PATTERNS OF CORPOREALITY:
THE GROTESQUE TEXT/ILE BODY

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CHAPTER 00 | PREAMBLE

This thesis is submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

ABSTRACT

This practice-led research project explores the feminine abject through textile design featuring grotesque ornament and pattern.

Maintaining a normative feminine identity in a Western culture involves, more likely than not, rigorous self-policing behaviours enacted to identify and eradicate signs of the corporeal self, which is seen as unfinished, vulnerable, and leaky at the margins. This encultured practice involves keeping the body contained and controlled, both physically and visually. Within a traditional Cartesian duality, boundaries are established through an oppositional politics of contrasting fluidity/solidity, irrationality/rationality, and containment/ excess.

Textiles are one means by which these boundaries are managed — through dress, and also through the textiles of domestic spaces: textiles that function here as a symbolic demarcation between body and world. As the conclusion to this research project I present designs for domestic textiles which, rather than clearly delimiting the leaky self from the public world, provoke experiences of fascination/repulsion in the viewer.

The textiles feature pattern and decoration based on grotesque ornament. As a social, artistic, and literary category the grotesque rejects the binary of interior/exterior, instead embracing the fluid, the overflowing, and the excessive. In this thesis I link this to historic notions of women's place and voice.

The artefacts that comprise the practical component of the thesis subvert the formal language of the female nude, which is designed to smooth, control, and contain the excessive female body. They explore how the leaky and abject body can be viewed as other than polluting: namely, as belonging to a different experience of subjecthood.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

Signature: Date: 1 Nov 2013

POSITIONING STATEMENT

I always knew textiles spoke. My mother's quilts shared stories of the garments she'd worn before I was born, and those of my childhood. The untouched painted linen and wool threads, in the cardboard box illustrated with a dainty lady in 18th-century dress, told me of my grandmother's wish for relief from the realities of post-WWII rural Kaiangaroa. The handstitched table linens kept in the china cabinet, and saved for 'best', whispered of the importance of managing appearance. My 1990 needleworked canvas Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles pillows shouted a wish to marry pop culture with domestic craft, in a pre-internet world.

Throughout my life I learned every textile skill I could find. Crochet, embroidery, quilting and appliqué, screen printing, needlepoint, cross stitch, dyeing, shibori, and garment construction: enlarging the vocabulary with which I spoke.

Once I joined the fashion industry I learned the dialects in which clothing talked to the world on our behalf, and the quiet desperation people felt when they couldn't find the right words. Working in costume for theatre and film let me fine-tune my understanding of the language of textiles; how colour, texture, pattern, size, and shape might speak worlds into being.

My Master of Art and Design thesis spoke about a childhood spent being both between, and at the edge of, cultures and places. I lined garments, made from upholstery fabric, with textiles printed with childhood snapshots, and featured large buttons with resin-encapsulated images.

In this PhD thesis a range of textiles; digitally printed, embroidered, and with hand-printed devoré, speak about a contemporary lived life framed as a grotesque subject.

My daughter's birth sampler in my hallway,

    . . . and the quilt that now lies on my bed, but once covered my grandfather's sparse cooling frame in a hospital bed,

        . . . have taught me in very intimate ways,

           . . . that fabrics speak.

INTRODUCTION

This practice-led research project investigates the notion of the female grotesque through textile design. This exegesis contextualises the accompanying artefacts (texts) in the thesis exhibition.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In 2003, discussing Jenny Saville's paintings of naked women, Meagher proposed "the emergence of an aesthetic of disgust," offering "new modes of thinking about feminine embodiment", and asked, "what would it mean for a woman – an artist, an activist, a spectator - to willingly and excessively embody disgust?" (p. 24). This research project explores this mode of feminine embodiment, through an investigation of feminine abjection and grotesquerie in textile pattern and ornament. I use my own body as a grotesque and abject text.

This thesis posits the grotesque and abject as lived experiences, as part of an ambiguous subjectivity. Disgust functions as a tool for normative enculturation. Ambiguity provides, as Meagher (2003) suggests, "an opportunity to both acknowledge and interrupt disgust reactions – which is to say that it allows us to feel disgust in order to interrogate its sources" (p. 30). This acknowledges multiple ways of being.

My research frames autoethnography as a transgressive and grotesque way of speaking out about that which traditionally would be contained and held within the subject. Through this I subvert, as does autoethnography, the tradition of the silent, domesticated woman in her proper place. The textiles in the exhibition function as visual and tactile autoethnographies, speaking to my own framing as a grotesque subject. By using textile pattern to express narratives of the private made public, I destabilise the role of pattern and ornament as controlling, ordering, enculturing, and enclosing unruly elements.

Cixous (2001) urges that:

> if woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man . . . it is time for her to dislocate this 'within', to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of. (p. 634)

The project uses the idiom of textile design to speak in this l'écriture feminine, or women's language: offering an alternative discourse in autoethnography.

Pelias (2003) warned of the potential concern that, "academics function as ethnographic tourists in that they, like tourists, like ethnographers, never get beyond the surface of things, even when they spend a lifetime at their sites" (p. 371). Using an autoethnographic approach allows me to rupture the surface; bringing my internalised experiences forward and pushing myself outwards: the essence of the abject. Through crossing boundaries and transgressing limits, the textiles challenge the viewer. They break the rules of order and silence, and threaten to contaminate the audience.

The research explores feminist issues: as Balducci (2007) asserts, "feminist art is any art that in some way questions dominant, typically patriarchal paradigms — be they art historical, political, social, or aesthetic" (p. 45). What is at stake in my research is an exploration, through text, pattern, and ornamentation, not only of my own position as a grotesque and abject female subject, but also of the boundaries of aesthetic paradigms.

The work sits across the boundaries of graphic design, textile design, fashion, craft, autobiography, and visual arts. The work blurs lines of demarcation and, in doing so embraces "impurity, anomaly or

1. Michael Camille (1992) describes medieval babewyn as chaotic creatures: "women with bird's bodies . . . pig-headed dancers and hooded old men with tails between their legs like hideously overgrown genitals" (p. 85). Babewyn were drawn in the margins of decorated manuscripts and sculpted on the outside of churches and cathedrals: creatures of liminal spaces.

monstrosity" (Derrida, 1980 p. 57). As Lind (2007) identifies, the new millennium has been marked by a "shifting between genre boundaries" (p. 173). A mixing and crossing-over is evident: of interests, subjects, tools, methods, technologies, scales, and places, between genres such as art, design, film, academia, commerce, and ideological structures. Our culture is marked by a "flourishing of hybrids" (p. 173): grotesque *babewyn*[1], fragmented and partial, creating a new form of totality.

My practice also encompasses the category of body art, in that it "take[s] place through an enactment of the artist's body . . .that is then documented such that it can be experienced subsequently through photography, film, video, and/or text" (Jones, 1998, p. 13). While my body was enacted as the grotesque in a photographic studio in order to gain imagery for some of the textile works, more importantly it is enacted through the performative activities of everyday living; of experiencing life as a subject. This, as Jones asserts, "places the body/self within the realm of the aesthetic as a political domain articulated through the anesthetization of the particularized body/self embedded in the social" (p. 13). It is my hope that the work contributes to an understanding of human experience; that, as Jones suggests, it "provides the possibility for radical engagements that can transform the way we think about meaning and subjectivity (both the artist's and our own)" (p. 14).

This exegesis presents the conceptual framework through which the thesis may be interpreted and understood.

EXEGESIS DESIGN

To some extent, it remains true that "all scholarly research is expected to culminate in writing" (Bolter, 2001, p. 105). Although this PhD is framed as practice-led design, the production of its written exegesis remains important, and its generation was in close discourse with practice throughout the development of the thesis.

As Grey and Malins (2004) note, to evaluate research it is necessary to articulate the methods by which it was undertaken (p. 168-170). Therefore, this exegesis first reviews extant knowledge relevant to the thesis. I then explicate the methodology underpinning my approach. The exegesis thus interrogates the practice as well as articulating the methods through which the thesis was framed and explored. Finally the critical framework, and commentary on selected pieces from the exhibition, frame the research project.

A practice-led research project involves a complex and intertwining network of relationships between practice, writing, and framing. The critical framework is unpacked in discourse with the artefacts created in the realisation of the thesis. The relationship between context, research methodology, critical theory, and practice embody shifting and interpenetrating boundaries.

EXHIBITION DESIGN

The exhibition involves the making public of that which is usually private. The textiles mark liminal spaces within public space: separating and defining the self and the non-self, the intimate and the public: the window, the hall, the lounge, the dining room, the bedroom. These transitional spaces, by being removed from the domestic environs, however, are left ambiguously adrift: a series of "liminal, transitional spaces, unmoored, unfixed and resistant" (Momin, 2004, p. 51). In this way the exhibition design reflects the ambiguity involved in the grotesque and abject: a blurring of boundaries and categories, leaving the viewer off-balance and uncertain. Although works appearing in the exhibition feature throughout the exegesis, a consideration of their individual and collective nature is discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 01 | REVIEW OF RELATED KNOWLEDGE

INTRODUCTION

This review of knowledge surveys theoretical and visual material contextualising the thesis. The first section reviews written material relating to the project, and the second examines art and design practice that prefigures or runs parallel to the inquiry. In considering the conceptual territories for the project I present this review under subheadings that map onto core areas discussed in the critical framework.

THEORETICAL WORKS

THE ABJECT

Texts on the abject build on Douglas' Purity and Danger (2002), originally published in 1966, which defines dirt as "matter out of place" (p.44). Douglas argued that the notion of defilement is a cultural construct; that dirt is the outcome of a classification.

Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the byproduct of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. The idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism. (ibid)

Douglas approached dirt and defilement from an anthropological standpoint, and she was particularly interested in how uncleanliness was categorised in different religions. Her research suggested that uncleanliness resides in items that cross boundaries.

Kristeva (1982) developed the concept of the abject in Powers of Horror. She argued that the abject is that which crosses boundaries, being neither the subject nor object: "abjection is above all ambiguity" (p. 9). Kristeva defined the abject as that which "does not respect borders, position, rules. The inbetween, the ambiguous, the composite". The abject is "something rejected from which one does not part" (p. 4), and it occurs when "the clean and proper . . . becomes filthy, the sought-after turns into the banished, fascination becomes shame" (p. 8). Kristeva noted the instability of the abject is related above all to the maternal body (p. 14), and she suggested that the abject constitutes what it marks as other: "'I' expel myself, 'I' spit myself out, 'I' abject myself within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish myself" (p. 3).

Kristeva's abject has subsequently been explored by a wealth of recent feminist writers, including Covino (2004), Creed (1993), Cregan (2006), Grosz (1994), Heard (2007), and Shildrick (2002, 2006).

No. 70.   Sin in Satins.

FIGURE 1.1

Demon in stays, from Wright's *History of Caricature and Grotesque* (1865).

FOOTNOTE

2. Stays are an early form of corset, made like a bodice with shoulder straps, and lacing up the back and front (Calasibetta, 1988, p. 547). The term corset meaning a stiff, supporting undergarment dates only from 1795.

2006).

Covino (2004) argued that there is a "dominant tradition in philosophical aesthetics, that an ideal body is no body at all, a body freed from its materiality" (p. 7), and she located the "identification of transcendent beauty with the erasure of the abject body" (ibid.). Creed (1993) identified our conception of the abject maternal body as "shocking, terrifying, horrific" (p. 1). She disagreed with the idea that the maternal is inherently abject, but argued rather that the feminine maternal is constructed as non-symbolic and therefore threatening, through "signifying practices of patriarchal ideology" (p. 166). Cregan (2006) analysed how the body becomes framed as abject by exceeding "bodily boundaries and borders" (p. 7), and argued that the abject body sits within a "tradition that privileges a controlling mind over the material form of a person" (p. 11).

THE GROTESQUE

Significant studies of the grotesque as a separate genre of art and literature began with Wright in 1865, in his comprehensive study of grotesque motifs in art and literature (from Ancient Egypt and Greece to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century caricature). Wright framed the grotesque as "comic or laughable" (1968, p. 1). Part of the grotesque humour that Wright identifies comes from behaviour that crosses boundaries; that is, matter out of place. Nineteenth-century gender mores were a significant source of Wright's "joviality" (p. 3). These included an Ancient Egyptian engraving of a woman vomiting wine (p. 3), a medieval manuscript figure of a horned, winged, demon in tight-laced stays[2] (Fig. 1.1) (p. 105), the drawing of a housewife who has seized the staff of rule and overthrown her husband (p. 124), and the reproduction of William Hogarth's engraving of a young woman eating a ruined pie that had fallen to the ground (p. 439).

In his 1957 *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, Kayser (1963), like Wright, identified the grotesque as involving the juxtaposition of things that did not belong together. However, he extended the grotesque to include not only the comic, but also the eliciting of horror and laughter, and the creation of humour with disgust and astonishment. In the 1968 edition of Wright's work, Barasch, drawing heavily on Kayser (1963), added a substantial introduction. In this, he examined uses of grotesque from the Roman Augustean era through to the 1960s. In this overview he traced alternative shades of meaning within the grotesque, and their metamorphosis over time. Barasch noted that grotesque is a slippery and fluid category. He argued that the term "had been employed since the seventeenth century in almost every realm of human experience, having connotations from 'divine' to 'disgusting'" (p. xxii).

Harpham, in his 1982 work on the grotesque, noted that "grotesqueries both require and defeat definition . . . they stand at the margin . . . between the known and the unknown . . . calling into question the adequacy of our ways of organizing the world" (2006, p. 4). Harpham specifically referenced French Renaissance scholar Michel Eyquem de Montaigne in his analysis of the grotesque. Montaigne stated "the most beautiful lives, to my mind, are those that conform to the common human pattern, with order" (cited in Harpham, p. 103). Harpham argued that in this worldview "the aberrant and anomalous, because they too are human, can instruct us . . . profitably on the subject of reality" (p. 103): the grotesque highlights the pattern of culture. Thus, Harpham framed the grotesque not as a marginal or aberrant form, but rather as the keystone to Western aesthetics and culture.

Bakhtin (1984), in his re-examination of Rabelais, explored the association of the grotesque with the physical body. The grotesque body, he argued, is associated with the "lower bodily stratum"; and with biological functions such as sex, urination and childbirth (pp. 20-21). The grotesque, therefore, is paradoxical, in that it both degrades and renews.

Russo (1994), enlarging on Bakhtin's thesis, linked the grotesque with the abject, and noted that both of these, in their association with the physical body, had come to be considered feminine qualities. She argued that the grotesque had lost its original positive associations, and instead had come to represent "all the detritus of the body that is seperated out and placed with terror and revulsion. . . on the side of the feminine. . . down there in that cave of abjection" (p. 3). Russo went on to say:

> The classical body is transcendent and monumental, closed, static, self-contained, symmetrical, and sleek; it is identified with the 'high' or official culture. . . the grotesque body is open, protruding, irregular, secreting, multiple, and changing; it is identified with non-official 'low' culture or the carnivalesque. (p. 8)

Gombrich (1984), in his treatise on ornament, briefly examined the grotesque. He noted the slippage of meaning present in the grotesque, and the free play it offers the designer. Gombrich refers to a "systematic ambiguity" (p. 282), in the grotesque, calling it "self-contradictory" (p. 281).

Zamperini (2008) traced the development of grotesque imagery from Nero's Golden House, uncovered during the Renaissance, through to Baroque, Rococo, neo-classical, and art nouveau styles. She argued that the grotesque has a tenacious presence in Western art and design, despite the grotesque's subversive and irrational qualities. Zamperini notes the grotesque is often regarded as an "embarrassment" (p. 6) by official culture, due to its origins in the unnatural, the deformed, and the bizarre. She argues that the grotesque has survived in part

because of its ability to appear to be merely empty ornament, while it conceals allegorical or hidden messages.

A number of researchers, including Carroll (2003), Jones (1998), Menninghaus (2003), Ross (1997) and Summers (2003), have examined the influence of the grotesque on contemporary art and design. They identify the grotesque as one of the major influences on postmodern theory, as well as contemporary mass art and popular culture (Connelly, 2003, p. 292-933), while noting the shifting and reforming nature of the grotesque.

More recently, Goss (2011) examined the turn towards the grotesque in contemporary design discourse. He identified the paradox whereby an aesthetic designed to be ambiguous is introduced to an ordered, planned, design process. Goss argues that a designer cannot simply place "some of the grotesque's characteristics . . . in a design" to "render it grotesque" (p. 124). Rather, one must create an "aesthetic and functional ambiguity" that denies classification (p. 124).

DISGUST

Related to the grotesque and abject is the sensation of disgust. Kolnai's 1929 phenomenological work on disgust addressed a then "sorely neglected" topic (2004, p. 29). Kolnai identified disgust as a defence reaction, and related disgust to abhorrence, which combined disgust, fear, and value-oriented atitudes (p. 34). Building on this sense of disgust as value-oriented, Elias's (2004) 1938 text, The Civilizing Process, examined changing historical standards of behaviour and the reactions they elicited.

Miller (1997) identified the various ways in which a disgust reaction can be evoked. These included moral disgust, olfactory disgust, disgust caused by proximity bodily waste, and disgust caused by a substance that in itself is not digsuting (such as food) being in a place where

it should not be (such as a beard): thus, matter out of place (p. 1). He argued that "disgust rules mark the boundaries of the self" (p. xi) and also feature in human social rankings. Miller identified Jews, nonwhites, workers, and women as specific examples of social classes that have historically elicited a disgust reaction (p. 245).

Korsmeyer's (2011) recent work also examines disgust: however rather than morsal or aesthetic disgust, her writing focuses on "core or material disgust, the kind of emotion that typically follows encounters with sour milk, sewage, and slime" (p. 5)

More relevant to this thesis, is Menninghaus's (2003) comprehensive examination of disgust in literature. He identifies disgust as a response to transgression: either moral, spiritual, or physical. Menninghaus examines aspects of bodily disgust in detail, specifically the disgust engendered by "folds and wrinkles" in the skin (p. 51), the "gaping mouth" (p. 60), "disgusting breasts" (p. 67), the "colossal woman" (p. 75), and the trope of the "fat old whore" (p. 228). Menninghaus argues that fat elicits disgust because it creates a "haziness" in one's outline; it blurs the boundaries of the body. He identifies the collosal woman as "an undoing of the [beauty] aesthetic altogether" (p. 78). Here the borders of beauty are not just breached, but disappear entirely.

FAT AS EXCESS

Fat and body size (particularly in relation to societal pressure placed on women to look a certain way), has been addressed by a number of second-wave feminist writers.

De Beauvoir (2011), in 1949, linked a fear of embodied weight to a fear of the breaching of bodily borders. She noted that with the onset of puberty, girls discover their bodies becoming open for public comment and censure: a woman's body is no longer an expression of individuality, but "instead she becomes for others a thing" (p. 353). De

Beauvoir also identified the accumulation of fat during menopause as one of the factors that leads to menopausal women being considered neither males nor females, although she regards this positively, linking an increase in weight, along with endocrine changes, with "a health, a balance, a vigour that they lacked before" (p. 63).

Orbach (1978, 1982) addressed compulsive eating however she argued that what was considered to be self-destructive behaviour was, rather, an attempt to cope with Western culture. She discussed how women absorb a mass-media message that they can "solve emotional problems, sexual problems, family problems, relationship problems, work problems – all through the transformation of their body" (1978, p. 20). She also identified the role that food plays as a symbol of womanly affection and caring for others. She argued that food is "full of love and nurturance for others, full of self-indulgence to herself" (p. 21).

Brownmiller (1984) noted that because a woman is "forced to concentrate on the minutiae of her bodily parts [she] is never free of self-consciousness". She argued that this self-absorption functions to restrict "freedom of mind" (p. 51). Chapkis (1986), in an ethnographic approach to women's appearance management, identified how complex women's relationship to fat is: with weight both a foe to be battled, and a tool used to deal with the cultural pressure of femininity. She noted that although "woman is identified with body, she never can be . . . mistress over it." (p. 16). Graying, wrinkling, and gaining weight, she suggested, represent reminders that "female identify and authority are only marginally governable" (ibid.).

In 1990 Wolf linked the medicalisation of fat to political oppression. She noted that with the rise of feminism "the stronger women were becoming politically, the heavier the ideals of beauty would bear down upon them, mostly in order to distract their energy and undermine their progress" (2002, p. 3). Similarly, Bordo (2003) identified the fat

body as "culturally inscribed and historically located "(p. 41). She links its institutionalised shaming to an exclusion from the public sphere.

More recently, researchers such as Braziel (2001), Hartley (2001), Kent (2001), LeBesco (2001, 2004), McAllister (2009), Meleo-Erwin (2011), Saguy and Ward (2011), have examined (or made) feminist and queer responses to fat as excess. Rather than reiterating the cultural pressure on women to maintain normative weight, their scholarship has focused on a reclaiming of excess corporeality, in what has become termed fat activism (Cooper, 2008).

LeBesco (2004) typifies this approach, framing the fat body as a revolting body: not simply an aesthetic state, or a medical condition, but a political one. She positions the revolting body as rebelling, protesting, contesting, and refusing to passively submit to authority. Thus, she argues that fat becomes a subversive cultural practice that challenges cultural assumptions about femininity and beauty.

Other writers, such as Cooper (2010), Gilman (2008), and Murray (2007, 2008) have looked at fat shaming as a broader symptom of anxiety about cultural transgression. This corpus of work examines, as Cooper (2010) suggests, not the fat *body*, but rather "the cultural production of fatphobia" (p. 1020).

Farrell (2011) discusses fat and belonging within American social groups. She suggests that fat functions as a marker for cultural anxiety. Oliver (2006) notes that the term overweight is not an objective description of body mass, but rather a statement about what behaviour is allowed, and a relegation of the transgressor to the "margins of society" (p. 15). He notes the Body Mass Index (commonly used to determine medical obesity in Western culture) was designed by 19th century statistician Adolphe Quetelet, as a mathematical tool to calculate how far someone deviated from the norm. Quetelet held to physiognomy[3] , and developed his index inside a worldview

that "deviants, criminals, or troublemakers could be identified by their physical characteristics" (p. 17), with the understanding that "the farther someone was from the average weight, the more they violated other social norms and the more they could be monitored, institutionalized, or controlled" (p. 18). His thinking therefore, framed fat as cultural deviance.

WOMEN'S MEMOIR AND LIFE WRITING

With the rise of third-wave feminism[4], the subject of women's memoir and life-writing became a rich area of scholarly discourse. Researchers such as Anderson (2011), Broughton, (1991), Buss (2002), Cavarero (2000), Chute (2010), Ellerby (2001), Hart (1979), Heilbrun (1986), Miller (1988, 1991, 1994, 1996), Smith (1987), and Smith and Watson (2002, 2010) have examined the marginalisation of women's life writing, repositioning it from "a genre described until recently as a kind of flawed biography gone wrong" (Smith, 1987, p. 3) to "a personal act of repossessing a public world" (Hart, 1979, p. 195).

Miller (1996) notes that memoir "hesitates to define the boundary between public and private, subject and object" (p. 2). Chute identifies the ability of memoir to challenge the "dominant tropes of unspeakability, invisibility, and inaudibility" (p. 3) as crucial to its adoption by women in order to speak themselves into the world.

These researchers frame memoir as not only as a record of what has happened, but also suggest that the process of memoir-writing is performative. As Anderson (2011) notes, "writing the self involves moments when the self is lost, when cracks appear and unconscious memory floods in . . . the self is never secure" (p. 95). In this paradigm, rather than a record of truth, the memoir explores the "subject as subject to dissolution . . . fragmented, inchoate" (p. 95).

FOOTNOTES

3. Physiognomy is the obsolete pseudo-science of determining character from the form or features of the body (Porter, 2003, p. 487).

4. Second wave feminism (1960s-1980s) was mainly concerned with establishing employment rights, reproductive rights, and legislative equality (Freedman, 2003). Second-wave feminists were subsequently criticised for lobbying on issues primarily relevant to the life experiences of middle-class white women (Roth, 2004), and assuming the experience of all women was intrinsically the same. Third wave feminism (late 1980s-today), in contrast, encompasses "a new body of thought, distinct from second-wave feminism, which is characterized by notions of identity, difference, contradictions and embodiment" (Arneil, 1999, p. 255), and acknowledges the "diversity and differences in perspectives" among women (p. 186).

Cavarero (2000) examines the importance of memoir in creating a sense of self in relation to the world:

> The narratable self is inevitably caught up in the text, but is not the result of it; nor does identity coincide fully with the tale . . . when it comes to autobiographical texts something else is at issue: a desire for unity. We try to find a unity which we cannot discover within our own lives, which begin and end in the unknowable. Instead we rely on others. We seek this unity in the story of others or in our own story as seen through the eyes of others. The story presupposes a listener or an audience but as well as this, as soon as we write our own story, it becomes the story of our relationships with others and with the world. (p. 88)

The contested role of autobiography and life writing in scholarly research writing remains active and it is within this that my thesis is partly located. A consideration of additional discourse is introduced and expanded upon in the critical framework chapter of this exegesis.

ORNAMENT, DECORATION, AND PATTERN

Early works on ornament, such as Owen Jones's 1856 *The Grammar of Ornament* (2008) focused on ordering and classifying historical Western ornament, although some non-Western ornament was included, such as that belonging to "Savage Tribes" (from various Pacific nations such as Tonga, New Zealand, and Tahiti) (pp. 40-45). Dresser's 1873 *Principles of Decorative Design* (1995) imposes clear rules and directions upon the designer of ornament, detailing colour schemes and proportions in an effort to maintain "purity" (p. 36), and exhorting the avoidance of "largeness and coarseness" (p. 108).

Semper's (2004, 2011) mid-19th century works approached ornament as determined purely by the physical restrictions present in the process of creation: a by-product of material rather than an aesthetic decision imposed on the material. In contrast, Riegel's (1992, 2004) late Victorian books on ornament, such as *Problems of Style: Foundation For A History of Ornament,* reframed ornament as a contest with nature: an attempt to visually tame and control the world around us.

In his 1908 *Ornament and Crime* Loos (1998) reflected the attitude of his era when he framed ornament as degenerate. He argued that "the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornamentation from objects of everyday use" (p. 167). This view became highly influential in modernist thinking. Gombrich (1984), to a certain extent, reclaimed ornament and decorative design, so long as they were handled with constraint. He framed adornment as "order superimposed on an existing order" (p. 65).

More recent works on ornament have reassessed its aesthetic qualities. Grabar (1992) examined ornament in Islamic architecture and artefacts, and explored the sensuality of ornamentation. Snodin and Howard (1996) examined ornament in terms of historical and cultural contexts, and considered the shifting "moral dimension to the use of ornament" (p. 12). Similarly, Trilling (2001, 2003) explored the aesthetic move from the highly ornamented 19th century, through the consideration of ornament as trivial and in bad taste during the influence of the modernist approach, to the rediscovery and rehabilitation of ornament at the end of the 20th century. Trilling stated ornament "is almost never 'original': the skill lies in turning a recognised form into something different." He argues that ornament inherently borrows from, and is informed by, the past (2003, p. xiv).

More recently, Brett (2005) examined ornament in terms of visual pleasure by exploring historical uses of ornament, and different approaches to specific colour, texture, and shape combinations. He examined philosophical issues impacting on the "critical treatment of decorative values" as well as the "social function of decoration" (p. 13). Brett linked the "denigration of decoration and visual pleasure" to the "enduring power of classical models" in Western culture, and argued a continuing devaluation of pleasure in contemporary society.

VISUAL WORKS

My research project adopts a feminist approach to the grotesque and abject. In doing so it draws upon the significant body of work developed by generations of women artists, who have dealt with issues of media, gender identity, sexuality, and the body.

PATTERN AND DECORATION

My work builds on the paradigm explored by the 1970s Pattern and Decoration (P&D) visual arts group. The group included feminist artists Joyce Kozloff, Valerie Jaudon, Miriam Shapiro, and Sonya Rapoport, and was described as "an essential part of the first wave of postmodernism" (Harvey, 2003, p. 44). These artists took "the visual vocabularies of traditional 'women's work'" and positioned them "as equivalents to high Modernism, as valid, highly evolved ways of looking at and interacting with the world" (p. 43). The group was formed with the intention of integrating "the 'minor' arts of 'decoration' with the 'high' or 'fine' arts of painting and sculpture in a bid to destabilize established cultural hierarchies and the legitimate and celebrate the decorative" (Chave, 1996, p. 9).

This group is particularly interesting in terms of my research project because it has not been written into art history: the work of these artists forms an aporia or gap[5].

The group members were influenced by different aspects of decorative pattern. For some, like Kozloff, inspiration came from non-Western decorative art, such as Islamic or Central American pattern (Kozloff, 1977, p. 65-66). Although the group comprised a higher ratio of women than contemporaneous art movements, and dealt with issues that feminism was also concerned with, it was not necessarily a feminist art movement (Danto, 2007, p. 9). However, members such as Kozloff were instrumental in feminist art organisations in the 1970s (Otis College, 2011), and others, like Shapiro (Fig. 1.2), were

influenced by traditional women's handcraft patterns such as quilting (Gouma-Peterson, 1999). It is through the work of women artists such as these that we are able to trace intersections between Pattern and Decoration and feminist concerns.

Group members such as Shapiro and Kozloff continued to use domestic textiles as the basis for art, in an "ideology and practice [that] mediates between the informal, customary rules and values of the craft workplace and the formal authority structure of High Art, producing a new Decorative Art in the human space where they meet" (Perrone, 1979, p. 80).

OTHER FEMINIST ART AND DESIGN

Second-wave feminist artists such as Louise Bourgeoise, Harmony Hammond, Eva Hesse, Ana Mendieta, Senga Nengudi, Faith Ringgold, Suzanne Santoro, Carolee Schneemann, Cindy Sherman, Lenore Tawney, and Hannah Wilke, all contributed to the foregrounding of women's life experience as an appropriate message for the visual arts, the politicisation of textiles as a medium for creative expression, and the development of a "new approach to a medium historically dismissed as a feminine craft" (Auther, 2010, p. xi).

Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* (1973-77) (Fig. 1.3) comprised the soiled nappy-liners from her son's diapers, complete with faecal stains, mounted and framed, alongside a written record of what she had fed her son that day (Kelly, 1996). These were controversial pieces when they were shown at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in 1976, because they brought the domestic into the public; the abject into the clean environment of a gallery. Being a written record of her child care activities, *Post-Partum Document* functions as both artwork and memoir: Henry (2011) describes it as "a bizarre baby scrap-book"

FOOTNOTE

5. Danto (2007) noted that "however much the P&D artists contributed to the understanding and practice of art, their movement has remained fairly obscure . . . [excluded from] the syllabi and reading lists for Art History 101 as it is taught to undergraduates in institutions of higher learning everywhere in the world (p. 10-11). Similarly, Balducci (2007) noted that the lack of scholarship around the Pattern and Decoration movement is almost farcical, and that it is "one of the most underappreciated" art movements of the late twentieth century. (p. 43) She reported that several comprehensive surveys of 20th Century American art completely omit the P&D movement (p. 56). Dempsey (2002) finds room for multiple pages on such minor art movements as the French Supports-Surfaces movement, Grav, and Combines (a movement comprised of a single artist), but relegates Pattern and Decoration to a 2.5cm x 5.5 cm note in the closing pages. It seems reasonable to suggest that it was the association with women's domestic crafts, and the very preoccupation with pattern and decoration that gave the group its name, that has led to the anonymity of the P&D movement. At the time, according to Swartz (2007), "much of what they were doing was pilloried by the art world as bad art or kitsch" (p. 27). American critics derided the work as trivial, lightweight, fluffy, and "feminine (in a pejorative sense)" (Swartz, 2007, p. 33 & 34).
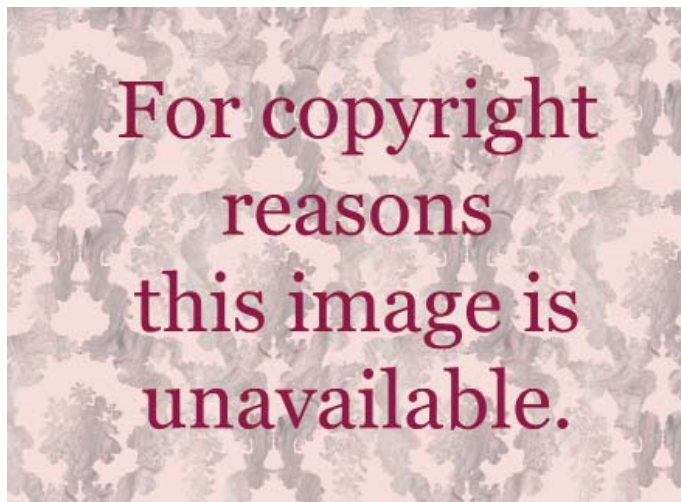
FIGURE 1.2

Miriam Schapiro, *Patience,* 1977. Acrylic and fabric collage on canvas.
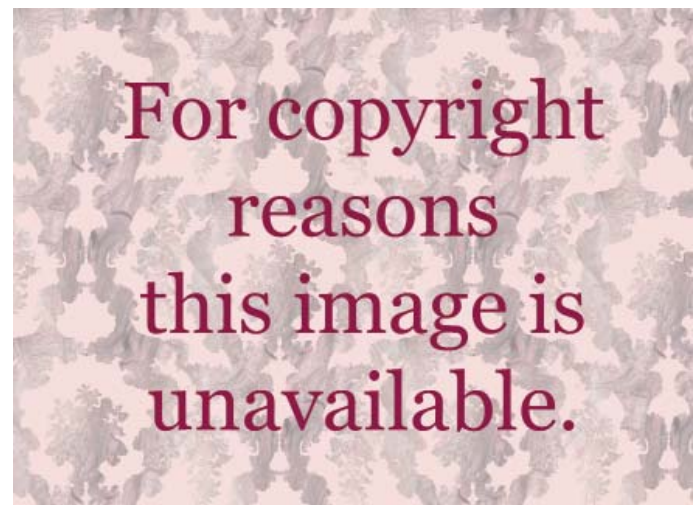
FIGURE 1.3

Mary Kelly, *Post-Partum Document*, 1973-77. Mixed media.

(para. 3). Kelly calls it an "account of what was really emotionally significant at the time" (para. 6).

Kelly has continued to make work that explores women's experience, and cultural assumptions about that experience. An example of this is her *Corpus* (1984-86), which comprises framed fashion garments, signifying an absence of female bodies and the female masquerade (Apter, 1995, p. 66). In *Corpus* "Kelly marks the female body or 'corpus' through photographed images of twisted and knotted articles of clothing, placed alongside text panels with hand-written first-person accounts of older women experiencing their bodies in the social realm" (Jones, 1998, p. 28).

Judy Chicago is best known for her 1979 installation The Dinner Party (Fig. 1.4). This comprised a large triangular table set with 30 place settings for famous historical or mythical women, in reference to the elison of women in historical records (Auther, 2010, p. 146-148). The decorated ceramic plates, in shapes reminiscent of vulvas, were placed on hand embroidered table mats and runners[6]. As Auther notes:

> the work stands as an emblem of the feminist embrace
>
> of craft as the antithesis of elitist art and the problems
>
> associated with feminists appropriating the language and
>
> materials of women's craft while insisting on their own
>
> status as noncraftspeople. (p. 146)

Similarly, Chicago's *Rejection Quintet* (1974) (Fig. 1.5) explores her theory of "central core imagery" (Auther, 2010, p. 123). This asserts the vagina to be women's central core of being, a "secret place which can be entered and which is also a passageway from which life emerges" (ibid.). Chicago wrote on the vulval drawings, expressing how the experience of rejection of her art was "like having your flower split open" (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, n.d.).
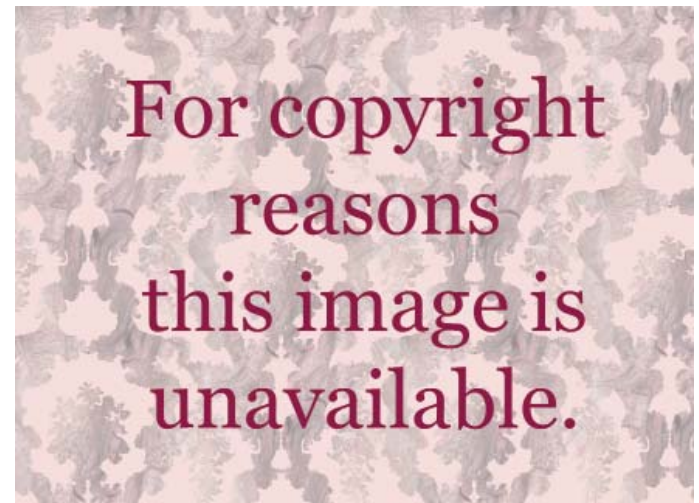
FIGURE 1.4

Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 1979. Mixed media.

FOOTNOTE

6. Some irony exists in the lack of acknowledgement given to the craftspeople who physically produced the ceramics and embroidery comprising Chicago's piece.

FIGURE 1.5

Judy Chicago, *Female Rejection*, from *The Rejection Quartet*, 1974. Coloured pencil and graphite on paper.

FIGURE 1.6

Tracey Emin, *All the People I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995 (The Tent)*, 1995. Mixed media.

Among the Young British Artists in the late 1980s and early 1990s several practitioners, such as Tracey Emin, Abigail Lane, Sarah Lucas, and Emma Rushton used textile-based works to explore notions of identity.

Emin's 1995 *All the People I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995 (The Tent)* (Figure 1.6) appropriated a ready-made camping tent, embroidered and appliquéd with a list of names of all the people and pets she had slept beside (not had sex with) at the time of making. Her other well-known work, *My Bed* (1998) included stained bed sheets, bloody tampons, and used condoms, relocated to a gallery space from the floor of her domestic bedroom. Less well-known, however, are her neon textual works, such as *My Cunt is Wet With Fear* (1998). Emin's work "exploits and flaunts the norms of gendered modesty about self-disclosure, testing the limits of decorum that women artists confront" (Watson & Smith, 2002, p. 6). Emin's willingness to expose the personal in her work has led to her being framed in often antithetical ways; from embodying "authenticity and self-expression" (Walker, 2003, p. 71), to being "sluttish" (Cherry, n.d., para. 1), splurging and self-revelatory (Sooke, 2008, para. 17), "vulgar, pointless and excruciatingly solipsistic" (McLaren, 2011), and expressing an aesthetic of "dirt and disgust" (Cherry, n.d, para. 2). The self-exposure inherent in her work led Smith (1999) to appraise her work as, "all the truths, both awful and wonderful, but mostly awful, about her life" (para. 2). With her status as a celebrity art maker (McLaren, 2011; Walker, 2003) Emin has been positioned at the artistic vanguard of feminist approaches to the autobiographical.

TEXTILE DESIGN

Timorous Beasties (Fig. 1.7) is a design label created by Alistair McAuley and Paul Simmons. They use traditional textile designs remixed and subverted with contemporary cultural references (Colchester, 2007, p. 114). They work in a range of interior media, including textiles, wallpaper, and soft furnishings. Their work is subjective, in that they reflect the Glaswegian culture in which they are located, but their designs differ from mine in that they do not specifically address issues of gender, or make autobiographical work. Additionally the Timorous Beasties practice is located in traditional design practice, with the resulting patterns being commercially available in a range of substrates for interior decoration.

Similarly, design team Bruno Basso and Christopher Brooke produce the textile label Basso & Brooke. Their prints feature exaggerated interpretations of femininity and sexuality (Black, 2006, p. 124). These elements are most famously exemplified by their 2005 *Vereda Tropical* design featuring stylised male and female genitalia in an ornamental design (Fig. 1.8).

Shelley Goldsmith's work (Fig. 1.9) is similar to my own, in that she uses fabric digitally printed with photographic images to create garments that explore identity and memory (Madden, 2003). Goldsmith is concerned with the physicality of textile works. Her designs incorporate traditional techniques and hand stitching. Significantly, she is particularly interested lived experienced as it is reflected in the interior of worn garments that explore aspects of "flooding, staining, and seepage" (Wildgoose, 2009).

Anne Wilson also deals with issues of abjection in her textile-based artworks. In pieces like *Lost* (1998) (Fig. 1.10) and *Hair Work* (1991-92) she sews lengths of found fabric with collected human hair. Wilson is influenced by feminist concerns and the alignment of textile work with the wider art world. She states that these and similar works deal with "the contradictory relationship between the formality of propriety of white table linen and the dirt and uncleanliness and abjectness of human hair when detached from the body" (Britton Newell, 2007, p.
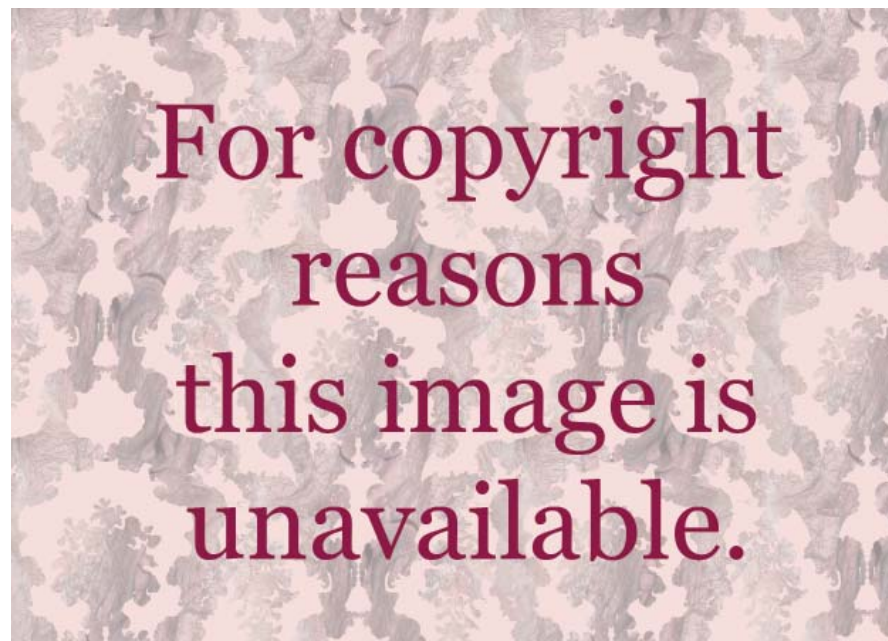
FIGURE 1.7

Timorous Beasties, *Act of Union*, 2008. Digital print.
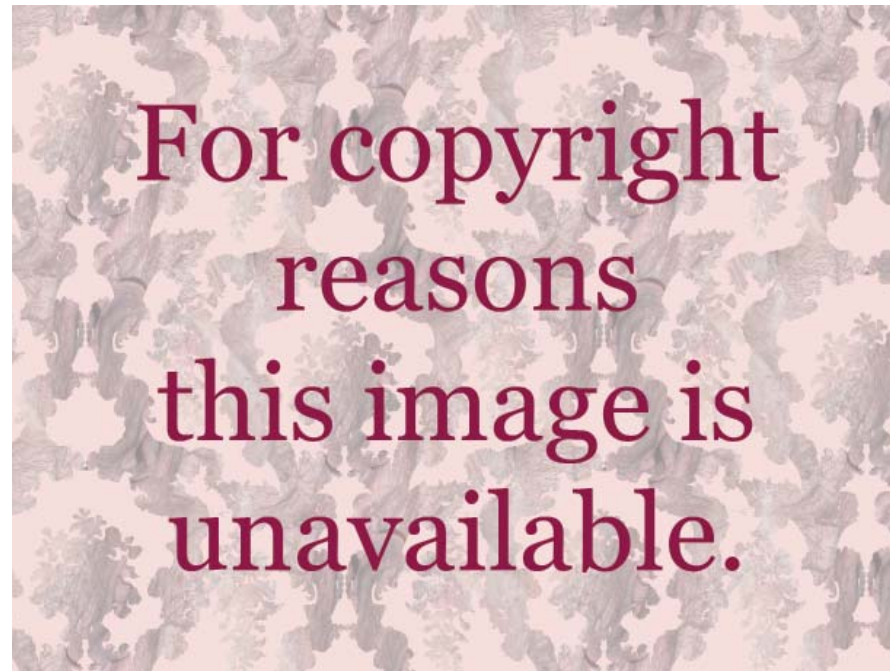
FIGURE 1.8

Basso and Brooke, *Vereda Tropical*, 2005. Digitally printed silk.

116). She is most concerned with the idea of hair as matter out of place, and has worked extensively with hair-related projects; seeing hair as a representation of womanhood.

Mireille Vautier also makes garments that explore unseen aspects of the human body, creating garments that are hand-embroidered with imagery of internal organs. Shirts such as *Untitled* (2007) (Fig. 1.11) explore abjection, playfully disrupting the role of clothing as a demarcation between inside and outside. Vautier states, "The human body is my main source of inspiration. Its inside and outside, its wounds and its vivid memory; skeleton, organs, ex-votos, precious jewelry protected by the skin . . . The human body is a relic, a base for work dealing with memory" (Safe-T-Gallery, 2008, para. 2).

Lia Cook's work (like my own), explores the communicative potential of imagery on fabric: in her case, these images are woven on a computer-controlled Jacquard loom rather than printed onto textiles (Fig. 1.21). As Buszek (2011) notes, Cook describes herself as both an artist and a craftsperson, blurring and crossing the "boundaries of material and visual culture" (p. 251).

ANTIPODEAN FEMININST WORK

The project contributes to the tradition of feminist art and design, specifically that which comes from an Antipodean viewpoint. In this regard, it may be seen as falling alongside related work by Vivienne Binns, Linda Dement, and Natalya Hughes.

Binns' vagina painting, *Vag Dens* (1967), pre-dates those of Judy Chicago by several years. Her image of the toothed vagina proposes the power of the unbounded woman. This is not in the castrative sense, with which Barbara Creed explored the trope of the horrific feminine, but rather, in a sense of the protective feminine power as

a waiting force (Binns, 2002).

Linda Dement's feminist collages, such as *Cyberflesh Girlmonster* (1995), and *In My Gash* (1999) use a grotesque conglomeration of parts of the female body in a similar way. In Cyberflesh Girlmonster she collaged the scanned flesh of thirty woman volunteers to create a "macabre comedy of monstrous femininity" (Dement, n.d). In Dement's digitally animated film *In My Gash* (Fig 1.14), the viewer's gaze is led ever inwards as we journey through a series of vagina-shaped gashes, into a grotesque landscape of body parts and formless noise. Dement's work has some similarities to my own in the use of photo-collage and the grotesque to create mindfully feminist statements. However, while her focus is representing the bodies of other women, as a collective group, I am concerned with my own body as a speaking text.

Like my work, Natalya's Hughes's installation *The After Party* (2012) also considers issues of domestic space, ornamentation, and pattern. Her installation continues a conversation started by Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974-1979). Hughes's intention was to make work that embraced humour as part of a feminist statement (Mark, 2012). With her lumpy, distended dining table, she knowingly nudges the audience; gently mocking Chicago's work, which she describes as "massively 70s dorky" (QAG GOMA, 2012). Hughes describes her work as "a little bit of a homage and little bit of a piss take." What is significant about her installation is its use of humour as a vehicle for critical feminist rethinking. Albeit with different emphases, a similar position is adopted in my designs. While both of our bodies of work are explicitly playful, Hughes takes a more consciously inter-textual approach, whereas my work is informed by, but not intended to replicate or echo, that of Chicago.
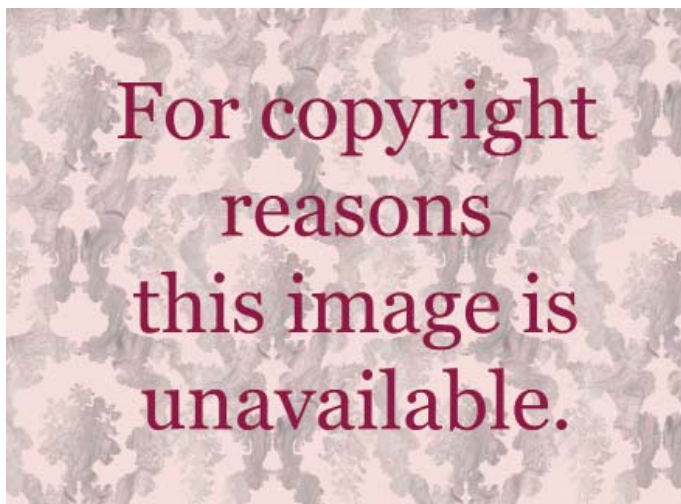
FIGURE 1.9

Shelley Goldsmith, *Fragmented Bell: Reclaimed dress and knickers from the Children's Home in Cincinnati*, 2006. Reclaimed dress, heat transfer printing, stitch.
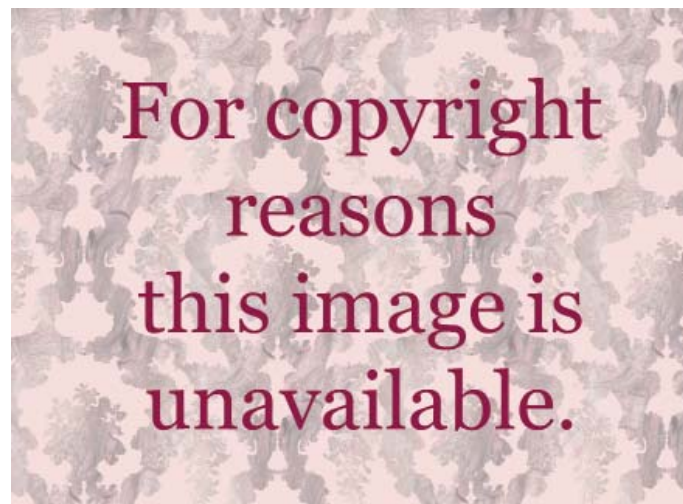
FIGURE 1.10

Anne Wilson, *Lost*, 1998. Cotton fabric and human hair.
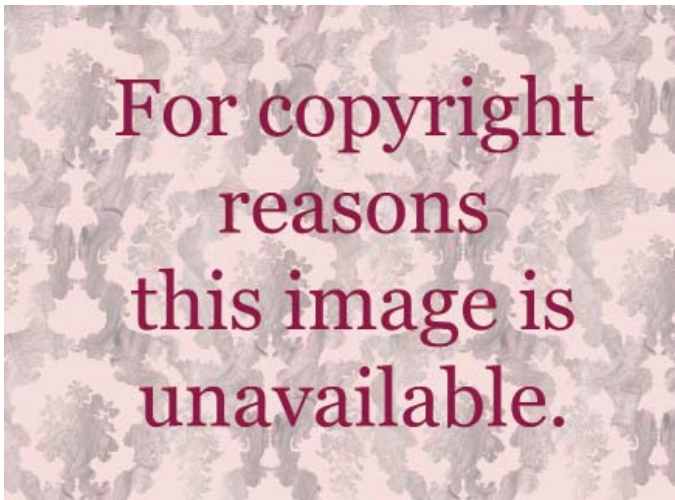
FIGURE 1.11

Mirelle Vautier, *Untitled*, 2007. Cotton shirt and cotton embroidery thread.
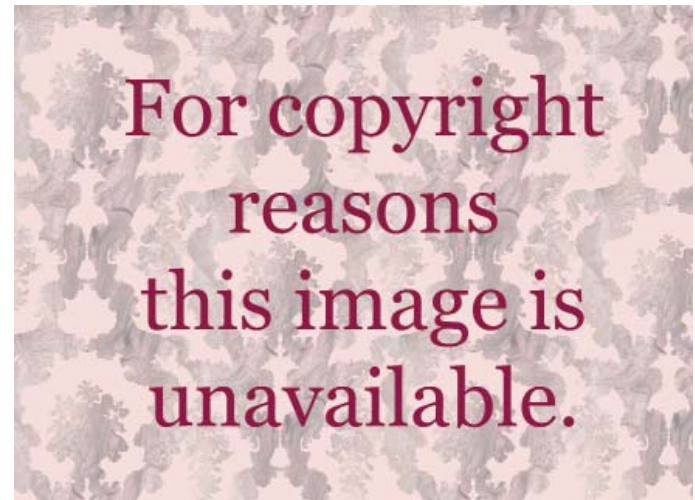
FIGURE 1.12

Lia Cook, *Big Baby*, 2001. Woven cotton and rayon.

CONCLUSION

A practice-led thesis is contextualised by a wide range of previous research. Accordingly, this chapter has outlined significant thinking that has inspired or positioned the project. However, because of the protean nature of creative inquiries any review of related knowledge must fall short of a definitive summary. This is because knowledge relating to such enquiries is both explicit and tacit; new knowledge is shaped by the definable and the nebulous. Emerging knowledge draws to itself what is required, and this may at times be knowledge that is fragmented or intangible. As Rosenberg (2008) notes, 'knowledge' that is used in a process of making "and also that which it produces, is a knowledge-in-potential or potentia - knowledge for and in becoming" (p.124).

Assuming acceptance of this idea, it is useful at this point in the exegesis to consider the research design constructed for explicating the project.

FIGURE 1.13

Natalya Hughes, *The After Party*, 2012. Mixed media with digital print. Dimensions variable.
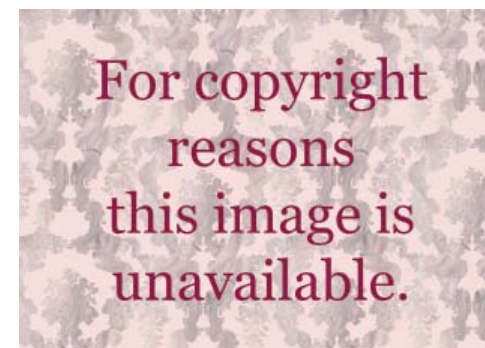
FIGURE 1.14

Linda Dements, *In My Gash*, 1999. Digital film (detail of still).

CHAPTER 02 | RESEARCH DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will address the research design employed in the explication of this project. It will then discuss how specific research methods function within a broader methodological framework.

A research methodology is often assumed to be a stable inquiry, however practice-led or interdisciplinary projects, as Kinchloe (2004) suggests, have an unfolding nature, where the end result cannot be predicted (p. 1), and at times they encompass vagueness (Bill, 2010, p. 6). In embarking on a practice-led research project the researcher should be open to "possibility and curiosity" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 19). This requires an approach that is both reflexive and flexible in order that it might respond to the protean demands of creative production.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research, as William and Ormand (2010) state, is the process of "seeking explanation and meaning" (para. 1). A methodology is an organised and systematic process of inquiry, that frames this meaning-seeking in a way that enables and facilitates close investigation.

My practice-led research project is structured as an autoethnographic inquiry activated inside the tenets of heuristics. I use tacit knowing, a designer's journal, diary-keeping, sketching, active noticing, serendipity, experimentation, feedback, and reflection to develop solutions to emerging questions. Knowledge emerges from a holistic approach, in which patterns and themes are identified in order to construct theory.

PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH

Scrivener (2000) has discussed the difference between a traditional problem-solving research project, in which the artefact created is a by-product of the solution to the problem (para. 2), and a research project based on creative production, in which artefacts themselves are the point of the research (para. 15). Scrivener, along with Candy, Amitani, & Bilda (2006) and Mäkelä (2007) contend that the creative production research project is undertaken by conducting the research through the very act of art-making or design-making,[7] and that the artefacts arising from this research cannot simply be conceived as by-products or an exemplification of know-how. Rather, there is intrisic value in the processes and artifacts that arise during the research (Candy, Amitani, & Bilda, 2006, p. 212), because these artefacts are capable of reflecting and exploring cultural concerns, and contributing to the human experience (Scrivener, 2000, para. 16).

Mäkelä (2007) states, "without the artefact, there is just the assumptive theory, which is separated from the actual process of making" (p. 159). It is through the making of an artefact that the direction of the research is determined, and the knowledge contained in a creative production project is the artefact. Thus, it is not intended that the work developed during this research is illustrative of theoretical and contextual issues, but rather that the artefacts are informed and questioned by the framework developed in its resolution, and explored in this exegesis.

Douglas, Scopa and Gray (2000) describe how art and design-based research projects can be structured as formal research in a PhD environment. They locate one purpose of practice-led research as producing artefacts that "embody knowledge more efficiently and appropriately than through text alone" (para. 19). This is the nature of my research; the artefacts I have created cause the viewer to re-examine their experiences with, and attitudes towards, their own corporeality in a way that a written thesis could not.

In addition to embodying knowledge, Douglas, Scopa, and Gray (2000) suggest that formal practice-led research also progresses the discipline. In this case, the practice-led research develops textile design as an an alternative form of authoethnography, and uses this process as a medium to investigate the liminal and abject, inclusion and exclusion, figure and ground.

FOOTNOTE

7. It is from reflection on the development of, and change within, the emerging artefacts that questions are raised that drive the project forward.

HEURISTICS

I approached this research project using a heuristic system of inquiry; what Moustakas (1990) described as an "open-ended inquiry [or] self-directed search" (p. 15). As Ings (2011) identifies, a heuristic approach places the researcher at the centre of the research, where she relies on "self-dialogue, intuition, reflection and insightful decision-making" to make design decisions (p. 228).

Douglass and Moustakas (1985) describe heuristics as a "quest for synthesis"; a sorting and recombining, "moving rhythmically in and out . . . looking, listening carefully for meanings within meanings . . . that adhere in the data" (p. 52).

Heuristics employs trial and error, experimentation, informed intuition, indwelling, and reflection, in order to create artefacts that explore a subjective human experience. A heuristic approach involves collecting a wide range of divergent perspectives in order to see how different material intertwines, resonates, and relates. Sifting through harvested material intuitively allows perspectives to speak to me in a dialogic process. As the researcher, my task is to look closely, to notice, and to identify patterns and similarities, through a process of tacit knowing. The aspects of the research that are significant to the practice gradually become apparent.

The challenge is to avoid forcing the research into what Stapleton (2006) calls a "predetermined tidy and conclusive whole" (p. 83), but rather giving enough time to the process of researching to allow the resolution to emerge organically.

Moustakas (1990) identifies the phases of a heuristic inquiry as initial engagement, immersion, incubation and indwelling, and illumination and creative synthesis.

INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

In the initial phase Moustakas (1990) says the researcher must be honest with herself and the experiences she has as they relate to the question or problem. In this regard she must initiate "self-dialogue, an inner search to discover the topic and question" (p. 27).

In this phase I started to consider what aspects of interiority and exteriority were apparent in my life. I began harvesting my personal experiences for instances of interiority that spilled over.

IMMERSION

Moustakas (1990) identifies this phase as becoming "on intimate terms with the question – to live it and grow in knowledge and understanding of it" (p. 28). He identifies self-searching, such as journaling, and persuing intuitive leaps or 'hunches' as useful methods for developing a sense of immersion in the topic. During this phase he says "virtually anything connected with the question becomes raw material" (p. 28). This idea links to Kleining & Witt's (2000) suggestion that the researcher in such inquiries uses a variety of "explorative methods and procedures" (para. 6) in an effort to maximise perspectives.

While in this phase I experienced the phenomenon of everything being connected to the research question. While at a cafe I received a phone call with unhappy news. In my distress I spilled a cup of coffee on a favourite and irreplaceable garment (which was also embarrassing, as it happened in a public place). However, I experienced a strange sensation of being aware of analysing my own emotions in response to the incident, while still in the moment. I also experienced a feeling of excitement regarding the physical qualities of the spill. The coffee accident, rather than a personal domestic disaster, became a series of textile designs based on splashes and stains (figures 2.1 & 2.2).
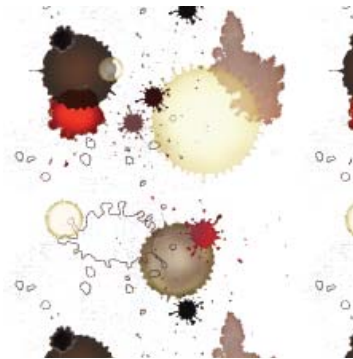
FIGURE 2.1

Splash fabric design based on spills and stains, for digitally printed cotton: August 2009.

FIGURE 2.2

Splash fabric design for digitally printed cotton. All stains were physically created with liquids, and then scanned, rather than being created digitally: August 2009.

INCUBATION, INDWELLING, AND TACIT KNOWING

Moustakas (1990) describes the incubation phase as a retreat from the previous intense focus (p. 28). During incubation the question is removed from conscious awareness, and the researcher is no longer seeking to be alert to new events and things that will contribute to understanding. Withdrawing from material-seeking does not mean withdrawing from the research. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) suggest that during indwelling a "growing sense of meaning and direction emerge as the perceptions and understandings of the researcher grow and the parameters of the problem are recognised" (p. 47). Moustakas (1990) notes that by indwelling with the problem, the researcher can gain a "clear sense of the direction in which the theme or question is moving and know what is required to illuminate it" (p. 48).

