an uncontainable flow. They dare to stand in a space that wasn't allocated for them, a space they must appropriate for themselves, and in that appropriation they transform selves and bodies. They are unashamedly forefront and centre stage, and i am embodied by them as corporeally spectacular, i am at that moment dialectically immersed body and self as i enliven those other space within myself.

Unlike the Film Stills, these women seem to exude an air of confidence and power, perhaps because they can no longer be the feminine ideal of youthful beauty, and yet they are attractive in other ways that deny the object body as the whole

story of women's bodies, their appeal comes not from their body nor its adornment, for this could easily be written off as a 'mutton-dressed-as-lamb' scenario, but from their use of these expectations of normative femininity when they are past the age at which they would be deemed appropriate, or indeed, feminine. It is like the clowns, entirely performance and unashamedly surface, where that performance in its hyperbolic form undermines that which it speaks of and to, in this case normative femininity and its appeals to truth and nature. These later Sherman women refuse to enter the trajectory of normative femininity and recede into the background, they fill the surface just as the Clowns and Sex Pictures do, confusing the narrative of normative gender.

Femininity is made to speak of itself as performance, as it always is, but this time it has the effect of disrupting normative femininity, for the performance is recognisable, it disrupts rather than being ideologically distorted as natural. Is the truth of 'woman' nothing more than an intensified, and excessive, layering of the products of femininity on aging bodies? When the masquerade no longer conceals its ideological facade, that is, it can no longer appeal to nature to sell its facade of truth, then woman, as a normative space is transformed and the excess of that space is allowed to infuse the boundaries, it becomes a space open for re-appropriation, which is how i read these later Sherman women. Here there is a kind of seizing back of the control of our bodies, a resistance that gives way to resignification, and even though these women may initially appear to be conforming with the rules of feminine aesthetics, they do so from a position on the margin of that, for they refuse to take up the designated space for older 'woman', of invisibility.

Getting Angry and Taking No Shit

i am embodied by the Aging Woman and their defiance of 'woman', their appropriation of space, their taking up of, literally, centre-stage. Let us refuse to

be relegated to the spaces of invisibility and silence, away from the glitz and glamour of the Film Stills, dressed in our Osti frocks and sensible shoes, looking after aging parents and angst-ridden teenagers. Let us recover some angst for ourselves, be edgy, ride that edge hard, dip our toes in the periphery of unchartered waters, be in our bodies in ways that enliven the other in our selves, let us remain at the surface, in the spotlight, not giving a shit about its illuminating effect on our wrinkles, they are part of our corporeal offense, that armour we will wield, corporeally aggressive and magnificent. Herein at this space we seize back control of language and bodies, we writhe against the name, and we relinquish all recognisability and respectability. We are the antithesis of respectability. Let us give the one-fingered salute to respectability vowing to never be so again! i am inspired and embodied by the Aging Woman, they surge through me and i become the insurgent. We tell our own stories, located and partial and always incomplete and in that space we seek out other ways to understand our bodies that enliven us, that negate them as devalued other of male, and that empower us as woman, in all our multiplicity, divergence and fragmentation. So when i look at these images normative femininity is disrupted, it fails to tell that story for these women refuse to relinquish the light and in that space they transform the story, for it no longer holds true. As Sherman's work continually speaks to us of the masquerade of femininity, and hence is, in many ways, about showing the construction of our gendered self, the women here can be seen as engaged in a construction of sorts, that is, of a specific self, but this time it is an informed, experienced, picking and choosing from many alternatives, for themselves. Even though initially this may seem to be conformity to the norm of objective bodies and suggest a struggle to halt the aging process it simultaneously can be understood as resistance because these women defy the transgression of the name 'woman', they refuse to recede into the background, and like the Clowns they loom large and threatening because they will not be made in the name, and in doing so they create a tension that

confuses and weakens the linearity and universality of the hegemonic gender narrative. They are not constrained by the dominant hegemony, but they know how it works and how to work it, and that gives them an attractiveness that the more vulnerable, anxiety prone, girls of the *Film Stills* lack. Like much of Sherman's other work, there is here too a kind of corporeal aggression, as the bodies of these women defy their normative place in hegemonic discourse and take up a space of resistance on the margin. A corporeal aggression that comes from a denial that we must repeatedly live and embody the story of hegemonic gender discourse, and a fleshing out of alternative stories and transgressions of the narrative. Here there is such a transgression as the bodies of older women are that upon which a performance of objective aesthetic bodies are applied, but with different results, rather than being a repetition and reproduction of the self and body within dominant gender discourses, this time the performance takes centre stage and the artificiality of all that 'woman' seeks to hold together by appeals to nature, is shattered. Here is shattered subjectivity, no less dissimilated than the disheveled bodily waste of the 'Detritus Waste' series, here bodies are physically whole yet there is disintegration, though it has now taken on another twist, for the breakdown is resistance, which comes about as we acknowledge that bodies aren't unitary or stable, that they are shattered, multiply experienced and continually fluid. And importantly, that this fluidity and multiplicity is uniquely experienced, we seem to have come full circle but on a very different trajectory, to a notion of a kind of individuality, though one that could hardly be more far removed from early ideological humanist concepts of individuality, which were ideological totalitarianism (Foucault, 1982) For here what is important is locatedness and specificity and we have come to that space where knowledge is located in and partial, when it is accessed from our own critically understood self and body, located very much in that suffering, living, breathing, and dying human being as we interact in the world and with others (Freeman, 1997). It is, as

Freeman said, that space we bring to all encounters that in order to know our selves we must continually reflect upon, as we live our lives in circular reconfigurations. Like writerly text, here again i can read Sherman's work within this vein, as a 'shattering' of subjectivity, perhaps to the point of 'boredom' (Barthes, 1975). Here in these latter images, the female body pulls off perhaps its greatest performance, to convey the entirety of the masquerade that is 'woman', that is feminine. And in doing so the performance ushers forth its own resistance, and the bodies of these women are transformed from the docility of their insertion in the hegemonic discourse of sexuality to seek within the folds of this performance the subjugated understandings that exist experientially as women inhabiting female bodies. That excess which exists within the convolutions of the surface folds, and as the dominant voice recedes other voices are enabled and our bodies and selves are transformed as we immerse in this dialogic space of complex, multiple and flowing surfaces which is life, though now it is freed up to enter and infuse the dialogue between corporeal body and languaged self. Here the space that exists between language and experience, that place where meaning may lie, is subtly prised open as we for a fleeting moment sense that the self we experience has changed irrecoverably. And we can now embody that space of resistance, where we are embodied by the other within, and on the margin of 'woman'. Our bodies immerse into the language we use, for the dialect is unclogged now by hegemonic debris, it can flow again and as it does the dialect enlivens us and our bodies immerse with the words, through the text, and beyond in chaos and disjuncture. We take back the space of our bodies as we tell our own stories and use our bodies in ways that enliven them and free us from the oppression of 'woman'. And in this space of resistance we remain and fight for the space to be seen, heard, and recognised in our multiplicity, in our fragmentation, in our chaotic subjectivity. The female body rises up from the Waste Land of dust and ashes, and casts a shadow across the all-seeing eyes of Dr T J Eckleberg, symbol of

patriarchal capitalism, and they would surely bulge in wonder as uncontrollable woman emerges. She must be, for that all-seeing 'I', that male gaze, a most tremulous sight. These women post-reproduction, post-sexual objectivity, are past their use-by-date in terms of sexual desirability, yet, like the so-called 'cougars', they transgress the boundaries of sexuality and sexual objectivity, for i am embodied by the sense of their reveling in their sexuality, wielding it as part of their corporeal armour, using it knowingly without it consuming them. These women are in control, and they are controlling, they know the rules of the game, and now they make up their own, they exude a power that is denied in the *Film Stills* and *Centerfolds* where the women are disempowered by femininity. Here in the *Aging Woman* femininity cannot tell its story univocally, there is disruption and the other stories flood the surface and negate a nominal telling. As the old adage goes, 'you've come a long way baby'. And as i write these words and they do not close a latch, they do not denote me again as 'woman', i realise just how far i have come.

Unlike the girls in the *Film Stills*, the woman in this picture seems to look at the camera and, by virtue of us, with what seems to be a mixture of boredom and disdain. A certain boredom perhaps, at the intensity of the male gaze, and the repetition of the same-old-shit (*SAMO*, Basquiat) in relation to what it means to be a woman, or the repeated exposure of the female body through, in this case, the use of the camera, perhaps representing the continual reproduction of us as saturated by our sexuality.

Femininity fails in the *Aging Woman*, whereas it worked in the *Film Stills*, for here the markings that denote natural femininity take on a constructed, piecemeal, and hardened form. Perhaps because on aging bodies they aren't as seamless, the makeup cakes, the tan accentuates wrinkles, the too dark hair exemplifies a too lined face. Here the usual adornments don't necessarily result in something

desirable. This being the case there is something of a mock-up in the make-up, that here there is a conscious choice going on in a way that was absent in their less enlightened younger counterparts, that the implications are realised, they already reside in those space of knowing and resistance on the margin, otherwise why should they even attempt to beautify a body that should exist now only for aging husbands and children, and as caregivers to aging parents. At some level these women already resist the status quo for they remain, their bodies resist that nihilism and they blatantly refuse to be closeted. Instead they take up that space of centre stage, which is necessarily resistant, remaining foreground and eclipsing institutionalised oppression, they will not recede into obscurity. And in doing so they refuse and confuse the name, and they open up space for women to be other, for the object body now has splintered, it has become that multiple space. And in this multiplicity there is some choice, for the hegemonic self locates amongst other possibilities for self and there is room in this performative space to play with other bodies, other selves. As Bartky (1990) reminds me, sometimes we want to be that objective, absolutely sexually desirable woman, but in being this it doesn't reduce us to just this and nothing more, for we simultaneously embrace our multiplicity. There is then in the performative a sense of fun, a release of the pressure that thinking resistance can sometimes entail, a seriousness that sometimes pervades it, a moral imperative that can sometimes seem to weigh it down. At some point in my critical journey i have been able to embody the fun that life can be when we inhabit the margin, when we are released from the nominality of hegemonic selves and bodies, and we can embody the dispersal and fragmentation, a body and perpetually in motion.

Seeing the Light

i read these latter works as perhaps not Aging 'Woman' but Enlightened Women as we realise the experience of being our self and inhabiting our body is multiple, and

fluid, and that there is room to be more than that made available in the name 'woman', universal, stable and contained.

These women seem to have come to a space where they no longer believe the ideology, and why should they, it now excludes them, relegated to invisibility, so what have they got to lose i guess and i read them as fighting back, so for me they are corporeally aggressive in a similar vein to the Sex Pictures, the violent dismembering that is the regression of the saturation of our bodies with sexuality, the Cartesianism that splices women's bodies further is here begun to be healed, for these women are more whole, both bodily and in their understanding of self, they embody resistance as their bodies refuse to be made invisible, to reside as no longer useful, desirable or worthy. And it could be argued that they too are simply buying into the idea that our value as women only exists in the body that is desirable from a male perspective, that is, we have internalised this and are simply rehashing it, only this time not so well. However, i read these women differently, to the earlier images where in taking up the nominal place of object body the dominant hegemonic voice was coming through. Here other voices can be heard for these women defy the 'natural' trajectory of the object body as they remain in the centre of the image, they remain in the space of the sign and in doing so transform it, dilute it, make its barriers permeable, other stories of women and women's bodies are allowed to permeate the story of objectivity. And it is no longer the story of women's bodies, rather it is revealed to be a performance rather than a truth, and a performance that requires continual reproduction in order to enliven us. Here some of the plot lines have been transformed and the story has taken a turn that wasn't intended, these women are aging and yet they refuse to conceal their bodies nor relinquish any form of adornment, and this is a form of resistance, no longer will they be made in the name 'woman', rather they are transforming themselves as they experiment with the masquerade, that is, gender performance.

Imagining and Transforming Reading Sherman

As i read from my located, geopolitical and partial position am i embodied in such a way as to envision and feel in my body this sense of its being corporeally aggressive in the way Burton described Sherman's work?

Do i now envision 'woman' differently, as that which is that illusion of substantial unity, but really is that volume in perpetual disintegration?

And as i read Sherman can i envision 'woman' breaking down, disintegrating, and in that space am i embodied by a kind of reawakening, a remaking from the dust and ashes, from our own bodies, so that 'woman' is transformed and it becomes instead simply woman, which has no inscribed boundaries, it is a fluid, flowing, multiple and chaotic space?

Do i, as i read Sherman, envision and embody those spaces appropriated that open up space to read woman in other ways, those that speak the excess of 'woman', and in those spaces of excess transform what we can think and speak of 'woman'?

As i read Sherman am i embodied by the trajectory of 'woman' as it becomes other trajectories, many paths and multiple weavings?

Am i embodied by the sense of 'woman' splintering and fragmenting and with it my own body and self proliferating, immersing in the text, bleeding through the language and transforming the self?

Can i now, in my located positioning, envision myself proliferating out, ceaselessly threading in unanticipated, and unimagined ways, and in that space appropriated can i imagine other?

As i read Sherman am i embodied by the sense that i am on the periphery and this is a space that i must appropriate for my self, for there are no knowns here, no subjective presumptions, only engagement and dialogue?

Am i embodied by my self as immersed in a dialogue with my body and language, so that i harvest within language that which will facilitate this dialogic space in the text, so that each thrust of language is simultaneously infused with the corporeal, and so that the subjective space from which i write is too, always, a bodily space?

As i read Sherman am i embodied by the sense of multiplicity, of fragmentation and of fluid selves, so that i celebrate and am enlivened by, and enliven in the writing this understanding of a self that splinters out, that is in perpetual proliferation?

Do i, as i read Sherman, envision that my starting space is always in my body and self, always in this most intimate and located space, and that this is continually in motion, perpetually transforming, that always that beginning space will transform and there will be other beginnings?

As i read Sherman am i embodied by the sense that all is at the surface, and the fallacy of a depth or an essence, is relegated to the place of another story?

As i read Sherman am i embodied by the sense that we must speak our own bodies, tell our own stories and transform our own lives, that we as women must wrestle back the space of storyteller for ourselves so that the stories we tell necessarily transform, and reform, our bodies and selves?

In reading Sherman do i position and read from my body, bringing forth the resistance that is therein, wielding my corporeal aggression?

Do i embody the sense that my body is strengthened by embodying it as that space through which we read, write, think and resist?

Am i embodied by the corporeal as that space from which the struggle to name us in hegemonic discourse is fought, simultaneously with the struggle to resist?

Am i enlivened in my body as i read Sherman, embodied by the sense of transformation, of disintegration, of peripheral yearnings, so that as i speak, think and write the language is embodied by this sense of the periphery, of resistance, and of the body?

Can the voice of my body be heard whispering through the text, have i harvested language that speaks my corporeality in ways that appropriate space for others to locate, to be embodied by the words and the rhythm, and to speak their own bodies in the language they use?

Am i embodied as i read Sherman by the sense that life mirrors art, in that, reading it as a retrospective analysis allows us to reconfigure the latter in relation to the earlier, which is the way in which we engage in our critical journey of self?

Am i embodied by the sense that there is no author, in this work, in the text or in life ... and yet also simultaneously understand that our lives are still lived in narratives, though the narratives have transformed and they are not linear, fixed or universal, this is the narrative of location, geopolitical positioning and only ever partial telling?

Am i embodied as i read Sherman by the sense of transformation, that any telling will only ever tell something of the story of self, that necessarily much will be missed that may be told in an other story?

Am i embodied by the sense that my story, as i read Sherman, has no beginning or end, it has as Butler said, already begun, as in media res, when much has already happened to put me in this subjective space, and each telling in its partiality, will give rise to other tellings, none of which will have the privileged place of beginning or end?

