

NC 0021062 5



**THE SAINT AND THE PROSTITUTE:  
IMAGES OF WOMEN**

by  
Paula E. Ryan

THE SAINT AND THE PROSTITUTE:  
IMAGES OF WOMEN

by  
Paula E. Ryan



NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN  
FACULTY OF FINE ART  
SCULPTURE DEPARTMENT

THE SAINT AND THE PROSTITUTE:  
IMAGES OF WOMEN

by  
Paula E. Ryan

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design  
and Complementary Studies  
In Candidacy for  
the Degree of Bachelor of Fine Art, Sculpture

1996

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN  
FACULTY OF FINE ART  
SCULPTURE DEPARTMENT

THE SAINT AND THE PROSTITUTE:  
IMAGES OF WOMEN

by  
Paula E. Ryan

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design  
and Complementary Studies  
in Candidacy for  
the Degree of Bachelor of Fine Art, Sculpture

1996

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks to Gerry Walker

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER ONE MEDIEVAL - 1000s TO 1300s .....	3
CHAPTER TWO RENAISSANCE (BAROQUE) - 1400s TO 1700s .....	11
CHAPTER THREE VICTORIAN - 1837 TO EARLY 1900s .....	16
CHAPTER FOUR CONTEMPORARY .....	22
CONCLUSION .....	32
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	34

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Illustration 1     *Eve* from Cathedral, Autun, France, Twelfth Century
- Illustration 2     *Adam and Eve*, from Bible Moralisée, Thirteenth Century
- Illustration 3     *The Garden of Eden with Temptation and Fall*, by Limbourg Brothers, Fifteenth Century
- Illustration 4     *Frau Welt*, from St Sebaldus Church, Nuremburg, Fifteenth Century
- Illustration 5     *The Torture of Saint Barbara*, by Master Franke, Fifteenth Century
- Illustration 6     *Eve* from Ghent altarpiece by Van Eyck brothers, Fifteenth Century
- Illustration 7     *The Temptation and Fall*, Hugo Van der Goes, Fifteenth Century
- Illustration 8     *Original Sin*, from the vault of the Sistene Chapel, Sixteenth Century
- Illustration 9     Detail of *The Heywain*, by Bosch, Madrid, Sixteenth Century
- Illustration 10     *Sampson and Delilah*, by Dürer, Fifteenth Century
- Illustration 11     *Sampson and Delilah*, by Rubens, Seventeenth Century
- Illustration 12     Anonymous illustration of Francastoro's poem *Syphilis*
- Illustration 13     *Found*, by Dante Gabriel Rosetti, Nineteenth Century
- Illustration 14     *The Outcast*, by Richard Redgraves, Nineteenth Century
- Illustration 15     *Found Drowned*, by George Watts, Nineteenth Century
- Illustration 16     *Study of a Woman Throwing Herself into the Moscow River*, by Perov, Nineteenth Century
- Illustration 17     Detail from *Oval Court*, by Helen Chadwick, 1986
- Illustration 18     Detail from *Oval Court*, by Helen Chadwick, 1986
- Illustration 19     Detail from *Oval Court*, by Helen Chadwick, 1986
- Illustration 20     Detail of *Viral Landscapes*, by Helen Chadwick, 1988-89
- Illustration 21     *Virgin Mary*, by Kiki Smith, 1992
- Illustration 22     Untitled (Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face), by Barbara Kruger, 1981
- Illustration 23     Untitled (I Am Your Reservoir of Poses), by Barbara Kruger, 1992



# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1	Eve from Cathedral, Aunou, France, Twelfth Century
Illustration 2	Adam and Eve, from Bible Manuscript, Thirteenth Century
Illustration 3	The Garden of Eden with Temptation and Fall, by Limbourg Brothers, Fifteenth Century
Illustration 4	John the Baptist, from St. Scholastica Church, Nuremberg, Fifteenth Century
Illustration 5	The Temptation of Saint Barbara, by Master Frank, Fifteenth Century
Illustration 6	Eve from Ghent altarpiece by Van Eyck brothers, Fifteenth Century
Illustration 7	The Temptation and Fall, Hugo Van der Goes, Fifteenth Century
Illustration 8	Original sin, from the vault of the Nieuwe Church, Sixteenth Century
Illustration 9	Detail of The Ascent, by Bosch, Madrid, Sixteenth Century
Illustration 10	Swamp and Delilah, by Dürer, Fifteenth Century
Illustration 11	Swamp and Delilah, by Rubens, Seventeenth Century
Illustration 12	Anonymous illustration of Francesco's poem Sphallus
Illustration 13	Forest, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Nineteenth Century
Illustration 14	The Outcast, by Richard Redgrave, Nineteenth Century
Illustration 15	Forest Drowned, by George Wren, Nineteenth Century
Illustration 16	Study of a Woman Throwing Herself into the Moscow River, by Petrov, Nineteenth Century
Illustration 17	Detail from Owl Court, by Helen Chadwick, 1986
Illustration 18	Detail from Owl Court, by Helen Chadwick, 1986
Illustration 19	Detail from Owl Court, by Helen Chadwick, 1986
Illustration 20	Detail of Viral Landscapes, by Helen Chadwick, 1988-89
Illustration 21	Virgin Mary, by Kiki Smith, 1993
Illustration 22	Untitled (Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face), by Barbara Kruger, 1981
Illustration 23	Untitled (I Am Your Restroom of Pores), by Barbara Kruger, 1993

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis centres around the connection between imagery of the female body throughout history and the encapsulation within that imagery of beliefs about femininity. It will focus upon art which depicts the female body as the source of social evil to support the argument that within the fine arts there is a deliberate association between woman, the body and the socially and morally unacceptable, the extremes of human behaviour.

Upon examining the hermeneutics of this art it becomes possible to isolate specific motifs recurrent in the history of narrative art which maintain these belief structures.

It is my contention that the afore-mentioned portrayal of women within Fine Art, not only represents the setting-up of this group as different, "other", the "alter ego" of the norm, but reinforces it, thereby maintaining myths and belief structures about women.

The term "other" is used here as contemporary writers such as Stuart Hall and Elizabeth Bronfen use it. That is to represent the group within society onto which mainstream society projects the socially unacceptable in order to form a barrier between itself and these unsettling extremes.

In the following chapters this thesis will analyze and compare European works of religious and moral narrative painting and sculpture, medical art and illustration, works which contain the associations mentioned earlier.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis centres around the connection between imagery of the female body throughout history and the encapsulation within that imagery of beliefs about femininity. It will focus upon art which depicts the female body as the source of social evil to support the argument that within the fine arts there is a deliberate association between woman, the body and the socially and morally unacceptable, the extremes of human behaviour.

Upon examining the hermeneutics of this art it becomes possible to isolate specific motifs recurrent in the history of narrative art which maintain these belief structures.

It is my contention that the afore-mentioned portrayal of women within Fine Art, not only represents the setting-up of this group as different, "other", the "other ego" of the norm, but reinforces it, thereby maintaining myths and belief structures about women.

The term "other" is used here as contemporary writers such as Stuart Hall and Elizabeth Brontón use it. That is to represent the group within society onto which mainstream society projects the socially unacceptable in order to form a barrier between itself and these unsettling extremes.

In the following chapters this thesis will analyse and compare European works of religious and moral narrative painting and sculpture, medical art and illustration, works which contain the associations mentioned earlier.



In Chapter One it will focus upon religious art of the medieval era (1000s to 1300s). Charting the emergence of this tendency to depict woman as the source of evil within visual moral parables. There will also be a brief mention of female mystics and how the depiction of their bodies has also contributed to the establishment of the female body as source of evil, both social and moral.

In Chapter Two religious and moral narrative art will continue to be the material analyzed to highlight the fact that these associations emerge as a strong and ongoing theme within narrative art throughout the Renaissance and Baroque eras (1400s to 1700s).

In Chapter Three I will pursue art which continues to associate women with the socially unacceptable into the Victorian era (1837 to early 1900s). These highly moral narratives appear in the form of illustrations for poetry, fine art painting, medical art.

In Chapter Four I will discuss art by contemporary female artists whose work uses the body as source. In the light of past beliefs about femininity and the themes pursued earlier, I will discuss whether or not these artists have moved beyond these associations or whether they merely reiterate them through their art.

in Chapter One it will focus upon religious art of the medieval era (1000s to 1300s). Charting the emergence of this tendency to depict woman as the source of evil within visual moral parables. There will also be a brief mention of female mystics and how the depiction of their bodies has also contributed to the establishment of the female body as source of evil, both social and moral.

in Chapter Two religious and moral narrative art will continue to be the material analyzed to highlight the fact that these associations emerge as a strong and ongoing theme within narrative art throughout the Renaissance and Baroque eras (1400s to 1700s).

in Chapter Three I will pursue art which continues to associate woman with the socially unacceptable into the Victorian era (1837 to early 1900s). These highly moral narratives appear in the form of illustrations for poetry, fine art painting, medical art.

in Chapter Four I will discuss art by contemporary female artists whose work uses the body as source, in the light of past beliefs about femininity and the themes pursued earlier. I will discuss whether or not these artists have moved beyond these associations or whether they merely reiterate them through their art.

## CHAPTER ONE

### MEDIEVAL - 1000s TO 1300s

The first image examined here is appropriately that of Eve. Original temptress from whom all others are descended. Medieval beliefs about women can be perceived in the particular Bible stories chosen to be illustrated. Eve is one of the most popular of these images. She is second only to that of the Virgin Mary. Eleventh century European religious painting and sculpture tended to convey epic themes such as the Fall. Bible stories were illustrated depicting good and evil in sharp contrast. Themes were deliberately uncomplicated as, apart from being illiterate, the average medieval person would not have been used to analyzing the contents of visual imagery.

This Bible inspired painting and sculpture was a vehicle for the church to convey its dominant concerns. It was intended to appeal to the lowest common denominator. To inspire awe and respect for the Church which was struggling to maintain power due to plague, ongoing pagan beliefs and Europe's fractured, feudal nature at that time.

This eleventh century art was one of the Church's earliest forms of propaganda, dominant themes can be detected, themes which would have promoted existing power structures. As stated earlier one of the most common of these themes is that of original sin, or more specifically Eve as source of sin.

This image can be seen in the early twelfth century relief sculpture of Eve which originally decorated the lintel of the North portal from the Cathedral at Autun Saint

## CHAPTER ONE

### MEDIEVAL - 1000s TO 1300s

The first image examined here is appropriately that of Eve. Original templates from which all others are descended. Medieval beliefs about women can be perceived in the particular Bible stories chosen to be illustrated. Eve is one of the most popular of these images. She is second only to that of the Virgin Mary. Eleventh century European religious painting and sculpture tended to convey epic themes such as the Fall. Bible stories were illustrated depicting good and evil in sharp contrast. Themes were deliberately uncomplicated as apart from being illiterate, the average medieval person would not have been used to analysing the contents of visual imagery.

This Bible inspired painting and sculpture was a vehicle for the church to convey its dominant concerns. It was intended to appeal to the lowest common denominator. To inspire awe and respect for the Church which was struggling to maintain power due to plague, ongoing pagan beliefs and Europe's fractured, feudal nature at that time.

This eleventh century art was one of the Church's earliest forms of propaganda. dominant themes can be detected, themes which would have promoted existing power structures. As stated earlier one of the most common of these themes is that of original sin, or more specifically Eve as source of sin.