For me, material experimentation is a pivotal tool in the indwelling process. As Polanyi (1964) identified, by focusing our awareness on one thing, our understanding of a different thing, which does not hold our attention, is altered (p. xiii). Through the action of experimentation we feel our way through the research. Polanyi (1969) describes this as similar to the way we "extend our awareness of our body . . . by means of a stick" (p. 148). I use the tools of doing, making, and playing, to feel my way within the research topic. Through such processes Polyani suggests we become aware "as we are our body, we *interiorize* these things and *make ourselves dwell in them*" (p. 148) Through this bodily exploration he believes we grow into "a person seeing the world and experiencing life in terms of this outlook" (p. 148).

Polanyi (1967) describes the unconscious knowledge used during indwelling and incubation as tacit knowledge. Moustakas (1990) defines the tacit as the "deep structure that contains the unique

perceptions, feelings, intuitions, beliefs, and judgements housed in the internal frame of reference of a person that governs behavior and determines how we interpret experience" (p.32). Accessing tacit knowledge he suggests, allows "intuition to continue to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside the immediate awareness" (p. 29).[8]

Mitchell (2006) notes that "the proximal component of tacit knowing is rooted in our bodies and extends out from them" (p. 76). Mareis (2012) suggests that for artists and designers   because of the inarticulable nature of tacit knowledge, it is useful to engage in non-verbal, embodied, design activities during the incubation phase, such as sketching, modelling, showing, presenting, mimicking, and trying out (p. 63).[9]

Mead (2007) notes that tacit knowledge is built up over time, and comes from our experiences in our particular field/s of study. My relationship to pattern comes from a lifetime of interest in, and affection for, textiles of all kinds, combined with my interest in design, gender theory, and critical theory. I carry within me innumerable prior experiences of relationships between colours, shapes, textures, and ideas. However, I am unable to fully articulate these if interrogated. It is only when new material enters my field of reference, and I am immersed in processes of indwelling and incubation, that I am able to orchestrate dimensions of tacit knowing, that lead to the realisation of new relationships. This process may be described as rhizomatic.

The rhizome is a conceptual framework for data interpretation developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). One principle of the rhizome is that it "has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing" (p. 25).[10] A rhizome is richly heterogenous: multiplicity, rather than unity (p. 8). This multiplicity "necessarily changes in nature as it expands in connections" and avoids dualisms or dichotomies (p. 9). Any point of a rhizome can be connected to

FOOTNOTES

8. Mareis (2012) frames tacit as "the opposite of 'articulable'" (p. 65) and defines it as knowledge that cannot be verbalised, but which can be demonstrated in practice.

9. A similar position is taken by Gill (2000) who identifies the role of the body in accessing the tacit dimension as "clearly crucial" (p. 179), because he believes it is not enough to merely *think* about other topics, but rather it is necessary to engage one's way of knowing in embodied ways, accessing different senses and ways of being.

10. Initially, this may seem contrary to the very premise of a PhD research project, which traditionally may be seen as the development of an idea (thesis) to a point of conclusion. However, the exhibition, and this accompanying exegesis, are not an ending to the research, but instead a resting point, or node. A rich abundance of new connections have already been, and are being, forged. From this node future paths emerge.

11. For further discussion on my use of a design wall as a creative tool see page 67.

any other point (p. 7). A rhizome can be broken, even shattered, but it rebounds after being destroyed, often along new lines (p. 9).

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) liken a rhizome to a map of the terrain, rather than a description of a path through it. A map fosters connections between fields. A map is open and connectible. A map can be torn, reversed, modified, adapted, reworked, reinterpreted, redrawn, reformed (p. 12). A map has infinite entryways and exits. A rhizomic approach to incubation meshes with the framing of heuristics as involving divergent perspectives.

The sense of play with which I developed an early pattern design is an example of this. On my design wall[11] I had pinned a photograph of a Victorian paisley textile design. I draw on previously developed knowledge, such as what a paisley design visually and symbolically comprises, how and where the motif was developed, where it is historically located, and innumerable other details. Early on in the indwelling phase I replicated and adapted this design, playing with the paisley motifs, and integrating depictions of vulvas and uteruses (Figure 2.3). Through making a new pattern a way forward through the research became apparent that addressed gender and the grotesque. This way forward was not a defined path, but rather a tentative grouping, drawing on material collected during the immersion phase. Although I was not consciously considering the theoretical aspects of the research at the time, making a new design activated the rhizome to forge new connections. While concentrating on paisley, my understanding of interior and exterior—that which does not hold my attention—was altered. The design functioned as a tool with which to feel around the tentative outline of the research question.

The incubation phase, therefore, is crucial to the development of the project. It may take the appearance of play or free experimentation, however links between the collected material grow as new connections are made. Although often inarticulable, they are informed by what is already known. This process leads to illumination.

ILLUMINATION AND CREATIVE SYNTHESIS

During the final phase of the project the researcher experiences what Moustakas (1990) calls "a breakthrough into consciousness awareness of qualities and a clustering of qualities into themes inherent in the question" (p. 29). This stage "opens the door to a new awareness, a modification of an old understanding, a synthesis of fragmented knowledge, or an altogether new discovery of something that has been present for some time yet beyond immediate awareness" (p. 30). Moustakas suggests that illumination will occur naturally when "the researcher is open and receptive to tacit knowledge and intuition" (p. 29).

The question, that has been internalised, must be answered in a way that the knowledge is transferable. While a heuristic approach leads to self-knowledge and transformation, it is through the process of creative synthesis that the knowledge is articulated. As Sela-Smith (2002) proposes, "self-transformation is always a potential by-product [of the research], in such a way that learning can be passed on to those who hear, read, or see it" (p. 82).

Illumination and synthesis also means explicating the knowledge in order to "fully examine what has awakened in consciousness, in order to understand its various layers of meaning" (Moustakas, 1990, p.31). In this research project the exhibition, and this accompanying exegesis, comprise the explication of the project.

FIGURE 2.3

Paisley design incorporating overies and vulvas: March 2010.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUBJECTIVITY

Webb and Brien (2008) note that under a traditional research paradigm, as in the sciences, the researcher situates herself within a model of knowledge that expects answers to questions such as: "what can be seen?; what can be demonstrated?; what can be argued?" (para. 5). They assert that this structure assumes the researcher will uncover an objective truth as determined by an external authority. Under this positivist paradigm the researcher might ask "if you don't know where you're going, how do you know when you get there?" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 19).

In contrast, heuristics has been identified by Moustakas (1990) as an appropriate way to explore "an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important social meanings and personal, compelling, implications" (p. 27). This positioning, in which the research is initially open-ended, and the researcher is inherently present in the research, places heuristics in opposition to a positivist methodological approach , in which "clearly defined intentions . . . expressed as hypotheses . . . position the purpose of [the research] within the context of what is already known" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 19). Because of the reflexive and personal qualities of heuristics, it is useful as a method for exploring a problem that has not been solved before, and so where there is no existing formula available for achieving a solution.

This makes it an appropriate approach for my research, because I am not attempting to uncover objective 'truth', but rather, to establish a highly reflexive territory within which I might explore and make manifest the potential of textiles to speak for the abject and liminal.

SHIFTING GROUND

This research project uses a variety of methods that are informed by personal experiences of abjection and subjecthood. In heuristic inquiries, Kleining and Witt (2000) suggest "data should be collected under the paradigm of maximum structural variation of perspectives" (para. 11). A broad, open-ended approach to creative-production throughout the project increased the chances of discovery because I was able to make connections between disparate and previously unnoticed connections. Kleining and Witt maintain that ability to make fruitful connections relies upon a propensity to hold the inquiry open to new concepts; this they argue, means constantly being willing to change preconceptions to data collection and analysis. They also suggest that the researcher must be prepared for the preliminary research question to change during the research process; and this can be evidenced as the research moved through considerations of worn clothing, and waxed textiles (Figs. 2.4 & 2.5).

In the redoubling and refolding nature of a heuristic inquiry, aspects of initial iterations, while apparently left behind as the research progressed, came to be present in the final creative synthic.

Figures 2.6 and 2.7 are images of the *Tahoma* Dress (July 2009). This was the first work exhibited during the research project. The piece comprised a white muslin garment with text inscribed into the fabric by a process of cutting and removing threads. The garment contained a length of text describing my thoughts, feelings, and hesitations regarding the initial 'making' stages of the project. This early work initially seemed to be tangential to the main focus of the inquiry, but as the project progressed and the research question was clarified, it became increasingly apparent that it was integral to the autobiographic nature of the inquiry.

Kleining and Witt (2000) suggest that the research question may only be fully known after being successfully explored. For me, this means regarding shifting ground as a positive sign of accumulating knowledge and insight. When ground shifts in heuristic inquiries, they suggest that the researcher re-examines the research question under new headings so she remains actively focused—albeit in another direction.

The open-ended nature of the inquiry allows for movement within the research question and for unexpected emphases to emerge. What becomes important in this environment is the ability for the researcher to recognise when moves within the research are profitable. Kleining and Witt (2000) argue that the researcher is able to evaluate effectiveness by identifying similarities and patterns that relate concordantly. They suggest that this harmony can be pursued by asking questions of the material and locating analogies or homologies within the diverse data being accumulated. They believe the success of the procedure can be measured by the richness of the result, its cohesive patterns and inter-subject validity.

Scrivener (2000) describes how during the framing of a creative-production project "the project's topic of interest and goal may change as the work progresses" (para. 8). In effect, the full question or focus of the research may not be known until after it has been explored.

FIGURE 2.4

The project initially engaged with aspects of interiority and exteriority through worn and dirty clothing: November 2008.

FIGURE 2.5

During one iteration of the research project wax was explored as indexical to the body, ephemeral yet enduring: August 2010.

FIGURE 2.6

Tahoma dress and text. Cotton muslin and pencil on paper: July 2009.
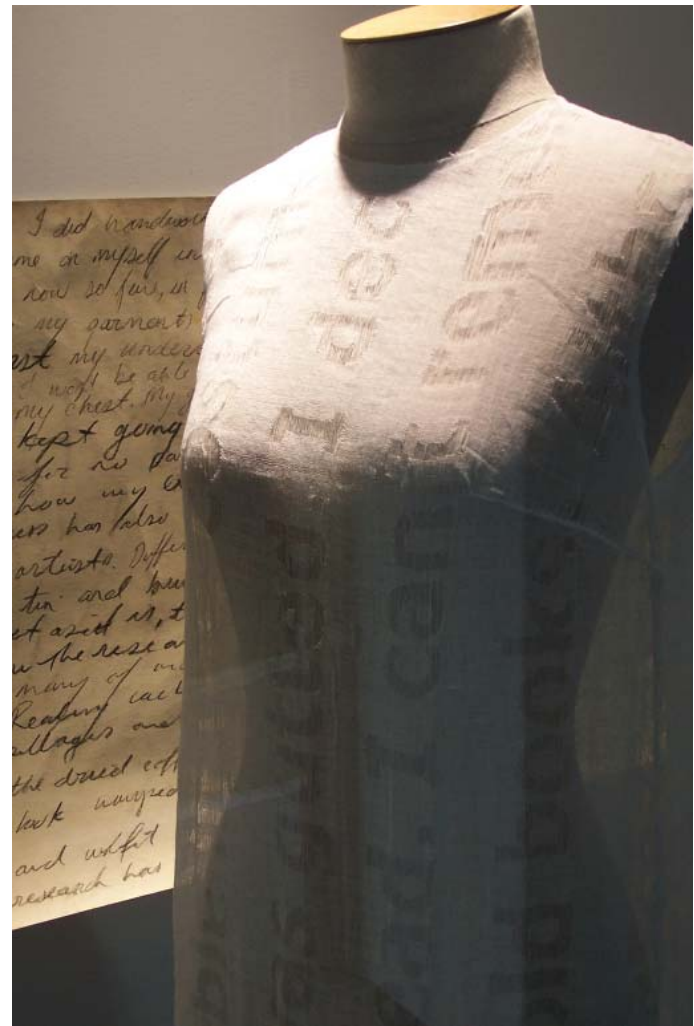
FIGURE 2.7

Tahoma dress. The text has been removed from the dress, leaving a narrative prewsent through its absence.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Traditionally, the position of the researcher has generally been understood as neutral and objective. However, in creative practice-led design research the researcher may be conceptualised as one who is involved in a two-way process – she doesn't just shape the research but is in fact shaped by it. Moustakas (1990) asserts that an important aspect of heuristic inquiries is that the researcher identifies with the focus of the investigation, and she is able to bring her own experiences and subjectivity to it in order to maintain "an internal frame of reference" (p. 26).

Accordingly, in this research project I may be considered as personally engaged in a reflective and dialogic process with issues of abjection and subjecthood. Rodriguez and Ryave (2002) note that "the study of the covert and tacit realms of social phenomena is in an exploratory stage of development" (p. 12) and they emphasise "the practical problem of capturing the ongoing, routinised, tacit, and elusive nature of natural social life" (p. 11). They further identify the importance of "recognizing, self-observing, and reporting the background details of everyday life" (p. 11) in a state they describe as "mindful and self-aware" (p. 24). This they suggest is an approach to research uniquely suited to "describing and understanding everyday human experiences" (p. 55). The everyday nature of dealing with the feminine grotesque makes self-observation an appropriate tool for gathering information about related issues of abjection and subjecthood as they occur in a lived life. In this instance I have identified autoethnography as the specific and appropriate method of self-observation.

Autoethnography involves examining one's own experiences while situated within a culture, in a way that "self-consciously explore[s] the interplay of the introspective personally engaged self with [the] cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.742). The autoethnographer "must be willing to dig deeper . . . excavate rich details, bring them onto examination tables to sort, label, interconnect and contextualize"

(Chang, 2008, p. 51). This is a productive research strategy for issues such as abjection, as it allows me, as the researcher, to exploit my position as "privileged with a holistic and intimate perspective" (p. 52). However, as Behar (1996) acknowledges, it is inherently risky for a researcher to make herself vulnerable in the way that is required for the "unspeakable to be spoken" (p. 12). By positioning myself as a grotesque and abject subject, and speaking through my practice about this experience of embodiment, I expose myself to potential criticism and condemnation.

Autoethnography sits comfortably within a heuristic inquiry, which is a process that explicitly engages with the self. Moustakas (1990) states that "the heuristic process is autobiographic"; he defines heuristics as a "self-inquiry" and acknowledges a topic is investigated through "one's senses, perceptions, beliefs, and judgements" (p. 15).

Autoethnography is usually seen as writing about the self: the self as a text. In this research project I use the self, my self, as a base for visual texts composed of both words and images inscribed on fabric: text/iles. When Chang (2008) describes the process of autoethnography as digging, excavating, tabling, examining, sorting, and labeling, it sounds, as it was no doubt designed to do, very much like the process of an exhumation. The body is exposed, labelled, and fragments are joined together to create a new whole. In inscribing my body on the textiles I am interconnecting textual fragments of myself to explore and communicate a covert and tacit realm of social phenomena: abjection and grotesquerie. In this way this project sits as an exploratory form of autoethnography.

One potential hazard of autoethnography is, as Chang states, that "mere self-exposure without profound cultural analysis and interpretation leaves [the research] at the level of descriptive autobiography or memoir" (p. 51). Douglas, Scopa & Gray (2000) point out that:

Processes of 'analysis' are distinct to that of 'evaluation', where the practitioner critically reflects on their experiences of practice. . . 'analysis' is a more distinctive and time consuming process of exploring research data in order to 'uncover' and 'interpret' imbedded patterns and information. (para. 38)

Being mindful of this, I have avoided approaching autoethnography as a mere transcription of my lived experiences. However, in the initial stages of the project I collected a range of autoethnographic material, informed by established research practice in cultural studies, (Gray, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) ethnography (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995), and autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Chang, 2008). The types of self-observation that I undertook during the enquiry included reflective diary entries, photographs of worn clothes, a collection of personal garments and artefacts, and records of cultural observations around worn clothing, abjection and subjectivity.

For example, in initial stages of the research project, I kept a clothing diary that noted the cycle of each garment through wearing and washing. Through this I identified the laundry as a place of ritualised purification. This in turn led me to consider both De Beauvoir's (2011) assertion that housework is a state of being locked into perpetual immanence (p. 73), and also a fruitful consideration of the privileging of other visual forms over textiles (Prentice, 1995). While the initial observations on laundry are not overtly apparent in the final research, this was a productive scoping of territory in that it led to previously unconsidered areas of interest.

DESIGNER'S JOURNAL

The designer's journal works as a tool for several aspects of the design process. It operates as a space for exploration and experimentation, a sketchbook, a research log, a diary for recording lived experience, and a device for reflection. It is what Newbury (2001) calls "a melting pot for all of the different ingredients of a research project" (para. 8).

While such documents may take many forms, my journals were a succession of eclectic assemblages: writing, sketching, daily ephemera, fabric experiments and cuttings, stuffed within an increasingly worn cover (Figures 2.8 and 2.9). The journals are what Hogan (1991) calls elastic and inclusive texts, which "mix chronicle, historical record, reflection, feelings, descriptions . . . travel, work accomplished, and portraiture of character rather haphazardly together" (p. 100). Throughout the research journey the journals remained unpolished and unedited, spilling up on to my walls, accompanying me in odd pages when I travelled to work, and sleeping beside me on the night stand. Stains and marks from day to day life became an intrinsic part of the journals' physicality. I would frequently remove or copy pages and pin them on my design wall, further breaking the linear structure of the document. In this way the journals became what Close (1999) describes as a "mound of evidence from which we can reconstruct a life" (p. 6). Keeping the journals becomes a process of writing a life into being.

This life however, is fluid and unstable. My diaries are characterised by multiple voices, recording the feelings of past and present selves, in often contradictory ways, without privileging one over the other. Gammel (2002) calls this "a collage of plural selves" (p. 292), which struggle "to give adequate shape to [the writer's] subjectivities" (p. 289). My diary entries take a repetitive rather than linear structure, and are eternally-open ended: the journals never draw a conclusion.[12] As a diarist I am both recording and reading the text, blurring the boundaries between self and other, private and public. Jones (1985)

and Hogan (1991) identify these as the stylistic tendencies of l'écriture feminine. The journals record creativity as a performative process of becoming, rather than as a finished product, as an exegesis tends to do.

SAFE SPACE

Cameron (1995) suggests that a journal may function as a 'safe place' to explore ideas, thoughts, and worries (pp. 9-18).

Bayles & Orland (1993) acknowledge that "fear that your next work will fail is a normal, recurring and generally healthy part of the artmaking cycle" (p. 10). The fear for me can be very specific: fear I am only pretending to be creative; fear that my current idea will be my last; fear of others' reception of my work; fear I will not gain employment after completion and the PhD will provide a pleasant decoration for my cubicle in a call centre. Creating this safe journal space to explore and experiment is integral to developing creative thought. Writing out potential fears and apprehensions provides room for solutions for these to be developed, or for the fears to be acknowledged as unlikely to materialise.

EXPERIMENTAL SPACE

As an experimental space, the journal, as Mason (2002) notes, is able to generate new approaches to research, and "feed back into states of enhanced awareness with a feeling of being invigorated" (p. 220). The journal space forms a field on which I can sift ideas into a logical progression or plan, in order to achieve physical action. Paradoxically, it functions equally well as a space for unrelated ideas to meet and form previously unconsidered juxtapositions. It allows for the development of an idea from its initial inception, and as a space for consideration of practical issues. As Bayles & Orland (1993) observe,

FIGURE 2.8

Designer's journal: June to August 2009.

FIGURE 2.9

Designer's journal: November 2010.

FIGURE 2.10

Sketch of stylised acanthus leaves from Persian ceramic ware: July 2011. Pencil drawings enable me to analyse and contemplate the proportion and linear treatments of traditional ornamental motifs, and sensitises me to their potential in my work.

FOOTNOTE

12. This non-linearity makes the journal a useful tool to accommodate what Ings (2011) identifies as one of the characteristics of a heuristic research project: "research and realisations [that] are often folded back into deeper or tangential inquiries" (p. 228). These wanderings are a strength rather than a drawback, as they maximise the potential for discovery.

"Imagination is in control when you begin making an object . . . as the piece grows, technique and craft take over, and imagination becomes a less useful tool" (p. 15). The journal as experimental space provides a liminal stage between imagination and realisation.

SKETCHING

As Scrivener, Ball & Tseng (2000) note, "Design seems inconceivable without drawings" (p. 465). Sketches play a bi-lobal role in my journal; they provide a means of recording rich, existing visual language to gain understanding, and they also serve as a tool to record and develop design ideas.

Recording existing design language

Sketching serves as a tool to understand an existing design language that may be initially unfamiliar to me. As Schenk (1991) notes, drawings function to make better designers: "the experience of observing . . . play[s] a part in developing their visual literacy, perception and visual memory" (p. 170). Through "drawing experiences" she suggests, "designers develop the type of visual understanding and knowledge that can be brought into use as required" (p. 170). Drawing is an essential tool for designers in the "development of the visual memory they need to call on as they begin to search for ideas" (p. 178). Scrivener, Ball & Tseng (2000) identify sketching as a tool that may be used to better understand perceived objects, and improve design thinking (p. 481). As Newbury (2001) suggests, "the process of keeping a sketchbook "can in itself sensitise the researcher to the visual", and this function alone makes it a valuable research tool. Indicative of the use of sketching in my journal is figure 2.10, where drawing is used as a vehicle for analysis and contemplation.

Developing design ideas

Design sketches also operate as a note-to-self, and an exploratory tool in the active development of new design possibilities.

Sketches often function as aide-mémoires; it is important to get down the kernel of the ideas as they come to me, before they slip my mind. This form of sketching is what Herbert (1988) calls *study drawings* (p. 26) and Goldschmidt (1991) terms *study sketches* (p. 123), i.e. "drawings made in the beginning stages of design, made quickly, and sometimes so idiosyncratic that they are only comprehensible to their maker" (p. 123). Because these initial study sketches are "not meant for communication with others, the designer can be extremely brief and vague" (Goldschmidt, 1994, p. 165). Schenk (1991) identifies "notional drawing" as a typical characteristic of design sketches (p. 170). She describes them as a "combination of words and rough visual notes" which is "almost like handwriting" (p. 170). Figure 2.11 shows the initial sketched idea for the coat fabric in the final exhibition. This sketch would not be enough to direct anyone else to complete the design; however it was enough for me to be able to remember my intentions. As ideas are fugitive, and the time frame (or physical location) often precludes a more developed sketch, sometimes the bare bones of the idea are all that I am able to record. Goldschmidt (1994) identifies this speed of sketching as a design advantage. She says, "It is necessary to be brief because speed facilitates transformations, whereas vagueness contributes to an open-ended and indeterministic representation that lends itself to many more possible interpretations than would otherwise be the case" (p. 165).

RESEARCH LOG

Where I needed to record specific technical details, the journal also fulfilled the function of a research log. This, Newbury (2001)
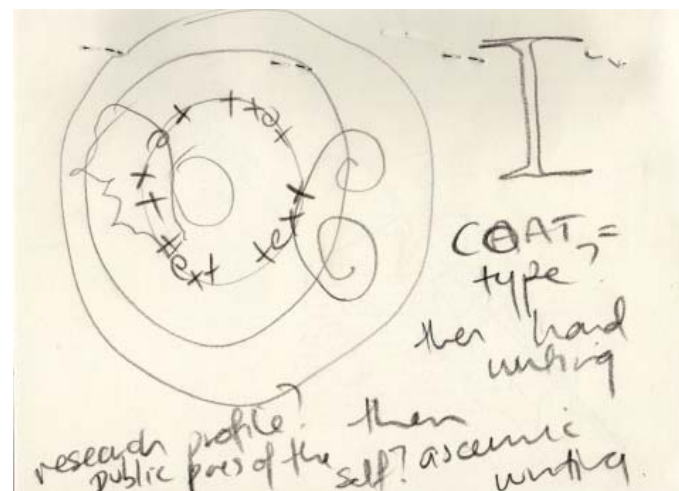
FIGURE 2.11

Page from the designer's journal; quick pencil sketch on paper for coat fabric: July 2010.

FOOTNOTES

13. A computer can be set to handle colour in a particular way, depending on the desired output. For example, images to be displayed on a computer screen will have a different optimal setting to those designed for physical printing. Because I printed different fabrics at different printers, using different processes, on different fabric, this required careful attention to detail to maintain suitable colour management for each provider's files.

14. A repeat is a single unit of a particular pattern. There are many different kinds of repeats, of which the simplest are the square repeat and the half-drop, in which subsequent rows or motifs are offset by half the width/height of the previous row.

15. Appendix B is a transcription of a diary entry that evolved into a vulval design motif, eventually becoming the treatment for the chaise lounge fabric.

FIGURE 2.12

Page from the design journal functioning as a research log, recording the proportions of dye and chemicals used to dye the dining room chair seats: July 2011.

explains, exists to record steps taken in sufficient detail that they can be replicated in the future. In my textile design work this is important because while initial stages of design development are loose, creative, and free-flowing, as the designs are developed I need to record more specific technical information.

I develop some designs in the Adobe software programs Illustrator and Photoshop. This requires the recording of palette decisions, colour profiles,[13] file types, repeat[14] type and size, resolution, etc.

While handwork can be slightly less rigid than computer design, there is still a large amount of technical information that must be recorded, such as dye recipes and dilutions (figure 5), dye immersion times, sewing machine tensions and settings, and reminders of techniques used.

DIARY

The journal functions as a diary space. This allows me to identify a "pattern of meanings" (Rainer, 1990, p. 17) emerging from the chaos of everyday life. One potential problem with such use of a diary is, as Gray and Malins (2004) note, the "possible reluctance to make accessible such a personal document." Accordingly, they suggest it "should be used with integrity and care" (p. 111). However, particularly when exploring a topic embedded in the notion of lived experience, a diary becomes a "story of self" (p. 111). As Gray (2003, p. 88-89) notes, the best examples of diaries are explicit, don't "fudge", and require a level of self-awareness and self-reflection.

By recording events, emotions, and responses the "rich details" that Chang (2008, p. 51) identifies as the essence of good autoethnography can be encountered and evaluated. Personal thoughts that might otherwise be forgotten can instead become rich territory for investigation. New connections can be made, and a deeper level

of understanding of the interrelatedness of aspects of a topic can be realised.[15]

REFLECTION

The designers' journal may also operate as a site for reflection. Reflection, Mason (2002) suggests, begins when we choose to mark a situation, rather than barely notice it (p. 18). He describes this as developing an "inner witness"; a part of ourselves that remains separate from actions, and which instead offers "advice and comment" (p. 19).

Mason identifies reflection as occurring in two ways: reflection on outward aspects of practice, and inward reflection, that is towards and about the practitioner. He argues that, "writing autobiographical and other notes, keeping a journal, and mentally re-entering salient moments can assist professional development and be integral to research" (p. 17) . By doing this, he says one becomes "aware of one's practice through the act of engaging in that practice" (p. 15). He suggests:

> When caught up in the flow of an event or when stuck
> in and on a problem, it is helpful to pause and try to
> describe your current state. The act of describing . . .
> while avoiding explanations, judgments, theories and
> implicit assumptions, is very effective for forcing an
> inner split between actor and observer. It helps to foster
> the growth of an inner witness, who remains separate
> from immediate problems . . . describing incidents and
> events can . . . serve as a backdrop or control against
> which to locate changes and development in the future.

(2002, p. 19)

Figure 2.13 shows a page from my designer's journal explicating my 'stuckness' and inability to progress the project. Using this technique I was able to identify the issues and to work to resolve the block.

Part of reflection involves developing the mental state for the process. Hooks (1995) notes the importance of:

> stillness . . . quietude, needed for the continued nurturance
> of any devotion to artistic practice – to one's work – that
> remains a space women . . . struggle to find in our lives.
> Our need for uninterrupted, undisturbed space is often
> far more threatening to those who watch us enter it than
> is that space which is a comment of concrete production.
> (p. 126)

DESIGN WALL

During my research I used studio spaces at Auckland University of Technology and also off-site rented studios. While most of the functions of the designer's journal occur in bound documents, I also used a non-folio journal format: a wall space in these studios. The wall functioned as a pin board to hang experimental designs, source material, found images, photographs etc. Figures 2.14 and 2.15 show the function of the design wall as a space for layering and making new connections. Kleining and Witt (2000) suggest that collected material allows for locating "similarities, accordance, analogies or homologies within the most diverse and varied data." The use of a design wall as an extension of the bound journal allows for an intuitive and fluid approach to the resorting and juxtaposing of material. One can stand back and at a glance experience simultaneously, overviews and detailed

FIGURE 2.13

A page from my designer's journal showing internal reflection. I describe my inability to make work as making me feel "despicable", and relate this to physical inaction, saying that "I'm not even walking any more". Through expressing my inability to achieve good work I was able to move through the sense of frustration to a point where I was able to be more creative and continue the research. Watercolour pencils and white ink pen: July 2011.

Studio design wall in my AUT studio, showing collected source material grouped into interpenetrating categories I have identified as key concepts: January 2011.

Studio design wall in my AUT studio, showing the layering of designs in progress with related visual material and texts of interest: August 2011.

FIGURE 2.16

Ab/ject exhibition, NorthArt Gallery: August 2009.

FIGURE 2.17

A Möbius garment from the NorthArt exhibition. A Möbius strip is a "one-sided, one-edged, non-orientable surface (a loop with a half twist)" (Yoon, 2007, p. 86). The garments in this exhibition have one single surface, without an exterior or interior. While the research eventually evolved away from this concept, the Möbius garment, constructed in patterned rather than plain textiles, is planned as a future extension of this research project.

connections. One gets a feel for the wholeness of the world one is investigating. This offers rich potential for strategic questioning and discovery when employing heuristic approaches to inquiry.

A DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIP

The designer's journal and design wall form the hub of a dialogic knowledge-producing encounter between the researcher and the practice. By using multiple ways of collecting, recording, sifting, resorting, and reflecting on the creative process, new relationships between material can be considered, and multiple perspectives juxtaposed. The journal and design wall, used in conjunction with intuition and tacit knowing, allow me to identify patterns and similarities, and rich design outcomes can be developed.

EXTERNAL FEEDBACK

When developing textile designs I seek external feedback from others as a means of evaluating the success of work. As Ings (2011) notes, "without some form of external feedback, purely self-referenced processes can result in designs that fail to explore a wealth of available options or fall short of their communicative potential" (p. 231).

