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**Toward a theory of performance art: An investigation of its
sites**

O'Dell, Kathy Rosalyn, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1992

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A

TOWARD A THEORY OF PERFORMANCE ART:
AN INVESTIGATION OF ITS SITES

by

KATHY O'DELL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art
History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New
York

1992

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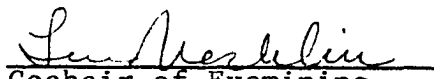
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Illustrations.....	xi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
NOTES.....	7
CHAPTER ONE: THE QUESTIONS.....	9
The Question(s)...	
Of Repression.....	9
Of Metaphor or Metonymy in Performance Art.....	15
Of Gender.....	20
Of Alienation and Psychoanalytic Theory.....	23
Of Art = Life.....	30
From Chris Burden (and One of His Critics).....	34
Of Contracts in Performance Art.....	40
Summarized: "The Argument".....	42
From Gina Pane.....	49
Of the Home.....	64
NOTES.....	67
CHAPTER TWO: THEORY.....	77
Didier Anzieu's "Skin Ego".....	77
Jacques Lacan's "Mirror Stage".....	86
Gilles Deleuze's "Masochistic Contract" in Relation to the Writings of Theodor Reik.....	96
Contract's "World of Law".....	122
NOTES.....	143
CHAPTER THREE: THE PERFORMANCES.....	157
Mouth Pieces.....	157
Vito Acconci, <u>Trademarks</u> , 1970.....	157
Chris Burden, <u>Five-Day Locker Piece</u> , 1971.....	168
Chris Burden, <u>Velvet Water</u> , 1974.....	176
Mirror Pieces.....	179
Gina Pane, <u>Discours mou et mat</u> , 1975.....	179
Vito Acconci, <u>See Through</u> , 1969.....	192
Ulay/Abramovic, <u>Balance Proof</u> , 1977.....	197
Bed Pieces.....	205
Vito Acconci, <u>Reception Room</u> , 1973.....	205
Ulay/Abramovic, <u>Communist Body/Capitalist Body</u> , 1979.....	211
Gina Pane, <u>Self-Portrait</u> , 1973.....	221
Chris Burden, <u>Deadman</u> , 1972.....	230
Chris Burden's (Many Other) Bed Pieces, 1972-1975.....	242
NOTES.....	264

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSIONS.....	274
Masochistic Performance in the Context of...	
Slavery.....	274
The Vietnam War.....	279
Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "Social Contract".....	285
Geography.....	288
Race, Class, and Pleasure.....	300
Institutional Issues.....	305
Prevention.....	311
The Photographic Document: Part One.....	315
Michael Fried's "Art and Objecthood".....	323
The Photographic Document: Part Two.....	329
The Early Twentieth Century.....	335
The 1970s: Final Remarks.....	340
More Recent Events.....	346
NOTES.....	355
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	367
NOTES.....	414
Illustrations.....	422
Bibliography.....	448

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
Artist, Title of Performance
Date, Site, Page Location of Photographs

Fig. 1	Ulay/Abramovic, <u>Talking about Similarity</u> 1976, Singel 64, Amsterdam.....422
Fig. 2	Chris Burden, <u>Shoot</u> 1971, F Space, Santa Ana, CA.....423
Fig. 3	Chris Burden, <u>Movie on the Way Down</u> 1973, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH.....424
Figs.4a-c	Gina Pane, <u>Money-Meat-Fire</u> 1971, Apartment of M. and Mme. Fregnac, Paris.....425-426
Fig. 5	Vito Acconci, <u>Trademarks</u> 1970, Pictured as it appeared in <u>Avalanche</u> , Fall 1972.....427
Fig. 6	Chris Burden, <u>Five-Day Locker Piece</u> 1971, University of California at Irvine.....428
Fig. 7	Chris Burden, <u>Velvet Water</u> 1974, School of the Art Institute of Chicago.....429
Fig. 8	Gina Pane, <u>Discours mou et mat</u> 1975, de Appel, Amsterdam.....430
Fig. 9	Vito Acconci, <u>See Through</u> 1969, Film.....431
Figs.10a-e	Ulay/Abramovic, <u>Balance Proof</u> 1977, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva.....432-436
Fig. 11	Vito Acconci, <u>Reception Room</u> 1973, Modern Art Agency, Naples.....437
Fig. 12	Ulay/Abramovic, <u>Communist Body/Capitalist Body (Identification papers)</u> 1979, Loft, Amsterdam.....438
Figs.13a-c	Gina Pane, <u>Self-Portrait</u> 1973, ("The Conditioning" [13a]; "Contraction" [13b]; "Rejection" [13c]) Stadler Gallery, Paris.....439-441

Fig. 14	Chris Burden, <u>Deadman</u> 1972, La Cienega Boulevard, Los Angeles (Under the auspices of Mizuno Gallery)...442
Fig. 15	Chris Burden, <u>Bed Piece</u> 1972, Market Street Program, Venice, CA..443
Fig. 16	Chris Burden, <u>Oh, Dracula</u> 1974, Utah Museum of Art, Salt Lake City, UT.....444
Fig. 17	Chris Burden, <u>White Light/White Heat</u> 1975, Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York City.....445
Fig. 18	Chris Burden, <u>Doomed</u> 1975, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.....446
Fig. 19	David Wojnarowicz, from recent film entitled <u>Silence=Death</u> (Film by Phil Zwickler and Rosa Von Praunheim).....447

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is concerned with performance art of the early 1970s that involved acts of masochism. The practice of attacking one's own body--be it within the arena of art, religion, or everyday life--is certainly not unique to this period. And yet, the fact that there was a burgeoning of such work, by a number of different artists, in a number of different places, particularly in the waning years of an internationally powerful crisis like the Vietnam War, needs to be reckoned with. Questions abound--hence, the organization of the first chapter.

Functioning much like an introduction itself, Chapter One is arranged as a series of sections bearing the title "Questions." It is meant to be read as a table of contents of issues with which I feel the artists I shall be discussing were concerned: repression; the function of metaphor; alienation and psychoanalysis; the "art-equals-life" debate of the 1960s; artists' contractlike agreements with their audiences; the construct of the home. Interspersed are discussions of three masochistic performances in which these issues are addressed. In two instances the performances will be examined at some length, taking up sections of their own that will bear the name of the artist as questioner. One section consists of what is to be considered, at this particular point in the

study, as a bare-bones sketch of my overall argument.

In Chapter Two, I shall "fine-tune" the theoretical model to be used in the analysis of a selection of performances from which my argument has grown. The chief concept in this model has to do with a "masochistic contract" I see operating in these works. I have borrowed the term "masochistic contract" from Gilles Deleuze, who first used it in his 1971 critical reading of the nineteenth-century erotic writings of Léopold von Sacher-Masoch. It was Masoch's name that was appropriated by Richard von Krafft-Ebing in the latter part of that century to label the disturbing phenomenon of one's desire to carry out actions of a self-attacking nature.¹ Masoch's stories were built in part on his own life experiences of relationships with women who, under signed contract, took up roles that allowed the writer to occupy a position as masochist.

While many psychoanalysts after Krafft-Ebing--including Freud, of course--developed theories of masochism, it was not until the early 1970s that anyone put a legalistic "spin" on the topic. However, for all the importance of Deleuze's cross-disciplinary approach, his legalistic contribution has been overlooked. What I wish to accomplish in this chapter, then, is to elaborate on this contribution by interrelating it to the material history and theory of the actual instrument of contract itself.

As a setup for this interrelational reading, a survey of psychoanalytic theories pertinent to masochism and the moments of its manifestation in psychical development is in order. Toward that end I shall discuss the writings of Theodor Reik (in whose clinical observations of masochistic practices, as will be shown, Deleuze detected an important lack, leading him to the field of law), Didier Anzieu, and Jacques Lacan.² Surveying their contributions to this topic will lead us to question the historical location of Deleuze's own theoretical workup. What was it about the early 1970s, I wish to ask, that might have instigated a shift in the analysis of masochism?

As I proceed with an examination of pertinent legal theory, a similar question will be posed, particularly in relation to the writings of law historian Grant Gilmore. Publishing The Death of Contract in 1974, Gilmore had a great deal to say about changes in contract's history that were taking place as he wrote.³ Putting together, then, that which I have mined from these two fields--psychoanalysis and law--I shall be prepared to grapple with and attempt to make sense of the troubling, increasingly masochistic art being produced in the same period.

In Chapter Three I shall concentrate on a selection of performances, among which are the most extreme examples of

masochistic performances found in the twentieth century. The focus will be on the work of five artists--Chris Burden, Vito Acconci, Gina Pane, and Ulay/Abramovic,⁴ whose performances will be examined for the manner in which the artists used their bodies as "limit-texts." Film theorist Deborah Linderman has offered a useful definition of "limit-text" as "that problematic thing" that allows into its representation something denounced in another for purposes of "quer[ying] a boundary that is normatively repressed in other texts."⁵ Apropos of this definition, the task in this chapter will be to address in more depth the queries listed in Chapter One, as well as to pose the metacritical question of the radical and/or reactionary nature of the artists' "boundary-tampering."⁶

Chapter Four will consist of conclusions drawn from the previous study of the theory and practice of masochism in 1970s art. The goals here are to: one, summarize my theory of performance--which, in brief and up front, is founded on the observation that this form of art-making draws its power from metaphor, the symbolic register, the field of representation; two, summarize what the analysis of performances in Chapter Three has revealed about cultural and political consciousness during the latter years of the Vietnam War and about the legal status of contract in the same period; three, discuss the way in which the photographic document--the chief

representational vehicle from which the performing body, with all its presentational capacity, is inseparable--operates within the historicization of performance art. Additionally, I shall glance at resonances of these findings in earlier moments of performance art's history as well as in more recent work. The chapter will be arranged in such a way that all of the foregoing will be framed as "contexts" within which masochistic performance art of the 1970s will, conclusively, be situated.

The last chapter of the dissertation will function as an ornate preface to that which stands at the end of any scholarly work: the skeletonlike bibliography. Fleshing out this skeletal structure in advance of its appearance, this chapter consists of an annotated bibliography of noteworthy materials written on performance art, beginning with those dating from the period in which the works addressed in Chapter Three were produced. The subtext of this venture (which is to say, its motivation) is to assess the methodologies employed throughout the dissertation. Thus, I shall offer some closing remarks on the usefulness of what I have chosen to call a "psycholegalistic" methodology in the ongoing investigation of performance art's corporeal and institutional sites.

Throughout the chapters ahead, my tacit mission is to draw attention to the need to integrate performance art

into the general history of art. This mode of art-making has typically been overlooked by art historians and cultural historians (with key exceptions of scholars like RoseLee Goldberg, Kristine Stiles, Maurice Berger, and Henry M. Sayre, whose work will be addressed in the upcoming chapters) as a form to which artists trained in other media have turned when those media have appeared inadequate to the needs of a historical moment. Thus, the incorporation of performance art's history into the history of conventional or even nonconventional forms of art-making (painting, sculpture, film, video, and photography) is not only an ethical mandate but a practical strategy helping historians, students, and readers in general bridge to the cultural, political, and economic specifics of those moments in which artists choose performance as a form of expression.

Put simply, performance art promotes contextualization. This process constitutes methodological changes in art history overall--an unquestionably valuable contribution in and of itself on the part of performance artists whose work has forced the issue of such change.

NOTES - INTRODUCTION

1. Gilles Deleuze, Masochism: An Interpretation of Coldness and Cruelty, trans. Jean McNeil (orig. Présentation de Sacher-Masoch, 1967; trans., New York: Braziller, 1971; also, New York: Zone Books, 1989, as Masochism, Coldness and Cruelty); I shall be using the 1971 Braziller edition which has slight variations in pagination from the more recent Zone Books edition. For Léopold von Sacher-Masoch's Venus in Furs and related contracts, see 117ff; in Zone Books edition, 143ff. For another translation of the novel and related correspondence, see Léopold von Sacher-Masoch, Venus in Furs: Letters of Léopold von Sacher-Masoch and Emilie Mataja, trans. Uwe Moeller and Laura Lindgren (New York: Blast Books, 1989). For the naming of masochism, see Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis, trans. Franklin S. Klaf, from the 12th German ed. (orig. ed. 1886; trans., New York: Bell Publishing, 1965), 87.
2. Theodor Reik, "Masochism in Modern Man," in Of Love and Lust: On the Psychoanalysis of Romantic and Sexual Emotions (1949; reprint, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984), 195-366. Didier Anzieu, The Skin Ego: A Psychoanalytic Approach to the Self, trans. Chris Turner (orig. Le Moi-peau, 1985; trans., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989). References to Lacan's work are numerous and will be provided as they are addressed in upcoming chapters.
3. Grant Gilmore, The Death of Contract (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1974).
4. "Ulay/Abramovic" is the performing name chosen by Uwe Laysiepen and Marina Abramovic, who met in 1975 and began to perform the next year under the reversible name Ulay/Abramovic or Abramovic/Ulay, signifying, among other things, a conflation of gender identities; they dissolved their partnership in 1989.
5. Deborah Linderman, "Oedipus in Chinatown," Enclitic 5-6 (Fall 1981-Spring 1982), 200.
6. This sort of questioning derives, as Linderman pointed out (see n. 5 above), from Foucault's thinking, especially his concerns about sexuality and the social strategies of its "deployment" for purposes of dominant power's ability to see that which it feels the need to control. See Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (orig. La Volonté de savoir, 1976; trans., 1978; reprint, New York: Vintage

Books, 1980), 106-7.

CHAPTER ONE: THE QUESTIONS

THE QUESTION OF REPRESSION

There is a tradition of repression in art history. Traditions are discussed. Breaks from traditions are discussed. But that which slips around in the middle, tampering with the fundamental criterion of art-making, is considered neither old nor new and thereby runs the risk of repression. This criterion dictates that artistic traditions, and their breaks, be concerned solely with concrete, objectified visual materials. So, that which is not readily available to the eye slides into oblivion. Whole modes of artistic production go unattended, sometimes not because they are not visual in the broadest sense of the term, but because the forms by which one knows them are several generations removed from--and therefore, it is thought, function "only" as fragments of--their allegedly "original" selves.

Photography suffered this discrimination until the spurious valence given to the notion of originality within an art context was called into question. On one end of the chronological spectrum of bibliography on this topic is Walter Benjamin's groundbreaking essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), in which the author criticizes those giving "much futile thought...to the question of whether photography is an

art," while leaving behind the "primary question--whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art."¹ On the other stands works like Rosalind Krauss's 1985 compendium of essays addressing The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths² and the abundance of postmodernist art practice and theoretical discourse that dominated the 1980s.³ All these contributions have helped establish a scholarly scenario within which certain acknowledgments regarding performance art can now be polemically asserted.

Of these acknowledgments, the most important, most obvious, yet still easiest to deny is that performance art, like the photography used to document it, can never be known in terms of its original moment. This ostensible inability "to be known" constitutes an epistemological conundrum, triggering performance art's virtual repression from the annals of art history.⁴ Indeed, the first survey book on this art form was only published in 1979: RoseLee Goldberg's Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present.⁵ While almost exclusively descriptive in approach, Goldberg's text nonetheless tampered substantially with this reign of repression.

Of course, the problem is also an economic one. Myths of originality collude, reciprocally, with the art market's method of assigning value to works of art. Performance art, for the most part, yields few objects (in

the "fine-arts" sense of "objets d'art"), thereby advancing its own rejection from traditional definitions of art and setting itself up for even more intense repression.

These acts of repression are telling, however, for they paradoxically expose an ideology operating at the core of history-making in general. This ideology becomes clear as one looks closely at the only way in which the history of performance art can be pieced together. Whether one is present or not the first time a performance is produced, from that moment on, in order to reconstruct the scenario in one's imagination, an array of tools must be relied upon, including language (both written and oral) and the camera (including the apparatuses of video, film, or still photography).

To create a history of performance art, then, to attempt to revisit, in one's imagination, an event that took place in the past--an event deeply invested in the dynamics of presentation--one must look through the lenses and hear through the earphones, if you will, of representation. Questions of truthfulness and objectivity (What really happened? How do I record this event so that others might understand it precisely as it occurred? How might the circumstances of the artistic scenario be conveyed without embroidering an overlay of detail commonly referred to as "editorial comment?") are

impossible to answer.

The history of performance art thus functions as a consummate illustration of how history in general is a construction composed of the predilections, which necessarily comprise the denials, of a speaking subject. It is these building blocks--predilection and denial or, said another way, desire and its cohort repression--that are glossed over by the ideology that says that history imparts objective truth. And so, the critical historian is called upon to seek methodologies which deal specifically with the processes of desire and repression--namely, psychoanalytic methodologies.

However, these methodologies, too, have been repressed in the traditions of art-historical discourse. When psychoanalytic theory has been employed by art historians, it has all too often been in a reductive effort to decode an artwork's "hidden" meaning or to demystify the intentions of the artist in the context of his or her psychosexual orientation.⁶ The goal of this study of performance art will be to resist all such reductive tendencies. I shall not attempt to uncover the "truth" about performance pieces nor seek artists' motivations by mining their biographies. Rather, I shall work in the opposite direction in an attempt to discover the complexity of repressive processes, to see how such processes are, themselves, the chief concern of

performance art, and to examine historicological reasons for how and why this has come to be.

These processes are exercised in and upon what I am calling the "sites" of performance art--that is, its chief materials of the human body and the space in which the body is made to act. "Body" and "space" are terms frequently used in an exclusively figurative sense by historians of painting and sculpture. To a certain extent the usage is logical. But the terms could also be discussed in a material sense. One might address the viewer's body, the viewer's physical, phenomenological, or ideological orientation to a work of art as conditioned by the exhibition space in which the viewer stands or by the relation of that space to other similarly institutionalized spaces. These material contingencies have generally been overlooked in the canonized history of modern art.⁷ The analysis of performance art, however, persistently disallows such oversights in several ways.

First, performance overtly relies on particular types of institutions for its existence. In the early 1970s, these included commercial galleries and workshops, which served as prototypes for what came to be known as "alternative spaces." Relying on federal, state, and city government agencies, private foundations, and sometimes corporations for funding, alternative spaces became performance art's chief presentational site from the

middle of the 1970s onward. This reliance, throughout the history of the alternative space, has almost always been tenuous, in jeopardy, about to fold. Thus, the observer is forced to attend to the impact of multiple, interlocking institutional frameworks on the content of performance art pieces--frameworks which are made more easily invisible in the exhibiting of painting and sculpture.⁸

Second, by definition, performance depends on audience response, thereby eliminating the possibility of overlooking the complex mechanics of reception in performance art's historicization. Third (and this point contributes to the latter), performance art literalizes the figurative. That is to say, the body is present in flesh and blood, as an object to be viewed; its ontology, then, which is shared by viewers, cannot be ignored.

Kristine Stiles, one of the foremost historians of performance art, has argued that what I have listed as the third aspect of contingency is experienced on the basis of the human body functioning along linguistic lines, metonymically: an individual within the performance arena (artist or viewer) comes to an understanding of himself or herself as a material part of a larger collective, and collectivizing, whole by virtue of functioning as what she calls a "metonymic joint." This sense of wholeness, in her thinking, is not to be construed necessarily "in terms

of unity," she writes, but in Derridean and Nietzschean philosophical terms of "reciprocal being," with the end result being a condition in which "[c]ontingency manifests the interdependence of the subject/object distinction...."⁹

While not entirely disagreeing with Stiles's views, they do seem to suggest that one must be present at the "original" event to benefit in the way described, and that subsequent experience of a performed work via perusal of its representations is not only different--which, of course, it is--but of somewhat lesser importance. To wit, she speaks of the way in which performance (or "event-structured art," which is her term of choice for the work she discusses) engages in a "repositioning and privileging [of] sensation over re-presentation" [my emphasis].¹⁰

I should like in this dissertation not so readily to dismiss the metaphoric status of the performer and viewer but, rather, to focus on it, examining the ways in which the shared ontology of the body might be experienced through its representations, its symbolic meanings, its metaphoric reverberations. In order to argue the latter convincingly, a brief discussion of Stiles's theory will be helpful.

THE QUESTION OF METAPHOR OR METONYMY IN PERFORMANCE ART

Stiles developed her ideas on the operation of the

metonym in the arena of performance art in her scholarly analysis and reconstruction of the brief but historically important "Destruction in Art Symposium," or DIAS, held in London in 1966. The symposium, organized by Gustav Metzger, brought together artists from around the world whose work concentrated on the dialectic between destruction and creation. Some of the participants most directly connected to this venture (or who had been consciously concerning themselves with this dialectic the longest) were members of the Wiener Aktionismus (Viennese Actionism) group, including Hermann Nitsch, Günther Brus, and Otto Mühl. Nitsch, who was and still is well known for his "Orgies Mysteries Theatre"--which involves, among other things, the destruction of animal carcasses for ostensibly creative purposes--serves as perhaps the best example of Stiles's theories.

Nitsch began his complicated theorizations of the Orgies Mysteries Theatre, Stiles tells us, as early as 1957.¹¹ The structure of the "OMT" model has remained fundamentally the same in the dozens of performances held since that time.¹² For instance, the pieces always: involve a group manipulation of ritual elements such as milk, honey, and carcasses; are directed by Nitsch; and are aimed at renewing the human body through its interaction with the animal world.

The body's metonymic function in works such as these,

according to Stiles's theory, is similar to that of a bridge or conduit, linking audience and performer, "mediat[ing] between the viewer and the meaning of the event."¹³ Operating as such, she argues in the synopsis of her dissertation, "the artist as being-in-the-world visualiz[es] the contingency and inter-dependency of subject identifying with subject."¹⁴ Indeed, all audience members are simultaneously performer-participants in a Nitsch piece. Nobody is allowed to enter the performance site to merely observe.

Now, it is important to note that Stiles's theories of the metonymic function of the performing body do not rule out an interconnection with the power of metaphor (I shall say more about the ways in which Stiles herself connects the two a bit later). Apropos of the topic with which I began this chapter, however, Stiles's thinking does imply that the former, the metonym, is just that--former, more originary, more authentic. She builds this idea of metonymic primacy--to which Nitsch adheres in his fascination with animalistic notions of the primal--with a comparative discussion of the workings of metaphor and metonym, based on the theories of linguist Jerzy Kurylowicz, whom she quotes as follows:

For metaphor, we must envisage a certain structure, i.e., perceive and interpret a metonymy, an expression like copper beard is to be interpreted 1.) beard=bearded man (metonymy); 2.) copper=red (metaphor). Neglecting the metonymy we run the risk of misinterpreting the metaphor: beard made of copper.

Meaning is here dependent upon prior connective information--men have beards the color of which may be red like fire which can be described as copper--in order to understand the metaphor copper beard.¹⁵

It would appear that Stiles relies upon Kurylowicz's stance on the metonym's apriori status to bolster her belief in performance art's radicality--or, more specifically, the radicality of the "destruction-works" on which she focuses. Hence, the title of her dissertation reads: "The Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS): The Radical Cultural Project of Event-Structured Live Art" [my emphasis]. With all due respect to Stiles's scholarly methods, I prefer, in this dissertation, to use definitions of metaphor and metonymy that might be more readily accessible to a reader versed in fields other than art history or linguistics (the other definitions she draws on are by Roman Jakobson, and Robert J. Matthews and Wilfried Ver Eecke).¹⁶ My choice will, in turn, delimit the possibility of assigning performance art a radical role in culture and society.

Quite simply, then, turning to Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language,¹⁷ I would like to think of metaphor as an "implied comparison, in which a word or phrase ordinarily...used for one thing is applied to another (e.g.,...[apropos of my topic] 'all the world's a stage')...." And metonymy will be thought of as the "use of the name of one thing for that of another

associated with or suggested by it (e.g., 'the White House has decided' for 'the President has decided')."

Metonymic operations, it should be clear from all the descriptions above, are designed to elide comparative and contrastive distinctions. This tendency has dangerous rather than radical implications, I would argue--as suggested within Webster's definition itself where responsibility for national welfare can be so easily displaced onto a piece of architecture.

It is precisely the operation of comparison inherent in metaphoric relations that I believe is key in performance art, where both differences and similarities between physical and psychical identifications are continually called into question. A mid-1970s performance entitled Talking About Similarity by Ulay/Abramovic--two of the five artists whose work will be the central focus of my study--is an example of this point.

In this piece, Ulay sits silently as Abramovic takes questions from the audience, responding as she imagines Ulay would if he were speaking. The piece ends when she senses her answers have become less about similarity to Ulay's identity and more about her own. The fact that Ulay is a man and Abramovic a woman draws gender-related difference into consideration as well. I shall turn briefly now to the question of such difference before proceeding with other aspects of the artists' performance.

THE QUESTION OF GENDER

Perhaps, in the case of many art historians, the three oversights I listed above are not surprising, for by avoiding discussions of reception as it involves issues of space and the body, historians of painting and sculpture can also, indeed, avoid unsettling implications of gender embedded in the relationship between an art object and its viewer. Feminist scholars of the last few decades have analyzed the dynamics of this relationship at length, starting with the conventional conceptualization of viewed objects as female and viewing subjects as male.¹⁸ The maintenance of these traditional identifications is, of course, most clearly seen during moments in history when artists render female bodies for a predominantly male set of patrons, judges, or potential collectors.¹⁹

But, it could be argued that this identificatory process is embedded deeply enough into Western culture that it carries over to the viewing of all other types of subject matter as well; indeed, I shall argue precisely this. No matter what the subject matter of artwork or of representation in general, its meanings are sustained by the symbiotic collusion, mentioned above, between epistemological-economic factors of possession and the psychological activity of the unconscious mind, in which gender identifications are formed in the individual's early encounters with the visual and tactile materials of

the world.

The encounters that are most relevant here are those which psychoanalysts in general have located in the Oedipal experience and, more specifically, which Jacques Lacan located at the mirror (in what he literally calls the mirror stage of psychical development), and which Didier Anzieu located in early experiences of touch vis-à-vis one's own body and a caretaker's body (experiences constituting what he calls a "common skin" phenomenon occurring during the oral phase).²⁰ What I shall be arguing in general in this study is that the structural relationship among art-viewing, oral-phase, mirror-stage, and Oedipal experiences is brought to life in performance art in a way that sheds a great deal of light on the repressed dynamics of viewers' experiences not only of performance pieces themselves but, by extension, of more conventional forms of art and of the institutions that frame these experiences.

Considering two such conventions--one in which perspective is emphasized in a work of art and one in which surface is emphasized--one might argue that perspectival art successfully carries out repressive strategies by seducing the viewer into an illusory relation with the composition that promotes a denial of bodily difference from the represented space. Conversely, given the habits of perception embedded so deeply within

western cultural traditions of art viewing, art that asserts surface so strongly that access to virtual space beyond the surface of a painting or sculpture is denied doubles the aforementioned repression. That is to say, the familiar denial of bodily presence is now itself denied.

In the latter case, viewers realize the presence of their bodies but do not really know what to do with that recognition in relation to the object of representation before them, or other objects around them. Almost too much difference exists for the lay person in these cases, which may account for the sense of disconnectedness from art experienced by so many individuals--a negative experience except, perhaps, for those "trained" to deal with it.

Interestingly, the intellectualization enmeshed in this training can, itself, become a way of transcending the psychodynamics of differentiation and their gendered complexities. Now, assuming an understanding of the psychodynamics at work in conventional art-viewing tasks through an analysis of their literalization in performance art will not automatically rein in the tendency toward transcendence inspired by traditional art or by intellectualizing about art, and thus deem the viewing of art tangibly relevant to multiple aspects of the world in which the viewer or thinker stands.

Nor will such an understanding necessarily cut down on a variant of transcendence--alienation. Rather, what I should like to argue is that a psychoanalytic approach to performance will help us grasp the paradoxical value of alienation, including its permutation in the recognition of sexual difference. In other words, such an approach will guide us toward a consideration of what might be called "constructive alienation"--which is, I believe, what most performance art fosters.²¹

THE QUESTIONS OF ALIENATION AND PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Writers on theater such as Bertolt Brecht (who, in his essay "The Street Scene, A Basic Model for an Epic Theatre," developed an entire theory around what he called, literally, the "A-effect (alienation effect)") and more contemporary writers on performance art such as Stiles (who argues that alienation is "reduced, although not resolved," by a metonymic functioning of a performer's body that ties it in a collectivizing manner to all observers) have paved the way for this discussion.²² The specifics of Brecht's theory will be dealt with shortly. But certain general differences between his theory, Stiles's, and my own should, by now, be coming clear. The chief differences lie in what I feel is the necessary use of psychoanalytic theory in the analysis of performance artworks and my insistence on looking at the ways in which

the performing body carries out a metaphoric role.

My commitment to these approaches diminishes the possibility of claiming that performance art is vastly different from more conventional modes of art which always have and always will operate metaphorically. Thus, assertions that performance art constitutes a "radical" development in twentieth-century art--or, in the case of Brecht, an "epic" form of theater--are called into question. This dissertation resists such idealistic claims.

By employing psychoanalytic methodologies we can begin to understand that relationships to modern art entail some innately violent psychological activities--artistic mastery and visual domination, to name a few. The terms of these activities not only belong to the general feminist discourse of gender identification but also, if we consider things from the point of view of those who are mastered and dominated, to a more specific discourse--that of masochism.

Activities that could be described as implicitly or explicitly masochistic exist in performance work throughout the twentieth century--from the Italian Futurists' use of their bodies as targets for a retaliating audience's arsenal of rotten vegetables in the 1910s, to artists' blatantly self-mutilatory acts of the 1970s. Again, Talking About Similarity serves as an

example. For Ulay's silence is the result of a single gesture carried out at the beginning of the piece: after sitting impassively before the audience, his mouth agape, he proceeded to sew his lips shut with a needle and thread (Fig. 1).

The mere mention of masochism usually causes rustling in an audience, whether it be a listening or reading one. A hush, a dead stare, a raising of eyebrows all indicate one's tendency to repress discussion of this complicated problem despite the fact that it riddles everyday life. Indeed, everyone performs within its structure, but using the excuse of melodrama or sensationalism, one chooses not to designate a seemingly harmless act of self-deprecation, or the denial of hunger in the name of beauty, or the suppression of anger for the sake of peace, as "masochistic." I would like to think of masochism as precisely this sort of everyday practice which, in the case of Talking About Similarity, is metaphorized by Abramovic's own, more subtle form of the phenomenon--self-effacement via denial of difference from her male partner, via a performance of resistance to alienation between the "self" and "Other."²³

As I indicated earlier, Talking About Similarity ended when Abramovic felt her ventriloquism had begun to slip and she began to formulate her own answers to questions posed by the audience. Thus, Abramovic's efforts to use

linguistic tools of the symbolic order to "talk about similarity" proved that sameness can be spoken about only as long as conscious attention is paid to such a task. Indeed, as Lacan has shown, an individual always already "speaks in the Other"²⁴--that is, simultaneously operates from the domain of the unconscious, where language is constructed around the recognition of difference. I shall discuss these precepts more fully in the next chapter. But for now I want to call attention to how Abramovic inevitably speaks from and about difference, opening a trapdoor to the immensity of what might be thought of as a "forcefield of language" making up the subterranean world of the unconscious mind.

Ulay's efforts, on the other hand, work spatioconceptually in the opposite direction. He marshals, with literal pinpoint precision, the viewer's perceptions from the grand, seemingly obdurate objecthood of the performing body to the specific entity of the skin. In short, he gathers up the forcefield of language into a single sign. As he reduces language to a single sign in this manner, he forces the viewer to reduce his or her perceptions of the body to the skin and, even further, to the skin's function of communication--one of the three "skin functions," besides those of protection and containment, which Anzieu has outlined and which will be discussed in the next chapter.

It is at this juncture, then, that Ulay's efforts collide and begin to collude with those of Abramovic, leading the viewer to the fact that the body can only ever begin to be understood through the differentiating terms of language. However, as the artists' collusion also demonstrates, this understanding is integrally linked, though paradoxically so, with the understanding that it is only language that can deliver a non-idealized, practical, and potentially beneficial assumption of sameness between individuals--a similarity founded on the vulnerability of the body as object (as metaphorized in Ulay's action) and/or as subject (as metaphorized in Abramovic's).

Together, then, the artists take the viewer to the depths of the performance's meaning by paradoxically guiding his or her attention to the surface of the skin. Their actions suggest that the body, from its roots within the psychologized institution of the domestic site--where the unconscious mind first finds its form--is always and forever operating within a similarly institutionalized context in every arena of life. By choosing to present this performance within an institutionalized arena like that of the art world, Ulay/Abramovic drive this point, literally and figuratively, home.

Now, this is not to say that this performance, or others like it, imply or champion a collapse between everyday life and art--the next "question" with which I

shall deal. It is untenable to suggest that performed masochism is one and the same as, or even metonymically linked to, everyday masochisms in which the vulnerabilities of the body are revealed, and leave it at that. First of all, there is a rhetorical problem in trying to make such a claim. For an act of masochism, whether it is carried out in the art arena or as part of one's daily routine, is always a performance in and of itself. Second, to repeat a central theme of this study, such performances function in a manner that represents something both similar to and different from themselves--which is to say, they function metaphorically.

Before going any further, the topic of similarity, so vividly highlighted by Ulay/Abramovic, needs some discussion lest it slip into the problematic discourse of universality where it could remain without receiving adequate inquiry, historical specification, and critique. To be polemical, I should like to suggest that symbolic connections between masochistic acts and that for which they stand can indeed be thought of as universal--within certain conditional parameters. They may be thought of as universal inasmuch as they relate to psychical developmental stages that everyone experiences--that is, to be very specific, "everyone" within Western culture since the end of the last century.

Film theorist E. Ann Kaplan helps clarify these

conditional parameters. As she has pointed out, it was in the latter part of the nineteenth century that the burgeoning of industrialism and capitalism prompted enormous changes in social relations and, consequently, in family structures. These historical events, she argues, not only prompted traumas within the home--namely, Oedipal traumas, which in turn led to their representation as Oedipal themes in literature (and ultimately in film and art)--but the need for a system like psychoanalysis with which to deal with such traumas.²⁵

One of the strategies of this system, of course, is to observe stages of psychical development. By relying on historical terms as Kaplan has outlined them, it is possible to say that these stages are experienced universally by all those living in a culture undergoing the same historical events broadly defined as "industrialization" and "capitalism."

In the case of the performances under question, the symbolic connections suggested must be considered within even more tightly defined historical circumstances. These circumstances, of course, have to do with the dynamics of the denouement of the Vietnam War, in the early to middle part of the 1970s. Whether thought of universally or specifically, the relationship of the representative masochistic act and its referent is extremely complicated, making the task of tracing the trajectory of the

metaphoric function of the act a very alienating process indeed, but one which cannot be avoided by advocating--to return to the question just raised--a shortcut, or collapse, between "art" and "life."

THE QUESTION OF ART = LIFE

To infer that a collapse between art and life takes place in performances of masochism would not only be to wrench them out of their general historical context, but their art historical context. For this collapse was the charge of performance work distinguishing the 1960s--a charge bequeathed by artists like Robert Rauschenberg and Allan Kaprow. Rauschenberg ushered in the decade in 1959 with his claim: "Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. (I try to act in the gap between the two.)"²⁶ And Kaprow published his famous prescription for Happenings--"the line between art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps indistinct, as possible"--in his book Assemblage, Environments, and Happenings in 1966.²⁷ It is in the spirit of these directives that Stiles has theorized her work on DIAS, extrapolating a working definition of post-World War II performance art (or, again, to use her term, "event-structured live art") as that which involves the body "functioning as a live vehicle of transit...as a synapse demonstrating the contiguity between art and life as well as the inexorable

human link between subject and subject."²⁸

If the performing body can indeed function metonymically, as a sort of conduit to all other bodies (most immediately the audience, and by implication, the social community beyond) as Stiles has theorized, I would argue that it can do so only within particular periods in which historical conditions in many areas of thought and action conspire toward a loosening of boundaries. Thus, a broad scenario might be established in which dissolution of more specific boundaries--the "line[s] between art and life," for example--becomes a matter of belief.

One must be able to take a leap of faith, in other words; one must come to believe in the possibility of fluid movement between certain fields of thought and action as a result of observing movement in other arenas where the stakes are a great deal higher than they are, say, in the world of art per se. Certainly, the 1960s--a decade in which this phenomenon was carried out in a positive way in the civil rights movement's drive to dissolve boundaries between race-determined rights, and in a negative way in this country's imperialist drive to violate political boundaries of self-determination in countries like Vietnam--were a prime time for artists to take their own leap of faith.

For Stiles, the leap taken by performance artists in the metonymic use of their bodies constituted a paradigm

shift away from "the visual arts' traditional and exclusive dependence on the communicative mechanisms of metaphor...."29 Locating the moment of change in the context of contemporary societal events, her theory is in keeping with my own position favoring historical specificity, but Stiles channels her argument toward a very different conclusion from my own.

