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Performance art is an effective site for the exploration of a feminist discourse, the female psyche, and an explosive space in which to challenge the status quo

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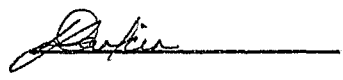
TITLE:

PERFORMANCE ART IS AN EFFECTIVE SITE FOR THE EXPLORATION OFA FEMINIST DISCOURSE, THE FEMALE PSYCHE, AND AN EXPLOSIVE SPACE IN WHICH TO CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO

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SCHOOL OF DRAMATIC ART
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This Research Report is submitted in partial fulfillment
of
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in the School of Dramatic Art,
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I DO HEREBY STATE THAT THE CONTENTS OF THIS RESEARCH REPORT ARE SOLELY OF MY OWN ENDEAVOUR.

SIGNED: 

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INTRODUCTION

This research report proposes that Performance Art is an effective site for the exploration of feminist discourse and the female psyche, and an explosive space in which to challenge the status quo. This paper uses the Performance Art piece *Naked on a Goat*, choreographed by Robin Orlin, to illustrate and examine this proposition. Performance Art as a genre allows female Performance Artists the space to explore an alternate discourse to that of mainstream culture. It is here that female artists are able to express and confront their experiences, emotions and concepts with regard to being "woman". This in turn then gives the space to challenge specific issues within the status quo, whilst exploring their own discourse.

In this introduction:

- I will explore a definition for the medium Performance Art
- I will explain why Robin Orlin's *Naked on a Goat* is used to examine the above proposition.
- I will suggest how *Naked on a Goat* positions a feminist discourse with a racial one in the context of South Africa today.

- I will examine how the work broaches psychological themes that are particular to the female psyche (in situations of inequality and domination).

WHAT IS PERFORMANCE ART?

Performance Artist, Robin Orlin, describes Performance Art:

> It is about taking art theory and placing it four-dimensionally. So you can come to it from a background of dance, theatre, fine arts, even architecture (and even film and video), because all of those disciplines deal with the notion of theory. (I don't know that dance does, I wish it did; it is a pity more choreographers don't.) There are no rules, absolutely no laws. There is no language at all and if I have built up a language then it is because I come from a particular background. Every artist develops their own style. I wish more artists were able to break out of their own style. Basically, there are no rules and no language. You can sit in the middle of a room and talk with your audience and that is performance art. In the same way, you can take your audience into a forest and throw stones at them and that is performance art.[1]

Performance Art seems to have been the progressive step taken by artists to resist and transgress their own disciplines. It has been evident that some artists become more and more self-reflexive within their work until they are even confronting the very medium they are working in. If their ideological base confronts and challenges aspects of the society they live in, they often choose to work in a style and form that resists classic artistic

[1] Appendix, p3

conventions. This in itself is a way of challenging the accepted "norm". Orlin says:

> There is no such thing as the norm. Something only becomes 'normal' or a 'norm' when it is digestible. The minute it is not digestible there is no norm. And there is no norm. We are all completely different in our experiences and who we are in space. That is why Performance Art is so interesting, and why I personally get sucked back into it again and again. It doesn't have the restrictions dance has and I have been able to build up a whole dialogue within this mode of expression.[2]

WHY *NAKED ON A GOAT* IS UTILISED IN EXAMINING THIS RESEARCH REPORT'S PROPOSITION

Robin Orlin is one of many female Performance Artists in South Africa today, but she is, perhaps the best known Performance Artist in the country and has built up a following of fans and critics. Her work is extremely controversial as it defies so much of our conventional understanding of dance and theatre and, more importantly, she challenges particular ideologies ingrained within our culture. She defies the dance world. and pushes the boundaries in the performer/audience relationship in order to challenge ideologies in the status quo.

Little academic investigation has followed Orlin's work. I believe Orlin's work makes a courageous contribution to a feminist discourse in South Africa today. She contributes to feminist and performance art theories, in that her work, *Naked on a Goat*, can be read as an enactment of the

[2] Appendix, p6

critique of Western feminism. It is this critique that has been leveled from women of colour and women in the Third World. It is, therefore, relevant to deal with a Performance Artist whose work has evolved out of a Third World predicament. Orlin's work can be understood as feminist work because it explores the female psyche, which investigates the psychological and social effects a male-dominated culture has had on South African women. Her work is particularly South African and relevant in a South African social critique because her work is placed in the context of life in Johannesburg, South Africa, in the late 1990's.

THIS FEMINIST DISCOURSE IS POSITIONED WITH A RACIAL ONE AS IT IS CONTEXTUALISED IN SOUTH AFRICA TODAY

Naked on a Goat deals with racial issues that have occurred as a result of apartheid. Orlin shows how a racial discourse is intrinsically tied to the problems of a feminist one. *Naked on a Goat* gives the woman and the black woman in particular a chance to express herself. The production addresses the issues of class and race, and does not focus exclusively on the category 'woman'. Orlin challenges us to understand that woman and race are both a destabilised category[3], and that these identities and the

[3] An identity that is not easily represented and is often misrepresented. When discourse is self-constructed, it may often cross boundaries and challenge the status quo. These identities are not easily categorised; they are unstable and can work to destrabilise even it's own representation.

issues of their identifications are overlaid. The categories can never be separated. This in itself is a challenging notion.

The overlaying of the race and gender issue is coupled with its effects on the individual female psyche. It is then, through a broad understanding of the process of collective identifications (like class and race and gender), that Orlin is able to interrogate the individual psyche of the woman. *Naked on a Goat* is thus a psychological enterprise as well as a performance art enterprise. Within this psychological reading of *Naked on a Goat*, is the manner in which the performers express their experience of embodiment. The experience of embodiment relies on the way in which their bodies are biologically inscribed as "woman" and "black". This is the place where the female psyche and the female body meet. The piece explores how the collective process of identification affects the individual female psyche and this is not always pleasant. In my opinion, *Naked on a Goat* is the perfect example of how Performance Art can be of use to a feminist discourse, especially in light of how Orlin's work depicts the status quo, which has subjugated and affected the female psyche.

BROACHING THE FEMALE PSYCHE

In *Naked on a Goat* Orlin is concerned with the effects of gender domination on the female's psyche. She therefore plays with the

unconscious impulses and wounding of the female psyche as much as her discourse addresses feminist questions and social taboos. Psychologist and writer Jessica Benjamin is useful in this inquiry because she identifies and deals with gender domination and its effects on the female psyche. Many psychologists have done so, but Benjamin's work is exemplary in that she posits an alternative. She resists the idea that gender domination has to be an inevitable cycle and much of her work is focused on possible solutions within the dynamics of gender relationships specifically located within the female psyche.[4]

Naked on a Goat can be seen as a show of the "Politics of Transgression"[5]. In 1997, the members of the cast were almost stoned in Poland because her work had touched such sensitive issues, exploding taboos and refusing silence. Orlin deals with the psyche, taboos, the body and political concepts emerging from the private domain in such a way that it is shocking, challenging and even frightening for the audiences. Her notions of embodiment and engendering, this report will argue, are dangerous to our western paradigm of thinking because they transgress and challenge it. Orlin's focus on the relationship between gender and

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[4] Benjamin, J, The Bonds of Love. New York: Virago. (1988).

[5] Leslie C. Jones speaks about the privileging of the feminine in a transgressive discourse and how this now means guarantees of liberation. She defines transgressive art practice as one that chooses to explore viscerality and the language of the body in non-traditional forms and materials. More importantly, it is transgressive because it challenges the boundaries of representations that occur within the dominant culture and ideologies. It allows for gaps within mainstream discourses and refutes traditional modes of representations and ideologies.
Jones, Leslie C, "Transgressive Femininity: Art and Gender in the Sixties and Seventies" in Abject Art: Repulsion and Desire in American Art. NY: Witney Museum of Modern Art (1994).

race, and on sexuality and race, pushes the social boundaries in form and content.

CHAPTER ONE

Chapter One focuses on how *Naked on a Goat* is a feminist discourse. It explains that the ideology of a work lies in both its form and content. This opens space for a discussion as to how certain feminist theories influence the form and the content, making this piece a feminist discourse. This Chapter explores how Orlin challenges the status quo from a feminist perspective dealing with the following aspects.

Part One: Feminist Discourse and The Status Quo

This chapter explores a broad description of *Naked on a Goat*. It examines Orlin's inspirational sources for the production and looks at how the production challenges theatrical conventions. Orlin presents the domestic worker as the princess Salome and she examines how the domestic worker has become an invisible presence. This in turn raises questions of representation and leads to an examination of a feminist discourse; and how it can be utilised in challenging the Symbolic Order. Orlin also uses *Naked on a Goat* to challenge the status quo by challenging theatrical

convention. In this way it is possible to see how her ideology is contained within the form as well as the content of *Naked on a Goat*.

Part Two: Oppressive Mimesis

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this chapter explores the notion of oppressive mimesis. This is done by examining how and that women are defined through a male subjectivity. A connection is drawn to the mimicry seen in the Theatre and a mimicry that engenders. This chapter proposes that gender is socially inscribed and it examines: gender social conditioning; the silencing of girls; the good girl syndrome; and the absent woman. Lastly the theoretical framework examines how the character Salome is utilised as a mimetic tool.

A textual analysis of the production's use of mimesis and mimicry, discusses how *Naked on a Goat* challenges the status quo. It also examines the "Dance of the Seven Veils" and how the production utilises a multitude of female texts. This leads into an exploration regarding how Orlin uses domestic objects in the production's game of oppressive mimesis.

Part Three: Feminist Mimesis

The feminist mimesis is discussed with regard to the body which becomes "re-membered". Orlin reclaims the body through the hysteric, the "true-real", and the abject. This can be understood as the Politics of Transgression. This section, The Politics of Transgression, explores the terms the True-Real and the Hysteric, and discusses the hysteria used in *Naked on a Goat*. It also reviews what is known as the Abject and how the production twists signification through costumes and props.

CHAPTER TWO

Chapter Two ventures into how *Naked on a Goat* is an exploration into the female psyche. It pinpoints certain psychological themes expressed throughout the piece and utilises Benjamin's work to illuminate them. Benjamin is a productive theorist with regard to Orlin's concerns and her work helps us to understand how the status quo has subjugated and affected the female psyche. Benjamin expounds on the experience of embodiment. Her understanding of relationality implies the possibility that embodiment comes through subjectivity at the point where different forces of power meet. It is thus interesting to integrate notions of the body and embodiment with that of the experiences of embodiment, and the psyche. The specific areas of exploration within the female psyche are as follows:

Part One: Benjamin's Alternatives

Part one presents Jessica Benjamin's alternatives: she examines the problem with the relationship between self and "other", and posits, as a possible solution, the concept of intersubjectivity.

Part Two: Domination

Part two deals with domination in a theoretical framework. The following are examined: power relations in *Naked on a Goat*, the problem of domination in the relationship between the self and the "other", specifically applied to the production, and the master/slave dynamic, also as present in *Naked on a Goat*.

Part Three: an Inquiry into Female Desire

Part three is an inquiry into Female Desire. A theoretical framework dealing with what women want, the "de-sexed" mother and the revolt against maternal power, the "missing" father, separation-individuation and cultural descriptions. This is followed by a text analysis of *Naked on a Goat*. The research report ends with a summation.

CHAPTER ONE

PART ONE: FEMINIST DISCOURSE AND THE STATUS QUO

1.1 NAKED ON A GOAT

Robin Orlin choreographed *Naked on a Goat* in 1996. The piece has a cast of four women. There are three characters that play Salome and one that takes the role of stage manager/Herodias.[6] It is a Performance Art piece that was inspired by the stories of two women: actress Louise Brooks and Oscar Wilde's Salome. Orlin found one source of inspiration in the unpublished autobiography by Louise Brooks, Naked on My Goat. The second source is the story of Salome[7], as written by Oscar Wilde. In the paragraphs bellow, I will deal with both these stories and the way in which they aided Orlin's creation of the piece. In so doing, I hope to uncover Orlin's intentions with regard to the work and show how her intentions align themselves with a feminist pursuit and challenge particular areas of the status quo in South Africa today. This will assist an understanding of how *Naked on a Goat* explores a feminist discourse and challenges the status quo.

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[6] Later in a re-working of the piece, men are introduced into the roles of the stage manager and one of the three Salomes.

[7] Wilde, Oscar, Salome, published by E.P. Dutton and Co,. Incoporated. America.(1927).

INSPIRATIONAL SOURCES FOR NAKED ON A GOAT

Naked on My Goat, by silent movie actress Louise Brooks, speaks about how Brooks was beautiful and silent in the fil...s until films were able to use sound. The producers and directors told Brooks that her voice was not "good enough" and did r... match the beauty of her looks. She was no longer hired. Brooks struggled from then on with depression and alcohol addiction. Orlin empathized with this story and was shocked by Brooks' treatment. The story of Brooks' pain and her "silencing" were issues that Orlin felt most women confront in different ways. Orlin was angered by Brooks, lack of control within the industry as the financial and artistic decisions were predominantly made by men. These men were able to choose which women were represented and how they were represented. At the same time, they were erasing certain representations of actual women. Brooks was beautiful in some areas but did not fit their ideal female image and was thus cast out. She had no representation and/or voice legally or artistically. The tragedy of this was that, when Orlin examined life around her, she found many similar cases. This was the beginning of *Naked on a Goat.*

The other source of inspiration came from Oscar Wilde's Salome. The story tells that Salome is the princess of Judaea and her stepfather is the Tetrarch, Herod. He is obsessed with her. The prophet, Jokanaan, is locked in the cistern because he prophesises doom and criticizes

Herodias (the Tetrarch's wife). Salome insists on meeting Jokanaan and, when she does, she desires him. He, however, rejects and insults her. The Tetrarch begs Salome to dance for him, saying that, if she does, he will give her anything she desires, even half of his Kingdom. She agrees and, after she dances "the dance of the seven veils", she requests the head of Jokanaan. The Tetrarch is horrified but keeps his word. Salome is brought the head of Jokanaan on a silver platter. The Tetrarch is so upset by this execution that he orders his soldiers to kill Salome.

Orlin uses the story of Salome because her concerns about the female position led her to the following issues:

a) She wishes to qualify who a South African princess would be
b) The character Salome is extremely difficult to define. She has a multifaceted identity and readers do not often agree on an interpretation of who she is. This links to Orlin's feminist theories that propose that women are often incorrectly represented, if represented at all[8]. The definition "woman" is based on an imposed interpretation and is therefore incorrect[9].
c) Orlin seeks to qualify "the execution", "the sacrifice" (Salome's) with regard to the present-day South African female

[8] Feminists, such as Luce Iriaray, Jeanie Forte and Rachel Bowlby, argue that a woman is incapable of representation within a male-dominated culture. Psycho-analyst, Jacques Lacan, articulates that our linguistic order centres on men and that anyone who is not "man" is defined through male subjectivity and positioned on the outskirts of the linguistic order.
[9] This refers to the above- mentioned concept that women are defined through male subjectivity and not by themselves.

d) The story also deals with power relationships between men and women

e) It raises the question of female desire

NAKED ON A GOAT AS A CHALLENGE TO THEATRICAL CONVENTIONS

Theatrically, *Naked on a Goat* is a challenging and exciting piece. It explores different ways in which to transgress theatrical boundaries and explode its own façade by refusing to follow through with the illusion of "real" events occurring on stage. In this way, it can be understood to be using a Brechtian[10] appraoch to theatre each time the performers break out of their roles and allow themselves to be people who are merely playing these roles. The performers confront the audience, thereby rejecting the old convention of the "forth wall"[11]. The piece is non-linear and the performers do not have one single fixed identity, but are exploring a multitude of female texts, whilst simultaneously all representing Oscar Wilde's Salome[12]. The work is self-reflexive, has no rules and utilises a language of expression. *Naked on a Goat* uses music, breath, speech and

[10] Bertolt Brecht is best known not merely as a playwright but as one of the first playwrights to release theatrical conventions from a fetishistic approach to realism. His work would "show the show" and the actors' roles were a complex layer of realities. They were understood as the characters they were playing but also as actors playing the role. This allowed the actors to "break the forth wall" and confront the audience.

[11] The "forth wall" is understood as the imaginary wall that separates the audience from the space of action in the play. It aids in the illusion that what is happening on stage is a real event and that the audience is privileged to be witnessing it. It also gives the audience a comfortable viewing distance from the events on stage.

incoherent vocal sounds to create its acoustic space. Visually, it uses plotted lighting and the performers use lamps and lighters. It utilises a television screen and different costumes and props. The performers act, sing, dance, chat and express in a physical manner, that which cannot be confined to the definition of "dance", but that which is perhaps better understood as physical theatre[13] and performance art[14]. What is evident is that the production follows no rules, creating a visual feast that is tragic and celebratory, violent and defensive, resignatory and confrontational. Orlin's creative process relies on emotional memory for inspiration and is staged in a manner that triggers various emotional memories in the audience.

THE DOMESTIC WORKER: ORLIN'S PRINCESS

Through this story, Orlin became interested in the concept of a princess. She thought about African princesses and toyed with fairytales like Cinderella. She contemplated how Salome, being a princess was central to life in Judaea yet was never satisfied and her story was never clearly understood. The representation of Salome leaves her portrayed as an obtuse and obscure figure. Orlin searched for whom she could equate with

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[12] Wilde, Oscar, Salome, published by E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc.America.(1927).

[13] Physical Theatre can be understood as the art form that has evolved out of a reaction to the strict discipline of classical dance. It does not insist on classical training and the movement itself is not so dance-like as it is a combination of movements, choreography, jumps, lifts, and subtle and overt plays on any action. It can be violent and quite gymnastic, but it can also be delicate and ordinary. Often performers speak, recite poems or make non-sensical communication, but it also uses silence and different sounds.

[14] I will be using Orlin's definition later in this paper.

this scenario in modern day life. She decided that she would resist the hierarchy within the status quo and declare her princess in present-day South African culture, to be the black female domestic worker.

Orlin acknowledges the contradictions and ironies that placing a dis-empowered and working-class citizen in the position of a princess causes. She chooses to be subversive and humorous in placing a black domestic worker in the position of a princess. (In their papers: They Don't Even Look Like Maids Anymore[15] and Daughters Playing: Some Feminist Rewritings and the Mother and Parody and Politics[16], Lynda Hart and Susan Sulieman speak about this type of subversive humour and how it can aid a feminist agenda.) They deal with how it destabilizes men and disengages women from the severity of their plight. It alleviates the direct stress of the confrontation.

THE DOMESTIC WORKER: THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE

Orlin decided to deal with the phenomenon of the black South African woman and chose to locate this investigation with black women who are domestic workers. She pinpoints this particular identity because the

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[15] Lynda Hart, "They Don't Even Look Like Maids Anymore": Wendy Kesselman's "My Sister is in the House" from Making A Spectacle. (1989).

[16] Susan Sulieman,"Daughters Playing: Some Feminist Rewritings and the Mother", in Subversive Intent, (1990).
Susan Sulieman, "Parody and Politics" and "Parody, Perversion, Collage: Surrealists at Play" in Subversive Intent. (1990).

domestic worker is ever-present in our society: she is so present that she becomes invisible and is not represented. Orlin said:

> I was on a mission to find the integrity of the black woman. Domestic workers were a great place to start as they are never given an identity and are never awarded that uniqueness, like in fairy tales such as Cinderella. Why are they always seen as women without sexuality, who are void of feelings and are not recognised as having a life outside of the employer's family? She becomes part of the furniture yet she is, maybe, one of the most interesting and complex identities we have.[17]

As Orlin does this, it becomes apparent that *Naked on a Goat* challenges the status quo through its content. The piece takes a woman who is generally invisible in our society and puts her on stage in the spotlight. Orlin gives a voice to someone we do not listen to. She does this in defiance of these aspects of the status quo that have impoverished black women, and left them without an education and placed them in a an extremely difficult socio-economic position. But she also emphasises their femaleness and the issues of their engendering. (All these issues will be explored further in this research report.) Orlin hopes to help represent these women and these issues in a world that does not recognise them.

