Embodying Subjectivity
A Literary Genealogy of Anorexic Discourse

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Abstract

This thesis traces the development of women's subjectivity through anorexic discourse, in Doris Lessing's *Martha Quest*, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and Jenefer Shute's *Life-Size*. The first chapter draws from feminist philosophies and Foucauldian genealogies to construct a framework for discussing anorexia's relation to subjectivity. Here, I convey how social apparatuses that constitute and constrain women's bodies and female experience differ from women's attempts at self-constitution. The conflicts that arise from these differences are embodied in the anorexic's struggle for subjectivity. The second chapter is a literary genealogy of anorexia, where the three narratives demand such questions: what is she using her body to resist, what messages are inscribed in her resistance, how can self-starvation inform her agency? I use Sally Robinson's literary theory of positional representation to discuss Martha; then I consider Nyasha with regards to Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry; and finally, I examine Josie's shift from abjection to acceptance in Kristevan terms. My thesis concludes with a discussion of how anorexic resistance is able to shatter cultural constructs and develop a means to subjectivity that is characterized by its incorporation of female complexities, and not by self-destructiveness.

Résumé

Ce mémoire retrace la naissance de la subjectivité féminine à travers le discours anorexique dans *Martha Quest* de Doris Lessing, *Nervous Conditions* de Tsitsi Dangarembga et *Life-Size* de Jenefer Shute. Le premier chapitre s'inspire des philosophies féministes et des généalogies foucauldiennes pour construire un cadre de discussion sur le rapport entre l'anorexie et la subjectivité. Dans ce chapitre, je démontre comment l'appareil social qui forme et enferme le corps des femmes et l'expérience féminine diffèrent des tentatives féminines d'autoconstitution. Les conflits qui surgissent de ces différences sont symbolisés par la recherche anorexique de la subjectivité. Le deuxième chapitre est une généalogie littéraire de l'anorexie où les trois narrations nous entraînent à poser les questions suivantes : À quoi son corps lui permet-elle de résister? Quels sont les messages inscrits dans sa résistance? Comment le refus de s'alimenter nous renseigne-t-il sur sa personne? J'utilise la théorie littéraire de Sally Robinson sur la représentation positionnelle pour analyser Martha; ensuite j'étudie Nyasha en fonction de la notion de mimétisme de Homi Bhabha et enfin j'examine le passage de l'abjection à l'acceptation chez Josie en des termes kristévains. Le mémoire se termine par un débat sur la manière dont la résistance anorexique ébranle les structures culturelles et donne accès à une subjectivité qui se caractérise par l'incorporation des complexités féminines et non par l'autodestruction.

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List of Abbreviations

AS Sheila MacLeod, *The Art of Starvation*

DP Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

ES Sally Robinson, *Engendering the Subject*

HS Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (vol. 1)

HS2 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (vol. 2)

HS3 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (vol. 3)

LS Jenefer Shute, *Life-Size*

MQ Doris Lessing, *Martha Quest*

NC Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

PH Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror*

P/K Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*

SS Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

WT Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time"

Introduction: Embodying the Issues

Women's bodies have had a furtive, diminished history which has only recently begun to be written about from women's perspectives. Contemporary women's literature--writing by and about women--derives its strength in part by uncovering and articulating the problematization of women's bodies which has historically pervaded Western society. Women's literature also highlights a fundamental, intricate nexus between women's bodies and female subjectivity, revealing the difficulties therein, which have culminated in situations of obsessive body disciplining, self-starvation and anorexia. In novels such as *Martha Quest* (1952), *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *Life-Size* (1992), writers Doris Lessing, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Jenefer Shute use fiction as a touchstone for conveying the complex connections between women's bodies and women's self-representation, and for positing critical questions about the increasing emergence of women's self-starvation and anorexia in our culture.[1]

I have found that my speculations on anorexia and its relation to women's subjectivity are convincingly represented in women's writing, where narrative is able to articulate issues of identity, gender relations and body-consciousness in ways that are not satisfied by other discourses, such as critical theory. In each of the novels I study, the author uses transgressive and dissenting narrative strategies to create a "signifying space" for women's experience, and by "writing beyond the ending," the author resists cultural limitations and appeals to different prospects for developing women's subjectivity.[2] Because each writer leaves the narrative unfinished, the subsequent narrative overlaps and builds from the preceding one, such that *Martha Quest, Nervous Conditions* and *Life-Size* form a genealogy of women's experience which is shaped by experiences of self-starvation.

My study of these novels will be preceded with a general but intricate critique of culture. In keeping with Showalter, I believe feminist literary criticism gains from studying literature through a framework of culture, which "incorporates ideas about women's body, language, and psyche but interprets them in relation to the social contexts in which they occur" ("Wilderness" 345). This approach to literary criticism acknowledges the important differences between women writers, in which race, class, race, nationality, and history are literary determinants as significant as gender (345). I have chosen writers that represent some of these differences, but whose narratives express "a collective experience within the cultural whole," which "binds women writers to each other over time and space" (345).

Before I trace the genealogy of anorexic discourse in *Martha Quest*, *Nervous Conditions* and *Life-Size*, I need to outline certain issues of body politics, gender construction and self-representation to establish how women's identity is both self-constituted and socially constituted. While literary theory and criticism have been helpful for informing my readings of the novels, I have found it necessary to draw also from the disciplines of philosophy, social theory and clinical studies, in order to assemble the necessary framework for studying the characters Martha, Nyasha and Josie.

Cultural studies and social history "offer us a terminology and a diagram of women's cultural situation," but feminist critics must link these disciplines "to what women actually write" (Showalter, "Wilderness" 350). A study of anorexia in literature can facilitate our understanding of women's sex/gender positions in relation to their subjectivity, if we understand anorexia as a nexus of "articulation of the body, women's sexuality, class and the

Western post-industrial society" (Probyn 114) and a site at which the discourses of sex and gender converge.

By examining various feminist concerns surrounding women's bodies, as well as Foucauldian concepts of the disciplined, panoptic and hystericized *female* body, and bridging these ideas with feminist approaches to women's self-starvation and anorexia, I am creating new parameters in which to examine the discursiveness of women's subjectivity. This will entail questions about the nature of self-starvation: is its protest characterized by a defeating process of victimization,[3] or is there couched within this protest an agency that finds itself through the processes of resistance? In short, can women's self-creation be developed without self-destructive tools? The literary texts I have chosen will delineate how modes of resistance--when articulated by the body--can be effective at first, but inevitably disintegrate into means of self-effacement, where subjectivity collapses with subjugation. This site of collusion, however, is also a site for new possibilities of self-creation that, unlike Foucauldian bodies, find agency through processes of incorporation.

Part I: On Becoming Our Bodies

It is in great part the anxiety of being a woman that devastates the feminine body.[1]

In this chapter, I investigate the female body as a site of discursive power to reveal how women's "potential resistance is not merely undercut but utilized in the maintenance and reproduction of existing power relations" (Bordo, "The Body" 15). From a feminist perspective, the anorexic body can be seen as a discursive site that--in relation to gendered subjectivity--finds agency in the midst of power relations and social limitations.[2]

There are, however, certain paradigms limiting this perspective. These I want to highlight in order to contest. For instance, humanist notions of *female* and *woman* in the Cartesian nature/culture paradigm limits our conceptions of sex and gender, because it does not consider women as proponents of both nature and culture.[3] In Western humanism, from Plato to modern positivism, the concept of *body* has been associated with *female,* in which both concepts are foe to rational objectivity and considered adversary to the mind. Cartesian thought fixes on mind-centredness as the source of knowledge, and makes claims to a self that is pure and fully autonomous.[4] In this context, the body is posited as a boundary between the autonomous self and the external world, or *other.*

Similarly, Foucault's epistemology is limiting due to its neglect of conceiving differences between gendered bodies. Foucauldian views are further limited because they do not envisage a subjectivity that is constituting as well as constituted. He writes that the body is produced as a cultural effect or an "inscribed surface of events," such that his genealogies aim to "expose a body totally imprinted by history," where history implies "the destruction of the body" ("Nietzsche" 148).[5]

Feminist praxis can discipline Foucault's notions of power and knowledge to capacitate gendered, and specifically female, subjectivity. A Feminist Foucauldian view perceives the body as a discursive site, a locus of social practice and a cultural text. This view revisions the body's role as a source of intellectual insight which is able to facilitate reconstruction and transformation of dominant norms. The body is a "medium of culture" and a "metaphor for culture" whose changing forms and meanings reflect historical conflict and social change, while expressing the politics of gender that reflect those changes (Bordo, "The Body" 13). From this perspective emerges a subject "whose body, interests, emotions and reason are fundamentally constituted" by a woman's particular socio/historical context (Jaggar 6). This subjectivity is not constituted in binaries or in *jouissance*, but rather in the ability to maintain individual, dissenting action and empowered self-representation.

The approach I am taking necessarily elides Cartesianism, but also elides postmodern conceptions that see women's illnesses as purely symbolic subversion.[6] In both currents of thought, women's experience is often relegated to the realm of the intelligible, which revolves around images, visionary representations and metaphysics of the body, rather than its corporeality. As one of many postmodern discourses, *l'écriture feminine* offers fascinating approaches to writing the body, but does not want to transcend a theoretical realm of the symbolic, and therefore cannot be used to talk about women on a practical, everyday level.[7]

While the bulk of *l'écriture feminine* and traditional humanist thought will not inform my readings of anorexic women in literature, there are some thinkers within both epistemologies which I have found convincing, namely Julia Kristeva and Simone de

Beauvoir. The former will be touched upon later in my thesis, but here, I want to turn to de Beauvoir's notions of the body, gender and subjectivity. Her claim that women are socially and self-constructed rather than naturally formed marked the beginning of feminist philosophical deconstructing of humanist conceptions of *woman*.[8] Beauvoir's paradigm characterizes subjectivity not by Cartesian binaries or postmodern play but by *situatedness*, which is able to de-essentialize and de-naturalize the concept *woman*.[9]

In *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir claimed that man has deemed himself the Absolute subject and woman the Other--a premise that can be extended to any relationship of dominance/subjugation (SS xix).[10] But de Beauvoir was convinced that although a woman is perceived as the inadequate Other, she is more than Other. A woman is not to be reduced to an objective body, for she, too, has a consciousness that seeks self-representation, subjectivity, or what Sartre called Being-for-Itself.[11] Considering women as ontological beings, de Beauvoir observed that their ongoing crisis in self-creation has arisen through men's devising of a myth or ideal of Woman that is characterized by her fundamental relation with nature, Otherness, and the body. This crisis is maintained, however, by women's acceptance of Otherness, evident in their continual endorsement of socialized roles of passivity, submission and subjection. Women experience their shameful Otherness with the emergence of puberty and female sexuality, which is then ossified in roles of womanhood (SS 500-3).

Beauvoir believed that although "the whole feminine history has been man made," women have a certain freedom in forming their gendered selves, and by focusing on the *body as situation*, women can begin to dismantle established gender polarities (SS 144). As a

situated site, the body is pivotal to women's "situation in the world," in which her subjectivity is developed and manifested in her own activities as well as by "the bosom of society" (*Pyrrhus* 41). As a locus that continually assimilates these interpretations, the body becomes a "nexus of culture and choice, and 'existing' one's body becomes a personal way of taking up and reinterpreting received gender norms" (Butler, "Variations" 134). The situated subject is intersubjective, relational, and always embodied.

Situatedness is a liberatory concept, but it needs to be considered in accordance to gender construction. Butler questions de Beauvoir's paradigm by demanding "if gender is the corporealization of choice, and the acculturation of the corporeal, then what is left of nature, and what has become of sex?" ("Variations" 129).[12] Beauvoir, however, did not aim to reject sex entirely. Rather, she aimed to reveal that while a woman's body is not sufficient for defining her as a woman, her body is "an essential element of the situation she occupies" (SS 41). Furthermore, if agency is a prerequisite in locating a gender situation that is "a tacit project to renew cultural history in one's own corporeal terms," then agency starts with our bodies, for "it is our genders we become," and "taking on a gender is not possible at a moment's notice, but is a subtle and strategic project, laborious and for the most part covert" (Butler, "Variations" 131).

Beauvoir's conceptions have formulated a liberatory but problematic epistemology in which a woman's self-creation seems to be achieved through defying her natural (reproductive) capacities, or by repudiating her body (SS 553). It seems obvious that de Beauvoir's premise is informed by her own profound distrust for the female body, which she saw as negative, burdensome, and inherently alienating.[13] Similarly, the anorexic has a

profound distrust if not hatred for her body, but discovers that while she cannot change her sex, she can modify it by manipulating her gendered body. These are nullifying strategies, for while the body is a locus of gendered meanings, these meanings are not clearly defined, nor are they clearly separable. Our society is inscribed with rigid gender norms which are often determined by sex, such that shifts in gender boundaries tend to cause dislocation in self-representation and subjectivity, because dissenting gender situations do not fit into social standards.

This experience of dislocation brings us back to problem of choice. The anorexic seems to conceive of her body and self in a way that is congruent with de Beauvoir, who believed a woman "is her body," but "her body is something other than herself" (SS 33). The anorexic discovers her sex and gender are linked through social fabrications that cannot be undone by bodily discipline and self-diminishment. Her pursuit of disembodiment and attempt at transcendence from embodied sex cannot be achieved, for she discovers that her body, her sex, can never really be denied. The denial of her body results, ironically, in an embodiment of denial, as well as a denigration of her body. The anorexic woman is probably unaware of this philosophical dead end. What's more, if women's bodies are experienced as situated, the anorexic politicizes her situation by challenging traditional norms of sex, sexuality and gender. In her struggle for agency, she deconstructs her normative, female identity by depreciating her natural/sexual body, only to find herself in a strange collapse of non-sexual, de-gendered and hyper-cultural subjection.

The experience of body as situation also incorporates representation. In *Technologies of Gender* Teresa de Lauretis argues that gender is a representation, where the representation

of gender is also the construction of gender (3). This construction includes its own deconstruction, in which discourses such as feminism and poststructuralism are questioning the ideological misrepresentations of gender in our society (3). Lauretis' concept of gender is similar to de Beauvoir's notion of woman, in which gender is not sex or a biological entity, but rather, "a representation of each individual in terms of a particular social relation which pre-exists the individual and is predicated on the conceptual and rigid opposition of two biological sexes" (3). This opposition is often referred to as the sex-gender system, which is intimately connected to political and economic factors that exist in most societies. Although their are differences between cultures, the problematics of the sex-gender system seem to emerge cross-culturally. As part of the sex-gender system, anorexia is one of many gender representations which assigns diverse meanings to the feminine, femininity and the concepts of woman. If genders are social positions which carry different meanings, then anorexia is product and process of gender representation and self-representation.[14]

Interpretations of anorexia often make a heuristic link between "the paper-thin representations of women" and self-starvation (Bordo, "The Body" 116). For instance, Turner sees anorexia as part of an ongoing female illness, in which "hysteria in the pre-modern period was an illness of scarcity" and "anorexia in the twentieth century is an illness of abundance" (Turner 83). In addition, some psychologists maintain that anorexia is purely a result of "the enormous emphasis that fashion places on slimness" (Bruch viii). But anorexia is more complex than a "fall-out from experiencing too much representation" and its pathology and symptoms cannot be confined by such seductively linear interpretations (Probyn 133). It is crucial to consider the paradoxes and perplexities of anorexia, and not

diminish it to "a modern affliction caused by too much affluence, women's lib., fashion and media" (Probyn 113). While mass culture has emphasized the importance of "surface presentation of the self" and has read anorexia in the same way, anorexia is closer to "a parody of twentieth-century constructions of femininity" than a compliance to those constructions (Bordo, "The Body" 17). As a parody, anorexia is not merely gender/surface *play*, for anorexia bares the ludicrous cultural surface on which feminine ideals are fabricated.

Representation is a slippery situation. Our bodily texts may be read in congruence with our intentions, but more often, they are misinterpreted. Such is the case with anorexia, in which the relation between practice and perception is shaky at best. While some feminist theory has focused on image and spectacle of women's bodies, this often leads to obscured and misleading conclusions because it does not consider the image in conjunction with practical, corporeal experience.[15] I want to get past a discussion of body image and consider the problematic connections between of female praxis, representation, and perception in the anorexic situation.

Anorexia: Resistance or Collusion?

There are a number of messages given in the (ir)rationale of self-starvation, in which the anorexic uses her body for negotiating discourses of sex and gender, and for exposing the contradictions within those discourses. In this way, the anorexic woman attempts to unsettle the ideologies which contain and constrain women. Her emaciated body is an exaggerated form of the pervading pursuit of slenderness, which expresses the "double-bind" of expectations of femininity. This bind consists of contradictory roles that are informed by the

sexual division of labour, which still posit women in the realm of the domestic: nurturing, producing and reproducing, feeding others, but with the disclaimer that women suppress their own desire and consumption, maintaining "a totally other-oriented economy" (Bordo, "The Body" 18). For the anorexic, it is not food, but control of female *appetite* which is important, such that denial of appetite signifies power, autonomy, sexual liberation, independence and rejection of the double bind.

In *Hunger Strike*, Susie Orbach posits anorexia as a physical and political protest, in which resisting food and consciously diminishing the body is an indictment of our society's chagrin for women's hunger or appetite, and society's expectation that women discipline their bodies (102). Anorexia embraces feminist praxes in its protest and deconstruction of ideals of femininity, where starvation is a text of resistance. Anorexic behaviour, however, is often *read* as hostile to feminist praxes, especially when it is perceived to assimilate traditional norms of femininity, even obsessively so.

While Bordo claims the anorexic woman is generally unaware that she is making a political statement ("The Body" 21), I tend to agree with Orbach, because many autobiographical and literary accounts of anorexia articulate an understanding of body politics and how they relate to, affect, and impress upon others.[16] In *The Art of Starvation*, Sheila MacLeod recounts her own position:

> I was being given what I did not want (which amounted to being given nothing) and being classified as what I was not (which amounted to being classified as nothing). My only weapon in my bid for autonomy was to go on strike... So I 'chose' a form of passive resistance. Just as a worker's ultimate

> weapon in his [sic] negotiation with management is his labour and the threat of its withdrawal, so my body was my ultimate, to me, only, weapon in my bid for autonomy. (AS 56)

Given her own experiences, MacLeod believes that anorexia should be read as a political protest (AS 56).

I do think, however, that the anorexic is often unaware of the personal, physical ramifications of her behaviour, and perhaps she does not realize how misinterpreted it tends to be. Channelling all her energy into insurgency, the anorexic woman is swallowed by her compulsions, which contract her back to normative views of femininity: silence, submission, frailty, and needful of institutional (medical) rehabilitation. MacLeod writes "'I' had shrunk to a nugget of pure isolated will whose sole purpose was to triumph over the wills of others and over the chaos ensuing from their conflicting demands," and also recalls:

> Engaged as I was in the struggle with myself, the struggle between my self and my body, other people had no real existence for me. I no longer believed them or believed in them, having to believe in myself as a matter of survival. (AS 98, AS 93)

Because the personal affect of anorexia is so debilitating, its protest becomes self-defeating, regardless of how it is read. MacLeod explains that her resistance created a "state of helplessness" that entailed "being a non-person," in which she diminished her ability to continue her resistance (AS 98).

The anorexic seems to produce both communicative and physical ambiguities which defy her intentions, to the effect that "the pathologies of female protest function,

paradoxically, as if in collusion with the cultural conditions that produce them" (Bordo, "The Body" 22). The problem of collusion is crucial because anorexia is peaking at a time of backlash against revisioning and re-organizing of female roles.[17] The second-wave feminist celebration of the female body seems to have transposed itself into "a jarring dissonance" in which women, feminists included, are starving themselves into debilitation and death ("The Body" 28). As de Beauvoir suggested, bodies are inherently a site of struggle. While women have learned that management of bodies can be empowering for better health, longevity, strength, and self-esteem, body management ceases to be a liberating source of power when it veers into objectifying disciplines and obsessive normalization.

Self-starvation seems to arise for a number of differing reasons, but most frequently it emerges as a reaction to implicit or explicit societal expectations. For instance, a woman may embark on a strict diet/exercise regime because her mother or boyfriend has commented on her body shape, or because friends have emphasized the 'need' for a slim, fit, modern feminine/androgynous figure. In this way, anorexia may originate as a conventional, female practice of changing the self for the satisfactions of others. But as a woman experiences agency and satisfaction in controlling her bodily regimes, she apprehends a sense of autonomous power--a power that has traditionally been coded as part of the male realm of superior will and control. She is also perceived by others as in self-control, valorized for her body discipline, and seen as more attractive because she approximates the ideal of androgynous feminine beauty.

Wilful rejection of food becomes another source of power. Her abstention evokes anger and frustration in her family and often jealousy amongst friends. In the family this

power is experienced as transforming because it shifts the dynamics of dominance, where parents control neither her eating nor, by extension, her life at large. Aimee Lui's autobiographical *Solitaire* explains that diet is one of the few things a woman can control in a confining family situation: "My diet is the one sector of my life over which I and I alone wield total control" (46). The taste of this power is addictive, and she obsesses over possibilities of even greater power, to be achieved through stricter regimes. She begins to despise personal characteristics which she considers female: aspects of her body, personality traits and emotional vulnerabilities. While she diminishes her body, she avoids social and sexual situations that would thwart her freedom to practice regimes. She does not want to explain herself to anyone, for she is afraid that disclosing her newly found knowledge of self-control would revoke her newly acquired power.

In spite of her efforts, she necessarily falls into disappointment and guilt, because her impossible tasks create a "moral spiral" of expectations which become increasingly difficult to achieve (Turner 194). As the anorexic experiences internal conflict between mind and body, questioning sex, gender and associated expectations, she begins to identify herself through paradoxical behaviours and disciplines. While she cannot control social and familial expectations, she can develop her own. For instance, by suppressing menstruation, the anorexic suppresses her sexuality, which is her way of prohibiting others from infiltrating or dominating her sexualized subjectivity. However, she becomes controlled by her body through the natural, self-defeating effects of starvation: insomnia, hyperactivity, migraine, weakness and fainting, heart palpitations, constant irritability and inability to make choices or create changes.

There is little doubt that our society's valorizing of the docile, subjective yet sexual and/or submissive female body, and simultaneous objectification of women's bodies, have played a pivotal role in the increase of anorexia in the late twentieth century. But what is often read as narcissistic self-attention is actually a text of women's fear and loathing of never achieving social standards. Women are devoted to constraining practises and controlled disciplines which render them "less socially oriented and more centripetally focused on self-modification" (Bordo, "The Body" 14). Women exercise control over their bodies and make them over *against* notions of femaleness and femininity, only to locate the female body as once again a sick body (Bartkowski 77).

As I have suggested, anorexia's (ir)rationale lies in paradox: the anorexic uses her body to reject societal norms, which ironically seems to reaffirm them. The current craze for thinness insures that women conform to certain norms of beauty which are assumed to be congruent with patriarchal ideals. But aren't women actively constituting the relentless pursuit of thinness?[18] This question requires an examination of how women's bodies have been historically, socio/sexually constituted.

Body Politics: Discipline and Panopticism

For women, experience of our bodies is entangled in many expectations that we do not seem to control. This is especially evident in the area of women's sexuality, in which "the regulation of female sexuality" has been overseen "by a system of patriarchal power" (Turner 91). Here, I want to do a feminist reading of Foucault's genealogies of discipline and panopticism, to explore how women's bodies have been socio/historically constituted.[19]

Foucault's genealogical approach "operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments" to discover the "destruction of the subject who seeks knowledge in the endless deployment of the will to knowledge" (Rabinow 97). This notion accords with his belief that subjects are constituted in resistance to totalitarian powers, and with feminist convictions that female subjectivity does not conform with humanist wills to selfhood. While Foucault aims to bare the body as an historical effect in which corporeal modification is necessary to produce the speaking subject (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 130), feminist perspectives can be utilized as a kind of reverse discourse, that through their own ethics of resistance challenge the normalizing powers which produce Foucault's subject-effect.[20]

Feminist and Foucauldian epistemologies agree that the body is a site of power and a "locus of domination through which docility is accomplished and subjectivity constituted" (Diamond and Quinby x). I believe the convergence of feminist and Foucauldian praxes establish new prospects for innovative, political and ethical commitment in both social and literary discourses. The tensions between these praxes serve to maintain reflexivity and guard against totalizing or hierarchizing epistemologies, for both are sceptical of Western humanism's assumption that the male elite experience is universally attainable or desirable. Both offer alternative ways of thinking about experience. While Foucault exposes the effects of normalizing power in the production of human subjects, feminist analyses illuminate the seeming ubiquity of masculinist power over women. By incorporating Foucauldian concepts of power, feminist analyses are able to convey how discursive sites of power have been constituted, and how they continue to be utilized in our society.

According to Foucault, power is yielded through knowledge, which is formed through disciplinary systems which incite power apparatuses. Power is both discursive and localized, operating in all areas of the body politic and within bodies themselves, which allows subordinate groups and discourses to sustain it. The first site I want to explore is discipline. In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault does a genealogy of the docile body, and its emergence into modern, Western civilization. Although his analysis of discipline assumes that the constitution of docile bodies is a masculine reserve, his oversights allow for feminist perspectives to rethink the genealogy in a way that highlights the gap, namely, the absence of female bodies.

In the emergence of industrialization, capitalist society saw the body as an object and target of power to be appropriated for social purposes. This was a "body manipulated by authority," developed to obtain "new forms of knowledge" which worked to improve the body politic as a whole (DP 155, 137). By the nineteenth century, the body came to be valued for its signification of economy, efficiency and internal organization. This increasing interest in bodily regime was the evolution of the docile body.

