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Crafting the Intimate Body

Catherine Harper Professor
The British University in Egypt, catherine.harper@bue.edu.eg

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CATHERINE HARPER

Crafting the Intimate Body

Abstract: The intimate body—essentialized in Judy Chicago's The Dinner Party, *complicated in Helen Chadwick's* Eat Me—*is revisited through discourse on intersex, debate around trans identities and contemporary feminisms, via the subversive actions of radical crafting and visual, textual, material and performic queering.*

Keywords: bodies, craft, intimate, materiality, sensuality, sex

Scholars and thinkers have long documented their fascination with the body's existence through time. My fascination—as artist and writer—lies in the cloth and clothing debris, detritus and ephemera left behind by that body. Those 'leavings' evidence the body's articulations of movement and action through space, as well as informing textual and material evidence of its crafted artefacts and narrative cultures.

This essay is experimental and performative in its genre, structure and mode of expression. It is dense and metaphorical, but its tendency to unruliness is controlled by linearity in progression from Chicago's static form to Chadwick's more fluid and seductive one. The text is structurally disciplined to conjure an almost binary distinction between the works of Judy Chicago (see Figures 3 and 4) and Helen Chadwick (see Figure 5). The undermining of binaries is, however, promoted in discourse on intersex, debate around trans identities and contemporary feminisms, and through visual, textual, material and performic queering.

In Ireland's Troubles, when living in Belfast's sectarian cityscape, the elemental wombs and tombs of prehistory were easier to look at. They allowed penetration of light deep into the centre of the earth and exposed the endless spiral of inner worlds and the outer reach of the universe. They stimulated my creative imagination, attracting me to the matter of the natural, the unnatural and the supernatural, and informing my early *vagina dentata* works (see Figure 1). Their traces also appear in

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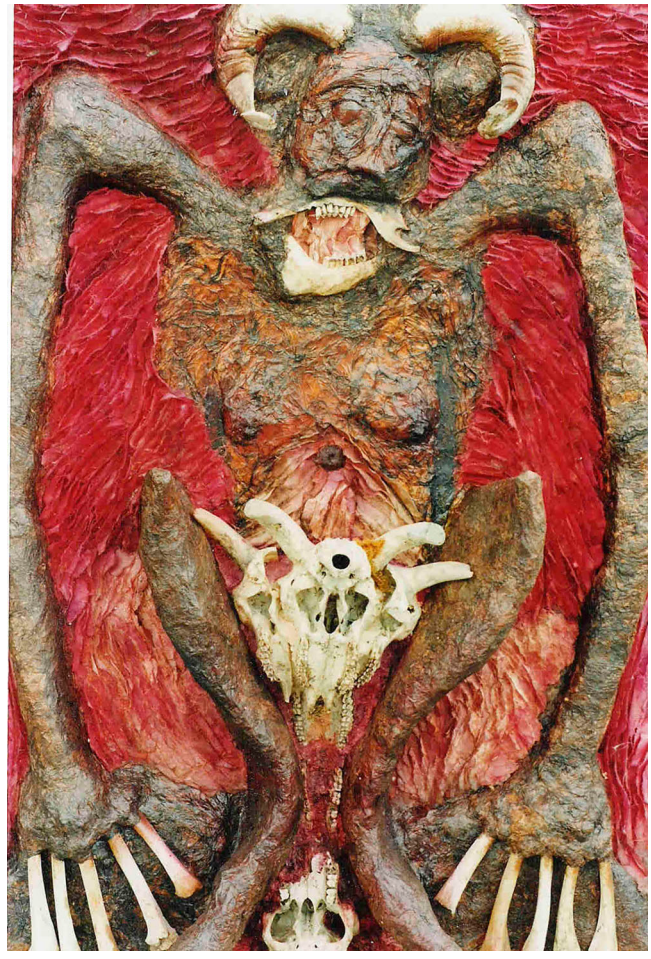

Figure 1. Catherine Harper, *Síle on Her Haunches* (1990), 100 × 130 × 20 cm, mixed natural media, bitumen, hand-made papers (collection: Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Ireland)

more recent spiral and zigzagged intimate textile pieces (see Figure 2). In *Síle*, horns and teeth signal virility and power, vaginal bite and penetrative gore, her clitoris standing out like a third unblinking eye under withered breasts. *Síle*'s bloody redness hypnotizes and repels. In *Áine*, 'male' and 'female' patterns draw on Irish mythology and pre-history, with little room for gendered ambiguity or sexual transgression. The enthralling and essentialist temptresses of mythology, the sexual power, allure and danger of *Síle* and *Áine*, are all captured in folds of fabric.