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[17] Appendix, p1

1.2 QUESTIONS OF REPRESENTATION AND A FEMINIST DISCOURSE

The question of representation[18] is a relevant one for the feminist and for exploring a feminist discourse. I will evaluate why a feminist discourse is problematic in dominant forms of representation. It is necessary to state that, if the dominant forms of representation uphold the status quo, then it

[18] Orlin attempts to create the space for a discourse for two very disempowered and difficult cases; *the woman* and *the black woman*. In the context of a phallogocentric and racial heirachy, I would argue that it is favourable to be a white man. If one is classified "coloured", it is most unfortunate to be classified as a female as well as a black person. The black woman is given almost no space for self-representation. Representations and modes of representation (of identity) for the black female are truly problematic and almost non-existent – especially in South Africa. Overseas artists have tried to tackle the problem and a good example would be the film "Daughters of the Dust", by Julie Dash, who made the film in reaction to the lack of representation black women were receiving from black filmmakers like Spike Lee. Daughter's of the Dust is a film that places the woman in the centre as subject. I tells their stories and not the men's. Its style is non-conventional in many ways: it is not situated in linear time; the way in which the camera "speaks" the women is fluid, sensuous, unusual and original. It is poetic in style and uses poetry through the voice-overs and the images and frames represent a collective whilst portraying individuals.

Julie Dash realised that the issue of black representation in cinema and theatre needed to be confronted. This raised the problem of representing the black female. Her identity (the black woman) and the portrayal of her actual life and living circumstances almost never appeared on screen or stage and, if it did, it was always constructed through the white or black man's gaze. Examples of this would be women in "Boyz in the Hood", or "Do The Right Thing". When the women did appear in the story, they were on the periphery dealing with the men and reacting to the men and their problems. They were also defined and portrayed through the "male gaze" which tended to objectify them horrendously. Even mothers were rendered as drug addicts and pathetic without men, dominating and over controlling and/or over-sexualized or desexualized. Their stories were not told nor identified.

Steven Spielberg did tell the story of a black woman but it was written by one: Alice Walker's "The Colour Purple". The film did not deal with all the issues that the book raised with regard to sexuality and the lesbian relationship suggested between the characters Shug and Celie. It would truly have been an act of courage to represent not only the black woman but the black lesbian woman in mainstream cinema, as she is placed on the periphery of the peripheries' periphery! Even certain performance art groups in America face problems with multiple identifications. There is a group of lesbian performance artists that call themselves "The Spiderwomen" and they have had much internal conflict over the fact that the black women feel their issues and life styles are still not represented because even they are marginalized within "The Spiderwomen".

must be that other/alternate forms of representation can challenge the status quo. The following paragraphs will show that the *form* of *Naked on a Goat* stages a challenge to the status quo as well as hosting a feminist discourse.

This argument considers what is meant by "the dominant forms of representation". It then exposes reasons that it would be problematic to place a feminist discourse within these modes of representation. The other part of this argument is one that connects the status quo to this dominating symbolic order. Because, if the feminist project is to dismantle, challenge and deconstruct[19] the status quo, then the dominant forms of representation cannot be of use (as they uphold the status quo) and it becomes necessary to find an alternate mode of representation that will play host to these aims.

Theodore Adorno explains that the status quo is the dominant ideology, the dominant values and belief systems of a particular society in a particular time in its history.[20]These dominating ideologies are represented and supported by mainstream modes of representation and this poses a

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[19] Derrida, J, Of Grammatology, London: Hogarth Press Ltd., (1997).
Derrida spoke about deconstruction and explained it as a complex relationship that seeks to understand how certain discourses empower themselves to speak "truth". It is a mode of investigation that reveals where these discourses cannot go if their own edifice is not to collapse. Derrida also explains that deconstruction is an enterprise that shows some of the silences and erasures that flourish in the discourse of gender and race.
[20] Jameson, F. (ed.), Aesthetics and Politics. London: Verso. (1977):151-196.

problem for the feminist discourse. The Lacanian Model[21] articulates mainstream modes of representation as part of a system of representation that portrays the woman and her body within a heirachy of a patriarchal symbolic order. This is a system that feminists and female performance artists have challenged and undermined through subversion. It is here that the woman's body has existed as a reflection of male subjectivity and desire. She is not seen in accordance with her own right but rather in relation to men (who are the epicenter of this system's referent). The women "lack" what the male has, and is therefore ascribed the term, "other". This model refers to subjectivity in terms of a process of desires, drives and symbolisation. It, therefore, constructs the woman as incomplete.

Not only does this dominant system of representation present the woman through male subjectivity and desire[22], it also excludes the female subject from its symbolic order and presents her as the objectified other. Female performance artists examine women's relationship to the dominant system of representation with an inherently political intent.

CHALLENGING THE SYMBOLIC ORDER

Feminist thinkers have dealt with Lacan's articulation of the symbolic order with regard to how this symbolic order affects a feminist discourse. I will

[21] Lacan, Jacques, Ecrits, translation A Sheridan. NY, London: WW Naten. (1977).

refer to the reactions of feminists: Bowlby, Forte,Cixious, Silverman and Kristeva. Their arguments become relevant when we note that *Naked on a Goat* challenges this symbolic order with purpose and intent. It does this by exploring a language and strategy of intervention that can challenge the dominant forms of representations, thereby challenging the status quo.

Rachel Bowlby in her essay, Mimesis, Mimicry and The True-Real[23], makes this frightening point. She says, "If language...as they claim is phallocentric, then female drives are by definition incapable of representation."[24] Bowlby points out that it is not so easy to react against a system from the inside. If the language of the dominant culture excludes female representation then the woman does not function even from the inside. So it is pertinent to ask: how can the woman "speak" and represent herself within it? Jeannie Forte also raises this question of discourse. She asks, "...how can a woman speak if she is not subject?...As a function of what she is not, receiving on her body the stamp of the other...the signature of void, and mark of his identity."[25]

Forte suggests that it is through society's dominant forms of representations and/or linguistic order that "woman" does not hold the

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[22] I will substantiate this statement later in the paper.
[23] Bowlby, Rachel, "Mimesis, Mimicry and The True-Real", in Modern Drama. 32, no1. (March 1998).
[24] Ibid, p377
[25] Forte, Jeannie, Summary/Analysis of women performance art, Women's Performance Art: Feminism and Postmodernism, in Theatre Journal 40 (1988):259.

position of subject, that she is represented through the male mirror, only in so far as that she is not masculine and lacks what he has and symbolises, that it is through her body that she becomes marginalised and objectified: that she is void of representation except one that reflects part of the male identity. If this is the predicament for women within mainstream modes of representation then how can she speak? From which position, if no position gives her the status of subject? It becomes clear that a feminist discourse is necessary but difficult, as it would have to address the linguistic order without using its mode of representation. If it does not use the language of popular culture then how effective can an alternate language be? This paper will explain how Orlin finds an alternate discourse in *Naked on a Goat*. If it is through the body that women are marginalised and objectified then it is through the body that Orlin lets them speak as subject, in the centre, on stage.

French feminist, Helen Cixious, agrees with Lacan regarding the acquisition of patriarchal values through language. She argues that it must then be possible to dismantle patriarchy through language, so she encourages the exploration of a feminine language, a language that is rooted in the female body and sexuality. Cixious wants to find this language and to "..exhort women to write the body in order to speak their subjectivity."[26] She argues that this "writing" cannot fail but be more than

[26] Cixious, Helen,"The Laugh of the Medusa", in New French Feminist, ed. Marks and de Courtivron. New York: Schocken Books, (1981).

subversive. So surely it is axiomatic that this female desire that has not been permitted and/or acknowledged can become the disruptive factor in the deconstruction of a patriarchal structure when the excluded, that is at the same time central to the included's construction, refuses to stay excluded? This is a means of expression that is not conceived within the phallocentric system of representation and as Cixious insists: "...anything having to do with the body should be explored."[27] This is exactly what *Naked on a Goat* does. By the very fact that *Naked on a Goat's* language of expression is not conceived within the phallocentric system, I would argue that it challenges the status quo. This will be examined in detail further into this chapter.

Kaja Silverman's reaction to the Lacanian Model was first to point out that it is a system of representation that becomes dependent on *subject* and *signification*. She argues that, "...the discourse within which the subject finds its identification, is always the discourse of the "other" of a symbolic order, one which transcends the subject and which orchestrates its entire history."[28] With this understanding, it becomes easier to see just how problematic it is for women to express themselves within the symbolic order, and how difficult it is to find a discourse without it. *Naked on a Goat*, I argue in this chapter, does find a feminist discourse that challenges the

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[27] Cixious, H. 1981. In Helene Wenzel, "The Text as Body/Politics: An Appreciation of Monique Wittig's Writing Context", in Feminist Studies. New York. Schocken Books. (1981):266.
[28] Silverman, Kaja, "The Subject of Semiotics".New York: Oxford University Press.p194, for remarks on the potential dissonance of a speaking subject and it's representation. (1983).

way in which the symbolic order places the subject (woman) in the position of "other" and "orchestrates an entire history" which misrepresents her within the symbolic order.

Theorist Julia Kristeva negates this symbolic order by radically inverting it. She declares that women are the actual semiotic on which the symbolic order depends. She states that it is on the underside of this symbolic order that the maternal and feminine lie, qualities which are not necessarily delineated by sexual difference.[29] This allows for cracks in the meaning of the patriarchal structure and makes space for the possibility of an authentic" different" rather than an "other". It is an alternative given by the "other" . This works to attack the former authority of the "same", that lies so deeply embedded within the status quo. Kristeva stresses the value of constructing the woman as separate and holistic in relation to man, especially when she and her body become objects of danger as well as desire, (Later in this paper I will be reviewing the question of the body and female desire.)This necessitates, however, a deconstruction of the status quo .*Naked on a goat* constructs the woman with an alternate representation her body is used dangerously as well as erotically but this "woman" in *Naked on a Goat* is not untouched by the effects of a patriarchal symbolic order. The effects of this symbolic order on her psyche, as well as in her everyday life, are also explored through the

[29] Kristeva, Julia, Approaching Abjection" in Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection. Translated Leon S. Roudiez. NY: Columbia University Press.(1982).

direction of the piece. These aspects will be dealt with in an analysis of certain parts of the production later on in this chapter. For example, the performers' use of tutus allows them to explore a new identity beyond the one they were prescribed.

1.3 CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO

Many people may argue that it is futile to spend energy deconstructing the status quo when the actual focus is to reconstruct a new sense of self and way of life for women in society. If we look for similarities in politics, then there is evidence that no new government has ever come into power without some form of radical revolution and/or a mass change in consciousness when people have collectively opted to choose a different road. They have been willing to forfeit the old and established foundations in order to construct a new and (apparently) progressive society. Throughout history, the cycle has been repeated: the current situation become unacceptable and there is a search for something more satisfying.

It is thus important to explore how *Naked on a Goat* challenges the status quo through its form and content. The production explores a language that defies theatrical conventions whilst subverting dominant cultural representations. It battles against the dominant discourse, mainstream

modes of representation and the patriarchal-racial paradigm of thought. This is first seen in *Naked on a Goat's* theatrical style.

CHALLENGING THEATRICAL CONVENTION

The production as a whole explores different ways in which to transgress theatrical boundaries and explode its own façade by refusing to follow through with the illusion of "real" events and characters existing on stage. Orlin makes it clear that Salome is also an ordinary woman who is performing as Salome for her job. In this, Orlin can be understood to be using a Brechtian[30] approach to theatre each time one of the performers break out of her role and allows herself to be a woman who is merely playing a role.

For example, at one point in *Naked on a Goat*, the dancers start to collect the plates and lamps, and one of them sweeps the stage. The members of the audience wonder if it is to prepare the stage for the next set of images or if it is part of the next phase of the dance. We discover it is both and Orlin sets up the transition to the following interaction between the stage manager/actress and the dancers/women, now that their double roles as performer/actress/dancer/woman are amplified into a multitude of female texts. The stage manager shouts at them for complaining about cleaning

the stage, how they get slower at it each night. She shouts that they must hurry up and do their job. The dancer who is sweeping reacts by refusing to continue the production even if she is contracted to. The stage manager continues to fight with her in an orchestrated testimony that conveys a message against the "system", which is shown as hostile to the individual.

This Brechtian-type diversion is comical and threatens to be real, but the dancers resume their work. This serves as an example of how postmodernism reflects on itself as a medium and makes the audience aware that it is an audience and that the dancers are performers. This strips away the veils of the male spectator and undermines the dancers as dancers and reveals them as ordinary women who are just the same as every other woman. It is here where the relationship between sign and signified is exposed.

The exposure between the sign and the signified continued when several times in the production, the performers shout out at the audience and comment on their feelings. The theatrical style of the piece continues to challenge theatrical convention in that the piece is non-linear and the performers do not have one single fixed identity. Here we should consider that, because *Naked on a Goat* was born out of a feminist intent, it is

[30] Brecht's play Marat Sade, showed actors that played inmates of an asylum who were performing a play written by one of the political inmates. So there is a double-role playing , but they are still evidently exposed as actual people who were professional actors on stage.

impossible to separate the form and the content, which will be dealt with in 1.4.

1.4 IDEOLOGY CONTAINED IN FORM AND CONTENT

Considering that *Naked on a Goat* was born out of a feminist intent, it is impossible to separate the form from the content. Both help each other to expose, use and explore Oriin's rebellious ideologies. Both help to expose problems in the status quo whilst simultaneously speaking with a feminist discourse. This is in agreement with Adorno's argument which argues that artists must negate the status quo.

Adorno posits that *how* the negation is represented is of equal importance to *what* it is negating. In other words, he argues that *the ideology is contained within the form*. For example, a linear narrative covertly proposes a linear mode of thinking and way of perceiving one's existence. The ideology, according to Adorno, is found overtly in the content and covertly in the form. It can be argued that naturalism, for example, postulates a very deterministic and psychologically- driven linear sense of the world and does not question and challenge the status quo although it may deal with particular issues *within* it. It can also be argued that non-naturalist media, such as Performance Art, postulate a non-linear, non-recognisable mode of behaving and a non-determined sense of the world.

This challenges the logic and rationale that our mode of being in the world resides on.

It has been suggested that *Naked on a Goat* uses an alternate discourse to that of popular culture and the dominant forms of representation. It has been proposed that this, in itself, poses a challenge to the status quo. This chapter goes on to explore in greater detail *Naked on a Goat's* feminist discourse and how through this discourse, it challenges the status quo. This is achieved by examining certain feminist strategies that the production uses to tell its story. Each of these strategies challenges specific parts of the status quo and breaks theatrical conventions. Just as the form and content of *Naked on a Goat* cannot be separated so, too are the theories that support and inspire these 'rategies inseparable. These are the strategy-theories that this chapter will be exploring:

In Part Two, oppressive mimesis and oppressive mimesis linked with gender social conditioning: Part Three, the feminist mimesis as counteracting oppressive mimesis, the use of the female body, the use of the True-Real, the Hysteric in *Naked on a Goat*, and Orlin's explorations of the Abject.

PART TWO: OPPRESSIVE MIMESIS

2.1OPPRESSIVE MIMESIS

To define oppressive mimesis, we must start by stating that the body is the locus for inscription within the Symbolic Order. According to our body's biological sex and pigmentation, we are awarded signification that positions us somewhere within the linguistic heirachy. Through language and culture, we learn what our signification means. This signification has been signed over and over again: it cannot be escaped. Once we are represented, we become defined and thereby confined to this referent of what we are supposed to be. This is the operation of oppressive mimesis and it becomes almost impossible to qualify oneself without this system of representation. The operation of mimesis perpetuates these positions within the Symbol Order and we are socially conditioned into accepting these given identities (if we are not a white-heterosexual-man[31] who is positioned as the central speaking subject.) We are positioned in categories that are inevitably placed at the periphery of the Symbolic Order.

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[31] In the Western paradigm of though, the structures of language, culture, racial and gender relations tend to position the white- heterosexual- man as the *central speaking subject.* The *central speaking subject* can be understood as the subject around whom the dominant ideologies and social structures revolve and give most easily the power of discourse Anyone that lies outside this description is already set on the periphery and awarded less and less discourse (self-representing voice and modes of representation) and, throughout this research report, is referred to as the "other".

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It is possible to contextualise oppressive mimesis within a feminist argument because the role of "woman" is constructed and prescribed repetitively and incorrectly in our society. *Naked on a Goat* challenges society's mimetic practice with regard to this social construction of the "same" roles over and over again. In an examination of what oppressive mimesis is, we are led to an analysis of how it operates within the process of engendering. I will examine how oppressive mimesis works to condition us socially into our roles (engendered roles) and how these roles are performed socially. The performance of *Naked on a Goat* exposes this mimetic practice through its style and through its content. Later in this chapter, it is explained how this is done. For example, the performers often repeat actions until the meaning of their action becomes lost and obscured. This is likened to the performing of our role "woman". Orlin also challenges the accuracy of the representation of the roles we are prescribed by swapping male and female performers without the audience knowing.

But, before examining how Orlin challenges the use in the status quo of oppressive mimesis, I will introduce the theoretical framework behind her direction/choreography. The notion that gender is socially inscribed is one that is discussed by feminist theorists Judith Butler, Elin Diamond, Teresa De Lauretis and Luce Irigaray. I will also be drawing on research done in

the field of gender social conditioning to review how oppressive mimesis involves us in a series of psychological and social inscriptions. This body of theoretical work leads us to understand the female performance artist's intent when she attempts to subvert this oppressive mimesis and, in so doing, aims to deconstruct these socially inscribed roles. For instance, *Naked on a Goat* challenges the construction of "woman" and "black". This strategy works for a feminist discourse which in turn works to challenge the status quo.

Because the dominant ideologies are patriarchal, the central speaking subject is empowered and so the (white-heterosexual) man is awarded the privileges of being placed in the centre of mainstream culture. Therefore, he has the controlling position of locating all other subjects in relation to him (the centre). This identifies and defines other identities: these identities may be racial, religious, sexual, gender specific etc. – but they are all defined through *his* paradigm. And so he defines the "other" in relation to himself and the referent of identity, for the *other* cannot be self-determined. Yet this same referent is taught and conditioned until the referent is the mimesised referent of the referent: in a simulacrum that never even represents the subject through it's own identification!

Orlin's ideologies can be located through her defiance of this patriarchal mimetic practice. *Naked on a Goat* deals with this process of definition

and the identities Orlin places on stage are those that are confined and marginalized. This alone challenges/confronts the status quo which keeps the "other" on the peripheries of thedominant culture's representations. The choreography exposes their positions within the symbolic order as positions that silence and objectify. However, it is of importance to keep in mind that it is almost impossible to position the "other" as the "central speaking subject" within this framework and discourse, because it is almost impossible for the "other" to be in the central position in mainstream culture. In the analysis of *Naked on a Goat* that follows the theoretical framework behind oppressive mimesis, we can see how Orlin made it possible for the "other" to speak outside of popular culture, with a feminist discourse and, in so doing, she challenged the status quo. First, let us explore an academic understanding of how oppressive mimesis works.

