AN INFINITE PLAY OF EMPTY MIRRORS

WOMEN, SURREALISM, AND SELF-REPRESENTATION

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Whitney Chadwick

But all her life the woman is to find the magic of her mirror a tremendous help in her effort to project herself and then attain self-identification. . . . Man, feeling and wishing himself active, subject, does not see himself in his fixed image; it has little attraction for him, since man's body does not seem to him an object of desire, while woman, knowing and making herself object, believes she really sees *herself* in the glass.

Simone de Beauvoir *The Second Sex*

Rare are the moments when we accept leaving our mirrors empty . . . still, we persist in trying to fix a fleeting image and spend our lifetime searching after that which does not exist. This object we love so, let us just turn away and it will immediately disappear.

Trin T. Min-ha *Woman, Native, Other*

Until the early 1980s women artists received little notice in histories of Surrealism, although they continued to play supporting roles in a few articles and memoirs.[1] "Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage" had opened at the Museum of Modern Art in 1966 with a single work by a woman—Meret Oppenheim's fur-lined teacup—an object still widely believed to be the creation of a man. Frida Kahlo had yet to become a North American cult figure, though Hayden Herrera's biography, published in 1983, would have much to do with her subsequent near canonization.[2] I intended in *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (1985), the first full-length study in English devoted to the work of the women artists associated with the movement, to shift attention away from the Surrealist

"Woman"—a representational category shaped by the projections of the masculine heterosexual unconscious—and toward Surrealist *women*, a diverse group of individuals for whom Surrealism had played a significant role in their struggle to articulate an autonomous feminine subject.

In recent years the subject of women and Surrealism has gained academic currency. University courses are now devoted to women Surrealist writers and visual artists. Biographies, monographs, and anthologies of their writings have appeared; and the problematics of Woman/Surrealism/women, now increasingly viewed through the deconstructive lenses of poststructuralism and psychoanalytic theory, continue to be debated at conferences and in publications.[3]

We welcome the opportunity to reconsider the women of Surrealism as part of a larger project having to do with self-representation and intergenerational legacies. Indeed the subject is particularly timely today, for while postmodern theories have opened up new spaces for considerations of the feminine, they have often directed more attention to inscriptions of sexual difference in representation than to the practices of individual women.[4] Yet outside the academy, women artists remain engaged in their own explorations of difference and agency and their own critiques of the structures that mark their difference.

In mobilizing the body as a primary signifier of its cultural politics, Surrealism established new parameters within which women artists might begin to explore the complex and ambiguous relationship between the female body and female identity. Women were not among Surrealism's founding "fathers." Although their significance to the movement continues to be debated, they left a collective body of self-portraits and other self-representations that in taking the artist's own body as the starting point and in collapsing interior and exterior perceptions of the self (regardless of how that word was/is understood), continues to reverberate within contemporary practices by women that articulate how the body is marked by femininity as lived experience, subjectivity produced through new narratives, and the possibility of a feminine imaginary enacted. This body of work appears to have no parallel in the work of male Surrealists more inclined to project their desires outward, locating moments of rupture between conscious and unconscious, subject and object, in bodies Other to theirs, and almost exclusively of an otherness assigned to the feminine.

The complicated relationship that existed between the lives of individual women and the patriarchal ideologies of the feminine that dominated Surrealism continues to attract scholarly and critical debate, as does the question of Surrealist misogyny.[5] Nevertheless, although the conflicts confronting women in the movement were great, they need not eclipse either the powerful attraction of Surrealism for a significant group of young women or its continuing appeal to subsequent generations of artists (male and female) who have sought to explore the unconscious as a site of meaning and to challenge rationalist distinctions between self and other, inside and outside, conscious and unconscious.

Putting the psychic life of the artist in the service of revolutionary politics, Surrealism publicly challenged vanguard modernism's insistence on "art for art's sake." But Surrealism also battled the social institutions—church, state, and family—that regulate the place of women within patriarchy. In offering some women their first locus for artistic and social resistance, it became the first modernist movement in which a group of women could explore female subjectivity and give form (however tentatively) to a feminine imaginary.

The young women who joined the Surrealist circle in Paris in the 1930s—or, in the cases of Leonor Fini and Frida Kahlo, declared themselves *not* Surrealist while nevertheless exhibiting with the group on occasion and adopting many of Surrealism's core tenets—saw Surrealism as supporting their desire to escape what they perceived as the inhibiting confines of middle-class marriage, domesticity, and motherhood. Although in many cases they lacked a clear sense of what being an artist meant (or perhaps they perceived all too clearly that the roles of women and those of artists are often incompatible), they thought of themselves as artists. And they saw Surrealism, rather than direct political action, as their best chance for social liberation.[6]

Women artists associated with the Surrealist movement came from widely different social and cultural backgrounds. Differences in political allegiances, sexual preferences, and social identifications shaped their self-images, as did a range of literary and artistic conventions: from Frida Kahlo's indebtedness to nineteenth-century Mexican portraiture, medical illustration, and the representational traditions of the *retablo* and Leonora Carrington's predilection for fourteenth-century Italian painting, Celtic literary sources, and English nursery

rhymes to Leonor Fini's cultivation of the Flemish primitives and German romantics. Even so, points of connection do exist among them, though we should not seek their effects too aggressively.

In general, the works of women associated with the Surrealists display an affinity for the structures of fabulist narrative rather than shocking rupture, a self-consciousness about social constructions of femininity as surface and image, a tendency toward the phantasmic and oneiric, a preoccupation with psychic powers assigned to the feminine, and an embrace of doubling, masking, and/or masquerade as defenses against fears of non-identity.

To explore the work of three generations of artists without essentializing (i.e., universalizing experience on the basis of some shared feminine "essence" or biological imperative) poses a number of challenges: the danger of colonizing women by producing generic descriptions of their productions, overplaying the effects of sexual difference, or being lulled into the mythology of "herstory" instead of struggling to clarify the messiness of sexual politics in a real world in which women may be marginalized *and* effective, excluded yet present.

The task is not to seek out a shared style, a similitude of politics or attitude, or a shared heritage predicated on sexual difference. Indeed intergenerational influences are more likely to have been transmitted, as have been the majority of artistic influences in Western art, through patrilineal channels. Yet this need not blind us to the variety of ways in which women have written their own legacies of transmission and effect or to parallels in how they have framed the particulars of women's experiences.

The words *surrealist* and *surrealism* appear frequently in discussions of the work of many contemporary women artists who employ strategies of disruption and/or images of the body fragmented, deformed, or doubled. Often references to specific antecedents (both male and female) appear: Cindy Sherman, Francesca Woodman, Kiki Smith (Hans Bellmer, Claude Cahun); Louise Bourgeois, Dorothy Cross, Michiko Kon, Yayoi Kusama (Meret Oppenheim); Ana Mendieta, Paula Santiago (Frida Kahlo); Lindee Climo (Leonora Carrington). Rarely, if at all, do observers move beyond formal likenesses, articulate the specifics of the assumed relationship between contemporary artist and historical predecessor, or elucidate

the differences between historical Surrealism and the complexity of its artistic legacy.

"Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation" explores the repercussions of Surrealist practices in the work of subsequent generations of women interested in testing the representational boundaries of self and body in ways that reference historical Surrealism. This entails negotiating theoretical models of female subjectivity that displace women from the sites of language and meaning and the continuing and significant presence of contemporary imagery by women that gives a central role, however provisional or unstable, to feminine subjectivity and female agency within current artistic practices.[7]

Reading the work of contemporary artists against the background of historical Surrealism clarifies formal and conceptual points of intersection between past and present, but it also may lock us into rigid structures of meaning. At the same time, rereading historical Surrealism through the lens of contemporary culture often strips images of their historical and cultural specificity, allowing them to circulate as Rorschach tests for today's social and cultural concerns. The "rediscovery" of both Frida Kahlo and Claude Cahun in the early 1980s has been accompanied by just such critical rereading. Kahlo's own dialogue with Mexican culture, politics, and history has been largely overlooked in the North American consumption of her images as icons of feminine angst. Likewise, the neatness with which Cahun's photographs have been annexed to postmodern concerns with the decentered subject and with identity as contingent and mutable has obscured the complexity and contradictions of her writings and blinded many to the works' representations of conflicted identities.

The work of historical women artists influenced by Surrealism raises questions about representational strategies that continue to resonate in the work of younger women artists. The categories outlined here—"Self as Other," "Self as Body," "Self as Masquerade or Absence"—are arbitrary, and the boundaries between them fluid and unstable. They serve only as broad frames within which to explore issues that shaped self-representations by women Surrealists, as well as a few of the dialogues that may have been enacted between contemporary women artists and Surrealism.

Self as Other

Beauty will be convulsive or it will not be at all. Convulsive beauty will be veiled erotic, fixed-explosive, magic circumstantial.