Some temptresses, however, are not at all essentialist. The erotic, engorged, even predatory quality of conscious, subjective, active desire is present in Jeanette Winterson's subjective 'I':

Figure 2. Catherine Harper, *Áine* (2020), 150 × 200 × 10 cm, stitched and quilted 'intimate textiles' artwork

> I painted my uncertain breasts with strong black arrows and ran a silver quiver down my spine. I took out my lipstick and drew my lips into red bow bent. You were my target. I painted my legs with dangerous yellow chevrons and bathed my heels in mercury. I would need to move fast. I circled my buttocks with gold rings and gave my navel its own blue diamond. (Winterson 1994: 45)

Here textual craft is used to reject embodied gender-certainty, conjure masquerade, and ensnare the gazing and consuming eye of the reader. Like this author's alter ego, *Queenie*, in the craft performances and crafted objects

Figure 3. Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party* (1979), 1440 × 1440 × 1440 cm, view of Wing Two of installation with place settings, installed at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art in the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY (courtesy of Judy Chicago, © Art Resources, NY)

series *Anatomical Drag* (see Figures 6 and 7), my subjective 'I' knitted a feminine phallus, materializing it as long, floppy, portable and pink. That act allowed *Queenie* to 'enact differences in the theatre where roles freely circulate' (Adams 1996) and—through her craft—to operate beyond anatomy, inventing sex difference, fetishizing craft, and disavowing genital materiality:

> … she [Queenie] constructs fetishes and substitutes them, one for another; she multiplies fantasies and tries them on like costumes. All this is done quite explicitly as an incitement of the senses, a proliferation of bodily pleasures, a transgressive excitement; a play with identity and a play with genitality. It is a perverse intensification of pleasure. (Harper 2002)

Finally, in my *Intersex* book (2007), I drew a clear connection between the *body in craft* and the *crafted body*. Linking my own textile practice with that of 'surgical stitching'—used to 'aesthetically normalise' genital representation of binary sex, while of course proving the validity of sex ambiguity—I mobilize the subversive actions of radical craft and crafting to bastardize that binary.

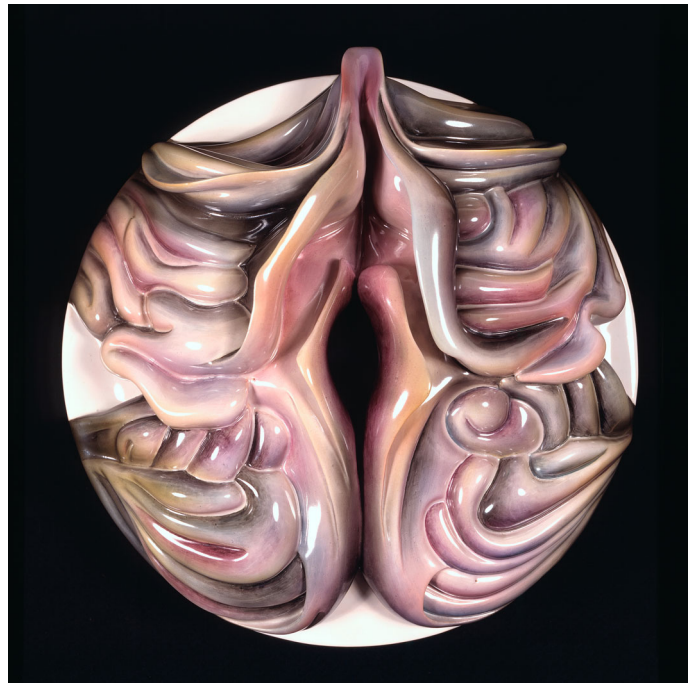

Figure 4. Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party* (Georgia O'Keeffe plate) (1979), 36.8 × 35.6 × 12.1 cm, porcelain with overglaze enamel, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY, gift of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Foundation, photo ©Donald Woodman (courtesy of Judy Chicago, © Art Resources, NY)

