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HELEN CHADWICK; BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES.

BY

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INTRODUCTION

" I think I challenge these boundaries, these fixed notions of identity. My own aim is to blur these boundaries, create new possibilities. I really wish to transgress recognised fixed entities."

(Chadwick in interview with author. 13/1/95).

Helen Chadwick's body has been conditioned to accept life's natural and institutional processes which have controlled and constructed boundaries within her "self" since birth. As constructed her body has become a site composed of the results of these processes. Boundaries that restrict and restrain, torture and confuse, are boundaries which need to be addressed and thus transgressed. Helen Chadwick throughout her work has attempted to do so.

From challenging the notion of the fixed, often personal female identity / institutional restrictions to the universally natural state of her own existence / life and death, Chadwick depicts friction while still maintaining the potential for fluidity within her subject matter. Within Chadwick's earlier work her use of her body remained of central importance to the depiction of her visual representations. Representations which were criticised for their apparent further entrapment of the female gender an example of this "Of Mutability" (1984-'86). being Due to the wide and varied misinterpretations of her work Chadwick consciously decided after "Lofos Nymphons" (1987) to remove her body completely from the other pieces which were to follow. "Meat Lamps" (1989) marked that departure and it also debuted her use of alternative chosen materials which were considered to be taboo.

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(Chadwick in interview with author: 13/1/95)

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These materials replaced her body and became the new subject matter through which she continued to translate her ideas.

In Chapter One, my thesis examines Chadwick's body in relation to the institutional processes, restrictions which she has encountered, and she documents the effects they have had upon her body. From "In the Kitchen" (1977) to "Ego Geometria Sum" (1982-'84) Chadwick translates her objections to these restrictions with a strong visual impact. Also within "Ego Geometria Sum" Chadwick will begin to align the institutional with the natural creating a complex proposition which is carried through to her later works.

In Chapter Two, Chadwick's work focuses more so on the natural processes which effect her body while making reference to the institutional "Of Mutability" (1984-'86), an installation which explores both of the above in greater detail. It demonstrates to its viewers the issues which Chadwick wished to address in a clear and concise manner.

Within the final chapter of my thesis I explore the above in greater detail. Choosing several different works I re-examine Chadwick's continual concerns through the aspect of her latter work, work which within itself has managed to cause discontent among the public and the critics. However, the most important element of this chapter is its eventual outcome. Re-discovering both the natural and institutional through her new approach, Chadwick begins to finally embrace both by restructuring the effects they have had upon her symbolic body. This restructuring unleashes the possibility of the fluidity already mentioned, and Chadwick finally begins to move out of and beyond the boundaries of the body. This is clearly visible in both "Piss Flowers" (1991/92) and "Wreaths To Pleasure" (1992/93).

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"Proud Change (not pleased in mortall things) Beneath the moone, to raigne Pretends as well as Gods, as Men To be the Soveraine.'

(Spenser's 'Ode of Mutability, Enfleshings, p.42)

"I discharge myself, time and again in a discontinuous flow,'

(Chadwick, Enfleshings, p.29)

"Of Mutability embraces death/decay. They are a fact of existence".

(Chadwick, Interview with Author, 1995)

(Chadwick, referview with a Authors 1985)

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"I distributive in solity three and security with

Accidents of Matter: A concept of self as being infinitely subject to change.

"The distinction between occupied and empty space is clear. It marks the boundaries of the body, the limits of the constructed self."

(Chadwick, Enfleshings p.11).

Is Chadwick's body a victim or victor of life's processes? From self/other, the building of the boundaries of the body can be discussed through the examination of the socialization of that body.

"In the Kitchen" was first exhibited in (1977) at Chelsea School of Art, at which time, Chadwick had begun to combine performance with installation. Surrounded predominantly by abstractions in metal while studying in Brighton Polytechnic and Chelsea, Chadwick began to actively react against the norm. She started to produce objects which were linked to her own physical experience. Small, soft and organic in nature they were based upon parts of the female body, her body. "In the Kitchen" was an assimilation of the above , the main aims and final presentation altered only by a change in scale and also the introduction of performance within her installation format.

The piece itself consisted of four female performers which Chadwick placed within skeletal metal frames that were themselves encased by P.V.C. These structures simulated archetypal modern kitchen appliances, an oven, a sink,

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a fridge and a spin dryer collectively. The performers although physically restricted within these metal frames, were, with the help of webbing harness, allowed a certain amount of freedom, freedom to move around the gallery and exhibition space at will. The rigidity of the metal frames was softened only by the looseness of the glossy white plastic covers, aligning Chadwick's flesh with sterile domestic functions. "In the Kitchen" portrays Chadwick's body as a site projecting social values back out towards the viewer, a site restricted by its institutional confinements.

The equipment listed previously has been equated by Chadwick to the female sexual organs. For example the hot plates represented the breasts and the spin dryer, the womb. Throughout the performance of "In the Kitchen" the four women remained devoid of any expression. Their faces gazed outwards, engaging the viewer in an intense mental combat. Encased by the machines which surround them, these women have become one with their environment. They are the environment.

The initial viewing of this piece left the viewer with a sense of an impending state of rigor mortis which threatened to overcome all that was surveyed. Chadwick re-enforced this by incorporating at a later stage the use of a background tape. At a performance staged in Birmingham's equivalent of the ideal home exhibition, Chadwick used this tape. Compiled from house wives radio programmes it enhanced and highlighted through sound, the humdrum existence of many women's lives. Amid this particular presentation Chadwick stood posing, as a "glib" demonstrator promoting the appliances on display. Selling her wares to those who wish to purchase, reducing these figures, her figure to the lowest level of victimisation.

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"In the Kitchen" is a complex statement which plays upon issues of gender, a female gender which has been instigated and constructed by a patriarchal discourse. This piece emphasizes Chadwick's fear of the transition of self, from self/other, subject/object. Her clever use of the "verbal muzak" on tape instilled her concerns within the work and clearly defined the accepted role of women within the identity system. Chadwick gave no indication as to whether there may be a way to break free from this prison. She offered only a visual representation of what she, as a female, had experienced throughout her own socialization. At this point in time she remained a victim.

Chadwick's sense of self had become subject to change, and she had begun to form a function which was alien to her `self'. She had become a `housewife'. Through the physical encasement of her body she highlighted the inner turmoil that breeds successfully upon the outer constrictions of `the Patriarchal Order'.

"The border has become an object. How can I be without border".

(Kristeva, p. 4).

From subject/object, is there an alternative! Chadwick remained within the category of "performance" artist when she approached her second major work. Maintaining the use of her own body as a central force within this work, Chadwick created a performance named "There is absolutely nothing to worry about" (1978). The construction itself was initially titled "Train of Thought". This piece was first staged at the Acme Gallery, a few months after "In the Kitchen" was exhibited at ArtNet. The work itself combined elements

of photography, sculpture, sound and performance. It offered the viewer a multi-dimensional format to explore while confronting them with many social/gender issues.