While bodily discipline and asceticism had been largely a religious concern--maintained for the purpose of renunciation--the rise of capitalism saw these concerns spread to the secular realm. This secularization prompted discipline to become a formula for domination, now maintained for increasing social utility. The control of desire (through abstention of food and sex) that had been predominantly a religious issue was also transposed into social realms, including the family.[21] In this way, the concern for long life as a religious value shifted to an concern for "efficient quantification of the body" (Turner 37).[22]

This shift reaffirmed Enlightenment ideals of passion and reason, in which the female body (as passion and signifier of the private sphere) became a challenge to the continuity of patriarchal property and power (as reason and the public sphere).[23] From the enlightened perspective, conditions of the private sphere--perceived as hedonism, consumption, desire and female--impeded those of the public sphere--considered ascetic, productive, rational, and male (Turner 38). In this context, the concept of woman came to be equated with lack of control and those things capable of destroying capitalist mode of production.

Regimens and disciplines were controlled by dominant institutions (penal, military, academic, psychiatric), which also incorporated the physical usefuleness of the individual's "natural and organic" body (DP 156). As social disciplining evolved, people internalized the practises and endowed themselves with self-constituting, self-disciplining behaviours (DP 167). In this way, regimens were actually maintained through people's obedience to their own disciplines, which in turn increased their obedience to external forces. It was understood that a body's self-regulation was part of the social regulating of bodies and central to political struggle; the body was to be practical, and nothing was to "remain idle or useless" (DP 152).

Foucault uses the male soldier to exemplify his notion of discipline, but its characteristics can also be seen in the anorexic woman. Guided by and against socially inscribed regimes, she internalizes them in her own struggle for power and knowledge. She expresses a reverse discourse, in which her body precariously demands to speak for itself, in her own terms, challenging the normalizing ideals of women's bodies and related gender/sex roles. In this context, anorexia can be regarded as part of the "political technology of the

body in which might be read a common history of power relations and object relations" (DP 23-4).

Docile bodies reinforced and reaffirmed traditional power apparatuses through "an uninterrupted coercion" of disciplinary practises (Bartky 62). But this coercion arose from other sites of power as well. Here, I will turn to Foucault's study of panopticism, so I can elucidate how the anorexic also internalizes the discourse of surveillance, such that she partakes in obsessive self-discipline coupled with rigid self-surveillance.[24]

Foucault writes that crises such as the Plague gave rise to social projects that "called for multiple separations, individualizing distributions, and organizing in depth a surveillance and control, an intensification and a ramification of power" (DP 198). In connection, leprosy gave rise to rituals of exclusion, where the leper was subject to rejection, confinement and exile-inclosure (DP 198). During the nineteenth century, the concepts of segmentation were welded to those of exclusion, and used in institutions such as asylums, reformatories, schools and penitentiaries (DP 199). This began a new faction which monitored and normalized behaviour using mechanisms of both discipline and surveillance.

A physical representation of these mechanisms was envisioned by Jeremy Bentham, in *Panopticon* (1791).[25] The panopticon is an architectural structure which confines, segments and exposes bodies for the purpose of complete control. A tower stands in the centre, surrounded by a periphery of cells which have windows facing both the tower and their outside. The cells are backlit in order to give maximum exposure into the cells, which are like "cages... theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible" (DP 200). Due to the backlighting, inhabitants cannot tell if there is an overseer in

the tower or not. The panoptic structure includes walls between each cell, making it impossible for inhabitants to interact. As a result, inhabitants are in constant view but cannot see out; they are under continual scrutiny but cannot communicate with others.

The concept of panopticism was considered "a guarantee of order" because it induced "a state of consciousness and permanent visibility" which assured "the automatic functioning of power" (DP 200-1). Like the disciplinary behaviours of the military that eventually filtered into social behaviour, panopticism also became detached from any specific use, such that it operated on and in society at large (DP 205). As the schema spread in generalized forms, it strengthened the social forces of capitalist endeavours, infiltrating most social relations, acting "everywhere and always alert, running through society without interruption in space or time" (DP 209). These mechanisms penetrated society by maintaining a "capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (P/K 39). In this context arose the disciplinary society which pervades today.

Panopticism was perceived as a diabolical machine "in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised" (P/K 156). As this infernal model of the panopticon grew, power became an essence that no one controlled, and manifested in a paranoia of surveillance. The ideal mode of surveillance operated as "malveillance," a mode of circulating mistrust in which each person obtained and utilized power in varying forms (P/K 158). Surveillance found a nest, however, in "the privileged locus" of the family (DP 215-6).

There is a fundamental relationship between surveillance as social control and surveillance as familial control. In the bourgeois household, the regulation of sexuality was controlled by spatial confines, such that panopticism operated through the combination of the gaze and interiorization:

> An inspective gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising the surveillance over, and against, himself [sic]. (P/K 154-5)

Control over family members began with the paternal gaze, but was strengthened by the power of its interiorization. It follows that via this extension into the familial realm, in which individuals became subject and object of public and private surveillance, women came into contact with the forces of discipline and panopticism.

Panoptic power, though, is short-sighted in not recognizing that people may have the ability to resist or subvert it.[26] By neglecting to engender docile bodies and bodies subject to panopticism, Foucault overlooks a proportionate area of resistance, and as Bartky suggests, "to overlook the forms of subjection that engender the feminine body is to perpetuate the silence and powerlessness of those upon whom these disciplines have been imposed" (64). But it is Foucault who suggests knowledge operates at a subjugated level, and there are "a whole set of knowledges which have been disqualified as inadequate to their task" which are emerging in our society (P/K 82). These knowledges are uncovered as women begin to articulate female experience as a "historical knowledge of struggles" which has been previously overlooked (P/K 83).

Curiously, anorexia seems to partake in both interiorization and resistance to the gaze, for the anorexic has come to believe "mastery and awareness of one's own body can be acquired only through the effect of an investment of power in the body" (P/K 56). As she practices bodily disciplines and self-surveillance to produce effects at a personal level of power and knowledge, she is both a panoptic tower and cell: controlling her body and being controlled by external precedents. In this way, self-control produces a paradox:

> those of one's own body against power... suddenly what had made power strong becomes used to attack it. Power, after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counterattack in that same body. (P/K 56)

While Foucault discusses boyhood masturbation to exemplify his point, the same logic can be applied to anorexia:

> what's taking place is the usual strategic development of a struggle...sexuality, through thus becoming an object of analysis and concern, surveillance and control, engenders at the same time an intensification of each individual's desire, for, in and over [her] body. (P/K 56-7)

In the case of masturbation, the body becomes a site of contention between parents and child, where a child's actions are a revolt against parental encroachment (P/K 57). In the anorexic situation, a woman feels bared before a panoptic society, and both empowers and enslaves herself with its regulations.

Disciplinary practices may give women a genuine sense of control, but they also inscribe women's bodies with inferiority, because health and beauty regimes suggest the "feminine body-subject" begins as deficient. The project of femininity is a "setup" in which

women attempt radical and extensive transformations that are virtually impossible to achieve (Bartky 71). In this setup, shame becomes a secondary characteristic, since women who do not achieve the ideal shape feel ashamed and deficient. These feelings internalize social condemnation as integral to the structure of the female self (77). While the anorexic attempts to deface these codes by using her body to assert that she is neither lacking nor wanting, her behaviours lead others to believe she is experiencing great lack: she is *deficient because she is female*, but she is *also a deficient female*.[27] What's more, if the technologies of femininity are performed against a backdrop of deficiency, then this deficiency is fortified by the anorexic's compulsive and rigid representation. In *The Obsession*, Kim Chernin recalls her anorexic disdain for femininity:

> the emotions which prompted [self-starvation] were a bitter contempt for the feminine nature of my own body. The sense of fullness and swelling of curves and softness, the awareness of plentitude and abundance that filled me with disgust and alarm, were actually the qualities of a woman's body. (20)

Femininity has evolved as a spectacle, and while its production may seem voluntary or natural, it is prompted by social expectations that women assimilate often unknowingly. This iron maiden system seems to shape women not into docile, autonomous subjects, but into "docile and compliant companions of men" (Bartky 75). While women may choose to uphold and enact disciplinary norms, these norms reflect a larger, inegalitarian inferiorization and sexual subordination which, for the most part, women have not created (75). Women may choose to discipline their bodies for themselves, but the male gaze abides in women's consciences. Moreover, male and female judgements of the female spectacle reflect a gross

imbalance, in which women are expected to give more importance to their body image than men are expected to do with theirs. In this context, women are considered indefinite and unable to recognize themselves without their masculine mirror.[28]

Transforming oneself into a feminine ideal may affect sexual, economic, and social success, but these successes are undermined by a furtive effect of female subordination. By affirming that something needs changing, disciplinary behaviours only continue to problematize women's natural shapes. Also, the pursuit of slenderness reaffirms women's frailty and fragility; while women are commissioning themselves to be thin and fit, they continue to take up as little space as possible. It is troubling that the pre-pubescent body and size has become a feminine ideal because it begets discordant aspirations of sexuality and subjectivity. While giving women a sense of empowerment, the return to a pre-adolescent body only reaffirms notions of a silent and secondary sex.

It seems that forming the body into the appropriate shape using the appropriate practices is crucial to many women's sense of completeness. Abandoning the customs that designate female success is a difficult task, especially when there seems to be no striking alternative. If women try to subvert social standards by not partaking in the iron maidenry outlined above, discordant feelings seem to arise. Resistance to feminine norms may begin as empowering, but it tends to deteriorate into feelings of failure, and, once again, deficiency. If this resistance was affected collectively it could influence a restructuring and genuine empowering of female gender. But as it stands, female representation is in part constituted through disciplinary measures which constrain experiences of the feminine body

and female sexuality, and these measures will have to be drastically reformed in order to effect a true liberation of women.

As I have suggested, women have become veritable inmates of the panopticon, self-policing subjects, under relentless self-surveillance and in "a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" which reaffirms subjection (DP 201). Now that I've discussed anorexia's relation to the cultural fallout of discipline and panopticism, I want to discuss how it converges with other societal dysfunctions.

Converging on the Anorexic Body

In "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture," Susan Bordo sees anorexia as a symptom of individual distresses and a bodily text that is inscribed with exaggerated versions of our society's obsessions. Far from a conformity to superficial fashion phenomena, anorexia reflects, crystallizes, and calls attention to cultural disorders.

Like Bordo, I am curious as to why our society is so obsessed with bodily discipline and thinness, why the "tyranny of slenderness" affects women so staggeringly, and what its relation is to first, second and third wave feminist movements.[29] Surely there are viable connections, which Bordo refers to as "axes of continuity" or "cultural currents," in which anorexia is synchronized with contemporary currents such as obsessive exercise, and is historically connected to female protests such as late nineteenth century hysteria ("Anorexia" 90). Following Bordo, I want to discuss the three cultural currents which are expressed in the anorexic situation: the axes of *dualism, control* and *gender/power* ("Anorexia" 90).

Bordo's paradigm is framed with her premise that there is no naturally gendered body. Rather, our fundamental, basic pleasures and instincts are "already and always inscribed" with normative ideals, such that people's experience of their bodies and the bodies of others are affected by social standards.[30] I have discussed how the body is a site on which power is exercised; similarly, Bordo suggests that social manipulation of women's bodies has historically been a central strategy in the maintenance of power relations between the sexes.[31] This power arises in a number of forms, including dualistic modes of thinking. Bordo thus seeks to confirm how Cartesianism converges with the anorexic experience. In a previous section, I outlined some of the problems inherent in Cartesianism; here I will supplement them with Bordo's thoughts.

Western dualism has always separated that which is bodily or material from that which is mental or spiritual. The body is experienced as alien or the "not-self," which is brute and animal-like. It is also experienced as confinement or limitation, from which the soul and mind seek escape ("Anorexia" 92). In either case, the body is foe to civilized thought and reason, since it threatens control and rational existence. It is therefore necessary to gain control over the body, to supplant desire with reason, and to replace materiality with spirituality.

The quest for self-mastery is necessarily problematized because the attempt to supplant corporeality with rationality is continually frustrated by a need for more control. Ultimately, the body's physical needs and desires cannot be subdued by the mind. These frustrations are inherent in the anorexic experience, when a woman attempts to control and suppress her bodily needs often to the point of death. Just as early dualist philosophers were

plagued by the inability to control desires, anorexics are plagued by their inability to control hunger. Hunger is the anorexic's adversary, because it is imminent, repetitive, and unending; she tries to dissociate it from her will not to eat, and experiences hunger as *other*.

Chances are that anorexics do not consciously follow, aspire to, or even recognize Enlightenment philosophies, but the notions of Cartesianism are inscribed in our culture to the point that most women and men think in terms of dualistic reasoning. No doubt this is problematic for those feminist praxes which seek to develop ways of being and knowing that are not based in Cartesian ideology. Here, it is important to remember that Bordo is discussing how anorexic thinness represents triumph of mind over body, reason over desire, and control over corporeality, where these triumphs crystallize what is negative in our culture. What's more, the triumph never occurs, because thinness is always an aspiration. The anorexic never reaches her goal because she never overcomes hunger, never sees her body as thin enough, and can never exist only through will. But in keeping with humanist ideals, she believes that fatness, fatigue and pleasure are associated with weakness, and inadequacy. Sexuality is inextricably related, since it is associated with consumption, fatness, and loss of control.

Bordo suggests that disdain for the body is historically grounded in Greco-Roman thought and Christian traditions ("Anorexia" 96). This notion is supported in volumes two and three of *The History of Sexuality*, in which Foucault writes about the Classical cultivation of the self. While Foucault's previous works focused on the development of subject-effect, constituted by public discourses and institutional powers, these later works focus on individual self-creation as a means to social positioning. Here, Foucault maintains that

constitution is actualized through disciplines and regimes, but now he considers their relation to the self. Attention to one's self and body was pivotal to the development of the mind and soul, hence to the development of society at large.

In Classical society, regimen was part of personal conduct, in which everything from food to sex was measured. Regimen organized and problematized the self's relation to the body, such that a proper way of living was determined by an intrinsic concern for the body. Through belief in Platonic and Hippocratic dietary regimes, diet became a fundamental category through which human behaviour was mediated (HS2 101). Diet characterized the ability to manage personal existence and showed a respect for *the art of living*.

Platonic view emphasized that all things connected with the body were to be measured--both corporeally and morally--to secure health and soul maintenance. A balance of bodily consumption and evacuation was fundamental, and was achieved through related regimes of exercise and vomiting. The problems of obsessing over bodily disciplines were readily acknowledged, "for if the aim of regimen was to prevent excesses, one might exaggerate the importance one lent to it and the autonomy one permitted to assume" (HS2 104). Using an example that parallels anorexic behaviour, Foucault discusses the occurrence of athletic excess, which was characterized by repeated workouts and obsessive bodily vigilance. The Platonic belief was to subdue obsessive tendencies of perfecting the body, for regimen was not good if it restricted or took over a person's life. Rather, regimen was "a treatise for adjusting one's behaviour to fit the circumstances" for assimilating and succeeding in different situations (HS2 106). Diet and exercise were set as deliberate

practises that characterized a whole method of creating oneself as an individual and social subject (HS2 108).

The cultivation of the self was also sustained through group practices. For example, bands of Epicureans and Stoics practised food abstinence to locate a higher level of pleasure in things not superfluous, and to discover the facility in dispensing with things which have become habit or preference. The goal of such practices was the "conversion to self," in which escaping dependencies and enslavements (both personal and social) facilitated the rejoining with one's elemental self. This goal was part of an ethics of mastery, as well as an ability to delight in oneself (HS2 108).

Once again, Foucault's study is confined by its male-centredness: the cultivated body is the male body, the self is the male self; nowhere does Foucault take up issues of female self-constitution. Rather, all three volumes of *The History of Sexuality* observe women and women's bodies as objects or facets of both private and public realms of male-ordered society. To exemplify my point, I'll glance briefly at Foucault's interest in Lycurgus' legislation of women's regime (HS2 122). Here, Foucault recapitulates Lycurgus' constraints on women, and offers no critique or argument against the patriarchal legislature.

In the interest of social progress, Lycurgus asserted that healthy offspring were begotten only from women whose lives were disciplined with abstinence of wine, careful measurements of bread and meat, and regimented exercises. The relation between regimes of food and sex was surmised by Aristotle, who saw the power of procreation as part and parcel of a proper dietetic regime, in which procreation was "the final processing of what alimentation brings into the body" (HS2 132). Following Hippocratus, Foucault explains that

male penetration was vital for giving a woman's body equilibrium (HS2 129). In this way, female sexuality relied entirely on men, whose interest lay in social progress through reproduction, "given the fact that [women] were considered to be socially and physiologically destined for marriage and procreation" (HS3 122).

Bordo's *axis of control* bridges current anorexic behaviour with elements of Classical regimentation. She elucidates how women's defiance of sexual and social constraints is often embodied in starvation. A woman reclaims her sexuality through regimented diminishment of her body, thereby resisting the objectification and submission that is associated with womanhood. Ironically, her disciplines only reinscribe patriarchal valorization of bodily regimes as part of self-creation. Her interests are not, however, in the art of living, but in the art of starvation; she perfects an ethics of mastery by forsaking care or pleasure of the self.

The current obsession with the body is perhaps more pervasive than ever before, but we seem to have forsaken care of the self for control over the self, even to the extent that we derive pleasure from obsessive regimens of restriction. The anorexic actively participates in this masochistic drive, but she also experiences herself, her life and her hunger as out of control. While her diet and exercise may have begun as methods of achieving personal dominion and frustrating authoritarian parents, this control transposes itself from seeming achievement and autonomy to actual addiction and obsession (Lui 36). Having grown up in the midst of constricting/conflicting familial and social expectations (Bruch 33), she is torn and "confused about where to place most of her energies, what to focus on" and places all her energy on one site: her body (Bordo, "Anorexia" 96).

As she starves herself, exercises fanatically and undergoes other compulsive rituals to secure a sense of mastery, she invents a domain where she is dictator. Deluded by her seeming strength, confidence and power that allow her to perform under such little sustenance, she derives energy from her resistance. This feeling of strength does not come from bodily experiences, since these only divulge her weakness and frailty, but from her will and her cognitive assessment of self-mastery. She cares little for health and proper care, and devises her own standards in which self-denial, abstinence and endurance are signs of optimum health.

Bordo suggests the prevailing fetish with the body—which Foucault has shown is a historically constituted fetish—reflects our concerns for progression, such that we perfect, maximize and utilize our bodies as a means to feel invulnerable and thus express societal succession ("Anorexia" 100). While women may be swept up by the freedom and independence suggested by the current boyish body ideal, the pursuit of this ideal is time and energy that does not serve women's advancement. As a feminist protest, the drive for slenderness is counterproductive, because the energy required to perpetuate and increase thinness is enveloping to the point that it precludes any liberating action ("Anorexia" 105). The anorexic's will to subdue and conquer the body may be a rebellion against the feminine fabrications which pervade our culture, but her will achieves only powerlessness. Despite her delusions of invulnerability, the anorexic expresses fears of vulnerability. Since ninety percent of anorexics are women, it follows that powerlessness and vulnerability are reaffirmed as female characteristics.

This powerlessness, however, also precedes self-starvation, since women are permitted less latitude with their bodies by their own accord, by men and society at large ("Anorexia" 100). For instance, women commonly believe they are overweight or too fat, because they rely on others for authority about their private eating habits, as well as external judgements on their weight. The anorexic internalizes these judgements, which counters her sense of self-dictatorship. One anorexic experiences "a little man who objects when I eat" and another refers to "a dictator who dominates me" (Bruch 58). Curiously, it seems to be an internal *male* overseer that wills the anorexic to control, while she experiences her internal, hungry, pleasure-seeking self as *female* powerlessness.

The *gender/power axis* examines these internalized selves. As the anorexic crystallizes these male/female conflicts, she experiences her corporeality as "voracious, wanton, needful of forceful control by her male will" (Bordo, "Anorexia" 108). While she ingests a fear and disdain for traditional roles and limitations, she purges the natural, cyclical, unpredictable qualities associated with the biologically and hormonally regulated female body. Not surprisingly, the refusal to eat is often a rejection of motherhood.[32] In this way, the gender/power axis relates to anorexic fears of sexuality and of reproduction, as well as women's valorization of the boyish, asexual body. Aimee Lui recalls her experience of breast-hatred: "If I could only eliminate them, cut them off if need be, to become as flat-chested as a child again" (Lui 79). A disdain of menstruation is also pervasive, because the anorexic associates it with motherhood, submission, compliance and vulnerability. This disdain gives evidence of anorexia's protest against the limitations of female domesticity, in

which anorexic daughters are rejecting the limited lives of their mothers (Bordo, "Anorexia" 104).

The resistance to limitation links anorexia with late nineteenth-century hysteria, when middle/upper class women's lives were constrained by changes within capitalistic society and its sex/gender roles. Although anorexia affects a more diverse population than did hysteria, there are a number of resemblances in the circumstances and protests of both illnesses.[33] In the late nineteenth century, women were caught between familial and social expectations; the Victorian family maintained that father was the authority, and Victorian society saw the market dictate (im)possibilities for women. Skills that had been considered women's were turned over to the industrial system, and "in the new machine economy, the lives of middle-class women were far emptier than they had been before" (Bordo, "Anorexia" 103).[34] While the late nineteenth century marked the beginning of feminist activism, the ideals of femininity continued to be those of the delicate, frail, domestic, dependent woman, such that "Victorian women and girls were notoriously poor eaters and fragility was widely cultivated" (Brumberg 110). The correlating of femininity with powerlessness seemed to reinstill women and women's sexuality as subordinate to positions of dominant power.

Hysterization

The affinity between anorexia and hysteria, and their connections to socio-sexual constraints on women, calls for a discussion of the *hysterization* of women's bodies, which emerged as a proponent of patriarchal power in Western capitalist-industrial society (HS 64-73). In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault writes that sexuality has evolved as an eminent "instrumentality" and a dense transfer point of power relations

between men and women, among family members and between different generations (HS 103). Sexuality was controlled through institutional, strategic measures, and far from being repressed, it became a discursive source of power and knowledge, through strategies such as the hysterization of women's bodies (HS 105).[35]

For Foucault, social repression of sexuality is a myth, and desire is not an ahistorical phenomenon. Rather, both are produced and manifested in different ways during different social periods (HS 120). The family was a central agency of control and domain of sexual saturation, but female sexuality was also a social concern, so it was medicalized and politicized. Because women were considered at par with nature, the "idle woman" was the first in society to be *sexualized* (or normalized), for she had to be constructed into an object of value, capable of family maintenance and parental obligations. Through "rituals of confession" and "scientific regularity," women's sexuality was "under close watch" and scrutinized by "a rational technology of correction" that characterized the panoptic climate of society (HS 120). In this context, "the hysterization of woman found its anchorage point," and the "nervous woman" was propagated by a male-dominated society (HS 121).

The normalization of sexuality was linked to the disciplining of bodies, where "harnessing, intensification" and "adjustment" of sexuality was enforced by "an entire micro-power concerned with the body" which was maintained through obsessive surveillance, medical and psychological investment (HS 145-6). Hysterization was perpetuated "in the name of the responsibility [women] owed to the health of their children, the solidity of the family institution and the safeguarding of society" (HS 147). Foucault's Lycurgian diction calls attention to the capitalist-industrial objectification of women, which made their bodies

public property, their sexuality a political concern, and prostituted their gender for the benefit of social productivity.

Since women's sexuality was maintained for "common" use, belonging "par excellence, to men," women were robbed of personal experience (HS 153). Regarded as overcharged with sexual energy, they were denied access to their own sexuality; their bodies were maintained "wholly in terms of the functions of reproduction" and kept "in constant agitation through the effects of that very function" (HS 153). In the family, parents enforced restraint, and in social realms, patriarchal ideals did the same. As a result, women were predisposed to symptoms of hysteria, which arose from these contradictory expectations and confinement. Hysteria arose as a protest in which the body signified what societal constraints made impossible to communicate with language. For many women suffering from hysteria, anorexia developed as a related symptom.[36]

The connection between anorexia and hysteria was documented in England by physician William Gull, and in France by neurologist Charles Lasegue (Brumberg 112-30). Both of their diagnoses were published circa 1870, and both grew from studies on "hysterical" women who refused to eat, hence the first accounts of anorexia were referred to as *Anorexia Hysterica*. Gull saw anorexia as one of women's many nervous disorders, and specified anorexia as a disease most evident in women of higher classes, aged sixteen through twenty-three, where bouts of hysteria underlay the diagnosis (112). While Gull's reports were primarily medical, Lasegue focused on the psychological basis of *l'anorexie hysterique*. Thus it was Lasegue, and not Gull, who documented the "first real glimpse of the pressurized family environment" that incited hysteria and anorexia (127). Lasegue noted

that in bourgeois society, women who refused to eat "had the power to disrupt their families," which was the first report that understood how "food refusal constituted a form of intrafamilial conflict between the maturing girl and her parents" (128).

Late nineteenth century hysteria is similar to modern anorexia in that both are texts inscribed on women's bodies, which oppose constraints such as hysterization. Like anorexia, the protest of hysteria was self-repudiating, for hysteric women were considered needful of external care, control and surveillance, as well as incapable of rational thought.[37] Also, the hysteric's refusal to communicate with physicians and family reaffirmed norms of feminine silence. In both forms of resistance, sexuality is problematized, but with anorexia there are the added concerns of food, hunger and eating. These concerns are no doubt tied to Victorian views of female sexuality as devouring and insatiable, notions that were crystallized by hysterical women, who were thought to need sexual and reproductive restraint, as well as control over consumptive and hedonistic tendencies.[38]

Why have female illnesses exploded during periods of social and political change, such as the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries? While hysteria is an uncommon illness today, anorexia continues to increase, near exponentially in the last fifteen years. As Brumberg suggests, the amount of women who have fallen prey to anorexia confirms a general relationship between acute social change and the intensification of bodily controls. In the confusion of our transitional society, new possibilities are being charted and actualized for women, but sex/gender roles continue to be constrained by tradition, and young women are feeling anxieties which they cannot resolve. In this impasse, the cult of diet and exercise is the closest thing that society offers to a "philosophy of the self" (Brumberg 269). It seems

obvious, then, that when personal and social difficulties arise, women become preoccupied with their bodies and control of appetite. In a society where consumption is invariably linked with identity, the anorexic thus makes nonconsumption the "perverse centrepiece" of her subjectivity (271).