An Epic and Essential Female Canon

Chicago's *The Dinner Party* of the late 1970s is epic in scale, ambitious in its use of a range of crafts and an army of craft makers to produce, and emphatic in content and concept. Housed at the Brooklyn Museum, it remains an important and iconic work, with traditional woven, embroidered, needlepoint, porcelain and china craft techniques creating an installation with thirty-nine individualized ceramic plates and textile place-settings for that number of named 'invisible women of significance', as well as the nine hundred and ninety-nine other women's names inscribed on the floor tiles. Each woman's name was selected from history and mythology, creating a symbolic and visible female canon, a powerful gathering around a triangular dinner party layout that draws on the loaded tropes of sustenance, collaboration, non-hierarchy and reception.

The conceptual and actual distinctiveness of the plates and runner designs of *The Dinner Party* is remarkable, with a huge archive of preparatory scholarly and practical research underpinning each crafted addition.

Figure 5. Helen Chadwick, *Eat Me (installation and detail)* (2003), cibachrome, glass and aluminium and electrical apparatus, ©Estate of Helen Chadwick, Richard Saltoun Gallery (credit: Leeds Museums and Galleries, UK/Bridgeman Images)

Figure 6. Catherine Harper, *Anatomical Drag* (2001–3), details from series

Chicago's originating concept, in abstracted or representational form, was her desire to 'express what it was like to be organised around a central core, my vagina, *that which made me a woman* [my emphasis]' (Chicago 1975: 55). There was, of course, a laudable backstory to this now controversial assertion: Chicago's stated intention was to take the 'despised … object of contempt', and re-present it back as newly valorized, newly celebrated vaginal iconography (Chicago 1975: 143).

Figure 7. Catherine Harper, *Queenie Double* and *Queenie Knits One*, from *Anatomical Drag* series (2001–3)

The production and consumption of Chicago's vaginal iconography by feminist audiences, while by no means without critique, does situate its reception in the context of a particular wave of feminist thinking that (arguably necessarily) served to homogenize, rather than expand, how the term 'woman' was to be conceptualized. Chicago's formative terminology served to *essentialize* womanhood. By representing the thirty-nine iconic women via the crafting of what she had established as an *essential* female genital form, she laid herself open to critique, and later censure, around perceived erasure of the complexity of ethnic difference and anatomical diversity. While her later thinking did evidence cultural as well as biological consideration in the construction and/or formation of female sexual identity, *The Dinner Party* icons curiously mobilized an almost Freudian binary articulation of sexual difference. They placed that binary in terms of an absent or a present phallus and omitted sexuality's desirous expression driven either by the psyche (with its wild imaginings), or by the *female phallus*, the clitoris.

Chicago continued, as late as 1987, to assert that an *essential* difference between men and women lay in the 'fact' that giving birth is 'common to all women', tying her understanding of womanhood to reproductive capability and normative biological determinism, and anchoring it therefore—innate and immutable—in stitch and clay (Kubitza 1996, in Jones 1996: 169). Her *essential biological feminine* was therefore closed off to the alteration or conjecture implicit in slippery slippages of social, political, emotionally feminine/female bodies of desire, and the 'complicated

discursive practices' of language, materials and social formulation, that solid stolid crafting fails to touch (Fuss 1989: xi, 2–4).

Fuss's coverage of the debate between pure essence and social construct is critical to this argument. Chicago adhered to a belief system that attributed fixed, innate and intrinsic qualities to both women and men. Her doctrinal and biologistic position is at odds with the truth of anatomical difference (Quinn 2018), the social construction and performativity of gender (Butler 1993), and the construction of alternative identities and non-gendered, gender-optional, or gender-queer bodies seeking erotic pleasure (Halberstam 2011).

In one register, this discourse of difference is unimportant. *The Dinner Party* is a huge work of highly dramatic symbolism; it is not a didactic demonstration of anatomy or biology. The singular visualization of women's sexual experience was undoubtedly a necessary and timely strategy in breaking cultural silence surrounding female sexuality, acknowledging the subversive potential of such visualization, and—eventually—placing the reproductive function of the vagina alongside its 'site of nervous pleasure', the clitoris (Chicago 1987: 14). Chicago herself asserted that the *diverse stylization* of *The Dinner Party* plates in the late 1970s was a unifying and inclusive device that *collectivized* women separated by culture, ethnicity, sexuality, class, generation, geography, experience, choice, and reality. The resultant *coalition* of varied female experience—she maintained—was a strategic tool by which to challenge western patriarchy's control of feminine representation.