Chadwick built a detailed reconstruction of a London Underground train carriage carrying two commuters, Chadwick and Philip Stanley. With a tape recording conveying the sounds of the train and the thoughts of the man and the woman playing in the background, the overall piece is disturbing yet completely intriguing. Besides the fact that an elevated dias supported the carriage like a sculpture would be by a plinth, the overall detail of the piece when completed, became a faithful replica of a real underground train. The seat units, window and flowers were recreated in order to honour the original. The only item Chadwick did not reconstruct was the strap hanger. She obtained this from London Transport.

Chadwick and Stanley sat opposite each other in complete silence and in a raised area. The atmosphere was tense and enforced by a sound-tape recorded in a tube train. Containing the simulated noise of the train in motion and the conscious thoughts of both the man and woman, the tape was used in order to allow the viewer to intrude upon the strained intimacy of the couple exhibited. The thoughts conveyed by the woman are confused and at times irrational. Filled with fear and recrimination the woman has placed herself within the position of the "object", and then laid blame upon the presumption that the man desired her, a presumption which questioned her complete gender identity. Chadwick, therefore, has actively initiated the borders that create the categories of both Subject and Object and then transgressed from one to the other in order to sustain her correct socialization. She has become a victim of the institution which surrounds her. The female initiation of

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Fig. 2. "There is absolutely nothing to worry about" (1979).



constructing these borders is not a presumptuous act carried out without basis.

It is a reaction to the past actions of a structured male gender within "the Patriarchal Order". Men have always been viewed as subjects but never as objects. They have always maintained their control through the gaze, and these subconsciously learned rules that are running through the woman's mind only serve to reinstigate her fear. Yet could it be possible that man's thoughts are not only of desire but are instead ones of reciprocated frustration! Maybe he as a male has become as constricted as the female. For within this piece Chadwick again plays off gender. While the woman's agitation mounts, the man's new awareness grows and Chadwick becomes so anxious that ultimately and accidently makes physical contact by touching his foot. She places herself under an obligation to apologise. This only serves to incite Chadwick's emotions and reactions further, while demonstrating to the audience that the man remains completely unaware of the role he is playing. Confirmed by the sound of his thoughts translating the boredom of his day to day existence, the whole piece exudes not only a sense of tension but also one of irony. The man never validates the woman's fears and the woman's fears only subside when she reaches her destination. Chadwick's body may not be physically encased as in, `In the Kitchen', but her thoughts and movements within the above piece are confirmed sufficiently to cause her to react against the situation, ie. her socialization. Chadwick does not want to become a victim or to remain a victim.

Running alongside this piece, placed on the wall of the gallery behind the tube installation was a panel of colour photographs. Depicting six alternative types of confrontation the panel was constructed within a format which



replaced advertisements found in tube trains. Portraying a rush hour squeeze in one frame while focusing on aspects of status, fetishism through concentrating on details of their clothes Chadwick re-addressed and reenforced several issues. Chadwick also created a further photo-text piece which translated a similar encounter the "Train of Thought" piece, but through a cheap romance strip format. Subverting the typical boy meets girl story in order to allow herself a rather detailed exploration of the previous situation, Chadwick emphasized again her awareness of the boundaries which are being constructed by the institutional / patriarchal order, and to transgress borders which inevitably effect the inner "self".

Chadwick is fully aware that change is a necessary process but to re-construct she must de-construct. "I want to open up a crease, I want to create a space. A new space"! (Chadwick, Interview with Author 13/01/1995). This space may become a place where meaning can collapse and borders dissolve through fluidity, offering perhaps the alternative she seeks. An alternative which may disallow her victimisation to continue.

From other/self can Chadwick's body ever embrace the boundaries constructed by life's institutional and natural processes?

In `Ego-Geometria Sum' (1982-84) exhibited in the Serpentine Gallery,. Chadwick created a piece that began to explore the possibility of embracing the boundaries she feared most. Composed of eleven wooden geometric solids which were arranged in chronological order and in a circle on the floor of the exhibition space in order to indicate a sense of growth, "Ego Geomentria Sum" became known as a narrative autobiography which depicted the artist's own personal development. These eleven forms represented landmarks within






Chadwick's personal history and when surrounded by a series of photographs titled "The Labours" the overall piece became a complex symbol for all that had gone before it ie. "In the Kitchen" and "Train of Thought".

Chadwick had returned to the traditional format of sculpture while still playing with gender. The title "Ego-Geometria Sum" in itself is also a play upon Plato's pythagorean theory that a small number of regular geometric forms account for the "construction of the universe". The eleven wooden geometric forms which Chadwick constructed were separately named and are known respectively as an incubator - birth, a font - three months, a pram - ten months, a boat - two years, a wigworm - five years, a bed - six and a three quarter years, a piano - nine years, a horse - eleven years, a high school thirteen years , art studio notice board and statue - fifteen to thirty years. They represented thirty years of Chadwick's life and a cycle which encompassed her infancy, childhood, education and eventual maturity depicted by the upright plinth. It is a cycle affected by both the institutional and natural processes of life. It was through the cycle represented in "Ego Geometria Sum" that Chadwick began to distinguish the boundaries which have been imposed upon and within her.

These images, placed upon the wooden solids, were made possible by Chadwick's use of a sophisticated photographic technique. By now Chadwick had become quite confident within her use of the medium and by treating the objects with a light sensitive paint she achieved images that when developed were embedded into the wood. The images seemed to float just beneath the surface creating a sensuous mystique and, although the geometric forms are angular and sharp in structure, they still appear somehow soft to the touch. This softness was echoed by the flesh coloured material that was hung upon the walls of the room

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broken only by the framed photographs known as "The Labours". This overall effect aligned the forms with flesh and the underlying potential of impending decay, death: a natural process that could but should not threaten Chadwick's body.

The volume of the solids were equated with the size and age of the artist's own body at that particular point/period in time. The rigidity of their shape represented Chadwick's limited construction of self, and became a force which would define and control her identity while containing her physically. These borders which restrain her are an assimilation of man made artificial order, an order maintaining Chadwick's status as being that of victim.

Throughout the eleven pieces there exudes an air of tension and entrapment, not unlike that felt in `In the Kitchen'. A tension highlighted by the rigidity of the poses her body assumes, poses which are as rigid as neoclassical nudes. In earlier sections of this work, an incubator, pram and bed, are displayed as forms which embrace and restrict Chadwick's body in an overbearing and protective manner. Although the incubator as a form is associated with warmth and protection Chadwick's depiction lends this object a different level of comprehension. From birth she has been socialized to accept her given role. Chadwick addresses her isolation and confinement within these solids by creating images which are attractive yet slightly repulsive. The incubator has now become a cell and Chadwick the prisoner. In the bed, Chadwick's body is laid out in such a way that it may imply rather, the laying out of a dead body in a coffin, an observation made by Richard Cork. If so, Chadwick is seen to refer again to the inevitability of death, a natural process which although she fears she knows she must embrace. Within the latter section of "The Piano" Chadwick's body appears to be unable to reach out beyond its realm. Her discontentment is continuing to grow and is visible by the use of the semi fragmentation of her body as a whole. The repetition of the dimensions of her trying to play the piano while placed in an absurd position conveys to the viewer Chadwick's restrainment within these borders and her frustration can be easily felt. The viewer can almost hear her fumbling fingers strike down violently upon the keyboard. The enveloping sounds of the notes cause confusion which is conveyed by the depiction of a bar of music upon the top of "the Piano". Chadwick will not be at one with her confinement. For, to accept all of life's processes her body would have to remain within boundaries and behind borders of some kind.