This image can be seen in the early twelfth century relief sculpture of Eve which originally decorated the lintel of the North portal from the Cathedral at Aachen. Zein







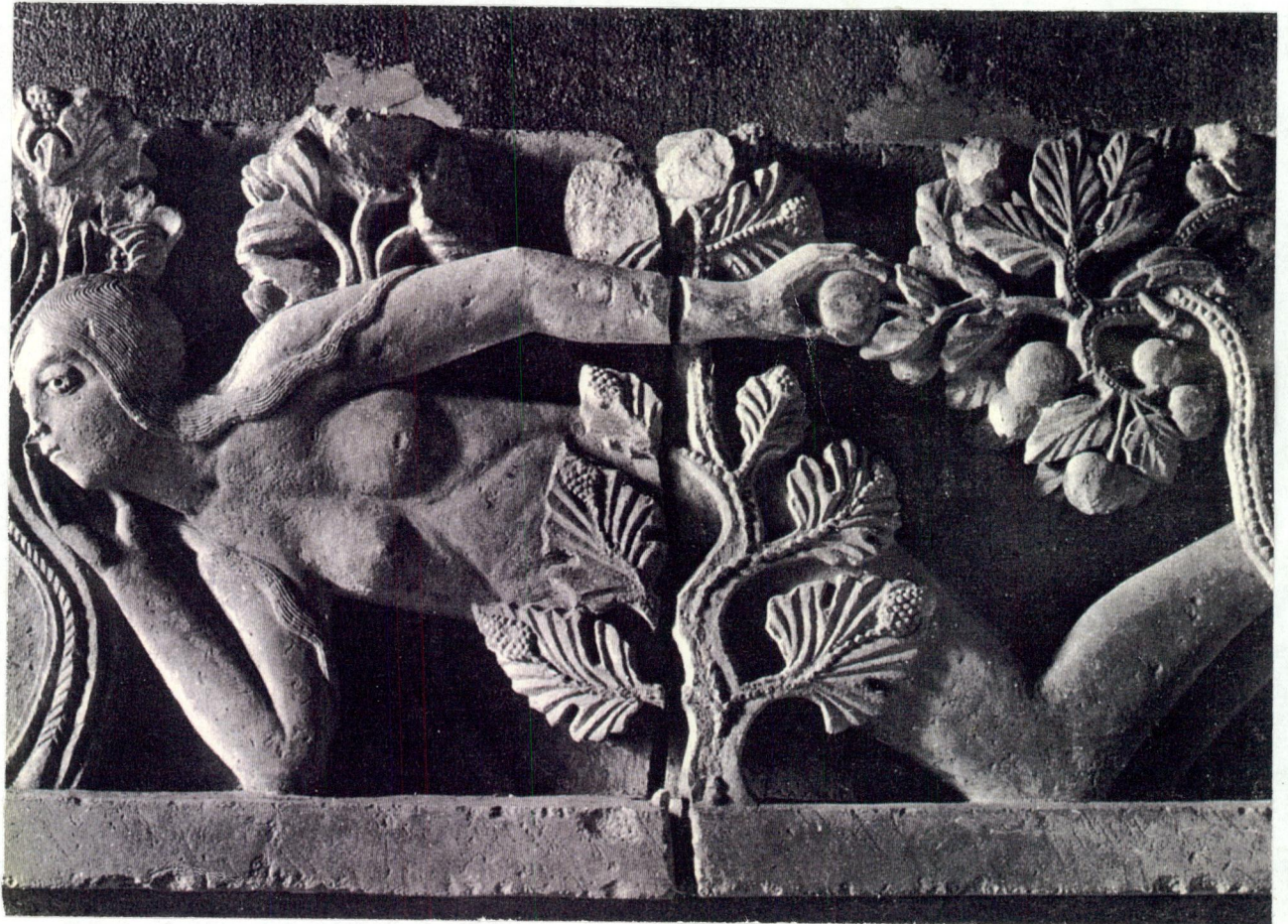


Illustration 1  
*Eve from Cathedral, Autun, France*  
Twelfth Century





Illustration 2  
*Adam and Eve*, from Bible Moralisée  
Thirteenth Century

Lazare, France (Illustration 1). This piece was sculpted by Gislebertus, a Cluniac sculptor. It portrays Eve as a paragon of human corporality, moving serpent like through the branches plucking the fruit of knowledge from a nearby bough.

This theme of Eve as sinner is depicted again in the thirteenth century illustration of the story of Adam and Eve for the Bible Moralisée in Vienna<sup>1</sup> (Illustration 2). In this picture Eve is shown as the source of human sexuality. In the top left hand corner we see Adam and Eve, almost identical, asexual. Eve is taking the fruit from the serpent who has a female form.

After this act we see them in the top right hand corner of the picture hiding their bodies. Eve is almost totally obscured from view by Adam who now strives to conceal his newly acquired genitalia.

When describing this painting in the *The Gothic Idol*, M. Camille quotes Petrus Comester<sup>2</sup> who said of the serpent, "*God chose a certain kind of serpent, as Bede says having the face of a virgin, because like attracts like*" (Camille, 1989, p91). The theme of the female serpent gained strength during the medieval era, and supports the notion of woman as being more responsible for original sin and sexuality.

The motif of the female serpent can be seen again in the miniature of the *Garden of Eden with Temptation and Fall* (1415). Painted by the Italian Limbourg brothers for the

---

<sup>1</sup>Devotional Book of the Gothic period

<sup>2</sup>Encyclopedist of the Gothic period



the branches plucking the fruit of knowledge from a nearby bough. This theme of Eve as sinner is depicted again in the thirteenth century illustration of the story of Adam and Eve for the Bible Moralisée in Vienna<sup>1</sup> (Illustration 2). In this picture Eve is shown as the source of human sexuality. In the top left hand corner we see Adam and Eve, almost identical, asexual. Eve is taking the fruit from the serpent who has a female form.

After this we see them in the top right hand corner of the picture hiding their bodies. Eve is almost totally obscured from view by Adam who now strives to conceal his newly acquired genitalia.

When describing this painting in the *The Gothic Book*, M. Camille quotes Pierre Comestor, who said of the serpent, "God chose a certain kind of serpent, as hebr says having the face of a virgin, because like curves like" (Camille, 1989, p.91). The theme of the female serpent gained strength during the medieval era, and supports the notion of woman as being more responsible for original sin and sexuality.

The motif of the female serpent can be seen again in the miniature of the Garden of Eden with Temptation and Fall (1412). Painted by the Italian Limbourg brothers for the

<sup>1</sup> *Occasional Book of the Gothic period*

*Encyclopedia of the Gothic period*

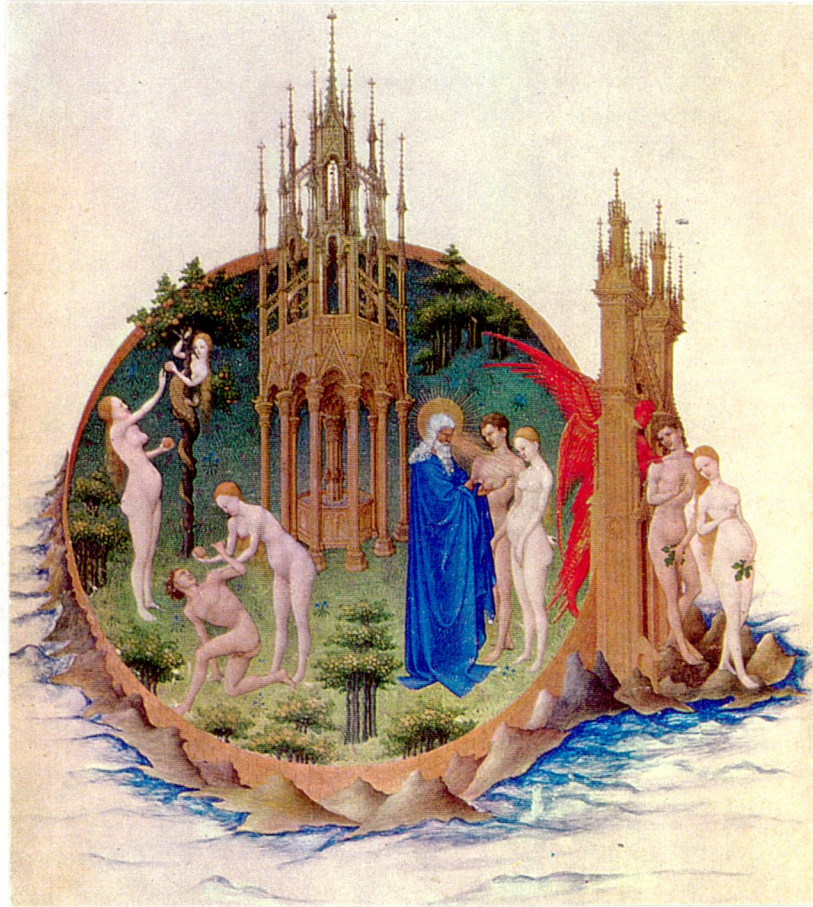


Illustration 3  
*The Garden of Eden with Temptation and Fall*, by Limbourg Brothers  
Fifteenth Century

Calender Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry, commissioned by the French Duke (see Illustration 3). In this painting four events of the Fall are depicted. The garden itself is enclosed by a wall separating it from surrounding ocean.

In the first part of this visual story we see God blessing the union of Adam and Eve. To the left of the Garden we see Eve, alone, accepting the fruit from the serpent which is again of female physiognomy. It has flaming red hair similar to that of Eve. In fact one could ascertain from this painting that the serpent is some aspect of Eve herself. In the foreground we see Eve tempting Adam. She stands over him and he is kneeling. The arrangement of their bodies conveys her active role in persuading. There can be no doubt as to who is responsible for this crime. To the right we see an angel forcing them out of the garden. They are now covering themselves as a result of Eve's sin.

The idea of woman as associated with evil gained power in the medieval era through the medium of this religious illustration. Images of Eve and her descendants, other temptresses like Salome or the Whore of Babylon or Delilah. All these images convey a central message, that of woman as having the capacity to tempt and corrupt man through the medium of her body.

The fourteenth century statue of *Frau Welt* or *Madam World* (Illustration 4) from the portal of the St Sebaldus Church in Nuremburg is perhaps the best example of this portrayal of woman as being both appealing and a source of corruption.



Colander (Les Riches Heures du duc de Berry, commissioned by the French Duke (see illustration 3). In this painting four events of the Fall are depicted. The garden itself is enclosed by a wall separating it from surrounding ocean.

In the first part of this visual story we see God blessing the union of Adam and Eve. To the left of the garden we see Eve, alone, accepting the fruit from the serpent which is again of female physiognomy. It has flaming red hair similar to that of Eve, in fact one could ascertain from this painting that the serpent is some aspect of Eve herself. In the foreground we see Eve tempting Adam. She stands over him and he is kneeling. The arrangement of their bodies conveys her active role in persuading. There can be no doubt as to who is responsible for this crime. To the right we see an angel forcing them out of the garden. They are now covering themselves as a result of Eve's sin.

The idea of woman as associated with evil gained power in the medieval era through the medium of this religious illustration. Images of Eve and her descendants, other temptresses like Salome or the Whore of Babylon or Delilah. All these images convey a central message, that of woman as having the capacity to tempt and corrupt man through the medium of her body.

The fourteenth century statue of Eve, Well or Meadow World (illustration 4) from the portal of the St. Sebaldus Church in Nuremberg is perhaps the best example of this portrayal of woman as being both appealing and a source of corruption.



Illustration 4  
*Frau Welt*, from St Sebaldus Church, Nuremberg  
Fifteenth Century

When seen from the front this Frau Welt is a young and innocent looking woman covered modestly by a flowing dress. Her breasts are hardly developed and her face displays the fullness of late childhood. She gestures towards the observer as if to beckon.

Seen from behind her true corruption is revealed underneath her dress. It has parted to reveal a rotting, corrupted body crawling with insects and frogs. She is the perfect example of woman and woman's body as locus of sin and corruption. She is the scapegoat, the other, all decay contained underneath, confined behind her dress which acts as a metaphor for her skin.

This imagery of woman's body as harbouring evil and destruction came about at a time when there was much speculation about and mistrust of women. Fear of witchcraft was growing in Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This was the result of the general social unrest experienced due to the ravages of the great plagues. Society was in turmoil, the Church was in danger of losing power, a scapegoat was needed. The plague was rationalised as and believed to be the result of witches casting spells. The Church, which before denied the existence of witchcraft, suddenly decided that society's difficulties were the result of a mostly female group within society consorting with the devil and unleashing all sorts of trouble.

This fear which is evident in images like Frau Welt eventually culminated in the Papal Bull of December 1484, launched against witches. This unleashed a Europe wide witchhunt which lasted almost three hundred years and left thousands dead.



When seen from the front this Frau Welt is a young and innocent looking woman covered modestly by a flowing dress. Her breasts are hardly developed and her face displays the fullness of late childhood. She gestures towards the observer as if to beckon.

Seen from behind her true corruption is revealed underneath her dress. It has parted to reveal a rotting, corrupted body crawling with insects and frogs. She is the perfect example of woman and woman's body as locus of sin and corruption. She is the scapegoat, the other, all decay contained underneath, confined behind her dress which acts as a metaphor for her skin.

This imagery of woman's body as harbouring evil and destruction came about at a time when there was much speculation about and mistrust of women. Fear of witchcraft was growing in Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This was the result of the general social unrest experienced due to the ravages of the great plague. Society was in turmoil, the Church was in danger of losing power, a scapegoat was needed. The plague was rationalised as and believed to be the result of witches casting spells. The Church, which before denied the existence of witchcraft, suddenly decided that society's difficulties were the result of a mostly female group within society consorting with the devil and unleashing all sorts of trouble.

This fear which is evident in images like Frau Welt eventually culminated in the Papal Bull of December 1484, launched against witches. This unleashed a Europe wide witchhunt which lasted almost three hundred years and left thousands dead.

Dominican Inquisitors Kramer and Sprenger wrote the *Maleus Malificarum* or *Witches Hammer* as a result of the Papal Bull. This book was an encyclopedia of demonology which specifically associated the female body with evil. "*All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which in women is insatiable*" (Summers, 1994, p14).

The art discussed earlier in this chapter came before this culmination of fear and violence. This art was commissioned by the Church and was effective propaganda, its central theme being the connection between woman, sin and corruption. This art maintained medieval power structures in that it reflected and reinforced fear and mistrust of women.

I will now turn to imagery of a different kind, that of female mystics. These two types of women, the Sinner and the Saint, the Whore and the Virgin, could be said to have nothing in common. They have one very important link, relevant to this thesis, the body. Just as female sinners were depicted as sinning in a distinctly corporal manner, so the female saint experienced her faith.