The *Georgia O'Keeffe Plate* is the most physically elevated of the ceramic plates in *The Dinner Party* and is the representative focus of this discussion. Chicago perceived O'Keeffe as 'the mother' of all women artists because of what she called the 'female aesthetic' in O'Keeffe's work (Chicago 1975: 143) and O'Keeffe's contribution to a 'universal language to express our own point of view as women' (Chicago 1996: 96).

Tilting forward, the *Georgia O'Keeffe Plate* presents a central dark space, opening outwards revealing first inner and then larger outer labia that transform into a series of protuberant ridges and nodules, the inner purple bleeding outwards into pale pink, white and mossy green (see Figure 4). The construction of this plate is robust, muscular, tumescent and engorged. Invested with a certain rippling, pulsing, gripping sexual power, its glossy rigidity is not wholly passive, and its upwardly surging energy is at least *conceptually* active. While its glazed ceramic form remains materially fixed to its base, there is nevertheless the sense of an 'active vaginal form' at least conceptually challenging traditional articulation of female sexuality passivity (Jones 1996: 97). The plate's outer labia curl promisingly upwards to form a tantalizing hood at the top of the plate … *but—the absence of a crafted clitoris arrests the eye* … .

Static, petrified, O'Keefe's ceramic clitorectomy renders her vulva visually and cerebrally emblematic of penetration, of reception, of secondary orgasmic function, and of maternal expulsion, but without the tactile and intuitive eroticism of the hand-rolled bud of pleasure, the desirous and sensual female phallus. Symptomatic of the mass omission of the clitoris from erotic representation (Chisholm, in Grosz 1995: 24), effecting Freud's conception of a 'penis-envy' girl-castrata (1933), Chicago's artistic decision serves to reject the presence of a potent, erect, phallic female sex organ as an indicator of an alternative and active desire. Clitoral absence in all but (probably) *Margaret Sanger's Plate* in *The Dinner Party* is notable, while *Sojourner Truth's Plate*, that of the only black woman of *The Dinner Party*'s thirty-nine guests, is represented *without vulva at all,* a serious *castration* in a project promising not only vaginal imagery but universality and inclusion.

Why not reflect on the pulsating materiality of the whole vagina, including its clitoris and the internal and external musculature of that genitalia? Why not conflate the mobile functions of lubrication, nervous excitation, incoming and outgoing passage, and orgasm?

Eat Me

In Helen Chadwick's much more modestly scaled *Eat Me* (2003), her concern with producing a body image that 'counterpoint(s) that ideal paradise state' runs counter to the epic and essentializing drive above (in conversation, 1986). The confident subjectivity of *this* feminine representation is articulated in its direct titular command—*Eat Me*—its voice echoing Winterson's linguistic urgency. By contrast with the production and consumption of *The Dinner Party*, Chadwick's timing helps illustrate the shifting reception of post-millennial feminist work, where representation of the concerns and desires of women and those identifying as women is much more complex (see Figure 5).

Unlike Chicago's ambitious and massive project, Chadwick speaks for *herself* first, but by doing so paradoxically presents an unrestricted and complicated view of female sexuality. This is the first of several paradoxes that contrast the fixity and certainty of essentialist body thinking, with more multi-layered approaches to shifting, shimmering desire and a more constructed, encoded and 'culturally mapped' 'womanly body' (Fuss 1989: 5–6).

By creating a vagina-referencing image as part of this light box installation, a back-lit Cibachrome photograph of a raw oyster in its open shell placed on an ellipse-shaped, vulva-shaped bed of vibrant yellow

chrysanthemums, Chadwick deftly positions the feminine body between biological and social, natural and the cultural registers. She embodies the crafting of intimate and ambiguous pleasures, merging both the charged materiality of edible flesh and its cool photographic presentation. In contrast to the explicit control of meaning in the creation, presentation and self-documentation of *The Dinner Party* project, *Eat Me* allows for multiple inscription and interpretation, asserting imaginative defiance of any neat classification of the desirous feminine.

