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Louise Bourgeoise, Kiki Smith and The Uncanny

by

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Introduction

Louise Bourgeois and Kiki Smith create very different work in a visual or stylistic sense. There are however, many parallels in their choice of subject matter and themes and also in the responses their work evokes in the viewer. These two artists, from different generations, have dealt with notions of identity in quite a similar way. Their work is autobiographical in that they both explore emotional and psychological states from a personal perspective. However at the same time they have achieved a space for the viewer to interpret the work in relation to their own lives.

Both Smith and Bourgeois deal with the body from a psychological point of view, resulting in a strong and unnerving impact on the viewer which provokes feelings of familiarity mingled with anxiety. Qualities of the 'uncanny' are present in both artists' work and these qualities, which will be discussed in detail, are responsible for this impact. Freud has offered a reading of the uncanny which states that the uncanny experience causes emotions and sensations associated with the pre-oedipal and oedipal stages to surface in the mind of the adult. This leads into a discussion of various psychoanalytic theory's relating to child development including those of Freud, Lacan, Klein and Kristeva. These theories will be referred to in relation to specific works by Smith

and Bourgeoise, many of which refer to their childhood experiences.

The impact of the uncanny in the work of Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeoise is often due to the way they have dealt with the human body, in particular through their use of abjection. In art and culture in general, the use of the female body in particular is problematic;

"..the body, operates as a symbol of society across cultures, and the rituals, rules and boundaries concerning bodily behavior can be understood as the functioning of social rules and hierarchies" (Wolff, 1990, p.122).

Numerous sculptures of Louise Bourgeoise and Kiki Smith's reflect psychoanalytic theories and redefine them on their own terms. Chapter 1 discusses uncanny connections with the pre-oedipal stage in Bourgeoise and Smith's work. Chapter 2 examines the uncanny in their work in relation to the Oedipal stage through their use of fragmentation. This leads to a discussion about their work in the direction of fetishism and hysteria. Both of the artists' work resonates with abjection, a concept concerning the pre-oedipal stage. Abjection evokes emotional responses in the viewer that are similar to those aroused by the uncanny. Chapter 3 examines how, through their use of this concept, Bourgeoise and Smith have dealt with the body in a way that subverts social rules and social hierarchies.

CHAPTER 1

The Uncanny and The Pre-Oedipal Stage

The psychological impact of the work of both Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeois is a result of an apparent sense of the uncanny. An explanation of this concept is necessary in order to look at its manifestations, implications and effects in their work. The discourse of psychoanalysis is useful, despite its problematic nature, in that it gives an insight into how and why our familiar ways of seeing are disrupted by the uncanny experience through its ability to access repressed material.

Freud wrote an in depth dissertation on the 'uncanny' in 1919, in which he discussed the emotional nature of aesthetics and the psychological nature of the uncanny (Freud, 1991). This work provides a background for discussing elements of the uncanny in work of Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeois.

Through extensive etymological research into the German words 'heimlich' or 'canny' and 'unheimlich' or 'uncanny', Freud concludes that their meaning develops towards ambivalence until each connects with its opposite. In other words, the uncanny has

"the double semantic capacity to mean its opposite, signifying at once the homely, familiar, friendly, comfortable, intimate and the unfamiliar, uncomfortable, alien and unknown" (Wright, 1992, p.436).

Thus the psychological significance of the uncanny lies in its power to convey both antithetical meaning and ambivalence. The implications of the uncanny in relation to psychoanalytic theory denotes,

"that which ought to have remained repressed and unconscious but has frighteningly surfaced to preconscious perception" (Wright, 1992, p.436).

Therefore the uncanny implies a regression to a replaced and infantile stage. According to Freud, this state of being is encountered on two levels of child development: the first being *"the pre oedipal stage of primary narcissism"* and the second, *"oedipal level castration fear"* (Schneider Adams, 1993, p.45).

The pre-oedipal stage and primary narcissism will prove to be relevant to an examination of the work of Louise Bourgeois and Kiki Smith. Freud held that the pre-oedipal stage occurs in early infancy. This stage signifies a strong attachment to the maternal presence where a connection or convergence between the mother and the infant occurs. During this phase the child has no structure of consciousness and no sense of self. For the infant this is an all absorbing time of gratification which is completely tied up

with the female body and takes place in a private, emotional and maternal world of disorder and anarchy. The uncanny on the pre-oedipal level of development is derived from a loss of self evoked by splitting, doubling and repetition. Many of Louise Bourgeois's sculptures reflect this disordered and anarchic world through a perceivable duality and, in many instances, a multiplicity of form.

Louise Bourgeois's beautiful and monstrous sculpture *Blindman's Buff*, 1984, (PL. 1, p.14), recalls the displaced world of the pre-oedipal stage. Multiple smooth and fleshy orbicular forms suggestive of breasts, bulge and swell out from the bottom half of the sculpture. These polished forms contrast with the coarse texture of the thrusting top part of the sculpture which is phallic in form. Female and male forms are represented together in this work, in a harmonious and chaotic convergence. This integration of male and female forms reflects the pre-oedipal stage which represents a time before sexual difference has been established. Through the gender duality of many of Bourgeois's works she merges the libidinal energy of both sexes, thus phallogocentric inclinations are subverted.

In his essay 'The Uncanny' Freud elaborates on notions that "*the uncanny is a return of an earlier state of mind, a primitive animism or infantile narcissism that should have been repressed or surmounted in the course of individual evolution*" (Wright, 1992, p.436).

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year, and the second section deals with the specific results of the work.

2. The second part of the report deals with the specific results of the work. It is divided into three main sections: the first section deals with the results of the work in the field of agriculture, the second section deals with the results of the work in the field of industry, and the third section deals with the results of the work in the field of commerce.

3. The third part of the report deals with the conclusions of the work. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the conclusions of the work in the field of agriculture, and the second section deals with the conclusions of the work in the field of industry and commerce.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the recommendations of the work. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the recommendations of the work in the field of agriculture, and the second section deals with the recommendations of the work in the field of industry and commerce.

5. The fifth part of the report deals with the summary of the work. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the summary of the work in the field of agriculture, and the second section deals with the summary of the work in the field of industry and commerce.

It is this revival of repressed meaning which has been held to induce sensations of familiarity and alienation associated with the experience of the uncanny, thus what was originally experienced as pleasurable re-emerges as horrifying. In different ways, both Smith and Bourgeoise make the emotions associated with the pre-oedipal, physical in their work.

Louise Bourgeoise's Janus series made in 1968 included the sculptures *Hanging Janus* (PL. 3, p.15) and *Janus Fleuri* (PL. 4, p.15). Louise Bourgeoise informs us that 'Janus' refers to

...the kind of polarity we represent. The polarity I experience is a drive toward extreme violence and revolt - and a retiring. I wouldn't say passivity, but a need for peace with the self, with others and with the environment (Bernadac, 1996, p.81).

Her sculpture *Janus Fleuri*, which translates as 'flowering Janus', suggests an uncanny ambivalence between masculine and feminine, intimating the bisexuality of the pre-oedipal phase. The duality between male and female referred to previously, is again represented. Two limp and swollen forms mirror each other suggesting a double phallus. A vagina is suggested at the point from which the two forms emerge. The protuberant forms, which allude to two limp phalluses, subvert the psychoanalytic notion of the phallus as a powerful and authoritarian symbol. By representing the penis in a limp and defenseless state it becomes a signifier for vulnerability and weakness.

Louise Bourgeois's sculpture *Nature study*, 1994, (PL. 2, p.14), has a highly polished bronze mirror like surface. This is another hybrid form which combines the attributes of both the female and male. A tail appearing from between the muscular legs of this unfamiliar creature suggests a penis, thus inferring it is male. Multiple breasts bulge out from his chest intimating a role reversal. Gender duality is a theme that reoccurs in many of the works of Louise Bourgeois. Some of Kiki Smith's works, which also represents both the male and female body, will be discussed at a later stage in relation to the abject.

In his essay 'the uncanny', Freud discusses themes of 'the double' in relation to the writings of Otto Rank. The notion of 'the double' first arises in the mind of the child and it becomes an important connection between the pre-oedipal stage of primary narcissism and the uncanny. Freud describes primary narcissism as a state where there is no distinction between the id and the ego and where "*an infants libido is focused entirely on itself*" (Wright, 1992, p.271). This narcissism has remained in the mind of the adult on an unconscious level and is accessed when the adult experiences the uncanny.

There have been many interpretations of Freud's theories. Jaques Lacan discusses the pre-oedipal stage from a structural perspective. This phase assumes the development of ego over time



Plate 1
Blindmans Buff, 1984,
Louise Bourgeois.



Plate 2
Nature Study, 1984,
Louise Bourgeois.

Plate 3 : *Hanging Janus*, 1968, Louise Bourgeois.

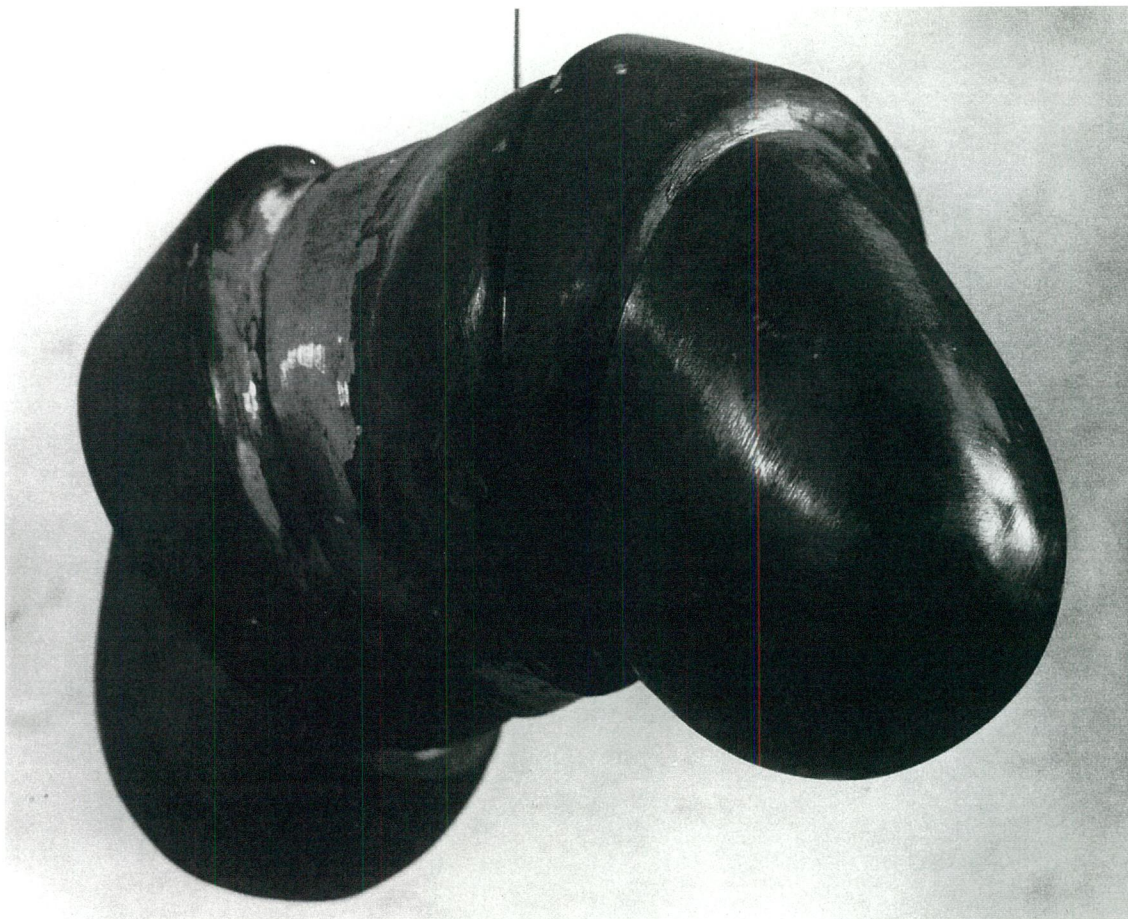
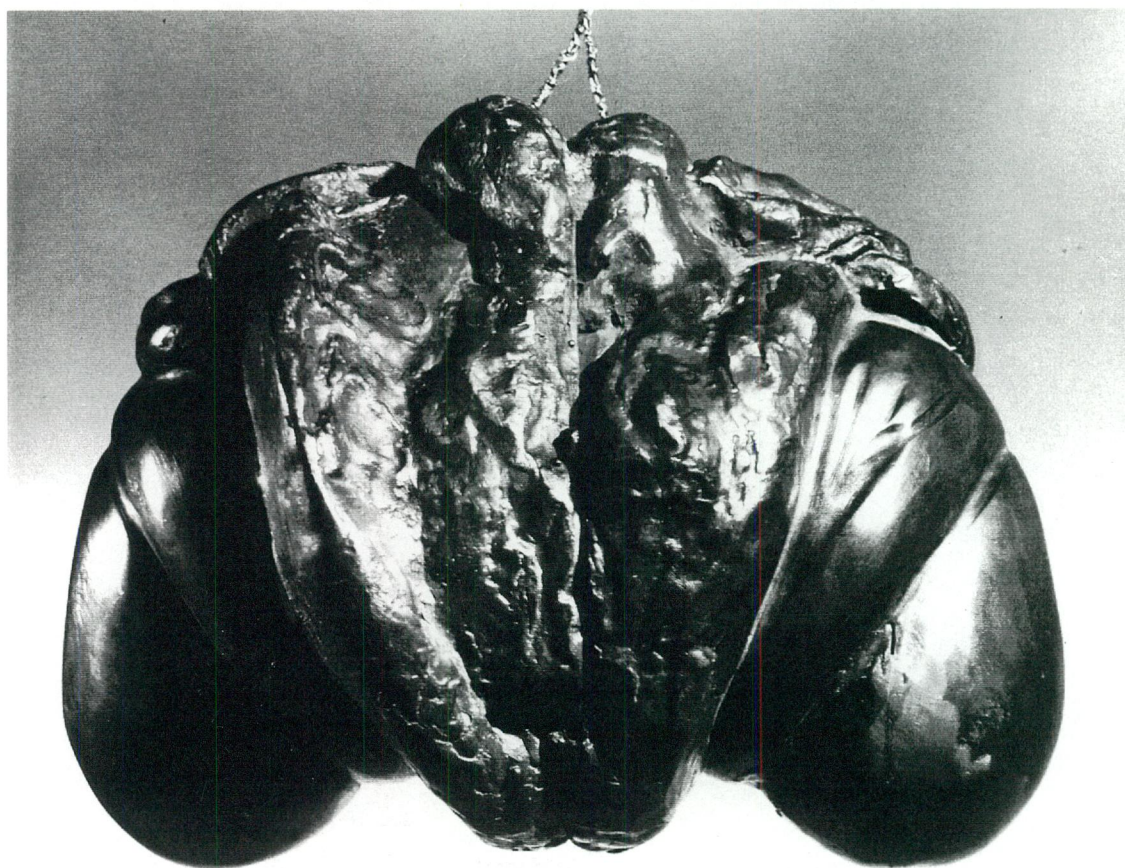


Plate 4 : *Janus Fleuri*, 1968, Louise Bourgeois.



and refers to an unconscious psycho-sexual structure which is retroactive, in other words it comes after the oedipal stage. The Lacanian notion of the mirror stage in childhood development is the equivalent of Freudian theories of primary narcissism. The mirror stage discusses the relationship of the child with his own image. During this stage the child cannot distinguish its own immediate needs and desires from its narcissistic and undifferentiated experience of the world. The mirror stage is :

“an object of narcissistic identification which presents an ego-ideal (or ideal self) which is believed to be the self” (Hollows and Jancovich, 1995, p.87).