On one hand, she argues convincingly that the shift occurred in response to events in the nuclear, post-World War II era that both made individuals increasingly aware of the vulnerability of their bodies and rendered conventional approaches to art-making inadequate as expressions of this awareness. On the other, however, Stiles asserts that artists' shift to a metonymic utilization of the body had staying power--a claim I find arguable on the basis of the performances I shall be examining. She claims that

it was no coincidence that the art action--an art form animated by the dynamic structure of an event (a Happening)--appeared at a point where painting and sculpture were no longer able to effectively realize the political and social ramifications of the fragility of existence in the wake of the devastations of World War II. By introducing the artist's own bodily presence as the material work of art, these artists permanently altered the ways in which social issues might be presented in the visual arts. By situating the signifying body at the center of destructive events, they found a means to link creative values in art to the existential dilemmas of the nuclear age and stressed, finally, existence over essence [my emphasis].30

The permanency of the metonymic model, Stiles goes on to

suggest, is proven in subsequent works like those we are about to address--"Action and Body Art," to use her terminology--as well as in "Neo-Expressionist painting and sculpture, where the human being is often represented as politically and/or psychologically threatened."³¹

In contrast to a theory of metonymic permanency, I shall be arguing that by the early 1970s, when self-mutilatory works like Ulay/Abramovic's abounded, the failure of artists' aims of the 1960s to establish "contiguity" and "fluidity," as theorized by Stiles and Kaprow (or even demonstrated in precursory masochistic performances of the 1960s), and thereby to dissolve the boundaries between performer and audience, had become clear. Examples of these earlier masochistic works would include performances by Viennese Aktionism artist Günther Brus and Fluxus artist Yoko Ono.³²

Brus tried, in simple spatial terms, to bridge the art-life gap by performing his acts of masochism as close to the audience as possible. In the final performance of his career, Zereisseprobe, performed on the cusp of the works under discussion--1970--he cut and contorted his body within arms' reach of the audience.³³ And Ono, in works like Cut Piece, performed at DIAS in 1966, figuratively "cut" the audience-performer dividing line by literally offering to viewers a pair of scissors with which to cut the clothing from her body.³⁴

Moving beyond their predecessors, masochistic artists of the 1970s articulated a poignant distance between performer and viewer. Effecting a distantiation of their bodies from the viewer--not only in the spatial sense of the performer-audience relationship but, moreover, in the representational sense of relying on an array of media to document their works--they reopened a gap between art and life. In doing so, they revealed a sea of largely politicized, ideologized referents for their metaphoric actions.

A good example of the failure of the art-equals-life debate is provided in a well-known performance from the early 1970s and an artist-critic's assessment of it: Chris Burden's infamous piece entitled Shoot, and a New York Times article by Peter Plagens. These two pieces bring together the issues discussed so far concerning performance art functioning, above all, as representation. Thus, they warrant a close reading.

QUESTIONS FROM CHRIS BURDEN (AND ONE OF HIS CRITICS)

"He Got Shot--For His Art." So read the title of a 1973 New York Times article by Plagens, in which he writes about the work of not only Burden, but his fellow-Los Angeles artist William Wegman.³⁵ Despite the comparative structure of the article, the title indicates Plagens' emphasis on Burden, specifically on works like Shoot: the

1971 performance in which Burden arranged for a sharpshooter to graze his arm with a bullet fired from a .22-caliber rifle (Fig. 2); the piece that showed artists' intentions have very little to do with final outcome, inasmuch as Shoot resulted in a deep wound, not a superficial abrasion as planned; the piece almost everyone, including those who know very little about performance art (or even art in general) have heard of; the piece that made Burden and performance art (and, for some, even art in general) infamous; the piece to which most people initially respond by asking "Why would anyone want to do such a thing?"

Plagens refers to this piece in his article in a cynical manner, inadvertently providing a few answers to the foregoing question. Using the concluding paragraphs of the article as a springboard for the upcoming discussion of five artists' self-attacking work of the 1970s, I shall expand upon Plagens' answers and offer a few of my own.

In the first of the following paragraphs Plagens makes reference to Shoot, as well as a 1973 performance entitled Movie on the Way Down, in which Burden held a Brownie camera to document his descent to a gymnasium floor after an assistant, in a prearranged move, severed the rope which had tied the artist to the ceiling by his ankles (Fig. 3). Plagens addresses audience members', as well as

his own, general responses to the artist:

Burden...irritates practically everybody, mostly because he reminds the art audience what fat, white, middle-class lives they lead (never dropped or shot) and the safety of the wall-hanging art they like. But he bothers me because his freedom--to "think things and do them"--may be instead a product of artworld art history--backed further into some untenable, masochistic corner because all the other novelty territory has been claimed.

Burden's conduct as an aspiring avant-garde artist, as dictated to him by Avalanche, Flash Art and Artforum, is no freer than a novitiate Franciscan's seeking admittance to that order.³⁶

Plagens, in the remaining sentences of his text, proceeds beyond oblique references to the institutional structures framing Burden's work--like academia or journalism--to an overt reference to a more specific institution which, I would argue, is always under address, to one degree or another, in the masochistic works I am going to be discussing. That is, along with the title of the article, the last few sentences I am about to quote suggest a militaristic subtext in Burden's performances--a subtext in which what we might think of as the "performing body" and the "embattled body" are drawn into a very specific relationship to one other.

The title of the article ("He Got Shot--For His Art") introduced the work's connection to the institution of the military, its phraseology being none other than that of a familiar wartime expression of patriotism, with the word "art" substituted for "country." Plagens brings out the

more nuanced meanings of this phraseology as he closes:

If you want to be a heavy artist nowadays, you have to do something unpleasant to your body, because everything else has been done.

I asked Burden about that--comparing his bullet wound to a real one, suffered by a Vietnam vet or a street-gang member. "Isn't it small potatoes?" I said. "Yes," he said. But--so it came to me later--is all art: yours, mine, Burden's or Wegman's.³⁷

In just a few short paragraphs, Plagens touches upon almost all the topics I shall be looking at closely in this study. He refers to issues of race and class, which I shall address in Chapter Four in the context of legal history and the place within it of practices of enslavement. He fleetingly but incisively speaks of masochism as integral to the workings of art history and art criticism--that is, to the legitimizing apparatuses, the pseudolegalistic institutions, of the artworld. And he reflects upon the sort of liberation theory which had, by the 1970s, come to be thought of as a tradition in performance art. Joining Plagens in his questioning of Burden's attainment of freedom, I shall try, throughout the study ahead, to assess the accuracy of noncritical, liberatory theories of performance art.

Plagens closes his article by relating the violence of the Vietnam War to mass culture in general, his comments underscoring his cynicism toward Burden's work. The comments work retroactively to cast the article's title in

a cynical frame, but this tying together of title and conclusion goes beyond the author's intention to be journalistically symmetrical or glib. That is--and perhaps this is the most useful contribution Plagens' article makes to my discussion of performance art's metaphoric powers of representation--by contrasting Burden's bullet wound to "a real one, suffered by a Vietnam vet or a street-gang member," Plagens not only raises doubts about whether sacrificing oneself in the world of art constitutes a qualitative substitute for sacrificing oneself on the battlefield. Rather, his contrast pronounces, with an air of melancholy, the failure of 1960s performance rhetoric: art does not, or at least could no longer be made to, equate with life.

Plagens and Burden were right, I believe. There was no direct connection between the artist's wound and a Vietnam vet's, just as there was no direct connection between one's experience of the soldier in Vietnam, pictured on the nightly news or in Life magazine, and the actual body that was being represented there, mutilated by war and mediated by the rules of institutional news-making.³⁸ What there was and is a connection between, however, are the structures of the agreement sustaining both art and war--structures that stand the performing body in position as metaphor for, not metonym of, bodies in society at large and the embattled body in particular.

It was what was taking place between those bodies that needed critical attention--a need that turned into the task of 1970s masochistic artists. I believe that the structures of the agreement sustaining art and war are contractual, and it is precisely these structures that the artists addressed. By 1970 it had become clear in the context of the Vietnam War that there was a growing discrepancy between what was fact and what was being represented as fact by individuals operating from positions of power. It was becoming clear that contractual agreements made by such individuals with those who were marching into war, or even with (if we think of contractual agreements more broadly as unarticulated assumptions of consensus) those who were watching agreements being played out through media representations on their television sets and in their newspapers, were breaking down.

In other words, there was an ever-widening gap between "what was being said" by those in positions of power and "what was being meant." The latter was beginning to show through--indeed, was literally beginning to bleed through--the seemingly opaque gloss of the former. The language I have just used in describing the outer poles of this gap is borrowed from a specific law-world discourse, to which I shall now turn.

THE QUESTION OF CONTRACTS IN PERFORMANCE ART

Not surprisingly, changes in this same referential "meant-said" distinction were taking place in the material history of contract itself. As Grant Gilmore points out in The Death of Contract (1974), almost a century had passed since Oliver Wendell Holmes first stated that "the true ground of the decision [over a contract dispute] was not that each party meant a different thing from the other...but each said a different thing."³⁹ Now, by the time of his own writing, Gilmore observes major, albeit subtle, shifts taking place in the history of contract--shifts away from what another legal historian called modern contract's status as an "'abstraction'--a remote, impersonal, bloodless abstraction."⁴⁰

The breakdown in the contractual or allegedly consensual relationship between state and citizen in the Vietnam War context of the early 1970s should be seen, I believe, as the failed exploitation of modern contract's century-long endorsement of a semiological severance between signifier ("what is said") and referent ("what is meant"). It is this exploitation, I also believe, to which masochistic artists responded by: on one hand, duplicating the painful effects of this separation; on the other, showing the paradoxical necessity of separation for purposes of making sense of the representations, including contractual agreements, that shape our lives.

Articulating this separation, as well as its inherently painful dynamics, through the use of masochism as a metaphoric practice, 1970s masochistic artists dispelled myths of collapse that form the basis of the art-equals-life debate and its corollary--the media-representation-equals-life-on-the-battlefield debate. Rather than act in the gap between "what is said" and "what is meant"--that in which Rauschenberg and Kaprow delighted, and in which Stiles and the artists she addresses invested restorative belief--1970s artists saw that it was time to perform more deictically. In other words, they pointed at but refused to occupy this gap--a refusal aimed at stimulating a distanced analysis and critique of the ideologizing that takes place therein.⁴¹

In effect, then, what I am saying here is this: most people's profoundly dwindling trust in the state in the waning years of the Vietnam War, along with performance artists' engagement in masochistic acts, should be seen as America's (vis-à-vis the Vietnam War) as well as 1960s art's (vis-à-vis art-equals-life optimism) as well as Holmes's (vis-à-vis the world of contract) "last stand." Proceeding on the basis of this hypothesis, a look at the masochistic structure of a selection of artworks will raise questions regarding the masochism implicit in social relations, in traditional art-producing and art-viewing experiences, and in the operation of contract itself. It

is to these relations, experiences, and operations that the masochistic artist has reacted by making the masochistic structures of those relations, etc. resonate in the performance arena.

It will be helpful at this juncture for me to summarize points made so far and to lay out a fuller account of my hypotheses--which, I hope by the end of this study, will have transformed themselves into a full-fledged argument supported by the material evidence of the selected performances.

THE QUESTIONS SUMMARIZED: "THE ARGUMENT"

Let me begin with a caveat. It is important not to view either my own, or Stiles's, theories of the performing body's function as metaphor, or metonym, too rigidly. As I indicated earlier, there are examples of looseness in Stiles's theorizations which give way to a reading of performance art as symbolic, representational, metaphoric. To wit, she writes:

Destruction in art should be understood as a method employed to expose habits of theory and practice that deterministically narrow artistic production and its public reception. In a general way, destruction in art metaphorically addresses the negative aspects of social and political institutions within which life-threatening technology and psychic practices have evolved and, in a specific sense, it examines conventions which constrict the constructive capacity of the individual [my emphasis].⁴²

and:

With prior notice of the auto-destruction of the [art]

object, the public should learn to expect and anticipate the passing of the work of art, and might learn to cherish the value of its limited appearance as a metaphor of the transitory nature of life [my emphasis].⁴³

Similarly, I want to loosen the meaning of metaphor, especially in terms of its place within the arena of the symbolic. That is, turning to the Lacanian notion of the symbolic--put simply for now, that which has to do with language and its growth out of experiences of Oedipalization--I want to explore (as I feel the selected artists have) its roots in previous stages of psychical development. More specifically, I wish to examine the ways in which the three key stages of development (oral, mirror, and Oedipal stages) are echoed in processes of contract-making. Without, at the moment, getting entangled in too detailed a description of these stages and processes, or in elaborate footnoting--all of which will be adequately dealt with in the next chapter--I should like to proceed with a sketch of my "argument," presenting it in as straightforward, simple, and conversational a manner as possible. The intention is to create a shared basis of understanding among readers.

Although I am advocating a loosening of the terms of the symbolic, I remain committed to the idea that performance art's overriding value lies in its representational status. To me, the representational aspects of performance (its play within the arena of the

symbolic) are its greatest contributions not only to art history but social/cultural history in general. Performance artists make this contribution through the use of their bodies as primary material. The contribution becomes particularly obvious, albeit paradoxically so, in masochistic performance in which artists actually go so far as to use their skin as primary material.

I say "paradoxical" because it is popularly, or naively, held that the closer we get to the body, the less room there is for mediation, for the powers of representation to be wielded between the body (as a referent) and one's perception of the body (as a sign invested with a great deal of data beyond the physiological). The theory here is that the body exists and can be known "purely" as a totalizable, fleshy whole that rests outside the arena of the symbolic.

Artists performing acts of masochism show this theory not to be the case. While solidly positioned in the arena of the symbolic (by virtue of their operation within the field of art, which is always-already-and-forever the field of representation, the symbolic, the metaphor), they play around with masochistic acts that take themselves and their viewers back to psychologically charged moments thought by some theorists (but not others, as I shall explain shortly) to be pre-symbolic.

The practice of masochism, then, I am claiming, is used

as a vehicle to the metaphoric representation of moments preceding, and including, the Oedipal scenario as theorists like Lacan have sketched it (i.e., as the scenario in psychical development in which the field of the symbolic is rigidly constructed, once and for all, in the form of language). This practice, as witnessed in numerous examples of early 1970s performance works, reveals how these earlier moments--specifically, those inherent in the oral stage and mirror stage of the psyche's development--constitute what might be thought of as crucially important triggers, initiators, or roots of the symbolic.

These triggers/initiators/roots are made manifest in painful processes: one, of separation from the mother (in the latter stages of the oral phase, as theorized by Didier Anzieu in his book The Skin Ego, the "skin ego" itself being a highly metaphoric symbol); and two, of the recognition of the "split self" experienced upon an individual's first glimpse of his or her reflected image (in Lacan's "mirror stage"). These moments, clearly, not only have to do with an introduction of a separation that provides "room" for intervening data to mediate between a body and one's perception of that body (i.e., that which makes up the symbolic), but introduces, as I have just mentioned, experiences of pain manifested in and upon the self (i.e., masochistic experience).

So, to repeat, while staying grounded in the obviously and irrefutably symbolic field of art production, the performance artist, especially the masochistic artist, guides the viewer along the trajectory of psychical development--which is to say, the course of the construction of the symbolic register. The use of various mnemonic devices (themselves metaphors or symbols) helps chart the landmarks of this journey: a survey of early 1970s masochistic works shows the repeated use of the mouth, the mirror, and the bed as focal points of performances. Appropriated by the artists through unconscious motivation, these material entities help the artist drive deeply into the unconscious and trace its construction through the oral, mirror, and Oedipal stages for which these devices stand, respectively, as metaphors. As the selection of performances in Chapter Three will show, the oral stage is symbolized by the mouth; the mirror stage by the mirror; the Oedipal stage by the bed.

But more is at stake in this journey than a simple "unrepressing" or a vague reminder of moments in one's psychical development. As it is enacted, the nature of the environment in which the original journey took place becomes an issue with which the artists and their viewers are confronted and must come to terms. This environment could be called an "institutional construct." In the case of psychical development, this construct is the domestic

site, the home. Indeed, it is here that one first makes this journey that culminates in the rigidification of the symbolic, the establishment of hierarchy, and the placement of the individual in the arena of "law."

For Lacan, the latter was configured by the "law of the father." This "law" and the domestic site in which it was initially formulated together serve as paradigmatic metaphors for the literal institution of law within which all individuals deal daily. Masochism takes this construct seriously, requiring a set agreement between the individual who practices masochism and anyone else who observes, allows, or participates in that practice (in our discussion, the performance artist and his or her audience).

As mentioned in the Introduction, Gilles Deleuze, analyzing the novels of Léopold von Sacher-Masoch, was the first theorist to note that this agreement, which Masoch literalized by drawing up actual contracts with his partners, was a crucial component in masochism (along with four other components observed by Theodor Reik, including demonstration, provocation, suspense, and fantasy). Taking the concept of contract even more literally than Masoch or Deleuze already have, as I wish to do, will prove useful in understanding what motivated artists in the early 1970s to take their bodies to masochistic extremes.

I intend to show that: 1) significant changes in the history of the theory of contract not only corresponded time-wise to the era in which masochistic performance flourished, but not surprisingly, to the time at which the subject of masochism caught Deleuze's attention as he sought to theorize the phenomenon's manipulation of contract; 2) the execution of contracts involves a series of activities (offer, acceptance, consideration) which, also not surprisingly, echo the stages of psychical development outlined above (oral, mirror, Oedipal).

Taking a look at the psychological as well as legalistic aspects of masochistic performances illuminates important aspects of the historical context in which they were produced. A good example of many of the psycholegalistic, historicological connections discussed above can be found in a performance by Gina Pane entitled Money-Meat-Fire. I shall discuss this performance at considerable length in the next section, in an effort to introduce a sort of model for the examination of the numerous pieces to be presented in Chapter Three.

A reiteration of the disclaimer with which I began the sketch of my argument: some of the theoretical issues will be necessarily glossed over in the next section in order to keep the focus on the foregoing, general connections. I shall concentrate in a more scholarly fashion on pertinent theories (of Anzieu, Lacan, Deleuze,

and others) in Chapter Two. An additional point regarding legal terminology I am about to use: for our current purposes, the legal terms of "offer" and "acceptance" can be taken at face value, with the latter thought of broadly, as including the process of negotiation; "consideration," a somewhat more complicated term, can be thought of for now as involving material economics, as in the question of whether a benefit or detriment is at stake in a pending contractual agreement.

QUESTIONS FROM GINA PANE

Not the least of the above connections made by Pane were to the institutions of law and the economy. Audience members were confronted with the demands of these two institutions before Pane's performance even took place. In order to attend Money-Meat-Fire (1971), the potential audience member had to decide whether to agree to the terms of the contract-type offer printed on the invitation: "A sum equivalent to 2% at least of your salary will have to be deposited in a safe at the entrance of the place where I will be performing."⁴⁴

If in agreement, after depositing the prescribed sum in the coffer at the door of M. and Mme. Fregnac's apartment in Paris (Fig. 4a), audience members watched Pane as she conducted a three-part performance, in which she: kept shoving one pound, five ounces of raw ground beef into her

mouth, regurgitating much of it back out onto her plate; watched the evening news on television while sitting in an uncomfortable position with a bright light shining in her eyes (Fig. 4b); and used her bare hands and feet to put out patches of fire set in a mound of sand (Fig. 4c).

The fact that audience members had paid up front brought attention to this action as a transaction, making them aware of their contracted partnership with Pane, as well as their investment in the ideology of the human being as possessible--which is to say, the ideology of the body as a contractable entity of exchange. This ideology has been addressed by literary theorist Walter Benn Michaels, whose analysis of Frank Norris's turn-of-the-century novel McTeague--the first piece of American fiction dealing with issues of domestic masochism--is helpful in our analysis of Money-Meat-Fire, especially since Pane purposefully chose to situate the piece within a domestic site.⁴⁵

As Michaels suggests, McTeague's masochistic wife, Trina, paid for both her marriage-contracted partnership and her modicum of independence within it. Her barter for the former was her body (McTeague, an out-of-work dentist, liked to chew maniacally on Trina's fingers) and for the latter, her savings (Trina refused to share a \$5,000 lottery windfall with her unemployed husband).

Using Trina as his reference point, Michaels argues

that masochism thrives on the tension between owning and being owned.⁴⁶ Parenthetically, it is clear that Michaels' argument here begs loudly for a nuanced discussion of the relation between masochism and the institution of slavery. I shall hold such a discussion, as already promised, later in this study. But what is most relevant to my analysis at this point is the way in which the tension Michaels describes is paralleled in Pane's performance by the tension between perceptions of masochism as "perverse" or "normal."⁴⁷

Michaels argues that, on one hand, "if the masochist's desire to be owned is perverse, it is nevertheless a perversion made possible only by the bourgeois identification of the self as property."⁴⁸ On the other, "the logic that makes Trina strange is precisely the logic of liking one's ways, and the logic that makes her like her ways is...the logic that makes her like everyone else--normal."⁴⁹

In Pane's masochistic performance, then, to reiterate, it is the way in which the body is set up as a contractable entity of exchange and, more specifically, the way in which that setup was "passing as normal" in the early 1970s, that she disallows. The contracted partnership between viewer and performer in Meat-Money-Fire is the key contributor, I believe, to the change in attitude Pane feels she provoked in her audience. "At the

end of twenty minutes," she writes, "everyone there remarked: 'It's strange, we never felt or heard the news before. There's actually a war going on in Vietnam, unemployment everywhere...'. Until this moment, they were anesthetised in the face of world news."⁵⁰ Because the economic structure of the masochistic contract was made clear, the social dynamic that places people in positions as masochists (glorifying and renaming the activity of masochists in the case of soldiers at war; or writing them off as masochistic producers of their own conditions in the case of the unemployed) could no longer be considered "normal."

It is no wonder, I would argue, given the situation in Vietnam, the state of the economy, and the disenchantment with views of the normalcy of those situations on the parts of dominant power by the early 1970s, that masochistic performance proliferated as a way of calling attention to the flesh and its use as barter. Pane produced a sort of "wake-up call" by playing with the terms of the audience-performer contract and, moreover, by replaying mutually correspondent aspects of psychical development.

That is, Pane makes her contractual offer crystal clear up front by putting out an invitation that forced the issue, and in the first portion of the performance by taking the audience with her on a regression to

remembrances of the psychical oral phase. Specifically, in the opening section of the piece, she focuses on this phase by carrying out a double rejection of what it allegedly offers: first, through the symbolic substitution of the dead body of an animal (symbolically, a mammalian mother-analog) for the living body (the mother's body as mammalian source of lactational sustenance); then, through the regurgitation of that dead body. Thus, her action points to, but her rejection disallows, nostalgia-riddled fantasies of the maternal body functioning as a comforting "prop"--fantasies that have their counterpart in narcissistic fantasies of being "one with the universe," so to speak, or one with what Anzieu calls the "mothering environment."⁵¹

Pane's symbolic rejection of the oral phase paves the way for the second part of the performance in which she and the audience watch the evening news through the glare of a bare lightbulb. The glare, though partially blinding, makes the audience member as self-consciously aware of the function of vision and its power to help one identify with an entity outside the self as would a refraction of light glancing off a mirror into which one gazes for the purpose of coming to an understanding of the self. Just as Lacan's narrative of the mirror stage of psychical development begins by providing a fragmented, partial understanding of this self through a

representation that never reflects the whole body and is always situated at a material distance from the viewer, so did the watching of the nightly news take place in a fragmented, partial, and distant context.⁵² Thus, the fragmentation, partiality, and distance of the bodies of injured soldiers in Vietnam represented on the screen were underscored.

Pane elaborated on this sensation of distance by simulcasting her performance on a video monitor in front of the audience, thereby enabling herself to convert the notion of "distance" into a metaphor for "difference." That is, in addition to viewing the representation of war-torn bodies at a distance, the audience understood the conceptual difference between the embattled body and Pane's performing body, as well as the distance and/or difference between her actual performing body and its representation on the video monitor.

The third, and last, section of the performance focused on what the artist has referred to as a representation of hearth and home through the symbolic use of fire.⁵³ Pane's masochistic action of willingly enduring the pain of extinguishing patches of flames (set in small mounds of sand) with her bare hands and feet suggests yet another rejection--here, of the alleged comforts of Oedipalization as they are represented through the cliched symbols of family unity (the fiery warmth of hearth and home). This

sense of unity requires a belief in (familial) similarity among individuals, a belief that echoes the nostalgia for similarity to and unity with the oral mother, but with an added feature: the subjugation of these individuals to the law of the Oedipal father.

This last section ties into my psycholegalistic schema at the point where the consideration stage of contract-making takes place and is seen to correspond to the Oedipal phase of psychical development. It is in this portion of the performance that Pane's masochism is made most obvious and intense, her willingness to endure pain making it clear that it truly is the body that is at stake when those who are offered a contract (here, the audience) "sign" (here, in the form of depositing money in the coffer at the door of the performance).

But most important, in pointing out and yet rejecting reminiscences of the Oedipal phase and the stakes it sets (the consideration established by contract) Pane "bookends" her earlier rejection of the oral stage and its offerings, leaving the audience floundering in the area in between the two phases. This in-between zone, I would argue, is the space of contractual acceptance, or negotiation. What I am suggesting, then, is that Pane opens up a space in this piece in which the audience is free to negotiate with and/or accept that which is transpiring before their eyes.

Now, as Money-Meat-Fire announced up front, the audience, by even appearing at the piece, had already accepted the terms of the performance offered in the invitational contract. So, the question posed in the in-between zone into which the observer--then, as now--is deposited is not so much whether to accept the artist's masochistic actions but whether to accept all that to which, through the powerful function of metaphor, they relate.

When asked in a published interview how the audience reacted to the last section of the piece, Pane reported that "the atmosphere was at first filled with curiosity, then astonishment, then a curious floating. Nobody said anything--the silence was terrifying. I don't think they received what I call the 'perturbing' or 'disturbing' element. That came much later when they returned to their routine environments."⁵⁴ It is this typically silent acceptance on the audience's part that takes us into a discussion of the constructive potential, as well as the problematics, of carrying out a masochistic act.

To begin by expanding upon Pane's observations, I would argue that the audience was shaken up within the piece, but shaken up on an unconscious level--precisely the level being touched by her replay of the stages of development of the unconscious mind. Employing the fragmenting, distancing--and, indeed, "perturbing" and "disturbing"--

strategies outlined above, Pane prepared viewers to be consciously perturbed and disturbed upon reentering the heretofore seemingly ordered construct of their homes or, as she put it, "their routine environments."

The audience's silence, then, aurally duplicated the visual, material, and conceptual distance established in the piece and gave viewers the space within which to be affected by it--i.e., to be affected by the distance between the similarities and differences of the performing and/or embattled bodies as Pane presented and represented them. This distance is precisely that which would be experienced in the institutional constructs of the home and all other institutions hierarchized in a fashion that replicates its power structure.

Moreover, remembering and being perturbed and disturbed by the self-conscious experience of their own bodies--their own bodies relative to Pane's as it was presented and represented before them, and their positions relative to the representation of the injured body on the news, left viewers in a space where they could operate critically. They could consider the value of distance between their own and others' objecthood and subjecthood, as well as the vulnerability pertaining to each of these identificatory poles.

The opening up of this critical space is stimulated by the inherently alienating dynamics of masochistic acts.

Thus, Pane draws, no doubt unwittingly, on Brecht's theory of alienation, which he described as follows:

What is involved here [in the "so-called A-effect"] is, briefly, a technique of taking the human social incidents to be portrayed and labelling them as something striking, something that calls for explanation, is not to be taken for granted, not just natural. The object of this "effect" is to allow the spectator to criticize constructively from a social point of view.⁵⁵

Pane's acts of self-induced regurgitation, contortion, and exposure to fire qualify as "striking." The images yielded by the performance beg for "explanation," inasmuch as they document far from comfortable, "natural" events.

But what is most important to note here is that the point of any critique which is launched upon observing these images is not to help an individual come to grips with the question of whether distance is "good" or "bad"--another version of the question of whether all forms of alienation are negative--but with how much distance might be called for at any given moment in history. This sort of critique could, we can speculate, help the individual consider the fact that he or she has choices as to when a shortening of distance between oneself and an entity outside the self is beneficial (for example, for purposes of solidarity in such actions as mass protests against a war) or detrimental (for example, in the establishment of a "mass" which can be ultimately subjugated).

Thus, the evaluation of distance as it is produced

within and by a performance and its documentation can be broadened into a critique of Oedipalized institutions' compulsion to encourage similarity between individuals and/or to dissolve boundaries among them for the purposes of control. Such an evaluation might be further broadened into an assessment of one's need to insist on boundaries, in particular to choose where precisely they should be set. These extrapolated possibilities constitute the constructive potential of stirring up masochistic processes--possibilities that tie an individual more consciously to his or her social circumstances and their various historical triggers.

Pane concludes her observations of the piece by claiming that "I attack their [the viewers'] habitual comfort--which if they allowed to be penetrated would automatically be modified. But the simple fact I cause a momentary struggle inside them is important for me."⁵⁶ This conclusion situates Pane's performance within a broader historical context than just that which has to do with Vietnam per se. The clue to this historicizing task lies in her observation that she causes a "struggle inside" her viewers.

In 1971, when Pane presented this piece, the time for externalized struggle, for physical protest over the Vietnam War, was passing. The time for analysis and critique of the underlying structures of that which had

been protested had begun. This analysis and critique had to begin at home: the very home into which the representations of fragmented, injured bodies were, on a daily basis, being channeled; the very site in which Pane chose to present her piece. The trouble with the images being piped into the home during this period had a direct relation to the trouble that was already there--the trouble with power, organized around the patriarchal hierarchy that had caused the mistaken conflict of the Vietnam War in the first place.

But for all Pane's dreams of inducing an "automatic modification" in the viewer's home-based "comfort," the most she or any artist in this era could actually do was "bring the struggle inside"--both inside the home and inside the self, where the seeds of criticism take root. Pane, like other artists of this period, took the masochistic step of literalizing the fragmentational processes of identification and of delineating boundaries by making marks on the body's surface that metaphorically illustrate the difference between a protected body and a vulnerable one. In this way, her actions, like others', I shall be arguing, comprised a "direct hit" aimed at the institutional heart of the trouble in society--the trouble with hierarchical power and its tendency to delineate boundaries to the benefit and protection of a few and to the detriment and increased vulnerability of many.

The potential problem with masochistic artists' "direct-hit" method, however, is that it runs the same risk as certain militaristic moves of which such a method is itself reminiscent. Some people feel forced to move into too distanced a position, to withdraw into fantasies of earlier developmental stages for purposes of attaining ersatz protection--that which Pane would refer to as "anestheticisation."

Artists of the early 1970s found themselves in an awkward time, pulled in one direction by a desire to externalize protest over institutionalized violence, and in another by their attraction to an ever-deepening examination of the interior of the home and its psychologized structure, from which the violence that needed to be critiqued had grown. The in-between zone they straddled was packed with issues which were not entirely clear. Thus, artists produced work that did not always so clearly fulfill its own potential.

Some viewers did, and still do, end up numb. As Pane herself said: "Most spectators admit feeling the action the first time totally, the second time less and third time hardly at all."⁵⁷ Nonetheless, what works like Money-Meat-Fire provide is shockingly essential to our understanding of history: an etiological charting of the pain-imbued course of psychical development; a display of the contractual structure within which that course is

duplicated; a suggestion, again by way of extrapolation, of the manner in which painful processes transferred from the former (psychical development) to the latter (contractual arrangements) can accelerate into violence.

It would take more distance than that which any of the five masochistic artists' work offered for this display to be brought into sharp focus, however--the historical distance represented by my current study. In the twenty years since these performances were produced, the trouble with institutionalized violence--or, said more precisely, with institutions' Oedipalized compulsions to dissolve most boundaries while maintaining those which enhance interests of dominant power--has become far less vague than it was in the early 1970s.

In a manifesto-style statement that is worth quoting at length--for my own stylistic purpose of placing a boundary on this chapter's discussion, and the thematic purpose of making a transition to the topics of the next chapter--Anzieu has eloquently summarized the cultural situation in which he (and I) are currently writing. His quote articulates the situation I believe grew out of the Vietnam War era, the situation that I believe the artists under discussion sensed was in the making and were trying, however clumsily or inchoately, to address:

If I had to sum up the situation of the West--and perhaps of the whole of humanity--in these closing years of the twentieth century, I would emphasize the need to set limits: on demographic expansion, on the

arms race, on nuclear explosions, on the acceleration of history, on economic growth, on insatiable consumption, on the increasing disparity between the rich nations and the Third World, on the gigantic scale of scientific projects and economic enterprise, on the invasion of the private sphere by the media of mass communication, on the compulsion endlessly to break records at the cost of over-training and drug-taking, on the ambition always to go faster and further and to spend more, with all the overcrowding, nervous tension, cardiovascular illness and general discontent that results....

Thus it seems to me a matter of the utmost urgency, in both psychological and social terms, for us to re-establish limits, restore some frontiers, mark out inhabitable, liveable territories for ourselves--limits and frontiers that will produce differentiation and at the same time allow exchanges between the regions (of the psyche, of knowledge, of society and humanity) thus delimited.⁵⁸

The artists who practiced masochism did so, I believe, to metaphorically illustrate a need for viable boundaries and practices of distantiation. As Therese Lichtenstein has argued in her writings on art (specifically, that of Hans Bellmer) and sado-masochism: "[R]epresenting ruptured physical and psychic boundaries can also be a search and desire for boundaries by acknowledging their absence."⁵⁹ I believe that artists of the early 1970s had begun to see the lack of boundaries and distance as problems inherent in the Vietnam and post-Vietnam era. Most important to remember, the artists seem to be saying, is that these problems were, as has just been demonstrated with Pane's work and which should become clearer as we proceed, synonymous with "trouble in the home."

Very briefly, before proceeding to Chapter Two and a

fuller description of the theories I am cobbling together as a model from which to analyze and critique the selection of performances in Chapter Three, I need to say a few words about this concept of "home" into which we inevitably keep bumping.

THE QUESTION OF THE HOME

As indicated in the charting of my foundational hypotheses, of equal importance to questions of the body in any study of performance art are questions aimed at the spaces within which work focusing on the body has taken place. By operating within the domain of theatricality, I shall argue, performance art efficiently loops the viewer back to the domain of domesticity--that is, the home, in which performance skills, methods of perception, and identificatory procedures are first forged.

Freud, it should not be forgotten, appropriated the name of a classical drama--Sophocles' Oedipus Rex--to label one set of these early domestic experiences.⁶⁰ In this effort alone, he suggested a link between the spaces of domesticized and theatricalized performance. What I am proposing in this dissertation--or, rather, what I feel artists like Pane have prompted her viewers to see--is that the experience one has within the institutional framework of performance art can be usefully compared to the institutional framework in which one experiences the

Oedipal scenario--the domestic site, the institution of the home.

This is the institutional site on which I shall be concentrating in the dissertation, with much thought given to the ways in which the home connects to the arena of law, both in the psychoanalytic sense in which Lacan speaks of the Oedipalizing effects of the "law of the father"⁶¹ and the materially legalistic sense in which, say, Jean-Jacques Rousseau might speak of it. Again, it should not be forgotten that the premise of Rousseau's whole notion of the social contract is that "the first model of political societies" is "the family."⁶² Indeed, the practice of law and the initiation of the social contract begin at home. The artists I am about to discuss have much to say about this fact, its problematics, its value.

It is my hope that my admittedly narrow focus on the institution of the home will make it possible to take the foregoing comparisons and extend them to frameworks in which the terms of gender differentiation and masochism are even more rigidly repressed and thus have a profound impact on the way individuals interact with the world. The goal of this study, then, concerning issues of institutionality, is threefold: one, to burrow deeply within the construct of the home, which I see as the chief site with which the artists under consideration were

concerned; two, to lay the groundwork for a future investigation of the specific material sites within or upon which performance art has been carried out (alternative spaces and their prototypes); three, to prompt a questioning of the interrelationships of these sites with others in which the body is constantly active, its movement choreographed and/or curtailed by the ramifications of repression.

This all leads to one overall question I wish to put forth with the hope of making this study relevant to, and its findings able to be extrapolated into, fields outside that of art history per se. The question is two-pronged and emanates from performance art's epistemological-economic structure. Put simply: How do institutions which frame the body frame individuals' knowledge of it? And for whose benefit is this knowledge-shaping carried out?⁶³

Pulling this rather grand line of inquiry back to the more manageable list of questions surveyed in this chapter, I shall proceed now with an elaboration upon theorists' writings introduced above so that the performances in Chapter Three might be approached in a more informed manner and in greater depth.

NOTES - CHAPTER ONE

1. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," trans. Harry Zohn, in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 227.

2. Rosalind E. Krauss, The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1985).

3. Kicking off the decade of this discourse as it relates to performance art was a symposium held in Montreal called "Multidisciplinary Aspects of Performance: Postmodernism," documented in an anthology entitled Performance, Text(e)s & Documents, ed. Chantal Pontbriand (Montreal: Parachute, 1981). The anthology as a whole will be addressed in the Annotated Bibliography.