It appears that with each achievement or possibility of women's independence or liberation there is a corresponding ideal of femininity which women ravage themselves and their bodies to attain (Bordo, "Anorexia" 107). While the early suffragettes actively initiated women's liberation their corsets were laced tighter, and as contemporary feminists actively protest violence against women, we continue to starve ourselves. In this manner, the gender/power axis has been constituted by conflicting anxieties which arise from historically culminated, male-precedented conceptions of female sexuality.

I have shown that anorexia is a socio/historically localized illness which reflects, resists and incorporates issues of gender and sexuality. I want to emphasize that while the anorexic body is "deeply inscribed with an ideological construction of femininity," the anorexic aims to resist the normalizing and homogenizing assumption that all women aspire to the same, standardized ideal. She uses her body as an "aggressively graphic text" that demands further examining and questioning about our ideals of femininity and what they signify (Bordo, "The Body" 16).

Part II: 'I' is the Skinniest Subject

The sub-text to be read in that skinny body is,
'I am weightless/worthless; I am empty/nobody.
This is what my behaviour is all about.'[1]

Previously, I considered gender as a system of meaning rather than a natural trait allotted to individuals. Because gender is not stable or unitary, the processes by which one becomes a woman are unstable and often contradictory. The deconstruction of unitary identity has dismantled humanist conceptions of the universal subject, and as demystified the essential notion of Woman. But it is not so clear how post-humanist notions of subjectivity can incorporate gender in a way that is not abstract or playful to the point of being ineffectual. Our thinking of women as a category which is multiplicitous and differentiated has enabled feminists to problematize standardized norms of women's gender and sexuality. But from this premise certain difficulties arise.

In *Engendering the Subject*, literary critic Sally Robinson considers some of these difficulties, and asks "how, then, are we to think 'identity' as local and contingent, while simultaneously recognizing that identities are structured by larger systems of power and signification, such as patriarchy, racism, heterosexism, and international capitalism?" (ES 5). We resolve this by thinking of identity as relational, temporary, strategic and plural, both including and excluding differences, such that "One is not, nor can it be, the Other. Yet... the One is only the One in opposition to the Other" (ES 5).[2] Differences within the category women are able to disrupt the perceived singular difference between man and woman, but only if we consider identity as "a continual dispersal or displacement" which is *grounded* in specific and historical contexts. By rethinking the relationship between gender and

subjectivity so that identity does not comply with the binary constraints of humanist selfhood, subjectivity emerges as "constituted in gender specific terms" by a "process of engagement in discourses and social systems" (ES 49).

The notion of positional identity allows women to claim subjectivity in different situations, among differentiating and dominating others, and to negotiate positions between "the local and the systemic, between the subjective and the institutional" (ES 7).[3] In this way, a woman is constituted by socio/historical elements, but she is also constituting: "subject *to* normative representation, as well as subject *of* self-representation" (ES 8).

Self-representation is an ongoing process by which women produce themselves simultaneously *against* norms of femininity and *toward* new forms of representation that disrupt those normative conceptions (ES 11). In this context, subjectivity is not a fixed "kernel of identity," but rather a continual engagement in both social and discursive practices that informs the process of transformation. Robinson suggests that experience is a vital link between representation and self-representation, in which experience "is the process by which one becomes a woman" (ES 14). The anorexic experience can therefore be seen as part of the development of women's subjectivity.

In the following three sections, I will trace a literary genealogy in which the characters Martha, Nyasha and Josie struggle with their bodies as they strive for subjectivity. Within this collective, I discuss Martha, Nyasha and Josie as representatives of the first, second and third generations of women's struggle depicted by Julia Kristeva in "Women's Time," an essay which emphasizes the multiplicity of female experience in relation to the "socio-symbolic contract" (WT 199).[4] In each novel, the narrative articulates concerns over

1the body's relation to identity, sex/gender roles and self-representation--the tensions between cultural construction and self-creation--in ways that bring to light the issues developed in the preceding chapter. My genealogy illustrates a "collective experience," (Showalter 345) in which each narrative builds from the preceding one, and subjectivity is developed through experiences of anorexia that problematize but also begin to resolve the tensions between social and self-constitution.

Martha

Doris Lessing's *Children of Violence* series provides a rich basis for studying the ongoing process of women's self-creation in the midst of social constraints, for the series is framed with a feminist critique and narrative deconstruction of the humanist quest for bodily transcendence.[1] As length allows, I will consider only the first book of the series, *Martha Quest,* in which Martha begins to experience the power of positionality within hegemonic discourses. Martha grows up in an African colonial society cultivated by British norms of the 1930's. In this setting, issues of gender are affected by structures of race and class. It is this social climate which incites Martha's struggles against normative constraints, which are embodied in her episodes of self-starvation.

In the first few decades of the twentieth century, the female struggle with weight was well underway, in both private and public realms. The Progressive Era fostered expectations of personal responsibility for the body, such that overweight women were considered a "physical liability" and a "social impediment" (Brumberg 238). The slenderized images of women which originated in the French fashion industry, circa 1920, became a standard in Western society. In order to fit the fashions and fit in with fashion, women began to calorie count and exercise, with the result that "physical features once regarded as natural--such as appetite and body weight--were designated objects of social control" (243).

This rise of body consciousness occurred, ironically, at a time of women's social and political revolution, when women began to work outside the home, attend colleges and universities, and develop greater personal freedom. Julia Kristeva refers to this time as monumental, since women "aspired to gain a place in linear time as the time of project and

history" (WT 193). In the post-World War I milieu, the slim body was more than an instrument of fashion, it was also a signifier of socio-sexual orientation, in which a slender shape "was a sign of modernity" that marked for a woman something better than "traditional motherhood and domesticity." The slim body also separated a woman from "the plump Victorian matron and her old-fashioned ideals" (Brumberg 245). Early twentieth century femininity was also structured, however, with a traditional belief that women needed to preserve their youth and physical attractiveness in order to "get hold [of] a man" (247).

In the first few decades after World War I, there was a subtle yet pivotal evolution in modern dieting, in which adolescent girls became the target of weight control. Because dieting was cast as a powerful, transforming and worthwhile endeavour, girls were expected to tame their appetite. Younger women learned from older women that thinness was considered essential for attractiveness, socio/sexual success and self-esteem. This popularization of adolescent weight control was "a prime component of the modern dieting story and a critical factor in explaining anorexia nervosa as we know it" (Brumberg 253). This is the context in which Martha experiences and articulates the struggles of being an adolescent, in which her body experiences are linked to her struggle for self-creation.

Martha is concerned and frustrated with the social limitations of women's lives, and vows never to be "a fat and earthy housekeeping woman," for she is convinced that women's bodies are the cause of women's subjugation (MQ 19). In her quest "to gain a place in linear time, the time of project and history," she sees no space for "a fluid and free subjectivity" (WT 208). Martha can be seen to represent the *first phase* of liberated women in Julia Kristeva's "Women's Time," for she is of a generation which tended to locate

identity through "the rejection, when necessary, of the attributes traditionally considered feminine or maternal in so far as they are deemed incompatible with insertion" into male-ordered, dominant society (WT 194). As a representative of this first wave, Martha is interested in equal rights with men, and considers "the desire to be a mother" both alienating and constraining (WT 205).

Martha does not shift completely from her teleological quest for selfhood to experiencing processual subjectivity in *Martha Quest*, and neither does she fully reconcile with the female body. However, this first of the five Martha Quest novels does trace the inception of Martha's understanding of female identity-as-process, coupled with an emerging care and pleasure in her body. Lessing depicts the development of Martha's subjectivity through a series of instances which link her self-representation with her body-as- spectacle, and within these instances, a gradual rethinking of both.

Martha is largely an autobiographical character whose narrative reflects Doris Lessing's "stifling" teenage years in Southern Rhodesia.[2] As a white, bourgeois, colonial woman, Martha is marked by her "placement and self-placement in relation to the ideologies of race, class, as well as gender" (ES 20). She attempts to create her self through reading rather than through her own experiences, and grants authority to male writers of history and literature (MQ 13). As an avid reader of literature and of her own narrative, she considers herself a woman who is socio/historically constituted. She finds it easier to judge and resist her position than to experience it, for Martha claims to see "a clear picture of herself, from the outside":

> She was adolescent, and therefore bound to be unhappy; British, and therefore uneasy and defensive; in the fourth decade of the twentieth century, and therefore inescapably beset with problems of race and class; female, and obliged to repudiate the shackled women of the past. She was tormented with guilt and responsibility and self-consciousness. (MQ 14-5)

Martha's feeling of being stuck within cultural systems of meaning has led her to want to identify with the male gender, while denouncing and negating experiences of becoming a woman. She continually insists that her experiences do not reflect her real self, and she considers 'feminine' experiences to be fragmentary, inaccurate and spurious reflections of her true self. As an outsider looking at her self-as-effect, Martha believes that if she adopts the position of Self who oversees the Other, in which the Other characterizes those things about herself that she aims to deride, she will eventually guarantee herself a privileged position. Her logic is cognitive and intellectual, but it is illusory because she has not allowed herself to experience the positions she views as female, and neither does she have an actual, dominant position by which to suppress the Other.

Martha tends to think of the end before she has mastered the means. This leads her to feel bogged down in the middle, which is a feeling she codes as female. Her assertions of selfhood necessarily obstruct her experiences of femaleness because she allies herself with modes of development which she has coded male. While Martha thinks that resisting the synecdoches of femininity will empower her, Lessing implies that Martha would benefit more from resisting those male codes and claims to selfhood that prohibit women from becoming

subjects. In this way, it is her assimilation of humanist, masculinist notions of autonomy and authenticity that constrain and stifle her.

Martha's attempts to resist conventions place her in a self-conscious position within her own narrative. She feels she must oppose the forces that aspire to hold her down, but she is not clear what those forces are and from where they stem.[3] She feels the existence of her female self at odds with her 'real self,' and believes it is feminine forces that encroach on her quest for selfhood. But in believing that she should partake in a linear passage to selfhood, Martha revokes her own process of becoming.[4] She repeats to herself, as if to convince her consciousness:

> her mother was hateful, all these old women hateful...evasions, compromises, wholly disgusting. For she was suffering from that misery peculiar to the young, that they are going to be cheated by circumstances out of the full life. (MQ 13)

Clearly, she has begun by assuming that ideological constructs are unchangeable, and that women's lives are Other than "the full life" (MQ 13). Similar to de Beauvoir, Martha sees "the female self" as a contradiction in terms, for she is "*subject to* the ideological production of femininity as passivity" which problematizes her desire "to be *subject of* her quest narrative" (ES 39). In this context, the narrative Martha creates for herself --her self-representation--is continually dislodged by her own belief in female passivity.

Since Martha believes that gender is natural, and that female gender lacks transcending qualities, she thinks that one cannot be both a woman and a unified self, for the first disturbs the second. Because she is resolute that womanhood nullifies selfhood,

"Martha's resistance to becoming a woman must take the form of an intense (self) negation" (ES 42). If she uses negation as a self-defense and a strategy against the feminine, then it appears that self-starvation and body control are fundamental forms of her resistance and self-negation.

Martha's desire to be an authentic subject is accelerated by efforts to distance herself from the female body, which she sees as a threatening contingency. Because she believes irrationality is rooted in the female body, she experiences her own body as an obstacle in her quest. Martha sees gender as an essentialized, static quality which is unchangeable. Yet at the same time, she resists the notion of a natural femininity by controlling her body in the effort to resist womanhood, but nonetheless, she appeals to the fashions of slimness.

One of Martha's first intimations is a "repugnance" for Mrs. Van Rensberg's fat, shapeless body, which she observes is "like that because she has so many children" (MQ 9). Martha seems to associate motherhood with fatness and stupidity, for she describes Mrs. Van Rensberg as irrelevant and uneducated. She then claims to her friend Marnie that she'd rather die than be tied down to babies and housekeeping (MQ 19). Martha's perspective seems to echo *The Second Sex*, in which de Beauvoir intimates a young girl's fear and loathing of motherhood, which she perceives as "a finality which sweeps her away from selfhood" and "dooms her to man, to children, and to death" (SS 345).

It is peculiar that Martha has such an acute sensitivity and understanding for people, issues, and circumstances, but at the same time is so distanced from her own sensitivities. She is overly capable of philosophizing her thoughts and feelings but she avoids experiencing the inconsistencies which arise from them. Because of this self-distancing strategy, she often

catches herself by surprise. Seeing herself in a mirror, she is startled by her own reflection, for she realizes "she possessed a certain beauty. But it seemed to her that her face, her head, were something quite apart from her body; she could see herself only in sections, because of the smallness of the mirror" (MQ 23). The small mirror that can reflect her body only in sections is Lessing's way of conveying Martha's fractured self-perception. Since Martha's own narrative privileges mind over body, her self-representation does not capacitate both her intellectual and corporeal selves. When Mrs. Quest walks in and sees Martha's naked body, she is alarmed "at the mature appearance of her daughter's breasts and hips" and lays "her hands on either side of the girl's waist, as if trying to press her back into girlhood," to which Martha shudders "with disgust at the touch of her own mother" (MQ 24). It is not only her mother's intrusion, but her mother's touch which disturbs her, for it reaffirms the female corporeality of Martha's body and her own fears of becoming a mother.

At sixteen, Martha realizes that taking the matric exam is "a simple passport to the outside world" (MQ 30). But her feeling of being trapped within the confines of her parents' lives gives her "this intense feeling of being dragged, being weighted... against her will, her intellect... as if her body and brain were numbed," to the extent that she is so afraid of failing the matric that she won't take it (MQ 31). She is jealous of her brother's education but refuses to be sent to such a "snob school" (MQ 34). Through instances such as these, Martha becomes aware of "several disconnected strands of thinking" which prompt her resilient behaviour (MQ 34). Rather than attempting formal education, she appeals to the Cohen boys for a continual supply of books, such that she depends on them for accessing new knowledge.[5]

In her mid teens, Martha is exposed to the social ramifications of being a woman in Zambesia during the 1930's.[6] Entering the Cohen boys' reading room, she notices that Solly and Joss "openly and rudely examined her," which both irritates and pleases Martha, for "she had starved herself into a fashionable thinness which, since she was plump by nature, was not to everyone's taste. Apparently not to the Cohen boys" (MQ 42). This passage elucidates an interesting discord between male and female, Jewish and Christian, expectations of the female body. It also reveals how Martha believes social success is contingent on body shape.

Martha's newly formed thinness both defaces and reaffirms stereotypical standards of the feminine, as Joss suggests Martha is too thin, but Solly affirms "better thin and pure, Joss, than fat and gross and contaminated by--" when Martha cuts in and rails at them for talking about her as if she weren't there (MQ 42-3). This brings up other fundamental tensions. First, Solly equates fatness with abundant grossness, which he considers a characteristic of a loose and stupid female. Conversely, he equates thinness with purity, higher consciousness, and an interest in humanist production of the self. Solly's conceptions are no doubt informed by racial politics and colonial ideology. He seems to associate thinness with whiteness and hence, colonial power. Martha accords with Solly's religious and Cartesian conceptions, but she simultaneously resists being the object and Other of their conversation. Despite her resistance to otherness, Martha is pleased with her new "incarnation as a fairly successful imitation of a magazine beauty," and she considers herself a successful spectacle (MQ 50).

Martha's concern over what the Cohen boys think is also evident in her intellectual aspirations. While she had left school under the auspices of eye problems, she continues to read frantically. The boys question what is wrong with her eyes and why she isn't going to university. To this, Martha becomes mute, unwanting and unable to express her fears of breaking out of "the absurdities and contradictions" in herself, which she blames on the "country's social system" (MQ 53). Martha wants to feel that she is a part of her country's social history, part of monumental time, to the effect that she claims "the striving forces" of the country are part of "her own substance" (MQ 56). She suggests "the effort of imagination needed to destroy the words *black, white, nation, race* exhausted her, her head ached and her flesh was heavy on her bones," but it seems that she wants to feel these pressures because they bring her closer to selfhood (MQ 56).[7]

Martha is jealous and resentful of what she sees as a white, male, privileged position, and does not allow herself to see possibilities for her own position. Watching Joss approach her from a distance, she "envied him almost to the point of bitterness, knowing exactly what he wanted, and how to get it" (MQ 58). She associates Joss's privilege with his "compact, neat body...every nerve and muscle connected to his will" (MQ 58). By assuming Joss's position is authoritative, Martha becomes confused when he does not treat her as the object of his authority, when he treats her with mutual respect. At one point, "she understood that he was waiting for her to invite herself, and this confused her," for it seemed unfeasible that she could be more than just responsive to his provocations, that she could be equally as self-commanding.

After this experience, Martha reaffirms "that she must be wary, ready to resist," (MQ 60) and with her intellectual, distanced self-understanding, she refocuses on her humanist quest. Her will, however, is momentarily fractured by a contrary understanding, when she realizes she is capable of positioning herself as a female subject-in-process. Martha has this moment of elucidation during her walk back to the farm:

> during that space of time (which was timeless) she understood quite finally her smallness, the unimportance of humanity...yet she was part of it, *reluctantly allowed to participate*, though on terms--but what terms? For that moment, while *space and time kneaded her flesh*, she knew futility; that is, what was *futile was her own idea of herself* and her place within the chaos of matter. What was demanded of her was that she should accept something quite different. (MQ 62, italics mine)

Martha feels these discordant illuminations in her body, which she fears is superfluous. Her feelings of smallness and futility are common among anorexic women, who attempt to counter these feelings by, paradoxically, making themselves smaller. At another point, she is sitting on the farm sunning herself, and feels her "firm soft flesh with approval," but "the sight of her long and shapely legs made her remember the swollen bodies of the pregnant women she had seen, with shuddering anger, as at the sight of a cage designed for herself" (MQ 66). She cannot yet experience pleasure in her body without being reminded of women's oppression, and without fearing the constraints of reproductive womanhood.

At seventeen, Martha sees another mirrored reflection of her body. This time, she sees herself in a full length mirror, and "it was if she saw a vision of someone not herself; or

rather, herself transfigured to the measure of a burningly insistent future... she did not know herself" (MQ 89). Here, Lessing uses the full-length mirror to reveal how Martha's self-perception is changing. Martha becomes aware of that person which her consciousness has denied: her corporeal, female, feeling self. She is empowered by the reflection, and wonders why she has allowed others to dominate her and "take possession of her," rather than taking control of herself. After this moment, Martha realizes that her appetite for authoritative knowledge has "created a self-contained world which had nothing to do with what lay around her," in which she has been "flooded by emotions that came from the outside" of her own experiences (MQ 90).

Soon after this incident, Martha attempts to create a situation where she is able to take control of herself. She shifts her situation by leaving her parents farm and taking a job and apartment in the nearby town.[8] It is during her first year in town that she undergoes acute periods of self-starvation. Martha's landlady, who often suggests that Martha should be eating more, "asked anxiously if she would like some supper. Martha refused, because of the anxious note, which automatically stiffened her resistance" (MQ 110). The atmosphere created by Mrs. Gunn's concerns reminds Martha of past experiences on the Quest farm, when her parents' anxiousness only strengthened her insurgency. In her new, pseudo-independent life, she concentrates on establishing self-control:

> she had hardly eaten since she came to town...she was by no means finished with that phase of her life when she was continuously thinking about food, not because she intended to eat any, but because she meant to refuse it. She would think of the next meal due to her according to convention, assess it in

terms of flesh, and then nervously pass her hands downwards over her hips, as if stroking their outlines smaller. (MQ 110)

These words express Martha's belief that restraining from food will facilitate her social and sexual success, since hyper-thinness is a qualification for developing independence and achieving selfhood. The narrator, though, downplays Martha's obsessive desire for thinness by describing it as a "phase" that is common and easily passed through. The narrative reveals a social condoning and near celebrating of young women's self-starvation, and it is not clear whether Lessing is critiquing or merely observing, hence accepting, this tendency.

Despite Martha's appeals to independence, she still establishes herself through the eyes of others. Soon after settling in town she meets Donovan, and continually shapes herself to his liking. She is driven by an "instinct she did not know she possessed" to choose her clothing "from the point of view of a Donovan" (MQ 110). More disturbingly, she acknowledges that this is "the same instinct" that makes her "downward-stroking movement over her hips and thighs appreciative and satisfied" (MQ 110). Clearly, Martha's relentless slimming is central to the gendered and sexualized self-representation she has internalized, to the extreme that "she had slimmed herself during the past two years so that the bones of her pelvis were prominent, and this gave her great pleasure; and she went to bed vowing she must not put on weight" (MQ 110). With Donovan, Martha takes delight in positioning herself as a spectacle and object. Having internalized the panoptics that now dictate her self-esteem, she is "under the power" of an external "compulsion" in which Donovan's surveillance is "dictating" her actions. She experiences the male gaze as "delight" and happily "presented herself to him (still in the power of that outside necessity)" (MQ 111).

Gradually, Martha realizes she "had never paused to think where she was going" and has not taken time to assimilate her experiences (MQ 123). She notices herself "slackening off" in her work and her body discipline, and begins to question her seemingly natural restraint of food:

> This business of food: how little one should take it for granted! For it might be considered strange that until thirteen or fourteen Martha's appetite was so hearty it was positively embarrassing; and now that hungry and affectionate child had vanished so completely that she could not eat without feeling guilty and promising restitution to herself by giving up the next meal. (MQ 123)

Martha has thus far succeeded in maintaining a strict abstention, but her self-coercement and guilt over eating--coupled with fatigue--eventually propel an internal backlash. She begins to lose control:

> she would suddenly turn aside into a shop, without even knowing she had intended to, and buy half a dozen slabs of chocolate, which she would eat, secretly, until she was sickened and very alarmed, saying she must be careful, for she would certainly lose her figure if she went on like this. (MQ 123)[9]

Martha's hunger, appetite and eating have lost their natural inclinations and have been replaced by a cycle of guilt, restraint, binge, and shame. She identifies eating and not eating with elemental aspects of weakness and strength respectively. But despite her consciousness over food, "she was putting on weight; for if she did not eat she drank, as everyone did" (MQ 124). For Martha, "everyone" is her new found group of friends, including Donovan, who are her authority on what is acceptable.

Martha eventually gives herself some leverage so that she can enjoy her socially-oriented lifestyle. But at a meeting with The Left Book Club, she comes into contact with a group of women who confuse her perceptions of womanhood, which puts Martha on the defensive. These women are socio/politically knowledgeable and active, but also devote their lives to being homemakers. Martha feels compelled to be "hostile and critical," and she finds herself analyzing them in the same way Donovan had analyzed her: as spectacles. She decides the women are "hostile and absurd, with their fuss and their demands" (MQ 130). She seems to be jealous and threatened by their ability to embrace both 'masculine' and 'feminine' notions of social productivity, and realizes "she was as much on the defensive as if their mere presence were a menace to herself" (MQ 130). With a compulsion to separate herself from their 'feminine' realm, she abstains from the food being offered:

> Martha joked and lit a cigarette, and said she was slimming. The women looked sharply at her, and said at her age it was ridiculous; they looked to the men for support, and did not find it... Martha's gaze was expressing the most frank criticism, even scorn; and she, in turn, ranged herself with the men as if it were her due to have their support. (MQ 130)

In this passage, we see Martha's internalization of panoptic *malveillance*, as well as her alignment with masculinist discourses of subjugating power. Her outright repudiation of the women's attempts to bond with her, combined with her sharp judgement of their femininity, is troubling. She has not recognized that "feminine forces" can be empowering, and is instead threatened by the possibility of female power. From this point on, Martha seems to be far less rigid about her diet. Possibly she is beginning to master humanist selfhood by

colluding with the male-precedents which she perceives are socially powerful and politically transforming.

Despite her interest in the powers of political activism, Martha remains obedient to ideals of femininity which are dictated by others. Under Donovan's command she prepares herself for an evening out, and while in the bath she uses the gaze on herself: "inspecting her own body according to that other standard, 'long, lean, narrow'" (MQ 161). Her increasing use of the *inspecting gaze* is, however, momentarily disrupted by an uncharacteristic infatuation with her body's femaleness. Suddenly:

> it was difficult to respect *that standard* when she saw herself naked, and soon, with frank adoration, she fell into a rite of self-love. Her limbs lay smooth and light in the water, her thighs seemed to her like two plump and gleaming fishes, she scattered water over her white belly. (MQ 161-2)

This interstice filled with bodily adoration is the first time Martha sympathetically connects with her femaleness. It takes her by surprise. In what seems an instinctual self-defense, she quickly re-establishes a critical perspective which ends this corporeal experience:

> her body lay unmoved and distant, congealing into perfection... Martha thought of Mrs. Gunn's groaning, sweating body, and was fiercely grateful for her own; she thought of the ugly scar across her mother's stomach, and swore protectively to her own that it would never, never be so marred; she thought of Mrs. Van Rensberg's legs, and with tender reassurance [she] passed her hands over her own smooth brown legs, murmuring that it was all right, all right, nothing would harm them. (MQ 161-2)

Despite Martha's vigilant retreat to self-objectification, her experience of self-enjoyment seems to disrupt the rest of the evening. While she remains excited and "ready to be sewn into her dress" by Donovan, she finds herself "compliant, but impatient" (MQ 163). These conflicting emotions are revealed in another self-reflection. Martha excitedly looks at herself in a mirror, but is uneasy and uncomfortable with the representation Donovan's makeup and hairdressing have produced:

> It was not herself, she felt...she was instinctively forming herself to match that young woman in the mirror, who was cold, unapproachable, and challenging. But from that cool, remote face peered a pair of troubled and uneasy eyes. (MQ 163)

In this realization, Martha is sympathetic to a distinctly personal self which is not the humanist self which seeks triumph of mind over body, reason over desire, and control over corporeality. This reflection in the mirror, combined with the bathtub experience, prod Martha to recognize differences between her linear quest and the experience of divided consciousness. Not only does she perceive the differences, she experiences them. She feels herself in her body as a desiring subject while looking at herself (in the mirror) as object.