ANDRÉ BRETON *L'Amour fou*

The masculine can partly look at itself, speculate about itself, represent itself and describe itself for what it is, whilst the feminine can try to speak to itself through a new language, but cannot describe itself from outside or in formal terms, except by identifying itself with the masculine, thus by losing itself.

LUCE IRIGARAY "Women's Exile"

Even before 1936, when psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan first presented his paper arguing for the origins of selfhood in a "mirror stage" (the "misrecognition" of another in the mirror that produces the self, or subject), theories of subjectivity and sexual identity had revolved around seeing. Lacan's theory of subjectivity, which derives from Freud's concepts of narcissism and the "specular" ego (the formation of the subject around a dynamic of seeing/not-seeing that initiates the castration anxiety around which male sexuality is formed) left Woman in the position of signifier for the male other, her subjectivity (or "femininity") determined by the discourse of patriarchy.

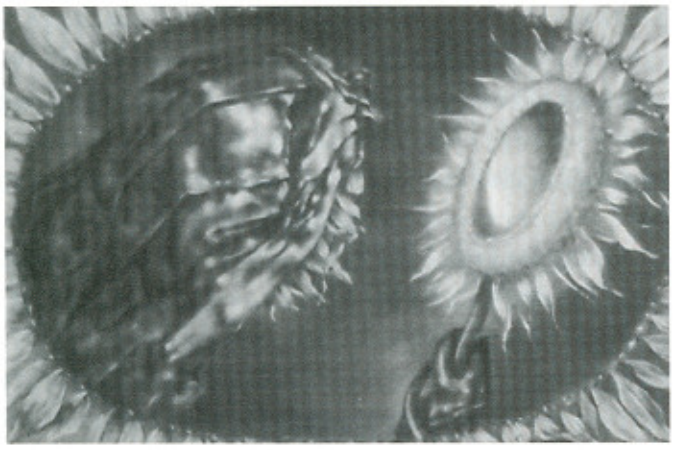
It is in the nature of the self-portrait to produce the subject as object, but, as Luce Irigaray has noted, the process of objectification that enables the woman to describe herself *as if from outside the body* also implicates her in a masculine dynamic that projects the woman as other. For women artists, the problematics of self-representation have remained inextricably bound up with the woman's internalization of the images of

her "otherness": "Mirror of male desire, a role, an image, a value, the fetishized woman attempts to locate herself, to affirm her subjectivity within the rectangular space of another fetish—ironically enough, the 'mirror of nature.'"[8] Positioned to collude in their objectification, unable to differentiate their own subjectivity from the condition of being seen, women artists have struggled toward ways of framing the otherness of woman that direct attention to moments of rupture with—or resistance to—cultural constructions of femininity.

The Surrealists, like Irigaray, were indebted to Freud's and Lacan's theories of the connection between vision and sexuality. The female visionary—childlike, criminal, or mad—became the central figure in both Surrealism and the emerging literature of psychoanalysis after World War I, and the woman invoked in the poetry of André Breton, Paul Eluard, Benjamin Peret, and others is at once compelling, gifted, dangerous, nocturnal, and fragile, a composite being "drawn from the legacy of the Romantic and Symbolist imagination and reinterpreted through Freud."[9] Her sister image in the visual arts remains more emphatically marked by the signs of psychoanalytic deviance: fetishism, sadism, voyeurism, etc.[10]

Dorothea Tanning's *The Mirror* (1952; fig. 1), a painting executed fifteen years after the artist first encountered Surrealism at the exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" at New York's Museum of Modern Art, illuminates some of the more problematic aspects of femininity and self-representation. In Tanning's painting, an anthropomorphic sunflower bud holds up an open flower, gazing into the petaled "mirror" in an apparently rapt contemplation of its own blossoming. This vegetal parody of the traditional *vanitas* image (in which the sin of vanity is represented by the image of a woman staring into a mirror) is frozen within a second "frame," an outer aureole of fiery petals that collapses the imagery of flower, mirror, and eye into an ironic meditation on femininity, nature, and artistic vision. No matter how intently one gazes into this compelling but disturbing image, there is nothing more to see. Tanning's sunflower/mirror remains opaque, the little vignette of looking and mirroring incomplete.[11]

In Western culture the image of the mirror has signified the social construction of femininity as specular consumption and the narcissistic identification of the woman with her reflected image. Tanning's painting, however, resists such



Dorothea Tanning
The Mirror, 1952
Oil on canvas
12 x 18 in.
Private collection, New York

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overdetermined readings. It is not, after all, a woman who occupies the feminine position here but a hybrid, an anthropomorphic flower, a grotesque being that blurs the boundaries of animal/vegetal/human worlds and collapses the binaries of sexual difference. The careful structuring of the image to capture a gaze from outside the frame—the spectator's—and redirect it within the frame implicates the viewer in more than one kind of seeing and challenges the privileged link between seeing, knowing, and possessing as functions of the masculine.

It is too easy to suggest that Tanning merely reproduced the common trope that identifies Woman as the objectified other, the object of the male gaze, for the woman is both absence and presence here: unrepresented as Woman but evoked through the cultural association of femininity with narcissism and the self revealed in the mirror. Tanning's hybrid being, simultaneously self-reflexive and vegetal, stands at the boundary of nature and culture. In Surrealism, the mirror image, rather than confirming our assumptions about the nature of the real (and its replicability), defamiliarizes the real and opens it up to the forces of the dream, the irrational, and the unconscious.[12] Tanning's mirror both affirms and denies the self, like the mirror evoked by Claude Cahun in her autobiographical narrative *Aveux non avenus*:

A sheet of glass. Where shall I put the reflective silver? On this side or on the other: in front of or behind the pane?

Before. I imprison myself. I blind myself. What does it matter to me, Passer-by, to offer myself a mirror in which you recognize yourself, even if it is a deforming mirror and signed by my own hand? . . .

Behind, I am equally enclosed. I will not know anything of outside. At least I will recognize my own face—and maybe it will suffice enough to please me.[13]

As Tanning's painting suggests, women often produced self-representations that suggest a complex relationship to social ideologies of the feminine. Compelled either to submit to the public language of patriarchy or to invent private languages that kept them marginalized by asserting the uniqueness of their femininity, women often employed irony, humor, and confrontation to problematize their position within Surrealism.

Self-portraits by women associated with Surrealism often bear visible signs of the slippage between Woman and women and between nature and culture. Collapsing the projection of the body as sight or spectacle and the awareness of the body as site of meanings (assigned, fabricated, manipulated), the woman artist reproduced herself as a multiplicity of roles/identities within the signs of an elaborately coded femininity "which always derives from elsewhere."[14] Many works by women Surrealists both recreate and resist the specular focus and voyeuristic gaze of Western representation. Others reimagine the Surrealist woman as a figure of agency and transformation. The unruly woman of the male Surrealist imagination—dismembered, mutable, eroticized—is recreated through women's eyes as self-possessed and capable of producing new narratives of the self. Leonor Fini's *Au bout du monde* (At the Ends of the Earth, 1949) and Remedios Varo's *Harmony*, painted in Mexico around 1955, share with many other self-images by women Surrealists ambivalent, or ambiguous, constructions of self.

In Fini's painting (pl. 4), the woman—isolated within the frame, her bare breasts partially exposed above the dark waters of a primordial swamp that is also home to rotting vegetation and bird and animal skulls—gazes directly out at the viewer. Narcissistic? Perhaps. Certainly references to the myth abound: watery reflections, invitations to the spectator, intimations of self-absorption. Yet Fini's painting replaces the

beautiful male body with that of a woman. Is this Echo perhaps, silenced and condemned to an eternal life of voiceless stone? Finally, Fini's female image, while linked to a darker, indistinct face—reflected back as an image of the mysterious, the animal, the repressed that is also the feminine in Western culture—is too commanding to slide easily into the position of passive object of contemplation.

Varo's painting, which depicts an artist/composer alone in a cell-like room manipulating her knowledge of science, art, nature, and mysticism into musical compositions, resists specularity by absorbing the central figure into a swarm of surface detail that deflects the gaze and interrupts the compositional hierarchies that dominate Western painting after the Renaissance. The figure itself, attenuated and androgynous in its cropped hair and baggy suit, is neither reducible to a single identity nor fixed within the signs of sexual difference.

Fini's and Varo's paintings suggest that the female self, no matter how relentlessly pursued in the images reflected back to it, can neither be fully captured by its representations nor escape them.[15] Women Surrealists often astutely wove self-awareness into images of identity as a juggling of incompatible roles, a balancing act, a series of performances that leave the subject frayed around the edges, fragmented, not one but many, into complex narratives that simultaneously project and internalize the fragmented self, reproduce and resist dominant discourses.