"WOMAN" DEFINED THROUGH MALE SUBJECTIVITY

Freud's terming of the girl-child, the "little man", reflects the mimetic conditioning of woman through a masculine mirror, that silences, objectifies and marginalises her. Similarly, "woman" can be articulated within the dominant systems of representations not as "woman" but as "not man". She has been defined as a reflection of male subjectivity. This male subjectivity may be viewed as the referent by which the female

reflection is defined. Women come to signify *lack* within this mimetic system; in this way, women resemble the male referent in an on-going simulacrum, and she is forced to mime her femininity within this pre-defined role.

The construction of the word/role, "woman", is made through the male the subjectivity; and this point becomes forgotten as "woman" is performed over and over again, confirming in performance to the rules and codes of its model. It would make sense then that the job of the marginalied, objectified *other* is found in the deconstruction of this dominant order of patriarchy by showing the operation of mimesis both socially and theatrically

MIMICRY IN THE THEATRE AND MIMICRY THAT ENGENDERS

This is where theatre can work as complimentary to a feminist critique because both are associated with mimetic practice. Theatre relies on the mimicking of real life and the show is repeated each night. The female is taught her role, "woman", through society's use of mimetic practice, which has become part of a role-playing simulacrum. I would like to propose this oppressive mimesis is tied to the notion that to be "engendered" is not necessarily a biological inscription[32] but it is:

[32] Diamond, Elin. 1998. "Mimesis, Mimicry and the True-Real", published in Modern Drama, 32 n0.1 (1998):58-72.

a) Socially inscribed

b) Assumed by the individual through performance

Feminist theorists like Irigaray, Diamond and De Lauretis explore the concept that "engendering" is a process of oppressive mimesis and not one that is inherent to our biological sex. Through an analysis of Orlin's work (as will be examined), it is possible to see that she also defies the notion that we are born into a gender just because of our sex, especially when gender attributes are socially categorised. Orlin does not believe that these categories of attributes that express what is "feminine" and what is "masculine" are necessarily what men and women are like, but they are what we are taught we should be like. *Naked on a Goat* challenges notions of identity and especially this type of gender identification and conditioning process.

The production attempts to counteract these inscriptions, for example, of "woman". It defies inscriptions of "man" and "woman" by performing them differently from how they are signed. "Woman" can no longer be fixed to one meaning as the performers explore so many different parts of "woman", those that are acceptable to the referent and those that are not. Both the male and female dancers mimic masculine and feminine

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De Lauretis, Teresa."Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics and Cinema". Bloomington: Indiana University Press.(1983).
Irigaray, Luce. "Speculum of the Other Woman" . Trans. Gillian C. Gill . Ithaca NY:Cornell University Press.(1974).

behaviour. These are examples of *Naked on a Goat* challenging the status quo and they will be thoroughly examined after this theoretical discussion. But to aid my analysis of the text, I will first explore two notions that arise out of this concept: that to be engendered is not necessarily a biological inscription.

2.2GENDER IS SOCIALLY INSCRIBED

I propose that, through gender social conditioning, we are socially inscribed with a gender, and that this process of conditioning determines how we emerge as "man" and "woman". This is, of course, significant to a debate that deals with deconstructing and challenging an engendered hegemony.

For, it is through such a hegemony, that we are not only fixed with a gender, but this gender becomes the instruction manual for how we are *supposed* to function in our daily interaction. If we are to understand how feminist performance artists challenge the status quo then we must be armed with an insight into how the status quo functions, that is, if we are to evaluate its deconstruction and its destabilization.

What is vital in this debate is the fundamental acknowledgement that we are all products of social conditioning and that we continue this cycle and

become the perpetuators of it as well. Social conditioning, is for the most part, unconscious. Parents are not always aware that they have, for example, chosen to read stories about tea parties to their little girls and stories about winning races to their boys. It is how we, as a society, have been programmed to think and refer to each other: we are webbed in a sticky net of semiotics and what has been defined as "man" and as "woman" has become dominant in the game of signification.

We learn what it means to be "man" by watching and mimicking dad or any other man's behavior. Little girls understand how they are supposed to function in the world as women by observing mommy and other female role models. Gender becomes an enactment of behavior, a mimicry - a performance.

GENDER SOCIAL CONDITIONING

Kate White, author of Why Good Girls Don't Get Ahead...And Gutsy Girls Do[33], develops ts an understanding of how gender is socially inscribed as her book researchs how we are conditioned into positions of silence and how we learn to be "woman". She pin points, for example, particular reasons and places where and when women learn to put their own needs last and suppress their voices. White refers to the work of Dr. Taffel, child psychologist and author of the book, The Confident Parent; to Myra and

David Sadker's research in this field and to the work of Carol Gilligan, who is the Professor in Human Development and Psychology Program at Harvard University. She examines how they understand this process of oppressive mimesis.

For example, Dr Taffel states that: "...a daughter observes the way the individuals in her home interact with each other and absorbs the messages her parents send."[34] Her observations discover her mother assuming primary responsibility for her family's needs and a father who generally does not participate in "helping out".[35] The little girl continues to see that a mother's responsibility not only includes merely doing all these things, but constantly thinking about them. The mother is seen as the gatekeeper and "possessor of critical information".[36] The mother can find lost clothing and decide what will be eaten at lunch. The daughter is led to the conclusion that the role of a female is to take care of *other people's needs*. She is also encouraged in her social conduct by being told "that's a good girl" and "that's a bad girl".

Dr. Taffel continues to say that children are reading signs from all areas of their lives. For example, when a girl feels anger, it is the signal that it is

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[33] White, Kate, Why Good Girld Don't Get Ahead...And Gutsy Girls Do, New York: Curbstone Press. (1989).
[34] Ibid. p14
[35] What Dr. Taffel is referring to what is better described by Jessica Benjamin when she speaks about what she has termed the "de-sexed mother" and the "missing father". These are concepts I shall be exploring in the second chapter

time to be assertive. However, such reactions are enforced as incorrect behavior and, eventually, *she relinquishes her own voice and rights*. By contrast, when a son behaves in an aggressive manner and allows anger to surface, it is often met with a wink or the "double look". It is the parent saying that, even though you should not have done that, I am proud of you for not being a "wimp". He believes that children are instilled with strong sexual stereotyping that is affirmed through the media, advertising, books and other conduits of society's attitudes. These *good girl* messages are often so subtle that they are left unrecognized.

A powerful example is the children's book The Trouble with Pets:

> Sister thought about dressing it in doll's clothes and pushing her carriage. She thought about introducing it to her stuffed toys. Perhaps they could have a tea party...Brother's thoughts were quite different. He thought about winning the blue ribbon at the Bear Country Dog Show. He thought how fine it would be to shout "Mush!" as his great dog pulled him through the deep snow. [37]

This little paragraph affirms gender as a role and not as a biological inscription. It teaches little girls that they should sit around looking pretty and behaving pleasantly, when brother wants to be a leader and a winner. This bedtime story provides for the internalization of socially prescribed roles and immediately inverts the (female) child from subject to object. She is encouraged to be the object of attraction rather than the subject of

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[36] White, Kate. 1989. Why Good Girls Don't Get Ahead...And Gutsy Girls Do. New York: Curbstone Press. (1989):15.

success. The difference is most strongly felt by the encouragement for her to be passive and for him to be active.

THE SILENCING OF GIRLS

Myra Sadker, Ed.D, and David Sadker, Ed.D, in their research on how we are conditioned and encouraged to internalize certain engendered ideas and behaviour patterns, found that:

> [G]irls are systematically denied opportunities in areas where boys are encouraged to excel...male students control conversation in the classroom. They ask and answer more questions. They receive more praise for the intellectual quality of their ideas. Girls, on the other hand, are taught to speak quietly, to defer to boys, to avoid math and science and to value neatness over innovation, appearance over intelligence... There is the official curriculum, which calls for doing well on tests and homework and getting good grades, but there is also the hidden one. This curriculum involves speaking in class, raising questions, and offering insights. It helps a student to develop a public voice. Girls are encouraged not to have a public voice. They are rewarded for being nice and being quiet. Their higher grades lull them into a false sense of security that they are doing what they must to be a success. It is only later that they pay the price for having been encouraged to be a spectator, to not speak up."[38]

Carol Gilligan (Professor in the Human Development and Psychology Programme at Harvard University) believes that after years of internalizing these messages, there is a "*silencing*" (a relinquishing of the public and often even private voice) in young girls when they move from primary to high school. She says that, when they reach mid-adolescence, they

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[37] Smith, T. 1990. The Trouble With Pets. New York: Penguin., (1990):6.

become aware of society's expectations of them and this results in a more tentative and conflicted mode of behavior. She states that:

> They are uncomfortable about how people will feel if they get mad or aren't "nice". The girl who is insistent on speaking or desires knowledge goes "underground", or is overwhelmed. These adolescent girls/women become self-conscious about what they are saying before they say it, while they are speaking and worrying about having said it.[39]

THE GOOD GIRL

Along with the silencing of the actual voice comes the need to quieten (reduce) attention given to girls, unless within the boundaries of the *good girl* image. Any unconventional behavior is scoffed at and belittled thus teaching girls to suppress any innate instincts and convert them to the conventional response.

Gilligan discovered that women are told how to act and what's expected of them so that they do not stop to discover their true selves and what they really feel, think and want. Clinical psychologist, Robin Dee Post, also reported that she found that women tend to sabotage their success and undermine themselves by being reluctant to let others know of their accomplishments and through not letting people know what they want. Post says that the other phenomenon she finds is that women will put

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[38] White, Kate., Why Good Girls Don't Get Ahead...And Gutsy Girls Do. New York: Curbstone Press. (1989):17-18.
[39] Ibid. p19

excessive demands on themselves, which leads to perfectionism, procrastination, and an over commitment to work. This often results from a childhood where the woman was subjected to high demands and criticism.

It becomes possible to understand that the role, "woman", is socially conditioned and, through certain social circumstances, certain behavioral patterns are developed. When women silence their public and even private voices, their representation becomes more and more distorted. When women feel there is little or no space in their environment that allows for them to "speak", they choose not to and internalize all sorts of frustrations. Often women blame themselves for problems that are not caused by their own doing, because they are unable to confront and demand from people around them. It is easier to blame the self and take on too much responsibility. Eventually the woman herself becomes the largest participant in perpetuating her own objectification, otherness and silencing, not because it is "natural" to her but because she is taught and conditioned that she has no other choice.

THE ABSENT WOMAN

It is this phenomenon that many female performance artists address in their work. It is almost always an underlying theme. Orlin addresses not only the "silencing" of the female voice but the *absence of female representation* as a result. Her prime example is that of the domestic

worker who is always present in our lives and homes but is never represented or awarded her own identity and voice. She exists for the people she works for but any issues in her life and family are generally never known and hardly communicated. Orlin speaks about how most of these women are the backbone of their society and support extended families on their salaries but their contribution is never recognized. They have their own children, parents and husband but raise someone else's family in order to provide for their own. They work long hours and usually live away from their families in order to be freely available for their employes. Their stories are never told, never recognized. So, layered added to what I term gender social conditioning, is the social and political phenomenon of black women in South Africa. Racially, they are side-lined and given no voice. Financially, these domestic workers are dependent on their jobs and, if they began to speak up as "real" people, they would be breaking unspoken rules and their jobs might be in jeopardy. This predicament is not easily solved, nor easily remedied.

Orlin's handling of this problem is multifaceted, as is the problem. She considers what is woman, what is black, what is white, what is age and how these identifications become ritualized. We learn what they are and then we role-play until we believe that that is who we always have been. An example of this is discussed later with regard to the performers' (both black and white) dressing up in traditional Pedi costumes and celebrating.

Orlin choreographs women performing as women are represented, and as women are not. She takes black women who perform what "black" is and what "white" is. She tries to convert these definitions into a mass of identifications within the self. All her performers have these aspects of self and they battle and confront them. The performers perform these categories over and over in the hope of showing that these categories are actually performances in real life. (Judith Butler deals with these concepts in "Critically Queer", in Bodies That Matter[40], and Sayre Henry also explores this in The Object of Performance[41]. Their work can help illuminate Orlin's reworking of *Naked on a Goat*, where she deals with the notion that gender is a performance, more closely than she does in the first piece. She uses a male dancer in place of a female dancer. The audience is lead to believe that he is a woman, and ,until he strips, they do. This is one of the most radical and superb examples of how gender is performed and that gender is performed! The camp man and the drag queen mimic female behavior. They are "feminine" in mannerisms, way of speaking, body postures. They may even wear dresses, but, biologically speaking they are still clearly what we would define, as "man". The power of this subversive behavior lies not only in external appearance - as he may wear a dress and have a beard (both significations of the opposite gender) but also in his mannerisms and manner of interacting.

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[40] Butler, Judith., "Critically Quees", in Bodies That Matter. NY: Routledge.(1993).

This act deconstructs and destabilizes the validity we have given to the notion that "being female" happens biologically and the way in which you are positioned in the world has nothing to do with how you are engendered. The performer mimics the female and performs femininity. This undermines what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman (at least in the biologically prescribed definitions). This helps us see that femininity is learned as well as prescribed. We learn what it is from the environment around us and then we mimic and perform it. The process of engendering is one that occurs through (this oppressive) *mimetic practice.*

2.3 SALOME: MIMETIC TOOL

Orlin states that *Naked on a Goat*, is in no way a re-telling of Salome. It is a very different and experimental mimesis.[42] She explains:

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[41] Sayre, Henry,"Tracing Dance: Collaboration and the new *Gasamstkunswerk"* in The Object of Performance Chicago: University of Chicago City Press (1998).

[42] She never intended to create her own version of someone else's story. She explains the use of Salome's story as a process. She spoke about being in America as a student and how she would take stories in order to deconstruct them. She went back to university later in life and found herself mistrusting the kind of information that was being given to the students. In order to work and manage her distrust, she tried to change it into deconstruction. That was how she learned about deconstruction - not that deconstruction is embedded in distrust. She would take books and "stuff around with them, play." She would underline, question, comment, rewrite, draw. It was important for her to move away from dance and a way to deal with her suspicious mind.

She found that the younger students were interested in gaining information and she was interested in questioning information and information sources. Orlin believes that this can be linked historically to her background in South Africa where there were always levels of mistrusting information that was given to the public and students during the Apartheid and State of Emergency era. She says:

"It was understood by many people, by most academics, artists, liberal "whities" and of course amongst the oppressed that information was being tampered with, it was biased and propogatory.

> People do not like their stories re-told, they want things recognisable. Romeo and Juliet can be re-told in a hip and modern way but it must still leave the story recognisable. People become mistrusting, anxious and defensive when minds are being played with and react strongly against this type of work. Some will "ride" it and others will close up. My use of Salome is not
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> Sequential, it is abstract and strange. When those aspects are embedded in visual images that encourage emotional association – audiences find it too personal and shocking. It is unpredictable and not easy to digest, they are not accustomed to having to pay so much mental and emotional attention. There is no comfortable distance for them to assume. There are real bodies in space – in their space.[43]

So on a broader scale, *Naked on a Goat*, even in conception, utilised a form of mimesis. It took a well known story and character and instead of re-telling and re-playing or re-enacting it, it sought it investigate, deconstruct and re-create it. The referent slowly changes and Salome becomes in excess of the referent she was formerly represented as. She is politicised and becomes more complex and less and less recognisable. By positioning a Black, female domestic worker as a princess, on stage

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So there was the history of perpetual questioning. There was a general mistrust of institutions, but for me that distrust was a definite personality trait. This has always given me a tool for working. When academic thought and analysis began to hamper my creative process I would try not to read academic material and would switch extremes. But being an academic thinker everything I see and hear and feel is translated and analyzed within my mind as a natural process of digestion."

[43] Another thing that influenced her decision to work with the story and character of Salome, was that when she returned from America she found that the dance world was still run by white northern suburbs women and she relished the day that that would change. This is an example of the hierarchy of awarded discourse. The dance world may be a field dominated by women and not men but within that there is still a hierarchical kind of domination. White women dominate it and there is little place for the black women to speak. Orlin did find that there were more and more black men involved in the system but again there was little trace of the black women. So in terms of *Naked on a Goat*, she declared: "I was on a mission to find the integrity of the black female dancer." The irony of it is that when they were reworking it to go on tour one of the dancers got married and her husband refused to allow her to dance. The dancer submitted. Orlin felt that this was like taking twenty steps back.

and as the central speaking subject, Orlin is being subversive. She is challenging the placement of this woman (domestic worker) as "other" and on the periphery of the symbolic Order. This re-functioning of a well-known story in order to challenge the status quo is dealt with in detail by theorists Diamond and Suleiman, and by playwrights Brecht, Churchill, Kennedy.[44]

On a more detailed level, there are countless uses of mimetic practice within *Naked on a Goat*. An explicit example of how the production uses a feminist mimesis is when it re-functions Salome's famous "dance of the seven veils". Not only is the dance told differently, but the differences are challenging to the audience as it brings to the fore notions of engendering, assuming a role, desire and aggression. It confronts notions of femininity. The three Salomes (Fikile, Busiswe and Tania) use petticoats as a cloaking and uncloaking of femininity.

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[44] Sulsiman, Susan Robin,"Daughters Playing: Some Feminist Rewritings and The Mother" in Subversive Intent. (1990).
Diamond, Elin,"Benmussa's Adaptations: Unauthorised Texts From Elsewhere" in Feminine Focus. New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc. (1989).

TEXT ANALYSIS

2.4 OPPRESSIVE MIMESIS IS MIMICKED TO CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO: ANALYSIS OF *NAKED ON A GOAT*

DANCE OF THE SEVEN VEILS

In an analysis of the text we can see that Orlin has taken the story of Salome's dance with the seven veils; the act of dressing, and simulated "courting". In being continually repeated, three simple things lose sense to make a new sense. It is not necessarily easily identifiable intellectually but it is very articulate emotionally. In the mimicking of these things, for instance getting dressed, Orlin has confused their signification, they become destabilised and the women can begin to find their own meaning, their own "real".

If they just repeated these actions, their meaning would never have changed and their signification and impact on the psyche would have remained unchallenged, but the actions are repeated with symbolic differences. When this section of the piece begins, one of the performers notices a petticoat lying on the stage. Another performer/dancer brings a lamp to pinpoint it, while the last dancer picks it up and drops it onto the plates. Later raw meat will also be placed on the plates. Just as the raw

meat is a symbol of their objectification, so too are the petticoats, garments that cover the female anatomy, garments that are strong icons of femininity.

The three dancers stand in a row up-stage and move towards the audience as they touch their bodies seductively. This seduction, however, leads to their dressing in the petticoats rather then undressing completely. Instead of exposing their desires, they veil themselves and hide and suppress them. They dress above the lamps so as to illuminate the petticoat's whiteness. But instead of dressing properly, the petticoats only get half way up their torsos before they are thrust down. This action is repeated as they dress in another petticoat on top of the first. Here they are assuming the female role deliberately (through putting on the petticoat), but when they put on the second petticoat the meaning and signification of their dressing becomes confused. They take on the female role and then reject it by refusing to engage in a "civilised" and passive exercise of dressing (role-playing). They repeat their movements to highlight and mock their rejection of their ascribed roles. So the everyday act of dressing in a petticoat has become subverted into a more complex one, one that expresses the "irrational", the frustrations of the women who refuse to have their identities fixed. So it is through mimicry, repetitions of mimesis on stage, that the dancers have defied their gender.