In *Eat Me,* the 'central core' imagery that Chicago champions is materialized in the shape and symbolism of the oyster. Its 'metaphorical body' (Tickner 1987, in Betterton, 1987, 11) references piscine piquancy. It reclaims the pejorative 'fishy' of the visceral vulva, its floral bed providing further fragrance and petalled alliterative labia, its entire sensate body pulsing with pleasure-ready depths and enervated curves. Its delight activates the sensibility of Fallon's queer poem, *the oyster eaters:*

> … in my mouth full
> my imagination and
> imagining full of
> a fresh flower
> …
> a sex salad
> a lucky muff diver
> what a lucky licker
> muff diver dyke.
> (Fallon, in Grosz 1995: 30)

The promise and value of the unseen pearl indicates no symbolic clitorectomy here. Housed in the fleshy folds of the oyster's self, its hooded, hidden, pea-sized prize is compellingly clitoral. Its orality is predicated on the oyster's revelation, its engagement, its excitation and its consumption. Created from the oyster's self-lubrication, the tasty juices, the pearl is steeped in the erotic fluidity of the slippery sexual body. As the precious offspring of the oyster, it murmurs the maternal relationship while asserting the self-fertilizing, hermaphroditic 'immaculate conception' of its creation. The result of 'constant abrasive irritation … the disease of the oyster', the pearl articulates the proximity of sex and death (Chisholm, quoting Fallon 1995: 76). Of nature, the oyster is presented in culinary culture as 'dressed' for consumption, on a ground of cultivated commercial blooms. The *Eat Me* image masquerades *as vagina* without reduction *to vagina* (Kandel 1996, in Jones 1996: 195), its body revealed, but veiled, controlled and complexified, unfixed but not penetrated.

This work shifts *passive identification* by the female viewer with the vulva to *admiration,* to desire to *be,* then desire to *have.* The active, sexual female gaze at a female subject/object becomes then a *lesbian gaze,* allowing the subject *and* object of that gaze *to perform the sex that Winterson, the 'cunning linguist', speaks* (Winterson 1994: 45). The 'female' image/text consciously provokes an erotic affect in the female viewer/listener, succeeding in 'clitorising' her (Chisholm 1995, in Grosz 1995: 24). The lesbian gaze in this respect is not so much that of the identified lesbian, or the woman wishing to become lesbian, but rather the result of an 'erotic affectivity, a clitoral intensity or sexual mobility' (Chisholm 1995, in Grosz 1995: 24), the result of deliberate and purposeful seduction, a stealthy measured stimulation of desire in the female viewer.

To queer that female gaze and that female image engages the imagination with ambiguity and performativity. To think the concept of the lesbian gaze, or the lesbian 'gazed at', requires commitment to notions of transitory, fluid, inclusive gender identities rather than essential sexualities and gender positions. Expansive queerness combines a 'variety of desires and hybrid identities' (Horne and Lewis 1996: 1), and permits exploration of sexual transgression from normative, essential and heterosexual binaries, subject/object power dynamics, and even conventional gay/straight identities. This consideration of a range of sexualities, positionings and placements colludes with the concept of a less fixed and certain view of the 'objectifying gaze', and complicates problems typically associated with such a gaze (Betterton 1996: 18).

The allowance of complicated naming of desire and the erotic, and the acknowledgement that these may cross boundaries into imaginative sexual territories previously considered too dangerous to traverse, compels feminist thinking around sex towards Waldby's predicted necessity of the feminist pornographic imagination (Waldby 1995, in Grosz 1995: 275). Where Chicago sought to control sexual readings of the *Dinner Party* plates, Chadwick's *Eat Me* opens her vaginal imagery to multiple and complex desires, renders a definition of essential female desire impossible, and queers any straightforward understanding of the relationship she constructs between subject and object, viewer and viewed.