For the purposes of cross-referencing points regarding repression, originality, and photography that I am currently making, it would be helpful to call upon Douglas Crimp's contribution to the symposium, "The Photographic Activity in Postmodernism," in which he addresses all these points. In recalling his essay "Pictures," October 8 (Spring 1979), 75-88 (also immensely important to the scholarship on performance art), Crimp argues: that "after nearly a century of...repression, the question of representation" is addressed by performance art; that performance art's complicated effectualizing of "presence" by way of "absence" leaves any possibility of connecting to the notion of an original "unbridgeable;" and that "such presence is what I attribute to the kind of photographic activity I call postmodernist" [my emphases] (Pontbriand, Performance, Text(e)s & Documents, 71).

4. This condition is beginning to be rectified by the interdisciplinary scholarship of cultural historians like Kristine Stiles and Maurice Berger, both of whom were trained as art historians and insist on the incorporation of the history of performance art into the history of other forms of art-making, as well as a consideration of cultural, social, political, economic, and theoretical issues. They have both published extensively, but their primary texts that illustrate my point here are as follows: 1) Kristine Stiles, "The Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS): The Radical Cultural Project of Event-Structured Live Art" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1986), forthcoming as book, Pont-la-Vue Press, New York; for a vastly abbreviated but extremely useful version of her dissertation see Kristine Stiles, "Synopsis of The Destruction in Art Symposium

(DIAS) and Its Theoretical Significance," The Act 1 (Spring 1987), 22-31; 2) Maurice Berger, Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s (New York: Harper & Row, 1989).

5. RoseLee Goldberg, Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979). Revised and reprinted as Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988).

6. Examples are too numerous to list but at one extreme would be Mary Matthew Gedo's work on Picasso--particularly troubling for its absolute lack of reference to psychoanalytic theory amid the making of grandiose conclusions regarding Picasso's psychological motivations. See Gedo's "Art as Exorcism: Picasso's 'Demoiselles d'Avignon'," Arts 55 (October 1980), 70-83, in which she claims that Demoiselles d'Avignon "portrays [Picasso's]...experience of a world in dissolution, mirroring his inner psychological disintegration" (79).

On the other end of the spectrum is work by someone like Donald Kuspit, who indeed integrates psychoanalytic theory into his work, and in a substantive manner, but still not a manner that problematizes it, often betraying surprising blindspots in his thinking. An example would be his analysis of the performance/video work of Dan Graham ("Dan Graham, Prometheus Mediabound," Artforum 23 [May 1985], see esp. 76ff), in which he develops a highly nuanced argument regarding Graham's "frustrated narcissism" (an argument that can be provocatively compared and contrasted to Rosalind Krauss's work on video and narcissism in "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism," reprinted in John Hanhardt, ed. Video Culture: A Critical Investigation [Rochester: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1986], 179-91), but does so in a way that overwhelmingly glorifies the biodeterminism of Freudianism. Thus, in my estimation, Kuspit compromises the ethical possibilities inherent in opening up psychoanalytic methodology--that is, the promotion of more egalitarian discourses, among which, chiefly, is a feminist discourse. In the end, then, even an approach like Kuspit's is reductive--in his case, to a scholarly sexism.

Let it also be noted that, of course, reductive psychoanalytic strategies plague other disciplines. Leo Bersani, in his 1977 Baudelaire and Freud, complains how certain brands of psychoanalytic criticism diminish the complexity of Freud's work by relying on methods of "symbol-chasing" or discussions of an artist's or writer's work in the gossipy terms of a malfunctioning sexual development. (See Baudelaire and Freud, 6.)

7. The development of Minimalist sculpture in the 1960s

forced the issue of considering an artwork's material contingency. The writings of Rosalind Krauss and Douglas Crimp on artists such as Richard Serra (for the culmination of their work on Serra, see Laura Rosenstock, ed., Richard Serra/Sculpture [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1986]) paved the way for younger scholars like Berger and Stiles (see n. 4 above) to cross-reference theories of contingency to the field of performance art.

8. The problem of institutional invisibility is not exclusively related to exhibition practices, but also to critical practice, as Mary Kelly points out in a section of her important essay "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism" entitled "Exhibition and System." She writes: "Critical writing on art which places emphasis on the analysis of signifying practice rather than on the exhortation or description of artistic auteurs, generally acknowledges that art forms are inscribed within the social context that gives rise to them. Nevertheless, there is a problematic tendency to constitute the pictorial text as the paradigmatic insistence of that inscription in a way which forecloses the question of its institutional placing" (Mary Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism," Screen 22 [Autumn 1981], 57).

9. Stiles, "Destruction in Art Symposium," 676. For a full account of Stiles's theory of the metonymic performing body, see "Destruction," Section 3.2, entitled "Metonymy: The Figure Bridging the Space Between Subject and Object," 645-66.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 478.

12. For a full account of OMT theory see Hermann Nitsch, Orgien Mysterien Theater/Orgies Mysteries Theatre (Darmstadt: Marz Verlag, 1969).

13. Stiles, "Synopsis," 29.

14. Ibid.

15. Stiles, "Destruction," 652, or "Synopsis," 29.

16. Stiles, "Destruction," 651-52.

17. Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, 2nd edition, 1980.

18. The most sophisticated references chronologically "bookending" the vast scholarship produced on this topic

are: Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971), reprinted in Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 145-78; and Griselda Pollock, Vision & Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).

19. Carol Duncan has spoken most directly to this point in "Virility and Domination in Early 20th-Century Painting," Artforum 12 (December 1973), 30-39.

20. All of these "encounters" will be discussed at length, but relevant citations follow here. Pertinent citations for Freud are too numerous to list but perhaps the most helpful summation of his theories of Oedipalization can be found in his discussion of ego and super-ego development in "The Ego and the Id" (1923), in A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. John Rickman, M.D. (1937; reprint, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), 219-21. The key texts by Lacan and Anzieu on which I shall be relying are: Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" (1949), in his Écrits, A Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1977), 1-7; Didier Anzieu, The Skin Ego (see n. 2, Introduction).

21. See paragraph 2, n. 22 below.

22. Bertolt Brecht, "The Street Scene, A Basic Model for an Epic Theatre" (1950), in Brecht on Theatre, ed. and trans. John Willett (1964; London: Methuen, 1984), 125ff.

I should note that without Stiles's caveat on the notion of reduction--but not total resolution--of alienation, I would not have been prompted to make similar observations, articulated above, that led to my claim regarding "constructive alienation." (See Stiles's "Synopsis," 29, for a summary of her caveat.)

Along the same lines, without Stiles's work on metonymy, I would not have been motivated to examine the workings of metaphor in performance art more closely. Clearly, my debt to her runs deep.

23. Not all theorists, of course, would approve of my broadening of the application of the term masochism to include such activities as self-deprecation, etc. Further discussion and justification of my views on the need to colloquialize this terminology will take place in the text ahead.

Meanwhile, however, perhaps my most provocative opponent would be Paula J. Caplan, Ph.D., The Myth of Women's Masochism (1985; reprint, New York: Signet, 1987),

who resists efforts like my own because of the way she feels they impact on women in clinical settings which, of course, in turn will affect their position in everyday life. Dr. Caplan has made strident efforts to get the DSM-III (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-III of the American Psychiatric Association) classification for masochism narrowed, rather than broadened, so that other labels, and their correspondent configuration of maladies, might be sought for individuals', especially women's, nervous disorders.

While I appreciate Dr. Caplan's motives in urging psychoanalysts to dig deeper rather than grasp in desperation at convenient labels, I find it necessary, especially when dealing with artforms which, given the historical ascription to art in general as one of the purest upholders of culture, are ostensibly immune to suggestions of dysfunctionism. The works I am about to look at are clearly masochistic in nature and did not spring from a social context or art context that could in any logical way be construed as free of masochistic practice. Thus, with great appreciation for the well-argued thesis of Dr. Caplan, I feel the term masochism should become a household word--especially since, after all, masochism begins at home, as this dissertation will prove.

24. Jacques Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," in his Feminine Sexuality, eds. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Jacqueline Rose (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1985), 79.

25. E. Ann Kaplan, Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera (New York and London: Methuen, 1983), 24.

26. In Dorothy C. Miller, ed., Sixteen Americans (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959), 58.

27. Allan Kaprow, Assemblage, Environments, and Happenings (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966), 188-89.

28. Stiles, "Synopsis," 29.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., 30.

32. Stiles has also written on these two artists' work. On Brus: "Notes on the Politics of Performance," paper presented at "Strategies of Performance," a symposium at the Maryland Institute, College of Art, Baltimore,

Maryland, April 1989. On Ono: "Unbosoming Lennon: The Politics of Yoko Ono's Experience," forthcoming in Art Criticism.

33. See, especially, Günther Brus, "Notes on the Action Zereisseprobe," in Aktionsraum I oder 57 Blindenhunde (Munich: Aktionsraum, 1971), 141-45. Thanks to Kristine Stiles for providing this citation for me.

34. See Stiles's account of this piece at DIAS in "Synopsis," 25.

35. Peter Plagens, "He Got Shot--For His Art," New York Times, Sunday, 2 September 1973, sec. D, 1, 3.

36. Ibid., 3.

37. Ibid.

38. Concerning media alterations of the embattled body, especially through the use of language, see Elaine Scarry's The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). Scarry's motivation to investigate the phenomenon of soldiering and the embattled body and to establish a typology of representations of war seems to be the question of (although she never uses the term) the masochistic nature of the soldier's consent to enter into war.

From her bafflement she writes: "That the adult human being cannot ordinarily without his consent be physically 'altered' by the verbal imposition of any new political philosophy makes all the more remarkable, genuinely awesome, the fact that he sometimes agrees to go to war, agrees to permit this radical self-alteration to his body" (112). Given the fact that one of Scarry's categories of representation is the "renaming" of the injured body, and/or the materiel of war used to carry out that injury (she cites the renaming of prisoners used in medical experiments in Japanese camps as "logs;" Japanese kamikaze planes were named "night blossoms," etc. [66]), it seems peculiar that she finds it necessary, herself, to rename soldiers' masochism, calling it instead "radical self-alteration to the body."

The fact that a writer attending to these issues with tremendous depth of insight resists psychoanalytic terminology is further proof of my observations regarding the widespread repression of a discourse of masochism. Scarry is currently, however, looking into related issues of contract and consent, per a paper delivered at the "Ideology and Technology" symposium sponsored by DIA Art Foundation, April 1992.

39. Oliver Wendell Holmes, cited in Gilmore, Death, 41; original location of quote, per Gilmore n. 94, is The Common Law 242 (1881) Howe ed. 1963.

40. Gilmore is citing Lawrence Friedman, Contract Law in America (1965), 20-24, for his discussion of contract's abstract nature. Part of Friedman's theory, quoted by Gilmore, goes as follows: "'[P]ure' law of contract is an area of what we can call abstract relationships. 'Pure' contract doctrine is blind to details of subject matter and person. It does not ask who buys and who sells, and what is bought and sold....contract law is abstraction--what is left in the law relating to agreements when all particularities of person and subject-matter are removed" (Gilmore, Death, 6).

41. Ambiguity over the dynamic of separation and the part it plays in establishing critical distance is integral to artistic practices employing aspects of masochism, as art historian Therese Lichtenstein has shown in her analysis of an artist's work also produced in a war context--the doll imagery of Hans Bellmer, produced around the time of World War II. (See, esp., Therese Lichtenstein, "Hans Bellmer's Dolls: Images of Pleasure, Pain and Perversion," Sulfur [Spring 1990], 59). For a thorough discussion of Lichtenstein's theoretical work on sadomasochism and a comparison to my own on masochism per se, see n. 37, Chapter Two. For briefer discussion, see n. 59 below.

42. Stiles, "Destruction," 10.

43. Ibid., 27.

44. François Pluchart, "Gina Pane's Biological Aggressions," ArTitudes 3 (December 1971-January 1972), 10.

45. See Walter Benn Michaels, "The Phenomenology of Contract," in The Gold Standard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 119ff.

46. Ibid., 123.

47. One could say that this tension of perceptions is replicated in the scholarship on masochism. Freud consistently refers to masochism as a perversion. The citations are too numerous to list, but see, for example, a section in "Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex," in which he equates the sadist and masochist--"though," he writes, "either the active or passive side of the

perversion may be more strongly developed...." (Sigmund Freud, "Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex" [1905], in The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, ed. Dr. A. A. Brill [1938; reprint, New York: The Modern Library, 1966], 570).

On the other end of the spectrum stands liberation theorist Sylvère Lotringer, founder/editor of Semiotext[e], who feels that "the masochist 'deviates' from the norm because he is excessively normal and moral" (Sylvère Lotringer, Overexposed: Treating Sexual Perversion in America [New York: Pantheon Books, 1988], 21).

Similarly, yet vastly different in her motivations, Dr. Paula Caplan feels that much of what is considered "masochistic," especially for women, consists of "normal" desires (satisfied only via extremes because not satisfied more regularly nor viewed as reasonable in the first place), or actions seen mythically as pathological (for the purpose of deflecting any association of the actions away from social causes). See discussion of Caplan's theories in n. 23 above.

48. Michaels, The Gold Standard, 124.

49. Ibid., 122.

50. Effie Stephano and Gina Pane, "Performance of Concern," Art & Artists 8 (April 1973), 22.

51. Anzieu, Skin Ego, in passim, but esp. 55ff.

52. Lacan, "Mirror Stage," esp. 4-5.

53. Stephano and Pane, "Performance of Concern," 22. These symbolic associations were articulated by Effie Stephano as she recalled an earlier conversation with Pane.

54. Ibid., 23.

55. Brecht, "Street Scene," 125. For more on Brecht's theory of the "A-effect," as well as a historical contextualizing of his work, see, respectively: Stuart Hood, "Brecht's Theory of Alienation," Block 3 (1980), 11-12; Sylvia Harvey, "Whose Brecht? Memories for the Eighties: A Critical Recovery," Screen 23 (May-June 1982), 45-59.

56. Stephano and Pane, "Performance of Concern," 23.

57. Ibid.

58. Anzieu, Skin Ego, 8.

59. In a longer study it would be of interest to compare and contrast the need for boundaries and distance in the specific historical contexts of World War II versus the Vietnam War, using Lichtenstein's study of Hans Bellmer's work and my study of masochistic performance as reference points (see my n. 41 above). Some of the perceptual dynamics of these two sets of work are similar, some different. To wit, critical distance is attained in a viewing of Bellmer's grotesque doll imagery, according to Lichtenstein, via strategies of "attraction and repulsion" (Lichtenstein, "Hans Bellmer's Dolls," 60). Masochistic artists of the early 1970s preferred more deictic strategies, pointing to the gap traversed by attraction-repulsion tactics for purposes of critiquing that which lay in between (see my discussion of this point earlier in this chapter, text at n. 41 supra). These subtle differences are no doubt due to differences in the social, cultural, and political dynamics of the two historical periods. Attention to such large questions lie, unfortunately, outside the parameters of the present study.

60. For a useful synopsis of the myth of Oedipus, as well as interesting discussion of that which Freud leaves out of his own use of the myth, see Jessica Benjamin, The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 141ff.

61. Lacan, "Meaning of the Phallus," 83. See also Mitchell's discussion of the "law represented by the father" in the context of a contrast between Lacan's theory and theories of Oedipalization on the parts of Freud and Melanie Klein, "Introduction - I," in Lacan, Feminine Sexuality, 22-23.

62. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Social Contract," in The Essential Rousseau, trans. Lowell Bair (New York: Meridian Books, 1975), 9.

63. I am indebted in the mere asking of these questions to the discourse that has developed over the last decade in response to the AIDS crisis. It is this crisis that has revealed, through great misfortune, what exactly is at stake in the representation of the body, especially in terms of who or what controls those representations. Citations are too numerous to list, but for the precise language I have used in the formation of these questions, I am most grateful to Simon Watney, Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS, and the Media (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), and, of course, to one of his

own inspirations, Michel Foucault.

A specific Foucault quote cited in part by Watney (16) fully explains my desire to develop a discourse of masochism that will resist the tendency of dominant power to suppress its theorization for the express purpose of promoting its practice (and more easily promoting it when it continues to go unnamed). In the following quote Foucault refers to that which I call masochism as "subjection": "...[I]t is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection...; the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body. This subjection is not only obtained by the instruments of violence or ideology; it can also be direct, physical, pitting force against force, bearing on material elements, and yet without involving violence; it may be calculated, organized, technically thought out; it may be subtle, make use neither of weapons nor of terror and yet remain of a physical order" (Michel Foucault, Discipline & Punish, The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan [1977; trans., New York: Vintage Books, 1979], 26).

CHAPTER TWO: THEORY

DIDIER ANZIEU'S "SKIN EGO"

Anzieu's theories are useful to my study for four reasons. First, as the title of his book (The Skin Ego: A Psychoanalytic Approach to the Self) suggests, he places his emphasis on the material entity of human flesh, as do the artists whom I am considering. He argues that skin and the sense of touch hold a biohistorically hierarchical position--or what he calls "structural primacy"--over all other senses in the development of the psyche.¹ His bases for this argument include the facts that the sense of touch is the first to develop in the embryo, that the skin is the only organ covering the entire body, and that touch is the only "external sense" (in contrast to sight, smell, hearing, taste) that is reflexive in nature. Touching oneself renders the sensation, he writes, of

being a piece of skin that touches at the same time as being a piece of skin that is touched....It is on the model of tactile reflexivity that the other sensory reflexivities (hearing oneself make sounds...looking at oneself in the mirror), and subsequently the reflexivity of thinking, are constructed.²

Second, lest Anzieu's theory begin to sound so invested with the notion of skin's structural primacy that the reader fears I am about to veer into an essentialist reading of work by artists who use skin as material (or one in which the work is seen as radical), it is important

to understand that Anzieu places his emphasis on the metaphoric character of this material--just as the artists under consideration emphasize metaphor in their masochistic activities. To wit, in Anzieu's theory, the "skin ego" is conceived of as a construction, a representation both similar to and different from flesh itself. "By Skin Ego," Anzieu writes, "I mean a mental image of which the Ego of the child makes use during the early phases of its development to represent itself as an Ego containing psychical contents, on the basis of its experience of the surface of the body" [my emphasis].³

Third, these "early phases" of which Anzieu speaks together constitute the oral phase--precisely that phase of psychical development, as already indicated in Chapter One, with which several of the selected performances are concerned. What Anzieu has to say about the processes that take place there will help make sense of pieces in which artists foreground not only their skin, but the physical object of the mouth--a symbol that functions mnemonically to tether the viewer's attention to the activities inherent in this psychical phase.

Fourth, the way in which Anzieu discusses the oral phase never allows it to be read outside its institutionalized context which, as I mentioned earlier, he refers to as "the mothering environment." Moreover, he argues adamantly that this site be thought of as both

natural and cultural.⁴ One is thereby encouraged to see this site as linked both to the biological construct of the family and all other social constructs modeled after it. Thus, the institutionalized environment within which the metaphor of the skin ego is formed is itself cast, by implication, as a metaphor--an entity both like and unlike the home. Similarly, the work of the artists under discussion constantly refers the viewer to institutional frameworks outside that with which, upon first glance, they seem to be most engaged--the institution of art. I shall proceed now with a detailed account of these four aspects of Anzieu's theory.

Skin, according to Anzieu, serves the purposes of containment, protection, and communication. He writes:

The primary function of the skin is as the sac which contains and retains inside it the goodness and fullness accumulating there through feeding, care, the bathing in words. Its second function is as the interface which marks the boundary with the outside and keeps that outside out; it is the barrier which protects against penetration by the aggression and greed emanating from others, whether people or objects. Finally, the third function--which the skin shares with the mouth and which it performs at least as often--is as a site and a primary means of communicating with others, of establishing signifying relations; it is, moreover, an "inscribing surface" for the marks left by those others.⁵

Anzieu's key concern in all his theorizations of the skin is the "attachment drive," experienced during the oral phase. If attachments to the mother, or equivalent figure, are satisfied "sufficiently and at an early enough

stage," he argues, then the powers of containment, protection, and communication enacted by the skin will be internalized by the child in subsequent moments of separation and eventual moments of Oedipalized, sexualized autonomy.

Clearly, there are many ways in which this ideal internalization process and ensuing moments of development can be disturbed. For each of these moments evokes anxiety-ridden fantasies which may not be overcome. Failure-inducing disturbances could have to do with anything, according to Anzieu, from genetic deficiencies to inadequate attention paid to the child from individuals in his or her environment. Anzieu discusses examples of anxieties and fantasies and charts the main phases of development to which they correspond.

Before the fantasy of sharing a common skin with the mother materializes, the child is caught up in what Anzieu terms the "intra-uterine phantasy." The fantasy includes a refusal to be born, a desire to return to the "phenomenon of mutual inclusion." If anxieties over this fantasy are not resolved, one simply does not move on to the fantasy of the common skin and thereby risks undergoing versions of autistic development in which the individual "withdraws into a closed system, that of an egg which will not hatch out."⁶ If anxieties are resolved, however (I shall discuss how resolution is accomplished

shortly), this stage in development is recalled constructively, in moments of adult affection in which lovers embrace and thereby replay the phenomenon of mutual inclusion.

The common-skin fantasy marks the beginning, Anzieu believes, of an individual's ambivalent ability to "open out" into the world while still only understanding that world through "mutual symbiotic dependency" on the mother. This dependency is only surpassed as the fantasy of the common skin is suppressed. The moment of common-skin suppression is of crucial importance to Anzieu's, as well as my, study. The anxiety this suppression produces--anxiety over separation from the mother--is manifested in feelings of pain and concomitant fantasies of assault on the very skin that had previously bound the fantasizer and the mother together. Anzieu claims that "it is at this point that phantasies of the flayed skin, the stolen skin, the bruised or murderous skin exert their influence."⁷ If one does not move beyond this point smoothly--say, if one "fixates" on these fantasies--he or she may experience masochistic impulses. It is precisely this moment that masochistic artists, it would appear, feel compelled to replay.

Now, I need to make two points absolutely clear. It would be reductive and inaccurate to claim that this is the only moment replayed by these artists. It would also

be reductive and inaccurate--to say nothing of vulgar and uninteresting--to conclude that the artists under consideration were given inadequate attention as children, that their genetic makeup did not accommodate smooth psychical development or, per Anzieu's additional causes of detoured development, that they were simply incapable of fantasizing, had endured an accident in their early years, or had undergone a childhood illness. I wish to lay out another path of inquiry. For this purpose, I want to call attention to an aspect of Anzieu's argument that suggests an image of the skin as, potentially, a spatial metaphor.

The consideration of skin as metaphor requires a close reading of Anzieu's concept of "double anaclysis"--the idea, mentioned briefly above, that an individual's interaction with the world is not only biological but social (and this would include institutional).⁸ But in order to fully understand this concept, one must start by asking a question elided in the foregoing discussion of disturbances: What type of interaction is entailed in smooth psychical development? According to Anzieu, a "dual process of interiorization" of the following two spatial aspects of the skin needs to occur in order for the simultaneous interiorization of the compensatory functions of the skin (containment, protection, and communication) to take place.

These spatial aspects are: one, the territory of the "interface" between the bodies of child and mother (a space that Anzieu sees operating as a sort of "psychical envelope"); two, the "mothering environment" itself (with all its verbal, sensual, tactile contents).⁹ It is against these spatial aspects, Anzieu claims, together internalized and constituting a background--the background entity for which he coined his term "skin ego"--that the "ego" as we know it will develop.

On one hand, then, it is in the oral stage of attachment to, and propping up against, the mother's body that the ego has what Anzieu calls its "epidermal and proprioceptive origin."¹⁰ It is here that the psyche prepares its own spatialized metaphor--its skinlike defensive barrier that will monitor input and, in Anzieu's words, "filter exchanges" with both the external forces of the world and the internal forces of the id and super-ego.¹¹ On the other hand, this scenario does not have to do only with the body. As already indicated, the skin ego, born of a "double anaclisis," also involves the "mothering environment," which serves as spatial metaphor for the other half of Anzieu's anaclitic duality--that is, as social prop or, as I would prefer to think of it, institutional support.

Anzieu confirms these claims by citing successful (he implies) treatment for severe psychosis, in which

biological as well as social propping techniques are put to use. The treatment involves the encasing of a patient in damp sheets (replicating the mother's biological skin that served as a prop in the oral stage of development, thus helping the patient regress to the fantasy of sharing a common skin) as well as encircling the patient with hospital attendants (thus providing the metaphoric "mothering environment"). Both approaches, Anzieu concludes, are needed for recovery.¹²

Out of all the foregoing, I am most interested in the retroactive implication of Anzieu's theory of "double anaclisis." That is, masochistic impulses may not only be potentially and partially cured through a new, functional formation of the social component of double anaclisis, but may be caused by a malfunctioning of this component. What I want to look at in this dissertation is the social part of the metaphoric "mothering environment," since it is precisely that (along with its malfunctions) with which I feel the masochistic artists under discussion are most concerned.

If they were not, why would they encircle themselves with audience "attendants" who function just as much like representatives of an institutional system (in this case the institution of art) as hospital attendants who function, per the example above, as representatives of institutionalized medicine? And why would they choose to

deal with masochism in the arena of representation rather than, say, carry out their actions in secret, isolated surroundings where, it is believed, the most extreme versions of masochistic practice flourish?¹³ Might it have something to do with the fact that their concerns are focused on representation and the location from which it originates?

Given that Anzieu's key interest lay in the "attachment drive," he provides abundant material for looking at processes of psychical development leading up to the mirror stage,¹⁴ at which point Lacan's work on this stage becomes pertinent to the task of analyzing masochistic performances in which the material entity of the mirror is foregrounded. In fact, Anzieu makes it clear that his notion of what he calls "primary masochism" indeed precedes this stage of development. Primary masochism for Anzieu is

initially accounted for by a sudden, repeated and quasi-traumatic alternation, occurring before walking, the mirror phase, or the acquisition of language, between overstimulation by the mother or her substitutes and deprivation of physical contact with her, and thus between satisfaction and frustration of the need for attachment [my emphasis].¹⁵

One last point: For accuracy's sake, it is important to note the difference between Anzieu's notion of "primary masochism" and Freud's. In Freud's work, masochism was labeled primary or secondary according to its position relative to sadism. "Primary masochism" described the

will to make oneself endure pain, even to the extent of risking death, and was termed primary because it had greater force within the individual--or so Freud began to claim after his 1920 publication of "Beyond the Pleasure Principle"--than the will to cause another person pain, pain that might even include homicidal destruction.¹⁶ Freud linked primary masochism to the death drive, whereas primary sadism had more to do with the survival instinct--the desire to kill rather than be killed. And so, from the stage of primary masochism as Anzieu has outlined it, Lacan is a helpful guide.

JACQUES LACAN'S "MIRROR STAGE"

As is fairly well known now in psychoanalytically based art history, theory, and criticism, Lacan builds upon Freud's conceptualization of what takes place in the Oedipal scenario, distinguishing between what happens for male and female children. A brief overview of this scenario, in which the individual becomes firmly entrenched in what Lacan calls the "symbolic" register, will help set his mirror stage and the register of what he calls the "imaginary" in context. This contextualization itself will be helpful in the upcoming chapter inasmuch as performances in which the mirror stage is referred to--either with or without the use of the material entity of the mirror as a mnemonic device--comment in very

particular ways upon the developmental stages that precede and follow it.

In Lacan's thinking (by way of Freud's), as the little boy observes that the mother's body does not have that which his does--namely, the phallus--he understands her to be different, ultimately thinking and describing her as "Other." Thinking and describing take place, of course, with the help of a symbolic means of representation--that is, language, to which the child is introduced, following this troubling observation, in the Oedipal scenario. Here, the conclusion the child articulates in response to the mother's difference, and his ability to understand and express this difference, are facilitated--or enforced, really--by the entrance of the father, who claims possession of the mother, demarcating her as his territory. His possessive enunciation is made both verbally, through language, and physically, by his inherently phallic presence. Thus, forevermore, language and phallic power are inextricably linked.

Once this phallic presence is in place, it is no longer possible for the little boy to claim the mother as the chief entity in the environment (Anzieu's "mothering environment") to which he had earlier been attached during the oral phase. It was there, in those pre-Oedipal moments, that Lacan's notion of the "imaginary" had its greatest bearing, where the child had the sense of being

merged with his environment. The child's desire for attachment and his frustration over its emphatic dissolve--a dissolve that began, as Anzieu showed, in the latter moments of the oral stage--are known only to his unconscious mind. Born in the Oedipal moment, the unconscious is constructed by the very language that allows for the patriarchal takeover and the subsequent articulation of difference between genders.

Like the little boy, the girl child is no longer able to rely on processes of attachment to the mother figure or boundariless merging with her environment. Unlike the little boy, however, the female child will continue to identify with the mother on a psychophysiological level of similarity. Nonetheless, this sameness can only be expressed--again, as in the case of the male child--within the limitations of language imposed by the father. Thus, the little girl's recognition of sameness is irretrievably lost to the recognition of herself, like her mother, as "Other."¹⁷

This transition from attachment to the oral mother to the experiences taking place in the realm of the Oedipalized symbolic is, to understate the situation, a very big move for the child. Deleuze, as I shall point out in the next section, conceptualizes the movement as that of an oscillating pendulum; it takes place gradually, in increments, like a pendulum marking off minutes and

hours in its graceful swing. It is in the middle of its oscillation, somewhere between the ages of six to eighteen months, according to Lacan, that the "mirror stage" experience takes place.

The mirror stage functions as a sort of preliminary to the symbolic and postscript to the imaginary, constituting a "threshold" (to borrow another term, as we shall see in a moment, from Lacan) between the two realms. This threshold, as the performances under discussion demonstrate, constitutes a moment to which masochistic artists consistently return. Though often awkward and inchoate, their efforts bespeak the fact that the dynamics of the mirror stage, if retroactively tapped in a particular way, come close to fulfilling utopian visions of deconstruction. This can occur, as I shall prove, chiefly because of the concomitant achievement of tapping the mirror-stage parallel in contract-making known as acceptance, or negotiation.

Through a highlighting of the dynamics of the mirror stage, artists find it possible to expose the most intense moments of masochistic pain inherent in the transition to the symbolic realm, while also providing an alternative to that pain--again, mainly through contract. An explanation as to how the mirror stage can be seen as inherently masochistic is in order. For this, I turn to more specific aspects of Lacan's (interspersed with reminders

of Anzieu's) thinking.

It is in this mirror-stage transition that the child first recognizes itself symbolically as "Other." As the little boy or little girl gazes into the mirror, the ambiguous knowledge of the self as both the same as, and other than, its reflected image is born. The child, who already knows itself through touch--the sense Anzieu identified as the first sense to be experienced reflexively--now knows itself through vision as well. As Lacan writes, "the mirror-image would seem to be the threshold of the visible world" [my emphasis].¹⁸ This new knowledge, then, is bifurcated, put through what Lacan calls "functional fragmentation," and reconfigured as the "split self."¹⁹

This splitting process is that which I am designating as inherently painful; Lacan implies the same by speaking of the "price" exacted by the mirror stage--a price not fully recognized until Oedipalization is complete. In "The Meaning of the Phallus," he writes that if the subject (what may be defined, for art-critical purposes, as the seeing subject)

speaks in the Other, whether or not the subject hears it with his own ears, it is because it is there that the subject...finds his signifying place. The discovery of what he articulates in that place, that is, in the unconscious, enables us to grasp the price of the division (Spaltung) [the split that takes place at the mirror] through which he is thus constituted.²⁰

And so, while the child can watch itself touching itself

in the mirror, its experience of these two senses (sight and touch) will be the same, yet different, by virtue of the latter (touch) forevermore being mediated. Thus, the child understands its own three-dimensional volume simultaneously with understanding its visual representation as a two-dimensional surface.

This experience bears a correspondence to Deleuze's theory of the coldness and cruelty of masochism (the title of his book, remember, is Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty) but also contrasts with it in a significant way. On one hand (literally and figuratively) this surface image, to the child, will indeed register as cold. However, as the child continues to touch its warm, three-dimensional, pliable self, it simultaneously reaches out and with fingers extended slaps the palm of its hand on the cool surface of the mirror which is serving up his or her flat, hard, visual representation. And so it is, with this last gesture, that the first symbolic act of self-attack (and, thus, of masochism) in an individual's psychical development is experienced--a moment in which the subjecthood and objecthood of the body are understood as simultaneously similar and different.²¹

Now, this claim should not confuse the fact that experiences of masochism are multitemporal. Indeed, as I have shown in the survey of Anzieu's theories, what one might call the first pre-symbolic moment of masochism

takes place in the ambivalence generated in the latter moments of the oral stage when the child begins, painfully, to detach from common-skin fantasies. This moment is experienced as a conflict between a painful separation from, and an all-embracing acceptance of, the mother, the latter being an experience in which the child has the imaginary sensation of actually being a part of her body or, as Anzieu put it, of sharing a common skin.

But it is the experience at the mirror that concretizes the child's ambivalence, that presents the child with an illustration of what it means that the oral stage is over and that the realm of the imaginary, of which that stage is a part, is about to draw to a close as well. While the child does not yet have access to the system of representation called language, which will be charted by the father in the future Oedipal scenario and with which the child begins to articulate sameness and difference on the basis of gendered territorial rights, the mirror nonetheless introduces a fundamentally and fortuitously, as several of the masochistic artists show, nongendered concept of sameness and difference located at the site of one's own body.

Talking About Similarity, looked at in the last chapter, highlighted this concept even without the use of the material entity of the mirror as a mnemonic device. The twinlike nature of Ulay/Abramovic's relationship,

manifested in the performance in their desire for Abramovic to mirror Ulay's identity, which necessarily includes the concept of gender, satisfied the need for a symbolic device.

The split experienced at the mirror constitutes a final, violent disruption of the early oral-stage merger of the child with its environment. Though ambivalence had begun to shake the child's seemingly seamless oneness with an unterritorialized world, the rumbles of the oral stage had been gentle and rolling in comparison to the bifurcating slice initiated at the sliver-thin surface of silvered glass that cut through the child's formerly unboundaried environment. Thus, as I have already shown, the mirror stage constitutes the second moment of masochism--a moment at or from which, I would like to suggest, three things may happen.

One, in an effort to return, nostalgically, to the gentle rumblings of ambivalence in the latter moments of the oral stage (or, perhaps, to a complete recapturing of oneness with the oral mother), an individual tries to deny its presence, to "make the mirror go away," so to speak, to duck beneath its reflection, to deal directly with the pliable, warm body as if that's all there is, as if the representation of the body doesn't exist or at least doesn't matter. Taking this option, I believe, is the basis of one's embrace of the metonymic potential of the

body.

Two, one completely accepts the terms of the realm to which one has acceded from the mirror--i.e., the symbolic, whose function it is, in part, to help heal the violence experienced at the mirror through repression of the desires and frustrations over separation from the mother that commence during the latter moments of the oral stage, crescendo through the mirror stage, and peak in the Oedipal scenario. Language is, ostensibly, that healing agent--albeit one that requires (as Lacan has already told us) a fee (in the form, especially, of hierarchized gender designations). Lacan referred to this healing quality as "orthopaedic" in his description of the mirror stage as

...a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation--and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic--and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development.²²

This second option does not entail the denial of the mirror stage per se but denies the possibility of tapping its full potential retroactively, especially its early moments of fragmentation.

Three, one returns, again and again, to the sliver of silvered glass, experiencing the body simultaneously as something: to be felt as well as seen; to be experienced directly as well as indirectly, presentable and

representable; knowable as subject and object, same and different, self and other, active and passive, mobile and frozen. In other words, returning to the dynamics of the mirror stage affords the individual a way of thinking about the body in which these vastly different perceptions might be held in delicate balance.

In the performances ahead, these three options will be constantly traversed and questioned. But it is the last that will figure most prominently among the artists' concerns. Given this, I would like to pose a preliminary question, offered with provocative intent. Might we consider that the extremes to which some of the artists go in discovering the utopian potential of the mirror stage be proportionate to the extent to which patriarchy and its linguistic exigencies rule? If so, a study of artists who use the site of their physical selves to literalize the fragmentation experienced at the mirror, to illustrate the way in which that sliver of silvered glass cuts through the myth of wholeness preceding and succeeding the psychical stage in which it figures, could reveal a great deal about the destructive, sometimes sadistic extent to which dominant power rules, often disassembling that which it wishes to stabilize.

One of the tools of this stabilizing impulse--as well as, ironically enough, its opposite--is the legal instrument of contract. To prepare for an investigation

of how, why, and to what end artists in the upcoming chapter exploit this irony through masochistic practice, I turn now to the writings of Deleuze, which necessitates a look at the writings of Theodor Reik as well.