Am i embodied as i read Sherman, that herein, in this disintegrating 'woman' there is a space appropriated that is, at the same time, overflowing with hope and resistance?

Am i embodied by the sense of becoming an insurgent, enlivened by the flow of the body through language and back through the body as i engage in the dialect that is life, but now it is embodied too in the text?

Am i embodied by the sense that i have given my body to the struggle, as Hansberry asked of us, that i have willingly relinquished it as i take up and appropriate other spaces on the periphery of the name?

Am i embodied by the sense that i reside on a periphery, that this is a space that is both nurturing and harsh, that it is, as hooks reminds us, not a place of comfort yet it is a place of resistance, struggle and inspiration?

Am i embodied by the periphery as that through which we imagine and flesh out those other selves that have not had space to come to voice, and now in which we appropriate space to speak of.

Am i embodied as i read Sherman that i no longer recognise myself as 'woman', that this is not a truth that forms me, that materialises my body and speaks my self?

Am i embodied by the sense of Western ontological thought cracking along the fissure lines that disintegrating 'woman' facilitates, of the momentum that is the result of a subtle and sustained resistance, within a community of those for whom the personal and political necessarily are infused and enlivened?

Am i embodied by my work, as i read and write, as theory in the flesh, and that as i read Sherman, i live this fragmentation, disintegration, reconfiguration, return and renewal daily, that i have the sense that i do not end and this work begins, but

that we are immersed, bled together, fused in a continual dialogue that transforms in ways that are enriching, sustaining and transforming?

Am i embodied, as i read Sherman, by the sense that 'woman' is a ceaseless copy, and that the search for origins is futile and destructive, and instead we should begin with our bodies and at the surface, for all the truths of our self will be found there, a kaleidoscopic multiplicity, a chaotic proliferation, an enriching life?

As i read Sherman am i embodied by the sense that this is a revolution no less monumental for its being staged on the page, and its being the revolt of bodies and language, which when you think about it, it always actually is about telling the story of the self and other, including their bodies, and it is always about the appropriation of language and its immersion in the relations of power that underpin it?

CHAPTER SIX

THINKING IT THROUGH: REFLECTION, RECONFIGURATION, RENEWAL, AND TRANSFORMATION

Transformation: Beginning Again and Again, Storying our Lives in Other Ways

As i move through the text, it mirrors my own transformation, for this is the process of remembrance and return, repetition and reconfiguration, and herein on the page that transformation is spoken, it is embodied, opened up and enabled to breath, to enliven me, and as a space that others might seek out their own journey of understand the self that they are, and that which they might become. The sense i have desired and struggled to evoke is that there are no beginnings and endings in the work, that it embodies Barthes (1987) writerly text, where "we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend *as far as the eye can reach*, they are indeterminable" (pp. 5-6). So that we can enter the text for it is permeable, we weave through it in multiple ways, in and out, body and self, a corporeal threading through, as we are embodied by those spaces within the work that allow the rhythm of our bodies to be heard, allow them to speak. It is as Foucault (1994) said, i want to embody within the text this sense that i in my communal compilation, "give it a color, a form, an intensity that doesn't say what it is" (p. 256). So i do not shut it down, rather i let it live, and life is intense, so the space which is the surface, for we have long since outlived our 'essence', bridles with this intensity, this complexity, this chaos. As i read Sherman i have been stereotyped, basking in my own aesthetics in the Film Stills, as i was illuminated by the artificial eyes of the camera and psychology. i have taken up spaces where i experienced

myself as simultaneously subject of the male gaze, and voyeur. In the Centrefolds i was embodied by that known space of vulnerability, fear and anxiety as i, at the same time, took up a space to loom over the woman. Yet even here i sensed something akin to a revolution, a seething corporeal aggression, an insurgent and building force that would usher forth, albeit in subtle but persistent ways, our liberation from oppression. i was going to call it a quiet revolution, but it is not quiet, for the voice of our bodies though wordless is monumental in its capacity to disrupt and that noiseless sound is earth shattering for it, literally, unearths foundations. Language is all we have, said Morrison (1994). Our bodies are that space where the struggle to name and contain is fought. These are our armour, and they are enough. i am embodied by this sense of strength and agency, that with these 'tools' i can resist, i have that capacity and i always did but now i enliven it, the name cannot contain me as it once did for it is one story among others, and not my story. i do not own it and it cannot own me.

Smudging Lines and Firing Up Bodies

i accept that my knowledge of myself is partial and fluid, and i celebrate this for it is life. When we think outside of binaries we can accept that life happens in that divide, neither either/or but as that immersion. And we can accept that joy and disappointment coexist, as do happiness and sadness, our lives are punctuated always by moments, never states. We need to reconfigure the binaries, in the way hooks describes, in relation to Blackness and shadows, to give it an aesthetic that embodies those with dark skin in ways that haven't been readily available. And similarly with body and mind, i am embodied by the immersion, the smudging over that Cartesian line. This has been perhaps the most ardent struggle throughout this process, to think the body with the self, to not continue to shut it out, to silence it. It has been a practice, a process, of a continual engagement with my body and language. It has at times been frustrating, for the body, as we know,

slips away from language, from speaking it in ways that do not again return it to objective obscurity, and language structured in binary necessarily also, works toward that end. It is thus a persistent and reflective struggle, a harvesting of language that will tap something of the corporeal, something of the dialogue of body and self which is life. We live in our bodies, we orient from them, to disallow their immersion in the text is an arbitrary severing and one i most certainly do not desire. i have learnt to listen, to see differently; to grasp at those fleeting moments when the body is felt in ways that are like a surge, as the dialect is embodied it is like a spark, a connection. It is as though that gap where language arcs to, but cannot encapsulate, is glimpsed for a moment, is felt for an ethereal second, and then moves on in that instant, like a flicker of a flame. But this one does not die, it will not be arbitrarily snuffed out by language that would deny it life, call it misbirth. It is insurgent, flammable, and it gives rise to a slow burning ember. We must harvest those moments of our bodily voice, in dialogue with self, through language, for they fuel resistance. Interestingly now near the completion, of what is an inherently unable to be completed, accomplishment, i no longer think bodies and selves in ways that delineate and separate them, though the words at times enforce this separation it is not my desire, and not my location. When i speak bodies i simultaneously speak selves, for always i am embodied by that dialogue and struggle to enliven that in the text, the intention is not that one outshine the other, that one take an integral place in the journey, for they cannot be disentangled, and any such venture must necessarily be an arbitrary enforcement.

Weaving, Othering and Immersing in Text and Bodies

i desire most that this text is open and permeable, and though there is no 'me', or 'I', to be found within it, i breathe through it, along with so many others, who simultaneously breathe through me. So just as there are no beginnings and

endings in the text, neither are there any in me, i am in the text, i am beyond it, woven, we are threaded together, but not absolutely bound, for the boundaries bleed out in directions unlimited, unimagined, and unable to be imagined. Like the sinews and fibres of my body i am entwined in the writing, for it is me too, but it is other than me, for it is open, there are no absolutes, no certainties, and no hard and fast conclusions. It is permeated by intertextuality, of which my body and self are simultaneously textual. i am embodied by my body as unbounded, it does not end with the physical form, i can almost physically sense the unboundedness of it, the dialogue, its bleeding out and drawing back in, the transformation that this enables. There is no doubt that i feel differently in my body and as i understand my self. There is no doubt that this has been a journey of intense transformation, as i reflect back upon its emergence located in those early sparks of resistance. It is, as Foucault (1982) said, a journey that disrupts thinking, for we can no longer rely on the name, on dominant discourse to orient us (p. 172). And it is arduous enough, that the struggle is etched in our subjectivity, traced and materialised in our bodies in ways that transform us as other, as object, as excess. i am embodied by my other selves, i do not negate them, close them down when they speak, i celebrate the otherness in me, for it connects me to others, for herein we are different and similar. i am embodied by this sense of an ethical connection with others as binaries are erased and we overlap into one another, immerse in our multiplicity, and muddy the sacred waters of truth, universality and objectivity. As Bartky (1990) said we sometimes feel a greater connection with our White male oppressors, than with women of different ethnicities, especially perhaps Black women, and yet when we live in that arbitrary slash that signals our divide, we begin to connect in other ways. For we are not identifying similarity as a way to come together, rather we are embodying difference, similarity, and unknowingness, in ourselves and others, and this is the basis for our ethical connection (Butler, 2001). i have learnt to see myself and others differently,

which is not simply about recognising and denouncing stereotypes, but about encompassing difference in others. It is about thinking how language harms, how words injure. As hooks (1995) notes in relation to beauty, the way we have been able to think it has injured people with dark skin, and so we must come up with new aesthetics, other ways of thinking beauty, goodness and worth that smudge binaries, and move at the margins of hegemonic discourse. In thinking other i think of how the differences bind us, or how they can, like that missed opportunity to embrace one another, that Morrison (1994) laments, i desire to be embodied by that difference, both in myself and in relation to others, for when we think of ourselves as interwoven, a text, and we overlap with others in their textual space, difference too is like the stranger within, it is how we know the other, for they are not entirely other, they are part of that interwoven and dialogic space through which we know ourselves (Napier, as cited in hooks, 1994; du Bois, 1920).

Here is My Body, Take It

Do I remain a revolutionary? Intellectually - without a doubt. But am I prepared to give my body to the struggle or even my comforts? (Hansberry, as cited in hooks, 1990, p. 191)

When i first read this i stopped and thought and i wasn't sure that i had, or would, give my body over completely to the struggle. But thus far in my journey i know absolutely that the body of hegemonic 'woman' though not gone, has been relinquished to the place of a story, it no longer tells me a truth of myself and the spectre of it no longer haunts me. i realise that long ago i gave my body to the struggle, for we must relinquish that body that is not ours to speak of, and never was. And in that space left by the authorless body we bring forth our own bodies, multiple, varied, divergent, diffuse, and fragmented. Similar to Sherman's series after series of bodies that will not be named, remain untitled and unframed, and unable to be known in any complete way. My body takes on the space of untitled and i am embodied by the sense of exhilaration that the release from the name

elicits. i have given my body to the struggle and my comforts, for there is no comfort when perspective has changed and we have "learnt to see" differently what was comfortable and familiar reveals itself as strange, ugly and human (du Bois, 1920; hooks, 1990).

Unwieldy Bodies, Unwieldy Words

Interestingly, in writing the analysis it became like the body of resistance, of corporeal feminism, unwieldy, aggressive, taking up space, appropriating space within the spatial limitations of this academic work, which is so much more than this, a transformation of a life, my life, of gender, of sexuality, of bodies, an opening up of space for others to transform their lives and selves (Burton, 2006). i sensed a flow, an enlivening as i wrote the analysis, the spaces that had been subtly opened, those tiny cracks and crevices of resistance, were now embodied and i too was enlivened by the unboundedness of the text, of my self and body. i felt i lived this threading in and out, this proliferation beyond the text, this endless process of signification with no signified in sight and no certainty within a sign that might stop the flow, in this writerly text there was no demarcation line that separated it from the life that flowed through and around it, a sense of ethereal fluidity washed through it. It was as though a life force had impregnated the text and in that space the 'I', that might once have signified an author, a foundation to cease that flow, had truly been relinquished, relegated to simply an other voice, and not the voice of authority, for there is no demand here to be in the writing in specific and presumptuous ways, there are only spaces where we can locate and take up our own journeys as we too 'learn to see' (hooks, 1995). And what now takes centre stage is the dialogue, the open space of the text that does not drop a latch, with sedimented and calcified language, but remains like that old rusty gate who's latch has long since lived out its usefulness. As it bangs ceaselessly in the wind, unbounded, uncontained, a sound that is a relentless shrill

emits from its dry joints, a perpetual haunting of those who would latch it tight for fear that its ceaseless reminder of uncontainability should undermine their own place of privilege. For in the space now ventilated by life there is room to tell our other stories, and as we speak we bring forth a sense of the dilution of boundaries, of immersed subjectivity, of binaries diffused and blurred, and of bleeding peripheries where the metaphorical blood plebianises the normalised self and illuminates the facade upon which it founders.

Seeing Beauty in the Shadows, Daring to Speak the Unnamed Self

And in this unbounded space we learn to see the abject within, and outside, for we are the normative and it's abject simultaneously, each must be taken up in our bodies in order for the hegemonic one to live (Butler, 2001). Just as in the relationship between parasite and host, the name must obtain its nourishment, its ability to be that privileged place, from the non-normative, it is the abject which gives it 'meaning' within the determining structure of language, gives it life and validates its enforcing 'truth'. And as we allow ourselves to finally bask in the proliferation of subjectivities, the fragmentation of 'woman', and ourselves, the immersion washes over us and we can celebrate, and be enlivened, by our diversity, by our abjectness, and in that space too, by our inability to know completely that which we call the self, or other selves, for any knowledge will always, necessarily, be partial, located and situational, and perpetually immersed in that process Freeman spoke of, that is, those "spirals of remembrance and return, repetition and reconfiguration" (Freeman, 1998, p. 47).

Keeping it Open and Letting Us Breathe

do not cede upon your desire (Lacan, cited in Butler, 2001).

Opening up space to be other, has been an integral orientation point in this work, always i am struggling with language, like Barthes, against its enforcing and

hardening properties. It is like working with an enemy we must continually trick into being a friend, so we are always in that process Morrison spoke of, that is, "mining, sifting, and polishing languages for illuminations none of us had dreamed of" (pp. 32-3). We are always experimenting with language, as we simultaneously reflect on what that language is doing. My experience is that it doesn't always flow in the ways i had hoped, but sometimes it does, and in those moments when i feel it working it is through my body i feel a connection, that somehow at that moment i have tapped into that self-body-language dialogue, and when that happens it is a spiritually uplifting moment, difficult to word but absolutely the driving force that keeps me moving along this path. i sense the monumental nature of this movement, for what i seek in all this mining, polishing and sifting is not simply to transform my self and body, but to open up spaces for others to locate and take their own path of transformation too. It is, then, always primarily about opening up spaces on the margin of the knowable, that which we know, which we can know about ourselves to negate the hegemonic stories, to relocate them as a story, no different to an other, except in its internal validation as truth teller. This resonates with hooks (1990) when she talks of the importance of space, politics and transformation:

We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world. (p. 153)