In an unpublished manuscript written in 1939, Leonora Carrington, distraught over the incarceration of her lover Max Ernst, recalled Henry Fuseli's painting *The Nightmare*, writing; "Tonight I was visited by some familiars from my childhood: Fear and Madness sit on my bed and look at me with their great horse-like eyes."[16] In her *Self-Portrait* (c. 1940) and other paintings, these animal familiars give form to the instinctual, the sexual, the uncontained.

Carrington was not alone in projecting aspects of the self as animal surrogates, and her influence can be seen today in Lindee Climo's meticulously rendered repaintings of selected "masterpieces" of Western art as meditations on the relationship between human and animal, self and other. While one might argue that strategies such as these inevitably return us to conventional social constructions of the feminine, the images themselves suggest a more complex interweaving of self and other.

Many women—including Carrington, Fini, and Varo—adopted strategies that more recently have been referred to as "self-othering." Identifying with moments prior to historical time and/or outside the "civilized" cultural spaces identified with patriarchy, they sought the sources of the "feminine" and "woman" in epochs and places in which women were believed to have exercised spiritual and psychic powers later repressed under patriarchy.[17]

Often women artists in the Surrealist movement wove the pieces of feminine self-awareness into fabulist narratives peopled with magical beasts and legendary characters. Carrington's self-identification with the creatures of her stories and plays has been widely discussed elsewhere.[18] Mythic beasts denoting aspects of the masculine and feminine self also appear in the work of Tanning, Fini, Oppenheim, and Kahlo. The success or failure of these strategies in relocating the sources of feminine subjectivity is perhaps less important than the fact that they served as enabling devices, in several cases fueling creative lives for sixty or more years.

Image of fecundity and barrenness, rich imaginings and fearful isolation, self and other, interior and exterior, the female body in the works of women Surrealists served as an important harbinger of women's desire to image themselves by speaking through their own bodies. It is perhaps through their many and diverse images of embodied femininity that women Surrealists left their most powerful and pervasive legacy to subsequent generations of women artists.

Self as Body

For me, sculpture is the body. My body is my sculpture.

LOUISE BOURGEOIS

More so than men who are coaxed toward social success, toward sublimation, women are body.

HÉLÈNE CIXOUS "The Laugh of the Medusa"

In today's visual culture, images of the female body function as carriers of complex and contradictory messages while in feminist debates about essentialism and constructionism, the meaning of the body itself remains under intense debate. In the work of artists like Louise Bourgeois, Cindy Sherman, Rona Pondick, Michiko Kon, Paula Santiago, Marta Maria Perez Bravo, Francesca Woodman, Dorothy Cross, and others, the body has become the site of cultural mediations, the sign of political and social challenges to assigned meanings, and an important measure of female subjectivity.[19] Bodies and body parts swell, mutate, dissolve, double, and decompose before our eyes as the body registers cultural, as well as personal, fears and anxieties. Artists increasingly deploy the body as a site of resistance and a locus for expressions of death, disintegration, horror, and presymbolic forms of expression.

Breaking with the notion of unitary self that dominated post-Enlightenment thinking, the Surrealists embraced incoherence, disjunction, fragmentation. Women deeply internalized this refusal of bodily and psychic fixity, often representing themselves using images of doubling, fragmentation, projection. The defamiliarized body of Surrealism has become the unknown body of contemporary art, most often female and Other: threatening, uncontrollable, and uncontainable. "Beauty will be convulsive or it will not be at all," Breton wrote in 1937. "Convulsive beauty will be veiled-erotic, fixed-explosive, magic circumstantial."[20] Breton's convulsive beauty located the disruptive force of Eros in the body of Woman, but the radical violations that collapsed the female body into parts "exploding with erotic energy" in the works of male Surrealists like Hans Bellmer or dissolved it into the insubstantial, the *informe*, in the writings of dissident Surrealist Georges Bataille, were often turned in different directions by women in the movement.

Kahlo exposed her own body, cutting it open to reveal its physical and psychic scars, transcending the specificities of its wounds by surmounting it with the masklike face of enduring sainthood. Tanning projected eroticism onto the bodies of children who, in works like *Children's Games* (1942; pl. 8) and *Palaestra* (1949), release an incendiary energy that shreds wallpaper and transforms interior spaces into highly charged environments. Oppenheim exposed her skull to radiation and captured the self as glowing skeletal frame. Claude Cahun—as well as Oppenheim and Kahlo—used her own body to destabilize the boundaries of gender and sexual identity.

Since the early 1970s, when women artists mobilized the female body as marker of a new sexual and cultural politics, they have continued to use the body to challenge social constructions of gender and sexuality. Although the body seems the logical point of departure from which to identify a sense of self, its location at the boundaries between the biological and the social, the natural and the cultural ensures that our relationship to its forms and processes is always mediated by cultural discourses. At the same time, the body—the object that each of us inhabits in the most intimate ways—has attracted growing critical attention in recent years because despite its positioning within cultural discourses and theories of spectatorship, it remains a primary source for the exploration of the presymbolic or nonsymbolic modes of expression through which many women hope to relocate feminine subjectivity.

Contemporary expressions of the artist's body that refuse the conventions of specular pleasure open the body to apprehension through other senses and often recall the visceral and tactile nature of certain Surrealist objects, like those of Meret Oppenheim, which shift from hard to soft, inorganic to organic (the fur-lined teacup), and exterior to interior (*Pair of Gloves* and *X-Ray of M.O.'s Skull*). Many current images of the body as unfamiliar, uncanny, grotesque, unbounded, transitional, etc. owe much to Surrealism's collapse of interior and exterior reality, its reimagining of the body as a signifier of absence and deformity. Distorting heads, erasing features, substituting parts—as René Magritte does in *Le Viol* (The Rape, 1934), a painting of a woman's head in which pubic hair replaces the mouth, and breasts the eyes—Surrealism challenged the rational ordering of the body and with it distinctions between mind and body, reason and sexuality, human and animal, higher and lower.

As feminist theorists have begun to seek less determinist and confining models of female subjectivity, the work of women artists has provided an important focus for attempts to move beyond the polarities of sexual difference. In many cases Surrealism has provided the starting point for works that challenge existing representations of the feminine through reimaginings of the female body as provisional and mutable, or at least intimating a shift away from the phallic organization of subjectivity.[21]

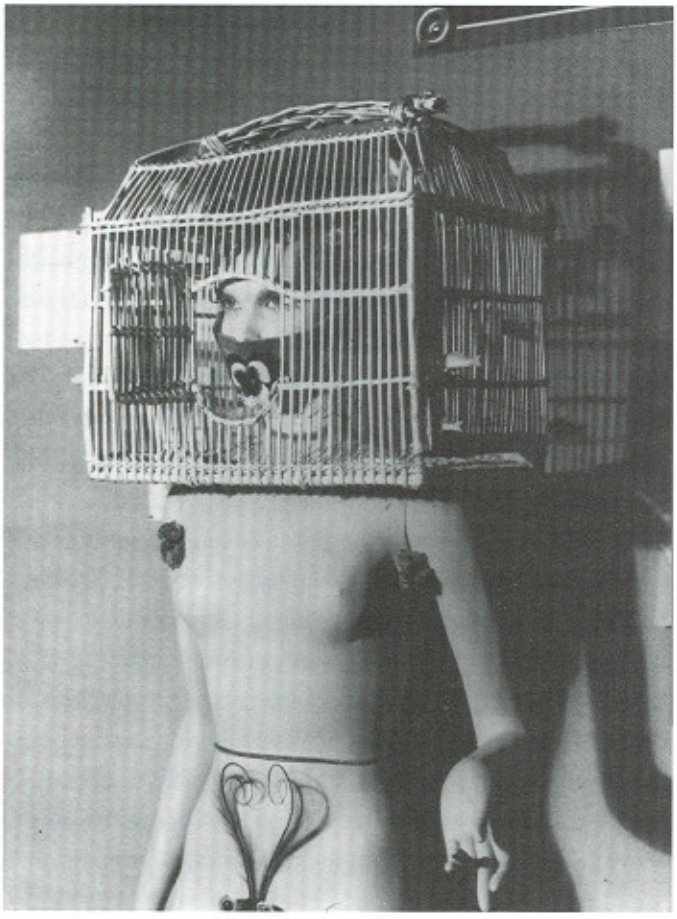
Louise Bourgeois is almost always positioned in some relationship to Surrealism, though she herself has disavowed

the connection, stating in 1993 that she is an existentialist not a surrealist.[22] The disavowal hasn't silenced speculation about her artistic roots. She has been placed within the Surrealist tradition for her psychological motivations, for her use of the dream and the unconscious, for her adherence to Georges Bataille's notions of the transgressive and the *informe* (his anti-rationalist, anti-idealizing embrace of the shapeless detritus of being human, of excrement, filth, and decomposition).[23] An equally long list might be made of the connections that have been drawn between her work and that of other feminist artists (for Bourgeois, unlike some women of her generation, has been public in her commitment to the cause of women's art). Rather than reenter the broad territory of these affiliations, I would instead like to consider a single work/theme of hers (the *Femme-Maison* drawings) framed in relation to a single Surrealist example: André Masson's *Mannequin* from the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris.