There was generally considered to be less of a division between the tribulations of the soul and the expressions of the body in the medieval era. In fact, female saints are recorded as suffering from stigmata much more violently and physically in this era than in any other in the history of Christianity. In her research into the myth of female somatism Caroline Walker Bynum tells of "*visionary women (such as Julian of Norwich) who prayed for disease as a gift from God*" (Bynum, 1989, p166).



Dominican inquisitors Kramer and Sprenger wrote the *Witches* (Münster, 1904, p.14).  
Münster as a result of the Papal Bull. This book was an encyclopedia of demonology  
which specifically associated the female body with evil. "All witchcraft comes from carnal  
lust, which in women is insatiable" (Summers, 1994, p.14).

The art discussed earlier in this chapter came before this culmination of fear and violence.  
This art was commissioned by the Church and was effective propaganda, its central theme  
being the connection between woman, sin and corruption. This art maintained medieval  
power structures in that it reflected and reinforced fear and mistrust of women.

I will now turn to imagery of a different kind, that of female mystics. These two types  
of women, the Sinner and the Saint, the Whore and the Virgin, could be said to have  
nothing in common. They have one very important link, relevant to this thesis, the body.  
Just as female sinners were depicted as sinning in a distinctly corporeal manner, so the  
female saint experienced her faith.

There was generally considered to be less of a division between the tribulations of the soul  
and the expressions of the body in the medieval era. In fact, female saints are recorded  
as suffering from stigmata much more violently and physically in this era than in any other  
in the history of Christianity. In her research into the myth of female somaticism Caroline  
Walker Bynum tells of "visionary women (such as Julian of Norwich) who prayed for  
disease as a gift from God" (Bynum, 1989, p.166).

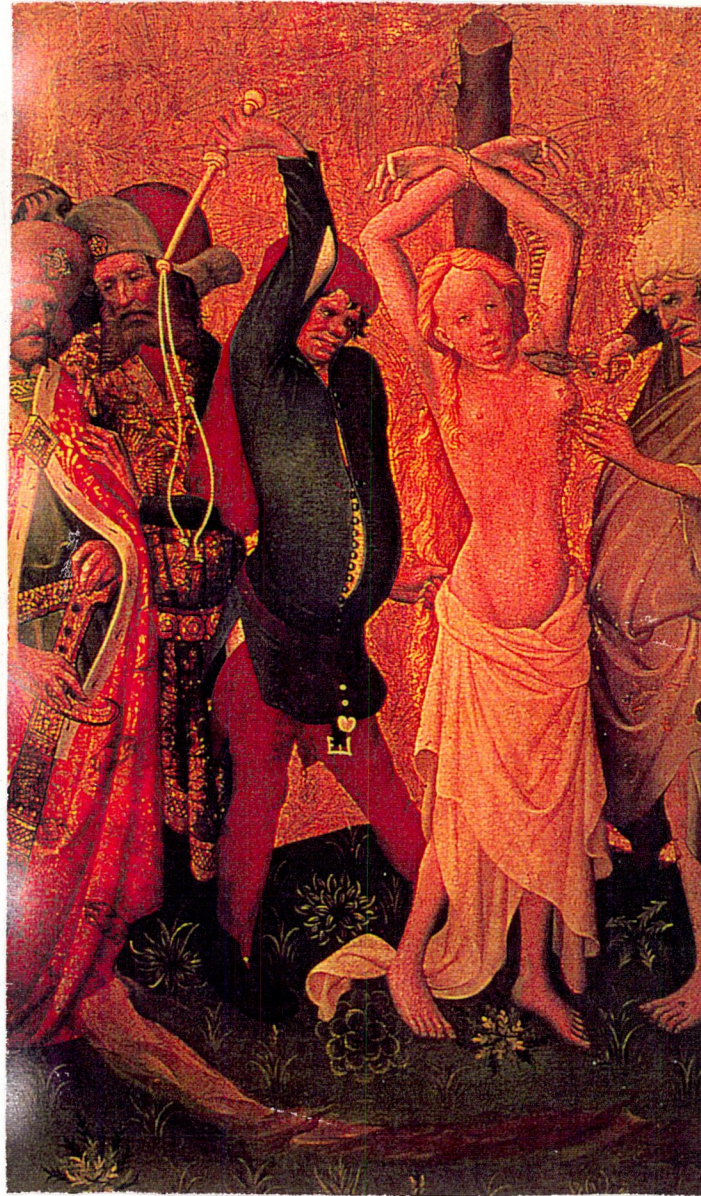


Illustration 5  
*The Torture of Saint Barbara*, by Master Franke  
Fifteenth Century



This bodily suffering and demise so prevalent in the medieval era seems like the only way for female mystics of that time to emphasise their spirituality. By punishing their bodies they were seeking credibility in a society which associated them with the temptations of the flesh, with ordinary bodily functions rather than any "higher destiny". They were purging their bodies which were perceived as being more susceptible to sin than those of men.

This trait can be seen in the early fifteenth century painting *The Torture of St Barbara*. Painted by Master Franke (1410-1415) for the Altar of St Barbara at the Kalanti Church, Helsinki, Finland (Illustration 5). Here we see the young saint beautiful and half naked, tied to a post. She is being tortured by two grotesque men, one of whom is whipping her back while the other prepares to cut off her breast. The expression on the face of the saint is important to note as she appears calm and languorous, almost as if she is enjoying what would have been agony.

This masochistic trait is hardly surprising if one considers the message seeded in this painting and others like it. It suggests that woman can only achieve true holiness through the destruction of her body. The expression on the saint's face indicates that the artist wished to portray her as being happy to be rid of her beauty, a hindrance to her spiritual development, suggesting that the body continuously stands in the way of the equality of woman. The cutting off of the breast is symbolic of the severance of her sexuality.

This concept of the inferiority of the female body had its roots in Aristotelian theories about generation, much believed in the Medieval era. In her essay on female somatism, *The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages*, Bynum puts forward

This bodily suffering and demise so prevalent in the medieval era seems like the only way for female mystics of that time to emphasise their spirituality. By punishing their bodies they were seeking credibility in a society which associated them with the temptations of the flesh, with ordinary bodily functions rather than any "higher destiny". They were punishing their bodies which were perceived as being more susceptible to sin than those of men.

This trait can be seen in the early fifteenth century painting *The Torment of St Barbara*, painted by Master Franke (1410-1415) for the Altar of St Barbara at the Kalander Church, Helsinki, Finland (Illustration 5). Here we see the young saint beautiful and half naked, tied to a post. She is being tortured by two grotesque men, one of whom is whipping her back while the other prepares to cut off her breast. The expression on the face of the saint is important to note as she appears calm and languorous, almost as if she is enjoying what would have been agony.

This masochistic trait is hardly surprising if one considers the message seeded in this painting and others like it. It suggests that woman can only achieve true holiness through the destruction of her body. The expression on the saint's face indicates that the saint wished to portray her as being happy to be rid of her beauty, a hindrance to her spiritual development, suggesting that the body continuously stands in the way of the equality of woman. The cutting off of the breast is symbolic of the severance of her sexuality.

This concept of the inferiority of the female body had its roots in Aristotelian theories about generation, much believed in the Medieval era. In her essay on female somnambulism, *The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages*, Gynnam puts forward

this theory, which is, in the making of a new human being, woman supplies the matter, the flesh, while man supplies the "spark" or "prime agent". She uses this theory to prove the growing inclination in the medieval era to polarise the sexes into opposites such as male/female, soul/body, intellect/appetite, form/matter.

These associations have set the pattern for male supremacy in later years. Already we can perceive the association of woman with corruption, sin and corporality. The body was perceived as being more worldly, inferior and woman was perceived as being more bodily than man. As Bynum wrote of this era, *"Theological scientific and folk traditions associated woman with body, lust, weakness and irrationality, men with spirit or reason or strength"* (Bynum, 1989, p175).

These associations can also be traced through the medical imagery of this time. There was a general lack of understanding of the female form in the early years of anatomy. This was due, in part, to the shortage of female cadavers available for dissection. This shortage of female source material was due to the fact that the main source of cadavers for the anatomist of the early fourteenth century was the executed criminal or expired vagrant. As women usually died within a family there were few cadavers not taken away by relatives for burial. Thus anatomy began on this unequal footing where the model by which the human body was mapped out was more than often male.

Medieval scientists soon began to claim that men and women were merely superior and inferior versions of the same model. The male body assuming the role of that which defines the human. One can argue then that women was perceived as "other", a deviation from the norm. Bynum quotes fourteenth century surgeons, Henri de Modeville and Guy



this theory, which is the making of a new human being, woman supplies the matter, the flesh, while man supplies the "spark" or "prime agent". She uses this theory to prove the growing inclination in the medieval era to polarise the sexes into opposites such as male/female, soul/body, intellect/appetite, form/matter.

These associations have set the pattern for male supremacy in later years. Already we can perceive the association of woman with corruption, sin and corporeality. The body was perceived as being more worldly, inferior and woman was perceived as being more bodily than man. As Hyman wrote of this era, "Theological scientific and folk traditions associated woman with body, lust, weakness and irrationality, men with spirit or reason or strength" (Hyman, 1989, p172).

These associations can also be traced through the medical imagery of this time. There was a general lack of understanding of the female form in the early years of anatomy. This was due, in part, to the shortage of female cadavers available for dissection. This shortage of female source material was due to the fact that the main source of cadavers for the anatomists of the early fourteenth century was the executed criminal or expired vagrant. As women usually died within a family there were few cadavers not taken away by relatives for burial. Thus anatomy began on this unequal footing where the model by which the human body was mapped out was more often male.

Medical scientists soon began to claim that men and women were merely superior and inferior versions of the same model. The male body assuming the role of that which defines the human. One can argue then that women was perceived as "other", a deviation from the norm. Hyman quotes fourteenth century surgeons, Henri de Mondeville and Guy

de Chauviac, who claimed that "*The apparatus of generation in women is like the apparatus of generation in men, except that it is reversed, the womb is like a penis reversed or put inside*" (Bynum, 1989, p186). These claims embody the attitude that woman was merely a corruption of the male.

And so we see in the medieval era, instead of being evaluated in her own right, woman was perceived in the light of her differences from man. Her "otherness", her other body being the scapegoat for and site of sin and corruption. Man was continually represented as being made in the image of God, but what of woman? She emerges as diametrically opposite.







Illustration 6  
*Eve from Ghent altarpiece by Van Eyck brothers*  
Fifteenth Century

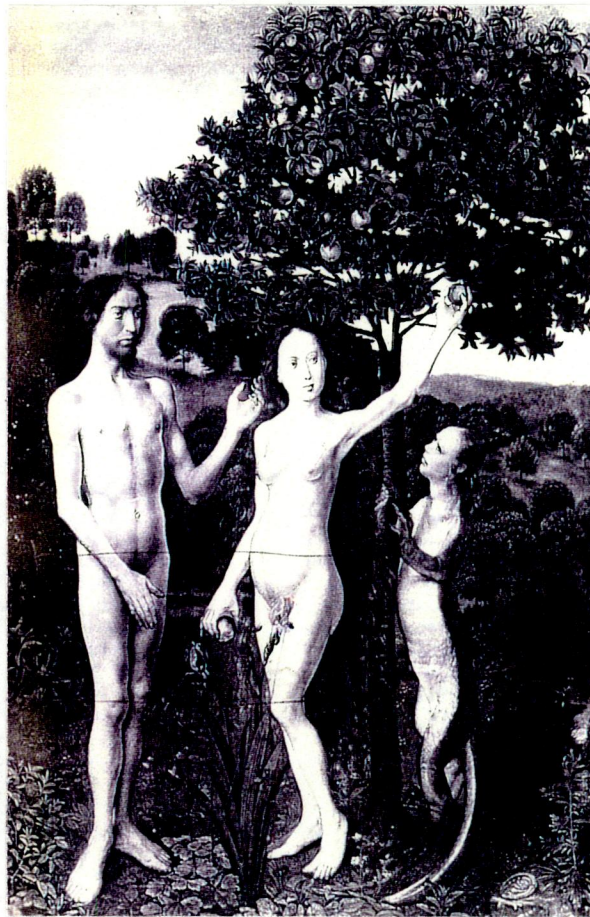


Illustration 7  
*The Temptation and Fall, Hugo Van der Goes*  
Fifteenth Century