In the beginning of the dressing ritual, they are caressing their femininity. However, the result of this is a battle against the petticoat. A petticoat represents a garment of clothing that conceals their bodies, which hides the form that represents their femininity and individuality. It is also soft in texture and is semiotically and connotatively infused with a female sexuality. When the performers step into these garments, they are stepping into socially inscribed roles and notions of what it means to be "woman". These petticoats act as veils that prevent them from exploring and enjoying their own sexuality. Compounding this constraint, the petticoat can be seen as representative of the fascination that a patriarchal society has with women in underwear, barely and teasingly dressed. This is challenged by the dancers' blazing focus directed at the audience when dressing in the petticoats whilst still being provocative and defiant.

The three dancers/performers then take lamps and shine the light onto themselves from head to feet. This illuminates their existence, their courage, their torment and, of course, their bodies. And their bodies are now obviously the locus of their subjugation and their liberation. They begin to fight with each other, wrestling for the dresses. We see base creatures, driven by the bestial desires of human nature. They wrestle like spoilt children fighting for a toy, greedy to own and control.

The intellect is exiled leaving unadulterated instinct and the dancers struggle in a chain of need, desperate to survive in the wilderness of gender savagery and the solitary and confusing predicament of the human condition. This fight over the petticoats reduces the women to fashion "victims" - desperate for a piece of the desirable, desperate to be the desirable, if not to take hold of their own desires. This sequence reinforces how they have relinquished their own desires and internalised what is desired of them. It is also as if they want to cover themselves and hide their bodies, as if they were grotesque.

It is Fikile Maswanganye who wins the seven slips. Busiswe Negebulana chases Fikile threateningly into submission. Fikile moves behind the blanket. Busiswe returns to find the other dancer who has collapsed on the floor with one lamp that buzzes on and off, on and off, letting us discover darkness and revelations of insight into the dancers' intriguing series of simulations.

The audience views (in between flashes of pulsating darkness) two women who are stalking each other, in an extremely sexual manner. They sweat beads of aggression as they face each other to love each other. They circle one another in whole form and in specific body areas, coming together and moving apart, denying and giving. This is a mating dance with a difference. It is as though they are challenging each other to invest

in themselves. They tempt and dare the other to explore, indulge, enjoy and despise the other's body and self, and the other one's own self, speaking with their bodies.

Here is a representation of the female identity in live space. It confronts the male gaze but also the female gaze. There is no safe distance for the voyeuristic male gaze as these are "real" women in "real" space (tangible) that can see and *do* watch the audience. They are almost naked and vulnerable but they refuse to be victims of circumstance. Their nakedness and close proximity become weapons with which to confront the audience with and to reclaim their own sense of self. If dancers, performers and women are supposed to have beautifully toned and thin bodies – these women do not. If society seems to be accepting multiple sexual identifications then Orlin has placed a black woman and a white woman together, half naked on stage and has sexualised their interaction.

Orlin also explores the notion that these performers are all part of the same psyche and she plays with the idea that they are confronting aspects of themselves, parts of their own consciousness. When Fikile and Tanya confront each other they are confronting the "white" and the "black" parts of themselves. Orlin articulates the white aspect of self as the privileged part and the black part as the one that lacked opportunities. Orlin said that historically there is a white and a black self within us. She

believes that these are things we need to deal with in. It is her perception that this country is in a fascinating stage where we have the opportunity to reconcile and heal.

The sequence then progresses to a dance where one dancer attempts to jump onto another and capture her. But she falls and tries again. It is as though they are a part of the same female psyche that is courting and berating itself. Their ceremony moves behind the blanket and the lamp continues to follow them, lighting up the blanket from behind. This makes it look like a growing, glowing womb and like an organic bulb that is incubating something which is ready to burst. The lamp stops flashing as the third dancer emerges wearing the petticoats.

Here the epicentre of the Dance of the Seven Veils unfolds. The entire production may be understood as it builds to, climaxes and then exhausts itself in its journey of discovery. But this particular scene relates in a more focused manner to the actual dance of Salome with parallels such as the dancer dressed in all seven petticoats.

Fikile Maswanganye would probably have used veils in a more conventional production but, for this show in this postmodern genre, it is petticoats. She begins Orlin's version of the dance as if she is doing a strip show of melancholy and defiance. In the story, Salome unveils her

objectified body so that its objectification will grant her desire. Fikile unveils her objectified body in order to expose its objectification and then to reclaim it. It is in the re-vising of Salome's dance that Fikile can deconstruct her ascribed and internalised role and begin to articulate her own.

The two other women follow her with lamps mimicking masculine behaviour so as not only to highlight sexual harassment, but to spotlight the objectification of the female body. They whistle like men admiring their property, with the potential to violate their property. When two women are objectifying another, the effect is unusual and unsettling.

Fikile constantly keeps her eyes on the audience and the other dancers encourage her to do this. She takes the petticoats off one at a time and as she takes the last one off we see a piece of raw meat between her legs. This is both disgusting and horrifying and we are not sure if this is supposed to simulate a penis or a swollen clitoris. But, either, way it signals the sexually objectified and that which cannot be logically defined. This foregrounds Fikile's exploitation without allowing her to be simply reduced to it. It explores the desires that drive fetishistic scopophillia and the exploitative gaze. This deliberately lends privilege to the female eye. Parts of the body that drive fetishism become displayed and exaggerated as fetishised objects.

The presentation of the piece of raw meat between Fikile's legs has caused much disturbance in audiences world wide. (Orlin believes that her work always challenges notions of identity. She says that her creative process seems to bring up complex issues in the performers' psychology like issues of sexuality, and even issues like eating disorders. Orlin views *Naked on a Goat* as only three-quarters her work and initiated by her action. She would refer to her work as devised and not choreographed by her). The piece of raw meat becomes visually extremely challenging visual for the audience. In the first phase of performing this piece, it was Fikile who used the meat. But when the piece went on tour, she could no longer dance in it and Orlin decided to use a male performer in her place. But she dressed him like a woman. He wore make-up, had (as she described) a beautiful body like a woman's, and long hair. His nails were painted and the audience had no idea that he was a man. He even wore a stuffed bra. So when he stripped the veil/petticoat and stood naked before an audience in a bra without the meat, instead showing his penis,...the audience was horrified. (This was what nearly caused a riot in Poland.)

This shows the link that Orlin's ideology has with form and content. The style of performance was feminine and metaphoric, the content turned out to be metaphorically female. This was used as a devise to challenge the status quo. The performers were "performing" femininity. They were

assuming the role and accepting the uncomfortableness of the role, through the use of their objects - the petticoats. We as the audience could understand they were trying to fit into the petticoats but were frustrated and angered by them. All the time perceiving the women as women, dealing with their frustrations at being "woman". They were mimicking female behaviour and the audience could think that they understood that these were women. Suddenly the identity they understood was confused and incorrect as everything about the performer was feminine and "female" except that he had a penis. This man had mimicked femininity until the fact that he was a man became visible. He had undermined the referent and redefined his signification. Sexual and gender identification is no longer a clear-cut case of biological genitals. What is in appearance simple is far more complex, with multiple layers, and no boundaries are obvious anymore. In fact, society's boundaries only become obvious when they are challenged. They remain invisible and silent until bumped.

A MULTITUDE OF FEMALE TEXTS

According to Orlin, there is no one person when we are dealing with an individual personality. This is in accordance with the postmodern concept of identity. There are multiple parts and points of identification within a psyche. We all have the latent and developed potential of all kinds of personas within us. Orlin explains that all her performers are Salome,

parts of Salome. They confront and dance with each other on so many different levels. Orlin speaks:

> There is no one person. There are too many different aspects that make up a person. So in the case of Salome – there is no one Salome. She role-plays an incorrect referent of what a woman is. She has been disempowered by concepts of "woman" and "princess" and she has been labeled irrational, unpredictable and emotional. It is exactly these things that become her weapon. In *Naked on a Goat*, we explore the different aspects of selves/Salome in various scenes and actions like: the dog, the slut, the healthy person, the aggressor, the little girl, the mother, the daughter...
>
> It is in the juggling of these different aspects that a person becomes interesting. Salome is not just Salome because she is a victim, but because of the incredibly difficult relationship she has with the world and with herself. We looked at the various aspects and components of what we are made up and thus Salome confronts the white person in her; the black person in her; the man in her; the woman in her; the transvestite in her; the lesbian in her; the heterosexual in her; the desexed part of herself; the demanding part of herself; the actor; the vulnerable... etc in herself.
>
> But in so doing she confronts the other performers and the audience with these parts of themselves as well. And that is when the audience becomes uncomfortable. These issues are too private and too disrupting. But post modernism allows for you not to be down the line and asks you not to re-instate inscribed singular identities. It allows for you to be constructive and to pull things apart. It lets you say: something looks like this – but it is not that – it is far too complex. When people can allow for just that understanding then the need to fix the "other" into a neatly fitting space becomes reduced.
>
> It is okay for the audience to be uncomfortable. It is the audience that is not comfortable with being uncomfortable. But if theatre can still be so personal, shocking and controversial then it means that there are still issues that communities need to deal with. Therefore there is still a need for revolutionary theatre that can provoke, incite

> and make uncomfortable. Things are far from being resolved and when an audience become uncomfortable this is the red light buzzing that here is something that needs to be dealt with and not silenced and packed away.[45]

PINEAPPLES AND OPPRESSIVE MIMESIS

Another scene that challenges oppressive mimesis is when the actress is singing about the action she is performing - which is cleaning her pineapples. The act of a woman cleaning her house should seem quite normal. However, this is subverted and the actress appears quite insane as she sings operatically and ecstatically about dusting her pineapples.

This is an attack on the activity of performing socially inscribed roles. Women who are housewives and dedicate their lives to performing the role of "housekeeping" are performing what society has inscribed as *normal, good, necessary and mundane*. Normality is questioned. The piece asserts that society's understanding of what is acceptable and good is reducible to a circumstance that stimulates dementia, if it is repeated and repeated until all sense in the action is lost.

This little performance with the pineapples is confusing, amusing and jarring for the audience. It is also the first time an actor had used her own voice to create sound and she sings in a crazed fashion about mundane activity. (Maybe that is why she seems half-crazed, as she spends her life

[45] Appendix, p4-5

performing mundane tasks.) This functions to invert established beliefs. Any socially designated role is proposed as good. Here the example is that of the housewife. The piece places the blame on the role, not the woman herself, and questions a passive acceptance of roles.

Orlin's work serves as self-reflective for women rather than being absolutely accusatory on external levels. Her work also argues for self-liberation through some form of acceptance. For instance, this piece looks at the extrinsic motivations for the present circumstances of women, but does not dwell much on these aspects. It starts with those aspects and then allows for a study of the internal world, which is perpetually polemic and constantly resigns itself to the ruptures and sutures of these inner disputes.

As the actress cleans the pineapples, she takes pride in and enjoys her work. This is an important motif in this work. It raises the option of conflict; or acceptance in an existential fashion, with regard to one's life and roles and rituals, rather than fighting them. What is immensely intriguing for me is that Orlin's dancers seem to find a sense of liberation through accepting their roles and rituals at the end of the play. It is almost as if acceptance *for*, works as a release *from*.

This character, the stage manager, is given most of the power and control throughout the piece. She the performers what to do. She also represents Herodias, Salome's mother. She is constantly present, always watching and controlling (or attempting to control) Salome. This is also an exploration into the mother/daughter relationship and Orlin concentrates on cases of jealousy, specifically when the mother becomes envious of the daughter's developing sexuality, which will link up later with notions I explore in the second chapter that examines the "desexed" female. Orlin looks at the relationship of power between the performers/women, the mother and daughter, and the performers and the stage manager.

PART THREE: FEMINIST MIMESIS

3.1 FEMINIST MIMESIS

Feminist mimesis works against oppressive mimesis by inverting, twisting and ridiculing it. Feminist mimesis aims to show that the sign is not necessarily linked with its significations. It tries to deconstruct this "real"[46] by showing and mimicking the operation of oppressive mimesis. This feminist mimesis aims to expose male desire as the agent of defining the

[46]Let us refer to the referent we are inscribed with (within the symbolic order) as the "real", as used by Kristeva in her paper, "The True-Real". Feminist performance artists are interested in speaking for themselves, in destabilizing and unveiling the misrepresentations of what is "real" with respect to what is "woman". This is why a subversive mimesis becomes a strategy within this art form. The imposed oppressive mimesis eventually becomes internalised if the referent is the area of exploitation that the feminist mimesis is concerned with.

"real". It militates for a more complex and all encompassing referent. It explores different references that the "other" would like to see signified and it simultaneously dismantles the mechanisms of patriarchal modeling. It is through the recuperation of mimesis that the "other" may attempt to recuperate itself as subject.

Luse Irigaray writes:

> One must assume the female role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it...To play with mimesis is, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it.[47]

THE BODY

In a feminist mimesis, *the body* can be the greatest tool for challenging the status quo and exploring a feminist discourse. I would argue that the female body has always been the site of oppression and objectification. Female performance artists invert this by letting the body "speak". Orlin does this by interposing the body into the Symbolic Order and letting it disrupt this model by refusing to be a recognisable referent. A feminist discourse makes use of the body as a speaking agent in several different ways. I will be exploring how *Naked on a Goat* uses the body's True-Real, the hysteric, and the abject, and how Orlin uses the body to thwart the male gaze. The theorists that have aided me in this research are: Kristeva,

[47] Burke, J. 1981. "Irigaray Through the Looking Glass", in Feminist Studies 7:2 p:111

Russo, Creed, Willis, Diamond, Dolan, Mulvey, Freud, Foucault and Schneider.

The most obvious starting place for this discussion is the body. The fact that *Naked on a Goat* uses live bodies in the audience's space to challenge the status quo with a feminist discourse is of utmost importance. Orlin utilises the female body to interrupt the Symbolic Order. Theorist, Rebecca Schneider, and Michael Foucault offer an interesting perspective in an argument about the use of "the body".

Micheal Foucault writes that: "The story of the selves and the story of history do have a common meeting ground, a place of mutual utterance, a form that is of utmost value to the performance artist - the body."[48] He continues to say that it is the search for descent and not the reconstruction and erecting of foundations that "disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself. What convictions and far more decisively, what knowledge can resist it? Descent attaches itself to the body, it inscribes itself to the nervous system."[49]

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[48] Foucault, Michael. 1987. "Language, Counter-Memory, Practice",ed. Donald F Bouchard (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. p147

[49] Ibid, p148

Foucault refers to the disruptive potential the body has when it is used to disturb the Linguistic (Symbolic) Order. He explains that it can aid a deconstruction of the system by challenging a hegemony that was perceived as unchallengable; by showing the inconsistent pieces of a seemingly consistent whole, it shows the differences within an order that is structured around sameness.

"RE-MEMBERING" THE BODY

Rebecca Schneider also speaks about how our bodies can show the gaps and flaws of the Symbolic Order. She mentions our shared nervous system that surges "intimately and often invisibly, between and throughout differences regardless of bloodlines like a public secret. Acknowledged or unacknowledged, a social genealogy continues to reverberate in the tangled spaces between our race, gender, age and class identities - available at any moment to be ..'remembered'."[50]

Schneider's use of the word, remember, is also played with, with regard to notions of the body. Schneider talks about re-membering members: members of the body, gender, history, selves, politics and structural hegemonies. This "re-membering" becomes a powerful tool in the deconstruction of the illusionary real *members* that limb our society. This challenge to the status quo attempts to deconstruct issues surrounding the

[50] Lorde, Audre, "An Open Letter to Mary Daly", in Moraga and Anzaldua, This Bridge, (1982):96.

body and re-member it differently. In the re-membering, we can re-evaluate and replace these members into different serving members of the body of the heterogenic paradigm. A paradigm that re-lies (the word re-lie can insinuate the perpetual telling of lies rather that its denotative brother) on a single memory, a single body of sameness, a consistent projection of images (the same images). But this suggested re-membering is in counter mimicry to the cycle of remembering, the repetitive culture of the commodisised *other.*

It can then be said that women performance artists interpose the body into the dominant system of representation to find a discourse that interrupts and confuses the signification of woman as "other", which epistemologically interrupts the entire system of representation. It is through an examination of mimicry that the difference/s between the copy and model, the character and actor, and the spectator's relationship with the rational male citizen can be highlighted. It is this re-examination of mimicry that lends itself to a new feminist mimesis. A subversive mimesis such as this allows the actor's body to speak not for but be-for(e) the referent. Once again, I will deal with a theoretical framework on the subject of how a feminist mimesis challenges the status quo before applying it to *Naked on a Goat.*

3.2 THE POLITICS OF TRANSGRESSION: RECLAIMING THE BODY THROUGH THE TRUE-REAL, THE HYSTERIC AND THE ABJECT

THE TRUE-REAL

This *true-real*[51] body, as Diamond refers to it, is given "axiological status", whilst the body simultaneously is unable to *speak* truth. This "true-real" body can be understood as follows: "Wedging a space between body and text of body displaces the imaginary wholeness of the actor in realism, making her truth provisional, contingent."[52] It is within this practice that the hysteric's[53] *true-real* can dismantle truth by referring to yet refusing to symbolise its meaning. It is here that the ossification of paramount *reals* can be thwarted. Yet to do this within the realist's medium is a contradiction in terms and naturally opens ground for a more progressive medium. If mimesis as we know it is based on the *real* and if realism is a beacon that perpetuates that *real*, then any mode of expression for the feminist's *true-real* lies outside this mimesis and then outside this medium. However, this discourse may be rethought when the oppressive mimesis is undermined through its repetition (in the feminist mimesis), or when this stable reference is destabilised by the body's *true-real*.

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[51]Diamond, Elin, "Mimesis, Mimicry and The True-Real", in Modern Drama 32, no.1 (1989):377.
[52] Kristeva, Julia.,"The True-Real", in The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toriil Moi. New York: Columbia University Press. (1986):235.

The body can be seen as the meeting place of form and content. The form uses the body to express the pains of embodiment. The form is about using the actual body in space, and using it subversively. For example, if women's bodies are objectified and valorised for being thin and muscular, these bodies are not thin and not beautiful. This is a means of reclaiming the body and the body's aesthetics. When private parts of the body are revealed it is not meant to be an erotic display like in pornography. Instead it is done aggressively and the women, along with unveiling their bodies, unveil the male spectator by staring at him. The content is about the woman, and it is her body that signs her as woman. The body is no longer the site of oppression. It becomes the weapon that is used to challenge the status quo. When the body "speaks", it gives rise to a feminist discourse.

Whilst exposing the relationship between sign and signified, the body also serves as the place of utterance and expresses its own language of emotions and experiences. The emotions and experiences that it expresses are primarily those that are a result of the body's signification of embodiment. If the female body and the body's pigmentation are the locus for oppression, then it is the body that can tell the story of its signification. It is through real bodies in space that the audience can be confronted with the real pains and conflicts of those housed within these bodies. The body

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[53] "The Hysteric" will be defined further into this chapter.

may change in time and space but the story and/or history of the body, its genealogy and its lineage do not. It is perpetuated and for those embodied within a body that inscribes them to particular experiences of oppression, silencing and marginalisation, it is beneficial to reclaim that body and the voice of that body. This can happen if the body can tell the stories and express the motions of its suffering and frustration and joys. The body can dance its own steps. This is relevant in discussing how Orlin's bodies in space explore the experience of their embodiment and, therefore, explore areas of the female psyche. This is dealt with in the second chapter.