Living in Language, Writing in Life, Breathing Revolution

As discussed, there are those ethereal moments when i feel as if i am at one, totally immersed within the writing, it has embodied me as it takes on a life of its own, i live within that dialogue, and of course with so many others, cited and omitted, known and unknown, become that space with the text of a writhing contorting body, pushing at boundaries, opening spaces, the writerly text calls but

it is not a demand, it is not an injurious injunction, it has been transformed, and in its open perforation there is no space where we might be contained. As i imagine the call transformed by language which strives to embody the writerly text, i envision it now as a murmur, a rhythm, a whisper, a breath, as ventilation that moves through the text, and embodies that flow. It is, i imagine, something that can only be sensed, and not that which we could know, or seek to know, absolutely, it is a knowledge that is corporeal, experiential, that we feel in our bodies, that washes over us and that we can then enliven in our words. It is the dialect embodied, that we are self and body but we are language too, for that is what gives us life, but it does not have to signal an end, or a boundary upon that life. Like Basquiat, we can learn the rules of the game, yet we do not have to absolutely play by them, we need to know them in order to negate and go beyond, we need to know in order to remember and so as we may know the self that we have become, for the normative self is part of our story, even, and as i have said before, when that acknowledgement is painful we must own it and the legacy that it entails, for only then can we move into other spaces which allow us to locate on the periphery, in the margin where we can resist the reproduction of ourselves within confining oppressive names (hooks, 1990). In this space on the margin, we can locate 'woman' as simply a story among others, and a particularly violent one, for it is inherently injurious and we live that injury on and through our bodies, our selves, we collaborate in our own misery without realising the cause of our devalued sense of self. Now freed from continual reiteration, we can take up spaces and tell our own stories, those that heal injuries and enliven and lighten our bodies of their oppressive load. The body of 'woman' weighed down by the discursive load of sex, of gender is materialised differently as the words breathe across the void between life and language. As i have written i have experienced this lightening, my body is known to me differently, i reside within it, but it is part of my self too, it is no longer split, i do not think of it as objective other, as separate from the self,

to be known only from the words, the discourse of others, i experience it now as an immersion of the dialect between self and body This changing awareness of our/my body is a process that is slow and painful, laborious, it is a revolution of magnanimous proportions, a bodily revolution, a corporeal struggle to be more than 'woman', to have more than the body of 'woman', White 'woman', to have the body of me, located, known only ever partially, never completely, bearing a legacy of oppressive discourses, a body that is inscribed with, among other stories, the story of White colonisation of other ethnicities, and the story of oppression by sex. i must ask along the way do i understand what it is to live in a White body, for i must know intimately what White bodies have done, the legacy of such bodies, if i am to think about what it must be like to live in a body that is not marked with the privilege of that race. i must attend to these other markers which give us recognisability within the dominant social order, we are not 'woman' alone, we are also materialised as we take up places in those other normative subjective categories of class, race, age, and sexuality. This resonates with hooks (2000) when she noted that we need a "vision of social change that takes into consideration the ways interlocking systems of classism, racism, and sexism work to keep women exploited and oppressed" (p. 109). We must, says Probyn (1992), think of other bodies when we speak of our own body, those that are differently positioned in relation to race, sexuality, class, gender, and so on. If we do not we risk lapsing into a kind of essentialism which ignores the specificity of bodies and thus threatens to reinscribe oppression, as "the question of my body can also displace hers" (Probyn, 1992, p. 96). This thinking through the body as we position, and are positioned, in relation to other bodies is of course at the heart of empathy. i have found that i was able to think of other selves, but in the thinking i was often missing the mark in terms of the body, to think of the body of another is entirely alien, even when we genuinely empathise with others, we don't often think through the body of others, and of course, always it is from our perspective,

we cannot get past that, but even so, it is important, i believe, to imagine what it might be like to live in that body, in that space, a space marked by oppression. How might people see me differently if i lived in a Māori body, a Pacific Island body, a Black body, those are questions i believe we need to ponder, knowing of course, that our answers will always be located within our own self and bodies. It denies essentialism, it denies that women's bodies are the same, anatomically yes for the most part there are similarities, but there are also vast socio-cultural differences, and when we look to another we must do so without "displacing her body with ours". As we learn to become the living dialect of self and body, to encompass this in our sense of self and embody it in our bodies, we must not forget that others too are this dialogic space, and we must remember to think of their corporeality as well when we think of other selves, they too are this conversation between corporeal matter, materialised discursively but never absolutely or fully, and language.

Moments to Share, Deepening our Sense of Interconnectedness

i remember going to the cemetery to see my Father's grave, and a teenage Māori boy was visiting a grave alongside, he was dressed in a hoodie, his face partially concealed, and i wondered at that moment how others would see him there, and me, differently. i thought how it might be to inhabit that body in that space at that moment, and what it meant for him, and others who looked upon him, including myself. As we locked eyes for a moment, in that instant, i wondered at my own initial reaction, and what he thought when he looked at me, and how those thoughts were influenced by our obviously very different bodies. He was positioned by his body, just as i was by mine, to stop for a moment, to stop the automation which is stereotypical thinking, and discarding others by summary, enables us, i believe, to bask in what is our humanity, which is, i think, that we are the same and different, simultaneously. He and i couldn't be too much different

on the surface, at the level of normative subjectivity, and bodily appearance, we were poles apart, yet we shared a situation, we were both there presumably to visit someone, we looked at each other for a moment, made a connection, and then got on with our lives, yet in that one moment i thought of how it might be to inhabit that corporeal space and what that might mean for him, what it means for me, and for others. i connected with his body for a moment to try and draw something in, a dialogue, a whisper of shared breath perhaps, no matter how fleeting, how momentary, and though unable to be enworded adequately or to engender that flowing out and in, as it immediately was for the most part lost in that ethereal gap between life and language, it was important because i was at that moment thinking in other ways, not simply on the edge of the name, but on the edge of my corporeal knowing. i was at that moment enlivening the unboundedness of my body, and of his, bleeding out and drawing back in something of that other body, so that i might know it a little and from my own located vantage point of course, but not so as i might tell his story, certainly not to displace his body in any way, but to connect on a bodily level, to whisper inaudibly out to another our shared humanity. Thinking bodies isn't merely about thinking our own if we are to truly engage with the unboundedness of bodies we must take up that space where our bodies immerse, where they overlap, where they share that unboundedness (Spivak, 1989). i am embodied by my self as fragmented, that i bleed out and through, immerse with others, plebianise one another, murky those bloodlines that would hold us in our stable gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and so on. Without assuming we know others in any way that isn't about our own uniquely located positioning, we must think the body of the other as well (Probyn, 1992). In that space of thinking other, we are able to immerse with that which is part of, the very foundation, of our self, for we are both normative, the valued side of the binary, and the abject (Butler, 2001). We know the other, said du Bois (1920), for we are "flesh of their bone", as we take up the name given to us in

language, we take up necessarily that which gives it meaning, that which the name refers away from, that abject or othered space too (p. 22). And we know it at an intimate, though perhaps, largely unarticulated level, a corporeal knowing. As i momentarily connected with the young Māori boy, it was perhaps this shared connection, this other/both simultaneously that was brought forth, a momentary space of opportunity to be human, to be more than that we are given in the name. Perhaps in that corporeal space, unworded yet absolutely defiant of being materialised completely within language, we spoke in that moment inaudibly across a gap, the experience of inhabiting specific bodies, in specific locations, in this situation, at this time, with the "world" each of us brought to the encounter. Of course, i cannot know if he felt any such connection, or how he read the situation, and i should not try for i do not seek to answer for him, nor to know him, only to read from my own subjective space, and in the reading to bring forth the corporeal so that when i see out from my 'i', it is transformed, for the body is part of the dialogue, it is enlivened in me, and i have learnt to see bodies as entwined within a perpetual dialogue with self and language, and to understand this in others too. And i have on this journey, slowly and surely enlivened the text with my own body and my own body is irrecoverably altered by that dialogic experience. i feel in my body in a way i previously failed to experience, articulate, be aware of, for the body has been relegated to the depths of unknowingness in dominant discourse and we need to find a way to speak our bodies again, without map, marker, or prescription, we must harvest those sounds when we can and embody them in our writing. Always this will be an experiment, always we are probing language for where it can take us, continually reflecting on that uncharted path that is languaging the body without shutting it down. Perhaps that which Western ontology, psychology, fears most is the body, for it has been the devalued other of mind, the subjective made objective for science, and in the process assumedly relegated to the spaces of silence.

Telling Other Stories of Our Bodies

As we take up the name, 'woman', we take up this devalued association for in the name there is the intimate connection to the body, for we are as 'woman' associated with the body in ways that 'man' is not. In becoming 'woman' we must take up the space of the hegemonic body of 'woman', even when we do not subjectively feel that place for it comes with presumptions and expectations which are given meaning in relation to the man and mind. We are supposedly inherently emotional, to weep is acceptable, normal, we are expected to flow in various socially acceptable ways, but the female body also flows in ways that are uncontrollable, and therefore, uncontrollable. Menstruation and uncontrollable blood-flow have long been a particular haunting of men. In a society where control and containment is paramount, this body that leaks and seeps at boundaries, that won't be contained, physically or metaphorically is a disruption, an interruption and it, thus, remains philosophy's eternal enigma" (Grosz, 1994, p. 4). We must turn on its head the idea of our bodies as shameful, as devalued other of mind, for we now erase the Cartesian line, and as we do and the blood spills it permeates the mind, engorging it with corporeality, we can engage with the self that is no longer severed in this way, for we no longer think it as split, and the experiential flows through in the language we use, for we are continually probing that immersion in the writing. I find when I use words like blood flow and engorgement, metaphors that tap the body in its physicality, I feel this dialogue most spiritually, most through my own body, and I have the sense that it is embodying me and is being enlivened through the text. And that in this process there is an opening up of space to be other, to be in our bodies in those ways we don't yet know how to name, but that we probably don't even want to, or need to, for to be in the body, to write in that bodily space, to engage with the dialogue, to bring that forth in the text is enough, for with each surge there will be another subtle shift and that is what we seek to harvest for all our mining, sifting and polishing. Our 'gold nugget' is a

movement at the periphery of our selves and of the name, a droplet into the margin that opens it subtly wider, and in that movement is an other push against the centre, disturbing and distorting its claim to normality, skewing its distribution so that it begins to look queer, and its story begins to disintegrate, along with the foundations of Western ontology. We should not underestimate that the transformation of the self is simultaneously the transformation of that upon which the self is founded, so what we seek to undo is not simply 'woman', but how sex became the basis for the story of self, a story that would reproduce us in the telling, and how that became the truth of our selves and eclipsed our own uniquely located truths? We need to think through our bodies, bring in that voice that is inherently, and necessarily, disruptive. This is experimental, it can only be done at the periphery of the hegemonic for there is no room for creativity, for imagination therein (Morrison, 1994). i remember early on reading Foucault (1982) who talked about changing the way things have always been thought so that what was taken for granted, considered to be common-sense and normal was transformed which gave the subjective journey i was on, the writing, a sense of a clarity, an orientation:

... as soon as people begin to have trouble thinking things the way they have been thought, transformation becomes at the same time very urgent, very difficult, and entirely possible. (p. 172)

In my own journey, i have long since surpassed that space where things were able to be thought in the way they always have, the distortion now is vivid and i cannot think the hegemonic without simultaneously seeing its ugly, human 'foundation' or ideology. This is the transformation, that we no longer understand ourselves, or knowledge, as universal, as stable and as a truth. All is fragmented, all is in flux, we cannot know the truth of our self for it is dialogic and thus perpetually in transformation. Knowledge too is dialogic and we must locate to know from our own fluid and unable to be absolutely known spaces. When we do so we are

embodied by life, complex, a struggle, yet rewarding, this surely is our reward for struggle, our heaven on earth as we are enlivened, through language and in our bodies, with the capacity to connect with others in ways that do not negate or devalue them, and in the immersion we are embodied by their similarities and difference and they by ours.

Embodying the Other, Facing Up to the Stranger Within

Like Morrison's 'Tower of Babel' story, here was the opportunity to embrace and celebrate those differences, and embody them within each other, not as a means to divide and subjugate, but as a means to connect and enliven our sense of self and other, that we are that simultaneously, and that is what connects us, and holds us, to each other even if just for a moment. In that fleeting glimpse perhaps there was an experience that bridged the gap between language and life, a connection that language would presumptuously shut down, but nevertheless an arcing to a meaning that exists in the experience of being human, of inhabiting bodies that aren't fully materialised in language, in that instant i connected in a corporeal way, imagining other selves within the ontological space that i imagine from. It is the way in which we can come together as we learn from each other, open ourselves to understand and accept each other, and celebrate diversity, both within ourselves and between our self and others. As i transform in self and body, i must continually probe how might i live in this body in other ways that negate the oppression embodied in the name, that reside on the periphery of the normative and in taking up those other spaces weaken the truth claims of the dominant order, and how might i live in this body in ways that do not perpetuate oppression for other bodies positioned in relation to my own. The body can be wielded as a tool in the fight to resist being subjugated within the name, for it inherently is peripheral and we must join it on the margin. Sherman's art speaks the marginality of bodies, the aggressive corporeality that along with language are the tools of

revolution (Burton, 2006). Her bodies, and i read them in this way, exhibit this corporeal aggression, especially and ironically in the 'Aging Woman' series i see a surmounting of a long struggle against oppression, these women are no longer fooled by ideological discourse, they no the rules of the game, they have played them all their lives. And knowing them they can turn upon them and use them in accord with their own desires and needs, in order to transform themselves. To me, they are like a breathe of fresh air, a metaphorical equivalent of the 'finger' sign, a significant "up yours", as they wield their bodies to negate nature, to displace normality, to bleed the boundaries and dilute and muddy 'woman' so that what we are left with, the remains are perhaps Sherman's pile of prosthetics, masks, clothing, dolls, in a heaped pile, with a camera at the top, an artists creation, the creation of 'woman', a simulacrum for sure, and what would we find at the bottom of the pile, nothing. Perhaps at last we realise there is "nothing under the hood", not Sherman, not us, and certainly not essential woman (Krauss, 1993). It is certainly the case that the later 'Aging Woman' select from the pile but the result is not a concealing of the facade of gender, but a revelation, in them we see the mask, the masquerade, they use it unashamedly, like Barthes wrestlers, all is at the surface and we must read in that space without foundation. And in that literal space i see more than 'woman', more than 'Aging Woman', there is resistance for these women refuse to be named and relinquished to the spaces of invisibility, the space of middle-age women, ground into the dust like Myrtle in Fitzgerald's novel, they stand centre stage, eclipsing the structures around them. Unlike the early stills, i do not read in them a sense of vulnerability, and of course retrospectively as i read i sense this being transformed in the earlier works. In the 'Aging Woman', now transformed and just woman, i imagine the crumbling of foundations for they no longer loom over the women, as they did in the stills, here Myrtle lives, we recover her body, exhumed from Waste Land, as Western ontology breaks down and disintegrates into its narrative beginnings, and into the

debris of dust and ashes. i imagine, as i have written previously, that man is in those shadows, watching as he watched in the Film Stills but he too is transformed, now he is not predatory, not that which we should fear, the space of watcher has transformed, as he watches he is overcome with a terror he neither fully knows, nor can articulate, yet he knows it completely in a corporeal sense. As he hides he trembles in anticipation of what he fears most, but can not name, a corporeal fear, inscribed on and through his body, that privileged space that knows in a bodily way that privilege. And yet knows too the fragility of it, cannot articulate it of course, but i imagine it is akin to an uncontrolled bodily shiver. We struggle in language, for it is perhaps the 'meaning of our lives', and we harvest it to speak our body in ways we 'barely know' how, yet we must keep grasping, keep arcing towards those unnamed, and unnamable, spaces for therein we will be embodied in ways that give rise to multi-vocality, that allow us to enliven the dialogue of self, body and language. Our revolution is corporeal and linguistic and we will wield both in the armour that is our defence against oppression, against being continually made in the name and subjugated in the making. In our space on the margin we take back language, we 'mine' it for its nurturing properties (Morrison, 1994). We take back the space of our bodies too, telling our own stories, arcing across gaps, dipping our toes in peripheries, absorbing other so that we might embody the dialogue in our writing. To tell the story of ourselves, including our bodies, is a most powerful production, it is the radical narrative that reproduces us in different, multiple, fluid, chaotic ways (Morrison, 1994). One must locate on the margin in order to tell those other stories for they cannot be heard within the confines of hegemonic discourse, except to be disregarded within the realms of science as subjective, and therefore, unable to be validated knowledge. We are as hooks said, in that unique position of double vision, knowing the centre and the margin simultaneously, knowing how they feed into one another, how one derives from the other its meaning, its validity, its ability to be the truth

teller. We have to, as hooks advised, return home for we are reconfigured, transformed as we reflect upon those early experiences, that history of self, a legacy of oppression.