A geometric solid named 'Horse' is next in chronological order and represents Chadwick's education in life, the education of mind and body. The body on one particular side of the horse has adopted an upside-down position. It is through this contorted posture that Chadwick wishes to relate to us the physical exercise and possible punishment which a body, her body has and can endure. Her education which found its fruition within her eventual occupation was an important juncture to emphasize.

It is at this stage that Chadwick's body/natural processes and mind/institutional restrictions have begun to run parallel with each other, and in the next and second last piece within the jigsaw puzzle of her life, titled "High School" Chadwick emphasizes again clearly the ambiguity of borders which are constructed and enforced by the symbolic order and identity system.

The piece `High School' assimilated and reinstated Chadwick's main concerns.





Her body within this form had become completely tense and had even begun to cower, which accentuated an unusual and non consistent tendency within Chadwick's work. Chadwick's figures normally accosted the viewer with their strength and accountability for their posture, but in the case of "High School" her figure has become fully aware of the processes it has been put through and the effects they have had and will have upon it. Her nakedness and vulnerability is shameful. She is ashamed of how she has been restrained for so long she feels that she must address the issues which tackle and control her. Within the last piece, titled "Statue" Chadwick begins to do just that. Chawick within this piece stands bolt upright, representing not only her achieved maturity and evolvement as an artist but also the fear that accompanies this sense of release. As she stands there for inspection Chadwick allows her body for the first time to be seen as a physical whole. She is now confident enough to be viewed without distortion or in relation to other images, although she still remains constricted by the shape, this shape has in part become hers.

"The Labours" photographs taken by Mark Pilkington, is shot from the standpoint that the artist herself is now holding the objects. Chadwick's relationship with these processes have now begun to reverse.

The artist is no longer manipulated but has become the manipulator. Her boundaries have begun to dissolve and although I cannot say she is completely free of them as her posture is still determined by the weight and size of the solid she is holding, I can imply that this now has little meaning because as we stare at these pictures we begin to realize that Chadwick has no interest in what we really think. Her face is completely turned away and her concentration is focused purely upon the construction of "self/I". Chadwick

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Fig. 5. "Ego Geometria Sum" (1982-'84. "The Labour's" No. 1).



has dismissed the importance of the images she is carrying, because she feels that she has reclaimed her body, as a site which is neither Subject/Object or Other. Through "Ego Geometria Sum" she had begun to re-examine all that is considered to be "I", and has tried to create a visual representation which is aware of the possibilities of eventual liquidity of all structure.



Her body images both confirm and speak out against this order. We can read them as representing the victim of life's processes. Natural and Institutional".

(Hubbard, The body - Gut Feelings, 1991.)

"A chilling rigor mortis threatens to overcome these brainwashed women and ensure that they never escape from the machines trapping their bodies on every side".

(Cork,' Of Mutability' 1986)

"Each object, each accident of time is thus impregnated with the record of its passage. The shaping forces that constrained the child arresting and influencing its growth".

(Chadwick "Ego Geometria Sum", Enfleshings, p.11)



CHAPTER TWO.

Mutability of Matter. A mockery of `life in death'.

'The boundaries have dissolved between Self and Other' the 'living and the Corpse'.

(Chadwick on `Of Mutability', Enflesings, p.29)

`It is death infecting life'.

(Kristeva on `The Corpse', p.4)

'It is mockery of life in death'.

(Chadwick on `Of Mutability', Enflesings p.47)

The installation `Of Mutability" (1984-'86) was initially viewed at the I.C.A., London when completed in 1986 and subsequently shortlisted for the `Turner Prize' in 1987. It is work which can be described as an exploration of contemporary sculpture in relation to the environment imposed, and it sustained Chadwick's use of the female body as a site of discussion. Her concerns now lay with her body's reaction to the natural processes which it had been put through and the results of this.

The title `Of Mutability' is a collective name for two separate work's respectively "The Oval Court" and "Carcass". The name "Of Mutability" was obtained from Spenser's poem `Ode to Mutability' - `Proud Change' but Chadwick eventually altered the title. `Of Mutability' was a large scale installation constructed in adjoining rooms with a vestibule between them meaning these two







works "The Oval Court" and "Carcass" could be viewed on an individual basis, which is how I will be approaching my discussions of this piece.

The physical construction of `The Oval Court' (Garden of Delight), the larger of the two, encompassed the use of both the walls and the floor within the exhibition space. Influenced by her love of Pilgrimage Churches of the Bavarian countryside and the Vanitas paintings of Holland during the 17th Century; Chadwick placed upon the floor of the exhibition space, what appeared to be from a distance a large blue pool.

The Pool itself was made up from twelve overlapping groups of blue, xeroxed images of the artist's own body. Constructed upon a horizontal platform raised nine inches above the floor, these images remained the centre piece of the installation.

Chadwick's use of the nude and its play upon the high art tradition was translated cleverly through the use of these figures, the twelve of which were depicted throughout the panels and within the raised Pool. The figures were then seen to float in an embrace around the perimeter of the structure. The shape of this was mapped upon the enlargement of the scale and shape of the artist's own hand, just as the solid geometric forms in `Ego Geometria Sum' had been constructed.

Chadwick's body which has been central within most of her earlier works was positioned differently within each panel. These positions were borrowed from famous paintings, for example the Swans of Bernini's when Seraph pierces the breast of St. Teresa. This painting inspired the group of the lover and the bird in the "Goose" Panel. Chadwick's body was also placed in relation to dead

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animals, birds, rotten fruit and manmade objects, cords and hoods. All of these ran in conjunction with each other and created often subverted images. It was the questions raised by these images that Chadwick wished to focus on.

These twelve panels were separately named; examples are "Goose", "Cornucopia" and "Harvest". This allowed the viewer an opportunity to read the Pool with a sense of logical progression and allowed a cycle of understanding to be translated. The shape of the Pool was also symbolic of something else. Chadwick's blue black Pool obtained its colour from the artist's tears which were being wept from above, a point to be discussed later. It, the Pool has been compared to the womb by the artist herself. A centre and main protector of life it is the ultimate symbol of birth and the beginning of the process.