In order to avoid non-critical interiority, I elict feedback from a range of sources. One useful source of feedback is the public exhibition of works. Figures 2.16 and 2.17 show images from an exhibition held at NorthArt Gallery in Auckland, featuring a range of Möbius garments. Each garment comprised a single surface, folding and redoubling over the body. The single-surface garment provided a rich avenue of exploration, utilizing a paradoxical involuting of interior and exterior. A limited amount of feedback was gained through comments left in a visitors book I provided, however a more useful strategy was to engage gallery visitors in conversation.

Additionally, I elicit feedback from a series of informal focus groups. In general these groups comprised design-literate people who were not specifically versed in textile design.[16] Being visually literate meant group members could close-read design, as well as suggest bodies of knowledge that might be useful references that fall outside of the researcher's current domain of exposure. I also asked a variety of non-designers for feedback, for as Bruseberg & McDonagh-Philp (2002) note, it is important to elicit feedback from people who are unlike the designer, in order to gain a variety of perspectives (p. 28).

As an example of the use of external feedback, for the design of the coat appearing in the final exhibition, I initially developed several potential colourways[17] for the textile (figure 2.18).

While eliciting opinions on colourway I was also offered simultaneous feedback suggesting the design did not appear to hold any significant relationship to the body. Bruseberg & McDonagh-Philp (2002) note

that it is important to "receive constructive criticism early in the designing process, as it can significantly help to enhance the final design" (p. 35). This is so the feedback can be usefully integrated to the creative process (p. 35). By learning at an early stage of its development, that the design appeared too remote and removed from the personal, I was able to adjust the work so it subtly incorporated further body parts.

While external critique was useful in my work, Sela-Smith (2002) notes that it is necessary to be cautious in eliciting feedback, as "different perspectives and different meanings, can . . . disorient the researcher doing self-inquiry" (p. 71). Ings (2011) supports this, concluding that "unless feedback is drawn back into the self (as opposed to simply being applied to the emerging design) . . . this can result in a work in the final stages of its realisation, losing much of its integrity and idiosyncratic 'voice'" (p. 231).

In order to avoid this I reflected on and internalised feedback carefully before making changes to the work. This is apparent in the design of the chaise longue. Although I received feedback that the vulval design of the fabric was too personal, I regarded this work as a key piece, and after reflection decided against changes recommended by other academics at AUT. One specific comment was that any genitals were not an appropriate subject for art or design work that might be seen by students, as this would only encourage students to portray unacceptable sexual imagery in their own work.[18]

While feedback regarding textile designs or design ideas was relatively easy to obtain, feedback or discussion around the experience of abjection and grotesquerie was much harder. I was unable to discuss the experiences of living as a grotesque and abject subject in person with anyone. The topic made people visibly uncomfortable and they quickly closed the conversation or changed the topic of discussion. However, I had some limited success eliciting responses through my

FIGURE 2.18

Early experiment for coat fabric design: August 2011.

online community. Seven individuals self-identifying as women chose to engage with me in general informal discussions around abjection. While discussions were brief, these women displayed excitment that my research was addressing women's framing as grotesque, and also expressed their discomfort with some portrayals of women, not only in the media, but in casual comments from friends and family. One woman mentioned how she mentally cringed at instances of slut-shaming and fat-shaming, but that she also found herself physically reacting by physically curling over, and her realisation she was trying to become smaller (Anonymous, personal communication, 19 February, 2012).

Feedback, then, can provide critique leading to inprovement, and suggest previously unconsidered avenues of approach, but can also act as confirmation to me that my research is indeed touching on a shared human experience.

FOOTNOTES

16. This is not a deliberate exclusion, but rather reflects that textile designers in Auckland are not numerous, and, with the demands of practice, those whom I could locate were frequently unavailable.

17. A colourway is a particular colour scheme or palette in which a textile design is made. This is different to a colour story, which describes a group of colours applied to many different textile patterns in a design group. A colour story gives overall visual cohesiveness. A colourway provides variation within specific textile designs. Commercial textiles are usually available in several colourways, each colourway comprising several shades from a particular colour story (Kight, 2011, p. 82).

18. It took several attempts to locate an upholsterer who would cover the chaise longue in the vulval fabric. The first upholsterer, a large, long-standing, and well-known business, run by a sole male proprietor aged 55 to 65, phoned me to reject the job after the chaise and fabric had been delivered to his workshop. He explained that while he would usually be personally prepared to do the job, it would be inappropriate to have the fabric in the workshop where younger apprentices would see it. I emailed a further two upholsterers in enquiry, attaching images of the design, and both declined to accept the commission, with no further explanation. I was eventually able to locate a local upholsterer, Daniel McAlpine, who expressed no issue with the textile print.

NOTICING AND SERENDIPITY

Vaughan & Akama (2009) suggest, that if we are to fully engage with a research topic we should:

> become a space ready to receive; we must see each thing afresh . . . To look is to know what you are seeking before you start. To notice is to chance upon without expectation. Such an approach to exploring a location, familiar or unknown, opens up possibilities to be somewhere that you never expected to be. (para. 15)

This act of being open to possibilities, without any idea of what might present itself, is also articulated by Mason (2002), who points out the value of:

> stumbl[ing] on to something through serendipity in a particular situation. What seems to be required is a disturbance or a resonance. Not a tidal wave, but a ripple sufficiently great to be distinguishable on the choppy surface which is my experience. (p. 68)

Mason (2002) calls the search for themes and similarities, "seeking threads . . . looking for themes [to] inform your future practice" (p. 65). This involves developing attunement, as we can only notice what we are "primed or sensitised to notice" (p. 66).

We see that this idea is concordant with the tenets of heuristic inquiry. Developing an ability to notice, to make connections between fragments, and to see these traces in the conceptual environment of one's research is at the core of my design process. However, this is a nebulous experience that is challenging to articulate.

In December 2010 I noticed two toddlers playing in the sand at my local beach. They were wearing all-in-one sun-safe swimsuits with arms and legs, and I remembered that my own daughter had worn exactly this style of swimsuit in navy and white horizontal stripes sixteen years earlier. Noticing the boys, and thinking about the stripes, initiated an internal journey, forging connections between fragments of previously encountered ideas and images. Prior to this, in my research I had been investigating subverting the binary of interior/exterior through Möbius garments and waxed fabric made into garment shapes. However, now it occurred to me that a consideration of stripes as a locus for disruption of wholeness and purity might prove fruitful. Going home, I experimented with a quick computer-based sketch of a striped fabric, in which the stripes skew and deviate from the expected (figure 2.19). This initial idea and sketch developed, over time, into the final designs present in the exhibition.

FIGURE 2.19

Digital sketch of warped-stripe fabric design:
November 2010.

FIGURE 2.20

Detail of warped-stripe fabric design, showing the
flower made from images of my lips and umbilicus:
November 2010.

EXPERIMENTATION

Much of the work discussed thus far occurred inside, or as an extension of, a designer's journal. However, in understanding the nature of experimentation in the thesis it is also useful to briefly consider how experiments were developed in the explication of the project.

EXPLORATORY EXPERIMENTS

Generally, my initiating experiments may be categorised as exploratory. Schön (1983) suggests exploratory experiments are actions undertaken only to see what follows. These experiments are initiated so I can trial an idea for a new approach to the research. An example of this is the flower motif I designed using my lips and umbilicus (Figure 2.20).

With this experiment I had no expectations about what would happen when designing either a striped fabric, or a flower made from human body parts. These were actions undertaken only to see what followed. I understood that solutions would surface during the 'solidification' of the idea. Designs were not resolved and then made; their making drew substance in to being and in this process suggested further opportunities for exploration.

Figures 2.21 through 2.23 show a selection of textile-based three-dimensional sketches (Gray and Malins, 2004), that function as exploratory investigations through material experimentation. The authors describe this process as "a haptic/hands-on approach through 3D sketching with actual material" (p. 111).

At this time I was interested in seeing how wax and textiles interacted. The quick experiments tested different potentials of the media. I was exploring what might happen when I dipped fabric in wax; brushed it on; smeared the wax on cold or hot; heated it afterwards; ironed it; crumpled it; put holes in the fabric then coated it; or mixed the wax with oil. These material experiments allowed me to explore possibilities with little risk, while offering the potential to spark ideas worthy of deeper exploration. Goldschmidt (1991) notes that exploratory inquiries through material experimentation introduce:

> a special kind of dialectics into design reasoning that is indeed rather unique. It hinges on interactive imagery . . . pregnant with clues, for the purpose of visually reasoning not about something previously perceived, but about something to be composed, the yet nonexistent entity which is being designed. (p. 140)

MOVE-TESTING EXPERIMENTS

Schön (1983) defines a second form of experimentation as move-testing. By this he means "any action undertaken with an end in mind" (p. 146). Move testing experiments are generally used in my work as a means of refining thinking. For example, at one point I used photographs of my body printed onto cotton in an attempt to communicate the idea of the private interior being used as a covering for the public exterior, (a reversal of the usual trope). The experiment did not seem particularly successful to me, and I made a 'move'; "a deliberate action undertaken with an end in mind" (Schön, 1983, p. 146). I sewed a succession of cotton squares together, in the hope that by strengthening associations with the bedroom and private space something interesting might become apparent in the work (figure 2.24).

With this kind of experiment the test is either confirmed (it does communicate the reversal) or negated (it does not communicate the reversal). In this case the move seemed to be negated: through a combination of fabric, print quality, and image choice no useful tension between interior and exterior was communicated.

FIGURE 2.21

Experiment with wax encased in fabric: October 2010

FIGURE 2.22

Experiment with waxed fabric: November 2010

FIGURE 2.23

Experiment with wax on fabric and hand stitching. This three-dimensional sketch was not a finished garment, but rather a way of exploring how waxed fabric interacts with sewing techniques: December 2010.

Conversely, move testing experiments undertaken in the design of grotesque ornamental pattern moved my thinking through a number of increasingly refined iterations (figures 2.25 and 2.26). At one stage in the development of this design I made a simple move: placing text into the background, to see if this might better communicate the idea of the textile as a specific personal narrative.

This prompted me to handwrite text into a second development of the design (figure 2.27). Rather than use a faux-handwritten computer font, I wrote with a tablet and stylus directly onto the design, to see if the element of the hand drew a different response than that of the computer font.

Figure 2.28 shows one of the designs in the exhibition, a curtain textile. The move-testing experiments in the previous designs led to me trial handwriting in vertical stripes. However, in this move, I wrote with graphite on toothed paper, scanned the text, and then placed it in the design, (rather than writing it in digitally). This move was made in order see what the specific visual qualities of handwriting might be, and what these might bring to the textile.

Thus, move-testing enabled me to develop designs and refine them through a process of action and evaluation, that gradually resulted in the artefacts becoming more articulate.

HYPOTHESIS-TESTING EXPERIMENTS

Finally, Schön (1983) identifies a third type of experimentation. This he defines as hypothesis testing. Hypothesis testing he says involves having a desired pre-determined outcome, and measuring the observed results against that hypothesis (Schön, 1983, p. 146). The hypothesis may be implicit, and is often uncovered through a series of move-

FIGURE 2.24

Experimental bed quilt patches show a move-testing experiment. The move was ultimately negated, as this solution to subverting the interior/exterior binary did not resonate with me: December 2011.

FIGURE 2.25

This design of vulvas and mouths seemed to speak about the general, rather than the specific: April 2011.

FIGURE 2.26

By adding text to the background of the image, I move-tested to see if this would better communicate the idea of the images belonging to a specific individual: April 2011.

testing experiments. For example figure 2.29 shows a detail of a trial for a hemming technique for the tablecloth in the exhibition. I had a clear hypothesis for this work. I wanted to design an artefact that evoked handwork, however I wanted to subvert the reality of actual handwork, with its lengthy time demands and association with the domestic interior. I hypothesised that using 'fake' machine-sewing techniques to replicate hand hemstitching might turn a traditional hand stitched glory box[19] item into a hybrid. Thus I pitched experiments against an idea. Experimentation served to exercise and test that idea (hypothesis). I found the result to successfully convey this sense: a successful test of the hypothesis.

FIGURE 2.29

Detail of tablecloth hemstitching technique done by domestic sewing machine. Cotton muslin and cotton thread: March 2012.

FOOTNOTE

19. A glory box is a chest in which a young woman stores household linens and personal clothing accumulated for life after her marriage. The term is unique to Australia and New Zealand, and is now almost obsolete ("glory box", 2009).

FIGURE 2.27

In a further move, I tried writing with a stylus in specific portions of a different design, to see how handwriting might speak to the viewer: May 2011.

FIGURE 2.28

This curtain design uses scanned handwriting on paper, rather than digitally-recorded writing.

FIGURE 2.30

An initial experiment which provided useful backtalk. The experiment told me that using a doll torso removed any sense of the personal from the work: September 2011.

FIGURE 2.31

Initially I heard the back-talk of the situation, but chose to ignore it, as I did not like what it was saying: September 2011.

REFLECTION IN AND ON ACTION

Embedded in the use of tacit knowledge and indwelling is the process of reflection in and on action. The process of experimentation and the making of new connections rely on letting the experimental material talk back to the researcher. As Schön (1983) posits, "moves stimulate the situation's back-talk, which causes [the researcher] to appreciate things in the situation that go beyond their initial perceptions of the problem" (p. 148). This happens because we reflect on the situation, and listen to what it is telling us, rather than impose our predetermined idea of what the outcome will be. Kleining and Witt (2000) state, "we 'ask' our material 'questions' . . . receiving answers and questioning again" in a dialogic process (para. 13). This conversation is reflexive. Schön (1983) says, "in answer to the situation's back-talk, the designer reflects-in-action on the construction of the problem, the strategies of action, or the model of the phenomena, which has been implicit in his moves" (p. 79).

Reflection-in-action is the process of listening to the back-talk of the situation while engaged in the situation. Figure 2.30 shows an experiment I undertook, adding a wing made from images of my hands onto an image of a doll body. While making this I could feel the design indicating that the situation was not working. I could hear the experiment telling me that although the design used digitally-collaged images of different areas of my body, applying these to the form of a doll did not communicate the abject nature of lived experience. This is the type of situation which Schön described when he explained that the practitioner "treats his case as unique [and] cannot deal with it by applying standard theories or techniques" (p. 129). There is no existing standard for communicating the grotesque through textile designs.

Initially I resisted this feedback. I was apprehensive about making the work more personal. I abandoned the experiment, and began another

FIGURE 2.32

Further iteration of the hand-angel design with the addition of my own body: September 2011.
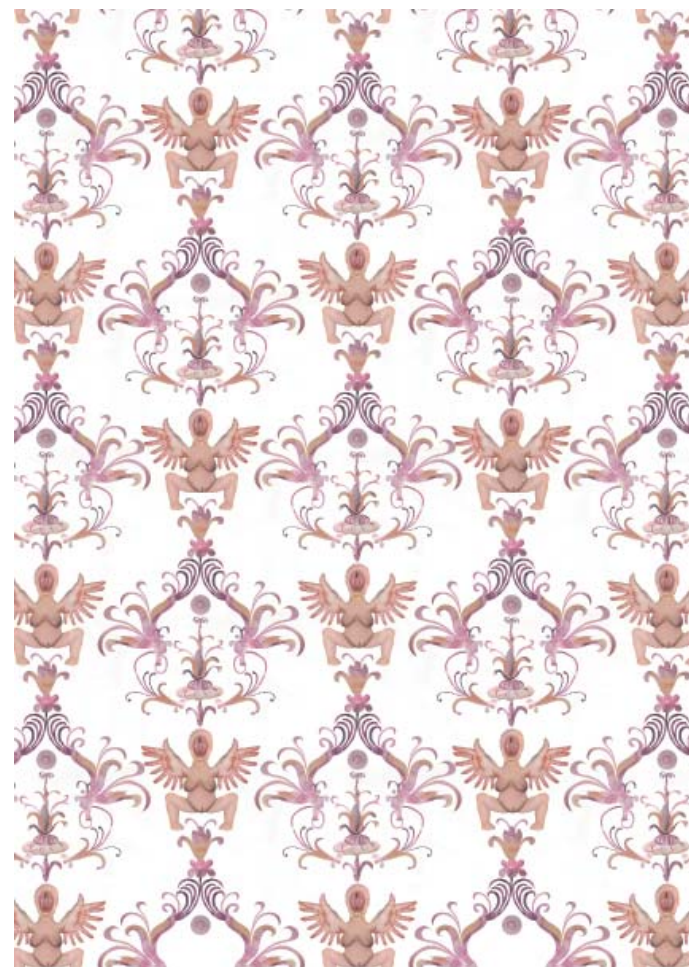
FIGURE 2.33

I altered the design when I considered how it would behave inside a repeat: September 2011.

(figure 2.31) which was almost identical. Quickly I realised that this situation was telling me exactly the same thing as the first: I had heard the back-talk, but not listened.

As a consequence, I engaged in a reframing of the design (figure 2.32). In this experiment I kept some parts of the doll's body in the design, but added my own. Prompted by reflection-in-action I made this move as an experiment, drawing on previous experience and tacit knowledge, in what Schön calls "the spontaneous exercise of intuitive artistry" (p. 240). I continually asked myself "what can I make of this?" (p. 241) while I was inside the process of designing.

Having completed an experiment, I reflect on it as a completed iteration, in a process of reflection-on-action. In this state, I am not driven in response to the unexpected, but rather take the moments offered by a pause in production, at the end of a particular set of processes, or at the end of a working period, to look back on the situation and think about the approach I have taken, other similar situations in the past, and my thoughts on this situation (Scrivener, 2000, para. 29). I record my reflective thoughts in my designer's journal. I am then able to *reflect on the reflection*, and consider if my original responses have shifted.

During this reflection I consider aspects such as the quality of the lines I am creating, the colour and texture palette, and how the single unit I am developing will look when placed into repeat. I am open to surprise and refutation. Reflection-on-action prompts a further reframing and new iteration (figure 2.33).

In the course of creative practice this reflection is seamless and constant; a moving between reflection in the moment of making and reflection on what has been made. In this process one is always drawing on the tacit. Together, reflection and tacit knowing feed into the indwelling and illumination stages of heuristic inquiry.

CONCLUSION

The autoethnographic nature of my project required a range of research methods that allowed me to access, and draw inspiration from, my personal experiences. Both autoethnography and heuristics require a process of indwelling and reflection, in order to synthesise the interior experience of culture into a visual form; in this case, textile designs. Using a range of research tools; writing, sketching, and experimentation, combined with reflection in- and on-action, to explore the research area, allowed me to utilise the flexibility of heuristics to find design solutions that satisfactorily communicated aspects of human experience.

Having discussed the design of the research project, I will now address the theoretical framing of the project.

CHAPTER 03 | CRITICAL FRAMEWORK

The grotesque and the abject are closely related; enfolding one another, they clasp between them a challenge to the cohesiveness of subjectivity. They provoke fascination *and* disgust: we must look, yet we must turn away.

The grotesque human is too cavernous, too large, too much: threatening notions of subjecthood because they spill over, and will not be contained. Similarly, the abject leaks; it breaches the autonomous boundaries of the individual by calling into question what is the self and what is not.

THE GROTESQUE: FRAGMENTED, MONSTROUS, CAVERNOUS

The grotesque is slippery and indistinct. Evans (2009) describes it as "notoriously difficult to pin down" (p. 136). The grotesque deals with notions of the hidden and the earth, the fragmentary and the excessive, the natural and artificial, the risible and the disgusting.

The term grotesque originally referred to a late-Roman ornamental style of domestic interior decoration, most prominently visible in Nero's Domus Aurea, the Golden House (64-68 CE) (Zamperini, 2008), and in Pompeian fresco (approx. 30 BCE -79 CE) (Cassanelli, Ciapparelli, Colle, & David, 2002). The grotesque style, first mentioned in the mid-sixteenth century, features fantastic figures amongst curving foliate designs (figure 3.1). The term first appeared in a description of a Roman villa. Because the rooms were excavated below ground level, Renaissance observers 'misconceived' them to be grottos" (Connelly, 2003, p. 5): cavernous and dark.

> Borinski, in his 1914 Die Antike in Poetik und Kunsttheorie, noted that: the effect of the grotesque seems to have been associated with its subterraneously mysterious origin in buried ruins and catacombs. The word is not derived from grotta in the literal sense, but from the "burial" in the sense of concealment – which cave or grotto expresses…for the eighteenth century still had the expression das Verkrochene [that which has crept away]. (cited in Benjamin, 1998, p. 171)

This subtle distinction links the grotesque to that which is covered over, ignored, sublimated. It evokes descent into covered, decorated space, rather than denoting specific iconography or design forms (Zamperini, 2008, p. 9). The figures themselves stand for the notion

FIGURE 3.1

Nero's *Domus Aurea*, the Golden House (64-68 CE)

FIGURE 3.2

Palatine Antiquarium, Domus Transitoria (detail)

of the grotesque generally: fragmented, partial, assembled from parts of extant animals, plants, and human figures, in preternatural combinations. However, due to the link with location, "the many connotations of the grotto – earthiness, fertility, darkness, death – link to all the variants of grotesque imagery" (Connelly, 2003, p. 5).

When first discovered, grotesque ornamentation was considered beautiful and imaginative. Vasari described them as divine (Kelley, 2002, p. 23). Kelley also notes that part of the grotesque's original appeal "was the notion that it was a product of pagan painters who were at liberty to invent what they pleased – [the grotesque] represented artistic freedom".

However, as classical Greek and Roman writings became more widely disseminated during the Renaissance, Vitruvius's (1960) opinion of the grotesque became influential:

> We now have fresco paintings of monstrosities, rather than truthful representations of definite things . . . Such things do not exist and cannot exist and have never existed. Hence, it is the new taste that has caused bad judges of poor art to prevail over true artistic excellence. . . . Yet when people see these frauds, they find no fault with them, but on the contrary are delighted, and do not care whether any of them can exist or not. Their understanding is darkened by decadent critical principles . . . The fact is that pictures which are unlike reality ought not to be approved . . . if their subject is lacking in the principles of reality. (p. 211-212)

Now, the grotesque is violation; a putting together of things that should be apart: the sacred and the profane; the pure and the mixed

(figure 3.2). Increasingly, Vitruvius' notions of architecture contributed to an equation of grotesque motifs with "the irrational, the irregular, the licentious, and the immoral" (Kelley, 2002, p. 23).

The highest art came to be influenced by "rule, reason, [and] order" and the "mathematical and pure abstraction which reflected the perfect harmony of God's universe" (Barasch, 1968, p. xxvii). In contrast, the grotesque was increasingly associated with the foul, the ugly, and the fantastic, and specifically with "the shameful realm of the individual imagination" (Barasch, 1968, p. xxvii): one person's private ideas made visible to all, in contrast to the depiction of reality agreed-upon by the social group.

Edmund Spenser (1596) described a room decorated in grotesque style in his sixteenth century poem *The Faerie Queene*;

> Much fayrer then the former was that roome
>
> And richlier by many partes arayd
>
> For not with arras[20] made in painefull loome
>
> But with pure gold it all was overlayd
>
> Wrought with wilde Antickes[21] . . .
>
> (verse LI; p. 376)

These figures had "monstrous formes" and Spenser likened them to "false love"; intended to deceive and entrap. This definition of grotesque as monstrous, with connotations of shame, sin, and fear, was pervasive during the seventeenth century (Barasch, 1968, p. xxx).

By the eighteenth century the term grotesque was generally related to caricature, with its sense of exaggeration and excess (Wright, 1968, p. 415) in which notions of "natural deformity" provoked laughter through a "representation of human life in inferior persons and low

FOOTNOTES

20. Arras refers to embroidered or woven wall hangings: at the time of writing far more common in English upper-class homes than painted wall decorations. They were named for a velvet-like thread of silk or wool, much like chenille, originating in Arras, France (Calasibetta, 1988, p. 191).

21. Antickes (variously spelled antics, antiques, or anticke work) was the standard term for classical grotesque decoration (Barasch, 1968, p. xxix-xxxv).

22. The Bartholomew Fair was a yearly market and jamboree, held in London from 1133 to 1855. It had its origins as a cloth trade-fair, however by the 1600s it was more a carnival, well-known for what were considered lower-class amusements, and famous for what Hone (1826) described as "an annual congregation of ignorance and depravity", which gave "the profligate and abandoned opportunity to debauch the innocent, defraud the unwary, and endanger the public" (p. 626). Nineteenth-century visitors reported being able to view albinos, Red Indians, ventriloquists, dwarfs, a living skeleton, contortionists, fire-eaters, dancing bears, waxworks, a blindfolded time-telling pig, baby crocodiles, and an elephant which uncorked wine bottles (Cavendish, 2005, p. 52). The fair was eventually shut down in 1855, after long earning middle-class disapproval for its preponderance of prostitutes, drunken revellers, and vulgarity (Cavendish).

23. See Appendix A for an analysis of a contemporary example of this kind of grotesque caricature: the 2011 film Jack and Jill.

24. It is in this sense that Gardener (2012) uses grotesque, in a description of two murderers' "continued lack of remorse and . . . grotesque lack of reality" (p. 23).

25. The notion of whether men's leakage is polluting to the same extent as women's is currently the subject of debate. Kristeva (1982) argues that "Neither tears nor sperm...although they belong to the borders of the body, have any polluting value" (p. 71), however Grosz (1994) disagrees, and states that Kristeva misclassifies semen as non-polluting (p. 207). Researchers such as Gail Dines (2010) see the so-called facial, "porn-speak for ejaculating on the face," (p. 90) as the ultimate degrading violence against women (p. xxvi), and therefore position semen as ultimately polluting. Sex researcher Charlie Glickman rebuts this, and posits that men are offering semen as an act of affirmation-seeking (Schwyzer, 2012). Glickman points to the long tradition of facials in gay porn as proof that they are not designed to degrade women, but are instead a search for validation that the semen-producer is desirable.

subjects" (p. 305).

> There is yet a lower sort of poetry and painting, which is out of nature; for a farce is that in poetry, which grotesque is in a picture. The persons and action of a farce are all unnatural, and the manners false, that is, inconsisting [sic] with the characters of mankind. Grotesque painting is just the resemblance of this . . . the end of all this [is] . . . to cause laughter: a very monster in a Bartholomew fair,[22] for the mob to gape at for their two-pence . . . it is a bastard-pleasure too, taken in at the eyes of the vulgar gazers, and at the ears of the beastly audience . . . it is a good thing to laugh at any rate. (Dryden, 1808; cited in Wright, 1968, p. 306)

In this stigmatisation of the term, "any person or characters . . . that depicted comically ugly or morally deformed types would be labelled 'grotesque'" (Barasch, 1968, p. xxxvi): thus the grotesque came to be associated with "the dirty, the criminal . . . the hedonistic . . . [and] the disgusting" (Kelley, 2002, p. 28). As Garber (1989) notes, caricature ranged from the "mere depiction of actual deformity" and exaggeration of existing traits, to the actual grotesque, where imagination allowed the artist to create "monstrous and weird products of the brain [in order to] arouse laughter, disgust, and astonishment" (p. 327).[23]

The grotesque, then, comes from the inside, rather than depicting the outside. Its fragments elicit disgust, rather than representing truth. With this sense of the grotesque as invented caricature, the boundary-blurring nature of the grotesque rises to the forefront, creating a tension between attraction and repulsion.

In grotesque caricature the genitals are often highlighted, in making public of what would be otherwise private, and in reference to Rabelais's notion of the "material bodily lower stratum" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 103) as a source of amusement (figures 3.3 & 3.4).

Grotesque caricature, exactly as in the Roman grotto-esque, places parts from diverse sources together to form a collection of pieces that refuse amalgamation. Nevertheless, composed of multiple scavenged pieces, the grotesque "still operates as a totality" (Kelley, 2002, p. 31).

This sense of the grotesque as a collection of parts, as fragment, came to the forefront during the Victorian period. Frankenstein's monster is emblematic of the grotesque: comprised of "bones from charnel-houses," and the products of the "dissecting room and the slaughter-house" (Shelley, 1992, p. 55); he was designed to be a beautiful whole, but instead became a "wretch", a "demonical corpse", inspiring only "breathless horror and disgust" (p. 58-59).

The monstrous grotesque challenges because, as Connelly (2003) posits, it lacks: "fixity, stability, order" (p. 4). Bakhtin (1984) describes the grotesque as "a body in the act of becoming. . . never finished, never completed" (p. 317). It threatens us with the possibility we will be overwhelmed; we cannot judge when or if it will stop. The grotesque is potentially ever-growing, ever-changing, eternally recombining, and defined by its "transgressing, merging, overflowing, destabilising" relationship to boundaries (Connelly, 2003, p. 4). Should the grotesque stay in its place, and remain apart, it would no longer be grotesque. It is only when it transgresses customary social categories and borders that it becomes grotesque.

The twentieth-century literary grotesque is created by a juxtaposition of unlikely elements: truth and lies, beauty and ugliness, justice and corruption, and blurring the boundaries of these categories (Kayser, 1963: Longman, 1974; O'Connor, 1962) to depict the monstrous in
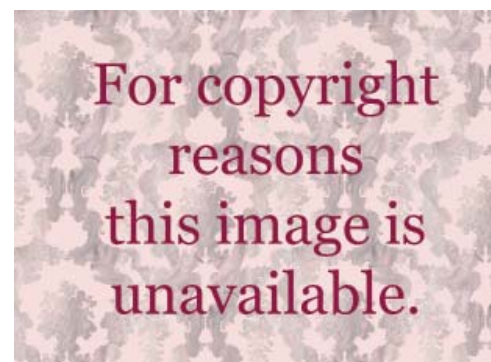
FIGURE 3.3

Anonymous. Grotesque caricature: satire on the sappers, 1789-92.
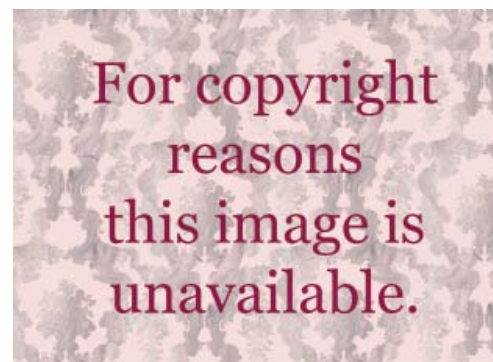
FIGURE 3.4

Anonymous. Grotesque caricature: satire on the sappers, 1789-92.

everyday life.

The multiple and complex historical meanings for the grotesque are elided and blurred in common-sense contemporary usage of grotesque of horrible excess and over-abundance.[24] In specialist discourses other terms have come to be used to describe some of the grotesque's facets, "among them arabesque, abject, *informe*, uncanny, bricolage, carnivalesque, convulsive beauty, and dystopia" (Connelly, 2003, p.5).

