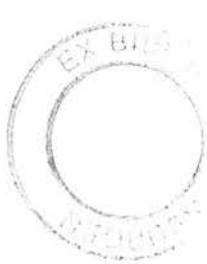
FEMALE FANTASY, PORNOGRAPHY AND CENSORSHIP: A PRESENTATION OF WOMEN'S WRITING TO REDRESS THE IMBALANCE IN PHALLOCENTRIC CULTURE'S PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE DESIRE

Caroline Suzanne Davis
Ph.D.
English Literature
The University of Edinburgh
1999



Declaration

I declare that the composition and contents of this thesis are entirely my own.

Caroline Suzanne Davis.

Abstract

The thesis specifically examines the issue of censorship of pornography from a variety of feminist perspectives and offers alternatives. Literature, specifically women's writing, is evaluated as distinct from other forms of pornography. The female voice and the unique nature of women's relationship to language are explored. Female fantasy, combined with a literary approach to the representation of human sexual relations, is offered up as a way of redressing the phallocentric nature of traditional forms of pornography. The thesis examines the evidence in favour of, and against, censorship. The study approaches the problems and possible repercussions of understanding any form of literature as primarily political and propagandist, and secondarily as art.

The evidence presented to suggest the failure of censorship is argued to be incontrovertible. An historical case, that of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, clearly demonstrates the contradictory and problematic nature of censorship of literature. Various feminist discourses are employed to suggest ways of reading and writing that can more fully unite representation of female desire with the experience of it. 'Artistry' and 'erotica' as distinct from 'pornography' are highlighted through analysis of the work of Jeanette Winterson. The thread that connects the Sadeian text with modern attempts at artistic pornographic writing is identified and considered in connection to Angela Carter's work. The phallocentric nature of language, and obsession with the romance genre is evaluated through readings of Kathy Acker. The freedom of the female writer who engages with the pornographic is recognised as both limited and endless with the insight of Pat Califia.

The relationship of 'female pornography', as a distinct and empowering discourse, to the dominant discourse is carefully considered and integrated into the study. The value of language, and literature, is identified in the unique way that it creates a pornographic moment which cannot be located in the same way as pornography which belongs to any other medium.

Language functions as a mode of translating culture and ideology and a key argument of this thesis is that literature is the place where much of this translation takes place. The thesis analyses the approach of specific authors with different concerns and literary backgrounds to demonstrate the way in which literature can reveal possibilities for positive representations of all varieties of human sexuality.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank the many people who were involved in providing advice and support during the writing of my thesis. In particular my thanks go to my supervisor Ms. Faith Pullin. Also to Prof. Aidan Day for providing comment on some of the chapters. I would like to thank my father and mother for providing financial support and therefore making it possible for me to complete this work once undertaken. My thanks also go to Dr. Isla Jack for her suggestions and support during the later stages of the process and to Richard Harris for proof reading. I would also like to thank my friends who provided support and encouragement when necessary, in particular my fiancé Mark Sermon. I am most grateful to the staff of the National Library of Scotland, The University of Edinburgh Library and ArtLan for practical help.

Contents

Declaration	**Page**	**i**
Abstract	**Page**	**ii**
Acknowledgments	**Page**	**iii**
Contents	**Page**	**iv**
Introduction	**Page**	**1**
Endnotes	**Page**	**23**
***Chapter One*: Feminism, Pornography, Sex and Language**	**Page**	**26**
Historical and Cultural Limitations on Female Fantasy	**Page**	**28**
Discourse Analysis and French Feminism	**Page**	**38**
The Anti-Pornography Debate	**Page**	**55**
The Anti-Censorship Debate	**Page**	**65**
Female Fantasies present in Contemporary Media	**Page**	**74**
End Notes	**Page**	**88**
Chapter Two*: A Case Study to Demonstrate Censorship in Action: The Problems and Solutions Highlighted by Radclyffe Hall, Specifically in Relation to *The Well of Loneliness	**Page**	**94**
Self-Censorship: Examples of other works of literature by Radclyffe Hall	**Page**	**100**
Creation of a Lesbian hero: Problems of 'new' representation	**Page**	**107**
The Role of the Publisher and the Legislator	**Page**	**119**
Popularity: The Secret of Success	**Page**	**129**
End Notes	**Page**	**140**
***Chapter Three*: Women Writing New Pornographies and Inscribing Sexuality, Love and Desire: Angela Carter and Kathy Acker**	**Page**	**143**
Angela Carter: Re-evaluating the Sadeian Stereotype	**Page**	**154**
Kathy Acker: Filling in the Gaps: Replacing the Silences in Pornographic Texts	**Page**	**180**
End Notes	**Page**	**192**
***Chapter Four:* Women Writing New Pornographies and Inscribing Sexuality, Art and Desire: Jeanette Winterson and Pat Califia**	**Page**	**196**
Jeanette Winterson: Making Art with Words - "Art Anticipates Life"	**Page**	**206**
Pat Califia: Hidden Desires	**Page**	**222**
End Notes	**Page**	**234**
Conclusion	**Page**	**236**
End Notes	**Page**	**246**
Bibliography	**Page**	**247**

Introduction

We don't know what women's vision is. What do women's eyes see? How do they carve, invent, decipher the world? I don't know. I know my own vision, the vision of one woman, but the world seen through the eyes of others? I only know what men's eyes see. So what do men's eyes see? A crippled world, mutilated, deprived of women's vision. In fact men share our malaise, suffer from the same tragedy: the absence of women. (*Forrester*)[1]

We are all a product of culture and this makes the quest to be original both complex and confined. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate ways in which writing expands the boundaries of our confinement. After a consideration of censorship and its influences through a case study of Radclyffe Hall, attention is drawn to the writings of Angela Carter, Kathy Acker, Jeanette Winterson and Pat Califia. These female writings are considered in terms of non-phallocentric pornographies offering an alternative 'demystifying' discourse. First, however, it is important to offer an explanation of what I mean by the term 'pornography, a term riddled with culturally defined biases and inconsistencies. Pornography is essentially about communicating desire, transmitting 'what turns me on' through various media into 'what turns you on' and I use the word to embrace all literary representations of sexuality. The utter subjectivity of the term is further complicated if we indulge in the tradition that attempts categorisations such as 'erotica', 'hard-core', 'soft-core' and 'obscene'. Pornography is a grouping which can include representations which depict exploitation of children and murder; however 'Snuff movies' and 'paedophilia' fall outside the boundaries of this work.

As yet there is still no standard definition of what can be seen to constitute the pornographic. The literal meaning of the term pornography as defined in the *OED* is:

> The explicit description of exhibition of sexual subjects or activity in literature, painting, films etc., in a manner intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic feelings.[2]

Like many terms, pornography has come to mean more than its dictionary definition. In 1990 the Home Office Research Planning Unit was commissioned to look into the issue of pornography focusing on its influences and the accuracy of previous research.[3] The contents of the report focus on the influences of pornography, with the opening section of the report given over to definitions of pornography. Some of those that were particularly representative follow:

> We should say that a work is pornographic if it combines the two features of explicit representations (content) and an apparent or purported intention to arouse its audience sexually.[4]

further:

> Pornography covers all depictions of naked women or anything which shows women in a degrading way,[5]

and in conclusion:

> It has been common in recent claims about pornography to suggest that it serves as an agent of dominance of men over women. By promoting a particular view of women as objects to be used, abused, degraded and furthermore, actually 'enjoying' or 'wanting' these things, it is argued that pornography is partially responsible for both the position of women in society and also for creating the conditions in which rape and other forms of assault on women are commonplace.[6]

It should be noted that, despite a considerable number of definitions, none are objective, and furthermore, none focus on the second half of the wo rd which deals with the representative nature of porno**graphy**. These predominantly negative

definitions are intrinsically linked to a criticism of what pornography means to the consumer. Susan Griffin refers to pornography as the 'fantasy life of this culture's mind' and, in many ways, those who condemn and criticise the existence of pornography are fueling the myth as much as those who produce it.

Lynne Segal would agree and she argues that the role of pornography in society is significant primarily in that its influence is of such concern to so many:

> One way or another, for both men and women, pornography has been placed at the centre of the search for an understanding of the pains and pleasures of heterosexual desire.[7]

The debate surrounding the production and consumption of pornography is as much a function of the pornography industry as the incitement of desire. Whether we masturbate over, tear up, or defend, pornography we ally our perception of our own sexuality with culture's. The danger is that phallocentric/penetrative-focused pornography should provide an instruction manual.

This is a danger which concerns those feminists who are opposed to pornography. Andrea Dworkin, a key member of this 'anti-pornography lobby', has outlined the etymology of the word:

> The word *pornography*, derived from the ancient Greek *porne* and *graphos*, means "writing about whores". *Porne* means "whore", specifically and exclusively the lowest class of whore, which in ancient Greece was the brothel slut available to all male citizens.[8]

Dworkin initially elects to take this definition literally and focuses on the notions of property, power, force, objectification and subjection the term implies. Furthermore she asserts that pornography is misused as a synonym for 'obscenity', a word which she sees as more problematic. In her book *Pornography: Men possessing Women*

(1981), Dworkin analyses the subjectivity related to this term in contrast to the more easily delineated pornography. She argues that 'obscenity', an issue which has been at the root of legislation "is not a synonym for pornography. Obscenity is an idea; it requires a judgement of value".[9] Other feminists have chosen to focus on the boundaries between the erotic and the pornographic. Gloria Steinhem comments on the illusions about desire that are fostered by pornography:

> Consider also our spirits that break a little each time we see ourselves in chains or full labial display for the conquering male viewer, bruised or on our knees, screaming a real or pretended pain to delight the sadist, pretending to enjoy what we don't enjoy, to be blind to the images of our sisters that really haunt us—humiliated often enough ourselves by the truly obscene idea that sex and the domination of women must be combined.[10]

What this quotation illustrates is the suggestion of inherent violence in the references that are frequently made to pornography. A moment of violence which Mandy Merck refers to in "*The Sexualization of Power*" as epitomised by penetration during "intercourse [which] has come to represent *the* subordinating moment in gender relations".[11] This focus on the phallocratic power represented by pornography fuels the debate and is closely linked to the responses of Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon to the availability and production of pornography.

Pornography, as a term, might denote the portrayal of prostitutes, but the specificity of this definition is still in question. Dworkin and her compatriots, in the fight against pornography, have found it virtually impossible to adhere to a single use of the term 'pornography':

> The pornography system itself is objective and real and central to the male sexual system. The valuation of women's sexuality in pornography is objective and real because women are so regarded and so valued. The force depicted in pornography is objective and

real because force is so used against women.[12]

For Dworkin, acts of penetration in themselves are versions of the patriarch acting out his privilege over a woman coerced into submission by, if not money, then a sense of romantic or political sensibility to fulfil the pleasure of those who hold a higher status – men.

Having shown the elasticity of the term , it is important to state what I mean when I refer to pornography. My discussion of pornography will relate principally to the texts/sections of text that I have selected to discuss. In subsequent chapters my frame of reference is delineated by discussion of female authors, critics and censors. Whilst avoiding glossing over the subjectivity of individual writers, I will try to refrain from the general acceptance of the negative connotations of the term pornography Nadine Strossen has noted elsewhere; connotations which suggest that pornography is a form of "sexual expression that allegedly demeans women".[13] Although, on occasions, use of the term pornography may be substituted by 'obscenity' or 'erotica' this only occurs when the authors I am discussing have expressly made a decision to use them. Any decision to use the word pornography, will imply neither value judgement, nor a suggestion of degrees. My intention is to examine pornography in the context of censorship, or as a part of free speech, and as the censor extends her/his net to include more and more artistic representations of sex, then so must I.

As a topic, pornography suffers the mixed blessing of being a particularly fashionable subject at the moment. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the

development of technology in the form of the Internet has brought pornography into the homes of everyone. The increase in availability has been mirrored in an increase in interest and debate.[14] Secondly, the late twentieth century is a not a time of widespread high moral standards in the Western world. Certain feminists are opposed to pornography because they believe it encourages the objectification of the female body and so it has once more come to the fore as an indication of amorality. Thirdly, and on a more sinister note, pornography, and particularly its imagery, is increasingly popular in serving the imperative to enforce compulsory heterosexuality and monogamy. Although pornography frequently represents non-heterosexual acts, the visibility of these possibilities as 'other' further establishes the doctrine of the dominant discourse. In other words they are portrayed as the exception which proves the rule. Similarly the use of pornography as an alternative to polygamous desires which unsettle the dominant discourse, with the emphasis it places on family, is welcomed. Therefore, we must remember when discussing pornography that even when it is prosecuted it is generally in the interest of both finance and heterosexuality for it to exist in its many variations.

Pornography becomes problematic for the dominant discourse when it treats all individuals as rational adults and when it is produced for women. Although as a consequence of pornography's current fashionable status, the censorship of pornography by the British legal system is apparently in decline, this does not mean that we should ignore it as an historical phenomenon and nor does it mean that it no longer exists. In Britain we are sheltered by obscenity laws and had, until the advent of the Internet, little opportunity to obtain 'hard-core' pornography. Traditionally the

establishment has responded to problematic material by censoring it and since the Victorian era this has been the case with pornography.[15] Censorship itself is essentially the removal of specified material from the market place. Legal censorship was initially designed to prohibit the sale and display of obscene or shocking material in establishments which cater for the general public. In the original instance this definition of the general public was considered to refer to "those whose minds are open to [. . .] immoral influences and in whose hands" such material "may fall".[16] Throughout the twentieth century censorship of pornography within the British legal system has consistently focused restriction of sexual representation to uphold morality. In recent years the concern of U.S. feminists to restrict sexual discrimination in all its forms has begun to affect the stance of British anti-pornography campaigners. The issue of freedom of speech, frequently debated by American feminists campaigning in opposition to censorship is becoming increasingly pertinent in Britain.

In America and Canada political censorship, under criminal law, is distinguished from civil censorship as defined by Dworkin-MacKinnon.[17] Civil condemnation, as opposed to political condemnation, arguably does not threaten freedom of speech as it does not involve 'prior restraint' but:

> The Supreme Court has recognized that constitutionally prohibited censorship includes any use of government authority - or any threatened use of such authority - to limit the flow of ideas, information, or expression based on their content [. . .] the Court has recognized that censorship in civilian garb is still censorship.[18]

Freedom of speech is affected whenever discourse is smothered rather than an opportunity for alternative agency introduced. Private pressure can be seen to affect

the publication, distribution and production of a work. Although the representation of violence against women is limited by social pressures when pornography is censored there remains a large volume of violent imagery circulated within contemporary society. The production of a discourse of suppression cannot redress all representations of power and submission.

In contrast to pornography, censorship treats all individuals as children, and it is for this reason that it is unsuccessful. People, in trying to obtain forbidden material, are encouraged to act like children. More importantly, removing the responsibility from the individual to a group of individuals (i.e. the censors) whose views are themselves subjective is inappropriate. This thesis seeks, not only to demonstrate censorship's flaws, but also to suggest an alternative and to recognise that alternative where it already exists. The alternative to censorship of importance to this work, and specifically for feminism, is to create a new version of the pornographic discourse capable of inscribing female fantasy.[19]

The process of identification with a pornographic image is not understood, but the limited nature of the bulk of this imagery has an effect on fantasy life. Fantasy and pornography provide the setting for desire. The 'political implications of pornography' are not the issue; pornography pertains to fantasy and not to reality. Even if pornography reflects a given pornographic situation it does not define it. The influence of pornography on the fantasy life of the mind is a confused topic. Both fantasies (as expressed by female writers) and pornography (as sanctioned by patriarchal concerns) reflect the political beliefs of the dominant culture doing so

because of their common roots in the discourse of patriarchy.

Fantasy is an element of emerging desire and is intrinsically linked to the sexual in the pornographic. Pornography is used to achieve and enhance sexual excitement, frequently to the point of orgasm. Sexual desire is in some ways 'beyond control' not falling within the boundaries of sexuality as society chooses to recognise it. Thus desire is very much a feminine realm in that it conforms to the criteria set by Elizabeth Cowie:

> Desire here is most truly itself when it is most 'other' to social norms, when it transgresses the limits and exceeds the 'proper'. The result is a hotchpotch, formed only by its status as the forbidden; it is characterized not only by the now more conventionally acceptable transgression of barriers of race or class, but by the transgression of the barriers of disgust.[20]

Fantasies involve movement between the self and the other, between subject and object. Therefore in fantasy "the subject may, as it were, experience the pleasure of being 'desubjectivized'" as Joseph Bristow suggests.[21] The experience of not being the subject in a sexual fantasy is not new for woman - her traditional role is object. The fantasy is the setting for the interaction between the subject and the object, the site of the experience of desiring. For this reason sharing fantasies is one way in which women can discuss new forms of interaction between the genders.

Before the discussion can begin, however, it is necessary to situate my own debate within the theoretical discourse within which I believe it functions. Critical theory has proved both a hindrance and a help to feminism. The search for a female identity apparently struggles against the fashionable discourse of postmodernism. However, if we recognise that the disruptive nature of postmodernism is dependent on there

being an 'identity' to disrupt then it is not logical to apply postmodernism to female sexuality. Postmodernism springs from an attempt to re-evaluate the self-determination of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment did not determine the feminine, except as 'other', and we must recognise that to begin with the feminine is, in many ways, outside the meta-narrative of the Enlightenment. Therefore we should first define the feminine, a project of modernity, before we can start a process of re-evaluation. Patricia Waugh elaborates further on this argument:

> Those who have been systematically excluded from the constitution of that so-called universal subject - whether for reasons of gender, class, race, sexuality - are unlikely either to long nostalgically for what they have never experienced or possessed (even as an illusion) or to revel angrily or in celebratory fashion in the 'jouissance' of its disintegration.[22]

It is within the terms of this debate that my thesis connects patriarchal culture and the impotence of the phallocentric author to the possibility of an empowered female writer. One of the aims of this thesis is to present "*women's writing* to redress the imbalance in phallocentric culture's portrayal of female desire".[23] Hélène Cixous' *Laugh of the Medusa* (1976), which introduces the idea of *écriture feminine*, is an important source text for my theoretical argument. The production and analysis of *écriture feminine* is riddled with complications. The discourses of feminism grapple with the idea of what it means to be a woman, to be female, and come to a plethora of conclusions. The disagreements focus on the dangers of accepting the terms of the debate, i.e. woman, female and feminine.

The two main areas into which the concept of woman is divided are those of 'biological determinism' and 'cultural inscription'. Simone de Beauvoir famously wrote that "one is not born a woman, but rather *becomes* one".[24] This translates

through further explanation to an idea that we are born 'sexed' and become 'gendered' when we enter language. This suggests that sex exists in the pre-discursive domain and is a biological fact. Judith Butler examines this idea in detail:

> Within the sex/gender distinction, sex poses "the real" and the "factic", the material or corporeal ground upon which gender operates as an act of cultural *inscription*.[25]

Sex is notionally divided into two distinct categories, male and female. These are the categories which traditional pornography recognises and a society which hinges upon compulsory heterosexuality seeks to uphold. 'Man' and 'Woman' are the protagonists of heterosexism, and heterosexism is shamelessly essentialist. Lacan and Irigaray write of the 'incest taboo' and how by affirming the model of family we promote both the exchange of women as commodities and the idea that 'woman' is a distinct and rigid pre-discursively delineated category.[26] Lesbian feminism has analysed this illusion from the perspective of not fitting into the category as heterosexism would demand. Monique Wittig focuses on this problem:

> A materialist feminist approach that what we take for the cause or origin of oppression is in fact only the *mark* imposed by the oppressor; the "myth of woman", plus its material effects and manifestations in the appropriated consciousness and bodies of women.[27]

Therefore it is not valuable to inscribe female experience unless we recognise that the dualism of the heterosexual representation system, based on the concept of 'other', is frequently nonsensical. Ultimately the idea of sex distinction is a product of discourse, in this case a scientific discourse.

The act of gendering is arguably the single most powerful act of inscription that discourse performs upon us. The relationship between gender and sex would seem

obvious, but this relationship is every bit as illusory as the rigidity of either category, as Butler states, "Gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex".[28] Gender appears fixed because it pre-dates our society historically:

> Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.[29]

The process of gendering is intended to result in two distinct categories, in much the same way as 'sexing'. The suggestion might be that gender is to culture as sex is to nature. This lends weight to a gendered female and a gendered male as 'other' in their relation to each other. Feminism recognises woman as defined as 'other' and this raises questions about female identity and agency. Luce Irigaray goes further and describes women as 'the sex which is not one'.[30] Woman is not a unified concept in the sense that male phallocentricity views unity. Women are multiple, unrepresentable in a state of opacity, 'woman' as a unified concept is not a 'real' or useful categorisation. Gendering of a masculine and a fem inine creates the problem of agency and female creativity. As Butler writes:

> The language of appropriation, instrumentability, and distanciation germane to the epistemological mode also belong to a strategy of domination that pits the "I" against an "Other" and, once that separation is effected, creates an artificial set of questions about the knowability and recoverability of that Other.[31]

It is the argument of the essentialist which creates an answer in the suggestion that the 'other' is a biological fact. This circular discussion can be avoided when we consider that we are constructed by discourse and that this is not the same as being determined by discourse.

Gender as a cultural construct is fluid and sexuality is one way in which this fluidity is highlighted. Whether this is a fluidity stemming from biology or from cultural inscription is an argument that has unnecessarily taken up far too many pages of feminist debate. It is mute when we recognise that if biology is created by discourse, then culture and biology are not distinct. Biology is simply another meta-language. Further, Butler states:

> That the term [woman] is questionable does not mean that we ought not to use it, but neither does the necessity to use it mean that we ought not perpetually to interrogate the exclusions by which it proceeds, and to do this precisely in order to learn how to live the contingency of the political signifier in a culture of democratic contestation.[32]

It is a discussion I have felt the need to highlight to explain my viewpoint, but it is the position of this thesis that agency and female/feminine voices occur as a result of repetitions and explorations of the existing discourse. It is the unique position of being gendered and sexed female that leads to a new form of power play and a new way of revisiting identity from a position which accepts that the masculine, which we accept to have agency, is as much "nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and original" as the feminine.[33] Therefore, we recognise rewriting and revisions of the existing discourse by women to be as valid as the continual repetition and revision of discourse to promote the masculine. My subject is desire and sexuality, and, before I elaborate on my perceptions of *écriture feminine*, it should be mentioned that, as Butler rightly indicates, sexuality is itself in all ways at the crux of the conflict:

> The pro-sexuality movement within feminist theory and practice has effectively argued that sexuality is always constructed within the terms of discourse and power, where power is partially understood in terms of heterosexual and phallic cultural conventions.[34]

The women's writing I examine in this thesis at all times reflects upon the existing discourses of power, and, by repeating them in a variety of altered ways, displaces them.

Although the primary argument of this thesis is that sexuality and gender are culturally created and can be altered, this is not to contradict entirely that such a thing as biological difference occurs. Biological factors do set the parameters within which influences operate, but do not determine the form of sexuality. Stevi Jackson outlines the perimeters of this debate:

> Although women and men differ genetically, hormonally, and physiologically, it is not possible to leap to the conclusion that they also differ in terms of personality or behaviour.[35]

I would add that, even if biology does encourage certain differences, there is no way to tell if these differences are the same as those which culture determines. This is illustrated when we look outside of our own culture, either socially or historically; there is no such thing as the norm. These factors also influence fantasy. Our fantasy lives are socially constructed and, in the past, women have not taken part in the structuring. Throughout childhood and adolescence, erotic perceptions, which were once fluid, are directed along the pathways of the dominant culture. This occurs in both men and women, but more regularly for women and the result often has negative repercussions on identity and self-awareness. Women are frequently identified through the medium of the male gaze.

The unique ability of women writers (i.e. writers sexed and gendered female) is based upon their experiences during the process of gendering, regardless of their

sexuality. Women have been displaced to such a point that they can write from the position of the 'other' and, simultaneously, having been so saturated by culture they can also write from an inherent knowledge of the dominant culture - the position of 'self'. This returns me to my starting point; the work of Hélène Cixous. She argues that the position of the woman writer is inherently a bisexual one because women do not experience the same drive as men towards monosexuality.[36] This is because the monosexual is phallocentric. This bisexual position places the woman writer in an exciting role according to Cixous:

> The location within oneself of the presence of both sexes, evident and insistent in different ways according to the individual, the nonexclusion of difference or of a sex, and starting with this 'permission' one gives oneself, the multiplication of the effects of desire's inscription on every part of the body and the other body.[37]

This idea of a 'woman writer' in no way suggests that the female writer does not have her own unique perception from within discourse as an individual. It simply suggests that the relationship between discourse and body in women is less alienated than in men:

> *In body/Still more*: woman is body more than man is. Because he is invited to social success, to sublimation. More body, hence more writing.[38]

Writing is the domain of woman because this form of expression displaces the discourse of phallocentric power by expressing a different perspective:

> Writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me - the other that I am and am not, that I don't know how to be, but that I feel passing, that makes me live - that tears me apart, disturbs me, changes me, who? - a feminine one, a masculine one, some?[39]

Writing is an opportunity to learn about one's own desire and, perhaps just as importantly, validate and recognise the desire of the 'other' and others:

> It is by writing, from woman and toward woman, and in accepting the challenge of the discourse controlled by the phallus, that woman will affirm woman somewhere other than in silence.[40]

Although defining a feminine practice of writing is described by Cixous as an "impossibility that will continue" she also accepts that the difficulty in theorising such writing "does not mean it does not exist".[41] Much as Butler describes, even if there is no coherent unified concept of 'woman's identity' this does not mean she does not have a voice, an agency, "there need not be a 'doer behind the deed'" it is enough "that the 'doer' is variably constructed in and through the deed".[42] In this case the deed is writing.

The female/feminine/woman writer is an important subject for several reasons. Literature is the appropriate medium for women to encode their desire, since writing is the single most powerful way for women to communicate with one another. Moreover, we are discussing the subject of pornography, and the allegation often levied at female producers of pornography is that they are involved in the exploitation of women. The production of literature does not involve 'physical beings' so exploitation does not apply in the same way. Thirdly, as a result of gendering and the phallic nature of other pornographic media literature appeals most directly to the female sexual imagination. Furthermore, the censorship of female thought and writing means that there is a dearth of literature which legitimises female experiences of sex. Cixous eloquently explains how writing translates the body, and why it must be used to do so:

> To write - the act that will 'realise' the un-censored relationship of woman to her sexuality, to her woman-being giving her back access to her own forces; that will return her goods, her

> pleasures, her organs, her vast bodily territories kept under seal; that will tear her out of the super-egoed, over Mosesed structure where the same position of guilt is always reserved for her (guilty of everything, every time: of having desires, of not having any; of being frigid, of being 'too' hot; of not being both at once; of being too much of a mother and not enough; of nurturing and of not nurturing . . .). write yourself: your body must make itself heard.[43]

Therefore reading is also a process of translation of the body. This provides a key component in the case I put forward in chapter one to allow women to create their own pornography to redress the imbalance in existing representations of desire.[44] Literature is a powerful domain because it is language which creates what we conceive to be our set of realities. Luce Irigaray argues that through the expression of sex in language, either spoken or written it will be possible to create a discourse which is no longer phallocentric. Such a discourse would aid the creation of a new civilisation in which sex becomes an acceptable and integrated expression of humanity. Luce Irigaray warns this will only become possible in time:

> The issue is whether [our civilisations in the West] are mature enough to give it [sex] its human cultural status. It's a transformation that will [have to] come through the development of the sexed dimension of language and every single means of exchange.[45]

Thus this crucially important shift in attitudes towards sex is intrinsically linked to language and the symbols which we use to express our sexual and gendered identities.

There is also a measure of irony in deciding to demonstrate how women's writing redresses the balance and provides an alternative to censorship, in that women are the single largest group to have been censored. The voices of women's sexuality, which we did not hear throughout history, existed; they were merely silenced. Jane Marcus

suggests reasons why they may have been censored:

> [Woman has been] thus imaginatively fixed on a point which conflates her art with man's perception of her sexuality. Because man wishes to repress her power to accuse him and to remake the world, he has also repressed all her powers of celebration and limited her expression to the depiction of the scene of raping and the naming of her oppressors.[46]

Female sexuality has been subject to oppression via violence, 'reputation', pregnancy, disease, coercion, chastity belts, property laws and marriage.[47] Sexuality is, like gender, an aspect of social construction as we can see by examining the variations in sexualities in response to the altering attitudes throughout history.[48] Sexuality is, for women, a further experience of inequality and silencing. To discuss the subject and suggest that we should try and reveal female experience of sexuality is a project which has received criticism. The primary allegation is that sexuality is at the focal point of the phallocentric heterosexist psyche and it is better to silence such voices than it is to give them new perspectives. As Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott discovered, pornography is the manifestation of these sexual voices that provides considerable disputes because:

> It helps to circulate and perpetuate particular versions of these narratives such as the mythology of women as sexually available, deriving pleasure from being dominated and possessed and a model of masculinity validated through sexual mastery over women.[49]

The alternative debate, and the one to which I subscribe, is that whilst pornography is a focal point for sexual inequalities it is more dangerous to emphasise the problematic of power relations at the expense of pleasure than it is to discuss the erotic potential of shared fantasies for women.

Although sexuality is a site of inequality it seems curious that we should accord such

weight to it that we consider the value of redressing the balance to be outweighed by the dangers. As women, sexuality and fantasy comprise an area of our lives that has resulted in our bodies and our minds being appropriated and taught to contradict ourselves. There is no other area of debate which affects the lives of future generations and the manner in which their identities are constructed of which feminism fights shy. Whilst I accept that cultural construction of sexuality is as much in need of debate as that of gender, I wish to point out here that the value of women writers and critics is found in their ability to constantly contextualise sexuality and fantasy. Jackson and Scott recognised that the danger lies in suggesting that pornography functions in isolation from the rest of culture when they wrote that "The material appropriation of women's bodies and the cultural significance accorded to sexuality are interrelated".[50] The female writers I discuss are important in the re-creation of fantasies because, like women in general, they recognise that sexuality and its power struggles are intrinsically bound up with every other area of life.

The first chapter of the thesis provides an introduction to the topics, problems and directives of the thesis. The nature of female fantasy is placed in a cultural context to highlight the issues of concern to the female writer. This context illuminates areas that place restrictions on the female imagination. A brief theoretical introduction to recent attempts to create a new discourse suggests alternatives to the patriarchal meta-language which enables many of these restrictions. This is linked to further insights into the relationship between sex, language and the female writer. The specific limitations that are arguably placed on women by the pornographic discourse

are analysed with attention to the arguments of those feminists who believe that censorship of pornography is the only solution. This is followed by an examination of the negative implications of censorship on free speech. Nadine Strossen's well-thought-out work *Defending Pornography*, which springs from the movement of Feminists for Free Expression, is the key source text for my anti-censorship argument.[51] I go on to evaluate further possible angles of approach to pornography once the principle of anti-censorship is established. Whilst Strossen's sole intention is to demonstrate that censorship is wrong, the project of this thesis is to explore alternatives to censorship, in particular those provided by literature.

A case study is used to provide an insight into the processes both of censorship and gendering. *The Well of Loneliness* was published and censored in 1928, so the first section of chapter two examines the obscenity law which was applicable at the time and the heterosexism of the period. It is also the intention of this thesis to represent writers' positions from more perspectives than those proffered by a single novel, and I therefore give readings of some of Hall's other works. These provide insight into the process of self-censorship and suggests that Hall's interpretations of lesbianism were not so purely biological as *The Well of Loneliness* may suggest. *The Well of Loneliness* continually questions gender classifications in its representation of Stephen as an invert and in Hall's representations of heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual individuals. Despite the fact that Hall was not self-conscious about feminism, lesbianism is a key feminist discourse serving the disruption of the doctrine of compulsory heterosexuality. An historical narrative of the circumstances of *The Well of Loneliness's* censorship is also provided. The information for this

section of the chapter comes in greater part from Lovat Dickson.[52] This is because Hall's estate fell to him, and letters and documentation relating to the case have been seen and written about only by him and Lady Una Troubridge.[53] To conclude the chapter I place Hall in context with her contemporaries and suggest the possibility that the fame of *The Well of Loneliness* is directly related to its having been censored. Fourthly, the book was written in 1928 and the history of it informs us of the development of attitudes towards sexuality in early twentieth century Britain.

The final two chapters of my thesis go further than simply suggesting that we inscribe female fantasy, they demonstrate the ways in which Angela Carter, Kathy Acker, Jeanette Winterson and Pat Califia have variously inscribed theirs. I believe the legitimacy of this project is vindicated by the writings of the women I have chosen to examine. The decision to write about Angela Carter was based on my interest in how her fictional writing is informed by the Sadeian discourse.[54] I consider *The Sadeian Woman* (1979) before moving on to examine her fiction. Carter uses stereotypes to demonstrate the inherent problems in conforming to rigid models of human behaviour. She, and the other writers I discuss, expertly demonstrate the limits of ideological power and demonstrate the importance of demystifying this power. Kathy Acker is included because of her richly intertextual and self-controlled style of writing. She demonstrates the power of the phallocentric discourse as it is manifested in all areas of life, thus highlighting the implausibility of any suggestion that pornography alone supports phallocentricism and misogyny. Her writing is also deeply concerned with the way in which sexual desire and love become obsessions that overtake reason and lead to destruction. I include Jeanette

Winterson's work because of the self-conscious manner in which she structures her writing on artistic principles, as well as her treatment of the subjects of love and desire. My reading of Jeanette Winterson also finds focus from her own critical work *Art and Lies* (1994), and looks at how she articulates desire, the body and the Universe. Winterson's work is also particularly valuable when read in connection to the work of Cixous. Pat Califia produces work which reveals the performative nature of sex and pornography. Califia is especially important because of the emphasis her, apparently violent, pornography places on the safety of the individual participants. In spite of their differences all four writers demonstrate uniquely female responses to former phallocentric models of sexuality and choose to re-inscribe them.

The fact that all the writers whose works I choose to analyse are women is partially deliberate. Although I do believe the male writer is capable of demonstrating a feminine voice it is necessary to seek feminine voices where they are at their least appropriated. Although a man can be a feminist, he cannot be a woman. My subject is women and the desires of women.

The cultural awareness and responsibility towards others which are present in the texts of Radclyffe Hall, Angela Carter, Kathy Acker, Jeanette Winterson and Pat Califia makes their work especially useful when addressing the claims of the anti-pornography lobby. The pornography debate, language and patriarchal culture all have a limiting force on the expression of female desire and it is these factors which are discussed in the following chapter.

End Notes

1. Vivianne Forrester, What Women's Eyes See, trans. by Isabelle de Courtivron, in New French Feminisms, ed. by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1981), pp.181-182 (p.181).
2. The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary: On Historical principles, ed. by Lesley Brown, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), II, p.2294.
3. Dennis Howitt, and Guy Cumberbatch, Pornography: Impacts and Influences: A review of available research evidence on the effects of pornography (Commissioned by the Home Office Research and Planning Unit, 1990).
4. Report of the Special Committee on pornography and Prostitution in Canada (1985), p.53.
5. Claire Short M.P. quoted in Daily Express 1/11/89.
6. Howitt, p.14.
7. Lynne Segal, Sweet sorrows, painful pleasures: Pornography and the Perils of Heterosexual Desire, in Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate, ed. by Lynne Segal and Mary McIntosh (London: Virago, 1992), pp.65-91 (p.65).
8. Andrea Dworkin, Pornography: Men Possessing Women (London: The Women's Press, 1994), p.199. Note the term pornography was coined by the Victorians and not the Ancient Greeks.
9. Dworkin, p.9.
10. Gloria Steinhem, Erotica and Pornography, quoted in Dworkin, p.199.
11. Mandy Merck, From Minneapolis to Westminster, in Segal, pp.50-62 (p.59)
12. Dworkin, pp.200-201.
13. Nadine Strossen, Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights (London: Abacus, 1995), p.19.
14. Pornographic sites are among the most visited on the Internet and swiftly utilise new technological developments. These sites are also accessible to all, including children.
15. The discovery by archaeologists of depictions of sexual intercourse and nudes on the walls of homes in Ancient Greece so upset the Victorians that they 'invented' the word pornography.
16. Lord Justice Cockburn, quoted in The Times (Saturday, December 15, 1928), p.5, col.4.
17. Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon are the two prominent anti-pornography lobbyists responsible for the implementation of censorship laws in Canada.
18. Strossen, p.65.
19. Within this context the term 'fantasy' is used to refer to the "the arranging of, a setting out of, the desire for certain objects [. . .] a staging of a scene. In so far as this involves a set of actions, a set of events, the staging implies a resolution, a consummation of the scene in some particular act implied by its setting out." As described by Elizabeth Cowie in *Pornography and Fantasy: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, in Segal, pp.132-152 (p.136).
20. Cowie, pp.132-152 (p.134).
21. Joseph Bristow, Sexuality (London: Routledge, 1997), p.165.
22. Patricia Waugh, Practising Postmodernism/Reading Modernism (London:

Edward Arnold, 1992), pp.124-125. For a fuller explanation of this argument see Patricia Waugh, Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern (London: Routledge,1989).

23. See title to thesis.
24. Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Vintage, 1973), p.301.
25. Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (London: Routledge, 1990) p.146.
26. See Luce Irigaray, This Sex which is Not One, trans. by Catherine Porter (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), for a detailed explanation of the 'incest taboo'.
27. Monique Wittig, One is not born a Woman, in *Feminist Issues, Volume 1, No.2, Winter 1981*, pp.
28. Butler, Gender Trouble, p.6.
29. Butler, Gender Trouble, p.33.
30. Luce Irigaray, This Sex which is Not One.
31. Butler, Gender Trouble, p.144.
32. Judith Butler, Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex (London: Routledge, 1993), Page 222.
33. Butler, Gender Trouble, p.31.
34. Butler, Gender Trouble, p.30.
35. Stevi Jackson, The Social Construction of Female Sexuality, in Feminism and Sexuality: A Reader, ed. by Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp.62-73 (p.63).
36. Hélène Cixous, Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays, in The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism, ed. by Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), pp.91- 103.
37. Cixous, pp.91-103 (p.93).
38. Cixous, pp.91-103 (p.100).
39. Cixous, pp.91-103 (p.94).
40. Cixous, pp.91-103 (p.98).
41. Cixous, pp.91-103 (p.97)..
42. Butler, Judith - Gender Trouble, p.142.
43. Cixous, pp.91-103 (p.103).
44. See chapter one: The Anti-Censorship Debate.
45. Luce Irigaray, Je, tu, nous: Toward a culture of Difference, trans. by Alison Martin (London: Routledge, 1993).
46. Jane Marcus, Still Practice, A/Wrested Alphabet: Toward a Feminist Aesthetic, in Feminist Issues *in* Literary Scholarship, ed. by Shari Benstock (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp.79-97 (p.81).
47. For further debates on this subject see, Kate Millet, Sexual Politics (London: Virago, 1993).
48. For details of alternative arguments that support biological determinism see, Lynda Birke, Animals and Biological Determinism, in Jackson, pp. 101-116.
49. Sue Scott and Stevi Jackson, Sexual Skirmishes and Feminist Factions: Twenty-Five Years of Debate on Women and Sexuality, in Jackson, pp.1-31 (p.23).
50. Scott, pp.1-31 (p.26).

51. Nadine Strossen, Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights (London: Abacus, 1996).
52. Lovat Dickson, Radclyffe Hall at The Well of Loneliness: A Sapphic Chronicle (London: Collins, 1975).
53. Lady Una Troubridge was Hall's lover when she died, and the principle benefactor of her estate, she also wrote a biography of Hall, The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall (London: Hammond, 1961).
54. Angela Carter's writing formed the basis of my M.Sc. dissertation which is included within my thesis under the terms and conditions of The University of Edinburgh.

Chapter One

Feminism, Pornography - Censorship and Language

Now, again, poetry,
violent, arcane, common,
hewn of the commonest living substance
into archway, portal, frame
I grasp for you, your bloodstained splinters,
your
ancient and stubborn poise
-as the earth trembles-
burning out from the grain.
(*Adrienne Rich*)[1]

Pornography is one of the most important issues on the agenda of the contemporary feminist. The fact will always remain that one person's pornography is another's erotica, and vice versa.[2] Traditionally, authorial intent is deemed to be crucial when considering this. To a certain extent, this usual focus on production is misleading; the clue to discrimination depends on the reading. It is more important to consider the accepted meta-language of the sexual to be the force which results in the problematic nature of literary representations of all human sexual relations. This thesis examines the possibility of new representations of the sexual in language; representations that need not offend the feminist but liberate her from the constraints placed upon her by a discourse that, as Andrea Dworkin notes, posits 'penetration' at the core of all sexual imagery:

> Sex, a word potentially so inclusive and evocative, is whittled down by the male so that, in fact, it means penile intromission. Commonly referred to as 'it', sex is defined in action only by what the male does with his penis.[3]

We must look into the ways in which women have attempted to inscribe the body and sexual intimacy as a basis from which to challenge accepted versions of what is

sexually important and arousing to a reader. To do this I will look at two basic precepts: first, that there is a space for, and possibility of, a form of language that can positively represent the feminine; secondly that there is no reason why simply because of cultural 'misuse' of sexual literature that women should believe that all literary representations of sex and sensuality are fundamentally suspect.[4] It is possible to see, through reading the relevant literature, that pornography need not always be represented as a tool of suppression. To demonstrate this we must look at the arguments both of those opposed to pornography and of those who favour free speech and condemn all censorship.

All feminists agree that there are many demands placed on women by contemporary society which limit their ability to think and act freely. Female fantasising has been curtailed partially through the denial of its existence, but also through patriarchal systems which place responsibility on women for the morality of society. The most powerful way in which men are able to maintain control of women is by manipulating communication between them. A task made considerably easier by language itself, which is ultimately a patriarchal system of naming[5]. The function of such language is to emphasise the hierarchical structures which separate men and women. Anti-pornography feminists believe that pornography is the area of discourse which heightens this separation in the most extreme fashion. They suggest that the pornographic discourse is at the crux of phallocentric language, and that its eradication through censorship would result in both a more equal system of communication for men and women and fewer limitations on women. Those feminists who oppose censorship do so because they believe that censorship itself is

more limiting. Historically censorship has invariably resulted in the silencing of the female voice as well as those of minority groups. The key danger is outlined by Nadine Strossen:

> Given the inescapable ambiguity of the central concepts in the feminist anti-pornography laws - subordinating or degrading descriptions or depictions - and the subjectivity of any interpretation of sexually oriented expression, these laws necessarily arm individual women and government officials with the power to impose on others their views about what forms of sexuality are politically or morally acceptable. All of us would be hostage to the tastes of the individual women who sued under an antipornography law and of the judges and jurors who ruled under their claims.[6]

Therefore, censorship does not protect free speech through controlling pornography rather it limits it. This is not to suggest that patriarchal pornography is a good thing, simply that alternatives to censorship need to be found. A possible option is to encourage women to produce pornography which incorporates their own fantasies. This would seem to be a good place to begin as there is evidence in contemporary society that women are indeed sharing their fantasies. It is important to examine the likely sources of female fantasies both as responses to phallocentric culture and as revelations of female physical desire.

Historical and Cultural Limitations on Female Fantasy

The capacity to fantasise and the daring nature of fantasy is a product of freedom to fantasise.[7] In particular, women often link their fantasies to external prompts expecting that once revealed to others they will be used to suggest that there is 'something wrong' with them. In this way female sexual behaviour is over-prescribed by society. There is a long historical tradition in Western society linking sexuality, and particularly female sexuality, with shame and guilt. Biblical tradition,

beginning with Eve, cites the naked female body as shameful and holds women responsible for any sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Sexual guilt is instilled in girls from a young age by establishing clearly which kinds of sexual activity are acceptable and which are not. Before a child reaches sexual maturity s/he learns precisely how, when and where her/his sexuality can be explored. Society encourages and guides our desires and fantasies but educates us to know that penalties are to be paid if we admit to liking sex.

The history of female sexual desire has undergone dramatic changes over recent centuries in response to evolving Western phallocentric culture. In *Promiscuities: A Secret History of Female Desire* Naomi Wolf charts the history of recent attitudes towards female sexual desire:

> The idea that women's sexuality is inherently milder than the sexual desire of men dates from the end of the eighteenth century. With the ascent of the industrial revolution, Europe and America articulated a new view: women were no longer the more animal sex but the more angelic, their desires focused not on lust but on tender affection and domesticity. Increasingly they were seen as so sexually alien from men that they were men's opposite.[8]

Such philosophies were designed to excuse men from acting carnally and to deny that women are inclined to do so. The secularisation of hierarchisation, in the face of religious decline, led to the tightening of the bonds which restrict sexual expression. The rise of psychoanalysis supported the restriction of female desire by pathologising female lust and idolising sexlessness in women. Married women, who had previously had their pleasure sanctioned by the Judaeo-Christian tradition, were expected to have no, or little, sexual desire and thus only 'endure' sex with their husbands. Hysteria was a condition which men commonly linked to female sexual

indulgence. Fashion added to the repression of the female sex drive, corsets were laced so tight that they caused physical discomfort, and even damage, to women's internal organs. The twentieth century may have seen another re-discovery of the clitoris and female sexual desire, but much remains of the traditions which sought to deny female sexual response. Women's abilities to request and expect sexual satisfaction have been denied and reduced through a number of methods. Contributory factors include: the value placed on virginity, the insults which remain for those who seek to be as sexually active as men, drugs to suppress the sex drive, responsibility, fashion, which infantilises and causes illness, attitudes towards foreplay, and science which is obsessed with conception.[9] It is this history which has reduced female pleasure and ignored the female imagination. Sexual fantasy is the key to exploration of female desire and censors would deny us this also:

> Harold Leitenberg and Kris Henning, in their overview 'Sexual Fantasy', summarize a quarter-century of research on female sexual longing. They find that women's pre-occupation with their own desire manages to surmount cultural taboos, life circumstances, and even their own inner censor.[10]

The internally generated fantasies of both men and women are to some extent fuelled by external prompts. For women the media give fewer external erotic cues. Literature offers a unique opportunity both to share one's own fantasies and investigate the imaginary of others.

Changes in attitudes towards female sexual fantasy represent the important first step toward representation of female desire within the fabric of society. Today, images which serve to nourish the female imagination are considerably more prolific than they were in the 1970s when Angela Carter was working on *The Sadeian Woman.*

The premise for the argument of this thesis is that we should promote those images and representations which re-inforce and nurture women's sexual imaginations. To be displaced from one's own body is difficult enough, but to be located in a place outside one's mind and desires is surely worse. The tradition of feminism that proposes the need for women to escape their desires if they are to act in a 'rational' manner may have been appropriate in the time of Wollstonecraft but is not today.[11] Once sexual fantasies are shared and accepted as valuable, both as additions to shared sexual experience and as a means of release, we become more able to concentrate on engaging healthily with all elements of our lives.