'Of Mutability' - 'The Oval Court' taken from the aspect that 'It is a mockery of life in death' - Helen Chadwick (Enfleshings Pg. 31) examines a lot of specific ideas. Chadwick studies the nude and nature of the body in relation to a large range of issues. Life in death and the effect of this natural process upon the body, being just one. It is through that aspect however I shall be addressing the structure of 'The Oval Court' - commencing from what I have said above too and then to formally introduce 'Carcass' the smaller of the works as my final point of discussion within this Chapter.

Inside the Pool itself there floated long limbed healthy idealized forms reduced during the photocopying process from life size. Amidst these desirable and often subverted images of the artist's own body there existed also several fragmented nudes which lie alongside their socially acceptable counterparts. The desirable forms within the Pool represented the many social values which have been projected onto the female body and they also commented on the



idealized form that was then created. Idealized when perfect scorned when less. The subverted and fragmented nudes on the other hand exposed Chadwick's constant exploration of a state of life which would lead to the expulsion of death. But is that within itself ever possible. Chadwick has stated that "she embraces death because it is a natural state of existence. It is an inevitable state of existence which will eventually allow her to truly live". (Chadwick, interview with the Author 13/01/1995). Chadwick embraces it because she knows that the only way to overcome its implications is to incorporate it.

Chadwick's Figures explore the nature of their existence and question `the Patriarchal/Institutional processes and the natural functions they are supposed to abide by throughout the twelve panels. I have chosen to discuss four in detail: "The Swan", "The Harvest", "The Sacrificial Lamb" and "Gagging with Pleasure". The last two are merely headings to denote which detail within `The Oval Court' I am focusing on. Before exploring these four panels I would like to make a brief but detailed note on the rest of the structure of `The Oval Court' in relation to the panels to be discussed.

Placed on top of the blue Pool, twelve panels were five gold spheres. Chadwick carefully positioned them between the twelve images amidst the plainer, quieter blue so that occupied and unoccupied spaces were emphasized. The sphere's offered the piece an element of distinct contrast. Their structure was one of strict immutability, completely impenetrable. From the softness and vulnerability of the blue Pool and the figures it contained Chadwick again aligned her flesh with form, as seen in `Ego Geometria Sum'. By using the spheres she highlighted the natural fertility of all her figures as they decayed. These spheres also represented the fingertips of the artists hand, encircling her womb.

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Surrounding the Pool and Spheres on the walls of the structure are several paper Solamonic Columns, also described as a series of gates with foliage lintels. The structure of these columns constructed through the use of computer drawings were based upon the columns of the Baldachino of St. Peter's in the Vatican City. Each Column is tapped by photocopies of the artist's face. Chadwick's face is distorted by emotion. Her eyes are wide and she is openly weeping. Her tears are flowing continually downwards through the lines of the columns and into the Blue Pool, whereupon they successfully evaporate and drift upwards towards the top of the structure again. The lintels that rested upon the paper Solamonic Columns were decorative in nature. The flowers which were visible within these lintels could be seen as a clever play upon the Vanitas Paintings use of flowers as emblems of passing time. Chadwick's re-use of this symbol is interesting and highlights Chadwick's concerns with decay and the Mutability of Matter.

Returning to the four panels/details which I have chosen to discuss within the Pool of "The Oval Court" I will now begin to examine the first of the four, that being the "Swan" panel.

When the viewer is drawn to the `Swan panel' they will see that Chadwick has been blindfolded, and it is now that the effects of life's natural processes upon the body become clear. Chadwick's body has been placed in an intimate pose with the Swan's position within the panel. Her figure is open and vulnerable. Lying on her back, unable to protect herself from what surrounds her, this image is intense and could be read in several different ways. What if Chadwick was hiding? What if her only form of protection was to retreat behind a mask; a blindfold to hide from the decay of the outer world and body? The natural processes which surround her, threaten her `Self' are the rotten

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Fig. 7. "Of Mutability" (1984-'86) "The Oval Court".



fruit and the Swan itself. As it is dead or as Chadwick phrased it `Only recently living', there is a potential that life and death may merge and borders dissolve.

In another panel to the left of the `Swan', Chadwick's figure is seen to be blindfolded and vulnerable again in posture. She held in her right hand a small vanity mirror and although unable to see her reflection Chadwick's head is turned fully in that direction. Straining forward she is unable to see what has been reflected but if she did would she admire her desirable reflection or be a witness to her own decay!

Within the "Harvest" panel Chadwick addressed directly the natural function or transgression that takes place within/around the body. In her previous works Chadwick had depicted usually the borders of the physical body and institutionalised bodies. But in 'Of Mutability' she began to express her interior, natural 'self' by cutting open her body and exposing her entrails. The building of the boundaries still continued but had moved onto a more complex level. The "Harvest" panel is a disturbing image, the figure is central accosting the viewer's attention. The body appears to be entangled by its surrounds, permitted to breathe only by the fact Chadwick has made a distinct division down the middle of the image by the use of her double headed figure. This immediately constructs an invisible line which cuts, as does the axe and opens the artists body. With entrails exposed the outer border became the artists own flesh, flesh which is subject to change.

The double headed Harvest figure symbolise the battle within and between the boundaries that are present. Chadwick acknowledges that she is aware of these



Fig. 8. "OF Mutability" (1984-'86) "The Oval Court"







by allowing each head to face away from the other. One observes the ripeness and fulfilment of life, the other the disgusting sight of deconstruction, decay and death. As Chadwick observes the ripeness of life, she is exposed also to the desires which surround her. This image has been viewed through the aspect of desire. Chadwick's fantasy and "Gardens of Delight" have been criticised for its use of subverted images. When the axe was placed within the pubic area of this form it instigated elements of sadomahcistic desire, an image which Chadwick refuses to comment on. Her awareness of the ripe fruits which tempt her are symbolic of what may lay beneath this beauty.

These two forces of life and death are pulling at Chadwick's already socially restricted and constructed body. Tearing apart and ripping open its outer self is an action which could lead to the exposure and challenge of the functions of expulsion and excretion. Natural processes or forced? Decentralizing their importance by pushing past them in order to eventually include them under the guise of an accepted flux/fluidity.

The "Sacrificial Lamb" meets the vaulting lover face to face in a kiss. Within this panel Chadwick examines the relationship between the lover and the lamb, concluding that it may possibly be a violent one. This image is less ornate than others and it plays only upon the viewer's knowledge and understanding of the piece. The lamb is dead and that death reminds the lover of her impending infected demise. That kiss could well become the kiss of death. The lover is being forced to face death and to survive she must find life in death. Chadwick must embrace the natural processes her body encounters while still addressing the institutional ones and thus reconstructing `self'.

In 'Gagging with Pleasure', the last panel up for discussion Chadwick implies


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she is like a basket of fruit. The image has a great visual impact upon the viewer, as Chadwick is physically and forcefully expelling rotten fruit from her mouth with her face slightly contorted she wretches openly, her arms flaying in an expressive manner. Chadwick has made it clear that she studied Julia Kristeva's theory of narcissism while creating `Of Mutability' and while this is a theory not conclusively attributable to Kristeva, it is important to Chadwick's work.