What contemporary common-sense usage preserves, though, is the sense of the grotesque as the putting together of opposites, provoking both disgust and laughter. In this way the grotesque asserts the impossibility of the division of the world into simple complementary pairs: above/below, inside/outside. It is the unease with which we greet this recognition, an acknowledgement of the impossibility of a stable separation between self and other that provokes our laughter.

This sense of the grotesque also alludes to its representation of inferior human forms, a notion introduced by Dryden (1808). Responses to a February episode of American talk show *Anderson* demonstrate this framing. For this episode, adult mothers of child beauty pageant contestants were given a makeover, in which they were dressed in adult-sized reproductions of their children's costumes, with matching hair and makeup (figure. 3.5) (Cooper, Murphy & Morin, 2012). Davies' (2012) critique represents a typical media reaction: "It was grotesque. It was everything you'd want it to be. The moms, thankfully, looked absolutely ridiculous." Notably, this use of the term grotesque relies heavily on the notion of excess. The mothers were risible precisely because of the excessiveness of their costumes: too pink, too large, too sparkly, and too young in style. The laughter they evoke is not the laughter of humour, but rather the uneasy laughter of disgust, fear, and recognition, provoked by the uncontained and overflowing grotesque.

The contemporary sense of the grotesque also incorporates the notion of overflowing excess; for instance in the private interior made excessively public. In 2012 the fashion label Black Milk Clothing produced a pair of leggings with a digitally printed depiction of anatomically correct muscle groups, which made the wearer look as if they had flayed skin (figure. 3.6). The fashion media widely described them as grotesque (Arthurs, 2012a; Granero, 2012; Hecks, 2012). Blogger Alex (2012) made explicit the tension between our desire both to see, and to turn away, when faced with the grotesque: "While I agree . . . that these leggings are pretty grotesque, there's a part of me that finds them fascinating. Probably the same part that likes to watch surgery documentaries" (para. 2).

FIGURE 3.5

Guests from talk show *Anderson*. February 2012.
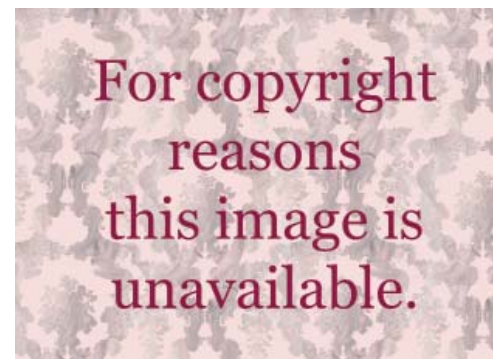
FIGURE 3.6

Black Milk muscle print leggings. February 2012

FIGURE 3.7

Crocheted bikini from *Poorly Dressed,*
February 2012.

FOOTNOTES

26. Argentina is a notable exception to this: in 2012 the Argentinian government unanimously voted that individuals could change their legal gender at will, without requiring any judicial, psychiatric, or medical procedures (Warren, 2012). In New Zealand, the procedure to change the gender assigned at birth is still somewhat complex and bureaucratic, and the judicial process requires "some degree of permanent physical change" (Human Rights Commission, n.d., para. 6).

27. Indeed 'hole', and the related 'donut', in a similar way to the term cunt, are offensive slang terms for a woman, reducing her existence to her vagina ("hole", 2009; "donut", 2003).

28. Nor is it perceived to be a clean hole: the vagina is frequently framed as inherently dirty. While douching, or washing out the vagina with liquids, is uncommon in New Zealand, a reported 20-40% of American women aged 15-44 still douche regularly (United States Department of Health and Human Service, n.d.).

29. The purpose of the interviews was "to explore women's experiences of, and perceptions about, the vagina, including questions about language, doctors, sex, and their feelings about their own vagina. Size was not a question included in the interview schedule, and in all but four of the interviews was raised by the participants themselves." (Braun & Kitzinger, 2001, p. 266).

THE GROTESQUE AND ABJECT FEMALE BODY

In Western worldviews the body is often marked by insecure bodily boundaries, making it the source of uncontrolled leakage. It is seen as producing an "uncontrollable, seeping liquid . . . viscosity, entrapping, secreting . . . a formlessness that engulfs all form" (Grosz,1994, p. 203).[25]

Skin, in this culture, is "the ultimate boundary, the material that divides the inside from the outside" (Halberstam, 2002, p. 7). The presence of matter expelled from our bodies – or bodies which expel matter – causes a state of defilement. This may be aligned to Kristeva's (1982) notion of abjection. The ideal body is one freed from materiality. Transcendent beauty arises from denying the materiality of the body.

Women traditionally hold the function of 'being' the body within a masculinist discourse (Anderson 2011, p. 40), linked through their association with Bakhtin's (1984) "lower bodily stratum" (p. 20). The biological functions of menstruation, lactation, and childbirth mark women as 'other;' disruptive and messy. They must either be expelled, or maintain a materiality-free transcendence, in order to "preserve the integrity of reason" (Anderson, 2011, p. 40).

In this way women as a group fall into the category of the abject.

THE ABJECT WOMAN

While gender is socially constructed and mutable (Butler, 2006; Lorber, 2010; Weitz, 2010) it seems it is possession of a vagina that defines women. As Spade (2011) observes, in most countries a person who identifies as female, but lacks a vagina, is unable to receive a governmental reclassification of gender.[26] A New Zealand television commercial for tampons aired in 2011 (but quickly withdrawn) suggested that only 'real' women have vaginas (Tahana, 2012).

The presence or absence of a vagina defines, from birth, a subject's limits and possibilities. As Blackledge (2003) notes, "Having a vagina meant I could be expected to work all my life for less money than if I was minus female genitalia. I could be expected to be treated as a second-class citizen, downgraded constantly because of my cunt" (p. 2).

Western culture specifically, as part of a Judeo-Christian belief system, places the female genitals as the most shameful component of human anatomy. "I will pull up your skirts over your face that your shame may be seen" (Jeremiah 13: 26, New International Version). "I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame." (Nahum 3:5, New International Version).

Notably, cunt is still "the most taboo or insulting word in the English language" (Blackledge, 2003, p. 85): nothing is more degrading in Western culture than being called a vagina, because of women's potentially polluting capacities. As Brown (2009) proposes, ". . . the vagina comes to represent the abject, or a threat to the subject, and is policed in order for dominant meanings to remain intact" (p. 1).

THE GROTESQUE WOMAN

The vagina is commonly framed as a space or hole,[27] deriving from a history of conceiving "the female and her vagina as a passive vessel for sperm": women as mere incubators (Blackledge, 2003, p. 101).[28]

The conception of the vagina as being a cavernous hole, or lack, is still a common trope in contemporary society. This can be illustrated by only a few instances, from copious numbers observed over the period of my thesis.

An anonymous writer to the Sunday Star Times sexual advice column Ask Mrs Salisbury (2011) referred to the vagina's grotesque potential as a large hole, when he pointed out how men extend the "courtesy" to women of not mentioning their vaginas are "too large" for the male partner" (p. 38). Braun and Kitzinger (2001) relate how women they spoke to were most concerned their vaginas would be condemned by their partners as being "a huge cavernous space" (p. 267).[29] Greer (1971) concurs: "the best thing a cunt can be is small and unobtrusive" (p. 39).

This anxiety was the basis for an episode of situational comedy series Curb Your Enthusiasm (Charles, 2005), in which the character Jeff describes a previous sexual partner, Lisa, as having a "gigantic vagina . . . biggest vagina known to man; huge! . . . it's gigantic; gigantic!" The character Larry subsequently accuses Lisa of stealing a valuable signed baseball: "I submit you took that baseball, stashed it in your unusually large vagina, and walked right on outta here." Although this event is presented are being highly unlikely to the extent of absurdity, the episode concludes with the implication that while Lisa may or may not have stolen the baseball, she has stolen Larry's cell phone and that this is indeed secreted in her vagina.

Terms indicating an excessively large vagina remain a casual insult to

punish women who transgress accepted norms of femininity. This is exemplified by a recent posting on the website *Poorly Dressed*.[30] The photograph shows a woman wearing a red crocheted bikini (figure 3.7). The poster was satirically cautioned, "please consider [your audience] before you point the camera directly at the cavernous maw between your widely spread legs" (Anonymous, 2012, para. 1).

Culturally, the vagina becomes an overwhelming grotesque space, engulfing and unfillable.

GENITAL REDUCTION

This fear of embodying excess and largeness – the grotesque – also prompts women to seek genital cosmetic surgery. Many researchers identify the current trend for cosmetic surgery to alter the appearance of the female genitals for aesthetic reasons (Berer, 2010a; Braun, 2005; Braun, 2009; Essén & Johnsdotter, 2004; Green, 2005; Johnsdotter & Essén, 2010; Renganathan, Cartwright & Cardozo, 2009). The vast majority of these surgeries are vaginal narrowing or tightening,[31] and labial reduction (Berer, 2010b; Lee, 2011; Liao & Crighton, 2009; Mahran, Rashid & Leather, 2011). Liao and Crighton (2009) report their patients, often motivated by self-disgust, frequently bring to consultations illustrations from advertisements or pornography, as if "presenting for a haircut at a salon," (p. 1091).

THE LEAKY WOMAN

Substances that come from and of the body are abject, as they are boundary-crossing. Those that are part of the skin, and dry – hair, fingernails, and skin itself – are less polluting. Substances which have escaped from the body, wet and sticky, are more dangerous. Faeces, urine, blood, sperm, mucous, and saliva are the most disgusting and repellent parts of being human.

MILK

Breast milk produced by the secreting female body continues to cause public dismay in the 21st century (Kwek, 2011; Narain, 2011; Williams, 2011). In 2012 social networking website Facebook suspended the account of a user who posted photographs of herself expressing milk using a breast pump, alleging they violated their community standards (Johnston, 2012a).

Calls for the 'privatisation' of breastfeeding usually revolve around issues of sexualisation (Bethsunshine, 2011; Ford, 2010, para. 5; Jane, 2010; Locklear, 2011). That it is the *leakiness* of the female body that prompts negative reaction is generally not acknowledged. Human breast milk, as a substance that is of the subject, yet not the subject, falls into the category of the abject.[32] The unwillingness of mothers to police their bodily boundaries produces alterity.

MENSTRUAL BLOOD

Menstrual blood holds such a strong position as a polluting substance in Western culture that, as Camille (1992) notes, medieval lepers were believed to have been conceived while their mothers were menstruating (p. 133). Menstrual blood is shameful, and all processes relating to it must be contained invisibly, lest it disturb that integrity of reason.

MUCOUS

Vaginal mucous exists almost silently in Western culture. Products such as panty-liners allude to states of being "fresh" and "comfortable" (Charmee Breathable Series Pantyliners TVC 2009, 2009), without stating what this freshness might relate to. As Blackledge notes, vaginal mucus "suffers with the useless, demeaning designation of 'discharge'" . . . vaginal discharge equals dirt . . . moist, wet, well-lubricated genitals are viewed by some as disgusting, polluting and to be avoided" (p. 171).[33]

The female body, then, is "inscribed as a mode of seepage…lacking self-containment…a formlessness that engulfs all form, a disorder that threatens all order" (Grosz, 1994, p. 203).

FOOTNOTES

30. The *Poorly Dressed* website is a place for users to anonymously submit photographs, often taken surreptitiously, of people wearing clothing, hairstyles, or makeup that either contravene social norms, or exaggerate current styles. The images, captions, and comments are intended to mock the wearers, in a type of informal social control.

31. Lee (2011), in her interviews of genital cosmetic surgeons, reports a surgeon stating "I took her from a four-finger vagina to a two-finger, and boy was her husband happy" (para. 28). The largeness of the vagina is here framed as only important in terms of its nature as a receptacle for the penis.

32. Several cultures enact a purification ceremony on mothers when they finish breastfeeding, to enable them to rejoin the community as fully encultured members. Valodzina (2006) is one example of a number of anthropologists who have reported on such social cleansing rituals.

33. A negative response to even the suggestion of genital dampness is very common in social media. On a book appreciation website, user Bubbles (2012) comments on his progress through a book a friend recommended by saying, "Oh dear, what is HC making me read? Moist vaginas . . . Hope this doesn't get more gross cause [sic] I already threw up in my mouth a little."

THE FAT WOMAN

While women learn behaviours to mask the leakage of milk, menstrual blood, and mucous, undesirable excess embodied as weight is harder to disguise. Fat becomes a woman's most frequently and easily identifiable sign of her positioning as grotesque and abject[34] (Orbach 1978 & 1982; Bordo, 2003; Rothblum & Solovay, 2009; Braziel, 2001). Fat is seen as a frightening and destabilising personal characteristic.

Fat as excess is explicitly linked to women. Hartley (2001) explains, "that which distinguishes women outwardly from men—the curves of breast and hip—are primarily accumulations of adipose tissue" (p. 68). Despite this, to be appropriately feminine a woman should be smaller than a man, and take up little space. Bergman (2009) notes that, in terms of societal norms, "a man can be much, much fatter than a woman and still be viewed as comfortably within the standard deviation" (p. 139), and that "whether I'm fat or not depends on whether the person or people looking at me believes me to be a man or a woman."

In a polemic against fat, newspaper columnist Amanda Platell (2009) complained that fat people "take up too much space" (para. 1). This is a common statement, recurring whenever people have no choice but to be in proximity to fat, such as public transport (John C, 2011) or specifically, airline travel (Allen, 2010; Mayerowitz, 2009). Reaction to excess size speaks of a fear of being encompassed, surrounded, and engulfed. It is a fear of contamination; that fat will encroach upon the autonomous self. Web forum user Cosmeticjunkiee (2007) describes fat in terms of communicable disease. She says,

> more and more ppl [sic] are falling prey to this every single day. Until one morning we will wake up and obesity will have become a new world order . . . We have to nip this thing in the bud before it claims more victims.

The description of the fat body as an out-of-control body surfaces

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FOOTNOTEs

34. This is despite the vast number of books which offer to assist a woman to visually hide her 'figure flaws' and appear to fit within the normative weight range (Deckert, 2002; Halston & Roberts, 2012; Moultry, 2006).

35. The successful internalisation of this surveillance is illustrated by a group of four young women aged 25-27 in Austin, Texas in 2009 (LeBlanc, 2009). Believing their "jeans were too tight," they started a weight loss group called the Out of Control Fat Roll, and pledged to diet and exercise to lose weight. They held group weigh-ins, made public confessions for eating forbidden food, and posted their progress on Facebook and Twitter. The "loser" of the group (i.e. the person who lost the least amount of weight by the end of the diet) "would have her photo taken in a bikini and posted on the blog." The penalty is described as "harsh": presumably because the purpose of the bikini photo is to highlight a woman's failure to achieve normative femininity, and expose her to public ridicule, revulsion, and scorn. Such discipline is exerted on the self by the self, enabled and supported by the immediate social group, and observed closely by broader society. 'Failure' of this self-control (or rather, achieving less 'success' than other members of the social group) leads to a strategy of voluntary self-shaming. The confession of sins, with appropriate penance, places the process of fat-loss within the tradition of mortification of the flesh. This form of publicly-enacted discipline is common for women attempting fat-loss. It is at its most obvious in formal fat-loss industrial complex organisations such as Weight Watchers or Jenny Craig, but present in informal social groups throughout Western culture.

repeatedly in Western culture (Bentley, 2000; Carnell, 2009; lalalalahelp, 2009; LeBlanc, 2009). Being fat is assumed to stem from the inability of a weak mind to prevent the body from taking what it demands.

Kent (2001) notes:

> The self is never fat. To put it bluntly there is no such thing as a fat person . . . fat women's bodies . . . are represented as a kind of abject: that which must be expelled to make all other bodily representations, even life itself, possible. (p. 135)

This is reflected in the discourse of the fat-loss industry, which repeatedly exhorts women to "find the real you" hidden inside the fat (Greiner, 2012; Huff, 2012; PRLog, 2011; Tanady, 2011). Fat is matter out of place, contaminating the true self, and threatening all. Over-ruling control and discipline, the fat body takes charge and expands infinitely, in a Bakhtinian (1984) framing as "a body in the act of becoming . . . never finished, never completed" (p. 317). Through a lack of containment, fat threatens the autonomous selfhood of all.

The self-surveillance effect of the cultural panopticon ensures women police their own grotesquerie.[35] The penalty for failure is expulsion from the category of right and proper to that of the abject.

THE ERASURE OF THE SELF

While "an ideal body is no body at all," and transcendent beauty arises from the "erasure of the abject body" (Covino, 2004, p. 7), erasure of the abject is never possible. As Butler (1993) asserts, the subject is paradoxical from the outset, since it is, "constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abject outside, which is, after all, "inside" the subject as its own founding repudiation" (p. 3). That which we reject is part of ourselves. Without the abject there can be no subject, nor object; the abject stands as a link between self and other.

While women work to police their leakage and excess, the attempt to achieve the incorporeal body is an attempt to erase the self. Our acknowledgement of this paradox is what gives women's bodies their ability to disturb and provoke.

FIGURE 3.8

Fabric design detail for *Bedroom Suite for an Interrupted Honeymoon*

FIGURE 3.9

Bedroom Suite for an Interrupted Honeymoon

FIGURE 3.10

Design for *Siren* bedhead

THE GROTESQUE AND ABJECT IN THE WORK

These concerns are evident in the work in a number of ways. I destabilise and undermine normative practice by displaying my own fat woman's body as a grotesque motif in textile designs. In this way I embrace my embodiment as a tool of resistance to cultural control and position myself as what Rowe (1990) would describe as an unruly woman. Rowe states that unruliness, "reverberates whenever bodies, especially women's bodies, are considered excessive—too fat, too mouthy, too old, too dirty, too pregnant, too sexual (or not sexual enough) for the norms of gender representation" (p. 410-411).

By choosing to be a woman who embodies matter-out-of-place I embrace transgression, and take ownership of all that a woman should not be. As Brown (1985) observed:

Fat women are ugly, bad, and not valuable because they are in violation of so many rules. A fat woman is visible, and takes up space. A fat woman stands out. She occupies personal territory in ways that violate the rules for the sexual politics of body movement . . . she has clearly fed herself . . . thus, for women to not break the rules, and for women not to be ugly, bad, and invaluable, women must fear fat, and hate it in themselves. (p. 62)

Bakhtin (1984) notes that eating and drinking are amongst one of "the most significant manifestations of the grotesque body" (p. 281). The grotesque "swallows . . . rends the world apart, is enriched and grows at the world's expense," at the same time being "joyful, triumphant . . . devouring without being devoured." To feed oneself is an act of asserting subjectivity.

By using grotesque ornament as a dis-ordering system for my grotesque body, I disrupt the category of bodies worthy of being displayed, in a violation of traditional female norms. I breach the aesthetic boundary to bring forward excess, earthiness, fertility, darkness: the essence of the grotesque and abject.

The colour palette employed throughout the works reflects the abject. The designs represent the pigments of my skin at points where the exterior and the interior meet; juxtaposing light with dark, shiny with matt. The deep fleshy tones do not treat the skin as an epidermal veneer, encompassing and containing the interior, but rather they posit it as an enfolding and erupting site of transition and transgression.

The *Bedroom Suite for an Interrupted Honeymoon* (figures 3.8 & 3.9) is a chaise longue printed with a baroque pattern made from large-scale photographic repeats of my vulva. These are unsettling in their excess. The chaise brings to mind images of the indolent, supine woman: a lazy cunt, taking up the entire seat.

The *Siren* bedhead (figure 3.10) shows my fat body in the form of a split-tailed siren: taking the symbol of the sexually available woman and splicing it with a sexually unappealing woman. In combination, this creates a grotesque that is both caricature and monster.

Having examined the positioning of women as grotesque and abject, it is now useful to address efforts throughout Western history to keep women, and women's voices, as matter in their right place: controlled and domesticated.

TEXTILE AND TEXT | PART 02

LIFE WRITING

The textiles in the exhibition include, as well as imagery of my grotesque and abject self, textual narratives of this self, drawn from my life writing. Life writing is less structured than an autobiography; comprising "unstable, provisional writing, sketches rather than formal memoirs . . . These forms . . . become a way of constructing a different subject, a subject-in-process . . .a subject which is not fixed" (Anderson, 2011, p. 88). Anderson defines life writing as:

> All forms of writing about lives including biography, autobiography and diaries . . . The terms' inclusiveness acknowledges how hard it is to draw a rigid distinction between the different genres and how one genre may contain elements of another. (p. 144)

Dowd and Eckerle (2007) define life writing as encompassing diaries, letters, memoirs, religious treatises, fictional romances, cookbooks, and combined forms of these; in fact any text which includes aspects of day to day life, whether fictionalised or not (p. 1). Texts such as cookbooks, as Wall (2002) points out, function as life writing because they may be used to reevaluate notions of the domestic. These kinds of texts "tease out alien aspects of routine household rituals, activities, and tasks and thus expose the discrepancy between domestic ideals and an often disorderly lived practice" (p. 5). Life writing, then, is genre-blurring.

The inclusion of fictionalised writings within the life writing definition demonstrates a refusal to draw a clear distinction between what is 'real' and what is 'not real'. Life writing makes overt the impossibility of aligning any form of memoir or autobiography with an objective 'truth'.

Buss (2002) notes the tendency for life stories to change and shift over time. Anderson (2011) maintains that autobiographies "produce fictions or figures in place of the self-knowledge they seek. What the author of an autobiography does is try to endow his inscription within the text with all the attributes of a face in order to mask or conceal his own fictionalization or displacement by writing . . . In the end there is only writing" (Anderson, 2011, p. 12). Barry (2002) coined the term autobifictionalography (p. 4) for her memoirs: she asks, "Is it autobiography if parts of it are not true? Is it fiction if parts of it are made up?" (p. 6). Boylan (2003) tells her reader "This is a true story . . . certain moments in it have been gently altered" (p. 301).

The coat in the exhibition features text from a diary entry I made (Appendix B). The coat is of a pattern I use for making clothes for teaching. These coats function in my wardrobe as symbolically protective garments, used for the public presentation of the self. However in this garment the text records my seeping and leaking body, as that presentation failed in its task of keeping matter in its place. It exposes the interior, of both my body and emotional state, which would ordinarily remain private. The diary entry was made in retrospect. Because I create my understanding of events through their narratisation it is impossible at this remove to tell if this records what 'really' happened, even for myself, the writer.

This fluidity of 'truth' positions life-writing as a form of the grotesque. By disdaining the clear binary of fiction/non-fiction, life-writing is irrational and fragmented. Buss (2002) enjoys this marginality: "I found in memoir the perfect medium to embroider my own rebellious discourse. I liked that it was a marginal form, even a marginal form of a marginal discourse" (p. xv).[36]

Life writing is equally framed as abject. Through incorporating written texts which cross between those written for the private self (diaries), those which may be semi-private (letters or notes) and those written for public consumption (published texts), life writing "hesitates to define the boundary between public and private, subject and object"

(Miller, 1996, p. 2). This creates a seepage and leakage of the private into the public.

FOOTNOTES

36. Buss' metaphor of the diary as a piece of embroidery is echoed by several researchers. Hampsten (1982) draws an analogy between diary-writing and handcraft: through embellishment and care, and in turning a practical task into self-expression (p. 80-81). Hogan (1991) describes women's diary writing as expressing ornamental detail "woven into the whole fabric" (p. 95), and links this to Schor's (2006) framing of detail as feminine.

37. It is no co-incidence that Barasch (1968) asserts that the gothic grotesque, in the form of gargoyles, misereres, and sculpted ornament, is "dismiss[ed] offhandedly as droll trivialities" by 20th century viewers (p. ix).

38. Typical of this framing of autoethnography as female-focused is Heim's (2007) description of a male-authored text as being in the "tradition of autoethnographic writing that has so far predominantly been associated with women writers" (para. 1).

39. Indeed, Madison (2012) draws no distinction between memoir and autoethnography, referring to experiential writing as "autobiography, travel writing, or memoir (or what some people call autoethnography)" (p. 10).

MEMOIR AS GROTESQUE AND ABJECT

Women's writing has frequently been considered suspect: too much detail, too personal, excessive.

From the late 1980s onwards the literary world experienced an increase in women's life writing, as part of what Wlodarczyk (2010) calls, "an explosion of writings about feminism and feminist activism" (p. 16). Memoir, incorporating collections of letters, travel writing, and diaries, has become the subject of a wide range of feminist scholarship (Buss, 2002; Chute, 2010; Ellerby, 2001; Smith & Watson, 2002; Stewart, 2003). As Buss (2002) explains, memoir is a life-writing practice in which a writer gives testimony of personal knowledge (p. 2). Buss asserts that women "take up the memoir form for the specific purpose of revising cultural contexts so that their experience is not excluded . . . bringing female gendering to bear on our previously male-gendered narratives of the self and culture (p. 3).

Reaction to the rise of the female memoir called into question the validity of female experience. Bernstein (1997), in an article on the genre of women's confessionals, positions it as unimportant, alleging that "not every story is worth telling"[37] (para. 9). Eakin (1999), questions if women's memoir is a "sign of a decadent culture of disclosure" (p. 157). Dowd (1998) refers to the "if-it's-about-me-it's-interesting" life-view (p. 27). Genzlinger (2011) calls Heather Havrilesky's memoir "utterly ordinary" (para. 7), and castigates her for "overshare" (para. 8). He laments the lost days when people who had "unremarkable lives" were "obliged to keep quiet . . . the way God intended" (para. 2), and says, "A moment of silence, please, for the lost art of shutting up" (para. 1). Women's experience, then, can be framed as too trivial, too loud, too out of control, and too self-indulgent.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AS GROTESQUE AND ABJECT

This increase in the genre of women's memoir came hand in hand with the rise in the academic use of an autoethnographic methodology (Chang, 2008; Duncan, 2004; Ellis, 2004, 2009; Ellis & Bochner, 1996, 2000, 2011; Muncey, 2010; Wall, 2006), who utilise and promote autoethnography as a way of positioning the "introspective, personally engaged self" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 742) within the research. Although not all researchers who use autoethnography are women, in discourse it has frequently been framed as having been developed in response to "feminine sensibilities and supposedly softer, more experimental and participatory approaches to knowledge" (Strine, 1992, p. 399) and in opposition to a "masculinist ideology" (Blair, Brown & Baker, 1994, p. 384).[38]

Including personal experience in research can provoke similar criticism.[39] Manning (2007), for instance, states, "Searching for theoretical reflections of my experiences I discovered auto/ethnography. My initial delight turned into distaste at the degree of self disclosure I encountered in the writings. I rejected auto/ethnography as self indulgent and un-academic . . . " (para. 1). Coffey (1999) states that autoethnographers are at risk of "gross self-indulgence" (p. 132). Delamont (2007) frames autoethnography as "pernicious" and "intellectually lazy" (p. 2). Clough (1997) links autoethnography to the "melodramatic, talk-show explicit, emotional realism of television" (p. 95) with its related associations with the feminine, the personal, and infantile regression (p. 102). A reviewer of an autoethnographic paper comments: "You use 'I' ten times on page ten. This seems rather excessive" (Holt, 2003, p. 2). Atkinson (2006), critiques autoethnography as "exaggerated" and "overdrawn" (p. 400), and holds that ethnographers as authors "look inward at [their] personal and emotional life . . . rather than looking outward to an intellectual constituency" (p. 403). Anderson (2006a) notes that

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40. The term ethnographic realism was coined by Marcus & Cushman (1982), who define it as "a mode of writing that seeks to represent the reality of a whole world or form of life" (p. 29). It came to be mainly used as a style of writing up ethnographic field notes in a way that describes the society as if the researcher was actually there, functioning as a witness to the events. Embedded in this definition is the assumption that there is one single reality which can be represented by an autonomous, objective observer: who "represent[s] faithfully the true nature of social phenomena" (p. 44). The purpose is to "develop context-free, universalistic 'yardsticks' that can be applied to particular cases" (Blair, Brown & Baxter, 1994, p. 389). Ethnographic realism rejects the notion of a range of micro-narratives, each representing an individual's personal experience, which can be quite different to another individual's experience of the same social phenomena.

41. The Renaissance trope of excessive yet meaningless female language remains current in the 21st century, with the huge popularity of *Shit Girls Say* (Humphrey & Sheppard, 2011). In this series of online videos (officially three, however spawning more than 2,600 copycat videos, such as *Shit Black Girls Say* (Sorrells, 2011) and *Shit Girls Say on Their Periods* (HotRodHottie7, 2011)) women's language (delivered in true early modern English fashion, by the male-identifying Graydon Sheppard impersonating a female) is depicted as constant, repetitive ("Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen . . . listen"), meaningless (various facial contortions and squealing), trivial ("Oh, I had such a good sleep", "Ugh, I hate trying on clothes", "Twinsies!"), and exposing women's inability to deal with simple daily issues ("What's wrong with my computer?", "What's my password?"). At the time of writing, the original three videos alone had been viewed a total of 24,816,206 times in the six weeks since their first uploading, by my count. In April 2012 Harlequin announced an upcoming mass-market book based on the video series (Boog, 2012).

autoethnography has been primarily related to "emotionally wrenching experiences" (p. 377) and calls for a return to, or an addition of, more "clearly analytic" (p. 391) ethnography. He contrasts "evocative autoethnography" with "realist ethnography"[40] (2006b, p.452): fanciful, emotive, and subjective writing on the self, with objective writing which can more accurately represent the truth.

Even proponents of placing the self within the research can call for caution in its practice, positioning it as a potentially dangerous discourse. Fleischman (1998) notes the growing impetus, since the 1980s, for female academics to include personal micronarratives, autobiographical information, and gendered language in their research, in contrast to the carefully neutral and 'objective' language traditionally expected in academia. She opines it is safest for "women of a certain age with tenure, and with a measure of academic credit in the bank" (p. 1008) to include the autobiographical and expose the self. They have already proven their position as objective researchers, and might want to avoid "boredom" in late-stage careers (p. 1009). Fleishman urges academics to avoid the "merely personal" and "gratuitous autobiographical detail".

The inclusion of the self in research, then, is criticised as a grotesque transgression: embodying both public excess and cavernous interiority. The terms of critique mirror Vitruvius's rejection of the grotesque: as that which does not represent what is objectively true.