Bourgeois's own accounts absorb the question of artistic parentage into the oedipal drama of a single family—hers—in France in the 1920s. It is unclear whether or not she attended the Surrealist exhibition of 1938, which opened at the Galerie des Beaux-Arts in January. Certainly she was in Paris at the time (she did not move to New York until October of that year). The exhibition attracted large crowds and extensive press coverage. As visitors paraded past the row of display mannequins transformed into Surrealist gorgons that guarded the portals of the Surrealist world within, one in particular stood out.

Masson's object included a female mannequin, nude, her head covered with a wicker bird cage, pansies tucked into her mouth and armpits, and her pubic area adorned with tiger's eyes (fig. 2). The figure, a recasting of another famous Surrealist image, also resonated with allusions to a historical circumscribing of middle-class femininity within images of cages and caging.[24] The Surrealists often took the metaphor one step further: "Headless. And also footless. Often armless too; and always unarmed, except with poetry and passion." So begins Mary Ann Caws's introduction to the volume *Surrealism and Women*.[25]

In 1946 Bourgeois, now living in New York, married, and the mother of three sons, began a series of drawings titled *Femme-Maison* (pl. 10), in which an image of a house replaces a



Man Ray
Mannequin, 1938
Photograph of André Masson's *Mannequin* at the "Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme," Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris, January–February 1938

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woman's head. Despite the presence of the caged head, Bourgeois's and Masson's images differ in striking ways. Masson's piece disturbs in rewriting the female body as exoticized other, its juxtapositions of images of femininity and masculine control, its fetishistic substitutions of the signs of nature—flowers and feathers—for the sites of female sexual pleasure. Bourgeois's piece troubles in conflating the woman's identity with the house and its powerful connotations of a control that silences as surely as Masson's flowered gag.[26] Yet rather than seen as an assault on the body, literal or metaphorical, Bourgeois's *Femmes-Maisons* have most often been read in terms of the biographical, the literary, or the allegorical.[27]

According to Bourgeois, the woman in trying to hide reveals herself to be naked.[28] The dry, linear drawing schematizes the figure, turning it into sign rather than object and stripping it of specular eroticism. As sign rather than image of the female body, Bourgeois's representation lies outside the category of fetish object. Instead it becomes a signifier of self-perception and self-deception, in which silence and repression, domesticity and confinement, vulnerability and retreat simultaneously resonate and contradict.

Rosalind Krauss has noted that for the Surrealists, "the primacy of vision—its perceptual automatism as it were . . . is pure . . . [while] the calculations of reason . . . are controlling and degenerate."[29] Bourgeois's representation, although it draws on Surrealism's reliance on the unconscious as a source and on deforming the visible, emphasizes structure and rests on a rational, if subversive, ordering of the anarchic forces of the id.[30] This striving toward a conscious organization of meaning distances Bourgeois's representation from Surrealism's commitment to breaking down rational structures. Bourgeois's *Femmes-Maisons* are not Surrealist (and may, in fact, owe only a passing formal resemblance to Masson's mannequin). Yet they intervene in the territories of Surrealist representation in ways that underscore the complexity of the dialogues between generations of artists.

As early as the 1940s Bourgeois had begun symbolically merging male and female in totemic wood figures that evoked Max Ernst's and Alberto Giacometti's objects, but it was during the 1960s—as part of a wider rejection of minimalist geometries in favor of a deployment of the referential and the embodied that owed much to Surrealism—that Bourgeois, Yayoi Kusama, and Eva Hesse began to produce works that mobilized the body to challenge the gendered binary oppositions that supported modernist art as a masculine enterprise.

Bourgeois's latex pieces of the 1960s, like those of Hesse, evoke multiple and shifting associations with skin, interior and exterior bodily spaces, and orifices. During that decade she developed the biomorphism of polymorphous sexuality and fusion that has characterized much of her work. Examples include *Portrait* (1963), an early latex piece with rounded, indeterminate forms bulging against a rubbery skin that resembles a flayed animal hide; the self-described self-portrait *Sleep* (1967), with its rounded and hard, phallic yet flaccid

forms; and *Torso (Self-Portrait)* (1963), a quasi-abstract body mask covered with penile, scrotal, and labial shapes.

Bourgeois often displayed pieces comprised of breast and penislike forms in groups. Recalling Freudian and Surrealist condensations of images, they also imply a dispersal of power in which the phallus, no longer simply part of a larger organism, multiplies. Its threatening potential is tamed as Bourgeois's hand shapes her forms as if they were plants. Phallic form, subdued and softened in works like *Germinal* (1967) and *Untitled* (1970), is equated finally with the kind of generative power historically assigned to the feminine.[31]

Bourgeois's biomorphic forms, with their references to the mutating metamorphic forms of Jean Arp, Masson, and other Surrealists and their suggestion of male and/or female genitalia, resist the construction of female subjectivity around notions of difference and otherness. In a similar way during the 1960s, Yayoi Kusama, a self-professed "visionary madwoman" who arrived in New York from Japan in 1957, also began symbolically challenging the structures of sexual difference by interpolating the phallus, symbol of patriarchal authority, into environments composed of familiar domestic objects.[32]

By the mid-1960s the new expressionist strain in New York art was often linked to postminimalism's embrace of nonart materials like rope and latex, and its reliance on the gestural, the temporal, and the conceptual. Since 1966, when critic Lucy Lippard and artist Mel Bochner first remarked on the strong bodily associations of Hesse's art, critics have often pointed to the surface tactility of Hesse's expanded repertory of materials and the multivalent associations of her imagery.[33] "The scale is modest, but just right, carrying a strong sense of bodily identification," Lippard noted of *Sequel* (1967–68), one of Hesse's latex accumulations.[34]

Lippard, drawing on the work of Yale psychologist Gilbert J. Rose, used the term body ego to describe how an image might refer simultaneously to inner and outer bodily sensations.[35] *Ishtar* (1965), *Nine Nets* (1966), and other works of these years also exploit the sensuous, tactile, and flexible qualities of latex and net through multiple and shifting significations that evoke both male and female.[36]

Hesse's work of the mid-1960s, like that of Bourgeois and Kusama, remains focused on the interplay of material and con-

cept, an acceptance of the mediating effects of gender on subjectivity, and a resistance to gender stereotypes. This work also announced an extension of transgressive practices derived from Surrealism that explored viscerality, the language of the body, and bodily deformation as a challenge to Western culture's insistence on the inviolability and integrity of the human body.

As artistic practices of the 1960s and 1970s increasingly registered the breakdown of modernist geometries and the two-dimensional picture plane, work that emphasized the visceral and the unbounded both recalled Surrealist exploitations of the *informe* and pointed toward later theoretical and critical writing on the abject, an embrace of the unbounded, permeable body that leaks and dissolves, the body traditionally associated with the interior regions of the feminine other, among them monstrosity and disgust.

Seeking to conceptualize the repressed, the forbidden, with its threat to social order and stability, critic Julia Kristeva argued for a theory of the abject, identified with the space of the feminine and more specifically with the maternal body as a place of passage, a threshold where "nature" confronts "culture," now seen as the moment of challenge to the distinctions that supported theories of feminine otherness.[37]

By the 1980s attitudes toward representations of the body that derived from earlier Surrealist practices mingled easily with the legacies of body art, feminist performance, postmodernist appropriations, parody and critique, and an expanding politics of the transgressive body. Growing attention to femininity as the repressed encouraged many contemporary women artists self-consciously to explore the primal body, to present bodily images stripped of personal or social context and re-present them as disturbing symbols of social breakdown and/or psychological fixation, and to dislodge meaning and identity.

Kiki Smith's misshapen females viscerally bear, and bare, the signs of their femininity as they manifest the hidden markings of the feminine. Although she has resisted conscious self-representation as a motivating factor in her female images, her work—with its echoes of the Surrealist *informe*—has significantly reshaped the contemporary female body in representation. Stripping the female body of social and personal content, Rona Pondick explores the roots of female subjectivity in infantile needs and primal fixations.

Although the visual conventions differ, confronted with Pondick's literalist reflection on Freudian theory one cannot help but recall an earlier artistic commentary on the "father" of psychoanalysis. In Remedios Varo's painting *Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst* (1961), the woman leaving the doctor's office (identified by a plaque beside the door that announces Freud/Adler/Jung) exorcises her patriarchal demons by delicately dropping the severed head that she holds upside down by its long gray beard into a deep well.