According to Lacan, this stage represents the origins of self establishment. When the infant looks in the mirror and recognizes the reflection there as itself, the ‘I’ is seen as a unitary whole. This stage also describes the infant’s alienation from the mother. It is through this separation from the mother that the child constitutes a sense of identity.

Kiki Smith’s sculpture *Other tomb* , 1997, (PL. 5, p.20) shown in IMMA, 1997, could be said to reflect the doubling process of the mirror phase. The work presents seven large pieces of distorted glass at eye level on a shelf, at which the viewer is compelled to look. The image reflected by each of the seven mirrors is distorted and fragmented, suggesting *“a kind of protected mutilation”* (Smith, Talk in IMMA, 26/10/97), since it is

the viewer's double that is mutilated. This sculpture conjures a carnivalesque and almost hysterical atmosphere. Kiki Smith describes this piece as a reaction to the images that are forced on women in today's society. These mirrors present a fragmented self to the viewer, overturning notions of a unified and singular subjectivity. Consequently, this sculpture destabilises patriarchal ideologies.

In his essay 'The Uncanny', Freud refers to Jentsch's concept of the uncanniness of waxwork figures, dolls and automata. The uncanny, in this instance, is produced as a result of "*intellectual uncertainty*" (Freud, 1919, p.351). This uncertainty is a confusion in relation to whether what is being looked at is an inanimate, lifeless object or an animate, living being, thus causing an uncanny effect.

It is interesting to look at Mike Kelley's notion of the double in relation to the statue as a representation of a living being in a substance that is not living. The statue provides a clear example of the animate becoming inanimate. In his essay for the catalogue of the exhibition 'The Uncanny', Kelley states that

Man, unwilling to accept the notion of himself as a material being of limited life span had to represent himself symbolically as living alternately, through representing himself in materials more permanent than flesh (Kelley, 1993, p.19).

Statues of religious icons, throughout history, have always evoked a sense of immortality and death in the viewer. This illustrates how

the uncanny operates in terms of figurative sculpture, in particular Kiki Smith's sculptures of the human body. Many of Smith's sculptures relate to religious iconography and also allude to the doll. The double acts as a reinforcement of self love, as an assurance against destruction and death of the ego. Absence or loss of the double which relates to many of Kiki Smith's sculptures, results in anxiety as it signifies loss of self or ego, mortality, death or sexual impotence.

"the narcissistic personality projects its thoughts onto others, others are its double. The foreign self can be substituted for its own by doubling, dividing, interchanging itself" (Kelley, 1993, p.25).

The figurative sculptures of Kiki Smith can act in a sense as double for the viewer. The viewer can identify with her sculptures, reflect on them and question and re assess themselves in relation to them. Many of Smith's sculptures represent a loss of self, thus reflecting the emotional, disordered and anarchic pre-oedipal stage which represents a time before identity has been established.

Our perception of normal reality is constantly kept within certain bounds. The act of doubling results in a confusion of the boundaries between fantasy and reality. It could be said that the uncanniness of Kiki Smith's sculptures of the body reveals a gap in the integrity of reality and therefore undermines the familiar boundaries between life and death. Death cannot be represented in a physical way and so it is represented as repressed other, as what

life is not. It undermines the structure of difference that life and death present, a structure that social order depends upon. Thus the uncanny quality of Smith's sculptures causes a subversive effect and enables a new meaning to emerge. The values of the viewer are challenged because their dependency on structure is momentarily broken. This overlaps with the pre-oedipal stage where the child cannot distinguish between self and other and no boundaries or structures exist.

Kiki Smith stated :

My relationship to the figure isn't as close to sculptural history as it is to dolls and puppets. When you start making figures, you're in a sense making effigies or you're making bodies. You're making physically, bodies that spirits enter or occupy, or that have their own souls, presence and physical space (Shearer and Gould, 1992, p.67).

Kiki Smith's *Virgin Mary*, 1992, (PL. 6, p.20) is a realistic, life size sculpture, represented in the stance of the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary is a mother figure presented as an idealised double or role model for women by the Roman Catholic church. She is presented as a woman with no sexuality hence she represents ideals that are unattainable. Kiki Smith's sculpture of the Virgin Mary is presented as a damaged woman. Her skin has been removed exposing her flesh and fat on the surface. This arouses a feeling of anxiety and loss in the viewer. The absence of skin destroys the body ego and signifies a loss of self and a loss of sexuality that threatens narcissism. The trauma evoked by the

Plate 5 : *Other Tomb*, 1997, Kiki Smith.

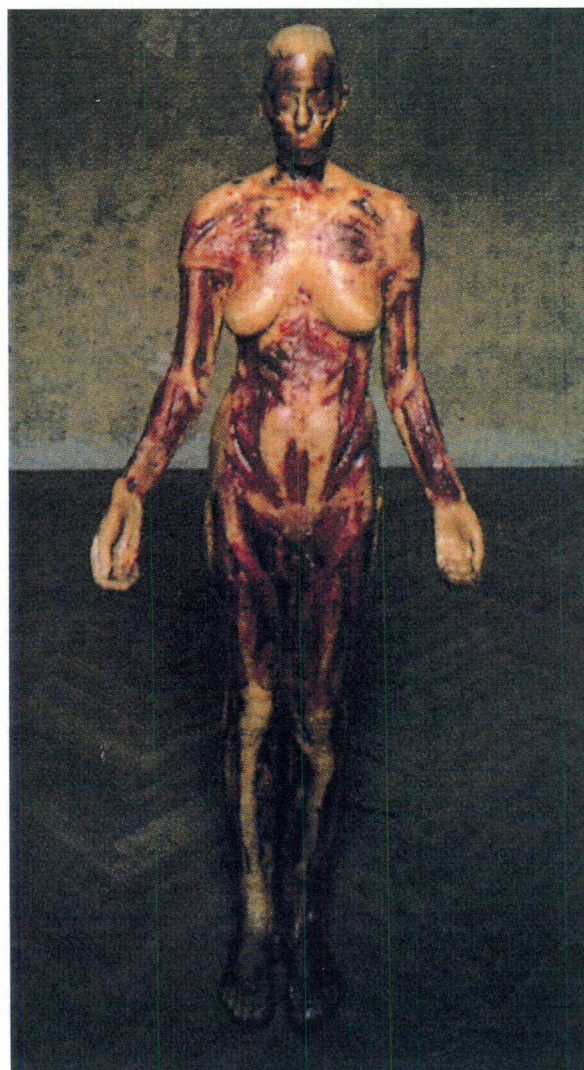


Plate 6
Virgin Mary, 1992,
Kiki Smith.

separation and loss of her skin also reflects the child's separation from the mother. This separation occurs as the child moves from the pre-oedipal stage in order that a sense of identity be formed. Thus the sculpture suggests the need for re-evaluating the identity of role models that patriarchy has provided for women. Kiki Smith stated:

"Our bodies are basically stolen from us, and my work is about trying to reclaim one's own turf, or one's own vehicle of being here, to own it and to use it to look at how we are here" (Whitechapel, 1995, p22).

Her sculpture *Virgin*, 1993, (PL. 7, p.24) which was exhibited in the 'Beyond the Pale' exhibition in IMMA 1993/1994, represents a female body in white papier mache. *Virgin* is presented high up on the gallery wall above the viewer's eye level. This positioning removes her from the realm occupied by the viewer, thus reminding us of the unattainable qualities that the Virgin Mary represents to women as an ideal. The eyes and vagina are the only two zones which gleam out from the quiet paper. The vulnerable quality of the paper and the discernible orifices suggest the vulnerability of the body. Viewers experience an uncanny sense of the vulnerability of their own bodies, of their mortality. The paper has been applied in strips resulting in a bandaged effect, which could be read as metaphor for illness. The mouth of the woman is also covered, rendering her mute. The connection

between the animate human becoming an inanimate sculpture is highlighted further by the process of mummification or wrapping. This bound effect combined with the flaccid quality of the paper indicates a metamorphoses of some kind that is not yet complete. The sculpture suggests death, however wrapping is also evocative of a caul which sometimes covers a child at birth.

Doubles are created in Smith's work through the process of casting. A plaster mold of the body is taken, usually by wrapping a model in plaster bandage. Paper and glue, or other substances, for example clay or bronze, can then be laid or poured into the mould producing a cast which acts as a simulacrum of the model's body. The uneasiness, often felt by the viewer when encountering one of Kiki Smith's sculptures, is partly due to the life-like quality of her figures.

Kiki Smith's sculpture *Lilith* (PL. 8, p.24), exhibited in 'Convergence' in IMMA, 1997/98, again illustrates the uncanny effect of her realistic bodies. A dark and disturbing figure of a woman is presented crawling on the gallery wall. The viewer becomes aware of the convincingly realistic cold and piercing blue eyes made of glass, peering from the head of this terrified woman, resulting in a shuddering effect. The viewer experiences a strong sensation that there is a living being trapped inside the bronze shell of the sculpture. The uncanny becomes apparent in *Lilith* through the illusion Smith creates of the inanimate appearing as animate.

In another haunting sculpture, *Untitled* , 1992, (PL. 9, p.25), Kiki Smith represents a female body without a head hanging from the ceiling. Her insides hang beneath her ghostly white dress and flow down onto the floor in a tangled and chaotic stream. In an interview with Claudia Gould, Smith states that :

The virgin Mary always extends her arms, making the body vulnerable. Vulnerable and compassionate, but to be vulnerable is to lose insight. It makes you exposed. For me, to be that vulnerable, I think you could lose all your insides, lose yourself (Shearer and Gould, 1992, p.71).

The loss of self represented in many of her sculptures, including these, could be said to reflect a return to the pre-oedipal stage where the child has no sense of self. The pre-oedipal stage describes a very vulnerable time, for the child is completely dependent on the mother for survival. The child has no sense of a unified or integral body. During this stage of the process of development, the infant is unaware of any distinctions between inside and outside. Instead the child experiences its body as fragmented and chaotic, as a disorganised scramble of impulses and drives.

Louise Bourgeois's *Untitled with Growth* , 1989, (PL. 11, p.28) is a wonderfully organic sculpture which represents multiple rounded forms which seem to be in a form of process. It appears to be emerging, growing, doubling, dividing, repeating and multiplying. Similarly, Kiki Smith presents all of her representations of the body in some form of process.

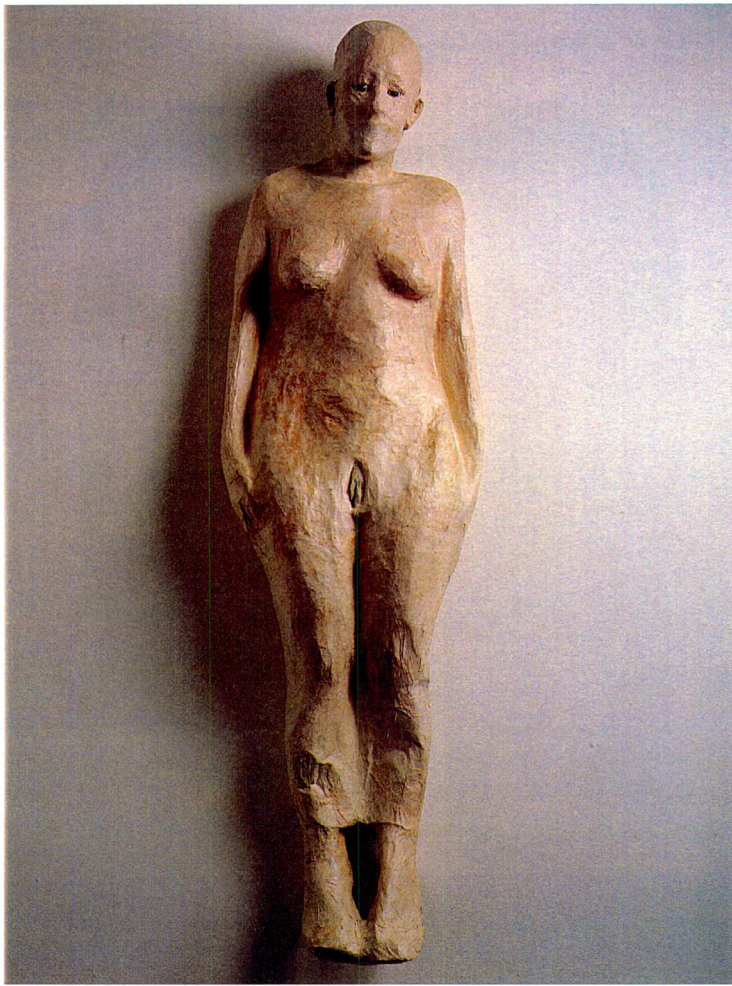


Plate 7
Virgin Mary, 1993,
Kiki Smith.