We forget that our point of entry into this life is through the body and that it is through the body that we are able to live and experience life. The body is our tool for expression and for experience. It is the gateway for giving and receiving, and for communicating and perceiving; it is a two-way mechanism. It is the link for inside and outside. The boundaries between the body and its experience and effect in and of the outside world are quite malleable. It becomes the vessel that acts as the intermediate between thought and feelings and absolute action. It monitors and responds to reactions externally and is constantly reacting internally. Our bodies are living ecosystems that are the site for thousands of organisms' life and death every day. Even when we do not utilise speech, we still express the inner world through our postures and breath.

In fact, our bodies are our theatres as they stage our scripts and animate them. So the body on stage becomes the site of a complex communication. It expresses the inner world (of the female psyche) because it can – because it is a vessel of the external world. The other bodies in space – being the audience – use their perceptual skills, such as their eyesight, to absorb these outward manifestations of the dancers' story. Then they assimilate this language internally and respond. A communication of the internal world can occur because of the body (representing the external world). The bodies of members of the audience react as well, and messages and electro-magnetic currents become "alive" in the space.

Brecht's mimesis, the body in space, the feminine experience and women's desire to establish new and all encompassing relationships with the world, themselves and their representation, enables them to manipulate the referential. Art may follow reality, but reality does not have to be portrayed realistically in order to be accepted as artistic expression of what is truly real, especially when the status quo dictates a reality that is biased and exclusive. Women performance artists seek new subject matter that can be reshaped in new relationships with the true-real and mimesis, with the signs and the signifying systems.

THE HYSTERIC

A strategy that uses the body's "true-real" is what Kristeva, in her essay The True-Real[54], referred to as the *hysteric*. According to Kristeva, the masculine mirror of imposed mimesis leaves female performance artists with the alternative of exploring a non-recognisable referent. This non-recognisable referent is used as a strategy to release the signifier from the signified, the sign from the referent, and signification from intention. Kristeva points out that, medically, a means of disempowering the woman was to term her an hysteric and proclaim her symptoms unreadable and somatic. Once a woman's sanity and rational mind was in question she became totally undermined.

If we could define the medical use of the term "hysteric", it would deal with irrational behaviour, socially unacceptable behaviour, unpredictability, lack of control in the mind/mouth/body, and unrecognisable behaviour. When there is a lack of control over the body, the body becomes the site of the grotesque; it leaks and smells, convulses, bleeds and excretes. The "monstrous female" takes on a new meaning as she becomes the "grotesque". The women are taught that their bodies are grotesque (through the media and social environment). It is not acceptable to have excess hair on the body; it is not attractive to have cellulite or fat; the menstrual cycle is something to be kept private as it is gross and any

[54] Kristeva, Julia, "The True-Real", in The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia University Press. 1986): 236.

toilet-related activities must never be spoken about. She is silenced in her body and through her body. She spends hours keeping her body "clean" of hair, or working out at the gym, and pretends that her body does not bleed, urinate/excrete.

The strategy then, according to Kristeva, is to invert this lethal title and use hysteria to disrupt categories and systems' coherent meanings. Hysteria defies the grammar of the patriarchal system and allows a feminist discourse. This brings to the fore the possibility of "Hysterical Realism" which, translated, denotes a realism without truth. But the truth it lacks is the one based on the *real* (the "not man" referent, arising from the masculine-reflection) which opens space to explore the *true-reaL,.* "true", only because it is not longer a product of a masculine mimesis, so its "real" emerges from a female reality/perspective/subjectivity. Here, realism attempts to destabilise the status quo and then reconstruct it along the lines of a moral structure supported by logos - this new mode of medium does not necessitate the reconstruction of a comfortable safe world, but makes space for a "truer" one.

"Speaking" the body can be the most powerful and controversial way of challenging the status quo with a feminist discourse. It is historically painful, but for the hysteric and the artist the true signifier is the body. Let

us examine how *Naked on a Goat* takes the hysteric and subverts it and shocks, revolts, seduces and speaks.

HYSTERIA IN *NAKED ON A GOAT*

In the production, there is a point where dancers have moved behind the blanket and suddenly a gunshot is heard. One of the dancers emerges from behind the blanket and is contorting with the "wound" from the shot and then she falls as if dead. A waltz begins to tickle the air with a seductive eeriness, and another gunshot is fired. Busiswe also emerges in her death role-play, whilst Tania, the first dancer to emerge, is now waltzing to the music. In the same set of movements, Fikile appears from the blanket and Busiswe picks up on the dance. The three women wear a mink-like shawl coat without underwear. They move to the music, dressed only in mink and panties, simulating animals in their waltz. The ever-present stage manager continues to shoot at them. Each time they are shot, they bleat like dying animals and we see these women as victims, like the minks.

Minks are bred in order to be killed for fashion garments. This analogy impacts powerfully against the backdrop of women (who are only ever perceived as objects to be possessed), and "death" (emotional or physical) within the actual subjecthood of a woman. Their bodies stage the revolt of the hysteric and convulse. This demonstrates the divisive effects

of a patriarchal self in a body that is not the same. It also mimics the gender signs of the heterosexual female. Her body twitches, rebels and gasps until the crystalline beauty of rational discourse melts into an incoherent ooze of whines, grunts and stilted hysterical cries. Such a transposition of women into sign actually endangers the lives of real women. This strange dance also suggests the brutalising effects of the sexual objectification of women.

Initially the dancers are the picture of elegance, waltzing gracefully around the stage. But, slowly, the dancing becomes deformed and distorted as they fall to the floor like still photographs of shot and fallen antelope. Slowly they bare their breasts, alluringly covered before becoming uncovered and exposed. (The members of the audience notice that the tutus are being hung from meat hooks).

This scene is broken when a shot is fired but the dancers ignore it shouting at the stage manager/actress to "stop it already". The ritual of death caused by the imposition of aesthetics over an already beautiful female soul/body is over. They disappear behind the blanket, the music stops but their feet are still waltzing. Even when left alone, the effects of patriarchal socialisation are always present.

Orlin stated that this part of the piece was one that most people never ventured to understand. She explains that there are many levels and layers here. There is a group of women who are very vulnerable. They are naked on stage and must deal with it. It is here she deals with Salome's death and because the death is not sequentially expressed at the end, people do not, as she put it, "cope with what is going on". She further explores how women feel when they wear mink coats, and this is intended to parallel Salome's feelings about killing Jakanaan. She is then brought the meat which symbolises his head. Further resonances include karma, rebirth as well as death, fashion and women being fashion victims, pieces of meat, or dead skins.

But Orlin is also playing with theatrical conventions. She wants to find a way to create a very tight dramatic moment and then break it and its illusion. So Salome is shot and dies and it is sad, and then she just gets up and carries on dancing over and over again until eventually she shouts at the stage manager who is shooting her: "Fuck off and just stop shooting – get a life!" There are multiple elements at work here. Orlin stated that the performers are also goats here. Goats- she referenced - are the sacrificial animal at celebrations in some black cultures. Their sacrifice is interpreted as a sign of festivity. Here we find a link with the title. These women are sacrificed for other people's pleasures in a patriarchal and racist system,

and they are naked -- vulnerable to the world and to themselves. They are naked on a goat.

As the piece continues, the world goes dark and we are all dancers and audience alike, encompassed by blackness. The light seeps in to reveal three women crouched on their hands and knees, snarling at us aggressively.

They creep towards us. If they are to be reduced to animals and objects of desire then Orlin will subvert this and make them aggressive animals and objects of danger. A swing is lowered above them. They growl and bark at us and at each other, and begin to grab each plate possessively in their mouths so as to place it on the swing. The furs seem to have transformed these women from tortured creatures into snarling animals intent on reclaiming their *flesh*. When the dancers' bodies mimic the mannerisms of dogs, Orlin is not only using the Hysteric (the uncontrollable and unpredictable body) but what Kristeva calls the *abject*.

THE ABJECT

Kristeva defines the abject[55] as the place where meaning collapses, where the Symbolic Order fails, when something has intervened and it is no longer possible to ascribe signification to signifier. The abject, Kristeva

[55] Kristeva, Julia. 1982. "Approaching The Abject" in Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection. Translated leon S. Roudiez. NY:Columbia University Press.

explains, is ambiguous and transgressive, for example, a woman's placing a piece of raw meat between her legs, or a man that looks like a woman bearing his penis and wearing a bra. Its signification is ambiguous but it incites a sense of repulsion and attraction, it is intriguing and disgusting. This is the realm of the abject and its transgressive nature disturbs one, its signification is in excess but, at the same time, it is so strange that it becomes intriguing, so transgressive that it becomes attractive. It allows for a collapse of meaning as it is in excess of definition.

When the abject is used through the body and in the body's unpredictable expressions and movements, it works with the *true-real.* It no longer allows for a confined referent of the predictable "not man" sign. That "real" (the "not man" referent) is not realistic in its articulation of the female referent/identity. The *true-real* pries open the space for a referent that is non-recognisable and unpredictable which in turn makes it impossible for an identity to be fixed (and consequently marginalised, confined and silent). It frees the referent from the sign-model copy. It is here that content and form are both freed from the male referent.

Therefore, unlike the portrayal of the female body under the male gaze in films (in mainstream cinema), women performance artists define the rules that govern the depiction of them as females, as well as the depiction of their bodies. Their work carries elements of surprise as they assume the

unpredictable, and use unprecedented control over the images of their own bodies. This is designed cathartically to shed the patriarchal images of women, and embrace new self-generated images. Kristeva said, "In this economy, there are no images or semblances. Each element is neither real, nor symbolic, nor imaginary-but true."[56]

Theatre, then, becomes the perfect context for women performance artists because it is live entertainment and, therefore, thwarts the illusion of distance and exposes the male spectator. This device is used in the form of *Naked on a Goat_* each time the performers deal with content that inscribes them through male subjectivity. The performers confront the spectator to such a degree that many feel so uncomfortable that they walk out of the theatre. The distance necessary for fantasising is no longer there. Any sense of voyeuristic pleasure that would re-inscribe the body as object is dissolved. Jill Dolan[57] refers to the exploitations of the specific realities that govern the body within the Lacanian model that exist between the audience-performer relationship[58]. When performance artists

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[56] Ibid, 236.

[57] Dolan, Jill,"The Feminist Spectator as Critic". University of Michigan Press.(1991).

[58] Dolan says, "..To the fearful proximity of the performer and the dangerous consequences of his own desires. His cloak of invisibility has been stripped away and his spectatorship becomes an issue within the work."[58]According to Freud's castration theory, men fear castration and view women (because their bodies lack the penis) as the castrated. Then women become the object of desire as well as a danger, a danger when there is a strong anxiety over the difference and the manner in which to cope with this fear lends itself to the desire to subjugate what is threatening. Alternatively desire if indulging in and idealizing in this feared object can be a means of relieving it and the fear which it incites. As Laura Mulvey offers this option to be the investigation of the "mystery"[58], and the re-enactment of the original trauma by subverting this representation into a fetish so that it is reassuring rather than dangerous. The woman's body once again becomes the site for objectification and this objectification incites fetishism. This option then ensures that women are the object of the pleasure-seeking male gaze. Mulvey describes fetishistic scopophilia as the enactment of the physical beauty of an object in order to transform it into something satisfying in itself. It can exist outside linear time

expose their bodies, it is with the intent of reclaiming them. This intention to eventually be able to assert their own pleasure and sexuality by doing this denies any fetishistic pursuit of their own bodies. But it is that fetishistic pursuit that becomes the object of consideration.

TWISTING SIGNIFICATION: COSTUMES AND PROPS

Naked on a Goat's ideology that is embedded in the content is extended to the form through the costumes and props. The garments that dress the body in *Naked on a Goat*, are also used to help reclaim the body and to confuse its former representations, those that worked to objectify the woman. Orlin twists signification. She uses domestic objects and costumes to mimic their *real* function and become extensions of the body's obsessions. The body itself becomes written over by costumes and movements that capture the performers' illusory grid.

For example, in *Naked on a Goat*, costumes are utilised as symbols for different constraints. These costumes transmute into a distortion of what they connote. The medical gowns are commonly understood as icons of healing and aid, but they transform into objects of abuse and limitations. The dancers slap themselves with these garments and try to free themselves from them. The entire image is filled with fury, anguish, vehemence and despair, quite the opposite of what medical uniforms

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as the erotic instinct that is focused on look alone.[58] And if the female body is a safe site of desire then her body is the phallic symbol that can reconstruct her absent penis.

normally represent. The dancers want nothing to do with any form of paternal care, or of a paternal and restraining world. If their emotions are hysterical then the patriarchal world is cold and severe, like the medical gowns.

In one scene, the dresses that the dancers wear are taken off and transformed into boxing gloves. The dresses are swung around their heads and slapped onto the ground whipping the air in anger. The dancers move towards us shouting and challenging us to take them on. When they do try to attack us physically, they behave like men. Is this mocking men, or is it a means of expressing the masculine side of the feminine (Jung's animus) in very stereotypical and iconic ways? It does not really matter because the extraordinary and incongruent thing encapsulated within this mimesis is that these women are militant and strong, standing in tutus. The tutus begin as icons of the "good girl" syndrome that eventually render a woman passive, but the tutus become inverted into weapons of active aggression.

She militates the tutu as a reaction to the seeming fragility of ballet dancers and the cruelty of the ballet world. Orlin can be quoted as saying that what she does with props and costumes is not always sophisticated. It is almost childlike[59]. She will look at the core de ballet and think about how funny they would look in a maid's uniform while performing the dying

swan. In the same way, she will look at domestic workers and think about how beautiful they would look in tutus. It is the confusion of significations that she enjoys, as it allows more space for realistic, multiple and complex identifications. It is as she says, "a perversion" and the way in which she observes and deals with observations. She challenges the hegemonic forces because she distorts, inverts and ridicules them.

Standing in the tutus, these three wonderful women retract in motion but not intention. They lift their tutus with their gloves in a circular motion that keeps revealing their pelvic area. This brings attention to their vaginas even though they wear underwear. They thrust out at us in a potent and blatant confrontation. The dancers' challenge remains masculine in energy but it utilises the essence of the female anatomy to be its point of resistance and strength. Their biological reference of suppression becomes their focus of confrontation. The dresses are sent violently into the air and thrown at the audience. The dancers then conclude the episode by spitting at the audience, thus portraying their contempt.

SUMMATION

NAKED ON A GOAT: A FEMINIST DISCOURSE THAT CHALLENGES THE STATUS QUO

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[59] Appendix, p5

If the ideology in realism validates the dominant culture, then its efficiency as a political strategy in a feminist discourse becomes questionable in order to speak. The feminist discourse seeks to find a space outside a system that represents women through male subjectivity. An effective medium for challenging this aspect of the status quo is Performance Art. Robin Orlin's *Naked on a Goat* is a site for the exploration of a feminist discourse because and through the way in which it challenges the status quo. *Naked on a Goat*'s challenges to the status quo are based on feminist issues and because these issues are located within a context of exploration in the piece, the piece, I would argue, can be understood and defined as a feminist discourse.

CHAPTER TWO

PART ONE: BENJAMIN'S ALTERNATIVES

This chapter proposes that Performance Art is an effective site for an exploration into the female psyche. I will continue to use Performance Art piece *Naked on a Goat*, choreographed by Robin Orlin, to examine this proposition. I believe that it is an impossible project to explore the entire female psyche, especially considering that so much of its working belongs to the subconscious and superconscious. It is important to stipulate that I do not propose that *Naked on a Goat* assumes such a gigantic task, but I do propose that it most definitely explores important parts of the female psyche. In this chapter, I have chosen two major psychological themes that are broached in the production as examples of how and that *Naked on a Goat* explores the female psyche.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the performers use their bodies to express their experiences of embodiment. These expressions can be understood as a psychological study, as Orlin explores the effects that a patriarchal culture has on the female psyche. As discussed in Chapter One, this patriarchal hierarchy has dominated the forms of representation within our

culture which have in turn contributed to forming our culture. Orlin sought to find her own forms of representation that are true to the female body and mind. Keeping this in mind, it is possible to examine *Naked on a Goat* as an exciting expedition into the internal life of these women. Thus the entire production can be seen as an exploration into the female psyche.

Particular psychological themes are dealt with in *Naked on a Goat*. I will pinpoint and examine them, referring to the work of psychologist and author, Jessica Benjamin.[60] As previously stated (in the Introduction) there are many psychologists whose work I could have applied to Orlin's text. I chose Benjamin primarily because she posits that there is a way of breaking the cycle of patriarchal domination, culturally and psychologically. She examines the social phenomenon of gender domination and its effects on the female psyche. From this position, she then suggests a (if not utopian) solution. In applying her theories to Orlin's work, the exciting link between performance art and the psyche becomes intriguing.

Orlin's work probes and challenges the way in which our social interaction has taken on the forms of gender domination and examines its effects on the female psyche. Benjamin's work can be viewed as an entry point into the psychic realm of *Naked on a Goat*, because her work also probes and

[60] My study of her work has concentrated mainly on her book The Bonds of Love

challenges the way in which our social interaction has taken on and accommodated the forms of gender domination. Benjamin says:

> The fundamental question we must consider is why these positions continue to shape the relationship between sexes despite our society's formal commitment to equality: what explains their psychological persistence? I believe psychoanalytic theory can help illuminate what it formerly accepted: the genesis of the psychic structure in which one person plays subject and the other must serve as his object. I propose to analyse the evolution of this structure and show how it forms the fundamental premise of domination.[61]

I would argue that Benjamin's most worthwhile contribution to this body of work is found in her book, The Bonds of Love, where she proposes that domination only *appears* to be an inevitable process. She posits that there is the possibility of two participating "subjects" that can be mutually respectful in a relationship. She says that, to reduce domination to a simple relation of "doer" and "done to," is to substitute moral outrage for analysis. "Such a simplification, moreover, reproduces the structure of gender polarity under the guise of attacking it."[62] These ideas will be explored throughout this chapter.

The key psychological themes that I believe are explored in *Naked on a Goat* are:

- The Master-slave relationship: power struggles and gender domination

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[61] Benjamin, Jessica, The Bonds of Love. New York: Virago. (1992).
[62] Ibid, p10.

- The question of female desire: a study of female agency and desire and/or the lack thereof. What do woman want, and do they have the space culturally to want it?

Orlin confirmed that these are major psychological themes in the production. I will review these psychological problems separately and each one will be followed by an application of the theory to the text. By examining the psychology of these themes and how they are explored in *Naked on a Goat*, it becomes evident that this performance art piece explores (aspects of) the female psyche.

There are many depths to the issues Orlin's piece addresses and some of them are expressible in words and some are not, because they are all a working of the inner psyche. But it is the inner psyche that prompts us to respond and act in our social interactions and it influences our impact on the world. If we can explore the inner psyche through the body and let it affect us emotionally and intellectually, then we can make choices. We choose at every moment of our lives everything that we do and feel. When we become aware of why and how we make those choices then we are more educated in our decisions. It is possible consciously to chose what we wish to do in our lives. We can point ourselves in the direction of an ideal we wish to aspire to. It is important that artists like Robin Orlin give space and voice to the pains, desires and pleasures of women in South

Africa today. It is important for us to understand what Benjamin is positing. She explains the problem and then tells us there is a chance to move out of this tunneling simulacrum.

Let us first examine her proposition of the self-other relationship.

SELF AND OTHER: CAN THEY MEET AS TWO SUBJECTS?