This experience also leads Martha to question the authoritarian position she has allowed Donovan to assume with her. At the party, she seems to relocate that sympathetic bathtub self:

> Martha was feeling a little sick, for she had hardly eaten all day; but Donovan was talking to the two girls... she gave up all idea of dinner, pulled a plate of potato chips toward her, and began eating them with the ruminant

concentration which means a person is not eating for pleasure but from necessity. She heard laughter, glanced up, and saw that the people around her were amused. 'I'm starved,' she said firmly, and went on eating. (MQ 167)

For Martha, this trivial act of eating against etiquette in public is a breakthrough, for it deconstructs the associations she has established of eating/guilt, appetite/shame, and food/secret. She is hurt by Donovan's amusement with her and momentarily reverts: "no, she didn't want dinner, Donovan was quite right, she was slimming and-" but this defence is quickly ended as she decides to leave the party and eat dinner with Binkie.

Despite repeated illuminations of self-understanding, Martha remains a frustrating character. At the party, she seems to substitute Binkie for Donovan, for she still privileges external, monumental constitution over self-constitution. Her belief, however, that selfhood can be achieved through practices of negation such as self-starvation is gradually replaced by a realization of women's positional powers, in which gendered identity is a dynamic part of developing subjectivity. As Lessing suggests in *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside:*

> while sometimes it seems as if we are helpless, we are gathering, and very rapidly--too rapidly to assimilate it--knowledge about ourselves, not only about ourselves, not only as individuals, but as groups, nations, and as members of society. (11)

By leaving *Martha Quest* an unfinished narrative, Lessing writes beyond the ending of Martha's experiences, and enables *Martha Quest* to be read as part of "the collective experience" which "binds women writers to each other over time and space" (Showalter 345). Martha's inability to insert herself into the linear time of male experience and

transcendent selfhood creates a springboard for moving to the next generation in my genealogy.

Nyasha

While Martha's struggle was initiated by her quest for a place in the linear time of history, Nyasha in *Nervous Conditions* struggles to situate herself outside the constraints of colonial discourse that insist on women's absence as speaking subjects. As de Lauretis suggests, "the only way to position oneself outside of that [dominant] discourse is to displace oneself within it--to refuse the question as formulated, or to answer deviously (though in its own words), even to quote (but against the grain)" (*Alice* 7). While Martha thought self-starvation would be a means to gain a place in monumental time, Nyasha uses self-starvation to displace and subvert colonial power.

Nervous Conditions is a southern African novel which intricately examines sex/gender roles and women's experience in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Its author, Tsitsi Dangarembga, posits women as historically constituted, but involved in complex interactions in which they develop individual, processual identities. There are many stories interwoven in *Nervous Conditions*, but Dangarembga privileges one narrative, that of a naïve yet wilful and determined young woman name Tambudzai. Tambu's narrative focuses on relationships with family, and especially with her cousin Nyasha. It is through the friendship between Tambu and Nyasha that I want to discuss some of the difficulties involved in Zimbabwean women's attempts at developing subjectivity.[1] As the speaking subject of her history, Tambu suggests her narrative is about entrapment, escape, and "Nyasha's rebellion--Nyasha, far-minded and isolated, my uncle's daughter, whose rebellion may not in the end have been successful" (NC 1).

Dangarembga's novel emphasizes that Zimbabwean women have diverse and often oppositional experiences. Her fiction accords with de Lauretis' theory that female subjectivity is a site of differences:

> differences that are not only sexual or only racial, economic, or (sub)cultural, but all of these together, and often at odds with one another... these differences, then, cannot be collapsed into a fixed identity, a sameness of all women. (*Technologies* 14-15)

By placing differences and complexities of women's experiences at the centre, Dangarembga rewrites the traditional, colonial narrative, articulating what it has silenced. She questions the nature of colonizing, hierarchical relations, and reveals their covert destructiveness. The women in *Nervous Conditions* reflect aspects of Julia Kristeva's "second generation" of women in "Women's Time." These women refuse linear time in "an exacerbated distrust of the entire political dimension" and attempt to develop a women's consciousness which is spatially and temporally separate from dominant culture (WT 194). In this context, Nyasha demands that her identity be recognized as "irreducible," and as such, "plural, fluid, in a certain way non-identical" (WT 194).[2]

Since the reader is directed by Tambu's retrospective, it is important to read against many of her judgements and complicities in order to understand the nature of Nyasha's revolt. Recollecting their friendship, Tambu suggests she was always confounded by Nyasha, for there was "something about her that was too intangible for me to be comfortable with, so intangible that I could not decide whether it was intangibly good or intangibly bad" (NC 78). The relationship with Nyasha showed Tambu that it was possible "to be fond of

someone of whom [she] did not wholeheartedly approve" (NC 78). *Nervous Conditions* deserves a fuller examination than I can give here, but I will follow Tambu's narrative, focusing on the situations which are crucial to the emergence of Nyasha's anorexia. There are numerous, disparate elements which affect and crystallize her self-starvation.

Tambu first refers to Nyasha as "my uncle's daughter," which typifies the Zimbabwean belief that women are objects of patriarchal property. Nyasha's situation reflects a "patriarchal mode of production," in which her father, Babamukuru, exemplifies the "class of patriarchs who are socially recognized as heads of household and/or extended family production units" (Henn 38). In relation to patriarchal power, Nyasha represents the subaltern group, which includes wives, unmarried daughters and junior siblings. This group is denied "free access to the means of production on the basis of ideological and political criteria which allow the patriarchal class to set the terms on which women and dependent males gain access to the means of production" (38).[3] Babamukuru is the patriarch who controls both the means of production and the means of his family's subsistence. His family's dependence on him is "ideologically defined as permanent" and women are maintained as reliant, subordinate and exploitable (39).

Although Nyasha is subject to this patriarchal domination, there are other sources of power to which she has access. Education is a relatively new privilege for Zimbabwean women, which has been made possible through capitalist developments in Zimbabwean society. Henn's study of women's oppression in colonial and post-colonial Africa imparts that "the penetration of colonial capitalism" saw the rise of exploitation of women, but also provided women with "new opportunities to struggle against patriarchal control" (49).

Moreover, the rise of capitalism influenced "the establishment, consolidation and breakdown of colonial control" (Folbre 62). But despite the rise of capitalism, patriarchal relations persisted, which "helps explain why young people played a particularly important role in the liberation struggle that intensified in the 1970's" (62).

The patriarchal-capitalist society outlined above provides a context for Tambu's narrative. It takes place in the 1970's, and reveals how Nyasha's "liberation struggle" is a vital part of her developing subjectivity. In the novel, colonial "breakdown" is exemplified and embodied in Nyasha's contention with a patriarchal family situation, and in her resistance to her father's colonizing mode of control. While Tambu is discovering that female identity is not natural, Nyasha is focusing on resisting socio/historical constraints to her self-creation. For Nyasha, the more educated she becomes, the more empowered she is to resist subjugation and assert her individuality.

Having been away at school in England and now at school again in Zimbabwe, Nyasha has a broad perspective of women's possibilities and limitations. She is concerned with how deeply the hierarchical relationship of colonizer/colonized is inscribed in Zimbabwean familial and social realms. In an obsessive hunger to know and understand African history so she can oppose it, Nyasha discovers that agency for change is found in "the insurgent" or the "subaltern consciousness" (Spivak, "Subaltern" 197). The subaltern consciousness questions monumental time and history, thereby conceiving alternative ways to situate subjectivity. Nyasha is convinced that she can produce her own discursive sources of power--her "counter-power"--and situate herself within but also against the grain of colonial constraints which are embodied by her father (WT 202).

In contrast to Nyasha, Tambu is convinced that Babamukuru epitomizes a "good African", whose social mobility and determination have given him a stable, honourable position. Tambu perceives Nyasha's home life as near perfect, and thinks Baba treats his wife Maiguru and daughter Nyasha as well as can be imagined. Tambu conveys the disparities in opinion:

> My uncle was the only African living in a white house. We were all proud of this fact... except Nyasha, who had an egalitarian nature and had taken seriously the lessons about oppression and discrimination that she had learnt first-hand in England. (NC 63)

Since Baba had worked hard and defied poverty he did not need to "bully" anyone:

> especially not Maiguru, who was so fragile and small she looked as though a breath of wind would carry her away. Nor could I see him bullying Nyasha. My cousin was pretty and bold and sharp... He didn't need to be bold any more because he had made himself plenty of power. Plenty of power. Plenty of money. A lot of education. Plenty of everything. (NC 50)

Reading against Tambu's trusting perceptions, it becomes apparent that Baba's character is typified by his tendency to bully, subjugate and violate the women in his family. While Baba--who does take care of Nyasha, Maiguru and his extended family--has come to epitomize the possibilities of liberated African nationhood, he has also become a propagator of colonial discourse. While Baba may have grown up as a colonized subject, he now adopts the position of colonizer, as headmaster of the mission school and as patriarch of his household.

Colonial discourse can be better understood through Homi Bhabha's paradigms of difference and mimicry. Bhabha writes that colonial discourse functions as an apparatus of power which "turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences...through the production of knowledges in terms of which surveillance is exercised," to differentiate between colonizer and colonized, and to subjugate the latter ("The Other" 154). Insofar as colonial discourse "sets up the native subject as a site of productive power, both subservient and always potentially seditious," Babamukuru is able to control and harness his family through maintaining "visibility of the subject as an object of surveillance, tabulation, enumeration and indeed, paranoia" (156). In his exercise of colonial power, Baba tries to establish his family and social situation--his colonized--as an unchanging reality "which is at once 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" (Bhabha, "The Other" 156). His modes of domination, however, are threatened by subversive discourses that arise from within the subaltern consciousness, which is embodied by Nyasha.

If Baba perpetuates colonialism via patriarchal family relations, then Nyasha instigates a "mimicry" of colonialism which is a "representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal" (Bhabha, "Mimicry" 126). Mimicry is the colonized subject's method of subverting the colonizer. As an insurgent power which operates "at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed," mimicry is acted out between, within and against the rules (130). Nyasha is a mimic of her father's power and his exercise of control. Through mimicry, she attempts to create an empowered space for marginalized experience, for mimicry is Nyasha's way of situating herself "outside the linear time" of her father's limiting principles (WT 194).

Mimicry occurs at a site of tension "between synchronic panoptical vision of domination" and "the counter-pressure of the diachrony of history (Bhabha, "Mimicry" 126). The synchronic vision is a demand for autonomous identity and linear time, which is sought after by Babamukuru. The diachronic view is characterized by change and difference, which is exemplified by Nyasha. The counter-pressure is also a desire for a "reformed, recognizable *Other*" who is "subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (126). And since mimicry shapes itself through ambivalence towards the colonizer, it continually produces slippage, difference and excess that threatens and displaces the colonial authority.

The power discovered through the practice of mimicry is like the power discovered in anorexia. Both express a parodic "double-articulation" which occurs within and against the rules ("Mimicry" 126). In a description that sounds decisively similar to both the Foucauldian genealogies which produce the subject-effect, and to the anorexic discourse which resists it, Bhabha explains mimicry:

> a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses immanent threat to both normalized knowledges and disciplinary powers. (126)

The anorexic, as mimic, is like the colonizer: self-directed and determined, but she uses these qualities against the constraints of the dominant order.

there was no other explanation for the tiny little dress she wore, hardly enough to cover her thighs. She was self-conscious though, constantly clasping her hands behind her buttocks to prevent her dress from riding up, and *observing everybody through veiled, vigilant eyes to see what they were thinking. Catching me examining her*...I could not condone her lack of decorum. I would not give my approval. I turned away. (NC 37, italics mine)

This passage reveals a closeness and similarity between Nyasha and Tambu which, ironically, is conveyed through their distance and differences. At this point, Tambu relishes in their differences. She finds it odd that Nyasha "believed that angles were more attractive than curves" (NC 135). Nyasha's concern with body shape and diet is strange to Tambu because her immediate family is in constant want of food. Tambu muses "Nyasha would not, I was sure, be able to prepare such a fine stew, certainly not at an open hearth. This idea made me feel so superior, so wholesome and earthy" (NC 39).

Underneath Tambu's seeming superiority is a deep sense of otherness. She is plagued with feelings of exclusion and invisibility, which she connects with her sense of superfluity, of being unnecessary:

> Exclusion whispered that my existence was not necessary, making me no more than an unfortunate by-product of some inexorable natural process [so] it was comfortable to recognise myself as solid, utilitarian me. (NC 39-40)

Tambu soon discovers that despite Nyasha's privileges, she is plagued with a deep sense of exclusion and superfluity as well. Tambu's feelings are a result of poverty and subjugation within an unchanging patriarchal family. In contrast, Nyasha's sense of superfluity is the

effect of being excluded from her African heritage because she is perceived as Anglicized, white-wishing and intellectually arrogant, but nonetheless a subjugated Zimbabwean female. The cousins share an interest in working to subvert and surpass processes of exclusion, but have different ideas on how to do it.

As Tambu is preparing to leave her immediate family to attend the mission school and live with her wealthy uncle Babamukuru, she imagines she will be able to disregard the toils of peasant life and "be encouraged to consider questions that had to do with survival of the spirit, the creation of consciousness, rather than mere sustenance of the body" (NC 59). But upon moving to the mission house, she notices that while her cousin has had a more privileged, superior life than herself, Nyasha is plagued with different struggles. Nyasha is surprisingly withdrawn and serious, "directing more and more of her energy inwards to commune with herself about issues that she alone had seen" (NC 51-2).

Tambu realizes that beneath Nyasha's Anglo-fashioned self-representation is a complex and troubled young woman. She becomes more interested in understanding her, and no longer uses an aloof, distanced gaze on Nyasha. Tambu does observe how Nyasha continues to use the gaze on others: "I stayed near Nyasha, and watched my cousin. In this way I saw her observing us all... She was silent and watchful" (NC 52). Tambu does not understand why Nyasha is so morose and quiet, and still thinks Nyasha has no right to be ungrateful and ill-mannered. Nyasha is Babamukuru's daughter, has wonderful clothes, and is ahead of her age in school (NC 60). Tambu does not realize that Nyasha's distance, silence, and seriousness characterize the onset of anorexic behaviour. To provide one parallel from many possible witnesses, Sheila MacLeod remembers developing a severity and

moral censure of others, in order to distance herself from anything which made her feel vulnerable (AS 54-73).[4]

Tambu's acceptance of hierarchal, subjugating relations is slowly unsettled by Nyasha's effacement of them. She is disturbed by Nyasha's independence, for it makes her feel "if not exactly inadequate at least uneducated in some vital aspect of teenage womanliness" (NC 76). Nyasha's subversive disposition also makes Tambu nervous, for "Everything about her spoke of alternatives and possibilities that if considered too deeply would wreak havoc on the neat plan" she had laid out for herself (NC 76). Tambu does not understand what causes Nyasha to repudiate her mother, Maiguru, "who was the embodiment of courtesy and good breeding" (NC 74). Yet these are the very reasons why Nyasha invalidates her mother. She tells Tambu "'don't worry about my mother... She doesn't want to be respected. If people did that she'd have nothing to moan about and then what would she do? She spends most of her life complaining'" (NC 79). Maiguru tries to make excuses for her daughter's unseemly behaviour, saying that Nyasha is too Anglicised and has adopted her disrespectful ways from being in England (NC 74). Yet Maiguru knows, from her own experience of leaving Zimbabwe to attend school in England, that Nyasha's impertinence signifies deeper complexities.

Nyasha feels hurt and angry at her parents who sent her to England and now criticize how she developed there. She cannot find a space for herself within their conflicting expectations, and she resents their belief that she is a "hybrid" who continually offends them. She tells Tambu "'I can't help having been there and grown into the me that has been there. But it offends them--I offend them. Really, it's very difficult'" (NC 78). Nyasha's taste for

a more liberated existence makes Maiguru nervous, since her own attempts at emancipation were quelled when she met and married Baba. Like Tambu, Maiguru is afraid of Nyasha's power and her insistence on challenging norms and wreaking havoc on established order.

Maiguru suggests that Tambu ignore "Nyasha's little ways," claiming "'We keep trying to teach her the right manners, always telling her Nyasha, do this; Nyasha, why didn't you do that. But its taking time. Her head is full of loose connections that are always sparking'" (NC 74). Unfortunately, Maiguru's and Baba's mixed signals only heighten Nyasha's sense of dislocation and subsequent urge for separation. Nyasha's parents have high standards of academic success--to which Nyasha aspires as well--but they will not allow her to explore certain intellectual pursuits that may provoke more "loose connections," such as reading books like *Lady Chatterly's Lover.*

Nyasha's increasing opposition to her father and spurning her mother are related through a series of scenes at the dinnertable. At Babamukuru's house, dinner is a serious occasion, centering, as Tambu observes, on "the ritual of dishing out my uncle's food" (NC 81). But "the visibility of mimicry is always produced at the site of interdiction," such as Baba's dinnertable (Bhabha, "Mimicry" 130). As is typical in families with anorexic daughters, the battle of wills is fought most acutely at mealtimes, where food and eating signify dominant control and power for the parents, and, alternatively, signify subversive power and control for the daughter.

At the first dinner of contention, Baba insists that Maiguru is to blame for Nyasha's precociousness. In reference to Nyasha's reading D.H. Lawrence, he says "'If I let you, Ma'Chido, you would spoil these children. No daughter of mine is going to read such

books'" (NC 81). Nyasha counters her father through mimicry, as she espouses his role by reaching for the dishes of food before her preordained time, which would normally be after her mother. Incensed, Baba asks what she's doing, to which she calmly replies '"I don't like cold food'" (NC 81). When Maiguru suggests that Tambu eat more dinner so she won't go to bed hungry, Nyasha claims "'I don't mind going to bed hungry,'" which incites an argument between Nyasha and father, and Nyasha asking where her book has been put (NC 81).

Baba has hidden Nyasha's copy of *Lady Chatterly's Lover*. Nyasha first assumes that her mother has hidden it, but apologizes '"Sorry, Mum. I know you wouldn't do anything like that'" (NC 83). Yet in order to maintain her role of Baba's supporter and expediter, Maiguru pretends she has taken the book. When Nyasha reacts in consternation, Baba tells her not to speak insolently to her mother, and continues '"I expect you do as *I* say. Now sit down and eat your food'" (NC 83). Baba strips Maiguru of her own power by establishing himself as the last word. He also creates unjustified mother-blame, for he has manipulated the situation to make himself appear truthful and moral, leaving Maiguru to appear wileful and sneaky. Although Nyasha sees through her father's guise, she nonetheless scorns Maiguru for submitting to his manipulation.

Baba is shaken by his daughter's impudence and reacts as if he were master and she slave: "'Now sit down and eat that food. All of it. I want to see you eat all of it'" (NC 84). Nyasha responds with cool, passive resistance, and murmuring that she is full, leaves the room. This situation reflects Sheila MacLeod's experiences with her father in *The Art of Starvation*. She remembers "all I could do with him was to argue about literature," but was

able to prove her "moral superiority" in the face of her father by eating nothing at the dinnertable (AS 70-1). Baba trumpets that there is something "wrong" with Nyasha, to which Maiguru calmly replies that he did, after all, steal her book and not admit it. Tambu has been sitting quietly observing the hostility, and wonders if Maiguru will ever be "fed up with taking the blame" for Baba's actions (NC 84).

Tambu's subsequent narrative reveals some of the patriarchal ideology hidden behind Baba's closed doors. Tambu respects and admires many of his traits, which are the same traits that evoke Nyasha's insolence and antagonism. Tambu is called by her uncle for a discussion, and on her way to his office she assesses:

> He was a rigid, imposing perfectionist, steely enough in character to function in the puritanical way that he expected, or rather insisted, that the rest of the world should function... Babamukuru had found himself... in positions that enabled him to organise his immediate world and its contents as he wished... Babamukuru was good. We all agreed on this. More significantly still, Babamukuru was right. (NC 87)

She soon discovers that Baba has "summoned" her to remind her of how fortunate she is "to have been given this opportunity for mental and eventually, through it, material emancipation" (NC 87). She is so impressed with Baba's authority that she vows to be "straight as an arrow, steely and true" just like him (NC 88).

Despite what Baba suggests to Tambu, Nyasha is discovering that education is not necessarily the key to mental or material emancipation. She sees that her mother's life is like a purgatory of being mentally emancipated but materially enslaved, for Maiguru had

completed a Master's degree in Philosophy in England, but nonetheless became a complacent wife to Baba. So when Maiguru tells Tambu not to be disconcerted by "Nyasha's little ways," Nyasha responds "'Little ways. Now I wonder. Who's got little ways?'" (NC 92). Nyasha is afraid of replicating her mother's self-sacrifice. Having continually observed Maiguru's silence and compliance to Baba, she tells Tambu "'You have to keep moving... Otherwise you get trapped. Look at poor Mum. Can you imagine anything worse?'" (NC 96)

Nyasha is obsessed with understanding the history of oppression across different countries, for she wants to gain a broader perspective of "real peoples and their sufferings" (NC 93). She reads compulsively about South Africa, then about the horrors of "Nazis and Japanese and Hiroshima and Nagasaki." She has nightmares about these atrocities, but continues reading, "because, she said, you had to know the facts if you were ever going to find the solutions" (NC 93). As Nyasha absorbs histories of subjugation, she aligns more fully with the logic of mimicry, which deconstructs the hierarchical perceptions of race, class, history and women's experience. Nyasha suggests to Tambu, "'It's bad enough when a country gets colonised, but when the people do as well! That's the end, really, that's the end'" (NC 147).

Nyasha's evocative disposition does not fit the mission school's norm of 'female,' and as a result, she does not have many friends. The other girls reprimand her behaviour, saying '"she thinks she's white,'" which is considered "a curse" at their school (NC 94). Also, they think Nyasha is proud, loose, and favoured because she is the headmaster's daughter (NC 94). Meanwhile, Tambu is shifting her perspective. What she thought were Nyasha's

negative qualities she now sees as positive attributes. Tambu describes Nyasha as shocking but funny, disrespectful but irrepressible, and continues:

> I thought she was wise too, although I was not sure why. I admired her abundance of spirit even though I could not see where it was directed: Nyasha had everything, should have been placid and content. My cousin was perplexing. *She was not something you could dissect with reason.* (NC 96, italics mine)

Tambu realizes that Nyasha's individuality cannot be understood through the constraints of conventional, binary thinking. Because she does not fit into the norm, her differences seem to threaten some people and appeal to others:

> People like me thought she was odd and rather superior in intangible ways. Peripheral adults like her teachers thought she was a genius and encouraged this aspect of her. But her mother and father were worried about her development. I did not think that her probing of this and that and everything was good for her either. I thought it was not safe. (NC 97)

In resistance to hierarchical conceptions, Nyasha will not tolerate being posited as Other. In one instance, Maiguru, Baba and a teacher are talking about Tambu and Nyasha while they stand within earshot, which "made Nyasha indignant, because she did not like being referred to in the third person in her presence; she said it made her feel like an object" (NC 99). Although Nyasha is only in her early teens, her contention with otherness conveys the sophistication of her understanding of subjugating relations. She sees the necessity of

disrupting the norms of Zimbabwean society in order to pursue her subjectivity and liberate women's experience.[5]

While Nyasha's schoolmates think her high grades are a result of being favoured, it is clear that Nyasha works fanatically for the highest possible marks. Nyasha seems to decide that her emancipation will be through education, for although education was not emancipatory for her mother, Nyasha believes Maiguru's mistake was not her commitment to studies, but her commitment to marriage. In attempting to find liberation through academic success, she internalizes conflicting pressures: her parents and teachers expect perfect grades because she is capable of them, but her classmates hope she will falter, thus proving that her privileges do not guarantee her success. Nyasha's worrisome disposition may be compared to Sheila MacLeod's autobiographical insights:

> At school I worked hard, spending most of my time in the library. Anything less than an 'A' disappointed me, and even when I had clearly gained the best grade in the class--a slightly alleviating factor--I still told myself I wasn't good enough. (AS 70)

Nyasha's academic expectation and internalization of parental pressures prompt her anorexic behaviour: "She was looking drawn and had lost so much of her appetite that it showed all over her body in the way the bones crept to the surface, but she did not seem to notice" (NC 107).[6]

Nyasha's narrative continues to echo Sheila MacLeod's testimony, whose autobiography fills in the gaps that are not narrated by Tambu or Nyasha. In this context, the fictive and the autobiographical combine, sustaining the articulation of women's

experience. In her autobiography, MacLeod recalls two major factors that incited her anorexia: an intense pressure to succeed in examinations, and her strained relationship with an authoritative yet distanced father. She describes these entangled factors:

> There was no real communication between me and my father...He commanded and I obeyed, or, rather, pretended to. My task, apart from the usual household chores, was to get on with the work for my three summer O-levels... they were my father's choice for me, not mine. (AS 43)

These thoughts are helpful for considering the nature of Nyasha's resistance, because MacLeod articulates what may be occurring in Nyasha's silent interstices. MacLeod continues:

> I think my father's authority was irrational because he expected me to have no other interests outside my schoolwork. And I think I believed, or tried to believe, him when he repeatedly told me that the restrictions he placed upon me were for my own good. (AS 44-5)

Like MacLeod, Nyasha is entangled in different pressures, to the effect that not eating occurs at times of contention with her parents (such as at the dinner table) and during times of school stress. These instances are linked, as both involve Nyasha's will for separation and attempts to defy and transcend familial and social constraints. She also uses not eating as a method of creating herself as a different, separate, individual. Nyasha's mode of self-creation is efficacious, for "Nyasha's mood affected the way the rest of us felt" (NC 109).