GILLES DELEUZE'S "MASOCHISTIC CONTRACT" IN RELATION TO THE WRITINGS OF THEODOR REIK

Before launching into the details of Reik's and Deleuze's theories, I want to offer a few of my own observations on the notion of contract and the institution from which it springs, in order to establish a context in which to discuss how my adoption of Deleuze's specific terminology of the "masochistic" contract will be useful in analyzing the function of self-attack within performance.

I am hoping that Deleuze's terminology will keep the reader mindful of three things. First, the fact that masochism is something that gets witnessed, attested to, and willy-nilly agreed upon by another party, or parties. In performance art, these "witnesses" are the members of the audience. If my argument is accurate--that performance art is one and the same as its representations--then "audience" includes all who observe and/or read (and, in the case of myself and others writing about the work, all who fabricate) those representations, then as now. Second, the terminology emphasizes the fact that the masochist operates self-consciously, inasmuch as

forging contractual agreements is always a matter of choice (the reader/observer has the choice to continue reading and looking, just as the audience member at the initial staging of a performance had the choice of either staying or leaving). Third, the terminology suggests that the masochist operates critically (Deleuze, as I shall indicate in a moment, announces that this is precisely the case) within institutionalized parameters--specifically, in the context of my study, those of law and art.

In the eyes of some observers, masochistic performance actions of the early 1970s would not only qualify as transgressive in the avant-garde sense but in some cases actually qualify as illegal. Chris Burden's trip to court after a 1972 performance (to be discussed in the next chapter) is an example in which such an assumption was literally borne out. Examining the ways in which performance artists have tampered with and revealed the structure of contractual agreements on several levels--most of which are far more subtle than the Burden example and, interestingly, disproportionately more profound than the state level upon which his example depended--will, in turn, reveal a great deal about one's presumptions of legalized boundaries as they exist in societal and cultural institutions overall.

Dealing with the notion of contract, then, I would like to argue, becomes a way in which performance artists

reopen what we could call, to borrow two terms from Roland Barthes, the "polysemy" of the image of the body, thereby directing attention back to the "dysfunction" upon which these institutions thrive. I am using these terms in the same sense that Barthes did in his essay "Rhetoric of the Image," an essay that will be of great use later in the study as I reflect on performance art's use of the photograph and the specific impact its messages have had on the reading of pieces in Chapters One and Three. As an introduction to these reflections, it is useful to ponder Barthes' claim that "all images are polysemous....Polysemy poses a question of meaning and this question always comes through as dysfunction, even if this dysfunction is recuperated by society as a tragic...or a poetic...game...."²³

Apropos of Barthes' claim, I should like to suggest that masochism--itself capable of being labeled dysfunctional--points toward the ways in which society plays out its tragedies and games in various forms of violence and victimization, especially war. It is to this institutional recuperation and distortion of the polysemy of the body's meanings that, I believe, early-1970s artists under discussion responded. They did so by using a pseudolegalistic form of contract ironically as both their license to practice masochism and their target of critique--that is, critique of the manner in which society

uses (and sometimes abuses) certain interpretations of contract (for example, alleged "consensus" that a nation should enter a war) to justify their own dysfunctional acts.

Here I agree, at least in part, with Deleuze's claim that the masochist's "apparent obedience conceals a criticism and a provocation."²⁴ However, what I would like to argue is that the masochistic performance artist's critique, while perhaps issuing from his or her unconscious mind, is far from hidden. In the thorough investigation of the workings of the masochistic contract in the performances ahead, a very clear trajectory of provocation will be traced, revealing multiple targets. From the art world (the institution within which the artists have deliberately chosen to enact their work) to the domestic site (the paradigm of art-world institutions), the trajectory of critique passes predictably through the institution of law.

It is important, as I have already suggested, to understand "law" not only as the institution that ironically but not insignificantly provides masochism with its chief instrument of contract, but the institutionalized psychoepistemological system through which, being ruled in the Lacanian sense by the "law of the father," we come to know our identificatory positions in life. It is also important to understand that tracing

the aforementioned passage is not just a theoretical, conceptual, or philosophical exercise--one to be undertaken only for the pleasure of lofty intellectual pursuit. As is shown by the early-1970s examples of masochistic performance or by more recent events in the American art world, the masochist's critique can often get misconstrued, even altogether halted, by the actual institution of law.

Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of sadomasochistic acts are an instructive example of the latter, falling short of their critical potential as they became entangled in the very legal structure which, I would argue, prompted the depicted acts in the first place. Taking a long, hard look at the structure of the masochistic contract and how it has operated in performance art of the past will help assess its status today in relation to works like Mapplethorpe's and many other recently censored artists and clarify what is at stake in its representation--how it can come to serve the interests of dominant power or, on the other hand, how it might be mobilized toward alternative ends.

Appropriating Deleuze's terminology serves another, methodological purpose; it motivates a look at masochism on the part of the artists under discussion for its similarities to and differences from his theorizations. This comparison is crucial, since the development of

theories on masochism in representation is so much in its infancy that when a thinker goes to the lengths Deleuze has in making some sense of such a complex practice, his arguments run the risk of getting used transhistorically to address all forms of masochism regardless of their specific political, social, and economic contexts.

Curiously, one is not aided in avoiding this intellectual pothole by Deleuze himself who, after a sophisticated analysis of Masoch's novels, concluded that:

The situation that the masochist establishes by contract, at a specific moment and for a specific period, is already fully contained timelessly and ritually in the symbolic order of masochism. For the masochist, the modern contract as it is elaborated in the bedroom corresponds to the oldest rites once enacted in the swamps and the steppes. The novels of Masoch reflect this twofold history and bring out the identity between its most modern and its most ancient forms.²⁵

While a structural analysis of masochism will be helpful in the upcoming study of performance artists' work--and Deleuze is a keen guide--a warning must be imposed. It is imperative to avoid the trap of transhistoricism inherent not only to Deleuze's, but most, structural analysis. Fortunately, the form and content of this study will not allow for this error. For performance art requires us to look closely at the specific nature of the agreement between performer and audience member, which includes consideration of the historical context (here, the waning years of the Vietnam War) in which those performers and

audience members struck their agreements.

Apropos of this point, the methodology used and the interpretations of artists' work put forth in this dissertation will necessarily expose my own sociocultural roots, the domestic paradigm in which my own emotional and psychological ontology is rooted, as well as my proximity to wars that have been or continue to be waged as I write--domestic wars on poverty, homelessness, and AIDS, to name only a few. Investigation of all that contributes to the condition of the "masochized body" is hard to avoid in these latter years of the twentieth century. The challenge is to find strategies of inquiry that result in locating both the negative and positive aspects of this condition, the value as well as detriment, so that its continuance is more clearly a matter of critical choice rather than unthinking resignation.

Now it is time, once again, to pull back on such grand lines of inquiry. Just before moving on to the specifics of Reik's and Deleuze's theories, however, a quick comment on the construct of war is fitting. I suggested earlier (and I shall develop the point further as I go along) that war itself is an operation which could not exist without the entity of the masochistic contract. That is, battle cannot be waged without sadists and masochists. However, by being carefully circumscribed by the institution of the military, which has its very own legal institution,

sadists and masochists are known by other names--names that sanction, if not glorify, their activities.²⁶

In considering masochism's place within historical contexts of embattlement, it is probably not coincidental that Theodor Reik wrote most of his theories of masochism and published them after his emigration to the United States in 1938.²⁷ Though explicitly based on clinical observations, one could argue that "Masochism and Modern Man," published in Of Love and Lust, was influenced by the context of an impending war that had displaced Reik from his homeland, motivating him to question the structure of pain and violence and the workings of the individual will within that structure. Similarly, one might hypothesize that Deleuze was moved to write on masochism as a partial reaction to the 1968 uprising of the radical Left in Paris, as well as the Algerian War to which the Left was responding.²⁸ Connections between the work of Reik and Deleuze, as well as the historical contexts in which they were formulated, will become clearer as I delve into the details of their texts.

As I indicated earlier, Deleuze built his theory in large part on what he saw as a missing piece in Theodor Reik's analysis, which located four processes operative in every masochistic act: fantasy, suspense, demonstration, and provocation. Deleuze added the factor of contract. Reik's list is, in a sense, chronologically ordered:

masochistic fantasies precede the long wait (the suspension of time) for the fantasies to be actualized; ultimately, demonstration of the imagined events takes place, which in turn constitutes provocation for their continuation. Although actual enactment, or overt theatricalization, of masochism occurs well into the chronological chain of masochistic events, from the start Reik frames his discussion either explicitly or implicitly in the language of theater, thus warranting attention in a study of performance art, as it did Deleuze's in his study of the dramatic narratives of Masoch.

For example, Reik calls the first process, fantasy, a "mental preview" of the scenario the fantasizer will carry out in an act of self-induced or provoked pain (the term "mental preview" was provided by a client). Subsequently, there may be what Reik refers to as a "rehearsal" of the act--sometimes, interestingly enough, in front of a mirror--in which the masochist moves beyond "performance on the thought stage" to a ritualized "stage-managing of the phantasies."²⁹ All of these possibilities take place in advance of masochism's actual demonstration. But the important point here is that even in this general phase of fantasy, played out in isolation, the masochist imagines himself or herself under the scrutiny of others--that is, as a "performer" before an audience.

The second element of masochism in Reik's schema is

suspense. The masochist waits for pain to happen or not happen. The tension inherent in this suspense is mildly painful itself, the presumption here being that one might offset intense pain by inflicting a bit of it up front. Thus, like all other aspects of masochism, suspense becomes a way for the masochist to seize command of a situation, to prepare for an unforeseen shock that might rest outside one's control.³⁰

This phase might be compared to the feeling involved in waiting to walk out in front of an audience, to be on view before a group of mostly unknown people. Tension in this context is not so much a form of fear of the unknown per se as it is a way of setting oneself "on edge" before anyone else has a chance to do so, of preparing oneself for confrontation with the unknown in a Reikian, masochistic manner--by taking control of one's fear in advance through the tool of willed tension.

The performance pieces I shall be looking at constitute just such tense, waiting-in-the-wings-type moments or, as Vito Acconci has said in reference to his work of the early 1970s, situations of "putting oneself 'on the spot.'"³¹ Additionally, the selected performances from the early 1970s bear the quality of a rehearsal, a ragged form of pre-theater. This quality is shared by most performance artwork but has a decidedly more profound impact in the pieces I shall be discussing. Indeed, given

the intense nature of masochistic acts, a viewer hopes that a performance is only a rehearsal, that it will not be repeated let alone "refined" into a "final" version which, in masochistic terms, would mean death.

While one might easily exchange Reik's third factor in masochism--"demonstration"--with the term "performance," his specific definition makes this factor even more applicable to my discussion. Demonstration, he writes, is the process whereby "suffering, discomfort, humiliation and disgrace are being shown and, so to speak, put on display."³² I have already shown and will continue to show how this definition is played out in performances in which the artists suspend images of "discomfort" before their audiences, or display experiences of "suffering" initiated by their own hand--a prick of a needle, a slice of a razor, a near self-immolation.

Just as important to my discussion, however, as this performance-oriented interpretation of "demonstration" is one of its definitive terms--"display," a word lifted from the vocabulary of the shopping world, from the language of economics. As the masochist "displays" his or her acts of humiliation, discomfort, and suffering, it is suggested that he or she invests them with value. The quality, if you will, of this value--that is, its identification as "exchange value" or "use value"--becomes clear by tackling the problem of contract, the history of which, as I have

already indicated, is itself rooted in the history of modern economics. Forged in the era of a burgeoning market economy, the modern contract not only supports that economy but perpetuates its ideology--an ideology described by Gilmore as "the untrammelled autonomy of the individual will."³³

Reik's fourth aspect of masochism leads, finally, toward a specific discussion of contract. It was no doubt here, in the discussion of provocation, that Deleuze detected the piece missing from Reik's schema. Provocation, Reik argues, is the attempt on the part of the masochist to "induce [one's] partner to create for him that discomfort which [one] needs for attaining his pleasure."³⁴ Deleuze basically agrees with Reik on the workings of provocation--and, indeed, there was a great deal of provocation going on in Masoch's novels. But he disagrees with Reik's overall thesis that masochists engage in pain as a way of alleviating their guilt and anxiety over their desire for pleasure, thereby absolving themselves of those anxious feelings so that they might proceed to pleasure in a guilt-free state.³⁵

Deleuze argues, instead, as does Anzieu, that pain and pleasure--or, for that matter, masochism and sadism--are asymmetrical.³⁶ It is from this position that Deleuze develops his theory of contract, for which there would be no need, of course, if symmetry between pain and pleasure

were an accurate concept. For, after all, contract negotiations are about recognizing the imbalances of power with which one contends daily and about figuring out how to operate within that lack of symmetry.

The topic of pain-pleasure symmetry is of foundational importance to the analysis of performance pieces in this study. Hence, the topic warrants a few more moments of discussion before concentrating on Deleuze's notion of the masochistic contract. Except for Anzieu and Deleuze, pleasure has consistently been blended with pain in considerations of masochism as a way, I would argue, of aestheticizing masochism on the part of theorists who are no doubt uncomfortable with their observations of this troubling practice. As an observer's identification with a masochist increases (an identification based largely on the principle of a shared physical ontology that creates a sense of closeness to the masochist), maintaining the distance necessary for building empathy or launching critique can begin to erode.

In other words, the potentially empathizing viewer may begin to feel a loss of boundaries, prompting him or her to grasp on to an alibi of pleasure as a way of dismissing the topic of masochism, of resolving one's own conflicts (over the phenomenon of choosing to endure pain) by embracing the pat assumption that the masochist not only desires, but delights in, his or her actions.³⁷ The

pleasure alibi, then, permits the observer to discontinue a deep questioning and critique of masochism that might take his or her thinking, feeling, and memory to a place even more uncomfortable than the masochistic gesture for which the alibi is a cover.³⁸

What is this place? To review some of the basic points made so far, early 1970s masochistic performance reveals this place to be two-sided--the very site one occupies as an observer, and the domestic paradigm after which the present scenario is structured. While some viewers may understand and be willing to follow this line of inquiry, to "go to this place" in the present as well as in remembered experience, others will either discontinue questioning via the pleasure alibi, as mentioned, or stop short at the horrifying sight--which is to say, also, the "site"--of the masochistic body itself. The risk run, then, is that the viewer may never make the move toward considering said site more broadly and contingently as the site of social relations in which knowledge of that body is constructed. The latter is the task of theoretical and critical inquiries into masochistic practice and, thus, the task of this dissertation.

As I have been arguing, such inquiries cannot be conducted without making the difficult passage through the more general site within which "home" exists, through the site which is responsible for the construction of the home

and any changes in it--that is, the institution of law.³⁹ It is via their pronounced manipulation of contract that performance artists of the early 1970s lead observers through this passage in ways that conform to aspects of Deleuze's theories of the masochistic contract and its specific relation to law. It is time now to turn to a detailed discussion of these theories.

To Deleuze, the masochistic contract is a sort of cartoon version of contract, the caricaturization having the purpose of identifying, but making ambiguous, what he calls contract's "destination" in the world of law.⁴⁰ He defines contract in terms of its promotion of certain freedoms, time parameters, and entitlements, all of which are compromised as contract accedes to law:

[W]hile the contract implies in principle certain conditions like the free acceptance of the parties, a limited duration and the preservation of inalienable rights, the law it generates always tends to forget its own origins and annul these restrictive conditions....To imagine that a contract or quasi-contract is at the origin of society is to invoke conditions which are necessarily invalidated as soon as the law comes into being. For the law, once established, violates the contract in that it can apply to a third party, is valid for an indeterminate period and recognizes no inalienable rights.⁴¹

There is a difference in Deleuze's thinking between contractual relations per se and masochistic contractual relations. But there is a fundamental similarity between the two as well. Each, according to Deleuze, is gendered--that is, contract per se has to do with an artificial,

ideologically male-coded, "culture-bound" relation operating in contradistinction to more "natural" relations an individual maintains with a woman and/or mother. These traditional male-dominated power hierarchies get turned on their heads, he claims, as contract is caricatured by the masochist.

At this point Deleuze's theory verges on relegating woman to an essentialized identity--a positioning he couches in the vague terminology of "typicality;" he writes that "in the contractual relation the woman typically figures as an object in the patriarchal system."⁴² However, he proceeds to argue that the "masochistic contract" actually inverts these positions, setting up a new situation in which the woman/mother is the individual to whom power is given. It is this transfer of power in Deleuze's analysis that constitutes a large portion of the masochistic contract's importance. As the woman/mother atypically becomes master of a male slave, she stands for the possibility of empowerment against all odds constructed by patriarchy.

In fact, Deleuze goes so far as to theorize that the mere presence of a patriarchal figure is severely compromised. To wit, in Masoch's writings from which Deleuze extrapolates his observations of masochism into general theory, the father is symbolically erased from the picture. "The masochistic contract," he asserts,

"excludes the father and displaces on to the mother the task of exercising and applying the paternal law."⁴³

Deleuze finds this shift of power to be a "most radical transformation of the law;"⁴⁴ however, he goes on to argue that this constitutes the "naive" portion of the masochistic contract's radical significance. Even more important is what happens to the male slave in the transfer. He is, Deleuze claims, "reborn." This rebirth takes place symbolically through the masochistic contract's complicated reworking of the castration threat. Deleuze explains this concept with the help, once again, of inversion theory. While the threat of castration serves in the patriarchal paradigm as an instrument of prevention of and/or punishment for incest, he claims that in the matriarchal paradigm it becomes a "condition of the success of incest."⁴⁵ What Deleuze is saying here, then, is that incest is sanctioned by the masochistic contract, the sanction serving the express purpose of the male slave's liberation. And this liberation takes place through a symbolic regeneration--a regeneration which is, by Deleuze's definition, "parthenogenetic."⁴⁶

What might be concluded from the synopsis of Deleuze's theorizations so far is that through an observation of Masoch's texts, Deleuze reconfigures the terms of Freud's Oedipal scenario and its castration threat in order to theorize a parthenogenetic situation in which the male's

psychical separation from not only the mother, but the father, can take place.

Now, on one hand, one might argue that as Deleuze theorizes the masochistic contract's inversion of patriarchal hierarchy and subsequent investiture of woman with power, the examples he uses proves woman's utter disempowerment. In this argument, her disempowerment is shown to be thinly veiled by what at first appears to be a complementary disempowerment on the part of the masochistic male partner. In the end, through the miracle of theoretical parthenogenesis, power goes to the reborn, sole, specifically male survivor. Thus, this argument would conclude, what Deleuze (on behalf of Masoch) succeeds in doing is establishing a situation in which not only the power of the father can be appropriated, but the mother's as well--all under the guise of raising woman to a level of high command. Male hierarchical power is ultimately preserved. The blind spots of inversion theory are thus exposed.

However, another argument is possible--one which is preeminently important to the analysis of the masochism practiced by the performance artists in this study, and one which also points to what I believe constitutes, albeit also hiding beneath his veil of generosity, Deleuze's genuinely "radical" message. It could be argued that Deleuze's schema suggests a way to level the

hierarchy of patriarchy altogether, dissolving gendered roles, imbuing power to a "son" through a restructuring of life scenarios ("rebirths") wherein the position of "son" could just as well be taken up by anyone--for instance, a "daughter." Thus, one could interpret Deleuze's interpretation of Masoch as a proffering of an opposition to the blind spots inherent in the very inversion theory both writers embrace.

Now, to be sure, Deleuze does not go so far as to suggest the possibility that masochism functions as a mobilizer of gender-slippage. On the contrary, he rescues power for the male figure purely and simply. However, staying rooted in the material world, as the performance artists under observation insist on, one cannot help but see how Deleuze (the theorist), Masoch (the novelist/masochist) and, by extension, Severin (the character/masochist in Venus in Furs, the novel Deleuze focuses on in his analysis) all maintain power at the level of language.

Masoch and Severin write their own contracts. Deleuze writes the analysis of the contracts. Thus, Deleuze enacts a double inversion of power positions (in theory, first, he bestows power upon woman; in reality, second, he retrieves power for himself). In doing this double flip, he demonstrates the major flaw of inversion theory (anything that is turned on its head can be turned back

onto its feet with a very quick sleight--or writ--of hand).

But, ironically enough, it is precisely this point--the point at which power is preserved at the level of language--that salvages Deleuze's intentions toward radicality and makes his theories useful to my analysis of masochism as it is entailed in the selected performance pieces. For it is the field of law toward which Deleuze ultimately directs his readers--a field that is, after all, forged in fundamentally linguistic terms in the Oedipal scenario. Masochistic practice inevitably, albeit unconsciously, leads to this scenario, in which the bestowal of language upon a child--male or female--is traversed by the "law," as Lacan postulates it, "of the father."⁴⁷ And so, for all Deleuze's earlier denigration of law as the spoiler of contract's liberating effects, and for all his advocacy of parthenogenetic rebirth that would detach an individual from the domestic site once and for all, his theories manage nonetheless to continually connect to issues of the home and its Oedipalizing tendencies.

As important to this study, however, as all of the foregoing is the way in which Deleuze prompts a very specific consideration of these tendencies--through a discussion of what he observes to be a triad of maternal types depicted in Masoch's novels. His theorization of

these three maternal roles bears a provocative correspondence to the three stages of psychical development represented in the performance work of the early 1970s.

By way of preface, Deleuze claims that "the masochistic contract generates a type of law which leads straight into ritual."⁴⁸ (Parenthetically, this claim helps us see how performance art has been an appropriate vehicle for artists interested, even on an unconscious level, in the relationship between contract and law, since performance is, by definition, ritualized.⁴⁹) Deleuze observes three types of rituals represented in Masoch's novels--"hunting rites, agricultural rites, and rites of regeneration and rebirth." These rites "coexist...interact...and...sum up the mythical complex of masochism," according to Deleuze,⁵⁰ and are ruled by women who represent maternal figures described as "uterine, oral, and Oedipal."⁵¹ These figures are best understood through Deleuze's citation of the following scene from Venus in Furs.

Severin is led to a field planted with grapes and corn where, after being tied to a stake and pricked with "golden hairpins," he is, on Wanda's insistence, harnessed to a plough accompanied by three women: one who steers it, one who drives Severin with a whip, and a third who leads him on a leash. The woman who steers, one surmises from Deleuze's reading, is symbolic of the uterine mother,

who occupies the site of prebirth through the metaphor of the hunt and the position of the hunter within it. That is, the hunter is situated behind her prey--just as, one again surmises, the pregnant mother is located "behind" the child, in support of its eventual entry into the world.

The second woman is the Oedipalized mother who, by virtue of being "already integrated in the patriarchal system,"⁵² avoids the victimization for which she is destined within that system, according to Deleuze, by becoming aggressively sadistic, by wielding the whip.

The third is the most important figure to Deleuze and thus, one may conclude, to Masoch as well. She represents the oral mother who, in Deleuze's mind, reigns supreme and is ultimately responsible for the male masochist reaching the goal he seeks. Her characterization is cleaved: she operates both within the triad as the woman who totes the umbilical-cordlike leash, representing the rebirth of the shackled Severin; and also outside it, in the formulation of Wanda, who is also known as "Venus in Furs."

Wanda epitomizes the cold by dressing in furs, her ermine jacket also representing, as Deleuze puts it, the "trophy of the hunt." From her conceptually removed position--"out in the cold," so to speak--she authoritatively oversees the agrarian ritual and directs the "three" women's role-playing. "She is the mistress,"

Deleuze writes, "of the Law--what Masoch calls the law of the commune, in which the hunting, the agrarian and the matriarchal elements become fully integrated."⁵³

Of particular interest in this scenario is Deleuze's notion that integration is carried out through a process of "oscillation." He observes a "theme of...choice between the three mothers, the oscillating movement of the pendulum, and the final absorption of both the uterine and the Oedipal mothers by the triumphant oral mother."⁵⁴ This process of oscillation plays an important role in formulating conceptions of the body--that which I am arguing is a chief concern of performance pieces that forcefully reformulate such conceptions through severe forms of physical manipulation. I shall show how this oscillatory activity is carried out across a variety of performances and sometimes even in a single performance, in which all three key stages of psychical development (oral, mirror stage, Oedipal) might be symbolically revisited.

Deleuze elaborates on this part of his theory in an earlier chapter entitled "The Three Women in Masoch," where he outlines yet another tripartite typology. This time, however, the different types of woman are not directly identified as maternal. Although he sets up three categories of woman, he does not go so far as to say that this second typology can be superimposed on the

one just discussed, despite the urge on the part of his object of scrutiny, Masoch, to merge all women together no matter what: "whether she is a princess or a peasant girl, whether she is clad in ermine or sheepskin, she is always the same woman: she wears furs, she wields a whip, she treats men as slaves...."⁵⁵ Nonetheless, it is clear, not only from the novelist's assertion but close observation of his and Deleuze's texts, that such a superimposition can be made. Moreover, it is useful to my study to propose one.

In Deleuze's "Three Women of Masoch" typology, he describes the first type of Masochian female as hermaphroditic, pagan, and sensual. Sexual equality is of interest to her, Deleuze argues, but only as a tool toward acquiring dominance over male characters.⁵⁶ She bears a close correspondence, then, I would argue, to the characterization of the uterine mother who (as surmised from Deleuze's interpretation above) bides her time in a desexualized yet sensualized state, waiting to give birth--just as the primitivistic hunter (or Deleuze's "pagan hataera," the "generator of disorder"⁵⁷) heatedly awaits her prey in the unruliness of the wilds. In keeping with the specifics of Deleuze's theory, these functions lead woman toward, but do not yet constitute, mastery of a situation.

Another type of female character is more overtly

involved in mastery. She is, in fact, as in Deleuze's other typology, outrightly sadistic. As the opposite of the hermaphrodite, this second woman occupies the extreme site of cruelty. Motivated by "impotent rage" and always acting in consort, Deleuze notes, with a man who threatens to take her place and make her his victim, she is the fully Oedipalized mother. Boxed in by patriarchy and therein forced to either repress her potentially disordered anger or give it full vent, she is cast in the role of what might be seen as a male-styled sadist.⁵⁸

The third woman is Masoch's "ideal," according to Deleuze's interpretation--the "woman torturer" who absorbs the qualities of the two other women, transforming "their warmth and their fire by her icy coldness, their confusion by her rigorous order."⁵⁹ The latter is emblemized by Wanda/"Venus in Furs" who, if superimposed on the first typology, personifies the oral mother, the ideal maternal site of rebirth of the male masochist. Also similar to the previous typology of the maternal figure, this third type of woman occupies the space between the extremes toward which the first two women lean. The two extremes are marked on one end by the intensely sensuous warmth stirred up and contained by the suspense of the hunt and/or prebirth and, on the other, the fiery, unleashed, but ultimately controlling passion of sadism. Again, Deleuze observes an oscillatory movement: "this ideal

swings like the span of the pendulum. At one extreme masochism has yet to come into operation, and at the other it has already lost its raison d'être."60

Now, for all the benefit that can be gleaned from Deleuze's notion of oscillation, there seems to be something missing from his theory here. After examining both of his triadic typologies, it becomes clear that what is lacking is a precise examination of the territory traversed between the two extremes he outlines. But it is here that the theories of Lacan fill in a piece of the puzzle of psychical development that Deleuze overlooks.

For Lacan, the two points described by Deleuze as "extremes" are known as the realms of the "imaginary" and the "symbolic." The former, to review, describes the moments in which a child has the sensation of being merged with his or her environment. The establishment of boundaries between individual and environment, and the recognition of selfhood and otherness, begin with one's move toward the realm of the symbolic, where language is bestowed upon a child. This bestowal signals the moment of full separation from the environment to which the child heretofore felt merged--or "attached," to recall Anzieu's term--to varying degrees. The chief entity in this environment was, of course, the mother.

Thus, I would like to suggest that Lacan's realm of the "imaginary" arches over Anzieu's "mothering environment"

and both of Deleuze's pre-Oedipal formulations--that in which woman personifies the uterine mother/hunter, and that in which she takes up the role of oral mother/woman torturer. Lacan's realm of the symbolic, in its fullest form, corresponds to Deleuze's formulation of the Oedipal mother/sadist. Entry into this realm, though beginning on the threshold of the mirror stage, culminates in the Oedipal scenario, through which one is simultaneously ushered into the world of law.

To be fully sensitive to the workings of the masochistic contract, it is important to examine the material history and theory of this world, to sketch the context from which the apparatus of contract was built. The writings of several legal scholars will aid in this project, to which I now turn.

CONTRACT'S "WORLD OF LAW"

The legal instrument of contract has existed for centuries. Perhaps its most thorough history for the purposes of the lay person has been charted by Alan Watson in The Evolution of Law, in which the author locates the instrument's historical roots in the Roman Empire, where five different types of contract, as he sees it, were operative.⁶¹ However, until the 1870/80s, there was no theoretical workup on how contract actually functioned or, more specifically, how it differed from tort.

"Tort," for the purposes of this study, is adequately defined by Richard L. Abel as "a wrong...done to one person by another for which the law provides a remedy." In other words, in tort there is no independent, mediating document or communication, tacit or expressed, upon which the nature of a "wrong" experienced in a relationship is assessed. Thus, tort is distinguishable from contract, as Abel goes on to say, in that legal remedy for contract is only "appropriate where the duty breached is found in a preexisting agreement."⁶²

Historical shifts in the theory of contract have been best traced by Gilmore in his Death of Contract. From the preindustrial era to the early 1970s, Gilmore focuses on what he sees as contract's two most dramatic transformations. Occurring approximately a century apart, in the 1870/80s and at the time of his own writing, the shifts rotate around the degree to which "the will of the parties [involved in a given case] must, subjectively, concur"--in other words, the degree to which there is what he calls a "meeting of the minds."⁶³

The first change was marshaled by the development of what was called the "bargain theory of consideration." As indicated earlier, "consideration" is fundamentally economic.⁶⁴ In the context of the mid-nineteenth century, the privileging of concrete financial criteria in contract negotiation above and beyond more interpersonal

prerequisites constituted a turn toward objectivism. The thinking that went into this transition, it would seem, was quite simplistic: monetary elements could easily be ordered and objectified, whereas the potentially confusing and chaotic thoughts and emotions involved in a "meeting of the minds" could not. Rather than find a middle ground in which both subject and object, or mind and money, could play a part in agreement-making, the nineteenth-century shift exhibited a sort of purist orthodoxy. Gilmore sums up: "The basic idea...seems to have been that there really is such a thing as the one true rule of law, universal and unchanging, always and everywhere the same-- a sort of mystical absolute."⁶⁵

Prior to the nineteenth-century shift in the notion of contract, whenever there was a conflict to be settled, a judge would determine whether and how the initial "meeting of the minds" upon which a contract had been based had failed. In order to render a determination, the judge would weigh what had been said and/or meant--i.e., promised and/or intended--in a given agreement and how its terms had been violated. But, by 1881, when Oliver Wendell Holmes issued his famous proclamation, cited in Chapter One, endorsing what a party said in a contractual agreement above and beyond what the party meant, contract had grown more objectified.⁶⁶

In other words, the creators of contract were more

interested in its form than the process that went into it or complexities arising from it. Gilmore locates the beginning of the shift in this direction at the point at which academicians within the field of law began to draw up an actual theory of contract--indeed, when concerns turned toward what was being said. From that time forward, at least to the moment of its "death" in the late 1960s-early 1970s, contract became increasingly formalistic.

The beginning of the historical nineteenth-century shift is most prominently marked, Gilmore observes, by Holmes's now-famous 1881 series of lectures, published as The Common Law, from which the "said-meant" distinctions were quoted above. These lectures comprised a key text for law students who would ultimately become the individuals creating and judging contractual agreements.⁶⁷ Holmes's work did not sprout without seed, however, as Gilmore explains.

Preceding Holmes by a decade were the important publications, in 1871 and 1880 respectively, of Christopher Columbus Langdell's casebook on Contracts and his follow-up "Summary of the Law of Contracts."⁶⁸ It was here, Gilmore points out, borrowing terminology from Lawrence Friedman, whose work on contract theory he highly praises throughout his text,⁶⁹ that contract first began to be thought of as an "abstraction."⁷⁰ Holmes, and later

Samuel Williston (Williston on Contracts, 1920) and Arthur Linton Corbin (Corbin on Contracts, 1950)⁷¹ concretized the notion of contract, furthering the formalism Langdell initiated.

Now, one might ask, as Gilmore implicitly did, to what is owed the Langdell-Holmesian impulse toward theory? Gilmore suggests that it was not necessarily changes in the world of law that demanded the theorization of contract but, rather, could just as easily have been theory itself that induced changes in that world.⁷² But what created the need for change in the first place? Gilmore points out that laws of sales or negotiable instruments, for example, did not exist before the late eighteenth century. Such examples comprise the personal property security law that the Industrial Revolution "left in its wake"--a law that developed, in Gilmore's words,

in response to dramatic shifts in the technological, political and cultural organization of our society. Law, by its nature, reflects what is....If seashells are currency, we will have a detailed, intricate and comprehensive law of wampum; if seashells cease to be currency, the law of wampum will gradually die and be forgotten. Until goods, and claims to money based on their manufacture and sale, became as significant a repository of wealth as real property had traditionally been, we had no need for a law of sales or a law of negotiable instruments. The need arising, the law was promptly provided.⁷³

Other legal historians would disagree with Gilmore's reflection theory, however. Watson, for example, inverts Gilmore's belief, claiming that "law is largely autonomous

and not shaped by societal needs; though legal institutions will not exist without corresponding social institutions, law evolves from the legal tradition."⁷⁴

Watson's position and his careful historical mapping reveal the extent to which law has been appropriated from rules set down as long ago as the ancient past, which in turn underscores the enormity of the power sustained by what he aptly calls, throughout his book, the "legal elite." But as should be clear even from the brief quote above, there are problems with Watson's work, as well, which require a few brief critical remarks.⁷⁵

Reading Watson as generously as possible, one might say that his claim--that law shapes society--could bear the potential of actually daring those inside and outside the "legal elite" to look for ways to influence legislation, to seize control of this society-shaping force. But such action would require a critical agenda. And rather than establish such a model critique of the way law does its shaping, or look for contradictions in legal history that might illuminate openings through which change could possibly be initiated, Watson develops a theory of evolution (as the title of his book indicates). Such a theory, of course, imputes to law a quality of immutable naturalness--a quality at the ideological core of the concept of tradition.

Watson concludes that

...for satisfactory law in society one must have a satisfactory legal tradition. The main thrust of law reform must be to ensure that the means of making law are the best possible for the society. In this context specific, abiding--indeed natural--features of the culture deserve express mention. Law is treated as existing in its own right: it is being in conformity with lawness that makes law law. Hence, first the means of creating law, the sources of law, come to be regarded as a given, almost as something sacrosanct, and change in these even when they are obviously deeply flawed is extremely difficult to achieve. Secondly, law has to be justified in its own terms; hence authority has to be sought and found. That authority (in some form, which may be perverted) must already exist; hence law is typically backward-looking. These two features make law inherently conservative.⁷⁶

As this quote reveals, Watson follows a traditional academic methodology of deductive reasoning, which could be described as conservative in and of itself. By way of this formal echo of the content of his conclusion, he seems to endorse the conservative way in which law operates. In fact, he accepts this precept so thoroughly that he succumbs to the very ideology of law's immutability he has theorized, as if law's own "sacrosanct lawness" has him in its grips, foreclosing on the option of criticality that is, in all reality, open to him as an academic.

The vise-grip he observes in the legal field and in which he himself seems caught is precisely the vise-grip, I believe, that the artists I am looking at experienced in the early 1970s and literalized in the pressure they exerted on their own bodies. However, by exploiting and manipulating law's instrument of contract (via their

masochism), they at least attempted to avoid Watson's noncriticality.

Watson goes on to claim that the only position from which one might provoke change is from the margins of the mainstream world of law. He asserts that "legal change is frequently the result of efforts of nonlawyers or of lawyers outside the tradition."⁷⁷ Similarly, performance art of the early 1970s took place at the margins of the mainstream world of art, in alternative spaces and their prototypes. Also, performance often attracted individuals from "outside the tradition" of visual arts. Acconci, for example, was initially a writer. He began to do performances in the late 1960s when he felt the need to move his words off the printed page and out into the world in the form of his performing body⁷⁸--or, I would argue, in the form of the masochistic contract.

As if to emphasize the content of his last quote, Watson literally situates the remark outside his own main text, in the third-to-the-last endnote of the book. He goes on in the note to defensively state that he is not advocating conservatism but just wants to underscore how rigidly set in its ways law is and how those who try to penetrate its rigidity will only end up being construed as "'bad' lawyers....at the intellectual mercy of the traditionalists."⁷⁹ Similarly, within the traditions of the art world, performance artists have typically been

construed and ultimately dismissed as "bad artists." The purpose of my study is not to prove otherwise but, rather, to explore the institutionalized structures and dynamics from which such simplistic dismissals are made and to which the artists I am discussing responded: the structures of the home, law, economics, art, etc.; the dynamics of repression.