Plate 8 : *Lilith*, 1995, Kiki Smith.



Plate 9 : *Untitled*, 1992, Kiki Smith.



Melanie Kline has interpreted Freudian theories of the pre-oedipal stage from a developmental perspective. According to Klein this phase infers the innateness of ego and refers to a stage before the Oedipus complex where a psycho-sexual development involving predominant attachment to the mother occurs (Wright, 1992, pp.191-193). Kline's theories discuss how the infant endows partial objects with the characteristics of a complete person. Primarily the child fantasises feelings of affection and aggression onto the mother's breast. The dialectic absence or presence of the breast results in the gratification or denial and frustration of the child's libidinal desires and needs. Depending on the nurturing relationship between mother and child the breast becomes an object of either good or bad significance to the child.

Louise Bourgeois's pink latex sculpture *Mammelles* , 1991, (PL. 10, p.28) meaning 'Teats', could be related to the Kleinian notion of the partial object. The nurturing and nourishing breast forms are represented as multiple fragments becoming a symbol of power. However, they also suggest the infant's demanding and consuming drives for the satisfaction of its needs, resulting in a splitting and shattering fragmentation of the body. Klein's theory of the part object is also reflected in Louise Bourgeois's sculpture *Fillette* (PL.17, p. 40), as it illustrates how feelings of affection and aggression can be projected onto a body fragment. This sculpture is discussed in detail in chapter 2.

Julia Kristeva's concept of the semiotic stage refers to a space preceding the Oedipal stage but it also relates to the Symbolic order or Oedipal stage as a 'pre-signifying energy' (Wright, 1992, pp.345-347). By drawing attention to this space, ways in which the Symbolic order could be modified are made possible. Freud's theories have neglected the female child's pre-oedipal stage. Louise Bourgeois and Kiki Smith, by making the pre-oedipal stage physical in their work and by merging both male and female energies, have filled in feminine spaces. Thus their uncanny sculptures subvert phallogentric inclinations by suggesting a more equal balance.

Movement from the pre-oedipal or semiotic stage to the Oedipal stage is a process of socialization and involves the acquisition of language and gender identity. This movement from one stage to another, which involves the child recognising difference, is also described as movement from the pleasure principle to the reality principle. The Oedipus Complex moves the child into the public sphere of symbolic systems and the paternal world of order and rigidity.

Plate 10 : *Mammelles*, 1991, Louise Bourgeois.

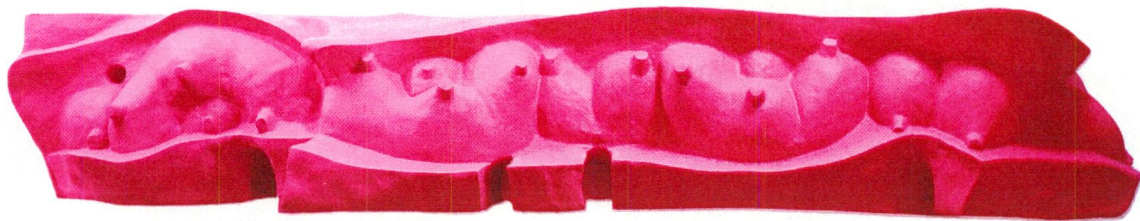
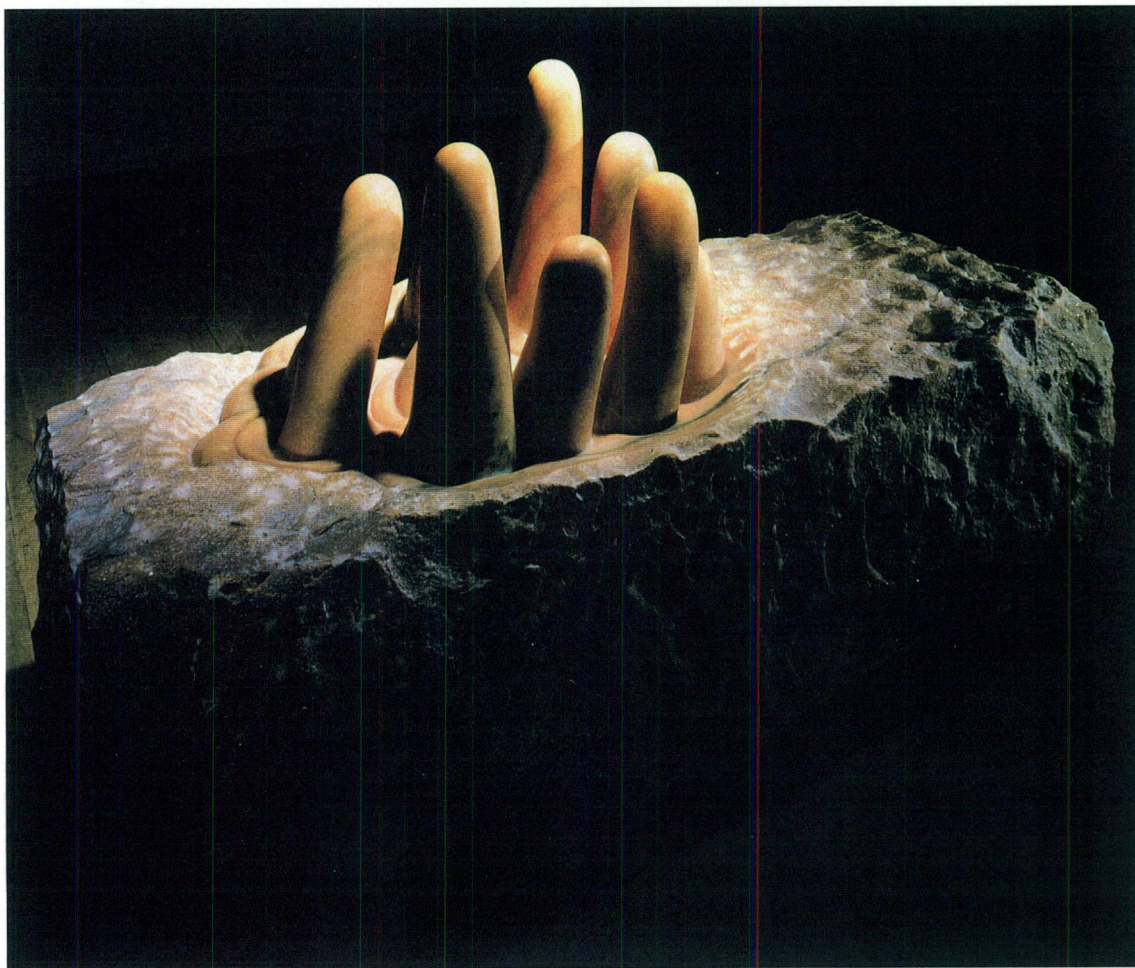


Plate 11 : *Untitled (with Growth)*, 1989, Louise Bourgeois.



CHAPTER 2

The Uncanny and The Oedipal Stage

According to Freud, the Oedipus complex is a symbolic process which the child goes through psychically. It involves the child's unconscious desire to sexually possess the parent of the opposite sex while excluding the parent of the same sex. During the process of the male child he becomes aware of and possessive of his mother. The father becomes the disrupting factor of the dyadic affair between mother and son. The male child sees the mother as damaged or lacking and fears that if he associates with the mother he too may be damaged and thus, he develops a fear of castration. This results in the male child's separation of consciousness from the world of the mother to the world of the father. In other words, the male child moves to an identification with the father. During the Oedipal process of the female child, when the child tries to identify with the father she realizes she cannot because she is different, so she returns to identify with the mother.

Femininity is problematic in Freudian theory as Freud describes femaleness as coming with the female child's disappointing realization that she is not male. Psychoanalysis has

excluded and disadvantaged women for reasons inherent in the structure of society , the unconscious and symbolic systems such as language itself, the Church, the Law, educational systems and thus all social structures. Freud's analysis of gender may be flawed and may have brought women to accepting a position rather than freely determining their own, therefore putting them at a disadvantage. However psychoanalysis has been developed and extended and studying its theories enables women to become aware of

"the patriarchal myths through which we have become positioned as Other (enigma, Mystery), and as eternal and unchanging" (Kaplan,1983, p.4).

Psychoanalysis began with Freud's theories on the unconscious mind. Freud's new psychoanalytic theories strongly influenced the Surrealist movement which began initially as a literary movement. Some of the Zurich Dadaists arrived in Paris in 1920 where the possibilities of spontaneous writing or automatism, free association and the unconscious were being considered for artistic endeavors. Andre Breton published two Surrealist Manifestos in 1924 and 1929. By rendering apparently incoherent fragments with accurate realism the Surrealists allowed the imagination to overwhelm the intellect. Their aim was to consider dreams and everyday reality with equal value and importance. The uncanny was an important aspect of Surrealism. Theodor Adorno maintained that

the affinity of Surrealism and psychoanalysis depends not on their interest in the symbols utilised by a truth-speaking unconscious, but rather on the way that they both focus on the attempts of the unconscious to evoke and reveal in sudden bursts of shock the images of our childhood past still crystallised within us (Wright,1989, p.268).

The Surrealists were aware of the psychoanalytical notion of male fetishism. Surrealist objects were compared by Breton with the objects which recurred in the mind of the fetishist. Adorno argued that surreal images are fetishes as they behave as substitutes for something that has been lost. The Surrealist treatment of objects that were once familiar and invested with emotion, transformed them so that they became unfamiliar. Notions of fetishism apparent in the work of Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeois will be discussed in relation to fragmentation.

Many of the works of Louise Bourgeois and Kiki Smith arouse feelings associated with the uncanny experience through their use of body fragments. Freud informs us that images of severed or detached body parts recall castration fear and thus the viewer experiences the uncanny.

"Dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist,...feet which dance by themselves,...- all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them" (Freud, 1919, p.366).

Louise Bourgeois and Kiki Smith challenge notions of identity and subjectivity through their explorations of the uncanniness of the

fragment. The uncanny is an important concept in post modern aesthetics as it allows new definitions to emanate.

"The modernist notion of fragment as microcosm has given way in current artworks to a willingness to let the fragment be fragment, to allow partiality to exist" (Kelley,1993,p.15).

The concept of identity is dealt with by Michel Foucault as a notion that is not stable or fixed, thus allowing breakdowns or transgressions to occur. Postmodernism treats the notion of identity and subjectivity in contemporary society as incoherent and schizophrenic. This sense of schizophrenic incoherence is evident in the work of Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeois, thus reflecting these Post Modern concerns.

Louise Bourgeois's works deal with intense emotions and desires. Her inanimate objects communicate a sense of love and tenderness, anger and cruelty, anxiety and alienation, sexuality and death. The uncanny is manifest in her expression of these intangible notions. She represents fragments of the body associated with sensations - eyes, ears, hands, feet, breasts, penises. Her forms are both familiar and foreign and evoke attraction and repulsion in the viewer.

The eye as a fragment has an unconscious phallic meaning and an uncanny effect and is a common motif in Surrealist art. A sense of the uncanny is present in her sculpture *Nature Study (Velvet Eyes)* , 1984, (PL. 12, p.34), which is part of a series that

included the works *Pink Eyes* and *White Eyes*, 1984, and *Bald Eagle*, 1986. Her sculpture *Nature Study (Velvet eyes)* could be read as a metaphor of the gaze, thus the boundaries between viewer and object are confused. The eyes suggest an inquisition of some kind; one cannot help feeling stared at. For Louise Bourgeois *Velvet eyes* represents the soft eyes of a loved one. Two large holes in a block of marble hold two eyeballs inside. In a way this work acts as erotic metaphor for an awaited penetration.

Kiki Smith's Sculpture *Tongue and Hand* , 1985, (PL.13, P.34), relates to Louise Bourgeois's *Velvet eyes* . The body fragments or partial objects represented in these two sculptures are used in relation to the senses: to taste, to touch, to see. They all retain their communicative force: to speak, to gesture and as quoted by Louise Bourgeois,

"the eyes are the window of the soul, reflecting feeling and truth. They are the best way to communicate with the world, with others" (Bernadec,1996, p.110).

The plaster tongue and hand in Kiki Smith's sculpture, appear to communicate with each other. This is achieved in the way they are positioned in relation to each other and also in the way the form of one, seems to mimic the form of the other. Both artists have left room for the viewer to add their own voice.

Many of Louise Bourgeois's works, (like Kiki Smith's representations of complete bodies, discussed in chapter 1) appear

Plate 12 : *Nature Study (Velvet Eyes)*, 1984, Louise Bourgeois.



Plate 13 : *Tongue and Hand*, 1985, Kiki Smith.