Since Maiguru tries to elide confrontations with Nyasha, she asks Tambu to talk to Nyasha about her increasing weight loss and obsession with studies. When Tambu does

approach Nyasha, Nyasha reveals her fears: "'I'll never know it all. So I have to keep reading and memorising, reading and memorising all the time. To make sure I get it all in...I can't help it. If I stop for a minute, I get so worried'" (NC 108). Once again, Nyasha's confession can be elucidated by MacLeod's testimony:

> the apparent text of my behaviour was 'Look at me--how learned and knowledgeable I am,' the subtext was something more like, 'I'm trying frantically hard to learn and to understand, despite my stupidity. Give me some credit. Tell me I'm not so stupid.' (AS 70-1)

In contrast to Maiguru's silent worry over Nyasha, Baba is overtly impressed with Nyasha's will and devotion to schoolwork. He is distraught, though, with Nyasha's liberated sense of femaleness (NC 108). One night when Nyasha arrives home late, he imagines the worst and bellows "'Why can't you behave like a young woman from a decent home? What will people say?'" Nyasha responds "'You've taught me how I should behave. I don't worry about what people think so there's no need for you to'" (NC 114). By exercising his beliefs in a way that is *almost the same, but not quite,* Nyasha uses mimicry to de-authoritize Baba's power.

Baba is riled at her menacing response, and assuming she has been out being a "whore," he starts beating her. Nyasha retreats '"Don't hit me, Daddy... I wasn't doing anything wrong. Don't hit me'" (NC 114). Baba insists that she must learn obedience and continues to strike her, but Nyasha relocates her power and yells "'I told you not to hit me.'" Then, in a moment of mimicry, she punches him in the eye, rousing a battle:

Babamukuru alternately punching Nyasha's head and banging it against the floor, screaming or trying to scream but only squeaking, because his throat had seized up with fury, that he would kill her with his bare hands; Nyasha, screaming and wriggling and doing what damage she could. (NC 115)

Nyasha is piqued by her mother's virtual acceptance of Baba's tyrannical behaviour, and seems to blame Maiguru for her father's violence. After the beating, she walks past her mother's outstretched arms "in a stony denial" (NC 117).

After watching this violence, Tambu realizes that Baba is not as "good" as she had believed, and she thinks his "condemning of Nyasha to whoredom, making her a victim of her femaleness" is despicable. She also sees how Nyasha is right to believe that domination over women--in its many forms--is "universal," for "It didn't depend on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition. It didn't depend on any of the things I had thought it depended on. Men took it everywhere with them" (NC 116). Tambu maintains that Nyasha is wrong to be so volatile, strong-willed and resisting, but Tambu is also innerved: "what I didn't like was the way all the conflicts came back to this question of femaleness. Femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness" (NC 116).

Tambu's rethinking of Baba's morals brings her to greater respect for Nyasha's "inconsistencies" and evocativeness within relationships. Tambu realizes she could benefit from listening to Nyasha, who claims:

'I don't want to be anyone's underdog. It's not right for anyone to be like that. But once you get used to it, well, it just seems natural and you just carry on.

And that's the end of you. You're trapped. They control everything you do.'

(NC 117)

Nyasha's reactions to her parents reveal that authoritarian discipline does not necessarily facilitate the shaping of feminine norms. For "in spite of disciplining their daughter with an hour-long sermon and fourteen lashes, because she was fourteen years old," Maiguru and Baba grow in disparity over not understanding and not being able to subdue Nyasha (NC 118).

Nyasha claims that she can tolerate the fights with her father because "without the confrontation and the hurling at each other of deep-felt grievances, they would never communicate at all" (NC 155). But they become increasingly disappointed in one another. Nyasha tries to understand Baba's "traditions and expectations and authority," but is hurt and resentful that he has no interest or concern in her point of view (NC 190). He considers Nyasha a failure of "feminine decorum" next to Tambu, whose quiet and complacent demeanour characterizes "the sort of young woman a daughter ought to be" (NC 155). Nyasha decides Baba is a "historical artefact" in dire need of deconstruction (NC 159-60).

Nyasha worries that even if she were able to break out of her own constraints, there will always be others to overcome. She asks '"where do you break out to? You're just one person and [domination] is everywhere. So where do you break out to? I don't know, Tambu, really I don't know'" (NC 174). She wants to intensify her "self versus surrender" strategies, but her feeling that she cannot "conquer the hopelessness" manifests in a more acute period of not eating, and she becomes more unresponsive and vague: "retreating into

some private world" (NC 174, 117). Maiguru has already been conquered by hopelessness. She conveys the similarities between their experiences:

> People were prejudiced against educated women. Prejudiced. That's why they said we weren't decent. That was in the fifties. Now we are in the seventies. I am disappointed that people still believe the same things. After all this time... I don't know what people mean by a loose woman--sometimes she is someone who walks the streets, sometimes she is an educated woman, sometimes she is a successful man's daughter or she is simply beautiful. Loose or decent, I don't know. (NC 181)

Maiguru's narrative describes how Zimbabwean women are trapped by conflicting expectations that are sealed with patriarchal and misogynist ideals.

For instance, one evening Nyasha is late for dinner, and Baba takes offense. When he accuses her of behaving indecently, she calmly excuses herself from the dinner table. The regular dinner drama occurs as Baba exclaims:

> You will eat that food... Your mother and I are not killing ourselves working just for you to waste your time playing with boys and then come back and turn your nose at what we offer. Sit and eat that food. I am telling you. Eat it! (NC 189)

He has yet to learn that using food as a means of control only reduces his power over Nyasha. Nyasha's passive resistance exacerbates his anger, and his tantrum continues, but he now speaks to Maiguru about Nyasha as if Nyasha weren't there:

"skeletal" (NC 198). What's more, her emotional and mental disposition has disintegrated: she is fanatic about her schoolwork, completely withdrawn, and disturbingly quiet.

Nyasha's behaviour is consistently shocking, and Tambu does not want to return to school while Nyasha is growing weaker and more fanatic. In the final scenes of *Nervous Conditions*, the deterioration of Nyasha's subjectivity is evident, and so too is her ability to maintain a subaltern power. When Nyasha silently takes her seat at the table, Babamukuru dishes out "a large helping of food for his daughter and set it before her, watching her surreptitiously as he picked casually at his own meal" (NC 198). Nyasha gazes at the food "malevolently, darting anguished glances at her father, drained two glasses of water, then picked up her fork and shovelled the food into her mouth, swallowing without chewing and without pause except to sip between mouthfuls from a third glass of water" (NC 198). Tambu notices that only after Nyasha's plate is empty do her parents relax. But as soon as Nyasha finishes eating and "the atmosphere" returns to "normal," Nyasha leaves the table. Once again, Nyasha heads straight for the bathroom and throws up the food, then silently returns to her studies and works through the night.

Baba and Maiguru are distraught with their daughter's frailty and silence, but delude themselves by convincing one another that the situation is not serious, because Nyasha does eat supper, if nothing else (NC 199). Nyasha's strategy parallels MacLeod's strategy of "feigning compliance with the authorities and responding cooperatively to their apparent concern, while continuing to eat minimally and to purge in secret" (AS 65). Tambu, however, recognizes the severity of Nyasha's situation:

> Nyasha was losing weight steadily, constantly, rapidly. It dropped off her body almost hourly and what was left of her was grotesquely unhealthy from the vital juices she flushed down the toilet. Did he not know? Did he not see? (NC 199)

Nyasha's purges defy and defile her parents delusions. The purges are acts of mimicry which occur "at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed" (Bhabha, "Mimicry" 130). She appears to behave and to eat according to their rules, but is actually acting against them. Merely observing their daughter's body, Baba and Maiguru must realize that the food she eats at dinner is not being digested. But because they watch her eat and don't see her vomit, they cling to their illusions.

Tambu is horrified that no one comments or acts on the seriousness of the matter. During another dinner Nyasha passes out into her plate. Baba thinks she is just "making a scene" so he "ordered her to her bedroom, where she lay open-eyed and quiet all night" (NC 200). In the middle of the night, Nyasha tells Tambu the reason for her self-starvation. She believes that starving herself will shatter the longstanding oppression of African women. As Nyasha is talking, Tambu observes her sunken eyes, bony body, and her nervous habit of picking at her own skin. In an accusing, dilated tone, Nyasha gives her testimony: "'I don't want to do it, Tambu, really I don't, but it's coming, I feel it coming... They've done it to me... Really, they have.'" Suddenly, she has an identity collusion and aligns with her father, sternly saying "'it's not his fault, he's good,'" but this alignment is a mimicry as well, for she then switches to a sarcastic, sneering Rhodesian accent: "'he's a good boy, a

good munt. A bloody good kaffir,'" and quickly reverts back to herself, hissing bitterly "'why do they do it, Tambu... We're grovelling...I won't grovel, I won't die'" (NC 200).

While her bodily deterioration conveys that she can no longer consume and be consumed by the history of colonization--a history that endorses the silencing and subjugation of her race and sex--Nyasha refuses to relinquish her subjectivity. Nyasha breaks her silence as her fury intensifies. Her parents come running, only to witness Nyasha "shredding her history book between her teeth" and screaming "'their history. Fucking liars. Their bloody lies'" while breaking glass, clay pots, anything she can find, and "jabbing the fragments viciously into her flesh." After this, Nyasha unleashes more internalized conflicts: "'They've trapped us. But I won't be trapped. I'm not a good girl. I won't be trapped... I don't hate you Daddy...Mummy, will you hold me?'" (NC 201)

Nyasha's splitting between immunity and vulnerability is an outcome of conflictual anorexic self-representation. Her splitting also reveals an effect of mimicry: the disintegration of the binary colonizer/colonized which is replaced by the "twin figures of narcissism and paranoia that repeat furiously, uncontrollably" (Bhabha, "Mimicry" 132). Once initiated, mimicry continues as a spiralling cycle, in which ambivalence to colonial power "repeatedly turns from *mimicry*--a difference that is almost nothing but not quite, to *menace*--a difference that is almost total but not quite...where history turns to a farce and presence to 'a part'" ("Mimicry" 132). While Nyasha has succeeded in becoming a menace to her father's authoritarian power and making a farce of his patriarchal, colonial history, she has also created her own splitting between "narcissism and paranoia." Her subaltern

presence which is "almost total but not quite" now seems to be embodied by her own body's slippage.

Nyasha's emotional and physical deterioration also conveys Spivak's view that "the figure of woman" who necessarily accommodates multiple and conflicting auspices "syntaxes patriarchal continuity even as *she is herself drained* of proper identity" ("Poststructuralism" 220, italics mine). In Nyasha's case, patriarchal continuity has been maintained through a dissimulation of her discontinuity, and "on the *repeated emptying* of her meaning as instrument" ("Poststructuralism" 220, italics mine). This emptying was seen in Nyasha's starvation, her urge to purge, and her furious testimony. Nyasha tells Tambu "'there's a whole lot more'" she has kept inside, but she now needs to dissimulate it, because "'its too powerful. It ought to be. There's nearly a century of it'" (NC 201).

Nyasha's "kamikaze behaviour" (NC 201) finally jolts Maiguru and Baba to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation and get help for Nyasha. After sessions with different psychiatrists, Nyasha concedes to go into a clinic for treatment and rest. Tambu and the reader are locked out of these institutional doors, and are left to question what becomes of Nyasha. One might speculate that Nyasha's hospitalization is colonial power's "desperate effort to 'normalize' *formally* the disturbance of a discourse of splitting that violates the rational, enlightened claims of its enunciatory modality" (Bhabha, "Mimicry" 132). In this way, Nyasha's deterioration is tragic, because her need for control and care seems to reaffirm patriarchal and colonial discourses. I find myself wanting to hear her witty, perceptive, saucy comments--but these attributes seem to have diminished along with her strong sense of agency.

There is, though, an alternative way to view Nyasha's deterioration. I see in her anorexia "an act of ambivalent signification," which literally splits and deconstructs binary oppositions and polarities (Bhabha, "Colonial Nonsense" 208). Through her "enunciatory act of splitting" Nyasha has succeeded in creating strategies of differentiation which produce an "undecidability between contraries or oppositions" (208). Her diminishment is not necessarily negative, for it constitutes an intricate, self-reflexive strategy of differentiation and defiance in colonial discourse (211).[7] What's more, Nyasha's acceptance of psychiatric and physical care begins to move her away from defences and towards possibilities of producing differentiation.

As a signifier of the shift from strategic resistance to possibilities of constituting differences, Nyasha's narrative is left abruptly open. And in contrast to the first scene of the novel, Tambu now has a supportive perspective and seems to believe that Nyasha will strengthen herself and relocate her subjectivity. For both Tambu and Nyasha, "the process of expansion" is difficult and ongoing, but Tambu closes her narrative by suggesting "this story is how it all *began,*" leaving the reader to consider how Nyasha will pursue an agency of expansion between contraries and oppositions (NC 204, italics mine). The relationship between Tambu and Nyasha relates the empowerment derived from second generation feminists in Kristeva's "Women's Time", for the cousins' narratives and testimonies have given "a language to the intrasubjective and corporeal experiences left mute by culture in the past" (WT 194). They have actualized de Lauretis's suggestion, "the only way to position oneself outside of that [dominant] discourse is to displace oneself within it--to refuse the

question as formulated, or to answer deviously (though in its own words), even to quote (but against the grain)" (*Alice* 7).

Josie

As a representative of Kristeva's third generation of women in "Women's Time," Josie struggles for "difference and specificity" in relation to "power, language, meaning" (WT 196). She is trying to create a "signifying space" for herself, one that dissents from the "socio-symbolic contract" which designates women's roles in society (WT 196). While some feminist thinkers contend that women's attempts to produce a subject space only reaffirm humanist notions of subject/object or I/Other,[1] Jenefer Shute's novel suggests that women generate subject space by collapsing such Cartesian oppositions.

My genealogy of anorexia has shown that representation and subjectivity are inseparable concepts (ES 190). In *Martha Quest*, Martha's self-reflections revealed to her that she had been forcing a separation from her self-representation, which was constraining her process of self-creation. In *Nervous Conditions*, Nyasha used mimicry to disrupt colonial power, but her strategies also became self-destructive, forging a rift between her self-representation and her agency. *Life-Size*, by Jenefer Shute, begins where Nyasha's narrative finished. While Nyasha is last seen going into a treatment centre, Josie's narrative begins in a treatment centre. This novel focuses on fusing the split between representation and subjectivity.

Jenefer Shute uses a feminist perspective to uncover and examine many of the furtive, uncomfortable issues which underlie women's propensity towards self-starvation in the late twentieth century. *Life-Size* is a fictional testimony of a twenty-five year old woman, Josie, who is an upper-class, educated, white, American anorexic. Josie's narrative begins with her hospitalization, which also begins the reconstruction of her emotional and physical selves.

The plot is structured around her hospital experience and by memories which her stay in the hospital evokes. Her testimony conveys a process in which "the sorting out of identity and difference" is a "process of analysis: naming, controlling, remembering, understanding" (Jardine 118). *Life-Size* traces the disintegration of Josie's quest to be a subject-effect, and articulates a process in which her wilful abjection transforms into emotional self-acceptance. Josie's analysis begins with *naming* and *controlling*, but gradually shifts to *remembering* and *understanding*, which through present experiences, push her to an acceptance of femininity and affinity with women's experience.

Foucault's genealogies have shown how discursive practices both make and break the subject-effect, in which power relations "underlie everything which makes individuals truly individual" but also "attack everything which separates the individual" ("The Subject" 220). Conversely, *Life-Size* suggests that women cannot always control the materials available to construct their selfhood, but they can devise methods to resist limitations. The novel accords with Kristeva's vision of third generation feminists, in which women combine their "insertion into history" with a "radical refusal of the subjective limitations" (WT 195). This combination etches a path to new claims of women's experience, which is embodied in Josie's anorexia and healing.

Kristeva writes that women's subjectivity is linked to cyclical time (repetition) and monumental time (eternity), which are connected to experiences of motherhood and reproduction.[2] As one of Kristeva's third generation, Josie must confront the task of reconciling maternal time (cyclical and monumental) with linear time (goal-oriented, historical). On the level of the subject, reconciliation occurs by disintegrating the concept of

a linear, unified identity, as well as by accepting needs, wants, desires and sexual differences (WT 188). During the years she is anorexic, Josie locates her identity through repetitive, unending visions of herself, but against reproductive and maternal self-reflections. Her identity is not fixed or stable; rather, her character is multiple and split. These traits, even in their self-destructiveness, are en-route to self-(re)construction.[3]

Josie's split identity is supported by the structure of the novel. Shute uses textual splitting to continually disrupt and collapse past with present (and vice versa), revealing how and why Josie has shaped her unchanging, repressed self through anorexia and against linear time. In the hospital, Josie's past experiences merge with present thoughts, and her disparate selves reintegrate, prompting a reconciliation of the past, coupled with a unification of her mind/body diaspora.

While Josie's struggle for subjectivity originates in dissolving the borders between I and Other, between subject and object, her anorexia begins as a means to defy gender norms. Her self-starvation is partially an effect of and partially a response to "those lines which patriarchal culture induces women not to cross" (Mahbobah 88). In this defiance, she *names* her reasons for resisting gender norms and for repudiating femininity; she also *controls* her needs, desires, hunger and her body. Despite her sense of empowerment, Josie is deflated by this "disintegration of borders," in which her attempts at separation only produce proximity to and dependence on the source(s) of her animosity and aversion (Mahbobah 88). The collapse of borders is revealed in her bodily, mental and emotional deterioration, which occurs through eight years of sustaining anorexia.

Josie's anorexia is a form of resistance which is similar to abjection. In *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva explains abjection as a paradoxical "revolt of being" which is "directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside" (PH 1). The act of expulsion turns something internal and originally part of identity into a defiled Otherness, such that the abjector feels trapped in "a vortex of summons and repulsion" (PH 1). Abjection is maintained through this "twisted braid of affects and thoughts" that cannot locate a definable object to oppose, so the abjector feels weighted by conflicting tendencies (PH 1). Like abjection, anorexia involves apprehension and rejection of an object or objects which are not clearly understood or definable by the anorexic, who is sure only that she feels caught in a nexus of suffocating expectations. This nexus becomes a site of degradation. In resistance to constraints such as dualism, control and gender/power, she seems to corrode her agency by expending all her energy in defiance. Kristeva explains this position:

> abject is not my correlative, which, providing me with someone or something else as support, would allow me to be more or less detached or autonomous. The abject has only one quality of the object--that of being opposed to 'I'. (PH 1)

The oppositional object becomes the abject as it is jettisoned. This is the mode by which Others are purged and defiled. The abjector (or anorexic) imagines that *it* is the desire of the *Other*, and feels she must resists *it*. But through her need to resist and to separate, she becomes "infinitely homologous" with *it* and the *Other*. In other words, whatever she repudiates becomes part of her identity, which disintegrates the borders between *I* and *Other*.

The act of abjection is a facade of power, for when the abjector recognizes that she is defining herself against others, she realizes her subjectivity is "a weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, [but] which crushes" her identity (PH 2). The outcome of abjection is what Kristeva calls the reality of "existence-in-abjection" (PH 2).

Using Kristeva's example of "food loathing," I want to delineate how the paradoxical processes of abjection crystallize Josie's anorexic behaviour. Kristeva writes from the position of the food loather, explaining that a repugnance and retching of food is "the fascinated start that leads me toward and separates me from them," which instigates a separation and thus proximity to the defiling "shame of compromise" (PH 2). The orality of eating "signifies a boundary of the self's clean and proper body" and food is perceived as a "polluting object" (PH 75). Food becomes abject when it is perceived as a border between two distinct entities, such as nature and culture. In this context, "food is the oral object (the abject) that sets up archaic relationships between the human being and the other, its mother, who wields a power" that is as suffocating as it is vital (PH 75-6). As an elementary form of abjection, food loathing provokes the collapse between self and other, between subject and object:

> dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. 'I' want none of that element, sign of their desire, 'I' do not want to listen, 'I' do not assimilate it, 'I' expel it. But, since the food is not an Other for me, who am only in their desire, 'I' expel myself, 'I' spit myself out, 'I' abject myself with the same motion through

which 'I' seek to establish myself ... they see that 'I' am in the process of becoming an Other at the expense of my own death. (PH 3)

Kristeva captures the contradictions in the anorexic's perceptions of what is autonomous and what is reactive, what is affect and what is effect. She is wholly concerned that *they see* what she is refuting and what she will not accept; she will abject all that *it* incorporates, even if *it* incorporates her self. Josie asks "why don't *they recognize* my strength: how much it's taken me to make so little of myself?" (LS 83, italics mine).

Josie believes that "I" adequately defines her because it is "the slenderest word in the English language" (LS 205). But as the above passage from Kristeva suggests, 'I' is a veneer of autonomy, for the food loather's 'I' is actually a convergence of herself with *they*. The more she abjects, the greater the collapse of *I* and *Other*. As her attempts at separation continue to defy her, she finds herself in an increasingly elusive, "less clearly marked locus, neither within nor without but in between opposites" (Mahbobah 88). In this way, her separating from conflicting constraints (social, parental) and desires (food, sex) only establishes her place within those constraints.

Josie's fears of eating and gaining weight force a split in her subjectivity. This splitting seems to be a defense against *it*. When she is told by a nurse to try and eat something, she responds triumphantly:

- '*I*'m not hungry,' *I* say.

- '*It* was too much,' *I* say.

- 'Anyway *I* did eat something,' *I* say. '*I* ate some of that roll.'

(LS 4, italics mine)

Josie claims her starved self is "purer and less cluttered, concentrated on the essentials instead of distracted by a body clamouring for attention, demanding that its endless appetites be appeased. Stripped down, the brain is closer to the surface" (LS 7). When told she must eat a little of everything on her plate, Josie panics: "banana and tuna and cream: the very words, as if secret, obscene, are making me ill, my heart starting to hammer" (LS 4). Her thoughts echo Kristeva's food loather, who cried "dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it" (PH 3).

Like Nyasha, Josie has discovered that silent starvation is a powerful subversion to the socio-symbolic contract, for it's self-displacing quality "defaces as it reflects, modifies as it imitates, subverting the law it seems to obey," (Mahbobah 94).[4] Also like Nyasha, Josie tries to distort gender norms via "notoriously duplicitous" discourses of starvation, silence and subversion.[5] These methods accord with de Lauretis' view that a woman's resistance to dominant discourses is achieved by displacing herself within them, speaking them deviously: "by/in a representation, by/in a discourse, by/in a sex-gender system" (*Technologies* 26). Similarly, abjection uses a silence that is "sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it" (PH 4). These strategies are expressed by anorexics in *The Golden Cage: The Enigma of Anorexia Nervosa,* who give testimonies of feigning a "dutifully compliant and agreeing" disposition, while cherishing "the secret knowledge that things as they are discussed are not so. Throughout childhood, they have been double-tracking, agreeing with what is demanded of them but secretly disavowing it" (Bruch 183).

From the first scene of *Life-Size* it is obvious that Josie's strategies are deeply lodged and well practised. As a nurse puts a tray of food in front of her, she muses "I make no response... I say nothing" (LS 1), because under the hospital's surveillance, apathetic silence is one of the few strategies she is able to maintain. Anything that encroaches on her "identity, system, order" (PH 4) is jettisoned, and in this way, Josie "simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes" herself because she derives her strength from "the impossible within" (PH 5). She is empowered by her body's disruptive capacity in the face of hospital control: "the full [food] tray dumped on the other bed, me flat on my back, arms outspread, my pelvic bones protruding pointedly under the grey-green hospital gown" (LS 4).

Josie may envision herself as transcendent and sacrificial, but the paradox of her empowerment is that it lies, for the time being, in physical disintegration and mental collapse, not in spiritual strength. Contained in a hospital bed, she is discovering that her "very *being*" has become none other than the abject (PH 5). Kristeva articulates this paradoxic fulfilment in disintegration:

> I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such waste drops so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains and my entire body falls beyond the limit--cadere, cadaver. (PH 3)

Similar thoughts are intimated by Josie, who is unable to lift her body from the bed, yet abandons herself: "One day I will be pure consciousness, travelling unmuffled through the world; one day I will refine myself to the bare wiring," believing "soon, in this body, everything will be willed" (LS 5-7).

Josie's self-abandonment reveals that she does not yet have the strength to recognize her want. She is not yet able to see that she could benefit from claiming her needs and desires. Her hospital space is not the signifying space she had expected to achieve through anorexia, but during her first weeks in the hospital, she continues to focus on abjecting others and diminishing herself. Her stance during these weeks (and the previous eight years) can be read through Kristeva's food loather:

> 'I' want none of that element, sign of their desire, 'I' do not want to listen, 'I' do not assimilate it, 'I' expel it. But, since the food is not an Other for me, who am only in their desire, 'I' expel myself, 'I' spit myself out, 'I' abject myself with the same motion through which 'I' seek to establish myself... they see that 'I' am in the process of becoming an Other at the expense of my own death. (PH 3)

Josie claims "I never feel hungry and despise those who do," because she wants to believe she has "freed herself" from the compulsion to need, to desire (LS 8). Under the surveillance of doctors and nurses, she reaffirms "no one must ever see me eat, no one must ever catch me in the act--especially now that my appearance excites so much attention, with people always staring at me, willing me to weaken" (LS 11). Since her self-representation is characterized by lack of need, she upholds "eating is private; only the body is public" and identifies herself by non-consumption:

> food's only interest lies in how little I need, how strong I am, how well I can resist--each time achieving another small victory of the will: one carrot instead of two, half a cracker, no more peas. Each gain makes me stronger, purer,

larger in my exercise of power, until eventually I see no reason to eat at all. (LS 77, 8)

Josie believes identity is connected to "the ecstatic workings of lips and tongue," that life is experienced through the mouth and "other inlets," and that orality signifies a boundary of the pure will and proper body (LS 169). Because everything she has 'ingested' has led to pain and shame, Josie has reversed this current; perceiving food as a polluting object, she negotiates the world by keeping it out. She chooses certain words--strong, larger, resist, exercise, will, little, small--to reaffirm her self-representation; she validates her identity by naming those things which need repetitive, continual control.