There is also an inherent contradiction in how we view sex. Pornography has been blamed for exaggerating the human need for sex, while religion has been blamed for condemning it. The significant historical changes this century which include the development of Freudian psychoanalysis, two World Wars, changes in divorce laws, better contraception, feminism, increased instances of eating disorders and AIDS have added to this contradiction. Girls experience sex as potentially dangerous and their bodies as shameful. Shame, which often leads to guilt, can relate to being sexually arousing. This guilt sometimes leads to concerns about fantasising. While engagement with the body is necessary to be fulfilled, hypocritical false moralising makes this difficult, as Naomi Wolf highlights:

> The shaming of girls and women from acknowledging a sexuality on their own terms, or a sexual past, pressures them into a contemporary version of 'passing.' The need to 'pass' for someone other creates a vulnerability to external anxieties about womanhood in one's private life - as well as a vulnerability *about* the fact of one's womanhood in the work place.[12]

Negative attitudes towards sex contribute to guilt and problematise it unnecessarily. Fantasy is, in such a context, a powerful liberating force. Guilt can be removed from the encounter, or passed to someone else, allowing the fantasist to yield responsibility. Alternatively, fantasy can utilise the erotic capacity of the forbidden to heighten excitement. Fantasies, like sexual encounters, take place in a climate of guilt and female shaming which they are unable to fully escape.

The problem originates in the fact that a significant proportion of the guilt which women express relates to religious and spiritual traditions which over emphasise sex as sacred. Alongside the genre of the romance novel, and the notion of 'one true love', organised religion has sought to inculcate in all members of society, and especially women, the moral rewards of monogamous, usually heterosexual, sexual encounters. 'Love' is presented as the goal and as the reward of the woman who obeys the social, spiritual and moral codes which relate to sexual abstinence and self-denial. Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* highlights the path of 'true love':

> In the romantic world, kisses do not come before love, unless they are offered by wicked men who seek to delude innocent girls [. . .] the first kiss ideally signals rapture, exchange of hearts, and imminent marriage.[13]

The difficulty encoded in such versions of human relations is that they do not coincide with the sensations and sexual urges of the human body. The girl who is taught, via the fairy tale, to expect 'pure and sexless love' is the same girl who must negotiate the stirrings within her own body and the bodies of others. Such myths and ideals seek to protect women from unwanted pregnancy and men from female sexuality.

There is an alternative 'feminist myth' identified accurately by Naomi Wolf. This myth warns the same girl that:

> Victim-feminist anxiety over robust female heterosexuality has led to a situation in which there is an elaborate vocabulary with which to describe sexual harm done by men, but almost no vocabulary in which women can celebrate sex with men.[14]

Here Wolf expresses her fear that there is no space to recognise the pleasure of sexual experience within either of these discourses. Women are explicitly educated in how to say 'no', little surprise then that there is still no agreement about how to say 'yes'. The position becomes even more problematic if we dare to ask how we can learn the pleasure of saying yes. This problem is exacerbated if placed in a climate where censorship of the sexual is seen as desireable. Such a climate perpetuates the guilt surrounding the 'forbidden'.

The acknowledgement of a fantasy, either by writing it down or sharing it, is an important step in the eradication of guilt. When fantasies are shared in texts the female reader can acknowledge the reflection of her own fantasy and feel validated. One's ego and body image are affirmed through consolidation via shared fantasies. Elizabeth Grosz argues that this affirmation is considerably stronger when fantasy becomes a part of the fabric of culture:

> The other's body provides the frame for the representation of one's own. In this sense, the ego is an image of the body's significance or meaning for the subject and for the other. It is thus as much a function of fantasy and desire as it is of sensation and perception; it is a taking over of sensation and perception by a fantasmic dimension.[15]

Therefore, when women's literature is dissected for the purpose of locating the reader's experiences of her body within the text the inscription of a recognised

desire, shared feeling or need is valuable as a means of expanding the meta-language of female sexuality. Thus sharing expressions of sexual identity are a necessary part of the process which re-evaluates woman's identity. Once women realise that their own fantasies are shared the guilt associated with admitting to that fantasy is reduced.

For centuries women have been virtually silent about their sexual fantasies. Certainly silent in comparison to the overwhelming volume of representations of male sexual fantasy; fantasies which are not only widely available but also actively affect the stereo-typing of sexual roles and experiences. Elizabeth Grosz speaks of the failure of the female body to make itself heard on its own terms:

> All knowledges and social practices have thus far represented the energies of one sex alone. I am not suggesting that women have had no input into cultural production - quite the contrary. Women's contributions have never been acknowledged in the term chosen by women themselves.[16]

If those who favour censorship succeeded women would never have the opportunity to communicate with one another and add to graphic depictions of sexual relations. It is my concern to look for the common elements in the act of fantasising and in the most regularly depicted images of the self.

The images which fuel male sexual arousal surround and define us, female and male alike. The extent to which the symbolism of masculine desire has permeated the language of female desire is impossible to determine. Images operate in a variety of ways and a single author will frequently alter her position in relation to the dominant discourse. There are women writers who reproduce phallocentric erotic art predominantly for the male market as this extract from Anais Nin demonstrates:

> 'When she stood by the big iron bed, waiting, he said, "keep your belt on." And he began slowly tearing her dress from around it. Calmly and with no effort, he tore it into shreds as if it were made of paper. Louise was trembling at the strength of his hands.[17]

Others place women in the traditional masculine role of subject.[18] Some, like Jeanette Winterson, prefer to subscribe to the imagery of male erotica but use it to re-write and demonstrate female sexuality through art:

> My lover is an olive tree whose roots grow by the sea. Her fruit is pungent and green. It is my joy to get at the stone of her. The little stone of her hard by the tongue. Her thick-fleshed salt-veined swaddle stone.[19]

Another alternative is to deconstruct sexual desire and draw on images that commonly appear in traditional pornography as Acker does here:

> I was unable to be loved so I fucked every guy I could lay my hands on. Women have always been taught to hate themselves. That's history. And they have to deny that by not allowing themselves to fuck around.[20]

Notably women, both artists and not, writing from a position within a phallocentric dominant discourse define what 'sexy' has come to mean.

The 1980s saw many changes in the fabric of society which affected sex and our relationship with our bodies. Although AIDS is often reported to have had a negative impact on the freedom we feel to experiment sexually and blamed for the increase in asexual morality, the causes of current attitudes and inhibitions run deeper. The materialism of the 1980s and 1990s has continually been in direct conflict with the goal of knowing our sexual selves. The demands of women for equality in the work place and the home may have run simultaneously with those for increased sexual autonomy but they were not synonymous. Whilst society values

those who strive to have successful careers, including women, there is a suspicion and fear relating to those, especially women, who vocally seek a rewarding sex life. The deprivation of the right to control our own bodies and own our desires is increasingly the most important way in which the patriarchy can maintain its hold over women. Carole Pateman clearly links the failure of women to experience freedom to sexuality and the illusion of civil liberty in contemporary society. Despite apparent gains in the capitalist marketplace women are still not 'individuals' in the sexual arena in the same sense as men:

> Women can attain the formal standing of civil individuals but as embodied feminine beings we can never be individuals in the same sense as men. To take embodied identity seriously demands the abandonment of the masculine, unitary individual to open up space for two figures; one masculine, one feminine.[21]

Not only do women need to identify themselves economically and sexually they must also learn when to separate the two and seek 'themselves' independently of both. The exploitation of sex as a selling tool is itself based on the traditional values - despite the fact that censors have such difficulty locating them. The image of sex for sale is worded in such a way that we are reminded that sex for the sake of pleasure is wrong, and that 'nice girls don't do it'. The process of limiting sexuality and the desire of women to discover it has taken a new turn. It is no longer suggested that women do not fantasise, masturbate, orgasm or have sexual appetites. Instead, they are encouraged to 'have control' and teach their children that sex is dangerous and can have a negative impact on the rest of our lives and how people might judge us. In contrast Naomi Wolf, seeks to educate women to think positively about 'being bad', connecting with their lust and exuberance for life and their bodies:

> Every molecule of the child seeks every pleasure. She is

> sensuous, grasping, self-absorbed, fierce, greedy, meglomaniacal, and utterly certain that she is entitled to have her ego, her power and her way. For the few years between her first consciousness and the curtailment of all her badness, her dreams are more vivid and her world more saturated with passion, apparitions and ecstasy than it will ever be again.[22]

Knowing ourselves and our bodies will come as a result of accepting our passions, our fantasies, our sexuality and learning to communicate this to others without 'original guilt'.

The shift in nature of female fantasy during the 1990s is not a surprising one; the woman is becoming the seducer, the rapist, the angered, the dominant. Women are not just on top in bed they are tops in the S/M sense of the word. Like men they are more able to identify, justify and consequently avoid sexual guilt. Guilt is exterior and power interior; lust speaks its name and glorifies in its fulfillment. The project started by female writers who chose to communicate fantasies has led to an ability in the subsequent generation to normalise that which was considered suspect (albeit only partially achieved). The role of fiction in inspiring fantasy, should not be underestimated. The act of representing women who are comfortable with sexual control was, and remains, the first step. As Susanne Kappeler argues:

> Feminist critique must evolve forms of communication that are neither ego-trips nor solid objects, but forms of exchange. A feminist psychology will negotiate the relationship of the individual with the collective, the subject with sociality, not with an objectified other. The personal is political, because the personal is the minimal social unit. Hence feminist critique will envisage intersubjectivity: revolution, not coup d'état.[23]

That is, the communication of desire is an encouragement to others not to be afraid or guilty. However, language, the medium of this communication is itself

problematic.

Discourse Analysis and French Feminism

Language is the medium which binds together issues of female flesh, sexuality and oppression. I propose that we consider pornographic literature to be at the crux of any argument relating to the power of the phallocentric discourse. Issues such as mental erotic terrorism are supported by the systems of representations from within which we function; the search for a new discourse must move outside of this. Any new discourse differs not only stylistically and imaginatively, it also looks at an eroticised version of the female form as divorced from its purpose as 'speculum'. In undertaking this task I accept that there is bias attached to the choice to look into an area which is so subjective that no judgement can ever be considered final. For me, the overriding concern at this point is to produce a constructive critique of precisely how women writers are learning to re-shape and re-work language to express purely female perspectives on sexual intimacy.

In addressing the phallocentricity of language it is valuable to achieve an understanding of the logic behind acceptance of its power. Discourse analysis states that language is categorised into individualised groups of statements; these groups are referred to as 'discourses,' and I believe that the creation of a 'new discursive domain' is necessary before women can feel free to express themselves. Discourse is believed to structure both reality and identity and is a crucial force in limiting female expression. Sara Mills outlines the imperative to recognise this aspect in the dominant discourse and address its appropriacy for women. She suggests that:

> The Women's Movement has been important for many women in mapping out new discursive roles both for men and women. These roles are strongly contested by media representations and by the representations which are constructed through people's interactions with stereotypes of all kinds.[24]

Thus as men and women are 'gendered by discourse' it is important to recognise this 'gendering process' as changeable. Feminism has focused on the potential for creating a new discourse and examines conflicting discourses. This approach is also used to negate seemingly feminist messages by the media:

> An advertisement for a perfume may portray a woman as being in control of her life, as physically fit, as pursuing a career (in short, gesturing towards feminism) whilst, at the same time, casting the perfume as a means to initiate or enrich a relationship with a male.[25]

The feminist message is incorporated in the advertisement to attract young women, but sexist and conservative discourses are simultaneously being promoted.

The relevance of discourse analysis for feminism, and women's writing, is the manner in which we are encouraged to address 'subjectivity' and notions of the 'self'. Unstable notions of the 'self' cause obvious problems for feminist theory, particularly in relation to subjectivity. However Roland Barthes has reflected that:

> The adoption of certain subject positions is a type of action which has consequences, and it is this setting of subject positions within particular contexts of actions which feminist discourse theory makes possible.[26]

Therefore it is important that the ability to construct active subject positions for women within society is partially reliant on recognition of all people as discursive subjects.

Michel Foucault is a key figure in the history of the interpretation of discourse.

Consequently, much feminist debate has drawn on his discourse theory. Foucault's work is especially useful to feminists who seek to locate the struggle for power in the linguistic domain because he suggests that men exercise power through language. For example Betty Friedan has accepted the crucial role language plays in women's search for equality:

> As history constantly teaches us, discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle.[27]

The ways in which the dominant discourse seeks to legitimise its hierarchic intentions are of particular concern to Foucault. His work on 'disciplinary procedures' and 'confessional strategies' are similarly relevant to women. In the religious context, confession encourages the subject to internalise guilt and become compliant to the dominant. Furthermore, according to Foucauldian logic power relations are supported by psychoanalysis because the designation 'mentally ill' involves definitions of sanity based on a discursive norm. Approaches to the process of confessing/revealing one's difference can be viewed differently according to the environment in which such communications are undertaken. Furthermore Judith Kegan Gardiner adds that:

> Whilst feminist theorists see the confessional as potentially an oppressive form of interaction, for example, where women are classified as mentally ill by male psychotherapists, there is a sense in which confession within particular politicised contexts may be empowering, setting stories of 'failure' and 'self-blame' into contexts where those same 'failings' can be seen to be structural problems with Western culture's demands on women.[28]

Therefore the communicative aspect of the confessional could be seen as empowering to women. Women's writing, as a means of communication utilises discursive structures to transmit ideas which do not conform to the demands of the

dominant discourse. The crucial aspect of discourse is its power either to promote or neutralise definitions of gender identity. Once this power is recognised, discourse need not force women to write in a certain way.

Discourse is also responsible for the way in which women have constructed both femininity and heterosexuality and it is important for feminism to identify and neutralise this power. Ideological readings of 'femininity' suggest that it is no more than a construct, created by men, to which all women are allied. Variations are not so significant as the similarities and 'femininity' is read as a dangerous collection of stereotypes.[29] Although this is a prevalent reading, it is not the one accepted by discourse analysts. In contrast they propose that the dominant discourse encourages us to read femininity as weakness, vulnerability, emotional - and thus negative. Once we recognise that the danger lies predominantly within the way we perceive femininity as an intransigent unchanging discipline, and not its existence per se, a constructive approach can be taken. Dorothy Smith writes that:

> To explore femininity as a discourse means a shift away from viewing it as a normative order, reproduced through socialisation, to which women are somehow subordinated. Rather femininity is addressed as a complex of actual relations vested in text.[30]

Therefore femininity, in this sense, depends on a wide range of contextual features which effect its representation within the discourse of power.

When women recognise the possibilities offered by an interactive relationship with the discourse of femininity it becomes an educator rather than an oppressor. When women engage with these issues and then choose to display femininity they can be seen as agents of change rather than as victims. The tendency of those feminists who

favour censorship is to avoid interaction with discourses that are found to be disconcerting. This is a negative approach and fails to effect change. It is more fruitful for the individual not simply to ban discourse - a task they would find impossible - but to aim to move critically within discourse shifting position in response to changing stimuli. The female writer shares this goal, however she also has the added imperative to communicate and create new discursive domains and new ways of seeing old ones.

Another theorist we must consider is Jacques Lacan. Feminism has frequently looked to the discourse of masculine psychoanalytical theory from which to move forward and re-invent language and Lacan's work is especially significant in that it re-evaluates Freudian notions of the phallus. Freud suggested that the only 'real' focus for a female, once she discovers her intrinsic phallic lack, is her desire for the penis - the most valued 'possession' in the sexual economy. Luce Irigaray addresses the works of Freud, Lacan and Saussure and moves to a position from which she posits suggestions for a discourse which is not totally 'female exclusionary'. For Lacan, language is the building block of the 'Symbolic Order', the foundation stone of consciousness and perception:

> The unconscious is constructed in the moment of entry into the symbolic order, simultaneously with the construction of the subject. The repository of repressed and pre-linguistic signifiers, the unconscious is a constant source of potential disruption of the symbolic order.[31]

Therefore as the child acquires language s/he becomes a cultural being, yet the child's relationship with culture, entered into through language, is defined most pervasively by her/his gender. It is undeniable that the most important signifier in

the linguistic hierarchy is the phallus and that this marginalises women; they speak the language which denies their value in society.

Psychoanalysis is also concerned with the mystification of desire, which is intrinsic to sub/unconscious guilt. A consideration of the issues, which the psychoanalyst attributes to the term 'desire' is important because it will inform the readings of the texts presented in this thesis. At the simplest level, desire, as it is determined by phallocentrism, is at the root of both the male and the female pornographic imaginary.[32] When the desire for the phallus and the desire to be centered and unified falls into the domain of the female subject the process of signification/representation is altered. The Freudian and Lacanian notion of desire becomes a need for something which is lacking, the female subject falls short of the male subject. The focus of female desire may remain the same (the phallus) but the sexual response to that desire is different. This debate comes from the assumption that phallus is synonymous with penis, allying Freud and Lacan and establishing that the male is in possession of the ultimate signifier. Jane Gallop argues that:

> The pretence that penis and phallus are different, but the act of confusing the two, which causes problems: 'as long as the attribute of power is a phallus which refers to and can be confused (in the imaginary register?) with a penis, this confusion will support a structure in which it seems reasonable that men have power and women do not'.[33]

The desire for the phallus is shared by both male and female in that it is the fetishistic symbol which culture recognises as part way between satisfaction and love.[34] The 'subject' position of the male is reinforced through his possession of the phallus. Therefore it is the role of the woman not to be the subject of desire, but rather the object which reinforces the value of the subject. Any woman who attempts

to usurp the male right to the position of subject experiences guilt and confusion. Desire in the form of fantasy is arguably representative in some way of a dissatisfaction (or problematic relationship) with the phallus. It is the complex nature of female guilt and the displacement (and re-placement) of desire which is translated through communicated fantasies.

I have chosen to look at French feminist theory to discover the direction which the journey to define a female erotic language might take. To do this, we need to outline the aspects in the existing meta-language which represent its intrinsic value system. This will provide us with a series of ideas about language and humanity - ideas that have attained mythical status in their promotion of essentially phallocentric versions of sexual intimacy and physical expression. In patriarchal erotic writing female pleasure is located within the realm of the spiritual and pleasure is found exclusively in acts of love or subservience to overtly masculine types. Annie Leclerc reacts by expressing that which the phallocentric discourse is most uncomfortable with - the physical capacity for sexual fulfillment within the female body:

> I must talk about the pleasures of my body, no, not those of my soul, my virtue or my feminine sensitivity, but the pleasures of my woman's belly, my woman's vagina, my woman's breasts, luxuriant pleasures that you can't even imagine.[35]

There is a level of fear to be overcome when one attempts to inscribe seriously the capacity of the female body for pleasure because male-centred language discourages identification with female pleasure. As Margaret Reynolds states it "quite literally obscures the evidence of woman's bodily pleasure with the phallus".[36] Language has conspired with and joined culture in obscuring all but the emotional residue of the multiple levels of sensuality experienced by women. It is true, then, that the primary

objective of the feminist must be to counteract the phallocentricity of language and self-expression that seeks to deny the capacity of the female body for desire and pleasure.

The work of Luce Irigaray on the phallocentricity of language and the self-expression of women is especially valuable in this context. Her own background was in clinical psychoanalysis and much of her work deals with patrairchal history and language as the quintessential problems of psychoanalysis. She criticises the transmission of the principles and methods of treatment from father to son, and the opposition to political approaches, amongst those in the field. She experienced this 'opposition' first hand after the publication of *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974) when she lost her post in the Department of Psychoanalysis at Vincennes.[37] Her belief that the historically determined nature of psychoanalysis results in a bias against women is linked to the fact that the phantasies which psychoanalysis seeks to interpret are usually the thinly veiled phantasies of Western society, for which it is at least partly responsible. Irigaray argues then that women in particular should treat analysis and their choice of analyst with care, the reason for this is outlined here by Margaret Whitford:

> If the instrument of psychoanalysis is language, and if language is not sexually neutral, then it is not a matter of indifference whether one's analyst is male or female; the dynamic may be quite different and may need to be theorized.[38]

Furthermore, in a practical sense, phallocentric language intrudes into the female consciousness on a daily basis and it is difficult to separate the female mind from phallocentric discourse.

Phallocentric language certainly plays its own crucial part in maintaining the conspiracy intended to convince woman that her defining sexual characteristic is one of lack. Questioned on the need for a woman identified language, Irigaray outlines her opinion:

> In the face of language, constructed and maintained by men only, I raise the question of the specificity of a feminine language: of a language which would be adequate for the body, sex and the imagination (imaginary) of the woman.[39]

Irigaray feels that a female identified language would essentially be one that was not centred on concepts of unity in a visible form. She looks first at the morphology of the female sex to discover a possible discourse which will not be 'isomorphic with the masculine sex'. She submits the 'two lips' of the female sex which are continually interchangeable and self-embracing as crucial in upsetting the premises of the dominant discourse. The primacy of this image would provide a problem for the goal of perfect unity that obsesses masculine language; within feminine language there would always be a plurality - a situation of interchangability and multiple denotation. We see, then, that the silences in women's literature are self aware in that there is an understanding that the real meaning for the female reader lies beneath the surface, ever-changing, fluid, written to embrace a feeling or a moment rather than purely to define.

Writers including Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Dorothy Richardson, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Jean Rhys have internalised the sense that the feminine is only heard in the silences, the spaces in our culture not filled by male noise. This arises specifically from three circumstances. First, women have been physically silenced

and denied an opportunity to write about issues such as religion, politics, history and the economy by a lack of education forcing them into the private domain. Secondly, that women have censored themselves by remaining silent on certain issues, avoiding subjects through fear of being attacked, ignored, or ridiculed. Thirdly, and perhaps most pervasive in contemporary literature, is the way in which certain women writers consciously produce material which will conform to the requirements of the dominant culture, by either writing in a way that is perceived as feminine, or in a way which rejects any attempt to locate female identity. As a consequence they wholly encompass masculine linguistic traditions and expectations. Indeed, Cameron reminds us that we must always be ready to ask, when a work signed with a woman's name receives high acclaim, whether it is necessarily enough for women to speak and write as deemed acceptable by men?:

> If we are 'allowed in' to literature and culture only on condition that we accept conventional [masculine] ways of expressing ourselves, we are simply exchanging one silence for another.[40]

Luce Irigaray's attacks on Freudian definitions of places of female desire and frustration are of value to anyone seeking a female discourse of sexual satisfaction and autonomy. Her key argument in *Speculum of the Other Woman* focuses upon the presentation of woman as man's 'other', his negative, the mirror-image, a form that arises from sameness rather than from difference. The patriarchal desire to reduce everything to a state at which it can be identified with a phallocratic norm is realised in the arena of the linguistic. Therefore, Irigaray argues in *Je, tu. nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*, language must be dissected and the imaginary and symbolic structures of Western thought re-coded. Society must be restructured to form a

sexual order dependant on creativity, rather than a generational order dependant on procreativity:

> During the development of our civilization the sexual order has been neglected. It's a sad irony that cultures as sophisticated as ours in many respects is should be so lacking or impoverished in others and should now seek sexual rules or secrets from animals, plants, and distant civilizations. What we need for our future civilization, for human maturity is a sexed culture.[41]

A 'sexed culture' being one in which we move beyond the idea that sex is disgusting, diseased and harmful. This can only happen once we recognise the extent to which discourse is already sexed. It will certainly never be realised if censorship is successful.

This necessarily links up with the symbolism and language of the erotic and the literary representation of the female as an erotic being. The erotic qualities and capacities of the female as presented in male culture are primarily visual. That is, she is seen through the male gaze, and, as such, is passive and yields gratefully as speculum to the phallus. Irigaray refers to the interpreted logic of the Greeks, which focuses on unity of male and female experience whilst concealing the nature of female desire:

> The prevalence of the gaze, discrimination of form, and individualization of form is particularly foreign to female eroticism. Woman finds pleasure more in touch than in sight.[42]

Therefore, it is interesting to note that traditional pornographies are not suited to this capacity of women to enjoy tactile sensations in a sexual way.

Having looked at the problems inherent in portrayals of female desire we can now

consider the possible direction and creation of a revealed female imaginary in literature written by women whose intent is to express female sexuality in its variations. We must accept that, because the woman who writes erotica does so from within a male discourse, she can only go a short distance both towards expressing an imaginary that constructively criticises that of the male, and in laying the foundation stone of the female dialectic. Irigaray suggests a number of processes through which women could create new discourses.

Initially it is crucial when undertaking the move towards a female identified language to recognise that, as Irigaray suggests, there is no division between society and language. Therefore there is no division between sex, society and language either. Irigaray argues that they are essentially linked historically, and she uses the evidence presented by the French language's preference for the masculine form as proof.[43] Although the gender bias of the English language is not so obvious the use of the masculine as generic, the giving of the man's name to his wife and children, the assumption that God is male are all norms which contribute to the masculinising of society.

The phallocentricity of language will not alter organically without conscious intervention. Therefore Irigaray argues that women must not passively wait for language to change, or underestimate the power of language because it "can be deliberately used to attain greater cultural maturity, more social justice".[44] Neither should women accept their exclusion from language, which Irigaray identifies in the process by which women "maintain a relationship to the real environment but [. . .]

don't subjectivize it as their own".[45] If women are to enter the role of the subject and escape the patriarchal, phallocratic order their relationships with each other as well as their relationships with language must change. Irigaray identifies the 'mother/daughter' relationship as a possible site for this change.[46] In the case of the 'female writer/female reader' relationship certain of the methods which Irigaray suggests for mothers and daughters are applicable.

Within the context of this thesis the most interesting elements of the relationship which Irigaray envisages between mother and daughter are those which deal with what she refers to as the 'important outer space':

> It's important [. . .] to have their own outer space, enabling them to go from the inside to the outside of themselves, to experience themselves as autonomous and free subjects.[47]

Irigaray suggests a number of ways by which this might be achieved, the most relevant of which include - the substitution of human value for artistic value; avoidance of exile from natural and cosmic space; playing with the mirror phenomenon to avoid being devoured by the other; learning to circulate from outside to inside, and inside to outside, the self; inventing and imagining something new rather than simply re-inscribing the old; working on exchanges between I-female and you-female.[48] The four writers discussed in the final two chapters of this thesis each incorporate some or all of these methods of communicating and expressing the self.[49]

The methods of communication suggested by Irigaray offer something of a challenge to phallocentric discourse. Whether such threats are consciously recognised, or merely intuited, the fear that men feel when on the verge of exploring feminine

difference in a manner divorced from the male referential is potentially restrictive for both men and women. This subject is eloquently discussed by Hélène Cixous in her critical works, specifically, the *Laugh of the Medusa* (1976). Here she looks into the consequences of relating to a new Utopia, a female Utopia. She looks at the 'dark continent' from within the 'white continent' and sees the fears that new/female representations of reality bring:

> Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark you're afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Most of all don't go into the forest. And so we have internalized this horror of the dark.[50]

She exhorts women to write, although, like Irigaray, she believes that women's imaginary and sexuality cannot simply be represented in a symbolic that focuses on the possibility of homogeneity:

> You can't talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogenous, classifiable into codes any more than you can talk about one unconscious resembling another. Women's imaginary is inexhaustible.[51]

Cixous is always fearful of falling into the trap of accepting the inevitable impenetrability of a discourse that has been used by men for centuries. To accept this would be to exclude women from the possibility of locating the proper place of self-expression; women must communicate themselves, their bodies, their desires, the obscured and fragmented dark of the female unconscious. Previously, the danger seemed to be that women would not speak because they were as terrified as men of the silent knowledge that our culture is laughable.[52] The exploration of the feminine, and the expression of a beauty that does not lie in the eye of the beholder, is the goal Cixous incites us to reach. The question of where woman is in the linguistic order does not need to receive a specific answer. We learn we do not need to write a new



language to find the 'dark continent'. Rather, women re-write the old one and cease to fear 'lack' as we unleash our force for change. 'Écriture feminine' is exemplified in texts which deliberately write from a perspective on difference. It is work which serves to split open the phallocentric logic which reveals itself in the binary oppositions typified by the ultimate opposition - male/female. Writing which can be seen as 'sexed female' is writing that comes from the body, from the inside, that breaks away from any feminine directive to function wholly as cradle for the phallus.

The sexual role of the female is represented linguistically from within these dual and hierarchical oppositions, i.e. superior/inferior, as examined in Cixous' *Sorties*:

> The hierarchization subjects the entire conceptual organization to man. A male privilege, which can be seen in the opposition by which it sustains itself, between *activity* and *passivity*. Traditionally, the question of sexual difference is coupled with the same opposition activity/passivity.[53]

Always in imagined human relations, woman is on the side of passivity. Sexually, especially, she is a prey to male activity. Cixous suggests that the inscription of a discourse that is based on difference rather than opposition is necessary to disrupt the logocentric philosophy to which those within any given language system have no choice but to subscribe. The ability to unite oppositional discourse is based on a disruption of negativity:

> She knows no, name, negativity. She excels at marrying oppositions and taking pleasure in this as a single pleasure with several hearths.[54]

Therefore écriture feminine allows women to use language to connect language and desire together and to escape the Lacanian vision of language as distancing us from desire.

Cixous is also concerned to address the role that Death plays in culture and in structuring identity and desire. She describes writing as a means of escaping the traditions which cite imminent death as an excuse for inertia. Text can become a means by which we rise above defeatism and acceptance of ourselves as victims from the biblical account of the Fall onwards:

> It's all there where separation doesn't separate; where absence is animated, taken back from silence and stillness. In the assault of love on nothingness. My voice repels death; my death; your death; my voice is my other. I write and you are not dead. The other is safe if I write.[55]

Once we rid ourselves of the dead idols of language we can escape the male voice which seeks to own language. For women seeking to write pornography the bind is doubled because the discourse of male sexuality obsesses itself with death and negativity. For Cixous, the social gendering of male and female sexuality rests on the 'libidinal economy':

> Every entry into life finds itself *before the Apple.* What I call "feminine" and "masculine" is the relationship to pleasure, the relationship to spending, because we are born into language, and I cannot do otherwise than to find myself before words: we cannot get rid of them, they are there [. . .] So there is nothing to be done but to shake them like apple trees, all the time.[56]

The existence of the Law/Knowledge/Apple means that, even whilst we are before language, we are also inside it. To be inside is to experience pleasure through becoming other, thus women, frequently defined by culture as other, have more experience of the inside.

> After all women do all virtually or in fact have an experience of the inside, an experience of the capacity for other, an experience of non-negative change brought about by the other, of positive receptivity.[57]

This positive receptivity increases our understanding and improves the quality of the relationships we build with others. As Cixous points out, if we remembered the origin of our atoms as star-dust "we would live and we would love differently".[58]

The female writer of pornographic or erotic literature is in a similar position to any other woman who attempts to record exclusively female experience. She must use her imagination to escape from the Symbolic Order's limitations of language by identifying the impact of the dominant discourse and the potential forces that can disrupt its power, and affect the creation and acceptance of new discourses. There are numerous examples in the canon of women's writing which are representative of conscious attempts to exorcise the influence of the patriarchal meta-languages. Initially, female writing was identifiable by the topic with women creating a discourse in which to communicate personal experiences. Some women write to reveal an understanding of the silencing of women and their message is often located in what is not written. Alternatively, the demystification of sexuality provided an honest and valuable account of female sexuality. In her attempt, Cixous creates a discourse of the imaginary and disrupts the emphasis on separation which is apparent in the bulk of male writing.

The discourse of the French feminists began a re-evaluation of the notion that feminine sexuality in its complexity is intrinsically linked to linguistic domination by the phallus. It became clear that the eternal struggle of female desire is against the negativity of all discourses that seek to position female sexuality. Women must claim the expressive force of language:

> There is another power in words that is not the power to legislate and threaten. What power? The power to bring people to their and our desire. The power to enter into a resolute circle of mutual understanding against which repression must be blunted. The power to seduce our enemies. The power to reveal a simple obvious truth buried beneath layers of rationalization and technical jargon.[59]

The women writers in this thesis all seek to attack the negativity of discourse towards sexual activity and desire, specifically when it limits the female imaginary. It is these negative expressions of sexuality that have led to feminist opposition to pornography.

The Anti-Pornography Debate

The concerns of the anti-pornography lobby are essentially the same as those of all feminists regarding the position of women in society. Pornography is seen by this group as the principal weapon employed by men to suggest insidiously the inferiority of women and the female form. It argues that culture is based on the subordination of particular groups in society, and pornography is seen as an offensive weapon used primarily to enforce male supremacy, in direct conflict to women's human rights. Perhaps the most pervasive argument against pornography, however, is the suggestion that it actively encourages old, and creates new, stereotypes of the feminine. These stereotypes form the basis of the anti-pornography lobby's attack. All the stereotypes mentioned hold a position of primacy in feminist debates because masculine power is a corollary of the predominance of a cultural system conceived to protect the male sense of self.

In her book *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* Andrea Dworkin looks at the

methods by which cultural constructs, including language, sustain belief in the artificial notion of the necessity of male supremacy. Andrea Dworkin's influence is pernicious. Her lobbying, combined with that of Catherine MacKinnon, led to the implementation of anti-pornography laws in Canada.[60] She argues that the concept of autonomy is essentially 'real' only within the domain of the masculine:

> The power of men is first a metaphysical assertion of self, an *I am* that exists a priori, bedrock, absolute, no embellishment or apology required, indifferent to denial or challenge. It expresses intrinsic authority.[61]

The male sets up standards and laws which deny any rationale that would allow women places in the higher echelons of society. To back up the so-called reality that women are by definition less deserving of power, and less normally autonomous than men, women have internalised a sense of awe and we bring this with us to witness examples of physical strength displayed by males of the species. Within culture, feminine beauty is at least partially reliant on physical incapacity, representing as it does the wealth of the male, intrinsic to his ability to keep and protect her from labour; woman at her most desirable is ornamental. It has even been noted that:

> Women are physically weaker the higher their economic class (as defined by men), the closer they are to power, the weaker they are.[62]

Male power is also upheld by the ability of a dominant class to inculcate fear in those traditionally inferior. Dworkin reminds us that "the symbols of terror are commonplace," and, are employed to uphold the state which places the female in fear of the male. These symbols range from guns, knives, fists, bombs, tanks, nuclear weapons to the ultimate age-old symbol of male terrorism, the penis.[63] Legends of heroism, glory, and villainy permeate society and women's minds with a pseudo-knowledge that the male is to be feared and obeyed. Acts of terror, legends of terror,

and the sanctioning of legalised terror provide powerful images:

> Whether exquisite as in Homer, Genet or Kafka; or fiendish as in Hitler, the real Count Dracula, or Manson. Rotting meat smells; violence produces terror.[64]

However Dworkin argues that Man utilises his power most dangerously through that most predominant of his domains, language - the system which names things and invests objects and creatures with the properties by which they are to be judged and treated. The names he has given woman throughout history have served to vindicate his acting out violence against her:

> He exterminates nine million women as witches because he has named her evil; [. . .] he mutilates the female body, binds it up so it cannot move freely [. . .] because he has named her weak; [. . .] she resists rape [. . .] he says she wants it; [. . .] he forbids her education; [. . .] he does not allow her to use her mind [. . .] then names her intuitive and irrational; [. . .] he defines femininity and when she does not conform he names her deviant, sick [. . .] he does what he wants and calls it what he likes. He actively maintains the power of naming through force and he justifies force through the power of naming.[65]

Most crucially, he has named her his property, thus he owns her and holds exclusive rights to her mind and body; she has become property - possessions are of the 'self' - and, since female 'self' is not legitimised by society, she is a possession of man. Dworkin proposes that 'sex' too is an exclusively 'male possessed' commodity; virility is an energy dimension which is defined purely in masculine terms, and it is this energy which fuels the essence of our culture. There are numerous modern-day legends that support the discourse of male supremacy.

Arguments that favour a 'scientific discourse' demonstrate a powerful ideological force at the service of those who justify women's oppression because of their biological nature Brownmiller explains how, because men can rape, anatomy can be

placed at the root of sexual subordination:

> Man's discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times.[66]

The physical power of men, as discussed by Dworkin, leads to social power. The advent of the contraceptive pill somewhat reduced women's powerlessness in the face of biological factors, but the maintenance of the existing hierarchy, in which women are subordinate, can be achieved through other means. To achieve this, pornography seeks to remind us that women are still possessable in a sexual sense, and are therefore in some sense possessions. Despite the advances in women's rights in the course of the twentieth century, the prevalence of imagery based on a dialectic of subordination causes many to ask how far we have really come.

Susan Griffin's analysis of modern day culture highlights the process which turns women into stereotypes. The present day consumer society soaks up and pumps out images of women as seductresses, innocents, mothers and victims. As children grow up, their response to society's image of them more often than not leads to a mimicking of that image. Griffin is concerned that the little girl who finds within herself something which is incompatible with pornography's image of her is taught to adapt and become the woman who lives the lie:

> When one has lost one's self, one does not say, I am one way but I behave another. Rather, one has forgotten that the lost self ever existed.[67]

The sexuality of a child is swiftly stolen and sacrificed to the demands of the pornographic. Griffin goes on to point out that:

> The calculated use of a not yet grown woman's body in pornographic poses is part of our culture's symbolic murder of all

that is childlike in our souls.[68]

So innocence must be destroyed so that revenge can be taken against those who would suggest that pornography is not a process of separation from reality, but rather a learning of a new and more fulfilling reality. The heroine of a sado-masochistic text must unlearn her body to experience the full power and degradation inflicted by her master, allowing her to become powerless and a thing possessed as property. Such a text is the extreme manifestation of all imagery that seeks to unite degradation and desire to promote male power. This is how Dworkin views the danger.

> Sexual power is also an attribute of the male, something that inheres in him as taker of what he wants and needs, especially as one who uses his penis to take women, but more generally as a taker of land, of money. As an attribute, his sexual power illuminates his very nature.[69]

It is this power, as expressed in pornography that leads to fear and confusion. Women themselves must learn to conform to cultural suggestions relating to their own fulfillment at the same time as protecting themselves from domination.

The argument that much of pornographic writing and art is in some way reliant upon a sacrificial offering of the female is a further stereotype. In explaining the title to her book *Pure Lust* (1984) Mary Daly writes:

> On one side, it Names the deadly dis-passion that prevails in patriarchy—the life-hating lechery that rapes and kills the objects of its obsession/aggression. Indeed, the usual meaning of lust within the Lecherous State of patriarchy is well known [. . .] Phallic lust, violent and self-indulgent, levels all life, dismembering spirit/matter, attempting annihilation.[70]

This details the implicit necrophilia in much of patriarchy's stereotyping of women - women are victimised into a state of living death. Male control over women's bodies

is at issue here - male ideologies become institutionalised by the media etceteras. Woman's purpose is to fulfill male sexual desire and raise children. Women are presented by society as slaves, irrational, dependent and weak. They are punished for illegitimate pregnancy, yet are under pressure from the media, advertising, peer group, to indulge in sexual intercourse. Historically, women have been punished physically and mentally for reasons of biology, and are often implicated themselves in perpetuating these imbalances.[71] Examples of women's complicity in their own subjugation further expand this stereotype. Pornography which promotes images of pain and woman's desire to be mastered is common and Daly argues that such examples provide an insight into a place where women apparently recognise their own lusts to be manifestations of an apocalyptic darkness which could destroy society:

> Sado-sublimation perverts abstract thought, so that this becomes an instrument for causing the thinker to be more and more absent from her Self, consequently castrating her will to use her powers, to act.[72]

The disempowerment of women is reflected by frequent attacks on those institutions in society which uphold morality and seek to reduce the dangers of male sexual power.

Pornography is frequently perceived to attack the foundations of society, in particular the Church. Such perceptions are based on its apparent defiance of moral order. It is a manifestation of that nightmare of the mind which progresses from the story of Adam and Eve - female flesh corrupts the spirit and corruption leads to destruction. Pornography is seen by Simone de Beauvoir as a transgression against such holy prudery. The link between the metaphysics of the pornographic and the religious is

an old one, one recognised specifically by the Marquis de Sade (1787):

> The God you admit to is nothing but the fruit on the one hand of ignorance and on the other of tyranny. When the strong first set out to enslave the weak, they convinced their victims that God sanctified the chains that bound them, and the weak, their wits crushed by poverty, believed what they were told. All religions are the destructive consequences of this first fiction and merit the same contempt as its source deserves.[73]

There is always a sense that the rebellion of pornography against the church contains too much religious imagery to be anything other than an imitation of it. His search for profanity and sacrilege, focusing on the torturing of beautiful women in religious settings to shock, somehow become expositions of the Church's own misuse of the body of woman as culture's oldest victim. It is the essential evil which both pornography and the Church see within the female form that leads to the suggestion that spiritual happiness is incompatible with carnal knowledge. Critics have argued that "No aphrodisiac is so potent as the defiance of Good" (Griffin).[74]

The escape from religious confines through sexuality is an expression of Man's bestiality, as he becomes defiler of the virgin and consumer of pornography he comes close to the nature he wishes to escape. The virginal nature of the desireable innocent is one aspect of the stereotyped female. Madonna vs. Whore is a familiar ideological framework, although we may argue, alongside Naomi Wolf , about its appropriacy in the 1990s:

> This split, 'Feminist or Slut?', has its antecedents. Feminists of the past contributed [often negatively] to the debate about female desire.[75]

In this context, only the mother is other than a sexual object. To be a virgin in pornography controversially leads to the moment of becoming, when her supposed

innocence is exchanged for the shame which is woman's reward for sexual activity. Pornography holds this moment as its most powerful. The objectionable nature of the implied inescapability of female shame is not, however, that to which anti-pornography feminists specifically object. It is the objectification of such women to a point at which they apparently have no shame. Their whoredom is complete as it is linked with false modesty and the constant availability of material that concerns itself with recreating the magic of the striptease without the threat of consumption. Female flesh is constantly available between the pages of books, on video stands and on the Internet. It is not necessary to view a woman as anything other than the sum of her physical parts. In pornography, woman can become virgin and whore in one moment. Attractive, according to Dworkin, because she can be form with no voice; something controllable - an image of a woman's body devoid of power:

> More coherently defined—that is, defined outside the boundaries of male experience—the power of sex manifested in action, attitude, culture, and attribute is the exclusive province of the male, his domain, inviolate and sacred.[76]

The enforced artificiality of such women extends further into the realms of those things which might not necessarily be considered pornography:

> Male sexual power is the substance of culture. It resonates everywhere. The celebration of rape in story, song, and science is the paradigmatic articulation of male sexual power as a cultural absolute.[77]

Once one follows the path which accepts and glories in the removal of all objectifying images of women there is nowhere to stop; essentially this is the problem of the anti-pornography lobby.

The way a woman dresses is either seen as reinforcing or challenging a stereotype.

She cannot dress lazily for her own comfort. Women are still encouraged to withhold sex as a signifier of their intrinsic value. Naomi Wolf identifies a potential danger:

> Before 1960, "good" and "bad," as applied to women, corresponded with "nonsexual" and "sexual." After the rise of beauty pornography and the sexual half-revolution, "good" began to mean beautiful-(thin)-hence-sexual" and "bad" meant "ugly-(fat)-hence-nonsexual."[78]

Women, perhaps, cause rape by assuming they live in a free society. They are being punished for the objective guilt of being female. Prostitution is an economic relationship. Marriage is a love relationship. They are both extensions of man's sexual enslavement of women. The problem arises when one begins to see pornography as the cause of these imbalances rather than simply as a process of representing these acts. Catherine MacKinnon refers to the use of pornography itself as a weapon to justify anything from rape in time of war to violation of those who are made invisible by the making of pornography. Pornography may simply offer a representation of a variety of forms of sexual expression in response to demand from both men and women, but it is the extent to which it creates fantasies, rather than supplies the requirements of pre-existent fantasies, to which many censors object. We can see a successful ideology as a seductive blend of truth and misrepresentation; in this case pornography is dangerous in the position at which it starts to create new truths (for example J.G. Ballard's *Crash* (1973)).

Pornography can be seen as a tool with which to enact the argument between the 'real' and how we perceive the 'real'. The body is a visual projection that can be directed along a fictional directive through a series of moments of representation, a

series of symbols which reduce/increase a sense of the ego. In the case of the male these representations focus on the phallus and the cultural status obtained by the identification with, or possession of, this symbol. Judith Butler looks at precisely where the value of the phallus as symbol lies, and highlights the significance of any end to this situation:

> The phallus itself presupposes the regulation and reduction of phantasmic investment such that the penis is either idealized as the phallus or mourned as the scene of castration, and desired in the mode of an impossible compensation. If these investments are deregulated or, indeed, diminished, to what extent can having/being the phallus still function as that which secures the difference between the sexes?[79]

The symbolic is defined by its limits and is essentially concerned with a constant regulation and re-enforcement of its values to maintain a position of potency. Problems are caused by pornography because it is a discourse of need and desire, and not one of sexual union. At its apex it is concerned overly with what is not said; pornography is the ultimate in misrepresentation of the real, in this sense. It is at the point where we accept that pornography deals primarily in misrepresentations that we recognise its dependency on existing symbolics. The locus of desire for a pornographic text/image lies not with the medium but with the observer. His/her response is then dependent on socially pre-determined ideas of desire. The problem that the pornographer faces in producing something new is identified by Roland Barthes as a problem for all mythologists:

> When a myth reaches an entire community, it is from the latter that the mythologist must become estranged if he wants to liberate the myth. And myth with some degree of generality is in fact ambiguous, because it represents the very humanity of those who, having nothing, have borrowed it.[80]

If a novel representation of a myth reaches a community of believers it is, at first,

shocking, but is then incorporated into the existing mythology and then mystified in its own right. The censor would argue that the value of censorship is that it prevents a new perversion/degradation becoming mystified. History demonstrates that censorship attacks symbols which fit readily into our existing mythological framework and that, often, the publicity attached to an act of censorship hastens this process.

The Anti-Censorship Debate

The anti-censorship movement is primarily reactive to the anti-pornography lobby and focuses particularly on the destructive impact of forcing through legislation. Although concerns about the position of women in society are shared by the anti-censorship lobby their key concern is expressed by Betty Friedan, founding president of the National Organization for Women, and author of *The Feminine Mystique*:

> I deplore that even a very few feminists have been diverted by the issue of pornography from the basic protection of all our rights. Now, I urge all women to have their eyes opened to the dangers to our basic rights by the pushing of anti-pornography legislation.[81]

The most controversial issue highlighted by the anti-pornography lobby relates to alleged violence resulting from the consumption and circulation of pornography. However, according to a report by the Home Office (1991), the relationship between pornography and sexual violence is not proven; and the suggestion that sexual criminals be perceived as perpetrators of violence, rather than as sexually disturbed individuals, would, on the basis of existing research, seem appropriate. The case of human rights is more problematic; the focus of the anti-pornography lobby has arguably become a case of women's rights at the expense of minority groups in society who experience prejudice, and this is obviously dangerous. It is the problem

of mis-representation, as outlined by Dworkin and others, that feminists most object to. Surely the conclusion of their argument - that women cannot be both sexually active/aware and equal - is the ultimate mis-representation?