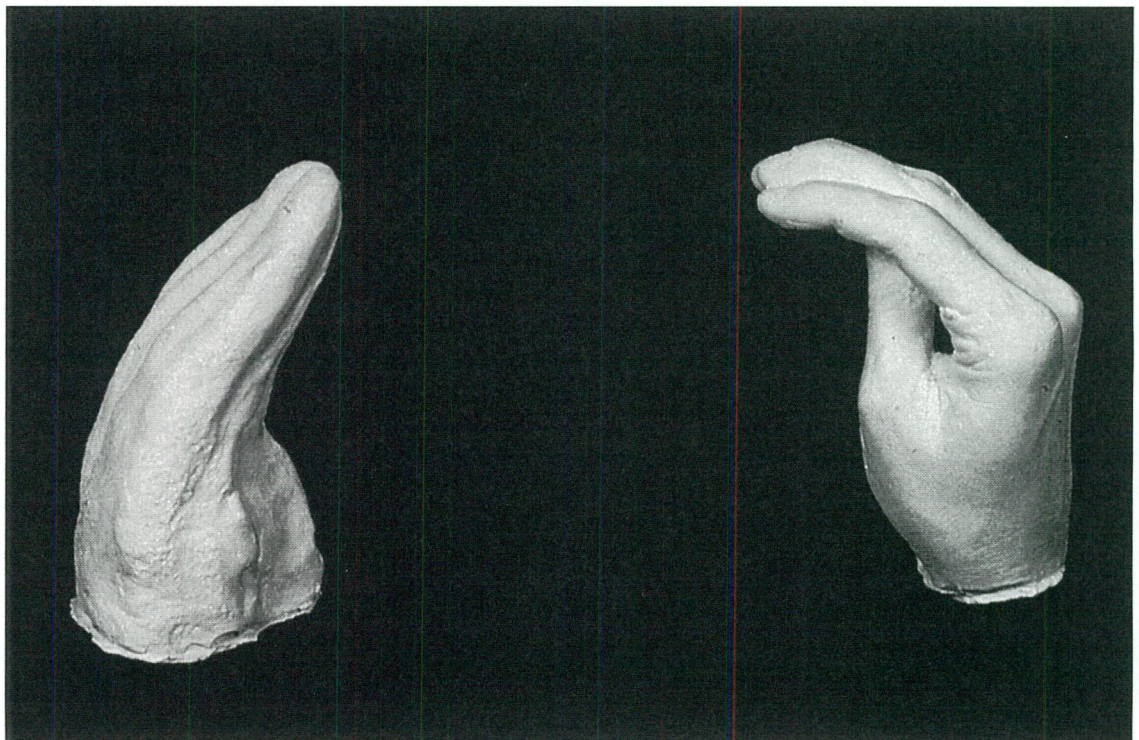




Plate 14
Untitled (with foot),
 1989,
 Louise Bourgeois.

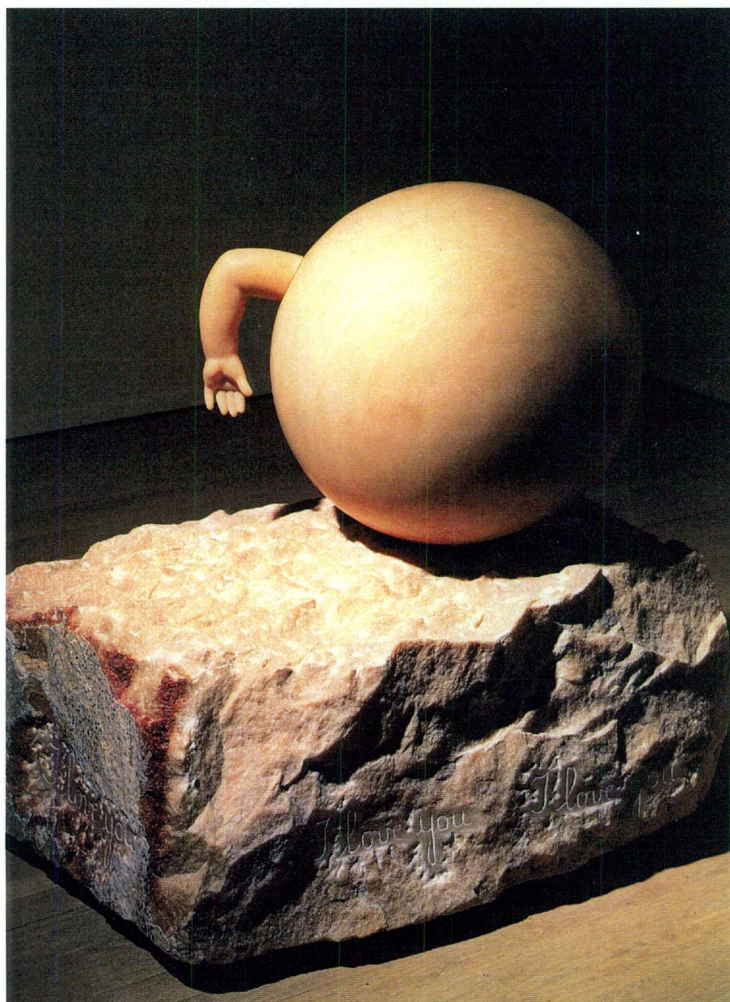


Plate 15
Untitled (with hand),
 1989,
 Louise Bourgeois.

to attribute life to the inanimate. This is apparent in works such as *Untitled (with foot)* , (PL. 16, p.35) and *Untitled (with hand)* , (PL. 17, p.35). Text reading “Do you love me ?” and “ I love you” is inscribed onto the bases of each of these pieces, respectively, highlighting the difficulties involved with communicating love. In both sculptures a body fragment emerges from a smooth marble sphere which is suggestive of a womb or pregnant belly. The emerging fleshy limbs appear dependent on the hard geometric spheres with which they are combined. These works, as well as being an example of fragmentation, also allude to the pre-sexual pre-oedipal stage of life.

The four sculptures mentioned present fragments of the body which results in a paradox. The notion of a disembodied eye, tongue or hand is absurd and ambivalent since these fragments cannot function as separate parts; they remain static and are unable to communicate. They could be related to Freud’s notions of blindness and castration. He explains that idea of losing or damaging one’s eyes causes fear and anxiety.

“A study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that anxiety about one’s eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated” (Freud,1919, p.352).

Smith’s *Worms* , (PL. 16. p.39) shown at IMMA in 1997/98 represents a large group of realistic red-brown worms. It is suggestive of a snake pit or a collection of sperm. The phallic form

of the worms alludes to the male castration complex. This piece also evokes a strong sense of abjection and fear; a primordial fear of death, putrefying flesh and decay. The viewer is made feel very uncomfortable and is compelled to stand a good distance away.

It could be said that the viewer is made uneasy about the uncanny sculptures of Louise Bourgeois and Kiki Smith because of an enthusiasm in relation to accepting things known to be unreal, and a willingness to discard rational and reasonable thought momentarily. This reflects the neurotic character of Nathaniel in 'The Sand-man'. Nathaniel was old enough to know the sandman was not a real person yet he identifies the sand-man's attributes with Coppelius the lawyer whom the children in the story were frightened of. Louise Bourgeois's works have been described as "*literalizations of dreams and nightmares, the beautiful and erotic and the horrendous and neurotic*" (Ekman, (Ed.), 1994, p.58), and the same could surely be said of the sculptures of Kiki Smith.

In 'The Uncanny', Freud discusses the story of 'The Sand-Man' by E.T.A. Hoffmann, whom Freud describes as "*the unrivaled master of the uncanny in literature*" (Freud, 1919, p.355). He examines the theme of the Sand-Man

"who comes when children won't go to bed, and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes so that they jump out of their heads all bleeding. Then he puts the eyes in a sack and carries them off to the half-moon to feed his children (Freud, 1919, p.349).

A connection could be made between Louise Bourgeois and the uncanny Sandman. Robert Mapplethorpe's portrait, 1982 of Bourgeois clutching her latex sculpture *Fillette* , (PL. 17, p.40), 1968, under her arm is both humorous and macabre. She has a sly but playful grin which almost breaks into laughter at the representation of a disembodied penis, which she possesses and controls and will not return. The penis represents the superiority and authority of the male in psychoanalytic theory. By representing the penis as a separate body fragment, Bourgeois has managed to reverse Freud's theory of castration. The title of the piece, *Fillette* , translates as 'Little Girl'. This title, as well as the manner in which she holds the sculpture, implies that for Bourgeois, the object resembles a doll. This suggests that Bourgeois also projects feelings of affection onto this part object. This in turn, insinuates that the doll could perhaps be seen as a form of fetish for the female child.

Louise Bourgeois's latex sculptures of the 1960s are extremely abject in their visceral allusion to corporeal interiors. Bourgeois's latex sculpture *Le Regarde* , 1966, (PL. 18, p.40), which translates as 'Gaze' is another representation of a disembodied fragment. This sculpture makes both exterior and interior visible. The quality of the latex in this sculpture, combined with the flaccid folds in the form, are evocative of flesh or, more

Plate 16 : *Worms*, 1996, Kiki Smith.

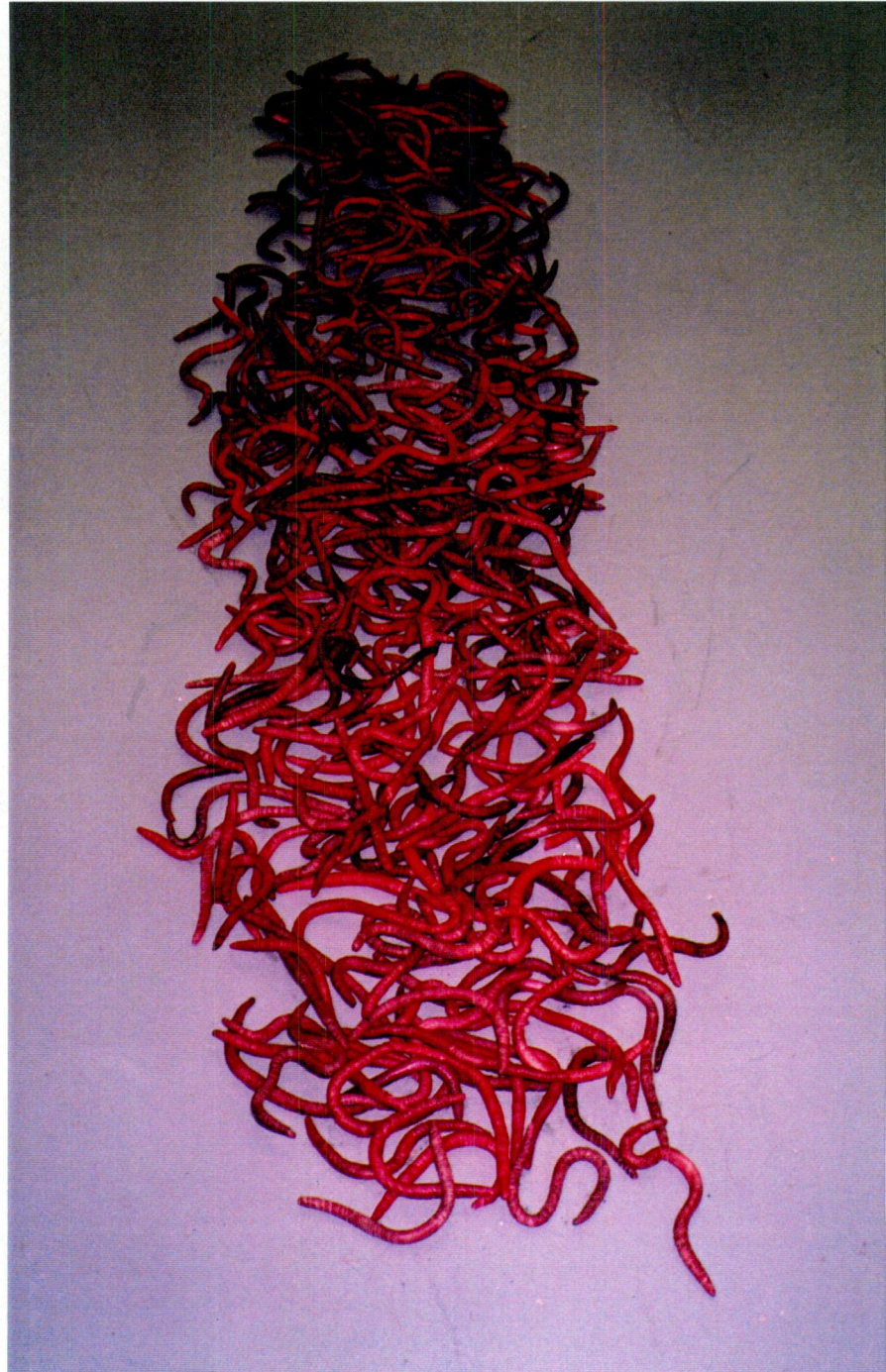


Plate 17

Portrait of Louise Bourgeois with Fillette, 1982, Robert Mapplethorpe.



Plate 18 : *Le Regarde*, 1966, Louise Bourgeois.



specifically, of the female genitalia. Reinforced by its title, meaning 'Gaze', this sculpture also alludes to the eye. Bourgeois claims control of the gaze in this sculpture, thus she challenges and redefines psychoanalytic notions of the female lack of gaze. In a related way Kiki Smith has stated that through much of her work she tries to fill in "*what it means to be a girl child*" (Shearer and Gould, 1992, p.74).

It is interesting to look notions of fetishism in relation to the use of body fragments in the work of Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeois. The uncanny also relates to notions of fetishism, as Elizabeth Wright denotes

"the uncanny is the projection of our inner most fears onto the external, creating objects of love and hate" (Wright, 1989, p.272).

The Freudian view of fetishism can help to illuminate certain aspects of fetishism in Smith and Bourgeois's work, and the consequences resulting from their explorations.

An inanimate object, an entire body or a body part, can function as a fetish. The object becomes a fetish when it is invested with psychological significance through the process of fetishisation. According to Freud, the fetishisation of an object is an abnormal activity which acts as a means of obtaining sexual satisfaction. It is an activity which Freud restricts to men.

Freud's study of the cause of this deviation is of vital importance as it exposes his views on sexual difference and thereby

reveals the problematic nature of his psychoanalytic theories in general. A fetish does not act as a symbol for the female genitalia but as a substitute referring to what Freud sees as the lack implied by the female genitalia. Freud informs us that the fetish originates as a result of the anxieties experienced by the male child in the Oedipal stage. During the Oedipus complex, the male child sees his mothers genitals as a sign of her sexual difference. He becomes unconsciously aware that his mother is missing a penis and perceives her as symbolically castrated. In reaction to his own fears of this castration happening to him and in order to compensate for his mother's seeming lack he fetishises other objects. Thus the fetish

"commemorates the last precept to the little boy's traumatic loss of illusions regarding maternal anatomy, power and identity" (Wright,1992, p.114).