Varo's severed head recalls the fragmented bodies of Surrealism and contemporary representations aimed at transgressing social convention. "I always feel that my identity as a woman and as an artist is divided, disintegrated, fragmented, and never linear, always multifaceted . . . always pictures of parts of bodies. . . . I always perceive the body in fragments," Annette Messager has written.[38]

Messager, a Frenchwoman, has frequently acknowledged her debt to the Surrealists: to their interest in artifacts, ethnographic articles, and collections and, above all, to Surrealist photography with its bodily and psychic dislocations produced through the montage and the manipulated photograph. Yet Messager's fragmented imagery relates directly to the production of gender through a commodification and objectification of the female body. *Pièce montée*, no. 2 (1986; pl. 22) incorporates acrylic and oil paint with photography. Both horrifying and parodistic—Messager locates one of its sources in a 1930 photograph of a human tongue by the Surrealist Jacques-André Boiffard—Messager's disembodied head vomits forth a cascade of fragmented body parts.

Other contemporary artists have sought a new focus for female subjectivity in hybridization, fetishization, and the displacing of self onto artifacts of the body. Annette Messager's dresses, Paula Santiago's garments, and Dorothy Cross's objects covered with cowhide and cow udders explore the self through substitutions and deferrals of meaning while Marta Maria Perez Bravo fuses Afro-Cuban religiosity and feminine experience in large-scale photographs that site the maternal body (hers) between the personal, the social, and the ritualistic.

"Clothing," Kaja Silverman suggests, in a feminist reframing of Freud's assertion of the ego as a mental projection of the surface of the body, "in articulating the body simultaneously articulates the psyche."[39] Like Oppenheim's *Gloves*, Cross's

Virgin Shroud (1993) and *Stiletto's* (1994) manipulate bodily coverings and fashion's reliance on bodies. In the latter work, a pair of fashionable high-heeled shoes covered in calfskin that terminates in a cloven hoof, Cross comments ironically on how we wear animal skins over our human skins in ways that often signify our embrace of culture (fashion) over nature (animal).

Cross, an Irish artist from a country still defining itself in relation to its rural past, reshapes the fetishized imagery of Surrealist works like Magritte's *Philosophy in the Boudoir* (1947), a painting in which a pair of women's shoes sprout toes and a nightdress breasts into wry commentaries on gender, desire, and the fetish. Freudian theory does not admit the possibility of female fetishism, denied because the woman inhabits the body that bears that sign of its lack, rather than standing apart from it as does the man. Yet the tactility of Surrealist objects like Meret Oppenheim's fur-lined teacup and bound high-heel shoes, and the fact that many of her objects seem to bear the imprint of an absent body, has been interpolated into many subsequent explorations of self through objects identified with the feminine.

Santiago, like Kahlo before her, produces works that enact personal pain through bodily images. Using wax and tissue-thin layers of rice paper, she produces delicate layered sculptures in the form of a child's undergarments or sections of garments. Using strands of her own dark hair, she carefully stitches together body shapes that have been dyed with her blood. Like ghostly tracings of the body's surfaces and contours, given momentary form and suspended in space or hung in vitrines, they record the insubstantiality of self and body image. Literally incorporating traces of her own body, as the relics of saints often contain fragments of the saint's body, their fragmentary displacements are like a memento mori, a fetish, a talisman, like the locks of hair that lovers used to carry next to their bodies to invoke the absent partner.

The articulation of self through strategies that identify the self and the exterior world or that register the self through traces, absences, or disguises both affirm and deny the embodied self. Masking, masquerade, and performance have all proved crucial for the production of feminine subjectivity through active agency.

Self as Masquerade/Self as Absence

Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it—much as a thief will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he has not the stolen goods. The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade'. My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference.

Joan Rivière "Womanliness as a Masquerade"

As long as I have a mirror next to the camera, I'm acting enough to go into a kind of trance and draw a character up. I have little scenarios in my mind.

Cindy Sherman *Aperture*

Psychoanalyst Joan Rivière's essay theorizing the concept of femininity as a masquerade, a decorative surface hiding the woman's lack and enabling her to negotiate a subject position within patriarchy, appeared coincidentally in 1929, the same year as André Breton's *Second Manifesto* of Surrealism.[40] While Rivière theorized a masquerade that was indistinguishable from feminine non-identity, Breton's manifesto seems to repudiate the very idea of disguise. Over and over he invoked Surrealism as the means to clarification, illumination, self-knowledge. Nevertheless, throughout the 1930s disguise and masquerade functioned as weapons in Surrealism's assault on the foundations of the "real." In 1938 Marcel Duchamp extin-

guished the lights and "hid" the architecture of the Galerie des Beaux-Arts, the site of the international Surrealist exhibition, under 1,200 hanging sacks of coal. A row of mannequins, embellished with found objects, lined the corridor outside the gallery like prostitutes in the Rue St.-Denis, pointing the way to the surreal universe within. If Rivière's masquerade of femininity enabled the woman to assume a place within a masculine world, the Surrealist masquerade challenged the rational parameters of that world.

A decade earlier the deployment of masks in Dada performances at the Cabaret Voltaire had enabled the performers to sustain an illusion of becoming one with the Other, of shedding inhibitions and releasing the so-called totemic and primitivizing forces associated with the unconscious.[41] By 1929 these irrational and primitivizing forces had clearly been reformulated under the sign of the feminine.

Many Surrealist masks and costumes—like the elaborate feathered headdresses that Max Ernst wore to signal a shamanistic identification with his alter ego Loplop, the Superior of the Birds—identified the wearer with non-European cultural traditions and beliefs. Others, like the masks produced by Meret Oppenheim and Leonor Fini out of fur and feathers, exoticized their creators as part of that otherness. Still others, however, encouraged the enacting of different sexualities and gender roles.

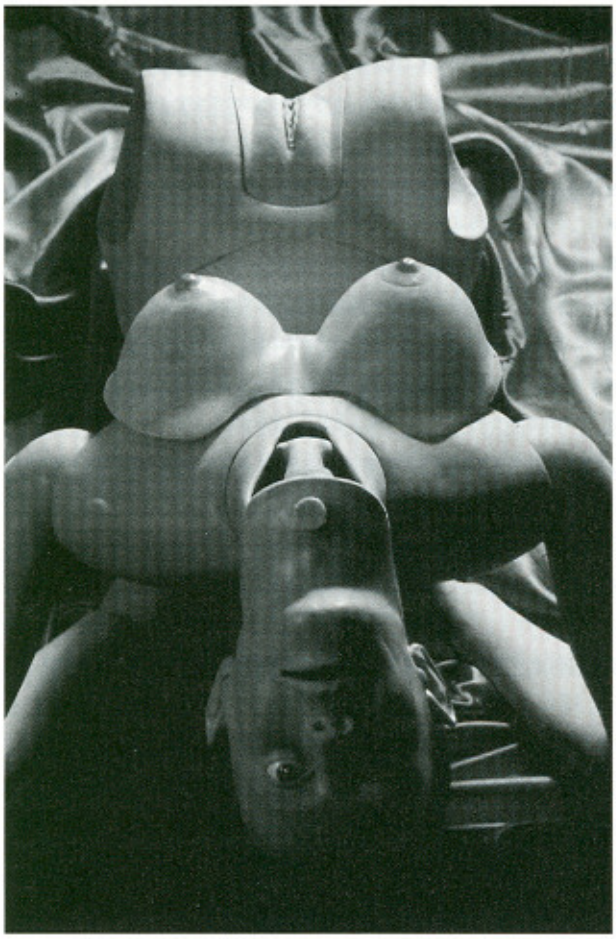
As early as 1925 Claude Cahun had begun using mirrors to double and distort her image. Photographing herself in a series of disguises, her face painted or heavily made-up, she appeared in the guises of androgyne, sailor, mime, acrobat, Buddha, wrestler.[42] Cahun's iconography of fluid, transgendered identity no doubt owed as much to the pioneering lesbian culture that supported Romaine Brooks's striking *Self-Portrait* (1923) and Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) as to Surrealism. The results of her interventions into the representational terrain of sexual difference have recently been seen as articulating gender and sexuality as positional rather than fixed. Examining this work in the more historically specific context of lesbianism in the 1920s and 1930s—marginalized within Surrealism by Breton's homophobia and within broader culture by medical discourses of homosexuals as a "third sex"—suggests a more urgent political stake in the struggle to place herself.