The female authors of both erotic/pornographic literature, and of texts against censorship must face the problems arising from the existing mythology surrounding sexual desire. But, in direct contrast to the anti-pornography lobby, they accept that the best way to do this is to embrace desire as they experience it as women. As Strossen argues there are instances when pornography de-objectifies women because "they can use it to validate their own desires and pleasures. They can also reinterpret or take control of the fantasy".[82] The anti-censorship lobbyists suggest various methods of undermining the influence of the anti-pornography lobby. The growth of the anti-pornography lobby is seen as dangerous by anti-censorship activists particularly because it encourages feminists to direct their energy and resources into a single area. Alternatively, to suggest the opposition of anything which limits the expression of sexuality is equally problematic.

Deidre English suggests that as individuals we should not blindly see all forms of pornography as a part of legally protected self-expression and therefore legally acceptable, if morally suspect. We should simply ensure that pornography is not legislated against because we cannot predict the direction of censorship "after all, it is usually the conservatives who sponsor censorship crusades".[83] Her position accepts entirely the need to address the problem on an intellectual level, but also

prompts us to see it as part of a larger problem. To censor out of indignation is not the answer; women must address the profoundly real masculine attitudes which have constructed the fantasies of Western society and, through understanding these, create new mystifications of their own which permeate and provide balance. Susanne Kappeler points out that this position, that of analyst, effectively removes pornography from the domain of feminist debate and provides a solution which:

> Might be considered even more utopian than total abolition. There are no practical suggestions as to how women should stage this intervention in, or takeover of, a multi-billion dollar industry.[84]

Kappeler's own answer to the problem locates an important position. Women must enable a new dominant discourse, enable a new understanding of art and a society that does not have sex at its crux. She suggests that a feminist cultural practice would be one that

> Arises from a changed consciousness of what culture and its practices are [. . .] a practice in the interests of communication, not representation. It would be dialogic, multilogic, an end to pornologic.[85]

'Pornologic' expresses the idea that we live in a society which bases its imagery on sexual voyeurism rather than true discourse. A change in the structuring of this discourse demands a change of consciousness, the discovery of a new subject without an egocentric concern with its own need to dominate to survive, and Kappeler believes this subject already exists - Woman. Kappeler's solution is perhaps materially more practical than English's, but it is certainly grander in scale, and certainly would take as long to achieve. Her position is attractive because it demonstrates a unique faith in the power of communication to recreate society - an idea which is discussed later in this chapter in reference to New French Feminism.

She does not accept that pornography is the medium through which the status quo should be addressed - she simply permits that to be an appropriate position. New representations, therefore, can be seen to exist in any media.

The problem of representation and the existence of a problematic dialectic within which we are forced to conduct relationships both with members of the opposite sex and members of the same sex makes it possible for the anti-pornography lobby to link all negative images of women in society to pornography. The nature of the anti-pornographist's response to the restrictions placed on our self-expression because of this pornologic society is, according to those committed to anti-censorship, misguided. To answer one method of limiting our expression with another has untold consequences. Both the claims that a sacrifice is justifiable, and the consequences of enforcing a censorious attitude to pornography, need to be examined more critically.

For some, the supposed relationship between sexual violence and pornography makes any woman's defence of pornography incomprehensible. Indeed, were such a link proven, or even statistically likely, this position would be hard to controvert. In reality, however, research which demonstrates a causal link between pornography and violence against women is, either non-existent, badly researched, or even suggests the directly contradictory position that increased access to pornography reduces crime. Nadine Strossen, for example, suggested that any causal link is refuted by the fact that:

> Levels of violence and discrimination against women are often inversely related to the availability of sexually explicit materials,

including violent sexually explicit materials.[86]

Her basis for this statement is that following relaxation of pornography laws in Denmark in 1967 there was a decline in violent crime; and although the rape rate increased this most likely resulted from increased reporting due to liberalisation of attitudes. Furthermore the problem of finding evidence that the Home Office Research Committee came up against should not be ignored. Surveys relating to consumption of pornography and subsequent likelihood to offend have been conducted amongst populations of sexual offenders. Even if their criminal nature does not characterise them as having unusual psychological profiles, the very fact of their incarceration makes their willingness to find an exterior cause for their behaviour possible, if not probable. Any criticism of such 'evidence' must also take into account the lack of control subjects, excepting laboratory experiments using students. Despite the fact that the majority of the studies were undertaken by the anti-pornography lobby, the Home Office findings were that the evidence was either inconclusive or supportive of the 'no effect' argument.[87] Any attempt by a body to collect evidence relating to pornography consumption is further problematised by censorship itself - so-called hard core pornography does not enter the equation because of its presumed non-existence.

Nadine Strossen's seminal text *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights* points to the lack of evidence to suggest that the availability of pornography leads to violence against women.[88] Notably in the United States, where much of the research is carried out, she points out that:

> Availability and consumption of pornography, including violent pornography have been increasing throughout the United States.

> At the same time, though, the rates of sex crimes have been decreasing or remaining steady. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that between 1973 and 1987, the national rape rate remained steady and the attempted rape rate decreased.[89]

Furthermore, Strossen has suggested that the relationship between the socio-economic status of women and the rate of sexual crimes is more direct than that between such crime and pornography. Evidence relating to equal opportunities in the work place and availability of sexually explicit material seems to show that the more liberal a society is in its response to pornography, the more liberal its view on women in the work place, and the fewer instances there are of violence against women. Such evidence comes from state-by-state analyses in America and is further supported by the examples of Japan, Germany, and Denmark as liberal compared to Saudi Arabia, China, and Iran. Japan, in particular, produces and circulates sexually explicit material including themes of rape, bondage and violence, yet the reported rape rate there is 2.4 per 100 000 people compared with 34.5 in the United States.

A further misconception analysed by Strossen is the implication by anti-pornography lobbyists that if we are not exposed to pornography we are not exposed to violent and sexist imagery. She argues that pornography is not, in and of itself, designed primarily to support a culture of misogyny. The primary role of pornography is to incite lust and, consequentially, masturbation. The masturbatory value of pornography for women should not be underestimated; it "enhances women's ability to attain sexual pleasure on their own, as well as with men".[90] Thus, a form of desire which focuses on the visual and imaginative capacities of the human libido is never going to disappear - driven underground by censorship, its audience may be limited, but the demand would most certainly increase. The advent of the Internet and its use

for the circulation and consumption of pornography, serves to illustrate that it fills a gap in the exchange market. The gap pornography fills is defined by the nature of that market; and if the existence of such a market is not in question, censorship will only ever be a temporary measure.[91]

Censorship has long been the aim of right wing religious movements, and in joining with such groups, anti-pornography feminists have further endangered human rights at the expense of supposed gains in women's rights. As in the case of Radclyffe Hall in 1928, recent censorship of pornography has been used to attack homosexual, inter religious, inter cultural and inter racial pornography. In 1985 British Customs and Excise officials launched *Operation Tiger*, under the remit 'indecent articles', aimed at London bookshop *Gay's The Word* bringing one hundred criminal charges and seizing one hundred and forty two copies of imported titles including Sartre, Wilde and Genet. Although the case fell apart because it was out of synch with European law, the intention was there. Additional fears are that as anti-pornography feminists unite with moralists the issue of women's degradation becomes a secondary issue. Strossen warns of the dangers of these feminists allying themselves to causes which favour silence on all sexual issues; "traditional and feminist anti-pornography, anti-sex crusaders appeal to a broad gamut of the ideological spectrum in both the government and the public".[92] The dangers of this are manifest - sweeping fears about sexual expression in America have led to an AIDS clinic not sending out information about the spread of the disease, and a doctor being prosecuted in Oklahoma for displaying a safe-sex poster in his window.[93] Education about sex, or relating to forms of art which represent sex, has been curtailed in American

Universities.[94] A further consequence of the increasingly taboo nature of sex is an imbalance in the system of film classification. An example of this being the film *Starship Troopers* (1998)[95] which shows bodies being decapitated, dismembered and gutted by alien creatures, an extreme level of violence and aggression which apparently warranted a rating of merely 15; contrasted to *Boogie Nights,* (1998)[96] which had a small measure of sex and nudity, and was automatically rated 18. These issues are not unknown to anti-pornography feminists, but the reduction of any sexual act to a point at which the criminal might happen to 'get ideas' or 'masturbate over it' is seen as a significant enough abomination for us to see no price as too high. Once again, we must question any attempt to prompt legislation that nominally gives one minority rights at the expense of the rights of others.

This thesis is located within the realms of the anti-censorship debate in its appraisal of existing female pornographic discourses. Until now representations of sexuality have been the issue on which pornography debates centre, but this is misguided in that what pornography claims to represent is not sexuality but moments of, and symbols of, desire. The rich fantasy life of a culture, or even an individual, cannot be reproduced even in so many pornographic creations because of the three dimensionality of sexual experience. This may not remain true, of course, artificial reality offers as yet unexplored possibilities. At present, however, pornography, like other forms of graphos, only functions when it has an audience which is capable and willing to translate itself into an active (or supposedly, in the case of the censor, a passive) position within/alongside the text. Such material, on the whole, stereotypes our sexual desire. It is, by its nature, unable to create a new mythology of desire; its

role is to represent an already mystified symbol. Even a book like *Crash* is unable to create a new dialectic of technology-based desire. It is a blend of the technological and sexual in an orgy of sadism and necrophilia that examines the future of desire in a fashion not dissimilar to that of Sade. Ballard's text is filled with the blood and palpitating flesh that feeds the fears and desires of the Sadeian:

> I could imagine her sitting in the car of some middle-aged welfare officer, unaware of the conjunction formed by their own genitalia and the stylized instrument panel, a euclid of eroticism and fantasy that would be revealed for the first time within the car-crash, a fierce marriage pivoting on the fleshy points of her knees and pubis.[97]

Before we begin to inscribe female fantasies - if that is what we choose to do, we must first accept that any two-dimensional representation of sex is limited by its audience.

A two-dimensional, or stereotypical, fantasy is not by its nature degrading to women. The reduction of individuals to the appreciation of isolated moments of power-oriented sexual fantasies dis-empowers both the male and female recipient. The male is reduced, by implication, to his sexual desire and craving for dominance. However, as Marcia Pally points out, "being an object of sexual desire is demeaning if that is all one is".[98] No one in our society has experienced women only as objects of desire. It is degrading to suggest that pornography objectifies and attacks women for being sexual and therefore their only response must be to shrink away from acceptance of their own sexuality. To be involved in image-blaming is to accept not only that pornography leads to crime, but also that women involved in the production of pornography are being untrue to themselves. The possibilities for such fictions are limited by an anti-pornography line of argument because the suggestion will always

be that, by writing about sex, women position themselves in a discourse dominated by the male phantasmic. The veracity of this is taken up by all those women who attempt such writing, although the evidence of this thesis is that because all pornography places itself into a pornologic sociological framework the novelty of such writing is necessarily limited. This is not a reason to stop; it is something to understand, subvert and enrich. It is the reason to keep writing.

Female Fantasies present in Contemporary Media

Despite the responsibilities placed on women, or perhaps because of them, fantasy and desire for sex is every bit as present as in men. Recent studies suggest that the evidence does not support the superficial presumption that men have a greater desire for sex.[99] In particular Carole Pateman cites a study from 1990:

> [The study] asked male and female college students to record externally triggered fantasies as opposed to internally generated ones. The women had fewer than half the number of externally triggered fantasies than did men - about two versus 4.5 - but the frequency of their internally generated fantasies was nearly identical - 2.5 for women versus 2.7 for men. Since there are more external erotic cues for men in the media than there are for women, this finding could suggest a creative use of the female imagination.[100]

Culture nourishes the female sex drive in a less focused way than it nourishes the male. Despite this, some seek to deny its very existence. The suggestion that women have less desire to seduce, and receive sex, is based upon an ongoing experiment undertaken by society to make women 'responsible for' the consequences of sexual activity. This, in spite of the suggestion that romantic love plays a vastly more significant part in the lives of women than of men. The belief in the importance of love as a sexual stimulus for women has been reiterated,

especially, in an age where the success of sexual seduction is seen to be dependent upon appealing to the needs of femininity as Wolf recalls:

> We attribute a larger amount of narcissism to femininity, which also affects a woman's choice of object, so that to be loved is a stronger need for them than to love.[101]

Freud links a woman's relationship to sex with becoming a mother. This further places women in a role traditionally viewed as asexual, unerotic and emotionally centred. Thus, heterosexual women, especially as teenagers, are faced with an artificial contradiction constantly enforced by society. Naomi Wolf recalls her own experiences:

> Our difficulty in 'becoming women' was intensified by the way that babies and sexual pleasure were unnaturally presented as opposite ends of a spectrum marked 'sex'. The benefits of having control of our reproduction were obvious; but the compartmentalization that was demanded was damaging for us. It meant that we could not think of the two aspects of ourselves holistically.[102]

The advent of increasingly successful contraception, and laws permitting abortion, places the responsibility for not becoming a mother almost entirely on women. The desexualisation of the maternal figure is a consequence of patriarchy and science has removed responsibility for the result of motherhood from men. This has led to an increase in perceptions of sex as a commodity and, for men, it is women who must be seduced to possess it. Making censorship women's responsibility would further exacerbate behaviour prompted by such beliefs.

A frequently ignored element in the attempt to repress female sexual fantasy is, what Carole Pateman identifies as, *The Sexual Contract*.[103] She argues that the contractual nature of heterosexual relations depends upon a subject and object relationship. The

fluidity of these roles is severely limited in that the female role is normally that of object, possession. The effect of such external limitations on the female psyche is discussed by Lynne Segal:

> Twentieth-century sexology misleadingly assumes that sexuality is purely a physical matter that involves external stimuli that must lead to orgasmic results. On this view, sexology regards the human body like a desiring machine, with its erogenous zones aroused for the one climactic performance that exclusively defines success [. . . we await] a new 'gender order' in which we can 'fashion new concepts and practices of gender based upon the mutual recognition of similarities and differences between women and men, rather than upon notions of their opposition.' No doubt this as yet unrealized gender 'order' will come into view once our culture no longer believes that popular sexology holds out the promise of a better and more satisfying erotic life.[104]

The 'sexual contract' is one element of twentieth century Western society which needs to be re-evaluated as a part of the 'feminist project'. As long as the 'sexual contract' is partially reflected and reinforced by a marriage 'contract', determined by a patriarchal state, based upon principles of ownership, female eroticism is negatively affected. The existence of an economy which exchanges women enforces a sexual opposition in which women are not encouraged to explore aggressive sexuality.

Female sexuality has been affected by the legal formalisation of imbalance in sexual relations for centuries. Feminism has led to the implementation of gender neutral laws but ultimately the 'sexual contract' still depends upon the facts of biology, as Pateman indicates:

> When contract and the individual hold full sway under the flag of civil freedom, women are left with no alternative but to (try to) become replicas of men. In the victory of contract, the patriarchal construction of sexual difference as mastery and

> subjection remains intact but repressed. Only if the construction is intact can the 'individual' have meaning and offer the promise of freedom to both women and men so that they know to what they must aspire. Only if the construction is repressed can women have such an aspiration. Heterosexual relations do not inevitably take the form of mastery and subjection, but free relations are impossible within the patriarchal opposition between contract and status, masculinity and femininity.[105]

Formalised repression of female desire in the service of male satisfaction would seem an unlikely cause of female fantasising about sex and it is not the case. Fantasy relies for its charge on escapism - on its relation to 'reality'.

For women to add their fantasies to the arena provokes both excitement and confusion. The contribution of women to the pornographic discourse is an important step. What is needed is to unite women's artistic representations of sexuality and thus understand further the importance of the positioning of 'subject' and 'object' in both fantasy and pornography. This is a key in all our interpretations of the female position in the symbolic order. To achieve this I will compare the themes and approaches undertaken by the female writers in this thesis to establish the factors which govern the female sexual imaginary.

The use of fiction as a source to discuss female desire and the processes of communicating desire is not unprecedented.[106] The value of approaching fiction in this way is revealed clearly through analysis of self-aware female writers who recognise the importance of their opportunity to communicate their impressions of the world to other women. They are also able to provide texts which can function to educate women to think differently. Since Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of*

the Right's of Woman (1792), the importance to women of an education system which is not solely dependent on the values of the patriarchy has been clear. It lies within the province of the contemporary female writer to demonstrate ways in which traditional value systems, and their foundation in the dominant discourse, can be re-evaluated and re-expressed.

The need to escape control is a primary concern of the female writer. This control manifests itself in many ways, but most notably through the delineation of how we should act. This extends to descriptions of such acts, and the fantasies relating to them. The anti-pornography feminist takes as her first avenue of attack the allegation that such writers are anti-women, opposed to the objective of equality. If we once more examine the arguments of Nadine Strossen we can recognise such arguments as born of fear. A fear of accepting that pornography might actually be valuable to women:

> Many sexual materials defy traditional stereotypes of both women and pornography by depicting females as voluntarily, joyfully participating in sexual encounters on an equal basis.[107]

This provides a model for fantasies which are not based on oppression and bear some relation to how women experience sexual scenarios. Pornography also serves an educational purpose as the removal of sexually explicit material has been seen to result in increased rates of unwanted pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases.[108]

The goals of the fictional writers I included in my thesis in some way affect their choice of subjects and in particular their approach to pornography. There are a number of alternative sources from which we can gain information about women's

fantasies. One possible source is the work of Nancy Friday. Her collections represent attempts to listen to women's fantasies, to hear what women want from sexual interactions.[109] Indeed, faced with such a vibrant collection of liberated female voices, receptors of a non-judgemental request for their fantasies, it would be hard not to attempt to find meanings and common elements in their voices. Nancy Friday decided to write a book about female sexual fantasy at a time when the liberation of women's minds and bodies seemed to be unleashed. It was also a time when it was just occurring to men that they might achieve erotic charge from women's fantasies.[110] Despite the obvious rationale behind choosing such a topic at such an apparently historical moment, responses to Friday's ideas were mixed. The unavailability of any corroboration of, or information about, Friday's sources means that in a study such as this her work is inadmissable. It is however possible to see links between the fantasies she recorded in her work and those of female writers. A key theme in fiction and in Friday's work is the desire to escape from the situations they currently find themselves in.

Women who have less control than they might like over their own lives fantasise about sexual control. At the opposite end of the spectrum women who have been given power in their daily lives seek to relinquish control of their bodies.[111] A further impetus to relinquish control is the illusion that only in full acceptance of the object position can a woman find her identity. This particularly seductive motivation is an illusion; objectification is not the way to an empowered subjectivity. Concurrent with male extremes women too identify with the sadist and the masochist in their fantasy life. When we examine the world of the male sadist we identify an

aggressor seeking revenge against women. When we gaze into the inner world of the female fantasist we should consider the particular nature of the revenge she is seeking. Is the fantasy simply about exchanging her position for one of control? Is it about searching for a situation in which the lead can belong to the woman? Is it an opportunity to become the voyeur, thus creating a space for the female gaze? Is the motive simply fetishistic? Is the fantasy about revenge for centuries of oppression? Or are the women merely responding to the male masochist's desire for a top?

Unfortunately female fantasy is not usually discussed in such a way. The moralistic attacks of anti-pornography feminists on male fantasists/pornographers who objectify and abuse women in their fantasy lives restricts and brings into question the writings of women who find pleasure in a 'dark side'. Naomi Wolf, turns this argument on its head and argues, correctly, that it is exactly these women who must be acknowledged:

> If we suppress the truth that sometimes women do have choices and consciously choose to do wrong, then we have fallen short of what should be our fundamentalist feminist goal: laying claim to our humanity, all of it, not just the scenic parts. We must dare to assume full responsibility as well as ask for full rights, because human status brings with it the ineradicable moral weight of making choices - including the most wicked ones. Feminism should not mean being a saint. It should mean owning one's own demonic, angelic soul.[112]

It is laudable that women seek new ways to wield power, and produce pornographies that do not rely on oppression to the extent that male fantasies do. We are faced, however, with questions about the truth of such assumptions and, if they are true, there is a necessity to examine why this is the case.

Power is an issue in human relations even before sexual relationships are considered. The first consideration takes place from the position of onlooker. The voyeur, the one who seeks prey, the thrill of the chase - represents the observer at a point of remove from the object of desire. Since the 1970s, women have been placing themselves in the position of onlooker even taking the initiative in making first contact. The voyeur is traditionally male; collectively men watch women, and women, from a young age, expect to be watched. Modern culture perpetuates voyeurism. Male and female alike luxuriate in visual imagery, film, video, television, computers, magazines and billboards. Visual representations surround us and much of this representation is of idealised femininity. 'Feminine beauty' is the obsession of this 'post-feminist' age as Wolf's *Beauty Myth* reminds us:

> Consumer culture is best supported by markets made up of sexual clones, men who want objects and women who want to be objects.[113]

The process of seduction, for men, is almost always close to fully complete before they enter the scene. It is apparently enough to be successful at being desired; sexual quality, appropriacy and fulfillment is not so important as being seduced. Women, as are men, are encouraged to admire thinner, younger, more beautiful images of the female form. The image in the mirror is more important than the person reflected. Wolf argues that the evaluating of the image of a woman in her own eyes is prescribed from birth:

> A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping. From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually.[114]

One of Angela Carter's heroines in the title story to the collection '*The Bloody*

Chamber' realises that the image of herself in the eyes of men is the most potent:

> I caught sight of myself in the mirror. And I saw myself, suddenly, as he saw me, my pale face, the way the muscles in my neck stuck out like thin wire. I saw how much that cruel necklace became me.[115]

The image of masculine perfection is not as prevalent as that of the feminine. It is little wonder that women are less vocal as voyeurs of the masculine than they are of the feminine. As in the extract, the adornment of the object of desire is as important as its representation as attainable. The fashion industry has clothed women in such a way as to emphasise fragility and vulnerability, cause discomfort and lack practicality. Female display, specifically in pornography, but also in the mass media, is in lingerie. Whilst women recognise a given 'costume' as worn by women it is the costume itself which carries erotic charge. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand why the female fantasist would enjoy the appearance of a man dressed in lingerie.

The limited availability of sexual images of men for the woman voyeur affects the content of her fantasies.[116] Individual women fantasise about and look at different things. However, it is only the last decade which has specified what we should be looking for. Women look at sex as a physical proposition and looking adds material to speculations about potential satisfaction. It is, in some ways, unfortunate that the female voyeur is becoming as 'directed' as the male voyeur. For women today, pornography and the possibilities of 'male sex objects' are exciting. In *Fire with Fire*, Wolf recalls:

> We looked, we chose, we fantasized, we pursued and were pursued, we told story after story about our conquests. Sex with beautiful men, exotic men, new men, taboo men, was the glittering prize. It was a ritual for which we applauded and adorned one another as we set out for the night.[117]

While such 'objectification' is exciting, it is questionable whether or not it is politically correct. Female power has long been compromised by objectification of women and feminists have castigated men for this, claiming it demonstrates a lack of respect for the humanity of women. Women must be careful not to make the mistake of accepting patriarchal messages that equate objectification and 'sexy'. Pornographic magazines for women and male strippers may be the female alternative but they generally amuse rather than excite.[118] After all, as Elizabeth Cowie remarks:

> Sexual arousal is a matter not of nature, but of signification. What arouses is already a highly coded entity. Sexual arousal is not merely a bodily affair but first and foremost a psychical relation.[119]

Whilst the female body has been signified in such a way that representation is analogous to seduction, the male body is not yet encoded to such an extent. Women have been denied the power to inscribe sexuality according to a phallocratic model.

The inscription of the male according to a non-phallocratic model is the goal of Angela Carter, Kathy Acker, Jeanette Winterson and Pat Califia. Women experience their desire fragmentarily, either as it is reflected back at them by the affirming phallus or, as subjects lacking identity. Tradition has successfully relied upon the frequent identification of the penis with the phallus and woman as 'speculum' or 'vessel'.[120] This mode of representation leads to a disempowerment of women and upholds the exchange of woman as commodity. It is unlikely that partial objectification of the male body and eroticisation of it as distinct from alliance with

the phallus will result in a similar disempowerment of men. It is within literature that we find an example of alternative systems of representation, not within society. Women can become more powerful when the masculine signifier 'penis' becomes more fragile than female 'lack'. The power of the female body and the symbolic exchange of feminine for masculine is explored vividly in Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*:

> "Myth is more instructive than history, Evelyn; Mother proposes to reactivate the pathenogenesis archetype, utilising a new formula. She's going to castrate you, Evelyn, and then evacuate what we call the 'female fructifying space' inside you and make you a perfect specimen of womanhood."[121]

The character of Evelyn pre-figures women who find it difficult to see themselves with female, rather than male, eyes and yet know that femaleness is the site of a unique power.

Empowerment is dependent on claiming one's own fantasies and recognising the nature of their relationship to reality. Accepting also that whilst the role of women in male fantasy is attractive, it is not the only role available for the female fantasist to adopt. Seduction is a process affirmed for women by romance novels. Erotic inscription of the male body into the symbolic is 'in process', and it is up to female writers/artists to ensure that desirability is not objectification. The process of eroticising the male should be based on positive rather than negative models as Diane Elam suggests:

> Theoretical knowledge about sexual desire proves as erotic, if not more erotic, than the supposedly actual sexuality that is the object of knowledge [. . .] sexual activity is pre-eminently fictional, in that pleasure is produced from the interplay of desire and fantasy, in a way that renders the fictions of the sex trade indistinguishable from those of the psychiatric

theorist.[122]

Therefore, the fiction of female sexual power, as related to the psychology of female power, is best maintained by the evolution of female sexual fantasy. Furthermore, it is important that sexual power is primarily about self-knowledge and not about objectification of one's partner. When women objectify men to attain their own subjectivity they generally recognise this to be a temporary circumstance. The exchange of one position for another is conscious, and this results in empowered subjectivity and empowered objectivity. Power to accept and luxuriate in one's own sexuality is a human right which has been denied to women for so long that the process of self-exploration will be a lengthy one.

The symbolic order is also dependent on the maintenance of specific fantasies, patriarchal ones. The symbolic order seeks the suppression of female fantasy. Masculine attitudes towards female fantasy are frequently negative because the exploration of fantasy can be employed in the search for subjectivity. The status quo was maintained whilst women's fantasies remained repressed and discussion of the potential rewards of, and motivations for, fantasy were not considered. The first stage for women, in a renegotiation of the symbolic, is therefore to vocalise fantasies. The first step is the recognition that one's objective status is seductive and represents power. The second step is to fantasise as a subject, as a subject who in turn is subjected to the rule of law, which depends on there being an object to achieve subject status. Foucault outlines this relationship:

> Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. Should it be said that one is always "inside" power, there is no "escaping" it, there is no

> absolute outside where it is concerned, because one is subject to the law [of the dominant discourse] in any case?[123]

Despite the problems of maintaining an empowered subject position it is a crucial step for women, in the renegotiation of the dominant discourse, to move outside of objectivity and into a form of subjectivity. French feminism encourages awareness and re-creation of woman as subject in the process of the destruction of a dominant discourse which relies on binary oppositions. The final step, undertaken in fiction, is to shift fluidly from the position of subject to object, and back, with no sense of the implied positive and negative connotations of either term. The process of knowing oneself through sexual fantasy as empowered or not empowered represents a threat to the symbolic order.

For women to embrace their fantasies, however, they first have to relinquish guilt. Even if women are objectified any process which eliminates guilt can free the imagination - anonymity is a good example of one such process.[124] Phallocentric pornography frequently relies on the removal of personality and/or identity from the woman. She is anonymous; a cunt. Consequently the fantasy is a purely physical one whereby neither of the individuals can identify themselves. For women, fantasising about anonymity is a way of displacing their own passivity. This anonymity is mirrored in the pornographic sexual encounter because it implies lack of responsibility and reduces people to their sexual parts. Pat Califia, in her short story, '*The Surprise Party*' creates a scenario which depends on the anonymity of the policemen who have been arranged for a birthday surprise.[125] In this tale the anonymity and the 'surprise' nature of the event reduce the guilt of the lesbian protagonist in her delight in a violent heterosexual encounter. The nature of fantasy

is that it permits women to imagine things they would not necessarily wish to do.

In this way, anonymity is just one of many themes which pervade female sexual fantasies. Once guilt is relinquished the process of positioning oneself as subject is the next stage. This process has a long tradition in phallocentric pornography and invariably depends upon the objectification of someone/something else. This objectification takes many forms if one accepts the evidence of fiction.[126] The relationship that 'woman as subject' seeks to cultivate with an 'object' may frequently be disturbing when identified alongside the dominant discourse, but, by virtue of its dominance, women are subjects who more frequently have a position in society as object.

During the course of the twentieth century literature has increasingly been a key medium for addressing the dominant discourse. For feminists this process is seen to begin with the works of Virginia Woolf and Radclyffe Hall. Radclyffe Hall is a particularly relevant case in that her work was censored as obscene in an act characteristic of the censor using his/her power to persecute minority opinions.

End Notes

1. From Adrienne Rich, The Fact of a Doorframe, in Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose: Poems, Prose, Reviews and Criticism, ed. by Barbara Charlesworth and Albert Gelpi, (London: Norton, 1993), p.62.
2. An oft cited quotation makes this point well "what turns me on is erotica, what turns you on is pornography." Here taken from Nadine Strossen, Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights (London: Abacus, 1995), p.18.
3. Andrea Dworkin, Pornography: Men Possessing Women (London: The Women's Press, 1994), p.check.
4. In this case 'misuse' refers to the use of such material to perpetuate the subordination of women.
5. This 'naming' refers to the setting up of binary oppositions through language to limit and control women. See especially Hélène Cixous, Sorties, trans. by Ann Liddle, in New French Feminisms, ed. by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1981), pp.90-98.
6. Strossen, p.199.
7. See Strossen, pp.174-178.
8. Naomi Wolf, Promiscuities: A Secret History of Female Desire (London: Vintage, 1998), p.153.
9. In contemporary society responsibility for contraception is predominantly placed on women.
10. Naomi Wolf, Promiscuities, p.169.
11. See Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (London: Penguin, 1992).
12. Naomi Wolf, Promiscuities, pp.239-240.
13. Germaine Greer, The Female Eunuch (London: Flamingo, 1993), p.193.
14. Naomi Wolf, Fire with Fire, p.199.
15. Grosz, p.38.
16. Elizabeth Grosz, Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.xi.
17. Anais Nin - Delta of Venus (London: Penguin, 1990), p.30.
18. See the gender blurring of Eve(lyn) and Tristessa, in Angela Carter, The Passion of New Eve (London: Virago, 1992).
19. Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1992), p.137.
20. Kathy Acker, In Memoriam to Identity (London: Flamingo, 1993), p.155.
21. Carole Pateman, The Sexual Contract (London: Polity Press, 1988), p.224.
22. Naomi Wolf, Fire with Fire, p.335.
23. Susanne Kappeler, The Pornography of Representation, (London: Polity Press, 1986), p.219.
24. Sara Mills, Discourse (London: Routledge, 1997), p.15.
25. Mills, p.102.
26. Mills, p.103.
27. Michel Foucault, The Order of Discourse, quoted in Mills, p.43.
28. Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction, trans. by Hurley, Robert (New York: Penguin, 1990), p.83.

29. See 'Anti-pornography debate' for a more detailed examination of stereotypes.
30. Dorothy Smith, Texts, Facts and Femininity: Exploring the relations of Ruling (London: Routledge, 1990), p.163.
31. Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (London: Routledge, 1992), p.65.
32. The term 'imaginary' refers here to the desires of the imagination, with a suggestion that the imagination is controlled sub-consciously.
33. Reference to Jane Gallop, in Sue Vice, Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reader (London: Polity Press, 1996), pp.117-118.
34. See Jacques Lacan, The Meaning of the Phallus, trans. by, Jacqueline Rose in Vice, pp.120-129.
35. Deborah Cameron, The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader (London: Routledge, 1991), p.1.
36. Margaret Reynolds, Erotica: An Anthology of Women's Writing, (London: Pandora, 1990), p.xxvi.
37. After this experience Luce Irigaray described herself as having been "put into quarantine" by the psychoanalytical establishment. For details see, Women Writers Talking, ed. by Janet Todd (London: Holmes & Meier, 1983) p.224.
38. Margaret Whitford, Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine (London: Routledge, 1983).
39. Luce Irigaray, Demystifications, trans. by Claudia Reeder, in Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, pp.99-106 (p.101).
40. Deborah Cameron, The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader (London: Routledge, 1991), p.80.
41. Luce Irigaray, Je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference, trans. by Alison Martin (London: Routledge, 1993),
42. Sue Vice, Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reader (London: Polity Press, 1996), p.116.
43. For examples see the analysis of the masculine as always dominant in syntax, and of neuter and impersonal as expressed by either the same pronoun ,or in the same form, as the masculine in Luce Irigaray, Je, tu, nous, pp.30-31.
44. Luce Irigaray, Je, tu, nous, p.32.
45. Luce Irigaray, Je, tu, nous, p.35.
46. Luce Irigaray, Je, tu, nous, pp.47-50.
47. Luce Irigaray, Je, tu, nous, p.48.
48. Luce Irigaray, Je, tu, nous, p.49-50.
49. Angela Carter deals not only with relationships between mother and daughter, but also places human values on her characters, manipulates mirrors, and moves into the realm of a new form of science fiction. Kathy Acker focuses predominantly on human values and the circulation of thought from the interior to the exterior and back. Jeanette Winterson's work incorporates all of the criteria mentioned. Pat Califia focuses especially on the mirror phenomenon and interior and exterior space. For more precise details see chapters three and four.
50. Hélène Cixous, The Laugh of the Medusa, trans. by Keith and Paula Cohen, in Marks, pp.245-264 (pp.247-248).
51. Cixous, pp.245-264 (p.246).
52. Cixous uses the mythical figure of the Medusa to make this point: "*You only*

have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing." Cixous, pp.245-264 (p.255).

53. Hélène Cixous, Sorties, trans. by Ann Liddle, in Marks, pp.90-98 (p.91).
54. The Hélène Cixous Reader, ed. by Susan Sellers (London: Routledge, 1994), p.60.
55. Sellers, p.64
56. Sellers, p.132.
57. Sellers, p.135.
58. Sellers, p.136.
59. Andrea Nye, The Voice of the Serpent, in Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall, Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.323-338 (p.335).
60. In Harm's Way: The Pornography Civil Rights Hearings, ed. by, Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin (London: Harvard University Press, 1998).
61. Dworkin, p.13
62. Dworkin, p.15.
63. Dworkin.
64. Dworkin, p.17.
65. Dworkin, p.18.
66. Susan Brownmiller quoted in, Alison M Jaggar, Feminist Politics and Human Nature (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1983), p.90.
67. Griffin, p.205.
68. Griffin, p.253.
69. Dworkin, p.24
70. Mary Daly, Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy (London: The Women's Press, 1984), p.2. Daly explains the title to her work because she is very aware of the fluidity of the language used to discuss the sexual.
71. Naomi Wolf, Fire with Fire (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993).
72. Daly, p.153.
73. Marquis De Sade, The Misfortunes of Virtue and Other Early Tales (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.37.
74. Susan Griffin, Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge against Nature (New York: The Women's Press, 1981), p.15.
75. Naomi Wolf, Promiscuities (London: Vintage, 1997), p.224.
76. Dworkin, pp.22-23.
77. Dworkin, p.23.
78. Naomi Wolf, The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are used Against
79. Judith Butler, Bodies that Matter: On the discursive limits of sex (London: Routledge, 1993), p.139.
    Women (London: Vintage, 1990), p.163.
80. Roland Barthes, Mythologies, p.171.
81. Betty Friedan, Feminism, quoted in Strossen, p.265.
82. Judith Kegan Gardiner, quoted in Strossen, p.165.
83. Deidre English, The Politics of Porn: Can Feminists walk the line?, in *Mother Jones* (April 1980), p.22.
84. Kappeler, p.43.
85. Kappeler, p.222.
86. Strossen, p.254.

87. Home Office Report, 1991.
88. In many ways Nadine Strossen's *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights* is the basis of the debate which opposes Andrea Dworkin's *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, making Strossen her counterpart and an important figure in my debate.
89. Strossen, p.254.
90. Strossen, p.166.
91. According to the findings of the 1971 *Technical Report of the U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*, when such material is finally obtained, because of its increased desirability, the audience is more receptive to it: "*Social scientific studies that were included in the report of the 1970 President's Commisson on Obscenity and Pornography suggested that censorship of sexually explicit materials may increase their desirability and impact*". Strossen, p.263.
92. Strossen, p.20.
93. Strossen.
94. Strossen, pp.26-29.
95. Starship Troopers, 1998.
96. Boogie Nights, 1998.
97. J.G. Ballard, Crash (London: Vintage, 1995), p.99.
98. Marcia Pally, Good Girls and Bad Girls, in *Index on Censorship, 1/1993*, pp.5-7 (p.6).
99. Pateman, pp.169-171.
100. Pateman, p.170.
101. Sigmund Freud, New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, 2 vols. (London: Penguin, 1991), II, p.166.
102. Naomi Wolf, Promiscuities, pp.196-197.
103. For a detailed analysis see, Carole Pateman, The Sexual Contract (London: Polity Press, 1988).
104. Lynne Segal, Straight Sex: The Politics of Pleasure, quoted in Bristow, pp.55-56.
105. Pateman, pp.187-188.
106. There a numerous writers who search for evidence of the imagination through fiction.
107. Strossen, p.162.
108. Nadine Strossen quotes a number of writers who support the validity of this argument suggesting that pornography, especially pornography produced by women, can have liberating effects on women. Strossen quotes Kathleen Sullivan on this subject, "[if] social convention, backed by religion and law, confines sexuality to the heterosexual and the monogamous, marital, familial, and reproductive, then the ambisexual, promiscuous, adulterous, selfish, and gratification-centered world of pornography is a charter of sexual revolution that is potentially liberating rather than confining for women." (p.174) Pornography and feminism share an insistence that women are sexual beings, that female sexuality should be a subject of debate. Also in Strossen, Ann Snitow: "Pornography sometimes includes elements of play, as if the fear women feel toward men had evaporated and women were relaxed and willing at last." (p.175) and in reflection of the equalising force of feminism and

pornography she writes; "It is a fantasy of an extreme state in which all social constraints are overwhelmed by a flood of sexual energy [. . .] Class, age, custom - all are deliciously sacrificed, dissolved by sex." (p.176) The threat to freedom of speech from censorship of such material is great, "just as *suppressing* sexual speech plays an important part in *maintaining* the political, social, and economic status quo, conversely, *protecting* sexual speech plays an essential role in *challenging* the status quo." (p.178) This is not to argue that the pornographer's purpose is to promote free speech and female sexuality. It is, however, a crucial concern of the female pornographer.

109. The main texts to consider would be *My Secret Garden: Women's Sexual Fantasies* (London: Quartet Books Ltd, 1990) and *Women on Top* (London: Arrow, 1992). Nancy Friday's work is especially interesting in that she discovered a difference in the fantasies of women over the period 1973 to 1991 and included fantasies expressed in the fiction I discuss over the same period.
110. The 1980s was a time when the liberation of women's minds and bodies seemed to be unleashed. It was also a time when it was just occurring to men that they might achieve erotic charge from women's fantasies. Men suggested that fantasies were for the frustrated, the celibate, the "frustrated neurotic", certainly not for "the ordinary sexually satisfied woman". Women were reluctant to admit they had fantasies let alone to share them with others.
111. This information comes from the letters written to Nancy Friday, collected in *My Secret Garden* (1973) and *Women on Top* (1991). See Endnote 109.
112. Naomi Wolf, Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change The 21st Century (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), p.246.
113. Naomi Wolf, The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are used Against Women (London: Vintage, 1991), p.144.
114. John Berger, Ways of Seeing (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972), p.46.
115. Angela Carter, The Bloody Chamber, in Burning your Boats: Collected Short Stories, pp.111-143 (p.115).
116. See endnote 97 for details.
117. Naomi Wolf, Fire with Fire, p. 241.
118. In Britain visual pornographic material for women must not show an erect penis.
119. Cowie, p.135.
120. See p.47.
121. Angela Carter, The Passion of New Eve, (London: Virago, 1992) p.68.
122. Diane Elam, Feminism and the Postmodern: Theory's Romance, in The Feminist Reader, ed. by Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), pp.182-200 (pp.182-183).
123. Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction (London: Penguin, 1990), p.95.
124. See, Acker, Kathy Goes to Haiti for further examples.
125. Pat Califia, Macho Sluts (Boston: Alyson Publications Inc, 1988), pp.211-242.
126. Fantasies outlined include those about young boys, black men, animals and

fetishism. They all rely on objectification in a similar way to male fantasies. Some focus on the legendary importance of a large penis and suggest a desire for greater, more complete, deeper, longer sex. Usually the woman is 'subject', deserving of endless pleasure without having to explain herself to a reluctant lover. Fetishism is particularly interesting because it does not rely on objectification of an individual and the act of desire' becomes an end in itself. References to these fantasies can be found in Nancy Friday's *My Secret Garden* and the fiction of Angela Carter, Kathy Acker, Jeanette Winterson and Pat Califia.

Chapter Two

A Case Study To Demonstrate Censorship In Action: The Problems And Solutions Highlighted By Radclyffe Hall, Specifically In Relation To *The Well Of Loneliness*

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all. (Wilde, 1891)[1]

In this chapter I intend to examine some of the concerns of a censorious nation when faced with a text that expresses ways of being sexually aware which are non-conformist. In this particular instance the non-conformity is lesbianism, something particularly feared by those who sought, and seek, sexual morality in abstinence or in heterosexuality - a heterosexuality preferably sanctified in the eyes of God by marriage. Heterosexism was an in-built component of the obscenity law; the definition of obscenity as it applied to the 1928 Courts was the same as that which had led to the censorship of *Psychology of Sex* on the grounds that it in some way justified homosexuality. Lord Justice Cockburn, cited at the appeal to sessions made by Hall on behalf of her book, suggested the following test;

> Whether the tendency of the matter charged with obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and in whose hands publications of this sort may fall.[2]

The Well of Loneliness (1928) caused particular consternation in this climate, as Hall united the theories of sexologists Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis with religion to posit the idea that God created 'inverts'.

The writing of Radclyffe Hall's most controversial novel was considered on several levels by its author; she asked her lover Una Troubridge about the wisdom and permissibility of writing about the subject of inversion; she selected a specific medical and psychological profile as a basis from which to create the work; and, most controversially, she elected to write a work which would bring into contrast her Roman Catholic beliefs and her sexuality. Her motives had nothing to do with shock tactics, nor did she intend to convert readers to lesbianism. Accusations have been levelled at her since publication, ranging in diversity from immoral and sexually explicit stimulator of perverse desires, to John Fletcher's description of her work as a "self-lacerating and deeply conservative vision of lesbian *aimes damnées*."[3] Despite this there is little doubt that Hall's novel was a radical step forward in the promotion of a lesbian consciousness. Although the contemporary lesbian feminist can find much that is negative in her portrayal of the invert she was ahead of her time. Knopp writes:

> Modern readers generally regard Stephen as an extreme stereotype [but] Hall did not miscalculate the extent to which early twentieth century lesbians, including the heroine of *Orlando* perceived themselves in ways similarly dictated by the scientific theories of the day.[4]

She in some way succeeded in authenticating the unorthodox by presenting psychological profiles from the dominant discourse in her novel. Stephen Gordon is very much a product of a particular upbringing; she is a stereotyped invert who spends her life regretting her sex because of her sexuality.

The obscenity revealed by Hall's book is the obscenity of society's prejudice, not that of sexual perversion. She represents a society which was accepting of female

friendship as long as it conformed to the notion of companionship. The pre-twentieth century sense of the innocence of female friendship is outlined by Janet Todd:

> Female friendship was a fascinating and inspiring theme in the eighteenth century. It was an historical phenomenon, fed by and feeding into fiction, expressing itself sometimes in companionable lives.[5]

It was a phenomenon devoid of sexual components. Female erotic friendship remained throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century in the domain of the male voyeur and the silent woman. Both Stephen's mother and the prosecutor at the trial of the book are mouthpieces for the mainstream of society which resists change and prefers blissful ignorance to recognition of changing situations. The condemnation of Stephen's relationship with Angela distresses her mother because she is ashamed of a love which does not fall within her own understanding of what love is:

> You have presumed to use the word love in connection with this - with these lusts of your body; these unnatural cravings of your unbalanced mind and undisciplined body - you have used that word.[6]

Like Stephen, Hall and the women for whom she speaks, refuse to accept that the feelings they have warrant the guilt that those like Lady Anna Gordon expect them to feel. *The Well of Loneliness* is disturbing because it disrupts the boundaries of sex distinction, a denotation which most of society had no need to see challenged.

It is this rigidity that Hall found unacceptable and alienating. Heterosexist assumptions had permeated earlier fiction, limiting the potential impact of the woman writer's novel. Whether 'Jane Eyre's childhood relationship with Helen, for example, bordered on the romantic has not been explored because there was no need. The reader was always asked to interpret male/female relationships as romance, and

female/female relationships as either friendly or antagonistic. Women competed as sexual rivals for the moment of pleasurable union with the hero, the woman was not expected to 'be' the hero. Virginia Woolf mocks the established canon on this point in her ground breaking essay, *A Room of One's Own* (1929):

> The very next words I read were these - 'Chloe liked Olivia . . . ' Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes happen. Sometimes women do like women.[7]

Not only do women like women, sometimes they love one another, and that is the message that Hall tries to express clearly to an audience which she feels is capable of absorbing it. The enjoyment of one's own sexuality had been brought into question by censors, but Hall with her scientific interpretations of sexuality expressed her view that her capacity to be a lover of women was bestowed by God.

Readers of *The Well of Loneliness* have, in the light of later literature, become concerned about why a practising, independent, wealthy lesbian felt the need to portray lesbian sex as a negative catalogue of sacrifice and discontent. This is one area where the liberal feminist brings into question the precise nature of Hall's responsibility. Rebecca O'Rourke has given an insight into one aspect of Hall's motivation:

> Her cause could better plead from an appeal based on the suffering of homosexuals rather than from an account of their pleasures.[8]

It is the innocence and sensitivity of Stephen Gordon and Joan Ogden which draws the audience into a complicit critique of their tragedies. Stephen's nobility and 'heroic' attitude to life and loves creates one of the most eligible romantic subjects in fiction. The thematic and chronological layout of the novel are perhaps not redolent

of the modernist era in which Hall was writing, but the style gains value from the weighty heterosexual romance tradition to which it refers. The work reverberates with challenges, but most of all the poignant desire of the hero(ine) for acceptance touches those who were eagerly awaiting the dawn of an era of openness and media information, rather than dis-information. The book is a clear directive to the consumer of the late 1920s - and the use of the romance tradition adds credence to the suggestion that there have always been people like Stephen, and God made them so.