## CHAPTER TWO

### RENAISSANCE (BAROQUE) - 1400s TO 1700s

The associations and attitudes towards women discussed in the last chapter are carried on and reflected into the Renaissance era. Again through the medium of Religious Art. The powerful theme of Eve is explored by the late Gothic/early Renaissance artists Hubert and Jan Van Eyck in the famous Ghent altarpiece (1432) (Illustration 6). Painted for the St Bavo's Cathedral Ghent, Flanders. In this painting Eve stands in contrast to the Virgin Mary, also depicted. She is naked again, guiltily covering herself with a fig leaf. She is still holding the apple, perhaps a symbol of the fact that it was she who tempted Adam and not the other way round. This painting reflects the belief, stemmed from the medieval era, that male sin came from outside influences. But what of woman? She seems to have already had an affinity with the serpent. The theme of Eve and the serpent is carried on by another Flemish painter of the fifteenth century, Hugo Van der Goes. In a small panel painting of The Temptation and Fall (Illustration 7) in Vienna. Eve is shown holding an apple and plucking one for Adam who stands passively by. As in most paintings on this subject, their genitalia is already covered, even though they have not yet tasted the fruit of knowledge. This contradicts the bible story. Adam is already covering himself and Eve's crotch is covered by a flower blossom. In his description of this painting, Edwin Mullins postulates that this was due to an attempt by Van der Goes to compress both the consequences of the act and the act itself into the one image.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RENAISSANCE (BAROQUE) - 1400s TO 1700s

The associations and attitudes towards women discussed in the last chapter are carried on and reflected into the Renaissance era. Again through the medium of Religious Art. The powerful theme of Eve is explored by the late Gothic/Renaissance artist Hubert and Jan Van Eyck in the famous Ghent altarpiece (1432) (Illustration 6). Painted for the St. Bavon's Cathedral Ghent, Flanders. In this painting Eve stands in contrast to the Virgin Mary, also depicted. She is naked again, guiltily covering herself with a fig leaf. She is still holding the apple, perhaps a symbol of the fact that it was she who tempted Adam and not the other way round. This painting reflects the belief, stemmed from the medieval era, that male sin came from outside influences, but what of woman? She seems to have already had an affinity with the serpent. The theme of Eve and the serpent is carried on by another Flemish painter of the fifteenth century, Hugo Van der Goes, in a small panel painting of *The Temptation and Fall* (Illustration 7) in Vienna. Eve is shown holding an apple and plucking one for Adam who stands passively by. As in most paintings on this subject, their genitalia is already covered, even though they have not yet tasted the fruit of knowledge. This contradicts the bible story. Adam is already covering himself and Eve's crotch is covered by a flower blossom. In his description of this painting, Edwin Mullins postulates that this was due to an attempt by Van der Goes to compress both the consequences of the act and the act itself into the one image.





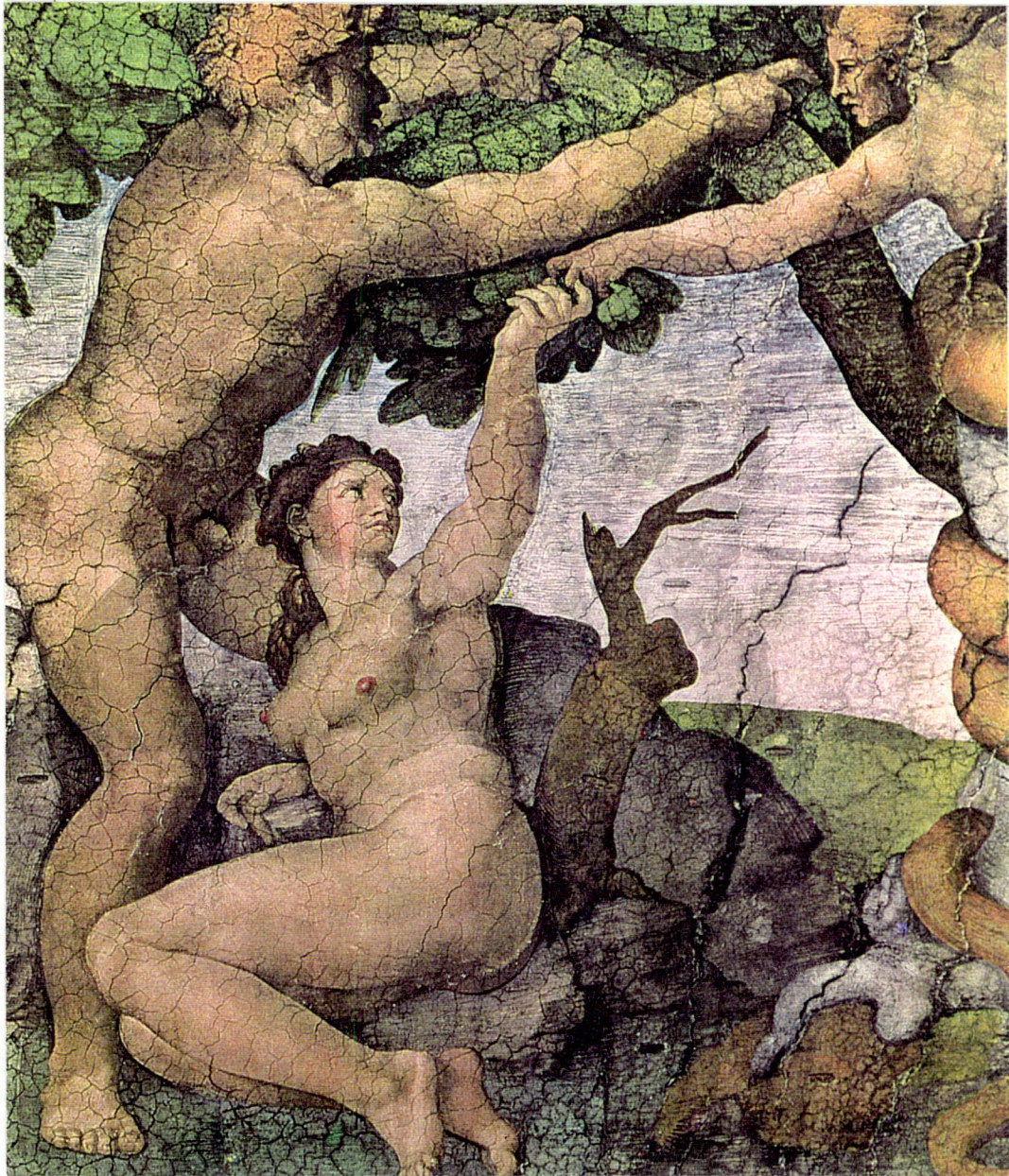


Illustration 8  
*Original Sin*, from the vault of the Sistene Chapel  
Sixteenth Century



This image could also contain a deeper meaning seeded in the way it is constructed. Adam's hand deliberately covers himself while Eve makes no attempt at modesty. The fact that her crotch is covered by a flower blossom is no coincidence, it is a symbol of passion. I would argue that this is the nature of Eve's sin. This image reinforces the idea of woman tempting "innocent man". Van der Goes seems determined to depict this original sinner as female, again the serpent who leans towards Eve has a female face.

The story of Eve as origin of sin continues well into the high Renaissance. One of its most beautiful incarnations is that painted by Michelangelo as part of the Sistene Chapel Fresco completed in 1510 (Illustration 8). This fresco shows the story of Adam and Eve both before and after the tasting of the fruit. The two episodes are separated by the image of the tree of knowledge in which the serpent is entwined.

On the left of the tree we see Adam and Eve waiting to receive the fruit which the serpent is picking for them. Eve lies reclining and it is Adam who stands up and stretches out his hand. This uncharacteristic depiction of Adam actively reaching for the fruit could be suggestive of an attempt by Michelangelo to portray them as being equally responsible for their sins. And yet the serpent still has a female form with flowing red hair like a deformed version of Eve.

This theme of woman as source of sin can also be detected in the work of Hieronymus Bosch. For example *The Haywain* (1490), Prado, Madrid. Bosch received a theological education before becoming a painter and his art is highly moralistic. There are two copies of this painting in existence. The Madrid version is generally accepted to be the original. When unopened this altarpiece depicts an old pilgrim on his journey through this world



This image could also contain a deeper meaning seeded in the way it is constructed. Adam's hand deliberately covers himself while Eve makes no attempt at modesty. The fact that her crotch is covered by a flower blossom is no coincidence, it is a symbol of passion. I would argue that this is the nature of Eve's sin. This image reinforces the idea of woman tempting "innocent man". Van der Goes seems determined to depict this original sinner as female, again the serpent who leans towards Eve has a female face.

The story of Eve as origin of sin continues well into the high Renaissance. One of its most beautiful incarnations is that painted by Michelangelo as part of the Sistine Chapel Fresco completed in 1510 (Illustration 8). This fresco shows the story of Adam and Eve both before and after the tasting of the fruit. The two episodes are separated by the image of the tree of knowledge in which the serpent is entwined.

On the left of the tree we see Adam and Eve waiting to receive the fruit which the serpent is picking for them. Eve lies reclining and it is Adam who stands up and stretches out his hand. This uncharacteristic depiction of Adam actively reaching for the fruit could be suggestive of an attempt by Michelangelo to portray them as being equally responsible for their sins. And yet the serpent still has a female form with flowing red hair like a deformed version of Eve.

This theme of woman as source of sin can also be detected in the work of the Hieronymus Bosch. For example *The Alchemist* (1490), Prado, Madrid. Bosch received a theological education before becoming a painter and his art is highly moralistic. There are two copies of this painting in existence. The Madrid version is generally accepted to be the original. When unopened this alchemist depicts an old pilgrim on his journey through this world



Illustration 9  
Detail of *The Heywain*, by Bosch, Madrid  
Sixteenth Century

of sin. When unfolded it reveals three panels, the last of which reveals the source of all this sin.

On the left panel we see Adam and Eve in the garden, Eve accepting the fruit from the serpent, again in female form. And finally them being expelled from the garden in fear. The central panel reveals a clamber of bodies crowding around a hay wagon, upon which a group of people are perched being watched over by God. In the final panel we see the familiar Bosch landscape of Hell. With various punishments being administered to sinners.

The centre panel is of interest here as it pertains to the nature of sin. It depicts a wide range of people most of whom are clambering to mount or following the wagon like some perversion of a harvest procession. This is important to note as the wagon is occupied by a group of people who are generally agreed to represent transient earthly achievements (Illustration 9) like fame, represented by the winged devil playing a pipe of some sort, and the pleasures of the flesh are also represented by the women.

If the painting is understood as a moral allegory, then the women on top of the hay come to represent earthly pleasures and preoccupations that mortals become desirous of on their journey through life. An angel is depicted also on top of the hay, praying up to God as if despairing at how man has been deceived into forsaking his spiritual development for earthly pursuits embodied by the woman.

This theme of woman as deceiving and seducing through the medium of her body can also be seen in paintings of the story of Sampson and Delilah, common in Renaissance



of sin. When unfolded it reveals three panels, the last of which reveals the source of all this sin.

On the left panel we see Adam and Eve in the garden, Eve accepting the fruit from the serpent, again in female form. And finally, them being expelled from the garden in fear. The central panel reveals a chamber of bodies crowding around a hay wagon, upon which a group of people are perched being watched over by God. In the final panel we see the familiar Bosch landscape of Hell. With various punishments being administered to sinners.

The centre panel is of interest here as it pertains to the nature of sin. It depicts a wide range of people most of whom are clambering to mount or follow the wagon like some perversion of a harvest procession. This is important to note as the wagon is occupied by a group of people who are generally agreed to represent transient earthly achievements (Illustration 9) like fame, represented by the winged devil playing a pipe of some sort, and the pleasures of the flesh are also represented by the woman.

If the painting is understood as a moral allegory, then the woman on top of the hay comes to represent earthly pleasures an preoccupation that mortals become desirous of on their journey through life. An angel is depicted also on top of the hay, praying up to God as if despairing at how man has been deceived into forsaking his spiritual development for earthly pursuits embodied by the woman.

This theme of woman as deceiving and seducing through the medium of her body can also be seen in paintings of the story of Sampson and Delilah, common in Renaissance



Illustration 10  
*Samson and Delilah*, by Dürer  
Fifteenth Century

narrative art. The story goes that although she loved Sampson, Delilah was bribed into persuading him to reveal the source of his strength by his enemies the Philistines. Sampson eventually does this and while he is sleeping Delilah orders the source of his strength, his hair, to be cut off. This story contains a message essentially similar to that of Adam and Eve. Men must be wary of being seduced by women and their bodies as this can lead to sin, suffering and death. The fact that Delilah loves Sampson even in the act of depriving him of his strength is indicative of the belief that women are duplicitous by nature.

An example of this image within Renaissance art is Albrecht Durer's woodcut of 1493, *Sampson and Delilah*, (Illustration 10). This woodcut was designed by the then young Durer to illustrate the book *Der Ritter Vom Turn* published in Basel in 1493. This book was originally written by Geofroy de la Tour Landry for the moral education of his daughters. The text draws a parallel between Delilah's betrayal and Judas' betrayal of Christ. The piece illustrates Delilah herself cutting off Sampson's hair. This contradicts the Bible version of the story which relates that she called for a servant to come and cut it off. In showing the woman directly cutting off the hair Durer reinforces her guilt for the observer. Like the depiction of the serpent as female in the Adam and Eve narrative, this straying from the original makes obvious the artist's intent to portray the woman as author of the crime.