Cahun's are not the only Surrealist images of female cross-dressing (Kahlo's *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, 1940, and Varo's *Harmony*, c. 1956, come immediately to mind), but her interest in the theater identifies that genre's performative model, as well as the presence in that milieu of sexually ambiguous figures like Sarah Bernhardt, Ida Rubinstein, and Beatrice Wanger, as key sources for Cahun's explorations. Cahun's photographs have often been read as prefiguring the imagery of the unstable self produced by Cindy Sherman's mediated self-images, though there is no evidence to suggest that Sherman was aware of Cahun's work at the time she began inserting her own self-image into film stills and other media-based representations.[43]

Although Sherman has consistently denied historical influences, her work of the 1980s is often discussed in relation to Surrealism and frequently related to Surrealist practices that refigure the body's meaning through its parts. "Even her most dutiful and intoxicating references to disaster films and *film noir* pale before her homage to Hans Bellmer," notes critic Andrew Menard, "[and] several of the new pieces (the sex pictures) rather slavishly mimic photographs from the *Poupée* series."[44]

Such readings, however, fail to account for the extent to which Bellmer's bodily dislocations (almost always sexualized and coded female) have been absorbed into a contemporary culture in which physical reorderings of the body (through disease, organ transplants, etc.) have become a fact of life rather than a weapon in a Surrealist assault on Western assumptions of bodily wholeness and integrity.[45] The cultural codes of Sherman's critiques of pornography are nowhere to be found in Bellmer's fetishized bodies. Indeed many of Sherman's substitutions and deformations point toward an earlier interest in locating the transgressive body at the boundary between the human and the machine.

Sherman's Untitled #261 (1992; fig. 3) and Max Ernst's *Anatomy of a Bride* (c. 1921; fig. 4) share a fascination with mannequins, simulacra, and machine function that derives from the sexualized bachelor machines of Dada fantasy. The Dada *machine-célibataire*, however, emerged from the tangled strands of the Kafkaesque literary imagination and the literal replacement parts of bodies torn apart in battle. Sherman's prostheses, on the other hand, belong to a marriage of medical

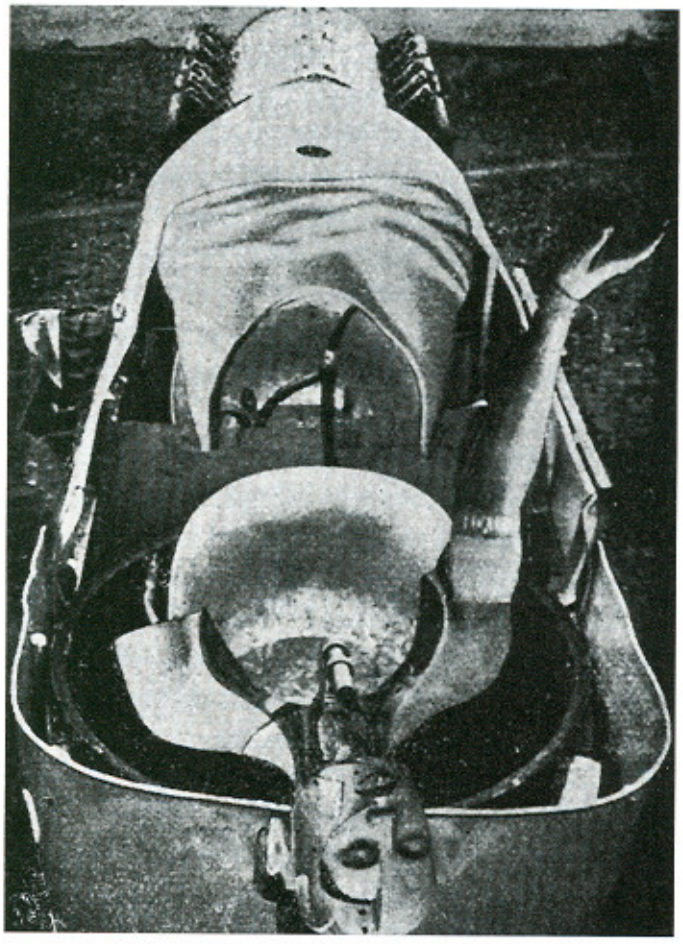


Cindy Sherman
Untitled #261, 1992
Color photograph
68 x 45 in.
Private collection

3

technology and cyborg fashion. This parodic element of Sherman's work, with its double references to film and fashion, technology and virtual reality, adds a level of miming and appropriation that does not collapse back into historical Surrealism or Dada. In introducing a note of irony she neatly distances her representations from Surrealism's enthusiastic assaults on bodily integrity.[46]

Constituted as Other, as object, in Western representation, the woman who speaks must either assume a mask (masculinity, falsity, simulation) or set about unmasking the opposition within which she is positioned. Yet cross-dressing and performative practices have enabled women artists from Cahun to Sherman to embody what Judith Butler has called



Max Ernst
Anatomy of a Bride, c. 1921
Photo of a collage with white gouache
9 1/8 x 6 3/4 in.
Private collection

4

the "three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance."[47] "Under this mask, another mask," Cahun wrote, "I will never be finished carrying all these faces."[48]

Masquerade for women has functioned both as an element in rituals of seduction that rely on costuming and as a means of blurring gender boundaries by using coded signs, the meaning of which shifts from historical moment to historical moment and from culture to culture. Freud and Cixous have pointed to the apparently greater bisexuality of the woman, for whom assuming the clothes that signify masculinity suggests her ability to assume a mastery over the image and the look. Adopting the imagery of the Other, the signs of male sexuality

and masculinity as coded through dress, gestures, bearing, and look—as Cahun does in many of her *Self-Portraits* (1920s), Kahlo in *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair* (1940), and Sherman in the untitled self-portraits that reference Mick Jagger, Andy Warhol, and other male performers of ambiguous sexuality—the woman who cross-dresses blurs the signs of sexual difference. The Surrealists' fascination with androgyny is well-documented.[49]

Like Cahun, Meret Oppenheim often used masks and masquerade to produce images of the self that blurred gender roles.[50] The practice continues in the work of contemporary artists interested in exploring gender and sexual roles through performative strategies and in producing the self through juxtaposition and layering with, or in relation to, external objects. Japanese artist Michiko Kon surrounds and overlays her body with elaborate hybrid constructions using raw fish, flowers, and vegetables to create images with the visually and viscerally disruptive potential of Oppenheim's objects and the allegorical resonances of Arcimboldo's sixteenth-century portraits.

Performative strategies also encourage agency and externalized perceptions of self. Many paintings by Fini, Tanning, and Kahlo suggest the use of masquerade to control external perceptions of women. Kahlo, for example, often staged her self-presentation through carefully chosen symbolic images and cultural "props." Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen have remarked on the split between the theatrical mise-en-scène of Kahlo's masquerades and the withdrawal of affect into a mask-like face that produces her as gazing subject rather than as object of another's look:

For Frida Kahlo beauty was inextricably bound up with masquerade. In her self-portraits . . . her face remains severe and expressionless with an unflinching gaze. At the same time the mask-like face is surrounded by luxuriant growths, accoutrements, ornaments and familiars—a monkey, a doll, a hairless dog. The ornament borders on fetishism, as does all masquerade, but the imaginary look is that of self-regard, therefore a feminine, non-male and narcissistic look. There is neither coyness or cruelty, none of the nuance necessary to the male eroticization of the female look. The masquerade serves the purpose of displacement from a traumatic childhood of the subject herself ever-remembered, ever-repeated.[51]

The fetishization of nature, costume, and attributes evident in many of Kahlo's self-portraits also defends against a fear of barrenness, of non-identity. At times, new meanings collapse back into old images, into the fear that beneath the facade, the mask, the costume, there is nothing to be seen. Surrealist self-portraits by women often reveal a tension between the investment of self in the reflected Other and the fear that behind the elaborate productions that stage the feminine as Other there lies only emptiness.

Confrontation with a self that offers nothing new is the subject of Varo's *The Encounter* (c. 1955). Here a woman stares bleakly into space as she raises the lid of a box and discovers that it holds nothing except her own image. As Varo's biographer Janet Kaplan explains, quoting the artist, the woman approaches the box in anticipation of finding intriguing self-revelations within, but finds not another but the self: "Bound by a fraying fabric to that other head in the box, she confronts the reality of self-exploration—that one is tied to the self one already knows."[52]

Varo's painting suggests an ironic play in which otherness becomes sameness in a scenario that recapitulates Freud's account of sexual difference: a scenario in which the male subject gradually distances himself from the mother (the first object of desire), whereas the girl child is denied the distance that comes with knowledge and must become that original object of desire through an identification with the female (maternal, for Freud) body. This identification with the maternal body that Freud and subsequent psychoanalytically inclined critics posit as a condition of female subjectivity produces femininity through doubling.[53]

The doubled image in Surrealism has often been read as a means of breaking with unitary meaning or, as Rosalind Krauss has elaborated, a device for signifying the real and the unreal simultaneously.[54] The doubled image, however, also provided women artists with a way of complicating otherness by reproducing it as sameness, by making the woman Other to herself and engaging her in a dialogue with the self that produces her life as narrative. Discussing literary autobiography, Paul de Man noted that the subject of autobiography is not an objective fact but a "textual production," and dialogism often characterizes self-narratives by women artists.[55]

Kahlo's *Two Nudes in the Jungle* (1939), with its play of light and dark, its doubling of vegetation behind the two nude figures, alludes to a sexuality based on sameness rather than difference. A series of remarkably gentle gestures—a hand stroking hair, a foot resting on another's thigh—break with assertions of difference by suggesting the possibilities of self-identification and self-pleasuring. Here the otherness is also the otherness of cultural difference, an acknowledgment of Mexico's multiplicity of cultural heritages and traditions.