Finding Our Way Back and Forward in a Ceaseless Dialogue

We must leave, of course, for the home we knew was an inherently injurious place, yet we need to return there, and we do time and again, for in the returning, there is reflection and the process of rremembrance and return, repetition and reconfiguration, which is the way in which we live our lives (Freeman, 1998). And when we return it is different for our seeing space has changed and we look upon the old in light of the new and it is altered irrecoverably, it no longer has the capacity to injure for we do not heed the call, we do not recognise ourselves in the interpellation, but we do remember and the memory informs our subjectivity. As Chambon and Irving (2003) remind us, we must "begin to feel our existence in different frequencies than the rational, the indexical, and the categorical" (p. 275).

Refusing Names and Living Literally

As i engage with Sherman's *Aging Women* and as i write a text struggling against languages enforcing inherency, embodying the language with aggressive corporeality, the body, Barthes mana word infusing the text and negating its summary, i refuse my occupation in the narrow confines of gender discourse. i will not be relegated to unseen spaces, the writing and i refuse to symbolically die, to be made to speak myths unitary monotone, we remain alive, embodied and literal, there is no foundation to be found only the complexity that is the surface, the metaphorical convolutions drawing in the very flow and fluidity of multiple bodies and selves. The text is perforated with the dialogue of body, self and language, that perpetual immersion of the corporeal and the linguistic embody the writing. i

imagine as i live and breathe the writing, as i am embodied by the words, the sinewy threads of our bodies, the tissues and fibres weaving together with the language, an intertextual implosion of our discursive and physical selves, a dialectic between the self and body, an embracing of that physicality that breaches the experiential gap, but remains predominantly unable to be worded, articulated, or even thought coherently. Nevertheless, it elicits a spark of embodied knowing, that may fuel the beginnings of a search for something other than a life made within hegemonic discourse and organised by institutionalised oppression. As we take up and wield our corporeal aggression we, like Sherman's 'Aging Woman', refuse to be squeezed into small places, to be made insignificant, to be overshadowed by the structural manifestations of Western ontology and dominant discourse. Here, in the writerly text, there is a sense of the struggle to confront, conform, and transform subjectivity, and necessarily to do this where all the action takes place, and always did, at the surface. So the surface is inflated by this struggle, engorged by this corporeal wielding, and in the writing the text too is defined by a cacophony of multiple murmurings, a silence that is at the same time absolutely deafening for when we can no longer hear just one voice booming over and drowning out the others, we hear them simultaneously, a colourful multiple vocalisation, that we must listen to because within this we will know our selves, within this is the experiential self, permeable, multiple and fluid. Just like Creole speech, gumbo ya ya, the self is the space through which many voices come together to tell a story, to infuse the collective with multiple perspectives, many lives, and many aspects of our life, each of them a fragment of the narrative of self, are brought together to infuse our own life and in the infusion to manifest a remembrance of the self as multiple, and an acknowledgment that the one we experience today comes from this multiplicity, and might be experienced in quite other ways tomorrow. And further, that this seeming lack of continuity should not be a source of concern and prompt a search for a stable and coherent self, rather

it is the reality of our lives, and we should embrace and embody it, allow it to permeate our selves, our bodies, and our words. Always we write to bring forth the bodily voice for it is that which disrupts most harshly, it is the tension, the antagonist of hegemonic discourse, the body which has been the thorn in the side of science, that which it has sought most severely to sanction, must now be allowed to speak and in the speaking there is transformation. The body, Barthes "mana" word, remains defiant of dominant discourse, of being materialised fully or finally, it will not reside within the name, always it seeps at the boundaries, diluting the narrative, plebianising subjectivity, and discolouring discourse. Our lives are permeated by the noise of conflicting and multiple selves, but in our reproduction as specific kinds of self and in relation to those subjective norms that give us recognisability, we struggle against these other voices, letting them go unacknowledged, or paying them as little heed as possible. Yet they remain, always on the edge of our self, an insistent irritation, a continual tension that disrupts and haunts the reiteration of us as 'woman'.

Harvesting the Wordless Sounds

We must, each of us, find our own way to hear the sounds of our bodies, the wordless sounds of the experiential body that lives as perpetual antagonist of the normative, of the body that is silenced in the name, the recognisable body made available to us and taken up in our subjective names. Just as we must learn to see, we too must learn to hear, to sense, and mine those moments when our bodies whisper through the text, when we can embody that dialect within ourselves. i imagine the body as that perpetual and persistent agonist of power, a metaphorical persistent screeching, tenuous scraping, that is unable to be ignored, that seeps into the cracks and crevices of Western hegemonic discourse and unsettles it, irritates along with, and in conjunction with, language, it will be our greatest ally in harbouring that resistance and allowing it to embody our selves and infuse our

language. We need to understand the dialectic between the body and language, that the body is given to us in language, yet retains something other, something resistant, something that stops language fully enveloping and dissolving it. Our bodies made material through discourse, yet never fully, always the materialisation is incomplete, unfinished, unable to be finished and in the reiteration, that continual interpellation to be this woman and take up the space of a woman's body, there is always an other, the abject self that is simultaneously reproduced with the normative, and this is a tension that undermines this production of us as gendered, raced, classed, sexed beings, it is thus never smooth and always fraught with the risk that the interpellation will fail, and that we won't recognise ourselves fully in the hegemonic image, that something of the abject will show through, that spark i spoke of earlier, not something we can acknowledge fully, but something we can feel, part of the experience of living in our bodies, that remains unable to be languaged, yet which fuels resistance to oppressive subjective norms. We are never made fully, and certainly never finally, in the hegemonic calling for the process is one of reiteration and is always haunted by the abject other (Butler, 2001). Which i agree with Butler, may very well be the means of our ethical connection with others, in the acknowledgment that we will only ever know them as we know ourselves, partially, in their and our locatedness, and in a state of perpetual movement and change. The understanding and acceptance that self-knowledge is limited and never complete and that we aren't inscribed by hard boundaries of selfhood that are not diluted and infused by the other upon which the normalised self is formed, may allow us to connect with others in ways that are mutually nurturing (Butler, 2001). As Butler has said, when we accept that we cannot fully expect to know ourselves then we can connect with others, for how can we expect to know them. And further that when we ask the question of others, "who are you?", and presumably of ourselves as well, we should do so not to obtain a full or final answer, but as a means to acknowledge the excess, the

fluidity, that is the self, that we live in "fragments and dwell in doubt" (Chambon & Irving, 2003, p. 276). That always there will be more, that is the reality of our lives, we are that perpetual movement, variable and changing. It is primarily about letting that subjective space breathe, letting it be permeated by shared breath, allowing it to be that open and dialectical space that it is. Understanding the limits of self-knowledge and celebrating our multiplicity and diffusion prompts an ethical response, a moral connection with others, for we experience something shared, something we share by virtue of our shared humanity, on some level we sense that we aren't so alien to each other, that we recognise the other for it resides within us already and we know it intimately, though perhaps less well cognitively (Napier, cited in hooks, 1994, p. 37; du Bois, 1920; Butler, 2001). Which resonates too with hooks (2000), who asked might unite us across race and gender, in the struggle against oppression, so that we might be better able to address oppression as it interconnects in the complexities of class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and so on. This was certainly not about assimilating us all in a singular term that denies individual difference, for our experience of oppression will be unique and located and will be experienced within the concrete and every day realities of our lives, and in terms of the other subjective narratives through which we have those experiences and through which others see us. Perhaps understanding our own peculiarity to our selves and acknowledging the peculiarity in others is a means to make this ethical connection that binds us together in a meaningful relationship to one another. As Freeman noted we perhaps need to orient around something that gives us meaning in our lives, be that God, spirituality, or art for instance, and perhaps it is something like Foucault's ethics of the self, to work on one self, to do the best one can with the selves we have, understanding how we came to think/experience ourselves in these ways, and then to go beyond this one overarching narrative and pull back all the threads of the other stories that have contributed to our experience of multiplicity, the

elicitations of tension, contradiction, illegitimate selves that seep and flow through our normative subjectivity, haunting its reiteration of one stable and bounded self.

Strangers within our midst are indeed the strangest of all - not because they are so alien, but because they are so close to us. And he goes on to say "... strangers must be like us but different. They cannot be completely exotic, for, were they so, we could not recognise them. (Napier, as cited in hooks, 1994, p. 37)

If we forget that we are related to those we condemn, even those we must condemn, then we lose the chance to be ethically educated or "addressed" by a consideration of who they are and what their personhood says about the range of human possibility that exists, and even to prepare ourselves for or against such possibilities. We also forget that judging an Other is a mode of address: even Punishments are pronounced and delivered to the face of the Other, requiring that Other's bodily presence. (Butler, 2001, p.32)

I find that my very formation implicates the Other in me, that my own foreignness to myself is, paradoxically, the source of my ethical connection with others. (Butler, 2001, p. 32)

Sounding Off in the Writerly Text

On this journey of understanding my own experiences of self, i have found that these corporeal sounds are often elicited, albeit briefly and momentarily, through some works of art and literature. i have found that it is through these texts, of the writerly kind, that i been able to connect with some of the noises of my own subjectivity, the multiple voices that come together to elicit for me particular experiences of self, and to appreciate the sounds and try to harvest these and embody them in my daily life, and in my writing. We must seek out those subjugated voices, within ourselves, and on the edge of normality for they speak of other selves, those that the dominant voice seeks to devalue and diminish and they are our voices of resistance. As hooks (1990) noted in relation to speaking

these 'unfamiliar' voices which cannot be made still within normative frameworks and in doing so disrupt and distort the dominant story and its subjective norms:

Sounds and scenes which cannot be appropriated are often that sign everyone questions, wants to erase, to "wipe out." (p. 147)

And here we are at that space where those sounds have become for us an omnipotent and infernal din which we can no longer leave unattended and in this process "transformation ... [has become] ... at the same time very urgent, very difficult, and entirely possible" (Foucault, 1982, p. 172). Indeed we know that there is no space for us to inhabit which is not transformational, for now we inhabit that other seeing space, which is an irrecoverable shift in vantage point and the seeing is transformed and transforms us, and we cannot see things in the same way again, nor would we want to for all facade and ideology has been peeled away and what is exposed is now the ugliness of human intention, privilege concealing itself as normality, as nature even, hiding itself in its "rags of facts and fancies" so that we may not see its ultimate truth, so that we may not even seek to know its secrets for we take its prescription as natural, and therefore as undeniable truth, right down to the very truth of our selves and bodies (du Bois, 1920, p. 23).

i think that what i try to do is enliven the words with the body and in doing that i use auditory metaphors and other bodily metaphors, that attest to the breathing, living aspects of the body and in doing so embody the dialect between language and the body, that our bodies are languaged but they are also more than that. And the more is that which language won't quite get, that falls into the gap between language and the body, the physical, the lived, life, but there is always a striving across that gap and that brings forth the body into the text and allows it to speak.

Bodily Boom and Reverberation

Those times when the body is heard most vividly, when its force and felicity are strong and potent is when we become that unrecognisable self, we reside on the boundary of normality and in that space upset those boundaries of what is, and is not, normal and truthful. It has been for me, at those times i feel most able to resist, enlivened in my body, strong and a force, rather than vulnerable and anxious, and i think Sherman's work is that trajectory from our taking up spaces of hegemonic discourse to taking up an other space on the edge of that, which is the space of resistance, and which embodies us in other ways that aren't only linguistic, but that speak to and infuse the dialect between body and self. It is as Sampson stressed we must seek out when we think if we are to inhabit bodies not ground down by the weight of hegemonic discourse, that the resistance, the language we use must be able to embody us differently, it must speak on and to the oppressed body. And as Morrison (1994) conferred, language is all we have and it is our moral responsibility, we continually struggle against its violent inherencies, and its nominalising properties, and we do so against a backdrop of constant reflection and reconfiguration in relation to our own understanding of our selves and bodies. As hooks (1995) notes in relation to her own work, that "concern for the contemporary plight of black people necessitates that I interrogate my work to see if it functions as a force that promotes the development of critical consciousness and resistance movement" (p. 71). So always in this work there will, or should be, a reflective process that we are engaged in, for the language we use has traces, it is like the capillary Foucault spoke of, spreading out in multiple and various ways, unable to be sutured, language like the blood flow is ethereal and vital. We celebrate its vitality, for it is that which allows us to exist on the edge of our normalised selves, the flow, the movement is what embodies us in other ways, so whilst we celebrate this we also recognise its enforcing properties, that sometimes in the writing the language we use will distort in ways unintended and

engender connotations we might not previously have envisioned. We must then write and reflect with this awareness, so that we use language carefully, thoughtfully, and always knowing that language will assert in ways we hadn't intended. In Sherman's work i can see the trajectory from 'woman' to women, and i am embodied by it, i have made that reconfigured trajectory, i will not become the 'Aging Woman' that must be made invisible for 'woman' to remain alive. Awash in theory and bathed in jouissance of the writerly text, i will remain corporeally aggressive, centre stage, and spectacularly resistant. i take up that limelight and reconstitute it for myself again, and again, and each time i reconfigure, reflect, and transform.

i have struggled throughout to come up with an appropriate way to speak of that self who is critically aware of their subjectivity, who is engaged in an ethics of the self, that critically reflective person who is female and who has engaged with their subjective history (Foucault, 1997). They are not 'woman' for they exist on the margin of this name, continually transforming it in ways that 'woman' certainly did not intend, and to call them women is difficult also, for that brings forth 'woman', yet that bringing forth is important too, it is the remembering which we must in order to negate that oppressive self as it perpetually, even now, heeds us to reproduce within ourselves and bodies. So i have used women in the analysis, but always with a corporeal niggle, the equivalent of a poke in the ribs with a sharp stick, a moment of discomfort as i embody the inadequateness of that term, for it too is a name, though a plural one and names invoke and shut down meaning. Women invokes a name, it invokes a history of that name, it seeks to shut down meaning and make it nominal and stable, and that is what i struggle with when i use the term women. Perhaps a cross through the term whenever it is used, as Derrida might have done, to show i am using it, but reluctantly, and with the awareness of its inadequacy. The word i wish to use, is one that invokes the plurality, the variability, the multiplicity, the movement, the fluidity, the flow, the

corporeality, that inhabits that space on the edge, in the margin, that space of 'radical creativity' (hooks, 1990). But we have a legacy and we must remember that, and woman is that reminder, though it does not have to be our destiny. As i have suggested throughout, perhaps woman, stripped of the parentheses, freed in a sense, is that which allows us to retain that legacy, to remember, but also to be embodied by the open weave, the intertextuality which permeates the text, our bodies, and selves, as we bleed into one another, as we live theory, and celebrate fragmentation. This transformed woman might help us to orient, in our located and geopolitically positioned spaces, in the sense that Freeman spoke of. A knitting back together of the narrative that stories us, which does not, i believe, suggest an overarching bound 'publication', but a loosely woven incomplete, and unable to be completed, document. One that frays at the edges but does not need to be mended for the fraying is the drawing in and out of our selves, and bodies through the language of the writerly text. The weave gives us an orientation, woman is woven in, and we orient around this dialogue that is perpetually fluid and flows through us. i am invigorated by the writerly text, something akin to a spiritual connection, a corporeal yearning, and the orientation comes not from disconnection, but from embodying life.

i feel the life giving property of it in the thread, in the fray, at the edge of the fabric where it begins to fray away and bleed out, that is the richest source of who we are and how we might be. Just like the capillary, the spreading out is our life, that which is denied in the name, but which flows anyway on the edge, and when we locate in that space we embody that flow, and that more than anything else is our ethereal connection, or orientation, but it is not a foundational or a stabiliser, for it is perpetual movement, a fluid and continual flow. It is the permeation in and out, the embodying of that in us which we now enliven in our everyday realities, it is that which we seek to bring forth and live rather than shut down and deny. Perhaps like Buddhism, an enlightenment that comes from letting

go of Western notions of thought and knowledge, and allowing our bodies to immerse and flow in our thoughts, a kind of healing of the Cartesian split, an acknowledgement of the dialectic between body and self, that gives rise, and transforms, our subjective experiences. This is unfamiliar terrain indeed and we grapple to understand our bodies in ways that aren't easily recognisable, and to harvest those fleeting moments when we sense a connection between body and language that denies normality, and locates truth within our own subjectivity. This is our local knowledge, that which we live daily and which we are learning to embody in our language, it is as Rich (1987) said, we must "Begin ... not with a continent or a country or a house, but with the geography closest in - the body" (p. 212). Our bodies have been perhaps the resource we have continually over looked and to our own detriment for it is power's persistent agonist, it is that which will not be named and framed but which retains, and perpetually enlivens, the excess of that normalised self. Our libidinal body is the excess of the name, and the excess of naming, for it literally seeps and flows outside the boundaries that are inscribed to ebb that flow, it moves like a river flows, sometimes the path is familiar but always there will be multiple deviations off that familiar terrain. The body flows outwards and in its dialectic with language it transforms discourse, making it speak in unintended ways. The body resists the name and we must embody that marginalisation in our writing, so that the text is enlivened by the voice of corporeal revolution.