The fetish enables him to deny knowledge of what he perceives as his mothers castrated state and also acts to keep alive the memory of the Oedipus complex. The act of fetishisation is a kind of doubling procedure, however :

the substitute is never the same as the original, and the original is a fiction: in the fetish what is preserved is the hidden fantasy of a hidden maternal penis, an imaginary phallus that is the source of the so - called phallic mother's omnipotence (Wright,1992, p.114).

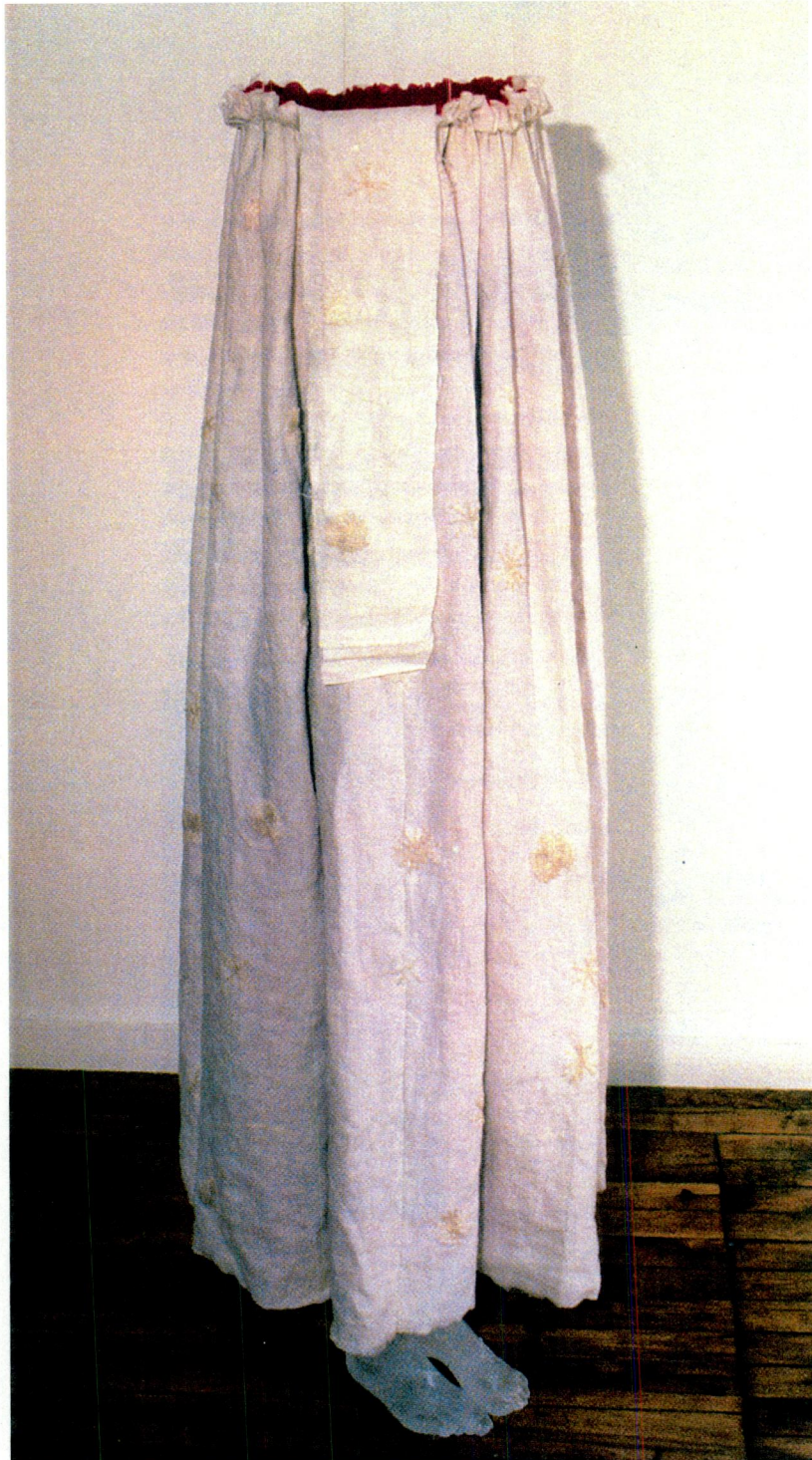
The fetishist demands that there be a female phallus. Thus fetishisation reveals the male child's uncertainty about female

castration and he wavers between the belief that the female is lacking and is not lacking.

Louise Bourgeois's marble sculpture *Femme Couteau* , (PL. 23. p.48), re-structures Freudian notions of the female body as a fetish. This sculpture suggests both an eroticised female body with gently curving lines and voluptuous breasts and the female genitalia. However, Bourgeois has represented this object in a form resembling that of a blade. This is reinforced by the title which translates as 'Knife Woman'. Thus, this fetishised female body becomes a sharply pointed blade-like weapon suggesting aggression, power and fertility rather than passive object.

Laura Mulvey's writing has discussed the male gaze and the notion that women are the passive object of the male fetishist's active gaze (Mulvey, 1985). The visual pleasure of the female spectator is often neglected in art and culture in general, as women are compelled to view representations of both men and women from a male perspective. Thus women are limited to the masochistic pleasure of their own denigration. Mary Ann Doane's theory in 'Film and the Masquerade' argues that through recognition of and identification with the artificiality of femininity, the female gaze is empowered. Femininity can be revealed as a performance of something that is not inherent but socially structured,

Plate 19 : *Skirt*, 1990, Kiki Smith.



flaunting femininity, holds it at a distance...resistance to patriarchal positioning would therefore lie in its denial of the production of femininity as closeness, as presence-to-itself, as, precisely imagistic (Hollows & Jancovich, 1995, p.89).

The artist Mary Kelly tackled the notion of female fetishism in her *Post-Partum Document*. Many female artists use fragmentation and fetishism in their work to place women in the active position of the fetishist rather than being positioned as passive objects of fetishism. Mary Kelly's work represents fetishistic objects which enabled her to disavow feelings of separation and loss as a mother, in relation to her child's development. She transgresses patriarchal notions of motherhood through her use of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

In Kiki Smith's sculpture *Skirt*, (PL. 19. p.44), a white cloth skirt with ornamentation sewn onto the outside, and lined with red fabric on the inside, appears to float in the air. Two small naked feet made of glass hang beneath it. With the exception of the feet the figure is absent from this sculpture. However the skirt and the manner in which it is suspended, implies a female figure without representing the body directly. The small and dainty feet, and the ornamented skirt both relate to the male sexual fetishisation of the female. Kiki Smith explains that this sculpture

"is about the disabilities of being a girl child..... I made it with the sex by putting in red cloth like a volcano" (Shearer and Gould, 1992, p.68).

In other words, the red lining hidden inside the skirt, refers to sexual difference; it acts as a sign of the femaleness of the absent figure. On the outside, Smith presents the viewer with two emblems associated with feminine beauty ; tiny feet and a pretty skirt. She reveals these signifiers of femininity as something that is conditioned in the female child rather than something that is intrinsic. Through her exploration of sexual fetishism in this sculpture, the outward appearance of femininity is exposed as artificial, thus challenging prevalent stereotypes.

According to nineteenth century anthropologist E.B. Tylor:

To class an object as a fetish demands explicit statement that a spirit is considered embodied in it or acting through it or communicating by it, or at least that the people it belongs to do habitually think this of such objects ; or it must be shown that the object is treated as having personal consciousness and power, is talked with, worshipped, prayed to, sacrificed to, petted or ill-treated with reference to its past or future behavior to its votaries (Gammon & Makinen, 1994, p.16).

Louise Bourgeois's *Poids* also explore fetishism. Her *Poid* (with eye) , (PL. 24,p.48), preserves a cloth eye pierced with several pins, within a glass vessel. This eerie and uncanny sculpture suggests a strong connection to anthropological fetishism, described above. For Louise Bourgeois, sculpture is a way of dealing with and distancing fear and resentment. The eye appears

Plate 20

womb, 1996, (View - Closed),
Kiki Smith.



Plate 21

womb, 1996, (View - Open),
Kiki Smith.

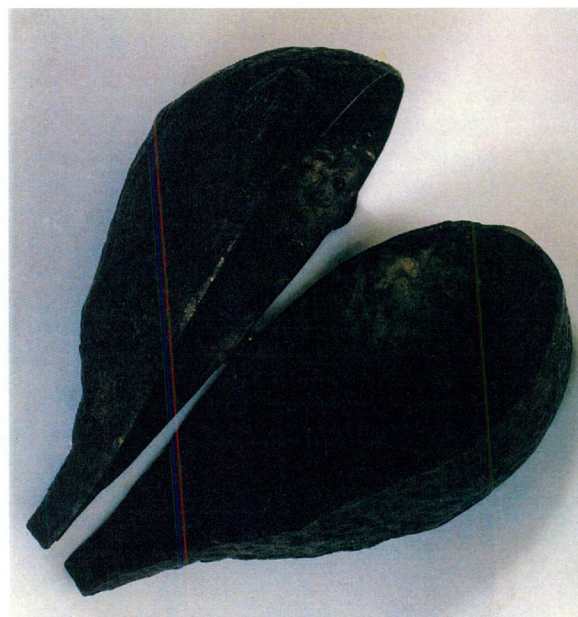


Plate 22 : *Lair*, 1986, Louise Bourgeois.

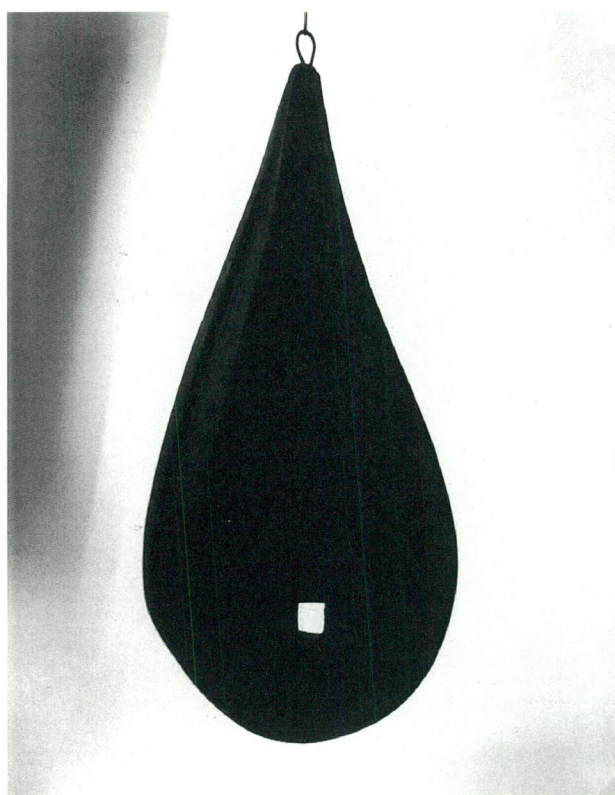


Plate 23 : *Femme Couteau*, 1969-70, Louise Bourgeois.

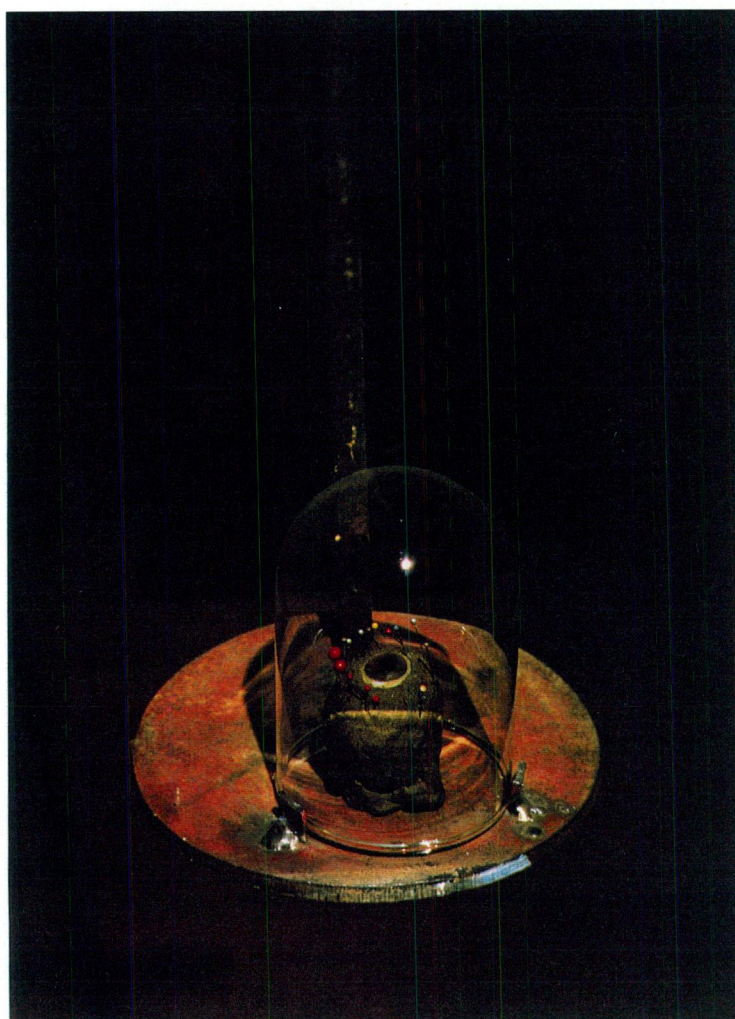
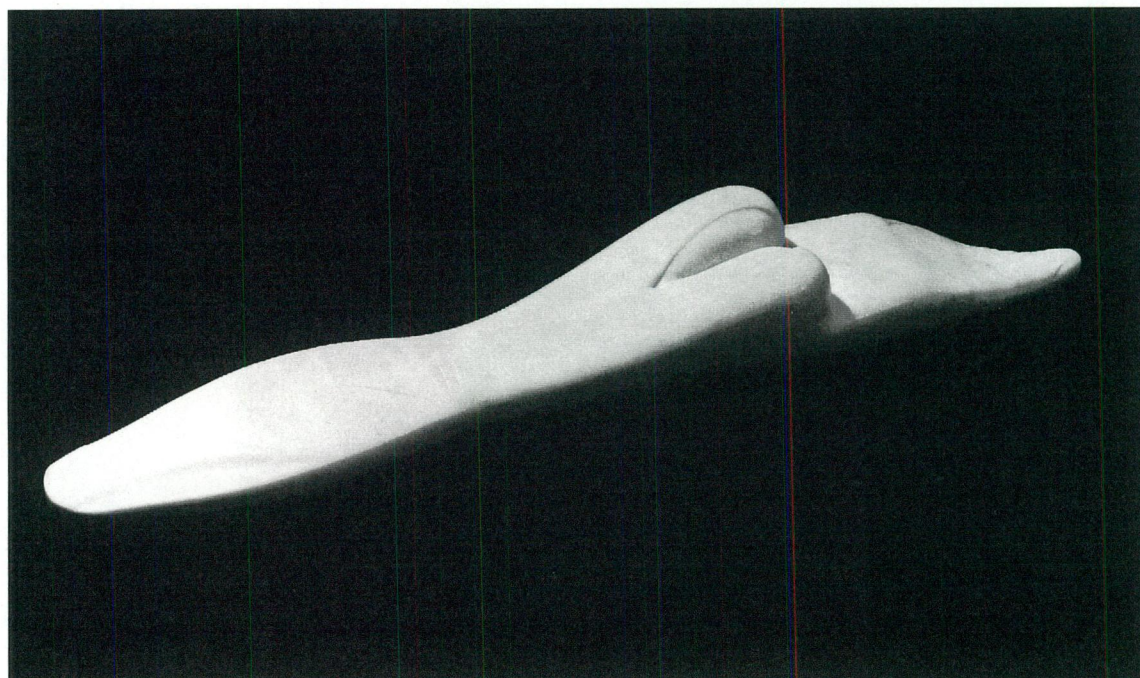