But most important to recognize in Watson's footnoted statement is the way in which it functions ideologically as an admonition to anyone who might want to challenge law's alleged immutability. Watson thus assists the "legal elite" in keeping those interested in radical change in ghettoized positions of compromised power. What he ostensibly intends as a caution light to potential challengers, then, reads as a yield sign.

Nonetheless, as I indicated earlier, much of Watson's anthropological research and his conclusions concerning the historical models of contemporary contract, used with the very caution he would like his readers to heed for other reasons, is helpful to studies such as mine. His work at least suggests that seizing the tool of contract, as a subsidiary (and thus more graspable and perhaps manipulable) entity within the potentially overwhelming, overarching world of law, might be a way out of (for purposes of gaining the distance necessary for critiquing) the vise-grip that world exerts. Indeed, this is

precisely the "seizure" that the five artists in my study try to effect.

Additionally, Watson's study serves as a point of contrast for theories that seem to more adequately match up with one's own everyday experiences. Such an approach can be found in the work of Peter Gabel and Jay M. Feinman--namely, a useful essay entitled "Contract Law and Ideology." Now, all four of the authors discussed so far make, or at least imply, the following practical point: because lawyers and judges have typically held privileged positions within the socioeconomic order, they have, as Gabel/Feinman put it, "expressed the legitimacy of that structure" when working on cases.⁸⁰ But rather than excuse this phenomenon as Watson seems to, Gabel/Feinman use it to analyze the ramifications of the tight symbiosis among society, economics, and law that everyone experiences and that the artists in this study address.

The authors charge that "in the process of resolving many cases, legal concepts were built up that embodied the new social relations. The result was a system of contract law that appeared to shape economic affairs according to normative principles but that was, in fact, only a recast form of the underlying socio-economic relations" [my emphasis].⁸¹ It is their concept of "appearance," addressed in their historical outline of contract, that most emphatically distinguishes Gabel/Feinman's analysis

from the others, saves their conclusions from the trap of reflection theory, and makes it most useful to theories of art and representation which necessarily center on the phenomenon of appearance.

Gabel/Feinman trace the history of contract: from the eighteenth century, in which contracts were open to "scrutiny by...community standards;" through the nineteenth century's tendency to use contract law to help people cope, on a practical level, with the "massive disruptions in their lives" triggered by the Industrial Revolution. Utilizing contract as a way to reclaim command over a rapidly changing world constituted, for some individuals, what could be considered an "up" side within nineteenth-century subjectivism. Of course, there was a "down" side. For Gilmore, as I quoted earlier, the down side had to do with the way subjectivism "modulates smoothly into a theory of the untrammelled autonomy of the individual will and thence into the idea of unrestricted freedom of contract...;"⁸² for Gabel/Feinman it has to do with a full reading of the concept of appearance or, to use a comparable term of Gilmore's, "idea."

Gabel/Feinman argue that "'the law' does not enforce anything...because the law is nothing but ideas and the images they signify. Its purpose is to justify practical norms (and in so doing to help constitute them by contributing to the collective conditioning process)."⁸³

By considering how the symbiosis between idea and image affects contractual agreements among individuals conditioned by this symbiosis, the authors are joining the theory of contract to theories of representation. This linkage allows them to explode the notion of "freedom" supposedly located at the heart of nineteenth-century "free competition" by exposing how the latter functions within the arena of representation to promote an ideology of equality and mobility that legitimates the so-called free-market system, while ignoring the fact that conditions of equality, mobility, and freedom exist only for those who benefit from unequal distribution of wealth, or the privilege of class.⁸⁴

Such benefits, of course, shape one's daily life--in largest part, perhaps, one's domestic life. Starting from this basic understanding, one can begin to see the stirring of the material as well as conceptual connections between the arenas of law, art, and the home. Looking at the ways in which performance art has contributed to this understanding by making these connections itself is the job of this dissertation.

It has only been in the twentieth century that what could be called a consistent history of performance art has been produced.⁸⁵ It is also in this century, according to Gabel/Feinman, that the following precept applies: as the workings of bourgeois ideology persist,

faith in contract diminishes. Gone, they claim, is the dream of a classless society based on the possibility of "free and equal citizens" forging contracts without state surveillance. On the level of appearance, then, this century's social order, which is thought to be constructed according to the cooperation of various business concerns with the state, projects an image of willingness, they argue, to compensate for inequities among classes through redistribution or regulation of wealth.

However, the authors write, behind this optimistic "ideological imagery" of a "fair society," of everyone watching out for everyone else, is the twentieth-century "socioeconomic reality" of monopoly control quietly nurtured by the state. The result is a perpetuation of the same capital-determined class domination of the previous century.⁸⁶

Although Gilmore sees the "bloodless" notion of contract operating more generally from the 1870s/80s through at least the first half of the twentieth century, he would agree with Gabel/Feinman's assessment of nineteenth-century class structure and its social ramifications. He asserts that "as we look back on the nineteenth century theories, we are struck most of all...by the narrow scope of social duty which...[the rich and powerful classes]...implicitly assumed. No man is his brother's keeper; the race is to the swift; let the devil

take the hindmost."⁸⁷

But, as Gilmore continues with an assessment of the twentieth century, his analysis of the workings of ideology becomes more ambivalent than that of Gabel/Feinman. He muses:

For good or ill we have changed....We are now all cogs in a machine, each dependent on the other. The decline and fall of the general theory of contract and, in most quarters, of laissez-faire economics may be taken as remote reflections of the transition from nineteenth century individualism to the welfare state and beyond [my emphasis].⁸⁸

Taking the above comments by Gabel/Feinman and Gilmore into my discussion of the manifestations of contract in performance artworks, the goals will be to ascertain attitudes toward "social duty" on the part of artists and observers, consider how such attitudes have or have not changed, and assess the efforts of masochistic artists to resuscitate contract in, according to these theorists, its dying days.

Returning now to the question regarding the historical impulse to theorize contract as a "remote, impersonal, bloodless abstraction," it may be concluded that the impulse rested on contract's complicated symbiosis with society's economic status. However, in order for the reader to thoroughly comprehend this concept and how it plays into contract's alleged decline, I must take a moment to address the precise mission and function of the "bargain theory of consideration." This issue is of

particular importance, as has already been seen in the analysis of Gina Pane's Money-Meat-Fire, inasmuch as "consideration" so tightly interconnects with perceptions of the body. I shall be using the terminology of "consideration," along with its affiliates "offer" and "acceptance," continually in the next chapter. Thus, all three terms warrant attention now.

Gabel/Feinman feel that "since the market was the measure of all things, only those promises were enforceable that represented market transactions--those for which the person making the promise received something, a 'consideration,' in return."⁸⁹ But because of this emphasis on money, the authors suggest, "enforcement of bargains functioned to permit the elaboration of contract law as legitimating ideology."⁹⁰

Gilmore, who approaches the history of contract somewhat less critically, describes consideration more factually as a "tool for narrowing the range of contractual liability."⁹¹ Despite his less critical approach, even a superficial assessment of this description tells us a great deal: a narrowing of liability shows that the stakes of contract had indeed been reduced to monetary issues; and since a contractual agreement involves the well-being of individuals, it can be argued that what is really at stake in contract is not only money but that for which it serves as substitute--as

just indicated, the human body.

As noted previously, Walter Benn Michaels argued in his analysis of McTeague, published in 1899 (notably, in the middle of contract's formalist period), that masochism thrives on the contradiction between "owning and being owned." The tension inherent in this contradiction persists, Michaels concluded, because it is made acceptable, even logical, by a market economy that sees the body as a contractable entity of exchange.⁹²

Gilmore's most useful conclusion, coming up shortly, concurs with Michaels' but goes a step further, encouraging the reader to move to a metalevel of analysis of contractual proceedings. Comprising a suggestion directed toward the institution of academia, Gilmore's conclusion grows out of his observation that the Langdell-Holmesian absolutist tendency of the nineteenth century provided no relief for what I would call the "contract-bound body." That is, no flexible, creative alternatives in the form of "quasi-contract" or "liability in tort," he wrote, ever came into vogue.⁹³ A contract was a contract, and was known as such by having passed through three prerequisite stages: "offer," "acceptance," and "consideration."

"Consideration" has been discussed. A definition of "offer" can be drawn from "Restatement, Second, Contracts," as it is cited by legal textbook writers

Gordon D. Schaber and Claude D. Rohwer: "a manifestation of willingness to enter into a bargain, so made as to justify another person in understanding that his assent to that bargain is invited and will conclude it."⁹⁴ "Acceptance" can be described by the way in which assent is granted. Schaber/Rohwer explain that the "manner of acceptance" may consist of a promise or a performance of a requested act, carried out in various "medium(s) of acceptance," including writing, oral consent or, in the case of more contemporary contract, silence (which I shall address in a moment).⁹⁵ Each involves processes of negotiation--a term I shall often be using interchangeably, as I have already indicated, with "acceptance" in an effort to keep us mindful both of the activity inherent in this phase of contract-making, and of the fact that although "acceptance" implies a finality, no contract is complete without a "consideration."

Particularly important to the upcoming analysis of performance works is this last notion of "acceptance by silence"--a set of circumstances in which "the offeror has stated or given the offeree reason to understand that assent may be manifested by silence or inaction, and the offeree in remaining silent and inactive intends to accept the offer."⁹⁶ These are precisely the circumstances that are demonstrated in early 1970s masochistic performance. To wit, very few performances were ever stopped; rather,

most were "accepted" inasmuch as audience members remained silent. While such "acceptance by silence" is a feature that potentially sanctions all performances, it is most operative in those involving clearcut masochistic acts. In the next chapter there will be ample opportunity to take a look at this form of tacit negotiation and, with the use of the psycholegalistic theoretical model constructed in this chapter, weigh its value and detriment for both parties within the performance arena.

Before proceeding, I would like to define one more point of law as a setup for this chapter's conclusion (by way of Gilmore's). Although the stages of offer, acceptance, and consideration were first standardized by the likes of Langdell and Holmes, whose enormous influence in academia produced new lawyers and judges who would tend to adhere to their classical theories, there were still ways in which the judicial system itself, Gilmore argues, tried to soften the ostensibly relief-proof rules. For example, the option of "estoppel"--which is, in Gilmore's terms, "simply a way of saying that, for reasons which the court does not care to discuss, there must be judgment for plaintiff"--was increasingly exercised.⁹⁷

Estoppel seemed to function as a strategy, one might say, for complicating the distinctions between signifier and referent upon which contract had come to rely. Such purposeful semiological confusion indicates a reopening of

a space in which "what was meant" in an agreement might be heard through "what was said"--in other words, heard over that which was formally offered, accepted, and considered (monetarily and/or bodily).⁹⁸

Gilmore sees these softenings as a subtext to the Langdell-Holmes formalization of contract--a hopeful sort of sabotage offsetting the chance that contract would ever fully obliterate "subjective" interaction. Eventually, by the time of his writing, Gilmore finds it possible to argue that such tactics as estoppel "illustrate...[the]...basic coming together of contract and tort, as well as the 'instinctive, almost unconscious' level on which the process has been working itself out."⁹⁹ This change constitutes the second shift in contract theory's history and could be characterized as a reactivation of the process Gilmore had called "the meeting of the minds."

Gilmore's conclusive suggestion, finally, to academia--humorously put and eminently useful for this study--is that "a desirable reform in legal education would be to merge the first-year courses in Contracts and Torts into a single course which we could call Contorts."¹⁰⁰ By positing this suggestion, Gilmore implies that by the late 1960s-early 1970s, a middle-ground option had begun to exist between conceiving of contract in strictly formalist terms, on one hand, and as an entity entirely subsumed by

law on the other. The "death of contract," then, it would appear, is the death of its theory, a death that allows the function of contract to live on in the interstices of these two extremes.

I would like to suggest that the artists I am about to discuss reveal their identities as contortionists. By tampering with the body in an arena of representation that has, from time to time, been as circumscribed by formalist theories as the world of law, the performers point to what has really been at stake in both arenas all along. That is, as the body is objectified for masochistic purposes, it is shown to be the vulnerable, perpetually sacrificed entity for which the monetary element of contractual "consideration" only serves as metaphor. Thus, the questions these artists seem to be raising--the questions arching over and above those presented in the last chapter--have to do with whether contract itself is a fundamentally masochistic enterprise and/or whether it might be salvaged as an antidote to masochism if a "meeting of the minds" can be resuscitated and kept alive for the sake of its inherent processes of negotiation.

The actual task of analyzing performances presented by these contortionists doubles their contortionist actions. Looking at the degrees to which aspects of subjecthood and objecthood are dealt with--separately and/or jointly--requires a methodology that twists, turns, arches over,

and touches upon several other fields of study, as already witnessed. I shall turn now to the body of my text to see how the artists under discussion addressed their own. I shall be discussing, in more detail than in the introductory examples, the ways in which the artists: reviewed psychical developments of the oral, mirror, and Oedipal phases; played out these phases' correspondent contractual stages of offer, acceptance, and consideration; and emblemized these triads via a provocative manipulation of mouths, mirrors, and beds.

NOTES - CHAPTER TWO

1. Anzieu, Skin Ego, 61.
2. Ibid., 62.
3. Ibid., 40.
4. See comments throughout Skin Ego, starting on page 4. Of special interest here is Anzieu's related theory of "double anaclisis," having to do with the child's sensation of being propped up, anaclitically, by both biological and social structures; see 112. This will be discussed in my text shortly.
5. Ibid., 40.
6. Ibid., 63.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 112.
9. Ibid., 63.
10. Ibid., 40.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 111-12. "The pack" technique was first developed, according to Anzieu, by French psychiatrists in the nineteenth century; it was revived in France in the 1960s by way of an American, who was responsible for adding to the treatment the practice of institutional attendants surrounding the wrapped body, thereby providing what Anzieu is calling a "social prop."
13. The fact that extreme masochistic acts, especially those going so far as to involve self-mutilation, tend to be isolated ventures contributes to the paucity of information on the topic, especially in more popular venues. The most recent work by Barent W. Walsh and Paul M. Rosen, Self-Mutilation: Theory, Research, and Treatment (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1988) is, for having its base in the clinical world, well-balanced among the three ways of dealing with the topic named in its title. The authors point out that although the self-mutilator (in a family situation) might carry out his or her action in secret, "there is [often] ambivalence. He or she hopes that the family will come to the emotional rescue" (207).

However, there are many other instances in which that hope is so minimal that the masochist may stay isolated for years. For more on the secrecy issue, see Teresa Opheim, "Self-Mutilation: Pain to Forget Pain," Utne Reader (March/April 1987), 21. Opheim's albeit brief article contributes to bringing the subject of masochism out of the closet. However, she claims that self-mutilation is primarily a woman's disease, basing her argument on already published material like a piece in the Lesbian Connection (September/October 1986). In the full version of the latter (which, significantly, as it turns out, was an anonymously written letter), the writer argues that much of the isolation related to the practice is implicitly encouraged by the medical profession that exists, in many mutilators' minds, as the only place to which to turn. Because of its domination by male practitioners, this ends up being no place to turn to at all. While the sociological aspect of this explanation is highly plausible, the premise that extreme masochistic practice is almost exclusively a woman's practice is questionable, as the following will show.

For a by-now infamous example of male self-mutilation, see the clinical assessment of "Mr. H" who, in private, literally cut off his own face with (again, significantly enough) shards of mirror--and, amazingly, recovered. That is, he recovered on a physical level; on an emotional level, there was far from full recovery. For example, despite in-depth lab reports to the contrary, Mr. H persisted in his claim that "his dog did it." (See Susan Scheftel, Amy S. Nathan, Andrew M. Razin, and Peter Mezan, "A Case of Radical Facial Self-Mutilation: An Unprecedented Event and Its Impact," Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic 50 [November 1986], 525-40.) While clearly not all acts of masochism are as extreme as the case of Mr. H, the fact that it, along with other published instances of varying degrees of such acts, have surfaced suggests that many more, less severe but still troubling, examples transpire daily.

Please also note that the numerous bibliographic references cited by Barent and Walsh (257-63) and Scheftel et al. (539-40) are extremely helpful and remind the reader that there is a body of academic work on this topic, especially inspired by Karl Menninger starting in the 1930s. More popular (and thus more accessible) literature only now seems to be coming forth, however, a few examples of which I have provided here. Recent additions would include Louise J. Kaplan's Female Perversions (New York: Anchor Books, 1991). See esp. Kaplan's chapter on "Mutilations," 362ff.

If nothing else, the performances discussed in this dissertation blew off the lid of secrecy sealed tight on these practices as of a few decades ago. The works'

relative repression in art history, however, illustrates common reactions of denial on the part of observers of extreme masochism--reactions that are still understudied. Barent, Walsh, Scheftel et al. make significant moves to rectify this repression. See, especially, Scheftel et al. on "Staff Members' Reactions to [Mr. H's] Self-Mutilation." Reactions included distortion (for example, insisting that the patient was drugged at the time of the laceration, despite proof that this was not the case), avoidance (some staff members asked not to work with Mr. H at all; some resisted encouraging him to ambulate when it was called for, so that he would not have to be seen), and "morbid curiosity" (537-39). These are common reactions to masochistic performance as well.

14. If there is to be criticism launched at Anzieu's theory, it might be that his focus is almost too intensely placed on the attachment drive. His own attachment to his theory of attachment has led to at least one error of fact. As an example of the extremes to which an individual might go "to maintain the boundaries of the body and the Ego and to re-establish a sense of being intact and self-cohesive," he cites Viennese Aktionism artist Rudolf Schwarzkogler who, Anzieu writes, "perceived his own body as the object of his art, amputated his own skin, inch by inch, until finally he killed himself. He was photographed throughout the process, and the photographs exhibited at Kassel in Germany" (Anzieu, Skin Ego, 20).

Kristine Stiles has definitively set the record straight on the myth that Schwarzkogler amputated his own penis and died as a result--a myth, as she points out, first promoted by Robert Hughes in Time magazine in 1972. Photographs suggesting self-castration were constructed by Schwarzkogler, using Heinz Cibulka as a model, in the 1960s. Schwarzkogler died in 1969 of still undetermined causes, according to Stiles's research, none of which include self-amputation, but among which, it has been speculated, include "falling, jumping, or attempting to fly from his apartment window in Vienna in a state of extreme agitation and hallucination." Stiles's information is based on in-depth research with Schwarzkogler's fellow artists, friends, dealer, and most importantly his female companion who was with him the day he died. See Kristine Stiles, "Performance and Its Objects," Arts 65 (November 1990), 35.

Parenthetically, Stiles's essay constitutes a book review of Henry M. Sayre's The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde Since 1970 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), in which Sayre, too, perpetuates the Hughes myth. Stiles not only dispels the myth, but provocatively takes Sayre to the mat for using

it in the construction of his own argument regarding the use of photography in performance--an argument seriously shaken by Stiles's factual insights. (See Sayre, 2ff.)

15. Anzieu, Skin Ego, 41.

16. See Jean Laplanche, Life & Death in Psychoanalysis, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (orig. 1970 as Vie et mort en psychanalyse; trans., Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 88-89, for an excellent chronology of the development of Freud's thinking on primary masochism, especially the detection of 1920 as the turning point in this development.

17. My narrative of the Oedipal scenario is clearly a collage of various theorists' interpretations and, thus, citations would be too numerous to list. However, perhaps the most useful (certainly to the synopsis I have presented here) cross-referencing of Freudian and Lacanian versions of the story can be found in the first part of Deborah Bershad's "Icon as Index: Middle Byzantine Art and Architecture," Semiotica 43 (3/4, 1983), 275-320. For a more concise synopsis, see Kaplan, Women and Film, 19-20. For commentary directly connected to Lacan's theory, see Jacqueline Rose's and Juliet Mitchell's introductions to Lacan's Feminine Sexuality.

18. Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," 3.

19. For Lacan's reference to "functional fragmentation" see "Intervention of Transference," in Feminine Sexuality, 67, in which he discusses the case of Freud's Dora. "Split self" has become the much-used (never by Lacan himself), simplified, anglicized terminology for the product of the complicated process of "méconnaissance" (Lacan's term) experienced by the child before the mirror; see "The Mirror Stage," 6, for discussion of méconnaissance per se.

20. Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," 79.

21. For two other views of the initial moments of masochism, see Kaja Silverman, "Masochism and Male Subjectivity," Camera Obscura 17 (May 1988), 31-68, in which she situates the development of masochism in the Oedipal scenario, and debates (in her n. 51) Gaylyn Studlar's position that masochism begins in the oral stage. For further elaboration by Studlar than Silverman had available to her at the time she wrote her essay, see Gaylyn Studlar, In the Realm of Pleasure: von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988). My argument

will focus on the gap between Silverman's and Studlar's readings of masochism's origins--that is, the late oral and early mirror stages; additionally, I hope to clarify the need to see how all stages of psychical development are implicated in masochistic processes if one is committed to investigating not only their initiation but their maintenance. (For further elaboration by Silverman than I had available at the time of my writing, see her recently published Male Subjectivity at the Margins [New York and London: Routledge, 1992].)

22. Lacan, "Mirror Stage," 4. It is important to take a moment at this point in my argument to echo a caveat provided by Jean Laplanche on interpretations of mirror-stage theory. He writes: "Lacan's intention is certainly not to link in any necessary [my emphasis] way the appearance of the human ego to the creation of the instrument of a mirror, nor even, for example, to the fact that like Narcissus, the infant can see his reflection on the surface of a body of water" (Laplanche, Life & Death in Psychoanalysis, 81).

This is an extremely useful reminder, especially for researchers who are considering objects of representation, to resist being reductive in cross-referencing forms of art and psychoanalysis--i.e., not to limit the relating of psychoanalytic methodologies to works of art involving actual mirrors or the like. However, as Laplanche himself places a condition on his caveat ("Lacan's intention is not to link in any necessary way..." the ego and the material object involved in the construction of the ego), so is it reasonable to assume that the material object of the mirror may sometimes be utilized in the investigation of the structural aspects of the stage of psychical development inspired by it. Instances of the latter will be discussed at length in Chapter Three, where reductive thinking as I just described it is avoided via the layering of Lacan's theory with Anzieu's theory of the "Skin Ego."

Laplanche provides an implicit link to Anzieu's theory via Freud (indeed, Freud functions as a large part of Anzieu's launching pad) in this same section of his text, where he goes on to say that "it would be imprecise...to say that Freud had not himself focused on the situation of specular identification. For it is present not only in 'Mourning and Melancholia' but above all in an extremely dense passage in The Ego and the Id, in which it is specified that 'the ego is first and foremost a body-ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but it is itself the projections of a surface'" (81). These projections, as Laplanche points out, involve visual as well as tactile perceptions based on a reflexive epistemological practice of getting to know the self by touching the self.

For Anzieu's acknowledgment of Freud's influence in the development of his own theory of the Skin Ego, see his chapter "Two Precursors of the Skin Ego: Freud and Federn," Skin Ego, 71-95. For another statement deemphasizing the importance of the material object of the mirror in Lacan's mirror-stage theorizations, also see Jacqueline Rose, "Introduction - II" in Lacan's Female Sexuality, in which she argues that Lacan did not wish his observations to be "restricted to the field of the visible alone: 'the idea of the mirror should be understood as an object which reflects--not just the visible, but also what is heard, touched and willed by the child'" (30) (Lacan quote, per Rose, is from "Cure psychanalytique à l'aide de la poupée fleur," comptes rendus, réunion 18 Octobre, Revue française de la psychanalyse 4 [October-December 1949], 567; note that this text was written the same year Lacan presented his "Mirror Stage" essay). In the whole context of Lacan's theory, the above passage seems to be a rare deemphasis of vision; hence, I am choosing to characterize his theory in my own text as vision-privileging.

I am indebted to Laplanche, along with Freud, Anzieu, and Lacan, for providing the foundation upon which I am building my theory of performance art involving the dialectics of vision and touch.

23. Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," 1964, in Image/Music/Text, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 38-39.

24. Deleuze, Masochism, 77.

25. Ibid., 88-89.

26. Again, I am indebted to Scarry and her Body in Pain; see n. 38, Chapter One.

27. See John Farrar, "Publisher's Preface," in Reik's Of Love and Lust, ix.

28. Particularly useful on the political/historical context of Deleuze's writing is Keith A. Reader's Intellectuals and the Left in France Since 1968 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), esp. the chapter on "Language, Power and Politics--the Work of Foucault and Deleuze," 80-91.

29. Reik, "Masochism," 214; the part played by the mirror in this scenario helps corroborate my own reliance, in the development of my theory of performance (in general) and masochistic performance (in particular), on the material entity of the mirror and the psychodynamics of the mirror

stage.

30. Ibid., 221-35.

31. Vito Acconci, interview with author, Brooklyn, N. Y., 17 February 1989. All other comments, unless otherwise noted, will be from this interview or an interview conducted 26 November 1991.

32. Reik, "Masochism," 235.

33. Gilmore, Death, 40.

34. Reik, "Masochism," 248.

35. Deleuze, Masochism, 79.

36. The specific terminology of asymmetry is actually derived from Anzieu, Skin Ego, 200. Deleuze argues the point through the analysis of the two phenomena as they function in sadism and masochism; see his chapter "Are Sade and Masoch Complementary?" in Masochism, 33-41.

37. My theory here obviously runs counter to Freud's notion of the symbiosis between pleasure and pain, and sadism and masochism. He claims that lurking in every sadist is a masochist, a condition providing the sadist with a promise of double pleasure--the pleasure of actively dominating his or her partner and the pleasure derived from psychical identification of his more hidden self with the dominated. (See Freud's "Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex," 570.) Why this identification would be based on pleasure, rather than pain, is a question consistently elided by theorists and precisely that which I wish to broach by hypothesizing pleasure as an alibi in this schema.

Freud's notion of symbiosis has, however, been useful to feminist theorists who see how it plays into practices of masquerade (the thinking here being that the sadist is a masochist in disguise). Such practices produce, through their pronounced artificiality, a distance from essentialized identifications. The function of distance is key to these discussions inasmuch as it is thought to problematize empathy. For art historian Therese Lichtenstein, Freud's theory of a pain-pleasure symbiosis, incorporating aspects of masquerade and a "distance-empathy" or, as she also calls it, an "attraction-repulsion" dynamic, have been crucial in her analysis of Hans Bellmer's photographs of ball-and-joint "dolls," which were often multilimbed and grotesquely assembled so as to look violently disjointed and reassembled from multiple, more naturally configured bodies. She observes

that Bellmer's images evoke "feelings that oscillate...between empathy and distance, attraction and repulsion...the very kinds of contradictions that constitute the s/m dynamic as Freud theorizes it. Thus, the s/m dynamic sets up the impossible place of being simultaneously inside and outside, close and distant, a dynamic that is always, already at a distance through the objectification of the self and the other. S/m relationships are based on a unique bond between people in which each partner is constituted by the other as an object and never as a subject" [my emphasis] (60, citation below).

While, Lichtenstein claims, "personal recognition in sado-masochism is derived through dependency on the other--a dependency without clear-cut boundaries" [my emphasis] (59), Bellmer's photographs defy the possibility of "uncritical closeness" through their exaggerated, artificial construction which "leave[s] no room for the viewer's suspension of disbelief. Feelings of fascination and repulsion are thus mirrored in a critical distance from the photographs which produce an alienated, unidealized and fragmented identity that simultaneously creates a recognition and misrecognition--an alienation from and identification with the image that intrudes upon the primary narcissism of the subject" [my emphasis] (61). Her conclusion regarding the function of Bellmer's doll imagery is that it represents a desire for boundaries through a representation of their annihilation and that, in the end, what is established is an "alienation of [the] alienation" that was so sharply felt during the 1930s in Germany, when Bellmer was working (Lichtenstein, "Hans Bellmer's Dolls," 54-63). (See my nn. 41 and 59, Chapter One, for full citation and more discussion.)

For Lichtenstein's argument on the way in which Bellmer's dolls worked transgressively against fascism's idealization of the body, also see her "Behind Closed Doors: Hans Bellmer," Artforum 29 (March 1991), 118-22.

I have summarized Lichtenstein's argument at length here because so little scholarly cross-referencing of psychoanalytic theory (especially regarding masochism) and art has been produced. Her argument is solid and well-articulated, and I wish to point out the similarities and differences in our thinking and show my indebtedness to her for our numerous conversations and joint readings on the topic of masochism and sadism over the years. As can be seen in the quotes provided and my emphases within them, Lichtenstein comes very close to discussing the mirror stage of psychical development--the stage in which masochistic tendencies take firm root, the stage which problematizes the subjectification and objectification of the body by suggesting, but complicating, their wholeness.

A discussion of the mirror stage, as I shall be

engaging it in this study, helps to continue that problematization in a useful way, allowing for a thinking of the body in which subjecthood and objecthood are held in a delicate balance, rather than the latter being renounced in favor of the former or vice versa. This discussion is made possible through a combination of Lacan's theories of psychical development and, especially, Anzieu's theories which revitalize in Lacan's the object of the body and function of touch which can slip out from under Lacan's emphasis on the psyche and the meaning of phallic, and even bodily, absence. Anzieu's "common-skin" theories help us get to the value of boundaries, also focused on by Lichtenstein. In turn, one is motivated to question the value of distantiation and how this spatial component is preserved in works of art for purposes of criticality. On this question, Lichtenstein's path and my own merge.

In summary, Lichtenstein's reliance on Freud's theories of sadomasochism (and Jessica Benjamin's in Bonds of Love) was appropriate to the subject matter of Bellmer's doll images, given their artificiality, related inference of distance from the viewer, and complication of empathy. My leaning on theories other than Freud's is appropriate to my study of works which have not relied solely on artifice but balanced out the artifice of photographic documentation with the actual practice of tampering with the body. Theories of balance, over theories reliant on the notion of symbiosis, or struggle, had to be sought for the study of masochistic performance pieces. The difference in approaches is subtle; Lichtenstein's work and my own are close, yet, as I hope to have made clear, different relative to the works being addressed. I thank her for the ways in which our work is creating a cross-weave of thought that will hopefully inspire other art historians to pull threads from our studies into their own tapestried discussions of troubling art.

38. Turning to Lichtenstein helps on this point too. She writes, "Sado-masochism can operate as a defense mechanism for deep psychic pain based on early childhood experiences of loss and abandonment, and often provides a substitute for a psychic breakdown while at the same time granting a person an illusory sense of self. Thus, representing an s/m dynamic can be a form of displacing real experiences of abandonment and loss." ("Hans Bellmer's Dolls," 59). Lichtenstein also discusses, here and in "Behind Closed Doors," the way in which this defense mechanism is operating relative to contemporary (to Bellmer) feelings of loss in Nazi Germany.

39. It is outside the scope of this dissertation to examine the myriad laws that construct the home site. A

few obvious ones, however, would include property laws, welfare laws, and divorce laws.

40. Deleuze, Masochism, 80.

41. Ibid., 79.

42. Ibid., 80.

43. Ibid., 81.

44. Ibid., 88.

45. Ibid., 81.

46. Ibid., 82.

47. Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," 83.

48. Deleuze, Masochism, 81.

49. An entire discourse on the ritual aspects of performance exists, much of which has grown out of the Department of Performance Studies at New York University where, in particular, Richard Schechner's investigations of ties between anthropology and performance have been conducted. Important to his work have been the writings of anthropologist Victor Turner. A more recent contributor to this discourse is Henry M. Sayre, who theorizes that performance art lies "on a continuum" between "ritual" (more akin to lived experience) and "narrative" (and its similarities to documentation). See, respectively: Richard Schechner, Between Theater & Anthropology (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); Victor Turner, The Anthropology of Performance (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986); Sayre, Object of Performance, 17.

50. Deleuze, Masochism, 81.

51. Ibid., 83.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., 42.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., 43.

59. Ibid., 45.

60. Ibid., 44.

61. Alan Watson, The Evolution of Law (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985). See Watson's discussion of what he sees as the five "original" types of contract: 1) "stipulatio," a "unilateral contract" with rhetoric akin to modern wedding vows, in which a "Do you promise...?" and "I promise" volley takes place; 2) "mutuum," concerning loans; 3) "deposit"; 4) "consensual contract," of which there are four sub-types (sale, hire, gratuitous service, pledge), requiring no formal agreement; 5) "societas," having to do with partnerships (4-28).

62. Richard L. Abel, "Torts," in The Politics of Law: A Progressive Critique, ed. David Kairys (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 185.

63. Gilmore, Death, 29.

64. Ibid., 19.

65. Ibid., 97-98.

66. See n. 39, Chapter One.

67. It is important to note that Holmes's lectures, along with the work of other theorists I am about to discuss (i.e., all of that which contributed to a theory of contract), were geared to students within an academic setting and, hence, could be thought of, according to Gilmore, as constituting "an ivory tower abstraction." However, as he goes on to argue, "we must not lose sight of the fact--the crucial fact--that the theory was an instant and spectacular success. In its 'pure' form the theory may never have existed outside the classrooms of the Harvard Law School. But generations of lawyers and judges and law professors grew up believing that the theory was true--and it is our beliefs, however absurd, that condition our actions" (Gilmore, Death, 18).

68. See Gilmore, Death, 12, for a discussion of these history-changing contributions. To get a quick glimpse of Gilmore's critical position regarding the era in contract's history launched by Langdell, as well as a taste of the author's sense of humor (which is what makes

his work so highly digestible for a nonlegal audience), see his opening paragraph in Death of Contract, which in part goes like this: "It was just a hundred years ago that Christopher Columbus Langdell, like his namesake four centuries earlier, set sail over uncharted seas and inadvertently discovered a New World. Western civilization had done very nicely for several millennia without anyone knowing that two undiscovered continents were interposed between Europe and Asia. It may be that we would all be better off if the first Columbus, as the result of a series of absurd miscalculations, had not revealed the truth. In somewhat the same way the common law had done very nicely for several centuries without anyone realizing that there was such a thing as the law of contracts" (5).

69. See n. 40, Chapter One, and text supra.

70. Gilmore, Death, 13, for discussion of Langdell. See also text at n. 40 supra, my Chapter One, for more discussion of the notion of contractual abstraction.

71. See Gilmore's nn. 4 and 5, in Death, for discussion of Williston and Corbin revisions.

72. *Ibid.*, 12.

73. *Ibid.*, 8-9.

74. Watson, Evolution, 119.

75. These problems need to be seen against the backdrop of that which Watson claims to be his mission. For example, as he states in his preface, his study of Roman contract law is not only about expanding knowledge or showing the power of its legacy. Rather, "[t]he most original and admired part of the most innovative legal system [the ancient Roman system] is used here to demonstrate the blindness of the legal elite to other legal concerns" (*Ibid.*, x).

76. *Ibid.*, 119.

77. *Ibid.*, n. 6, 145.

78. Acconci has referred to this transition in an interview. Published references are numerous, but see esp.: Vito Acconci, "Early Work: Movement Over a Page," Avalanche 6 (Fall 1972), 5.

79. *Ibid.*, 145.

80. Peter Gabel and Jay M. Feinman, "Contract Law as

Ideology," in Kairys, The Politics of Law, 175.

81. Ibid., 176.

82. Gilmore, Death, 40.

83. Gabel and Feinman, "Contract Law," 181.

84. Ibid., 176.

85. Some scholars have looked back beyond the turn of the century at prototype performances in the form, say, of spectacles. See, for example, Attanasio di Felice, "Renaissance Performance: Notes on Prototypical Artistic Actions in the Age of the Platonic Princes," in The Art of Performance: A Critical Anthology, ed. Gregory Battcock and Robert Nickas (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1984), 3-23. (I shall address this and other essays on the topic of performance prototypes in the Annotated Bibliography.) There are, indeed "patches" of work produced live, by artists, throughout history; my claim here is that it is only in the twentieth century that one sees a consistent run of performance work over the course of several decades.

86. Gabel and Feinman, "Contract Law," 182.

87. Gilmore, Death, 95.

88. Ibid., 95-96. Gilmore cites Friedman (see my n. 40, Chapter One) as the first to connect legal and economic theories of the nineteenth century (Gilmore, Death, n. 247).

89. Gabel and Feinman, "Contract Law," 177.

90. Ibid., 182-83.

91. Gilmore, Death, 21.

92. Michaels, Gold Standard, 123-24.

93. Gilmore, Death, 42.

94. Gordon D. Schaber and Claude D. Rohwer, Contracts in a Nutshell, 3rd ed. (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Co., 1990), 9.

95. Ibid., 34.

96. Ibid., 70; also quoted from "Restatement, Second."

97. Gilmore, Death, 64.

98. This is not to say that estoppel brings us closer to some notion of "truth." To dispel that myth and further complicate the picture, as law is so wont to do, see the discussion of estoppel in "Restatement, Second," cited by Gilmore, Death, 89: "Estoppel prevents a person from showing the truth contrary to a representation of fact made by him after another has relied on the representation...." Of course, it still remains to be seen who is telling, or what is, the "truth." (This quote was taken, per Gilmore's n. 234, from the tentative draft of the "Restatement, Second.")