The so-called truth of biology is interfered with by the mavericks of cultural presentation, signification and performance. The *Georgia O'Keeffe Plate* is constructed, carved, glazed and fired with heavy permanence, its musculature conveying a certain thrilling strength, but its clitoral absence desire-dampening and disappointing. *Eat Me's* erotically charged oyster, however, lush in its briny shell, oozing sensuality, and itching out its pearly symbol of pleasure, fecundity and death is charged and potent. Shaped as both inward unfurling cunt and outward tumescence,

its lapping tongue and rigid shell, the 'give' of its soft inner, the erect ripeness of its secreted pearl, its seed as well as ovum, the oyster opens an expansive feminist vocabulary of vulval, labial, clitoral and orifical to accept *phallic* and *hermaphroditic*, and proposes sexual ambiguity, multiplicity and paradox as a preferred 'anatomical destiny'. Chadwick's *Eat Me* represents the antithesis of essentialism, illuminating the risky subjectivity of sexual desire.

> '… the shell is full of liquor, and you mustn't spill a drop of it because that's the tastiest part' … sat in my palm in its bath of oyster-juice, naked and slippery … She raised the oyster to her lips and held it for a second before her mouth, her eyes on mine, unblinking … . (Waters 1999: 52)

Chadwick's desirous subject exists in the sexual world of the 1990s, where 'bodily landscapes are more likely to be fraught with both fear and fascination', than in Chicago's late 1970s (Betterton 1996: 38). Her oyster shivers in passive anticipation of its imminent *petit mort*, while seeking its own ecstatic destruction: to be devoured, to allow its own death throes to heighten the parasitic pleasure of eating and being eaten, to connect desire and death. Femme fatale, a black widow spider, that merry-mournful weaver, lazily devouring her male through their coitus. An emblematic *vagina dentata*, eating while being eaten, the oyster both commands consumption and promises penetration through the erotic receptive action of the swallow, with the binary of *having* and *being had* effectively queered (Chisholm 1995: 34).

The living oyster is revealed by the prizing open of its shell allowing the 'prick' of the pin, the phallic 'look' of the viewer/consumer, and what Waldby calls the 'violence of desire' (in Grosz 1995: 275). Although representing the metaphorical female body that *demands* that it be consumed, the preparation of the oyster for consumption is a *forceful and complex* conjuring of eroticized power relations. Since food is 'quite literally inalienable from the body' (Hardie 1995, in Grosz 1995: 155), the concept of the 'eaten body' has strong erotic content. The female body is embedded in feeding—initially through infant sucking, connected to sexual sucking, orality, speaking, then via digestion, and eventually through fucking (Benvenuto et al. 1986: 191). In *Eat Me*, the juicy invitation for visual, tactile, oral and olfactory consumption locates the work in culture's understanding of the oyster as aphrodisiac, that is, *enlarging desire by its consumption.* The promise of the oyster therefore is not of satiation of desire, but rather the perpetuation of a desire that

> … is like an ever-increasing hunger, a hunger that supplements itself, feeds itself, on hunger, and can never be content with what it ingests, that defers gratification to perpetuate itself as craving, languishing in its erotic torments rather hastening to quench them. (Grosz 1995: 286)

Chadwick's distillation of desire in *Eat Me* is mobilized both through the sensual mouth-tongue pleasure of language, and through her sensual involvement with the flesh and floral matter of the work, and its multi-sensory appeal. The tiny 'text of bliss' of the *Eat Me* title represents the 'cunning lingua' of a conscious advocate of a *desirous* rather than *essential* woman. Lingual performativity actively connects the sensuality of the voice, mouth, tongue and clitoris: language becomes an active stimulating tool *performing* the pleasuring it *speaks of*.

Eat Me transcends the brittle quality of the photographic medium by seeking, holding, reflecting and directing the gaze inwards to its core. The materiality of the content, flesh and flowers, pungency and flavour, brine and muscle, and its promise of ecstatic engorgement, transformation and transgression, speaks of alchemical magical transubstantiation:

> Lust is the dissolute ecstasy by which the body's ligneous, ferric, coral state casts itself into a gelatinous, curdling, dissolving, liquefying, vaporising, radioactive, solar and nocturnal state. Exstase materielle, transubstantiation. (Lingus 1991: 15)

The viewer's sense-tickled desire implicates her in her own seduction. Chadwick draws her into complicity with the cool purpose of a practised seducer, excited by the 'delectable and disturbing synthesis of sexual difference, ignited by the sensations experienced both in the making and the viewing' (Buck 1994). Chicago, conversely, materialized Georgia O'Keeffe in both metaphorical and epic permanency rather than the fluidic 'matter of ecstasy' above. The solidity and material volume of the *Georgia O'Keeffe Plate* denies erotic consumption, flirtatious trifling, or dabbling in liquid sensation, returning a hard stare to the presumably male gaze.