'She is bursting out of the basket and the fruit is bursting out of her' -(Enfleshings Pg 39). The basket filled with fruits of pleasure, love or could they represent something else, perhaps decay. If I were to pursue this notion I could therefore imply that if the fruits were decaying then the artist is no longer gagging on her pleasure but on her impurities. Her metaphorical burst could become a physical act of expulsion. But is this pushing my implications too far? For if I were to take it to the final step then the fruits surrounding her would then become her vomit.

With a cord tied around her neck sufficiently tight to cause discomfort Chadwick continues to expel this fruit, grapes, oranges and apples, all rotten, surround her naked body and expel an action which would disallow the natural process of decay to take place. A process though being in opposition to Chadwick's desires still remains necessary. The reality of her existence as a reconstructed site depends upon her allowance of both states to live within one.

Throughout `The Oval Court's' Pool the images Chadwick created did not imitate corporal reality but copied it directly. Animals and fruit which are placed together find their base in an Arcadian tradition. Chadwick's skate with it



gaping maw or her monkfish with its yawning mouth sprang from her fantasy but symbolically they exist not to threaten Chadwick's body, not to devour the inner being but they wish to give birth, to give life. From her own body and other forms that is the animals and fruits the imprint is taken from life. So in `The Oval Court' all things are real, real but not alive, living but within their own corpses.

The dead animals incorporated within the still life's throughout the panels were only recently living. Chadwick took great care in preparing these animals beforehand, washing and cleaning each. She began to form a deeper bond with her materials, the skate, the rabbit the lamb, the monkfish, the squid, crab, sardines and the goose. They all appear to be frozen in an agitated state of continuum. These dead animals are all edible. These corpses could become the body's necessary and only nourishment. Their infection could become an injection of life, life in death.

'Carcass' is the smaller of the two works is a continuation of 'The Oval Court's' theme, and is my final point of discussion within this chapter. 'Carcass' was and is seen as an artistic practice, a performing practice which documented the mutability of matter. It has been described as being the antithesis of the idealized / institutional body seen present at times in 'The Oval Court'.

Chadwick constructed a large glass column within the centre of the smaller room and filled it with mutable decaying matter. Rotting fruit, vegetables and disintegrating photocopies were used to create the centre of the piece that is the blue Pool in `The Oval Court'. The Pool was added to each day, relating this process with the viewer. Chadwick clearly implied with her use of







photocopies the inevitable deconstruction of the body. The visual strength of this was further enforced by the odour which was expelled when the mutable matter seeped out.

'The spirit plunges optically downwards and descent's into the flesh, flesh shines upwards towards a transfiguration of its determined tendency to decay'.

(Chadwick - Enfleshings, p. 39, 1986).

The repulsion of this married with the attractiveness of the fresh fruits colour encased and reflected by the glass column would have enticed the viewer to step closer and re-examine. Cleverly accosting more then one sense, sight, Chadwick also embraces our sense of smell and to some extent touch. The work itself could only best be experienced by allowing the viewer a time lapse between initial sighting and understanding of the piece to the closing of it. This would allow the audience to witness for themselves, to understand and document the physical decomposition of the work. Combining again the excitement of performance and the ironic insurance of installation.

In `Carcass' Chadwick depicts the vulnerability of the continuum of life in relation to the ultimate threat of death, decay: `Before I was bound, now I have begun to leak' (Chadwick on `Of Mutability', Enfleshings.) Highlighting perhaps in part a solution to the problem to leak and merge, flow and flux, this may release the body and untie the bonds that have bound it for so long. She reaches out and questions the social projection, institutional processes and limits that have been placed upon the site, the identity of the body.

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"Locked together, you and I bind a hybrid daisy chain organs doubled two a bed and by a floral rhyming wed".

(Hall, 'Golden Flowers' 1994)

"One may not doubt that somewhat God Shall come of water and of And sure the reverent eye must see A purpose in liquidity".

(Chadwivk, Effluvia, 1994)

"Male and female merge; flowers are frequently hermaphroditic; Chadwick sees them as metaphors for flesh".

(Kent, Choc Waves, 1994)



CHAPTER THREE.

BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES : THE MERGING OF MATTER.

Chadwick's ideas had always been developed through and visually realized by her use of the female body, her body as subject matter. She had manipulated what was obviously a familiar site to build upon and then from that point onwards began to deconstruct the boundaries which had been enforced upon her `self' through life's natural and institutional processes. These processes had up until now claimed Chadwick's body as a victim, not as victor, an example of this being `Ego Geometria Sum' (1982-'84). In `Of Mutability' (1984-'86) the struggle to embrace these processes as essential and necessary for her own existence within society and to subsequently restructure the results they had upon her body continued. Eventually, laying down the ground work for that which was to follow.

After `Of Mutability' Chadwick began to experiment with different formats and subject matter. She consciously decided to decentralise her body from her work, replacing it with materials which were considered to be taboo. Subject matter other than the body which had been present in `Of Mutability' now became a new visual site for `self' reconstruction. Dead animals, meat, hair, implications of excrement and rotting fruit were all used to create transgressive statements.

From `Lofos Nymphon' (1987) where Chadwick's body was still central to the works "ECCE" (1988), "Meat Lamps" (1989), "Meat Abstracts" (1989) and "Viral Landscape" (1989) where the body had been completely removed Chadwick had begun to readdress issues of sexual differentiation instigated by natural

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Fig. 12. "Viral Landscape" (1989).



processes and then reinforced by socialization and institutional processes.

'Viral landscapes' (1989) has been described as a series of large diseased landscapes. Created by taking traditional landscapes with cells superimposed using a computer, Chadwick obtained several four feet by ten feet horizontal photographic panels. This work is briefly mentioned due to the fact that it represented a complete and final turning point for Chadwick in relation to how she would now pursue her main concerns. For her it meant `the body is gone beyond itself, beyond the boundaries of being contained by skin', (Chadwick in interview with Nick Weger, *CV* 1989).

In `Meat Abstracts' (1989) Chadwick's revised approach was clearly evident. Through the direct use of dead pieces of meat Chadwick translated the ungendered issue of gender with a strong visual impact. Preserved and lovingly presented amid sumptuous fabrics, these livers and intestines were photographed creating beautifully repulsive works. Normally used as coverings for the body, the rich textures of velvets, silks and cured leathers dyed blue for pink mimic what is covered. This creates a heightened air of suspense as the viewer awaits the disclosure of the hidden living flesh. Within this piece Chadwick can be seen to play upon the issue of the gaze by dismissing it completely. She tears open the often patronizing and lustful gaze by fully revealing the `organic complexities of the body'. Challenging the institutional processes which have restricted her by illuminating the internal organs with electric lights Chadwick tries to reinstate a belief in `internal bodily affairs'. These affairs could possibly overcome the media laden psyche. While still aware of the natural processes which her `self' has endured Chadwicks use of these internal organs and the beauty of the surfaces she has created rely on the death of the subject and highlighted her hope



Fig. 13. "Meat Abstracts" (1989).



that the dead may be able to deny `metaphorically at least the briskness of mortality'. (Hall, Stake of the Art,1989.) Chadwick moved forward to complete several other works: "Philosophers Fear of Flesh" (1989); "Eroticism" (1990); "Organisms in Love" (1990) but it was "Loop My Loop" (1991) which directly led to "Piss Flowers" (1992).