99. Ibid., 88.

100. Ibid., 90.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PERFORMANCES

MOUTH PIECES

Vito Acconci, Trademarks, 1970

Sometimes the contortion of which I just spoke was literally enacted in early 1970s masochistic performance. Vito Acconci's treatment of his body in a 1970 piece entitled Trademarks is a good example. The performance consisted of Acconci striking a series of poses in which he twisted and turned around himself for the purpose of reaching and biting as many areas of his body as possible. Biting deeply enough to produce indentations in his flesh, he subsequently covered over these marks with printers' ink and stamped the impressions onto various surfaces.

Trademarks was intended for documentation purposes only. That is, it appeared before an audience solely in its represented form, the most complete example of which is a two-page layout in the Fall 1972 issue of Avalanche magazine.¹ The piece, as it appears here, includes photographs and text that comprise, in one way or another, four references to the mouth (Fig. 5). First, on the left page are eight photographs of Acconci sitting naked, using his mouth to reach parts of his body made available through the contortion of his arms, legs, and neck. These photographs, arranged around the edge of the page, form a frame for the second reference to the mouth--a single,

black print of a bite mark floating on a white background in the center of the page. The print takes on the appearance of a photographic negative, though in reduced scale, for the enlarged photograph of a bite mark in Acconci's flesh--the third reference to the mouth--that takes up two-thirds of the right-hand page. The fourth mouth reference, I should like to argue, is constituted by the text itself. That is, standing in for Acconci's voice, the text represents the words Acconci would have uttered had the vehicle of that utterance not been engaged in another type of linguistic production--leaving signs, signs of the body's attack on itself, signs left deep in the surface of the skin.

As is the case with most masochistic pieces, Trademarks' meaning is based on the function of distance. Most noticeably, Acconci positioned his body at a distance from the viewer--not only by exclusively representing rather than presenting the piece, but by situating himself within the frame so that the photograph confers to the viewer only a perplexing medium shot of his contorted body. The only way, in fact, to understand that Acconci is marking his flesh with his mouth is to draw connections across the distance between one mouth reference and another.

In carrying out this tracking activity, not only is one's sense of vision provoked, but one's sense of touch.

Thus, apropos of Anzieu's thinking on the initial provocation of this sense in the oral phase, one is able to accompany Acconci on his journey to reminiscences of this phase of psychical development--situated, as it is, "inside" the domestic space, at a distance in one's memory.

On the most material level, the viewer's sense of touch is provoked by having to come to an understanding of Trademarks by perusing its printed documentation. Acconci's decision to introduce this performance to the public in a magazine format, which is geared explicitly for tactile interaction on the part of the viewer, emphasizes this point. But on a more poignant and telling level, the viewer's sense of touch is solicited by the printed bite mark, which not only looks like a photographic negative but also bears resemblance to a fingerprint. The suggestion here is that as viewers peruse the performance, their tactile interaction with the pages upon which it is represented will invoke the sensation that their own "fingerprinting" of Acconci's print identifies the latter as their own. The print, then, functions as a sort of "legal proof" of the viewer's involvement in Acconci's acts.

In this context, the title of the piece takes on a very particular meaning: the marks Acconci makes on his body involve a "trade" of responsibility for his actions, an

indictment of the viewer as complicit in, if not as responsible for, his masochism as he is.² Even if it requires too much of a leap of faith to imagine the print as the viewer's own, the only other interpretation--that Acconci is the sole agent of his actions--is still compromised. For the print appears to point in the direction of the reader, thereby enabling Acconci, on a deictic level, to either: one, ultimately shift at least a share of the responsibility for the body and its actions to the viewer;³ two, point to the vast gap between himself and his audience wherein critique of his masochistic practice and all that for which it stands might be addressed and critiqued.

The photograph of the bite located on the right side of the layout, for which the "fingerprint" stands as counterpoint and appears much like a photographic negative, further solicits an experience of touch on the part of the viewer. The excessively detailed, textured close-up creates an impulse within the viewer to physically trace the route of the individual tooth mark indentations, as if touching them will draw the viewer closer to the body, will help heal the wound, perhaps even make it disappear under the pencil-eraserlike movement of one's fingertip.

But this effort to bring oneself closer to the wounded body--via representation and the impulse to touch

evoked by that representation--only reminds the viewer of the impossibility of such closeness as it is mediated by the dividing line of the plane of the page on which the picture of the body is printed and by the line of the wound itself, traced into the surface of a skin that is not the viewer's own. And so it is that one is brought face to face with the conflicting experiences of closeness and distance, attachment and separation, subjecthood and objecthood--all of which are inherent in the reminiscences of the oral phase with which Acconci is dealing.

More specifically, however, one is confronted with ambivalence over these experiences--a painful ambivalence that typifies the latter stages of oral development, where detachment from "common-skin" fantasies, as Anzieu outlined them, becomes complete. It is the painfulness of this ambivalence, it would appear, that Acconci feels driven to literalize so that the value of the ambivalence might be revealed. Toward this end, Acconci moves his viewers in the direction of the mirror stage, where this ambivalence reaches its zenith in the also-painful splitting of the image of the self.

All in all, Trademarks functions truly as a trademark of masochism. More precisely, the piece marks the tips of the roots of masochism as they can be traced to latter oral-stage moments (roots that become firmly embedded in the phenomenon of the splitting of the self experienced in

the early mirror stage). More precisely still, the piece serves as a trademark of "reflexive masochism," in which Freud's definition of that term is both illustrated and polemicized.

In his 1915 essay "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," Freud claims that masochism is nothing other than "sadism turned round upon the subject's own ego."⁴ Acconci plays with this wording. He begins the textual portion of Trademarks by announcing his act as one of "[t]urning in on myself, turning on myself."⁵ He then gives that act a visual component in the form of the eight contortionist poses.

Freud went on in his essay to set up a tripartite schema in which consideration of the body as always and forever an object as well as a subject (that which the ambivalence encountered in reminiscences of the latter oral stage and early mirror stage makes possible, as the review of Anzieu's and Lacan's theories showed) is glossed over. That is, according to Freud's schema, there is a distinct moment between: (1) sadism, in which an individual "exercise[s] violence or power upon some other person as object;" and (3) what could be called masochism proper (that which involves the active physical participation of another individual) in which "an extraneous person is once more sought as object...to take over the role of subject." The in-between moment (2) is

occupied by the type of masochist who, like the performance artists under consideration, functions reflexively, as a solo operator, not seeking outright physical participation on the part of any other individual. Freud describes this interstitial scenario as one in which "the object is given up and replaced by the subject's self" [my emphasis].⁶

What Acconci polemicizes, then, is the way that Freud's schema sets up a situation in which the objecthood, specifically, of the reflexive masochist's body could be so easily excluded from consideration. Acconci carries out this critique not only by simply making the material body excruciatingly prominent in the performance, but by vivifying Freud's gesture of exclusion through the sign of the bite--a metaphor of the circular ability of the body to acknowledge its material presence through its own consumption, and vice versa.⁷

Perhaps more important, however, Acconci insists on the simultaneous recognition of his presence as a speaking subject (an actively speaking subject, to further polemicize Freud's suggestion that the reflexive masochist by definition only uses a "reflexive, middle" voice and not an "active" or "passive" one).⁸ This is illustrated by the inclusion of text in the piece and the insistence that the viewer constantly interrelate the two forms of representation--photos and text, body and voice. As the

viewer does just that, he or she is confronted with the delicate balancing act that the early moments of the mirror stage introduce--a balancing of notions of one's own body (or any other's) functioning as both subject and object, an entity that sees and hears, an entity that is seen and is heard, simultaneously.

Attention to the initial moments of such an indeterminate, purposefully ambiguous thinking of the body--a consciousness bestowed upon the individual during the early mirror stage--would not be possible in this work if it were not for Acconci's emphasis on latter oral-stage ambivalence over closeness and distance, separation and attachment. It is this ambivalence that serves as a formal precursor of indeterminate thinking, as a methodological model for breaking up perceptions of the body and piecing them back together in a nonmatchable but viable alliance.

Acconci's Trademarks text and many other of his texts from the period indicate the spatial dimensions of this ambivalence, especially the distantiation from the paradigmatically maternal object experienced in latter oral-stage moments. An example of one of these other texts is a limited-edition book, entitled pulse (for my mother) (pour sa mère), which Acconci published in 1973. Although the first words I am about to quote refer to photographs of Acconci's mother which accompany the book's

text, the quote can also be seen, I believe, due to its expression of ambivalence toward the maternal figure, as addressing the documentation of Trademarks as well:

....You couldn't understand why I took these
 photographs
 You'd tremble if you saw this, you'd stay alive to
 think about dying
 I'm fading away from you, I'll bring you back
 You'd say this will bring bad luck, but I won't believe
 you
 I'll keep you alive, you won't die, I'll wish harder
 When I turn away from you, I'll be sure to come
 back....
 I've got to come closer to you than ever before
 You're always ahead of me
 I'll stay on you, keep up with you
 I'm slipping past you, it's only human to drift away
 You'll stay alive to see that I'm watching you, talking
 to you
 I'll push my luck, push past superstition
 No one can pull me away, I'll start again, toward
 you.⁹

The same spatialization of ambivalence expressed here can be seen at the end of the Trademarks text, where Acconci elaborates on the notion of distantiation. But here he attempts to resolve the ambivalence by listing his reasons for carrying out the represented actions--reasons that suggest the necessity of concluding the process of separation and making the transition to the process of mirroring:

Reasons to move: move into myself--
 move around myself--move in order
 to close a system.

Reasons to move: show myself to
 myself--show myself through myself--
 show myself outside

Make my own outside--send my inside
 outside (I can slip outside, then, because
 I am still moving inside).

Thus, Acconci culminates Trademarks by directing attention to the mirror, where it is possible to "show oneself to oneself," as well as to show oneself to others located spatially "outside" that self.

Acconci's performance and texts show that the mirror-stage scenario involves a spatial distantiation not only from the maternal object, but from the entire Anzieuian "mothering environment" that shares her caretaking responsibility. The most important thing this distantiation process has to offer, as Acconci indicates in the last stanza of the Trademarks text, is precisely that which the mirror stage provides by virtue of introducing the individual to the world of language--the opportunity to take command of that environment. And this includes, by way of extrapolation, command of the environment in all its permutations--which is to say, all institutions that come to substitute for it. Acconci's final words, then, graphed onto my own argument, say it all: masochism is about "making one's own outside."

Indeed, Acconci's "trademark" of masochism helps him make connections to the institutions of art and the economy: he makes metaphoric references to commercial design's practice of identifying ("marking") a product for purposes of exchange ("trade"). Taking command of his

"own outside" meant trying to counter this process at the same time as engaging in it. He bites into his own flesh in an attempt, as he says in another portion of his text, to "stake a claim on what I have."

Although Acconci does not deliver his viewers fully into the negotiatory stages of contract corresponding to the mirror stage of psychical development but, instead, subtly points in that direction, he makes the contractual stage of consideration crystal clear. Just as he shows the body to be at stake in latter oral-stage moments of reflexive masochism and in early moments of the mirror stage of psychical processes sited in the institution of the home, so does he show the body to be at stake in the institutions of the economy and art. That is, he leads his viewers toward an understanding of the body as both an object and subject or, more specifically, as an object that is subject to being possessed--by others, or by one's own self.

In no institutional setting was this understanding more urgent at the time Acconci produced Trademarks than the institution of politics. In closing, I suggest that for Acconci, politically speaking, the investigation of the body was, as he says in yet another portion of his text, "an alibi: I was so involved in myself that I couldn't be somewhere else." This "somewhere else," I wish to argue, referred to the battlefield of Vietnam as well as the

battlefield of protest against that war and other atrocities in contemporary Western culture. Acconci, like the other masochistic performance artists, was not engaging in the war effort, nor addressing issues of protest directly in his work, nor devoting himself in a major way to demonstrations in the street.¹⁰ Rather, by the early 1970s when the utopian vision attached to acts of protest was slipping into oblivion, Acconci sank deeply into his psyche by biting deeply into his flesh, thereby producing a visual metaphor for the urgent need to probe into institutional problems that created such battlefields, to penetrate deep beneath the surface rationale that kept them in place.

Chris Burden, Five-Day Locker Piece, 1971

Bringing together an act of contortion with the temporary disappearance of the body, Chris Burden perplexed the academic institution of art at the University of California, Irvine, in 1971 when he presented a Masters of Fine Arts thesis project which consisted of locking himself in a 2'x 2'x 3' art-supply locker for five days.

Burden had prepared for the piece by fasting. During the performance he existed on water available through a tube extending from a five-gallon water bottle in the locker above, and relieved himself through a tube leading

into an empty five-gallon bottle located in the locker below. Thus, the mouth became the pivotal object around which the performance was organized, the chief symbol upon which observers might resolve their concern over Burden's survival. It is the pivotal nature of the mouth in this performance that has prompted me to include it in this section of my study. However, as in most of the performances to be addressed, Burden makes use of other mnemonic devices too, which in turn trigger other psychical reminiscences. I shall turn to the most prominent of these other devices in a moment.

Five-Day Locker Piece attracted more people, including individuals in positions of power to stop the piece, than one would initially think an action such as this--not officially publicized, with no body to be seen--might. One critic wrote that "students from all over the campus came to the locker to see what was going on. Professors from the art department held classes in front of the locker, including Burden in discussions."¹¹ Burden reported that "pretty soon, the campus police were involved and they didn't know what to do. And then the Dean of Fine Arts found out about it and he was real panicky."¹² But the performance was not stopped. As Burden added in another report, the Dean "didn't want to be the bad guy who ended the whole thing, so he finally decided to let me go on, since I was near the end."¹³

Burden seduced legal decision-makers from the institutions of law and art education into an interaction with his piece by producing an image of being curled up, in a prone position like that of an individual in bed, for five days. Perhaps their seduction is not surprising if one figures, as I would like to suggest, that the bed--produced as an image and/or used as an actual material prop in a performance--serves as a mnemonic device linking an artist's and his or her viewers' unconscious to the experience of Oedipalization, specifically the introduction of the individual into the world of language as synonomous with the world of law. What I should like to argue, then, is that Oedipal reminiscences collude with those of the oral stage in this performance, leading to some interesting conclusions regarding these "worlds." I shall deal with the Oedipal reminiscences first.

One generally thinks of the Oedipal scenario taking place in the bedroom or, at least, one thinks of the scenario as raising issues involving the bed as a site of ultimately enacted, sexualized desire. It is in the repression of that ultimate outcome, however, that language comes to function as a substitute, marking the absence not only of sexualized and/or desexualized desire, but the correspondent absence of the maternal object to which that desire was hitherto attached.

This repression is mandated, and the substitute

provided, by the law of the father, thus inaugurating a system of repression that gets played out in all hierarchical institutions with which the developing child will eventually deal. Such institutions range from the most obvious--the world of law per se, represented in Burden's piece as the campus police--to the less obvious rule-making and boundary-setting institution of art education.

If my argument regarding the function of the bed as a symbol of the Oedipal stage of psychical development has valence, then it is not surprising that Five-Day Locker Piece is so much about forms of language--chiefly, the spoken word--that occupied the space and criss-crossed the boundary between Burden's body and the audience. Burden's absent body was converted into pure subject in the dialogues among visitors to the piece.

But the amount of language expended in these discussions--that is, the use of the mouth on the part of those trying to construct a subjecthood for the artist by way of explaining his motivation, creating a meaning for the piece, and contributing to his survival (which was also dependent, of course, on the focal point of his own mouth)--was in obverse proportion to the absence of his body as an object. That is to say, by virtue of its disappearance, or absence, from the audience's field of vision, the body became all the more present as an

object--an object that took form in the audience's imagination with the help of language's contribution to a subject-building discourse.

Significantly, the way Burden emphasized the simultaneous subject-object identification of the body was through strategies of distantiation carried out by the establishment of both temporal and spatial boundaries. Regarding the former, Burden claimed that "the important part to remember was that I had set it up. I could foresee the end too (it was not an open-ended situation which is partially what creates fear). It was not something which was thrust upon me, but rather something I imposed upon myself like a task."¹⁴ Burden constructed delineations in time, then, within which his body would maintain its contorted position and formulate itself into an image in viewers' minds as they stared at the locker door.

This door, along with those of the lockers immediately surrounding it, constituted the signature image of Five-Day Locker Piece (Fig. 6). That is, the configuration of doors makes up the only documentation photograph chosen by Burden to represent the performance. The choice is apropos, inasmuch as it is the locker door that makes up the spatial boundary mutually distancing the artist and viewer. This distance, enhanced by the temporal distance delineated by Burden, and doubled for us by the imposition

of history, emphasizes the difference between the individuals on either side of the door.

A material parallel of the door is formed by the two-dimensional plane of the photographic print, also contributing to the difference-producing function of distantiation. What is most important to note here, however, is that this difference is intermittently dissolved through a use of language that builds understanding of the piece on the basis of a tenuous balancing of the differences and similarities between the artist and his viewers.

In terms of temporal and spatial boundary-setting, then, Burden attempted to be in complete control, as the quote above indicated, thus challenging the job of boundary-setting over which institutions prefer to maintain command. Burden's attempts were successful on the most literal level. He not only was permitted to finish his piece, but succeeded in triggering discussion over it, constituting complicity in its continuation on the part of all viewers.

On a metaphoric level, however, one wonders how successful Five-Day Locker Piece was. Although viewers either explicitly or implicitly voiced a contract-type "acceptance" of the piece, and an identification with the artist was implicitly possible, does not the involvement of the most literal of law-oriented institutions deflect

attention from the subtler issues concerning institutional structures--for instance, issues of contract having to do with the mechanics of "acceptance" and its mirror-stage dynamics?

Said another way, when the question regarding a performance comes down to the black-or-white issue of whether or not it should, legally, be accepted and allowed to continue, are not the more relevant questions overshadowed, questions like: What is it about the piece that is upsetting enough to raise the question of its continuation in the first place? Is it not upsetting because looking at a piece of performance work, especially a masochistic one, is like looking into a mirror? And if the latter is true, does the work not remind the institution called upon to do its boundary-setting job that it, like all institutions, is driven by the psychodynamics of masochism inherent in hierarchical structures? And does not all of the foregoing add up to the fact that everybody is always-already complicit in a masochistic act?

Perhaps it is not surprising that Five-Day Locker Piece did not foster an "acceptance" of such questions as key to the piece but, rather, ultimately focused on the yes-no discussion of its (continued) acceptance per se. For the piece did not call attention to the mirror stage--the psychological correspondent to the dynamics of

contractual, negotiatory acceptance--in any formal or deeply metaphoric way. Despite its implied connections to an indeterminate thinking of the body generally associated with a rekindling of early mirror-stage moments, the piece most explicitly emphasized the oral phase (through the invisible, though prominent, placement of the artist's mouth and the activation of the mouth as a vocalizing mouthpiece), the Oedipal stage (through the bedlike function of the middle locker) and, to put another spin on my interpretation, the intrauterine stage.

The latter functions as the developmentally most different, yet theoretically most like, the Oedipal phase in psychical development. That is, as individuals become Oedipalized, they are as bound by the law of the father as they were by the body of the mother in the earliest stages of their existence. And so it is that Burden not only produces an image of being in bed, but takes up a position that replicates the intrauterine image of the body in the womb, connected to sustenance through an umbilical-cordlike tube.

Among the five artists under discussion, Burden is the only artist who reached this far back in psychical development for theoretical purposes of reminiscence, and for the practical purpose of obtaining new material with which to work. Burden reached back to what could be considered the earliest moments of the oral phase, when

the entire body of the child functions as a mouth. It would not be the last performance in which he would explore this phenomenon.

Chris Burden, Velvet Water, 1974

Velvet Water, conducted at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1974, is also connected to the intrauterine stage, as at least one critic has pointed out. Before beginning this piece, Burden announced the following: "Today I am going to breathe water, which is the opposite of drowning, because when you breathe water, you believe water to be a richer, thicker oxygen capable of sustaining life." His attempts, which were carried out offstage, just beyond a partition separating him from the audience, and viewed by the audience on video monitors (Fig. 7), ended after five minutes when he "collapsed, choking."¹⁵

Critic Dorothy Seiberling points out that while Burden claimed that breathing water is the opposite of drowning, "psychologists might find it difficult to accept his distinction. On an unconscious level, children tend to identify drowning with prenatal life in the womb, where the enveloping liquid does indeed 'sustain life.'"¹⁶ She goes on to provide a helpful quote from Karl Menninger, who claims that "the significance of drowning fantasies was one of the earliest of psychoanalytic

discoveries....When subjected to psychoanalytic investigation, such fantasies seem to relate quite definitely to the wish to return to the undisturbed bliss of intrauterine existence...."17

While these connections are of interest to the discussion of how psychical development provides artistic material, it must be pointed out that neither Five-Day Locker Piece nor, especially, Velvet Water project any degree of desire for "bliss." More relevant, perhaps, is what Menninger's quote strongly implies is a desire for an obliteration of disturbance. Extending his implication, one can more readily see in Burden's last two pieces a desire for protection from disturbances in one's environment, for a reliance on the function of metaphorically "common-skin" experiences that might provide a sensation of being buffered from the world.

Thus, it is perhaps more accurate to see Velvet Water as a piece in which the mouth is the chief material tool, thereby identifying the work as a replay of the oral stage, complete with a display of the terms of the masochistic contract--that is, as an extension of an offer to enter into contractual processes. For example, issues of the subjecthood and objecthood of the body are brought to people's attention through the tension they endure watching the representation of Burden's body on the video monitor and listening not only to the aural representation

of the action but its oral presentation only a few feet away, just beyond the thin partition that separated the artist from the audience.

One might argue that inasmuch as video was used--a medium which provides an instantaneous reflection of an action--that the piece refers, on a formal level, to the dynamics of the mirror stage as well,¹⁸ and, on a metaphoric level, to the contractual correspondent of the mirror stage--the negotiation between issues concerning the subjecthood and objecthood of the body. But even if a reading of this piece is stretched in this way, Velvet Water qualifies as the sole example, out of all Burden's performance oeuvre, in which he makes use of, or refers to, the mirror. He is the only artist, out of the five under discussion, to call so little upon the dynamics of this stage of psychical development for which the material entity of the mirror functions as an emblem.

Burden is also the only one of the five, as I shall show, to have focused so heavily on making pieces that involve references to the bed and, thus, the Oedipal stage. I shall discuss the implications of these observations in the last section of this chapter. First, I want to spend time with a selection of performances from the period that did concentrate, in one way or another, on an exploration of the mirror stage.

MIRROR PIECES

Gina Pane, Discours mou et mat, 1975

While Pane addressed all stages of psychical development in her 1975 performance Discours mou et mat, held at the alternative space "de Appel" in Amsterdam, the mirror stage became the central focus as the artist carried out a provocative, troubling interaction with the material object of the mirror itself. The performance began with Pane appearing before the audience dressed in white, wearing dark opaque glasses, "playing" cymbals that had been completely covered with cotton so that the sound was, indeed, "mou" and "mat"--soft and dullened. A more visual/physical correspondent to these concepts of sound was provided in a taped, spoken text accompanying the pieces in which Pane described various parts of her mother's body. Her breasts, for example, were described as "mous" and "mats"--soft, in the sense of flabby and flattened.

Pane then turned to two mirrors lying on the floor. On one was drawn a mouth, on the other the word "alienation." Using the sides of her bare fists, Pane proceeded to smash the first mirror, after which she lay down briefly in an awkward position on her side. She then rose to break the second mirror in a similar manner.

During the next segment, she played with a tennis ball hanging from the ceiling, hitting at it with a racket and

letting it bounce against her forehead. Her breathing, amplified by a microphone, was labored. On the verge of hyperventilation, she crawled back to the first mirror and using the palms of her hands, fists, and arms pummeled it once again, violently this time, smashing it to smithereens.

After reclining for a few moments, breathing like an overly exercised animal, she sat up, faced the audience, and with calculated, controlled slowness, lifted her left hand to her cheek, lightly resting her fingertips below her eye and nose. Almost frozen in this position, the palm of her hand partially covering her mouth, she almost mechanically raised her right hand, in which she held a razor blade. Slowly, with great precision and in a surprisingly gentle manner, she made a small incision in her lower lip.

Her body trembling now, she lay down again for a few moments, then moved to the side of the performance area where a naked woman had been lying on a black cloth, her back to the action, throughout the piece. Pane stretched out next to the woman and remained there until the end of the performance.

The audio component of the performance, as mentioned, consisted of text. Read in French, Pane's nostalgic references to her mother, as well as to a grandmother, were interwoven with music that concluded with a classical

violin piece. Additionally, slides had been shown almost continuously on the back wall throughout the performance, sometimes foreshadowing actions to come, as was the case when a slide of a tennis player and a close-up of Pane's face were shown just prior to the segments in which she played with the tennis ball and focused on her face in the razor-cutting action. The last slide shown in the performance was of two elderly women (suggestive of the two women remarked on in the audio text) walking in a city, wearing dark glasses.

The performance ended when Pane, who had been lying with her arm over her naked partner's body, suddenly shifted onto her back, picked up a pair of binoculars, held them to her own darkened glasses and "looked" up at the ceiling in a gesture of impeded visual transcendence.

Now that I have provided a full description of Discours mou et mat, based on a screening of an undistributed documentation videotape located in the archives of de Appel,¹⁹ I would like to concede that I produced this description, self-consciously, as an exercise in futility--a futility that could only be argued after the exercise had been conducted. The reasons for my "textual performance" are threefold and chart the polemic of performance documentation I have been trying to convey throughout the dissertation.

First, very little has been written about Discours mou

et mat--a fact which, second, indicates the limited amount of visual documentation of performance works that has been published overall. These two reasons (the lack of written material and the lack of visual material) might, it would seem, argue in favor of the fullest possible experience of filmed or videotaped documentation of performance works. After all, one might say, when available, the viewing of an enacted performance in "real" time could only add other dimensions to one's interpretation of a piece.

However (and now we reach the third reason for my performance-of-description--the reason which exposes the futility of my exercise), that which is added for the observer of such documentation generally functions, I would argue, merely as appendage. The straightforward description that results from the observation of video or film utilized for basic, "let-the-camera-run" documentation purposes tends to be simplistic, trivializing, and ultimately vestigial to performance art.

That which can be observed with far richer results, I would argue, due to the automatic stimulus toward inference that issues from the simultaneous stimulus of touch, is the documentation photograph. To my knowledge, there is just one published photograph identified as being from Discours mou et mat, appearing in an article on performance art in the Netherlands (Fig. 8).²⁰ In this photograph, a sharply angled, partial view of Pane's face

is seen in the lower left corner--a reflection of herself as she peers into the shattered glass situated below her. In her bruised right hand she holds the microphone through which the audience would have heard her strained heavy breathing. The fingertips of her other hand protrude into the upper left corner of the picture and can be seen reflected in the mirror along with the open palm of the hand, which seems poised, ready to strike the mirror again.

Shot from above and over Pane's shoulder, the photograph makes it clear that her glasses were completely opaque and thus gets the key point of the piece across--that the "discours" surrounding it needs to be as much about touch as vision, as much about the body as its image. Indeed, Pane's choice of title preliminarily hinted at this necessity--the adjectives themselves, as she "performed" them, have double meanings which are both tactile and visual.

Such discourse is, according to the argument I have been developing, the key point of all performance artworks, and is stimulated by the visual and tactile interaction between the viewer and a performer and/or the performance's photographic documentation. The sole photograph of Discours mou et mat is exemplary of this sort of interaction. The appearance of Pane's body (head and hands) in the left corners of the print provides not

only an imagined reflection of the viewer's presence before the piece (thus returning the viewer to the mirror stage, providing the viewer with conventionally formal, visual access to the image through an imagined matchup of one's own head with the artist's), but offers the viewer a "touchstone" in the image of the fingertips, which seem to hold down, as much as perpetuate, the violence indexed by the breaks in the mirror. The appearance of the fingertips invites the viewer to literally touch the image and, by balancing out this tactile experience with the visual, to determine a meaning for the piece.

The viewer finds, however, that possible meanings are necessarily conflictual, seemingly contradictory, apiece with what Barthes called the "polysemy" of an image and its association with "dysfunction," as discussed in the last chapter. The commonly recognized "dysfunction" presented and represented in Discours mou et mat is that of masochism. But the performance goes far beyond this one-line conclusion with which one might be tempted to dismiss the piece altogether.

Pane's wearing of darkened glasses has particular significance here: the performance demonstrates that there is more to masochism than meets the eye. The tactile as well as visual interactions offered by the photograph mnemonically take the viewer back to the stage of psychical development where this dysfunction begins,

where the necessary tension among the many identifications of the self is first encountered. This experience, however, as I have been suggesting, possesses positive (as well as dysfunctional) potential if its inherent tension is acknowledged rather than repressed.

The experience to which I am referring--the experience before the mirror--is reflexive, partial, and fragmentary. It is important to recognize that "reflexive" should not be confused with "reflective" here, nor should it be in any discussion of the mirror stage. Pane helps the viewer understand this caveat by blackening her glasses, thus obliterating her own visual power to meditate upon her "reflected" identity as a subject. Instead, she places emphasis on the power of touch both to inform herself of her body's objecthood reflexively (that is, she touches and is touched by her own body), and to announce to herself and others its vulnerability.

It is these aspects of identity--the objecthood of the body and the vulnerability of that objecthood--that are often eclipsed by the privileging of issues of subjecthood. Pane, it would appear, wishes to explore these aspects in order to reverse any eclipsing tendencies--not only for herself, but for the observer for whom she tactically keeps both domains (vision and touch) open.

This openness was as much the case in any sense of an

"original" viewing of the piece as it is in the type of viewing I (and you, the reader) are doing here, in the present. Apropos of the former, there is a striking moment in the video camera's sweep of the audience--a cameraperson's strategy, by the way, that can salvage video documentation from functioning as thin description--at the very end of the piece. A woman sitting on the floor in the first row appears paralyzed, stuck in place. Her hand is pressed over her mouth. With this simple gesture, the woman brings together the two parts of her own body that Pane had violated, as if to remind herself, through touch, of the power of the body to contain and protect itself through the capacity of the skin as Anzieu theorized it--a reminder Pane had already prompted, through irony, by presenting and representing the power of the body to carry out the opposite of containment and protection.

Pane more recently referred, though obliquely, to the privileging of subjecthood as a process of "mental prosthetics." The reference is found, interestingly enough, in her definition of the body as

the irreducible core of the human being, its most fragile part. This is how it has always been, under all social systems, at any given moment of history. And the wound is the memory of the body; it memorizes its fragility, its pain, thus its "real" existence. It is a defense against the object and against the mental prosthesis.²¹

Pane's reference to "mental prosthetics" bears a

resemblance to Lacan's "orthopaedics"--that function of the latter moments of the mirror stage from which the individual is deposited into the Oedipalized, symbolic realm of language.

It is from here that the individual proceeds into a state of "wholeness"--a wholeness not unlike that of the oral stage in its level of commitment to illusion and myth. As my discussion of Discours mou et mat has shown, instead of placing her focus on these latter moments of the mirror stage, Pane holds her viewers' attention on its pre-prosthetic, pre-orthopedic, and, one might say, pre-paternalistic capacity.

This location is where the pain of separation from the wholeness of the previous oral stage is most vividly experienced in the form of fragmented versions of the self unattached from the mother but, as yet, not bound by the "law of the father." This is the zone in which the individual is most alone with the self, most alienated and indeed "torn" from others in the mothering environment. But it is also the zone in which one is located between hierarchical orders ruled by figures of power identified as maternal or paternal, respectively.

Pane was cited, in the article from which the photograph under discussion was taken, as claiming that she had carried out this piece in an effort to "get her father-mother relationship under control."²² Thus, I

would argue, Pane shields her own vision from the memory of early mirror-stage recollections, wishing instead to literalize its chief component of pain and the experience of being torn and alienated. She takes this action in order to make tangible as well as visible (to viewers who include herself after the "original" fact of the performance) that which lies in the in-between zone she investigates--that is, a set of identificatory opposites, the negotiation of which might yield the "control" she sought.

The "opposites" include those I have been speaking about throughout this study: selfhood and otherness, objecthood and subjecthood, vulnerability and invulnerability, similarity and difference. At first, it appears that Pane focuses on her body in a manner that cuts away all forms of identification outside the first entity in each of these dyads, i.e.: the self (she plays out a complete withdrawal into the self by wearing dark glasses and pitting the powers of her body against themselves); objecthood (she converts her body into an object to be broken and carved); vulnerability (she demonstrates, by violating, the vulnerability of the protective, containing functions of skin); and sameness (she claims universal understanding of the body as fragile).

But in carrying out all these actions in a

provocatively masochistic manner, she only brings that which she appears to sideline--otherness, subjecthood, invulnerability, and difference--into the light, to reside in tense tandem with their opposites. That is, the image Pane produces in the mirror is, indeed, other, transmogrified into a conglomerate of puzzle parts. Her identity as a subject is brought out in the form of text heard during the piece and/or her own words as they appear in published interviews or articles seeking to describe or explain her work. Invulnerability becomes an issue of desire, as exemplified in the audience member's symbolic attempt to recoup the protective, containing power of the flesh. And difference is maximized in the presence of the naked female who takes up a position of passivity throughout the piece--a position markedly in opposition to that of Pane's consistent activity.

Pane seems to be showing us that despite the prosthetic attempts of the intellect and the orthopedic attempts of the fully symbolic realm of language, the terms listed above are those with which an individual has to work in processes of identification. They are the terms of--in a word--contract. Pane leaves her audience in the position of pondering their own silent acceptance of these terms. Might the unspoken, subtle form of negotiation inherent in this acceptance be tapped for its constructive potential? As Pane attempts to gaze through her binoculars, to

transcend the "here-and-now" of her piece, her vision is impeded--a scenario that seems to suggest answers to this question.

In this simple summary action, Pane retroactively shows how she has, throughout the performance, been condescending to both a "here-and-now" and a "there-then" (to borrow colloquialisms from, again, Barthes' "Rhetoric of the Image" essay which I shall address more closely in the next chapter²³) simultaneously. In keeping the focus on what is before her, so to speak, in the present as well as past tenses, Pane is able to make reference to what she appropriately called in her above quote the "social system," in which the body is irrevocably located and has its undeniably "'real' existence."

As the prefixes of my underscored terms suggest, Pane prefers to work with ("con-") one's reactions to what exists in the conscious present, and to burrow down into ("de-") the terrain of the unconscious past, as opposed to rising above ("trans-") conflicts that become evident in the scrutiny of either of these terrains of experience. It is her willingness to undertake this task, and the results it can yield in terms of a fuller understanding of the social system within which the individual must work toward change, that comprise the constructive potential of Pane's performance.

The domestic site--the "social system" most directly

addressed by Pane in this piece which had to do, by her own admission, with her original, home-based relationship--is precisely where contract-type negotiations begin. And so it is that site to which one must return, or into which one must descend, to find the psychologized structural elements worthy of critique in all other systems modeled after it.

Unlike Lacan, who felt that "the real" could never be experienced but only desired, Pane seems to be showing her viewers that "the real" is composed of the body's dualistic meanings, available to both vision and touch, and the relationship between them. Never attempting to transcend these dualities, Pane reveals what I see as an underlying, motivating sensibility in all her own, as well as others', masochistic work: the recognition that there is no other viable alternative to alienation than a delicate balancing act of identificatory opposites which may appear to be mutually exclusive but, as Pane's replay of the early moments of the mirror stage shows, is not.

Alienation, then, is transformed in Pane's (and others') work into a condition to be tapped for the distance it can provide in the service of critique of the social systems, starting with the domestic site, that give it birth.

Vito Acconci, See Through, 1969

Vito Acconci's See Through, in which he performed a boxing match with his mirror image, punching at the glass until it broke, was performed specifically for film in the fall of 1969.²⁴ It is the earliest of the pieces I have grouped together as indicators, by virtue of their masochism, of a trend in performance art of the early 1970s.

This trend, I am arguing, responded to the tenuous position of the body in society--specifically, the conflict between "what was being said" by societal institutions and "what was being meant" about those bodies which had been masochistically contracted into militarized states of extreme physical and psychical stress. Acconci established the importance of the consideration of the mirror stage and its psychodynamics amidst this conflict by utilizing the mirror directly in his performance, and by doing so in a way that reminds us once again that one of the foundational institutions into which the body is contracted is economic in nature.

As was always the case in documentation of Acconci's performance work, a self-written text accompanied the photographic representation of the piece. Published in the same issue of Avalanche as Trademarks, the text ended with a forthright declaration of the economy of the body--that is, its identity as an entity to be possessed. This

identity is more easily understood when one performs or, to use what I see as an equivalent term offered by Acconci himself below, when one "moves," thus simulating the flow of exchange upon which economic processes depend. He writes, simply:

Reasons to move: move toward what
 belongs to me--move to have what
 belongs to me.²⁵

Acconci's nearly exact (but significantly not) mirror-image repetition of words following the colon in this, the fifth and last paragraph of the documentation text, indicates the difficulty in grasping one's sense of self as an object to be claimed as one's own and, moreover, suggests the presence of an external power that exercises that claim with greater ease and force.