Crafting the Body

Surgeon-stitchers who reconfigure the genitalia of the intersex infant are the neatest toile-makers, pattern-cutters and embroiderers (Harper 2007). Delicate infant sex ambiguity in skin and tissue is—the terminology is relentless—inverted, incised, perforated, corrected, moulded, folded,

recessed, fashioned, stripped, tucked, recessed, sutured, snipped, sectioned, clamped, ligated, dilated, closed up, sewn into place, stitched up. Densely enervated tissue—phallic, clitoral—on intersexed infant bodies threaten culture's adherence to binary sex.

Medicine, as the crafty servant of culture and science, asserts authority over such unruliness with the homely tools and techniques of the seamstress. The flesh-craft of surgical body change craftily defines particular standards of so-called 'genital aesthetic appropriateness' in medical techno-culture that enables regulatory norms of sex and sex difference, and new standards of purity, hygiene and control to be enacted on and through fleshy materiality. The agency of commission on the part of some crafted subjects at least enacts the authority of self-actualization, while the very signatures sex—deep within the delicate tissues, web-like gauzes, sheerest chiffons of the brain, flesh, fluids, cells, concurring or clashing at micro and macro levels and layers within the body—replace genitalia as *the* signifying site of conventional definitive sex. The contribution of each to the final fabric is different and enigmatic.

Surgery's incisions are re-conceptualized in the author's *Anatomical Drag* series (see Figure 6). Offering a range of embroidered, stuffed and cut undergarments, ambiguous genitalia become mobile, for putting on and taking off. Sex as drag offers normalcy in the unfixing of sex from only the corporeal, allowing imaginative gendering and fantastical sexing to be conflated, inflated, decorated and celebrated. The masquerade invitation here is to choose biology, anatomy or genital slipperiness.

Through craft, sexed bodies are proposed as temporal, mutable, malleable, evolutionary, materially plastic rather than bipolar, dimorphic and fixed. Anatomy is mobilized through *Anatomical Drag* and the performance of sewn sex, to combine, overlap, button up, fasten down conventional divisions of sex, assimilating, concentrating, translating, (mis)recognizing and blurring binary sexual categories and desired morphologies.

With velvet, feathers, corsetry, and other gender-laced textile material, the fantasy continues through feminine resonances of craft to perform desire through underclothing, those layers nearest to the skin's tissues. The transvestite (a potentially charged term used here to denote one who specifically 'cross-dresses' as opposed to one who is transgendered or transsexual) not only masquerades as a woman (or a man) but chooses what type of woman (or man) s/he will be (Riviere 1929). That is, the imagined embodiment of sex and gender, made real—here through the drag of anatomy, with hooks and horns, pricks and probes, stitched-in vulval and phallic accessories.

The metaphorical cultural veil of a *socially/culturally* formed 'feminine' is materialized in the use of empty but sexually encoded garments (lingerie,

leather jackets, corsetry, gloves) to stand in for (masquerade as) the female body. A self-consciously feminist erotic is proposed, carefully controlled through the absence of the 'actual' body, through textual 'cunning lingua', and through awareness of the potentiality multiple desirous nature of the gaze.

Conclusion

This text set out to chase the impossible, while capturing the actual, the fleeting glimpse of the intimate body. Chicago's assertion of female essence in clay is rendered sterile and immobile; Chadwick's less tactile, more cerebral and referencing, but still somehow static; surgery's ability to make mobile the flesh by embroidering identity into and on to the body; the performed drag of constructed anatomy, taken on and off at will. While each mobilizes its own craft vocabulary, media and conceptualizing framework, each somehow fails to render the body as living agency, but each also fails to convince that crafting the body is not worth the attempt.

Subjectivity intervenes where crafty and crafted objects problematize idealism, with the stigmata of bleeding wounds, the stigma of female imperfection, and the material, sensual, desirous taboos of sexed, intersexed, multi-sexed and trans-sexed bodies. There are other practices and technologies that complexify 'ideal' bodies, but those in this text appeal to subjectivity, and recognize how alluring, enchanting, and yet impossible, crafting the intimate body is.

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ORCID

Catherine Harper http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3465-2253

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