WOMAN'S LANGUAGE AS GROTESQUE AND ABJECT

Critique of women's personal writing can be aligned not only with "the misogynist topos of women's endless talkativeness and its counterpart in a vagrant female sexuality" (Parker, 1987, p. 4). It is also aligned with the ongoing and entrenched representation of women in Western culture as garrulous and without self-restraint (p. 7). A Renaissance motto was "Women are words, men deeds" (Luckyj, 2011, p. 45), and even women's words were without reason; irrational; empty of logic. Woodbridge (1986) notes that in early modern England "authors' diction often characterises female speech as meaningless sounds, babbling, prating, chattering" (p. 80)[41] Luckyj (2011) asserts that "such cacophony was considered not only irritating, but also dangerous, since it threatened the order of the household and ultimately of the state" (p. 45).

Parker (1987) links the extensive history of denying women a public voice[42] with the categorisation of "'any public woman', and especially one who spoke in public" as a "whore" (p. 104): a woman of suspect and excessive sexuality.[43] Thus Shakespeare's (1599) Hamlet perceives his inaction and internal debate over his father's death, to make him "like a whore unpack[ing] my heart with words" (Act II, Scene II, line 520). An excess of language is equated with an excess of sexuality. Unfaithful women from the Judeo-Christian tradition are often linked with excess language: "And behold a woman meeteth him in harlot's attire prepared to deceive souls; talkative and wandering": a woman of sexual and verbal excess, out of her proper place[44] (Proverbs 7:10, Douay-Rhiems Bible, 1971).

Contemporarily, Cixous (2001) explicitly links women's words with sexuality. She states:

> I know why you haven't written . . . Because writing is
> at once too high, too great for you, it's reserved for the
> great – that is for 'great men'; and it's 'silly.' Besides, you've
> written a little, but in secret. And it wasn't good, because
> it was in secret, and because you punished yourself for
> writing, because you didn't go all the way, or because you
> wrote, irresistibly, as when we would masturbate in secret,
> not to go further, but to attenuate the tension a bit, just
> to take the edge off. (p. 628)

Luckyj (2011) links the stereotypes of "scold, whore and gossip" (p. 45) by their use in the management of women's proper place, "constructed to justify the 'naturalness' of a gendered hierarchy". The "relation between a potentially uncontrollable female sexuality, a woman speaking in public, and a woman usurping her proper place" (Parker, 1987, p. 105) is made in order to police sexuality, in order to:

> . . . make it clear that a woman must stay within a private
> place – the home – because her body contains a private
> place, a place or 'enclosure' that adultery would break into,
> and make a 'common' rather than a particular property.
> (Parker, 1987, p. 105)

Wilson (1994) identifies that historically "Women were their bodies; and whereas a feminine body was seemly and appropriate in a rural landscape – since women were closer to Nature anyway – a woman in the public spaces of the city was a threat and a danger. She should not be there; she polluted public space" (p. 11).

WOMEN AND THE DOMESTIC INTERIOR

It is still a truism that, as Weisman, (1994) maintains, "girls are taught to relate to personal body space, interiors, and the domestic sphere, and boys to reflect upon public, outdoor space" (p. 28). Women's experience is traditionally positioned as private and domestic. By bringing female experience into the public domain we prick the established social boundary and allow the interior to spill over.

However, the cultural positioning of the domestic is inherently grotesque, juxtaposing as it does the states of importance and triviality, refuge and prison. The home functions in different ways depending on gender. As Weisman (1994) asserts, for the father ". . . the house is still a place of renewal. For mother, private space and the status, adulthood, and sense of individuality it affords are glaringly absent. For her, the house is still her 'boundary', her 'sphere', and a never-ending, specialized workplace devoted to the growth, development, and fulfilment of other family members" (p. 98). The home is read as feminine, trivial, and unimportant, at the same time as domestic tasks to support others, such as childraising, cooking, and cleaning, can be valorised.

It is in this juxtaposition that the domestic is grotesque. As violation; a putting together of things which should be apart: the sacred and the profane; the pure and the mixed. The home, as the location for the body is where the realms of public and private meet, can function as "a battlefield of the monstrous" as the most disturbing event of all is the "disturbing the illusion of domestic comfort" (Grünenberg, 1997, p. 169).

Women who are not safely entrenched in the domestic space cross boundaries, and fall into a new, potentially dangerous category. Woman who do not fit the role of mother or caretaker become "unheimlich – unhomely, extimate to the realm of femininity-as-domesticity,

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42. The continuing denial of a public voice to women, in Western culture, was highlighted by the February session of the American government's House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, which was meeting to debate the provision of contraception for women in health coverage. The all-male Committee spoke with a panel of all-male witnesses on the topic of female reproductive rights (Pear, 2012). A female witness nominated by the Democratic Party, Sandra Fluke, was refused permission to speak, as she "did not have the appropriate credentials to testify" (Abrams, 2012, para. 14). Response to this omission included incredulous mocking on *Morning Joe*, a breakfast current events television show on MSNBC. The all-male hosts interviewed all-male guests about the "absurd . . . male-locker room" mentality the Committee displayed (Finkelstein, 2012).

43. During the final stages of this exegesis, the contemporary relevance of this attitude was exemplified by the language used to describe Sandra Fluke by media commentator Rush Limbaugh. Fluke had wanted to testify to the committee regarding the prohibitive cost of oral birth control pills, and that a friend used these to treat her polycystic ovarian syndrome. Should an employer be able to deny a medical treatment being covered by workplace medical insurance, on the grounds of religious belief, her friend's treatment might not be covered (Fluke, 2012). On his radio show Limbaugh described Fluke as a "slut" and a "prostitute" (Wyler, 2012)). While Limbaugh has removed the relevant transcripts from his website, a recording of Limbaugh's original show, with transcript, is available at http://mediamatters. org/mmtv/201202290008 This levelling of sexual insults at women who exercise a public voice is part of a very old tradition of what Morris (2012) describes as "Taliban-style intimidation of women" (para. 4). Although public response generally reviled Limbaugh, numerous similar occurrences emerged (Frauenfelder, 2012; Malkin, 2012). These examples included commentator Matt Taibbi stating, regarding political activist Michelle Malkin, "Now when I read her stuff, I imagine her narrating her text, book-on-tape style, with a big, hairy set of balls in her mouth. It vastly improves her prose" (Taibbi, 2009, para. 4). As Bady (2012) points out, by making any issue about women an issue about a woman changes a generalisable public concern to a specific personal desire, which can then be moralized about (para. 2).

unrelated to masculinity, and homeless in representation" (Lajer-Burcharth, 2001, p. 37). Women out of the home become abject: matter out of place.

As Irigaray (1985) identified, the question still remains:

> why isn't the woman, who belongs to the private sphere, always locked up in the house . . . how can you be a woman and be out here at the same time? . . . if as a woman who is also in public, you have the audacity to say something about your desire, the result is scandal and repression. (pp. 144-145)

As critical responses to autoethnography show, the prohibition about women speaking in public, other than in an approved mode, remains. Yet, as Bornstein (1992) notes, "One of the first steps to achieving power is to speak one's own voice: to name oneself" (p. 53). Despite the risk of exposure and transgression of aesthetics or authoritative principles, the importance of incorporating the private and personal narrative in both traditional ethnography, and traditional academic research, is important in order to perform a "personal act of repossessing a public world" (Hart, 1979, p. 195). Narratives which are ostensibly about a particular person are "are 'really' of . . . an era, an institution, a class identity". Speaking in public from a position of transgression, of being different, reclaims what may otherwise be excluded.

Women's life writing functions as a way of being in the world, and position women as actors; as "both looking and looked-at subjects" (Chute, 2010, p. 2). As Douglas (1978) makes clear, "Not only marginal social states, but all margins, the edges of all boundaries which are used in ordering the social experience, are treated as dangerous and polluting" (p. 56). Criticism of memoir and autoethnography is

an attempt to police these polluting texts, and re-establish secure boundaries.

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44. The use of the word slut or whore to insult women sits within a worldview in which any sexual activity women have is bad, unless it is within a monogamous heterosexual marriage. It is outside the scope of this research project to engage in this debate, however Nair (2012) succinctly states the case for that fact that "it's also perfectly fine that women . . . [might] like having lots of sex . . . whether with one person or with many, at the same time or sequentially" (para. 9).

45. Being positioned as abject, it traditionally falls on women to undertake those household duties that involve taking artifacts from the unclean side of the binary, and purifying them so they can emerge on the clean side, where they can be touched by all. The classic example of this is caring for textiles through laundry and mending; a task described by De Beauvoir (2011) as Sisyphean (p. 474). She asserts that doing housework is a state of being locked into perpetual immanence (p. 73). The 2009/10 Time Use Survey in New Zealand (the most recent for which data are available) show that women spend 4 hours 20 minutes per day on unpaid work including housework, with males spending 2 hours and 32 minutes (Bascond, 2011, p.1).

46. That this link between textiles and female chastity still exists is underlined by a 2012 press release and promotional website from American company Infidelity DNA Testing. They suggest: "Just provide us . . . underwear or panties and we . . . can identify if semen is present . . . [and] make sure the DNA belongs to the correct person" (PRWeb, 2012, para. 4). The company suggests you use this service not only to check on your spouse, but also if "you suspect that your . . . daughter has had sex recently" (Infidelity DNA testing, 2012, para. 2).

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47. The primary purpose for teaching the alphabet to working-class girls was for their employment in middle or upper-class households, where sewn alphabets would be used to mark domestic linen (Parker, 2010, p. 85).

48. While this is not the primary focus of the thesis, aspects of Derrida's observations on repetition (1998) are evident throughout all of the exhibited work. Derrida, in discussing repetition, suggests there is an "infinitesimal difference" (p.234) between an other and me, or between me and the other in me. In the absence of the body, where once there was presence, there is a repetition. Initially there is presence: my lived body. The residue of that presence is in the conception and design of the work, as well as physical traces; my epithelials and DNA left behind on the work. There is also a textual body, narrated in autoethnographic writing, these texts are digitally printed as patterns onto many of the fabrics. There are photographic images of the body, recording a moment of presence in which they were taken. These may be understood as a series of moments in which the designs were created, a series of moments in which the designs were printed onto fabric, and a series in which the artefacts were created from the textiles. There is a slippage between my lived self and my body in text and image. This is brought to mind by the now absent body's place in and on the artefacts – the constant referral to sitting and lying in domestic spaces. The viewer's lived presence – either viewing the work, or reading this account of the work – creates a further repeat, as they create meaning from the text/s. While this is not the primary focus of the thesis, aspects of Derrida's observations on repetition (1998) are evident throughout all of the exhibited work. Derrida, in discussing repetition, suggests there is an "infinitesimal difference" (p.234) between an other and me, or between me and the other in me. In the absence of the body, where once there was presence, there is a repetition. Initially there is presence: my lived body. The residue of that presence is in the conception and design of the work, as well as physical traces; my epithelials and DNA left behind on the work. There is also a textual body, narrated in autoethnographic writing, these texts are digitally printed as patterns onto many of the fabrics. There are photographic images of the body, recording a moment of presence in which they were taken. These may be understood as a series of moments in which the designs were created, a series of moments in which the designs were printed onto fabric, and a series in which the artefacts were created from the textiles. There is a slippage between my lived self and my body in text and image. This is brought to mind by the now absent body's place in and on the artefacts – the constant referral to sitting and lying in domestic spaces. The viewer's lived presence – either viewing the work, or reading this account of the work – creates a further repeat, as they create meaning from the text/s.

TEXTILES AS THE FEMALE BODY

Textiles are linked to the body, and also to impermanence: whether the impermanence of the 'triviality' of fashion, or the longer-term impermanence of decay and rot. Textiles fold, wrinkle, and stretch, they take on the shape of the wearer, and, through this close association to the body, are considered tainted and abject unless specially, ritually cleaned and kept pure; leading to the privileging of other visual forms (Prentice, 1995). This corruptibility, and close association with the body, link textiles to women.

Domestic textiles relate to three fantasies about women, as Frye (2010) describes: that women "kept indoors and out of the public eye will somehow remain chaste", "that women can be isolated from the outside world and from each other", and "that women so isolated are sexually available to a particular man" (p. 168).

Textiles are particularly associated with the female body, firstly through routine domestic activity, but secondly through the metaphor of purity; with sewing "representing the eroticised, reproductive female body, as cloth that can be readily soiled" (Frye, 2010, p. 164).[45] Access to and maintenance of textiles equates to access to the female body.

In Shakespeare's Cymbeline (1623), Giacomo likens Innogen's chastity to fabric: a "fresh lily! and whiter than the sheets" (Act 2, Scene 2, lines 18-19). Brome, in his The Queen and Concubine (1659), has Eulalia admonish a peasant girl to "keep your work clean and you shall be a good maid" (act IV, scene III). In Shakespeare's Othello, (1603) Iago asks Othello "Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief spotted with strawberries in your wife's hand (act III, scene III, lines 439-40). The spots stand in for the spots of blood on a wedding-night sheet; for virginity. Othello imagines how a "bed, lust-stain'd, shall with lust's work be spotted" (act V, scene I, line 37).[46]

TEXTILES AS TEXTS

As well as standing for the female body, textiles have long been used as texts for women to speak their stories. The archetypal story is that of Philomel (Ovid, 2004), who, after surviving rape, and having her tongue cut out to prevent her reporting the guilty party, instead depicts the events in fabric. "...Upon her loom, she hangs a Thracian web and starts to weave, threads of deep purple on a white background, depicting the crime" (p. 214).

Sewing and embroidery are traditional ways in which women have been encouraged to tell their stories. Frye (2010) notes that, in early modern Western culture, writing, visual design, and needlework were not separate activities for women, but instead combined to make texts (p. 3). Samplers were particularly used by women as means of self-representation, in a way that could be shared and left for descendants.

As well as functioning as textile objects, sewing became a symbol of selfless womanhood. The act of embroidering, mending, and garment making was proof of a woman's domestic discipline, and symbolized the "virtues of tireless industry, selfless service and praiseworthy thrift" (Parker & Pollock, 1981, p. 61).

Women, texts, and the domestic, became inextricably linked in the early modern period. One reason for the importance of needlework is that, as Frye (2010) argues, it was imagined to take place in "quiet and confined domestic spaces", so reinforcing the notion of "female virtue so central to [a] fantasy of a secure home" whereby "domestic security rests on the appropriate activity of women" (p. 6).

TEXTILES AS A TOOL OF ENCULTURATION

As well as women's proximity to domestic textiles, they were an inevitable vehicle for female texts, as textile work formed an essential part of a woman's education, entwined with the processes of enculturation.

Textiles were used throughout Europe, from the Renaissance onwards, as an important pedagogical and ideological tool for the education of girls. Textiles were used to teach the basics of sewing, while also providing, to lower-class girls, what Hackel (2009) calls an abecedarian literacy: producing "the most elementary vernacular reader, someone unable to write and able to read only haltingly and aloud" (p. 63).[47]

Teaching girls only to read rather than to write reinforces the importance of listening over speaking in the idealised framing of women's lives. The ideal woman, as depicted in conduct manuals, "listens without speaking, observes without commenting" and exemplifies the ideals of "silence, chastity and obedience" (Hackel, 2008, p. 200). In this way the sampler functions as an ideological tool, that rendered women "powerless, silent and still" (Parker, 2010, p. 86). Textile production and decoration busied women in an appropriate venue: the private domestic space. As Parker explains, "domestic arts were equated with virtue because they ensured that women remain at home and refrain from book learning. Ignorance was equated with innocence; domesticity was a defence against promiscuity" (p. 75).

Entwining literacy with sewing skills, however, did ensure that girls received a level of education they may not have otherwise. By aligning literary with textiles it was made suitably feminine. Hackel (2009) notes that in early modern England "women's and girls' secular reading was often constructed . . . as wasting of time, unprofitable, and even perilous practice" (p. 209). By entwining reading practices with textiles the boundaries between unsuitable erudition and ideologically

appropriate literacy could be safely maintained.

In his treatise *The Education of a Christian Woman* (1523), Juan Vives expressly links textiles and texts as tools for maintaining appropriate female behaviour, to be learned from the earliest age: "Therefore, she will learn, together with reading, how to work with wool and flax, two arts passed on to posterity from that former age of innocence, of great usefulness in domestic affairs" (p. 58). Reading was the "best occupation", but Vives promotes the importance of skill in textiles as well, which he links to the domestic and female chastity. Vives highlights the stories of Lucretia, who was found to be at home weaving, while her friends were out at night feasting (p. 60), and Penelope, who remained at home faithful to her missing husband by beguiling her suitors with her endless weaving (p. 61). However, more than this, Vives explicitly links textiles and the domestic to female silence:

> I should not wish any woman to be ignorant of the
> skills of working with the hands, not even a princess or
> a queen. What could she do better than this when free
> of all the household tasks? She will converse with men,
> I suppose. (p. 59)

Textiles then, not only preserve innocence and chastity by keeping women in the interior domestic space, but the necessity of production explicitly functions as a tool to silence women.

English Renaissance educationalist Richard Mulcaster (1970) also links writing for women with needlework. He asserts, "If I should allow them the pencil to draw, as the pen to write, and thereby entitle them to all my elementary principles, I might have reason . . . it would help their needle to beautify their works; and it is maintainable by very good examples even of their own kind" (p. 142). Mulcaster links the use of the hand in both writing and needlework with learning to carry out the socially appropriate reigning-in of the self: "habits of behavior begin with the control of the hand, with the formations of the hand" (p. 56).

During the Victorian era needlework came to be associated purely with leisure and decoration, rather than primarily mending and garment construction. The increase of textiles as loci of pleasure lead to a trivialising of the medium, and moralistic condemnation. Veblen (2010) asserted, "the pervading principle and abiding test of good breeding is the requirement of a substantial and patent waste of time" (p. 46). Frye (2010) agrees, pointing out that

> The fear of women's idleness, with its resulting
> temptations, haunts writings by and about women
> throughout the early modern period. This deep anxiety
> about women's leisure, which many people in the
> twentieth-century have inherited, has obscured the
> recognition that early modern embroiders were producers
> of texts and artwork, even as textiles around the globe,
> including the American quilt, have been widely affirmed
> as complex artistic expressions. (p. 127)

TEXTILES AS LIFE WRITING

Textiles as texts are paradoxical in nature. While instruments of hegemonic enculturation, they also functioned as an active voice for the maker. As Frye (2010) asserts:

> domestic embroidery preserves the seeds of social change by recording women's increasing engagement with print culture, their advancing literacies, and their engagement with intelligent, outspoken, authorial . . .exemplars . . . women who were more literate, more willing to oppose attempts to silence and ridicule them, and more politically and legally active. (p. 159)

The sampler, although ostensibly rigid and unvarying, in fact offers a multitude of potential for personal expression. A sampler has no pre-determined form. The maker can select or invent sewn elements and arrange them in any order. While usually including an alphabet, or a verse, this was open to interpretation, with limitless possibility for individual variation. In this way the band sampler could be used as a form of life-writing, as a tool to explore identity and exercise agency.

Sampler verses can be maudlin and sentimental, however they need to be read in the spirit of the time, rather than through a contemporary lens. Parker (2010) describes sampler verses as "prayers for spiritual support in a battle against restlessness and loneliness" (p. 151), such as the following text from an 1840s sampler:

> I ask not for a kinder tone, for thou wert ever kind.
>
> I ask not for less frugal fare, my fare I do not mind.
>
> I ask not for attire more gay, if such as I have got

> Suffice to make me fair to thee, for more I murmur not.
>
> But I would ask some share of hours that you on clubs bestow
>
> Of knowledge which you prize so much, might I not something know.
>
> Subtract from meetings amongst men, each even as hour for me.
>
> Make me companion of your soul as I may safely be . . .
>
> (cited in Colby, 1964, p. 254-55)

In a tone of quiet reproach, this functions as a call for inner strength to accept the tenets of encultured femininity.

Elisabeth Parker's sampler, held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, is an expressive and emotional work of memoir. Undated, but from some time after 1830, the sewn text is a stream-of-consciousness, and begins, "As I cannot write I put this down simply and freely as I might speak to a person to whose intimacy and tenderness I can fully intrust [sic] myself and who I Know will bear with all my weaknesses." The text goes on to describe Parker's "cruel usage" as a housemaid, and her enduring of "cruelty to [sic] horrible to mention for trying to avoid the wicked design of my master." The latter half of the sample concentrates, in stream-of-consciousness style, on Parker's despair, and her guilt at her desire for "the great sin of self destruction" (cited in Llewellyn, 1999, p. 68-69). While a paper memoir by Parker may not have survived, her textile still speaks.

As Frye (2010) notes, even when the texts on textiles appear to be generic, "the extent to which needlework, so often signed, initialled, or otherwise distinguished as the work of a particular hand, registers

the subjectivity of individual women within local and familial systems, as well as within national contexts" (p. 118). Certainly descendants of the original sampler-makers appear to have valued the time and effort which went into them, and a large number have remained intact and cherished when all other heirlooms from the ancestress have vanished.

Having established the cultural danger presented by women out of place, and the use of textiles as a traditional woman's voice, it is useful to consider the ways in which ornament and decoration, as experienced in the textiles comprising the accompanying exhibition, both disturb and maintain encultured order.

TEXTILES AS TEXT IN THE WORK

The works in this thesis reflect the way in which textiles may be considered as both tools of enculturation, and a means of inscribing a lived life on a material object. In the *Hemmed Tablecloth* (Fig. 3.11) the immediate visual characteristic is the large size of the tablecloth. The hemming of the cloth becomes an excess of the ritual of repetition,[48] the repeated labour of women's anonymous industry. The sheer fabric becomes a ghostly remnant of the hours spent in domestic care, lying like a shroud over the furniture that signals the dual role of 'home' – retreat from the public gaze, yet the site of performance of femininity for the gaze of others. The voice of the tablecloth is muted and soft, in the way that textiles so often form an unconsidered backdrop to our lives.

The tablecloth also brings to mind the nature of women's textile craft; for the most part a reproducing of the patterns of others. To be a good needleworker is to replicate the imposed pattern without flaw or deviation. Ornament is ordered, repeated, and controlled through the labour of femininity. Here, the absence of decoration brings to mind the annulling of the maker. The tablecloth is the flip side of the printed designs: it is the erasure of the person from the textile, the invisibility of the woman who made it.

In its excess of anonymity and ritualistic repetition (hemming) the cloth spills off the table and folds its excess onto the floor. This is an artefact where repetition is elevated over reason, where the subtle stitches that will largely go unnoticed but will contain and preserve the cloth, continue beyond order, they are the overspoken whisper, the woman who doesn't know how to shut up – the litany of repetition, finely wrought to no noticeable effect.

FIGURE 3.11

Hemmed Tablecloth

ORNAMENT AND DECORATION | PART 03

VISUAL PLEASURE

Ornament and decoration are paradoxical. In the Western Judeo-Christian tradition—the prevailing context of this thesis—ornament and decoration are often trivialised, and considered superfluous and, at times, deceitful. At the same time they can be seen as providing order: enculturing nature and imposing form on the obstinately unruly.

Historically, the appreciation of ornament and decoration has varied significantly even within Western cultures. Periods of romantic indulgence and classical restraint entertained different judgements and different practices. In the official canons of Western aesthetics since the mid-nineteenth century, though, the prevailing opinion is that ornament and decorations are additions made purely for the purposes of visual pleasure (Trilling, 2001, 2003: Brett, 2005). According to Riegl (2004), true ornament cannot convey conceptually meaningful narrative (p. 116-117), and is only ornament if it exists purely to delight the eye. This orthodoxy changed somewhat following postmodern debates and, in 2003, Trilling argued that "ornament is not adornment . . . and it is not . . . trinkets you put on the mantelpiece" (p. xiii). Nevertheless, he concurs that "ornament is intended, first and last, to give pleasure" (2001, p. 6).[49]

However, more than simply addition of detail for the purpose of beautifying, both decoration and ornament carry within them a sense of excess. One OED definition for decoration is "ornateness" ("decoration," 2011), while ornate carries the meaning of being "excessively decorative . . . with excessive decoration" ("ornate," 1999). The Victorian art critic John Ruskin demanded in 1849 that design should be "chaste," (2007, p. 45) and contrasted this to the "extravagance" of corrupt ornament (Ruskin, 2009, p. 29). His contemporary Owen Jones was concerned that designers should "set reign upon" their fancy. "Ornament let him have in abundance; but in its composition let him be modest and decorous, avoiding over-finery as he would nakedness" (2008, p. 382). More than a century later, Smeets (1973) argued that "ornament is bound by strict rules of moderation" and that it "must be used sparingly, never where it serves no purpose or is superfluous" (p. 72). Gombrich (1984) noted it is ornament in excess which has been warned against throughout Western design history (pp. 18-31).

FOOTNOTES

49. Swartz (2007) refers to "visual pleasure and beauty through patterning motifs and decoration" (p. 30), and Grabar (1992) asserts that ornament is "that aspect of decoration which appears not to have another purpose but to enhance its carrier" (p. 5). The key word in this definition is "appears". Ornament certainly does hold meaning. Kellum (1994), for example, has explained in great detail the meanings behind the ornamentation on the Ara Pacis. Ornament appears at first glance, however, to offer nothing more than visual pleasure, to the extent that Gordon (1992) can describe ornament as being "fundamentally without meaning" (p.3). Unlike a painting or photograph, which announces to us that it is the point of viewing, ornament sidles in, offering its meanings to those who linger.

50. It is useful to remember that within a Judeo-Christian framework woman is also seen as the supplement or accessory to man; made from Adam's rib, designed to fill his insufficiency.

51. Indeed Trilling (2003) likens ornament to visual background music (p. xiii) that often eludes our consciousness.

52. Architectural ornament, for example, can hold reference to long-vanished traditions, that (often unnoticed) are nonetheless at the root of our contemporary culture. Hersey (1988) notes that the dentils and wreaths—common on 20th century governmental architecture—refer to early Hellenistic religious sacrifices. Dentils are symbolic teeth which 'eat' the sacrificial harvest wreath (pp. 36-44). The polyvalence of ornamental imagery reinforces the paradoxical ambiguity present in ornament.

53. Guiled is the past tense of guile, meaning skilful deceit or treacherous cunning ("guile", 1999).

54. The urge to decorate oneself is both criminal and degenerate (p. 167). As Kelley (2002) notes, "What could be more horrific to an essentialist like Loos than [a] depiction of the world as an accumulation of animated ornaments stripped from their primary forms" (p. 31). Where ornament was not classified as deceitful, it was at least unreliable. Simmel (2000) noted that the proud person disdains ornament because, as it consists only of its immediate appearance, it "is only what it can be taken for at the moment" (p. 119). In contrast, he argues, the "genuine" offers more than its immediate appearance.

TRIVIALITY

Ornament can also be defined as an accessory or adjunct; that which is subordinate or supplementary[50] ("ornament," 2004), and its role in design can be framed as secondary and meaningless. Ornament, "as commonly understood, is an accessory" (Gordon, 1992, p.3). It can become a distraction, which "dazzles us and tempts the mind to submit without proper reflection. The attractions of richness and splendour are for the childish; a grown-up person should resists these blandishments and opt for the sober and the rational" (Gombrich, 1984, p. 17).

Paradoxically, however, precisely because of its lack of importance, ornament may also carry meaning that has slipped away from plain sight. Ornament can suggest, hint, allude, or even state boldly, knowing it will be overlooked. In literature, as Gordon (1992) stated:

> . . . one of the primary functions of ornament is to carry meaning and intent that have been suppressed or excluded from the central field. It is able to do so because it does not normally receive focused, conscious attention from the reader. (p. 4)

Observers of design objects and artefacts frequently do not read the object closely, or in detail;[51] so that ornament impacts on our attitude to visual artefacts, and yet remains unnoticed. As Trilling (2001) noted, "the only way to appreciate ornament is by seeing it, which is just what we have not been trained to do" (p. 6).[52]

DECEITFULNESS

The suspicion of subterfuge and distraction from the essential, attributed to ornament by many writers over the history of Western aesthetics, logically lead to a suspicion of ornament as deceitful. Already Vitruvius, in the first century AD, rejected ornamentation involving things that "do not exist and cannot exist and never have existed" (1960, p. 211). Shakespeare (1598), in The Merchant of Venice, called ornament nothing but:

> the guiled[53] shore / To a most dangerous sea; the
> beauteous scarf / Veiling an Indian beauty; in a word,
> / The seeming truth which cunning times put on / To
> entrap the wisest. (3.2.99 -103)

When mass-production advanced in the nineteenth century, ornament became cheap to produce and available to the masses. Promptly, design critics lamented that the cheap reproduction of expensive hand-made originals constituted deception. In 1853, Ruskin dismissed this kind of ornamental design as "downright, inexcusable . . . lie[s]" (2010, para. 49). Christopher Dresser, in his 1873 manual Principles of Decorative Design, described "this grovelling art, this so-called ornamentation, which tends to debase rather than exalt, to degrade rather than make noble, to foster a lie, rather than utter truth" (1995, p. 15). A century later, Gombrich (1984) discussed "the proliferation of substitutes, which made it impossible for the public to appreciate and assess the process of production" (p. 65). In 1973, Smeets—who was not per se hostile towards ornamentation—still exhorted designers to remember that "a pure feeling for the materials . . . [is] indispensable to meaningful ornamentation" (p. 161).

Outside of art and design circles, philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche opposed in 1874 a "decorative culture" to a "true culture" that has truth, unity, and integrity. True culture, believed Nietzsche, could "still be something other than a decoration of life, that is, basically always only pretence and disguise; for all ornamentation covers over what is decorated" (Nietzche, 1925, p. 99). Implicitly, decorative culture is a sign of dissolution. Adolf Loos, who became famous for associating ornament with crime and the 'primitive', regarded it as a sign of degeneration in Western culture: "the less advanced a nation, the more extravagant its ornament, its decoration . . . The goal toward which the whole of mankind is striving is to see beauty in form alone, and not to make it dependent on ornament and decoration" (1998, p. 77). [54]

Under the influence of postmodernist and poststructuralist theories, art and design criticism conducted a major revision of the assessment of ornament in the 1980s and 1990s. Nevertheless, some of the argument considering ornament and decoration as impure and deceitful continues on into the 21st century. Thus, Genocchio (2007), in a review for the New York Times, described the 2007 Pattern and Decoration retrospective at the Hudson River Museum as "empty decoration – drapery or wallpaper passed off as painting". His most scathing response was to works "hung directly onto the wall without frames", as this made them "seem like curtains or . . . tapestries". When it pretends to be art, which it is not, decoration is duplicitous.[55]

Genocchio saw the same category of treachery at work that Victorian writers frequently attributed to decoration: "causing one material to look like another which it is not" (Dresser, 1995, p. 16). As if there had been no postmodern revision of ornament, Walker (2011) similarly described an aesthetic of reduction and minimalism in fashion design as "intellectual", "pure", and "honest" (p. 173-183). Reinforcing the classic, uneven binaries of mind/body, pure/corrupt, honest/deceitful, such writers place ornament on the abject side of each binary. They can see ornament's ability to make something appear to be other only as inherently dishonest.