Benjamin speaks about the importance of how we connect to and recognize others, how we actively engage and make ourselves known in relation to the other. She states that it is the self's need to recognise as well as be recognised by the other. Benjamin declares that this is what many theories of "self" have missed. The idea of mutual recognition is crucial. The basic hegemony that is challenged by Orlin in her work is one that refuses to recognise women without placing them in contrast to men or reifying them into objects that may be handled and stared at. This results in a complex juggling of power relationships where the master/slave relationship shifts and pulls. The pain of the lack of recognition becomes an aggressive need to assert one's identity, free of these socially construed definitions of "woman". The exciting part of her work is that it also allows the dancers to express their frustrations and

emotional reactions to a system that will not recognise[63] them as they would be recognised.

INTERSUBJECTIVITY

The *intersubjective* view maintains that the individual grows *in and through relationships with other subjects.* It is vital that the other whom the self meets is also a self, a subject as different yet alike, as an other who is capable of sharing similar mental experiences. Thus the ideas of intersubjectivity reorients the conception of the psychic world from a subject's relation to its objects, toward a subject meeting another subject. The Intersubjective view refers to what happens in the field of self and other. It describes the capacities that emerge in the interaction between self and other. Even when the self is alone it is in a particular point in the spectrum of relationships rather than the original "natural state" of the individual. Assertion and recognition, according to Benjamin, become vital moves in a dialogue with the self and other especially considering that we recognise ourselves in the other (and inanimate objects[64]). Why then is

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[63] Benjamin articulates recognition as the act that affirms, validates, acknowledges, knows, accepts, understands, empathizes, sees, takes in, tolerates, identifies with, appreciates, finds familiar...loves. What Benjamin calls "mutual recognition" includes a number of experiences commonly described in the research on mother-infant interaction: emotional attunement, mutual influence, and affective mutuality, sharing states of mind.

[64] These concepts are dealt with in depth in what has been termed "Object Relations Psychoanalytic Theory". A good example of these theories can be found in:
Greenberg, J.R. and Mitchell, S.A, Object Relations Psycho Analytic Theory. Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.(1983).

there a breakdown of this relationship, so that self and self become self and other, the dominating and the dominator?

PART TWO: DOMINATION

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 POWER RELATIONS IN *NAKED ON A GOAT*

Naked on a Goat exposes the relationship between the self and other as a play of power and domination. Orlin states:

> All my pieces are about power and the concept of power. How does one see oneself in the world and how one exists in the world, especially as a woman? I question What is power? Is power always dominating? My work is not only about power and the effects of power on the female psyche, but about trying to empower. So, although I do examine the power relationships between people and women and women and men, I am also interested in empowering the female psyche.[65]

2.2 THE PROBLEM OF DOMINATION

How then can we understand power and domination in relationships between self and other? Benjamin refers to Hegel's[66] explanation of the problem of domination. He connects the self's wish for absolute independence and the self's need for recognition with the problem of

[65] Appendix, p3

domination. The self, he states, is establishing itself as an absolute, an independent entity, but it must also recognise the other as an absolute and independent self if it is to be recognised as such. One cannot be recognised by an other that the self does not recognise as an independent entity. He must be able to find himself *in* the other. The self can only be known by actions and, only if his actions have meaning for the other, do they have meaning for him. Yet, each time he acts, he negates the other, which is to say that, if the other is affected, then he no longer is identical with whom he was before. To preserve his identity, the other resists instead of recognising the self's acts. ("Nothing you do or say can harm me."[67])

When the subject tries to assert himself as omnipotent by insisting that his identity is entirely independent and consistent, that there is nothing outside of the self that it does not control, then the basis for domination has begun. Hegel posits that the self has no intrinsic need for the other but uses the other only as a vehicle for self-certainty. But, to affirm itself, the self must be acknowledged by the other and, to do so, it must deny the absoluteness of itself. This is the paradox. At the very moment of realising our own independence, we are dependent upon the other to recognise it.

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[66] Hegel, G.W.F. 1977. Phenomenology of the Spirit. Translated by A.V. Miller. London: Oxford University Press. (1977):104-119, 355-364.
[67] Benjamin, Jessica. 1988. The Bonds of Love. New York: Virago.(1988):30.

A person's "freedom" depends on the other's freedom, the recognition of independence must be mutual. Benjamin suggested that a constant tension is ideal. The problem remains recognising the other. For example, establishing myself means winning recognition of the other and this in turn means I must finally recognise the other as existing for himself and not just for me. The process of differentiation proceeds through the movement of recognition; it flows from subject to subject, from self to other self, and back. This is not only about separation but about the meeting of minds, a picture in which the bird's flight is always in two directions.

2.3 THE MASTER/SLAVE DYNAMIC

Benjamin states that the master-slave dynamic happens when there is a breakdown of tension. When the one self needs to assert his omnipotence and the other needs to re-enact his subjugation. In both cases, the repetition of the cycle is always in hope of discovering a surviving other and a surviving self. If the dominant person (the "master") finds an other that will withstand his attacks and can survive standing up to him, then he is no longer alone in the world as there is an "other" outside of himself. But to have an "other" outside of himself is to challenge his omnipotence. For the "other" (the "slave") who repeats a cycle of submission, it is with the constant hope that he or she can discover his or her "true-self", one that is not weak and submissive like the "false-self". Each time the cycle is

repeated, the opportunity for finding a voice and standing up to the domineering master presents itself.

The master and the slave come together, not in order to destroy the *other* or themselves, but to *save* themselves, to find the human contact and interaction they need. They have a constant hope of breaking their scripts, they come together through love, a love of the self. It is an attempt to try to re-discover a self that is worthy of self-respect that loves the slave. A love that is triumphant. It is also to find themselves in a world where there is an other self that can be part of a relationship where there is mutual love and respect towards the master. This sheds a very different light on the way in which we can understand the struggle for power.

MASTER / SLAVE IN *NAKED ON A GOAT*

If we take this understanding and apply it to Robin Orlin's: *Naked on a Goat*, it is very easy to see the shifts and plays of such power struggles, as the dancers take on the faces of master, and of slave of which there are many layers. Master to one may be slave to another. These battles for power highlight the tensions between women in "a man's world" and women and their internal (intrapsychic) selves. But there is also a far more complex and difficult phenomenon that these performers explore. The positioning of the master and slave in South African society extends

beyond the individual's psychology, because it is also a political and social phenomenon.

Added to Benjamin's psychologically articulated positions of master and slave is the historical positioning of the white man as master and the black man and woman as slave, the white man and woman as master and the black man and woman as slave, the man as master and the woman as slave, the white woman as master and the black woman as slave. This hegemony is challenged on personal and private levels. When someone positioned as slave is more educated and or has more social status than someone positioned as master then the dynamic differs and is far more complex. It is never easily identifiable. Positions are always shifting. The problem also happens when these positions are internalised and even if the public positioning shifts from (for example) slave to master, the internal psychology often does not. These are issues that every South African deals with in his or her interactions. The role of master and slave is shifting and hopefully, if there can be a mutual recognition in our everyday interactions, then we can begin to interact without the master/slave paradigm. A simple example of this in *Naked on a Goat* is the power changes between Herodias and Salome. At times Salome is the domestic worker and Herodias is the white madam. Herodias shouts at and gives orders to Salome around. Socially, Salome is supposed to listen to Herodias, but privately she does not wish to and is not convinced she has

to. At these moments, Salome stands up to Herodias and Herodias does not know how to deal with this social rebellion.

TEXT ANALYSIS

2.4 INDEPTH TEXT ANALYSIS OF MASTER AND SLAVE RELATIONSHIPS

In the beginning of *Naked on a Goat*, the dancers are dressed in surgical gowns, icons of the master's world. They seem cold and sterile and portend the sickness of institutions and lack of individuality, rather than the healing aid the medical world is supposed to represent. Their dance also seeks to heal this simulacrum of master/slave but as they reach towards this healing, they fall and collapse over and over again. The struggle is trying, it is relentless. The repetition is like the reinstating of the female role of slave over and over again. The members of the audience experience the intrapsychic world of the "slave" and her attempt to uncover her authentic-self[68] from beneath her gown, from the midst of her scripted life. As the members of the audience recognise their struggles and their pains, they recognise them as independent selves and thereby give them a voice. We have come to listen to their story and, in this interaction between performer and audience, there happens an

[68] This makes reference not to an ontological self but to the self she aspires to be

intersubjectitivty. The dancers speak with their bodies and our silence gives them voice.

But the power struggle does not only happen internally as a reaction to the "slave" position. The actress placed as the housewife/stage manager, plays many roles and all of them serve to "police" the dancers, to suppress their desire, to silence them and to dominate them. In the interactions between her and the dancers, the struggle for power is evident and relentless. She is positioned as woman/housewife/stage manager, all placements that do not defy the system of the not-man definition. In fact they are positions that encourage and uphold the dynamic. Although she is slave in this hegemony (as she is woman), she is also agent of the master which allows her to be master over other slaves. For example, at one point in the production the dancers emerge from behind the blanket like little girls appearing for their first ballet concert. They look uncomfortable and unsure how to accept and behave in this role. This becomes an exaggerated parody of all that resounds *good girl* and how awkward and self-conscious the dancers actually feel when they assume such a role. The music begins with an African song that sounds celebratory and suddenly the dancers welcome the bright colours of the tutus, dancing in traditional African style, shouting and laughing with each other and the audience.

Their dress transforms out of a garment of inhibition (slave) into a dress in which to dance. They dance together in a collective recognition of their own beauty as women. They move cyclically out and around from the blanket. Each time they emerge from the blanket they robe further in traditional dress and simultaneously assume the role that the garments assign them. They dress as they dance for us. There is a sense of pride and contempt along with the celebrations. It is as if they are saying to us, "we are women and we are African and we are proud". The dancers, black and white alike, jive to the rhythms of the township as the tutus have become covered by Pedi cloths, symbols of domesticity and tradition.

We can equate this dance with the uncovering of the "authentic" self in the face of being ascribed the role of slave (false self). So there is defiance in their celebration and it renders them powerful. They are no longer objects for someone else to appraise. They do not need to follow the lines written by someone else for them to say, and they do not need to think their beauty and individuality is ugly because it does not conform to the rigid letters of "slave".

Right on cue, "Salome" is heard from the balcony and the actress shouts it over and over. It is as though she functions as a buzzing red light overhead, screeching from her own, inner socialised voice. She then shouts that the "slaves" are making too much noise and throws her plates

down on them. Once again, these dancers are told to silence their voices. She calls for their submission and makes it clear that their joy and discovery is noise to her, the housewife, to her who has long since internalised her position of slave.

Orlin's voice reveals the complacency and stagnation of such a woman through her inability to identify with the dancers and her need to stop them. Their plight unsettles and disturbs her as it shakes the foundations of her identity and the qualifications of her identity are troubled. It may also be understood that she is the alto-ego of the dancers, their inner voices that mimic the masters', that fight against confinements, guilt, boredom and the craziness that this particular role subjects them to.

This comprehension implies that when the stage manager throws abuse at them, it is their enslaved minds that have learnt to talk against themselves as well as to fear and doubt their selves. Their doubt shouts self-hatred and time and time again shouts words strung out together to form shapes that contour with disgust, with a feeling of uncleanness and idolatry of self. The *good girl* psyche of a woman chats continuously in this fashion with itself. The dancers shout back at their own psyches throughout the piece whether these feelings are directed at the stage manager or not.

(Another level in this interaction is the actress's representation as the mother, Herodias. Orlin explores the mother's need to halt her daughter's growing desires and sexuality. This links with the concepts of female desire that will be dealt with later in this chapter.)

This is followed by an interesting and pathos-riddled set of movements and sounds. The dancers withdraw (without retracting their power) and begin to swing their dresses over their heads, vocalizing a sound that lies somewhere between a battle cry and one of exhaustion. As their vocal energy increases, the swinging of the dresses quickens and the members of the audience feel certain that they will fling them at us. But they do not. They let the dresses wrap round their bodies, thereby injuring themselves. This shows how destructive the internalisation and acceptance of society's prescribed roles are to a woman's true self. The dancers take the dresses and throw them in a pile and spit on them.

Orlin's work serves as self-reflective for women rather than being absolutely accusatory on external levels. Her work also augers about self-liberation through some form of acceptance. For instance, this piece does look at the extrinsic motivations for the present circumstances of women, but does not dwell much on these aspects. It embarks with those aspects and then allows for a study of the female world, which is perpetually

disputatious, and constantly resigning itself to this state. The members of the audience experience the female psyche expressed on stage.

The power struggle continues when, later in the piece, the dancers collect the plates and lamps on the stage and one of them sweeps it clean. The members of the audience wonder if it is to prepare the stage for the next set of images or if it is part of the next phase of the dance. We discover it is both and Orlin sets up the transition into the following interaction between the actress and the dancers. The actress/stage manager shouts at them for complaining about cleaning the stage and how they get slower at it every night. She shouts at them to hurry up and do their job. The dancer who is sweeping reacts by refusing to continue the production even if she is contracted to. The stage manager continues to fight with an orchestrated testimony that conveys a message that is hostile to the individual and the overall message is thus hostile to the system. The power struggle comes to a head through this Brechtian-type diversion, which is comical but threatens to be real. But the dancers resume their work.

This serves as an example of how post-modernism reflects on itself as a medium and makes the members of the audience aware that they are an audience and that the dancers are performers. This strips away the veils of the male spectator and undermines the dancers as dancers and reveals

them as ordinary women who are just the same as every other woman. And their dance within the master/slave dynamic is the same dance all women step to. This brings their battles closer to home and it is here where the relationship between the sign and the signifier is exposed.

The dancers still find movements where they can embrace what they are discovering about themselves, and can acknowledge and find a sense of pride in what their journey and choice of journey implies about the growth in their lives and selves. These caresses also portray the dancers' appreciation for their femininity and sexuality. This is the beginning of a discovery of the power that lies within their sexuality and the reclaiming thereof. The aggression they feel towards their own sexuality is a reflection of what they resent in terms of their bodies' objectification. So their bodies (like the costumes) become objects of fear, resentment and anger but also weapons of power that can be embraced, empowered and accepted.

When we explore the sexuality and aggression in Orlin's work it is beneficial to examine what Benjamin says about woman's desire. Female sexuality and her body are the locus of her suppression and also the driving force of the power struggles in the piece. After all, it is a dance piece with movements that contort with expression and images that convey the emotional world of the master/slave. So the body and its

needs, expressions and oppressions are key themes in relation to its "not-man" scripting and the force and direction of the piece.

Benjamin argues that the longing for recognition lies beneath the sensationalism of power and powerlessness. She explains that the unrecognisable forms often taken by our desire are the result of a complicated but ultimately understandable process - a process, which explains how our deepest desires for freedom and communion become implicated in control and submission. From such desires the bonds of love are forged.[69]

PART THREE: AN INQUIRY INTO FEMALE DESIRE

3.1 FEMALE DESIRE

I believe Orlin works at challenging the status quo by giving discourse to women who were never allowed to speak and to be heard. Black women and white women were silenced, made-to-fit, and denied desire or agency of their own. Orlin inverts, exposes and challenges this oppressive regime. She takes these women who were always sidelined and places them in the spotlight. She lets them speak and not in a language that was "made-

[69] Benjamin, Jessica. The Bonds of Love, p35.

to-fit". They can use their bodies for their own discourse. Usually these were bodies that suffered the eyes that stare at them. They use their mouths that always had to speak correctly, and, instead, they speak their desires that were always meant to remain hidden and locked away. Orlin encourages their fears and angers to become weapons rather than the site of degradation. These weapons are weapons of cloth, weapons of body, weapons of expression and weapons of play. The desire is to have desire, the story is their agency. When the work is aggressive, it is defiant because it can be and should not be, and, when it is gentle, it is because the expression of aggression and frustration let there be space for softer things. The dancers do not have to be "ladies" and their performance does not have to be "good". They are given the space to transgress.

They do not have to be beautiful or sexy for someone else; they can be ugly and demanding, anarchic and melancholic. Performance art frees the female psyche into a choreography of everything that women are taught they have to keep suppressed. Benjamin's theories on women's lack of desire are very important because it is not something to be overlooked that an entire sex struggles with their own agency. Orlin's work is important because she expresses this; she brings it to our attention; she reflects reality in a non-realist way. Artists who have a voice also need to have a responsibility for what they choose to say and, when they do, they

can be the leaders of new hope, and of re-evaluation. They can nudge us onto the path of change.

Orlin takes "missing desire" and turns it into the driving force in the movement's language. The choreography explores the need to fulfil these desires, the need to be allowed to have them and the aggression against anyone that will not acknowledge or allow it. The choreography expresses pain and the joy of desire, the struggle against the world and the self for this desire. The entire piece is truly a dance which takes "woman" and turns her insides out, onto the stage and moves her longings, frustrations and desires into moving shapes, bodies and images for all to see. In order to examine Orlin's exploration of female desire, I will first present a theoretical framework that explains the psychology behind this illusive thing, female desire, what is it, why it is problematic and where these problems originate from? I will be examining Benjamin's theories about what women want, and how the girl is taught and influenced in her desire by what Benjamin terms the "desexed" mother and the "missing" father. This leads to a discussion on separation-individuation and cultural descriptions of parents in the western world. All of this is then applied to *Naked on a Goat*. We are then further able to understand how much of *Naked on a Goat* explores the female psyche.

3.2 WHAT DO WOMEN WANT?

Freud asks, *what* do women want? Benjamin asks, *do* women want? Do women have desire? This is a shift of focus from being the object of desire to what is wanted, to the subject of who desires. Femininity continues to be identified with passivity, with being the object of someone else's desire, with having no desire of one's own except for desiring to be desirable (the object of desire).

Benjamin suggests that the phallus has come to signify not only male desire but all desire. Julie Mitchell says that only by acknowledging the power of the phallus can we finally uncover the origins of women's submission, the deep psychic roots of patriarchy. There is no female image or symbol that counter-balances the monopoly of the phallus as representative of desire. Women are associated with motherhood and fertility. But the mother is never articulated as a sexual subject: in fact, she is a profoundly de-sexed figure. Her power is not her own but is intended to serve her children. She does not have the freedom to do as she will - she is not the subject of her own desires. Her power may include power over others but not over her own destiny. In so far as a woman's desire

pulls her toward surrender and self-denial, she often chooses to curb it altogether. Jane Lazarre writes,

> There is a connection for me between the ability to feel autonomous, to feel confidently creative, and a fear of certain kinds of love. The love, especially when it includes passionate sexuality, undermines my ability to be myself, pulls me away from open channels, reawakens in me a desire to succumb to the ferocious power of my father's needs.[70]

Freud says that women are doomed to envy the embodiment of desire that will forever elude them. Desire in women thus appears as envy and he stresses it only as envy.

Benjamin says:

> Let us acknowledge the partial truth of Freud's gloom view. The equation of masculinity with desire, and femininity with object of desire does reflect the existing situation; it is not simply a biased view. Women's sexual agency is often inhibited and her desire is often expressed by choosing subordination. But this situation is not inevitable; it has come into being through forces that we intend to understand and counteract. We do not need to deny the contribution of "nature" or anatomy in shaping the conditions of femininity; we only have to argue that the psychological integration of biological reality is largely the work of cultures and social arrangements that we can change or direct.[71]

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[70]Benjamin, Jessica, The Bonds of Love. New York: Virage. (1988):34.
[71] Benjamin, Jessica, The Bonds of Love, New York: Virago. (1988):15.

3.3 THE "DESEXED" MOTHER

In a re-evaluation of the other's influence, it is necessary to acknowledge that a little girl's femininity is formed through the image of the de-sexed mother and it is possible to relate this to her lack of desire and agency in later years. But this only shifts the problem back a generation. Where then does the mother's lack of sexual subjectivity occur? Where does the absence of desire originate? Why is femininity linked with passivity? Why do men seem to have exclusive rights to sexual agency, so that women seek their desire in men, hoping to have it recognised through the agency of the other?