Kahlo frequently used doubled images of the self—as she does in *The Two Fridas* (1939) and *The Tree of Hope* (1946)—to position herself within the dualities out of which she formed the narratives of her identity: European/Mexican, nature/culture, body/body politic. They indicate her dual cultural heritage, her simultaneous existence as the loved woman and the rejected lover, the self located within a physical body that bore the signs of both disabling pain and conventionalized beauty.

Kahlo's continuing renegotiation of boundaries—between past and present, illness and health, Mexican and European culture, Diego and herself—also informs the work of the contemporary Mexican artist Paula Santiago and the Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta. Both have enacted the self/body through a registering of its traces and through images that suggest the absent body.

Partial exile from the body, recording the body through its absence or trace, or imprinting it elsewhere may reveal psychological dimensions of the self, political understanding, emotional awareness, or all of these. Such strategies, common both to Surrealism and to later performative acts by women that refuse the body as biologically determined or visually objectified, cannot be reduced to single meanings. Mediated by the specificities of culture and historical moment, they reveal the body as marker of identity, as border between multiple awarenesses of self, and as the source of complex images that challenge the specularization of the body in Western representation.

The work produced by women working historically in the context of Surrealism neither reduces easily to contemporary theoretical paradigms nor offers simple answers to the problems of female subjectivity and representation. Nevertheless, in making women's consciousness of self, body, and exterior world the subject of representation, it initiated a set of conditions through which to frame femininity that remain as powerful for women today as they were in the 1930s.

Notes

I have borrowed the title of this essay from Trin T. Minh-ha's elegant discussion of the challenge facing the woman writer who seeks to represent herself; see her *Woman, Native, Other* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 22–28. Part of this material was delivered as a lecture at the University of California at Santa Barbara; my thanks to Abigail Solomon-Godeau and the graduate students there for their constructive criticism and helpful suggestions. I would also like to thank Moira Roth, Julie Linden, and Michelle Sullivan for their many contributions.

1. Two notable exceptions to this were the pioneering work done in the 1970s by Gloria Feman Orenstein, whose "Women of Surrealism" was first published in the *Feminist Art Journal* 2 (Spring 1973): 15–21; and the encyclopedic special issue of *Obliques* devoted to the subject in 1977.
2. Hayden Herrera, *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983).
3. See my *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (Boston: New York Graphic Society Books, 1985). More recent examples include *Surrealism and Women*, ed. Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf Kuenzli, and Gwen Raaberg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991); Robert J. Belton, *The Beribboned Bomb: The Image of Woman in Male Surrealist Art* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1995); and *La Femme et le surréalisme*, ed. Erika Billeter and Jose Pierre (Lausanne: Musée Cantonnal des Beaux-Arts, 1987).
4. For a good introduction to feminist methodological issues in art history, see Lisa Tickner, "Feminism and Art History," *Genders 3* (Fall 1988): 92–128; also Griselda Pollock, "Feminist Interventions in the Histories of Art," in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 1–17.
5. For the problematics of women in the modernist avant-garde, see Griselda Pollock, "Inscriptions in the Feminine," in *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art in, of, and from the Feminine*, ed. M. Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 67–85; also Robert J. Belton, "Speaking with Forked Tongues: 'Male' Discourse in 'Female' Surrealism?," in Caws et al., eds., *Surrealism and Women*, 50–62; Belton, *The Beribboned Bomb*; and Rudolf Kuenzli, "Surrealism and Misogyny," in Caws et al., eds., *Surrealism and Women*, 17–25, take up the problem of Surrealist misogyny. Both arguments seem to me somewhat oversimplified.
6. As noncitizens, there was little to encourage them into oppositional politics in France, and by the 1930s the battle for suffrage was over in England and the United States. Moreover, the Surrealists had publicly declared themselves opposed to the social institution of bourgeois marriage in a manifesto of 1927 supporting Charlie Chaplin's right to exercise his genius independently of the legal responsibilities of marriage and paternity. Reprinted in Maurice Nadeau, *History of Surrealism*, trans. R. Howard (New York: Collier Books, 1965), 262–71.
7. Feminist criticism of the 1990s includes a number of significant challenges to theories, many of them originating in the work of Jacques Lacan, that position woman outside the Symbolic. These include not only the writings of Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and other post-Lacanian psychoanalytically inclined French critics but also, more recently, Bracha Lichetenberg Ettinger. See also Elizabeth Wright, "Thoroughly Postmodern Feminist Criticism," in *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Teresa Brennan (London: Routledge, 1989), 141–52.

8. Ibid., 83.
9. Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925–1985*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 20.
10. I do not entirely agree with Xavière Gauthier's distinction between the Surrealist woman of poetry and that of visual art, but clearly the concreteness of the visual image and the personal proclivities of male Surrealist artists led to significant differences in the literary and visual representation of Woman. Gauthier, *Surréalisme et sexualité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 71–190.
11. For a fuller discussion of these points, see Marsha Meskimmon, *The Art of Reflection: Women Artists' Self-Portraiture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1–7, and passim.
12. As critic Rosalind Krauss has suggested in another context, Surrealism did not confine itself to the given but "explored the possibility of a sexuality that is not grounded in an idea of human nature, or the natural, but instead, woven of fantasy and representation, is fabricated." "Corpus Delicti," in *L'Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*, ed. Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston (Washington, D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, and New York: Abbeville Press, 1985), 95. Representations that articulate sexuality and identity as fabricated, shifting, and unstable, reducible to neither essence nor social convention, often resist dominant stereotypes.
13. Claude Cahun, *Aveux non avenus* (Paris: Editions du Carrefour, 1930), 29, as quoted in Honor Lasalle and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Surrealist Confession: Claude Cahun's Photomontages," *Afterimage* 19 (1992): 10–13.
14. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "The Legs of the Countess," *October 39* (Winter 1986): 76.
15. Meskimmon, *The Art of Reflection*, 37.
16. The manuscript, written in response to Max Ernst's arrest as an enemy alien in 1939, is in a private collection in New York.
17. The term is used by Miwon Kwon in "Bloody Valentines: Afterimages by Ana Mendieta," in de Zegher, ed., *Inside the Visible*, 168.
18. Georgiana Colvile, "Magie, mangeries et métamorphoses," *Parallèles* (Quebec: Editions de L'Instant Même, 1996), 93–110.
19. These issues were taken up in the exhibition "Corporal Politics" at the List Visual Art Center at MIT (1992).
20. "L'Amour fou," as quoted in Nadeau, *History of Surrealism*, 313.
21. For the girl child, according to Freud, seeing and knowing are simultaneous, a matter of bodily identifications. The boy child, however, first ignores or disowns what he has seen. A second stage is necessary, and only the perceived threat of castration prompts him to endow what is seen/unseen with a meaning, to read the maternal lack as threat and to initiate compensatory mechanisms to allay the threat, among them fetishism (the substitution of an image or object for the missing part), voyeurism (the institution of a visual distance between desire and its object), and scopophilia (sexual pleasure through looking). The female, on the other hand, possesses no parallel distancing mechanism, and the closeness of the body continually reminds her of the castration that cannot be "fetishized away."

    Mary Anne Doane explores the implications of traditional psychoanalytic theorizations of subjectivity for spectatorship in *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 20–26. The theme of the closeness of the female body to itself is discussed in the work of numerous contemporary psychoanalytically inclined critics; see, for example, Luce Irigaray, "Women's Exile," *Ideology and Consciousness* 1 (May 1977), 65; Sarah Kofman, "Ex: The Woman's Enigma," *Enclitic* 4 (Fall 1980): 20; and Michele Montrelay,

"Inquiry into Femininity," *m/f* 1 (1978): 91–92. Both Freud's and Lacan's descriptions of the construction of the subject turn on a knowledge of sexual difference organized in relation to looking, to the visibility of the penis. More recent theorizations of female subjectivity have led to an important body of writings on the girl child's relationship to the maternal body and on pre-Symbolic forms of signification that are not necessarily linguistically derived. Some recent critics, including Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, have argued for resisting the positioning of Woman outside the Symbolic by *changing* symbolic structures of meaning to produce a symbolic linked to invisible female bodily specificity, a matrix, or in Ettinger's words, "a feminine unconscious space of simultaneous co-emergence and co-fading of the I and the stranger that is neither fused nor rejected. Links between several joint partial subjects co-emerging . . . indicate a sexual difference based on webbing of links and not on essence or negation." In de Zegher, ed., *Inside the Visible*, 108.