The different perspectives of Hall's critics have provided diverse sources of information, both with regard to her, and with regard to her work. Although not a 'one book author' Hall has frequently been analysed solely in terms of *The Well of Loneliness*. Much of the material available focuses on her censored novel; demonstrating how effectively censorship works as propaganda in the market place. Hall was established as a relatively well-known writer when she wrote *The Well of Loneliness*; both *The Unlit Lamp* (1924) and *Adam's Breed* (1926) had proved popular.[9] Claudia Stillman Franks' book *Beyond the Well of Loneliness: The Fiction of Radclyffe Hall* is one of the few places where an analysis of Hall's other fiction is presented as a useful study.[10] It is misleading to examine Hall's attitude to lesbianism from a critique of *The Well of Loneliness* alone. In this chapter I will concentrate on that book, but in an assessment of her motives for self-censorship I will look at *The Unlit Lamp* and some of her poetry. It is also necessary to discount at this point the frequently repeated claim, which originated with Lovat Dickson, that *The Well of Loneliness* is a thinly disguised autobiography. The book is a polemic; a

romantic tragedy written to illuminate a situation that coincided only in subject with Hall's own experience. The fictional nature has been questioned because she sets her book in real places, and this occasionally leads to inclusion of characters linked to real people. For example, Natalie Barney is included as Valerie Seymour; this was something Hall simply did in passing. Her primary concern was to represent the difficulties of homosexuals. Any examination of Hall's characters finds them to be lacking in dimension, they are stereotypes in the service of the narrative, it is unrealistic to assume that Hall identified directly with any of them.

The studies of Hall's life and intentions in writing began with a biography written by her lover Lady Una Troubridge after her death, and were followed by a more complete biography by Lovat Dickson. Although there is a tendency to accept his reporting of events, because he had complete access to Hall's estate after Una died, his attitude towards his subject is condescending, voyeuristic and often sensationalist. Where he veers into opinion his work becomes a problematic source; he was clearly fascinated by the parts of Hall and Troubridge's relationship that Una omits in her biography. Dickson claims the existence of autobiographical elements in her work simply because her subject is homosexuality.[11] He is judgmental of her appearance, and frequently describes her actions and demeanour as if they were extensions of her particular 'handicap'. Although I have relied on him for facts and sequence of events regarding the trial, it is not possible to consider him as a valid source of literary analysis, or to assume that he had any insight into Hall's personality and intentions. As an example of the audience whom Hall was approaching with the novel he is interesting. He represents the beginning of

acceptance; he has awoken from ignorance and moved through curiosity to partially informed judgement. All studies of *The Well of Loneliness* are informed by specific agendas - all groups drawn into the shadow of the book because it was, for a time, the focal point of public scandal. My intention is to look at the purpose, effect, and necessary implications of associating a book with the controversy it created. Because the book was tried as obscene and perceived as damaging to the value systems of a dominant discourse it is an important piece of evidence in an analysis of censorship and pornography. As a work written by a woman who chose subject matter which identified her with the outcast of society, the tone is an interesting example of how self-censorship effects the message of such a work. Hall tried to create a new discourse which would inform those who chose to live their lives within or outside of its influence. Hennegan writes:

> The lurid and extensive publicity which surrounded the trial focused the British public's attention upon lesbianism to a degree unknown before or since. Many people learnt for the first time that sexual relations between women were possible.[12]

Self-censorship: Examples of other works of literature by Radclyffe Hall

As I have previously mentioned Radclyffe Hall's own life and experiences as a lesbian were somewhat different from those of Stephen Gordon. She lived the most part of her adult life with women to whom she was devoted; contrary to the interpretation of Dickson Lovat, *The Well of Loneliness* is far from autobiographical. Although Hall never identified with any specific literary group, she spent her time on the periphery of the Paris set, and received support from the Bloomsbury group during the *The Well of Loneliness* Court case. She did not deal in stylistic experimentation, preferring the medium of the realist text. Criticised for her lack of

literary mastery by those such as Woolf, she did have a very distinct style. *The Well of Loneliness* was Hall's most high profile work, certainly her most overtly lesbian piece of writing. It was not the only one to engage with that theme. She had written *The Unlit Lamp* in 1924 and some of the poems in *A Sheaf Of Verses* (1908) have a clearly lesbian content. The poems in *A Sheaf of Verses* were written during the height of her affair with Mabel Batten (Ladye), and the sense of union and pleasure in her love is apparent when one reads works such as *An Ode to Sappho.*[13] Yet *The Well of Loneliness* with its high profile was to become the text with which a reading public identified Hall, and defined her opinions and ideas. In this section I will examine precisely how Hall's book was formulated within the confines of the self-censoring author. Her specific intention is to address issues that concerned and influenced the lesbian of the 1920s. She takes a scientific viewpoint and engages with culture, challenging perceptions of religious stringency, fear of the alternative, and requesting a legitimising response from her heterosexual audience. Her hero(ine) will find a voice in art and it was Hall's concern to do so herself.

Heterosexist, phallocentric assumptions abounded at the turn of the century, Freudians represented women as incomplete males, frustrated by awareness of the significance of that lack. All women are martyrs to the insult that made them women, and the analyst's job is to help the individual woman make an adequate transition into adulthood; to reach the understanding that she is healthy only when she knows "deep down in her heart that all existence is comprised in man's love of her".[14] Thus, all love between women is an immature auto-erotic fixation in which woman finds narcissistic pleasure in kissing her mirror image. Alternatively,

lesbianism is a fixing of the unfortunate woman in the pre-Oedipal stage; she is condemned to live out the mother/baby relationship in her sexual life. This may be arousing to the male voyeur, but it is essentially dangerous and threatening to male domination. Lesbianism represents a move away from the comprehensible land of heterosexuality, a trespass against the dominant discourse. Hall highlights the guilt of the homosexual, a theme explored in her poem *A Twighlight Fantasy*:

> So give me the tips of your finger
> Not your hand, lest I break the spell
> Of the moment with too much passion,
> And lose what I love so well.[15]

To hold oneself up to unnatural passions is to threaten love. Stephen and Mary pay the price, and are made unhappy by their choice.

Hall knew the price a heterosexual audience would like to see paid, and she exacted it. The novelist E.F. Benson wrote of *The Well of Loneliness*:

> It is one of the saddest books in the world, painting as it does in the most convincing colours the misery and loneliness [. . .] The book is its own antidote [. . .] it is hard to imagine a stronger deterrent.[16]

Hall writes for her chosen audience, and that is where we can locate the imperative direction of self-censorship. In response to a heterosexist Freudian dialect she produces a vivid account of the prejudices of society and the effect they have on the individual, and by implication on the writer. Her writing is never charged by eroticism; its force lies in satire. A further problem critics of the novel have created for themselves is to view it as a novel for lesbians. There is no doubt that Hall was aware of a lesbian audience, but as O'Rourke points out,

> The implied preferred reader of *The Well of Loneliness* is heterosexual. It is a book written to explain lesbianism: to

generate sympathy, tolerance, and understanding.[17]

It is also a book written to highlight the futility of condemning homosexuality.

In contrast to *The Well of Loneliness* is *The Unlit Lamp*, published four years earlier. *The Unlit Lamp* was the first novel Hall wrote, and its control and character management make it a more proficient novel than her later book. Hall originally intended to call the novel *Octopi*, its key theme examines the relationship between demanding mothers and their spinster daughters. According to Troubridge, Hall was prompted to write the book as she sat at dinner watching a middle-aged woman attending to her aged parent. The book becomes an exploration of sexuality and female/female relationships, whether Hall intended it to be or not. Her decision to write *The Well of Loneliness* to explore the subject of lesbian love suggests that she did not consider *The Unlit Lamp* such a book. Zoe Fairbairns notes in her introduction to the 1980 edition this is not only strange but somehow also results in a stronger argument:

> She wrote *The Unlit Lamp* because she was moved, as a novelist, by a glimpse of a human predicament; and because in it she was not deliberately setting out to make a statement, the statement is powerfully made.[18]

Set in the house of a family of declining importance, the novel outlines a triangle between three women. The independence and success of all is influenced by economic, social and cultural factors beyond their control.

Despite the confining environment of the novel one can see an unleashing of passions which do not conform to the heterosexual tradition. Interestingly, the characters in this book, Mrs. Ogden, Joan Ogden and Elizabeth, become caught up in

a cycle which finds its most likely discussion in the surgery of the psychoanalyst, and not that of the sexologist. Claudia Stillman Franks says of *The Unlit Lamp*:

> Radclyffe Hall creates a family milieu which would support the environmentalists' view of homosexuality as a conditioned phenomenon.[19]

Hall provides a background for Joan's childhood which is characterised by her mother's vampirism. She is encouraged to display affection physically and passionately. Joan is tortured by the fear that she is inadequate to the task of reciprocating her mother's love. The need she feels from Mary Ogden has to be satisfied to stop her feeling guilt:

> She pressed her cold cheek against Mrs Ogden's, rubbing it gently up and down, then suddenly she folded her in her arms, kissing her lips, seeking desperately to awaken her dulled emotions to the response that she knew was so painfully desired.[20]

The need of her mother is the over riding theme in the book, but it is the effect this has on Joan that provides the contrast to *The Well of Loneliness*.

The Unlit Lamp looks at the issue of marriage as a disrupting force in a female environment, a force which also becomes problematic for Stephen. Joan's mother does not want her to marry, Elizabeth remains unmarried throughout most of the book, and Joan herself avoids marriage because the idea upsets her mother so much. Curiously, although Joan does not want to desert her mother through marriage, she entertains with excitement the possibility of leaving with Elizabeth:

> She intended leaving her mother's home for that of another woman. She had realised that in doing so she was embarking on the unusual. (*Hall, 1991, p.247*)

This decision was faced with some trepidation because:

> It was not softened and toned down by precedent, not wreathed in

> romance as the world understood romance. (*Hall, 1991, p.247*)

Like Stephen Gordon, Joan Ogden is assailed with doubts and confusion as a result of her relationship with her mother, even if both cases are very different. Stephen's romantic attachments to other women are seen by Lady Anna Gordon as abominable; Joan's attachment to Elizabeth is seen by Mrs Ogden as an infidelity. Joan has come to admire and love in another woman what her mother hoped she would find in her.

Joan and Elizabeth's relationship is not explored in the same way as those in *The Well of Loneliness*. Hall avoids reference to sexual attachment between the girls, although there are allusions, perhaps this is why she herself never considered *The Unlit Lamp* to be a lesbian novel. As Elizabeth dresses for a formal occasion:

> she suddenly wondered if Joan liked her dress, but even as she wondered she remembered that Joan was only thirteen. (*Hall, 1991, p.34*)

Joan does notice Elizabeth's appearance and is drawn to her; later in the novel, after Elizabeth has rushed to the aid of a woman on fire, when Joan is attending her we see the nature of her interest in her governess,

> As she helped her into bed, she was conscious of a curious embarrassment. (*Hall, 1991, p.100*)

Hall is writing of an embarrassment similar to that Collins inspired in Stephen. As well as being an exploration of the nurture argument the environmentalist favoured to explain homosexuality, the three main characters in *The Unlit Lamp* also support certain arguments of the sexologists. Joan is identifiable as an invert, she is referred to on several occasions as having intelligence unusual for a girl, which reflects Ellis' belief that inverts were often extraordinarily gifted, and her appearance is described

as masculine:

> Afterall Joan was so like a boy - one felt that she was a son sometimes. (*Hall, 1991, p.55*)

At the close of the novel, her dress and short hair draw comments from two younger women whom she overhears:

> She's a forerunner, that's what she is, a kind of pioneer that got left behind. I believe she's the beginning of things like me. (*Hall, 1991, p.284*)

Joan's sexuality is a blend of biological destiny and maternal pressure, the two combining in a way that suggests more psychological influence than Hall would incorporate in her portrayal of Stephen Gordon.

Elizabeth and Mrs Ogden are distanced from the heterosexual in ways which differ markedly from Stephen's lovers. Mrs Ogden's sense of revulsion at the physicality of her husband is referred to on several occasions:

> What a life - and this was marriage! [. . .] he had loved her once - if that sort of thing was love. (*Hall, 1991, p.55*)

Elizabeth repeatedly turns down the opportunity to marry, instead she pleads with, and is broken by, Joan. She will wait for Joan to escape from the clutches of her mother, then she can allow herself to express her love. The waiting goes on as Joan continues to offer herself as a living sacrifice to her mother and Elizabeth eventually marries and ceases her contact with Joan. The lesbianism of *The Unlit Lamp* is not destructive, it is shown as an extension of love. In this work the frustration and loneliness are a product of Mrs Ogden's unhealthy smothering of her child, and not the result of indulgence in perverse desires. The happiness experienced by Joan and Elizabeth is strengthened and not destroyed by their need for one another. For this

reason, *The Unlit Lamp* is arguably a more relevant study of homosexuality and female inversion than *The Well of Loneliness*. It does not rely on the device of loneliness, and is much more subtle, yet its message is clear to those who are not blinded by the notoriety of Hall's most renowned work.

Creation of a Lesbian hero:- The Problems of 'new' representation

Writing in 1982, Elizabeth Abel lamented the limited scope of previous studies of *The Well of Loneliness*. She was commenting on the tradition that surrounds the book, seeing it firstly as a censored lesbian text and only secondly as a piece of literature. Alison Hennegan's introduction to Virago's 1981 edition of the book refers to the "sub-literature that has grown up around *The Well*".[21] This 'sub-literature' involves tales told around first discoveries of the book, and the way people have imparted its existence to friends and family to express their own sexuality. More recently it has been condemned for allying lesbianism with stigma and suggesting that it necessarily threatens happiness. The title of the book has been seen as objectionable, in its suggestion of alienation. In relation to late twentieth century perceptions of lesbianism and the female role in society, *The Well of Loneliness* is negatively charged. Stephen Gordon is a masculinised woman - an invert, not a lesbian - and she is more easily identified with a transsexual. Her inversion results from physical phenomena which have given her body male characteristics as well as desires. She cross-dresses to establish the exterior power of her body; she may not have a phallus, but she identifies with phallocentric values as a means to define her sexuality. In contrast, her lovers Angela and Mary are feminine, bisexual, and lesbian. They love her masculine styled heroism; but it is

her female body for which they feel desire. Angela's need for Stephen is identified with Stephen's for her:

> All that she was, and all she had been and would be again, perhaps even tomorrow, was fused at that moment into one mighty impulse, one imperative need, and that need was Stephen. Stephen's need was now hers, by sheer force of its blind and uncomprehending will to appeasement. (*Hall, 1992, p.144*)

Yet it is impossible for Radclyffe Hall to reconcile the force of Angela's own need because of her heterosexual impulses. Angela is a tease, and Mary is a woman who will only receive what Stephen feels she needs from a man. The 'lesbian' of *The Well of Loneliness* is Stephen, and her pleasure must always be thwarted. Not a hopeful message, Hall's reverberates through the twentieth century confirming the views of sexologists and psychoanalysts. The book is so much more than an example of an early meta-language for homosexuality. It is a religious, traditionalist, realist, romantic, psychological and censored work.

Hall selected her authorities for *The Well of Loneliness* from late nineteenth century perceptions of what homosexuality was. To support her premise that God created homosexuals, and that this is as natural as heterosexuality, she looked at the theoretical works of Karl Ulrichs, Edward Carpenter, Magnus Hirschfeld, Richard Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis. The problematic encompassed by their theories, and Hall's interpretation of them, is outlined by Hennegan:

> It's almost impossible now to determine whether the 'men of science' created theories which inverts then tried to fit or whether inverts revealed to the scientists theories which they themselves had formulated.[22]

Which ever was the case the biological argument for inversion was popular amongst inverts and sexologists alike. The naturalness of the statistically abnormal becomes

a question for the lesbian author. The early twentieth century saw the sexologists contradicted by the psychologists who sought explanations for behavioural anomalies in the childhood experiences of the affected individual.

Hall's concentration on Stephen's childhood in the first section of the book has a two-fold significance. Certainly it is suggested that from the moment of her birth her sex was not entirely defined as feminine:

> Anna Gordon was delivered of a daughter; a narrow-hipped, wide-shouldered little tadpole of a baby; that yelled and yelled. (*Hall, 1992, p.9*)

The child is christened Stephen and, disliked by her mother, spends the majority of her time with her father whose mannerisms and tastes she appropriates. She causes her mother confusion and misery; she fears there is something unusual about her child. Anna's fears are apparently reflected by Sir Philip, whose love for his daughter is tinged with pity. From the outset of the book we are to believe that Stephen's appearance and alienation from her mother are a consequence of her inversion. Yet Hall is also developing a situation which the Freudian could interpret; Stephen's distance from her female parent and closeness to the male could be a cause of the adolescent Stephen's desire to be her father, and to protect her mother as he did:

> Anna would feel the small hand at her elbow, and would think that the fingers were curiously strong; strong and efficient they would feel like Sir Philip's and this always vaguely displeased her. (*Hall, 1992, p.30*)

Anna's rejection and jealousy of her daughter are important factors from very early on in the child's life, and although Hall is conceiving a case study of a born invert the critic cannot help but see a tendency toward the possibility of an environmental

explanation in the novel. Stephen is denied transference to the feminine position by her mother's lack of identification with her. The mobile nature of the sex drive was according to Freud, as likely to result in a homosexual adult as a heterosexual one. The instability of this system is most affected by childhood experiences. The rejection of Stephen by her mother results in an identification with her father. Jean Radford rightly identifies her decision to take his desire as her own:

> She defends herself against her mother's rejection and by a 'reaction-formation' converts the painful anger into idealisation, and the feminine is taken as the love object.[23]

Stephen is also affected by the stereotyping of the female role in Victorian society. The Antrim children, Violet and Roger, represent the two extremes of the gender divide. Violet is proud of her successful transformation from child into little housewife and Roger antagonises the highly intelligent Stephen because he is given opportunities that she would dearly love. Stephen's education and physical training make her an appropriate companion for Roger, but she offends him and he sees her as "some sort of strange rival". The privileging of the male upsets and confuses Stephen; whether a natural invert, or a product of her father's upbringing, she is deeply wounded by the sense that others find her accomplishments unbecoming to a girl. Her desire to be a boy may be presented by Hall as a product of her inversion, but in many ways it is a reaction to society's injustice to women. Roger will go to Eton, climb trees, wear breeches, ride astride, and fight to defend his honour. Stephen is intelligent and fails to understand why her education should not be as full as his. Furthermore, she lacks the defeatism that would permit her to lead a life similar to Violet's. This is not an example of feminism for all women, and it would

be a mistake to see it as such; it is more a further reason for the invert to protest her masculinity. Anna worries about the sociological consequences of Stephen's education too late. Invert or not, her expectations are inappropriate for an upper class woman in turn of the century England:

> 'So far you've managed the child your own way, and I don't think its been successful. You've treated Stephen as though she were a boy - perhaps its because I've not given you a son -' Her voice trembled a little but she went on gravely: 'Its not good for Stephen; I know its not good, and at times it frightens me, Philip.' (*Hall, 1992, p.50*)

Hall may not be writing from a feminist perspective, but the message is clear nevertheless; there is no way Stephen's training has equipped her for life as an adult woman.

Hall is concerned that Stephen should be readily recognisable as a congenital invert, because the discourse she is formulating is one entirely lacking in blame. No one bears responsibility for the existence of homosexuals. No one, that is, except God. What Hall is struggling for is recognition that the invert is not a criminal, not medically diseased, not a victim of her own choice, but rather a person oppressed by social convention. It is for this reason medical, psychological, and social discourses combine in *The Well of Loneliness*. Contrary to some critic's views, Hall is not guilty of confusing her argument; she actually clarifies her position by employing several discourses. There is no contradiction between the three areas if one considers the role of God as creator of life and its manner of being lived. Congenitally inverted as a consequence of birth, psychologically affected by her parents and socially ostracised by a patriarchal society Stephen's situation is entirely controlled by God. As a Roman Catholic, Hall is determined to make an explicit

plea to God, and the God-fearing, that homosexuality be recognised as part of the rich tapestry of existence. Elizabeth Abel is at least partially right when she suggests that:

> Having Stephen Gordon be a congenital invert who has no choice about her condition strengthens Hall's argument about the unfairness of equating homosexuality with punishable deviancy [. . .] Hall cries out for sacred and social toleration.[24]

Hall's manner of requesting understanding is disconcerting both to homosexuals and the religious, but it is a mistake to assume that this discomfort is a result of inaccurate reasoning.

Hall approaches the issue of Divine culpability in impassioned cries from both Stephen and Philip Gordon. On an allegorical level, Stephen is seen as cast out of paradise, represented by Morton, into an isolation comparable to martyrdom. She experiences love as suffering and like her namesake, the first Christian martyr, she must bear the suffering of others to experience peace. Stephen is also identified with Cain; she is marked with the sin of her nature. Her sin is not murder; it is to bestow a love which threatens morality. Her discourses with God are a blend of regret that she is a woman, and appreciation for the joy her need to love women can bring. It is the morality and acceptance of a religious belief in Stephen that so upset those who elected to try the book for obscenity. She allies the love of lovers to Divine grace and takes this upon herself as a lover:

> There in that shadowy firelit room, she spoke such words as lovers have spoken ever since God flung the thought of love into creation. (*Hall, 1992, p.177*)

The power of God's love deeply affects Stephen. As a youngster, she witnesses it in the love of her parents and seeks to replicate it in herself. It is the love of God that

Stephen and Hall seek to reconcile with society's condemnation of those who practice love within homosexual relationships. The apparent cruelty of God in providing other forms of loving is a desperate blow to Sir Philip Gordon, who can only interpret his daughter's nature as a punishment:

> 'Oh, Stephen, my little, little Stephen.' He wanted to cry out against God for this thing; he wanted to cry out: 'You have maimed my Stephen! What had I done or my father before me, or my father's father? Unto the third and fourth generations?' (*Hall, 1992, pp.104-105*)

The idea that a sin must have been committed, and is now reflected in Stephen, was one Hall used to mirror the attitudes of her contemporaries. The fact that there is no sin, there is no revelation of a blot in the family history that led to this, is an example of her feeling that Stephen's loving is not a penance; it is just as much a celebration of life as Anna and Philip's.

Stephen's ability to love is called into question by society and by her mother, but she knows that, whilst it is not her will to love men sexually, she has a huge capacity to love. The most damaging moment in Stephen's relationship with her mother comes when she forces her parents to accept unconditionally that she is not going to be married. She strikes up a friendship with a young man, Martin, and spends large amounts of time with him. For Stephen this is her first significant friendship:

> She who had longed for the companionship of men, for their friendship, their good-will, their toleration, she had it all now and much more in Martin, because of his great understanding. (*Hall, 1992, p.95*)

This friendship is significant to her because it represents an opportunity to converse with someone of her generation. Someone who is as educated as she is and respects her. For her parents it seemed that this could be a possible hope:

> Had he been mistaken? Perhaps after all he had been mistaken - the hope thudded ceaselessly now in his heart. (*Hall, 1992, p.95*)

Sir Philip is mistaken, and so is Martin, who has fallen in love and wishes to propose. Upon hearing his declaration of love Stephen is overcome by horror, a feeling of deep revulsion:

> She was staring at him in a kind of dumb horror, staring at his eyes that were clouded by desire, while gradually over her colourless face there was spreading an expression of the deepest repulsion - terror and repulsion he saw on her face, and something else too, a look as of outrage. (*Hall, 1992, pp.96-97*)

Stephen is tortured by the fact that, despite deeply loving Martin as a friend, she cannot entertain the thought of him as a lover. It is at this point in the novel that she comes to face her difference, and question what and who she is. She seeks answers to her difference, but significantly she does not question her ability to love.

Once Hall's Stephen has graduated beyond the realms of possible heterosexual involvement her identity as invert is established. This takes place, in part, through a relationship with a married American woman who first fascinates her and then toys with her. However it is not this brief relationship which characterises Stephen's inversion. It is her appearance - her dress in particular. Cross-dressing from female to male is not recognised today as anything other than practical dress. For the turn of the century woman, dress defined her femininity. The purpose of fashion was to highlight female fragility and innocence. Dresses were far from practical for Stephen and her energetic lifestyle. Physically described as masculine in appearance, her interest lies in being handsome, and although the local people find her dress curious, it is a statement. The roots of 'cross-dressing', or as Gilbert and Gubar qualify it, 're-dressing', can be seen as an act of identity creation which goes beyond sexual

preference. Oxford women in the twenties took up a literal theatrical transvestism. Susan Leonardi, quoted by Gilbert and Gubar, reports on such antics by Dorothy Sayers, Winifred Holtby and their group:

> Even the proper Miss Emily Penrose enjoyed dressing as a man; she once represented in some kind of tableau, Sir John Collier's portrait of T.H. Huxley.[25]

For a more satirical, and literary view, of female clothing we can look to Hall's famous contemporary, Gertrude Stein. Stein referred throughout her career to the topic of clothing in her exploration of ways to parody the male need to symbolise and classify gender difference. In 1914 she wrote *Tender Buttons* which deals with gender categorisation and aspects of clothing:

> *Tender Buttons* is (are?) concerned with clothing, classification, sex, and language: are tender buttons tasty buttons? buttons meant to be tendered? sore buttons? belly buttons? nipple or clitoral buttons? Whatever they are, they point to Stein's obsession with the way in which clothing constitutes a sign system that can open or close off meaning.[26]

She makes a nonsense out of fashion, and the concerns of fashion, whilst at the same time expressing the importance of clothing as felt by Djuna Barnes' Robin Vote and Hall's Stephen Gordon. Clothing characterises a transsexual or even an androgynous identity; an identity which today we would recognise as different from a lesbian one. The clothing which sets Stephen Gordon apart is not intended directly to mimic masculine attire, it is a reflection of her feelings as a member of a third sex; Havelock Ellis' "congenital invert". Stephen dresses in suits with neck ties and dons the expensive signature clothing of a sapphist. The luxuriant nature of her clothes is a reflection of the period of history in which Hall lived. Such clothing was the attire of the aristocracy; the noble hero of the romance tradition that Stephen seeks to usurp.

Following the death of Stephen's father, and her expulsion from Morton after her mother's discovery of her love affair with Angela Crosby, Stephen goes to London with Puddle and begins a career as a writer. Once she has acknowledged her lesbian desire she is able to write freely and we must not miss the message that Stephen feels her first successful novel *The Furrow* to be a failure:

> I feel I missed something - I know it was fine, but it wasn't complete because I am not complete - and I never shall be [. . .] I shall never be a great writer because of my maimed and insufferable body. (*Hall, 1992, pp.216-217*)

Not only does Hall make her hero a writer, conforming to the sexologist's theories that inverts are talented, artistic and highly intelligent, she must also suffer the frustration of her situation in her moment of success. Her success and her work are her weapon against the world which repudiates her because she has obliged herself not to procreate. Her creations are her books; cultural production, a gift to a world that denies her and brings her torment. Her distress is eased once she moves to Paris and meets Valerie Seymour (modelled on Natalie Barney) who is at ease in her own sexuality, and she begins finally to settle into her writing.

Stephen tellingly finds a community in which her loneliness abates on the edge of the First World War. The masculinised lesbian has a role society needs her to perform. Puddle's is the voice of prophecy:

> This war may give your sort of woman her chance. I think you may find that they'll need you Stephen. (*Hall, 1992, p.271*)

Stephen finds her niche by joining the ambulance corps and becoming a member of a group that is valuable yet repudiates key feminine ideals. It is historically significant

to feminism in general that war marks a time when pre-existing value systems are rewritten, re-worked and forced to evolve to deal with the demands of chaos. War always brings a new set of realities; throughout modern history evolutionary periods of change have finally been brought to a head by war. For the lesbians and feminists of Hall's generation war simply meant that nothing would ever be the same again:

> War and death had given them a right to life, and life tasted very sweet, very sweet to their palates. Later on would come bitterness, disillusion, but never again would such women submit to being driven back to their holes and corners. (*Hall, 1992, p.275*)

For Stephen the war gives her not only a role, but an opportunity to love; she meets Mary Llewellyn, the most important love interest of the book, within this community of mutual support and strength.

The love which Mary and Stephen share is characteristic of Hall's earlier writings. She has a need to repress the erotic longings of the homosexual couple. Stephen and Mary honeymoon in Spain and are ecstatically happy to be with each other. However, Stephen continually pushes away Mary's sexual advances, because she seems to fear that if she ceases to repress her lesbian feelings the full weight of society's condemnation will fall on the shoulders of the woman she loves. She makes Mary miserable during the first part of their stay in Spain because she has decided that to protect her she must not be sexual with her. It is Mary who declares her desire and need to Stephen, forcing her to accept that the world's opinion should not matter to them:

> "What do I care for the world's opinion? What do I care for anything but you, and you just as you are - as you are, I love you! Do you think I'm crying because of what you've told me? I'm crying because of your dear, scarred face [. . .] the misery on it [. .

.] Can't you understand that all I am belongs to you, Stephen?"
(*Hall, 1992, p.316*)

Elizabeth Abel has negatively critiqued Hall's subsequent descriptions of Mary and Stephen's togetherness because of the apparent need to neutralise the act by naturalising it with references to nature.[27] These references to nature may have a neutralising effect with reference to sexual explicitness, but to ally lesbian sex with nature is surely as bold as allying it with God. The very completeness which Mary and Stephen experience is contrary to the Freudian imagination because of their lack. The very fact that they do not suffer penis-envy is enough to result in the censorship of a novel on the basis of half a single sentence: "and that night they were not divided." (*Hall, 1992, p.316*) The happiness of Stephen and Mary seems boundless but the Stephen's psychological scars eventually reassert themselves. Stephen is named after the first Christian martyr, and Hall's hero herself is a martyr. Her final act is one of sacrifice; she offers up Mary to Martin in the hope that as the wife of a man she can have a happiness that being lover of an invert could not provide. In challenging religion's view that homosexuality is a sin and an abomination a sacrifice has to be made. That sacrifice is the heart of Stephen Gordon. This ultimate emotional sacrifice is a final plea for tolerance, in that it bows to the demands of society, and accepts that Mary and Stephen's relationship can be considered obscene. Jean Radford claims Hall's text marks the point at which:

> The invert's sufferings have been taken out of the confessional into literature. So in struggling to free homosexuality from the religious discourses of 'sin', from nineteenth century medical discourses of it as 'disease', Radclyffe Hall instigates a new discourse of the homosexual as socially oppressed 'victim'.[28]

This image may not be a positive one for the lesbians who read her work, but it was not precisely defeatist. For the censor, it was arguably the very fact that the

victimisation of Stephen is rendered so sympathetically that sealed the book's fate.

Ultimately, the story of Stephen Gordon is a tragic one, perhaps not the ideal figure for the early twentieth century lesbian to read about. Her life certainly did not reflect the life of Hall or many of the other lesbians with whom Hall mixed. The descriptions of Parisian salons and thwarted love represent a darker side to the history of toleration. To understand Stephen Gordon we must also understand the issues which surround the publication of *The Well of Loneliness*. Stephen is a tragic hero for a heterosexual audience. Her tragedy is that her God given homosexuality obscures the nobility of her heart and her intentions. To create a readership that pities Stephen Gordon, even if its understanding of her is limited, seemed to Hall to be a necessary first step. She was judged for the work in her own time, and it was found to be obscene. The judgement of history has been no less harsh.

The Role of the Publisher and the Legislator

When Radclyffe Hall completed the writing of her novel she immediately began the next important task, that of ensuring the book's favourable reception by both publishers and readers. She foresaw that the publisher's handling of the work would be significant on several levels; not only did she want the book to reach a sympathetic and broad audience, she also keenly felt that the publisher of the work should stand behind the book however critics responded to it. Audrey Heath and Carl Brandt read the novel before she sent copies to potential publishing houses, and they gave her positive feedback. She had further reason to feel optimistic; Havelock Ellis, had promised to read it, and had tentatively agreed that he might be prevailed

upon to provide a foreword to the book when published. Before sending a copy of the book away, Hall wrote a carefully worded explanatory note and plea for total support of the work to Norman Flower of Cassells, the publisher of *The Unlit Lamp* and *Adam's Breed*. She was certainly aware of the potentially controversial nature of the work:

> Unless you feel, upon reading the book, that you are prepared to go all out on it and to stand behind it to the last ditch, then for both our sakes, as also for the sakes of those for whom I have written please don't take it.[29]

Naturally, publishers of the day had to consider how the book would fit their company's profile, and how its inclusion in their portfolio would affect other works on their lists. Unsurprisingly then, it was not until the book was sent to a fourth publishing house that it met with acceptance.

That publisher was Jonathan Cape; his was a relatively new publishing house, founded in 1921, and Cape had already made a name as a discriminating publisher with admirable marketing sense. It was his appreciation of market forces and the pervasive nature of publicity as a selling force that drove his interest in *The Well of Loneliness*. His motives in publishing the novel were not necessarily concurrent with its author's in writing it, but finally it was to be his willingness, indeed eagerness, to play the publicity game to the benefit of sales that allowed Hall's quest for tolerance to reach a wide audience. He was aware of the problematic nature of supporting discussion of the subject of sexual inversion, and it is doubtful that he acted out of a deep rooted personal belief in liberty. His feelings were simply that the case was a valid one that could result in publicity for Cape. He paid a £500 advance which, compared with the advance of £100 Hall had received for *Adam's Breed*, was

unusually large. His responsibilities were to his business and his initial suggestions regarding the first edition of the book were modest in their scope. He told the author that he was planning a limited edition to be sold at a higher than usual price, to be repeated if the reception was favourable - meaning of course if there was no complaint by the authorities). The question of the morality of the book had been referred to by Hall herself in her letter to Newman Flower, "Hitherto, the subject has been treated as pornography".[30] There was certainly little doubt that she saw Cape's rather modest intentions regarding distribution as an example of his being less than willing to stand wholeheartedly behind the work as she had demanded. Although Hall had finally agreed to his suggestions they were abandoned and there was a run of 1500 copies at 15s a piece; Cape yielded when Havelock Ellis provided the commentary to the first edition praising the stance of the book:

> So far as I know this is the first English novel which presents, in a completely faithful and uncompromising form, one particular aspect of sexual life as it exists among us today.[31]

Ellis clearly felt the book was of value, and it was his comments that validated some of the author's more impassioned pleas in the book's favour.

The details of publication decided, the next area of concern was precisely how the book should be released upon a potentially censorious nation. It is interesting to note at this point that, despite conservative marketing strategies, Hall's book was to attract significantly more attention than any of the other five books with a lesbian theme published that year.[32] Unlike Djuna Barnes' *Ladies Almanack* (1928) the publication of *The Well of Loneliness* was far from clandestine. Jonathan Cape had, in a letter to Hugh Walpole, referred to the necessity of the publication of *The Well of Loneliness*

being 'sober' and 'careful'.[33] In accordance, the book was published in a sombre black binding with a plain wrapper. Review copies were sent to periodicals, serious daily papers, and specially selected individuals with carefully worded covering letters. Publication in London was to be 27 July 1928, and first reviews proved serious and favourable according to Lovat:

> It was praised for being an honest attempt to present a difficult problem, but one marred perhaps by the author's insistence on the reader's sympathy for the invert as a tragic figure.[34]

The release of the book had apparently created minimal consternation amongst critics, and, at least for the first weeks of publication, Hall's insistence on the integrity of her publishers was not tested.[35]

Mr James Douglas, Editor of the *Sunday Express* was to be the first to prove the concerns of Hall and the publishers she had approached justified. His column which dealt with a variety of so-called vices each week took Hall and her novel to task on Sunday 19 August:

> The decadent apostles of the most hideous and loathsome vices no longer conceal their degeneracy and their degradation [. . .] They do not shun publicity. On the contrary they seek it, and they take a delight in their flamboyant notoriety. The consequence is that this pestilence is devastating young souls.[36]

Douglas also said that he would:

> rather give a healthy boy or girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel.[37]

There was little doubt in his mind that the responsibility for the morally corrupt stance of the novel was intrinsically linked to the author. Like women before and after, Hall had crossed the line and expressed a self that did not fit into a comforting phallocentric view of nature and women. As Sherron E Knopp points out, whatever

the criticisms in lesbian feminist analyses of the book, we know that it was influential:

> Appropriates parts of the dominant discourse, asserting the naturalness of gay relations and seeking to use sincerity and authenticity against their usual implication [. . .] Of course, it may be no more than a pathetic plea to be allowed to share the power of the oppressor. But alternatively, it may seize the ideology of depth and authenticate the unorthodox.[38]

This apparent rewriting of belief systems posed the biggest threat to authority.

The day before Douglas' article was published the *Daily Express* ran adverts encouraging readers to buy the Sunday edition. As a direct result, Cape sold out of the first edition of *The Well of Loneliness* that morning. On the 17 August Douglas had appealed to Cape as publisher and sent him a proof of his article. At this point Jonathan Cape's business sense came into play; he apparently strayed from the position of commitment demanded by Hall and wrote to the Home Secretary. He sent him a covering note, a copy of Douglas' article, several serious reviews, and *The Well of Loneliness*. He stated that he would abide by the Home Secretary's decision regarding the continuing publication of the book. On Tuesday morning he received a letter signed by Sir William Joynson-Hicks announcing officially for the first time that the novel was definitely 'obscene'. Cape wrote to the *Times* announcing that there would be no further print runs of the book, and to his printer cancelling the second edition of 3000. His decision was not so obliging as it appeared; he also ordered that moulds be taken of the type and flown to Paris.

Cape sub-leased the rights to the novel to an English language publisher in Paris, and proceeded to arrange distribution through this firm. The publisher was Holroyd-

Reece at the Pegasus Press (established 1927); he had already expressed interest in the book with a view to getting the continental rights, and he was not to be disappointed by the popularity of the book. Orders flooded in from England and a bookseller was appointed in London to distribute and attend to the demands for copies. To fulfil requests, Reece sent larger and larger shipments of the book to London. One such shipment, of 247 copies, drew the attention of the Customs Officials who impounded the book as pornography. After a few days the books were released, and traced to their final destination where they were seized under the Obscene Publications Act. Thus it was that the book came to be tried in Court, a trial which was unavoidable, and one which was to act as a Test Case. Specifically it was a trial that led to Hall's book achieving an immortality which it may not otherwise have been achieved.

News of the decision to try the book spread throughout the literary community, and once the date, 14 November, was set for the trial, Hall and the defence mobilised. Hall approached the Bloomsbury group, receiving interest from both the Forsters and the Woolfs, gaining much support in principle on the grounds that censorship of sapphism contradicted freedom of letters and affected a great number in the literary community. It was Hall's insistence that the book should be upheld not merely as devoid of vice, but also as a masterpiece, that led to frustration from those who supported the message of the book, especially Virginia Woolf. Writing to Vita Sackville-West on 30 August she said:

> They banned her book; and so now Leonard and Morgan Forster began to get up a protest, and soon we were telephoning and interviewing and collecting signatures - not yours, for *your* proclivities are well known. In the midst of this Morgan goes to

> see Radclyffe in her tower at Kensington, with her love [Lady Troubridge]: and Radclyffe scolds him like a fishwife, and says that she won't have any letter written about her book unless it mentions the fact that it is a work of artistic merit - even genius [. . .] So our ardour in the cause of freedom of speech gradually cools, and instead of offering to reprint the masterpiece, we are already beginning to wish it unwritten.[39]

Vita's reply highlighted the real issue, succinctly expressing her contemporaries most passionate feelings;

> If it had been a good book, a real masterpiece,- the result would have been the same. And that is intolerable.[40]

Hall also called upon Havelock Ellis, who declined on the grounds of his own record with such material - his volume relating to Sexual Inversion had been censored.

The Test of Obscenity Hall's novel faced was that ruled by Lord Justice Cockburn seventy years previously. In that instance, he had commented in reference to the books on trial that:

> It is quite certain they would suggest to the minds of the young of either sex or even to persons of more advanced years thoughts of a most impure character.[41]

By 1928, broader education and the higher level of sophistication in society had led to a general feeling that state interference in such matters was inappropriate. An attitude of reader responsibility was beginning to contradict those strict legal opinions which held that individuals could not necessarily protect their own morality. The locus of responsibility did not necessarily lie with author or publisher in the eyes of the public, but *The Well of Loneliness* was subject to the law. The British nation was enforcing its culture on an entire Empire, and as this was the case, that culture had to extol certain values.

Even today, a powerful contingent of censors believe that if one bans the image, one will be rid of the act. The result was one in which anything that transgressed the boundaries of the sexual norm was seen as especially dangerous. The subject of female inversion, when combined with apparent religious sanction, was a powerful transgression. Although the law as it stood excluded any evidence pertaining to artistic credibility, the possibility of entering the literary value of the novel was, as we saw above, explored. The defence did not find it terribly easy to acquire literary gentlemen to speak on behalf of the work. Reasons for refusals to speak on behalf of the book ranged from questionable lack of literary merit to uncertainty over the actual threat proffered to the freedom of letters by the trial (John Galsworthy). Hugh Walpole made one of the more honest refusals; he highlighted Cape's publicity hunt as signified by the letter to the Home Secretary:

> I dislike intensely all the publicity given to abnormality, which might I think, to be let lie on both sides.[42]

Dickson Lovat points out that, as well as the reluctant support the book gained from certain members of the Bloomsbury group, there were other very vocal eminent supporters. Notably Sir Michael Sadler, Master of University College, Oxford announced that to censor the book would:

> Be contrary to the public interest. It is poignant, vivid, deeply felt. It is in the same category as Rousseau's *Confessions*. The book is a psychological study rather than an essay in fiction.[43]

Hall sat in Court at the solicitor's table before Chief Magistrate of London, Sir Chartres Biron and Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Archibald Bodkin. Neither Jonathan Cape nor Leopold Hill attended the trial, they were represented by Counsel.

Hall was silent, pensive in the knowledge that circumstances had come to threaten the book she had requested Una's permission to write. Her position as defender of the weak and oppressed was assured, like Stephen it was her role to defend those countless voices that had remained silent in fear. In Court it was to be J.B. Melville, K.C. who put forward the request for toleration:

> To those at large it says there should be toleration and understanding for those who are God's creatures. I submit to you Sir that this book is written in a reverent spirit; that it is not written in a manner calculated to excite libidinous thoughts, but it is an attempt to deal with a social question which exists.[44]

Sir Chartres Biron was not to be swayed. His reading of the book was a close, if biased one. He considered Stephen's seduction of Angela to be the seduction of a married woman by a pervert, even if the book did not make reference to a consummation of this relationship. Despite the lack of graphic description in the book Biron felt that the imagination of readers would be encouraged to conceive all variety of 'horrible practices'. Specifically the spiritually sanctified relations outlined in the book represented 'unnatural, disgusting obscenity'. Quoted in Lovat, the Magistrate's decision was unequivocal - he especially objected to the moral stance adopted by the author:

> The whole note of the book is a passionate and almost hysterical plea for toleration and recognition of these people who, in the view presented in the book, are people who ought to be tolerated and recognised, in decent society [. . .] Not merely that, but there is a much more serious matter, the actual physical acts of the women indulging in unnatural vices are described in the most alluring terms [. . .] I have no hesitation in saying that this is an obscene libel, that it would tend to corrupt those into whose hands it might fall; and that the publication of this book is an offence against decency, an obscene libel, and I shall ordered it to be destroyed.[45]

The evidence of the thirty-nine literary witnesses was judged inadmissible, and

Cape's behaviour labelled suspicious in his absence.

A month later, on Friday 14 December, the Appeal came to Court at the Quarter Sessions presided over by Sir Robert Wallace, K.C.. Attorney General, Sir Thomas Inskip, allowed that the book may contain very fine writing, but proceeding to read passages from it he remarked:

> This is more subtle, demoralizing, corrosive, corruptive, than anything that was ever written [. . .] I hardly need ask what is the picture conjured up to minds that are open to immoral influences.[46]

According to *The Times, 15 December* he also an expressed opinion over authorial responsibility:

> The fact that someone who wrote a book did not intend it to be obscene did not matter [. . .] Courts would condemn it regardless of the intention of the writer.[47]

The Bench retired for ten minutes, returning with the conclusion that the book was obscene in that it condoned obscenity. Whether this obscenity was graphically depicted or not was judged largely irrelevant.[48]

The stormy days of *The Well of Loneliness* may have ended in defeat at the Appeal Court, but good news was arriving from France and America. In Paris, every English speaking book shop had copies displayed in the window, and plans for a French translation were being made under the jurisdiction of Gallirand. Una and Radclyffe left for Paris in February 1929 where they wallowed in the acclaim directed at the author of *The Well of Loneliness*. By April 1929 news arrived about the legal judgement in America. The case had been brought by J.S. Sumner, Secretary of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. On the 19 April 1929 the Court of

Special Service declared that:

> After a careful reading of the entire book we conclude that the book in question is not in violation of the law and each of the defendants is acquitted.[49]

Sales in America exceeded 50 000, and with dramatic adaptations promised, and requests that Hall speak up on behalf of lesbian groups, *The Well of Loneliness* had clearly assured notoriety for its cause and its author. The propaganda machine continued to work on Cape's behalf in England. Reference to Hall in Compton Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women*, and numerous satires of Jix (Sir William Joynson-Hicks), kept interest piqued. Later editions of the book were to make much of the censored status of the book, and no one could argue that Hall had failed to reach a large audience. The publishing and legal history of the book demonstrated the influence of the publisher in exposing literature to the public in a way that allows his/her voice to become louder than the author's. The influence of marketing pervades the history of *The Well of Loneliness*. Mass production and the growth of the culture industry collaborated in this case to broaden the possible market for the alternative author.

Popularity: The Secret of Success

Of the myriad of potential reasons which can contribute to make a book a best seller, *The Well of Loneliness* demonstrates that censorship is an especially powerful one. In this section I will examine the history of receptions of Radclyffe Hall's book from within, in the context of what contributed to its success. The book was written to be a success; as Una Troubridge told us, Hall wanted to reach a large heterosexual audience, to affect their understanding of female sexual inversion. She wrote at a

time when the theories of the sexologists were coming into conflict with the emerging meta-language of psychoanalysis. Also, at a time when religious belief was on the decline in Britain, the book invited a response from the Church, by recognising God as creator of sexuality and its variances. The suffering of the invert might alienate a portion of her lesbian audience, but by representing Stephen as a martyr Hall placed her metaphorically and literally at the crux of change, demanding acceptance. The subject itself is one which remains controversial, or at the very least a curiosity, sixty years later. Lesbianism is an area of female sexuality that has been received in very different socio-political climates since 1928 and discussion remains relevant. Further, whatever Hall's intentions, *The Well of Loneliness* offers a rebellion against the limitations placed upon women from much the same perspective as early feminism. All the above factors contribute to abiding interest in *The Well of Loneliness*, but it is my belief that the censorship of the novel was the single most important factor in determining the longevity of popular interest. The reasons for this belief are multiple, and form the body of this section of this chapter.