However, it is partially precisely ornament's ability to reconfigure and renew that defines it. Ornament has the potential to turn a two-

dimensional surface into the appearance of a three-dimensional one. It can highlight articulation and accentuate joining. As Trilling (2003) argued, "above all, ornament takes transformation as its subject matter. It revels in the creation of monsters. Animals emerge from plants, flowers shade into geometric shapes, with an ease that belies their unnaturalness" (pp. 153-154).

FOOTNOTES

55. This review also frames ornament as associated, in a negative sense, with domestic textiles. This links pattern squarely with femininity, through the long established conflation of women with the private domestic interior (Veblen, 1899; Sparke, 1995; Weisman, 1994) as discussed in section two.

56. Kelley (2002) notes that numerous twentieth-century artists, including Salvador Dali, Claes Oldenburg, Peter Saul, and Sherrie Levine, code softness and ambiguity as feminine, and hardness and exactness as masculine (p. 32).

57. Schor (2004) notes that "detail has been traditionally connoted as feminine and devalorized . . . Western culture [has made a] longstanding association of the order of the small, the finely wrought, and the heimlich with the feminine sphere" (p. 116).

58. Indeed, it is this link between decoration and the feminine, positioning decoration as both trivial and abject, which caused the relegation of the highly successful 1960s to 80s Pattern and Decoration movement to a footnote in most art history texts: see my review of contextual knowledge.

59. Setting boundaries on ornament has at times even been regarded as a way of turning subjective art into objective science, thereby containing its formlessness and potential disorder. Schafter (2002) noted that Victorian manufacturer William Dyce declared that "ornamental design is, in fact, a kind of practical science, which, like other kinds, investigates the phenomena of nature for the purpose of applying natural principles and results to some new end" (p. 27). Schafter discussed how nineteenth-century theorists on decorative arts w-ere focussed on formal elements, defining by external structure, and were determined to link ornament with scientific and linguistic methodologies in a search for order and meaning (p. 59).

MUTABILITY AND MONSTROSITY

It is partially precisely ornament's ability to reconfigure and renew that defines it. Ornament has the potential to turn a two-dimensional surface into the appearance of a three-dimensional one. It can highlight articulation and accentuate joining. As Trilling (2003) argued, "above all, ornament takes transformation as its subject matter. It revels in the creation of monsters. Animals emerge from plants, flowers shade into geometric shapes, with an ease that belies their unnaturalness" (pp. 153-154).

This discomfort with something that pretends to be something it is not, or something that does not exist, is very closely related to the discomfort evoked by grotesque ornament (see section 1). Ornament's mutability can be monstrous, and the fear of the monster – the fragmentary, excessive, and uncultured – generates distrust of ornament. Nikolaus Pevsner, from a thoroughly modernist, mid-twentieth century perspective, found "the insensibility of the artist towards the beauty of pure shape, pure material, pure decorative pattern, […] monstrous" in Victorian product design (cited in Trilling, 2003, p. 170). What is pure and separate, it follows, is good. It is also male.[56]

FEMININITY

Because of its association with detail and pleasure, ornament is frequently positioned as feminine. Thus, Veblen asserted in 1899 that a woman's "sphere is in the household, which she should 'beautify' and of which she should be the 'chief ornament'" (2010, p. 139). Basic forms were considered masculine. It was the ornamentation of the forms, the fussy trivial detail, which was framed as feminine. Rand (2009) quotes American businessman Benn Pitman saying "Let men construct and women decorate" (p. 64), noting that decoration, which implies waste and frivolity, is linked to the domestic space.[57] In popular opinion, "Art is painting, sculpture, etching; design is wallpaper, carpeting, and upholstery patterns" (p. 64).

However by no means was this association of decoration and the feminine a strictly 19th century phenomenon: throughout most of the twentieth century, male artists who chose to explore pattern and decoration were seen to:

> venture bravely away from a given locus of authority. For women . . . to make the same experiment was, in a sense, to court perversely a foregone conclusion: that their creative accomplishments simply continued conventional feminine preoccupations with domestic craft and self-adornment. (Chave, 1996, p. 14)[58]

The connection of woman with decoration is still deeply-engrained in contemporary Western, particularly middle-class culture. By way of association, decoration itself becomes gendered feminine.

Thus, Chave (1996) concludes that, throughout the twentieth century, the decorative was "mostly relegated to minor or non-art status" and that it carried with it "an ineradicable taint . . . moral as well as aesthetic" (p. 13).

ORDER

Within a Western aesthetic tradition, therefore, ornament, decoration, and pattern can be seen as trivial, deceitful, feminine, and worryingly prone to overflowing excess. However, an alternative framing is as a means of enacting human intellect and will on an essentially chaotic world: an ordering of matter into its proper place.

Several visual traditions put great store in ornament. In the Islamic culture, as Cotter (2004) noted, "ornament . . . is essential to creating a coherent visual universe" (para. 10). Similarly, in Chinese art, merely transcribing what the eye can see was traditionally not sufficient; the expectation that artists will use their imagination (Clunas, 2009, p. 14) thus led to a sumptuous profusion of patterns and ornamentation linking earthly art production with cosmic or heavenly harmony. In Indian art traditions, ornament and pattern were auspicious, protective, and necessary (Dehejia, 2009, p. 25) – to the extent that, according to Coomaraswamy (1977), any Indian art or design artefact was considered unfinished without ornament (p. 242). According to Grabar (1992) the Sanskrit term for ornament and decoration "implies the successful completion of an act, of an object, or even of a state of mind or soul" (p. 26). In this worldview decoration is not something extra, something superfluous, but rather an integral part of the whole; it orders and completes.

However, despite the negative Western associations of decoration and ornament, the sense of ornament as order remains present. Indeed, order is latent in the word ornament in English, as the word comes originally from the Latin ornere, meaning "to fit out or complete" (p. 4).

As Loos (1998) maintained, ornament "brings order into the shaping of our objects of everyday use, orders us and our forms" (p. 188). To architect and designer Le Corbusier ornament offered exciting possibilities precisely because it allows humans to exert our will and discipline: "ornamentation is like a sign: it is a synthesis, an experience of an order! 'Ornament' making is a categorical discipline" (cited in Smeets, 1973, p. 13).

This appeal of ornament for its ability to reshape nature into controlled order is notable. Gombrich (1984) described the process of decorating as taking a field and organising it. This involves planning, by sub-dividing the space, and then "building the pattern . . . by repetition and extension" (p. 79). Grabar (1992) frames the process of reducing natural motifs to pattern is "one way of taming nature" (p. 221).

Even in the scholarship of ornament itself the usual approach is to group, order, and classify, in what is more than a search for meaning and commonalities, but rather an attempt to exert control over the excess that ornament threatens to unfurl.

Under such a framework, Riegl (2004) regarded grotesque ornament as evidence of a declining civilisation. He described the "lack of linear clarity" and "dissolution of solid forms" as barbarous (p. 245), and considered it to be "animalistic" (1994, p. 115): a stimulus-response to a world not yet conquered. Riegl saw organic images as merely accepting what nature has provided, rather than imposing one's will upon.[59] According to Riegl, is it "natural" for well-designed ornament to not merely depict nature, but constrain it (p. 124), and he believed that humans would eventually evolve past the need to decorate.

ORNAMENT AND DECORATION IN THE WORK

The designed artefacts explore these considerations are made in several ways. First, in the Grotesque Bedsheets (Fig 3.12) the print utilises the ordered nature of regular repeat, however the imagery is disordered. The poses in the design are those used to depict the traditional ordered female body. However, in this case, it is my own disordered body that replaces the expected smooth and desirable curves. Thus, the print displays order and disorder at the same time.

The bedsheets further contest order by disrupting the expected use of the bed. The viewer might normally expect sheets to be thrown back to expose a place for a singular female body, not a plurality, a swarm; an embodiment of female power in multitudes. The women in the print are unruly, out of their place, as they look back at the viewer in direct address.

To display a naked female body promises pleasure in viewing, but instead the pleasure is subverted; the promise is deceitful. The body displayed is not one that offers itself as a pleasurable object to be gazed at, instead it flaunts its disordered excess flesh.

Further, like ornament, the sheets are trivial things. They are made from tacky, shiny polyester; a fabric of cheap hotels that rent beds by the hour. Rather than serious fibres of silk and linen, polyester sits lowly in the order of material beauty. It flaunts its role as a decorated and vulgar substrate.

FIGURE 3.12

Motif from *Grotesque Bedsheets*

CHAPTER 04 | COMMENTARY

FIGURE 4.1

The final works were exhibited in *Patterns of Corporeality*, at Gallery Three, 39 Symnonds Street, Auckland, New Zealand. 11-15 September 2012. The works comprised three curtains, a tablecloth, seat cover, a covered chaise longue, a padded headboard, and a set of bedsheets.

FIGURE 4.2

Dining room table with *Hemmed Tablecloth, 2012*. Cotton cheesecloth, 15m x x90cm, display dimensions variable.

FIGURES 4.3 & 4.4

Dining chair, 2012. Wood, silk and cotton velvet

FIGURE 4.5

Harpy Curtain. Digitally printed silk georgette. Length 150cm x width 90cm

FIGURE 4.6

Harpy Curtain design detail.

FIGURE 4.7

Design for *Harpy Curtain*.
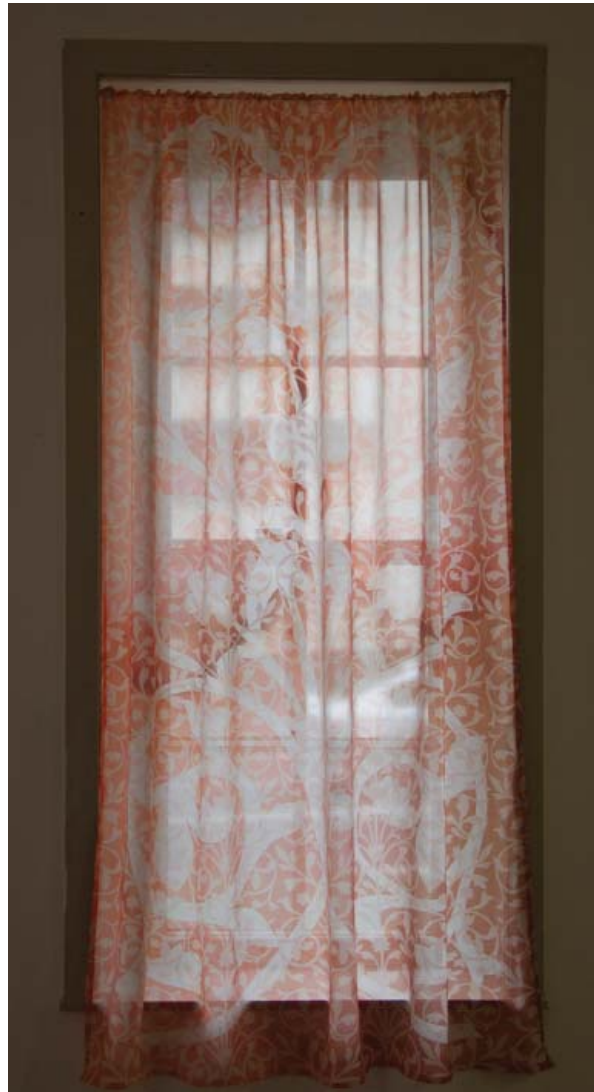
FIGURE 4.8

Curtain for Gazing. Digitally printed silk georgette. Length 150cm x width 90cm.

FIGURE 4.9

Design for *Curtain for Gazing.*

FIGURE 4.11

Mandorla Curtain.

FIGURE 4.10

Mandorla Curtain. Digitally printed silk goergette. Length 150 cm x width 90cm.

FIGURE 4.12

Mandorla Curtain printed detail.

FIGURE 4.13

Chaise longue *(Bedroom Suite for an Interrupted Honeymoon)*. Sublimation printed polyester. Width 167cm x height 77 cm x depth 68 cm.
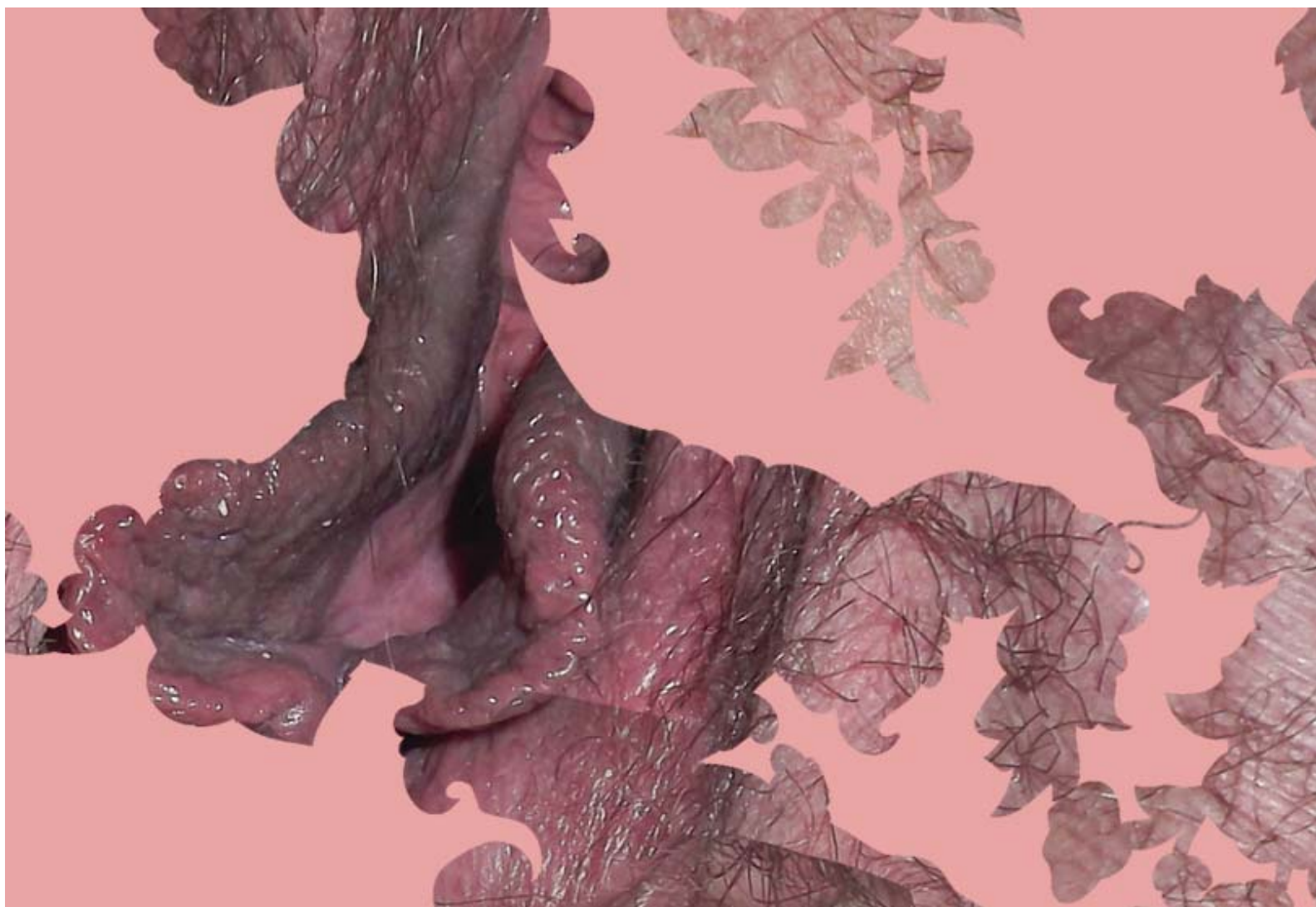
FIGURE 4.14

Textile design detail, *Bedroom Suite for an Interrupted Honeymoon*.
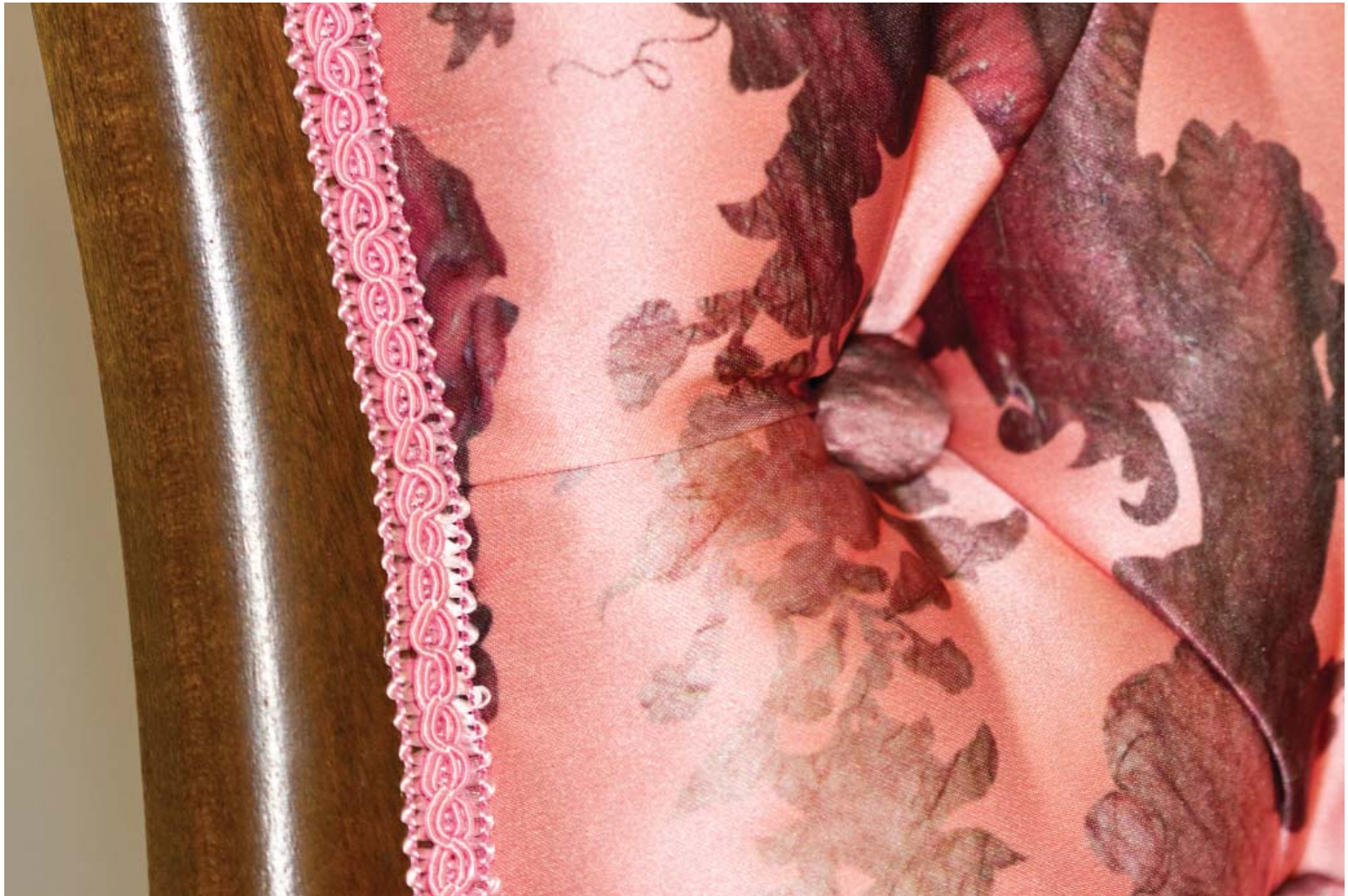
FIGURE 4.15

Bedroom Suite for an Interrupted Honeymoon detail..

FIGURE 4.16

Grotesque Bedsheets and *Siren Headboard*. Sublimation printed polyester. Installed width 90cm x length 190 x height 97 cm

FIGURE 4.17

Grotesque Bedsheets detail.

FIGURE 4.18

Siren Headboard design

FIGURE 4.19

Grotesque Bedsheet design.

FIGURE 4.20

Grotesque Bedsheets corner detail.

FIGURE 4.21

Grotesque Bedsheets side detail.

FIGURE 4.22

Grotesque Bedsheet motif
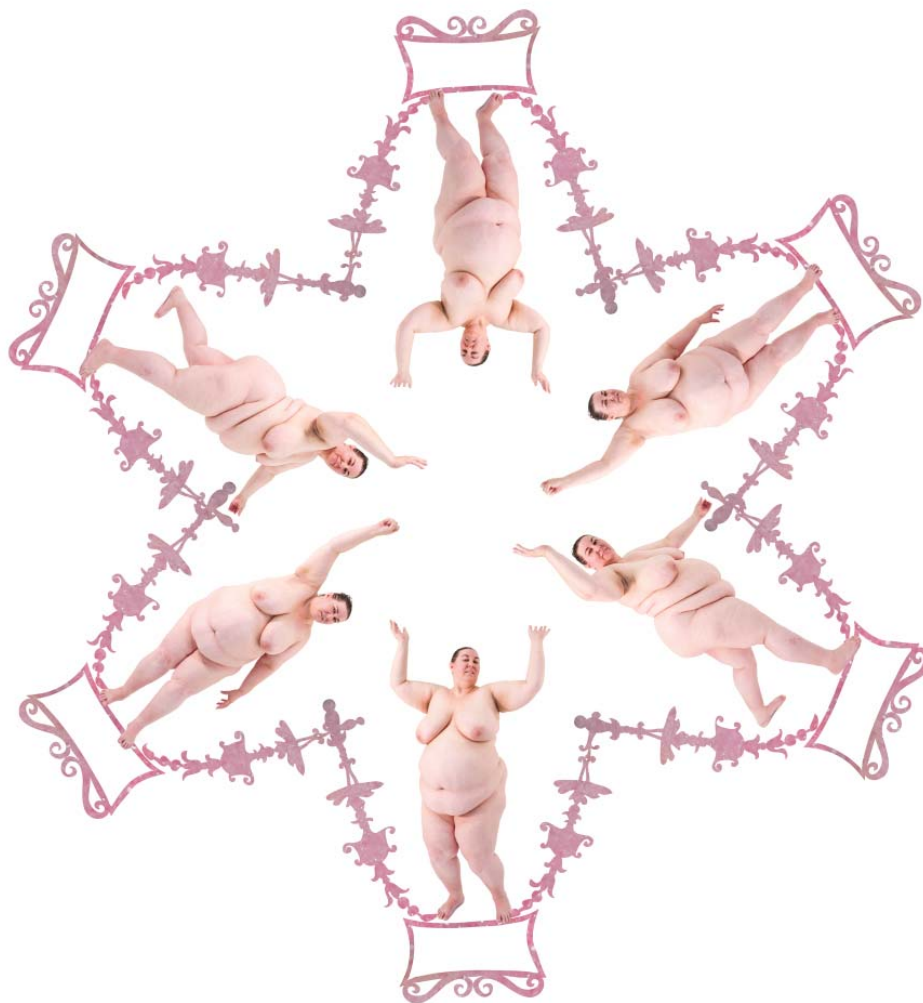
FIGURE 4.23

Grotesque Bedsheet central garland motif.

FIGURE 4.24

Lily Coat design detail

FIGURE 4.25

Lily Coat back

FIGURE 4.26

Lily Coat front

FIGURE 4.27

The *Bedroom Suite for an Interrupted Honeymoon* was exhibited at the Auckland University of Technology AD12 ARt & Design Festival, Novermber 2012, with the addition of a standard lamp shade in the same fabric.

EXHIBITED WORKS

While this section does not attempt to explicate every item in the exhibition, it opens a dialogue between the designs and the ideas discussed in this exegesis.

If the grotesque is things which should not be together, then the exhibition itself is a grotesque – a blurred boundary of what should be private and what should be public.

The works at the entry to the exhibition are a simulacrum of a liminal interior space. At the same time, however, this is not a private domestic space, it is a public gallery space. The exhibition displays my abject and grotesque body in a way that should be private and unseen.

The dining room table and chairs represent a domestic space which is partly private, but to which some non-family members may be invited. The space within the home is guarded, however, and not open to anyone, because the dining table functions as a potential site of abjection. The space where we eat involves opening ourselves to the potential risk of encountering that which is neither subject or object: the soup in the beard which so disgusted Darwin (Miller, 1997, p. 4).

The dining chairs are ornamented with the vulval motif which is featured on the cover of this exegesis. They enact the traditional presence of the female body in this domestic space, safe at home, and ready to perform feminine domesticity for visitors. Grünenberg (1997) notes that nothing is more disturbing than a disruption in "the illusion of domestic comfort" (p. 169). The chairs will be read at first glance as simply carrying a traditional floral motif. Only after viewing the other textiles will their nature become apparent, and the illusion shattered.

This semi-public dining area is also a traditional space for the presentation of suitably domestic feminine textile skills. I grew up with a grandmother who still keeps a linen cupboard full of hand embroidered table linens for guests. I have a collection myself, mostly handed down from family members, but also encompassing some pieces I have collected as they lay unwanted in thrift stores.

The table cloth is visual and physical excess. Measuring 15 metres long, it flows monstrously and will not be contained. The delicate edging is reminiscent of hand-embroidered hemstitching, but it is a machined effect. Rather than linen it is made of butter muslin, used traditionally in my family for baby nappy liners, butter and cheese making, and to wrap cooked meats, such as legs of ham. It is cheap and not hard wearing.

The traditional link between women, textiles, and the grotesque is encompassed by the tablecloth. Although some textile-related domestic tasks, such as home sewing, are vanishing traditions, others, such as the upkeep and daily maintenance of textiles, and cooking for the family, are still primarily women's unpaid labour (Bascond, 2011; McVeigh, 2012; Sharp, 2011; Wade, 2012; Wade & Sharp, n.d.). A tablecloth connects the past to the present. Family meals at the table enact a sense of order and stratification, and play a large role in the enculturing of children. Table linens may, like my own, be passed down to generations. A tablecloth is more than the solid, unique individual: it is a link between the past and the present. The tablecloth is an analog for the Rabelasian grotesque: connecting people through the physical ritual of eating and drinking, degenerating through use as it is stained, before symbolic renewal and rebirth through laundering.

However, as Ellerby (2001) notes, the domestic dining space is in itself a mix of things that should not, as an ideal, be together:

> When I idealize what a family might be, I think of a
> dinner table where members can reveal themselves to one
> another in all their conflicted and compelling complexity
> without fear of censure or rejection. But when I look at

FIGURE 4.28

Vulval motif for chaise longue: November 2011.

FIGURE 4.29

Jacques Louis David, 1800, *Madame Récamier*, oil on canvas.

the real families I know, I often find just the opposite. Instead of gathering with unrestrained forthrightness, families assembled at dinner table judge with almost uncanny perspicacity what can and cannot be revealed, what can and what cannot be said. New family members, a son-in-law or daughter-in-law perhaps, are at sea for a while until they catch on to the subtle nuances of permissible topics, emotions , and revelations. (p. 48)

The private domestic space, which can be a sanctuary, is equally a place of caution and resistance.

Going further into the exhibition space the imagery in works become more explicit . Here the veil-like sheer curtains, which function to demarcate the domestic interior and the public exterior, feature images of my different skin surfaces. As Halberstam (1995) notes, skin "represents the monstrosity of surfaces" (p. 1). It is a:

> metonym for the human; and its colour, its pallor, its shape mean everything within a semiotic of monstrosity . . . skin houses the body and it is figured . . .as the ultimate boundary, the material that divides the inside form the outside . . . Slowly but surely the outside becomes the inside and the hide no longer conceals or contains, it offers itself up as text, as body, as monster. (p. 7)

I spread myself over the environment of the exhibition space, and, through the exegesis, beyond it. By the time the viewer encounters the chaise longue from the *Bedroom Suite for an Interrupted Honeymoon*, [60] decorated with its clear vulval imagery, (figure 3.8) they may reevaluate their earlier brief glances at the domestic textiles. The sliding in of

meaning to the space functions to make the viewer surrounded by the grotesque and abject before they are aware of it, until its presence overwhelms them.

 The chaise is a mix of the vertical and the horizontal. Half chair, half day-bed, it combines the traditional visual signs for the genders. As Smeets (1973) notes, the vertical line is traditionally "the sign of life, health, activity, certainty, effective stability, manliness, It is the symbol of spirit directed upward, of grandeur and loftiness, and of man running erect (p. 54). In contrast, the horizontal line stands as a symbol of "the earth, the passive, woman, death, and rest; the material and the earthbound" (p. 54). Nochlin (1994) calls the horizontal the opposite of the sublime "associated with base materialism" (p. 21).

Because of this horizontality the chaise is a traditional prop in feminine portraiture, able to display the female figure as reclining and passive, without the sexual overtones of the bed, as in Jacques-Louis David's portrait of Madame Recalmier (figure 3.9).

The chaise as a physical artefact also intersects with notions of the body. As Lebeau (1994) states, deep buttoning on upholstery has long been seen as "a sublimation of the most bourgeois part of the body, the belly" (p. 143).

The explicitness of the chaise longue imagery draws upon and subverts conventional codes of pornography. In this public arena there is both a desire to see, and a desire to look away: a binary of attraction/revulsion which is the essence of abjection. In entering the exhibition the viewer is not choosing to look, in their own choice of location at their own time, instead I am forcing the viewer to look. In a subversion of Foucault's notion of the gaze I hold power over the viewer by displaying the images of body; images that may elicit discomfort rather than pleasure.

While imagery of the body is not present on the every textile, my

MAKING AND MATERIALITY

body itself is never absent. The materiality of the textiles recalls my body and hands, folding, hemming, printing, embroidering them. I am present in every stitch and mark. Even saliva is present, from threading both machine- and hand-sewing needles.

I choose to, as Cixous (2001) suggests, let my flesh speak true, lay myself bare. I physically materialize what I'm thinking; I signify it with my body (p. 631). In this way it is my intention that the works communicate the reality of a loved existence, and that they will resonate with others to prompt a reconsideration of the patterns of corporeality.