The option is not the idealisation of the "nurturing mother" or the glorification of sexual deprivation but neither is it beneficial to "conquer men's territory". Benjamin explains that the task is to transcend the opposition of the two spheres by formulating a less polarised relationship between them.

Janine Chasseguet Smirgel says that Freud's image of the castrated and powerless mother-of-lack is actually the exact opposite unconscious image that the child holds for the mother. She does not appear to lack a sexual organ, rather her vagina is known and feared for its potential to re-

engulf the boy whose penis would be far too small. Whether this has relevance or not, the interesting side of this statement lies in the little girl's reaction to the awesome mother. She sees her mother as powerful and her wish for the father (or as some might say his penis) is actually a signification of her desire to beat back maternal power.

REVOLT AGAINST MATERNAL POWER

The penis or the father becomes the symbol for revolt and separation drives, for the fantasy of maternal power and not maternal lack. The father is powerful not because he owns the phallus but because he represents freedom from dependency on the mother. He stands for separation with the mother. The phallus is not then the symbol of desire but becomes that on the child's path to individuation. Instead of penis-envy, Benjamin articulates that there is a need to identify with the father as a way of establishing a separation from the powerful mother.

The father's power has a double nature in its representation of difference. It is a defense against the mother and it is an expression for individuation. This does not only have to be understood as hostility towards dependency but as a love for the world.

Once we take the father and not the phallus as the locus for power, we may examine the daughter's relationship with him. Here we find not only a fear of maternal prohibition but also a fear of paternal intrusion. Benjamin points out that the father becomes the image of liberation from maternal power - when he becomes the one who recognises and embodies desire.

3.4 THE "MISSING" FATHER

The father represents the outside world and the child idealises the father because the father is the magical mirror that reflects the self as it wants to be - the ideal in which the child wants to recognise his/herself. The rapprochement phase inaugurates the first of a long series of struggles to achieve a sense of agency, to be recognised in one's desire, recognised as a subject who can will things and make them happen. Each parent may represent one side of the conflict between dependence and independence. It is here that the child's relationship with the father is so influential and so different in boys and girls.

Desire is intrinsically linked at this point to striving for freedom, for autonomy, but this striving is realised in the context of a powerful connection. The wish to be like the father, the identificatory impulse, is the matrix for crucial psychic structures. The asymmetry of the father's role is striking. The boy's story of identificatory love allows the son to be recognised and identified through a special erotic relationship. This is the

boy's love affair with the world - he wishes to be recognised as like the father and is able to create his masculine identity and maintain narcissism in the face of helplessness through this homoerotic affair. He seeks to recognise the power of his own desires and he will elaborate it in the internally-constructed ideal. Underlying identificatory love and ideal love are the same as desire for recognition.

3.5 SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION

Separation-individuation becomes a gender issue when we see the different behaviour between father and daughter, that differs so greatly from the relationship between father and son. Recognition and individuation can be organized within the frame of gender. For Benjamin, the "missing father" is the key to woman's missing desire, and its return in masochism. Like boys, girls, in their anxiety over separating from their mothers, look for an attachment figure who will represent their independence. Fathers can easily recognize themselves in their sons and so identificatory love happens with ease. But, just as the father dis-identified with his mother and needed to assert his difference from wo. .en, so too does this affect the way in which he i' ntifies with his daughter. It is not easy. The father often withdraws ..:d pushes the girl back to the mother - her aspirations for independence are turned inwards and her anger at non-recognition is expressed in her depressive response to the

reproachment conflict. They are confronted more directly with the difficulty of separation and feelings of helplessness. They relinquish their entitlement to desire and grow to idealize the man who has what they do not possess - power and desire.

The girl's "lack" is the gap left in her subjectivity by the missing father. Irene Fast says: "Boys and girls alike (ideally) go through a phase in which they play out their identification with the opposite sex, after which they are able to renounce it and recognize it as the prerogative of the other."[72] If this is successful, the child can have a love for what is different; if not, it is compromised by repudiation or idealisation. Benjamin expresses "envy" as being nothing more than a sign of thwarted identification. When the daughter wishes for the homoerotic bond that sons and fathers share, she can displace it into the idealization of a hero, serving an idol, submission to an ideal. Ideal love can also be linked to masochism - her the woman's adulation for the heroic man rejects love of freedom, and this can be traced back to the "missing father".

But even if she were able to identify with her father would she then be rewarded agency and desire of her own? Identification with the father also conflicts with cultural images of women as sexual object: and as maternal figures. But, once a girl's relationship with her father is sexualised her

[72] Greenberg, J.R. and Mitchell S.A, Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press. (1993):224

attachment to him becomes a barrier rather than an encouragement of her autonomy.

3.6 CULTURAL DESCRIPTIONS

It is very important to acknowledge that these descriptions of mother and father are no more than cultural descriptions and that each case is specific. Mothers can be figures of separation and agency thereby offering daughters what the father offers them. Then girls can remain identified with the mother. In some cases it is also possible that the father can identify with the daughter. It is necessary to acknowledge that all attributes and the potential for all things lie deep within the psyche of all people regardless of sex. We develop different attributes in accordance with our environment rather than through our biological significations. Benjamin explains that with regards to gender expectations and parenting both parents can be figures of separation and attachment. Children are capable of making use of identifications with both parents without being confused by their genders. The child's desire is to have both: mother and father: same and different. Thus which ever parent emphasizes sameness the child will turn to the other with urges of separation and the need for difference.

Cross-sex identification can co-exist with same-sex identification. Sexual

identifications have not yet hardened into polarities. In the individual's mind, the gendered self- representation co-exists with a genderless or even opposite-gendered self-representation. A person who can maintain this flexibility can accept all parts of herself and all parts of the other.

Benjamin speaks about the idealisation of the father and the devaluation of the mother that constitute the split that infuses culture at large and shapes our notion of individuality. If the two camps were not so defensive, if dependence and independence were not so mutually exclusive, then it would not hamper the little girl's development identification.

A father's role can only be used by a girl who can draw from a sense of self from the mother. So it is clear that the dilemma of woman's desire must include a mother who is articulated as a sexual subject, one who can express her own desire. When the mother and father are not equal then the parental identifications begin to oppose each other.

The mother's lack of subjectivity results in the impediment of successful destruction and survival (in the rapprochement stage) by both male and female children. Only a mother who feels entitled to be a person in her own right can ever be seen as such by her child. Only such a mother can appreciate and set limits to the inevitable aggression and anxiety that accompanies a child's growth and independence. Only someone who fully

achieves subjectivity can survive destruction and permit full differentiation. This possibility of balancing recognition of the child's needs with the assertion of the mother's own needs. This can reconceive the notion of motherhood in order to realign the differentiation process. It also mitigates the splitting complementary. Benjamin says that the structure of individuation which permeates culture and which privileges separation over dependence cannot simply be countered by its mirror opposite. Rather it must be criticized in the light of a vision of balance in which neither pole dominates the other, in which the paradox is sustained.

This vision is important to feminists' critique of society, especially now that gender roles are no longer binding nor specific. Women in some sectors of society may adopt the same emphatic autonomy, and the same false differentiation at the expense of real recognition and attunement, that has heretofore characterised the ideal of masculine individuality. The stereotype of the "career woman" is that she is able to detach herself and be as impersonal as a man. But this individuation based on denying the needs of others is hardly liberation!

If the parent unit stands for integration and sustaining of tension, then it would offer the child an ideal of separation and difference that is not defensive, a way that would avoid the power relationship in which one side is devalued and subordinate to the other. Thwarting identification is

damaging to children's sense of agency and in particular their sense of sexual agency. Subordination and passivity in relationships are a form of seeking reparation, in these relationships. Ideal love becomes their second chance of attaining the father/daughter identificatory love where their own desire and subjectivity can finally be recognised and realised.

Simone De Beauvoir comments: " When a woman gives herself completely to her idol, she hopes that he will give her possession of herself and of the universe he represents."[73] This belief that the man has access to the world is one of the great motives for ideal love. But it is not only the father that is "missing" (through his lack of recognition), it is maternal holding that can be withheld from the child. Sometimes the maternal omnipotence a girl can be fleeing is her mother's weakness and inability to survive and stand ground against the father. The need for an object who is truly outside and survives attack is crucial to the fantasy of ideal love.

The boundedness and limits within which one can surrender and in which one can experience abandonment and creativity are sought in the ideal love, and the lack of identification becomes associated with unattainable yearning and with self-abasement. These two issues that disturb the female psyche are issues dealt with so often and so fiercely in women performance art pieces. Self-abasement and unsatisfied longing torment

so many of today's culture's women; but it is also the desire to have all these things recognised within them. It is the desire for the fulfillment of these yearnings, the desire for a holding space, the desire for their desire to be recognised, and the desire to be able to have agency and desire within this hegemony. This fierce desire surges throughout the *Naked on a Goat*

When we take the work of Orlin and Benjamin and examine how they meet, they can ignite within us the understanding, the emotions, the desire to look to the future in our myopic lives and we can make the choice that ignites a desire to change it. And thus, I believe, artists and academics can live in the same apartment block because they are expressing the same things and striving for the same things and they are holding hands even if they are standing on the Tower of Babel.

TEXT ANALYSIS

3.7 WOMAN'S DESIRE IN *NAKED ON A GOAT*

There are two powerful examples of how Orlin deals with the issue of woman's desire. The first is one I have already spoken about - the dance with the seven veils. It can now be placed in the context of female desire. The dancers seem almost to have a hunger that feeds this raw desire,

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[73] Benjamin, Jessica, The Bonds of Love. New York: Virago. (1988): 53.

aggression and sexuality in this particular part. At first, they dress and cover their bodies with the petticoats, assuming their roles and covering their feminine selves. As in the story of Salome, they refuse to accept these roles. The refuse to relinquish their agency, so they begin to wrestle with the dresses and with each other. Self-abasement, yearning and frustration draw them into a struggle, a resistance. They do not just hand over their own needs like the "desexed mother". Instead, they fight for what they desire. In fact the fight and struggle as animals or children would. Their struggle is no longer self-conscious or inhibited - it is a matter of survival.

But their very struggle for these garments reduces them to fashion "victims" as they fight over pieces of clothing, for a piece of the desirable. They desire to be desirable. If they cannot own that which will make them desirable, then what else can they desire? This sequence reinforces how they have given up their own desires and internalised what is desired of them. It is also as though they are ashamed of their bodies - the very locus of their predicament. It begins to seem like a scramble to hide themselves, to lock away what they cannct have.

When the battle is over and the stage is cleared by darkness, the two dancers begin to stalk each other sexually and aggressively. In fact it is difficult to identify if it is a sexual courting or an aggressive and dangerous

rotation. But that is how female sexuality resides in the western paradigm of thought - it is dangerous, because it calls for agency and desire, which allow for a voice, which cannot be subjugated or contained. The sexuality of a woman is unpredictable and disarming because it is also taboo. How can a woman be a "good girl" and have sexual desires and needs? How can the nurturing mother also be a highly-sexed woman? How can a wife and daughter and sister also be sexed and demanding?

What makes this sequence even more unpredictable and unnerving is that this extremely sexual moment is happening between two women; but there is more to it than just sex. They come together and move apart in a landscape of lightning flashes through darkness. They examine each other's bodies and sniff for identification. What is sameness and what is difference? More importantly, the question becomes: if I identify myself through you, who is like me, will my yearning and self-abasement go away? Will I gain agency and can I desire? Can I desire this, and this is also you? Can you be my love affair with the world? These questions seem to be asked as one of the dancers runs and jumps on the other waiting to be caught, saved, loved, identified.

But each time she throws her entire body and body of questions and needs onto the other woman to answer, she is not caught, she falls to the ground. Over and over again, her desires are left unanswered and she is

humiliated and desperate. But she gets up and tries again. This symbolises the life of a woman, the predicament of desire. It is not all right to want, and if you do you will only be unhappy. It is almost as though this sequence is the splatterings of some female psyche as it dances, courts, tempts and berates itself. It is not for lack of sexuality or aggression, it is because it is dark and no can hear you when you are not allowed to speak.

Like Salome, the dancers become someone else's. They give over parts of their limbs to someone else's eyes, because through that, they are heard, through a man's language not their own. Salome can only have what she desires if she strips for Herod. She must lose in order to win. Although the dancers play this game, they do so with their eyes clenched tightly shut. They disrobe to assume a role that will bring to them what they desire on a silver platter. In this game, it is not easy to tell who is the prostitute but it is less difficult to understand whose triumph loses more. To allow themselves to want something is to win an audience of voyeurs and a dead man's head on a platter. To allow themselves to want something is to play the game.

3.8 DESIRE BECOMES SALOME'S SACRIFICE IN *NAKED ON A GOAT*

Another interesting example in this work that deals with woman's desire is at the very end of the piece. This last section explores resignation, .the offering up of desire and agency as the only remaining choice. The dancers have gone through an enactment of a dying sequence where they die like animals and then get up and die again and die again. They are denied their ideal identification and they are denied their needs. They are denied the recognition they want. They are denied the *woman* in the *not-man*. And so r' ces of themselves, like a hope, a desire, a love, a hate, a uniqueness, die. They fall away and are sucked into a hole that starts a shape in the planet called: "The secret wants and desires of my mom or my sister or my wife or my teacher or my friend or my lover or my accountant or my doctor or my domestic servant or my greengrocer or even just of me". And they die only to get up and die again.

But in case we thought they die in their dying, we are wrong and, as the lights close down on us, death peels open a piece of itself to reveal the dancers on their hands and knees barking and snarling at us as though they were dogs.

They are angry and aggressive and reduced to animals that have no intellect or emotions. But they can bite and they are dangerous. Orlin never allows the women to give in because, in general, women never do. They accept, they get angry, they fight back, they die, they are happy and the cycle starts again. (Of course, throughout this piece, these statements are focused on a feminist cause, one that defies the containing of identity into nicely arranged boxes that can be stapled and labeled and sent to the right places; to live in the right suburb; to have the right husband and say the right things. But these words can be written for most people, most minorities, most subjugated peoples who are defined and placed on the peripheries of the world's life, where they can play stage manager and sweeper, prop-keeper and make-up artist for someone else's play in someone else's life.)

The dancers bite back and bark and behave exactly as they are not meant to and exactly as they are treated. Multitudes of female texts are being explored and the production's seemingly positive messages are being transmuted into something else. Can they reclaim their "flesh" by behaving like scavengers? Will they stop being treated like animals or a piece of meat if they enact and play with an animal? Probably not but it will attract peoples' attention!

A swing is lowered over these barking women with seven bottles of paint hanging above it. The bottles are lit and reveal the colours of "The Rainbow Nation". The dancers move in a dream-like state as one pours paint onto the meat in each plate and mixes the colour into the meat. One holds the now-empty hook and dips her shoulder into the meat. The last one hangs the meat on hooks. Coloured, minced and branded as meat, the women stare at us accusingly. The meat bleeds colour onto the now-empty plates, to punctuate the end of this ritual.

These are interesting images when we seek to reach the psychological exploration beneath them. The colours may represent the "new nation" that is meant to liberate, empower and give each citizen an equal chance through equal opportunity. The "Rainbow Nation" campaign is also supposed to encourage good will and mutual respect in its citizens. As women and as black women all that those colours can do is colour and dye their objectification, the meat that so often connotes women's position and women's handicap in the world. It is being viewed as an object of sexual and fertile use, being denied the stories, hopes, intellect, energy and desire of a person. Being seen in bit parts like a well-shaped leg, or a good sized breast or soft nurturing hands or a well-working uterus - these bit parts deny women their whole identity as people.

When we concentrate on the bit parts, we can never touch the whole. The bit part of a black person is black pigmentation but that is merely part of the wrapping. So Orlin seems to address this issue with the meat and the colours. Skin pigmentation and the objectification of the female body have worked to confine and define her. Boxing and labeling a person's identity enslaves her because she cannot be recognised beyond that. Her agency becomes an impossible thing, desire even more unattainable. It gets lost somewhere or shut in somewhere else because it cannot fit nicely on the hooks and hangers of societies well-ordered system of identification. So the dancers dip the meat and bits of themselves in the paint. They prepare to resign, to wear the paint and embrace raw meat, images of another, formed in a mirror's image, designed to become the self. The only possible desire left is to become desireless and desirable.

In silence, they move back and hold hands, watching the body of South African women (coloured meat on hooks) bleed without dignity. They do not hold hands as a collective but rather so they can thrust Busiswe up to the swing. An old gramophone scratches out an incredible, incongruous song, which is comic and hauntingly sad.

The man's voice from the song tells the woman to go home to her husband, he is sick. Worse, he is dead. But he laughs heartily at the husband and wife's misfortune. The woman answers him by saying she

wants just one more dance before returning to "her poor old man". She wants to do and have something for herself rather than have her existence centred on her husband's. She asks to be allowed to have a moment where she can own her desires and voice them, where a tiny part of her life can belong to her and what she wants. However, when she learns he is dead and there will be a reading of the will, she insists this is not the time to dance and must go home. Because she can now re-define herself as a separate entity, the comedy of how she will go home, not for any love or grief for her husband, but for what his will might give her, stands out in a biting statement.

This also reveals the dancer's need to take action in her life in contrast with the stage manager who is the active voice of modernism that opposes anything other than passivity. It represents the frustration of women rendered incapable of independent action or thought, women who are forced to wait for life to happen to them. It highlights feelings of selflessness (the lack of space to desire) that have been constructed and delineated by the male-dominated society. It is in these subtle ways (for example, see the lyrics of the song) in which women are denied an active role in the constructed paths of their own lives. Or, rather, the reason that they have fallen into a pattern of not being constructive, active and vocal in their own lives. This foregrounds the conventions and expectations placed on women and that the deconstruction of these expectations

hinges on the awareness that woman as object, as culturally constructed category, is the basis of Western systems of representations.

Busiswe lets the pieces of meat go one at a time and then finally lies on the swing under the meat. The song ends, the lights diminish at a tortoise's pace. The audience is left with her limp body, hanging over a swing and the eerie sound of its rocking.

Busisiwe's farewell is laced with pathos. She practices a delicate ritual contorted with significance while a man's voice is laughing at her. But she exudes grace and pride. The meat and its strange sensuality comfort Busiswe. The audience may feel as though this is a ritual she performs every day (which as a dancer, she does in her performances) but does not distract from its intense sadness and power. The power can be discovered in the fact that she never fought the ritual, so it could not control her. She lets go of its sting and caresses its solitude and despair with longing and grace. This woman is embracing the pathos in her life with tenderness. Sometimes women choose to perpetuate the sacrifice of certain hopes and longings and feelings (desire) because it seems the only option.

This final image is timeless. It is neither a death nor a birth. It is almost as though her very perpetuating essence strung itself out over the swing of infinity and embraced her life with the colours and hints of something

existential. This is how it was, is and will be. She will always be struggling against it, and against her desires. There will be moments of revelation and moments of resignation; or rather of deconstruction and reconstruction. But ultimately she accepts just that. Busiswe does not fight her fight. She lets it be. She does not fight her pain. She lets it be.