The story of this other seductress is continually portrayed right up to a work by Flemish master Peter Paul Rubens (Illustration 11). This piece, again titled *Sampson and Delilah*, was painted in Antwerp in 1610. In this painting Sampson is slumped over asleep, with his head resting on Delilah's lap. Delilah's bare breasts make reference to the power of



narrative art. The story goes that although she loved Sampson, Delilah was bribed into persuading him to reveal the source of his strength by his enemies the Philistines. Sampson eventually does this and while he is sleeping Delilah orders the source of his strength, his hair, to be cut off. This story contains a message essentially similar to that of Adam and Eve. Men must be wary of being seduced by women and their bodies as this can lead to sin, suffering and death. The fact that Delilah loves Sampson even in the act of depriving him of his strength is indicative of the belief that women are duplicitous by nature.

An example of this image within Renaissance art is Albrecht Dürer's woodcut of 1493, *Sampson and Delilah* (Illustration 10). This woodcut was designed by the then young Dürer to illustrate the book *Der Ritter Vom Turm* published in Basel in 1493. This book was originally written by Geoffrey de la Tour Landry for the moral education of his daughters. The text draws a parallel between Delilah's betrayal and Judas' betrayal of Christ. The piece illustrates Delilah herself cutting off Sampson's hair. This contradicts the Bible version of the story which relates that she called for a servant to come and cut it off. In showing the woman directly cutting off the hair Dürer reinforces her guilt for the observer. Like the depiction of the serpent as female in the Adam and Eve narrative, this straying from the original makes obvious the artist's intent to portray the woman as author of the crime.

The story of this other seductress is continually portrayed right up to a work by Flemish master Peter Paul Rubens (Illustration 11). This piece, again titled *Sampson and Delilah*, was painted in Antwerp in 1610. In this painting Sampson is slumped over asleep, with his head resting on Delilah's lap. Delilah's bare breasts make reference to the power of



Illustration 11  
*Sampson and Delilah*, by Rubens  
Seventeenth Century



physical attraction she exerts over him. He is sleeping peacefully while Delilah consorts, an old hag holding a candle and a young man with the scissors, do their work.

This image again echoes the central theme of man drowning in the pleasures of female corporeality and suffering bodily decay and weakness as a result. The image of the loss of the hair is symbolic of the loss of power feared as a result of consorting with woman. Delilah's tender expression and hand resting gently on Sampson's shoulder illustrate, again, this treacherous nature of woman that she can participate in his downfall even though she cares for him.



physical attraction she exerts over him. He is sleeping peacefully while Delilah consorts  
an old hag holding a candle and a young man with the scissors, do their work.

This image again echoes the central theme of man drowning in the pleasures of female  
corporeality and suffering bodily decay and weakness as a result. The image of the loss  
of the hair is symbolic of the loss of power feared as a result of consorting with woman.  
Delilah's tender expression and hand resting gently on Sampson's shoulder illustrate, again,  
this treacherous nature of woman that she can participate in his downfall even though she  
cares for him.





Illustration 12  
Anonymous illustration of Francastoro's poem *Syphilis*



### CHAPTER THREE

#### VICTORIAN - 1837 TO EARLY 1900s

This connection between women, their bodies and corruption of various kinds can be seen running through the themes and dominant motifs of European narrative painting in the Victorian era. The idea of woman as other emerges strongly again in the type of women depicted. The image of the prostitute surfaced again and again. Her "fall" echoes that of Eve. These prostitutes are depicted outside, on the streets, living literally outside of Victorian society. Even though the clothing has changed and the particular narratives are different this Victorian art, like that of the medieval and Renaissance eras, reinforces what is essentially the same idea, that of woman's culpability and greater capacity for sin. The particular type of women may have changed but they are all descendants of Eve. From the Whore of Babylon to Delilah and finally this Victorian encapsulation of woman, the body and disease, the prostitute.

An image of striking similarity to that of *Frau Welt*, even though almost five hundred years have passed is the nineteenth century anonymous illustration of the French translation of Francastoro's poem *Syphilis*. This illustration depicts an arduous young man, down on one knee and clasping the hand of a seated woman (Illustration 12). This lady is represented as beautiful and young except that her face is not a face, it is a mask behind which she hides. The young man does not perceive this deception. Behind the mask is a grinning syphilitic skull. This image is reminiscent of *Frau Welt* in that it does not merely portray a sick woman. She is concealing her corruption behind a thin veneer of beauty. She is actively attempting to deceive man. This image echoes Eve who was a

### CHAPTER THREE

#### VICTORIAN - 1837 TO EARLY 1900s

This connection between women, their bodies and corruption of various kinds can be seen running through the themes and dominant motifs of European narrative painting in the Victorian era. The idea of woman as other emerges strongly again in the type of women depicted. The image of the prostitute surfaced again and again. Her "fall" echoes that of Eve. These prostitutes are depicted outside, on the streets, living literally outside of Victorian society. Even though the clothing has changed and the particular narratives are different this Victorian era, like that of the medieval and Renaissance eras, reinforces what is essentially the same idea, that of woman's culpability and greater capacity for sin. The particular type of women may have changed but they are all descendants of Eve. From the Whore of Babylon to Delilah and finally this Victorian encapsulation of woman, the body and disease, the prostitute.

An image of striking similarity to that of Frau Welt, even though almost five hundred years have passed is the nineteenth century anonymous illustration of the French translation of Tancrède's poem *L'Amour*. This illustration depicts an arduous young man, down on one knee and clasping the hand of a seated woman (Illustration 12). This lady is represented as beautiful and young except that her face is not a face, it is a mask behind which she hides. The young man does not perceive this deception. Behind the mask is a grinning syphilitic skull. This image is reminiscent of Frau Welt in that it does not merely portray a sick woman. She is concealing her corruption behind a thin veneer of beauty. She is actively attempting to deceive man. This image echoes Eve who was a

source of sin and sexuality. The nineteenth century Eve is a source of disease. And like Eve her image is a warning to man of the dangers of consorting with women.

The narrative of the young woman giving in to temptation and its consequences can be seen in the countless Victorian images depicting prostitutes at various stages of their careers. From the moment of temptation to the mortician's slab, dead usually by their own hand. This Victorian idea of woman possessing an unnatural capacity for deviancy is demonstrated by Sander L. Gilman in his essay "'Who kills Whores?', 'I do,' Says Jack: Race and Gender in Victorian London".

He quotes W.R. Greg, who wrote of women in the *Westminster Review* that they seemed to have a greater capacity to be seduced due to their "*strange and sublime unselfishness, which men too commonly discover only to profit by*" (Gilman, 1993, p263). This deviancy is situated within the body of woman by way of the "*warm fond heart*" (Gilman, 1993, p263) of which Greg speaks.

A prominent Victorian artist who had a fascination with the theme of the fallen woman is English painter and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti. All through his painting career Rossetti worked on the theme of the young woman who has resorted to prostitution being "found" by someone from her former life. Back when she was a part of Victorian society, still within the narrow confines of acceptable female behaviour. This "fallen woman" of Rossetti's painting *Found* (begun in 1854) is other and turns her face away in shame. Rossetti sketched and painted many versions of this theme throughout his life. The final painting remains unfinished, suggesting Rossetti's ongoing dialogue with the "difficult" issues raised.



source of sin and sexuality. The nineteenth century Eve is a source of disease. And like Eve her image is a warning to man of the dangers of consorting with women.

The narrative of the young woman giving in to temptation and its consequences can be seen in the countless Victorian images depicting prostitutes at various stages of their careers. From the moment of temptation to the mortician's slab, dead usually by their own hand. This Victorian idea of woman possessing an unnatural capacity for deviancy is demonstrated by Sander L. Gilman in his essay "Who Kills Whores? 'I do,' Says Jack: Race and Gender in Victorian London".

He quotes W.R. Greg, who wrote of women in the Westminster Review that they seemed to have a greater capacity to be seduced due to their "stronger and subtler unsatisfiability, which men too commonly discover only to profit by" (Gilman, 1993, p263). This deviancy is situated within the body of woman by way of the "woman found dead" (Gilman, 1993, p263) of which Greg speaks.

A prominent Victorian artist who had a fascination with the theme of the fallen woman is English painter and poet Dame Gabriel Rossetti. All through his painting career Rossetti worked on the theme of the young woman who has resorted to prostitution being "found" by someone from her former life. Back when she was a part of Victorian society, still within the narrow confines of acceptable female behaviour. This "fallen woman" of Rossetti's painting *Found* (begun in 1874) is other and turns her face away in shame. Rossetti sketched and painted many versions of this theme throughout his life. The final painting remains unfinished, suggesting Rossetti's ongoing dialogue with the "difficult" issues raised.



Illustration 13  
*Found*, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti  
Nineteenth Century



In *Found* (Illustration 13) we see a young man who has stopped in the street and is attempting to raise the woman who is slumped on the ground. He has grabbed her by the wrists but she turns her face away in an attitude of shame and humiliation. Her lack of willingness to respond to this young man who obviously knows her illustrates her otherness. She has erred and cannot go back and must instead lurk in the shadows near the ground. She is no longer like him and realises the futility of her attempting to reform.

Her fate is echoed by that of a young calf shown in the background. It is tied up in a cart and covered by a net, no doubt on its way to market to be sold. The young woman has sold her sexuality, her body, with which she is so closely associated and is therefore as doomed as the animal at market.

This image of woman giving in to temptation can be seen throughout European painting in the late 1800s and early twentieth century. It reflects the idea of woman as somehow more easily turned to evil than man. This is also reinforced by the depiction of many of these women as having once been "virtuous". This conveys the idea that all women are more vulnerable by their very nature to sin.

An example of this theme in narrative painting in England is Richard Redgrave's *The Outcast* of 1851 (Illustration 14). This painting depicts a young woman being ordered out of the family home by an old and stern looking man. She is clutching a new baby, obviously the result of adultery and a man, presumably her husband, is slumped at a table in despair being comforted by an old woman. The young man's despair is so great that it is as if the woman and child are already dead. He does not attempt to prevent this stern paternal figure from casting them out into the dark. Are we then to assume they are



in *Formal Illustration 13* we see a young man who has stopped in the street and is attempting to raise the woman who is slumped on the ground. He has grabbed her by the wrist but she turns her face away in an attitude of shame and humiliation. Her lack of willingness to respond to this young man who obviously knows her illustrates her otherness. She has cried and cannot go back and must instead lurk in the shadows near the ground. She is no longer like him and realises the futility of her attempting to reform.

Her fate is echoed by that of a young calf shown in the background. It is tied up in a cart and covered by a net, no doubt on its way to market to be sold. The young woman has sold her sexuality, her body, with which she is so closely associated and is therefore as doomed as the animal at market.

This image of woman giving in to temptation can be seen throughout European painting in the late 1800s and early twentieth century. It reflects the idea of woman as somehow more easily turned to evil than man. This is also reinforced by the depiction of many of these women as having once been "virtuous". This conveys the idea that all women are more vulnerable by their very nature to sin.

An example of this theme in narrative painting in England is Richard Redgrave's *The Gypsy of 1851* (*Illustration 14*). This painting depicts a young woman being ordered out of the family home by an old and stern looking man. She is clutching a new baby, obviously the result of adultery and a man, presumably her husband, is slumped in a table in despair being comforted by an old woman. The young man's despair is so great that it is as if the woman and child are already dead. He does not attempt to prevent this stern paternal figure from casting them out into the dark. Are we then to assume they are



Illustration 14  
*The Outcast*, by Richard Redgraves  
 Nineteenth Century



Illustration 15  
*Found Drowned*, by George Watts  
 Nineteenth Century



Illustration 16  
*Study of a Woman Throwing Herself into the Moscow River*, by Perov  
 Nineteenth Century



already dead to this family? Beyond the limits of representation as a result of this woman's affair.

This image mirrors that of Eve sent out of the garden in fear an uncertainty. As a visual moral parable it seems to warn that all women, even good women, are more susceptible to evil be it physical, social or spiritual.

These images depicting women and their crimes are visual scapegoats in that there is little or no reference to their partners in crime. Only the moment of the women's downfall. Suggesting by its de-contextualised nature that the deviation can be located within the woman herself. Sander L. Gilman refers to these women seduced into prostitution as being similar to the brides of Dracula. This is an inciteful analogy as the seduced women, like Lucy Werterna of Stoker's novel, are depicted living in darkness ceaselessly repeating their own seduction. These women are irrevocably altered versions of their former selves and death is inevitable.

Images of these errant women eventually culminate in paintings like *Found Drowned*, by George Watts, 1850 (see Illustration 15), or *The Drowned Woman*, by Vassily Grigrievitch Perov, 1967. Or the images of the victims of Jack the Ripper in the 1880s. This imagery of the dead prostitute was obviously very popular at this time. If imagery could be said to maintain the social order, these are the ultimate example. The dead prostitute plays a specific role in the scapegoating of woman. These images generally depict the prostitute as taking her own life. For example, *Study of a Woman Throwing Herself into the Moscow River* by Perov, 1867 (Illustration 16).



already dead to his family? Beyond the limits of representation as a result of this woman's affair.