Let us be that revolting body, the abject body, let us bask in the grotesque body, as we do often in Sherman, that which leaks and seeps and won't be contained, the body that disrupts dominant hegemonic order, that shakes its farcical foundations. In the shadows of the 'Aging Women' lurks man, but he is transformed now, he cowers behind the concrete structure seeking some support from its monolithic patriarchal presence, and with him the structure too is made different, it no longer stands as a testament to male power and knowledge, a sign of the rational

and civilised White male standing in the spaces vacated by God and religion and made available through science and psychology, taking up the privileged spaces within the power/knowledge relationship. As the origin of thought, of knowledge, and of ourselves come full surface, we see hu-man and in that vision the sign reveals its otherness, that which it must conceal in order to live and reproduce us in its image. Though the structure, be it statue, stairwell or building, remains standing, its interior has changed, for it must now speak of more than one truth, for the one always ushers forth the other. So the monolithic voice is perpetuated by many voices, a murmuring on the edges that transform hegemony, and with it, us. And this resonates with hooks (1995), when she writes, that for Black people, who were denied a space from which to come to voice, art was sometimes that political opening where they could speak their resistance, which was, of course, the case for Basquiat, and is undoubtedly for Sherman as well.

Art was to serve black people in the struggle for liberation. It was to call for and inspire resistance ... the power of art resides in its potential to transgress boundaries. (pp. 67-69)

Unstuffing our Throats

Morrison's metaphor, of the unfortunate pate producing geese that speak of the silencing of 'woman', of our throats literally stuffed with hegemonic discourse, which thus stifles those words we cannot form to speak, our transgressive words which are, in this context, unsayable. For there is, of course, no room in that space for multiple voices, and the hegemonic is violent, it invokes the violence of the "policing languages of mastery" (Morrison, 1994, p. 17). And of the silence that is 'woman', the "enforced muteness of the feminine body ... is the sign both of ignorance and of the inability to intervene politically" (Brown & Adams, as cited in Probyn, 1979, p. 92). As we now unpack our throats, embodied by the language of resistance, relinquishing our place in the hegemonic narrative and immersing that story in the many other stories of self, that until now were unable to be told,

those transgressive words are freed, our throats are unstuffed. The words no longer choke us, no longer engender only tension and discomfort, for we can speak them, and in the speaking they weave through the dominant hegemonic voice, making it relinquish its strangle hold on truth, as it is now made to immerse with its other, the excess.

Bodily Resistances

The libidinal body resists 'woman', it resists being encapsulated in a name, for it will not be bounded, nor contained, it literally seeps and flows which is a metaphor for its simultaneous uncontainability in language. The body is both physically and linguistically uncontainable, i am embodied by the sense of its straddling the divide between experience and articulating that experience in language, the body is that space where the experience surges through us, i choose language not to shut down that flow, not to denote its multiplicity, but to invoke it, to struggle to make the language speak some of the experience so that it may be embodied in others as they read, that they may experience something in their own bodies of this surge, of the body as flowing through the text. Always, of course, some of that experience, some of the bodies secrets will remain in that inaccessible space, in that other world that words can't quite conquer, where the flow is not quite ready to harvest, we cannot speak it yet, but we are patient, we understand the subtlety of this endeavour, and we are inspired and encouraged as we are embodied and transformed by the fluidity of life, that is like the current of a river across the shore, slowly wearing away its stony foundations in each ebb and flow. The inability to control the body of 'woman' is an especially male fear and history is littered with examples of means taken to control the bodies of women, to protect males from such terrors as menstrual blood, and those behaviours labelled and thus contained as hysteria. And the flow also helps me think of harvesting our bodily voice, those murmurings that whisper through the dominant voice, irritating

and transforming it, disrupting its truth claims, the libidinal flow, perpetual movement, fluidity that won't be contained, the bodily disruption in discourse is paramount to this work, being open to its intrusion and then harvesting that, and this all very experimental and on edge of what and how we know to be our self and how we think and experience our bodies, so we meet dead-ends, we take tracks that bring us back to hegemony, but we always push at those spaces on the margin of the dominant voice, we niggle in the periphery for that is where the resistance begins and spreads out, like the capillary we are buoyed along like the blood running through our veins in ways not well anticipated, it is about learning to think and feel our bodies, immersing ourselves within them and harvesting our corporeal voice, and it is akin to learning a foreign language where we don't recognise the sounds and articulation is a mystery, but we edge forward taking small steps, the movements are subtle and painstaking at times, and at other times we experience an ethereal rush for the movement speaks to us and permeates our words, the dialectic between mind and body is momentarily repaired and we speak our bodies in our words and the words embody us in other ways. This is what i seek most in this work to bring that libidinal, that corporeal sound into the language i use, to have it embody the words so that something of the dialectic might reach out and others might sense that the body can be, and is always more than that which the dominant discourse would have it be, and as we repair our Cartesian severing, as we embody the dialectic between mind and body we can begin to be the human that lives in all the complexity that is life, the struggle, and suffering, the joy and ecstasy, and even death (Freeman, 1997).

Harvesting that Bodily Resistance in the Writerly Text

Freeman has spoken of the need to orient around something, be that God, spirituality, art, something more meaningful to give us a sense of wholeness. And in relation to harvesting our corporeal voice this comes through for me in a

spiritual way, i feel a spiritual connection when i read particular works and they embody me in other ways. Particularly here i refer to in the literary field, people like Beckett, Fitzgerald, and Morrison, in cultural studies and history or philosophy, Foucault, of course, and hooks, particularly, who inspires me to remember that we don't have to close ourselves in within our own philosophies or consciousness either, which we can do, one can, if not careful, put oneself on something of a pedestal in this field, with its focus on language it can become removed from everyday speak, and hooks reminds me that this is about everyday, bringing in those multiple voices, its not about the academy once removed from life, an immersion of all within all, no boundaries, permeation, fluidity, movement, flow, the language is necessary but it should not preclude communication, and it is above all about transformation, the academy is part of what we transform. And in the art it comes through in Basquiat, Sherman, Rothko, Tseng Kwong Chi, work that speaks of an other, on the edge, that disrupts the centre for it remains on the edge, a continual agonist, that tenuous sound of something scraping on steel, perhaps like arthritic joints, that scraping of bone on bone, without an adequate cushion of tendon?, a harsh and continual wail that evokes a pain, as these two surfaces are brought together, for they must be in order for us to move, in the case of arthritis, in order to move we must, necessarily, invoke that pain, and metaphorically in order to be, in order to take up the space of recognisability, and in our everyday existence, we continually invoke the other, for it is within the self and inscribed in the name, and this is perpetual tension and the equivalent of the arthritic pain. And the tendon could be conceived as the breaking down of hegemonic discourse, the shattering of those truths of the self and the body, so as they break down the sound becomes more pronounced, more tenuous, more tortuous and we are further forced to confront it, to stop and contemplate the 'truths' of our self and body. To stop and look at the surface, stopping is key, like in Buddhism, to contemplate inwardly, to free up distraction, to meditate, to focus

on the internal, its about stopping the oscillation of meaning, focusing on something specific, and its similar in that we need to stop and look at the surface, and stay at that space, not to fill in it with essentialism, to find a foundation that's going to give us hard stability, but to stay at the space of the surface and to work with what is there, and there's plenty, it's absolutely complex, we are there too, our selves, our bodies, that too is all at the surface where we must stay. Which is what Sherman teaches us predominantly, or how i read her, we eventually stop looking for Sherman in the images, they become what it is about, the surface, we stop looking for the essential 'woman' or discovering who the clowns really are underneath, we read only at the surface for that's all she's given us, for the surface must be our own, it doesn't belong on anyone else, it is entirely from our own located space that we must read, we bring our world, to the reading and in that engagement we transform again that world as something else is added to the mix, which alters and flows in and out of what we already know of ourselves. We are that work in progress, an ethics of the self, a subjective work of art. Why if there is no transformation, asks Foucault, would an artist paint? Why would a photographic artist create a montage of images, of herself, if she were not transformed by that endeavour? Why would i immerse myself in theory, give my body and self to the struggle, and read the works of the photographic artist for the past many years, if i was not transformed in that dialogue, of course i would not. This work is that space of personal and political transformation. As we 'care' for our selves, we liberate them from oppression and we can embody that life that i am certain is our destiny, in the sense of that which we struggle towards, rather than a pre-determined reward.

We have become so far removed from the 'living' self, that it can be sometimes difficult to know where to begin, but of course, we must begin with that which we know, and that which is 'closest in' (Haraway, 1991). Of course this refers to our body and we must begin with them for they are our location on the world. Start

with where we are subjectively, corporeally, at this point in time, that is the arbitrary starting place from which to know, and begin our transformation (Barthes, 1981). And though this isn't an actual beginning, for always we are already in the story before we 'begin', even when we are born, this is as in "media res" (Butler, 2001, p. 27). It is thus a reflective backtracking beginning where there is no actual beginning that we can identify, certainly it was not our birth for the discourses which spoke to us upon that event were already well established and circulated prior to our arrival. Begin where we are with what we know now and go on from there, as we begin to take up other spaces from our recognisable space of 'woman', we all started in some relationship to that dominant discourse, even if we were the abject other, the unrecognisable outside the matrix, it was still in relation to that name (Wilchins, 1995).

Writerly Texts and Writhing Bodies

The writerly text is an embodiment of the writhing body, it is necessarily disruptive, it contorts, twists, distorts, makes the familiar strange, confuses, bridles with unresolved and perpetual tension. The body writhes anyway, even when the writing seeks to stabilise and contain, as in the traditional text, for it won't be contained, it seeps out at the artifice of boundaries that dominant discourse would inscribe. The writerly embodies permeable surfaces of which the body and language necessarily are, though hegemonic discourse would deny this multiplicity of entry, that we can enter the text, as the body which is a textual space also, through multiple points of entry. We speak from our bodies in multiple ways and they are always immersed in language, of course, for that is what gives us our experiences, our understanding of our bodies.

Thinking at the Surface of Selves and Bodies and Reconfiguring Subjectivity

As we move out of understandings of self that constrain it in our subjective names, and reduce the body to unspeakable places, we obviously must then think the body in other ways, to have it embody the language we use, and i have talked about metaphor as especially useful here. i have struggled too with speaking the body and self as though they are two individual parts, for i do not envision them in this way, yet sometimes i need to pick them apart to speak of them, sometimes i am referring more to the corporeal self, but always it is envisioned as a part of the self. i seek to embody the dialect between the parts, the multiplicity of self, when i speak, think and write. There are two aspects to this, the first is that the body and self are dialectical, and we are enlivened by this interaction, even if we cannot always embody it in the text. We have become as 'woman' relatively skilled at ignoring those feelings of discomfort when we become aware of them, they remain a tension but we paper over them with the name, which is an unsatisfactory, indeed a futile and dehumanising exercise. For the papering only serves to exemplify the absence, we are that absent centre, yet we struggle continually to give it a foundation it cannot hold steady, and the name only serves to illuminate the gap that 'woman' tries to conceal as it calls for us to reproduce ourselves as nominal and fixed. The second aspect to embodying the dialect, and thinking, speaking and writing from that interconnect and multiply experienced space, is the desire, indeed the need, to reside at the surface. We come to a place on our critical journey where we understand most profoundly that this is what we have, all we have, we have discarded the fallacy of essence or foundation that give rise to naturally occurring 'woman'. And we see them as du Bois said, "ugly" and "human". Like a marionette, we know behind the mask of femininity that passes itself off as essence, there is hu-man pulling the strings, there is a history rather than a depth, things have a history as Barthes (1982) would say, that they

are made and this history is lost in myth, concealed as nature and given back to us as truth. And this is how i read Tseng Kwong Chi's work, and Barthes illuminating example of myth's distortion. If we read on the surface we would surely see the irony of that French-Negro soldier pledging allegiance to France in a military salute, which is given back to us with an essence attached that makes it appear to be a most natural and enduring example of French patriotism, not to mention the healthy state of French race-relations. We seek on the surface to make that which would be taken as natural and as truth, appear strange.

Subject to the Abject

America's greatest promise is that something is going to happen, and after a while you get tired of waiting because nothing happens to people except that they grow old, and nothing happens to American art because America is the story of the moon that never rose. (Fitzgerald, 1990, p. xlix)

This is, of course, similar to the way in which parody brings the ridiculous to the surface and immerses it with the normative, so that the normative is disrupted by the parody. And we might ask where parody ends and normality begins? How do we know where to draw the line that delineates the ridiculous from the natural? If this recognition of abject and other, of parody and nature, were not already known we would not, indeed, even recognise the parody. We see the distortion, before myth papers over it, we see the brutality, or as in Beckett's work, the futility, the loss, all that we sacrifice in order to become the normative self, that life we must now save. Estragon and Vladimir perpetually repeating a cycle of waiting for a stranger that may not even exist, the Clowns and the mirthless laughter that pains like an open wound, and the carnival that brings parody and normativity to the surface, in all of these examples the brutality, the futility, the injurious violence that is language, that is our subjective naming, is there harshly at the surface and we can't help but see it. We might want to look away for it is

ugly hu-man, like Sherman's 'Sex Pictures' and the 'Detritus Waste' images, but the act of looking away won't erase the image, it remains projected upon our consciousness, a haunting of the hegemonic self, a deformation which deforms the norm, brings it back upon itself ushering up its own reign of terror. And in its brutality it engages with the normative self transforming that in something like a mirror image, for the brutality in the carnival figure, the figure of excess, on the edge, the circus freak, is not that which is inherently horrific, but in its being a representation of the abject other of the normative it is given this place of degradation, and in being so they bring forth in each reproduction of that desired self, the brutality of the name and the violence of its imposition.

Of course in Sherman we see the carnival and the abject, especially in the *Sex Pictures*, but also in the *Clowns* and the *Aging Woman* too. Language, says Morrison, is an act with consequences, and here it is a most violent imposition (Butler, 1997). In the earlier *Stills* and *Centrefolds*, the 'woman' nervously look at their reflection in mirrors, at something in the background, in the peripheral margins of the image. They too are haunted by something. Is it the spectre of the abject mirrored in the reflection as they look upon normative 'woman'? Does the spectre of the abject embodied within whisper and creak through the open doors, as it refuses to be put to rest. As we reproduce ourselves in the name, and the abject is simultaneously enlivened, we know it most intimately as part of our selves and bodies, yet we must deny it in order to live 'woman'. Sherman's young woman surely wrestle with these spectres, a demon within that will not be silenced, and then later in the *Aging Woman* series, these demons are fleshed out and they speak, for surely that most abject of femininity is the *Aging Woman*. And as they speak they transform the abject for it immerses with the normative, into that space of self, where it always was, but now we are embodied by that immersion and we have finally exorcised the demon which, in an ironic sort of overturning, is not the abject within, but the normative. All along we had been looking in the wrong

place for the villain. Perhaps we should have followed hooks advice and sought out beauty in the shadows, and consequently darkness in the light (hooks, 1995). This work is about opening up spaces to speak our other selves and in the speaking transforming our subjective experiences so that we speak, and the speaking brings forth, our multiplicity. i work to harvest those instances, in art, in the writerly text, when the brutality of the name reverberates forth and is glimpsed as human, and we see the light.