Plate 24
Poid (with eye),
Detail, 1992,
Louise Bourgeois.

to have served a similar function to the anthropological fetish, thus suggesting that it holds a corresponding value. This ill-treated body fragment seems to exude an aura of dark magical power.

Many of Kiki Smith's sculptures could be said to explore anthropological fetishism. She reinvents the physical world by making objects which act as containers of energy transformed from inside the body. For Smith, objects hold both information and power (Lecture in Trinity, 26/10/97). She believes that object making involves the transmutation of spiritual activity into the inanimate object. Therefore her objects could be said to hold a similar value to that of the anthropological fetish.

Some of Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeois sculptures can be related to notions of hysteria. The word 'hysteria' comes from the Greek word *hysteros* meaning 'womb'. Freud considered hysteria to be a 'psychic disease' caused by "*the complexity of sexuality*" (Wright, 1992, p.163). According to Lacan the hysteric represents

"the quintessential question about gender, divided artificially by the effects of identification and language that constitute a sense of being in the form of totalised gender concepts of male and female" (Wright, 1992, p.163)

Louise Bourgeois's sculpture *Lair*, 1986, (PL. 22. p.47), is a womb-shaped form which represents a house or refuge. The black heaviness of the form with only a small square opening

suggesting a window evokes fear, entrapment and panic. The house which can be experienced as friendly can also become a prison or trap. This may indicate a suggestion of hysteria.

Kiki Smith's sculpture *Womb* , (PL. 20. & PL. 21, p.47), 1996, represents a bronze womb-shaped vessel with hinges. It could be read as a protective vessel for containing something precious and vulnerable, however it contains nothing inside. Another contradiction lies in the fact that the womb presented appears hard and cold. It represents the uterus as a kind of trap, again this alludes to hysteria. The womb presented could represent a trap for the woman herself; the terrifying possibility of becoming pregnant as the woman's life so dramatically changes or the equally terrifying possibility of being unable to conceive.

Notions of hysteria draw attention to the pressures of roles defined for women by patriarchal constructs. The hysteric is described by Helen Cixious and Catherine Clement as

" a threshold figure for women's liberation and as a form of resistance to patriarchy " (Wright, 1996, p.165).

CHAPTER 3

The Uncanny and Abjection

The uncanny is ultimately concerned with that which repulses or disturbs rather than with that which is attractive, beautiful or sublime. This aspect of the uncanny, in the work of Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeois, relates to the notion of abjection. Fear of dismemberment and death evoked by Bourgeois's and Smith's sculptures of the fragmented body discussed in chapter 2 also invoke the abject. The abject, like the uncanny, has the power to elicit a sense of horror in the viewer. It is interesting to look at some of the work of Louise Bourgeois and Kiki Smith in terms of the abject and its uncanny consequences.

Lacan's theories developed the castration complex in relation to the infant's acquisition of language. This phase is referred to as the Symbolic Order, the Paternal Order or the Law of the Father. Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject is concerned with this stage in the child's development. This stage describes the starting point where language and a disposition of relative stability and coherence are acquired by the child. In other words, it is initiated when the child begins to name things; it originates in the

acquisition of language. According to Lacan's theory of the Symbolic Order :

'Words are not, as Freud thought, opposed to things ; words create the world of things' (Wright, 1992, p.421).

In her essay on abjection, 'The Powers of Horror', Kristeva argues that the abject is caused, not by something which is unhealthy or unclean, but by something that disturbs identity and boundary, order and system (Kristeva,1982). The process of marking and prescribing the boundaries of the 'clean and proper' body results in the occurrence of

"the Symbolic order, and the acquisition of a sexual and psychical identity within it" (Gross,1990 ,p. 86).

The body, once named, becomes alienated. The pleasures that the child once experienced, relating to both an illusionary sense of a whole and complete body and any imaginary integration the child previously sustained with an object, are lost. The semiotic or pre-oedipal impulses of the child which strive to overturn and destroy order, stability and identity, are restrained and controlled by the Symbolic Order. In Lacan's theory of the Symbolic Order

Language as a system imposes these rules upon the human organism's chaotic identifications with objects and gives rise to the desire for the linkage of body, image and word; it gives rise to the social order (Wright, 1992, .421).

Kristeva's notion of the abject affirms that the nature of the Symbolic is temporary and conditional and also threatening and

Plate 25 : *Spider*, 1994, Louise Bourgeois.

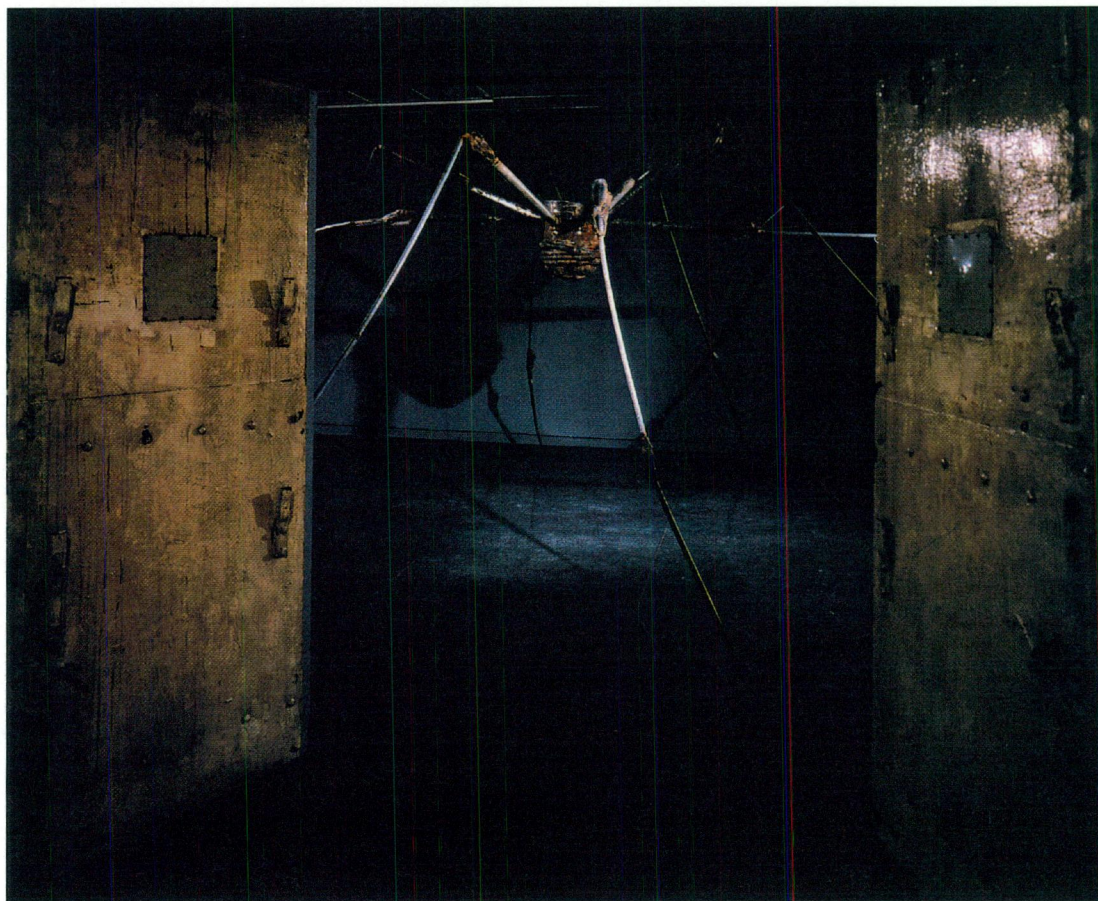


Plate 26 : *Spider*, 1994, Louise Bourgeois.



Plate 27 : *Bloodpool*, (Front View), 1992, Kiki Smith.



Plate 28 : *Bloodpool*, (Back View), 1992, Kiki Smith.



precarious. The abject acts as a subversive force by signifying the fragility of Lacan's theory of the Symbolic order and thus it destabilizes patriarchal notions of femininity.

"Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorable violence with which the body becomes separated from another body in order to be " (Taylor, 1993, p.60).

Through her use of abjection in relation to the maternal body, Kristeva gives an example of social 'othering'. Before moving into the Oedipal phase or Symbolic order, a process occurs whereby the child experiences the mother's food as abject. Thus the child rejects the mother-child dyad and becomes a subject with defined boundaries. Trauma is experienced by the child as a result of this separation from the body of the mother. Fear in relation to the mother's power to produce offspring and fear of being reabsorbed into the maternal body produce feelings of horror. Therefore the maternal body becomes an object of horror and threat, in other words the maternal body becomes abject. This abjection continues to threaten the identity and integrity of the subject.

Louise Bourgeois's huge and terrifying sculpture *Spider* , 1994, (PL. 25. p.53), allows the viewer to walk around and underneath its spindly legs. The inner workings of her smaller sculpture *Spider* , 1994, (PL. 26. p.53), are exposed, allowing the viewer to see inside its body. Its stomach is made of glass and is

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year, and the second section deals with the specific results of the work.

2. The second part of the report deals with the specific results of the work. It is divided into three main sections: the first section deals with the results of the work in the field of agriculture, the second section deals with the results of the work in the field of industry, and the third section deals with the results of the work in the field of commerce.

3. The third part of the report deals with the conclusions and recommendations. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the conclusions and the second section deals with the recommendations.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the appendix. It contains a list of the names of the persons who have taken part in the work, a list of the names of the persons who have given assistance, and a list of the names of the persons who have given advice.

filled with a transparent inky blue liquid alluding to body fluid. The spider, for Bourgeoise, refers to her mother who she describes as '*clever, patient, neat and useful as a spider. She could also defend herself.*' (Bernadac, 1996,p.147).

However, spiders also conjure fears of being trapped and devoured, thus these works allude to and incite the viewer to challenge notions of the woman as abject.

Kiki Smith's sculpture *Bloodpool* , 1992, (PL. 27. & PL. 28, p.54), has a strong sense of emerging from or on the verge of regressing back into incipient or fundamental matter. The figure suggests a young woman curling up into a foetal position. The spinal cord protrudes outside her flesh and is exposed, giving this sculpture a strong sense of abjection. A layer of her skin appears to have been peeled off revealing a delicate and translucent pink colour. The layering visible on the surface gives the effect that body is in the process of being formed or deconstructed. The figure appears very vulnerable and contorted suggesting that some form of violence or abuse has taken place. Perhaps an anger or violence that has been turned inward and directed toward the self. A feeling of separation and loss of self is again apparent.

Kristeva informs us that corporeal processes become invested with a process of signification through abjection. The stage of Symbolic Order involves the structuring of oppositional pairs ; inside and outside, subject and object, self and other. During

this phase these pairs acquire meaning and are coded by the child.

This occurs

"..in order that the child's body be constituted as a unified whole and for it's subjectivity to be definitively tied to the bodies form and limits" (Gross, 1990 ,p. 86).

The abject is an ambiguous and borderline state which exposes the flawed identity of both subject and object,

"If the object secures the subject, the abject signals the fading or disappearance, the absolute morality and vulnerability of the subject's relation and dependence on the object" (Wright, 1992, p.198).

Both Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeois merge opposites together in their work: male and female, order and chaos, interior and exterior, directing the viewer to consider a time before divisions have been established. They have represented the breakdown of these boundaries, evoking anxiety in the viewer but also inviting them to question and re-evaluate society's rules and structures in relation to their own lives. Various taboos, both social and individual are raised in reaction to the abject. Kristeva classifies these abjects in three genera : corporeal waste, the signs of sexual difference and food. (Kristeva, 1982).