In reading Acconci's declaration, one can imagine a two-step process in which painful recognition that the body is a possessible entity ("what belongs to [him]") precedes the process of actually taking possession of it ("to have what belongs to [him]"). This process recalls sociologist Bryan S. Turner's fundamental observation, upon which much of my own theorization is based, that we both are and have bodies. "Our embodiment is a necessary requirement of our social identification," he argues, "so that it would be ludicrous to say 'I have arrived and I have brought my body with me.'"²⁶ Indeed, Acconci charts a similar, although reversed, course in which the body is

"arrived at" or apprehended after its objecthood and consequent possessibility are understood.

Whichever direction is taken in this process, a distance is navigated--a distance inevitably inculcated with a sense of alienation. Turner addresses this distance as well. In a discussion of the body's conflictual status as "a natural environment," which is "socially constituted," he asserts that

[d]espite the sovereignty we exercise over our bodies, we often experience embodiment as alienation as when we have cancer or gout. Our bodies are an environment which can become anarchic, regardless of our subjective experience of our government of the body. The importance of embodiment for our sense of the self is threatened by disease but also by social stigmatization....The body is a material organism, but also a metaphor; it is the trunk apart from head and limbs, but also the person (as in "anybody" and "somebody")....The body is at once the most solid, the most elusive, illusory, concrete, metaphorical, ever present and ever distant thing--a site, an instrument, an environment, a singularity and a multiplicity.²⁷

Looking further into Acconci's text, one sees how he, like all the artists under consideration, guides us toward the ultimate understanding that a sustained, indeterminate thinking of the body--the numerous, dualistic, seemingly mutually exclusive aspects of which Turner just outlined--is the only alternative to a sustained sense of alienation. Such thinking, which absorbs the problematic notion of alienation into its own cure, may indeed be the only constructive response to the distance that must be traveled between identificatory opposites.

As I (and the artists under discussion) have been showing, this type of delicately balanced thinking of the body, this mode of internalized communication--which is externalized in institutional settings involving contractual negotiation--is initiated by the cooperative functions of vision and touch in the mirror stage of psychical development. Acconci speaks of these functions in his text and ties them directly to the material object of the mirror in his performance, thereby suggesting this psychical stage's potential, for better or for worse, to stimulate reflexive masochistic practice.

Printed alongside the documentation photograph (Fig. 9) of Acconci holding his fist at the surface of a mirror, gazing at the connection between his hand and its reflected image--an emblematic picture in and of itself of the cooperative functions of vision and touch--the first three paragraphs of his text read as follows:

Facing a mirror: punching at the mirror:
punching at my image in the mirror until
the mirror breaks and my image
disappears.

Get to me--get at me--get into me--get
through me--get through to me.

Talking to myself--talking myself into
myself--talking myself out of myself--
taking myself--taking to myself--taking
up myself--taking myself on--taking
myself through--taking myself off--
touching myself--touching on myself
(touching lightly and passing myself by).

Apropos of my argument, Acconci's poetic descriptions

of "facing" and "touching" are mediated by an internalized use of language ("talking to myself") for purposes of negotiating the space between ("into," "out of") different aspects of identity and their respective psychical states. Those differences are outlined in the fourth paragraph:

This is a way to get rid of myself. No, this is a way to get rid of an image and so be able to stand on my own. No, this is a way to get rid of a necessary support. No, this is a way to get rid of a nagging shadow. No, this is a way to get out of a closed circle and so have room to move. No, this is a way to get rid of deep space, so that I have to bang my head against the wall.

The contrasts between: the subjective and objective experiences of the presentation ("standing on one's own") and representation ("image") of the body; the attachment to an oral-stage prop ("necessary support") and separation from it ("having room to move") are punctuated by Acconci's negative declamations. "No" becomes Acconci's mode of negotiating among these seeming opposites--a negotiation that recognizes the impossibility of resolving any of them and thus, by default, the necessity of sustaining all of them.

The last set of differences, along with the final stanza cited at the beginning of our examination of See Through, solidly situate Acconci, as well as the reader/viewer, amid the institutional issues that underlie this piece. What Acconci is referring to in both these

instances is the contrast between nature and culture--that is, the conflict between operating in "deep space," as he says above, and confronting the cultural and societal structures for which the "wall" stands as an all-inclusive institutional metaphor. The classic example of masochism Acconci articulates (banging one's head against the wall) operates as an extreme example of the contractual and psychical negotiation (personified in Gilmore's "meeting of the minds") that must take place between the opposites listed for substantive changes in institutionalized structures responsible for our identities to be effected.

Ulay/Abramovic, Balance Proof, 1977

Determination to maintain a tension between seemingly oppositional aspects of identification is key in Ulay/Abramovic's aptly named performance Balance Proof, in which, also aptly, a mirror played a prominent role. The piece was presented at the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire in Geneva in 1977 and consisted of Ulay and Abramovic, each naked, taking up positions on opposite sides of a seven-foot, double-sided mirror and holding those positions as long as they wanted to, or could. The piece lasted thirty minutes, with Abramovic retiring first. After Ulay backed away from the glass, it fell to the floor without breaking.

Documentation of the performance--text and a series of five photographs--appeared in the artists' book documenting their collaborations.²⁸ The text bespeaks the artists' dealings with contractlike processes--an involvement already suggested in the title of the work in their choice of the word "proof," with its reference point in the world of law. The artists begin the text by setting out the terms of the performance (the equivalent of a contractual "offer") and then proceed to articulate the limits of their negotiation (their "acceptance"). The core part of the text reads simply as follows:

In a given space

We are standing holding a double-sided mirror between our bodies.

Marina Abramovic

I am leaving

Ulay

I am leaving²⁹

The photographs "fill in the blanks" of the contractual process outlined--that is, they picture the content of the negotiation which took place as the artists approached mutually accepted limits. Furthermore, the photographs illustrate that the "consideration" here, as usual in contract, constitutes the human body.

Looking at the first photograph (Fig. 10a), we see the artists' bodies occupying either side of a mirror. The

photographic image of this prop bifurcates the area within the frame, thus formally duplicating the function of the mirror in psychical development--precisely the function that Ulay and Abramovic are experiencing in the performance. This function has to do with what I earlier referred to as the "bifurcating slice...initiated at the sliver-thin surface of silvered glass"--or that which is referred to in Lacanian theory as the mirror-stage confrontation with the "split self."

However, unlike other masochistic performances, the artists' visual and tactile exploration of this function is not literalized. Rather than produce a physical mark upon their bodies, thus reproducing the psychical mark of the mirror stage, they have chosen to focus on its content, introduced in the early moments of that stage--i.e., the multiple aspects of personal identity. They illustrate the tension between these aspects through an enactment of balance.

That is, the artists place their bodies in positions that demonstrate to themselves individually, to each other, and to their observers that the body is, simultaneously: object of, and subject to, the powers of representation; a pliable, fleshy entity susceptible to the pressure of this cold instrument of representation as it flattens areas of the body (in this case, significantly, those denoting one's biological-sexual

identity); an entity that can see itself and be seen as flattened by its representation; an entity that is the same as and different from that which lies on the other side of the glass.

Inasmuch as the artists choose not to literalize the fragmentation experienced in the display of these identifications, one might consider Balance Proof as an alternative to the other, more intense practices of masochism through which identificatory processes have been explored. Such a conclusion is both accurate and inaccurate. On the one hand, Ulay/Abramovic fulfill all the Reikian/Deleuzian criteria for the enactment of masochistic impulses in this performance. They keep themselves in a state of suspense by not moving for thirty minutes. They engage in the provocation of each other (to stand as long as the other) and of the audience (to either help sustain the suspense along with them, or stop the piece). They stimulate fantasy in themselves, each other, and the audience by sheer virtue of the fact that the concentration in which the artists are involved not only produces, but can only be maintained by, the seemingly tangential thoughts and mental images that circle around their points of focus.

They engage and solicit others' engagement in the processes of contract in the Deleuzian sense of the term: its conditions of "free acceptance of the parties" are

fulfilled (nobody is coerced into either performing or viewing the piece); the "duration" of the agreement is "limited" to the time parameters within which Ulay or Abramovic feel the desire to stand in place; and the "inalienable rights" of the parties are preserved (desire, for example, is preserved inasmuch as it is the condition upon which the conclusion of the piece is based).³⁰ And lastly, returning to the Reikian model, the performance of these cumulative aspects of masochism constitutes their demonstration.

On the other hand, the performance does attempt an alternative to a deeply incisive masochism in the sense of operating as a fuller deconstruction of psychical development than actual, self-targeting forms of physical abuse can ever accomplish. Toward this end, the performance extracts, as all the performances under discussion have, certain components of psychical development for purposes of investigation--an investigation which disallows a reading of that development as definitively linear and, thus, unable to be usefully replayed.

But the piece takes the investigation a step further by resisting a duplication (duplication always being the risk run by deconstructive strategies) of the sort of masochism perpetuated in its most oppressive permutation by the later, Oedipalized stages of psychical development--

precisely the permutations that most profoundly shape everyday life. Thus, the possibility of critique is at least theoretically preserved.

Indeed, the foregoing is not to say that the critique fostered by Ulay/Abramovic is as full as one might ideally want from a deconstructive artwork. The most readily recognizable institutions that shape everyday life are not directly addressed here--say, the world of media (for which the world of art and its productions can stand as anything from a nearly equivalent, to a highly precious, metaphor) or the economy (which is addressed more directly in other performances) or politics. But, the foundational institution--hierarchical, patriarchal--after which these others are patterned is focused on in a more specific way in Balance Proof than in almost any other performance I shall discuss.

The domestic institution, with its modern, Western emphasis on heterosexual coupling, is the paradigmatic framework within which Ulay/Abramovic as a heterosexual couple are operating. But at the same time as they make their biological-sexual difference the focal point of this performance, they also tamper with it. They stage a scenario in which the mirror draws the line between their identities as "male" and "female." In so doing, they are able to tap the legacy of the mirror stage for its perpetuation of slippage between gender identifications

and implicate the de-hierarchizing and de-paternalizing alternatives inherent in such slippage.

Looking at the first photograph again, for example, one sees not only Abramovic's very obviously female body but an ambiguous image of Ulay's. The line formed by the edge of the mirror converts Ulay's body into a large fragment with frontal "attachments"--mirrored reflections of Abramovic's breasts and belly. This conglomerate image reorients the viewer's perceptions of Ulay's gender as male. Moreover, the lack of a visual match between the reflection of Abramovic's face and Ulay's nearly faceless head indicates that the ever-denaturalizing processes of representation are at work here, and that any conclusions regarding Ulay's gender are, after all, as constructed as any other aspects of identity.³¹

In the next two photographs in the series Ulay stands alone at the mirror (Figs. 10b-c). All sexual signifiers removed now, his gender identification continues to slip into the domain of ambiguity. Gender issues are important to Ulay/Abramovic, as indicated in the following quote:

I think people are always thinking of us as a symbol for man and woman: and of course in a biological way we are....Of course there is a difference between Marina and me, but equally there is a difference between one man and another. So we negate the general idea of man and woman. I think the two of us are more liberated than feminist or non-feminist artists, or any single artist. Because a single artist, a single person can't get the results we do. We have two impulses of two people, and there is one result.³²

While Ulay's quote reveals the tendency of these artists toward a totalizing conception of gender that would erase a more complicated notion of sexual difference, their documentation appears to resist such a reading and, along with it, any close association with the dogma of universalism.

The second-to-the-last photograph pictures the mirror tipping toward the floor as Ulay retracts his left foot from the frame (Fig. 10d). From the point of view of the observer of the documentation, the mirror is strongly enough angled to appear, virtually, as a delicate, yet solid, floating line. This observation announces the most useful and poignant conclusions yielded by the performance. For this floating edge proves that the ground upon which aspects of identification are based is movable; thus, the indeterminate possibilities of those aspects are expanded.

Moreover, the photograph suggests that the bifurcating slice produced at the mirror need not be incisive in the physical sense. The fact that the mirror remains unbroken after its fall at the end of Balance Proof (Fig. 10e) is poetically fitting. Perhaps the artists are announcing that the early moments of the mirror stage may be explored without its inherently shattering potential, without soliciting a literally fragmenting response which, so far in the performances discussed, has tended, in one way or

another, to get carved out of the surface of the body.

BED PIECES

While Ulay claims that only two artists working together, like Abramovic and himself, can produce provocative "results" regarding gender issues, several examples of Acconci's solo work would challenge this claim. I shall look at one such piece as an introduction to the final grouping of performances to be discussed in this chapter--those focusing on the use of the bed itself and/or bed-resonant imagery that functions as a material reminder of the Oedipal stage of psychical development and its relation to the contractual process of "consideration."

Vito Acconci, Reception Room, 1973

Acconci's Reception Room was performed at the Modern Art Agency in Naples in 1973. After walking through a corridor in which an audiotope played lines like "I should have been able to greet you," audience members arrived in a room equipped with a few chairs and a spotlit table. What they viewed for the duration of the performance was a bedlike tableau: Acconci lying on the table, beneath a white sheet, rolling periodically from his back to his stomach, exposing parts of his naked body. "The whole revelation might be a ploy," reads the text appearing

alongside documentation photographs published later in a group exhibition catalog (Fig. 11), "and all I'm doing is making myself passive, I'm taking the easy way out, I'm avoiding the real exposure of face-to-face contact with viewers in the gallery."³³

An audiotope was played inside the "reception room" as well. One of the lines heard was: "What I'm really ashamed of is the size of my prick, but I won't show them that."³⁴ Upon first hearing or reading the latter, one might construe Acconci's focus on male anatomy as a matter of pure biology and/or a vulgarization of sexual identity. But when the performance is considered as a whole (i.e., when one's experience of the performance is reconstructed in sequence), the artist's tactic of consciously delaying and then confounding the audience's confrontation with his body, as indicated by the first two quotes above, paves the way for Acconci's declaration concerning his anatomy to be taken on a more metaphoric level.

That is, first, Acconci introduces the viewer to the piece through the Oedipalized substitution of language (audio text) for the presence of his body. He thereby prepares the observer to consider the body as it ultimately appears in the reception room per se in a more conceptual context--the context of the gendered legacy of psychical development. Once inside the room, then, the viewer cannot see the "prick that is not shown" as

anything other than the phallus: the invisible signifying device around which the Oedipal scenario takes place and the legacy of the paternalistic, symbolic realm is constructed; that which is not seen in this performance but that around which one's interpretation of the performance is constructed.

Acconci's deliberately ambiguous reference to the size of the phallus both refers to and attempts to destabilize the notions that the legacy of the symbolic has a spatial orientation, that it is hierarchized. However, despite his ironic effort to destabilize this orientation in which hierarchized power is apportioned according to one's "maleness" (and ultimately, of course, according to race and class as well), the phallus is unmistakably the "high point" or "centerpiece" of the performance.

In one of the photographs (top, Fig. 11), for example, viewers can be seen with their chairs pulled up close to the bed/table, and one might assume that the only question stirred by their curious gaze is not whether one will discover whether Acconci is male or female, but whether or not the symbolic degree of his "maleness" will ever be fully exposed. This central focus on the phallus gets turned into something else, however, if one reads (and reads between) Acconci's lines. As will be seen, Acconci reveals his interest, already obliquely hinted at in the title of the piece, in performance art's potential for

referring to institutional constructs and offering possibility of critiquing them.

Potential for critique constitutes the foundation, I have been claiming, of all performance art concentrating on the body and its entanglement in processes of both presentation and representation. But performance which is masochistic in nature--and thus tied to the institutionalized world of law and contract--taps this potential with greatest persistence and force. The masochistic emphasis in Reception Room is on the suspense factor--as it will be, to one degree or another, in all the "bed pieces" under discussion.

Here, Acconci's body is seen "suspended" atop a bedlike surface. It is through this formal arrangement that Acconci directs viewers' attention to the title's institutional referent. With the glaring spotlight hung over the partially sheet-covered, suspended body, the arrangement takes on a clinical look. Acconci's body appears as if on an operating table, or a hospital bed in a recovery room. Viewers might indeed imagine themselves situated voyeuristically in a reception room, peering through transparent walls, awaiting the outcome of a medical procedure. The distance, in other words, between the two imagined spaces is diminished, and the viewer's association of the piece to the notion of "institution"--here, the institution of medicine--is strengthened.

But, clearly, this is not the only institutional association Acconci makes available to the viewer. Through his use of language in the audiotapes to describe the inner workings of his psyche, the distance between the institutionality of the clinical world and the institutionality of the domestic world, in which language is first bestowed upon the individual through the construction of the psyche, is also shortened. Language, then, is shown to be a clinical system in and of itself--both the object and agent of critique.

As object of critique, language is privileged in this performance--indeed, is utilized to the point of almost overriding the importance of the mass of flesh which is simply rolling around on the table, not doing anything very interesting at all. On the other hand, as agent of critique, language is shown to be the only source of full communication, the only substitute for what Acconci calls "face-to-face contact."

Such contact, to be sure, would have encouraged a replay of the mirror stage. But instead of encouraging such a replay here, Acconci gathers his viewers around the central images of the Oedipal scenario--the body (where questions of gender are solidified) and the bed (where questions of sexuality are ultimately resolved). By focusing viewers' attention in this manner, Acconci prompts an assessment of Reception Room in

psycholegalistic terms.

Any negotiation between performer and viewer, or among viewers, or within the viewer--a negotiation induced by a replay of the mirror stage--is, I would argue, compromised. The chairs, situated very near the table, indicate the viewers' closeness--a claustrophobic closeness with no space left for physical or verbal action, a condition induced by Acconci's self-admission of opting for Oedipalization's "easy way out" over the "face-to-face contact" more reminiscent of the mirror stage.

Nonetheless, Acconci's diminishing of the distance required for negotiation does not entirely eradicate its theoretical potential. Acconci's bed piece, like others', declares the necessity of recognizing the complex primacy of the body--whether it is seen or unseen--in systems of representation. Acconci wraps language around his body as he does his white sheet, generally hiding meaning, sometimes (almost) exposing it. In doing so, he shows that what is really at stake, what constitutes greatest "consideration," as in the proceedings of contract, is the body.

As Acconci turns his body, over and over, language--and the meanings it imparts regarding gender and, moreover, gendered hierarchy--is, in the end, shown to be a shifting, changeable, negotiable, crucial agent of critique. And thus, Acconci underscores another key theme

of performance art, especially that which is masochistic: wherever the body is involved in both presentational and representational forms, the malleability of the symbolic system that does the representing, having been introduced in the early mirror stage, will always be preserved--if only in theory, if only in terms of its negotiable potential.

Ulay/Abramovic, Communist Body/Capitalist Body, 1979

The conclusion I have just drawn from Reception Room raises a few questions that need to be asked regarding the "bed pieces," their link to the Oedipal scenario, and the way they clarify that which is at stake in that scenario's institution-, law-, and contract-bound outcome. Formulating these questions also allows me to review some of the major concepts covered so far in this study.

One, given the importance of the object of clarification--the body--can I claim, ethically, that engaging only the theoretical possibility of negotiation over its complex identities is adequate? Two, might it be that this possibility could actually lead to another--to the practice of an indeterminate thinking of the body and its identificatory components?

I have been arguing that such practice can indeed be activated in all performance art inasmuch as it triggers viewers' unconscious memories of early moments of the

mirror stage--a trigger felt more directly in works involving or referring to the specific material object of the mirror. In general, in both these situations--performance and the mirror-stage reminiscences it motivates--presentation and representation operate simultaneously, producing a split in identification that can be mined for its potential to function as a line of balance between recognized differences, rather than as a wedge that forces those differences into separate, and ultimately fixed, dualities.

I have also been claiming that, for better or for worse, such practice is activated with particular criticality in works employing elements of masochism. This type of work not only brings early mirror-stage moments (where masochism is significantly advanced in its development) into sharper focus, but automatically involves the individual in the institutionalized workings of contract--a process which is structurally inherent in masochism, necessarily involves criticism (contracts cannot be negotiated without discussion of their pros and cons), and is part and parcel of everyday social relations.

Can works such as the "bed pieces," then, which are much more mildly masochistic in their lack of direct attack on one's own body than other works I have discussed, go beyond being indirect reminders of the kind

of interaction that takes place during early moments in front of the mirror, to encouraging an actual reengagement of those moments' most constructive potential? That is, can the "bed pieces" foster a balancing of issues of identification, as do pieces more directly linked to the mirror? These issues, one must admit, are more easily handled if adopted without debate as the rigidly fixed, dualistic opposites traditionally handed down by the Oedipal scenario of which these bed pieces are a vivid reminder. How, then, do these pieces effectively upset that tradition? Or do they?

Ulay/Abramovic's Communist Body/Capitalist Body, which features the couple asleep in bed, makes connections with the Oedipal scenario and the oppositional dualities that are its legacy. An analysis of the piece will deliver some answers to the foregoing questions regarding the conflict between theory and practice.

Eleven audience members for Communist Body/Capitalist Body were invited to arrive at a designated address in Amsterdam at 11:45 P.M. the night before Ulay/Abramovic's joint birthdays in 1979.³⁵ The arrival of the viewers and their activities of the next few hours were recorded on film (stills from which appear with other documentation in the artists' book Relation Work and Detour).³⁶ Upon entering the loftlike space in which the performance was held, viewers encountered a nondescript, seemingly

unimportant desk, two small tables, and the artists lying in a bed situated on the floor against a far wall. A white sheet and bright red blanket were pulled up over their bodies and faces.

Displayed upon the tables, which were more or less in the middle of the installation, serving both formally and literally as centerpieces, were particular foods, drinks, and utensils. Each selection of items signified one of the artist's homelands. For example, one table featured Yugoslavian champagne, the other German beer, thus directing viewers' attention to Abramovic's and Ulay's respective countries of origin. Augmenting these symbolic elements was a subtle arrangement on a nearby desk. There, delicately joined together, were their identification papers--Ulay's birth certificate and Abramovic's 1962 student identification (which also included information regarding her birth).

Ulay/Abramovic never rose from the bed. This mildly masochistic gesture--enduring a position of "suspended" activity in an environment ostensibly created for their own benefit, pleasure, and active involvement--perpetuated, predictably, a sense of suspense on the part of viewers as well, who were left to question what would happen next. After about thirty minutes, having decided the artists might maintain their position indefinitely, one of the audience members opened the champagne.

Socializing ensued--a celebrating of the birthdays of those who were virtually absent. Most visitors left within a few hours. One friend stayed and slept on the floor at the foot of the bed.

Reviewing the published documentation of the performance (including, in order, the artists' textual "contract," photostats of the identification papers, photographic selections from the film, and transcribed reactions of the eleven guests recorded a few weeks after the performance), it becomes evident that it is the artists' papers that hold the key to Communist Body/Capitalist Body (Fig. 12).

The papers provide more than just "proof" of the artists' places and dates of birth (indeed, as the papers show, both were born on November 30: Ulay in Solingen, in what was then West Germany, in 1943; Abramovic in Belgrade in 1946). They also provide more than just a semiotic tie to the table arrangements. This assemblage of small documents, which could have been easily missed or misinterpreted by the viewers due to its marginal placement in the space, constitutes, in and of itself, a rich, multileveled emblem of sustained identificatory tension.

The tension obtains between the institutionalized dualities recorded in the papers--gender, nationality, politics, and economics. On an obvious and personal

level, the differences are between: Ulay's gender as male and Abramovic's as female; Ulay's birthright as German, Abramovic's as Yugoslavian; the respective political and economic structures of their birthrights, which in 1979 were known as capitalist and Communist. These differences are mitigated, however, by the known facts of the artists' similarities: Ulay/Abramovic were a couple, as symbolized by the joining of the certificates; Ulay was known for keeping his national origins "vague," as one guest indicated in the documentation; Abramovic, who had permanently left Yugoslavia, was similarly detached from her national origins; both had taken this detachment further by committing themselves, for the purposes of their work, to "no fixed living-place," as they said in their oft-published artists' statement; and they maintained a quasi-functioning homebase for business purposes in the Netherlands, a country not caught up in Cold War dynamics of separation between the political and economic precepts of capitalism and communism.³⁷

However, the artists presented and represented these differences and similarities in a way that went beyond the personal, allowing for questioning to be stirred around the issues of gender, nationality, politics, and economics in general. As one would expect at this point in my study, the questioning was motivated by the artists' manipulation of formal and conceptual distance.

In one interview printed in the documentation, a viewer described the arrangement of the performance space as including a "vast open area." The conceptual counterpart of the formal distantiation evoked by that arrangement involved him, he wrote, in "wondering all the time about all sorts of things, asking questions, without having to give a definite answer, which kept you mentally on the move....those questions had to do with all sorts of things. Also with the people who were there. Who is he? And who is she?, things like that."³⁸ The viewer's questions then became less personal and more broadly contextualized by, for example, art historical debate:

Why this thing in this way? Because then the whole of life becomes art-like--life is made into art then. Or is it the other way round? Maybe even the question is irrelevant....there always is a problem there....this kind of relation between art and life, because I never got the impression that you [Ulay/Abramovic] were really aesthetes in the sense of stylising your whole life. So there was no...no chance that it'd turn out to be that way.³⁹

These responses indicate the viewer's frustration in attempting to resolve the notion of difference and/or similarity between, according to the cited line of questioning, art and life. His attempt concludes, however, as I shall show, with an acknowledgment of the possibility of a new relation between elements of institutionalized structures--a possibility which, as I have been arguing throughout this study, can lead to a usefully tenuous balance of these elements' constantly

shifting roles and meanings.

My terminology here regarding the flexibility of roles and meanings corresponds to that of the quoted viewer himself who, earlier in his text, remarked on how "things kept on shifting" in the performance, that the "protagonists weren't there, but the thing shifted to the people themselves," and that the audience members' "communication" constituted "a crazy shifting." It was the formal distance at which Ulay/Abramovic positioned themselves, I would argue (so vast a distance that they could be considered "not there"), that allowed for the spatial shifts this viewer observed and the conceptual possibilities that ultimately matched them. Apropos of the latter, the interviewee declared that "you could make up an infinite number of interpretations, but I think you can't make up one, because the perspective is always changing."⁴⁰

The wording of the viewer's final conclusion refers to institutional parameters, or what he calls "conventions," but leaves their specific referents vague. The performance was, he declared, "something which happened in the stream of time, to quote Bergson...sometimes it crystallizes and then is made conscious by way of dropping all existing conventions and putting no new ones in their place, but only offering possibilities to establish new conventions."⁴¹ To another viewer of Communist

Body/Capitalist Body, however, referents were painfully clear.

"The birth-certificates really stole my heart...." one woman said, "mine is exactly like Uwe's, with a sort of swastika still on it and words like 'Gottglaubig,' which you don't use anymore."⁴² For this individual, the importance of the performance centered on what I earlier dubbed its emblem. For her, the assemblage of identification papers functioned as a very specific sort of mirror, a mirror of horror, reflecting memories of institutionalized frameworks of nationalist politics and politicized religion--historically specific, institutionalized frameworks within which one's similarity or difference during the Nazi era was truly a matter of life or death.

Once again, it seemed to be the distance the woman felt from the artists ("I didn't dare...to come near the bed") that allowed her to feel a closeness to them. The formal distance from Ulay's body, in particular, which resonated conceptually in the difference between the histories represented by the artist's birth certificate (Hitler's Germany) and the viewer's position (in the present moment) permitted her, it would seem, to claim certain similarities. These distances and differences, then, were experienced in delicate balance with the sense of closeness and the recognition of similarities to the

artists.

Ulay/Abramovic had been examining the potential of formalistic, conceptual, and psychical suspense--for themselves and their viewers--in masochistic performances they had produced individually before meeting on their birthdays in 1975, and together since.⁴³ Their emphasis on the suspense component in Communist Body/Capitalist Body, as in many other works, contributed to the reminiscence of the early mirror stage. The force with which an audience member at this performance was made immediately aware of him- or her- "self" and, also, aware of the social requirement to extend the self to "other" individuals in the space, comprised a Lacanian splitting of the self, or a "self-shattering" (as Leo Bersani has called it)⁴⁴ that is part of the masochistic experience beginning in the home, at the mirror.

But the artists' reliance on the imagery of the bed in Communist Body/Capitalist Body allowed them to solidify the viewer's reminiscence of the institution of the home already stimulated by mirror-stage experiences and to proceed onward, toward suggesting more specific institution-oriented issues for discussion. If the provision of information is specific enough, then--as it was here with the help of the rest of the materials of the performance--one might conclude that artists' highlighting of the bed can be an effective mnemonic device linking

viewers' attention to the Oedipal scenario and the rigid dualities established there.

But most important in Communist Body/Capitalist Body is the critical inquiry it fostered--the "acceptance" of these dualities in the contractual sense. It is this contractual notion of "acceptance," invoking processes of discussion and negotiation, that facilitates an indeterminate, purposefully ambiguous thinking of the body. And it is such thinking, in turn, that not only allows for acknowledgment of the institutionalized parameters (emblemized here in Ulay/Abramovic's papers) into which the body is powerlessly born, but a mitigation of those ostensibly fixed parameters via contractual processes that empower the individual to work critically, within them, to change them.

Gina Pane, Self-Portrait, 1973

Gina Pane deals explosively with all three phases of psychical development (oral, mirror, Oedipal) and exposes all three phases of the contractual process (offer, acceptance, consideration) in a 1973 work entitled Self-Portrait, in which she claims to have laid out her "complete vocabulary" of performance.⁴⁵ The piece was composed of three parts, or "actions," as Pane referred to her performance work in general. The parts were subtitled "The Conditioning," "Contraction," and "Rejection."

Interestingly, their order bears a reverse correspondence to the psycholegalistic schema I have been charting.

That is, the first section, "The Conditioning," features Pane on a "bed," thus introducing audience members to the piece through its association with the contractual principles of Oedipalization--namely, according to my argument, the corporealized legalistic principle of "consideration." The bed--an open iron frame fitted with crossbars to support the artist's body--was situated above fifteen tall, lit candles at the Stadler Gallery in Paris (Fig. 13a). Pane lay on her back, clothed, above the flames for approximately thirty minutes. Her only action during this time was the wringing of her hands.

In a published interview, she stated the following regarding "The Conditioning:"

Needless to say, the pain started right away and was very difficult to dominate. The public understood my suffering from the way I wrang [*sic*] my hands much more than from my face, so it was actually a very primitive mode of communication. But I feel I succeeded in making the public understand right off that my body is my artistic material. When, half an hour later, I was able to get up, I caressed my body very gently. There was no violence; my body hurt but I could still feel my touch.⁴⁶

Indeed, Pane clarifies straightaway that it is her body that is at stake in her work. Similarly, it is the body that is the key object of consideration in the institutional framework of law, which issues from the

Oedipal scenario and bestows upon the individual the rules and regulations of language as a "mode of communication," to use Pane's exact terminology.

The fact that Pane implies an interchangeability between her body and her chosen language system points to the performance's mission to explore indeterminate meanings, especially as they concern identities of the body and the self--that which make up, apropos of the title of the piece, "self-portraiture." Toward this end, throughout the piece (and all of her performances, for that matter), Pane continually establishes contrasts between biological and cultural statuses of the body.

In the above section, for example, contrasts are displayed in the juxtaposition of the body as a linguistic (generally construed as "cultural") and primitive (often construed as "natural") entity. However, Pane defeats any social attempts to promote erroneous connotations of these terms. Her significations of the natural and the cultural are never fixed; she slides them back and forth over each other, forcing the observer to handle them similarly, refusing the possibility that they be pinned down. This "slide" was put into motion in the support material for the performance, which was on view before, during, and after the piece.

Documentation for Self-Portrait indicates that five small installations lined the walls of the gallery in

which the performance was presented. One consisted of photographs of forests and circus arenas. In another area stood an arrangement of artist's paint brushes and jar covers. Another featured photographs and the story of a provincial village in France which, in protest to real estate developers, had isolated itself into a self-sufficient economic structure with the ecological goal of refusing health hazards that could accompany development, such as the use of defoliants.

Also shown was Pane's piece called Posthumous Work (1972), consisting of six tombstonelike constructions, each fabricated to accommodate a photograph of the artist to be taken at ten-year intervals. Her purpose here was to document for the potential collector of the piece the "deterioration of [her] body."⁴⁷ The plan was that after Pane's death, her posthumous portrait would be placed in the last gravestone; if the collector of the piece were to die first, then his or her portrait would be placed there instead.⁴⁸ And, finally, there was an installation of tampons allegedly used by Pane during the week preceding the performance.

By intercutting representations of nature (forests, the processes of aging and menstruating) with references to culture ("low" cultural artifice in the example of the circus, "high" cultural artifice in the display of conventional art materials, and specifically Western

cultural artifice in the construction of a contrived framework around the natural process of death), Pane refuses that the body be seen solely as biological or solely as a "victim" of representation. Instead, the body is shown to be caught up in systems of representation that can be reshaped toward the user's own ends.

Thus, Pane reveals her other mission in this piece, and all her performances: to demonstrate not only that it is the body which is at stake in social relations, but how the body might become a more effective tool of change. She shows how one might take command, as the French villagers did, of that which is ideologized as natural (like the "inevitable" progress of real-estate development) in order to preserve that which is worthy of survival in as natural a state as possible (like the body and the earth).⁴⁹

In the second action, "Contraction," Pane stood facing a wall onto which slides of women painting their nails were being projected. With her back to the audience and her hands covered with a white handkerchief, she made tiny incisions in the skin around her own fingernails, as well as in her lip, with a razor blade (Fig. 13b). A microphone, positioned at mouth level, amplified her only words: "They won't see anything." Pane referred to this section as "a total refusal to communicate."⁵⁰

"Contraction" continues Pane's illustration of

biocultural dualities (the "natural" color of blood is shown to be ironically duplicated by the "artificial" color of nail polish). Again, however, her illustration never allows the dualities to stand in simple, fixed opposition to one another. The two remarks just quoted emphasize her trademark ironicization of dualities. Her denial of the audience members' ability to see what she was doing as she faced the wall, for example, was made ironic by her simultaneous presentation of slides, which were clearly included to entice their gaze, their desire to see all, including that which she was hiding. Similarly, the denial of her own ability to communicate was ironicized by the prearrangement she had with the cameraperson to turn the camera on female audience members who would then be forced not only to observe the images of feminized aesthetics and wonder at Pane's concealed action, but to view their own reactions.

Thus, Pane took part in a very sophisticated--not at all "primitive"--mode of communication, transferring the work of communication to the audience members, pushing them to negotiate the meaning of the piece by integrating into it their multiple responses to that which was being presented and represented. Note that all of this internalized negotiation was accomplished as audience members gazed into the mirror image of themselves in the video monitors, thereby providing a reminiscence of the

mirror stage and advancing the question Pane is posing in "Contraction"--a question for women in particular.⁵¹

The question had to do precisely with processes of "acceptance." That is, through a powerful attack on her own body, Pane highlighted the vulnerability that can be entailed in accepting, or conforming to, the conditions of masquerade--a vulnerability that is first encountered in one's split identificatory status discovered at the mirror. This vulnerability, as discussed earlier, is both conveyed and counterbalanced by the reflexivity of touch working together with vision--i.e., by the once-experienced and now-imagined look and feel of one's representation in the mirror as one touches its hard, cold, impenetrable surface at the same time as being able to touch one's pliable, warm, penetrable flesh. Pane's masochism, then, can be seen as a caveat to women--expressed in one of the most extreme manners imaginable--to not automatically accept predetermined cultural or biological identities, but to take command over them, and to start this process by recognizing one's identity as simultaneously vulnerable and impenetrable.

In "Rejection," the third action, the artist knelt before the audience. After taking a few swallows of milk from a litre bottle, she repeatedly took milk into her mouth, gargled it, and spit it out into a bowl in front of her (Fig. 13c). She carried out this action with

increasing ferocity, until the cut in her lip reopened. As her blood started to mix with the milk, the performance ended. Reflecting back on the performance, Pane clarified the symbolism in "Rejection." It was, she claims, "related to childhood in general and thus the family....It means that in my artistic work I reject the memory relationship of my childhood and the past. I want to assume my adult responsibilities and be responsible for the liberty of my actions. Thus blood becomes an element that replaces milk."⁵²

Pane's rejection of the "memory relationship" constitutes the concluding irony of the performance, inasmuch as it is here, in this last section, that the terms of the contractual offer--terms which, as I have been arguing, originate in the oral stage--are actually demonstrated. Despite the self-alienation from this stage of psychical development that Pane maneuvers--in the form of symbolically alienating herself from any attachment to the mother as a source of nurturance and support--an illustration of that to which she, or anyone, is forever attached becomes all the more clear.