Despite the words she uses to affirm herself, Josie feels a loss of control in the hospital, and subsequently refers to her situation as "shrunk" (LS 3). She describes the hospital environment as barred, waffled, scuffed, scarred, but her words reveal that she is simultaneously describing her body. She enmeshes her spatial (hospital) experience with her corporeal (body) experience: "lying here, I trace and retrace each blister, each blemish, each bruise. The cold floor is tiled beige and khaki," and appraises "hospital, graduate school, prison: it's becoming increasingly difficult to tell the difference" (LS 3, 19).

Because she cannot maintain her bodily command in the hospital, Josie feels like an object, "just occupying space" (LS 1). In order to accommodate this loss, she forcibly separates her mental activity (still under her rule) from her bodily inactivity (now under hospital power). But in fact, the two realms have become fused. She attributes the noises of "clattering" and "rumbling" to the enemy: the food cart approaching her room; but these "noises" are actually her bones jarring as she moves about the hospital bed and her stomach

rumbling--which she does not want to acknowledge. In another instance, she endures a blood test by separating her mind from the bodily experience:

> It hurts, and though I don't look, *distancing myself from this piece of meat* that's being probed, *I start feeling sick*, my head suddenly *receding* from my feet, which in turn have *disconnected* from my knees. (LS 6, italics mine)

Josie has spent years trying to sever body and mind, and has succeeded only in creating an incredibly distorted self-perception: "somewhere between fat and thin, but not yet perfect," which continues even in the hospital: "one day I will be thin enough. Just the bones, no disfiguring flesh, just the pure, clear shape of me" (LS 75, 9). Her experiences of womanhood have been filled with incursion and shame, so she rejects her feelings of femininity, such that the 'me' Josie is trying to uncover through starvation is a 'me' stripped of emotional pain. But Josie has not confronted and resolved her pain. Instead, she has elided it through objectifying her bodily experiences via intense self-surveillance and hyperconstructivism: "every morning the same ritual, the same inventory, the same naming of parts before rising, for fear of what I may have become overnight" (LS 9). For instance, she describes her hips as if they are pieces of an apparatus rather than a part of herself: "piercingly concave, two naked arcs of bone around an emptiness" (LS 9). This emptiness is emotional famine.

Despite her vicious will, Josie starts to accept medical care as she takes time to contemplate her reasons for abjection and self-control. This shift actually commences as another anorexic strategy: "I must eat everything and waddle out of this jail to recover myself, to recapture my own clear shape," but transforms, very gradually, to a focus on

feelings rather than food (LS 26). At this point, Josie is still confused by her conflicting impulses; she concedes "I must eat; I have to get out of here," but is stricken "I can't eat; I'll die" (LS 27). These conflicts are similar to those which brought her to the hospital in the first place, when Josie's parents convinced her to take a "break from routine" (LS 76). Despite her intention to reject anything her parents proffered, she found herself resigning, in an incorrigible moment of splitting:

> I say, fuck off and leave me alone.
>
> I say, what the hell difference would it make? I can starve anywhere.
>
> I say, it's becoming too much work to decide what to do next. (LS 76)

Now in the hospital, Josie's willingness to consider her feelings and her body is difficult and disrupted. It begins with eating a bit of hospital food, which instigates the first of countless terrible memories, all of which convey how she has grown to associate food with intrusive, exploitive relationships. As she eats a morsel, she ponders "the last time I actually reached out to touch another person's flesh... Somebody did touch me, yes, more than a year ago, when I was still in the fat eighties" (LS 30).[6] She then describes a sexual encounter with a fellow graduate student which left her gagging and vomiting up semen in disgust (LS 32). Josie feels this "same gag reflex" when thinking about hyperalimentation,[7] and becomes so overpowered by the fears involved in each hospital meal (and thus memories of relationships), that she tries to focus only on what she will and will not eat. In desperation, she tries again to separate mind from body: "Time to weigh myself down with heavy books, arrange them around me on the bed cover so they will hold me down, keep me in place, prevent me from expanding sloppily, yeastily, over the edges" (LS 34).

The memory of the graduate student leaves a bad taste in her mouth, which leads Josie to recall other sour recollections. Through her disjointed thoughts, it becomes obvious that she associates men with penetrating, exploiting and unfeeling power, but considers femaleness the cause of male domination. Referring to her doctor, she wonders "how could a person like you understand a person like me? Perhaps, like the rest of them, you would like to whip out your dick and probe me... to find my core temperature, the deep, red heart of things" (LS 36). Josie's experiences have confirmed her suspicions that femininity is a well of vulnerability, for misuse and sexualization, which are things she connects with "the body's dark red rotten interior" (LS 158). She relates this rotten interior to innocence, female emotions, and menstruation.

By abandoning her femaleness through starvation, she achieves a hard exterior that is "cold and blue, betraying nothing" and therefore able to combat the potency of "all of them" and their "same slime (9 calories per teaspoon)" (LS 36). In the hospital she is safe from male, penetrative power, but Josie has come to believe "the *therapist* and *the rapist*--a matter of spacing, but the approach is the same" (LS 144, italics mine). She perceives hyperalimentation as a form of persistent penetration, which spurs other memories: "'I don't want any fucking tube in me. You can't make me do this. I won't.' Someone is always trying to force something into you, make you swallow something, pump you full of it" (LS 68). Josie's resistance is against the Hippocratic belief in female equilibrium through male penetration, discussed earlier in this thesis (HS2 129).

Given that Josie's relationships have been largely sadomasochistic, she cannot perceive herself except through reflection--by how others use and perceive her--and thus by

seeing her image in a mirror. In the hospital, she is wholly exposed under panoptic surveillance: "there's no privacy here, none at all: I'm the Visible Woman, with all my veins and nerves and guts on display. What goes in, what comes out, even what stays inside me is everybody else's business" (LS 173). But she is not allowed a mirror and cannot see herself, which evokes a panicky feeling of invisibility. This leads Josie to recall her need for reflection:

> In the ballet studio, all four walls are paneled with mirrors, but each one is slightly different, so I always stand in front of the one that elongates me... I always sit in one particular corner, where the mirrors meet. (LS 40)

Continuing these thoughts, Josie makes it evident that she equates femininity with spectacle. Moreover, she feels her self-representation is in antagonism with other women, who "wipe sweat off their rank bodies" while Josie stands "cool, immaculate, without a drop of sweat" (LS 41). She concedes "yes, there's a speedy, shaky dizziness" in her body after a workout, but she regains composure by looking in the mirrors: "aloof, on a higher plane altogether, I stare straight ahead--at my reflection, at the reflection of my reflection, at the reflection of that reflection" (LS 41). Josie is empowered by the repetitive, endless splitting of herself in the mirrors, which reaffirm she exists continually, spectacularly.[8] The paradox of this reflection is that while Josie perceives herself in the image of cyclical, monumental time, she also identifies herself against the image of mother/womanhood which actually characterizes eternal presence. Perhaps that is why her vision is also shrouded with shame, for Josie is "so mesmerized by the horror" of what she sees, she punishes herself with relentless looking

(LS 178-9). She is, however, comforted that the other women seem to feel the same inadequacy:

> we abandon shame, turning helplessly this way and that, pulling and yanking at our practice clothes... Everyone has her own gesture... Everyone has her own costume, ritualistically designed, a pampliset whose layers you can read history of that body's imperfections. (LS 179)

Josie's distorted self-perception is also revealed as she compares herself to another anorexic woman on the ward. It is interesting that Josie is able to observe this woman so clearly, but cannot perceive herself with the same graphic perspective. Josie is significantly thinner than this woman, but in comparing herself, she says "I see I have a way to go. She is a mere skeleton (which they falsely say of me)... she's frightening, too: there's something otherworldly about her as she stares hypnotized into the mirror, her gaze fixed already on some far distance" (LS 47).[9] It sounds as if Josie is describing herself, as well as the gaze she had used in the ballet mirrors.[10]

These visions of herself and other women incite Josie's recollection of the relationships that appear to have induced her anorexic behaviour. Josie's adolescent experiences support de Beauvoir's premise that women experience their shameful Otherness with the emergence of puberty and female sexuality, which is then ossified in roles of womanhood (SS 500-3). During these years, Josie realizes that invulnerability is achieved through separating her body from her feelings. She continues to use this strategy in the hospital, and during a conference with doctors "to discuss what will and will not go into [her] body," she claims "my body is there, but I am not; this is something you learn, early

on" (LS 69). For instance, Josie is reactive to memories of her friendship with Amanda-Jane. The two were close and compassionate friends in childhood, but as Josie "mutated overnight into a pimply, potbellied, pendulous-breasted sow," Amanda-Jane developed into a feminine ideal, such that Amanda-Jane's female success and sophistication led Josie to feel inadequate. In her early teens, Josie then discovered that female success came from disciplining the body as well as the brain. While attending Deerborne Academy, "an elite school for young ladies of academic bent--for bent young ladies, for bending them," Josie noticed that all the girls "had thick, well-cut hair, slim ankles, smoked salmon sandwiches for lunch, which they picked apart and didn't eat" (LS 65). She recalls "it took me a short, stormy detour, between numb childhood and now, to become untouchable again. Now I know nothing can harm me, that I can withstand any kind of want" (LS 86).

Josie does not explicitly describe why she needed to forge an invulnerable shell, but intimations of incest arise in memories of her father. She recalls laying rigid in her bed, hoping her mother would wake up as her father would come in drunk late at night and kiss her too liberally, sending chills over her body (LS 60). In another instance, Josie recalls the "violent wet din" of her father intrusively walking into her bathroom while she was naked (LS 92). Josie blames her mother for her father's behaviour, and seeing the fault in her mother's body, blames herself: "a mountain of blubber, her body was irredeemably *ruined by two children*" (LS 62, italics mine). Josie thinks that if her mother had been more desirable, her father would not have crossed her boundaries. Josie's mother-repudiation increased to the point that everything her mother did exasperated her, "especially in the way she occupied space" (LS 66). Concurrently, Josie found herself "increasingly sullen and self-absorbed,

unable to pass any reflective surface without a shameless, anxious consultation" (LS 66). Here, it is clear that she identifies herself in and against maternal presence.

In the hospital, Josie seems to transfer the animosity she felt--and still feels--towards her mother onto the nurses, who she treats with insolent disrespect while harshly judging their body shapes. One nurse, however, infiltrates Josie's contention, and after sitting with Josie through countless uneaten meals, Suzanne says "'cut out the nonsense now and just eat,'" to which Josie unwittingly responds "'I want you to feed me'" (LS 79). In this moment, Josie realizes she has been starving for care, and for love that is not connected to pain or exploitation. With Suzanne, she develops the female bonding she craves, which pushes her past abjection to try to understand and resolve her painful memories, rather than starve them out.

This realization of want of female bonding evokes Josie's memory of a lengthy physical fight with her mother, which reveals how she has internalized the pain of the relationship and inflicted it on herself:

> She's dragging me across the carpet... Wherever I can reach, I dig my fingers in--the pads of her upper arms, the rolls of her back, even the puffy wrists... wherever I can reach, kick and kick until she shuts up, until she disappears... I'm not sure how much longer this frenzy can sustain itself. (LS 80)

Josie has sustained this frenzy for years, by forcing herself to believe that she never felt hungry, tired, thirsty or cold.

Prompted by these thoughts, she shifts back to her friendship with Amanda-Jane. Having been at different schools for a year, Josie then went to Amanda's beach house to

visit. There, Amanda's mother reprimanded her eating habits by telling her "'It's nice to be slender, dear,'" which, coupled with Amanda's own attention to the beauty myth,[11] led Josie to experience shame in eating and shame over her body. In Amanda-Jane's house, value was given to women's acceptance of Otherness, evident in the family's endorsement of socialized roles of female passivity, submission and sacrifice. Josie recalls "I hadn't realized there was a rule: women prepared the food but musn't eat it. Why hadn't my mother taught me this?" (LS 88) She was so mortified by the accepted constraints on women in Amanda's family that she subverted and devoured them in the most overt way:

> Dessert was 'for the men,' as I well knew, but at every meal that summer I held out my plate anyway, blankly. I stuffed in everything, whether I wanted it or not... silently, sourly, defiantly. Naturally I grew plumper and more hideous by the day. (LS 90)

She learned that by incorporating and embodying her shame, she could avoid feeling it. For some reason, she found the rituals of self-hatred easier to tolerate than feelings of inadequacy. In addition to the self-repudiation Josie developed by judging herself according to Amanda's standards, she also experienced sexual exploitation. The combination of the two led her to connect female sexuality with masochistic submission. At a highschool party, she was forced into sexual activity with two boys, and remembers "I knew what was about to happen, but in a stupor of disbelief, offered no resistance" (LS 100). It seems that Josie's means of coping with the situation was to focus entirely on the hurtful words spoken rather than the exploitative act, for it was not the forced sexual favours that traumatized her, rather, it was a comment by one of the boys, who, grabbing at her stomach, said she was "a little

chubby" (LS 102). And in what seems a mechanism of purification, she decided the next morning to go on a diet.

When her parents objected to the diet, Josie showed them the extra weight around her stomach, to which her father responded "'we're not interested in seeing your navel at the dinner table'" (LS 103). As Josie muttered "maybe not at the dinner table, Dad," she noticed her mother acting as if she "hadn't heard" her comment (nor his late-night visits to her room). Her diet began a separation from her parents and her sexuality, and for years to come, distanced her from shame, pain and experiences of self-defilement. Josie was convinced these were feelings that "if you swallow them, take root inside you" (LS 114).

She recalls the euphoria that came with her initial starvation tactics: "for the first few weeks, I was in a state of sustained exhilaration: speedy, powerful, unstoppable," and as she whittled down, Josie discovered her "true form, the sharp but delicate articulation of a self" and felt "transformed" (LS 122). Her willpower was highly regarded by friends, and as she became "the daily spectacle" at school, people began complimenting her "diminished self," which was incentive to continue (LS 124-7). She discovered that the less space she took up the more attention she would receive, and she developed her own panoptic theory: "a body that isn't looked at doesn't exist" (LS 217). While it was fairly easy to get attention from schoolmates, she found herself unable to get the unconditional approval she actually needed, from her mother. Here, Josie gives evidence of abjection's collapse:

> I followed her around, examining myself minutely in every reflective surface (the toaster, the kettle, my knife at the dinner table)... when that failed to

enrage her, I would do jumping jacks in the kitchen while she cooked. (LS 128)

But Josie's mother was not impressed with her disciplines, and did not understand why her daughter was so caught up in "self-obsessed" behaviours.

Thinking about her mother's disappointing responses, Josie acts out against Suzanne. As a means of evoking attention, she throws her food tray on the floor and refuses to clean it up. When Suzanne responds with chaffing indifference, Josie is crushed with emptiness: "What does she mean, she's sick to death of me? She can't be; she has to put up with me, pretend to care: its her job. Is she going to ask to be transferred..." (LS 131) She is afraid she may have destroyed the only safe, caring female bond she has ever established, so she punishes herself by picking up the shards of glass she had broken, placing them in her palm and squeezing tightly (LS 133). Her gouged hand prompts a memory which reveals the difference between her bond with Suzanne and her relationship with her mother, as the blood reminds Josie of a shameful experience of haemorrhaging after losing her virginity. When Josie approached her mother in a bloodsoaked towel and nightgown, her mother responded "'Josephine, I can't possibly call Dr. Arnold. What on earth would he think?'" and wailed "'How could you?'" Josie realizes that she could have called the doctor herself, but testifies "my sole object was to convince my mother to help me. Standing there haemorrhaging wasn't enough, it seemed" (LS 135). In contrast, Suzanne returns and comforts Josie while tweezing and bandaging her mutilated palm (LS 133).

Josie recalls that after the haemorrhaging incident, her diet became increasingly fanatic:

since I had put myself under production, I practised economies of scale. I made each second count: I jogged from 6 to 7:30 in the morning, swam laps from 4 to 5, and worked out with handweights for an hour before bed; around these fixed points (and, of course, school), I had to schedule homework and my nightly command performance at the dinner table. (LS 145)

Like the docile soldier in *Discipline and Punish*, and Nyasha in *Nervous Conditions*, Josie has invested time as an instrument of regimented control, to be utilized only for the most productive purposes. Also resembling Nyasha, Josie studied obsessively, but with a misplaced sense of achievement:

> I won scholarships at three major universities and chose the one farthest away from home. I had reached an important goal--cracking one hundred pounds--and immediately set myself a new one: cracking ninety-five by the time I left for college. There, a thousand miles from jealous surveillance, I could begin to perfect myself. (LS 145)

This mass of juxtapositions bares Josie's "vortex of summons and repulsion" (PH 1). Her goals are like her reflection in the ballet studio mirrors: their substance is lost in their own unending recurrence and in their reflection of what is not yet achieved.

Josie's move away to university shifted her reasons for maintaining anorexic disciplines. Like Martha in *Martha Quest*, who moved away from her parents and tried to reaffirm her autonomy by intensifying her dietary regime, Josie used the anonymity of university life to test and master her controls, uninterrupted by family and friends. University offered "more space to make [herself] scarce," so despite achieving straight A's,

she felt virtually invisible. Since she did not feel that good grades could "justify the space [she] occupied in the world," she focused instead on relentless self-surveillance, on food and not eating it (LS 158). This resolve set her to new extremes of abjection and disintegration:

> I lived under an absolute dictatorship, with myself as both subject and tyrant. Maintaining this rule of law consumed all my attention, so I had none to spare for the groups of loud, ill-groomed others who registered at the edges of my consciousness. (LS 134)

Josie suggests "thinking all the time of what you will not think, what you will not do. It fills up all your time, maintaining the emptiness" (LS 158). With this mentality, she was intolerant of fellow students' activism, and saw it as "obscure agitation" (LS 155). More disturbingly, she refused to support women's issues, claiming "'I'm not a feminist... I've never suffered because I'm a woman. I'm tired of people using that excuse'" (LS 155).[12] Josie's adamant and spoken defense is uncharacteristic of her silent resistance. Her spoken words betray her, because they call attention to the very crux of her self-repudiation: she is a woman who feels pain and cannot express it because of the shame her pain evokes. Josie's public anti-feminism was also thwarted by her private experiences, for in her dorm room she panicked:

> Whichever way I looked, all I could see was fat--fat face, fat gut, fat quivering thighs, fat disgusting tits. How could I go outside and show myself to other people, when they'd all know, just by looking at me, how weak I was, how self-indulgent? (LS 158)

While at university, Josie focused on severing her mind from her body, her will from her feelings, and herself from others. But in the hospital, she experiences the boomerang effect of abjection, which then begins to rupture the parameters of her anorexic self-representation. As Josie confesses her fears to Suzanne, discussing all the painful incidents which have been contained in her defiance, she feels weighted with a "thick, stupefying sludge" (LS 151) of becoming healthier. Beginning to experience her body as a part of her self, she realizes she must care for it, despite her sense of being "'fat, disgustingly fat,'" which she also refers to as feeling "pregnant" (LS 114).

Josie's feeling of immaculate impregnation is related to her self-splitting and infinite self-representation, for as Kristeva suggests, "pregnancy seems to be experienced as the radical ordeal of the splitting of the subject: redoubling of the body, separation and coexistence of the self and other, of nature and consciousness, of physiology and speech" (WT 206). In the frame of Kristeva's logic, it appears that since Josie identifies with images of pregnancy: motherhood, femaleness, splitting (thus collapse) of self and other, of body and mind--she actually seeks reproductivity, womanhood. Josie visualizes herself in a distended, contrary image of sacrificial (m)other: devouring, profane (Eve), and immaculate, sacred (Mary)--which converges the essentialized differences of each ideal into the same, into neither.[13]

Conversely, she experiences her body as uncontrollably defiling: "there's nothing to do but lie here and feel my body bloat and rot, rot and spread, spread and deliquesce, decompose" (LS 152). But Suzanne reassures Josie that these emotions and physical experiences are "'part of the process'" by which Josie will gradually discover how to accept

and enjoy her femininity and womanhood without shame, submission and silence. Thinking about her friend Amanda, who has just separated from her husband, Josie feels a compassionate connection:

> I imagine her like me now, with emptiness all around her, so independent that there's nothing left to hold her to the earth. Don't do it, I want to cry out: I've tried separation and it doesn't work. (LS 157)

This is the first time that Josie admits separation doesn't work. This revelation allows her to see how abjection beseeched and pulverized her subjectivity. She has abjected her "very *being,*" such that she been able to identify herself only through her resistance to others. Her relationship with Suzanne has helped Josie to discover how separation and abjection deteriorate into "a weight of meaninglessness" which "crushes" subjectivity (PH 2). With this understanding, she is then able to develop a non-destructive self-representation, based on acknowledging her needs, and her want of female presence. The realization of lack and of meaninglessness petrifies Josie, which incites a number of recollections. During her recent years at university, Josie evaded her feeling of unbearable invisibility by partaking in unfulfilling sexual affairs which she consistently ended in uncontrollable eating binges.[14]

In an attempt to absolve her feelings over her previous, exploitative and denigrating sexual encounters, Josie sought affairs at university that she thought would empower her. She was not interested in sex, but in feeling needed and cared for. Her affairs were a form of immunity which can be described in Kristevan terms as "the identification with power in order to consolidate it or the constitution of a fetishist counter-power" that both restores the "crises of the self" and provides a jouissance of transgression against the socio-symbolic

contract (WT 203). However, instead of satiating this pursuit, sex and relationships made Josie realize how ravenous she actually was, by reconnecting her body with mind and bringing her alarmingly closer to her needs. She describes one sex/binge incident to Suzanne:

> Something lukewarm was running down my legs... So I went to the kitchen and started opening the cabinets, not planning to eat anything, just with voyeuristic intent...what did it matter if I stuck my hand, still rank with sex smells, into his food... I pushed it into my mouth, realizing, with a frightening ecstatic rush, that it was the sweetest thing that had been in there for months. (LS 166)

Josie's "schedule" was "disrupted" by opening her body to someone else, and she could not regain control because she realized "this has nothing to do with hunger. It has to do with filling the mouth so the howl can't make its way out... something had opened in me like a funnel, and the only possible appeasement was to fill my mouth" (LS 167).

In this compulsion to keep her mouth filled, Josie felt "no pleasure: only terrified self-witness" (LS 168). This terror was marked with paradox: Josie was actualizing her fear that sexuality leads to sordid female fatness and motherhood, by impregnating herself with food after every sexual encounter. In this way, Josie attributed her stomach's swelling (from too much food) to sex, which allowed her to blame male penetration for her 'fatness', rather than acknowledging her own hunger and want. After each binge, she would perceive her body as pregnant, so as not to perceive herself as consuming: "my belly, usually concave,

was swollen, as if last night's frantic inseminination had produced immediate fruit" (LS 169). Josie's paradoxical terrors are similar to de Beauvoirean visions of the maternal:

> it no longer seems marvellous but rather horrible that a parasitic body should proliferate within her body; the very idea of this monstrous swelling frightens her... pictures of swelling, tearing, haemorrhage, will haunt her. (SS 336)[15]

Josie's fear of and desire for motherhood was especially paradoxical given that she had already obliterated her reproductive capacity through years of intense starvation and exercise.

In the throes of this particular binge, Josie wanted to believe "this wasn't me. My identity had been temporarily suspended," but simultaneously, she yearned to experience more fulfilment of want, claiming "until I became myself again--empty and immaculate and controlled--nothing mattered, none of the usual rules applied" (LS 170). By splitting her anorexic self (empty, immaculate, controlled) from the self suspended with insatiable appetite, Josie was able to shamelessly identify with her desire. Her insatiable self then persevered by strategically moving the binge from the private apartment to public places, where suddenly "there were no decisions to make, no choices, no resistance" and her concern became only what she could eat next, regardless if people saw her eating. She remembers "abandoning shame," and reconnecting with her orality (thus identity) by "smearing chocolate on [her] face and hands like shit" (LS 172).[16] After this binge ended, she felt leaden with self-loathing, and began cutting class, cancelling appointments and staying home to starve herself back to 'normal' (LS 175).

Josie's memories of binges are spurred by the unsettling feelings that arise as she gains weight in the hospital. During a Reconnect with our Bodies session, she abjects her body in attempt to relocate her anorexic self-representation:

> This is not my body. If it were, I'd be horrified at how hot and bulky it feels, how sluggish and stiff, how wobbly the thighs, how tight the hamstrings... My body is an impeccable machine. This, therefore, cannot be my body. (LS 180)

Ironically, this abjection allows Josie to connect with and accept her body. Since she had maintained a starved body by splitting off from her feelings, it follows that she now accepts her feelings through abjecting her body. By separating anorexic self-representation (the impeccable machine) from her feeling self (hot and bulky, sluggish and stiff), she can gradually reconnect her self-diaspora. While she had developed her anorexic body as a "boundary" which others could not penetrate except by her consent, the hospital care has helped to break that boundary, and Josie focuses on her emotional, cognitive "self inside [her] skull" (LS 184) that includes her anorexic self in reconstitution.