Kiki Smith's sculpture *Untitled (male & Female)* ,1990, (PL. 29, p.58), represents both the male and female body. This work illustrates the effect of making corporeal waste visible. Two

Plate 29 : *Untitled (Male & Female)*, 1990, Kiki Smith.

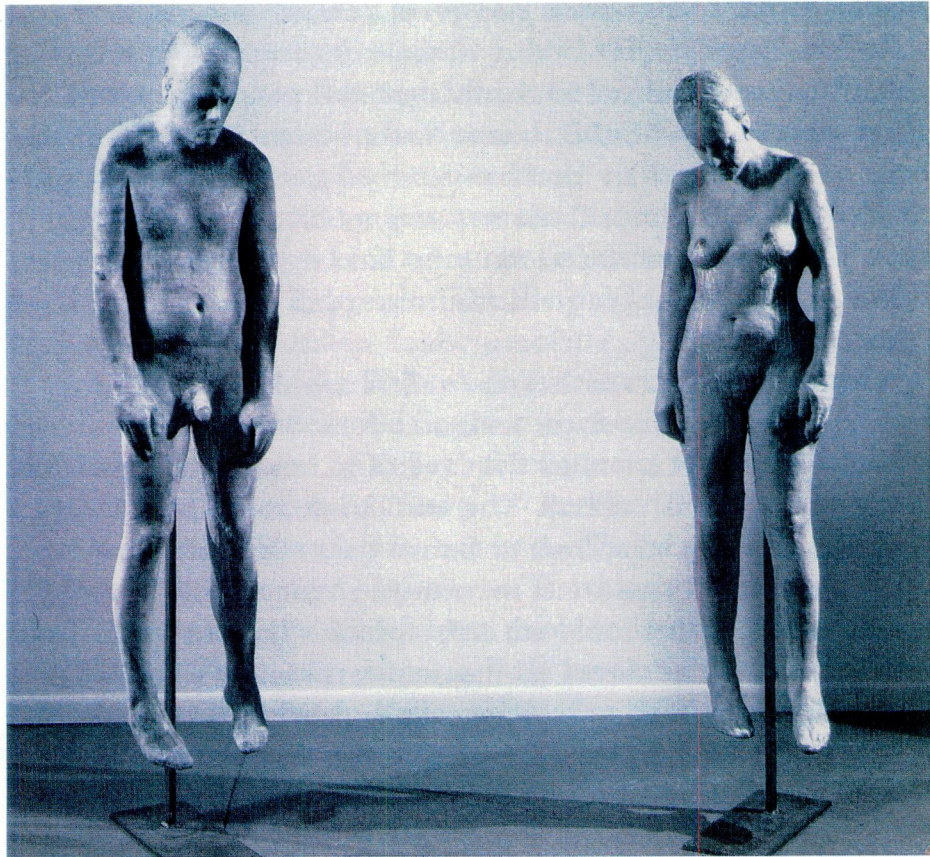


Plate 30 : *Peacock*, 1994, Kiki Smith.

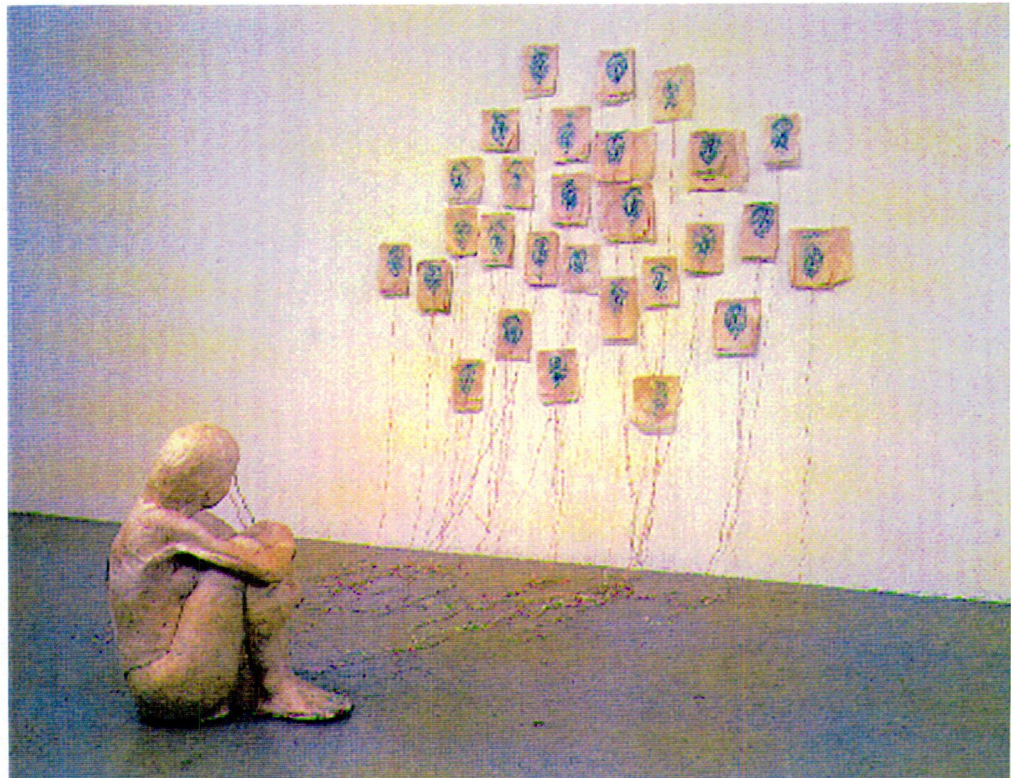


Plate 31 : *Untitled Train*, 1993, Kiki Smith.

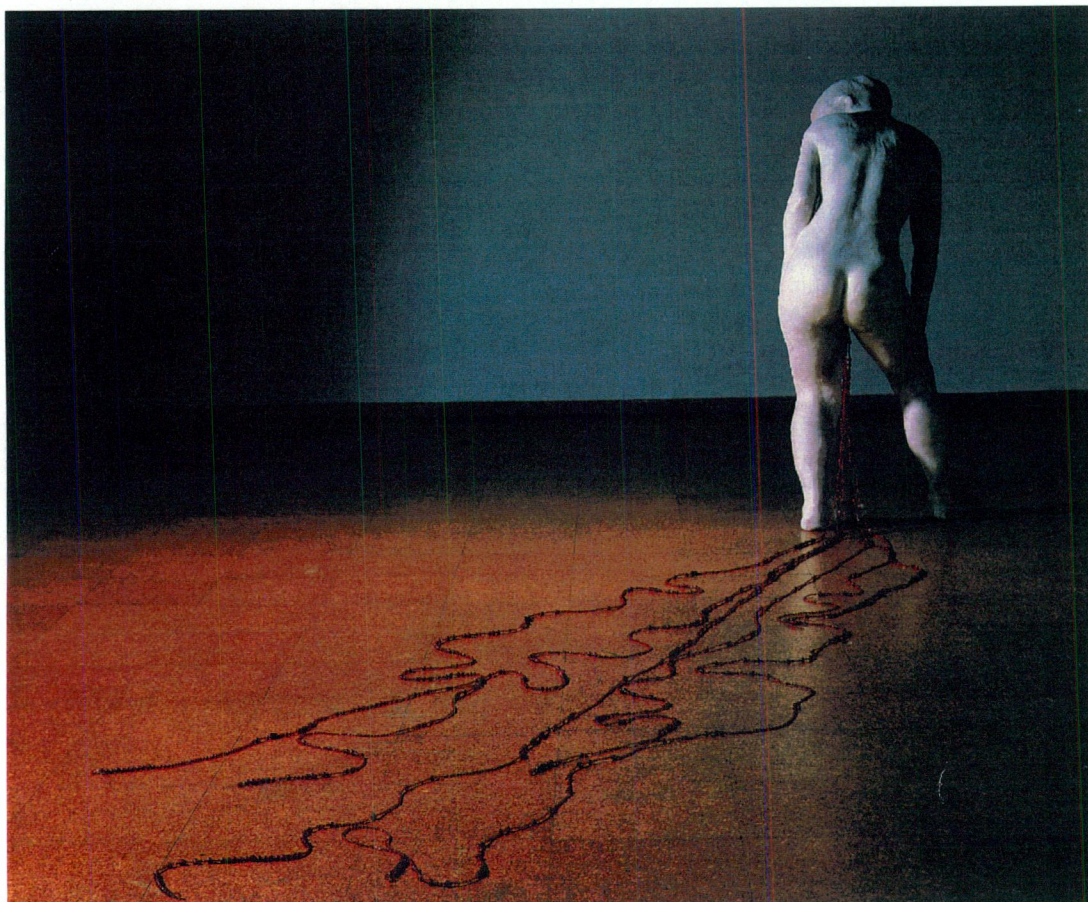
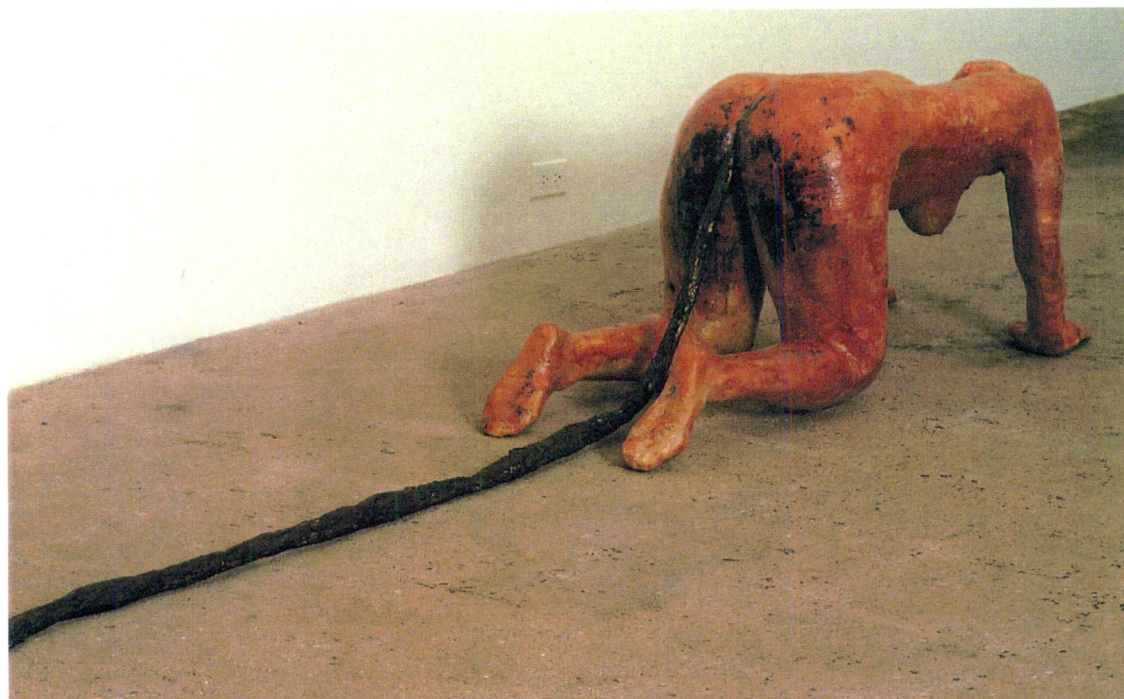


Plate 32 : *Tale*, 1992, Kiki Smith.



corpse-like bodies are lifted above ground level. They appear to be impaled on the metal stand they are suspended from. Their heads tilt downwards, their shoulders hunch forwards, and their feet hang, pointing in the direction of the floor. There is an overwhelming sense of heaviness in these corporeal, morbid and abject figures. Their skin appears pallid and bruised suggesting death and putrefication. Milk pours from the breasts of the female figure and sperm dribbles down the inner thigh of the male figure. The male and female body are separated from each other in this sculpture, they fail to interact. However an isolated correlation is suggested between the two. The boundaries of both the male and female body are traversed resulting in a destabilising effect .

Smith's sculpture *Peacock* (PL. 30, p.58) also alludes to the crossing of boundaries. A female figure made of white paper sits in a huddled position on the gallery floor. Tears flow from her eyes leading to delicate images of the vagina in blue ink, which are displayed on sheets of paper on the wall. This sculpture draws a comparison between the shape of the eyes and vagina. Both orifices also represent sites of abjection, since they depict places from which bodily fluids emit. This sculpture is similar to Louise Bourgeois's *Le Regarde* , in that it also alludes to the presence of a female gaze.

Abjection is apparent in Kiki Smith's freestanding sculpture *Untitled Train* , (PL. 31, p.59). Smith represents a realistic and

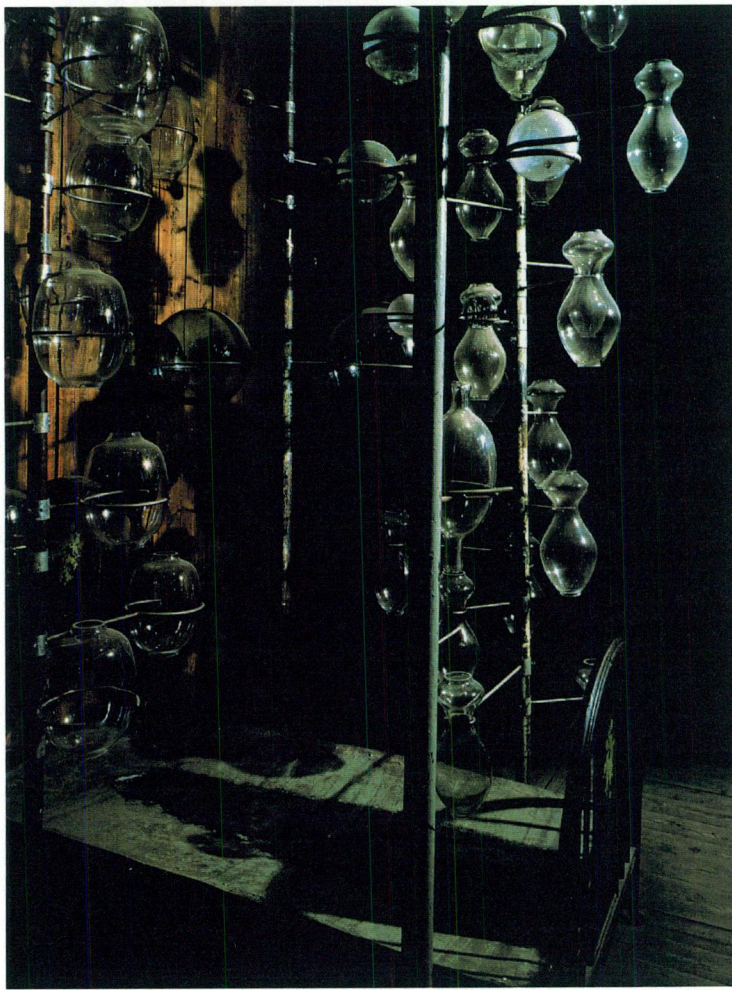


Plate 33
Precious Liquids, Detail,
 1991, Louise Bourgeois.