There was no lesbian who spoke English or any of the eleven languages the book was translated into between 1928 and the late 1960s who had not heard of *The Well of Loneliness*. Lillian Faderman tells us that Del Martin, writing in 1972 referred to the book as a "Lesbian Bible".[50] Contrary to such an epithet is a sociological study, conducted by Bonnie and Vern Bullough, of lesbians in the 1920s and 1930s:

> "Almost to a woman they decried its publication." They believed that if the novel did not actually do harm to their cause, at the least it "put homosexuality in the wrong light."[51]

Romaine Brooks, Violet Trefusis, Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West loathed

the book. Dislike of the book went beyond its 'victimisation complex' and its allegedly 'poor style' to its fundamental arguments, the facts and philosophy upon which Hall had founded it. She believed that, just as Stephen found certain comfort in reading Ellis and Krafft-Ebing, contemporary lesbians would find themselves in her work. Although I have discussed the fact that a lesbian audience was not her primary one, we must look at the judgement of the book by lesbians.

The primary reason for this being that, as Del Martin points out, there have been few books directly written about lesbianism from a position of empathy. Hall accepts the arguments of the sexologists, and to a certain extent the psychologists, but she writes fiction and reaches a wider audience. It is unfortunate that Stephen was a prototype for the lesbian as sick, a medical phenomenon, a poor suffering creature to be pitied. This image of the lesbian, however damaging, was a bold one. Unlike Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, Amy Lowell and Gertrude Stein, Hall did not use artistry/artifice to conceal her lesbian subject matter so as to make it less obvious to the potential censor. Lillian Faderman underlines the fact that the lesbian figure in the literature of early twentieth century writers including Radclyffe Hall, Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes, Elizabeth Bowen, Compton Mackenzie and Gertrude Stein is purely fictional:

> They create a fictional lesbian: not a woman who was expressing emotion quite within the realm of the normal, but rather an outcast, a neurotic, a pecularity.[52]

The enforced stigma that Stephen endures is one example of this problem with the representation of lesbianism, but the difficulty unquestionably affected her contemporaries. Ultimately, fear of difference and change was so rife at the start of

the twentieth century that a dream of an eroticised separate 'Herland' was too much of a leap of imagination for Hall. For feminists, as for lesbians, *The Well of Loneliness* was seen as too defeatist:

> Hall came under fire from later lesbian feminists because of her predominantly negative view of what she saw in the psycho-babble of her time as 'sexual inversion': "I am one of those whom God has marked on the forehead," her heroine declares to her lover.[53]

At this point it is interesting to consider that further allegations that the book was too religious, too full of role-playing scenarios, could be levelled at the majority of romance literature and pornography; this is the way the dominant discourse conventionally inscribes sexuality.

The natural progress of reception of the book was halted by its censorship in the courts. Writers who felt the book to be poorly written came forward to defend it as a matter of principle. Publicity resulting from censorship finally granted Hall a much larger audience than she would have otherwise received. Her account of lesbian experience is the one which her society felt to be the most threatening. The threat was clearly based upon her refusal to describe her characters in acceptable terms. Rosalind Miles writes of 'Romantic attachments', 'sentimental friendships, 'the love of kindred spirits' and 'Boston marriages' which had been freely tolerated in nineteenth century America and Europe:

> When women no longer disguised the true, sexual base of these unions, the reaction was immediate. For if two clitorises could manage happily without even one penis, the assumption of phallic supremacy was cut off at its root.[54]

Rebecca O'Rourke points out that the society within which Hall moved and wrote relied heavily on sex distinction:

> What disturbs is the disruption of sex distinction, a rigid system emphasised at every opportunity.[55]

The distinctiveness of the masculine and feminine gender is not something Hall specifically calls into question. Stephen represents a third sex, the invert. It was the failure of the early twentieth century to recognise the fluidity of gender to which the modernism of writers like Joyce, Woolf and Stein also responded. Bonnie Kime Scott focuses on their responses in her work:

> Gender is more fluid, flexible, and multiple in its options than the (so far) unchanging biological binary of male and female. In history, across cultures, and in the lifetime development of the individual, there are variations in what it means to be masculine, or feminine, in the availability of identifications such as asexual and androgynous, and in the social implications of lesbian, homosexual, and heterosexual orientations.[56]

The process of defining gender difference and sexuality are tasks jointly taken on by feminists and lesbians. The censorship of *The Well of Loneliness* bestowed a public profile on this question, bringing Hall into the forefront of a debate being waged by her more feminist contemporaries.

Janet Todd points out that the public perception of female friendship prior to the publicising of *The Well of Loneliness* was an indulgent one:

> Female friendship was a fascinating and inspiring theme in the eighteenth century. It was an historical phenomenon, fed by and feeding into fiction, expressing itself sometimes in companionable lives but most often in letters.[57]

With the writings of the sexologists in the later nineteenth century and the advent of Freud a change came about. The public no longer saw same sex love as necessarily devoid of sexual practice, and Jonathan Cape, used Hall's book to bring this into the limelight. Joseph Bristow highlights Hall's use of new dominant discourses in

alliance with religion to plead for recognition:

> [*The Well of Loneliness*] may seize the ideology of depth and authenticate the unorthodox.[58]

Although Hall was made famous as a result of censorship, hers was not a lone voice. Nor was hers a definitive voice. The work of her contemporary Virginia Woolf has spoken out down the century as a vehicle for the expression of sexuality in literature and feminism. Jane Marcus attributes the continuing potency of Woolf's work to the fact that:

> Woolf's narrative voice is sexually and politically exciting for the woman reader because it simultaneously rings with fear of male reprisal for sexual and verbal transgression, it mourns our martyrs, and it also resurrects them.[59]

Woolf goes further than Hall in both *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando* (1928), yet she is not tried for obscenity. Unlike Hall, who pleads for understanding from her readers, Woolf seduces hers. She demands collusion in a feminist conspiracy and awareness of lesbianism:

> Readers of *A Room* are part of a conspiracy [. . .] The Virginia Woolf who "talks to girls" harbours, and in this case practices, a powerful and barely disguised desire to seduce.[60]

Woolf refers to the trial of Hall checking that neither Sir Chartres Biron nor Sir Archibald Bodkin is eavesdropping.[61] Her further references to lesbian love are demonstrated in ellipsis and asides:

> Perhaps her asides and sexual jokes are meant to show Radclyffe Hall a trick or two, how to suggest that women do sometimes like women and avoid both censor and lugubrious self-pity at the same time.[62]

Either way, *A Room of One's Own* is a more eloquent and seductive piece of writing than Hall's. Hermione Lee, having seen cancelled versions, refers to the piece as: "A telling piece of self-censorship".[63] Ultimately, it is a feminist piece of writing, more

an attempt to convert her friend Vita Sackville-West to feminism, than an attempt to corrupt the educated ladies who made up her audience.

Virginia Woolf shared a social and political context with Hall. As the mouthpiece for her generation, her body of work, both fiction and non-fiction, stands out above that of Hall. She enters into the discourse of modernism which permits her to express thoughts and feelings in a less abrupt manner than Hall. From *A Room of One's Own* to *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *The Waves* (1931) and *Orlando* she shares a need to express a sense of isolation and alienation from the mainstream. Her modernist perspective, when combined with the uniquely feminine quality of her voice, produces powerful writing outlined here by Patricia Waugh:

> An emphasis on the relational embeddedness of artistic production in social and historical forms and experience and personal relationships also gives rise to a very different conceptualisation of subjectivity [. . .] alienation is expressed not as a *necessary* condition of 'human existence' (a consequence of the opacity of the 'soul'), but as a consequence of the *social* and *historical* conditions of women's experience.[64]

Woolf combines her literary voice with her personal vision of the future; a future based on an "entirely different conception" of male and female relations.[65] This different conception consists of an innocence expressed in the kiss Clarissa Dalloway shared with Sally Seton:

> The strange thing, on looking back, was the purity, the integrity of her feelings for Sally.[66]

It is also a future in which gender barriers are broken down and women will have the opportunity to possess "the sacred tree of property".[67] It is a combination of both *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando* that could have been offered up in 1929 as

inscriptions of a female desire for change, to be no longer silent in the company of men, about their friendship and desires. Woolf is described by Jane Marcus as she gave the lecture *A Room of One's Own*:

> She is having a fling as the slightly Sapphist author of *Orlando*, queen of the literary world at least for a day, and a "figure" to the students. She is also capitalizing on the obscenity trial for a lesbian novel in a book about women's writing, forever linking the two subjects in her pages.[68]

Virginia Woolf knew that in subverting the language of patriarchy her own words were potentially at the whim of the censors that banned *The Well of Loneliness*.

In contrast to both Woolf and Hall, Gertrude Stein was affected by the same subject, although her work was perhaps considered less accessible. Bonnie Kime Scott identified Gertrude Stein at the centre of three major modernist avant-garde Parisian groups:

> The lesbian Left Bank documented by Shari Benstock, the bohemian Montmartre of Picasso and modernist writing described by Stein herself in vivid detail in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, and the postwar scene of younger expatriate modernists, most notably Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Anderson, and Wilder .[69]

Despite many biographical depictions of her life, and the groups within which she moved, Stein did not become renowned for her own writing until relatively recently. Stein's work went further than any of the other modernists of her period. Her ability as a literary theorist manifested itself in her own fiction and in her critical essays. In her own time her originality was taken for eccentricity, and it is French feminism, poststructuralism and postmodernism which has made the revolutionary nature of Stein's work visible. Stein offered a unique presentation of the religion of art in her work. Art is not a merely representational medium, as Hall uses it. Art uses objects,

people and events as a 'springboard' for the imagination. Writing of Stein's *Lectures in America*, Scott summarises a key understanding of both modernist and female writing:

> Here Stein allies herself with a predominant quasi-religious modernist credo of the transcendent supremacy of art, which endows art and the artist in the act of creation with the only power available to human beings to rise above daily life and thereby to give it meaning.[70]

Ultimately, Stein writes as an artist creating art and communicating from an anti-representational stand point. This affects her presentation of lesbian subject matter, and consequently her contemporary readers found her expressions much less overtly threatening than Hall's. Shari Benstock admires Stein's experimental literary style for its complexity:

> In her [Stein's] writings, lesbianism provided neither the occasion for tortured, introspective examination of the psychological dimensions of her sexual orientation nor the material for sophisticated satire. Stein's relationship with Toklas was the occasion for linguistic experimentation, exploration, and the expression of childlike joy.[71]

This has freed her work from banal generalisations about the similarities between her life and her work, such as those Lovat makes with Hall's.

The question which we should ask, when faced with information about the technical prowess of Hall's literary contemporaries, is why *The Well of Loneliness* became the 'lesbian novel'? Despite the negatively charged descriptions of her life as a/n lesbian/invert, Stephen Gordon was and remains famous. Ultimately, her power is based on the response of the heterosexual, not that of the homosexual. In much the same way as Lovat described himself, many became curious about the sexual practices of two women together as a possibility for their wives and their daughters.

Birth control and war heralded the clamourings for equality and announced what Rosalind Miles refers to as the "rout of the sperm".[72] Lesbianism represented a further threat. Lesbianism, as represented by Hall and united with homosexuality, represented the emergence of a new other. Michele Aina Barale has examined this early example of society's need to accept the existence of minority groups as a means of upholding the practices of the majority:

> Homosexuality-lesbianism-is "good" just so long as it is useful in maintaining heterosexuality. Lesbian sexuality is permissible only when it is available for heterosexuality's consumption.[73]

Therefore we find that by 1951 mainstream culture had adopted the once marginalised *Well of Loneliness* and made it its own. The publicity once afforded the novel as censorship resulted in a new publicity. In some ways, as Hall had intended, *The Well of Loneliness* became a key text for the heterosexual. The stereotypical representation of Butch and Femme invest the characters with gender differences despite genital sameness. The lesbian text becomes a site at which heterosexuality can be further invested with the signifiers of normality.

Michele Aina Barale has examined four covers of *The Well of Loneliness*, dating from 1951, 1964, 1974 and 1981, to reveal both the power of censorship as an advertising tool and the safety of Stephen as 'not exactly female'.[74] The copy on the covers which attempts to pique the reader's interest announces a love story:

> "Denounced, banned, and applauded" (1951, 1964) [. . .] "censored" as well as "classic" (1981) [. . .] "the strange love story of a girl midway between the sexes" (1951, 1964), a "love that dared not speak its name" (1974 [back cover], 1981).[75]

All four covers, and indeed the later Virago edition which informs factually on the

back cover that the book "created a sensation" as a "powerful *crie de coeur*", "banned as obscene", use the fact of censorship as a marketing device. This, of course, plays on the human impulse to be more interested in that which is denied us than that which is of concern to us. It is unlikely that *The Well of Loneliness* would have survived if it had found a market amongst the literary lesbians of 1928 rather than the editor of the *Daily Express* and the Home Secretary. In the final analysis, Hall's book provided comfort to those who would believe that lesbians represent the 'other' and to those who liked the directness of the 'realist genre'. As a text for lesbians *The Well of Loneliness* has become an historically relevant part of a discourse rather than a defining moment within it.

Radclyffe Hall intended to question her society's attitude to homosexuality and the presentation of women. Her contemporaries and subsequent feminist writers may have judged her harshly because her argument was too confrontational to avoid attracting the censor's attention but in many ways her approach is the most interesting feature of her case. The self-conscious manner in which Hall sought to address the heterosexism and phallocentricism present in her society provides us with a preview of the approaches of those female writers who would follow her.

End Notes

1. Oscar Wilde, The Preface, to The Picture of Dorian Gray (London: Penguin,1985), p.21.
2. Lord Justice Cockburn, quoted in The Times (Saturday, December 15, 1928), p.5, col.4.
3. John Fletcher, Forster's self-erasure: Maurice and the scene of masculine love, in Sexual Sameness: Textual differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing, ed. by Joseph Bristow (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.64-90 (p.65).
4. Sherron E Knopp, 'If I saw you would you kiss me?' Sapphism and the Subversiveness of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, in Bristow, pp.111-127 (p.120).
5. Janet Todd, Women's Friendship in Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p.359.
6. Radclyffe Hall, The Well of Loneliness (London: Virago, 1982), p.204. Further References to this work are given in the text.
7. Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, in A Room of One's Own/Three Guineas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.3-149 (p.106).
8. Rebecca O'Rourke, Reflecting on 'The Well of Loneliness' (London: Routledge, 1989), p.2.
9. Adam's Breed won the James Tait Black award in 1926.
10. Claudia Stillman Franks, Beyond *The Well of Loneliness*: The Fiction of Radclyffe Hall (Amersham: Avebury, 1982).
11. Lovat Dickson, Radclyffe Hall at The Well of Loneliness: A Sapphic Chronicle (London: Collins, 1975), p.18.
12. Alison Hennegan, in Radclyffe Hall, The Well of Loneliness, pp.vii-xvii (p.viii).
13. Radclyffe Hall, A Sheaf of Verses (Oxford: Gaby Goldscheider, 1985), pp.36-38.
14. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century (Volume 2: Sex Changes) (London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp.221-222.
15. Radclyffe Hall, A Sheaf of Verses p.12.
16. E.F. Benson, As We Were: A Victorian Peep Show, (London: Longmans Green, 1930), pp.263-265.
17. O'Rourke, p.114.
18. Zoe Fairburn, in Radclyffe Hall, The Unlit Lamp, (London: Virago, 1981), pp.5-8 (p.7).
19. Franks, p.51.
20. Radclyffe Hall, The Unlit Lamp, p.66. Further References to this work are given in the text.
21. Hennegan, pp.vii-xvii (p.vii).
22. Hennegan, pp.vii-xvii (p.x).
23. Jean Radford, The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction (London: Routledge, 1986), p.102.
24. Elizabeth Abel, Writing and Sexual Difference (Brighton: The Harvester Press Ltd., 1982), p.248.
25. Gilbert and Gubar, p.355.

26. Gilbert and Gubar, p.355.
27. Abel, pp.250-252.
28. Radford, p.107.
29. Radclyffe Hall, Letter to Newman Flower, April 16, 1928, in Dickson, p.141.
30. Radclyffe Hall, Letter to Newman Flower, April 16, 1928, p.141.
31. Dickson, p.148.
32. Lillian Faderman, Love Between Women in 1928: Why Progressivism is not always progress, in Historical, Literary and Erotic Aspects of Lesbianism, ed. by Monika Kehoe, (London: Harrington Park Press, 1986), pp.23-42 (p.24).
33. Lovat, p.145.
34. Lovat, p.145.
35. After certain contractual difficulties relating to obligations in the event of legal or other troubles, the Mencken Press had agreed to publish an American edition.
36. Article by Douglas, in *Sunday Express, 19 August 1928.*
37. Douglas.
38. Knopp, p.181
39. Virginia Woolf, The Letters of Virginia Woolf (Volume 3), p.520.
40. Vita Sackville-West, The Letters of Vita Sackville West to Virginia Woolf (London: Hutchinson, 1984), p.296.
41. Times.
42. Dickson, p.158.
43. Dickson, p.158.
44. Dickson, p.163.
45. Dickson, p.165.
46. Times.
47. Times.
48. The drama was unfolding in the States too. Mencken were making waves, uncomfortable at the publicity the book was attracting in Britain, and the rights were finally signed over to Cape who promised full copyright protection. He also suggested that an edition of Hall's collected works be published in America, to take advantage of public interest in her.
49. Times.
50. Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men: Romance Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present (London: The Women's Press, 1985), p.322.
51. Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men, p.322.
52. Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men, p.24.
53. Rosalind Miles, The Women's History of the World (London: Paladin, 1989), p.258.
54. Miles, p.258.
55. O'Rourke, p.30.
56. Bonnie Kime Scott, The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.2.
57. Todd, p.359.
58. Joseph Bristow, Sexual Sameness: Textual Differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing, p.181.
59. Jane Marcus, Sapphistory: The Woolf and the Well, in Lesbian Texts and

Contexts: Radical Revisions, ed. by Jay Karla and Joanne Glasgow (London: Onlywomen Press Ltd, 1992), pp.164-213 (p.165).

60. Marcus pp.164-213 (p.167).
61. Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p.106.
62. Marcus, pp.164-213 (p.168).
63. Hermione Lee, Virginia Woolf (London: Vintage, 1997), pp. 524-528. There is a large body of feminist research which seeks the hidden meanings in the texts of Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes and Jean Rhys. Hermione Lee highlights this in reference to *Orlando*: "*Orlando* manipulates its readers. It is a biography which makes a mockery of the very idea of writing a biography. It is a blatant account of an intimate friend which is extremely self-concealing about the author's emotions. [. . .] It is a critique of sexual censorship, and of fixed notions of sexual difference, which is also cunningly self-censoring. It covers its tracks, and gets away with murder." (pp.524-528) This in spite of the fact that Woolf satirises censorship in her depiction of Vita Sackville-West as Orlando. Woolf's censorship is combined with a technique which has been identified as a characteristic of women writers - the gap in the text: "yet in both [*Orlando* and *A Room of One's Own*] there are anticipations of the mood of solitary meditation, silence and mysticism which will fill *The Waves*. And in both there are pauses, gaps, silences, things that can't or haven't been said." (p.528)
64. Patricia Waugh, Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Post Modern (London: Routledge, 1989), pp.16-17.
65. Waugh, p.125.
66. Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway (Harmondswoth: Penguin, 1992), p.37.
67. Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas, pp.153-367 (p.74).
68. Marcus, pp.164-213 (p.173).
69. Scott, p.479.
70. Scott, p.483.
71. Shari Benstock, Women of the Left Bank: Paris 1900-1940 (London: Virago, 1987), pp.175-176.
72. Miles, p.259.
73. Michele Aina Barale, Below the Belt: (Un)Covering *The Well of Loneliness*, in Inside/out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories, ed. by Diana Fuss, (London: Routledge, 1991), pp.235-257 (p.238).
74. Barale, pp.235-257.
75. Barale, p.238.

Chapter Three

Women Writing New Pornographies And Inscribing Sexuality, Love And Desire: Angela Carter And Kathy Acker

The society censors in order to ensure its own welfare or to destroy evil. If the I (eye) does not censor, it is moving in an amoral realm.
(Acker)[1]

The texts of Angela Carter, Kathy Acker, Jeanette Winterson and Pat Califia all represent the disintegration of the anti-pornography lobby's essentially phallocentric vision of pornography. In their writing they attack phallocentric stereotyping of the feminine in all areas of culture, not just pornography. The pornography debate is a complex one and it is important to include a clear reference to the links between the writers I discuss and the allegations of the anti-pornography lobby. Although all the writers I have chosen are themselves very aware of the issues of the contemporary pornography debate, their approaches vary. Their primary concern is to analyse the meta-languages of contemporary culture as they relate to women as individuals and as sexual beings. A crucial difference between women who inscribe female desire and fantasy and the anti-pornography lobby is the manner in which they view pornography. If we see pornography as one aspect of the patriarchal society, it becomes clear that the issue which should concern us is the historical and cultural framework of the dominant discourse and not the discourse of pornography. All the writers I discuss expertly demonstrate the limits of ideological power. It is also an important assertion of this thesis that women writers should be given the freedom to analyse and understand the position the dominant discourse places them in,

especially in relation to their bodies. Knowledge, and acceptance, of the female body and its needs in contemporary society, however, depends on a wide variety of factors.

To understand these issues we can turn to the texts of women writers themselves. There is certainly an identifiably new approach in the handling of patriarchal language as displayed in the works of Carter, Acker, Winterson and Califia. They express a will to step outside of the cultural domain they have been taught to inhabit. With the luck that is borne solely of living at the right time, they are allowed as contemporary women writers to step beyond obsessions with phallocentric pseudo-realities. The methods which they employ to do this successfully, whilst still offering something to those functioning within a misogynist framework, are multi-faceted. They all accept Adrienne Rich's assertion that:

> Men really fear not that they will have women's sexual appetites forced on them or that women want to smother and devour them, but that women could be indifferent to them altogether.[2]

The expression of desire and sexual pleasure are important when they contradict oppositional relationships. A discourse that encourages female attention and participation is to be achieved by writing in a way that is understood, and threatening only in its novelty. For this reason, suggesting that erotic and pornographic meta-narratives could achieve this goal would seem to be a curious assertion. What is more threatening than an attack on the sanctity of the images that are literally the closest protectors of the phallus? The purpose is, of course, to avoid false modesty and strike at the heart of a debate that has been clouded over by romantic falsehoods since the first child heard the first fairy-tale.

The reasons for placing a reading of Carter's representations of female desire and Acker's together are various. Carter and Acker may have devoted only a few lines to one another in their critical works but their concerns and attitudes are similar in a number of ways. Whilst their opinions on J.G. Ballard do not coincide they do share an interest in the Marquis De Sade.[3] Both are involved in projects of demystification and seek to uncover the long tradition of writing which insists on mythologising love and female desire. Carter wrote that she sees herself in the 'demythologising business' so it is natural that she would attack all gender stereotyping.[4] The transmission of mythology is an important process through which phallocentric culture perpetuates difference and separation between individuals. Myths are communicated through both language and time, therefore language and time are appropriated by writers engaged in projects of demystification.

The course of narrative history, both artistic and literary, is united by a concern with the concept of time:

> Narrative is written in language but it is composed, if you follow me in time. All writers are inventing a kind of imitation of time when they invent the time in which a story unfolds, and they are playing a complicated game with *our* time, the reader's time, the time it takes to read a story.[5] (Carter)

and:

> When time is understood as linear there is no escape. No escape for us out of the labyrinth. I said that the labyrinth has been built. But time is not only linear [. . .] let us by changing the linearity of time, deconstruct the labyrinth and see what the women who are in its center are doing.[6] (Acker)

Therefore it is unsurprising that Carter's and Acker's narratives address issues

relating to the deconstruction of time, both as it is represented in narrative and as we experience it as readers. Although she is often more covert than Acker, Carter shares the techniques of 'modernist plagiarism' with Acker. Intertextuality is a crucial way of addressing texts which form the basis of phallocentric discourse. Once cited core texts can be manipulated and revealed as tools of oppression.

Acker and Carter choose to attack texts from within discourses which are responsible for enforcing romance, identifying the 'failure' to live up to the 'ideal' as representative of 'bad girl' status, and, the suggestion that 'sex' should not occur to satisfy physical urges. Carter in particular identifies the contemporary failure to recognise pornography's capacity for change. She laments that it is:

> As if we were the slaves of history and not its makers, as if sexual relations were not necessarily an expression of social relations, as if sex itself were an external fact, one as immutable as the weather, creating human practice but never a part of it.[7]

Therefore it is important to take control of the mythologising process. Carter recognises love to be an obstacle in the path of women's sexual liberation:

> It is in this holy terror of love that we find, in both men and women themselves, the source of all opposition to the emancipation of women. (*Carter, 1991, p.150*)

The fear is that there are dangerous practical consequences of focusing on a search for love at the expense of identity. Ideologies of romance seek to distance love and social relations from sex and dominant discourses seek to uphold this. Civilisation has been seen to mean leaving animal instinct behind. Women, as the site at which such instincts are awakened, are particularly warned against embracing their sexuality. Kathy Acker argues that consciousness and sanity become dependent on

the need to experience love - the only way to experience and manifest love is through sex, which in its enactment always leads to nihilistic scenarios for the Acker heroine. The only answer previous meta-languages have provided depended on love as a simultaneous manifestation of normality for women and a tool of their subjugation. In her novel *In Memoriam to Identity* (1990), Acker unites the experiences of the flesh with the conforming mind's craving to succeed at love:

> I can't forget love because I can't forget the pain, all that he taught me, that a human being can lie to another human being and know full well that he's or she's lying. Love dies. Like that. He left me. *Lie* like *leave*. Reject. Therefore judge. My whole life is not touching and being touched, but my memory of how I have failed in what is most important of all.[8]

Love inevitably leads to the betrayal of the lover, but more so it is a betrayal of the self because it denies any attempt to locate identity elsewhere. Acker's heroines and heroes take pleasure in the flesh, but they are left in anguish or destroyed because of desire.

Carter's texts deal in an imaginative way with a wide range of sexual questions and taboos, representations of domination, and the construction of gender identity. She does this from an essentially heterosexist perspective, and she has been criticised by certain writers for ignoring the power of the Sadeian to degrade and negatively permeate everything that it touches. Acker considers the nature of female desire, and links madness, sexuality and wildly varying literary techniques to create something unusual from traditional mediums. She demonstrates desire to be intrinsically linked to pain, suffering and annihilation because of the meta-languages of romance to which women are exposed.

Carter and Acker are aware of the pressures affecting any woman entering a field which has been tilled and harvested by men to nourish their pleasure. Whilst Acker and Carter are linked by their similar concerns they demonstrate different approaches. Acker is less polite in her renditions of the faceless fucking which reflects woman's desperation under patriarchy than Carter, but her directive is the same. Both demonstrate uniquely female voices in accordance with the imperative to demystify the patriarchy and reveal female identity separated from 'the gaze'. We must accept that as the woman writing erotica does so from within a male discourse she can only go a short distance towards expressing an imaginary that constructively criticises that of the male, whilst laying the foundation stone of the female dialectic. Importantly, they also combine to reveal that pornography is a 'product' of circumstance, not an initiator. Evidence of Acker's and Carter's perceptions of the pornographic as a genre come from their own writings and from a process of extrapolation.

Carter in *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (1979), creates an in depth critique of the situation the female pornographer faces when entering into a male domain. By citing the works of the Marquis de Sade, she also provides an insight into the stereotyping undertaken by the male literary pornographer. Carter begins *The Sadeian Woman* with a 'Polemical Preface' in which she deals with the discourse and imagery which produce the cultural concept of pornography. She provides a critique which Keenan sees as:

> An attempt to jolt the reader out of customary associations and habits of thought. Carter was not looking to Sade for a model, but rather to provide a speculative starting point.[9]

Carter also looks at the Freudian premise that anatomy is destiny, that the sexual organs are a crucial representation of the whole person. The sexual function becomes only a small part of physical human life and the enlarging and simplifying of this aspect until it becomes the most significant indicator of personality serves no function other than for arousal or persecution: "This is true of all mythologising of sexuality; but graffiti lets it be seen to be true". (*Carter, 1991, p.4*) In his role as the archetypal pornographer Sade deals in an ideological currency which contributes to woman's mythological subservience and silence. As Carter herself tells us: "Myth deals in false universals, to dull the pain of particular circumstances". (*Carter, 1991, p.5*)

It is possible to understand Carter's perceptions of the nature of texts which mythologise sexual practices in a way that suppresses women and excites men, if we observe her suggestions for a possible 'moral pornographer'. She states that such a writer, one who would seek the demystification of the flesh, would most likely be a female writer; it is masculine culture's failure to show women as living, breathing human beings separated from their bodily inclinations which imbues the pornographer with a reductive power over both the women s/he writes about, and the men who are excited by the material. Involved in this desire to provide a picture of the realities of human sexual relations is Carter's use of language, which not only leaves nothing to the imagination, but also aims to shock. This imperative, the use of language to produce a negative reaction, as well as to create an image in the mind, is something which becomes especially important when looking at her fiction.

Carter examines the mental erotic terrorism embodied in many pornographic texts, specifically its relationship to physical violence - most pertinently she feels this is explored by Sade. His world is one in which women are constantly fragmented and made to bleed. His mark of difference lies in his lack of feigned respect for tenderness in human relations:

> Sade has a curious ability to render every aspect of sexuality suspect, so that we see how the chaste kiss of the sentimental lover differs only in degree from the vampirish love-bite that draws blood. (*Carter, 1991, p.24*)

This lack of concern to create a façade to disguise the realities of the male pornographer is what makes Sade's work such valuable material for the feminist student of pornography. At the same time, this is arguably the element of pornography to which anti-pornography feminists object. Indeed, the issues raised in *The Sadeian Woman* have been discussed by key figures in the pornography debate. Keenan summarises two reactions here:

> Kappeler accused Carter of validating the pornographic - in the name of equal opportunity - by appealing to the literary. Williams, on the other hand, employed Carter's text in an argument which attempted to claim a positive value for women in pornography.[10]

Keenan herself argues that Carter's writing does not lend itself to such simplistic readings.

Kathy Acker takes a more emphatic approach to maximise the shock value of her depictions of sexual relations. She breaks the 'incest taboo' with frequent references in almost all her texts to the occurrence of sex between fathers (and step fathers) and their daughters. Irigaray suggests that in terms of economics the taboo exists to protect the masculine social order by maintaining the commodity value of women:

> The passage into the social order, the symbolic order, into order as such, is assured by the fact that men, or groups of men, circulate women amongst themselves, according to a rule known as the incest taboo. Whatever the familial form this prohibition may take in a given state of society, its signification has a much broader impact. It assures the foundation of the economic, social, and cultural order that has been ours for centuries.[11]

This ordering of society by exchange of women means that all female behaviour is reflected on to and referred back to men. Women, thus commodified, have status only in reference to men. The continuation of society based on exchange of women results in the continual stereotyping of women.

The incest taboo is so deeply ingrained that when we read Acker's texts we feel uncomfortable. The opening chapters of *Blood and Guts In High School* (1984) deal with the sexual relationship between Janey and her father (Johnny).[12] Acker is not simply employing shock tactics, by flouting the taboo which underpins the economics of female exploitation and objectification, she is forcing her readers to address their own acceptance of patriarchal order and challenge the sexual contract which exists between men. Acker's heroines appear to be the victims of male terrorism, but once her disruption of the guiding principle of the libidinal economy is understood it becomes evident that equally men are potential victims of female desire.

Feminists, attempting to impose stricter censorship laws, typically assert that the pornographic trades in the manipulation of male fantasy, so that the consumer cannot locate her/his desire in a place where there is any residue of respect for the female. The depiction of a woman's desire is always a portrait of her fulfillment in providing

what her man needs to achieve his orgasm. However such commodification of the female can be challenged when one ceases gender stereotyping, and learns to express sexual pleasure in a woman-centered way. Carter rises to the challenge by moving into a world in which male phantasms dominate the sexual scene, not those of women. In this world a man desires a woman because another man has fantasies about her. Carter sees that these fantasies can only function for women when they accept that their best means of sexual expression is found through embracing the male sexual economy. Crucially, she recognises the extent to which a bestial and phallocentric view of sex must necessarily also limit men. Within her work we are made to see the way women are goaded into brutality for fear of upsetting the status quo, and how they learn to acquiesce because they fear the legendary strength of the predatory male. We also see examples of how the structure can be altered so that women become the empowered and feared sex; *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) provides the ultimate revelation in the end. It is not force that makes men pre-ordained masters. It is the belief that there is a force that ordains them to be such. Rarely does a character of hers describe her/himself as in ultimate control; the imperative to exist in a state of calmness within a love that is intrinsically strong erases the need to place men in one role and women in another.

Acker's fiction is a blend of postmodernism and pornography at its most self-conscious. Her work varies in its approach to the erotic, and frequently the language moves from the subtle to the forceful. She writes poetry and novels informed by the poetry of others. It is important to note that in the case of *Kathy Goes to Haiti* (1989) Acker deliberately set out to write a pornographic piece. By utilising the language

and methodology of a familiar discourse she gives us an insight into the "supremely, politically important" obsession with method.[13] Her interest in language and structural conventions within literature led her to write a novel intended to mislead its reader. The sexual content of Acker's writing is not occasional or coincidental, it is a deliberate challenge to the senses/sense deriving its credibility mainly from the poetic imperative which survives the sex-show.

In Acker's pornography the need to express and fulfill sexual desire subsumes any move towards plot and characterisation. This is perhaps more of a reflection of Sadeian reality than Carter could attempt from within the delineations of a demystifying moral pornographer. Acker's writing is often violent, frequently concerned with power, sometimes homosexual, and almost always orgasmic. It is therefore inevitable that she generally comes closer to the animal instinct Sade seeks to expose than Carter does. Need is the governing force and is united in an alignment of sex and death, pleasure and pain, love and destruction, "Your need gathers. Passion collects. You're in it now, baby [. . .] passions, just as they are".[14] The desire Acker expresses links nihilism and penetration, not through critical discourse, but through the anguish of her female characters.

She does not write in a discourse which must protect women from knowledge of their own desires. If she demonstrates lust as leading to the obliteration of sanity, it is the sex which achieves that and not the man involved, he is simply a necessary requirement of the heroine. Lust destroys Acker's women at the precise moment it revitalises them. Through pursuit of the male body they are doomed to be less than

they are. Kathy in *Kathy Goes to Haiti* wants love and sex to obliterate loneliness, but when she is with Roger her need controls her, and her grasp of her mind grows weak. She reminds herself that "you've got to use your intellect to keep you in line, no insane sexual behaviour no pleading and grovelling for love".[15] The fear is that it is women not men who must conceal their own desire, and thus despise men for awakening it. The voracious sexual appetites of Acker's heroines unlock the door to a world in which Carter's tigers and Sade's Juliette become victims of their own sexual desire, instead of always the victims of men. Acker does not rely on the alienating discourse of myth, or the conventions of an established genre; she does not write pseudo-psychology, nor is she divided from her subject by gender. She is a woman exploring the power of sex, seeking the masochistic impulse in submission to desire, not in submission to the phallus. Her methods are certainly controversial, and at times hard to justify; but perhaps those who categorise the pornographer as misogynist will be forced to look again.

Angela Carter: Re-evaluating the Sadeian Stereotype

The Marquis de Sade is seen as the ultimate misogynist pornographer in much of contemporary feminist writing. The manner in which Sade mythologises female sexuality, through de-humanising women in sexual scenarios, while essentially revealing the conspiracy of the romantic imaginary is of especial interest to Angela Carter:

> This confusion as to the experience of reality - that what I know from my experience is true is, in fact, not so - is most apparent, however, in the fantasy love-play of the archetypes, which generations of artists have contrived to make seem so attractive that, lulled by dreams, many women willingly ignore the palpable evidence of their own responses. (*Carter, 1991,*

p.7)

That is to say, the manner in which women respond to given situations does not always correlate with their own predictions. Carter focuses particularly on the reaction to romantic and sexual scenarios because she believes that the stereotype of the woman who wishes to be a fairy princess, rescued by the archetypal 'knight in shining armour' is damaging. The 'responses' of women she seeks are the allegedly 'unattractive' and 'bestial' responses which also interest Sade. As a part of this process Carter's fiction and non-fiction critique and provide insight into certain conventional pornographic images. Amongst others she considers the dominant female, relationships between women, and the treatment by misogynist and Sadeian pornography of flesh as meat, focusing specifically on dialects of penetration.

Angela Carter's fiction and non-fiction both address the concerns of the Sadeian narrative, and it is for this reason that all her work is so fundamental to any literary analysis of pornography. In the novels which she wrote prior to 1979 Carter included many of the threads of the Sadeian narrative. Key examples of this can be found in *The Passion of New Eve*, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, *The Magic Toyshop* and *Heroes and Villains*. In *The Passion of New Eve* Carter examines the process by which feminine identity is constructed and includes the Sadeian practice of education through sexual intercourse and physical degradation. In *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* her protagonist takes a journey through a variety of sexually charged environments on his path to enlightenment. In *The Magic Toyshop* she demonstrates the silencing of women and the abuse of the young to be an effective manner of enforcing the patriarchy. In *Heroes and Villains*

a young girl encounters a 'savage' people and is raped and educated about her desires. These narratives resemble the Sadeian as we will see in *The Misfortunes of Virtue* and *The Prosperity of Vice*. Carter's readings of these tales, through critical analysis and her own fiction, serve to highlight the various processes by which the female body becomes inscribed by both culture and pornography.

Carter also deals with Sade's use of language, in relation to the language used by other pornographers, illustrating the subtleties which make Sade's texts fit her own fictional purposes. This use of Sade is most commonly ignored in favour of interest in Carter's re-writing of fairy-tales. I believe that Sade appeals to Carter partially because of the unattractiveness of Sadeian sexual encounters. Primarily this is because they do not seek to conceal female repression and degradation. In fairy-tales a veneer of aesthetic and romantic sentiment is present which imbues them with a sense of acceptability. A pornographic work evaluates people in a superficial way - through actions alone - spiritual existence is unimportant. As Carter herself suggests, the pornographer erases the identity of the people involved to facilitate the attainment of pleasure:

> He converts the sexed woman, living, breathing, troubling, into a desexed hole and the breathing, living, troubling, man into nothing but a probe; pornography becomes a form of pastoral, sex an engaging and decorative activity that maybe performed without pain, soil, sweat or effect. (*Carter, 1991, p.20*)

This represents a reversal of 'normal' literary emphasis, the importance of the individual over circumstance. The body, especially the female body, must comply with the narrative.[16]

Carter also considers the general issues surrounding the treatment of the female body in pornography, focusing on the reference to the flesh, wounds, and blood of women. She highlights the acceptability of the value placed on the blood of the deflowered virgin, the Biblical revulsion in the presence of menstrual blood, and the Freudian references to castration and the female 'wound' as seen in our typically patriarchal culture:

> The libertine loves blood. At least the blood that flows according to his own techniques [. . .] Pain as a necessary component of pleasure: that of the male who penetrates, that of the male or female who is penetrated. *What fantasy of a closed, solid, virginal body to be forced open* underlies such a representation, and such a practice of sexuality? In this view, the body's pleasure always results from a forced entry—preferably bloody—into an *enclosure*. A *property?*[17]

Carter sees the fear of, and destruction of, female flesh in Sade's work, almost as a result of the role which his/our culture has given to women. Sade's uncompromising illustration of sexual violence results in a physical as well as a mental shredding of the female body. The Sadeian woman is often beautiful physically and spiritually, and sometimes she is powerful, but never is she in possession of her own body.[18] This drive for the annihilation of female flesh, which the anti-pornography lobby criticises, is not however solely a pornographic one.

The relationship between spirit and flesh is central even to contemporary pornographers, but at the time of Sade the relationship between the two was more clearly defined. Indulgence of the spirit alone in religious contemplation was as possible as total gratification of the lusts of the body. This pursuit of the flesh is undertaken in the Sadeian text with no justification from the realm of the spiritual, and indeed is often undertaken in the name of the desecration of religion. Carter

characterises these libertines in her analysis:

> [They] are great aristocrats, landowners, bankers, judges, archbishops, popes and certain women who have become very rich through prostitution, speculation, murder and usury. They have the tragic style and the infernal loquacity of the damned; and they have no inner life, no introspection. Their actions sum them up completely. (*Carter, 1991,* p.25)

Carter takes this further with an analysis of the intricacies of the mental associations in English with the word 'flesh' as opposed to the word 'meat'. It is this distinction, which does not exist in German, that leads to an exploration of Sade's treatment of flesh as meat:

> Flesh has special orifices to contain the prick that penetrates it but meat's relationship to the knife is more random and a thrust anywhere will do. *(Carter, 1991, p.24)*

Carter discovers an almost tentative rejoicing in Sade's work surrounding the sexual possibilities of meat.[19] In removing the humanity of the body from the subject and the object of pornography the pornographer can go on to remove all dignity.

Sade's pornography is intended to disgust as well as arouse, it is crafted to devalue human experience, and perhaps most disturbingly, it is designed to make terrorism appealing as well as revealing. A more recent version of this can be found in certain passages of Pauline Reage's *The Erotic Story of 0*:

> Slender body upon which thick purple welts ran like ropes across shoulders, back, buttocks, belly and breasts, two welts sometimes intersecting.[20]

This annihilation of the self and the mincing of the human body is the price the Sadeian libertine also exacts for his orgasm. Frequently the destruction of female individuality in tandem with the flesh is not even recognised. With Carter we must address this reduction of body to meat because this phenomenon must be seen either

as a defining characteristic of pornography, or of patriarchy; it is evidently infinitely more than a linguistic technicality.

Carter goes on to express the view that Sade's unique and uncompromising handling of human sexuality is in some sense valuable to women in its clarity. She evaluates the treatment of the innocent as seen in *The Misfortunes of Virtue* (1797) in the light of the 'romantic ideal'. Like Germaine Greer, and arguably Sade, Carter questions the inherent dangers faced by the naïve. The chaste kiss of the world of Barbara Cartland is as much a part of the conspiracy, and illustrates something potentially more damaging than the sexual annihilation of Sade's Justine. Justine is a 'good woman' in terms of the patriarchal ideologies of her time, yet her reward is rape, humiliation, violence, and finally 'death by nature'. As Carter points out:

> Justine, daughter of a banker, becomes the prototype of two centuries of women who find the world was not, as they had been promised. *(Carter, 1991, p.57)*

Sade provides an incitement to beware of idealism at the same time as indulging in descriptions of gratuitous sexual violence. The lesson he gives comes out of a hatred of women - a hatred Carter must acknowledge. Not a hatred necessarily of the female body, more disgust borne of misunderstanding the force of patriarchy of the susceptibility of the feminine will and flesh to consumption by ideology as it yields to the requirements of the dominant discourse. A pervasive requirement of this discourse is the need for women to be beautiful.

Unsurprisingly then, beauty is a recurring element in the description of the Sadeian woman. Carter argues that the attractive nature of the empowered Sadeian woman

rests in her perpetuation of the male myth of 'genuine female sexual power':

> The life of Juliette proposes a method of profane mastery of the instruments of power. She is a woman who acts according to the precepts and also the practice of a man's world and so she does not suffer. Instead, she causes suffering. (*Carter, 1991, p.79*)

Alternatively, the innocent Justine brings us face to face with male power, actual and potential sexual violence. Justine discovers innocence coupled with beauty may be valued, but that state is simultaneously found to be erotic - and this causes pain. Carter looks at Justine as the precursor of Marilyn Monroe, and the cult of the beautiful, dumb blond whose fragility and 'child-like' nature characterises her particular brand of eroticism, whilst permitting her to remain sexually 'pure'. Greer encapsulates this 'most attractive' image of woman perfectly:

> The stereotype is the Eternal Feminine. She is the Sexual Object sought by all men, and by all women. She is of neither sex, for she has herself no sex at all. Her value is solely attested by the demand she excites in others.[21]

Sade outlines a kind of ideal woman, then proceeds to inflict as much humiliation on her as possible because, ultimately, she can never be ideal, that is to say, she will never be a man.

Carter's work on the nature of Sade's treatment of his female protagonists covers a significant number of Sadeian texts, as well as referring to the overriding impressions of Sade formed by earlier critics. Although her prime concern is with the cultural implication of the Sadeian 'analysis' of the pre-determined nature of women, she also sets herself the task of defining the means by which the late twentieth century view of women results from 'traditional' ideological restrictions. For example, her fiction deals simultaneously with Sade and the genre of the fairy-tale in her analysis

of matters relating to the shaping of the female social consciousness. Carter is very aware of the process of transmitting conventional ideologies pertaining to the role of women, to each new generation of children. In *The Bloody Chamber* (1971), she demonstrates the extent to which the application of a vaguely inappropriate, or more obvious meta-language, that of sexuality, to folk tales can turn them into pornographic texts. In their abstraction of sex it becomes an act in which women almost become slaves in their subservience to the sexual meta-languages of the past. She employs a less subtle style of discourse in her own early fiction and she is motivated by her beliefs in the absurdity and danger of the discourses of the past - dangers which she outlines in *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History.*

Carter looks at Sade's portrayal of the two sisters Juliette and Justine. Both sisters are at a disadvantage as women in a man's world. The experiences of the two characters reflect one another as they choose to live dialectically opposite lifestyles. Justine attempts to conform to the stereotype of a good woman, but she is a Cinderella character who is destined never to meet her Prince Charming. Carter describes the story of Justine as an inverted fairy-tale:

> She [Justine] rejects the approaches of a fairy godmother because the woman is a criminal; she falls in love, not with a handsome prince, but with a murderous homosexual who sets his dogs on her and frames her for a murder he has himself committed. So she is the heroine of a black, inverted fairy-tale and its subject is the misfortunes of unfreedom; Justine embarks on a dolorous pilgrimage in which every preferred sanctuary turns out to be a new prison. (*Carter, 1991, p.39*)

Justine's passivity leads to repeated desecration culminating in her death from a lightning strike. The experiences of Juliette represent the antithesis to those of

Justine. By utilising her capacity for rational thought she takes control of her situation. She uses sex to achieve a position of power and influence over men who can protect her and through self-mastery takes pleasure in precisely those activities which caused Justine such pain. Juliette received her education in the convent where both she and Justine spent their childhood. Juliette was selected by the Abbess Delbène, who believed that she showed a natural propensity for vice, to receive an education in sexual expertise, atheism and the relativity of ethics. Her initiation into vice concluded with a murder and entrance into a brothel where she has anal sex with an archbishop. Juliette uses her powers of seduction to maximise her wealth and destroys all who cross her including her father whom she seduces and then murders.

Although the two women live their lives in very different ways their lifestyles are interwoven, and are not contradictory. Juliette is just as much at a disadvantage as her sister; it is only her decision to exploit the situation in which she finds herself that makes her a less than obvious victim of male society.[22] Juliette concludes that a life of vice is the best route open to her if she has any hope of becoming a rich and powerful woman. She is a woman who shuts off all sentimentality and functions entirely employing her intellect to produce financial and sexual gratification. Juliette is the whore/witch of the fairy tale, a 'type', no more moderate then her sister. The extent to which Juliette is a mirror image of Justine is expounded wherever possible; whatever Justine is accused of, or forced to do, Juliette willingly involves herself in. Carter reflects that Juliette strives for self-mastery throughout her career, while at no point does she ever find herself independent of the male sphere of influence:

> If Justine is a pawn because she is a woman, Juliette transforms herself from pawn to queen in a single move and

> henceforward goes wherever she pleases on the chessboard. Nevertheless, there remains the question of the presence of the king, who remains lord of the game. (*Carter, 1991, pp.79-80*)

Juliette and Justine depict two of the key stereotypes of the feminine, virgin and whore. Juliette only appears more powerful because she gains financial reward for her part in the conspiracy.