The exhibition of work in this thesis featured designed fabrics that used three distinct print processes: digital ink jet printing, sublimation printing and devoré. In addition a number of garment construction and craft techniques were applied.

I will briefly discuss these in relation to technological features and impacts on the design decision making.

PRINT PROCESSES

DIGITAL INK JET PRINTING

The three curtains *Harpy Curtain*, *Curtain for Gazing*, and the *Mandorla Curtain*, were printed on silk georgette, using digital ink jet textile printing. This was carried out at the Textile Design Lab [TDL] at Auckland University of Technology. [61]

This technology allows quick printing of small amounts of fabric, and is particularly good for testing designs in full scale, as prints can be assessed and designs can be digitally altered before production. However, as a technique digital inkjet printing presents certain limitations to the designer. It does not allow one to print large areas of solid colour well and colour banding quickly becomes apparent. This is caused by the movement of the print head in lines over the fabric, In addition, the ink jet delivery of small dots of colour, while sophisticated, does not offer the same level of fine detail as alternative print methods, and this results in some loss of detail on the designs.

The choice of fabric, and the print technique, constrained certain design options. The georgette fabric used in the curtains is sheer and light, however its fibres are highly twisted (Tortura and Merkel, 1996, p. 243). This gives the fabric a rough and bumpy surface in close up, and means that small details in photographic prints are lost. For example, the pink mandorla surrounding the vulva sketch in the *Mandorla Curtain* is actually photographic imagery of my tongue, however this detail is completely lost in the print, appearing as just an overall pink colour.

While this technology was able to be utilised in the design of the curtains it proved problematic for larger runs of fabric because currently, the TDL only offers piece printing, and not continuous roll-to-roll. This means that the maximum print size is only 150cm x 120cm. This was not sufficient for larger works like the sheets, coat and upholstery fabrics.

Therefore, although I would have preferred to print the chaise fabric for the *Bedroom Suite for an Interrupted Honeymoon* on silk satin, the ink jet print produced an image that was ambiguous; the pubic hair read visually as a blurry dark brown, and the effectiveness of the print was compromised. To attain the level of detail I needed I had to consider an alternative printing method.

SUBLIMATION PRINTING

The fabrics for the bed and chaise were eventually printed at Digitex in Tawa, using a sublimation print process. In this technique the image is first printed onto paper, and then is transferred to a textile using heat and pressure. Due to the chemical process involved, this technique can only be used on manmade fabrics such as polyester. The process produces a near-photographic quality, and allows a vast amount of fine detail to be included in a textile print. Figure 4.28 shows the photographic quality of image that can be achieved. Additionally Digitex offered roll-to-roll print, allowing a limitless length of fabric to be printed. In addition, its continuous-tone technology eliminates banding, allowing large areas of solid colour to be printed.

While Digitex had previously offered printing on a range of dress fabrics, such as polyester lining, they now concentrate on industrial fabrics. Therefore, the fabric for the bed sheets, bed head, chaise, lamp, and coat was a polyester used for commercial advertising banners.

An advantage of sublimation printing is the ability to print comparatively large areas: the maximum usable print width is 150cm. This meant that the *Grotesque Sheets* could be printed full-size, whereas digital ink jet printing would have meant seaming to produce a single panel wide enough to tuck around a mattress.

The final advantage of sublimation printing relates to drying and setting. The ink jet printer applies liquid dye, which must dry, and be set

FIGURE 4.30

The sublimation print technique allowed photographic quality fine detail to be transferred to the fabric for the *Grotesque Sheet*.

FOOTNOTES

60. The title of the chaise longue, Bedroom Suite for an Interrupted Honeymoon, refers to the abortive wedding night of John Ruskin and Euphemia (Effie) Gray. The marriage remained uncomsumated for six years, until Effie sued for annulment. Effie wrote, "[Ruskin] had imagined women were quite different to what he saw I was, and that the reason he did not make me his Wife was that he was disgusted with my person that first evening." (Kern, 1992, p. 145). The exact reason for Ruskin's horror remains the subject of supposition.

61. The TDL utilizes a Shima Seiki SIP 160F flatbed digital printer. This uses eight colors of reactive dyes (a light and dark CMYK in set)) and has a maximum image resolution of 300 x 600 dpi. Reactive dyes will only dye natural fibres such as cotton, silk, linen, or wool.64. This camouflaging effect informs Rousseau's (1964) notion that "the good man . . . disdains all those vile ornaments . . . most of which were intended to hide some deformity" (p. 37).

62. This is available commercially under the brand name Fiber Etch.

with heat and steam. The liquid dye, when meeting the textile substrate, can bleed slightly, giving a somewhat fuzzy appearance to the image.

By contrast, the extreme heat and pressure of sublimation printing results in the ink changing state from a solid on the paper to a gas. The image then bonds with the fibre to become a solid again. No liquid ink touches the textile. This leads to a cleaner, crisper print.

CRAFT TECHNIQUES

There were three distinctive craft techniques evident in the exhibited works. The first was a print technique, the second a machined imitation of a handcraft, and the second a combination of garment construction techniques used in the design of the Lily Coat.

DEVORÉ

The dining room chair seat was printed using a craft technique called devoré. In this process a corrosive paste[62] is applied to selected areas of a mixed-fibre fabric; in this case a silk & cotton velvet. The design was created by squee-geeing the paste through a mesh screen onto which a light-sensitive emulsion had been exposed. The paste removes the cellulose fibres of the textile, leaving only the silk backing.[62] Because the design is created by the absence of the pile, the viewer creates the image from a void in the textile.

This technique provides a delicate design, which can be easily damaged or even destroyed by use, particularly on furnishing fabrics. Use will flatten the velvet pile, disturbing the appearance of the design, and touch will cause tufts of pile to be dislodged.

HEMSTITCHING

The *Hemmed Tablecloth* is made from 15 meters of cheesecloth that has been hemmed in a machine imitation of traditional hand stitching.

GARMENT CONSTRUCTION

Unlike the other pieces, the *Lily Coat* was worn on the body, (rather than being designed to transform spaces). The pattern for the coat is based on a duster. This style of coat was originally used by male horse riders to dust and mud. It was adopted by both male and female automobile enthusiasts in the early 20th century (Calasibetta, 1988, p. 184). As such it is associated with protection when foraying into the public sphere.

The colour palette of the coat is based on the palettes of menstrual products such as sanitary napkins and tampons, with the turquoise fulfilling the function of protection and sanitation of the female body to protect the public world from its biology.

The garment is constructed by making an exterior and an interior, then turning both inside out and joining them together. It has no fastenings; it cannot be closed. This negates its function of protecting the exterior from the interior and vice versa.

As with all traditionally constructed coats, the lining is larger than the exterior fabric: it is literally bigger on the inside.

The sleeve on the coat is a slightly shorter length, commonly known as bracelet length (Calasibetta, 1988, p. 521)

The textile for the coat is sublimation printed onto heavy polyester. This gives the garment an unusual firmness and means the coat does not drape fluidly, as a regular dress fabric would. It appears stiff and unyielding, emphasizing the outsize shape and also the outsize floral motif.

FOOTNOTES

63. As Benjamin (1998) points out, "Only in the beyond were the blessed supposed to enjoy an incorruptible corporeality and a reciprocal pleasure in each other's beauty in complete purity. Until then nakedness remained a sign of impurity" (p. 222). 78. Jobity (2011) urges caution, however, as the size of the pattern must be just right. She exhorts large women to "avoid large, bold patterns that can make you look matronly and call attention to your size. At the same time, avoid tiny prints which look insipid on your frame" (p. 77). Phrases like this, in dress manuals, reinforce the sense that appearance management is an endless balancing act, and failure can be solely attributed to an unwillingness on the part of the subject to engage in the search for the appropriate solution.

64. This camouflaging effect informs Rousseau's (1964) notion that "the good man . . . disdains all those vile ornaments . . . most of which were intended to hide some deformity" (p. 37).

65. This is not to suggest that what is transgressive, grotesque, and abject is somehow an unchanging category. Rather, as Foucault (1990) asserts, what defines the boundaries of the pattern is dependent on who has ownership of the discourse: "who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak . . . and which store and distribute the things that are said" (p. 11). A revolution in what is accepted as truth—what Kuhn (1970) termed a paradigm shift— can alter the pattern of accepted and transgressive, sacred and profane, field and ground, as with growing acceptance of alternative sexual identities in the late-20th and early 21st century (Marinucci, pp. 28-32). Kuhn (1970) coined the term paradigm to mean what a particular community share. He originally intended this to be in relation to a community of scientists, however Handa (1986) extended the notion of a paradigm to encompass what any cultural community shares in broader social science terms.

SYNTHESIS: ORDERING AND DISORDERING THE BODY

The works in the thesis exhibition embrace the paradoxical nature of ornament and decoration to speak as transgressive texts. As traditional forms of femininity I appropriate textiles to speak about the realities of being a grotesque and abject subject: an inappropriate form of being a woman. Through this the textiles form a new kind of visual autoethnography, in the l'écriture feminine that Cixous (2001) suggested should wreck partitions and classes (p. 633).

Brett (2005) described the perceptual functions of ornament and decoration. He explained they are part of the visual navigation process by which we make sense of our surroundings (p. 9), specifically through edges: borders, fringes, rims, and the pattern of light and shade. Ornament, then, is concerned with keeping matter in its place: preventing decoration to flow without constraint. As Douglas (2002) points out;

Ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created. (p. 4)

A Western aesthetic system is based on separation, ordering, and the creation of a coherent individual identity. This is what Bakhtin (1984) describes when he argues that "the basis of the image is the individual, strictly limited mass, the impenetrable façade" (p. 320).

The "body of woman", by contrast, "is perceived as unstructured. It represents the flood, the human mass; it is soft, fluid and undifferentiated" (Nead, 1992, p. 17). Feminine softness blurs boundaries; it will not solidly contain the interior. A soft boundary can never be associated with the pure. Fuzziness, softness, indeterminate margins are all potentially monstrous, and where things cannot be clearly delineated, we have entered the realm of the abject. Softness is also associated with excess; soft surfaces offer abundance, whereas hard surfaces speak of sparseness and limitation.

As Parker & Pollock (1981) note:

In art the female nude parallels the effects of the feminine stereotype in art historical discourse. Both confirm male dominance. As female nude, woman is body, is nature opposed to male culture, which, in turn, is represented by the very act of transforming nature, that is, the female model or motif, into the ordered forms and colour of a cultural artifact. (p. 119)

Nead (1992) states this more bluntly:

The female nude can almost be seen as a metaphor for these processes of separation and ordering, for the formation of self and the spaces of the other. If the female body is defined as lacking containment and issuing filth and pollution from its faltering outlines and broken surface then the classical forms of art perform a kind of magical regulation of the female body, containing it and momentarily repairing the orifices and tears. This can, however, only be a fleeting success; the margins are dangerous and will need to be subjected to the discipline of art again . . . and again. (p. 7)

The female nude is confined and limited in a way that allows the

dangerous abject and grotesque to be contained, ordered, and regularized.

Kenneth Clark (1956) used the familiar categories of crystalline and organic to discuss the female nude. Clark classifies 'good' art as that in which "the female body has undergone a geometrical discipline" (p. 64). Clark drew on the ideals of the Enlightenment, of the dominion of man over nature, exemplified by Sir Joshua Reynolds' 18th century assertion that the artist's duty is to "correct nature herself . . . His eye being able to distinguish the accidental deficiencies, excrescences and deformities" (2010, p. 34). As Jervis (1999) notes, this ordered, classical body is the body of modernity; "static, closed, sleek, well-bounded, individual, decorous, attempting to approach ideals of beauty" (p. 19).

The formal language of the nude has been so internalised by our image-conscious culture that we perceive the contained body as natural, in the same way that Riegl perceived the enculturing and ordering of the organic as natural.   And yet, in a lived life the ordered body can never be fully realised: at best it must be a striving, a becoming. As Shildrick (2002) asserts,

As a model of the proper in which everything is in its place and the chaotic aspects of the natural are banished, the so-called normal and natural body – and particularly its smooth and closed-up surface – always remain to be realised (p. 54).[63]

 Because the perfectly ordered body can never be achieved strategies for the presentation of the self can be enacted to give the appearance of order. Ornament in dress is one such method used to impose order on the unruly body. As Gombrich (1984) describes, "in adorning the body an order is superimposed . . . contradicting the symmetries of the organic form" (p. 65). Dress can function as a tool for turning the naked into the nude: transforming a body which is relatively

un-encultured and excessive, into a body which is appropriately displayed. According to Yasko-Mangum (2007) patterned fabric is an important wardrobe tool for women, as "patterned clothing . . . can disguise challenging areas [of the body]"(p. 103). More specifically, she states, "if you have a full tummy . . . a pattern will disguise it" (p. 104). Women with a large bust are advised by Yasko-Mangum to avoid small patterns (p. 112-113) as these make the bust appear larger: large patterns minimize the appearance of size. Jobity (2011) advocates the use of patterned fabrics for "detracting and camouflaging wide or bulgy areas of the body" (p. 44).[64] Krupp (2010) suggests that to be "thinner by tonight!" you "choose a print in a swirling pattern, dots, floral, or paisley to camouflage" (p. 96). Similarly, Krupp notes that "patterns can strategically blur bulges "(p. 175).[65]

 For those who transgress the social norm, who are excessive and grotesque, ornament can function as a tool for maintaining the clean and proper self, giving at least the illusion of matter in its place. This role of textiles in enforcing and upholding the categories of cultural order foreground how what is often framed as a simple aesthetic choice can instead be a deeply embedded tool of enculturation. As Babcock (1978) notes, "What is socially peripheral is often symbolically central" (p. 32).

The use of ornament in textiles to control the grotesque and abject body is subverted by the coat at the entranceway to the exhibition. I use both my disordered self, and also a narrative of disorder at a textual pattern in the fabric background. In placing my abject female body as ornament I invert the process of placing matter in its place.

The positioning of some individuals as embodying transgression, whether because of size, biological sex, gender, or because of behaviour, reflects a Western classification system, which opposes the sacred and the profane. The sacred, or the proper, is represented by the public and the conforming, whereas the profane is "the potential

of individual consciousness" (Jenks, 2003, p. 29). Douglas (2002) notes that the sacred is "ultimately rootless, fluid, liable to become unfocussed and to flow into other experiences" and it must therefore be carefully controlled through boundaries. It is not that the profane may seep into the sacred, but rather that the sacred might slip away and dissipate. The profane must exist in order to define the sacred. Cultures require "rituals of separation and demarcation and by beliefs in the danger of crossing hidden boundaries (p. 27)

It is, therefore, that which is outside the boundary that gives shape to the sacred. The grotesque and the abject become the ground against which the pattern of the sacred and proper can be viewed. As Jervis (1999) pointed out, the dominant culture is always "inseparable from an understanding of its 'other side', what is expelled as unacceptable or unthinkable, or reduced to inferior status" (p. 1). My body is what is expelled from public acceptability: and yet cannot ever be separated from view. I must be visible in order to demarcate the place beyond the edge. I define the interior, the proper, through not achieving it.

As Nead (1992) points out that the female body becomes art through smoothing, controlling, containing, and, literally, framing it. The female body is rejected as art when it is in uncontained; "lumpy and protruding" (p. 19). The excess must be contained for the body to be successfully socialised. The fear of excess led to a,

> unified formal language" of the female nude, which is meant to "transcend the marks of individual corporeality . . . when this fails, both the image of the body and the feelings of the viewer are profaned, that is, desecrated or violated. (p. 22)

GROTESQUE HUMOUR

One aspect of the grotesque which is often overlooked is humour. The Rabelasian grotesque hinges on inversion, the sense of the ridiculous, and a refusal to take established hierarchies seriously. Bakhtin (1984) refers to this to as subversive comic energy: a laughter that renews and re-invigorates.

The textiles in my exhibition use this sense of 'laughter as subversion' as a form of feminist humour. Feminism is often accused of being humourless: for instance Friend's (1994) famous description of feminists as "ugly, hairy, humorless, bra-burning, ball-busting bitches" (p. 52). This relates to Finney's (1994) definition of humour, in which comedy "creates in-groups and out-groups by mocking aberrations from the norm" (pp. 6-7). When a member of the out-group refuses to laugh at their own mocking, they are ascribed the quality of humourlessness.

However humour is frequently used by marginalised groups to subvert this categorization and reclaim power. Shifman and Lemish (2011) identify feminist humour as oppositional, in that it "criticizes the current state of gender inequalities and hegemonic stereotyping," and functions "as an expression of empowerment." (p. 255).

My textiles play on my aberration from the norm. Rather than waiting passively to be judged at my success in meeting cultural norms, and being rewarded by being selected for display, I refuse to acknowledge appropriate boundaries and instead select myself, using the gallery as a stage to create a public space into which I insert myself. Through my textiles I use humour to give voice as an outsider.

As viewers progress through the exhibition, they pass the curtains, the table and chair, and chaise lounge. The bed is the last piece they encounter. Up until this point it is possible to overlook the imagery in the textiles. We often see what we expect to see, and the overt sexuality and presence of my body in the work can be easily missed. Only when the viewer first encounters my naked body on the *Siren*

Bedhead and *Grotesque Sheets* might they realise that all may not have been as they first assumed. At this point my body stares back at them, smirking and challenging.

The bed head and bed sheets feature a carnivalesque inversion. I have placed myself in the poses of traditional classical painting, but instead of showing myself as the expected innocent and secretly observed nude, I display myself as self-aware, hybrid, and naked. The bed head features an image of me as an early Renaissance mermaid: the 15th century version of the siren, differing from the more familiar Western mermaid by having a split tail, emphasizing her sexual and reproductive purposes. She is perilous, sexualised, zoomorphic, and linked with lower spatial zones of earth and underground (Chausidis, 2012, p. 13).

My presence in the textile relates to my physicality and association with the lower bodily stratum, and embodies my grotesquerie: my inability or unwillingness to confine myself to the categories of modest, ordered, and within limits. The sheets and textiles form a kind of heteroglossia: the disorder of my body contrasts with the order of pattern, and the order of the classical nude clashes with the disorder of my flesh.

The textiles produce in the viewer the grotesque laughter discussed in the critical framework: laughter at excess, laughter at a collection of body pieces that refuse amalgamation, laughter at the representation of an inferior human form. It is a laughter tinged with uncertainty: prompted by disgust, fear, and recognition, provoked by the uncontained and overflowing, caught in the tension between wanting to look and wishing to look away.

The harpy-esque images in the bed sheets, rather than performing a traditional passive acceptance of the gaze, or a coy ignoring of the viewer, roar and rage as my multiple faces challenge the viewer. The knowingness of the imagery in the sheets and bed head reverse the usual duality of onlooker and looked-at. By making my body the focus of the viewer I am laughing at a culture's distinction that my body is not worth being looked at: using my marginality and difference to empower, rather than be disempowered. The viewer is both laughing, and being laughed at. In this regard the design plays with Bergson's (1999) classical categories of the comedic: inversion, repetition, ambiguity, and awareness of the body.

Thus, the strangeness of the imagery can prompt that sudden bark of laughter which Schopenhauer (1987) ascribed to incongruity. The viewer can be caught between laughter, not knowing if laughter is allowed, and not knowing if laughter is allowed at this. While Bergson (1999) asserts that "a person embarrassed by his body" (p. 51) is comedic, and the viewer might know that the grotesque woman is comedic, the imagery on the textiles, while grotesque, does not appear to be embarrassed. It is, rather, an inversion: the body on the sheets is knowing and self-aware; in control of the display, rather than displayed.

The end result is a ridiculousness that the viewer is uncertain if they may laugh at or not; an enacting of playfulness caught between laughter and fear. This laughter also prompts a re-examination of the other pieces in the exhibition, and the discovery that the chaise is not only an ordered repeating pattern, but also a women's genitalia; the very locus of disorder.

THE NEW ZEALAND VERNACULAR INTERIOR

The interior pieces in the examined works were selected to echo an aesthetic from my childhood. I come from a working-class family, which under the influence of my matriarchal grandmother,was trying to claw its way into the middle class. The aesthetic I think of as 'home' belongs to her influence.

My grandmother was unusual for a married woman of her era: she worked full time as a secretary since long before I was born. Much of this was in an attempt to have money to buy 'nice' things. Born in 1926, she was a child of the Great Depression, and grew up living on the kindness of relations, and without the care of her mother, who was away working for others.

My whole life my grandmother would place furniture and household goods on layby and laboriously but meticulously pay them off. I still have her dining room table and chairs from the 1950s, faux-Victorian china cabinet with (unused) contents, and small but carefully-considered collection of Waterford.

From observation, this aesthetic is arguably common to many traditional New Zealand interiors. It is based on a juxtaposition of styles; a using of what comes to hand, a heartfelt embracing of the new consumer culture that allowed machine-made furniture and furnishings to create a semblance of what had previously been seen as the preserve of the wealthy. All the while, this aesthetic keeps in consideration the origin of New Zealand as a British colony, and the associated inheritance of what Grier (2010) calls "the self-image of the Victorian middle class": which was alive and well in my grandmother's 20th century New Zealand.

The New Zealand living room, right through until the 1980s, presented the public face of the family: what was desired to be seen, while tucking the messy realities away out of sight.

The juxtaposition of facade and interior, appearance and reality, is one of the inheritances I have from my grandparents. I carry with me the memory of endlessly buying new appliances on credit, with no money down, for want of $50 cash to pay a repairman, but having an evening aperitif, from crystal glasses, every night before dinner (with hors d'oeuvre, of course).

As a young single parent I never had the spare money or desire to layby furniture. What one sat on seemed supremely unimportant to me; it was enough to be grateful to have somewhere warm and dry to sit. Instead I became a second-hand furniture and duct-tape repair aficionado. Initially I used a weekly newspaper classified advertisements to locate furniture and household goods, but in 2003 I joined a new online auction service called TradeMe . TradeMe is now ingrained as part of the New Zealand vernacular: the website claims an active membership of 3,175,226 from a total New Zealand population of 4,465,097. TradeMe is the essential juxtaposing of things that do not go together: the New Zealand vernacular interior remixed and shaken. Reproduction Queen Anne tables appear next to homemade latch-hook rugs.

TradeMe, then, was my source for all the furniture items in the exhibition. Purchased unloved and discarded, I peeled the surfaces away and created new places for my printed textiles to be displayed.

I sought furniture that would borrow my grandmother's aesthetic. The dining room table I purchased echoes the curved feet of my grandmother's china cabinet. The dining chair is the same modernist design as the dining table I now have. The two original pieces were bought concurrently; both in the 1950s. They are of the same era, but speak about completely different eras. By this bringing together of different styles and places the furniture pieces themselves form a grotesque.

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 05 | REFERENCES

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CHAPTER 06 | APPENDICES

THE CARICATURE OF THE GROTESQUE WOMAN IN ADAM SANDLER'S *JACK AND JILL* (2011)

ADAM SANDLER'S
JACK AND JILL (2011)

While carrying out this research project the motion picture *Jack and Jill* (Dugan, 2011) was released. Written by Adam Sandler and Steve Coran, the film demonstrates the ongoing cultural currency of the grotesque woman as a caricature created for general amusement.

The title roles, twin brother and sister, are both played by Adam Sandler, resulting in the female character Jill transgressing feminine gender norms. Jack's wife, Erin, is presented as the foil to Jill, being portrayed as normatively feminine.

Jill is excess embodied. Her speech is too piercing, too loud, and also too blunt: she says what she thinks, instead of modulating her opinions. Jill's clothes are too bright and jarringly patterned compared to other female characters. Rather than Jill's clothes being fashionably body-skimming and revealing, they cover the majority of the body; high necked, long-sleeved, bulging and puffing out, with shirring, frills, pleats, and bulky fabrics. Her hair is curly rather than straight and sleek as Erin's is.

Jill's actions are excessive: she participates in an informal football game at a park rather than watch from the sidelines as other female characters do. When she does participate, rather than restrict her bodily movements in a way that is appropriately feminine, she commits her all to the game, resulting in the concussion of a bystander. (Young's 2005 essay *Throwing Like A Girl* explores the deep level of enculturation which results in appropriately feminine body comportment). Similarly, Jill creates destructive 'comic' mayhem inside a house by strongly swinging with a baseball bat, and hitting a ball with full force, rather than decorously doing so.

While not fat (she is, of course, the same size as Jack) Jill is portrayed too large for her gender: so large that she causes a pony to collapse under her. Her appetite is excessive; consuming a humourously large candyfloss servi ng at a sports game.

Jill is positioned as the antithesis of sexual desirability. When a male character (Al Pachino, playing himself) shows sexual interest in her, Jack questions his motives, as he does not believe this can be genuine. Indeed, it is discovered that it is not sexual attraction at all, but rather, pity: Pachino thinks Jill is a nice person, who deserves something good to happen to her.

However, although she is not sexually desirable, Jill is shown as sexually available in a way that Jack's wife is not. Jill's excessive and overtly public behaviour makes her public property. She has her breasts squeezed by one character, her buttocks fondled by another, and, in a separate scene, a man looks up her skirt.

Within the world of the movie, violence against this transgressing woman is seen as perfectly acceptable: in fact, it is described by the Motion Picture Association of America as "comic violence" (Jack and Jill: MPAA certification, 2011). In one scene Jack's son punches Jill in the face, knocking her from her chair to the floor, as she gives an anguished cry. Jack's response is, "I actually did feel something there: pride in my son."

While Jill is depicted everything which is socially unacceptable, as Jack's son points out, "[Jack] and Jill are so alike": Jill's behaviour is only seen as excessive because she is gendered as female.

The trailer for this film carries the majority of these scenes (excluding those of sexual contact), and can be viewed at http://www.jackandjill-movie.net/site/

Jack and Jill received an unprecedented 12 nominations for the 32nd

Annual Razzie Awards: an annual spoof award ceremony celebrating the Annual Golden Raspberry Award (Adam Sandler Sets New Record for Most RAZZIE® Nominations in a Single Year, 2012). The Razzies showcase what they consider to be the very worst in film making each year. This was, in fact, the first time that the number of nominations received by a film was greater than then number of categories the awards feature.

Despite this, as at 26 February 2012, Jack and Jill had grossed US$74,158,157 across 3438 screens in the US domestic market alone. This was slightly under the film's budget, which was an estimated US$79 million (Jack and Jill: Box Office, 2012).

APPENDIX B

DIARY TEXT

SWEAT

It's my first teaching day of the semester. I'm supposed to be explaining the class assessments and helping students set up online accounts and blogs. To my horror the assigned computer lab is double-booked and there is no room for my class. Thinking on my feet I take the students to the library and have them source information for the following week. Of 22 only four read books by choice (I asked at orientation), so perhaps it will be a good learning experience.

By phone I arrange a replacement lab for the class in an hour's time. When it's time to head back three students hold me up: they haven't completed the tasks, which means the following week they won't have the material they need for the hastily-designed workshop I have planned. The other students have already left for the lab and I should be going too. Now we'll all be late. I feel the stress level rise. This session has been a disaster. I didn't think it through properly. How must the students feel doing this in the first session of the paper? I am a terrible teacher. It's so hot and airless. I start to sweat. I feel the heat much more than thin people, in a country where air-conditioning is the exception rather than the rule. I wear sleeveless tops under jackets all year round. I can only imagine what it must be like not to feel overheated all summer.

I have to try to stay calm and not get too excited, as that will make the sweat worse. To leave the library we have to go up one flight of stairs. I'm so hot and flustered I'd prefer to take the lift, but I feel uncomfortable with people's eyes on me as I catch it up a single floor: I take the stairs.

I can feel sweat beading on my upper lip. I have a new kind of make-up on, and it seems to me that my face is sweating much more than I have experienced before. Can it be the foundation? I make a mental note to google this as I walk to the computer building. Thankfully here I need to go up two flights of stairs and I hope it will be OK if I take the lift. Wouldn't most people think that would be reasonable?

How many people are there here to watch me? Can I catch the lift one flight higher then walk down a flight? I do that sometimes to disguise my intentions.

I get to the computer lab. It's actually an open lab: any student can use it in this time slot. My body temperature is rising from the brisk walk over from the library, and I know from past experience that it will be at least seven or eight minutes before it peaks and begins to slowly decrease. I use the side of my hand to dab at the sweat that's beading on my upper lip. It wouldn't be so hot if I could take my jacket off, but I always wear sleeveless tops so I'll be cooler under my jacket. I can't wear just a sleeveless top as bare upper arms are risky on a woman over 35 in the workplace: it's a sartorial rule. Caught between a rock and a hard place.

Thankfully, apart from my class, there's only three other students in the lab, and I apologise to them that we'll be disturbing them for 20 minutes or so. My students have now been waiting for me for 10 minutes. I begin to log in the instructor's computer, and ask the students to put their hands up if they have not yet received their university login, so I can come around and log them in under a temporary login. Every hand goes up.

"Does anyone here have their own login yet?"

No-one replies.

I write the shared login on the whiteboard. It soon becomes clear that the details I've been given are not working; no-one can log in. I feel flustered and exasperated. So hot. Streams of sweat run down my back and soak into the waistband of my trousers, which is damp. The armholes of my top feel clammy and wet. I wish I had a tissue or a handkerchief in my bag to dab my face: it must be visibly wet by now, but even then perhaps the act of controlling the moisture would call attention to it.

I can log at least five other computers in on my staff login – the students will just have to share. I go around the room, logging computers in for small groups to share. When I attempt to login the instructor's computer I realise my mistake: while I can log into the university system multiple times, I can only have two active logins for the internet, and we need access to set up the students' blogs.

I realise that I have sweat actually dribbling down my face: in fact it's worse than clear sweat, it's rivulets of 03 Light Beige foundation streaming down my cheeks. How can my students have faith in a teacher who cannot manage her own personal appearance, let alone the educational needs of 22 learners? My mascara is not waterproof: is it running? I'm wearing liquid eyeliner: is that running? I have no idea how bad it is, as I have no mirror. The lack of a reflective surface in the room is a blessing at this point in time: I think if I knew what I looked like I would simply walk out.

I feel ridiculous. I am more upset about my body betraying me than the fiasco of a learning experience that this class is proving to be, and I'm disgusted with myself for it.

I dismiss the class. With no internet access the exercise was pointless from the beginning. I feel sad and discouraged. We will have to catch up next week, and that takes time away from other tasks.

If ever there was a time I was leaky at the margins this is it. How I wish there was an alternative to facing my students next week, knowing that they know that I am the physical embodiment of an imbalanced binary: the personification of irrational fluidity, insecure, unreliable, leaking and seeping.