Thinking back to her binges, Josie understands it was "desire" that took over, and "not simple need, like hunger, but a taut, elastic compulsion... to ravage, to tear with the teeth, to devour and destroy, to stuff the hollow skull" (LS 183). Once the binges had begun, she became controlled by their "convulsive capitulation" which took all her energy to withstand. She tried to focus on starvation, exercise and combatting the urge to binge, but after days of eating nothing at all, Josie would break into a binge and devour everything, in hopes of discovering what it was she actually wanted "to cram into [her]self," and to "postpone, preferably forever, the moment [her] mouth would be empty again" (LS 184).

Josie tries to convince the doctor, Suzanne, and herself that her binges were not linked to feelings brought out through sex. When the doctor asks if she has ever had a pleasurable sexual experience, she says nothing, but envisions Amanda-Jane: "her body: lean, golden, toasty" (LS 188).[17] Josie's attraction to Amanda is not only a strong memory of sexual desire for another person, but is also a memory of a significant bond with another woman. But because it resulted in Josie's self-hatred, it instilled in her negative associations of desire, sexuality, and femaleness.[18] These connections became evident at Amanda's beach house, which was the location of Josie's first binge eating.

As she recalls other episodes of the sex/binge cycle, Josie gives the impression that binges were destroying her anorexic disciplines. Actually, they only made her regimens stricter: she continued to drop pounds by limiting herself to two slices of bread a day, (one in the morning and one at night), plus an apple every other day (which was often forgone). With this continuing weight loss, her self-reflection became so divided, her want and fear of eternal, repetitive presence so strong, that she saw her belly as always enormous, "soft and full and overripe" (LS 190). She was aware of her disintegrating mental capacity, but did not have the capacity to do anything about it: "Inside, an icebound emptiness opened up. I would find myself staring at something... and have no idea how long I'd been sitting there, propping my head up with my hands" (LS 190).

In this deterioration, she began to take pride in the very female attributes she despised. Speaking about her sexual affair with a professor, Josie claims "I prided myself on making no demands. I just kept myself available and in shape. I thought I was happy" (LS 191). Here, Josie's splitting reveals anorexia's paradoxical reaffirmation of female silence,

submission and complacency; her attempts at counter-power seem to have collapsed into a deeper crises of the self: "my lying rigid and miserable while he laboured over me, sweating and panting" (LS 207). In the boomerang effect of abjection, Josie's lover "once a week, for almost and hour" had become the "only point of reference" she had to ensure her existence (LS 198). She needed him and was thankful for his "habitual inattentiveness," because it allowed her to have him while maintaining regimens of starvation and excessive exercise (LS 207).[19]

As Josie continued to lose weight, dropping to about 75 pounds,[20] she became increasingly afraid of gaining weight and began taking diet pills to sustain herself: "I had become a hologram, unreal and radioactive and empty at the core... It was wonderful" (LS 201). Josie's narrative echoes Susan Bordo's concern over the postmodern body "whose own unity has been shattered by the choreography of multiplicity" ("Feminism" 144). And similar to Nyasha's final episode of mimicry that collapsed into a splitting between the figures of narcissism and paranoia, Josie's emptiness culminates in a final collapse and splitting.

Realizing "the awful struggle" for subjectivity through starvation "would never end," because she was contained by her own continuous "surveillance," Josie tears at her body in a fit of frustration (LS 217). While Nyasha tried to disintegrate women's oppression by jabbing fragments of clay and glass into her skin, Josie seeks to find identification and endorsement of femaleness by mutilating herself. First shattering a water glass, she starts yanking the hair from her scalp and gnawing at her own flesh. She then walks barefoot across the shattered glass to look at herself in a mirror. In this painful moment of splitting:

"I understood I could be both *here* and *there* at the same time," she dances on the broken glass, and then satiates her want by eating the shards (LS 217-9).

Josie was "suffocating in the fog of [her] own stupefaction" and now realizes "it never occurred to me that I had a choice. It never occurred to me that I was in despair" (LS 209). Through her hospital experience, she is able to question her anorexic strategies:

> what was it that I had hoped my skeleton would tell me? I can't seem to grasp it anymore. Somehow I thought I could make more of myself by making less of myself. Somehow I thought I could become some body. (LS 205)

Josie's mandate "the worse you feel, the better you are" saw her through eight years of masochistic attempts at self-creation in which she achieved only self-abjection (LS 223). She understands "I had reached such a pitch of discipline that my own abstention was beyond my control," and accepts that "I" may be the slenderest word, but it is also "the flimsiest" (LS 205). Contemplating that subjectivity can be developed through acknowledging needs, rather than denying them, Josie has "a flash of longing to find [Suzanne] and cling to her body, so solid and substantial, to hold on so that I never have to leave, never have to fill the chill of empty space around me," and acknowledges her desire to initiate and maintain a positively-valued female experience (LS 227).

Josie's realization of co-existing "choice" and "despair" seems to have approached de Beauvoir's premise that women have a certain freedom in forming their gendered selves, and by focusing on the *body as situation*, can begin to dismantle the norms that precipitate pain and shame. As she adjusts her focus from resistance (through abjection and anorexia) to agency (through reintegration and bonding), her struggle for subjectivity shifts from

controlling and naming to accepting and understanding. Through this shift, she recognizes the paradox of abjection and self-denial:

> I thought the body could be redesigned as a perfect, self-sufficient machine. But the more I denied it, the louder it cried. The more I reduced it, the less I found. The more I wasted it, the more space it claimed, until my whole mind was under occupation. (LS 230)

In this statement, Josie expresses de Beauvoir's view that the pursuit of disembodiment or transcendence from embodied sex cannot be achieved, for she discovers that her body, her sex, and her gender, can never really be denied. The denial of her body resulted, ironically, in an embodiment of denial, as well as a denigration of her body. With this illumination, Josie's concerns shift from "the body" to a concern of her "whole" self, which incorporates her body (LS 230).

The collapse of borders, the recognition of want: these are aspects of abjection that imply an inherent negativity. The logic of abjection, however, maintains that resistance and self-denigration designate a passage to agency and self-creation. By complicating our visions of femininity, the duplicitous powers of anorexia, abjection, splitting and rupture can reconstruct female subjectivity in ways that do not collude with normative, constraining ideals. But for the disintegration of borders to be liberating, for there to be value in collapse, abjection must surpass the "fantasy" of "totality--narcissistic completeness" (WT 206) seen in visionary facades such as Josie's infinite reflection and dream of being endlessly represented, as well as in Nyasha's narcissism and paranoia that repeated furiously and uncontrollably in her final breakdown.[21]

In Josie's case, abjection contributed to the razing of binary relations, where the *I* converged with *Other*, and by de-centering *I*, began to dismantle Josie's vision of power in a linear (but specular) identity. Josie "needed to discover what was left when excess was stripped away" before she could acknowledge her "essentials" of need, want and desire (LS 230). Now, she grabs at her flesh with a new resolution: "this is the body I must learn to inhabit...Can I learn to be so present; can I learn to be so full?" (LS 228) Realizing that she will not disappear if she replaces self-repudiation with bonding and care, Josie is able to shatter anorexic representation and discover a means to the subjectivity she has been struggling for all along.

In *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf suggests contemporary young women are seriously weakened from "inheriting the general fallout of two decades of the beauty myth's backlash," which is evidenced in the high degree of eating disorders in our society (210). Alternatively, *Life-Size* conveys that women can be strengthened by their experiences of disintegration and struggles within the socio-symbolic contract, to the effect that Josie's experience of anorexia strengthens her self-representation and subjectivity. *Life-Size* seems to be asking Kristeva's question: "how can we reveal our place... and then as we want to transform it?" (WT 199), to which Kristeva would no doubt respond women's subjectivity must exist "without refusing or sidestepping this socio-symbolic order" but "in trying to explore the constitution and functioning of this contract... from the very personal affect experienced when facing it as subject and as a woman" (WT 200).

Conclusion: Incorporating Subjectivity

Gathering the fragments of a divided, repressed body and reaching out to others does not necessarily imply a lack or deficiency.[1]

By writing beyond the ending, Lessing, Dangarembga and Shute have enabled Martha, Nyasha and Josie to develop subjectivity in ways that begin to access womanhood--a womanhood that is defamiliarized from traditional, constraining ideals. These three narratives have embodied and illustrated the theoretical issues I discussed in part one, and have also traced some of the mechanisms by which female subjectivity is developed and problematized in women's fiction. In each narrative, the complexities of women's self-representation were conveyed through images of self-reflection and splitting, which related women's complicated experiences of their bodies, exacerbated by prospects of agency, choice and self-determination.

In our transitional culture, new possibilities are being charted and actualized for women, but undermined by gender roles and sexuality which continue to be constrained by tradition. Brumberg suggests than in this impasse, when young women are feeling anxieties which they cannot resolve, the cult of diet and exercise has become the prominent "philosophy of the self" practised in our society (269). It follows that when personal and social difficulties arise, women become preoccupied with their bodies and control of appetite. The numbers of women who have fallen prey to anorexia confirms the general relationship between acute social change and the intensification of bodily control, and in a society where consumption is invariably linked with identity, the anorexic thus makes nonconsumption the "perverse centrepiece" of her subjectivity (271).

I have suggested that women construct subjectivity by negotiating between normative representations of femininity and the possibilities that they can be agents of discourse and experience. These possibilities are achieved through women's self-representation, where "subjects produce themselves as women and, thus, make 'visible' the contradictions in hegemonic discursive and political systems" (ES 190). As I have shown, this self-representation is affectively embodied by the anorexic, who makes visible the constraints and contradictions inscribed in dominant norms. But self-representation cannot just settle in a bodily text against hegemonic systems, for it is ineffective if it remains contained by its own resistance. What powers are needed for women to move from resistance to creation?

Foucault's genealogies suggested that discursive powers were developed through capillary action, where power reached into the very grain of individuals, touched their bodies and inserted itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, and everyday lives (P/K 39). In this manner, apparatuses such as discipline, panopticism and hysterization were instilled by dominant powers, internalized by subjects, and perpetuated through effective attention to them. Foucault's ideas, however, did not consider how individuals can create themselves from within social constraints, in ways that deface, elide and deconstruct those very apparatuses. This power has been developed, though, in the thoughts and behaviours of Martha, Nyasha and Josie, and in the authors' writing of their narratives.

In place of Foucauldian notions of interiorization that seem only to constrain women's affective situations, my literary genealogy has established what Kristeva calls "an interiorization of the founding separation of the socio-symbolic contract" (WT 210). Martha learned that a rejection of femininity did not facilitate her quest for selfhood and insertion

into linear time. Rather, she was discovering how accessing female experience could enhance her self-representation and development of autonomy. From there, Nyasha discovered that anorexia was an affective means to disrupt and disorder colonial power, but had yet to determine how she could develop agency from the space she had created through mimicry and menace. Finally, Josie is in the process of developing that signifying space. Having experienced the boomerang effects of anorexia and abjection, Josie is beginning to embrace the powers of women's experience that will support her desire for cyclical and monumental self-representation.

In place of disciplinary, controlling, self-repudiating powers, Martha, Nyasha and Josie are realizing the affectiveness of "aesthetic practices" which deconstruct the social inscriptions that totalize and equalize women's roles, through expressing women's individual and collective voices and by claiming responsibility for themselves and others (WT 210). By speaking out, taking care and sharing with one another, women can surpass self-destructive discourses and make claims to a subjectivity endowed with recognition and integration of female differences. This intersubjectivity acknowledges that women--in relation to their bodies--are socio/historically constituted, but more importantly, self-constituting.

Intersubjectivity also complicates conceptions of gender. The narratives in *Martha Quest*, *Nervous Conditions* and *Life Size* revealed that gender "ought not be constructed as a stable identity," rather, gender is a representation "tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 140). This repetition was perpetuated largely through self-destructive disciplines, but began to emerge in reconstructive aesthetic practices that sustained relational, situated experiences that were

always embodied. These narratives confirmed that to overcome Cartesian fabrications, women must relinquish not only visions of a unified, linear self, but also visions that are "intoxicated" with self-destructive goals of multiplicity and plurality (Bordo, "Feminism" 145). It is at this point, when agency is founded in intersubjectivity, that a woman can situate herself at a "nexus of culture and choice, and 'existing' one's body" becomes a personal, self-enhancing way "of taking up and reinterpreting received gender norms" (Butler, "Variations" 134).

The ability to experience maternal time, womanhood, and femininity without masochistic and self-annihilating behaviours is a difficult process (WT 207). But through women's literature, we identify with the experiences that are women's history, and acknowledge its difficulties, its differences. In this way, women's writing offers our culture "a more flexible and free discourse, one able to name what has thus far ever been an object of circulation in the community; the enigmas of the body, the dreams, secret joys, shames, hatreds of the second sex" (WT 207).

Endnotes

Introduction: Embodying the Issues

1. In clinical and psychological disciplines, anorexia is considered a multi-determined disorder that arises from familial, psychological, biological and social elements. Anorexia has been increasing in frequency and fanaticism over the last twenty years, and has also spread to populations outside its original balance of white middle/upper class women. See Paul Garfinkel and David Gardiner, *Anorexia Nervosa: A Multidimensional Perspective* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1982); Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988).

Currently, the criteria that diagnoses anorexia is as follows (at least three of the four criteria must be present to some degree):
1) Onset prior to age 25. 2) 'Lack' of appetite accompanied by weight loss of 25% of body weight or more. 3) A distorted, implacable attitude towards eating food, weight and hunger such as denial of weakness, apparent enjoyment in losing weight and finding pleasure in refusal of food, a desire for extreme thinness and distorted body-image, hoarding or continual obsessing over food. 4) At least two of: lungo (soft, fine hair), hyperactivity, bingeing and purging, amenorrhea.

2. I borrow the term *signifying space* from Julia Kristeva's "Women's Time" in *The Kristeva Reader* (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 209. I borrow the term *writing beyond the ending* from Rachel Duplessis, to characterize the narrative styles of Lessing, Dangarembga, and Shute. See *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985) 5.

3. Jana Sawicki outlines various critiques of Foucault's earlier works, such as *Discipline and Punish*, *Power/Knowledge* and *The History of Sexuality, volume one* which claim his genealogies are actually victimologies, and make no shift from subjection to agency and resistance. (Jana Sawicki, Lecture on "Foucault, Feminism and Questions of Identity," McGill University, January 28, 1993).

Part I: On Becoming Our Bodies

1. Quotation from Simone de Beauvoir, cited in Kim Chernin, *The Obsession* (New York: Harper, 1981) 66.

2. Throughout the first chapter of my thesis, I discuss "the anorexic," "the anorexic body" and "the anorexic woman" to describe certain behaviours, characteristics, emotional and physical states that typify an anorexic experience. I do not mean to suggest that all women (and the small percentage of men) who are anorexic experience themselves and their lives in the same way.

3. My argument here is against views that situate anorexia solely in the crossroads of the nature/culture schema which pervades feminist and social theories in the 1970's. While touching on some very important elements of anorexia, including its use as protest of a culture to which women have no access, the argument neglects important areas of anorexic behaviour, to the result that anorexia is seen as an illness of suppression and victimization. I believe women have more assertion than this, and the third generation feminisms of the 1990's must seek ways to move from conceptions of women as victims, women as oppressed. Women are embodied persons, not Cartesian minds. See Patricia Naulty, "I Never Talk of Hunger" Diss. (Ohio: Ohio State UP, 1989), for an approach to anorexia which follows Sherry Ortner's 1970's approach, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in *Women, Culture and Society*, eds. M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1974) and Edwin Ardner, *Perceiving Women* (New York: Halstead Press, 1978).

4. For an overview of the historical development of Western dualism, see "Phaedo" in *The Dialogues of Plato* 4th ed., trans Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953); St. Augustine's *The Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (Middlesex: Penguin, 1961) 164ff; "Passions of the Soul" in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elizabeth Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969) 353ff.

5. In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" Foucault responds to Nietzschean and Freudian concerns with the emergence of culture, in which culture is the creation of meanings and values that, through its signifying practice, requires the disintegration of the body. For Nietzsche and Foucault, the body is understood as a blank page on which cultural values are inscribed, and corporeal destruction is required for the production of the speaking subject and its significations. See this essay and others in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977) 148ff. For feminist criticism on Foucault's vision of the body and the subject-effect, see Judith Butler, "Subversive Bodily Acts" in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 128-41.

6. Interpreting anorexia as purely a metaphor of symbolic subversion would require the support of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and feminist-Lacanian theory. Neither of these discourses offer a practical domain which can be applied to the notion of anorexia as a cultural construct and multifaceted resistance. French feminism, which is rooted in Western philosophy, linguistics and psychoanalysis, often views woman and the feminine as repressed or misrepresented in dominant Western discourses. Although this is an important argument, it negates the area of the practical, material/social structures which have coded women and their bodies, as well as women's own practice of these encodings. For an interesting article that compares and contrasts Foucauldian discourse with feminist psychoanalytic theories - and opts for the latter - see Isaac Balbus, "Disciplining Women: Michel Foucault and the Power of Feminist Discourse" in *Feminism as Critique*, eds. Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987) 110-28.

See Jane Flax "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory" in *Signs* (12.4 1987): 621-43, for arguments against the ideological nature/culture dichotomy and problematizing French feminism's writing the body as discourses for expressing women's experience and history. She sees the symbolic approach to construction of gender problematic because it obscures its own projection and does not ground itself in concrete social situations. Similarly, Elaine Showalter discusses the inadequacies of both writing the body and women's relation to the nature/culture dichotomy in "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" reprinted in *Modern Criticism and Theory*, ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988) 330-53.

I do not mean to suggest that language is an ephemeral entity seperate from some obdurate, empirical, material reality. Rather, language is rooted in culture, difference, meaning and sociality, and must be read in relation to its social context, its cultural constructs.

Elsewhere in my thesis, I employ the theories of Julia Kristeva, who although is a French feminist of the Lacanian school, does not situate her epistemology in the same camp as Hélène Cixous, Monique Wittig and Luce Irigaray.

7. In "The Politics of Writing (The) Body," Arleen Dallery supports French feminism, regarding *l'ecriture feminine* as a subversive discourse that operates against the signifying practises of Western culture, against "all the images and inscriptions of woman's body that reduce it through fetishizing, fragmenting and degrading woman's body" (65). Writing the body posits itself against "dominant discourse, the male gaze, or the scopic economy" (65). Dallery notes that "various cultural practices - fashion, dieting, jogging, weightlifting - can be interpreted as technologies of control of the body, as reconstituting a woman's body... But, *ecriture feminine* makes these signifiers of woman's body slip away" (65). While she

sees this as a liberating effect, I believe that her disinterest in the corporeal realm of women's bodies and cultural practices which create women's bodily expectations relegate women's bodies to an inevitable position of objectification. Do the cultural signifiers of women's bodies merely "slip away"? And if they do, what is left behind to constitute women's experiences? See Dallery's article in *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, eds. Alison Jaggar and Susan Bordo, eds. (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1989) 52-68.

8. While de Beauvoir's postulate in *The Second Sex* has been criticized for using a European bourgeois perspective to idealize and universalize the experience of women, it has nonetheless established a status of classic, ground-breaking feminist thought.

9. I am using de Beauvoir's premise of gendered, situated subjectivity because it seems to locate itself between but against postmodern hyperconstructive notions of the subject as fictional or "effect," and Enlightenment notions of subjectivity as autonomous, male-centred, transcendent. See Sonia Kruks, "Gender and Subjectivity: Simone de Beauvoir and Contemporary Feminism" *Signs* (18.1 Autumn 1992): 89-111.

10. Beauvoir discusses 'man' in terms of Enlightenment conceptions of man.

11. Beauvoir's premises were informed by co-existentialist Jean Paul Sartre. In *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), Sartre argued that the body is coextensive with personal identity, while consciousness extends beyond the body. His effort was to situate the disembodiment of personal identity in a paradoxical but necessary relation to embodied consciousness, thus forming a duality of consciousness that is both corporeal and transcendent. For Sartre, the consciousness or mind was experienced as a mode of perceiving, or *Being-for-Itself*, while the body was experienced as a mode of becoming, a constant and objective *Being-in-Itself*. To these entities Sartre added a third, that of *Being-for-Others*, where the mind or consciousness (the for-itself) seeks to recover it's Being by making an object of the other. This suggested the process of self-definition is characterized by seeking power over others, where the Self is created through domination over the Other.

Beauvoir's notions of subjectivity were also derived from working on the journal *Les Temps Modernes* with Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. See Sonia Kruks, "Simone de Beauvoir: Teaching Sartre about Freedom" in *Sartre Alive*, eds. Ronald Aronson and Adrien van den Hoven (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991) 285-300.

12. Many feminists believe gender construction becomes problematic when de Beauvoir's notion of freedom is considered, when her premise begins to converge with Foucault's notion that subject/bodies are historically constituted, rather than constituting. For example, her

chapter on "Formation" describes an "active production of the self" that approaches a Foucauldian genealogy of discipline and technology of the body. See Sonia Kruks, "Gender and Subjectivity: Simone de Beauvoir and Contemporary Feminism" in *Signs* (18.1 1992): 103n. Also, Monique Wittig problematizes Beauvoir's ambiguity by taking up the question of choice with respect to gendered identity in "The Category of Sex" *Feminist Issues* (2 Fall 1982): 63-3; and in "The Mark of Gender" *Feminist Issues* (5 Fall 1985): 3-12.

13. For de Beauvoir's near misogynist dislike for the female body, see *The Second Sex*, 34ff; *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, trans. James Kirkup (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1963) 131ff. For critiques of de Beauvoir's repudiation of women's bodies, see Mary Evans, "Views of Women and Men in the Work of Simone de Beauvoir" *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 3 (1980): 395-404; Dorothy McCall, "Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* and Jean-Paul Sartre" *Signs* 5.2 (1979): 209-23; Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1981) 306ff. For an alternative feminist reading which finds value in de Beauvoir's vision of the female body, see Linda Zerilli, "A Process Without a Subject: Simone de Beauvoir and Julia Kristeva on Maternity" in *Signs* 18.1 (Autumn 1992): 111-35.

Beauvoir also conveys the connections between women's conflicting roles, development of subjectivity and experiences of the body in *Les Belles Images* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). In this fictional work, Beauvoir depicts an anorexic woman, Laurence, whose repressed rage towards her mother, coupled with a refusal to ingest the hypocrisy of modern society, leads to Laurence's experience of and resistance to entrapment. She feels caught between motherhood and professional life, and uses self-starvation to try to resolve her feeling of limbo.

14. Foucault's first volume of *The History of Sexuality* supports the notion of female bodies as social construction. His contention that sexuality is not a natural, private, repressed discourse but rather, a cultural construction that affirms power and discursive knowledge, has informed our current conceptions of sexuality and the sex-gender system. Foucault suggests that historically, dominant powers produced certain discourses of sexuality for the purpose of normalizing them. With the rise of capitalism arose four different techniques by which the technology of sex was substantiated: the sexualization of children, the control of procreation, the psychiatrization of abnormal or anomalous sexual behaviours and the hysterization of women's bodies. These discourses were normalized through "rituals of confession" and "scientific regularity," and sustained in pedagogical institutions, economics, medicine, reformatory institutions, psychoanalysis, the family. As this sexualization of society evolved, the technology of sex emerged as a strategic set of disciplines which maximized livelihood

and sexuality, while normalizing gender roles. In this way, sexuality has become a representation of societal roles and relations. See *The History of Sexuality, volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random, 1980).

15. For instance, feminist film theory posits a strong focus on image, representation and conception of women and women's bodies, as accorded by the male gaze. See Laura Mulvey "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Screen* (16.3 1975): 6-18. In anorexic literature, see Helena Michie *The Flesh Made World* (New York: Oxford, 1987). For a text which discusses practice and perception of women's bodies, see Judith Hanna *Dance, Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance and Desire* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989).

16. For autobiographical accounts, see Aimee Lui, *Solitare* (New York: Harper, 1979); Sheila Macleod, *The Art of Starvation* (London: Virago Press, 1981); Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (Toronto: Vintage, 1990) 201-8; Maureen and Corry-Ann Ardell, *Portrait of an Anorexic* (Vancouver: Flight Press, 1985). For biographical accounts mixed with feminist analysis, see Eva Szekely, *Never Too Thin* (Toronto: The Woman's Press, 1988); Kim Chernin, *The Obsession* (1981) and Hilde Bruch, *The Golden Cage* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1978).

17. Anorexic behaviour pervasively emerges during two problematic stages in women's lives: adolescence, and corresponding to women's entry into higher education, when contradictory expectations are transferred from the private/familial sphere to the public and institutional sphere. In fact, the common age of anorexic women has shifted in the past ten years, such that the majority of anorexics are no longer in high school, but are largely university students. This shift reflects both the degree and influence that institutional and public expectations have on women. For further discussion of anorexia's position on university campuses and within third wave backlash, see Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth.*

18. I take the phrase *relentless pursuit of thinness* from Eva Szekely (1988).
I am in agreement with the theorists and studies that reveal how women, as well as men, create expectations for women to pursue fanatic thinness. Women's critical perception of their bodies are far more relentless than men's critical perception of women's bodies. See Kim Chernin, *The Hungry Self: Women, Eating and Identity* (New York: Times Books, 1985); Joan Brumberg, *Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease*; *The Female Body In Western Culture*, ed. Susan Suleiman (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1985); Carole Spitzack, *Confessing Excess: Women and the Politics of Body Reduction* (New York: SUNY, 1990).

19. Foucault defines *genealogical research* as an activity that does not infer an opposition between the abstract unity of theory and the concrete multiplicity of facts. Rather, it entertains "the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would alter, hierarchize and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science" (P/K 83). Genealogies are concerned with the insurrection of knowledges that oppose the effects of centralising powers and 'scientific' discourses, such as Marxian, psychoanalytic or semiotic theories. I find Foucault's work helpful because, as a reactivation of local knowledges, a genealogy attempts to emancipate historical knowledges from totalizing theories, thus allowing them to "struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse" (P/K 85). In Foucauldian terms, an *archaeology* is the appropriate methodology for analysing local discursive powers and knowledges, while a *genealogy* conceives the tacits by which these discursivities can be discussed.