Horrorifying 'Woman' - Sherman's Writerly Text

i have had, earlier on in this work, the experience of not being able to view Sherman's images for lengthy periods of time, especially the Sex Pictures and the Horror Series, yet even a glance followed by a rapid shutting of the book does not deny the image its haunting power, emblazoned upon my consciousness it resided to resurface often, and each time disturbing the normative. This is the writerly that will not rest, that will not be stilled, that permeates, that twists and distorts and gnaws at foundations of stability and normality, it is that which refuses easy categorisation, refuses to be co-opted back in, to become summarised and in the summary to be cognitively shelved. It shakes foundations for it makes them show their corruption, show their hu-man intent, and it shakes us too out of our solidified foundations where we repeat a reproduction in a name that denies us the ability to be the suffering, living, breathing, and dying human, but to only glimpse momentarily those life breaths before we are suffocated again by the gag of dominant discourse (Freeman, 1997).

The writerly text shakes, it will not be stilled and that is what i sense most provocatively when i read Sherman. i am embodied by a drawing in, almost akin to a physical pull, not an unpleasant tension, but a tension that is imbibed with hope, and a splintering which, to use Barthes term, is like the experience of jouissance. This shattering of 'woman' is a most orgasmic embodiment, for we are overcome by

that sense of dispersing, of splintering, as we fragment only to re-form, return, reconfigure and disperse in a cycle that embodies life. And the form has changed, for the story is narrativised differently, it certainly is not linear. Like a crazy quilt, it has no apparent order nor structure, rather it is an overlaying of the many scraps that speak to us of subjectivity and give rise to our experiences of life, and as they form together they must be read, rather than known at a glance, for to glance would be to write it off as an unstructured and a poor example of quilting. Yet in its chaos and multiple weave it is, in fact, reflective of life, and the self, and if we stand long enough and engage with it, as we must on our critical journey of self, we will see the life that flows through it.

Forming the Self in Other Stories

The form of our stories has changed for we do not seek to tell a truth, to give an autobiographical account of our lives, for we know that all knowledge, even of self, is partial, fragmented, and located, and therefore inherently unstable and importantly, unable to stabilise us, or others. For i tell my story from this space not to insist upon a transformation in you, nor to retell yours, but to tell from my positioned and located seeing place which is perpetuated by movement. Like the young Māori boy in the cemetery, i engaged with him from my perspective, but not to retell his story, or to know his life in any way that could tell it back to him, better. Rather i sought to connect somehow in a way that being human should be about, an opportunity in our past we squandered. It was there for the taking, i am embodied by the sense of its closeness, that it was there, we could practically savour the wonder of being human, having language, being embodied by both similarity and difference, and yet it was soured, like milk left in the harsh sunlight, it went to waste. That which could have given us nourishment in ways we could not think, certainly could not articulate, but surely could sense at some corporeal level, in that ethereal gap between language and life. Now we must

resurrect that opportunity, let us "suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder" (Fitzgerald, 1926, p. 107). Let us burn with those questions that do not cede upon desire and that remain in that unceded space as unended, unable to be ended, and not expecting to be encapsulated by an answer. Let us ask the question, who are you, without requiring, or expecting a name, or even a noun, to be part of the answer (Butler, 2001). In this eloquent passage, Fitzgerald (1926) laments America for having wasted opportunities, and sacrificed wonder:

the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes - a fresh green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for *Gatsby's* house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder. (p. 171)

This resonates for me as i read Sherman with the destruction of our bodies as we take up and reproduce our self as hegemonic 'woman'. In particular those bodies wasted as they are objectified to obscurity in the *Sex Pictures*, decayed into piles of disgusting matter in the *Detritus Waste*, and to a certain extent, in the *Aging Woman series*, though this reading is less likely from a retrospective perspective, as they speak out and to the other images, which of course they do anyway, regardless of whether we acknowledge that.

Teetering in the Writerly

The writerly text embodies for me a kind of spiritual connection, for it harbours within it the complexity and chaos of life, multiply interwoven, threaded and overlaid in disjunctive, non-symmetrical arrangements. i understand it very much as a periphery, a precipice from which we locate, which is not secure or stable,

where we teeter on the edge, but a simultaneously most enlivening space. i am embodied by it as that which gives us survival, as we become that human embodied by life, in all its complexity and chaos, joy and desire, and in that space we surely save our own lives (Walker, 1984). Many times i think that if i can just follow that thread, latch onto it, then there is hope for more, for living life in ways that embody me differently, and the thread is tenuous and multiple, frayed and rejoined, and sometimes it breaks away and i am dropped into the abyss, where the normative seeks to devour me once again, but i am past production and reproduction, and i now have something akin to a talisman in my armoury. No longer do i recognise myself in the interpellation, no longer do i heed the call, i hear it, of course and acknowledge its intent, yet that recognition does not engender the reproduction. i know this metaphorical place well, intimately, within my very core and fibre, my self and body, 'i am not foreigner', yet i no longer call it home (du Bois, 1920). i left there a very long time ago, slowly edging myself toward that excess that has spoken to me from those first moments when i experienced discomfort at sexist jokes, when i failed to see myself in that narrative, though was expected to reciprocate and laugh at my own misfortune at having been born a lesser man! i harvested that corporeal resistance that has provoked me continuously throughout my life, from those early experiences of oppression, that feeling of discomfort, displeasure, bodily displeasure. Here in my discursive 'homeland' i no longer live by the rules of production and reproduction, and though the interpellation to reproduce myself as desired and desirable 'woman', responsible and nurturing mother, and supportive and faithful wife is constant, i no longer heed these calls, for their narratives do not speak to me in the same way. When they speak i hear the brutality of that voice, the demand to be and in the being to shut down all else, to become that 'glittering husk' where the "knight departed long ago" (Morrison, 1994, p. 14). Its truth claims based on an essential something, a nature, no longer speak to me of something inherently

within, for i know that all is created on the surface and is an interaction with language from our corporeal, and linguistically reproduced, spaces. I close the knights armour for the search for essence is futile and contrived, and i leave its glittering hue to transform into something else, for the surface to be the space upon which we will read the story of the knight, of language, of our selves, for that is where the depth is, not an ideological 'depth', a nothingness that denies us our ability to experience our lives in ways that aren't contained in the names we have come to know ourselves by, but a surface teeming with the possibility of other ways of living, on the excess of our normalised selves. We can allow ourselves to be stifled, our throats gagged by those words of resistance that we cannot in this place articulate, or we can seek out and embody the resistance that is inherently within us, our corporeal armour unlike the knights armour is not a glittering lifeless husk, our body is our means of resistance (Morrison, 1994). It is resistance enlivened, we have the tools of our defence we need just learn how to use them, how to take them up when and where they present themselves. Our bodies resist always, unable to be checked, they flood, dilute and flow through normative understandings of selves and bodies, they leak and seep at the edges of dominant discourses, they are that permeable, struggling, writhing space and they embody us everyday in continual acts of resistance, that we must now seek to embody within our writing, in the language we use, so that the language transforms us and opens up other spaces for transformation. It is just as in the story of the old blind woman and the children, that together they discover that language is not dead, after all, and that together the life force of that language is, indeed in their (and our) hands (Morrison, 1994). Both language and the body are the forces through which we are simultaneously oppressed, and through which we do, and will continue to, resist that oppression and harbour that resistance. We are learning to speak our corporeal voices of resistance, learning to embody the dialect between language and the body that exists anyway. So much of this work is about

learning to hear and speak in unfamiliar ways, using language chosen carefully and reflectively for our purposes, about learning to connect with those connections from which we have become estranged, or never knew, from that spaces we haven't long been able to articulate as valid seeing spaces, for they were severed and once removed from our subjective awareness, though they remained on the periphery of our experiences of self and body, that abject other haunting our recognisable selves, threatening to make us in the process unable to be recognised. And yet when we locate in the margin, in that space of radical creativity, we realise the abject other is us, always was, and we bring it to life every time we deny its force, its zeal, for it is flies on the coat tails of hegemonic discourse, tugging incessantly, mercilessly, at its crisp White demeanour, tarnishing its faux glitter of frivolous and fraudulent truths. Every time the normative self lives it does so in an uneasy relationship with its abject other, and each time we reproduce ourselves in our subjective name, there is transformation in both that self and the other which exceeds recognisability, so that in subtle and persistent ways the abject is being recognised, acknowledged, brought into being, and the normative is thus diluted, diffused, fragmented and made to surrender its claims to ultimate truth and nominal and stable selves.

Our ability to live in ways that exist on the edge of normality, to seek out and harvest those moments of resistance, embodying them in our writing and enlivening them in our bodies, necessarily transform that edge and that is indeed very much a project of our own hands, we must make it our own, for we are located in our own unique positioning on the world, historically, traditionally, familiarly, and critically, each of us brings our own "world", our many and fluid selves, to each encounter, including the encounter that is the writing process. Though we do so immersed in a community of others seeking to bring forth their own narratives of self, and where we are enlivened by the spirit that embodies their work, which speaks to us from the margin and feeds and fuels our own subjective journey. What we find is

something of Freeman's orienting connection that stops us from becoming an unconnected mass of free floating fragments, we find life that is unencumbered by names or language, they are the fleeting glimpses we harvest in writerly texts, for on the edge of the name there is always something else, something more, and I expect that is our orientation, that we are human, that we exist in a world entirely linguistic yet in our corporeality we simultaneously resist this naming and framing for our bodies connect us with that world unencumbered by language, that world which exists outside how we attempt to speak and define it. Our bodies are libidinal and this flow won't be stemmed by language, though of course it will be linguistically contained in certain ways in relation to how it is defined, and known, and given to us as the truth of our bodies with the expectation that we will take up and reproduce ourselves in this ways, with these constraints. But the body remains something of an enigma for language, and attempts to define it absolutely and cease its perpetual movement have been futile, for no matter how many times we take up the name and reproduce the body as objectified other, we live in our libidinal and physical bodies, and everyday they attest to their space as the excess of the normative body. As we live in our bodies in ways that cannot be defined by objectivity, that are part of our subjective experiences, this is akin to a parody of objective bodies, for always our bodies usher forth experiences that deny this once-removed nominal understanding of them. As Bayer and Malone (1996, p. 688) have said the, "body is never as univocal as psychology and the western epistemologies it recapitulates would have it", like women who refuse to be made in the name, who take up marginal spaces at the edge of recognisability and respectability, the body is that perpetual trouble of psychologies normative self for it threatens at each and every turn the stability oscillating around ideological understandings of truth and nature. As hooks notes, "when we give expression ... to those aspects of our identity forged in marginality, we may be seen as 'spectacle.' Yet, ... it is a means by which culture is transformed and not simply

reproduced with different players in the same game" (as cited in Gergen, 2000, p. 95). And I think Sherman's work is all about this bringing to the fore our marginal selves, perhaps that's what defines her work, for she has said herself that it's about locating from where she was, with those images that influenced her from an early age. So the first series portray those stereotypical 1950 Film Stills and then perhaps other aspects of Sherman's marginality are brought forth in the later works, there is the Fairy Tale series which likely was influential, as they were to many of us, to some degree or another, even if it was just to scare the hell out of us with their overarching themes of parental/child separation, and of all sorts of misfortunes preying on children who wandered off the well trodden path, a narrative of staying within the norm, that path well trodden, perhaps. And in the Centrefolds too, but with a twist, for these aren't the sexually inviting shameless centrefolds of male-oriented publications, their poses are submissive, they are anxious, tension pervades the image, they are trapped in the light, the frame, and we watch and wait their response. There is within this space, in this moment before acting the potential to resist, a space to reconfigure ourselves in other ways, outside of the name, to take up space on the edge of 'woman' and negate that in such a situation we must interpret, and read, ourselves and others as overwhelmingly vulnerable. Must we always read this image as suggesting this young woman is most desperately in need of a male protector, to protect her/us from those other lesser-known males that inhabit the real and metaphorical shadows of our lives. And if we know anything about the incidence and prevalence of domestic violence we know how absolutely ironic this is. In Sherman we see many aspects of being 'woman' and being women coming forth, both those dominant and subjugated narratives, in relation to self and body. We see the objective body, in the Sex Pictures, taken to the extreme that its objectification has made it so far removed from our subjective experiences it has become plastic. It surely is, as Baudrillard (as cited in Sherman, 1997) noted, "sex laughing at

itself in its most exact and hence most monstrous form, laughing at its own disappearance beneath its most artificial form" (p. 12). Our bodies as women, have come to be synonymous with male-centred notions of sex and desire, we need to reconfigure these for ourselves, beginning in our bodies and creating our own narratives of bodies, woman, and desire.

Getting Caught in the Web

The writerly text flows ceaselessly in ways we cannot even begin to anticipate, and i most inspired by this sense that in the flow we might be embodied in ways unable to as yet be envisioned, but that take us to those edges of the speakable where we will harvest language and transform that edge, and ourselves, in subtle shifts. i desire that the flow, the proliferation, the interwoven textual space will be embodied, that the sense that this reflects life is enlivened through the writing, and beyond. That the text, like Sherman's bodies and our own, writhe, and at times the intensity of that struggle is overwhelming. i writhe as i write in my body and through language, and sometimes this is harrowing, the intensity of that overwhelms me. i struggle always to nurture in the text as much of the weave, so that bodies and selves are not displaced or delimited, but that in the open intertextual spaces there is room to be other, and room for others to be. Inevitably at times we lose the trail, and the flow meanders and something is lost, for we cannot following it absolutely, it necessary leads to places where we have not yet the words to access. But we mine always, harvesting that language, and edging closer to the life that is excess-ive, not to ever expect to encapsulate it, of course, but with each subtle shift we are embodied by the corporeal flow that our words enable as they probe that life, and suture to release the flow. And always we are moving towards unknown, unable to be known, spaces, we cannot peer down a tunnel towards the light, in the certainty it is there, rather we are seeing pin pricks of light, and we arc towards those flickers, we are embodied by them,

our bodies writhing through the text, against hegemony and in transformation. And with each minute spark we are making a subtle shift, which we struggle to write, that is the endless movement that surges us on.

Unendings and Transformed Beginnings

There will never be an ending that finishes the story in a writerly text, the threads are endless and perpetual, writhing out from the text in an intertextual weave, and at the end i don't expect, and neither should the reader, to get a summation, for in a text that writhes at boundaries and names there will be no summary. To do so would be to bind it and it will not be held, for the language is antithetical to summary, just as it is to try to uncover the writer's true intention. The work is political and the political intention resides at the surface and will be read in ways depending on the readers own geo-political positioning, that is not something i can, or would wish, to control. As Foucault noted, the intellectual is there to see how far this work will take us, you, me, how far it can go to 'liberate thought' from its place in the deep recesses of fossilised languages and sedimented practices (Butler, 1993).