Plate 34 : *Untitled (jars)*, 1986, Kiki Smith.



corporeal female figure. The plaster mould for the figure is created from a specific model with a strong and voluptuous shape. The female body is not an idealistic representation, it challenges prevalent ideals of the 'perfect' body. The figure's weight is leaning heavily in one direction, the upper torso tilts slightly forward, downward and inward in a contained pose. Smith achieves a strong sense of presence with the flesh-like quality of the wax, from which, the figure is formed. The fleshiness of the body combined with the hunched and slightly drooping pose and the signs of her sexual difference cause the appearance of abjection in the figure. Strands of delicate and translucent crystal beads fall from the figure's vulva suggesting the powerful taboo of menstruation.

menstrual blood....stands for the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual) ; it threatens the relationship between the sexes within a social aggregate and, through internalization, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference (Kristeva, 1982, p.71).

The viewer's initial reaction to *Untitled (Train)* is one of horror and embarrassment followed by compassion and emotional identification. The boundary between reality and illusion is momentarily crossed as the sculpture of a bleeding woman is confused with a real bleeding woman. The grotesque and repulsive are evoked, however at the same time the preciousness and beauty of the fractured and reflective beads become apparent. The beads

flow from inside the female body to outside, falling and dividing into many separate paths on the floor. The body represented has failed to retain its blood which spills into the viewer's space, causing viewers to affirm their subjectivity.

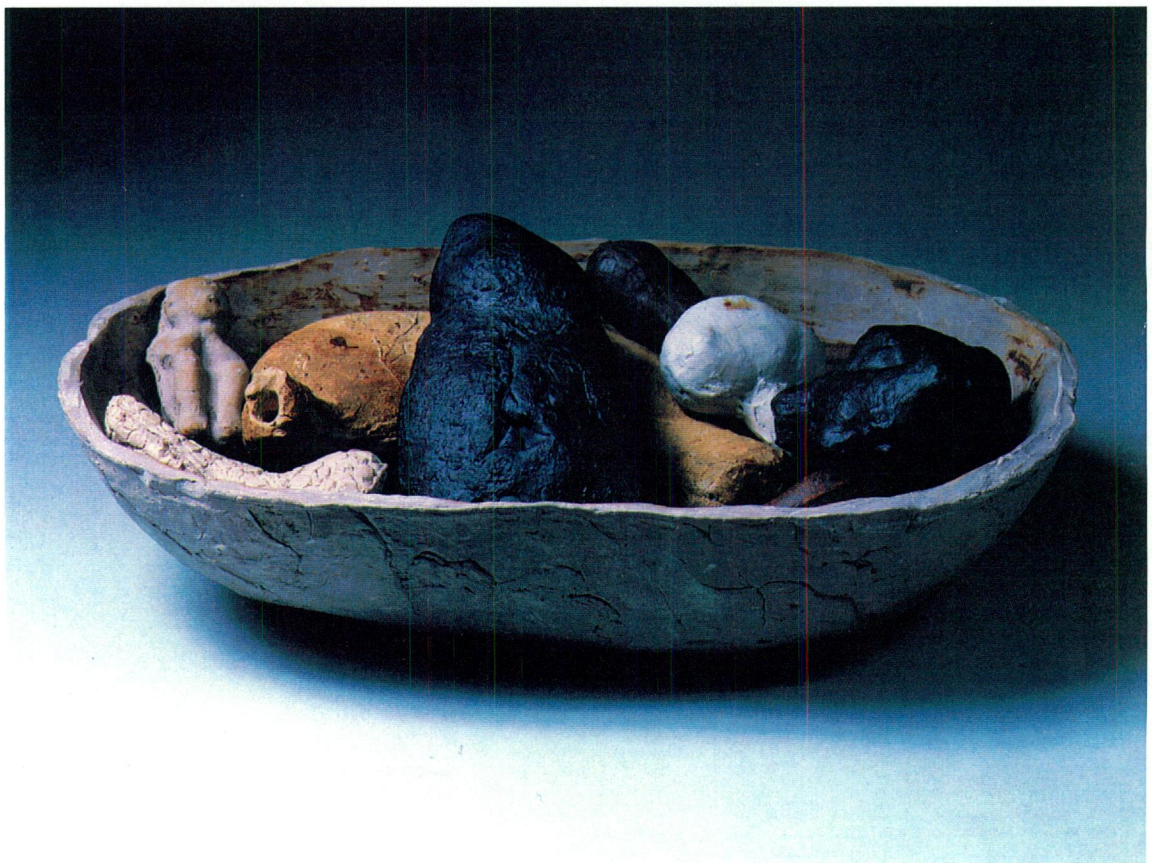
By representing the female body as a 'grotesque body' Kiki Smith avoids an objectifying gaze. Her disturbing sculpture *Tale*, 1992 (PL. 32, p.59) also represents the female body as grotesque by illustrating abjection in relation to corporeal waste. This sculpture, which represents a female body crawling on her hands and knees, emanates with a feeling of great pain. The woman presented is in the process of expelling excrement suggesting a loss of bodily control. This sculpture alludes to illness and urges the viewer to accept the body's limitations and mortality.

By confronting the abject signs of sexual difference and corporeal waste, Kiki Smith challenges patriarchal notions. She tackles the ideas of secrecy and unacceptability attached by society to menstruation and the body's waste materials. By making the natural and necessary corporeal function of menstruation visible in *Untitled (Train)*, she celebrates what has been seen as woman's difference and otherness, as something quite beautiful. Abjection in relation to the maternal body is also referred to in this sculpture. Thus highlighting notions of the woman as abject and urging the viewer to accept the mother as subject. Patriarchy is implicated and imperiled when confronted by menstrual blood as it invokes



Plate 35
Intestine, 1992,
 Kiki Smith.

Plate 36 : *Zweite Auswahl (Second choice)*, 1988, Kiki Smith.



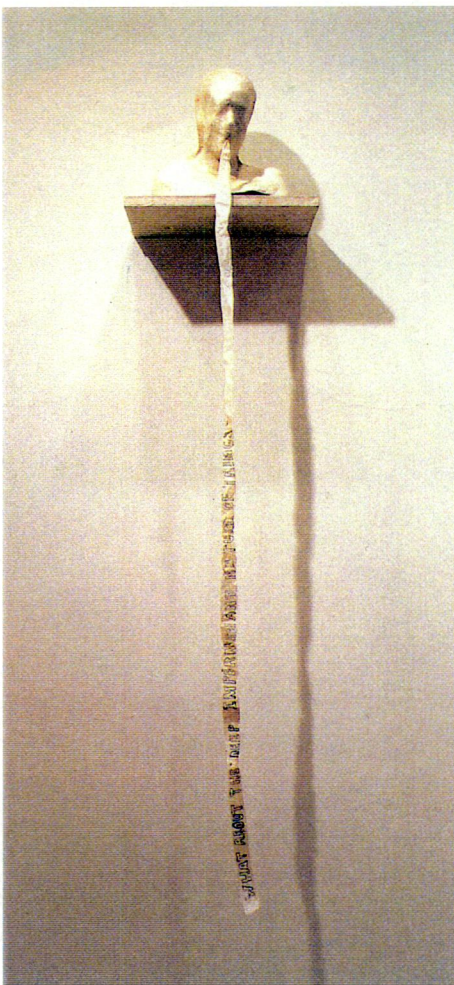


Plate 37
Untitled, 1991,
 Kiki Smith.

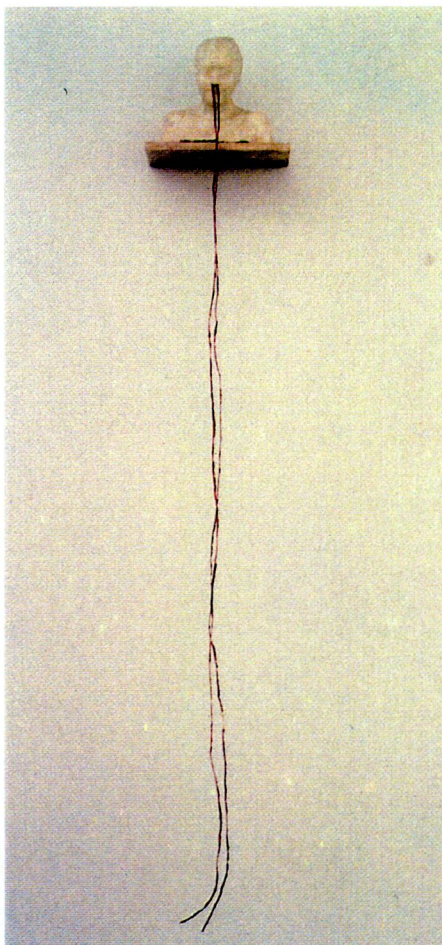


Plate 38
Untitled, 1991,
 Kiki Smith.

fear and anxiety in relation to the maternal body. Smith's use of the abject unsettles society's homogeneity and order, by acknowledging and celebrating the place where the subject and thus culture come into existence. (Gross, 1990).

Louise Bourgeois created an installation entitled *Precious Liquids* (PL. 33, p.61) which was exhibited at Documenta 9 in Kassel, Germany in 1992. This work represents a dark and enclosed room which the viewer can walk into. Inside this space are four steel poles which hold numerous glass vessels. A small pool of liquid lies stagnant on a bed made of iron, which the stands with glass vessels surround. The precious liquids contained within the glass vessels or containers allude to bodily fluids such as blood, sweat, tears, vomit, urine, milk, and semen. The pool of liquid on the bed indicates that the fluids have leaked out of the vessels which once contained them. This installation is concerned with the release of fluids from the body in reaction to the pressure of pain. Physical, emotional, psychological and mental pain is suggested by both the collection of objects presented in the room and the atmosphere created. The uncontrollability of the body intimated in this installation again suggests the body's vulnerabilities and limitations.

Kiki Smith's sculpture *Untitled (jars)* , 1986, (PL. 34, p.61), also alludes to bodily fluids. She represents twelve bottles made of mirrored glass, the surface of which reflects the viewer's image.

Words naming various bodily fluids are etched in Gothic type onto the jars implying that the liquids labeled are contained within. The liquid components of the body's make up, although contained in and hidden behind the mirrored glass jars, still confront the viewer with a sense of the body's liquidity.

Kiki Smith's two sculptures, *Untitled*, 1991, (PL. 37 & PL. 38, p.65) represent a pair of paper busts presented high up on shelves on the gallery wall. The insides of the bodies cannot be contained and spill out through the mouth and nostril openings of the ghostly heads. They spill over the edge of the shelves, towards the floor and into the viewer's space. This sculpture again raises questions of control. As Kiki Smith explains :

When people are dying, they are losing control of their bodies. That loss of function can seem humiliating and frightening. But on the other hand, you can look at it as a kind of liberation of the body. It seems like a nice metaphor, a way of thinking about the social - that people lose control despite the many agendas of different ideologies in society which are trying to control the body(ies)...medicine, religion, Law, ect. Just think about control. Who has the control of the body ? Does the body have control over itself? Do you ?...Does the mind have control over the body ? Does the social ? (Institute of Contemporary Art Amsterdam, 1990, p.127)

In sculptures such as *Intestine*, 1992, (PL. 35, p.64) and *Zweite Auswahl* (Second Choice), 1988, (PL. 37, p.64), Kiki Smith represents the internal organs of the body as unprotected and exposed fragments. By representing organs without the protective shell of the body, Smith exposes gender neutral and

undifferentiated fragments of the body thus implying the equality of humankind.

Abjection in the work of Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeois questions what is defined by culture as inappropriate and exposes realms of the body that are usually unseen. By confronting the abject Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeois challenge patriarchal attitudes towards the body. Their work draws attention to the splintered subjectivity of the human condition and by doing so destabilises patriarchal ideologies.

CONCLUSION

Louise Bourgeois and Kiki Smith have appropriated psychoanalytic notions of the uncanny, resulting in an incoherent and schizophrenic sense in their work. This confronts the viewer with an unfamiliar subjectivity causing us to question and re-evaluate notions of identity. The uncanny and abjection results in the blurring of boundaries between inside and outside, self and other, subject and object. This dichotomy again reflects the sense of schizophrenia present in contemporary Western society. The uncanny is achieved in the work of Louise Bourgeois and Kiki Smith, through the loss of self represented by gender duality, doubling, fragmentation, fetishism and abjection. The consequences of their work suggest that everything is either transformed or destroyed.

Through their work, in which the physical, the emotional, the psychological and the spiritual are expressed, Louise Bourgeois and Kiki Smith challenge and question the boundaries of society's accepted norms of behavior and perception. Through explorations of the assembling of patriarchal stereotypes and social structures in their work, in particular the notions of woman as object and woman as abject, the viewer is urged to question and redefine. The sculptures of Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeois reflect psychoanalytic notions from a female perspective, thus subverting and redefining the phallogocentric inclinations of psychoanalysis.

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