"Loop my Loop" (1991) was again a perfect example of Chadwick's constant concerns with the issue of gender, the issue of institutional processes and the necessary embrace of the natural processes. "Loop My Loop" depicted the running parallel between both mind/life and matter/death as "Horse" did in `Ego Geometria Sum' (1982-'84). A sow's intestines which were entwined within a strand of long blonde hair combined for Chadwick two separate symbolic meanings; the hair, glossy like silk, is dry, timeless, beautiful and perfect; It also partially covers the meat and represents not only the mind and a capacity for life but also an idealized form of the absent female body. Chadwick created a subject that may have become object. The meat-tactile and fleshy, wet and pale in colour-is a reminder of the skin of the absent blonde subject, a fleshy skin subject to change and mutability The skin represents not only the matter and its capacity for decay but also the need for Chadwick to work towards a potential liquidity, a liquidity of accepted identities and states of existence which could be exchanged offering an option other then having to create a new space for their existence. An option whose acknowledgement is necessary.

In `Piss Flowers' (1991-'92) exhibited initially in Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham, Chadwick began to celebrate the possibility of the virtues of liquidity, blurring boundaries of self through metaphor and direct materiality. `Piss Flowers' marked a return to a sculptural format. Produced

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Fig. 14. "Loop My Loop" (1990).





during a three week period of residence at the Banff Centre for Arts, Canada, `Piss Flowers' consisted of twelve plaster casts, made from manufactured cavities realized within the snow laden landscape which surrounded the centre. These cavities were created when Chadwick and her partner, David Nortarius methodically pissed in a pile of snow, the result of which was cast in whitend bronze.Chadwick viewed this particular project as a `work in progress project', it was to be experimental and transgressive, it never sought "conceptuality"- (Chadwick in interview with Author). On first approaching this potential piece Chadwick thought she would photo the surface of the melting snow and from there she would then make light drawings of "Alpine Microism". But Chadwick was to abandon this and would bypass the use of the artists hand and opt for something less conventional, urine, her and her lover's urine to be precise. Alhough urine is reguared as polluted and marginal plasure a taboo act beckoned, and is thus, "expelled through the object", (Kent. Choc Waves, 1994).

Chadwick fully orchastrated the direction and the physical expulsion of her and Nortarius's urine throughout the making of the twelve plaster casts. Creating a restricted area to work in by using a five petalled template ,Chadwick was the first to make her makings in the snow. Hunched down in the snow chadwick pissed, her warm flow of urine was strong, forceful and central,challening the successive markings made by Nortarius, these being a cooler diffusion of hers. The above actions resulted in a clever inversion of human genitalia, the traditional markings made by Chadwick and Nortarius allowed the female form to becme 'penile' and the male 'circumference labid'

"Piss Flowers" ultimately represented a phallus which was both maternal and paternal; `androgyne'. Although cast in bronze these twelve pieces when

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viewed seem brittle, transient and as vulnerable as the state they wished to project. With sly references to Warhol's "Daisy", Mapplethorpe's, "Rude Flora and Fauna" and Duchamp's "Fountain", Chadwick's "Piss Flowers" became a specific synthesis, a synthesis of sexual differentiation through the erotic play of their making of these forms. "Lofos Nymphon's" (1987) had focused also upon sexual differentiation but this was explored merely through the maternal aspect and Chadwick's body was still central to the work. "Piss Flowers" however demonstrated Chadwick's progression of thought and the visual deliberation of that. The stem of Chadwick's flowers cast for the artist and based upon the shape of a hyacinth bulb, and the flower heads were a remarkable visual manifestation of Duchamps idea of "infra thin" that "instant of absolute interpenetration of inside and outside". Wherein there remains a constant sub-visible struggle to establish "specificity of gender", a state of existence which Chadwick would rather avoid, a state which was inevitably induced by natural processes and then structured by institutional ones.

"Sexual indifferentiation approached through art or biology suggests a memory of wholeness".

(Butler, Before Sexual Difference, In Side Up, 1992)

Taken from "Before Sexual Difference" Butler addresses several issues and ascertains that the questioning of sexual difference and the crisis that has arisen from that, places this topic at an intersection, between "Feminism, Science, Art and Politics" (Butler "Before Sexual Difference"). On questioning the Politics of sexualization Butler believes that "the genitals as biologically defined in their difference cannot support the burden of socialization". It is this burden which Chadwick is continually reaching Professional Control of the state of the

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Fig. 15. "Piss Flowers" (1994).



against. For her "Piss Flowers" represents the solution to the problem ja euphoric state where the symbolic order is non-existent and completely unnecessary. Where boundaries are dissolved and fluidity of identities accepted. Butler's reference to the memory of "wholeness" is interesting within itself as use of the word "memory" implies that wholeness has been achieved. It must now be remembered and restrained. But is wholeness of self ever obtainable?

"The cast urine had become an iconography of gender, collapsing into an easy, ironic androgynous play between two borders who seem to be progressing towards a state after sexual difference".

Jack Butler on "Before Sexual Difference".

In "Piss Flowers" Chadwick's self renewal is focused purely upon her sexuality and definition of identity. However, her obvious awareness of the effect of natural processes upon the representation of her subject matter has been translated clearly. While I have been reviewing "Piss Flowers" under the institutional concept of sexual differentiation and the basic question of gender identity, I have de-emphasized slightly the importance of the other. Viewed as an obscure vegetal resolution "a resolution to the condition of human love and death, life and death", Bataille. (Effluvia 1994). The representational use of a flower as a symbol within this work itself metaphorically implied the passing of time, decay and eventual death. For to love shall lead to union, a union which will end in death as the cycle of life yet becomes apparent within Chadwicks work. But it is the

agnines, Pot her Piss Fowers" represents the solution to the problem jak euphonic state where the symbolic droes is num-existent and completely unrecessary. Where housdances are dissolved and fundtiv of prototics accepted. Bullet's reference to the memory of "wholeness" is interesting within itself as use of the word "memory" implies that wholeness has been editered. It must now be remembered and restrained. But is wholeness of salf ever obtained e?

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Other works included within the Effluvia exhibition varied in scale and approach, but never in subject matter. "Glossolalia" (1993) was a work which dealt with Chadwick's need to take her renewal of "self" and the dismissal of institutional and natural processes one step further, a piece which has been described as depicting "The Power of engendered human sexuality" - (Chadwick, Effluvia. p. 10) Helen Chadwick. Chadwick is now playing off gender, making it impossible to define. This is achieved by disallowing the existence of the singular phallus. A physical description of the piece will make my point clearer.