Sherman: Working through the Debris, Picking Up the Ruins

As i think through the body of 'woman', and the transformation i am reminded of the title of Pierre and Pillow's (2000) publication, "Working the Ruins", which is particularly apt in relation to Sherman, whose work exemplifies this resurrection of something from the wasted body that is the legacy of oppression borne in 'woman'. Certainly the work of Sherman, and Basquiat, is about the wounds of language that injures, the pain of disintegration and the glory of rebirth, of taking something from the ruins and having it spawn an other (Butler, 1997). We are driven, enforced by injurious language, down to this place where we are synonymous with nothing but metaphorical dirt, dust, decay, degradation (in

Basquiat this is the disintegration of Black bodies), and then there is a space through which we might be reborn in some other way, an other beginning, a transformation. The end, as we know, is arbitrary, language allows no such finality, no such stability, the end is just an other opportunity for transformation, so there is always resistance, even if we don't take it up, we are never absolutely bound in language.

Embodied Resistance, Unanticipated Surging and Writhing in the Writing

And interesting that until i got to the analysis stage of the Aging Woman Series, the resistance was more academic than embodied. i was struggling to feel it, i wanted to be able to explicate it, to read it in Sherman, but i wasn't entirely sure along the journey that i would be able to read it in an enlivening, embodying way. i worried that it might take the form of academic exercise, once removed from the research object, but telling a story of engagement, not embodied in the way that is living the theory. i was, therefore, surprised and overwhelmed by the way in which resistance did emerge for me, in such an empowering way. As i began to write the Aging Woman analysis i was overcome by the sense of being empowered by these women and by myself as a woman, and 'woman' was transcended and transformed in the process, it was as though in the final analysis, it all came together, or perhaps it all came apart and that was the inspiration, in the fragmentation of 'woman' and femininity through which i position to read the Aging Woman Series. Suddenly the resistance was there and it was unavoidable for me to read it otherwise, i wrote without thinking it through in a systematic way, for the writing was embodied and flowed in a way that was an enlivening of the dialogic between my self, and body and the text (Sherman's art). i experienced myself as submerging within the text, and an emerging of the text within myself, so that the words embodied me as i embodied them. The writing writhed, it pulled and

grasped, it twisted and distorted, it spoke of pain, of suffering, of enlightenment, joy, insight, courage, strength, sustenance, sustainability, fluidity, movement unfettered by hardened text, proliferation at the edges of 'reality' that takes us beyond that 'reality' and allows us to be more than 'woman', more than heterosexual 'woman', more than heterosexual White 'woman', and my body simultaneously writhed in a dialectic with the writing as it too proliferated beyond that denoted as the body of 'woman'.

Speaking from the Body, A Corporeal Engagement

Using our bodies to resist is an important aspect of what i hope to appropriate space in the text to do. Sometimes what i embody as resistance, at this point in my journey of self, may seem like compliance to a norm, yet it too can be resistance. Wielding our bodies, Sherman's corporeal armour as described by Burton, is how we should think of our bodies, not the body, to take up and use as we wish not constrained by norms, but neither constrained by the antithesis of those, for that too is oppressive. We do not resist in ways that are already named and known, thus reinscribing the oppression we seek to undo. To impose a name can have the same injurious effect regardless of whether that name is in discordance with the hegemonic name. Butler has discussed this in relation to homosexuality, where rather than it becoming a liberating term, it can encapsulate again in a name and limit, and control, the outward proliferation and fragmentation of selves. We seek to speak on the edge of the name, thus transforming and appropriating spaces to speak and be differently, this is not about finding another name to replace the old, for the name, the noun, is the framing device and we seek to tear down such farcical boundaries not to reinscribe them under the guise of resistance. i have found that my journey has allowed me to be in my body in ways that are about my engagement with it, through language and in relation to my experiences of self. i have taken up this space of my body and through it i tell

stories that are located and partial, are of multiplicity and fragmentation. As i speak, write and think my body differently i am trans-formed simultaneously by these voices of resistance, embodied, strengthened, invigorated, and inspired. As i inhabit my body i do so from this space appropriated, transformed and uniquely my own seeing space, i do not seek social approval, this is my body and i shall use it as i please. i shall understand my desires, sexual and otherwise, not as those prescribed within normative gender discourse, but from a process of engagement and dialogue as i live my body in language and through theory. Though, of course, sometimes those desires will coincide with normative heterosexual desire, yet when they do i do not feel like i have sold my soul to the devil, that i have gone over to the other side. Instead i remain enlivened within my body, free to be, for still that desire, even though it may align with heterosexual desire, is a process of critical awareness, and sustained and sustaining engagement, it is still dialogic rather than order and presumed. i do not follow it as truth, rather i understand it in my body. After all, our pleasures, our very desires, are made available and known to us within the name 'woman', and maybe we have grown to like some of them, maybe we don't want to entirely throw them all away, yet when we are critically aware of our subjectivity, both that made in the name and that which resides on the edge, we can go forth and make our own engaged choices. hooks (1994) tells a story of her choice to have a relationship with a much younger man who was in another relationship, an act that was no doubt informed, conscious and critically aware which are all aspects of taking up political agency, speaking politics and enlivening them through our bodies, taking up the spaces of bodies to speak and transform them in other ways, not simply following a prescriptive and pre-known path, but knowing the path and choosing to take the unmarked goat track for we if take only the well trodden path we miss the opportunity to see, the wondrous view that the less travelled path may hold for us. Sometimes when doing critical work it can seem to impose a heavy load, for we are taking on the weight of

hegemonic discourse, the might of Western ontology, and there will be much resistance to change, we will be shut down at each and every turn, but still we will niggle through the cracks and crevices on the surface, at the periphery, and appropriate spaces to whisper through those cavities. We live this altered seeing space, we cannot see in the old ways, we have metaphorically left home and when, and if, we return there is not the familiarity of the name, the story has fallen from grace, for we know that upon which it is foundered and we can no longer embody it in our daily lives.

Pleasuring Bodies, Enjoying and Joissance in Theory

Yet we should not in this transforming space relinquish pleasure, for it should be that jouissance that Barthes spoke of, for it is inspirational and i am continuously embodied by that. Here in this space appropriated on the margin, we do not have to live by the rules, for we are immersed within multiplicity and fragmentation, there is no normative, no truth. We inhabit a space where truth is understood as relational and so our ethical stance is altered to, for we understand language as that "act with consequences", and when we speak from our bodies we do so in relation to other bodies, so that our speaking does not drop a latch that constrains their coming to voice, that contains their bodies. And this resonates with my experience in the cemetery that was discussed earlier. i am inspired by hooks story of her relationship, described in the preceding paragraph, for it throws something of a curve-ball into the writing, it destabilises it somewhat, which is what the writerly text embodies, this inability to be named and summarised into obscurity. hooks (1994) describing of her experience negates the threat of the solidification of the text, it stops the language, the name, hardening again, shaking us out of a possible lapse into linearity again, where we envision the track and there is a risk of overlooking the threads that bleed out from it. This is not a space from which to write the universal self, that well travelled path of hegemonic

reproduction, rather it is the space from which to write the contradiction and the tension that embodies our actual experiences of self. As we write in our contradictory selves and writhing bodies, the text is embodied by this non-conformity. And as we tell our stories we must remember that this too is a space of enjoyment, if *jouissance*, it should not be a weight, not just a labourious journey, though at times it is laboured and necessarily so, but it should enliven us in pleasurable ways too, and we must flesh these out and speak them, for they transform the text and us, as our "mana" voice whispers through the language. This is not to envision the periphery as some sort of free-for-all, hedonistic wonderland, where pleasure outstrips ethics. As discussed already, we locate in relation to others, and in our shared space of the self as located, and only ever partially known (Butler, 2001). As we story our lives differently, including our corporeal stories, those acts that might have been known as normative transform. For instance, to have a Brazilian can be either be understood as a male-centred heterosexual desire in relation, or the internalisation of those desires within 'woman', that to be 'woman' we take up a male voyeuristic space in regards to our own bodies and we draw pleasure from that space, and simultaneously pain, yet we might hold onto some of these pleasures in our relationships, as Bartky has said we might derive something from these desires that we don't necessarily want to discard. If the pressure to not have a Brazilian is also prevalent, then that is another constraint, the same other than it appears to bat for the other team. The point i wish to make is that any decision we make in relation to our bodies and selves must be a conscious choice, made from that space of critical awareness and political agency, for these are the grounds upon which we make these decisions. They aren't made to please our oppressors, whatever garb they wear. We enjoy certain aspects of our bodies, for whatever reasons, and to throw everything away can plunge us into an other oppression, where we try to live ethically, yet in ways that aren't about the care of the self. This is an ethics of an almost religious

character, and we do not seek to impose regulations for reaching the promised land, for Eden here is negotiated daily, within the rigours and ecstasies of life. We need to give the ecstasies their voice, to let jouissance flow through our bodies and for the dialect to be enlivened in the language we use. Here in the margin, that space of critical awareness and reflection, we must continually reflect upon our selves in order that we aren't oppressed by an other set of norms and rules of behaviour, we seek to free up the name, to fragment the self and body and to harvest language that does not enforce, and thus embodies life.

Speaking Bodies in Located Spaces, Telling our Own Stories

As 'woman' we have taken up the space of bodily control, containment, deportment, literally locating in tight spaces, legs crossed, taking up little room (Bartky, 1990). Our bodies have been something to control, not to make a spectacle of, unless it is that which pleasures our male voyeurs. The voice that has traditionally spoken the body of 'woman' is male, the expert knower is male and thus the female voice has been relegated to spaces of inferiority, of silence and of invisibility. We must seek now to become audible, to tell our own stories from our personally political spaces. We resist the body object, and take back spaces to speak our bodies differently, from spaces embodied by language that transgresses 'boundary' and negates universal of truths. Locating in bodies enables us to think, speak and write them in other ways, and the dialect flows back and forth, threading through and transforming our bodies in a ceaseless movement that is thus enlivened in the language we use. It has taken time, and consciously so, to speak my body rather than the body, i have avoided 'my' for much of the work. Yet at this point of corporeal and subjective transformation, i am enabled to speak 'my' body, immersing it, allowing the dialogue to wash over me. This can never be a dislocated, purely academic exercise, a symbolic transferral of the terms, and 'the' for 'my'. It is, and must be, more than that, for we live it to the

full daily and it is that embodiment of 'my', that i take up the space of thinking on, and through, my body differently, that this is a space i have been moving towards, that i have struggled with, that has been hard fought in a battle marked by ebbs and flows, one needs to feel the surge of 'my' before it can become conversant in the text, or at least before that conversing embodies, and enlivens the writing, bringing through my bodily voice. If this is not so, when i use 'my' in an academic and objectively detached way, i simultaneously inscribe again those subjective inscribed boundaries , i do not allow it to proliferate, the body is still the "bounded in other", and my own experience of my body neither proliferates. We must come to this space of consciousness of our bodies, of embodying them with the fluidity of life, and it is necessarily a journey that takes time, for we have learnt so well the lessons of normative patriarchy, of oppressive discourse, we know intimately and have internalised that our bodies cannot be known from that space, that we must seek outside for their truths. They are neither ours to know, to use, nor to wield, we learn to conform as we take up the normalised self, and if we do not we risk sacrificing our very recognisability, that voice that we must initially speak from, if only to transform how we might speak (Butler, 2001; hooks, 1990). And in the transformation it sounds different, it sounds strange, the tension can be heard and sensed like a persistent and tenuous irritation. And then as we transform our subjective awareness the strangeness becomes that which we have always known but never questioned, "the familiar now appears strange" and we cannot look upon it with the same eyes, the 'I', the centre of our world, the individual, has shifted, and we now see our selves (multiple and varied) within a wider context, a wider social and historical context that brings with it ways of being, ways of knowing, and versions of truth that take up the spaces of the real and the unquestionable and are condensed into normative prescriptions of subjectivity, of validity, of recognisable personhood. And as we see them for what they are, an ideology, a guise to conceal their secret, we uncover their ultimate

truth, that they are not a truth, not a reality, not even normality, but entirely human, and no 'fact or fancy' can conceal this any longer.

And yet as they preach and strut and shout and threaten,
crouching as they clutch at rags of facts and fancies to hide their
nakedness, they go twisting, flying by my tired eyes and I see
them ever stripped,—ugly, human. (du Bois, 1920, pp. 22-3)

Enlivening Bodies, Writhing in Texts

We need to remember that the bodies we speak of, and transform, are our own. And what we seek to do is enliven them from those spaces of inanimacy, of objective detached other of the mind. As we take up 'woman' we simultaneously understand our bodies in specific and recognisable ways, they are materialised in that process of reproduction and thus controlled and contained in that name. The body we seek to enliven is that which can simultaneously embody us, that we can weave through the text in the language we use, that we can envision and be embodied by its space of intimately personal but absolutely political. We will "wield our corporeal armour", a most invigorating and embodying way to speak our bodies. Like Sherman's 'Aging Woman', they take up that space of centre stage, not only a voyeuristic space, but maybe that too, for perhaps we like to be looked at, though now the looking does not reproduce us in the name, we are embodied by that resistance. It is too a political space, a space where the body whispers through the text for the language we harvest is metaphorical and poetic, and seeks to embody this corporeal rhythm in the writing. Here in the writerly text, bodies writhe and as they do they thread, intertwine and immerse, here there is space to speak our bodies. Here the dialogic impregnates the words and we are born again in that void between life and language that the body is part of, and we writhe, literally and physically, to bring it forth with every utterance. In those moments when the voice of our body whispers through the text the words are embodied, we are enlivened, and it is something akin to a sensation that might be

like a wick lit on a firecracker, a spark ignited, running along a thread, but in this case the journey isn't known in advance, and it multiplies, frays, splits off and runs in many directions simultaneously and the result is spontaneous, expected, envisioned, unknown, imagined, on the precipice of the imaginary. It is absolute proliferation which of course it is anyway, yet now we are aware of this, we embody it, we live that proliferation, it is that which gives our lives meaning, which we cannot entirely think or write, but that we continuously strive towards (Morrison, 1994).

As we struggle to wrestle back the control of our own bodies, to tell our partial and located stories from our corporeal spaces let us not reinscribe an other oppression by assuming that all practices that women engage in are necessarily subjugating. And certainly we can think of a lot of the things that women do with their bodies as being about male control, about male desires, about heterosexuality predicated on notions of male sexuality and desire. We should not take away women's agency by delineating practices that are inherently good and feminist, or bad and feminism. Whether to have a Brazilian wax for instance, can be read either as an instance of subjugation to, and internalisation of, the male gaze, or a reflective and consciously considered choice that some women make. When we fail to take into account agency in this way, we negate that agency, we again tell other women's stories from our own located and partial spaces. And we again instigate a binary of good and bad, and give meaning to practices in relation to whether they are considered privileged, in this case, feminist or subjugated, that is, feminine. Anything that enforces in this way is akin to hegemonic discourse for it names and defines and we must reflect always that we are not simply reversing the binaries, rather than immersing them. The practices we engage in will be multiple, and the reasons for engaging in these too will be multiple, to collapse them into a binary is to enforce and oppress, with just the boundaries of the 'normative' shifted.

As women we must think through how to use our "corporeal armour" and i think Sherman is a commentary on this, i agree with Burton that Sherman uses the body in an aggressive way. And even though initially it might be somewhat easier to read the *Film Still* and *Centerfolds* as being about vulnerable and victimised female bodies, those that are oppressed under an all-seeing, panopticon-like male gaze, there are multiple readings and as we look back from the latter to the former a transformation occurs that was pre-empted all along, and i find that last works that i have looked at in the series now difficult to read any other way, and as i go backwards there is an aggression that permeates the entire body of work, an aggressive body, a wielded body, a taking up of bodily spaces that denote the entirety of the name, that dilute its subjective hold on us, a freeing up of our subjectivity to be more than that given to us in 'woman'. The body of 'woman' is here but it is transformed, it occupies an other space and if it does then 'woman' must give up its privileged place of the nominal, stable and enduring truth of the self, and with it the body as objective other, and nothing more. Our ability to think nominally, to think in terms of truth or falsity, to think in binaries has shifted and now the divisions are blurred, and meaning is allowed to smudge the boundaries of language and of us. Our bodies can be the not "bounded in there" thing, for they never were but now we seek the language that might embody that realisation. Our subjective spaces of self and body have been wrestled from the dominant hegemonic voice and made to speak differently, and we understand this voice as our own unique sound, located within our geopolitical and corporeal space, and as our body writhes and we bring forth that writhing in our talk and text we transform those spaces too, so that others might speak their own subjective truths, their own bodily selves.