The wickedness of the 'bad' Sadeian woman also lies in her reason, in her strength and in her sexuality. Women like the Abbess Delbéne, Juliette's instructor, offer a threat to the Sadeian world in which male domination is paramount. Because of her strength and blood lust she must be censured rather than accepted as she would be were she a man. Carter points out, but unfortunately fails to probe, a further manifestation of the inherent threat proffered by strong women to patriarchal values that is the apparent preference powerful Sadeian women have for their own sex. Examples of the despicable nature of women are dealt with over and over in much of Sade's work, yet it is perhaps unfair to pretend that his feelings towards these women were any different from those he had for the libertines he creates. Juliette in her position of 'control' finds herself fulfilling the same male fantasies as her sister. She even feigns virginity and helplessness to attract men. She is an object of male desire and, despite her decision to gain wealth and prestige by manipulating men, she can never fulfill her own fantasies. Her fantasy life is wholly subject to male discursive possibilities.

Feminine desire and violence are complex issues, and in Sadeian terms, as Carter recognises, they are at their most powerful when one deals with Sadeian women as

mothers. The practices of infanticide and matricide become a female perversion in Sade's texts. The supposed unnatural quality of women in Sade who choose to avoid motherhood by any possible means and conceive only to abort, or for financial gain, is bound up in many of the prevalent ideological perceptions regarding motherhood. Carter deals with the imagery of the womb as it presents itself in our culture. The ultimate womb is the earth, from which we come and to which we go, it is also a place of peace, growth and nourishment to which we can never return, and commands an important place in our symbolic culture. Sex can be used to reinforce this:

> The missionary position has another great asset, from the mythic point of view; it implies a system of relations between partners that equates the woman to the passive receptivity of the soil, to the richness and fecundity of the earth. (*Carter, 1991, p.8*)

Carter sees the threat of the mystery of women's bodies as the key to Sade's rhetoric of denial of the value of the female's capacity to 'create' and 'nurture' life, a denial echoed throughout misogynist culture. In actuality, Sade's demystification of the womb is what leads him most easily to the demystification of the female body in its entirety. The cult of the Goddess is cited by Carter as responsible for the exaggerated importance placed on the female body, and perhaps the eradication of the mythology surrounding that, as undertaken by Sade, will lead to a more realistic treatment of women as sentient beings. It is finally Carter's own fiction, and not Sade's, that confronts this most effectively; Sade writes Juliette as an antithesis, an embodiment of a female type, the implications for feminism contained within the tale are, therefore where present, incidental.

In the dramatic interlude *Philosophy in the Boudoir* (1787) Sade gives a detailed account of the erotic education of the willing Eugenie de Mistival. When Eugenie's mother arrives at the school of love to rescue her daughter, in a violent exposé of maternal relationships, Sade frames a fantasy in which the girl assaults her mother. Eugenie rapes and then sews up her mother as part of her erotic instruction, under the guidance of Dolmance. Carter interprets this act to represent Eugenie symbolically freeing herself from the influence of her mother. The medical profession's view of the female role in reproduction meant that Eugenie's treatment of her mother could be tenuously justified.[23] Because it was thought that a child owes its biological existence entirely to its father, it need have no extreme bond with its mother. Therefore, Sade, creates in this story, an extreme form of mother hatred which extends into Eugenie's own determination never to be a mother. Eugenie takes on a sexually aggressive role towards her mother inserting a dildo into her vagina whilst Dolmance penetrates her anally. What is Eugenie's behaviour, Carter asks, if it is not a manifestation of the relationship between her Oedipal feelings towards her mother and her self-hatred? After all, the opinions of both Freud and Sade derive from societies which placed the same ideological strait-jackets upon women, despite their chronological separation by a century.

The pornographers who characterise all women according to a generic woman, who will always respond in a pre-determined way, are dealing with the same stereotypes which a patriarchal society employs to define human relationships. Carter believes the boundaries of these types are rigid and she argues that even Sade fails to break the ultimate taboo. His pornography of pain and self loathing would have become

meaningless, in her opinion, had Madame de Mistival orgasmed and not fainted as Eugenie inflicted her vengeance. Sade finds a barrier which he cannot cross, a place where respect for female identity must occur to prevent discontinuity in the eroticisation of misogynistic fantasy. How could we expect him to write something which challenged his own and his culture's separation of female sexuality and reproductive capacity? The pornographer will usually opt to revert to safety to retain the necessary level of audience participation.

Carter's appropriation of Sadeian ideas and myths is visible in her work, although she does not gain her most magical and enthralling scenes from Sade alone. She has clear links to Lacanian philosophy, and the fairy tales of Charles Perrault.[24] She utilises her many sources in her examination of the mythology of sexuality, and although she places herself within a liberal context, the extent to which she can discuss sexual taboos and remain acceptable is still limited. It is questionable whether Carter is writing feminised Sadeian texts, or if she is working in a less directed and more intuitive way as she herself suggests in *Notes from The Front Line* where she proclaims, "what I really like doing is writing fiction and trying to work things out that way".[25] On the most basic level, she is writing in a style which, for a late twentieth century novelist, is curiously similar to that of Sade and nineteenth century novelists. She places her characters within a picaresque framework, and chooses to examine possible Utopias, be they patriarchal, matriarchal or oligarchical. Her fiction also provides key comparisons with Sade's when dealing with areas of extreme sexual behaviour. We can see in *The Sadeian Woman* a clear sense of the importance of the position of the female in masculinised pornography whether as

reader, or as participant. Carter deals with sexual 'fantasies' which incorporate possibilities of power for the woman involved, without making her into a dominatrix or a hag. She creates positive images of heterosexuality for women, either by exaggerating stereotypes to demonstrate their absurdity, or by including women who have as great a sensual appreciation of life as their male counterparts.

The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman (1972) is the first in an intended trilogy of speculative fictions of which *The Passion of New Eve* is the second. The trilogy was never completed and I believe this is at least in part because the *Sadeian Woman* provided a catharsis for Carter. Elaine Jordan suggests that *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* heralds a change in Carter's style, a break from the general themes and approaches which appear in *Heroes and Villains* (1969) and *The Magic Toyshop* (1967).[26] I would argue that the change comes later with the writing of *The Sadeian Woman.* Although the world of Desidero, the central character, has a closer and more direct relationship to sensuality and fantasy than that of Jewel or Marianne, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* is clearly concerned with key ideological and sociological themes which appear throughout her earlier fiction. Furthermore these themes very definitely relate to the approach she takes in her cultural critique of Sade in 1979. The first of these themes relates to the diversity of settings and climates in Carter's fictions which brings to mind Roland Barthes' words on the same subject in Sade:

> Whether Astrakhan, Angers, Naples or Paris, cities are merely purveyors, countrysides are retreats, gardens are scenery, and climates are operators of lust; it is always the same geography, the same population, the same functions.[27]

That is, where the text is situated becomes secondary, it is the emotional 'journey'

which is suffered on the physical 'journey' through the cities, deserts, and forests of Carter's and Sade's fictions that is important. Carter's use of setting is very similar to Sade's, in particular the isolation of the libertines from the outside world, and descriptions of the earth which employ the rhetoric of the body are common to both authors. In the work of both it is equally impossible to escape from examinations of possible 'Utopian' ends to the systems of democratic and autocratic patriarchy which we experience. Be it an Oligarchy or a Matriarchy, set up as a potential ideal way of conducting society, there is an identifiable tendency in Carter's fiction, borne out in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, to suggest that to escape from a negative approach to female sexuality we must first escape the social and mental constraints of the patriarchy. There is never any suggestion in Carter's fiction that the result of condemning and escaping a society which reveres and accepts male control, and the signifying power of the phallus, will result in entry into a less oppressive one. Like Sade she appears to deny the possibility of Utopia altogether.[28] Alterations in the general acceptance of the nature of liberty and identity within the public conscience prompted what Carter saw as Sade's satirical exploration of the loss of sexual morality. I am convinced that a partial appreciation of what Carter is doing in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and in *The Passion of New Eve* can be achieved by seeing her, too, as a satirist.

A further similarity between the fictions of both authors is the manner in which Carter deals in the currency of sexual fantasy, but her approach is subtly different. The concept of 'entertainment value' with regard to pornography is one which critics of Sade see as rooted in defilement, and to a certain extent they are not wrong. The

lack of power and control given to the female in his texts is intimately linked to humiliation and the revulsion elicited by the female sex organs. As Carter points out in *The Sadeian Woman*, the 'gap in the pornographic text' is traditionally left for a male consumer to step into. Benoite Groult agrees, and argues further, that a 'helpful' approach to pornography, through pornography, is not possible:

> Pornography has always existed and has never undermined anything. It has always given pleasure to the same men and the same women and shocked the same others.[29]

If she is right then perhaps Carter's *Seven Wonders of the World in Three Lifelike Dimensions* that the protagonist Desidero views, and Hoffman's machine which runs on eroto-energy, simply do nothing more than titillate or offend. If however, as I believe, Groult is wrong, Carter can be seen to be ably questioning radically the various manifestations of heterosexuality because the text operates within the realm of fantasy. I would argue that Carter is able to leave a gap in the text through which women can participate in the pornographic text. The inclusion of descriptions of diverse sexual acts, encompassing sodomy, necrophilia, paedophilia, rape and bestiality as the crux of what Desidero must face and 'overcome', encourages her audience to examine its attitudes towards sexuality. It is important to recognise that all variations of sexual behaviour are either legitimised or outlawed by the dominant discourse.

The idealisation and mystification of the female may be questioned in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, but the radical assault on actual identity as defined through sexual stereotyping is nowhere as pronounced as in *The Passion of New Eve*. The central male character, Evelyn, is castrated and inducted into female

society. At the beginning of the story he is seduced by Leilah/Lilith and after a brief sexual relationship he impregnates her, whereupon he loses his desire for her: "As soon as I knew she was carrying my child, any remaining desire for her vanished. She became an embarrassment to me. She became a shocking inconvenience to me."[30] After he destroys Leilah/Lilith he undertakes a symbolic journey through desert to the point at which his education as a female. Once Evelyn is physiologically altered by 'Mother' and appears female his psychological transformation begins. Although Eve is bombarded with stereotyped images of womanhood it is her rape by Zero which marks the start of her true education. Femininity is ultimately hers when she falls in love with the transvestite ex-Hollywood film star, Tristessa. Eve's ultimate enlightenment occurs at the close of the novel when she recognises that "The vengeance of the sex is love".[31]

In this text, Carter confronts the symbolic culture which concentrates on the female as negative, and permeates the psyche with images of a passive female sex-role. Using women as seductresses with their eyes on power - a power not reliant on money - she produces a text which relies most deeply on the female appropriation of sexuality as a weapon. The sexual terrorism which is prevalent against women in the Sadeian text is now in the hands of the oppressed who finally have the opportunity for revenge. Matriarchal domination and an American Civil War in which women fought against patriarchy using all the means at their disposal provides the context for a tale of oppositions.

The novel follows a picaresque framework and, once again, it is the mental journey

of the characters involved which is important. However, we can also learn a great deal about Carter's perception of the symbolic order of the pornographic if we examine the theatrical power of the sign systems embodied in the work. To contrast with images of 'lack' and passivity as suggested by Freud in relation to the vagina, Carter's 'Women' are signified by the female circle with a set of bared teeth inside it; while the symbol of a broken phallus features highly in the graffiti around the cities. The transference of a discourse of power to women in this text comes about with the negation of the idea of sexual 'completeness' and 'strength' of the male. The psychological impact of a culture which fails to appreciate the feminine, coming into contact with one which holds diametrically opposing views is encompassed by Evelyn's horror at the thought that he was to become a woman, and in Sophia's response to that horror: "Is it such a bad thing to become like me?"[32] The socialisation which Evelyn has received as a man has to be modified after he is physically changed into a female. Mother pours images of maternity into the mind of Eve to promote a transformation from his/her culturally moulded 'male' attitudes to ideas more appropriate to a female. The images Eve is shown all conform to male images of heterosexual women, women whose creativity is best channelled into motherhood; she is given no alternative criteria on which to base an acceptance of femaleness. It is subsequently rape, humiliation, and falling in love which are seen as slotting Eve into her new gender role, a powerful dramatisation of the way little girls set about growing into brain-washed women.

The view we are given of the behavioural patterns forced on Eve as a woman, patterns that she forced on others when a man, are crucial factors in our appreciation

of *The Passion of New Eve*. Carter examines the Sadeian scenario, firstly, as it exists in Evelyn's treatment of Leilah, and secondly, in Zero's treatment of his harem, from within the same mind. In this way, as Jordan argues, Eve becomes a narrative device, "as passive as Desidero because like him she is a way for the reader to pass through possible options, as it were experimentally".[33] S/he becomes a vehicle through which Carter can present a realistic demystification of the gender roles constructed by patriarchy and matriarchy (under Mother).

A key gender role which is demystified in *The Passion of New Eve*, but not through Eve is that of motherhood. The group of fantasies which seems to provide the least threat to the dominant discourse are those in which the woman identifies herself with nature and fertility. Emphasis on fertility seems to neutralise the power of these fantasies. Fiction often either avoids discussion of the role of mother or desexualises it. In the case of Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* 'Mother' is a fearsome creature, the leader of a dystopia which supplants the patriarchy. Until her final two novels, Carter placed the idea - the fantasy - of 'mother' under attack. The ability to differentiate between reality and fantasy is indicative of maturity, and, in turn, separation from the mother. Carter's women seem to rely, as do Sade's, on a severing of the mother. This is perhaps a reflection of a daughter fantasising. Nicole Ward Jouve seeks the mother at the root of our tussle with the need for closeness and independence:

> The father is consciousness, and what structures the need. The mother is our tussle with reality, the reason why we endlessly attempt to make sense of the world. Desire for the mother fuels us. The father compels us, and enables us, to let go. The mother is earth, water. Materiality, feeling. The father is air, fire. Thought inspiration, light. The mother is

> what enables me to rethink my relation with the earth. The father, with the sky.[34]

This relationship between child and parent is reminiscent not only of conventional stereotypes but also of Sade's tales. The mother figure who will swallow her child back into herself becomes the terrifying figure who can only be resisted through sexual abuse. In *The Passion of New Eve* the physical size of Mother prevents such abuse and the mother figure is freed from the traditional role of motherhood.

In this novel Carter not only deals effectively with images alluding to the cultural production of the traditionally feminine role in society, she also chooses to examine the constrictions of masculine roles. Eve is not the only character trapped by the stereotypes that are forced upon her because of her body; Tristessa represents her antithesis - a biological male who despite his physical body has cultivated and moulded for himself what Mother would see as a 'feminine consciousness'. The earlier Evelyn had spent his youth fantasising about the 'female Tristessa', and finally as a woman she falls in love with the 'masculine Tristessa'; and through this relationship they both move closer to their 'gender roles'. The blurring of gender boundaries, and in some cases the celebrated denial of them, results in the reversal and confusion of the social order. Not only does Carter present a 'Mother Goddess' who can only be described as a 'Phallic Mother', in the mould of Durand whom she identifies as such in *The Sadeian Woman* (*Carter, 1991, p.111-115*), she also gives us Zero, a man whose name signifies castration - Zero has to strap on a 'wooden leg' and this and his impotence are at the centre of his self-hatred. Zero relies solely on the will of the women that surround him to sustain his legendary status, in the same way as the Sadeian libertine does. However, Carter does not hide the weakness of

the libertine from her audience because her intention is to reveal, rather than conceal, the shaky foundations of the ideologies that support our interpretations of the sexual hierarchy. Through her direct reversal of notions and symbols which have become accepted with little comment by patriarchal societies she demonstrates the artificial nature of ideological frameworks, thus she makes a valuable social point.

The fact that Carter chooses to deal with issues that are fundamental to the patriarchy in an erotic way does in some cases cause confusion. The level of integrity which her texts hold as serious considerations of human relations is virtually entirely dependent on the attitude of the individual reader. Paulina Palmer recognises this limitation

> An episode which one reader may interpret as a serious investigation into the female victim's response to the experience of violent sex, may strike another as pornographic.[35]

The detached curiosity of the male narrator in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* produces a text that condemns and re-writes the kind of pornography produced by Sade, whilst at the same time not examining sufficiently topics of female manipulation, suppression and abuse. If we choose to look at this text in a negative way because of the lack of female perspective we must recognise the implications of this in the earlier half of *The Passion of New Eve* when Evelyn is still a male.

In *Heroes and Villains* Carter also presents a journey which results in the sexual education of a young girl. At the outset of the novel she lives in a 'civilised' steel and concrete village with her father where she is protected from the 'Barbarians who

inhabit the jungle'. The pseudo-Utopian society which she inhabits bores her and after the death of her father she leaves with a former prisoner, Jewel, and enters the world of the Barbarians. As in a traditional Sadeian tale Marianne's first reward for disobedience is rape. Jewel then introduces her to his people who reluctantly accept her. Marianne is especially interested in the backward son of Doctor Donally and rapes him in a final act of resistance to Jewel. Marianne becomes Jewel's wife and is accepted into Barbarian society.

The graphic rape scene which Carter includes between the two main protagonists of *Heroes and Villains* has been considered somewhat awkward by critics.[36] Jewel's rape of Marianne represents an attempt to 'master her', gain power over what he fears. It is Marianne's response that distinguishes this rape scene from the traditional. This is substantiated by Carter's own judgement:

> It doesn't make Marianne feel degraded - it makes her absolutely *furious*. And, in common with all the rape fantasies to which some women used to admit, the aggressor is a man of compulsive allure and unnatural beauty. A 'demon lover' who absolves the woman of all responsibility for her own desire.[37]

The two characters go on to fall in love and the incident is romanticised, with Jewel even providing a reason for his rape:

> 'There's the matter of our traditional hatred. And, besides, I'm very frightened of you [. . .] Donally says [. . .] Swallow you up and incorporate you, see. Dr Donally says. Social psychology.'[38]

In the case of women who fantasise about rape the violent aspect of the action is similarly repressed. The rape represents an inability on the part of the man to resist the compulsion of expectation. The rape fantasy as representation of male compulsion is part of the appeal. The desire of the woman is not admitted, the

responsibility for desire is taken by the man. The separation of fantasy and reality is important in the case of all fantasies, but the perceived implications of the 'rape fantasy' make this distinction especially important, as Dworkin indicates:

> In rape or incest cases, as in battery, the so-called victim is distinguished from other females by her provocativeness [. . .] She cannot comprehend what she is up against when she claims she did not want it. She is up against the whole world of real male belief about her real nature, expressed most purely in pornography.[39]

Thus the fantasy which seeks to remove the guilt of desiring is in itself often deemed to be the one women should feel most guilty about having. The choice to take on fully the position of 'object' in fantasy is a choice that represents consciousness of a choice being made, and it is that which is important.

Carter's male and female characters are equally suppressed by their cultures. Finn, the central male character in *The Magic Toyshop* is an obvious victim of patriarchal domination. *The Magic Toyshop* tells the tale of the newly orphaned Melanie, Victoria and Jonathon who go to live with their Uncle Philip and Aunt Margaret after the death of their parents. Aunt Margaret is a symbolically silent woman, dumb through oppression. Margaret's brothers Finn and Francie live with the family and are also subject to the dictatorial Philip who despises all forms of human love. The budding friendship between the pubescent Melanie and Finn provides the focus for the story, but the frustrated Philip attempts to corrupt their relationship. Prior to the performance of one of Philip's puppet shows he manipulates Finn. He is placed in a position in which he is set up by Philip to rape Melanie:

> He's pulled our strings as if we were his puppets, and there I was all ready to touch you up just as he wanted. He told me to rehearse Leda and the Swan with you. Somewhere in private.

> Like in your room, he said. Go up and rehearse a rape with Melanie in your bedroom.[40]

This submissiveness, which Philip requests from Finn, represents the abuse of the patriarch's power over other men. Although men are seen to suffer in 'porno-patriarchal' situations women usually suffer more as victims from sexual stereotyping than men do. Carter's treatment of gender roles as suggested by the patriarchal societies in *The Magic Toyshop* and in *Heroes and Villains* reflects the lack of morality which exists in societies modelled on 'acceptable' misogynist principles. This provides an informative contrast to her later explorations of alternative social/cultural structures in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and in *The Passion of New Eve.*

The Magic Toyshop is, in essence, a diatribe against male power, intended to silence women spiritually, physically and literally. Melanie's Aunt Margaret is dumb under Uncle Philip's roof, finding self-expression only in the sexual love she has for her brother. Incest is a key subject in the works of the Marquis de Sade, and a perversion that generally suggests the destruction of both partners because of the taboo society enforces on such relationships. In Carter's story it is the incestuous relationship between Margaret and Francie that becomes the only example of genuinely felt love:

> Francie and Aunt Margaret embraced. It was a lover's embrace, annihilating the world, as if taking place at midnight on the crest of a hill, with a tearing wind beating the branches above them. The brother and sister kneeled.[41]

The two of them understand each other's needs, and Finn and Melanie recognise that if there was any 'pornographic imperative' present any revulsion would become slight in comparison with Philip's treatment of his wife. He subjugates her until she

has no voice to question his acts of violence and disdain, ruling his domain with fear and resentment of that which he can never be; he is the archetypal patriarch in his originally intended role.

Carter has created a world that mirrors violence with silence, and revulsion with love; it is a world that demonstrates the strength of the weak against the weakness of the powerful. It is finally the burning down of the toyshop, in Uncle Philip's absence, that liberates the family itself from all external signs of patriarchal pressure:

> 'Everything is gone.'
> 'Nothing is left but us.
> At night, in the garden, they faced each other in a wild surmise.[42]

The new beginning that the children and the Jowles face will be filled with contradictions and uncertainties, but it will not lead to a future that conforms blindly to stereotypes. The attempt of the Sadeian influence to take away the essential innocence of children has failed, and Carter is triumphant in her presentation of the patriarchal world overrun with uncertainty.

Carter is powerful as a fantasist who blurs the boundaries between erótica and pornography until they disappear in a confusion of incest (*The Magic Toyshop*) and 'fairy tale' (*The Bloody Chamber*). Carter's use of imaginary worlds which reflect, what Roz Kaveney identifies as, "selective fascinations for New Wave SF" frequently result in rigorous testing of the dimensionality of her characters.[43] Kaveney refers to the occurrence of this in three of her earlier works:

> Carter was keen on expressing the mutability of individuality: *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) and *Heroes and Villains* (1969) all address this more or less directly - the changes through which their

> protagonists are put are remorseless, one might almost say sadistic in their intensity.[44]

Carter uses 'twisted' versions of new Utopias which highlight the impossibilities of stereotyping any character. Desire is a relative concept (much like everything else) in the Carter universe. Carter's writing frequently deals with the aspects of pornography that the anti-pornography lobby see as controversial. Power, money, penetration and love are all given their place and demonstrated to be potential focuses of pleasure. Objectification is often the result of this process. Carter's strength lies in the manner in which objectification moves fluidly from male to female and back again, nowhere more so than in *The Passion of New Eve* where both Tristessa and Eve represent both male and female. The confusion this leads to is highlighted by Lilith's question to Eve "What if Tristessa made you pregnant? [. . .] Your baby will have two fathers and two mothers."[45] In this scenario conventional patriarchal meta-languages of misogyny also cease to apply. In the new Dystopia hatred is not gender specific and women are shown to abuse power as easily as men. This negative view of women when placed in a position of power may not be one that contemporary feminists share, but neither is it shared by the anti-pornography lobby. In contrast to such views Carter's texts also allow us to see positive images of powerful women helping others as in *The Bloody Chamber.* Carter's work is especially important in that she demonstrates in her re-writing of traditional (patriarchal) myths the elasticity of the dominant discourse.

Carter encourages us to re-interpret society as an homogenous entity and this reminds us that perspective is everything. The focus of the pornographic imagination is seen to be dependent on context. The elasticity of discourse is revealed as part of

the process of demystification. The descriptions and rewritings of conventional pornographic imagery offered through Carter's texts reveal the necessity of recognising the penetrability of all phallocentric discourse.

Kathy Acker: Filling in the Gaps: Replacing the Silences in pornographic texts

Kathy Acker's work reveals the same relationship between pornography and society as Carter's. Acker uses contemporary discourses and meta-languages to demonstrate the nihilism inherent in desire. Pornography can be distinguished from sexual relations in that its focus is desire and not union. In *Kathy Goes to Haiti* (1989) the protagonist expresses the power of desire:

> Desire takes over. Dreams ideas . . . everything awakens. Your body is the most beautiful thing I've ever known and your touch satisfies all the longings I've ever had.[46]

This focus on desire and the lack of union in all human relations suggests that the negative aspect of patriarchal pornography is the obsession with separateness and oppositions. Through her expression of the negative expectations placed on human relations Acker's writing lends a clarity to the issue of pornography.

Criticisms levelled at pornography depend on stereotyping which is, in part, a consequence of the two dimensional nature of the acts portrayed. Although Acker's depictions of sex acts do not differ considerably from those criticised by the anti-pornography lobby, the method in which her character's neuroses are described can be seen to represent a uniquely female perspective. The pornographic episodes in her texts represent violence, power, financial control, degradation, slavery, obscenity, sadism and masochism. These elements of relationships permeate the entirety of her

texts. Pornography can be seen to be simply one of the many aspects of society which value the position over the individual. The force of sexual desire is simultaneously positive and negative in Acker's work. Desire is used to represent the voice of all oppressed individuals and the physical pleasures of the body.

Acker's own essays highlight the problem of using writing for the purpose of political change:

> I was aware that writing changes nothing on a large political scale. One reason for this, of course, is that those who are most oppressed are often either illiterate or rarely read. Literature, especially popular novels, is written by and for the educated populace [. . .] I wanted change, but I had no adequate tools or weapons, I was, at best, a writer.[47]

In common with those other women writers who sense the need for political change, Acker's writings are not always primarily concerned with issues of human rights or women's rights as linked to issues of sexuality. Her work is richly intertextual and she subscribes to her own particular brand of rewriting and remaking previous art forms. It is her intertextuality, like Carter's, that makes Acker particularly fascinating to the literary critic. She too writes about the work of Sade, stating that "to write is to read," and the places in her writing where her reading is evident are numerous.[48] As a writer of fiction she chooses to take the freedom of the medium to its extremes in her attempts to find her identity. Identity and freedom are intrinsically linked in the works of pornographers, consider that their works are only widely read when the freedom to do so is given. This is an issue of permission and, like many modernists, Acker finds this permission from within the works of others. Acker suggests her reasons for writing are to inscribe her own reactions to literature, and society, in an art form which reflects society. It is, therefore, also an appropriate

act to examine her literature as a potential new form of pornographic writing.

Acker frequently draws on the texts of others in an assault on the paternal fiction of authorial authority. Her interrogation of authorial hold over specific collections and orderings of language is a female one, as Elam identifies:

> Acker's work persistently thematises plagiarism in order to call attention to a postmodern understanding of 'reproductive rights' (certainly a feminist concern). The disruption of the authorative original in an insistence upon its preoriginary marking by reproduction is [. . .] an assault upon Western culture's privileging of abstraction, of the signifier over the signified, an assault on the legal fiction of paternity.[49]

To achieve this Acker borrows titles *Don Quixote* and *Great Expectations*, she borrows characters from Shakespeare, Dickens, Sade, she repeats her own work in *Empire of the Senseless* and she borrows the pornographic 'formula' for *Kathy Goes to Haiti*. The purpose of such intertextual writing is self evidently to fulfill a postmodern concern. Acker recognises and involves herself in the need to create new writing by reflecting her own fictions on to those of others. Literature counterfeits reality and encodes the tyranny of tradition. Acker disrupts the patriarchal premises of literature and forces us to bring a fresh view to the Canon. Her imitations reveal the nonsense of language and the dependency of the social order on language:

> Language is that which depends on other language. It's necessarily reactive. An isolated word has no meaning. Art, whether or not it uplifts the spirit, is necessarily dependent on contexts such as socio-economic ones. What can this language be which refuses? The only reaction against an unbearable society is equally unbearable nonsense.[50]

When witnesses are called forward to condemn the accused it is her/his words they speak not their own. Little wonder, then, that Acker incorporates the language of the

patriarch in her depictions of abused women. In her notes on two of her books in *Bodies of Work*, Acker draws attention to the fact that Shakespeare 'plagiarised' as did the Greeks.[51] Her work follows on from the neo-classical tradition in which writers were encouraged to translate and immitate the classics. In reality it is only since the nineteenth century, and the commodification of the 'author's creative force', that creativity has been valued and perceived in originality.

Originality is suspect when attempting to re-create pornographic art forms. A key to understanding such interactions, as depicted by the artist, is to recognise the processes by which they have become mythologised, and the nature of this mythologising. In pornographic writing, the consequences of these myths upon individuals are represented in their extremes. It is not simply pornographic to use particular words or to draw particular pictures. Usually, as in this case, the purpose is to highlight a point made frequently throughout the text. On page sixty-two of *Blood and Guts in High School* there is a sketch drawing of a cunt. The inscription reads:

GIRLS WILL DO ANYTHING FOR LOVE [Her Capitals].[52]

Whether we choose to see this as an example of pornography or not, the inscription lends something of authorial intent. There is a constant link in Acker's work between visual representation and literary representation. Her work would be aptly used to demonstrate a working definition of pornography only as that which is used as such. Acker looks to other media than prose text in undertaking her project to make anew past mythologies. Drawings, handwriting, Arabic script, different fonts, different languages, poetry, graffiti, repetition (written or typed), letters, play scripts,

memoranda and excerpts from legal documents are some of the inclusions in Acker's texts. She uses this wide variety of art forms but does not judge any in isolation. All pornographic representation comes together to impart something of the mythologising of a bodily act.

There is a multitude of examples of Acker's treatment of pornographic encounters and images in her work. For Acker's readers these sexually arousing episodes are not shrouded by silences, to permit us to guiltlessly partake in exploitation without recognising ourselves as the subjects. *Blood and Guts in High School* follows the life of an abused child who cannot see herself that way. The life of Janey, which Acker charts, begins with her relationship with her father, also her boyfriend, who has fallen in love with another woman. She proceeds to torture herself with anxieties about his inability to love her, a problem which she must somehow rectify. She searches for love throughout the book and uses sex as her means of getting it. In the same way in which Acker does not shirk from showing the emotional consequences of Janey's struggle, she does not gloss over the biological and political consequences. Within the first thirty-five pages of the book she has described two abortions, abortions which are the painful consequences of her drive to find a sexual solution to her unstoppable need for love. This image of abortion linked to the search for love and adventure is also addressed at the start of *Don Quixote*:

> 'I must love a soul. Can a soul exist without a body? Is physical separate from mental? Just as love's object is the appearance of love; so the physical realm is the appearance of the godly: the mind is the body. This,' she thought, 'is why I've got a body. This's why I'm having an abortion. So I can love.'[53]

Abortion is a lesser discussed side effect of sexual activity, important in that they

"are the symbol, the outer image, of sexual relations in this world," and Acker's inclusion of descriptions of abortions and the psychological reasons behind them highlights the importance of their availability.[54]

Her discussions also focus on the reality that a censorious society in protecting its citizens with limited access to pornography also limits information relating to abortion. This is not only a problem in societies grounded on religion. In the winter of 1991-1992 the Bush Administration announced a 'gag rule' on federally funded clinics prohibiting medical professionals from informing clients of their option to abort. Although this was overturned in the spring of 1992 there are certain states in America where access to abortions has been curtailed. Whenever an individual or an institution seeks to impose their own views on others the consequences are far reaching, and Acker's heroines choose a lifestyle in their sexual search for love which is prescribed by the society that would seek, in its (ir)responsibility, to deny them. Acker may include pornographic symbols in her literature but the events they represent occur in the lives of her characters because of emotional and spiritual needs. Arguably, it is the cultural mythology which creates these needs that is to blame - if we must assign blame.

The seductive nature of Acker's writing is a function of content, theoretical awareness and the deconstruction of desire. Elam identifies 'seduction' in theoretical terms:

> Seduction: which is to return ideology to its status as a kind of persuasion, as a *rhetorical* activity. The term seduction gets away from the truth/falsehood opposition [. . .] With regard to feminism, the sexual overtones of 'seduction' introduce

> differences of gender and sexuality (which are also, but not 'ultimately', differences of power) to the supposed anonymity of cultural knowledge.[55]

Seduction can be understood, the construction of desire demystified, but knowledge of the processes of seduction will not negate desire. Acker deconstructs the cultural processes which seduce young women and men into sexual encounters. The pornographic representation of sexual desire and fulfillment is one of these processes and *Kathy Goes to Haiti* (1989) is the text which most exemplifies her concern. She employs certain of the specific methods of the pornographer, focusing on repetition and reiteration which Irigaray identifies as a pornographic technique:

> The pornographic scene is *indefinitely repetitive*. It never stops. It always has to start over. One more time and another. The alibi of pleasure covers the need for endless reiteration [. . .] Pornography is the *reign of the series*. One more time, one more "victim," one more blow, one more death.[56]

Frequently, pornographic repetitions are acted out on the same vulnerable body. The seduction of the pornographic is dependent on seeking relief through loss and ending. Repetition is necessary because the desire can never be fulfilled. Acker's heroines, especially Kathy, recognise seduction as representative of loss in this sense.

There is a constant repetition of the experience of sex from compulsion through to action and consequences. Whatever the delineations of the pornographers art, frequency of the experience is one of them. Judith Butler suggests that:

> The compulsion to repeat an injury is not necessarily the compulsion to repeat the injury in the same way or to stay fully within the traumatic orbit of that injury. The force of repetition in the language may be the paradoxical condition by which a certain agency - not linked to a fiction of the ego as the master of circumstance - is derived from the *impossibility* of choice.[57]

In accordance with this, in *Kathy Goes to Haiti*, Kathy herself repeatedly analyses her situation, opens herself up to more addictive 'fucking' and then deals with the pain. We cannot judge this deliberately pornographic work in isolation from Acker's other writings - nor do we need to - there is no example of a different kind of handling of this theme in her fiction. Sometimes, the nature of the final abandonment changes, but the experience of living within society's myths is always repeated. This repetition is part of what Acker describes as the language of the body. Repetition extends outside of time and in not giving us new thoughts is giving a silence, one of art's most potent and least talked about voices.

In the case of *Kathy Goes to Haiti*, a deliberately pornographic novel, Acker chose to write a form of pornography intended to trick its audience into believing it is not merely a collection of stereotypes thrown together in a plotless tale. *Kathy Goes to Haiti* seems in many ways to have a story, in the convention of a travel narrative; and she creates characters who, although they seem endowed with motivation, are somehow deprived of psychology. Acker's work in general attempts to contradict the rules of good writing at the same time as it subscribes to the arbitrary requirements of good porn. In *Kathy Goes to Haiti* every other chapter contains a pornographic episode or montage of episodes, with each chapter acting as a mirror for its facing one, except necessarily the middle chapter. She combines voodoo, Nancy Drew, travel narratives and sexually explicit material. She parodies genres more overtly than Carter and experiments unceasingly with rules which she feels are constrictive and bizarre in their arbitrariness. The identity she seeks to express, whether personal, literal, or linguistic, is expressed ultimately through images of

desire.

Her heroine is having a relationship with a married man whilst on holiday. She takes the holiday at a time in her life when she has no relationships with anyone that are significant, and goes to a place with a different language, a place where she is a stranger, a desirable stranger. Acker need not have chosen Haiti as the location for the book, all that matters is that her alienation from the society from which she takes lovers is more complete:

> She's scared to death because she doesn't know anybody, she doesn't know where to go in Haiti, and she can't speak the language.[58]

Her sense of abandon is expressed in a vivid way. The reader is thrown by Acker through Kathy's wildest thoughts, sexual experiences and fears until abandon is clearly recognised as a form of abandonment. There is no resolution in the majority of pornographic literature; we either find a loose romantic plot developing to a conventional moment of closure, or we have no need to require any ending other than the completion of an education. In the case of pornography education takes place but because of conflicting messages no one has become educated. The mythology remains intact.

Acker expresses throughout her work how this mythologising has gone further and affected the mind. The revelation which defines her writings about sex is the loneliness created by the need for, and the expectations of, love. These feeling overwhelm her characters - especially the female characters. This need for love demands a constant sacrificing of the body to achieve a peace of mind which lasts

only transiently:

> You've got to get love. You've lost your sense of propriety. Your social so-called graces. You're running around a cunt without a head [. . .] You've got to use your intellect to keep you in line, no insane sexual behaviour no pleading and grovelling for love.[59]

The pornography of any sexual encounter is disturbing not in itself, but in the meanings attributed to the encounter having taken place. Where society tells us sex and love are somehow mutually dependent and, whilst glorifying one shuns the other, the freedom to learn the difference is denied. Acker gives the reader an insight into the deepest pain and sufferings of attempts to search for love through sex, because ultimately when sex is used to fill emptiness it increases the yearning for something nameless, in this instance love. If Acker's heroines are sex addicts who use sex to dull the pain of unfulfilling lives, destructive childhoods and gaps in self acceptance they are not a pornography-consumer's most fascinating material, they are his/her exaggerated reflections. A discourse of need and desire are frequently linked by the pornographer, but it is perhaps clear that it is not so obvious what precisely is desired. The symbolic order is naturally defined by its limits, but Acker gives us unique opportunities to recognise that the communication of responses which are instinctive and rarely defined are often the victim of cultural boundaries.

Acker's writing achieves a demystification of love; she approaches the myth from the perspective of the insecure and self-loathing and it results in destruction and disappointment. In her seminal work, *Gyn/Ecology*, Mary Daly speaks of the difference between 'self' and 'love':

> The rituals of romantic love as well as those of religion draw women into the ecstasy of Self-loss, the madness which is literally standing outside our Selves, being beside our Selves. In contrast to this radical feminist Self-centering moving beyond the boundaries of the Fathers' foreground. This is finding the Self.[60]

For Acker, self-centering is a somewhat more complex task, the location of identity is indistinct, the notion of identity and the self becomes nothing other than another remembered 'truth'. *In Memoriam to Identity* (1990) follows a dream search for the intangible nature of self. Again the reader is taken through a world of pornography, deflowerings, rapes, abuses, tragedies, broken hearts and insufferable pangs for an idea of a love. According to anti-pornography feminists, women's identity is reduced by emphasis on the physicality, the power exchanges of the sexual experience, but Acker demonstrates that loss of identity took place long before this point.

Time and the body are intimately linked through the fact of human mortality, Thanatos is frequently linked to Eros in structuralist criticism and death defines the perspective with which the writer, in common with the reader, recognises as outside debate. ´ When we speak of women writers using the languagé of the body we are simply illuminating the already ingrained relationship:

> To see clearly is to perceive that one must die. The logos must realize that it is part of the body and that this body is limited. Subject, not to the mind, but to death. Here is the place of sex.[61]

The language of the body, as described by Acker in her essays, has much in common with the language she herself uses in her own writings.[62] It is the language of flux; of wonder rather than judgement; of contradictions; of the material body; of laughter; of play; of poetry; of mysticism; of understanding its essential

insufficiency; of intensity, sexual and emotive; of scatology; a language which forgets itself. This is the language with which she writes, she constructs and depicts a tableaux of identities, tortured and attempting to find themselves on the path through time to death. It is this path which takes the reader from fiction to fiction always hearing the voice of Acker on the search, not just through time, but through relics, the handed down wisdom and art of those moments of times past but not dead. The art lives on in the reader the consumer who chooses to absorb and respond to it. From Genet, through Sade, Baudrillard, Freud, Greek Myth and on in to the future the reader travels through sexual pleasure and pain to her/his own death.

Angela Carter and Kathy Acker do not always specifically seek to write pornography, but they both seek to illuminate the subtleties of female desire and engage with the pornography debate. Carter examines the traditional basis of the fantasies from which we choose. Acker compiles 'diary like' descriptions of the lives and thoughts of women caught in, and tormented by, sexual desire. In the case of Jeanette Winterson the elaborate depiction of the focus of desire on female sensibilities is especially interesting. Pat Califia produces a pornography which conflicts with many, but seeks to find a way out of the confines of symbolism through exploration of sexual perversions. Throughout this and the next chapter it is possible to reach an understanding of both the detrimental and the favourable consequences of pornography.

END NOTES

1. Kathy Acker, Bodies of Work: Essays by Kathy Acker (London: Serpents Tail, 1997), p.37.
2. Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose, ed. by Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi (London: Norton, 1993), p.212.
3. Angela Carter, Expletives Deleted: Selected Writings (London: Vintage, 1993), pp.45-46.
4. Angela Carter, Notes From the Front Line, in On Gender and Writing, ed. by Michelene Wandor (London: Pandora, 1983), pp. 69-77.
5. Angela Carter, Expletives Deleted, p.2.
6. Kathy Acker, Bodies of Work, p.97.
7. Angela Carter, The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History (London: Virago, 1991), pp.3-4. Further References to this work are given in the text.
8. Kathy Acker, In Memoriam to Identity (London: Flamingo, 1993), p.262.
9. Sally Keenan, *Angela Carter's* The Sadeian Woman: *feminism as treason*, in The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: fiction, Femininity, Feminism, ed. by Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (London: Longman, 1997) pp.132-148 (p.135).
10. Keenan, pp.132-148 (p.133).
11. Sexual Difference, trans. by Sean Hand, in The Irigaray Reader, ed. by Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1995), pp.165-177 (p.170).
12. Kathy Acker, Blood and Guts in High School (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1978), pp.7 to 31.
13. Kathy Acker, Bodies of Work, p.11.
14. Kathy Acker, Kathy Goes to Haiti (London: Flamingo, 1993), p.76.
15. Kathy Acker, Kathy Goes to Haiti, p.77.
16. This 'narrative' conforms to pornographic convention and is specifically designed to avoid the necessity to critique social relations.
17. Irigaray, pp.200-201.
18. Arguably, the men in Sade's texts are equally subservient to some sort of 'pornographic convention' as women, but this traditionally places them in the position of exploiter even when apparently exploited - the male is always possessor of the ultimate symbol of power, a right (of dubious worth) which has been denied women throughout history.
19. The continuation of this idea is cannibalism, the most elementary act of exploitation and lack of respect for humanity, and this is something that both Sade and Carter confront. See my reference to *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* on p.????
20. Pauline Reage, The Erotic Story of O (England: Corgi, 1970), p.147.
21. Germaine Greer, The Female Eunuch (London: Flamingo, 1993), p.67.
22. The prize winning *Justine* (1996) by Alice Thompson focuses on the unity between the characters of Justine and Juliette. The central charcter signifies the stereotyped male who desires 'virgin and 'whore' equally, but separately. He owns a portrait of a beautiful woman whom he is destined to meet. The

portrait represents his desire to possess the woman it depicts. She is beautiful and, in the initial description of the painting, appears posed for the voyeur. The image described is a pornographic one; "Her gaze did not look directly at me, but coyly, to one side. This meant I could look at her to my heart's content. By looking away she put herself even more on display for me. This oblique sacrifice of herself sealed my love." (London: Virago, 1997, p.10) As the book progresses, and the voyeur meets the object of his desire, the identity of the woman in the painting appears to alter. Justine is defined by the desire of men for her. She is innocence as Justine or sordid as Juliette. The portrait alters both in accordance with the narrator's opium induced hallucinations and with his relationships with Justine and Juliette. At the close of the book Justine metaphorically hands herself to him as a *tabula rasa*: "'Who are you?' [. . .] 'That's for you to find out'. She leant over and handed me the blank book. She then rose, turned her back to me and walked out of the room." (p.136) Thompson's text illustrates the negative effects of desire which seeks its fulfillment through the imaginary idealised woman. Beyond this it warns women of the dangers of seeking identity through the male arena. To do so is to be nothing more than a series of representations of femininity, never fully identified as an individual. We should certainly at the very least ask ourselves if it is also Sade's intention to demonstrate the danger of the stereotype.

23. The medical opinion referred to is that which stated all genetic material came from the father, and the mother was simply needed to carry the child. See . .
24. When reading the fiction of Angela Carter I would suggest that until 1979 her fiction is informed by her personalised responses to the Sadeian dialectic (*Nights at the Circus* (1984) consciously puts Sade's ghost to rest). As a result of this it becomes necessary to read Carter's work as self-revelatory, and revelatory of Sade, rather than as an attempt to contribute to a feminist pornographic dialectic.
25. Angela Carter, Notes From The Front Line, p.77.
26. Check page ref for Jordan
27. Roland Barthes, Sade/Fourier/Loyola (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), p.5.
28. The creation of dystopias which highlight the negative forces in contemporary society is a concern also shared by Margaret Atwood. In her futuristic novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) she presents a post-war society which remains patriarchal and attempts the ultimate separation of sex and reproduction. The women in The Republic of Gilead are segregated into groups dependent entirely on fertility and the military/economic status of their men. The relationship between the infertile Commander's wife and the woman who is expected to conceive and bear her husband's child represents the extent to which an oppressive system can be mythologised and mutually enforced by its victims. However, it is at the "Rachel and Leah Centre' ('Red Centre') that women enforce the laws which subjugate them. Analysis of the role of the Aunts in the 'Historical Notes' to the book states: "The best and most cost-effective way to control women for productive and other purposes was through women themselves [. . .] no empire imposed by force or otherwise has been without this feature: control of the indigenous by members of their own group." (London: Virago, 1987, p.320) Historically,

men have dreamt of Utopia, Thomas Moore and Karl Marx amongst them. No part of the Utopian vision is based on the censoring of imagination and representation, and this increases the importance of the dream. If society were to approach (even a minimal portion of) a Utopian vision, censorship would not play a part. Honesty is required, and as in the Republic of Gilead, such honesty must come from women themselves.