Fig. 16. "Glossolalia" (1993) "Bad Girls".



"Glosolalia" was constructed upon a large circular Oak veneered table and pelts were arranged like a trophy and then placed on top of that table . This arrangement was achieved by sewing pelts together length wise, the centre piece was a cone made up from small lapping lamb's tongues cast in bronze. Around the top of the cone are placed five little tongues which open up to reveal a void or hole, and within this overall piece Chadwick used over one hundred lambs tongues while creating and completing this work, she assembled them with the help of a chicken wire frame.

"Glossolalia" is yet again another of Chadwick's works which success depends on the use of more then one sense, the revulsion that some may feel when first encountering the piece need not be resolved, but must be experienced. The temptation to reach out and touch is compelling, the trophy may well have become a sacrificial altar and the fleshy lambs tongues may transform into "a hundred tiny penises", (Chadwick - Effluvia). The overall piece translates a sense of movement/fluidity, as the light glistens on the bronzed tongues and the circular presentation allows the viewer to move freely around the piece and as the spectator keeps viewing from different perspectives they became aware of the horror of the thrust of the needle which was used to create the circle. The tearing of the flesh is frightening, and it serves for us as a reminder of the vulnerability of the body. The complete image is insistent and forceful, its function perhaps to dismiss her at times previous ambiguity in "Piss Flowers", for "Glossolalia" states clearly with great energy that it has made female penis envy a redundant option or explanation.

These tiny phallic forms merge but do not reform as one, the ungendered is what Chadwick wishes to explore and boundaries have became less clear and easy to define.





Fig. 17. "I Thee Wed" (1993) "Bad Girls".



"Glossolalia" along with "I Thee Wed" (1993) within this particular exhibition was to form (masculine) to the image (feminine) of "Mister Pum Pum" (1993), exhibited also. The interaction between each of these three works was exciting and informative. The vegetable priapus stood alone encircled by a ring of fur in "I Thee Wed" The female and male adjoin in "Mister Pum Pum" feminising the "heraldic male torso" - (Chadwick. Effluvia). Although both of these works deserve separate discussion and consideration, I have used them merely to accentuate Chadwick's "playing off gender".

The final work chosen for discussion also took centre stage alongside "Piss Flowers" in the Effluvia exhibition. It is one of Chadwick's most powerful pieces combining her accumulation of main concerns and creative personal obsessions which are highlighted within my thesis. "Wreaths to Pleasure" (1992-'93) has been described as being a ritual of love and death, life in death, and a celebration and unification of natural processes. It also however, represents a visual discourse which addresses the effects of the institutional processes upon gender, female gender. A visual discourse which seeks to embrace the fluidity of change "Wreaths to Pleasure" is a substantial piece of work composed of a myriad of complexities bound together by their open explanation of a life giving liquidity. From flesh to flowers this piece is a synthesis of all that Chadwick has wished to achieve.

The "Wreaths" or "Bad Blooms" as Chadwick calls them are circular luminous colour photographs, framed in coloured enamelled metal. Within these frames images of bondings of flowers in barely held suspension within a variety of fluids are depicted. Examples of these being, combinations ranging from -Bluebells in oil and milk. Tulips with plum and engine oil. Delphiniums in

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Fig. 19. "Wreaths to Pleasure" (1994) "Delphiniums in Pink Germolene".



pink germolene too - Narcissi and bath bubble. Dandelions and hair gel, and fizz of swoarfega running against tomato juice combined with plant life. In all Chadwick created thirteen wreaths. Hanging them high on the wall in a disjointed format, she forced the viewer to move closer and strain to reexamine the work. Her beautiful fresh flowers held perilously amid the liquid. This liquid which holds it will eventually cause them to swell, wilt and change. The potential onslaught of decay and death is ever present within each wreath

Chadwick views these "Wreaths" as "soft gel systems". When asked to expand on this Chadwick explained - "These are intelligent gels, gels which are self sensing and therefore respond intelligently to their surroundings". This is viewed as a scientific theory more so than an artistic one, it emphasized the fact then that the "Wreaths" are open, meaning there will always be a continuous process of differentiation. One that "fuses matter into bodies and diffuses bodies into free matter". - Effluvia, "Bad Blooms". The wreaths have become a tribute to a constant permeation of self and they invariably refer at all points to the transience of life itself. A successful move on from "Of Mutability" Chadwick's wreaths play cleverly again upon the symbolic structure of Vanitas Paintings. This fluid within the wreaths should be sliding down the wall, but instead they are frozen in a constant restricted movement, brash yet delicate these wreaths may be perceived as mournful memorabilia which uproariously celebrates life. The real becomes unreal, the gaudy, subtle and the ebbing flow of fluidity continues leaving the edible which is also toxic to become even more suggestive.

Chadwick sees the overall cibachromes as `one atrophes for flesh', Flesh subjected to natural and institutional processes. For example the image of





Fig. 20. "Wreaths to Pleasure" (1994) "Dandelions and Hair Gel".



"The Narcissi" could be as it swarms within its chose fluid be recognised as two ovids, ovids which could represent either eggs, brains or testicles. This is a strong visual statement it relates again Chadwick's two main concerns, concerns which effect all those who view this work. Going back to the image of the ovids the fact that they could be either eggs or testicles depicts again Chadwick's pre-occupation with sexual differentiation. However, important to note in this case is the ambiguity of the wreath read as either. Chadwick's blurring of the boundaries continues echoed beneath in the pool of chocolate which awaits below.

To pleasure - "Cacao / Chocolate Fountain". An eerie bubbling chocolate fountain, which forms the centre piece of the show is in physical terms a large nine foot across circular stainless steel tub containing 750kg of melted milk chocolate. In the middle of this tub stands a vaguely phallic stump and from the knob at the top of the stump, chocolate flows. Seeping downwards into the pool below. Continuously gliding down the shaft of the column, this dark flow of liquid slides, oozes and bubbles away, shifting slowly around the circular pad. A ton of sticky sweet faecal substances bubbles threatening the onlooker and creating a sickeningly nauseating smell rises which had filled the entire room with a heady and heavy stench. Chadwick placed a sign reading "Not edible" at the entrance of the gallery as a whimsical gesture warning the spectators of the forthcoming temptation.

Chadwick openly discloses her exploration of sexual pleasure, differentiation and love within "Cacao". Chocolate containing phenylethylamine induces a high comparable to orgasm and Chadwick plays with this image. She instigates that

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the melting and merging of this process would not be as fearful for a woman, as a womans sexuality "self" is less dependant upon the separation from the maternal, as is a man's. She continually explores the boundaries and interfaces that exist between the reconstruction of self and other, the processes which have affected and restricted Chadwick's body.