20. I borrow the term *reverse discourse* from Foucault. See *The History of Sexuality: volume one* (New York: Random, 1980) 101ff.

21. See Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner, 1965). Here, Weber argues that the Reformation transposed religious, ascetic denial from the monastery into the secular family.

22. See Brian Turner's previous work, "The Government of the Body: Medical Regimens and the Rationalization of Diet" *British Journal of Sociology* (1982) 254-69.

23. For a socio/political discussion of Cartesian constructs of masculine and feminine relations to reason and passion, see Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1964) and *Durkheim on Religion: A Selection of Readings* (Boston: Routledge, 1975).

24. In Foucault's original French text of *Discipline and Punish*, the verb *surveiller* is used frequently. However, it has no adequate nor precise English translation. The English noun *surveillance* "has an altogether too restricted and technical use" which does not exactly capture Foucault's notion. Other terms such as *supervise, inspect* and *observe* are equally inadequate in corresponding to Foucault's surveiller. See 'translator's note' in *Discipline and Punish* (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

25. As a political philosopher, Bentham's vision for political reform through utilitarianism greatly influenced nineteenth century thought. See Jeremy Bentham *Works* IV (London 1843).

26. Foucault notes that there were "revolts against the gaze" (P/K 162-3).

27. The notion of *woman as lack* comes largely out from Freudian epistemology, and is propagated in Lacanian thought and feminist responses to Freud and Lacan. See Helene Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation" in Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer, eds. *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, trans. Annette Kuhn (New York: Longman, 1989) 683ff; Catherine Clement and Helene Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986); *In Dora's Case: Freud, Hysteria, Feminism*, eds. Charles Berhneimer and Claire Kahane (New York: Columbia UP, 1985); Jacques Lacan *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, Norton, 1977) 230-44; Luce Irigaray *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1985). For a convincing critique and overview of Lacanian and feminist/psychoanalytic/ linguistic theory, see Mahoney and Yngvesson, "The Construction of Subjectivity and the Paradox of Resistance" in *Signs* (18.1 Autumn 1992): 44-73. French feminist (Irigaray, Cixous, Wittig, Kristeva) notions of subjectivity pertain that identity is formed through language, where language offers discourses in which subjects can position themselves. Amidst the semiotic and symbolic, identities are not unitary, but contradictory and shifting. I discuss this issue further in the section on Josie.

28. According to Lacan, entry into language (the symbolic) shatters unity, offering an illusion of wholeness which veils the actuality of fragmentation in subjectivity. This illusion emerges in Lacan's "mirroring phase" where a child experiences identity through reflection of others, over which she *seems* to have control. This notion (which is intriguing, complex, and which I have not done justice here) denies possibilities of agency, for the Lacanian subject who is anxious over her experience of loss acquires identity as an effect, rather than an actively constituting her self-representation. See Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." *Ecrits: A Selection, 1-7* (New York: Methuen, 1977). For alternative conceptions of subjectivity - conceptions which are sympathetic to my own perspective, see Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987); Wendy Hollway, "Gender Difference and the Production of Subjectivity" in *Changing the Subject* (New York: Metheun, 1984) 227-63; Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time" and "The System and the Speaking Subject" in *The Kristeva Reader* (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 187-312, 24-33; Judith Butler *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

29. I take the phrase "tyranny of slenderness" from Kim Chernin, *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness.*

30. Bordo supports her premise by discussing Foucault's notion that female sexuality was normalized through medicalization of women's bodies, where constant probing by doctors, psychiatrists and family eroticized and solidified certain experiences which women then came to identify with their own bodily experiences (HS1 47-8).

31. For instance, Bordo suggests that the corset was a signifier of cultural power that constrained women's bodies, as well as an actual, physical constraint on women's bodies ("Anorexia" 91). Alternatively, David Kunzle argues that the corset was a means of speaking erotic desire, on the part of the wearer. A tight-laced woman was able to display her sexuality but deliberately prolong sexual readiness. Given these speculations, it's difficult to discern what is power and what is objectification. See David Kunzle, *Fashion and Fetishism: A Social History of the Corset, Tight-Lacing and Other Forms of Body Sculpture* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982).

32. Some early accounts of the rebellion against nurturing and maternal bonding can be seen in the case of Frau Emmy, in Freud and Brueur, *Studies in Hysteria* (London: Penguin, 1974). Autobiographical accounts can be found in Sheila Macleod's *The Art of Starvation* and Aimee Lui's *Solitaire*. Kim Chernin discusses biographical and theoretical mother-hatred in anorexia in *The Obsession*. See also Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1978) for an object-relations approach to the development of female identity and its relation to the mother bond; *The (M)Other Tongue*, eds. Shirley Gardiner, Claire Kahane and Madelon Springer (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1985).

I do not agree with perspectives on anorexia that focus on mother-hatred as *the* cause of self-starvation. Although it is obvious in most cases that fear and repudiation of motherhood, reproduction and related social roles are intrinsic to anorexic resistance, these elements need to be examined within a larger framework that includes other relationships (such as father-daughter) and sexual experiences. For instance, there are strong connections between anorexia, abuse and rape/incest. See chapters on "Hunger" and "Violence" in Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* 179-269; Agnes Spignesi, *Starving Women: A Psychology of Anorexia Nervosa* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1983). My sections on Nyasha and Josie touch on issues of sexual and non-sexual violence, and their relation to self-starvation.

33. With its explosion during the last 15 years, anorexia is currently expanding into ethnic populations and all socioeconomic levels. See Paul Garfinkel and David Gardiner *Anorexia Nervosa: A Multidimensional Perspective*, 102-3; Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease*, 199-204. While sources on anorexia indicate a cross-cultural, cross-class, cross-race pervasiveness, sources on hysteria indicate a

locatedness in bourgeois, Western culture. However, this could be an oversight on and in studies of hysteria.

34. See John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1988), for an account of women's positions in Western, industrial-capitalist society.

35. As mentioned in an earlier note, Foucault discusses four mechanisms of control over sexuality: the pedagogization of children's sex, the socialization of procreative behaviour, the psychiatrization of perversity, and the hysterization of women's bodies (HS1 105ff).

36. See William Gull "Anorexia Nervosa" *Transactions of the Clinical Society of London* (1874); J.M. Charcot *Disorders of the Nervous System* (1889). For a lengthy discussion of Lasgue, Gull and Charcot, see Joan Brumberg's *Fasting Girls*, 112-35. For the original psychoanalytic interpretations of hysteria/anorexia, see Sigmund Freud and Joseph Brueur *Studies in Hysteria* (1974).

37. See chapters 2-5 of *Fasting Girls*, which uses historical accounts to link the protests of hysteria and anorexia, as well as elucidate their differences. For a feminist literary approach to hysteria, see Susan Gilbert and Sandra Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: the woman writer and the nineteenth century literary imagination* (Newhaven: Yale UP, 1979). See also Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987).

Particularly interesting is Roger Poole's biography of Virginia Woolf, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978). Although Poole does not actually connect Woolf's 'madness' and 'fear of food' to hysteria and anorexia, he spends chapters tracing her anorexic and hysteric thoughts and behaviours (from her own letters and journals, as well as from Leonard's). He also makes connections between her behaviours and the effects of destructive relationships Woolf had with her uncles, her father and Leonard. Lastly, he goes into detail on her "rest cure" where she was forced to lay inactive and eat gross amounts of food in order to restore her mental and physical health. See also Virginia Woolf's *Moments of Being* (London: Harcourt, 1969).

38. For instance, during the fin de siècle (when hysteria was at its peak), European art was characterized in part by pervasive images of women as femme fatale, Salomé, vamp, Delilah, Sphinx. These were anxious depictions of women and female sexuality as voracious, consuming, insatiable - painted by men. See Carol Duncan, "Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth Century Vanguard Painting" in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, eds. Norma Bronde, and Mary Garrard (New York: Harper, 1982) 293-314.

Part II: 'I' is the Skinniest Subject

1. Sheila Macleod, *The Art of Starvation* (65).

2. Robinson takes this notion from Denise Riley, "Does Sex Have a History? Women and Feminism" in *New Formations* 1 (Spring 1987).

3. Robinson's argument is similar to Alcoff's argument for women's positional subjectivity. See Linda Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism versus Poststructuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory" in *Signs* (13.3 1988): 405-36.

4. Kristeva believes the socio-symbolic contract defines women's roles in society, where women's relationships to the social (law) and the symbolic (language) structure and inscribe their positions "as mothers, wives, nurses, doctors, teachers..." (WT 199-200). The socio-symbolic contract pervasively designates and demarcates women by their reproductive (natural) capacities. Kristeva's conception of the socio-symbolic contract stems from similar ideas as Lauretis' concept of the sex-gender system, which I discussed in an earlier section of this thesis.

Martha

1. Of the feminist literary criticism on *Martha Quest* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1981), I found Sally Robinson's views to be the most convincing and original. In *Engendering the Subject: Gender and Self-Representation in Contemporary Women's Fiction* (New York: State U of New York, 1991), Robinson suggests that *Martha Quest* can be read as both a classic quest story or bildungsroman, and as a humanist paradigm of the individual self, but Lessing's narrative is filled with conscious gaps that suggest that the novel be read against, or in critique of, these conventions (29-31).

Although there are a number of fascinating studies on Martha as a modernist figure, these articles have not been conducive to examining the connections between her quest for selfhood and her struggles with her body. Some of the literary criticism was helpful, though, for broadening my thoughts on Martha's character. See M.J. Diamond, "Martha Quest: The Self and Its Spatial Metaphors" in *Women Writing in South Africa: A Critical Anthology* Cherry Clayton, ed. (Marshalltown: Heinmann Southern Africa, 1989): 163-81; Marcy Sheiner, "Thematic Consistency in the Work of Doris Lessing" in *Doris Lessing Newsletter* (11.2 1987): 4-14; Jean Pickering, "Martha Quest and the Anguish of Feminine Fragmentation" in *Critical Essays on Doris Lessing*, Claire Sprague, ed. (Boston: Hall, 1986): 64-100; Betty Mandl, "Martha Quest: the Dynamics of Mood" in *Doris Lessing*

Newsletter (5.2 1981): 3-4; Elayne Rapping, "Unfree Women: Feminism in Doris Lessing's Novels" in *Women's Studies* (v3 1975): 32pp; *A Small Personal Voice* Paul Schlueter, ed. (New York: Vintage, 1975).

2. In *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside* (Toronto: Anansi, 1986), Lessing discusses some of her own experiences in Southern Rhodesia. In the "Author's note," it becomes clear that *The Children of Violence* series and the character of Martha are autobiographical reflections of Lessing's experience of growing up as a white woman in colonial Africa.

3. A significant portion of the literary criticism on *Martha Quest* compares Martha to Stephen Daedalus. See Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Literature Exclude Women Authors" in *American Quarterly*, (Summer 1981): 123-39; Grace Stewart, *A New Mythos: The Novel of the Artist as Heroine*, 1877-1977 (Montreal: Eden Press, 1981); Nancy Topping Bazin, "The Moment of Revelation in *Martha Quest* and Comparable Moments by Two Modernists," *Modern Fiction Studies* (26 1980): 87-98; Jean Pickering, "Martha Quest and the Anguish of Female Fragmentation" *Critical Essays on Doris Lessing* (Boston: GK Hall, 1986): 94-100.

4. Martha's frustrations will eventually surface as the transforming experiences they actually are. But her understanding of fragmented, female identity as positive process does not emerge until later in the series of *Children of Violence*.

5. Martha's negative experience of formal education reflects Lessing's. In the "Note on the Author" in *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, we read the following description of Lessing:

> The isolation of her parents' Southern Rhodesian farm was stifling to the young Lessing, and she learned to use her imagination to create her own fictional worlds. She quit school at age fourteen, continuing her education informally by extensive reading.

6. Lessing has created a fictional country which appears to be Southern Rhodesia, what is now Zimbabwe - hence Zambesia.

7. Martha's concerns over race, sex and class oppression are reflections of Lessing's personal observations of prejudices and oppression, predominantly in Africa. For instance, Lessing recalls "in old Southern Rhodesia the white attitudes towards the blacks were extreme: prejudiced, ugly, ignorant. More to the point, these attitudes were assumed to be unchallengeable and unalterable." See *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, 23-34.

8. Martha's move to town is like Lessing's move from her parents' farm to Salisbury, when she was eighteen. See "Note on the Author" in *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*.

9. Martha's urge to binge is a behaviour seen quite frequently in anorexic women. In *The Obsession*, Kim Chernin discusses the tendency for anorexic women to have the occasional but compulsive need to binge. She begins the chapter "Confessions of an Eater" with her own narrative:

> I catch a glimpse of myself in the reflecting surface of a store window... the body I see there is so very slender when I imagine that it is terribly fat. And then I am violently parted from my own reflection... I must eat now, at this moment, without delay...And so I ran from bakery to bakery, from street stall to street stall, buying cones of roasted chestnuts, which made me frantic because I had to peel away the skins. I bought a pound of chocolate and ate it as I ran...
>
> (6-7)

I discuss the anorexic compulsion to binge in the section on Josie as well.

Nyasha

1. At the time of completing this paper, there were only three published articles of literary criticism on *Nervous Conditions* (Seattle: The Seal Press, 1989). I found each one useful for framing my thoughts on the nature of women's experience in Zimbabwe. Each offers an informative discussion of Dangarembga's unique literary style and her Zimbabwean feminist perspective. However, these articles focus largely on Tambudzai - Tambu - whereas my study of *Nervous Conditions* focuses on Nyasha. See Sally McWilliams, "Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions: At the Crossroads of Feminism and Post-Colonialism" in *World Literature Written in English* (31.1 1991): 103-12; Brenda Bosman, "A Correspondence Without Theory: Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*" in *Current Writing* (2.1 1990): 91-100; Jacqueline Bardolf, "'The Tears of Childhood' of Tsitsi Dangarembga" in *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* (13.1 1990): 37-47.

2. Kristeva's concept of the second generation in "Women's Time" imparts a late 1970's approach to feminism, which focuses on a separateness of female experience, "female psychology and its symbolic realizations" (WT 194). Although her paradigm does not incorporate differences of race and class, it is helpful for contextualizing the relationship between Nyasha and Tambu, and for recognizing the strength developed through their mutually supportive perspectives. The second generation's "radicalization" against the socio-symbolic contract, through the development of "counter-power," is loosely seen in Nyasha's mimicry (WT 202). Her counter-power, however, does not aim to annihilate men, nor exist entirely without them. Rather, she uses it to shatter women's oppression.

3. The patriarchal mode of production is disturbingly evident in Tambu's immediate family. Tambu's family is a peasant, farming family, in which the patriarchal ideology has not given way to capitalist modes of production, and women are slave labourers and biological reproducers of the patriarchal family. Her family epitomizes that part of African culture "characterized by women's farming systems, 'women's work' consisted of planting, weeding, harvesting, processing, storing and cooking the food necessary to the daily sustenance of all members of the patriarchal unit" (Henn 43). Tambu describes many occasions on which "the patriarchy"--meaning her father and the subsequent hierarchy of males--are given unquestioned preferential treatment by the family women. For instance, she describes her aunt, "who was a good woman and a good wife and took pride in this identity... took to cooking, twice a day, a special pot of refrigerated meat for the patriarchy to eat as they planned and constructed the family's future" (NC 135-6). For a marxist-feminist, socio/historical overview of women's positions amidst patriarchal, colonial and capitalist realms of Zimbabwean culture in the late 20th century, see chapters 1-3, 6, in *Patriarchy and Class: African Women in the Home and the Workforce*, eds. Sharon Stichter and Jane Papart (London: Westview Press, 1988). See also *Women and Class in Africa*, eds. Claire Robertson and Iris Berger (New York: Africana, 1986).

4. See also Joan Brumberg's chapter "The Appetite as Voice" in *Fasting Girls,* 164-204.

5. Later, Tambu repeats to the reader that Nyasha does not like to be talked about in the third person. In this instance, Tambu's mother and Baba are discussing Nyasha's (in)ability to "bring us a son-in-law" and find "a good husband" (NC 131).

6. Although Tsitsi Dangarembga never overtly discusses Nyasha as "anorexic," she uses language which leads me to believe she has done some research on the illness. Also, Dangarembga studied medicine and psychology before turning to writing. See "About the Author" in *Nervous Conditions*.

7. Bhabha suggests this strategy is achieved when splitting is read "outside the canon of castration" and rather as "a problem of the enunciation of ambivalence (211). See "Articulating the Archaic" in *Literary Theory Today* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990) 203-18.

Josie

1. See Judith Butler "Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory and Psychoanalytic Discourse" in *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 324-340.

2. Kristeva suggests that in most cultures, there is some form of a maternal cult. In the Christian version, the body of the Virgin Mother "does not die but moves from one spatiality to another" (WT 191). In *Life-Size*, Josie seems to believe that through starvation she will not die, but rather exist endlessly, repetitively, spatially. For thorough and qualitative discussions of anorexia in the religious realm of medieval society, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987); Rudolph Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985).

3. I am discussing "splitting" here in a way that comes closest to Julia Kristeva's notion, which is defined as "subject in process/in question/on trial" and is opposed to the unity of the humanist self. See "Women's Time" (213n). This notion of splitting also converges with Homi Bhabha's notion, which I discussed in relation to Nyasha in the preceding section.

4. In *The Newly Born Woman* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986), Catherine Clement suggests that women inscribe on their bodies what they are not permitted to speak, such that the female body can be a site of defiance, but becomes simultaneously an object of spectacle (10). This conflict between defiance and spectacle is embodied in hysteria as well as anorexia. I touched on some similarities and differences between hysteria and anorexia in the first chapter.

5. In the previous section, I discussed something similar to "duplicitous speech" in terms of Homi Bhabha's notion of "double articulation," which was conveyed in Nyasha's mimicry and anorexia.

6. Here, Shute is playing with words (something she does throughout the novel). Josie is talking about the 1980's as well as her weight, which was about 80 pounds.

7. Hyperalimentation is a method used frequently on near-death hospitalized anorexics. It involves an implanting of tubes into an artery above the heart, in which glucose is then dripped into the body.

8. Jenefer Shute seems to be dallying with Lacan's 'mirror Stage' of identity formation. Lacan uses male masturbatory rhetoric to describe the mirror stage, which is "experienced as a temporal dialectic that decisively projects the formation of the individual into [linear!] history... a drama whose *internal thrust* is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation, and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in a lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends beyond a fragmented body-image to form its totality".

Josie's predicament seems to reflect Lacan's paradigm, but I read her situation as a

mimicry of it: *almost the same, but not quite.* First, Shute situates Josie's mirror identification at a much later age than Lacan's theory requires, ie., Josie has already discovered language, has already had sexual encounters. Also, Shute conveys how Josie does not successfully locate her identity through an internal thrust or purely Symbolic rejection of "the specular *I*" for "the social *I*." Rather, Josie's repetitive image collapses the specular with the social, and is part of a process of subjectivity, not a stage of Symbolic formation. Shute's subversion of Lacanian theory is also evident as Josie does not forsake "the real" relationship in the development of her subjectivity. In Lacan's theory, "the real" is the experience of self-completion through unity with the mother, which is cast to the realm of the imaginary as entry into language and the Symbolic forms the individual.

Josie's process is closer to Kristeva's notion of "semanalysis", which involves acceptance of the Symbolic Law *for the purposes of renovating it.* This notion is similar to de Lauretis' premise of displacing dominant discourses from within them, and to Bhabha's notion of mimicry. In semanalysis, Kristeva combines the notions of the splitting subject (similar to Lacan's mirroring) with the construction of the subject in and through social norms (closer to Foucault's genealogies), to the effect that the 'specular' (semiotic) and the 'social' (symbolic) exist together. The interaction between specular and social constitutes the *signifying process* of subjectivity. Although Kristeva's paradigm relates to language and linguistic practice, it can be seen in Josie's anorexia, which is both a "drive governed," personal experience and a "social space," constituted within the social order. Like Kristeva's linguistic theory, Josie's anorexia is thus concerned with possibilities of disrupting the social (Symbolic) order - the socio-symbolic contract.

See Jacques Lacan, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience" in *Ecrits: A Selection*, 1-7; Julia Kristeva, "The System and the Speaking Subject" in *The Kristeva Reader* (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 24-33. For an insightful critique of Lacanian construction of subjectivity, see Mahoney and Yngvesson, "The Construction of Subjectivity and the Paradox of Resistance: Reintegrating Feminist Anthropology and Psychology" in *Signs* (18.1 Autumn 1992): 44-73.

9. Later in her treatment programme, Josie looks at pictures of anorexic women who are in about the same condition as herself. Looking at one photo, Josie still claims "This woman is a skeleton, not I" (LS 71). She describes the photographed woman with awe, but also refers to her as "frightening, a hunched gargoyle on a stick." When her doctor asks what she thinks, Josie responds that she is not nearly as thin, and if she was, she would not go out in public, because "everyone would know immediately what the problem was" (LS 72). As the doctors and nurses look at her in disbelief, she realizes her self-diagnosis is a bit deluded.

10. Anorexia is prevalent among ballerinas and other dancers. See Gelsey Kirkland, *Dancing on My Grave* (New York: Jove Publications, 1987); L.M. Vincent, *Competing with the Sylph: Dancers and the Pursuit of the Ideal Body Form* (Penington, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1986). See also Judith Hanna, *Dance, Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance and Desire.*

11. In *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf defines the beauty myth as follows: "a violent backlash against feminism that uses [traditional] images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancement. It is the modern version of a social reflex that has been in force since the Industrial Revolution" (10). Of course, this is the same social reflex that has constructed and maintains disciplined, panoptic and hystericizing apparatuses.

12. Josie seems to represent what Naomi Wolf refers to as *the third wave: frozen in motion*: one fifth of women on university campuses who are burnt-out, silent, exhausted and starving themselves to death according to "an inhumane social order" (Wolf 208). In connection, Naomi Wolf suggests eating disorders may affect women so adversely that they find feminism "viscerally unconvincing."

13. In "A Process without a Subject: Simone de Beauvoir and Julia Kristeva on Maternity," Linda Zerilli discusses Beauvoir's and Kristeva's maternal paradigms in relation to the representations of Mary and Eve. See *Signs* 18.1 (1992): 111-35.

14. Josie's binges are more acute and deleterious than Martha's binges. Josie's difficulties at university are a realistic depiction of eating disorders at American universities, where approximately one in ten women on campuses have anorexic tendencies, and about one in five women are bulimic. For an overview of the most recent studies, see *The Beauty Myth*, 179-217.

15. Zerilli suggests that Simone de Beauvoir's repudiation of motherhood and the maternal can be read "not a rearticulation of masculinist values nor an embracement of the subject of modernity" but rather "a discursive strategy of defamiliarization: a highly charged, always provocative, and at times enraging restaging of the traditional drama of maternity." See "A Process Without a Subject: Simone de Beauvoir and Julia Kristeva on Maternity" in *Signs* (18.1 Autumn 1992): 112.

16. Josie recounts all the items in a particular binge, twice: "three donuts, a slice of pizza, a glass of milk, most of a package of chocolate chip cookies, a bag of Doritos, a glass of orange juice, and English muffin with butter and jam, another, a large dish of coffee ice cream with chocolate chunks, more cookies, pretzels, a bowl of Raisin Bran" (LS 174). All

these are foods which Josie has not eaten for months. This list is typical of an anorexic binge, and - like the Hippocratic and Platonic regimens I discussed in the first chapter - is equalized through purging and excessive exercise (as well as long durations of total starvation and laxatives). For discussions of the similarities and differences of bulimia and anorexia, see *The Hungry Self; The Obsession; Fasting Girls; Anorexia Nervosa: A Multidirectional Perspective: The Beauty Myth.*

17. This scene is narrated from an anti-Freudian perspective, in which Josie will not confess her desire to her doctor.

18. Josie conveys a number of intimations of anti-lesbianism, which seem to reveal her resentment towards women that stems from the painful relationships with her mother and Amanda-Jane. For instance, Josie refers to her physical therapist as "the dykey-looking instructor" (LS 180).

By separating herself from other women through starvation, masochistic relations with men and an anti-feminist stance, Josie hopes to discard the physicalities and vulnerabilities of womanhood. In the last stages of her anorexic resistance, she censures a number of women: "the attractive woman downstairs was clearly a call girl... upstairs was a drag queen - or someone who sounded like one, giggling and tottering about - and in the basement, a lumpy lesbian who stared lustfully at me" (LS 202). By this time, Josie has shown the reader that her observations are increasingly nebulous and often conceal contrary feelings. Thus, her judgements can be seen as an expression of her continually increasing fear and want of womanhood.

19. Apparently, Josie's lover barely notices her emaciation, for there is only one instance where Josie mentions he was alarmed at how she had grown so frail (LS 206). Given that Josie notes what seems to be every mention of her thinness, I think we can trust her narrative here, and assume that the professor was too daft to realize he was sleeping with a twenty-four year old woman on the brink of death.

20. Josie's weight at this time was about 30 lbs less than what is considered healthy for a woman her height (5'2'') with a small frame.

21. Here, I am following Bordo's critique of postmodern deconstruction of the subject, where the postmodern body's "own unity has been shattered by the choreography of multiplicity" (1990: 144) and is de-centred to the point that it becomes a monstrosity, such as a Cyborg. See Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980's," in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed Linda Nicholson (New

York: Routledge, 1990) 190-233; Susan Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernsism, Gender-Scepticism" in Nicholson, 133-156.

Conclusion: Incorporating Subjectivity

1. Trinh Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism.* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989): 37.

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