29. Benoîte Groult, Night Porters, trans. by Elissa Gelfand, in New French Feminisms, ed. by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1981), pp.68-75 (p.73).
30. Angela Carter, The Passion of New Eve, p.32.
31. Angela Carter, The Passion of New Eve, p.191.
32. Groult, p.68.
33. Elaine Jordan, Enthralment: Angela Carter's Speculative Fictions, in Plotting Change: Contemporary Women's Fiction, ed. by Linda Anderson (London: Edward Arnold, 1990), pp.19-40 (p.36).
34. Nicole Ward Jouve, 'Mother is a Figure of Speech . . .', in Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter ed. by Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), pp.136-170 (p.167).
35. Paulina Palmer, From 'Coded Mannequin' to Bird Woman: Angela Carter's Magic Flight, in Women Reading Women's Writing, ed. by Sue Roe (Brighton: Harveste Press, 1987), pp.179-205 (p.189).
36. Angela Carter, Heroes and Villains, p.55.
37. Letter written by Angela Carter to Elaine Jordan, in Elaine Jordan, The Dangerous Edge, in Sage, pp.189-215 (pp.197-198).
38. Angela Carter, Heroes and Villains, p.56.
39. Andrea Dworkin, Pornography: Men Possessing Women (London: Women's Press, 1994), p.179.
40. Angela Carter, The Magic Toyshop (London: Virago, 1992), p.152.
41. Angela Carter, The Magic Toyshop, pp.193-194.
42. Angela Carter, The Magic Toyshop, p.200.
43. Roz Kaveney, New New World Dreams: Angela Carter and Science Fiction, in Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter ed. by Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), pp.171-188 (pp.172-174). SF is an abbreviation of science fiction.
44. Kaveney, pp.171-188 (p.172).
45. Angela Carter, The Passion of New Eve, p.187.
46. Kathy Acker, Kathy Goes to Haiti (London: Flamingo, 1993), p.92.
47. Kathy Acker, Bodies of Work: Essays by Kathy Acker, pp.7-8.
48. Kathy Acker, Bodies of Work, p. . . .
49. Diane Elam, Feminism and the Postmodern: Theory's Romance, in The Feminist Reader, ed. by Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), pp.182-200 (p.195).
50. Kathy Acker, Bodies of Work, p.18.
51. Kathy Acker, Bodies of Work, pp.9-12.
52. Kathy Acker, Blood and Guts in High School, p.62.
53. Kathy Acker, Don Quixote (New York: Grove Press, 1988), p.10.
54. Kathy Acker, Blood and Guts in High School, p.34.
55. Elam, pp.182-200 (pp.184-185).

56. Irigaray, pp.201-202.
57. Judith Butler, Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex (London: Routledge, 1993), p.124.
58. Kathy Acker, Kathy Goes to Haiti, p.5.
59. Kathy Acker, Kathy Goes to Haiti, pp.76-77.
60. Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (London: The Women's Press, 1987), p.67.
61. Kathy Acker, Bodies of Work, p.90.
62. Kathy Acker, Bodies of Work, pp.91-92.

Chapter Four

Women Writing New Pornographies And Inscribing Sexuality, Art And Desire: Jeanette Winterson And Pat Califia

What is forbidden is scarier, sexier, unnightmared by the white-collar cataloguers of crap. 'Don't do that' makes for easy revolt. What is forbidden is hidden. To worm into the heart and the mind until what one truly desires has been encased in dark walls of what one ought to desire, is the success of the serpent.(Winterson)[1]

The extent to which Angela Carter and Kathy Acker demystify the vision of the pornographic romance narrative is limited by the heterosexual imperative in the majority of their work. The texts of Jeanette Winterson and Pat Califia avoids the controversial image of the 'male penetrating female' which so concerns the anti-pornography lobby, Andrea Dworkin in particular. Specifically Winterson avoids depictions of 'penetration' as central to sexual relations. In *Written on the Body* (1992) she goes further and does not identify the gender of her protagonist.[2] This discourages the reader from concentrating on the effects of love and desire at the expense of gender oppositions. In *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) the lesbianism and the awakening of sexual feelings provide a focus which is distinct from, yet incorporates, the conventions of romantic love. Winterson's work is especially valuable because of her approach to language and art. Luce Irigaray demands a circulation from the outside to the inner self and vice versa, Winterson provides a narrative which moves not only outside the conventional boundaries of the self but also outside of time, history and the universe.[3] As Cixous demands she

tries to "write like a painter," perhaps from a different perspective to Cixous but certainly with a common desire to be a "bird-catcher of instants".[4] Winterson approaches time and language, two key constants of the dominant discourse, in a revolutionary way. This is mirrored by Califia's treatment of sex and violence, two key constants of the pornographic discourse. The work of Califia challenges the censor and the pornographer simultaneously because it represents a woman in pursuit, and in control of the ultimate sexual experience. Thus the works of both Winterson and Califia depict the search for the self through sex and love in defiance of the conventions of the dominant discourse.

Like Carter and Acker, Winterson examines the nature of love and desire through an exploration of earlier literature, and with particular reference to its illusory nature. Through the exploration of lust, the power of the human sexual instinct, she destroys the virgin and creates an entirely different breed of whore. Winterson wishes to draw her reader into an empathy with a sexuality and sensitivity that is foreign to the phallocentric mind. She chooses to portray the female body in its various beauties and possibilities as she moulds myths and masculine symbols for the feminine to produce something new and erotic. Her desire to craft a language to serve the female imaginary leaves us in no doubt about how far she is willing to pursue her recognitions of feminine sensitivity as power. Sections of Jeanette Winterson's books read as if they could almost be letters to a lover; only in full emotional and spiritual union can there be a climax in her work. Yet for Pat Califia the fantasy need not be spiritually charged to fulfill, to make one 'wet'. Almost like the male pornographer, her need is for pornography that serves its purpose as release. Califia

attempts through the safety of the fantasy, to impart knowledge about the female self. She intends her readers to find her book sexy, and revealing; it will provide food for thought as well as for the imagination. Through her depiction of consensual S/M, she challenges the more daring to re-examine a realm of fantasy life that has epitomised the power of the male over the female in previous pornographies. In conjunction with this she brings the awareness of the oppressed. Pat Califia's message is in many ways more extreme than Winterson's, and this is perhaps why her work has reached fewer people.

Winterson secured recognition as one of the most widely known contemporary female authors of erotic fiction as a result of a BBC Television adaptation of her first novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. She has written a number of different texts which have all been received well by both the critics and the public, therefore she is potentially an example of a woman who has been able to achieve acclaim without falling into the traps of the patriarchal mainstream. Her work is especially important because from within a position of influence she is able to demystify the link between heterosexual sex and idealised romantic love through the representation of lesbian relationships.

Califia deals with the sexual implications of lesbianism through an overtly pornographic meta-language. Her aim is to demystify the foundation stones of masculine sexuality so that she may utilise this revealed power to examine female sexuality anew. Califia's work is aimed at a lesbian audience and deals primarily with scenarios which involve lesbian activity. She writes in a sadomasochistic vein

and her pieces explicitly represent fantasies because, as she writes:

> Many people do not fantasize about the kind of sex that they actually have. Fantasy is a realm in which we can embrace pleasures that we may have very good reasons to deny ourselves in real life.[5]

Her writing challenges received ideologies and provides new fantasies for the politically motivated female sadomasochist.

The silencing which has so limited women extends to other groups on the boundaries of society which threaten the stability of the patriarch's world. Califia's work is intense and full of force, *Macho Sluts* is an invitation to both reader and censor, as she herself points out:

> If someone does not want you to read this book why is that? Because it goes beyond the customary limits of candor? In other words, because it is a little too honest? What are they afraid of? *(Califia, 1988, p.25)*

As an American citizen, she points out that the written word is protected under the First Amendment, "even if the words are about 'violent' sex" *(Califia, 1988, p.25)*. However, this is not the case in Britain, or the Commonwealth; as a result it may not always be easy to obtain material like Califia's. Equally important to the constraints of law are those of culture; the selection a bookseller may choose to stock can be as effective a means of control as any legislatory intervention. The awareness that in some sense pornographic literature has in the past been a controlled 'substance' reveals how effective censorship of any writing that does not fit into an unthreatening niche in a library extends to women writers. Although Winterson receives positive reviews of her work there is never any question that one should be wary of her books. Winterson's intended focus is after all lesbianism, and as Rich tells us, in her

article on *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*, anything that encourages close relations between women represents a possible upsetting of the traditional hierarchy.[6]

Califia is renowned in lesbian sadomasochistic circles in the United States, although, in Britain, it remains incredibly difficult to obtain copies of her work. There is no attempt here to undertake a comprehensive study of her theoretical and fictional work. It is my intention to place her work in a specific context to further illuminate the points previously mentioned in this chapter. The principal text which will be referred to is *Macho Sluts* (1988). As theoretical work on this subject is also limited, the source of the majority of my references is Lynda Hart's work *Between the Body and the Flesh: Performing Sadomasochism.*[7] Califia deals with what Freud would call perversion, in that her focus is upon the eroticisation of pain, abuse of power, and the safety of relinquishing power in sexual relations. Her work offers a further challenge because it threatens society by representing sadomasochistic lesbian acts which seek to identify an authentic moment outside of what most pornographers, and the majority of censors, would recognise as the heterosexual norm. A key to this discussion of Califia's work will be a brief examination of the feminist issues which surround S/M. This chapter places Califia within a framework of innovative self expression in relation to the art of the female writer/pornographer/artist. An examination of her work in connection with theories relating to selfhood and the loss of self during sexual expression uncovers a new and literal description of fantasy. We can view Califia's descriptions of lesbian S/M as a window into a world in which the fantasising is done by women. Women who are aware of the dangers of illusion

and phallocentric conventionalism and are not afraid to talk about sex and desire.

Both Acker and Califia take an unashamed approach to the subject of sexual desire. Indeed, why should they be quiet? There is nothing of reticence in the way men inflict sexual violence on women and each other. Of course there is something of the erotic in the images of tenderness which frame sexual acts in women's writing, and Anais Nin illuminates why:

> You do not know what you are missing by your microscopic examination of sexual activity to the exclusion of aspects which are the fuel which ignites it. Intellectual, imaginative, romantic, emotional. This is what gives sex its surprising textures, its subtle transformations, its aphrodisiac elements.[8]

The attempt of the male pornographer, Sade for example, to create sexual intensity through violence and physical presence is where male notions of the sexual become divorced from those of women.

In both the works of Winterson and Califia we see that lesbianism functions primarily to deconstruct heterosexuality at its most anti-feminine edge. The lesbian makes herself the signifier of the discourse, rather than the phallus. She is a disruption of heterosexuality, a presence standing outside the conventions of patriarchy, a hole in the fabric of gender dualism. Although the lesbian signifier is born out of the structures of heterosexuality, she is also outside the symbolic. Discussions of her body, as in Winterson, deal with a whole, not a thing which is ripped apart and cast out. She is a locus of strength in the text except where she falls under the sway of the heterosexist imperative, as does Melanie in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Winterson addresses the lesbian critic who views this distancing as

an attempt to discover a 'sameness' and identification with which to characterise the lesbian moment in a text. Lisa Henderson believes that there is a distinct difference between male pornography and lesbian feminist pornography: "Lesbian pornography does not exist beyond sex-gender and other forms of oppression, but nor does it simply reproduce them."[9] Contrary to the fantasy of the male pornographer, women are aware of the value of their own flesh, a value that ultimately is only rewarded in either sexual fulfillment, in the case of Califia, or in love, in the case of Winterson.

Califia believes that if lesbian pornography is to succeed as transgressive it must be new and capture an essence not prescribed by the patriarchy:

> 'Feminist Erotica' that presents a simplistic view of lesbian sex as two women in love in a bed who embody all the good things the patriarchy is trying to destroy isn't very sexy. . . . The auto-erotically inclined lesbian deserves more bang for her buck. *(Califia, 1988, p.13)*

For her, this means not only challenging the heterosexual norm, it also entails exposing the fact that there is no such thing as normal sexuality:

> Nobody comes out looking normal when you know the whole truth about how they fuck and what they think about when they jerk off. *(Califia, 1988, p.16)*

Pornography, for Califia, is a necessary medium in the struggle for women and men to express themselves freely. The essential difference between her concept of a pornography, which represents the extent to which humanity can find sexual pleasure in the perverse, and that of the male pornographer, is her recognition that sexual material can be used to damage and endanger if not contextualised.

In the case of Winterson's work her contextualisation underlines the notion that the

'unreal' sexual setting gives permission to anything. The humour in *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*, and the fundamentalist religious background, allow the lesbian theme to become unthreatening. Her later works have no such chronological framework, so are free to function as mythical texts possessed of ideas not realities. By focusing on the humorous elements of her texts the patriarchy is able to accept texts that blatantly challenge, not only the so-called 'sexual norm', but also the male identification with linear concepts of time. She describes her narrative as 'spiral' because that is how women think and live. Conversely the roots of patriarchy are found in linear chronology which function to justify supremacy. To move forward from fragmenting foundations, to expressions of future possibility, is the challenge that best describes the imperative behind the moments of fantasy in Winterson's work.

Written on the Body includes many such challenging moments however it is also concerned with representing the tendency of individuals to present themselves as central in relationships. We are encouraged to view the protagonist as the more powerful character, and this inevitably leads to a recognition that the emotions experienced are in control:

> No-one knows what forces draw two people together. There are plenty of theories: astrology, chemistry, mutual need, biological drive.[10]

There is always a lack of understanding because of the complexity of relationships, a complexity which fascinates Winterson but is ignored in the pornography of the patriarch. The complex and restrictive nature of sexual activity is further complicated, in Winterson's texts, by love. Winterson's texts reveal 'love' to be a controlling force outside of female/male relationships, partially by depicting lesbian

relationships, but also through parental relationships in *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985). In the case of Jessie's punishment in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* interpretation of agape is also utilised by those who represent power.[11] Although Winterson demonstrates the restrictive nature of 'love' she also links love to desire in expression of the union that Acker's protagonists find so elusive.

The background to Winterson's fiction, as presented in her own words, suggests that it is her determination to retain her integrity as an artist and her loyalty to her subject matter, regardless of patriarchal expectations, that has engendered her success. She has faced the question of whether it is best to conspire to effect a change from within the dominant culture or from without. She is aware of the dangers of censorship:

> Re-defining the erotic in terms of female rather than male experience is crucial to the pornography debate, not only to introduce some truth telling but also to remind those who want to protect and sanctify, that censorship may replace one kind of gag with another.[12]

Some years ago she agreed to be photographed nude, partly because, faced with an opportunity to add something to the pornography debate she chose to exercise her belief that "the best weapons are the ones you take from the enemy".[13] This leads naturally to a position of insight into the actual invisibility of the objectified body, a body conceived in its photographed form as existing purely to please the male eye. When writing the foreword to *Erotica* (1990) she refers to women's erotic writings as expressing sexuality in a way that is significantly removed from male concerns:

> Men occupy an incidental role; incidental in that, although they may pleasure a women they do not become the focus of the piece. Whilst men are removed from the central role they so covet, they

> are not objectified or humiliated. It is salutary that women know how to turn the tables without falling into the same traps. It is not necessary to devalue half the species in order to manufacture pleasure.[14]

Thus we can ask, legitimately, whether Winterson, in her recognition of the preference for a female discourse of sexuality which is balanced and not discriminatory, provides fictional examples of this discourse.

Perhaps one of the most interesting political comments Califia makes on the position of women and the expression of their sexuality comes when she is actually speaking about the pain of exclusion faced by the sadomasochist:

> It [Erotic totalitarianism] distorts our self-images, ambitions, and dreams. We think we are alone, or crazy, or ridiculous. Our desire learns to curb itself. and we come to depend on the strength of self-repression for our safety. *(Califia, 1988, p.9)*

Although she is dealing with a specific area of female sexual self-expression, the issues she critiques in her introduction relate to the silencing of the female voice and the necessity of creating a form of pornographic literature which, because it does not have to face a mass market, can afford to be sufficiently well written to threaten the status quo.

Fantasies about sexual acts which are generally considered taboo or contain excitement based on their transcendence of socially acceptable behaviour are present in Winterson's work as well as that of Califia. Where taboos usually act as deterrents in reality, they can function as 'exciters' in fantasy. The excitement of 'being caught' by the disapproving husband, lover, father, patriarch heightens the excitement of the fantasy. In *Sexing the Cherry* the retelling of the tale of Rapunzel

encourages us to consider why taboos exist, and why it is exciting to transgress:

> You may have heard of Rapunzel. Against the wishes of her family, who can best be described by their passion for collecting miniature dolls, she went to live in a tower with an older woman. Her family were so incensed by her refusal to marry the prince next door that they vilified the couple, calling one a witch and the other a little girl.[15]

It is clear that a taboo is only recognised by Rapunzel's family. Therefore the erotic charge comes from the love represented in the story. The taboo act, which finds guilt to be its charge, is different for everyone. Georges Bataille, quoted by Joseph Bristow, discusses the link between erotic charge, death and the taboo which seeks to ban elements from society:

> Time and again, he insists that taboos intensify erotic rebellion, since they solicit precisely the symbolic death they outlaw. Not only that, taboos often signify that sexual pleasure is dirty, shameful, sinful, and unclean.[16]

The pleasure of sexual transgression and the fear of being judged is an experience the majority of people have at sometime in their lives. Women in particular are encouraged to view most forms of sex as problematic and their relationship with their desire is dependent on either ignoring or eroticising such boundaries.

Jeanette Winterson: Making Art with Words - "Art anticipates life"[17]

Jeanette Winterson's writing is always consciously representative of its author's concern to create 'art'. This is one possible reason why there has been a certain eagerness to legitimise her work, to classify it as 'erotica', identifying it with love and not pornography. The legitimisation of an artist's work often has a reductive effect as any new audience will bring preconceived ideas to the work. Winterson laments the fact that her work is often seen in the context of her own sexuality; her

biography has become the subversive element which makes her writing interesting to the unimaginative. Regardless of the content of her texts, the danger is that she is simply a phenomenon; a lesbian writer who had her first book televised in C/conservative Britain in the eighties, a landmark that represents a sociological and political advance. Winterson may accept with Roland Barthes that the author's life is irrelevant, but this anoints a company of readers as the new directors of art. This necessarily reduces the reader's acceptance of the truth that Winterson puts forward; that art is its own director. There is no need for a book/author to be a cultural spectacle for it/her/his text to have integrity as art. We should not judge art on anything other than its artistry. Winterson's work may be labelled erotica, she may be the backdrop which inspires the individual to take notice of her literature, but in a reader's hands her books must succeed for other reasons. Ultimately I would argue that this success is based on her ability to look afresh at 'art' and the 'body', and thus in her re-presentation of contemporary discourses.

The interest of contemporary writers in the mythology and history which support the dominant discourse results from a desire to reveal the illusory nature of discourse. It is important to focus less on surfaces. Speaking through her character in *Sexing the Cherry* Winterson suggests that for women: "Every mapped out journey contains another journey hidden in its lines [. . .]".[18] Pornography feeds fantasy and Winterson demonstrates that pornography is dependent on the power of language to transmit fantasies. A process which is limited by the very nature of language:

> Language always betrays us, tells the truth when we want to lie, and dissolves into formlessness when we would most like to be precise. And so we cannot move back and forth in time, but we can

experience it in a different way.[19]

The presentation of language, history, religion, time desire and love in the works of Winterson provides a valuable reading of female desire which contrasts with the other writers I discuss in the thesis.

'Art' is the primary concern of Winterson the commentator and Winterson the writer; she does not accept that everything is art, that there is acceptable art and unacceptable art, that art is a representation of truth, or indeed that art is understandable. Art for her is communication, but we are deceived if we think we have the ability to fully conceive of its meanings:

> Art, all art, not just painting, is a foreign city, and we deceive ourselves when we think it is familiar [. . .] We have to recognise that the language of art, all art, is not our mother-tongue.[20]

This sense of a lack of grasp of meaning does not, for Winterson, put the viewer/reader or artist in an impossible position. She does not advocate that we look to others for interpretations which we can adopt and repeat. If we are to evolve and allow art to anticipate life we must expose ourselves to art and experience it as individuals. This stands against censorship, in that such paternalistic intervention into our reception of art destroys not only the original piece, but all future attempts at production. There is always something to learn from art, something to reclaim; we only need to look to the work of Kathy Acker to see an example of how this twists in an untamed way, away from those who would seek to give us a received meaning. It is the true artist that seeks for the problem and to solve it for themselves, learning the art object by turning it into art process. Acker writes of the problems of the art

process in language, in the introduction to her essays:

> The problem with expression is that it is too narrow a base for writing, for it is pinned to knowledge, knowledge which is mainly rational. I trust neither my ability to know nor what I think I know. Moreover the excitement of writing, for me, is that journey into strangeness: to write down what one thinks one knows is to destroy possibilities for joy [. . .] What else can communication be? All of me screams out: vision.[21]

She believes that there are two choices, we can either explain, imitate literally or make new - refuse to be tame, blindly accepting interpretation, classification, standardisation, and seize an opportunity to free our imaginations.

As a consequence of a fundamentalist Christian upbringing Winterson had reduced access to literature as a child and her own experience of censorship affects her writing. It is noteworthy that a female victim of censorship found sanity from the bible and other fragments of the patriarchal discourse:

> Fighting to keep language, language became my sanity and my strength. It still is, and I know no pain that art cannot assuage. For some music, for some, pictures, for me, primarily poetry, whether found in poems or in prose cuts through noise and hurt, opens the wound to clean it, and then gradually teaches it to heal itself.[22]

To argue that language is a force for good, regardless of its inherent gender discriminations, is possibly contentious yet to really address this issue effectively we should read literature which attempts to get outside of such imbalances. Like Acker, Winterson relies upon the writings of her predecessors, the language of the patriarch. Such re-writing is not an act of repetition - it is an act of creation. To produce unique art which depends on 'reality' rather than on culturally prescribed norms is the goal of any writer who would wish to add a new voice to the discourse of pornography.

Ultimately the purpose of art is to represent the dreams and myths to which a society subscribes/subscribed/will subscribe, and so the artist must fully understand her/his medium. In the case of Winterson, this understanding and appreciation of the medium seems to increase with each new work. Her medium is words, her material gift books; her obsession is the power of words, the power of books, "You can pick up a book but a book can throw you across the room".[23] Whether it be poetry, the writings of the modernists, or the attempts of past dead men to create great works of literature Winterson sees in 'the book' the same mystical potential of which Acker speaks.[24] This is a potential which Hélène Cixous felt the urge to discover through her own writing in spite of the difficulties presented by phallocentric language:

> How could I have not wanted to write? When books took me, transported me, pierced me to the entrails, allowed me to feel their disinherited power; when I felt loved by a text that didn't address itself to me, or to you, but to the other; when I felt pierced through by life itself, which doesn't judge, or choose, which touches without designating [. . . but] Writing spoke to its prophets from a burning bush. But it must have been decided that bushes wouldn't dialogue with women.[25]

The female reader who has so long been starved of a dialogue, of a language of her own, is perhaps also starved by her own inability to relinquish masculine interpretations of art. For the contemporary female reader the possibility of finding expression of oneself within the writings of women is continually increasing. Winterson's work teaches us not only about ourselves, our bodies and our sex, it goes further and teaches us how to appreciate reality with the imagination.

Winterson's work is not pornographic in the sense that it does not present a sexuality

which depends on a complicated ritual of power play and penetration focusing on one individual at the expense of the other. Yet, in the sense that Winterson's work is sexy - we keep it by our beds, we find within it reflections of our own fantasies and find new ways to articulate and explore them - it is. Pornography is about fantasy, often fantasies which reach outside of us and make us desire to become a part of them. Winterson's work does these things. If it is not pornography perhaps it is erotica, perhaps it is art, perhaps, more simply, it is expression of a set of desires that pornography, to date, has failed to deal with. In the search for a message in Winterson's work about expressing the sexual we have found much more. The reader, in particular the female reader, finds her concerns, dreams and desires mirrored. If not a precise reflection, the reader certainly sees more of herself than she does in phallocentric pornography. Winterson shares with Angela Carter and Kathy Acker the concern that 'love' should be represented as an experience rather than as a cultural phenomenon with a set purpose and prescribed boundaries. It is the elemental forcefulness of love, of life, of passion, of words that defines its existence in Winterson's texts. She does not seek a unity, an alchemical joining of individuals to create oneness, because there is no need:

> The separateness of our lives is a sham. Physics, mathematics, music, painting, my politics, my love for you, my work, the star-dust of my body, the spirit that impels it, clocks diurnal, time perpetual, the roll, rough, tender, swamping, liberating, breathing, moving, thinking nature, human nature and the cosmos are patterned together.[26]

Gut Symmetries is the book in which Winterson most openly addresses these issues and takes a look at the possibilities proffered to language and the mind by the artistic

interpretation of science. Science is a system of classification, and categorisation that has added to the history of Western mythologies, every bit as extensively as religion. Science is frequently understood to be the domain of the realist, but the speculation and fantasies about its possible applications shows science to be as imaginative in its own way as art. Science suggests rules and reasons for the dominant discourse to shape us. For women the contradiction lies in what Cixous suggests about the lack of reason and place for women:

> Woman is enigmatic, it seems. This is what the masters teach us. She is even, they say, enigma personified. Enigma? How do you set about being that? Who has the secret? She does. She who? I wasn't Her. Not a She, nor anyone.[27]

Thus, as Winterson's characters discover and Jordan in *Sexing the Cherry* expresses, it is necessary to "escape from the weight of the world [. . .] leave [the] body where it is, in conversation or at dinner, and walk through a series of winding streets".[28] Thus escaping from the places where we are categorised through conscious interactions with others.

The issues that most concern Cixous and Winterson are science; joining, connecting, time, histories, extra-dimensional forces, death and language. The value of language to both Winterson and Cixous is essentially its ability to connect everything suspect about discourse, whilst still remaining the medium of the female artist's self-expression. Winterson creates her images of the erotic in such a way that several critics have come to view her discourse as poetic. Her language and carefully woven images pay tribute to the beauties of the female body and pour the knowledge of the pricelessness of a loved one into even the most fleeting caress. The potential value

of this is revealed by Irigaray when she discusses the possibilities love between women:

> If women are to establish or make possible a love between us, or a love for the feminine among us, women need to double and play what we are twice over lovingly. Whether it be;
> -love for the nourishing envelope both inner and outer, for its skins and its mucus membranes;
> -love of the body: both of that body we give and that body we give each other back in return.[29]

In *Sexing the Cherry* Jordan strives for a revelation of the sacredness of an erotic sexual union through love:

> I say I'm in love with her, what does that mean? It means I review my future and my past in the light of this feeling. It is as though I wrote in a foreign language that I am suddenly able to read. Wordlessly she explains me to myself; like genius she is ignorant of what she does.[30]

Sexing the Cherry is a magical tale that slips from one era to another, and from one literary frame to the next as freely as one thinks. The characters in the tale are vehicles around which Winterson constructs the tissue of truths and new myths that characterise it. In *Sexing the Cherry* her character observes the reactions to the paintings of sinners in church:

> There are carvings of a man with his member swollen out like a marrow, rutting a woman whose teats swish the ground like a cow before milking. She has her eyes closed and he looks up to Heaven, and neither of them notice that the grass is on fire . . . . We file past every Sunday to humble ourselves and stay clean for another week, but I have noticed a bulge here and there where all should be quiet and God-like.[31]

Each image and idea in the book is carefully composed to reveal a detail that will cause the reader to look afresh at the world in all its man-made contradictions. Winterson writes in a way that is very visual but also very sensual. Her choice of a form of writing that is neither completely prose nor completely poetry brings fluidity

to her literary expression. Like Carter, Acker and Califia she accepts that it is important to convey an understanding of the beauty of feminine mystery and the way it is shrouded by male myth.

Winterson's intent is to weave tales, frequently pointing out what she is doing in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion*; "I am telling you stories. Trust me".[32] Winterson selects 'characters' from history, fairy tales and mythology to create a reference in the mode of the magic realists. What her work achieves goes beyond the fictional, or even the artistic. Her critical mind, and the inherent difficulties of accepting the parameters of the discourse from which she takes her stories, lead to the appearance of Winterson the critic throughout her fiction. A particularly valuable set of guidelines for any writer who sees the need to play with language, and the so-called rules of discourse, is delineated in *Sexing the Cherry*:

> *Lies 1* : There is only the present and nothing to remember.
> *Lies 2* : Time is a straight Line.
> *Lies 3* : The difference between the past and the future is that one has happened while the other has not.
> *Lies 4* : We can only be in one place at a time.
> *Lies 5* : Any proposition that contains the word 'finite' (the world, the universe, experience, ourselves . . .)
> *Lies 6* : Reality as something which can be agreed upon.
> *Lies 7* : Reality as truth.[33]

This set of 'lies' is the basis which permits spiral narrative and creativity with language. They provide the freedom from meaning which semioticians deny words. This is, of course, because we are released from the confines of Western concepts of time, truth, and finity. Winterson's discourse is unbounded by that which it contains because she refuses to accept the 'value-systems' to which language commonly

subscribes. It is this freedom with ideas, leading to a freedom with language, which causes Winterson's fiction to challenge the symbolic order whilst creating some of the most beautiful and expressive contemporary poetry.

We should not be surprised therefore that part way through *Sexing the Cherry* Winterson tells *The Story of the Twelve Dancing Princesses (pp.47-60)* and how they parted from the glorious Princes to whom they were wed. Winterson takes the fairy tale and alters it sufficiently to expose a truth about the falsehoods inherent in a 'happily ever after'. One Princess deserts her husband to live with a mermaid; one killed hers out of vengeance; another pierced her husband and his lover (a young boy) as they slept; another lived to become Rapunzel's lover becoming the wicked witch in the fairy tale. The most interesting tale is the Princess who discovered her Prince to be a woman; this story is erotically charged with images of spiritual closeness as well as physical intimacy:

> There was no separation between us. We rose in the morning and slept at night as twins do. I liked to feel the snake of her spine. We kissed often our mouths filling up with tongue and teeth and spit and blood when I bit her lower lip [. . .] I still have a coil of her hair.[34]

Winterson is not only sensitive to the beauty of skin and form; she breathes life into her erotic passages with the closest of touches, sounds, scents and flavours. Unlike the male pornographer, with his images of domination and beauteous acquiescence, Winterson creates women who are self aware and know that what they desire passionately is within their grasp. There is no excuse for her heroines to be filled with self-doubt and the need to succumb; their strength provides them with a destiny that even the most critical male observer is powerless to alter.

For Winterson's characters, it is love that confuses and distorts, threatening to destroy any sense of equilibrium between human beings. At the beginning of *Written on the Body* her central character laments:

> Why is the measure of love loss? Love demands expression it will not stay still, stay silent be good be modest, be seen and not heard, no. It will break out in tongues of praise, the high note that smashes glass and spills the liquid. It is no conservationist love. It is a big game hunter and you are the game. A curse on this game. How can you stick at a game when the rules keep changing?[35]

The power of the struggle for equality and equanimity within the state of coupledom is identical in its intensity whatever the gender make up of the couple. Winterson sets out to reveal this in *Written on the Body*. The gender of the narrator is left in question throughout the work although it is apparent that the nature of the author, if not the narrator, is awash with feminine sensibilities. For example:

> If I could not put Louise out of my mind I would drown myself in her [. . .] I found a love poem to Louise. I would go on knowing her, more intimately than the skin, hair and voice that I craved. *(Winterson, 1992, p.111)*

The androgynous nature of the lead character causes us to evaluate the emotions and descriptions of sexual encounters in a different way, but the total absorption in the memory and body of the loved one is usually seen to be most common in women. The hours the narrator spends making love to Louise sinking deeper and deeper into her flesh, until nothing else seems to matter, are to be her/his undoing like so many lovers before and after. When the time for realities and finalities arrives Louise, the woman who offers herself up for love and protection, is not given the opportunity to choose her destiny. Her lover decides that it is best for Louise that she stays with her husband - she may live longer - it is not felt to be within her capacity to weigh up

quality of life versus length. Ultimately Louise is treated like an object and judged unfit to decide her future.

Winterson's work is charged with the energy of someone who knows the need for the love which enables us to appreciate the world around us, in each other and ourselves. There is no negative criticism of the failed lover or the obsessive who fails to see the needs of the object of love. It is the beauty of intimacy that concerns her - and for the hero/ine of *Written on the Body* it is in her expression of the physicality of Louise that we find something that the writer of female erotica can proclaim laudable. She looks at her lover's body in its separate parts, not in its parts as flesh on a butcher's slab. First she takes the collar bone and the sensuality that thrills at the touch of it, "I wanted to fit you, not just in obvious ways but in so many indentations." *(Winterson, 1992, p.129)* Then she yields to the strength and gentle power of shoulder blades. The thirteen bones that form the skeleton of the face are paid tribute to, not in their expressions of love and hate, but in their revelation of that which they will continue to hold as the flesh melts away. Moving on to sound, smell, taste, and sight she writes with the lost voices that might fill the silences in Brontë, Richardson, and Rhys. Particularly, her expression of the heightening of the visual, in a world consumed by the sexual, is in deep contrast to the misogynist pornographer's visual images of female bodies draped over car fenders with legs splayed:

> Sometimes I run into the sunset arms wide like a scarecrow, thinking I can jump off the side of the world into the fiery furnace burned up in you. I would like to wrap my body in the blazing streaks of bloodshot sky. *(Winterson, 1992, p.138)*

There is nothing about the female body that can be converted into an image of

weakness as far as Winterson is concerned. She offers a challenge to those who always fail to see the beautiful in a way which does not subjugate the onlooker, or she (usually) who is being looked at. She takes up, and successfully addresses, the issue of mental erotic terrorism. It is only questionable that she permits her narrator to define the beloved as object. This leaves us to ask whether she has strayed far from convention in her expectation that visible control lies in the hands of only one partner.

Death is arguably the most important signifier, and as such has undergone much (mis)representation in art and literature. Freud linked sexuality and death in his description of the 'death drive' that places eroticism at the point where the battle between life and death is waged. The link between death, ending, completion, S/M, sexology and the positioning of love within the symbolic order is ever present in heterosexual pornography. The ultimate referent is 'death' and it is the lover's power over death that symbolises her/his control of the body. It is from within such a context that *Written on the Body* moves into a different dimension. The erotic focus of the novel, the character *Louise*, is herself in the process of dying. She is, however, in a position of control within the text. Louise denies the experiences the protagonist has had until the point she met her/him and then teaches her/him to see things anew. It is the first line of the book that sets the tone for our understanding of love; "Why is the measure of love loss?" (*Winterson, 1992, p.9*). Winterson takes the traditional staples of the pornographer's art but does not write pornography. It is her use of language that instead creates art. She uses images of pain, death, loss and sexuality to communicate the depths of the soul. It is not possible to read her words

deeply enough because of the limitations imposed on us by the symbolic order, yet we recognise her words because she writes with the voice of a woman who can see the value in avoiding ordered representations of the body.

The representation of the body as flesh is common in contemporary society, from the images in the media, to the advertising posters in the streets we are becoming shapes defined by idealistic visions of how we should appear physically. Naomi Wolf tells us that it is this focus which undermines female power and self-confidence:

> The post-1960 daughter sees more images of the impossibly beautiful woman engaged in sexual posturing in one day than her mother saw throughout adolescence.[36]

This adds more weight to the impossibility of writing language which comes from the body, Cixous' *écriture feminine*. To write from the body there needs to be an association with it, an experiencing of its complexities, an experience that the narrator in *Written on the Body* eloquently expresses:

> I didn't only want Louise's flesh, I wanted her bones, her blood, her tissues, the sinews that bound her together. I would have held her to me though time had stripped away the tones and textures of her skin. I could have held her for a thousand years until the skeleton itself rubbed away to dust. (*Winterson, 1992, p.51*)

Later, there is a description of the dying lover's body and senses, a sensual description which functions as poetic, prose and medical discourse (*Winterson, 1992, pp.115-139*). This description is in the fashion of a logic espoused by the likes of Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva. Diana Fuss criticises Irigaray's apparent suggestion that the locus of female power is her body rather than her mind as it has links with the Freudian notion that power originates in women's bodies not their minds. Yet in

explanation Fuss goes on to point out that:

> [since Aristotle] 'woman' has remained an enduring 'site of contradiction': 'on the one hand, woman is asserted to have an essence which defines her as woman and yet, on the other hand, woman is relegated to the status of matter and can have no access to essence [except through the male].[37]

This reduced status in the patriarchal discourse gives women the potential for new positions within the symbolic order.

In the case of Winterson's *Written on the Body* her descriptions of the body are mental paintings. A lover's close analyses of a loved one on a level which transcends the physical. The levels on which Louise's body is described represent an emotional contact and also deeper connections with the earth, the mind and the future. In particular, the description of the eye expresses need and consumption:

> I am living in a red bubble made up of Louise's hair. It's the sunset time of year but it's not the dropping disc of light that holds me in the shadows of the yard. It's the colour I crave, floodings of you running down the edges of the sky on to the brown earth on to the grey stone. On to me. *(Winterson, 1992, p.138)*

In placing sexuality in its meaning as choice of partner according to gender on the agenda of the contemporary feminist, and Winterson in general, one is encouraged to make judgements. Frequently, these judgements relate to how artists may express themselves. Lynda Hart suggests that a writer is empowered by acknowledging a lesbian sexuality, not only over expressing the body, but also over the symbolic order; "The very term *lesbian* has the privilege and the peril of (non)existing in what passes for The Symbolic Order".[38]

Outside the symbolic order it may be, but lesbianism has been much discussed, qualified and quantified from within the symbolic order as Winterson illustrates in her discussion of 'Sappho' in *Art and Lies*. Details of the life of Sappho remain elusive, and irrelevant. She is a symbol, a legendary woman who lived on the island of Lesbos and gave her name to lesbian desire. Virginina Woolf, before her, and writers of the nineteenth century refer to Sapphistry as the erotic love between women. Winterson begins her portrait of Sappho with a recollection of the force of her name, writing "I am a SEXUALIST. In flagrante delicto. The end-stop of the universe. Say my name and you say sex".[39] Sappho is not just a signifier of lesbian sex, she is also a poet, an artist who fears her art has been forgotten. Like the men who preceded her, from Plato, to Pope and Baudelaire Winterson creates her own unique way of understanding a place for Sappho. Unlike her progenitors, Winterson finds this position through positivism, through personal association, and by giving Sappho a voice, albeit Winterson's own. We can read Winterson's words and recognise the poetry within them; she is an artist, not a biographer, but ultimately in accepting the inaccuracy of language we go on to accept the impossibility of biography, "There's only art and lies".[40] Sappho has been turned into a symbol of something other than herself through the medium of language over millennia; Winterson represents her simply as an artist. She illustrates what is for her a very important point, that is that, in the final analysis art is about art and not about the artist.

Primarily it is the artistic nature of Winterson's writing that gives her work appeal. She does not write in 'blood', or 'milk', she needs only words to reveal female nature

and sensuality. She has familiarised herself with the relationships between discourses, and with the ways in which language interacts with the reader. It is to Winterson's credit that she not only understands these complex relationships but goes some way towards exposing and using them. Cixous expresses a relationship between the experience of childbirth and that of birthing a text:

> A longing for text! Confusion! What's coming over her? A child! Paper! Intoxications! I'm brimming over! My breasts are overflowing! Milk. Ink. Nursing time. And me? I'm hungry too. The milky taste of ink![41]

The necessity of seeing the process in this way is questioned by Winterson. She links the act of writing to the experiences of sex, love and death. She describes her writing as a consequence of exploration of the mind's capacity to interpret, not as a purely physical process. She makes art anew, and in doing so renews and refreshes the reader. Yet she allows us also to create a space which allows us to appreciate innovation. Pat Califia interprets her writing as a means of expressing the effect on the mind of extreme physical suffering, primarily through sadomasochistic scenarios.

Pat Califia: Hidden Desires

In her introduction to *Macho Sluts*, Pat Califia explains how she selected the title of the work:

> The title of this book was a piece of graffiti that had been spray-painted by an anonymous street artist above the Broadway tunnel in San Francisco. I don't know the gender or the sexual orientation of the person who coined this phrase, but if the shoe fits I'll go dancing. *(Califia, 1988, p.18)*

There is no question when one reads the work of Califia that her intention is to reveal the strength of women in the face of sexual force. She describes how force

can be turned on the enemy simply through the act of luxuriating in physical weakness, thus transforming it into a threateningly powerful spiritual strength. The submissives in her work find nothing but pleasure in their yielding to the dominatrix. Liz, in the story *Jessie (Califia, 1988, pp.28-62)*, finds her pleasure in obeying the whim of her body to experience the extensive intensity of pain the lover of her choosing can inflict upon her. It is in the orgasm of the submissive that Califia verifies the level of consent in the acts she describes.[42] The women Califia creates know no pleasure greater than that of basking in their own resilience as independent women - women with the capacity to make an informed choice, to welcome the most extreme acts of torture at a selected moment.

Pat Califia's writing appeals to the desire to escape the boundaries and throw off the taboos of the highly proscriptive cultural domain which the contemporary feminist must negotiate. The courage to explore the vast sexual domain in fantasy is limited but, as Califia highlights, to explore that domain in reality involves a further liberation:

> If someone believes that there is nothing wrong with the object of their desire, and yet is willing to repeatedly postpone obtaining it, to sacrifice it, to do without it, or trade it for a romance or a better job or a good reputation, they are bound to be angry when we insist on having our deviant desire, without guilt, apologies, or explanations. (*Califia, 1988, p.27*)

Califia recognises guilt to be a powerful limiting force and frequently praises those who do not suffer so acutely from it, because the occasions when we choose to relinquish it are the times when we learn the most about our bodies - our selves.

The introduction to *Macho Sluts* (1988) is written to appeal to the discriminatory reader and explain the trust that is necessary to allow a violent sexual fantasy to manifest in reality. The domination/submission scenes in the book are sensual and highly charged, and in many instances they include imagery and violence intended to heighten the sensitivity of both the subject and the reader. These episodes are as likely to come from the work of Sade as from Califia, but she consciously explains the liberating characteristics of her work to negate any such comparison. Sadism and masochism are activities that are seen to bring forth the body's grace and pay tribute to female stamina, they are not to be seen as the annihilation of flesh. The beauty that Califia, as a sadomasochist writer, sees herself bringing forth from the female form is one intrinsically linked to the choice of the submissive. The reclaiming of the whole continuum of sexual experience for women is the primary goal set by Califia the woman; the manifestation of this in leather, dungeons, whips and handcuffs is the concern of Califia the sadomasochist.

Califia's discourse resembles that of Pauline Réage the unidentified author of the pornographic text *The Story of O* which chronicles the sexual education of a photographer at her boyfriends request. An education which involves both women and men fucking and torturing her until the point at which she will feel ecstasy and gratitude. In many respects the bodily punishments Califia's women undergo at the hands of the dominants are no less terrifying than those experienced by Réage's '0'. However, '0' has no sense of her own will; she must obey the men who utilise her body because of the unconditional love she has offered to one man. There is no question that the reason Califia can be located as a feminist when Réage cannot lies

in the autonomous nature of her characters. At no point in her stories is the desire of the submissive abused because of love she may feel for her 'top'. The desire of one for another challenges the boundaries of decency within this context only if we question the 'safety' of the fantasy. It is her story relating to 'vanilla sex' that serves to demonstrate most clearly the force of mutual need experienced by any individual engaged in a sexual scenario. The narrator in *A Dash of Vanilla (Califia, 1988, pp.284-291)* enters the timeless realm in which sexual gratification can erase the injustices:

> My desire for you is desperate, as if making you respond in bed could make up for all the things that go wrong elsewhere and give me back what I lose when I make a contemptuous remark about something I love . . . . But making love to you barely salvages my self esteem, and keeps me addicted to you. *(Califia, 1988, pp.290-291)*

Califia knows the danger of consenting to acts of sexual depravity through love for someone else. To engage in a sexual act which has no place within the realm of one's own fantasy is bad enough, but to do it because one believes it is the fantasy of someone to whom one is addicted is worse - it is fatal.

The accusations levelled against practitioners of S/M, and specifically against self-proclaimed feminists and homosexuals, is that it is essentially an acting out of the age old power struggle between master and slave. Foucault identified the key objection to this accusation:

> [S/M is] a process of invention [that involves an] acting out of power structures by a strategic game that is able to give sexual pleasure or bodily pleasure.[43]

Control over the erotic forces of subordination and domination is taken by both

participants because rules are followed to maintain a safe and consensual environment. It is the Califia figure, the lesbian sadomasochist, that has forced feminism to address the issue of S/M both in the lives and in the fantasies of women. The anti-S/M feminist community has chosen to deny a voice to those who involve themselves in controversial, painful, power oriented sexual scenarios. For many, S/M is where the line should be drawn. As with any censorship of pornography, boundaries are erected; boundaries which continually disintegrate in the face of change. The process of naming and providing ourselves (our female selves) with an appropriate relationship to historical abuses and present abuses results in an alliance with the censor against lesbian sadomasochists. This alliance not only aids the persecution of a minority, it also blindly accepts that there is something fundamentally suspect about S/M.

To ally S/M in general with violence is a misreading. The consensual element of S/M may not be required in fantasy, but nevertheless it should remain distinct from rape. Violence is not the key to understanding S/M, nor is violence synonymous with power. In fact, romance, as a genre, bears considerable resemblance to S/M in the role-playing it involves. Sade may be a sexual terrorist, but it is important to distinguish between terrorism and sadism. The theatrical nature of S/M resembles fantasy in the planning and relationship to spontaneity. Lynda Hart argues persuasively for the consensual nature of sadistic practices. Fantasies are frequently repeated and thus calculated to result in maximum delight:

> What is striking about many s/m narratives and testimonials is the extent to which the sexual act is determined in advance, rigorously negotiated, planned in excruciating detail. Even the

> reactions of the anticipants are anticipated and prepared for as much as possible.[44]

The emphasis is on consensual practices; women placed in a position in which they know they will get what they want:

> One thinks how difficult it has been for feminists to achieve such simple recognitions as the right for a woman to ask, simply, for what pleases her in a sexual exchange, or to guide her partner through certain motions that she herself must know better than her partner will please her.[45]

S/M has much in common with fantasy in that the choice of the woman controls the situation. Shared power guides the S/M narrative.

Califia has frequently been called upon to defend her position because of the prevailing feminist attitude to S/M. Califia links S/M and lesbianism together as discourses which are desexusalised by those sections of the feminist movement which seek to silence minority sexual fantasy:

> The women's movement has become a moralistic force, and it can contribute to the self-loathing and misery experienced by sexual minorities. Because sexual dissenters are already trampled on by monolithic, prudish institutions, I think it is time the women's movement started taking more radical positions on sexual issues.[46]

Califia identifies herself as a feminist, despite her problems with the fragmentary nature of the movement, because as a woman she is subject to the patriarchy and objects to the limits it places on women through the Family, Church and State. As a practitioner of S/M she is also subject to society's unwillingness to accept sexual acts which are considered to be threatening. Califia's fictional writing and theoretical texts are important in redressing such attitudes. Her work represents, and refers to, consensual egalitarian sexual experiences dependent on negotiation:

> It is a consensual activity that involves polarized roles and intense sensations. An S/M scene is always preceded by a negotiation in which the top and the bottom decide whether or not they will play, what activities are likely to occur, what activities will not occur, and about how long the scene will last. The bottom is usually given a 'safe word' or 'code action' she can use to stop the scene.[47]

The consensual nature of the act could be read as problematic in itself. The conditioning which leads women to seek out pain and indulge in power play and hierarchical relationships represents an attitude from which feminism seeks to distance itself. In this context the specific nature of the fantasy is not at issue rather the ability to heighten pleasure, through a process which the dominant discourse finds inappropriate, and accept sexuality in its many forms. Lesbian S/M involves the acting out of fantasies but the protocol which 'keeps them safe' provides the necessary barrier between violence and sexual pleasure.