This image mirrors that of Eve sent out of the garden in fear and uncertainty. As a visual moral parable it seems to warn that all women, even good women, are more susceptible to evil be it physical, social or spiritual.

These images depicting women and their crimes are visual scapegoats in that there is little or no reference to their partners in crime. Only the moment of the woman's downfall, suggesting by its de-contextualised nature that the deviation can be located within the woman herself. Sander L. Gilman refers to these women seduced into prostitution as being similar to the brides of Iphigeneia. This is an ineffectual analogy as the seduced women, like Lucy Weir in Stoker's novel, are depicted living in darkness ceaselessly repeating their own seduction. These women are irrevocably altered versions of their former selves and death is inevitable.

Images of these criminal women eventually culminate in paintings like *Woman Drowned*, by George Warr, 1850 (see Illustration 13), or *The Drowned Woman*, by Vasily Grigorievich Petrov, 1907. Of the images of the victims of Jack the Ripper in the 1880s. This imagery of the dead prostitute was obviously very popular at this time. It imagery could be said to maintain the social order, these are the ultimate example. The dead prostitute plays a specific role in the scapegoating of woman. These images generally depict the prostitute as taking her own life. For example, *Study of a Woman Throwing herself into the Moscow River* by Petrov, 1867 (Illustration 14).

This image completes the scapegoating of this other as the woman is dead, by her own hand. There is no-one to blame for her downfall. The unacceptable has been located within her body and then it is killed off, cast adrift from the rest of society.

In his essay on race and gender in Victorian London, Gilman describes a shocking image by late nineteenth century French medical artist Enrique Simonet. In this image a pathologist is opening the body of a dead prostitute and staring at her heart. This was, according to Gilman, one of the favourite images of medical art at that time. Here we can see a perfect example of the localisation of corruption to the body of woman.

The pathologist physically opens the body of the woman in order to discover, what? Is he looking for the physical results of her moral deprivation? Or will he find some quality or difference that Eve possessed? Or Salome? Or Delilah? Will it be, as Gilman writes, *"the biological basis of difference, the cell with its degenerate or potentially infectious nature that parallels the image of the female and its potential for destroying the male?"* (Gilman, 1993, p266).

In this type of imagery a fantasy is played out as the prostitute represents the source of immorality, corruption. She lives outside the society and dies there. In any event, this popular image shows the moment of her extinction, made acceptable by the presence of the pathologist or policeman looking at the body of this poor dead other as seen in the police illustrations of the Whitechapel murders. This presence of someone looking at the dead body draws the fantasy to a close. It gives the impression that society is nothing to do with her end. That the corruption from which she died began and ended behind the barrier of her own body, and so society goes on.

This image completes the scapegoating of this other as the woman is dead by her own hand. There is no-one to blame for her downfall. The unscrupulous has been located within her body and then it is killed off, cast adrift from the rest of society.

In his essay on race and gender in Victorian London, Gilman describes a shocking image by late nineteenth century French medical artist Etienne Simonet. In this image a pathologist is opening the body of a dead prostitute and staring at her heart. This was, according to Gilman, one of the favourite images of medical art at that time. Here we can see a perfect example of the localisation of corruption to the body of woman.

The pathologist physically opens the body of the woman in order to discover what is the looking for the physical results of her moral depravity? Or will he find some quality or difference that Eve possessed? Or Salome? Or Delilah? Will it be, as Gilman writes, "the biological basis of difference, the cell with its degenerate or potentially injurious nucleus that parallels the image of the female and its potential for destroying the male?" (Gilman, 1995, p.166).

In this type of imagery a fantasy is played out as the prostitute represents the source of immorality, corruption. She lives outside the society and dies there. In any event, this popular image shows the moment of her extinction, made acceptable by the presence of the pathologist or policeman looking at the body of this poor dead other as seen in the police illustrations of the Whitechapel murders. This presence of someone looking at the dead body draws the fantasy to a close. It gives the impression that society is nothing to do with her end. That the corruption from which she died began and ended behind the barrier of her own body, and so society goes on.



The medicalisation of marginalised groups within society is not uncommon and is reminiscent of society's attempt to locate AIDS and HIV specifically within the homosexual community in the early 1980s, when news of the virus was spreading and causing fear. I would argue that the imagery above is proof that women have also been medicalised, in that their bodies have been depicted as a source of corruption and evil.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONTEMPORARY

For contemporary female artists representing the body has been distinctly problematic. This is due, not only to the specific associations discussed earlier in this theses, but the wider problem within Fine Art of the past association of man with artist and woman with model or body. There exists the pitfall for contemporary female artists who work through and about the body to merely reinforce these associations, to maintain the female body's status as other, as object of scrutiny and research.

This problem of whether the body can be used in a progressive way has occupied feminist artists since the early seventies. This chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive study of contemporary feminist artists and their encounters with the "problem" of use of the female body. That would stay from the associations traced earlier.

As with other chapters specific art works will be discussed. The artists whose works are chosen for discussion (Helen Chadwick, Kiki Smith, Barbara Kruger) should help to form an overview of contemporary strategies for the progressive use of the female body as source for art. Each of the artists discussed in this chapter has come from a different background and has very different reasons for using the body as source.

The British artist Helen Chadwick works about the body and its development. She explores personal and crucial bodily issues such as growth, sensation and decay. She works mostly through photographic processes, blending three dimensional sculpture with

## CHAPTER FOUR CONTEMPORARY

For contemporary female artists representing the body has been distinctly problematic. This is due, not only to the specific associations discussed earlier in this thesis, but the wider problem within Fine Art of the past association of man with artist and woman with model or body. There exists the pitfall for contemporary female artists who work through and about the body to merely reinforce these associations, to maintain the female body's status as object, as object of scrutiny and research.

This problem of whether the body can be used in a progressive way has occupied feminist artists since the early seventies. This chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive study of contemporary feminist artists and their encounters with the "problem" of use of the female body. That would stay from the associations traced earlier.

As with other chapters specific art works will be discussed. The artists whose works are chosen for discussion (Helen Chadwick, Kiki Smith, Barbara Kruger) should help to form an overview of contemporary strategies for the progressive use of the female body as source for art. Each of the artists discussed in this chapter has come from a different background and has very different reasons for using the body as source.

The British artist Helen Chadwick works about the body and its development. She explores personal and crucial bodily issues such as growth, sensation and decay. She works mostly through photographic processes, blending three dimensional sculpture with



two dimensional imagery, from the microscope to the photocopier and computer. Chadwick, an active artist during the seventies and eighties, works in a celebratory way about her personal bodily experience only touching upon wider issues of the representation of the body as they relate to aspects of her own corporality.

Kiki Smith, also British and active during the last two decades, deals with wider issues of the body. Smith's work is more universal as her pieces are anonymous looking. These full body statues are often of *a* woman and thereby come to represent aspects of femininity. They refer to the representation of the female body in the past, particularly within Christian iconography. Smith uses disruptive devices in order to illuminate and provoke us into contemplating past representation of the body. She is a very medium oriented artist and chooses her materials carefully, making sure they contain the qualities and connotations she wishes her statues to have. Materials such as wax, clay, rope, all of which have had their own relationships with the body in the past.

The third artist discussed is Barbara Kruger. Kruger is an American who was also active during the seventies and eighties. Her work is much more political and overtly feminist than that of Chadwick and Smith. She came from a background in graphic design. At the age of twenty-two she was designing for the major American fashion magazine *Mademoiselle*. Kruger used this training in her art to address the stereotypes and representations of the feminine within the media. She used the devices of myth production in order to expose them. Her work generally consists of attention grabbing phrases laid over simple, eyecatching illustrations. She invades the traditional spaces of the media utilising vehicles for persuasion such as the billboard, the t-shirt, the matchbox, etc. Kruger exposes the stereotypes propounded and myths about women produced by the

two dimensional imagery, from the microscope to the photocopier and computer. Chadwick, an active artist during the seventies and eighties, works in a celebratory way about her personal bodily experience only touching upon wider issues of the representation of the body as they relate to aspects of her own corporality.

Kiki Smith, also British and active during the last two decades, deals with wider issues of the body. Smith's work is more universal as her pieces are anonymous looking. These full body statues are often of a woman and thereby come to represent aspects of femininity. They refer to the representation of the female body in the past, particularly within Christian iconography. Smith uses disruptive devices in order to illuminate and provoke us into contemplating past representation of the body. She is a very medium oriented artist and chooses her materials carefully, making sure they contain the qualities and connotations she wishes her statues to have. Materials such as wax, clay, rope, all of which have had their own relationships with the body in the past.

The third artist discussed is Barbara Kruger. Kruger is an American who was also active during the seventies and eighties. Her work is much more political and overtly feminist than that of Chadwick and Smith. She came from a background in graphic design. At the age of twenty-two she was designing for the major American fashion magazine *Vogue*. Kruger used this training in her art to address the stereotypes and representations of the feminine within the media. She used the devices of night production in order to expose them. Her work generally consists of attention grabbing phrases laid over single, eye-catching illustrations. She invades the traditional spaces of the media, using vehicles for persuasion such as the billboard, the t-shirt, the matchbox, etc. Kruger exposes the stereotypes propounded and myths about women produced by the





Illustration 17  
Detail from *Oval Court*, by Helen Chadwick  
1986



media by using its own devices to make statements which disrupt, contradict or attack. For example, *Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face*, from the early 1980s. This piece directly confronts the tradition within the media to cater to the "male gaze".

As described earlier these three artists approach the body from very different angles: Chadwick's art being very personal and celebratory, Smith's harking back to past representations of the female body within fine art and Kruger working about and exposing the stereotypes of femininity which emerge from the imagery of the popular media.

I will discuss two works by each of these artists which embody their individual approaches to the use of the female body as source and whether or not they succeed in their different projects of celebration, illumination and disruption or whether they merely reinforce stereotypes and associations of the female body.

The first piece discussed here is *Of Mutability*, by Chadwick. This is essentially a celebratory piece about female physicality, the short lived pleasures of the flesh (Illustration 17). It was installed in three rooms of the gallery in the London Institute for Contemporary Art in 1986. The middle of these rooms was turned into a corridor walled with mirrors. In the smaller of the other two rooms stood *Carcass*, an eight foot tall glass container stuffed with layers of rotting organic matter. On the other side of the corridor, in the largest of the three rooms, was *The Oval Court*. This room resembled a walled garden. Inspired by the Amalienburg Bavaria, the folly of an eighteenth century castle.

This piece is obviously intended to portray the body in a positive light, to enshrine it, Chadwick's own folly to her physicality. The walls of *The Oval Court* are decorated by









Illustration 18  
Detail from *Oval Court*, by Helen Chadwick  
1986

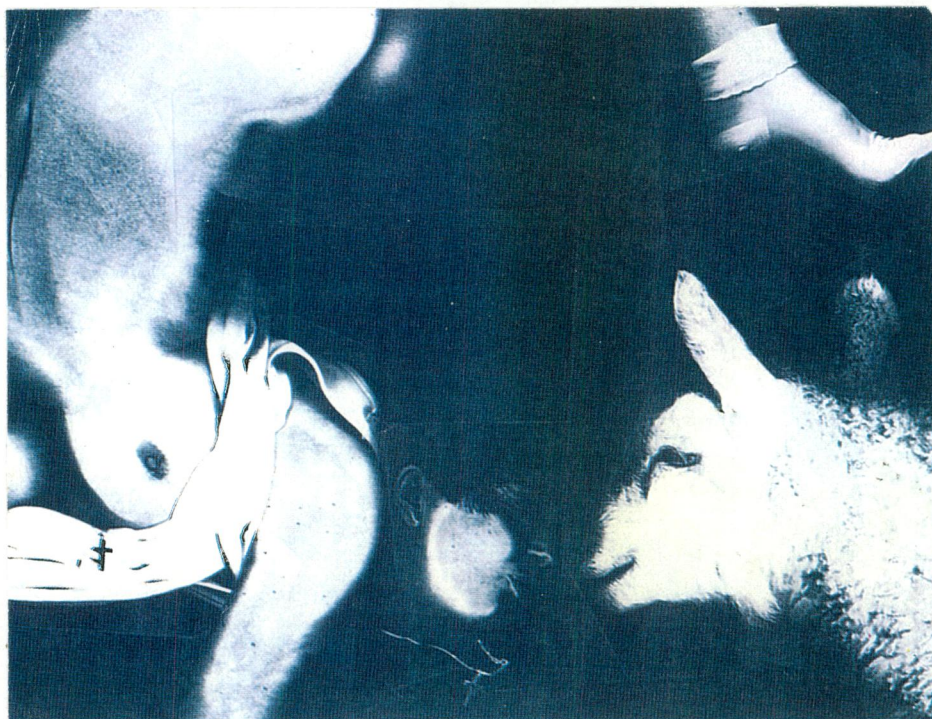


Illustration 19  
Detail from *Oval Court*, by Helen Chadwick  
1986

reproductions of Salomonic columns, at the centre of each of these is the artist's head portrayed weeping leaves and foliage. On the floor of the room lies "a pool" slightly raised off the ground in a roughly oval shape (Illustration 18).