SUMMATION

Orlin's choreography might be a reflection of the external experience in her life, but, ultimately, it is about her as a woman, and about each dancer's personal experiences as a woman. It explores the inner realm of "woman"; it is an exploration into the female psyche. Such an endeavour hopes to communicate the experience of "woman" in such a manner that will touch and challenge the members of the audience as individuals. Then the possibility of a growth in society seems more realistic. The piece does not concentrate blame on other things and people; it tells a story, a simple story of how women feel. It is about taking responsibility for every moment of our lives and the people we are in every moment. Understanding things does not change the shape of things. But it can help us make better choices and art can help us feel and respond emotionally to wanting to make better choices. So while Benjamin can help us understand how and why, Orlin can make us react emotionally to what is and to what we want to create. They hold hands - these two women - for it is through the portraits they paint that we can look through it and beyond it into a future

not ready yet for hanging So we can take our paintbrushes and colour it new.

As I mentioned, Adrienne Sichel asks about *Naked on a Goat:* "A sacrifice of domesticity, sexuality or art?" I say that it is only the beginning of what Orlin was touching on and exploring.

CONCLUSION

This research report has examined how *Naked on a Goat* is an effective vehicle for the exploration of a feminine discourse and the female psyche, and that it is an explosive space in which to challenge the status quo. I personally felt inspired by Orlin's artistic creations, and because they pushed boundaries in order to create such a powerful aesthetic, they seemed to challenge boundaries inside me, thereby freeing the artist in me.

I believe it is such a relevant endeavour in South Africa today. There are parts of our society that have been silent for too long, so silent that they are now invisible. It is time for us to expose silences and to deal with the pains and difficulty people in our nation have had to bear. We are a traumitised nation and it is therefore extremely important for us to "speak" our traumas, and to find space that can express them in order to alleviate them. This can help create an atmosphere of empathy and friendship. For the woman and for the black woman in particular, it is becoming more and more impossible to "speak". The starting point is always the self. We must never lose sight of the self in our attempts to assert, deconstruct the self's representations.

Naked on a Goat moved me deeply and writing this paper gave me the opportunity to explore why. It has been a beneficial and exciting project for me. The more I hope for a more educated and compassionately driven society, the more I see the benefits of a social critique through art. Art can help us understand our social predicament while entertaining us, touching us and inspiring us. Art allows us to explore our softer values, because listening and watching need to be quiet, need to open up spaces inside us beyond our subjective experiences. Experiences are the only time we can enter into the subjectivity of someone else, and that is why art can be so powerful in inciting us to change. I believe in the importance of art in our society and I am afraid that theatre is not appreciated and supported enough in South Africa at the moment. But that is a new discussion, which has no place here. I hope that this paper may serve as an illumination to parts of our society, psychology, and even to parts of the self.

When I first watched *Naked on a Goat*, I was compelled to remember what Clarissa Pinkola Estes had written in her book Women Who Run With Wolves[72]. Estes says that within every woman lies what can be termed the "skeletal woman". She is everything we have internalised through a patriarchal system of female objectification, oppression, abuse and self-debasement. She is ugly, dark and base. She murders, rapes, desires, steals, lies, is jealous, fights back, submits, and has hatred and fear. She is the shadow that lurks behind our conscious portrayals of our minds. She

is there whenever we are. It is with her fingerprints we "sin". She will always control us if our fear of her will always control us.

When a woman can look inside herself and face the skeletal woman, when she can embrace and have pity and compassion for her, when she can give her love and not fear, then a master will no longer have power over her. To liberate herself is to accept herself, with her darkness and sadness, for only then can this fear be subordinate to the self. The most daring and ultimately rewarding battle of all is to fight herself for herself. Busiswe is conquering her own ghosts when she wipes that meat on her body. The meat is her slavery in the patriarchal world. It is her hatred for womanhood in a patriarchal world. It was her frustration, her longing, her entrapment, her need, her loss - her everyday existence. It is her. But it is also a celebration of her womanhood and sexuality and life. It is her. It was everything she is, deconstructed and reconstructed.

Estes writes:

> No, no, the Life/Death/Life forces are part of our nature, an inner authority that knows the steps, knows the dance of life and death. It is composed of the parts of ourselves who know when something can, should, and must be born and when it must die. It is a deep teacher if we can learn its tempo. Rosario Castellanos, the Mexican mystic and ecstatic poet writes about surrender to the forces that govern life: "...dadme la muerte que me falte" (give me the death I need)[76].

Orlin says:

> Some go on the "ride" and others close up when something is not sequential and abstract and strange. When those aspects are embedded in visual images, they encourage emotional memory associations in the audience. My work is so shocking because it is so personal. People do not like it. They feel uncomfortable. It is not easy to digest and one cannot be a passive audience member. It calls for

active and intelligent, even questioning viewership. Audiences are not accustomed to having to participate mentally. Most audiences watch sitcoms, soap operas, Hollywood glamour stories, and are not keen for their entertainment to be challenging. Television has become a means of escape, mental slovenliness, and people also associate theatre with that same practice of viewership. Here there is no comfortable distance. These are real bodies in space and in the same space as the audience, and these are real issues. But one obvious aspect of performance art is that, because there is no specific language, the interpretation of the viewer is also personal. So the piece will bear a different meaning to everyone[77].

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[76]Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Women Who Run With Wolves, Random House, South Africa, (1992.):136.
[77]Appendix p6

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW WITH ROBIN ORLIN

Can you explain your use of Salome?

What interested me here was the concept of a princess, and I thought about what the ramifications of a princess in African culture would be. I played around with metaphors and fairy tales, like Cinderella. I thought about how she cleaned after her sisters. Basically, I was looking at South African culture and looking for the real princesses in that culture and, well, I came up with the domestic cleaner. I know I was being "cynical" and "funny" but I was also quite pointed in terms of who the "princess" really is. Domestic workers are never given an identity and are never given that uniqueness, like in the fairy tales, like Cinderella. Why are they always seen as women with no sexuality, no feelings, no rules, no identity. They have become like pieces of furniture. It bothers me a lot.

What were you playing with, with regard to the relationships on stage?

Well, a definite point of interest was Salome's relationship with her mother Herodias. I felt Salome was not making decisions on her own, that her mother was pushing her. Salome is a victim on a lot of levels. For me, there really is a sense of Salome not knowing what to ask for and that her mother insinuates that she must ask for the head of Saint John the Baptist. Yes, Salome has a "crush" on him but that decision is not made on her own. I really felt Salome's execution was for the wrong reasons! I suppose I was exploring the mother-daughter relationship and the jealousy between teenagers and their mothers over the daughter's developing sexuality. Herodias is set up as the stage manager because of the control factor. *Naked on a Goat* is very much about power-struggles and control. Herodias has an unhappy marriage and she wants John; it's a vicarious relationship.
Later, when I use a man, Herodias becomes Herod, the stepfather, and this changes things because now there is a man in control. Okay, he plays the stage manager but, ideally, in terms of power relations, he should have played director.

Can you speak about your use of a male Salome?

Well, my use of a male Salome definitely has homophobic overtones. I mean after his "Dance of the Seven Veils", he strips naked and the audience sees his penis and he is wearing a bra. He has such a beautiful body which does look like a woman's body. Anyway it is then that the stage manager/Herod shouts out, "Hey Salome, and I thought gay meant happy!" Warren the dancer suggested it

so I didn't feel too bad about putting it in. He just turns his back and sings the Billie Holiday song, "the man I love, one day he'll come along..." He is naked. It really is fascinating. This brings up a lot of stuff also because Salome never declares love for Herod, so in a way I am referring to that as well.

Would you agree that your work challenges our concepts of identity?

All my work challenges notions of identity. My creative process seems to bring up issues of sexuality, emotions, even eating disorders with some of the dancers. It is all unintentional. But it just reinforces for me how important it is to reclaim the body. It is obvious that we still haven't done it.

Speak about the creative process

It almost frightens me, the amount of stuff the performers bring to the work. I just facilitate it. I actually think of *Naked on a Goat* as only three-quarters mine, in that I initiate the action. Now I don't even refer to myself as choreographer and will refer to a piece as devised, not choreographed.

Can you talk a bit about the racial issues you raise in this work?

Historically, there is white and black within us, black pertaining to not having opportunities and white pertaining to being privileged. I feel that these are things we need to deal with in ourselves and confront and heal. This country is in a fascinating stage where we have the opportunity to reconcile and heal, not even through interaction but through history, the past and memory. I mean, I work a lot through memory. I use personal memory of certain sensations like of being in the streets in JHB, certain feelings. I remember as a child looking at domestic workers walking down streets and fantasising about where they came from and what their life was really about, so you see I work off my own memory. Only now am I learning how to play with the performers' stuff. But the structure of my work is memory. The style itself is about emotional association. I'll draw the analogy of my work being like an abstract painting or a dream. It has those flashing images, and pictures that all hold meaning on different levels and they all seem to link and move together in space and time but a space and time of their own existence. It is not sequential.

What were your aims in this production?

I had just returned to this country and I found that the dance world was still run by white northern suburbs' women. I have been relishing the day that that would change. And it has changed. What has taken its place is black men but, of course, this is without the sign of any black women. So, in terms of Salome, I was really on a mission to find the integrity of the black female dancer. The irony is that, in the reworking of it for tour, one black dancer got married, her husband did not want her to dance and she agreed. I just couldn't believe it. The only way

I can put it is what one of my black dancers said about it. She said that it was like taking twenty steps backwards. I don't know. But there was something specific that I was trying to do then but now I no longer have the need to deal with those issues.

What were the main issues you broached with regard to women in the piece?

Well, definitely, problems of the absent woman, the absent domestic woman, well, particularly, with black women in this country. They are placed so far on the periphery, and silenced. I looked at co-dependency, why women automatically are inclined to be more comfortable with co-dependency. Even without pathology, women are born into being on the borderline of a co-dependent, having their identity defined through their role and relationship with men.

Would you describe your work as feminist?

Well, it is choreographed out of the point of view of women. And I try to deal with questions from that point of view, question of roles and where boundaries blurred with these roles. Men and women, black and white, all of these issues. I play a lot with postmodern concepts of cultural identity. But it is always ambiguous, for instance, here, black men are horrified at the needs of black women. Some of them have been telling me that they are expecting to be looked after. Look, I can't generalise or be quoted because we all have evolved. I have been speaking with some black men that feel that feminism is a new type of abuse. But really the black woman is bottom of bottoms. Black women are the backbone of society. Often they are the only bread winners and support huge families whilst raising a white one. They have to play mommy, servant, slave, master, and that is only in public life, not even in private. Question of public and private with master and slave. So I am interested in the discussion that deals with social position versus private status.

What do you feel about the statement: gender is performed?

Well, it is absolutely something that is learned. A woman is not allowed to openly enjoy an orgasm or openly eat a chocolate cake. Even if she does, she is conditioned into the idea that it is not acceptable and does not fit. Identity is definitely a ritual and it is about role-playing. I look at it as a changing referent. I use all those concepts of the non-recognisable referent, the hysteric, the leaking body, the monstrous female. You know there is that part where they behave like dogs, why? Well, because they are treated like dogs.

Are you presenting a multitude of identities in Salome?

There never is one person when we look at the individual. Too many different aspects make up a person - there is no one Salome. They all role-play an

incorrect referent of what a woman is. You see they become disempowered by concepts of who they are meant to be whilst they, or should I say we, are labeled things like irrational and unpredictable and emotional, so, yes, these things are my subversive weapons. I look at aspects of selves: the animal, the dog, the slut, the healthy person. And I juggle these different aspects and that is where we become interesting as people. Salome is Salome not just because she is a victim but because she has this incredibly difficult relationship with the world and herself. Look at the various aspects and components of what we are made up. The problem with theatre especially dance, is that everything is instructive and confining. And postmodernism allows for you not to be that. It allows for you to be constructive and to pull things apart. Something looks like this. it's not, it is far too complex.
In a sense you are the same as the domestic worker. Your presence as artist is invisible yet the driving force in the work that happens.
I must think about that. Interesting concept.

How would you define performance art?

It is about taking art theory and placing it four-dimensionally. So you can come to it from the background of dance, theatre, fine arts even architecture (and film and video), because all of those disciplines deal with the notion of theory. (I don't know if dance does - I wish it did.) It is a pity more choreographers don't. There are no rules, absolutely no laws. No language at all. My language is because I come from a certain background and have a certain style. I wish more artists could break their styles. Well, there are no rules and no language – I mean you can sit in the middle of a room and have a dialogue with your audience and that is performance art. In the same way as you can take your audience into a forest and throw stones at them and that is performance art.

Tell me about your use of costumes and props.

What I do with objects and props is not sophisticated. It is almost childlike. I'll look at domestic workers in the streets and think they would look so good in tutus. Then I'll look at the core de ballet and think about how funny they would look in maid's uniforms doing the dying swan. It is a perversion. It is the way in which I observe and deal with my observations. I suppose it is challenging hegemonic forces because it distorts, inverts and ridicules them.

What is the key point in their rendition of "the dying swan"?

It is a reaction to lots of things. I mean the dancers are crying.

Can we discuss the mink coats?

We are all fashion victims. We become meat. I also deal with deaths and rebirths.

This part happens on lots of levels and layers. Here is a group of women who are totally vulnerable, naked on stage and they have to deal with it. I was dealing with Salome's death but because it is not sequential people can't cope with what is going on. It's about karma, about how do these women really feel who wear mink coats. Its about Salome and how she feels about killing Jokanaan. You know that afterwards they play with meat. I was absolutely playing with the concept of theatre. I asked myself how to make a dramatic moment and then break it. So Salome is shot and dies and then just gets up and carries on dancing over and over again until eventually she says, "Fuck off and just stop shooting - get a life." So there really are many elements. They are also goats. And in African culture goats are slaughtered for festivities and celebrations. This is the link with the title. It is the women who are sacrificed by society.

The piece felt extremely existentialistic. It seemed to be disputatious but also resignatory. It was confrontational but also accepting. I really felt, if I could ever understand existentialism through an image, it was at the end of *Naked on a Goat.* Please talk about that for me.

Absolutely! I do not think we can make theatre without being existential about it, You have to be existential in the nineties. Why define work? Let people make their own decisions. You can't prescribe how to make theatre and how you want people to feel. And you are going to show them stuff that they don't necessarily want to see and feel and digest? It is also existential in the sense that there is no linear narrative. Salome is who she is and there is absolutely no solution. In the last sequence, she tries to embrace her life, her body, her womanhood, her blackness. She is saying, "I have to accept things on my terms, but this is it, nothing more". These are my moments. There is no resolve. There is a resolve in terms of that it is the end of the piece, but there is no resolve for Salome. They role play every night as dancers/performers as well.

Do you use the fact that these are live female bodies in space to challenge the male gaze?

Naked on a Goat confronts the male gaze but also the female gaze. I noticed that every night black women walked out. It felt to transgressive and challenging for them. Also I look at how women are supposed to feel about the ideal body and I place the naked body on stage, and it is not the "perfect body" and the performers are vulnerable at the same time as confrontational. I believe the reason why my work is so shocking and makes the audience so uncomfortable is because it is so personal.

Is it ever your intent to make the audience uncomfortable?

You know what, it is okay for an audience to feel uncomfortable! But it is the audience who does not feel comfortable in being uncomfortable! Nothing seems avant-garde anymore anyway, just take film violence and sex. But here, in

theatre, things are actually so much more real and shocking and confrontational. And, when it is all these things, it just tells me that there are still issues to be dealt with and, therefore, there is still a need for revolutionary theatre that provokes, incites and makes people uncomfortable. Because, when it can still do that then there are still issues within communities that are not resolved.

Tell me more about the power struggles in the piece.

All my pieces are about the concept of power, not always about challenging power but about trying to empower, how one sees oneself in the world and how one exists in the world, and what is power really Look at the stage manager and her control, yet how much power does she really have? She only has as much power as is given to her. It is about institutions and systems and their power. In terms of domestic workers, a lot of *Naked on a Goat* happened because when I returned from America I noticed how disempowered people still were. I looked at cleaners all around the world. I actually worked as one in America. They are treated well. It was demeaning in the sense that I wasn't doing the work I wanted to do but, barring that, I was treated with respect. I didn't have to wear uniform as a signifier. I was fed properly and was spoken to like a human being. But, here, domestic workers are not given that integrity and I was asking why? Why and how do we change? Living in flats, I would hear how certain people spoke and shouted at their domestics and I just couldn't bear it.
This whole master/slave thing cannot be that easily applied to SA because it is an enforced relationship. It is not psychologically initiated but politically and socially inscribed. But the ramifications are definitely psychological. It is a reversing of classical pathology. The psychological damage happens through the relationship. It is not the damaged psyche that creates such a relationship. But it is the damaged psyche when it comes to the category of women.

How personal was this work?

Well, to get really personal, I dreamed as a child that there was this huge fat African maid in a uniform that I would murder. I did not have a good relationship with my mother and so the domestic brought me up as her own child. This is a South African phenomenon where the black domestic woman raises white children when her own are being brought up by someone else because she is not available. But it is more than a job - it is done with love. What is the psychology of the nation when some of us have missing mothers but we also have a second mother who is really a servant?

What do you have to say about "re-telling" such a well-known story?

Well, all of this was a process that began in Chicago and, when I came here, I could continue dabbling. It is not a re-telling. In America I started taking stories that I knew and started to deconstruct them. I went back to university and found myself mistrusting the kind of information that was being given out. I did not know how to work with that distrust and decided to change that distrust into deconstruction and that was how I learned what deconstruction was. Not that deconstruction is embedded in distrust. I would take books and rework them, "fuck around with them". Underline, question, draw. It was important, as I was able to move away from dance and started to deal with my suspicious mind. The younger students were interested in gaining information and I was interested in questioning information. Coming from the background of SA there was always levels of mistrusting information that was given to the public and the students. Most academics and active artists understood at the time that the information was tampered, biased and propagatory. There is a history of perpetual questioning. I know that I have always mistrusted institutions but that is also a private trait. Anyway, here I had a tool to work with. Later on, too much academic thought and analysis hampered some of my creative process and so I switched extremes and try not to read academic material. But being an academic thinker everything one sees and reads and hears is translated and analysed within the mind as a natural process of digestion.

Back to the Salome...People do not like stories re-told. They want things recognisable. Romeo and Juliet was fine because they made it hip and modern but they kept it recognisable. People become mistrusting, frightened and defensive when one is handed a postmodern version of a fairy tale commonly known. People think that I am playing with their minds and therefore react strongly to the presence of the work. Some go on the "ride" and others close up when something is not sequential and abstract and strange. When those aspects are embedded in visual images that encourage emotional memory associations in the audience and when they are shocking and unpredictable, when they feel so personal, then people do not like it. They feel uncomfortable. It is not easy to digest and one cannot be a passive audience member. It calls for active and intelligent and questioning viewership. Audiences are not accustomed to having to participate mentally. Most audiences watch sitcoms, soap operas, Hollywood glamour stories and are not keen for their entertainment to be challenging. Television has become a means of escape, mental slovenliness and people also associate theatre with that same practice of viewership. Here there is no comfortable distance. These are real bodies in space and in the same space as the audience, and these are real issues. But one obvious aspect of performance art is that, because there is no specific language the interpretation of the viewer is also personal. So the piece will bear a different meaning to everyone.

Most people see your work as challenging their norms. Do you agree?

There is no such thing as the norm. Something only becomes a norm when it is digestible. The minute it is not digestible, there is no norm. And there is no norm. We are all completely different in our experiences and who we are in space. That is why performance art is so interesting, and why I got drawn straight back into it. It didn't have the restrictions dance has. I built a whole dialogue inside myself and hope I can use it in theatre and not have to change mediums for finance.

Author Sarkin D
Name of thesis Performance Art Is An Effective Site For The Exploration Of A Feminist Discours, The Female Psyche, And An Explosive Space In Which To Challenge The Status Quo Sarkin D 1998

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