Lynda Hart identifies an area in which sadomasochist and post-modernist unite against a principle of feminism. After decades of silence women (feminists) are seeking for a way to inscribe and seize a sense of identity. This is in conflict with S/M, which frequently speaks of the masochist erasing her/his identity, of losing her/himself. However such 'loss of self' is not about exchanging one's identity for a constructed one, it is about precisely recognising the nature of identity:

> It is about a profound alteration in consciousness that can understandably be perceived as quite terrifying. nevertheless it is a leap into a corporeality that can facilitate a process of coming to realize that "self" is not only a construct, a prosthetic device, but often a burdensome one.[48]

The 'real' is 'at the limits of' or even 'outside of' representation, beyond that which symbolises our control, our relationship to our bodies. The pleasure of surrender is

achieved through S/M and this loss of self for the sadomasochist is a way to appreciate where our consciousness lies in relation to what we perceive as the real. This is threatening to those who wish to construct a set of symbols with which to construct identity, but if we are to avoid censorship we must accept that this escape (by the lesbian sadomasochist) represents a search for something 'other':

> When attempts are made to keep people from hearing about S/M or hearing us speak out, or even associating with us, it isn't knowledge about S/M that is being controlled. It is Knowledge of itself that the supposedly egalitarian, democratic, vanilla majority fears. (*Califia, 1988, pp.26-27*)

To examine the relevance of 'loss of self' to women during sexual fantasy and acts gives an insight into the relationship between performance and sadomasochistic sex. There is an element of performativity in all descriptions of sex from the terminology (sexual 'performance', 'acts' and 'scenes' of sexual intercourse) to the psychology; we are already on stage.

The role playing involved in S/M is consciously undertaken as an important element of the process which eroticises sexual activity and creates mentally stimulating fantasy. The role permits a flexibility which is not afforded to people in other areas of their lives:

> The most significant reward for being a top or a bottom is sexual pleasure. If you don't like being a top, or a bottom, you switch keys. Try doing that with your biological sex or your race or your socioeconomic status.[49]

S/M involves fantasies which utilise feelings and actions which are forbidden or which may involve sexist, racist or homophobic elements parodying oppression and engaging in the hierarchical nature of culture. It is crucial to remember that 'acting'

is about fantasising, not a genuine wish to be oppressed or oppressor. Channeling power and violence (intrinsic elements of sexual relations) into theatrical experiences re-directs them away from uncontrolled cruelty. The censor's inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality in such a context is referred to by Strossen in relation to the May-June 1993 issue of *On Our Backs*.[50] The cover showed an Asian-American woman covered in body paint portraying flames entitled 'Dawn Wan in Flames'. Literal interpreters of the image were outraged:

> Spokeswomen for DAP [Dykes Against Porn] explained that they saw the Wan photograph as racist and as promoting violence against Asian women.[51]

Dawn Wan had been involved in the idea for the body paint and the photograph. The image was defended by the then-managing editor Heather Findlay:

> I liked how [the cover] portrayed an Asian-American woman complete with attitude and sexual assertiveness - a departure, in my opinion, from the stereotype of the passive 'oriental' lady - so I didn't feel we had any apologies to make to anyone, especially to Dawn, who came up with the cover concept herself.[52]

The failure to distinguish between fantasy and reality is at the root of the pornography debate and anti-pornography campaigners frequently direct their attentions towards minority groups.

The pornographer and the legislator decide which sexual acts are normal, and healthy. Within such performances, and within the imagery of these performances, much is defined as acceptable. For women, the acceptable does not always reflect the erotic, and this is partially what Califia's work explores. She goes further, challenging the boundaries between performance and reality as defined by loss of

self during the sexual experience, a relinquishing of identity which escapes the limits of heterosexist discourse. Lynda Hart speaks of a paragraph from the Califia story, "The Calyx of Isis" (*Califia, 1988, pp.84-176*):

> The dialect is between the body - the home of the culturally constructed "self" and the "flesh" - the abstracted desire for something that is not performance, is prior to performance, or beyond performance . . . . Califia's story . . . . captures this oscillation:
>
> > she began to erase herself. She began to give up the idea that she had anything to hide or any right to demand pleasure instead of pain. She began to crumble herself at the edges, fade into air, render herself will-less and invisible . . . .[53]

Hart finds within Califia's story an expression of how the submissive (Roxanne) is pressured outside of her body by physical pain. Roxanne is forced finally, to perform the 'between', between body and flesh. Through relinquishing her idea of the 'real of control' she recognises life as the movement between body and flesh/reality and fantasy.

> Repetition of the performance is an acting out of the hope that a different structure of value could emerge - an elsewhere - beyond the dialectic, a different kind of knowledge/experience that escapes the closure of representation.[54]

This necessary alienation from self is also a by product of the lesbian sadomasochist's ritual. The first distance is gained by recognising oneself as an actor.

The distance which the artist takes from her/his subject depends on influences as various as subject, genre, medium and guilt. The artist is in a unique position in relation to that most elusive of concepts - 'truth'. It is the purpose of the female artist to express the possibilities she sees in life through her medium. The extent to

which she does this is various, and only occasionally controversial. For a writer like Califia it is the silencing of her desire, the negating of her sexual tastes by society that forces her to speak a potentially controversial 'truth'. She recognises that her work may be considered by some to be pornography. This should not be seen as pornography in a contemptible sense. It is not loosely thrown together; she is not a "hack" trying to "make a quick buck". She is writing about "what does it for her", not about what she thinks should "do it". An aspiring lesbian pornographer should, in her opinion, produce work which passes what Dorothy Allison calls "the wet test". Unfortunately, as Califia points out, the majority of lesbian pornography fails this test:

> Lesbian culture is impoverished. And if we are ever going to be free, we must have a vision of that woman of the future, including her ideas about what "sexy" means and looks like, and what "pleasure" is, and what its worth. (*Califia, 1988, p.14*)

Thus Califia will provide examples of 'sexy writing'. Some of this is created in the pages of *Macho Sluts*, but in a more general way it lies within the pages of pornography because women "have a right to pleasure ourselves, and access to pornography is a part of that."(*Califia, 1988, p.16*) Califia explores a variety of S/M fantasies which would certainly not all be to the taste of every woman, but the point about fantasy, and pornography, is that individual taste is the individual's guide.

The writers discussed in the final two chapters of this thesis share an interest in the anatomy of human (and especially female) desire. There is a point at which literature steps outside that which we would choose to experience for ourselves. It is important that literature transgress these boundaries if expression is to become possible.

Censorship fosters conformist literature and art. It is surely laudable that female writers, whatever their approach, seek and find a mode of expression to which women who are choosing to explore their sexuality can relate, and be inspired by.

End Notes

1. Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects (London: Vintage, 1996), pp.114-115.
2. See Jeanette Winterson, Written on The Body (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992). The central character is not identified as male or female, an extension of the device used in Virginnia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928). *Orlando* represents the female position within society as we view the narrative through a single hero/ine. Orlando experiences society both as male and female revealing the restrictions placed on women. In *Written on the Body* the 'genderless' narrator encourages the reader to ignore these restrictions and forget the significance of gender stereotypes.
3. See reference to Luce Irigaray in chapter one, p.50. The most useful texts for comparison are *Sexing the Cherry, The Passion,* and *Gut Symmetries.*
4. Hélène Cixous, The Last Painting of the Portrait of God, in Hélène Cixous, Coming to Writing and Other Essays, trans. by Sarah Cornell, Deborah Jenson, Ann Liddle, and Susan Sellers, ed. by Deborah Jenson (London: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp.104-113 (p.104).
5. Pat Califia, Macho Sluts (Boston: Alyson Publications, Inc., 1988), p.16. Further References to this work are given in the text.
6. Adrienne Rich, Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence, in Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose, ed. by Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi (London: Norton, 1993), pp.203-224 (pp. 203-204).
7. Lynda Hart, Between the Body and the Flesh: Performing Sadomasochism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
8. Anais Nin, Delta of Venus (London: Penguin, 1990), p.xii.
9. Lisa Henderson, Lesbian Pornography, in New Lesbian Criticism: Literary and Cultural Readings, ed. by Sally Munt (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. - (p.186).
10. Jeanette Winterson, Written on The Body, p.96.
11. Jeanette Winterson, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Virago, 1991)
12. Jeanette Winterson, Foreword, in Erotica: An Anthology of Women's Writing, ed. by Margaret Reynolds (London: Pandora, 1990), p.ixx.
13. Jeanette Winterson, Foreword, p.xx.
14. Jeanette Winterson, Foreword, p.xxii.
15. Jeanette Winterson, Sexing The Cherry (London: Vintage, 1990), p.52.
16. Joseph Bristow, Sexuality (London: Routledge, 1997), p.125.
17. Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, p.40.
18. Jeanette Winterson, Sexing The Cherry, (London: Virago, 1990), p.23.
19. Jeanette Winterson, Sexing The Cherry, p.90.
20. Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, p.4.
21. Kathy Acker, Bodies of Work: Essays by Kathy Acker (London: Serpents Tail, 1997), p.viii.
22. Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, pp.156-157.
23. Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, p.122.
24. Kathy Acker, Bodies of Work, p.8.
25. Hélène Cixous, Coming to Writing, in Coming to Writing and Other Essays, pp.1-58 (pp.13-14).

26. Jeanette Winterson, Gut Symmetries (London: Granta Books, 1997), p.98.
27. Hélène Cixous, Coming to Writing, in Coming to Writing and Other Essays, pp.1-58 (p.28).
28. Jeanette Winterson, Sexing The Cherry, p.17.
29. Luce Irigaray, An Ethics of Sexual Difference, trans. by Carolyn Burke and Gillian C Gill (London: The Athalone Press, 1993), p.105. See *Written on the Body* for more obvious examples of this.
30. Jeanette Winterson, Sexing The Cherry, p.34.
31. Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, p.160.
32. Jeanette Winterson, Sexing the Cherry, p.83.
33. Jeanette Winterson, Sexing The Cherry, p.54.
34. Jeanette Winterson, Written on The Body (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p.9. Further References to this work are given in the text.
35. Naomi Wolf, The Beauty Myth (Vintage: London, 1990), p.214.
36. Diana Fuss, Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference (New York: Routledge, 1991), p.72.
37. Hart, p.127.
38. Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993), pp.51-76.
39. Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, p.51.
40. Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, p.69.
41. Hélène Cixous, Coming to Writing, in Coming to Writing and Other Essays, pp.1-58 (p.31).
42. See in particular *The Calyx of Isis, Califia, 1988, pp.84-176.*
43. Sylvere Lotringer, Foucault Live (interviews 1961 to 1984), quoted in Bristow, p.188.
44. Hart, p.151.
45. Hart, pp.151-152.
46. Pat Califia, Feminism and Sadomasochism, in Feminism and Sexuality: A Reader, ed. by Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp.230-237 (p.231).
47. Pat Califia, Feminism and Sadomasochism, pp.230-237 (p.232).
48. Hart, p.61.
49. Pat Califia, Feminism and Sadomasochism, pp.230-237 (p.233).
50. Nadine Strossen, Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights (London: Abacus, 1996), pp.149-151.
51. Strossen, p.150.
52. Heather Findlay, Dyke Porn 101: How to Enjoy (and Defend) Your Porn, quoted in Strossen, p.150.
53. Hart, pp.149-150.
54. Hart, p.151.

Conclusion

It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded—which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallocentric system; it does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophic-theoretical domination. It will be conceived of only by subjects who are breakers of automatisms, by peripheral figures that no authority can ever subjugate.
(*Cixous*)[1]

It has been demonstrated that attitudes towards sexuality and pornography over time are fluid. The focus throughout this work was the twentieth century because this was when the pornography debate became linked to issues of female equality and empowerment for the first time. The intrinsic value of an analysis of the issue of censorship of pornography is located in the fact that society's changing attitudes towards sexuality reflect its interpretation of gender roles and especially the role of women. The texts studied in the final two chapters reflect the unique contribution made by medicine in the latter half of the twentieth century. For the first time it became possible to separate recreational sex and procreation, thus forever altering the perspective of women. However as long as procreation and recreational sex are linked by the dominant discourse, patriarchal morality will influence attitudes towards sexuality and censorship will exist.

This thesis addressed the fact that women, particularly in America, are involved in pro-censorship movements because of their belief that pornography is at the root of

how we characterise male and female roles. It has been conclusively demonstrated that the stereotyping of both male and female takes place on every level of the dominant discourse, originating in language. Thus pornography is only a symptom of the problem and not the cause. Women's writing was presented to redress this male-biased phallocentric portrayal of female desire. This bias clearly remains a key function of the dominant discourse regardless of attempts to censor representations of desire. Censorship has been linked to the silencing of female desire, especially dangerous for women as historically the sublimation of the female resulted from such silencing. Historically, the production and transmission of literature written by women has been curtailed by both procreation and censorship. Civil condemnations of trespasses against the dominant discourse have most frequently been directed at women, as demonstrated by the example of the trial of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928. Those women who argue in favour of censorship forget that the opportunity for women to express themselves in anyway that they choose is a right which has not yet been achieved. It has been demonstrated throughout that, if we are to accept the equality of women then the opportunity to produce literature which operates within/without the pornographic discourse is an essential element of that equality.

The works of a small number of those writers who feel the importance of the right to depict sex acts, and the responses to those acts, has formed the backbone of the work. This sample of women's writing produced in the twentieth century as a response to the anti-pornography debate demonstrates the pervasiveness of this issue in contemporary society. Although it has been clear that not all the writers discussed

responded directly to this debate, misogynist pornography as a medium which empowers phallocentric language was certainly an underlying concern for all. Although the imperative to demystify the sexual experience can be easily identified in all the writings discussed, the choice of texts included in the thesis was most rewarding because of the individual styles and aims of all the writers.

The field in which this research belongs is a vast one and therefore the approaches to the texts were specifically narrow. The concerns of the postmodern feminist were deliberately excluded for the most part from the arguments of the thesis.[2] It would be valuable in further work on this subject to consider the manner in which the fragmentation of 'the self' affects women's perceptions of their bodies. However, as I discussed at the outset, at this time and within the scope of my work it is important to focus on the continuing need for women to construct their own identities within the space of their own bodies before fragmentation can take place. Currently our understanding of the female psyche and the sexualised society in which we live is limited and subjective. Perhaps, in time, informed exploration of these discourses can lead to an opportunity to explode the myths relating to the construction of female identity and woman's position in the sexual economy.

The voice of the female sexual imagination is a crucial one in the redefinition of attitudes toward human sexuality. Particularly in Britain we live in a post-Victorian era which equates 'sex' with secrecy and embarrassment. To achieve a healthier climate for both men and women the sexual must cease to be aligned with guilt. Understanding and acceptance of the power of the human sex drive is an important

step towards equality between men and women. 'Being desirable' and 'having desire' do not need to be linked with either masculine or feminine or with weakness and strength. The fluidity with which an individual can move from either position is dependent not on biology but sociology. The discourse of fear resulted in a society which placed skirts around table legs and performed clitorodectomies to erase female hysteria, desire and masturbation, whilst prostitution flourished. As Bédarida argued:

> The potency of the 'double standard' consisted in the fact that it not only gave a man unfettered freedom, but also satisfied the basic demands of a patriarchal and bourgeois society, where female chastity was enforced with the utmost strictness, while men were permitted any number of extra-marital affairs.[3]

This was a society in which some women had no sexual education, others had no sexual pleasure and the rest bore the title of slut or whore. The system of so-called 'Victorian values' endured well into the twentieth century and current attitudes towards sex reveal that, whilst death may be the new obscene subject, sex remains subject to a complex system of double standards.[4] It is the goal of the women whose work I have discussed to remove the negative feelings that are associated with sex, an aim that they feel can be achieved without neutralising sexual images. An equal society would favour language which celebrates sexuality over one which roots itself in its silencing. Beyond this we seek a language which does not privilege the discourse of sexuality above any other. It is a valid concern that too much female energy has been devoted to debating what is essentially a 'patriarchal and bourgeois' obsession.

The subject of censorship is not one which will fade although it is becoming more

and more difficult for national governments to enforce censorship laws. Technology, in the form of the Internet, is finally placing decisions about consumption of 'offensive' material in the hands of the individual. The potential dangers of 'freedom of information' are heatedly debated by those who fear the intentions of those who will receive it. Censorship will perhaps become an issue for military and economic institutions. This will not remove public concerns relating to the availability of pornographic material. Responses to pornographic material will only change in accordance with the dominant discourse's attitude towards sexuality. As I demonstrated, such attitudes are entirely dependent on how we define the female and male in all relations with one another. Coppock, Haydon and Richter have pointed out that:

> The politics of reproduction are inextricably linked to the politics of **production**. Within feminism it is acknowledged that the social and cultural arrangements which contextualise reproduction act to centralise a woman's role as wife and mother.[5]

Thus as science alters the relationship between the body and reproduction, the political situation will certainly shift. It is too early to fully understand the consequences of the scientific and technological evolution and any future research undertaken would be dependent on the resulting alterations in the balance of power.[6]

The issue of female sexual pleasure has been a problematic one for the Christian faith and the case of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* is especially relevant in this context. Hall sought to educate her audience, male and female, heterosexual and homosexual. As this thesis has consistently demonstrated, the education of women by women is crucial to the development of a female consciousness that can recognise

and escape its bonds. Kappeler supports this position:

> Part of a feminist strategy must be the elaboration of a concept of collectivity that differs from male bonding over commodities and enemies. Feminist critique must evolve forms of communication that are neither ego-trips nor solid objects, but forms of exchange.[7]

Numerous examples of women who seek to communicate with one another have been provided. Their work does not always propose specific political goals, rather it reveals an erotic imagination which will continue to permeate literature and other media. In this respect Hall's work is unique, she has a political goal in writing and her tenacious determination to ensure that her goal should be achieved is demonstrated in chapter two of this thesis.

Writers such as Radclyffe Hall, Hélène Cixous Angela Carter, Kathy Acker, Jeanette Winterson, Pat Califia, seek to educate those who will listen. They demonstrate that sex education for women is not always about biology, contraception and childbirth and is not only undertaken by the teaching profession, the medical profession and parents. Sex education for women and men can be about lust, manipulation, love and power. This serves the dual purpose of reducing guilt and placing the girl in the position of fantasist, as the dreamer of her own destiny. Hélène Cixous sees the female writer, herself in particular, as a practitioner of this dreaming:

> Sinking into your own night, being in touch with what comes out of my body as with the sea, accepting the anguish of submersion. Being of a body with a river all the way to the rapids rather than with the boat, exposing yourself to this danger—this is a feminine pleasure. Sea you return to the sea, and rhythm to rhythm [. . .] ourselves in writing like fish in the water.[8]

Thus, by relinquishing the conventional ties of narrative and culture, freedom

becomes possible. These writers do not blindly suggest that we live in a society in which these things are possible, rather, that we live in a society in which these things are recognised as potentially possible.[9]

As a contrast to the female writers I have discussed it is informative to look to the literature of other groups who feel their fantasies have been appropriated or denied. Neil Bartlett's *Ready to Catch Him Should He Fall* (1990) is a homoerotic text which represents the relationship between two men who are positioned as outcasts by the heterosexist society. Bartlett's text adds weight to the debate in chapter four which relates to the artistry of words in an erotic context. The moment of nativity and pietà forms a final tableau which contravenes the discourse of compulsory heterosexuality:

> In the centre of the hallway floor, the naked bulb shining directly above his head, was a young man, holding a body in his arms. At first sight, the body looked small enough to have been the body of a child, though it was in fact the body of an old man. And the young man, because of the body cradled in his lap, and because someone had thrown a blanket over his shoulders which looked like a blue robe, and because his face was cast down in the traditional posture, looked like the Virgin.[10]

Bartlett the theatre director sews traditional religious and artistic motifs into the fabric of his text. Moments of erotic intensity are most explicitly rendered in the multiple references of the entire text. Familial relations, homosexual relations and friendship are blended until eroticism touches all elements of the work. The majority of my work is concerned with the writing of women and the representation of sexuality devoid of reductive power relations. Bartlett's text is both a valuable example of a place from which the masculine imagination contributes to the fantasy and of the manner in which theatre compliments literature.

Future research stemming from the arguments in this thesis should take into account the changing natures of society, literature and language as well as the course of feminist theory. Although literature has been my primary source of textual reference other forms of communication concern contemporary feminist debates about pornography. The role of the female spectator and producer concerns cultural theorists who examine cinematic, televisual and pictorial depictions of sexuality. As an historically recent form of establishing the dominant discourse, cinema contains a wealth of cultural reference and significance relevant to the debate which is undertaken here. Stacey writes:

> What do spectators bring to films from their own specific historical and cultural locations which then inform their readings? How do the discourses of particular historical conjectures limit the possible readings a spectator may make of a film?[11]

The cinematic re-visioning of literature itself plays an important role in the censorship debate. Whilst *Lolita* may be acceptable as a literary text in the 1990s, the recent film adaptation (1998) offends the censor.[12] The privileging of a novel over a film perhaps occurs only in a society which views written discourse as less influential than alternative forms. This reading concerns many within the field of English Literature who fear that the relevance of texts as participants in discourse is seen to be declining.

Certainly, whilst my thesis focuses on literature, the majority of research into pornography is directed at other media. It would therefore be valuable, in a further study, to examine the arguments which suggest that literature may not remain a

powerful force in shaping the dominant discourse. If women are gaining a powerful voice in the refashioning of images of desire the media in which they communicate their fantasies must be carefully chosen.

Performance art, as a medium of postmodernism and revision of the body, is very much an issue in contemporary feminist debates about pornography. 'Writing the body' can only take the communication of the influence of the physical self on the mind so far. Especially in the area of sexuality the visual and active representation of the female position can demystify pornography. Demystification has taken place through Annie Sprinkle's insertion of speculum in vagina on stage discouraging the privileging of privacy and highlighting the reality of the female experience. Further demystification takes place when pain is inflicted on the body in situations divorced from sexual fetishism. Although these demystifications are obviously relevant to the debate in this thesis, their link to the so-called 'post-modern condition' place them firmly outside the perameters of the work.

Throughout this thesis the power of communicating female desire through the medium of language has been recognised as intrinsic to the re-representation of woman's 'pornographic experience'. The pleasure of human sexual relations as experienced by women has been a problematic one for Western discourse and culture. Romantic love has been presented as the ultimate experience for women through the stereotyping of women from childhood onwards. The works of Angela Carter and Kathy Acker have demonstrated the negative impact the myth of romantic love has had on women's position in society. In reality the danger is not in believing

in romantic love, it is in sacrificing everything to it. Patriarchal pornography is in part also dependent on the mystification of romantic love. If sexual intercourse and romantic love were not intertwined the demystification of each would be a simpler process. The attacks by feminist censors on pornography reflect a frustration with the way in which romantic love has in recent years gradually become more separated from the sexual act. The increasingly isolated way in which we live our lives has accelerated this separation and increased the demand for pornography. It is the premise of this thesis that the separation, and the demystification of, sex and romantic love will be the only way in which women will finally become emancipated. The fear, as always, is that women will somehow be prevented from partaking in this process. It is of crucial importance that women continue to be involved in the process of normalising sex and romantic love. Phallocentric discourse will only be disempowered if we cease to worship the phallus and cease to censor those who are involved in its demystification.

END NOTES

1. Hélène Cixous, The Laugh of the Medusa, trans. by Keith and Paula Cohen, in New French Feminisms, ed. by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1981), pp.245-264 (p.253).
2. I would agree with Patricia Waugh's statement that "feminism needs coherent subjects and has found a variety of ways of articulating them which avoid the fetishisation of Pure Reason as the locus of subjecthood and the irrationalism born out of the perceived failure of this idea." (*Modernism, Post Modernism, Feminism: Gender and Autonomy Theory* in *Post Modernism: A Reader*, ed. Patricia Waugh (London: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.189-204 (p.194)) However this does not mean that feminists have not offered something to the post-modern debate rather that this is the subject for another thesis.
3. François Bédarida, A Social History of England 1851-1990, trans. by A.S.Forster and Jeffrey Hodgkinson (London: Routledge, 1991), p.161.
4. Bédarida, p.162.
5. Vicki Coppock, Deena Haydon and Ingrid Richter, The Illusions of 'Post-Feminism': New Women, Old Myths (London: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 1995), p.38.
6. Currently the evidence would suggest that the battle against the freedom of information on the Internet is being lost but it is impossible to predict the consequences of this. Despite its increasing popularity we should remember that the Internet is available only in the workplace and the homes of those who are able to pay for the technology.
7. Susanne Kappeler, The Pornography of Representation (London: Polity Press, 1994), p.219.
8. Hélène Cixous, Coming to Writing and Other Essays, ed. by Deborah Jenson, trans. by Sarah Cornell, Deborah Jenson, Ann Liddle and Susan Sellers (London: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.58.
9. The work undertaken in this thesis is only the beginning. The writers whose works I have considered are in no way comprehensive. It would be appropriate to address the same issues in the work of Margaret Atwood, Virginia Woolf, Anais Nin, Alice Thompson and Alice Walker.
10. Neil Bartlett, Ready to Catch Him Should He Fall (London: Penguin, 1992), p.285.
11. Jackie Stacey, The Lost Audience: Methodology, Cinema History and Feminist Film Criticism, in Feminist Cultural Theory: Process and Production, ed. by Beverly Skeggs (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp.97-118 (p.100).
12. In particular censors obected to the portrayal of Humbert Humbert by Jeremy Irons. It was felt that he was too attractive to play the role. This objection was crucial because the concern was that the believability of Lolita's desire for the Iron's character was enhanced.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fiction

Acker, Kathy, Kathy Goes to Haiti (London: Flamingo, 1993).
Acker, Kathy, In Memoriam to Identity (London: Flamingo, 1993).
Acker, Kathy, Blood and Guts In High School (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1978).
Acker, Kathy, Don Quixote (New York: Grove Press, 1988).
Acker, Kathy, Pussycat Fever (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1995).
Acker, Kathy, Eurydice In the Underworld (London: Arcadia, 1997).

Atwood, Margaret, The Handmaid's Tale (London: Virago, 1987).

Ballard, J.G., Crash (London: Vintage, 1973).

Barnes, Djuna, Nightwood (London: Faber & Faber, 1963).

Bartlett, Neil, Ready to Catch Him Should He Fall (London: Penguin, 1990).

Califia, Pat, Macho Sluts (Boston: Alyson Publications, Inc., 1988).

Carter, Angela, Love (Suffolk: Picador, 1971).
Carter, Angela, Black Venus (London: Picador, 1986).
Carter, Angela, The Bloody Chamber (London: Penguin, 1971).
Carter, Angela, Heroes and Villains (London: Penguin, 1981).
Carter, Angela, The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman (London: Penguin 1982).
Carter, Angela, The Passion of New Eve (London: Virago, 1992).
Carter, Angela, The Magic Toyshop (London: Virago, 1992).
Carter, Angela, Nights at the Circus (London: Picador, 1985).
Carter, Angela, Wayward Girls and Wicked Women (London: Virago, 1986).
Carter, Angela, Wise Children (London: Vintage, 1992).
Carter, Angela, Burning Your Boats (London: Vintage, 1996).

Friday, Nancy, My Secret Garden: Women's Sexual Fantasies (London: Quartet 1990).
Friday, Nancy, Forbidden Flowers: More Women's Sexual Fantasies (London: Random House, 1988).
Friday, Nancy, Women On Top (London: Arrow, 1992).

Hall, Radclyffe, The Well of Loneliness (London: Virago, 1982).
Hall, Radclyffe, The Unlit Lamp (London: Virago, 1981).
Hall, Radclyffe, Miss Oglivy Finds Herself (London:
Hall, Radclyffe Marguerite, A Sheaf of Verses (Oxford: Gaby Goldscheider, 1985)
Hall, Radclyffe, Adam's Breed (London: Virago, 1985).

Lawrence, David Herbert, The Rainbow (London: Penguin, 1949).

Nabakov, Vladimir, Lolita (London: Corgi, 1961).

Nin, Anais, Delta of Venus (London: Penguin, 1990).
Nin, Anais, Little Birds (London: Penguin, 1991).
Nin, Anais, Children of the Albatross (London: Penguin, 1993).

Rèage, Pauline, The Erotic Classic Story of 0 (England: Corgi, 1970).

Rhys, Jean, Quartet (London: Penguin, 1973).
Rhys, Jean, Good Morning, Midnight (London: Penguin, 1969).

Sackville-West, Vita, The Letters of Vita Sackville West to Virginia Woolf, (London: Hutchinson, 1984).

Sade, Marquis De, The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom and Other Writings (London: Arrow Books, 1990).
Sade, Marquis De, The Misfortunes of Virtues and Other Early Tales (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Sartre, Jean Paul, The Age of Reason (London: Penguin, 1986).

Sellon, Edward & Anonymous, The New Epicurean/The Yellow Room (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1995).

Sackville-West, Vita, The Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf (London: Hutchinson, 1984).

Stein, Gertrude, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas (London: Penguin, 1966).
Stein, Gertrude, Everybody's Autobiography (London: Virago, 1985).

Thompson, Alice, Justine (London: Virago, 1997).

Walker, Alice, Possessing The Secret of Joy (London: Vintage, 1992).

Wilde, Oscar, The Picture of Dorian Gray (London: Penguin, 1985).

Winterson, Jeanette, Static, in Young Playwrights Festival, 1988 (London: BBC Cooks, 1988).
Winterson, Jeanette, The Passion (London: Penguin, 1988).
Winterson, Jeanette, Sexing The Cherry (London: Vintage, 1990).
Winterson, Jeanette, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit (London: Vintage, 1991).
Winterson, Jeanette, Written on The Body (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992).
Winterson, Jeanette, Art and Lies (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993).
Winterson, Jeanette, Gut Symmetries (London: Granta Books, 1997).
Winterson, Jeanette, The World and Other Places (London: Jonathan Cape, 1998).

Woolf, Virginia, Mrs Dalloway (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992).

Woolf, Virginia, Orlando: A Biography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
Woolf, Virginia, The Waves (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
Woolf, Virginia, To The Lighthouse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Critical Works

Abel, Elizabeth, Writing and Sexual Difference (Brighton: The Harvester Press Ltd., 1982).

Acker, Kathy, Bodies of Work: Essays by Kathy Acker (London: Serpents Tail, 1997).

Anderson, Linda, ed., Plotting Change: Contemporary Women's Fiction (London: Edward Arnold, 1990).

Armitage, Gilbert, Banned in England: An Examination of the Law Relating to Obscene Publications, in The Here and Now Pamphlets: No. 7.

Backhouse, Constance and Flaherty, David, Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

Baker, Michael, Our Three Selves: A Life of Radclyffe Hall (London: Hamilton, 1985).

Barale, Michele Aina, Below the Belt: (Un)Covering *The Well of Loneliness*, in Fuss, Diana, ed. Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories (London: Routledge, 1991), pp.235-257.

Barry, Kathleen, Female Sexual Slavery (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1979).

Barthes, Roland, Roland Barthes, The Death of the Author, in Image-Music-Text, Heath, Stephen, trans. ((London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp.142-148.
Barthes, Roland, Mythologies (London: Paladin,1973).
Barthes, Roland, Sade/Fourier/Loyola (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977).

Beauvoir, Simone De, The Second Sex (New York: Vintage, 1973).
Beauvoir, Simone De, Must we Burn Sade?, in Sade, Marquis De, The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom (London: Arrow Books Limited, 1990), pp.3-64.

Bédarida, François, A Social History of England 1851-1990, Forster, A.S. and Hodgkinson, Jeffrey, trans. (London: Routledge, 1991).

Belsey, Catherine, Critical Practice (London: Routledge, 1992).
Belsey, Catherine and Moore, Jane, The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the politics of Literary Criticism (London: Macmillan Press, 1997).

Benson, E.F., As We Were: A Victorian Peep Show, (London: Longmans Green,

1930).

Benstock, Shari, ed., Feminist Issues *in* Literary Scholarship (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987).
Benstock, Shari, Women of the Left Bank: Paris 1900 to 1940 (London: Virago, 1987).

Berger, John, Ways of Seeing (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin, 1972).

Bristow, Joseph, Sexual Sameness: Textual Differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing (London: Routledge, 1992).
Bristow, Joseph, Sexuality (London: Routledge, 1997).
Bristow, Joseph and Broughton, Trev Lynn, The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism (London: Longman, 1997).
Brittain, Vera, Radclyffe Hall: A Case of Obscenity (London: Femina, 1968).

Brown, Lesley, ed., The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary: On Historical principles, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

Butler, Judith, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (London: Routledge, 1990).
Butler, Judith, Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex (London: Routledge, 1993).

Califia, Pat, Feminism and Sadomasochism, in Jackson, Stevi and Scott, Sue, ed., Feminism and Sexuality: A Reader (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp.230-237.

Cameron, Deborah, A Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader (London: Routledge, 1991).

Carter, Angela, The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History (London: Virago, 1991).
Carter, Angela, Expletives Deleted (London: Vintage, 1993).
Carter, Angela, Notes From the Front Line, in Wandor, Michelene, ed., On Gender and Writing (London: Pandora, 1983), pp. 69-77.

Castle, Terry, The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

Cline, Sally, Radclyffe Hall: A Woman Called John (London: John Murray, 1997).

Cixous, Hélène and Clement, Catherine, The Newly Born Woman, trans. by Wing, Betsy (London: I.B. Taurus Publishers, 1996).
Cixous, Hélène, Sorties, in The Newly Born Woman, trans. by Wing, Betsy (London: I.B. Taurus Publishers, 1996), pp.63-132.

Cixous, Hélène, The Laugh of the Medusa, trans. by Cohen, Keith and Paula, in Marks, Elaine and de Courtivron, Isabelle, New French Feminisms (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1981), pp.245-264.
Cixous, Hélène, Coming to Writing and Other Essays, trans. by Cornell, Sarah, Jenson, Deborah, Liddle, Ann and Sellers, Susan, ed. by Jenson, Deborah (London: Harvard University Press, 1991).
Cixous, Hélène, Writing Differences: Readings from the seminar of Hélène Cixous, ed. by Sellers, Susan (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988).
Cixous, Hélène and Calle, Mireille, Hélène Cixous, Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (London: Routledge, 1997)
Cixous, Hélène, Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing, trans. by Cornell, Sarah and Sellers, Susan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

Coppock, Vicki and Haydon, Deena and Richter, Ingrid, The Illusions of 'Post-Feminism': New Women, Old Myths (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995).

Craig, Alec, The Banned Books of England and Other Countries (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962).

Daly, Mary, Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy (London: The Women's Press, 1984).
Daly, Mary, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (London: The Women's Press, 1987).

Day, Aidan, Angela Carter: The Rational Glass (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

Dickson, Lovat, Radclyffe Hall at the Well of Loneliness: A Sapphic Chronicle (London: Collins, 1975).

Dine, Gail and Jensen, Robert and Russo, Ann, Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality (London: Routledge, 1998).

Dworkin, Andrea, Our Blood: Prophecies and Discourse on Sexual Politics (London: The Women's Press, 1982).
Dworkin, Andrea, Pornography: Men Possessing Women (London: Women's Press, 1994).

Eagleton, Mary, Feminist Literary Criticism (London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1991).

Easton, Susan, The Problem of Pornography Regulation and the Right to Free Speech (London, Routledge, 1994).

Ebing, Von Krafft, Psychopathia Sexualis (London: The London Press Company,

Ehrenreich, Barbara and English, Deidre, ed., 150 Years of the Expert's Advice to Women (London: Pluto Press, 1979).

Elam, Diane, Feminism and the Postmodern: Theory's Romance, in Belsey, Catherine and Moore, Jane, ed., The Feminist Reader (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), pp.182-200.

Ellis, Havelock, Psychology of Sex (London: Pan Books, 1959).

Faderman, Lillian, Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Love and Friendship between Women from the Renaissance to the Present (London: The Women's Press, 1985).
Faderman, Lillian, Love Between Women in 1928: Why Progressivism is not always progress, in Kehoe, Monika, Historical, Literary and Erotic aspects of Lesbianism (London: Harrington Park Press, 1986), pp.

Faludi, Susan, Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women (London: Vintage, 1992).

Fletcher, John, Forster's self-erasure: Maurice and the scene of masculine love, in Bristow, Joseph, ed., Sexual Sameness: Textual differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.64-90.

Forrester, Vivianne, What Women's Eyes See, trans. by de Courtivron, Isabelle, in Marks, Elaine and de Courtivron, Isabelle, New French Feminisms (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1981), pp.181-182.

Foucault, Michel, The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction, trans. by Hurley, Robert (New York: Penguin, 1990).

Franks, Claudia Stillman, Beyond The Well of Loneliness: The Fiction of Radclyffe Hall (Amersham: Avebury, 1982).

Freud, Sigmund, New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, 2 vols. (London: Penguin, 1991), II.

Fuss, Diana, Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference (New York: Routledge, 1989).
Fuss, Diana, Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories (London: Routledge, 1991).

Gamble, Sarah, Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

Garry, Ann and Pearsall, Marilyn, ed., Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1996).

Gearhart, Sally Miller, The Spiritual Dimension: Death and Resurrection of a Hallelujah Dyke, in Vida, Ginny, ed., Our Right to Love (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1978), pp.

Gelpi, Barbara Charlesworth, and Gelpi, Albert, Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose: Poems, Prose, Reviews and Criticism (London: Norton, 1993).

Gilbert, Sandra and Gubar, Susan, No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century,2 vols. (London: Yale University Press, 1989) vol.II.

Greer, Germaine, The Female Eunuch (London: Flamingo, 1993).
Grice, Helena and Woods, Tim, "I'm telling you stories": Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading (Postmodern Studies 25, 1998).

Griffin, Susan, Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge against Nature (New York: The Women's Press, 1981).

Grosz, Elizabeth, Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

Groult, Benoîte, Night Porters, trans. by Gelfand, Elissa, in Marks, Elaine and de Courtivron, Isabelle, New French Feminisms (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1981), pp.68-75.

Hallam, Julia and Marshment, Margaret, Questioning the 'ordinary' woman: *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*, text and viewer, in Skeggs, Beverly, ed., Feminist Cultural Theory: Process and Production (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp.169-189.

Hart, Lynda, Between the Body and the Flesh : Performing Sadomasochism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

Hennegan, Alison, Introduction to Radclyffe Hall, in Hall, Radclyffe, The Well of Loneliness (London: Virago, 1982), pp.vii-xvii.

Howitt, Dennis and Cumberbatch, Guy, Pornography: Impacts and Influences: A review of available research evidence on the effects of pornography (Commissioned by the Home Office Research and Planning Unit, 1990).

Hunter, Ian and Saunders, David and Williamson, Dugald, On Pornography, Literature, Sexuality and Obscenity Law (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1993).

Sex and Violence: Women and Censorship in the USA (Index on Censorship: Volume 1, 1993)pp.3-12.

Irigaray, Luce, Je, tu, nous: Toward a culture of Difference, trans. by Alison Martin (London: Routledge, 1993).
Irigaray, Luce, An Ethics of Sexual Difference, trans. by Burke, Carolyn and Gill, Gillian (London: The Athalone Press, 1993).
Irigaray, Luce, Demystifications, trans. by Reeder, Claudia, in New French Feminisms, ed. by Marks, Elaine and Courtivron, Isabelle de (London: Harvester

Wheatsheaf, 1981), pp.99-106.
Irigaray, Luce, This Sex which is Not One, trans. by Porter, Catherine (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993).

Jackson, Stevi and Scott, Sue, Feminism and Sexuality: A Reader (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996).

Jacob, Naomi, Me and The Swans (London: William Kimber & Co. Ltd.,1963).

Jaggar, Alison, Feminist Politics and Human Nature (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1983).
Jay, Karla and Glasgow, Joanne, ed., Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions (London: Only Women Press, 1992).

Jordan, Elaine, Enthralment: Angela Carter's Speculative Fictions, in Anderson, Linda, ed., Plotting Change: Contemporary Women's Fiction (London: Edward Arnold, 1990), pp.19-40.
Jordan, Elaine, The Dangerous Edge, in Sage, Lorna, ed., Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter (London: Virago, 1994), pp.189-215.

Kappeler, Susanne, The Pornography of Representation (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986).

Kasl, Charlotte Davis, Women, Sex and Addiction: A Search for Love and Power (London: Mandarin Paperbacks, 1992).

Keenan, Sally, Angela Carter's The Sadeian Woman: *Feminism as Treason*, in Bristow, Joseph and Broughton, Trev Lynn, The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism (London: Longman, 1997), pp.132-148.

Kehoe, Monika, Historical, Literary and Erotic aspects of Lesbianism (London: Harrington Park Press, 1986).

Kemp, Sandra and Squires, Julia, Feminisms (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Klaich, Dolores, Woman + Woman (London: New English Library,1974).

Knopp, Sherron, 'If I saw you would you kiss me?' Sapphism and the Subversiveness of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, in Bristow, Joseph, ed., Sexual Sameness: Textual differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.111-127.

Lacan, Jacques, The Meaning of the Phallus, Rose, Jacqueline, trans., in Vice, Sue, Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reader (London: Polity Press, 1996), pp.120-129.
Lacan, Jacques, Écrits: A Selection, Sheridan, Alan, trans. (Bristol: Routledge, 1997).

Lago, Mary and Furbank, P. N., Selected Letters of E.M. Forster, 2 vols. (London:

Collins, 1985), II.

Lee, Hermione, Virginia Woolf (London: Vintage, 1997).

Lewis, Wyndham, The Apes of God (New York: Black Sparrow Press, 1984).

Mackenzie, Compton, Extraordinary Women: Theme and Variations (London: Hogarth, 1986).

MacKinnon, Catharine, Feminist Approaches to Sexual Assault in Canada and the United States: A Brief Retrospective, in Backhouse, Constance and Flaherty, David, Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), pp.186-192.
MacKinnon, Catherine and Dworkin, Andrea, In Harm's Way: The Pornography Civil Rights Hearings (London: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Marcus, Jane, Sapphistory: The Woolf and the Well, in Jay, Karla and Glasgow, Joanne, Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions (London: Onlywomen Press Ltd., 1992), pp.164-213.

Marks, Elaine and de Courtivron, Isabelle, New French Feminisms (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf,1981).

McNeillie, Andrew, ed., The Diaries of Virginia Woolf, 5 vols. (London: Hogarth,1988), vol.III.

Merck, Mandy, From Minneapolis to Westminster, in Segal, Lynne and McIntosh, Mary, ed., Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate (London: Virago, 1992), pp.50-62.

Miles, Rosalind, The Women's History of the World (London: Paladin, 1989).

Millet, Kate, Sexual Politics (London: Virago, 1993).

Moi, Toril, Textual/Sexual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (London: Routledge, 1985).

Munt, Sally, Literary and Cultural Readings (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

Nicholson, Nigel, ed., and Trautmann, Joanne, asst. ed., A Change of Perspective: The Letters of Virginia Woolf, 6 vols. (London: Hogarth Press 1977) III.

Nin, Anais, A Woman Speaks (London: Penguin, 1992).

Nye, Andrea - The Voice of the Serpent: French Feminism and Philosophy of Language, in Garry, Ann and Pearsall, Marilyn, ed., Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.323-338.

O'Rourke, Rebecca, Reflecting on 'The Well of Loneliness' (London: Routledge, 1989).

Pally, Marcia, Good Girls and Bad Girls, in *Index on Censorship, 1/1993*, pp.5-7.

Palmer, Paulina, From 'Coded Mannequin' to Bird Woman: Angela Carter's Magic Flight in Roe, Sue, ed., Women Reading Women's Writing (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987), pp.179-205.

Pateman, Carole, The Sexual Contract (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).
Pouchard, Line, Queer Desire in *The Well of Loneliness*, in Belsey, Catherine and Moore, Jane, The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the politics of Literary Criticism (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), pp.52-65.

Radford, Jean, The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular fiction, London: Routledge, 1986).

Rainbow, Paul, The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought (London: Penguin, 1991).

Reynolds, Margaret, ed., Erotica: An Anthology of Women's Writing (London: Pandora, 1990).

Rice, Philip and Waugh, Patricia, Modern Literary Theory: A Reader (London: Routledge, 1992).

Roe, Sue, ed., Women Reading Women's Writing (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987).

Rule, Jane, Lesbian Images (London: Peter Davies, 1976).

Sade, Marquis De, The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom (London: Arrow Books Limited, 1990).
Sade, Marquis De, The Misfortunes of Virtue and Other Early Tales (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Sage, Lorna, Angela Carter (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994).
Sage, Lorna, Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter (London: Virago, 1994).

Scott, Bonnie Kime, The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990).

Segal, Lynne and McIntosh, Mary, Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate (London: Virago, 1992).

Sellers, Susan, Hélène Cixous : A Reader, in The Body and the Text: Hélène Cixous, Reading and Teaching (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990).

Skeggs, Beverly, ed., Feminist Cultural Theory: Process and Production (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

Smith, Dorothy, Texts, Facts and Femininity: Exploring the relations of Ruling (London: Routledge, 1990).

Strossen, Nadine, Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights (London: Abacus, 1996).

Condemned Novel: Appeal to Sessions: Magistrate's Decision Upheld (The Times, 15 December, 1928)

Tanesini, Alessandra, Whose Language? in Garry, Ann and Pearsall, Marilyn, ed., Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.353-365.

Todd, Janet, Women's Friendship in Litererature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

Trebilcot, Joyce, Conceiving Women: Notes on the Logic of Feminism, Sinister Wisdom (New York: Fall, 1979).

Troubridge, Lady Una, The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall (London: Hammond, 1961).

Vice, Sue, Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reader (London: Polity Press, 1996).

Walter, Natasha, The New Feminism, (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1998).

Wandor, Michelene, ed., On Gender and Writing (London: Pandora, 1983).

Waugh, Patricia, Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction (London: Routledge, 1983)
Waugh, Patricia, Practising Postmodernism/Reading Modernism (London: Edward Arnold, 1992),
Waugh, Patricia, Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Post Modern (London: Routledge, 1989).
Waugh, Patricia, ed., Post Modernism: a Reader (London: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Weedon, Chris, Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

Whitford, Margaret, Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine (London: Routledge, 1991).
Whitford, Margaret, ed., The Irigaray Reader (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1995).

Wilde, Oscar, The Preface *to*, The Picture of Dorian Gray (London: Penguin, 1985), *first appeared in the March 1891 issue of the Fortnightly Review.*

Winterson, Jeanette, Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery (London: Vintage, 1996).

Wittig, Monique, One is not born a Woman, in *Feminist Issues, Volume 1, No.2, Winter 1981.*

Wolf, Naomi, The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are used Against Women (Vintage: London, 1990).
Wolf, Naomi, Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change The 21st Century (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993).
Wolf, Naomi, Promiscuities: A Secret History of Female Desire (London: Vintage, 1997).

Woolf, Virginia, A Room of One's Own/Three Guineas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.3-149.
Woolf, Virginia, Three Guineas (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp.153-367.
Woolf, Virginia, A Woman's Essays (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992).

154.180
201-222