The title "Cacao" itself is named after the bean, but this interpretation of the word "Cacao" has been dissipated and thus re-read. When redefined with the help of a dictionary "Cacao" can be understood as being a latin derivative containing the word Caca/Cack. Meaning "to void a stool", an extremely polite way of referring to excrement.

Armed with the above re-reading of Chadwick's work critics automatically latched on to a convenient theory backed of course by Chadwick's own fascination with the crudity of bodily functions. The association or connection of the chocolate with shit then arose and stuck. The stainless steel tub became a large "plastic potty". "Full of diarrhoea", (Sewell, The Arts, Evening Standard p.30. 29/07/94). Even within the catalogue for the show the pool was described as "the gyendrous fecundity of waste", statements which confused the artist. Her intentions never consciously included these associations. "I wasn't intending it to look like excrement. It's meant to look like chocolate and maybe clay or primal soup". (Bedell, "Blood and Chocolate". 21st August, 1994). However, the misreading of Cacao is unerstandable, Chadwick's continual use of materials which suggest excrement example, (materials associated with the abject) had become a trade mark and a symbolic reference point for critics to latch onto. Chadwick's comment that the chocolate might actually represent clay is interesting. If taken from this aspect the whole ambience of the piece completely changes again. The stench





Fig. 18. "Wreaths to Pleasure" (1994).

marks within the Pool become cracks within the earth, evoking within us a fear of being buried instead of drowning. Evoking again an image of decay and the eventuality of death. Her wreaths look down in anticipation, as they wilt and change to become one with what they watch. The wreaths become the extremities of our existence, an existence re-emphasized by the beauty of life and the ugliness of death.

The work itself was greeted with little positivity, from both male and female critics. Chadwick's "Wreaths to Pleasure" suffered harsh reviews and tensions ran high, even before the work was initially exhibited. An example of this being Cadbury's withdrawal of their support for the project when they learned that Cacao could be read as phallus. A dissatisfactory image for a family business if the chocolate had become waste matter, shit then where would that leave their product.

Chadwick has always initiated debate through her work. Her contemporary look at life's contradictions often raises critics hackles. In her documentation of life's processes, be they natural or institutional and the effect of these upon her body will always leaving some viewers in no doubt of what all this has been about.

In `Wreaths to Pleasure' Chadwick's body had transgressed from victim to victor, her acknowledgement and depiction of liquidity within this work created an action, flux of identities and states of existence rather then a reaction or friction. "Wreaths to pleasure" was a celebration of all which Chadwick had strove to achieve. She had begun to represent the fluidity she had been searching for within her previous works, decentralising her body in



the process and creating stronger visual images, Chadwick had moved beyond the boundaries of the body.



CONCLUSION.

Throughout her work Chadwick has always been aware of the natural and institutional processes, which have bound the physical or symbolic representation of her body. Processes which had successfully built boundaries restricting the reconstruction of 'self'. Constraints which Chadwick choose to de-construct and visually represent through different mediums.

The combination of performance and installation within earlier pieces highlighted for her the difficulties she would and did encounter by using her own body as a site, a site open to exploration. Explorations which questioned the monumental structure of socialization, sexual differentiation and the accepted state of the natural processes of both life and death.

When Chadwick decided to de-centralize her body from her work she took her first positive step towards the deconstruction of these boundaries. Through her use of certain subject matter considered to be taboo materials Chadwick, re-enforced her aim of achieving a flux/fluidity of identities and states of existence within her own 'self'. These revised states of visual representation opened up new fields of discussion for both Chadwick and others.

The conclusion to my thesis is worked by the present position of thought Chadwick has taken and displayed within her most recent works. Chadwick's documentation of life's processes be they natural or institutional and the effects they have upon the body and the viewer, have always been clear and concise. The victimisation of the female body was intolerable so therefore Chadwick reacted. She offers her viewers no stable solutions to the transient problems of her work, but what she does do is clarify her own beliefs and

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visual stand point in relation to that which surrounds her. This is particularly evident in her later works ' Piss Flowers ' (1991/92) and 'Wreath's To Pleasure' (1992/93). Chadwick's future lies in liquidity. From flesh to form in ' Ego Geometria Sum ' (1982-1984), to flesh and to flowers in 'Piss Flowers '(1991/92), Chadwick has begun to unleash her body. Transgressing her original status of 'victim' and progressing towards a euphoric state of 'victor' Chadwick's body has begun to become her own body.



INTERVIEW

With Helen Chadwick by Author.

1. How important is t he transgression of these boundaries to you?

I think I challenge these boundaries, these fixed notions of identity. My own aim is to blur these boundaries, create new possibilities. My work seeks to venture forward towards new things. To negotiate. I really wish to transgress recognized fixed entities.

2. You have been quoted as saying that "Of Mutability" is a mockery of life in death? Could you expand on this in more detail.

Perhaps to me it is more an affirmation of life in death. Carcass is when the ideal body has been (become corrupt). It sets out to disturb. Disturbing internalized awareness. Disturbing the view of all that is repressed. It is very maternal. Whereas "The Oval Court" is an idealization of bodies.

3 "The Oval Court" and "Carcass" represent life and death respectively?

"Carcass to me represents filth and the corpse where as "The Oval Court" is a desiring dynamic fluid and flowing. It is a blue corpse. There is vitality in a uniting pictorial. "Carcass" may deal with filth, excrement but

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4. So "Of Mutability" embraces not only life but death as well?

Yes, it embraces death/decay. They are a face of existence. I am disturbing the barrier I want to move pas this. I want to disturb the barrier of (squeamish). I am interested in the suspended false reaction to physical matter.

5. In some works eg. "Meat Lamps" (1989) you seemed to have moved beyond the borders of the body, why?

Up until now I have been using my body as self portraiture. In a way my work was being perceived to be identified as being "female". A hymn to female existence. In "Meat Lamps", I was beginning to transgress this notion.

6. Why did you meat as your source (material).

I wished to avoid depicting gender I wanted to use it to show off common universal body. As in "viral Landscapes" when I used cells and tissues. It was the same principle.

7. You seem preoccupied with disturbing identity systems symbolic orders throughout your work as you have done in the above examples.

Yes, I want to understand these. There is a fear of reinforcing. I want to open up a crease, I want to create a space, a new space.

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8. Moving forward to works such as "Piss Flowers" (1992), Effluvia Exhibition 1994, collective works. Do boundaries, their existence still interest you?

Yes, in "Piss Flowers", I am dealing with sexual difference male/female. It as a project had a transgressive element to it. It was a work which was initially seen as a piece in regression. Experimental in actions when the snow directly melted and my actions where recorded and cast in bronze, I didn't see it as a conceptual project but an actual "transformative" conception. It was a refined representation of my ideas.

9. So, what boundaries are transgressed within "Piss Flowers"?

Gender issues have always interested me. Fuzzy genders. Blurring boundaries and issues of authorship. Work with a lover (David) interested me. It gave me another dimension to explore.



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