In *The Pool* the artist is depicted twelve times, arranged in various poses involving animals, fruit, vegetables, ribbons, trinkets. The whole piece resembles a Renaissance fresco except that it is on the floor. The images of the artist and animals twist and turn fabulously through space, the artists intent seems to have been to elevate the female body to the level of glorious Michelangelo frescoes.

These twelve "tableaux" in the pool are most relevant as they focus on past representations of the body. The poses are reminiscent of famous displays of femininity and works by some of Europe's most revered artists. For example, in one of the pieces the artist's body appears to twist through space to face that of a sheep in a kiss reminiscent of that electrifying meeting of God and Adam in Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam* for the Sistine Chapel (Illustration 19).

In another piece, she is arranged in a swoon like that of Bernini's St Teresa. In another, she holds a mirror, adopting that popular theme within Fine Art of vanity or "vanitas".

Chadwick created these images in the pool through black and white photocopying . Simply laying her body, the animals and other objects to be copied over the machine and later reassembling the images. There are five golden spheres down the centre of the pool resting on the surface. Marina Warner says in her essay on Chadwick, "*In their goldenness, their harmony, their timelessness, integrity of shape and impregnability, the*



reproductions of Salomonic columns, at the centre of each of these is the artist's head portrayed sweeping leaves and foliage. On the floor of the room lies "a pool" slightly raised off the ground in a roughly oval shape (Illustration 18).

In *The Pool* the artist is depicted twelve times, arranged in various poses involving animals, fruit, vegetables, ribbons, trinkets. The whole piece resembles a Renaissance fresco except that it is on the floor. The images of the artist and animals twist and turn tribulously through space, the artist intent seems to have been to elevate the female body to the level of glorious Michelangelo frescoes.

These twelve "fashions" in the pool are most relevant as they focus on past representations of the body. The poses are reminiscent of famous displays of femininity and works by some of Europe's most revered artists. For example, in one of the pieces the artist's body appears to twist through space to face that of a sheep in a kiss reminiscent of the electrifying meeting of God and Adam in Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam* for the Sistine Chapel (Illustration 19).

In another piece, she is arranged in a swoon like that of Bernini's *St Teresa*. In another, she holds a mirror, adopting that popular theme within *Pinx* Art of vanity of "vanitas".

Chadwick created these images in the pool through black and white photocopying. Simply laying her body, the animals and other objects to be copied over the machine and later reassembling the images. There are five golden spheres down the centre of the pool resting on the surface. Marina Warner says in her essay on Chadwick, "In their goldenness, their homogeneity, their timelessness, integrity of shape and impregnability, the



*spheres represent the ideal, in contrast to the labile forms in the flux*" (Warner, 1989, p41). They highlight the transience and fleeting quality of the images in the pool.

The seams where each photocopy is joined to the other are faintly visible, yet the images emerge complete and unbroken. These seams give the piece a quality of history, the history of the female body emerging through countless reproductions. Yet this piece is highly personal, as Chadwick says of the images photocopied, "*I want to make autobiographies of sensation*" (Warner, 1989, p41).

These are Chadwick's own sensations which she celebrates. At the other end of the mirrored corridor stands *Carcass*, a representation of what the bodies in the pool must become.

There is a strong sense of surface caused by the bodies pressed up against the copier. They look like objects for display placed behind the glass. The idea of surface is again conveyed by the fact that the pool utilises the plane of the floor. The golden spheres resting on top of the imagery as if floating on the surface of a pond.

One of the difficulties *Of Mutability* presents is that even though the images in the *Oval Court* celebrate the body, they do so only through its animality, keying into endless past associations of woman with the "natural" or mindlessly corporal. The surface of the pool brings to mind that other pervasive surface within Fine Art, that of the painting, onto which countless women have been frozen in poses presenting them as being more bodily than men.

spheres represent the ideal, in contrast to the labile forms in the film" (Warner, 1989, p.41). They highlight the transience and fleeting quality of the images in the pool.

The seams where each photography is joined to the other are faintly visible, yet the images emerge complete and unbroken. These seams give the piece a quality of history, the history of the female body emerging through countless reproductions. Yet this piece is highly personal, as Chadwick says of the images photographed, "I want to wake autobiographies of sensation" (Warner, 1989, p.41).

These are Chadwick's own sensations which she celebrates. At the other end of the mirrored corridor stands Carcas, a representation of what the bodies in the pool must become.

There is a strong sense of surface caused by the bodies pressed up against the copier. They look like objects for display placed behind the glass. The idea of surface is again conveyed by the fact that the pool utilises the plane of the floor. The golden spheres resting on top of the imagery as if floating on the surface of a pond.

One of the difficulties of *Mindbilly* presents is that even though the images in the *Q&A* Court celebrate the body, the do so only through its animality, keying into endless past associations of woman with the "natural" or mindlessly corporeal. The surface of the pool brings to mind that other pervasive surface within *Fine Art*, that of the painting, onto which countless women have been frozen in poses presenting them as being more bodily than men.







Illustration 20  
Detail of *Viral Landscapes*, by Helen Chadwick  
1988-89

Just as medieval art associated women with the appetites, so does *The oval Court*. She cavorts in an endless display of sensation around the spheres which represent the world of mathematical law, intellect/masculine, a forbidden space for her. In celebrating her physicality she relegates herself to that world. Like the women on top of the Haywain, she represents the pleasures of the flesh. This celebration, though beautiful, has failed, she emerges an incomplete being, only body.

A later series of works by Chadwick, the *Viral Landscapes* (1988-89) (Illustration 20) again focuses upon the body. In these computer edited photographic works, Chadwick superimposes imagery of coastlines over images of cells taken from her own bodily fluids. The micro and the macro are overlaid. Images taken from the borders of body are played off against images of the boundaries of country, culture. This imagery is relevant as it opens out issues of self and other, issues of boundary, of society's longstanding preoccupation with the demarcation of country borders and individual fear of merger in the wake of AIDS. And other less obvious boundaries like that between mainstream society and those who embody its extremes.

There is also a strong sense of history evoked by Smith's work. The bodies she makes appear old already, fleshed out in muslin papier mache, wax, clay. These materials are all so dry they give the work a petrified appearance like aged skin or carefully preserved museum pieces. Even though Smith's work harks back to traditional representations of the female within Christian art, it disrupts these representations by using disconcerting new ways of representing these women.



just as medieval art associated women with the appetites, so does the owl. She cowers in an endless display of sensation around the spheres which represent the world of mathematical law, intellect/masculine, a forbidden space for her. In celebrating her physically she risks her place in that world. Like the woman on top of the Mayan, she represents the pleasure of the flesh. This celebration, though beautiful, has failed, she emerges as inorganic being, only body.

A later series of works by Chadwick, the *Vital Landscapes* (1988-89) (illustration 20) again focuses upon the body. In these computer edited photographic works, Chadwick superimposes imagery of coastlines over images of cells taken from her own bodily fluids. The micro and the macro are overlaid, images taken from the borders of body are played off against images of the boundaries of country, culture. This imagery is relevant as it opens out issues of self and other, issues of boundary, of society's understanding of the body with the demarcation of country borders and individual fear of merger in the wake of AIDS. And other less obvious boundaries like that between mainstream society and those who embody its extremes.

There is also a strong sense of history evoked by Smith's work. The bodies she makes appear old already, fleshed out in mud, in paper mache, wax, clay. These materials are all so dry they give the work a petrified appearance like aged skin or carefully preserved museum pieces. Even though Smith's work harks back to traditional representations of the female within Christian art, it disrupts these representations by using disconcerting new ways of representing these women.



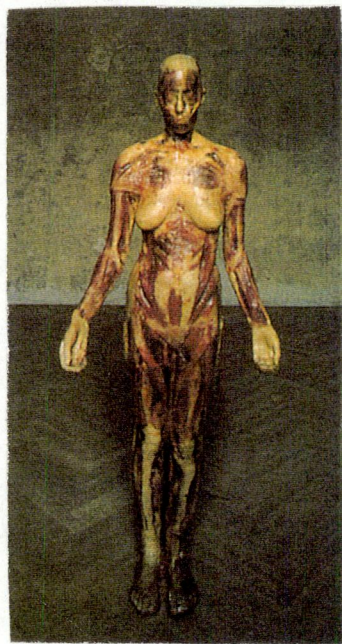


Illustration 21  
*Virgin Mary*, by Kiki Smith  
1992

For example Smith's *Virgin Mary* (Illustration 24) of 1992. In this statue Smith represents the Virgin standing in one of the traditional poses of Catholic art. That is, with arms out and hands turned outward in an attitude of prayer. This full wax statue represents the Virgin as a woman without any skin. The muscles and blood rendered suggest a real interior to this body. There is a curious tension caused by this depiction of the Virgin as flesh and blood. It is something that has not been done before and its "newness" makes one think back on past representations of the Virgin.

Smith says of the Virgin, "*I am angry that the Virgin Mary pays for her compassion by being neutered*" (Fuchs, 1994, p18). In this disconcerting piece Smith illuminates past injustice done to the female body within Christian art. One could not imagine Giotto's early fourteenth century paintings of the Virgin bleeding, sweating or experiencing sexual desire. This piece highlights the fact that imagery of female saints has been equally as damning to the representation of the female body as imagery of sinners has been. Female saints are either represented as having no sexuality at all or vehemently denying their bodies, either way the female body is confirmed as a negative thing associated with sin and corruption.

Although this statue *The Virgin* depicts the body in its most abject form, as meat, Smith succeeded in doing more than just echoing past associations of the body with base physicality and corruption. She exposes the past negative associations of the body through the fact that the idea of the Virgin Mary is not compatible with that of flesh and blood. This disharmony illuminates our understanding of female flesh as somehow wrong. Its discordant quality stimulates questioning of the position of the female body within Fine Art.

For example Smith's *Virgin Mary* (Illustration 12) of 1991. In this statue Smith represents the Virgin standing in one of the traditional poses of Catholic art. That is, with arms out and hands turned outward in an attitude of prayer. This full wax statue represents the Virgin as a woman without any skin. The muscles and blood rendered suggest a real interior to this body. There is a curious tension caused by this depiction of the Virgin as flesh and blood. It is something that has not been done before and its "newness" makes

one think back on past representations of the Virgin.

Smith says of the Virgin, "I am angry that the Virgin Mary pays for her compassion by being newness" (Fuchs, 1994, p.18). In this disconcerting piece Smith illuminates past injustice done to the female body within Christian art. One could not imagine Giorno's early fourteenth century paintings of the Virgin bleeding, sweating or experiencing sexual desire. This piece highlights the fact that imagery of female saints has been equally as damning to the representation of the female body as imagery of sinners has been. Female saints are either represented as having no sexuality at all or vehemently denying their bodies, either way the female body is confirmed as a negative thing associated with sin and corruption.

Although this statue *The Virgin* depicts the body in its most object form, as meat, Smith succeeded in doing more than just echoing past associations of the body with base physicality and corruption. She exposes the past negative associations of the body through the fact that the idea of the Virgin Mary is not compatible with that of flesh and blood. This dissonance illuminates our understanding of female flesh as somehow wrong. Its dissonant quality stimulates questioning of the position of the female body within Fine

Art.



Smith again uses the device of disruption as a pathway to illumination or understanding. In the piece *Peacock*, a woman sits on the floor. Behind her on the wall is a huge peacock's tail. Smith subverts the traditional use of the plumage as it is a symbol or display of male pride. In this piece it becomes a symbol of female pride. The central "jewel" of the tail is made from drawings of blue vaginas. And so the vagina, something normally only displayed in pornography or medical imagery, is held up as a thing of beauty, something to be proud of. Again in this piece the re-contextualisation of the imagery causes one to think back over its history.

The art of Kruger is the most confrontational of the three artists discussed. Kruger's work moves away from producing images of the physical female body to montage works of images of the female body taken from the media. Kruger's work is very relevant to this discussion on the representation of the female. In the past Fine Art was the dominant mode of image and myth production but this has changed in recent years with advertisements increasing invasion of the traditional space of Fine Art, that of message production. The media is constantly invading the private lives of individuals bombarding them with imagery encouraging them to consume. These images generally represent stereotypes of femininity and promote hierarchies rooted in the fine art tradition, those of man as viewer and woman as object to be looked at closely associated with product.

Kruger's art cleverly uses the devices of advertisement, headline type phrases structured for maximum effect laid over images taken from the media. In her imagery she exposes the voyeurism of the media and confronts it by making statements directly to the viewer which prevent or disallow the distance needed from the object (usually woman) viewed in a voyeuristic way. For example her untitled piece (Illustration 22) (*Your Gaze Hits the*

Smith again uses the device of disruption as a pathway to illumination or understanding. In the piece *Peacock*, a woman sits on the floor. Behind her on the wall is a large peacock's tail. Smith subverts the traditional use of the plumage as it is a symbol of display of male pride. In this piece it becomes a symbol of female pride. The central "jewel" of the tail is made from drawings of blue vaginas. And so the vagina, something normally only displayed in pornography or medical imagery, is held up as a thing of beauty, something to be proud of. Again in this piece the re-contextualisation of the imagery causes one to think back over its history.