The resistance we seek, and find, is like Foucault's idea of the capillary nature of power and resistance, they are plural and multiple, like a capillary, they spread out. Like social networks, such as facebook, the proliferation is unstoppable, spreads out, the contact is multiple and fevered, we have learnt to fear this proliferation in ourselves, in others, this profusion of meaning, this unstoppable force that we struggle always, in our daily lives, to contain. But the force remains even in our best efforts to shut it down, the movement continues, the impetus never resides, the most we can ever do is delude ourselves that this isn't the case. Language and the body are defined by movement, the body is 'unbounded', we must relinquish to this unboundedness, there are no boundaries, and those we attribute are entirely artificial, useful, and sometimes necessary, for purposes of analysis and control perhaps, but artificial none-the-less (Spivak, 1989). This fear of that which is unable to be stilled, the feverish movement that language and the body entails, is particularly prevalent when we think of women's bodies. And this is, surely to do with secretion and flow, bodies that leak and seep and do so spontaneously, there is a presumption that women's bodies are more likely to be involved in unsolicited secretion and flow, though of course in reality, men's bodies too flow and secrete, yet there is perhaps not the degree of analysis and documentation, aka control applied to these outpourings, historically women's bodies have been denigrated, even destroyed based upon this inability to be contained absolutely, you only need think of the burning of witches as evidence of the fear that is associated with the uncontainable bodies of women. Interestingly, we have been made to understand ourselves through our bodies, at the level of our bodies while at the same time in a negative way, that these bodies that we as women are more closely aligned with are demonic, are that which relinquishes us to the devalued side of the binary, the non-rational, emotional, physical aspects of subjectivity. Our relationship with our bodies is given to us as wholly negative, and our responsibility is to control and contain this unleashing, which is unpredictable and for which we must be on guard,

we internalise this dominant discourse that is given to us each time we take up and reproduce ourselves as 'woman', that we are the devalued other, and we must control and contain this otherness, else it wreak havoc on the entire foundation of Western thought and knowledge. It is time we wreaked that havoc using these bodies that must smudge the binary divides, murky the cognitive waters of the rational mind, revealing its inherent irrationality. We aren't rational, our lives aren't linear or progressive (in the traditional sense of that word), our bodies cannot be contained in words or physically, both in body and self we will always proliferate and flow even when that movement goes unacknowledged, unconsciously thought or written. We are instead, narratives in process, traces of before and the proliferation of the multiple paths to come, we are like Morrison said visionaries, envisioning that which we can glimpse fleetingly, momentarily from the periphery and trying to enword that vision without disembodiment, and ourselves, without hardening it and making it artificially stable, our bodies like the veins, the capillaries that run through them have no edge and the capillaries that are a metaphor for this proliferation of meaning transcend from our bodies and into our language, through our talk and text, a surging forth of that which arcs us toward meaning but does not close that off simultaneously. We seek a language that opens up spaces, that always probes at the ideological boundaries of selves and bodies, that permeates and thus breaks down binary and continually reflects on its re-emergence in other forms.

Gathering Strength

i think having been through and back, i find that in reading Sherman i have the experience of a gathering of strength, a shoring up our resistance, a pre-emption of a fight and then i can find within the work the way forward, the tools with which to battle, and of course, they are there already within our selves but we just need to learn how to take them up, our tools are and always will be language

and the body, and these will transform the self, which is how i read Sherman, for me this infuses the work. The transformation of the self, my self, other selves, through language and our bodies, both inherently unable to be pinned down and made stable, nominal, normalised, both defiant. Language refuses to be halted in the sign, for it always is under siege from its persistent need to defer away from itself to obtain some sort of meaning, and the body defies absolute and final materialisation for it exists across that experiential gap between language and life, neither wholly material nor wholly physical. We "need to learn in our bodies to speak in ways we don't yet know how to name" (or something like that), and i read this in Sherman, our bodies aren't this corporeal add-on or other of the mind, they aren't the objective other that we should know only at a distance and in that knowing continue to contain them. Our bodies are an important weapon, an important part of the armoury with which we will fight oppression, we need them to for they are that space where history and discourse would quash us most completely if we did not shore up our resistance, our bodies resist this total denigration into hegemonic discourse, they retain a voice that will not be completely silenced and it is this which we seek to bring forth at every utterance.

Spectacular Women

Like Gergen (2000), i refuse to be the antispectacle. Like Sherman's Aging Women i refuse the recesses of the frame, the invisibility reserved for women post-reproduction, post-sexual objectification. i remain in the frame, not to be named and framed, but to name my self as i go along, so this is not about universality, nominal and stable selves, but about fluid, flowing, seeping, leaking, abject, excessive, re-volting woman. It is about that body we barely know how to name, but we know we must try anyway, again and again, for each time we move, transform and resist. The transformation i experience is locating in my body in other ways, that do not negate it as objective other, that allow me to feel strong

and enlivened, insurged by the words, and images, of others that inspire me along this journey. It is, as hooks (1990) said, that "when we give expression in academic settings to those aspects of our identity forged in marginality, we may be seen as 'spectacle'" yet this is the "means by which culture is transformed and not simply reproduced with different players in the same game" (as cited in Gergen, 2000, p. 95). And we come to inhabit that space of spectacle as resistance, to be the spectacle is to speak in other ways, to speak our bodily voice, i inhabit and celebrate the spectacle that is the transformation of woman. The spectacle that transforms man too, for he knows himself, and is known, in relation to the other, 'woman', and as we become woman, parentheses stripped, body revealed in its corporeally aggressive splendor, man must stand in wonder, aghast at what is a sight to behold. The children in Morrison's (1994) story ask the old woman: "Tell us what it is to be a woman so that we may know what it is to be a man. What moves at the margin" (p. 28). Here woman moves at the margin as she razes the binaries, washes over them, diluting and negating his privileged place. And that which he most feared, the corporeal, the body of woman, he must now face as it bleeds through entangling him in an intertextual weave, disorienting, disfiguring, denouncing his-tory and reconfiguring it, him, and woman in other ways. We cannot tell him what it is to be a woman for it is perpetually in motion, and we cannot name it absolutely, nor would we want to, he cannot know himself by virtue of what we lack for the binary no longer holds a truth for either. 'Truth' is that privilege or oppression we no longer have.

Living and Loving the 'things with no names'

Language alone protects us from the scariness of things with no names. (Morrison, 1994, p. 28)

And here in this space of subjective transformation, what is scary is not that which has no name, but that which would enforce a name. What we should have feared most as women, was not the unknown stranger lurking in the shadows of the Film Stills, nor the male gazing down upon us, looming over us, encapturing and containing us in the Centerfolds, but 'woman'. That is where oppression lies and from whence resistance will come, from this critical journey of self, which necessarily is also an engagement with Western ontology, psychology, and the creation of subjectivities and hegemonic discourse. As we become woman, parentheses sheared away, the fear does a kind of transfer, and Man must recoil from the uncontainable woman, that he most feared but for which the name gave him an arbitrary comfort and 'security' in privilege, but now the ideology is undone and we see that privilege ugly and human. And as woman emerges reconfigured and reconfiguring, Man too must, necessarily, reconfigure, for he can no longer be stabilised by foundations of objective truth, or essential 'woman', they are a fallacy and we must speak now our other 'truths' amongst the debris of 'woman'. Herein, as i have engaged with Sherman from my space of communal compilation, surrounded by the shared breaths of so many others who inspire and surge me on, i have come to embrace my unknowingness, that i cannot name who i am at any specific moment and say that this is 'I' absolute and stable. It is only when we acknowledge that we do not know our truths, for there are none to be known. Our knowledge is necessarily partial, fleeting and located and once we learn to embrace this we stop searching for a self that would hold steady the tension and conflict in our lives as we try to live 'woman'. And just as importantly, we stop trying to bind others in the same way. And freed of the name we can create ourselves anew, our own particularised ethics of the self. Let us be inspired by Sherman's 'Aging Woman' and take the stage, at any age!

Scalding and Surturing in Language

As i think in this space of texts that remain alive, unable to be prematurely closed down, summarised, stopped, but instead ceaselessly writhe, enlivened by the flow of my body, speaking of fragmented and proliferating selves, i am reminded again of metaphor and its ability to punctuate the text in ways that enliven it, that embody us with a surge towards that 'place where meaning may lie" (Morrison, 1994, p. 20). Again, i come back to the harvesting of language and that this is the struggle that most permeates the work, language en-fleshed with bodies, language that is able to scald and suture, that brands and leaves a mark, a trace. i have been inspired by Morrison, hooks, Freeman, and many others, who similarly mine for language that denies nominal and universal selves, that refuses to be encapsulated and shut down. On the periphery i harvest that language that will leave a scald, that is a brandishing that burns, like a slap we are awakened from our hegemonic slumber, but it is too, a lightening that frees the hegemonic weight, an enlightenment for in the awakening we seek other ways to be the self. It is like Barthes text of bliss which is a kind of jouissance, possibly to the point of boredom, like a pain of an intensity that immerses it a kind of pleasure.

Jouissance is the realisation of a release, a freeing up of body and self, a moving into the margin and being engulfed by the ventilation that the margin embodies. i am embodied in this way as i write, and read, the writerly text, this sense of being washed over by many discourses, but we still breathe, we are not drowned by them for they cannot contain or engulf, they flow through our bodies, in the text and we are enlivened by that flow. This is, i imagine, something close to a spiritual experience, a freedom that ethereal, something you might experience in nature, a kind of dislocation from the self that is a freeing up of certainty and presumption, and letting that go, being embodied by this lightening. Though it is difficult to language that feeling, perhaps it is a bit like when it rains after a long dry spell,

and the fusion of dry grass and warmth and moisture, emits a peculiarly unique smell that resonates with a kind of 'ahhhh', an intense kind of pleasure, a release, as the parched land engulfs the rain, and we can embody that kind of release, that engulfing of something else, something that is both pleasure and pain. A writerly text embodies this striving for something other, a freedom from oppression, from the dominant hegemonic voice, it invokes that writhing as our bodies release that tension that the name imposes, as they are embodied by the dialect with language and we connect with the body in ways that make us unable to think of ourselves in the same corporeal terms, the terms that the name defines. Morgan (2004) does this especially well when she encourages us, through her writing, to think physically, to think through the body, something that is totally the antithesis of what we have been taught in terms of cognition. To think those corporeal spaces, to bring them in, because we have to, otherwise we too will leave the body out, even when that isn't our intention, thinking the body through the language we have is a complex and labourious task, for language will in its metaphysical binaries, shut the body out at every turn, and reinsert the objectified sexualised body of 'woman', or the biological body of science and medicine. And so as we write we have to be continually thinking through this body, that is at the same time being simultaneously shut out, and Morgan (2005) does this by having libidinal bodies and secreting bodies flow through the text, and thinking bodies outside the Cartesian split, allowing that to be healed and to think of body and self immersing, as they do anyway in our daily lives. Thinking through the body in this way is absolutely imperative in this work, for the body is that disruptive space, that tension that we must embody in the language we use. Which is why i guess Barthes suggested that body might be that 'mana' word, that which was so utterly disruptive that it could shake the very foundation of hegemonic discourse from its sedimentation of repeated narratives, masquerading as truth. Which resonates too with Spivak's (1989) understanding of the body as unable to be bounded, as having no edge, and

being unable to be spoken absolutely in any way. Our bodies are that upon which oppression is written, the site of the struggle to name us completely, as we bring them forth in the text and allow them to speak, we transform how we can experience our bodies and selves. This resonates with Kristeva (as cited in Allen, 2003) who spoke of the geno-text, as that which may get us to the margin, that can access that space on the edge of dominant hegemony, for it is "felt in certain texts which resist the dominance of the Symbolic Order" (p. 118).

Death of the Author and Birth of the Reader

Have we come to that space where we can we say without any doubt as to the answer:

What does it matter who's speaking?(Foucault, 1977, p. 138)

Measuring Lives in Language

Have i let the bird die, or does it live in the text, through me, in those open spaces where the weave is loose and other fragments can be woven in? The bird of course, is that which Morrison refers to, as language, and i reflect here upon whether i have used it well, responsibly, in ways that do not close down meaning, that do not shut a latch on life. As i open my hands, relinquishing the bird to fly, to proliferate forth, will it do so, or does it remain still, unyielding - dead. Have i breathed enough air into the text, created enough space for the bird to breathe, to be given a life that i do not delineate or control, for my part is done and now it must fly free, i do not presume to own it, its life has left my hands and i must relinquish it. i have given it as much freedom as i could, i have struggled body and self, to let that bird live, and now i must accept that it will seek out spaces that i did not intend, nor imagine, and that others may, and will, take it up, and be embodied by its freedom or try to contain it again. Either way it is out of my

hands, i have done my best to give it life and now necessarily i must set it free, we all need, and struggle, for freedom.

Saving the Sacrificial Child

i love the story hooks (1989) tells of the child Gloria (herself, of course), when she asks if it was necessary to kill the "Gloria of my childhood", so the woman she is today could emerge. And instead concludes that through her journey she had actually rescued Gloria. This, of course, refers to bringing back in that history, those past oppressions that we must remember, those painful memories that we often try to forget, or at least to recall as infrequently as possible. But in fact, we need to remember and recall for that is part of the transformation of self, we need to own those legacies no matter how painful, or uncomfortable, this initially may be. For eventually we move to spaces where they are part of the story, necessary, nurturing even, for the child wasn't always lonely, there was too happiness and unless we reconfigure that child we may not see those other spaces. And perhaps even more importantly, the loneliness fuelled resistance. For when we do not fit we must ask why, and keep asking why we have this sense of a disjuncture between our selves and the name. i am embodied by my own child, that like hooks, i wished to silence, to not speak those painful memories, the feeling of difference and estrangement, and now those feelings have been transformed into poignant memories, for they were the beginnings of resistance and as Barthes has reminded me, when we see in other ways, even when this isn't articulated, as in childhood, it can be a lonely place. At this unended ending, i embrace the sense of disconnection i had as a child, for it leads me here to this space on the margin. It is a place of struggle, but it also enriches and nurtures, i am transformed as i live on the periphery of the hegemonic self. Like hooks, i have woven into my narrative those early experiences, i have given them voice, and they transform me in that process of remembering and reconfiguring the self.

Living in Theory and Embodying Metaphor: Enlivening the Flow of Bodies in the Text

i have, along the way of this journey, been simultaneously embodied by the razing of 'woman' and by the healing of Cartesian severing. i have dipped my toes in the waters of excess that flow on the peripheries of the name. i have let blood flow, and immersed in an others bleeding. i have been awash in jouissance. i am in a sense cleansed, for 'woman' has been exorcised, the body of 'woman' relinquished, and i am renewed as i reconfigure and transform as other, as excess, as corporeal, as woman but no longer encapsulated, the parentheses have gone and i am free from the constraints of that hegemonic name. i have saved my life ... of that i am sure. In the reading of this text, as they locate in the interwoven and unbounded spaces, i hope most sincerely, most passionately, that others may be inspired to begin their own life saving journeys.

i will end this journey, which is, as always an other beginning, with the ever inspiring words of Toni Morrison (1994), which seem to offer a most appropriate departure.

Look. How lovely it is, this thing we have done - together (p. 30).

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