22. Cited in Terrie Sultan, "Redefining the Terms of Engagement: The Art of Louise Bourgeois," in *Louise Bourgeois: The Locus of Memory, Works 1982–1993*, exhib. cat. (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum, 1994), 28.
23. Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, ed. and trans. Alan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).
24. Man Ray's photograph of a woman with a strangely shaped wire-mesh hat pulled over her head was reproduced in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, no. 1 (1930). The trope of caged femininity runs strongly through Victorian art and literature; see Walter Deverell, *A Pet* (1852–53), Collection The Tate Gallery, London; reproduced in my *Women, Art, and Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), pl. 95.
25. Caws, "Ladies Shot and Painted: Female Embodiment in Surrealist Art," 263.
26. For further discussion of this theme in Bourgeois's work, see Julie Nicoletta, "Louise Bourgeois's *Femmes-Maisons*: Confronting Lacan," *Woman's Art Journal* 13 (Fall 1992/Winter 1993): 21–26; Pamela Kember, "The Home of Dreams and All Delirious Wanderings: The Woman-House in the Art of Louise Bourgeois," in *Louise Bourgeois* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art Papers, vol. 1, 1996), 46–51.
27. See Deborah Wye, *Louise Bourgeois*, exhib. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1982), 14; Julie Nicoletta, "Louise Bourgeois's *Femmes-Maisons*: Confronting Lacan," *Woman's Art Journal* 13 (Fall 1992/Winter 1993): 21; Ian Cole, "Brokering Madness," in *Louise Bourgeois* (Oxford), 58.
28. Louise Bourgeois and Lawrence Rinder, *Louise Bourgeois: Drawings and Observations* (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1996), 45.
29. "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 94.
30. See Bourgeois and Rinder, *Louise Bourgeois*, 45; I am grateful to Julie Linden for pointing this out.
31. Rosi Huhn, "Louise Bourgeois: Deconstructing the Phallus Within the Exile of the Self," in de Zegher, ed., *Inside the Visible*, 135–43; Bourgeois's subsequent cultivation of a perception close to that of schizophrenia, or hysteria, enabled her to move beyond the rationality and structure associated with phallic order while resisting essentializing projections of Woman as irrational. See her *Cells* and the hysterical arches, which reference Dalí's earlier use of this form.
32. J. F. Rodenbeck, "Yayoi Kusama: Surface, Stitch, Skin," in de Zegher, ed., *Inside the Visible*, 152; see also Leslie C. Jones, "Transgressive Femininity: Art and Gender in the Sixties and Seventies," in *Abject*

Art: Repulsion and Desire in American Art, exhib. cat. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1993), 33–57.

33. Lucy Lippard, *Eva Hesse* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 113.
34. Ibid.
35. For the importance of this concept to Hesse criticism, see Lippard, "New York Letter," *Art International* 10 (May 1966): 64; also Anne Wagner, "Another Hesse," *October* 69 (Summer 1994): 64.
36. More recently, Anne Wagner has elucidated a subsequent history of critical readings that continues to return us (though not always in consistent ways) to the problematic terms in which "the body might be said to be present in Hesse's art" and the artist and her art collapsed into a single entity. Wagner, "Another Hesse," 63.
37. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980), trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 53–55. Literary critic Alice Jardine has also theorized the cultural breakdown of confidence in patriarchal order as leading to a new space of the feminine defined as "terrifying, monstrous . . . mad, unconscious, improper, unclean, nonsensical, oriental, profane." *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 89.
38. As quoted in Sheryl Conkleton and Carol S. Eliel, *Annette Messager* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1995), 70.
39. Kaja Silverman, "Fragments of a Fashionable Discourse," in *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 141.
40. "Womanliness as a Masquerade," originally published in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 10 (1929); the essay has been widely reprinted. See, for example, *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burgin, James Donald, and Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1986), 35–44.
41. "Each mask," wrote Hugo Ball, describing an early dada performance in Zurich, "dictated not only what costume should be worn with it, but also certain precise, pathetic gestures which approached madness. . . . The masks transmitted their power to us with an irresistible violence." As quoted in Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (New York: McGraw Hill Paperbacks, 1965), 23. Evan Maurer notes, "When an African dancer dons a mask for a sacred ritual he also becomes the vehicle of the spirit the mask represents. The mask is therefore a significant element in the process of the transformation of the individual's consciousness from the human to the mythic." "Dada and Surrealism," in *Primitivism in 20th-Century Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 539; see also my "Fetishizing Fashion/Fetishizing Culture: Man Ray's *Noire et Blanche*," *Oxford Art Journal* 18 (1995): 3–17.
42. The major source on Cahun's life and work is Francois Leperlier, *Claude Cahun: L'Ecart et la métamorphose* (Paris: Jean Michel Place, 1992); see also Laurie J. Monahan, "Radical Transformations: Claude Cahun and the Masquerade of Womanliness," in de Zegher, ed., *Inside the Visible*, 125–33, and the exhibition catalogue *Mise en Scène* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1994). The imagery of Cahun's multiple personae often derives from a visual culture of cross-dressing that by the 1920s provided a visible means of renegotiating the culturally defined categories of masculinity and femininity with their more structured and restrictive roles for women; see Susan Gubar, "Blessings in Disguise: Cross-Dressing as Re-Dressing for Female Modernists," *The Massachusetts Review* (Autumn 1981): 478.
43. Cahun's work has yet to be fully explored in relation to its sources in the popular culture of the 1920s.

44. Andrew Menard, "Cindy Sherman: The Cyborg Disrobes," *Art Criticism* 9 (1994): 38–48; I want to thank Michelle Sullivan and Julie Linden, M.A. candidates at San Francisco State University, for their research and assistance in this area.
45. Sidra Stich elaborates on this point in *Anxious Visions: Surrealist Art* (Berkeley: University Art Museum, and New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), 26–80; see also Norman Bryson, "House of Wax," in *Cindy Sherman* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 218 and passim, and Hal Foster, *Convulsive Beauty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).
46. Bellmer's dolls participate in a sexual fetishization first identified in 1887 by Alfred Binet; in *Anatomy of Love* Bellmer claimed that desire has its point of departure not in the whole but in the detail, the body fragment isolated and compulsively repeated. See Dawn Ades, "Surrealism: Fetishism's Job," in *Fetishism: Visualizing Power and Desire*, ed. Anthony Shelton (London: The South Bank Centre, and Brighton: The Royal Pavilion, Art Galleries and Museums, 1995), 81.
47. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 137.
48. As quoted in Therese Lichtenstein, "A Mutable Mirror: Claude Cahun," *Artforum* 30 (April 1992): 66.
49. The literature is too vast to cite exhaustively. Albert Beguin's "L'Androgyne," published in *Minotaure* in 1938, traces the historical roots of the myth, elaborating it as a "celebration of love," "refletent l'anxiété de l'homme devant la dualité des sexes et le mystère de l'amour." "L'Androgyne," *Minotaure* 11 (May 1938): 10. See also Robert Knott, "The Myth of the Androgyne," *Artforum* 14 (November 1975): 38–45; also, my "Eros or Thanatos: The Surrealist Cult of Love Reexamined," *Artforum* 14 (November 1975): 46–56. More recent explorations of the theme of androgyny in Dada and Surrealism include Amelia Jones, "The Ambivalence of Male Masquerade: Duchamp as Rrose Sélavy," in *The Body Imaged: The Human Form and Visual Culture Since the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 21–31. The Surrealist androgyne (as celebrated by Breton, Masson, and others) remained primarily a way of annexing an aspect of femininity to a masculine self. For women, assuming male dress may simply provide a separation from social constructions of femininity, allowing for new ways of enacting identity.
50. The two photographs are reproduced in Nancy Spector, "Meret Oppenheim: Performing Identities," in *Meret Oppenheim: Beyond the Teacup*, ed. Jacqueline Burckhardt and Bice Curiger (New York: Independent Curators Inc., 1996), 40–41.
51. *Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1982), 26.
52. Varo, as quoted in Janet Kaplan, *Unexpected Journeys: The Art and Life of Remedios Varo* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), 178.
53. Sigmund Freud, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes," *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 87–88. The work of Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, Catherine Clement, and others has been particularly important in offering ways to understand the feminine body as exceeding its discursive limits.
54. "Corpus Delicti," in *L'Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*, 78.
55. "Autobiography as De-facement," *MLN* 94 (December 1979): 919–30.