The art of Kruger is the most confrontational of the three artists discussed. Kruger's work moves away from producing images of the physical female body to montage works of images of the female body taken from the media. Kruger's work is very relevant to this discussion on the representation of the female. In the past Fine Art was the dominant mode of image and myth production but this has changed in recent years with advertisements increasing invasion of the traditional space of Fine Art, that of message production. The media is constantly invading the private lives of individuals bombarding them with imagery encouraging them to consume. These images generally represent stereotypes of femininity and promote hierarchies rooted in the fine art tradition, those of man as viewer and woman as object to be looked at closely associated with product.

Kruger's art cleverly uses the devices of advertisement, headline type phrases structured for maximum effect laid over images taken from the media. In her imagery she exposes the voyeurism of the media and confronts it by making statements directly to the viewer which prevent or disallow the distance needed from the object (usually woman) viewed in a voyeuristic way. For example her entitled piece (Illustration 25) (*Your Gaze Hits the*



Illustration 22  
Untitled (Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face), by Barbara Kruger  
1981







Illustration 23  
Untitled (I Am Your Reservoir of Poses), by Barbara Kruger  
1992



*Side of My Face*) of 1981. In this collage the words are laid over an image of a stone portrait of a woman's face. She is referencing the process of the "male gaze", relegating woman to the status of "other", object to be looked at. In this image the fact that the woman is made of stone highlights how this gaze freezes the viewed into this realm of object and the difficulty faced by women as object of scrutiny to emerge from this role.

As Kate Linker says of Kruger's art, "*women appear in static or supine poses, displayed according to cliched conventions of popular representation*" (Linker, 1990, p62). This art could merely feed into those already prolific representations except that this is prevented and directly confronted by Kruger's text.

In another untitled piece (*I Am Your Reservoir of Poses*), 1983, Kruger again address the issue of the representation of the female. In this image we see a huge hat covering a woman (Illustration 23). Only her thumbs and a finger are visible to us, the rest of her is covered by her hat and clothing. This image is referencing the fact that within media, as the female is set up to represent stereotypes of femininity, the reality of woman is obscured.

And so in discussing the works by these artists their contrasting approaches to the body are made clear. Chadwick is more concerned with the reality of her own bodily experience. Kruger and Smith actively engage with the history of the representation of the body. Although in slightly different ways. Smith uses the incongruity of her piece, the tension caused in pieces such as *The Virgin* to illuminate the nature of past representations of the body. She allows us to draw our own conclusion. Allowing us to come to our own understanding of past representations of the body.



side of my face) of 1981. In this collage the words are laid over an image of a stone portrait of a woman's face. She is returning the process of the "male gaze", relegating women to the status of "other", object to be looked at. In this image the fact that the woman is made of stone highlights how this gaze freezes the viewed into this status of object and the difficulty faced by women as object of scrutiny to emerge from this role.

As Kate Linker says of Kruger's art, "women appear in stasis or sapient poses, displayed according to clichéd conventions of popular representation" (Linker, 1990, p.5). This art could merely feed into those already prolific representations except that this is prevented and directly confronted by Kruger's text.

In another untitled piece (*I Am Your Reservoir of Power*, 1983, Kruger again address the issue of the representation of the female. In this image we see a huge bar covering a woman (illustration 23). Only her thumbs and a finger are visible to us, the rest of her is covered by her bar and clothing. This image is returning the fact that within media, as the female is set up to represent stereotypes of femininity, the reality of woman is obscured.

And so in discussing the works by these artists their contrasting approaches to the body are made clear. Chabwick is more concerned with the reality of her own bodily experience. Kruger and Smith actively engage with the history of the representation of the body. Although in slightly different ways, Smith uses the incongruity of her piece, the tension caused in pieces such as *The Virgin* to illuminate the nature of past representations of the body. She allows us to draw our own conclusion. Allowing us to come to our own understanding of past representations of the body.

Kruger is more aggressive than Smith in her engagement with the representation of the female body in the media. She presents the stereotypes and yet prevents us from consuming them as myth through the vehicle of her ~~text~~.

## CONCLUSION

In tracing the associations of the female body within narrative art from the Medieval era through the Renaissance and Baroque to the Victorian, this thesis has essentially followed the perpetuation of the myth of the female as being somehow "other" or different.

The blatant scapegoating of the feminine seen in the religious art of the Medieval era gave rise to motifs within narrative painting which continued to portray women and their bodies as being a source of corruption both moral and physical. These associations can be traced through the Renaissance Baroque and Victorian eras. Through the vehicle of narratives such as Sampson and Delilah in the Renaissance, or the formerly virtuous young woman turning to prostitution in the Victorian era.

Although the media (television, radio, newspapers, etc) has now taken over from art s the primary vehicle for social messages to be conveyed, the hierarchy set up in the Medieval era: man as observer and woman as "other", different, object to be scrutinised, still remains.

This hierarchy has been the essential problem and project of feminist artists for the last two decades. To take back the female body from the male gaze. To move beyond its past as some deviance of the norm.

The three artists discussed in the last chapter form an "overview" of contemporary strategies and attempts by female artists to lay claim to the female body as a progressive



## CONCLUSION

In tracing the associations of the female body within narrative art from the Medieval era through the Renaissance and Baroque to the Victorian, this thesis has essentially followed the perpetuation of the myth of the female as being somehow "other" or different.

The classic reoccurring of the feminine seen in the religious art of the Medieval era gave rise to myths within narrative painting which continued to portray women and their bodies as being a source of corruption both moral and physical. These associations can be traced through the Renaissance Baroque and Victorian eras. Through the vehicle of narratives such as Sampson and Delilah in the Renaissance, or the formerly virtuous young woman turning to prostitution in the Victorian era.

Although the media (television, radio, newspapers, etc.) has now taken over from art as the primary vehicle for social messages to be conveyed, the hierarchy set up in the Medieval era: man as observer and woman as "other", different, object to be scrutinized, still remains.

This hierarchy has been the essential problem and project of feminist artists for the last two decades. To take back the female body from the male gaze. To move beyond its past as some deviance of the norm.

The three artists discussed in the last chapter form an "overview" of contemporary strategies and attempts by female artists to lay claim to the female body as a progressive

vehicle for artistic expression. The difficulties they incur encapsulate those faced by all female artists attempting to use the body in the light of its history as "other". They are each successful in that through the irony of their work they highlight past representations of the body and open up new areas of research.

Through referencing the past of the female body within the history of Christian iconography, Kiki Smith has highlighted society's attitude towards the female body.

Through her disruption of media representations of women Barbara Kruger has made clear that the viewer/object hierarchy which stemmed from the Medieval era is still present within contemporary media.

And through her celebration of the body, Helen Chadwick has raised the issue of control over possible readings of one's art.

Although these artists do not make definitive statements about the future of the female body within Fine Art, they and others like them have opened up multiple arguments and new discourse.

vehicle for artistic expression. The difficulties they incur encapsulate those faced by all female artists attempting to use the body in the light of its history as "other". They are each successful in that through the irony of their work they highlight past representations of the body and open up new areas of research.

Through reworking the past of the female body within the history of Christian iconography, Kiki Smith has highlighted society's attitude towards the female body.

Through her disruption of media representations of women Barbara Kruger has made clear that the viewer/object hierarchy which stemmed from the Medieval era is still present within contemporary media.

And through her celebration of the body, Helen Chadwick has raised the issue of control over possible readings of one's art.

Although these artists do not make definitive statements about the future of the female body within Fine Art, they and others like them have opened up multiple arguments and new discourse.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

BYNUM, Caroline Walker, "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages", in Feher, Michel and Nadoff, Ramona and Tazi, Nadia (eds), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body - Part 1*, New York, Urzone, 1989

CAMILLE, Michael, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1989

CHRIST, Carol, "Painting the Dead: Portraiture and Necrophilia in Victorian Art and Poetry", in *Death and Representation*, Goodwin, Sarah and Bronfen, Elizabeth (eds), USA, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993

DUBY, Georges and PERROT, Michelle, *Power and Beauty: Images of Women in Art*, London, Tauris Parke Books, 1992

FUCHS, Anneli, *Kiki Smith*, Denmark, Louisiana Museum, 1994

GILMAN, Sander L., *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness From Madness to AIDS*, New York, Cornell University Press, 1988

GILMAN, Sander L., "'Who kills Whores?', 'I do,' Says Jack: Race and Gender in Victorian London", in *Death and Representation*, Goodwin, Sarah and Bronfen, Elizabeth (eds), USA, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993

GOLDSTEIN, Laurence, *The Female Body: Figures, Styles, Speculations*, USA, University of Michigan Press, 1991

GOODWIN, Sarah and BRONFEN, Elizabeth (eds), *Death and Representation*, USA, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993

ISAAK, Jo Anna, *Kiki Smith*, Whitechapel Art Gallery Catalog, London, 1994

KRUGER, Barbara, *Remote Control: Power, Cultures and the World of Appearances*, The MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1993

MELINCKOFF, Ruth *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages, Vol I*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1993

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BYNUM, Caroline Walker. "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages", in Feher, Michel and Nefco, Ramona and Tazi, (eds), *Fragment for a History of the Human Body - Part I*, New York, Oxford, 1989.
- CAMILLER, Michael. *The Gothic Ideal: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- CHRIST, Carol. "Painting the Dead: Portraiture and Necrophilia in Victorian Art and Poetry", in *Death and Representation*, Goodwin, Sarah and Bronten, Elizabeth (eds), USA, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- DUBY, Georges and PERROT, Michelle. *Power and Beauty: Images of Women in Art*, London, Tauris Books, 1993.
- FUCHS, Anneli. *Kiki Smith*, Denmark, Louisiana Museum, 1994.
- FUCHS, Anneli. *Kiki Smith*, Louisiana Museum Catalog, Denmark, 1994.
- GILMAN, Sander L. *Dissem and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS*, New York, Cornell University Press, 1988.
- GILMAN, Sander L. "Who kills Whom?", *I do, Say Jack: Race and Gender in Victorian London*, in *Death and Representation*, Goodwin, Sarah and Bronten, Elizabeth (eds), USA, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- GOLDSTEIN, Laurence. *The Female Body: Figure, Style, Speculations*, USA, University of Michigan Press, 1991.
- GOODWIN, Sarah and BRONTEN, Elizabeth (eds), *Death and Representation*, USA, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- ISAAK, Jo Anna. *Kiki Smith*, Whitechapel Art Gallery Catalog, London, 1994.
- ISAAK, Jo Anna. *Kiki Smith*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London.
- KREGER, Barbara. *Remorse Control: Power, Culture and the World of Appearances*, The MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1993.
- MELNICKOFF, Ruth. *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, Vol. I, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1993.

MELINCKOFF, Ruth *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages, Vol II*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1993

MULLINS, Edwin, *The Painted Witch: Female Body/Male Art*, London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd, 1985

NEAD, Lynch, *Myths of Sexuality, Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1988

NOCHLIN, Linda, "Lost and Found: Once More the Fallen Woman" in Bourde, Norma (ed), *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, New York, Harper & Row, 1982

OWENS, Craig, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Post-Modernism" in Brown, Norma and Garrard, Mary D. (eds), *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, New York, Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 1992

PERNIOLA, Mario, "Between Clothing and Nudity" in Feher, Michel, and Nadoff, Ramona and Tazi, Nadia (eds), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body - Part I*, New York, Urzone, 1989

POLLOCK, Griselda, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the History of Art*, London, Routledge, 1988

STAFFORD, Barbara, *Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine*, London, The MIT Press, 1991

SUMMERS, Montague, *The History of Witch Craft*, London, Senate, 1994

WARNER, Marina, *Enfleshings Helen Chadwick*, London, Secker & Warburg, 1989



MELNICKOFF, Ruth. *Queers: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*. Vol. 1. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.

MULLINS, Edwin. *The Painted Witch: Female Body/Male Art*. London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd, 1982.

NEAD, Lynch. *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1988.

NOCHLIN, Linda. "Lost and Found: Once More the Fallen Woman" in *Boundaries, Norms* (ed). *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Canon*. New York: Harper & Row, 1983.

OWENS, Craig. "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Post-Modernism" in *Boundaries, Norms and Gender*, Mary D. (ed). *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 1992.

PERKINS, A. Maria. "Between Clothing and Nudity" in *Father, Michel, and Nudity*. *Boundaries, Norms and Gender*, Mary D. (ed). *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*. New York: Lixone, 1989.

POLOCK, Griselda. *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the History of Art*. London: Routledge, 1988.

STAFFORD, Barbara. *Imaging the Emissary in Enlightenment Art and Medicine*. London: The MIT Press, 1991.

SUMMERS, Monique. *The History of Witch Craft*. London: Seamus, 1994.

WARNER, Marina. *Enlightenment: Helen Chadwick*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1989.