That is, the ironic reminiscence of that which she wishes to forget may indeed shove the symbolic mother into the background, but simultaneously pulls into the foreground the concept of what Anzieu called the "mothering environment"--or, the domestic paradigm of all

sociocultural institutions within which all individuals must operate daily. And it is these institutions--especially their tendency to put the body at stake in their daily operations--that Pane, through her masochism and the contractual process it entails, wishes to critique. Among the institutions targeted in this piece were those having to do with the real-estate industry and women's fashion.

The last section of the performance brings the viewer back around to its beginning, encouraging an overarching conclusion to be drawn from Self-Portrait that has to do, very specifically, with the body and the development of the psyche. Recalling Pane's remarks after she had endured the pain of "The Conditioning," in regard to the preservation of the reflexive sensation of touch, I would argue that Pane is suggesting that at least this one potentially interactive phenomenon, first experienced in the oral stage, can and needs to be preserved and nurtured throughout one's entire lifetime development. Perhaps it is this phenomenon of touch--balanced with vision at the mirror, but subsequently suppressed by the privileging of the gaze within a hierarchizing system of representation in the Oedipal scenario--that Pane is advocating as an alternative to, or at least a constructive mediation of, the dominating pressure that system exerts.

Indeed, as Pane also said in her comments on the first

section, "the pain... was very difficult to dominate" [my emphasis]. The painfully oppressive level of institutional domination in the early 1970s (witnessed in the vicissitudes of the Vietnam War or the post-May 1968 political changes in Pane's homebase of France⁵³) is betrayed in Self-Portrait by the extent to which Pane felt required to go in establishing her body as a masochistic limit-text. Her orchestrated attempt to dominate self-imposed pain symbolized for her observers the pain of their own social domination, but more important, I believe, suggested methods for stopping short of the extremes to which she chose to expose herself.

These methods require the maintenance of a constructive tension between two tasks: not "losing touch," if you will, with one's own body or self; and not disengaging from the problem-ridden social institutions for which the "mothering environment" stands as metaphor. Interestingly, Pane found these methods to be most effectively articulated by starting off her performance with a symbolic representation of the psychical scenario in which the structure of those institutions first becomes rigidified. Thus, her iron "bed" became much more than the torture instrument it initially resembled.

Chris Burden, Deadman, 1972

Burden is the only artist who, in making use of bed

imagery, ended up in a direct confrontation with the official institution of law for which the correspondent Oedipal scenario serves as unofficial referent. In Deadman, presented in 1972 under the auspices of the Mizuno Gallery in Los Angeles, Burden lay on the ground next to a car parked on La Cienega Boulevard, in front of the gallery (Fig. 14). While the appearance of his body--lying on a city street, within inches of traffic, entirely covered with a tarpaulin--unquestionably conjured up an image of death, as put forth in the title of the piece, the fact that audience members knew the inert body to be that of the living artist also connected the scenario to an image of sleep, to bed imagery and, more firmly, to corresponding psycholegalistic issues.

Within minutes of being led by Riko Mizuno from the gallery to the bulging tarpaulin marked by two red flares, the audience witnessed the arrival of the police who had been notified by a passerby that an accident had occurred. The LAPD had also summoned paramedics and other rescue units to the site, but upon learning there was no emergency (when asked by a policeman if he were all right and what he was doing, Burden responded that he was doing a "piece"), they canceled the emergency calls. They then arrested Burden for what critic Peter Plagens termed "a 1968 (year of the riots) law for knowledgeable causing-to-be-reported of a false emergency (e.g., a bomb threat)."54

After Burden was booked, released on bail, and summoned for three days of court proceedings, his case was dismissed by the judge after the jury was "hung" at a vote of nine to three in favor of prosecution.⁵⁵

For all the "silent acceptance" of the piece demonstrated by the viewers who stood without speaking when asked by the arriving police what was going on,⁵⁶ and for all the verbalized acceptance of Burden that ensued on the part of close friends who went to the police station in support⁵⁷ or audience members who attended a dinner party afterward and shared their concerns,⁵⁸ the piece incited intense controversy. A particularly telling volley of responses, itself constituting what could be seen as the negotiation process inherent in contractual acceptance, was published in three issues of California's Artweek. The volley was triggered by a defensive description of the piece by Barbara Smith, a Los Angeles artist and friend of Burden's.

The bulk of Smith's initial piece consists of rhetorical questions in which she calls for support of Burden lest his "benign-to-society risks" yield "social consequences" foreclosing on what she implies is the metaphoric value of the artist's risk-taking. This value not only benefits the viewer, she argues, but all artists who continually need to take risks in order to develop new art forms. But Smith makes another point--perhaps the

most significant observation regarding Deadman.

"Among the interesting aspects of this piece," she writes, "is the fact that after Burden had placed himself under the car and set the scene, and before the crowd came out of the gallery to see it, several persons walked by and saw the 'accident' but seemed neither curious nor alarmed."⁵⁹ It is precisely this aspect of "silent acceptance" on the part of individuals going about their daily lives that is, I believe, what Burden was most interested, albeit on an unconscious level, in addressing.

Converting his body into a limit-text of dependency on others, he concretizes the function of contract. Contract becomes "officially" obvious, as I have shown throughout this study, in masochistic practice. But, in actuality, it is played out on the part of all individuals on a routine basis. For individuals to confront this fact and figure out the part they play in the ongoing agreements constituting their lives and others' is, of course, unsettling. Thus, it is not surprising that Smith's observation regarding the silent acceptance of passersby got overshadowed in the weeks of discussion that followed by more manageable questions of innocence and guilt, or right and wrong--questions made manageable by offering only two oppositional answers from which to choose.

To be sure, Burden's "bed piece" did not, in and of itself, nurture a discussion of its own pros, cons, and

admixtures of value and detriment. These are, after all, issues that are most prominently discussed when mirror-stage elements of fragmentation and partial truths are directly stimulated in an artwork, triggering equally fragmented and partially true, open-to-debate elements of identification of the self and others who shape and are shaped by institutions making up society.

None of the passersby stopped to join what they would have discovered was an audience of an artwork functioning as metaphor. Given the lack of a more overt stimulation of mirror-stage negotiation and debate, then, the only options left for these passersby were to walk on by, or call on the only institution they knew to restore order. While carrying out the latter might have constituted a caring move on the part of the caller, the response it prompted--from the extreme actions of the police taking legal action, to the fear and hostility of Smith's readers registered in Artweek--in retrospect reveals the disempowered status of individuals in their everyday lives. This lack of power is revealed in the unwillingness to get the details of a mysterious-looking scenario and the concomitant tendency to fall back on the dominant belief that institutions of law and order can solve all mysteries and make everything all right.

Fear and hostility took several forms in the three letters to the editor in response to Smith's original

article. One writer tried to legitimate her argument by drawing on fears perpetrated by history, comparing Burden's piece and Smith's defense of it to "the conceptual art of Himmler...[who]...had lots of bodies lying around."⁶⁰ Another, a fellow artist, writing out of alleged fear for himself and other artists, called for artists' self-censorship, claiming that "if we do not regulate ourselves you can be sure someone else will do it for us....we had as a community better set up some guidelines as to what is legal and...we should not condone or try to protect any artist who disregards any law made to protect society as a whole in public places."⁶¹ The third writer packed several commonly uttered critical clichés about performance art into four short hostile paragraphs, referring to Burden's works as "bullshit," "half-demented stunts," "fatuous," and "self-indulgent."⁶²

Smith's long response to these letters, published in the same issue, included four main points, two of which I shall excerpt. First:

The artist tends to deal with his own feelings and concerns about this, his life. It would be naïve to say that all artists find our times easy or rosy. So what is he to do? It is not news to say that a great many artists find it very difficult to make paintings or sculpture when there is no viable architecture--upon which these media depend--that adequately represents either our needs or times. So we can cite many names other than Burden's that show there is a body of work being done in this area of, simply stated, what it feels like to BE now.⁶³

She goes on in this same point to cite several artists,

among whom is Acconci, who "show how they feel in their own being and/or in alternative ways, formalized into event-like occurrences that transcend their personal dilemmas."

In the other point, Smith addresses the above-mentioned Himmler comparison:

...it seems there is an obvious distinction between Himmler and Chris Burden. Chris does us the service of pointing to issues, situations and feelings, with no desire to carry his own observations into a personal power trip. He is merely signalling to us as if to say "pay attention!" or we might have a Himmler or other disaster and be duped, all too unwittingly.⁶⁴

These two comments are particularly apropos of much of what I have been discussing in this dissertation. I join Smith (as well as Stiles and many others) in arguing that by the early 1970s there seemed to be no medium in which to respond to contemporary issues aside from the body--what I have chosen to call a chief "site"--upon and with which artists could take a look at why "times [were not so] easy and rosy."

Smith's use of the term "architecture" also suggests a connection to my term "site," which I am using to refer not only to performance art's material medium of the body, but its location, its institutional framework. I believe Smith's observation of the lack of "viable architecture" stands as a metaphor, detected by all artists at this time, for problems in the institutional structures, or "architectures," which shaped their lives as artists and

citizens--problems that had far deeper and more complicated roots than had heretofore been thought. As should be clear by now, it is this architecture that is always at issue in performance art, as revealed by masochistic work that takes the body to its limit in order to draw attention to the core potential, as well as problematics, of this "site" located in the structure of contract.

Indeed, I agree with Smith that the "signal" produced by Burden, along with the other four artists I am addressing, was one that called for the viewer to "pay attention!" In that light, masochism was the most appropriate choice of methodology since, as Deleuze rightly argued, masochism always embodies a critique. In other words, masochism "blows the whistle" on the institutional frameworks that trigger it and within which it is being practiced--practiced, generally, out of a desperate attempt to counteract the perceived lack of any other viable means of critique that might bring the individual a modicum of power.

There is one passage in Smith's letter, however, with which I strongly disagree. Discussion of her comment and my disagreement will allow me to go more deeply into an important issue which was raised earlier in Gina Pane's work, but which figures into all the work being examined. Thus, spending a few moments on this discussion will also

help me review many of the issues raised so far.

Smith claims that the work of artists like Burden "transcend their personal dilemmas." This claim, I would argue, is untenable in light of the performances represented in this study, as Pane's metaphoric denigration of transcendence so clearly demonstrated. To be fair, however, the claim perhaps bears some weight if considered in the context of Stiles's nuanced discussion of what she calls (in terminology similar to Smith's) "event-structured live art" (Smith refers to the works as being "formalized into event-like occurrences").

Stiles defines an "event" in terms of its functions: "Events qualify patterns of historical time and confront memory with past, present, and future experience....An event is a happening, something that takes place, has an effect, characterizes an experience, a thought, is related to fact, phenomena and transaction."⁶⁵ She goes on to argue for the value of artists' exploration of aspects of destruction within "events" they construct, a value that begins and ends with what she refers to as "transformation."

Transformation itself, which circumscribes but would not contain, according to Stiles, philosophical principles of "being" and "becoming," does not privilege the individual over the social relations upon which that individual's "being" and "becoming" are contingent. She

concludes her study of works presented at DIAS (the Destruction in Art Symposium, London, 1966) by claiming that

[t]he perpetual transformations which occur within both the destructive and creative processes might be analogized to the process of eternal "becoming" described as the quintessential significance of the nihilistic act. In this sense, the continual destruction of Self serves to authenticate existence [and] life experience by constantly destroying in order to create and examine a new system of values.

In the transformative process of destruction-in-art-events, the artist demanded that the information discovered within the destructive process be applied creatively to the political and social dilemmas facing society in order to address the psychic and physical destruction occurring within culture to both the individual and the collective.⁶⁶

It appears that, like Stiles, Smith believes that the type of work produced by Burden could transcend individualism while not transcending, but rather connecting with, the societal context (and its related political, cultural, and economic problems) within which an event is presented--all in all, an honorable outcome.

Nonetheless, "transcendence" is a tricky term, for which I earlier made a substitution--"condescend"; I would now like to offer a fuller theoretical justification. The replacement of the prefix "trans" (and my substitution could be applied, perhaps more clumsily, to the term "transformation") with the prefixes "con" and "de" hook artists "with" and "down into" what Smith called their "personal dilemmas," rather than suggest a floating,

upward movement which is altogether too difficult to tether. Moreover, the term "condescend" betrays the critical edge involved in the act; one dictionary defines the term as "waiving the privileges of rank."⁶⁷ Thus, the substitution becomes an appropriate fit for artists' works that question institutional frameworks and the hierarchical systems of "ranking" that sustain them.

I am in sympathy with both Stiles's and Smith's ideals that artists should wish to link their work to broader social issues in an effort to "transcend"--in the sense of going beyond--individual concerns (and in the case of the artists discussed by Stiles, perhaps their transformative wish was fulfilled, as she believes it was). However, I would contend that what Smith, at least, was saying and Burden was actually doing belie a feeling on the part of artists in the early 1970s that something was missing in artistic strategies that appeared "transcendent" or even "transformative" in nature.

They understood, I would argue, the need for an "insert" in the processes of: leaping from the isolating passivity of individualism to a broadening sense of active community; of crossing boundaries between art and life; of merging differences among groups of individuals as a form of automatically bettering society. The "insert" would entail a process in which the artist would need to condescend, work "with," and burrow deeply "down into" the

structures within which individual and community alike must deal. The "insert" would involve, necessarily, a "trip" (and here I am putting an intentional spin on Smith's use of contemporary slang) into the psyche and, more important, its origins in the institution of the home.

As this dissertation is proving, masochistic performance artists, in particular, did indeed work with and dig deeply down into their "personal [psychical] dilemmas," in order to reveal their institutional source as metaphor for all other institutions--social, cultural, political, economic, etc.--that shape one's life. To give Smith and Stiles the benefit of the doubt, if there were any hope placed in "transcendence" or "transformation" by the artists under discussion, it was the hope that the individual could emerge from his or her "trip" through the reminiscence of psychical development and move beyond it--armed with the information and tools (the "information discovered," according to Stiles in the second half of her last quote) necessary to make changes in (to "be applied creatively to," again per Stiles) that which can never be transcended at all.

Unfortunately, just as in Five-Day Locker Piece, these subtler workings of masochism in performance were almost lost to the legal issues at stake in Deadman--i.e., to the conservative, absolutist tendency to argue over its

"rightness" or "wrongness." Subtleties were also glossed over by the impulse to defend Burden with convenient, but reductive, weapons--like arguments concerning art historical pedigree or artist's intention. Smith herself falls prey to the latter conveniences in her other two points, in which she cites artists like Duchamp as a predecessor of Burden's and quotes Burden's denial of any intention of "playing games" with the police.⁶⁸

Fortunately, Smith obviously stimulated a polemical discussion of Deadman that remains unmatched in the pervasively descriptive writings on performance art in this era. Indeed, her discussion, and the piece itself, allow for useful connections to be made, as I have made here, to issues far greater than the site--or sight--of an inert body in a bedlike tableau.

Chris Burden's (Many Other) Bed Pieces, 1972-1975

As indicated earlier, Burden, relative to other artists, focused heavily on bed imagery in his performances and, in large part, avoided connections to the mirror stage. Besides Five-Day Locker Piece and Deadman, in which loose connections to this imagery could be made, he presented a cluster of pieces in which connections were more direct. They included, chronologically: Bed Piece, February-March 1972 (in which he lay on a cot in a gallery for twenty-two days

[Fig. 15]); Oh, Dracula, October 1974 (in which he hung in a cocoon-type apparatus at the Utah Museum of Art in Salt Lake City for eight hours [Fig. 16]); White Light/White Heat, February-March 1975 (in which he lay on a ten-foot-high platform in the Ronald Feldman Gallery for twenty-two days [Fig. 17]); Doomed, April 1975 (in which he lay inert at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago for almost two days straight [Fig. 18]); and Oracle, May 1975 (in which he "reviewed" the piece he had done at the Feldman Gallery a few months earlier).

These five pieces by Burden challenge the part of my argument in which I have claimed that to some degree, all performance artwork--whether the work involves the material entity of the mirror or not--triggers reminiscences of the mirror stage via a presentation and/or representation of the artist in flesh and (sometimes) blood. Flesh-and-(sometimes)-blood images, as my argument goes, automatically mandate a viewer's consideration of identificatory questions of similarity/difference, closeness/alienation, empathy/disregard, etc. between the artist and the viewer by virtue of the viewer having an obvious share in the material aspects of those images. The questions stirred up in this process are like those initiated by an individual's first moments before a mirror. Masochistic performance, which literalizes and metaphorizes the

figurative split experienced in those moments, profoundly accelerates the questioning process.

Out of all the works we have discussed so far, these five by Burden least stimulate the aforesaid reminiscences. It would seem, then, that Burden chose to go against the grain of the tradition of inquiry in masochistic performance, or even performance in general, by choosing to focus almost exclusively on reminiscences of the Oedipal scenario.⁶⁹ However, what this choice enabled Burden to do, as will soon become clear, was to direct his own and viewers' critical attention to more explicitly named institutions emanating from that scenario. Additionally, his choice did not come without a price, thus elucidating Lacan's caveat, addressed earlier, of the price exacted from the individual in his or her developmental movement beyond the mirror.

Perhaps the two most overt examples of bed pieces in which Burden targets institutional issues are Oh, Dracula and Doomed. In Oh, Dracula, a virtuoso combination of compliance and critique, Burden had himself hung in place of a Renaissance painting in the Utah Museum of Art in Salt Lake City. Thus, he complied with exhibition practices requiring artwork to be hung on a wall, but critiqued museum goers' expectations--founded on a virtual, tacit contractual agreement with the institution and its traditions--that art function as an object of

transcendent meditation. The candles placed below the cocoon emphasized these expectations.

And in Doomed, Burden lay motionless behind a large pane of glass tilted at a 45-degree angle against a wall at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago for 45 hours, 10 minutes. The duration of the performance was predicated on conditions known only to Burden, who had decided that the piece would last until someone altered, in any way, the arrangement of his body and/or the pane of glass. Finally, a glass of water was placed near him. Burden then leapt up and stopped the clock to document the elapsed time. Of course, guards had to work overtime to supervise the performance. And so, once again in his inimitable way, Burden tampered with the institutional logistics and economics of the museum world.

The critical points in both these performances are driven home by Burden's emphasis on two of the chief aspects of masochism outlined by Reik and Deleuze: suspense and contract. As is the case with all "bed" pieces, Burden's primary action is the lack of action. He waited, and made the audience wait, for his points to be made. Suspended, Burden showed that it is the body that is put at stake in institutionalized frameworks and, more specifically, in the contractual agreements that sustain them. In response to Doomed, a museum staff member was quoted as saying: "We could have ended it anytime we

wanted to, and here we thought we had a contract with him that we couldn't break unless he died" [my emphasis].⁷⁰ This quote reveals a tautology that is difficult, due to its potentially overwhelming importance, to comprehend: the stakes of the stakes of which I have been speaking are truly a matter of life or death.

Now, it is time to return to a discussion raised much earlier in the dissertation regarding traditional art forms--a discussion that has continued to take place in one form or another throughout my analysis of selected performances. The specific dynamics of the relationship between one who looks and one who is being looked at are generally repressed in Western culture. This repression is not only operative in a blatant way in relation to art, as I argued in Chapter One, but it is here that its most metaphoric representation can be seen.

Furthermore, the repression is not restricted to art forms themselves, but involves their history and, especially, the way in which these two (art and art history) work in the construction of one another. At least one purpose of this repression--advanced in the very period in which the painting for which Burden substituted himself in Oh, Dracula was produced--is to construct the conditions for transcendence on the part of a viewer.

Performance has the potential to deconstruct these conditions, and the art forms for which they exist, by

making viewer relations an obvious--and in the examples we have been discussing, painfully obvious--material element of the work. Thus, the possibility of transcendence is foreclosed on, and the role it plays, albeit subtly, in the process of viewing more conventional art is, by extension, diminished. (The thinking here is that once a viewer has experienced a performance piece in which transcendence is so clearly not an option, traditional art forms that tend to evoke such a response never look quite the same again.)

However, as should be clear by now, performance falls short of its potentially deconstructive task if it takes up a stance solely of opposition to traditional art forms or to the institutional frameworks which represent them, by using a method of simply unrepressing the formerly repressed agreement--i.e., the contract--in which a viewer is an automatic participant. Performance is capable of going beyond the illusion of liberation resulting from this type of opposition, to lodging a substantive critique of that which is opposed. The strongest masochistic performance accomplishes just this; it cannot help but promote a critique of institutional frameworks in that it activates, in an inescapably and tellingly painful manner, the structure of contract that is itself institutionally born and perpetuated.

In an essay in Burden's 1989 retrospective exhibition

catalog, Donald Kuspit examined the workings of what he called, borrowing from sociologist Talcott Parsons, a "social contract" in Burden's oeuvre, originating in the artist's "early self-destructive actings-out."⁷¹ To my knowledge, Kuspit is only one of two writers, other than myself, to explore the operation of any sort of contract in any performance artist's work. (Mary Kelly has spoken of contract in relation to art in more general, but nonetheless useful, legal-theory terms, as I shall discuss in the next chapter.) Kuspit's observations are helpful, but warrant careful perusal and critical response apropos of the comments I have just made.

Kuspit draws on Parson's general definition of "social contract" as, broadly and simply, power.⁷² Burden, he argues, "deconstructs...the social contract." To Kuspit this means that the artist uncovers the problems of institutionalized power that "blind" and "bind" the individual. In this way, he claims, Burden discovers his "true self." Through his early performances, in which he "disobey[s] the social contract," Burden is freed, according to Kuspit, from a "false sense of the body the social contract gives us." In the process, he also manages to demonstrate the social contract's own "inherent falseness."

On one hand, I agree with Kuspit, especially when he writes that:

[t]raditional art persuades the viewer of the goodness of the social contract, drawing him blindly into it and giving it complete power over him. Traditional art acts to make us unconscious of the powers that control us--to which we are contracted--in part by theatricalizing them as "divine," that is, inevitable. The power of Burden's critical art...is that it deconstructs...the social contract; it calls it into question, reminds us that it has many problematic features, and puts us in a position to be able to consider its hold on us, a position which already half frees us of that hold....Burden has given the increasingly empty idea of "critical art" fresh credibility by showing that the social contract--symbolized by the museum--which gives art its reality is not binding.⁷³

Kuspit's explicit claims regarding the seductiveness of contract, its ability to both repress knowledge and activate critique of the institutions it sustains, and the ability of performance to undo that repression concur with my arguments.⁷⁴

On the other hand, the suggestions emanating from Kuspit's previous quotes--that there is such a thing as a "true self" or, more implicitly, a social "truth"--are highly moot. And furthermore, the related implication upon which the latter depends--that there is some place outside institutionalized reality and its infrastructure of contractual agreements where such truth exists--is, at best, romantic.

Clearly, I agree that "traditional art" (painting, sculpture, etc.) engages the viewer in a controlling bond. But by overlooking the rich potential of naming that bond "masochistic," Kuspit is unable to go beyond showing how

Burden indicts contractual arrangements by virtue of simple disobedience.⁷⁵ To go beyond this conclusion would entail discussion of whether Burden reveals the structure of contract, its complexities and, most importantly, its roots in the psycholegalistic dynamics of masochism at work in the institutions that shape daily life. Lastly, while I agree that Burden's work is deconstructive (or, at least, partially so, as I shall show in a moment), it is important to understand, as I argued above, that deconstruction cannot be equated summarily with disobedience.

In response to Kuspit's exploration of the contractual proceedings in Burden's work, I would like to argue that Burden never succumbs to a romantic vision of life outside institutional structures. He thereby at least suggests analysis and critique of these structures--a tentative approach which may in turn spur action toward change, albeit within inescapable institutional bounds. My use of conditional terminology here appears to bring my conclusion closer to Kuspit's claim that by being placed in a position of awareness of contractual bonds, an individual may assess and begin to be free of them. But Kuspit's claim requires a lengthier leap of faith than I see fit to take, especially in the case of Burden's performances.

For the only way that observation and evaluation can

motivate a liberating change--which is to say, the only way deconstructive practice can point toward a solid alternative to that which is being deconstructed--is, I would argue, for access to the practice of contractual negotiation to be provided. It is on this point that Burden's bed pieces, with their inexorable emphasis on issues of Oedipalization in lieu of any guiding reference to mirror-stage (hence negotiatory) dynamics, fall short of playing a fully deconstructive role--in either Kuspit's or my terms.

In Doomed, Burden points out the possibility of negotiation only in terms of its complete denial, as indicated by the staff member who well understood that such an interaction was out of the question. The terms of the agreement had been established as absolutes, as being about maintaining or breaking the agreement, about life or death. And in Oh, Dracula, despite the way in which attention is drawn to institutionalized directives regarding the appropriate frame of mind in which one should view a work of art, Burden did not set up the conditions in which negotiation between the viewer and the artist, and/or between viewers, over the structural concepts of the masochistic contract operative in the performance could take place.

In the latter piece, Burden showed that it was possible to simultaneously leave too much and not enough distance

between himself and the viewer. The placement of the candles succeed only in duplicating the measure of distance set up in conventional art-viewing practices, suggesting the viewer stay at bay. Even if someone were to violate this directive and approach the cocoon, he or she would, simply, discover the dumb fact that Burden was inside it. The temptation is to simply acknowledge the "one-liner" quality of the jokelike substitution of the artist's body for a work of high art and, once humored, to disengage. Unlike Five-Day Locker Piece in which Burden engaged, through direct communication, with the audience members who congregated outside the locker in an effort to come to terms with the artist's masochism, Burden lay quietly in Oh, Dracula, like the vampire who sleeps by day and only displays his otherness by night--by which time, the performance was over.

Nonetheless, Burden laid out the elements that need to be held in balance during contractual negotiation: his own otherness and bodily objecthood on one hand; his subjecthood (if only by virtue of its absence, registered by his silence) on the other. But his presentation and representation of himself, like most one-liner jokes, are deadpan, empty. Unlike Ulay/Abramovic's, Pane's, or Acconci's bed pieces, in which peripheral references were provided whereby viewers could access at least an indirect communication with the artists and thus "fill in the

blanks" of the formal and conceptual distance between them, Burden manipulated distance in a manner that tempted the audience member to simply violate it. Thus, he halted criticality at the point of a non-sequitur display of that which needs to be extended upon, questioned, negotiated, and sustained in delicate balance.

The deadpan, empty quality of Burden's bed pieces evokes an air of melancholy which, I would argue, is part and parcel of that "price" exacted by the psycholegalistic movement away from the mirror and toward Oedipalization of which Lacan speaks. As the painful early mirror-stage experience of splitting (that is, the experience of the self as both subject and object) is theoretically healed, it is also, on a practical level, blocked. It is blocked by: the latter mirror-stage in which the process of "orthopaedic armouring" creates a mythically unified identity; and then the Oedipal scenario, in which the individual is assigned a gendered role which is slanted more in the direction of either subject or object.

The result in either case is loss--not only retrospectively experienced in terms of the object of the mother once known in the oral stage (and on which most psychoanalytic theory, especially that of Freud, focuses), but the object of the self encountered as one side of the split identity encountered at the mirror. If we loosen Freud's notion of the object to include the more Lacanian

process located at the mirror, his theories of melancholia become useful to my current discussion of Burden's bed pieces.

Indeed, as Freud argues in his 1917 essay "Mourning and Melancholia," the "loss suffered by the melancholiac is that of an object; according to what he says the loss is one in himself."⁷⁶ More specifically, the process of melancholia begins with what Freud calls the loss of an "object-choice"--a loss not only related causally to the more-or-less "natural" event of death but, he implies in his comparison of melancholia to mourning, to any cultural (social, economic, etc.) set of circumstances as well.

Whatever the cause, loss results in melancholia, according to his theory, when it fails to involve withdrawal of one's libidinal investment from the lost object and transference of that investment to a new one. In this scenario, the melancholiac identified with the lost object and, "[t]hus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, so that the latter could henceforth be criticized by a special mental faculty like an object, like the forsaken object."⁷⁷

Freud's observations on these points brings his theories of melancholia close to those of masochism. In keeping with his theories of the latter, however, as expressed in "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" two years earlier, he resists the use of the term "masochism" per

se, concentrating more on the "sadistic" aspects of the desire to turn whatever criticism one really wishes to aim at a lost love object, onto the self. The benefit of this detour for melancholiacs, he theorizes, besides procuring a "sadistic gratification"⁷⁸ (he remains committed, as this juxtaposition of terms shows, to the notion of a pain-pleasure dyad), is in being able to "avoid the necessity of openly expressing their hostility against the loved ones."⁷⁹

Freud's theory of the melancholiac's avoidance of a seemingly greater wrong corresponds to the conclusions reached by Reik in his study of "Masochism in Modern Man." At the very end of this essay, he first asserts that masochism "endangers the progress of civilization because it imposes needless sacrifices and too great psychic burdens on the ego and on communities." But he proceeds to resign himself to the possibility that the type of avoidance Freud speaks of above might actually contribute to cultural progress: "It undoubtedly constitutes a cultural step ahead when the masochist, faced with the necessity to choose, prefers to be hit rather than to hit."⁸⁰

Bringing Freud's observations on melancholia and masochism together with the cumulative views of theorists discussed earlier--Lacan, Anzieu, Deleuze, and Reik--it becomes clear how the masochistic performances I have been

discussing aim at retrieving the sense of one's own objecthood. This sense of objecthood of which I am speaking is gained in the early moments before the mirror and subsequently lost in the wake of the Oedipal scenario's raising of stakes to include the body and its traditionally gendered identifications. The attempt at retrieving a flexible, nongendered sense of objecthood stands a better chance, however, as I have argued, when the link between psychical and legal dynamics is made evident, and processes of negotiation between ostensibly opposite identifications of the self experienced at the mirror are made possible.⁸¹

Interestingly, Freud himself made connections between the world of the psyche and the world of law. For example, the melancholiac's criticism or "complaints," he writes, "are really 'plaints' in the legal sense of the word; it is because everything derogatory that they say of themselves at bottom relates to someone else."⁸² By integrating Freud's observations with the theories I have put forth so far (my own and others'), it also becomes clear how even the melancholiac is attempting to critique something else, outside the self, in reaction to which his or her attention is (and in the case of the masochist, his or her actions are) trained on the very body which is at stake in that "something else"--i.e., in the institutional systems that shape the conditions in which that body

exists, thrives, and/or suffers.

If an individual falls short of this critical goal, however, his or her efforts can easily fall into a melancholic abyss of providing an all-too-ephemeral hint as to what those institutionalized systems and the specific problems within them--the problems that stimulated a masochistic and/or melancholic reaction in the first place--are. By refusing to provide the possibility of a negotiatory process, which might return the individual to the point in psychical development (or vice versa) where the "lost object" can be retrieved for the purpose of balancing it against one's perception of subjecthood, the fall into the abyss, culminating in inertia and silence, is inevitable. The price of taking up the mirror stage on its offer of an armoring orthopedics, which only becomes more rigidified in the Oedipal scenario, is then paid in full.

Nowhere in Burden's oeuvre is there less possibility for negotiation than in the next three pieces I shall discuss. In Bed Piece, Burden functioned as, in his own words, a "repulsive magnet."⁸³ Lying in a bed at one end of the Market Street Program Gallery in Venice, California, he both attracted viewers and, by evoking the uncanny force inherent in the experience of encountering a familiar scenario in an unfamiliar environment, kept them at bay. Burden did not speak throughout the twenty-two

days he confined himself to bed. He ate food left for him by the gallery staff and relieved himself only during the night. However, as he revealed to writer Robert Horvitz, the staff often forgot to leave food because "in their minds I had become an object."⁸⁴

While Burden's response indicates that his masochism indeed may have fulfilled his own quest for lost objecthood, an equivalent result for the viewer was denied. Any mirroring (of an identity of the self as object) back onto the viewer was foreclosed on by Burden's ultimate compromising of the very familiarity of the scenario with an unfamiliar degree of distance, charted by reverse magnetism, between himself and visitors.

It was the initial possibility of familiarity within the uncanny arrangement that might have offered the viewer an avenue of identification--as Ulay/Abramovic's provision of their papers, as well as food and drink succeeded in doing in Capitalist Body/Communist Body. Without this familiarity, exposure of the institutionalized systems responsible for either the gain or loss of the sense of the artist's body as a vulnerable object stopped with the gallery visitor's view of the bed and the identity-rigidifying dynamics of the Oedipal scenario its presence suggested.

In other words, there was no evidence of a successful contractual agreement (as evidenced by lapses in the

gallery staff's memories of their duties) and no mirroring. And so, Burden's silence, coupled with the over-determination of formal distance in the piece, foreclosed on any possibility of negotiation.

However, what Burden did accomplish in this piece was to locate, for himself, a vague question he would feel compelled to pursue three years later in a different version of the performance--White Light/White Heat. Regarding this piece, he has claimed that "the shift from beginning to end [of Bed Piece] was pretty mysterious to me and that's why I'm reinvestigating it. I'm trying to get to the crux of it."⁸⁵ In White Light/White Heat, which also lasted twenty-two days, Burden positioned himself above the gallery visitor's viewing range (ten feet from the floor) on a triangular platform. A very plain, white structure inserted into the corner of the all-white gallery space, the platform resembled a Minimalist sculpture (and can be connected to phenomenological theories of Minimalism, as will be seen later).

Unlike Bed Piece, Burden fasted throughout and while he slept intermittently, was often awake, participating "like a ghost," he later said, in the comings and goings of viewers and the everyday business of the gallery.⁸⁶ Thus he perpetuated the already-potential melancholic atmosphere in the room. As Freud observed, melancholia is

marked by "sleeplessness and refusal of nourishment, and by an overthrow, psychologically very remarkable, of that instinct which constrains every living thing to cling to life."⁸⁷ It would seem that what Burden discovered as the "crux" of these bed pieces was--as Freud had implied might be the case--a deadend. Burden brought this discovery to light in Oracle.

Oracle, performed just a few months after White Light/White Heat, was Burden's self-conscious response to the previous piece; and, inasmuch as White Light/White Heat was itself a response to Bed Piece, Oracle can be seen as the artist's conclusion to both. Moreover, Oracle is the last performance of Burden's career to deal directly with the topic of masochism. Thus, it says a great deal about his dealings with this physiopsychical phenomenon in general.

After the audience had entered the gallery in Italy where the piece was presented, the door was locked. The audience was seated facing three large, spotlit windows covered with scrims. Burden's shadow appeared on one of these scrims as he proceeded to make a long statement. Given the summary status of the piece, it is worth quoting from this statement at length. First Burden reviewed the logistical details of the performance. Then he went on to recount that:

After I had been there for three weeks, on the last night, I had a dream--a sort of a nightmare. In the

dream, I was doing a piece on a large bunk bed. I was high on the top bunk, and nobody could see me. I was always worried that the sheets were coming untucked, hanging down, spoiling the piece by making it look messy. I couldn't look to see if the sheets were really hanging down, because then someone would see me. All I could do was lie there and worry. Then in the dream, the piece was over and I was down from the bed. I was sitting in a bar with two friends. It was the first time I had seen anyone.... I could talk...but I didn't have anything to say. Nothing interested me. I knew that I was physically all right, but spiritually something had happened to me. It was as if I didn't need anything anymore, it wasn't just that I didn't want it. And it wasn't like I was crazy--it wasn't like that. It was like serenity. If there was ever a time when I should have been happy and relieved and wanted to talk, this should have been it. But it wasn't. It was like ennui or boredom, when nothing you think about is interesting or fun. I knew that people expected me to be happy, and they expected me to be glad to see them. I knew that it would be obvious that I was distant, and I couldn't hide the way I was feeling. It was like something had evaporated from me. I was sad and frightened. I realized what was wrong. I no longer had any desire to be part of the real world.⁸⁸

After finishing the story of the dream, Burden's shadow faded and the audience departed.

Burden's closing remarks regarding his sense of detachment and self-evaporation recall Freud's descriptions of the "distinguishing mental features" of melancholia such as "abrogation of interest in the outside world" and "inhibition of all activity,"⁸⁹ as well as his even more concise contrast between mourning and melancholia. "In grief," he writes, "the world becomes poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself [which becomes poor and empty]."⁹⁰

In-ever increasing increments, Burden's bed pieces

over-determined the formal and conceptual factor of distantiation necessary to the task of effectively negotiating dualistic aspects of identity. As Burden catapulted his body out of its position as "repulsive magnet" in Bed Piece to complete visual absence in White Light/White Heat and, further, to the faraway dream world expressed in Oracle, he amplified Brecht's notion of alienation to such an extent that he obliterated any possibility whatsoever of that which Gilmore called, in legal terms, a "meeting of the minds."

On the positive side, Burden's concentration on the use of bed imagery pointedly links one's attention to the home. And his manipulation of formal and conceptual elements suggests, again in ever-increasing increments, the hierarchies established there. The bed and the body suspended upon it are lifted higher and higher from the floor, to a location above the viewer's head, to a position beyond one's presence altogether--the "top bunk" of a dream world. His elevation of the body not only indicates the notion of hierarchy inherent in the Oedipal scenario, but suggests that within that scenario the body is of primary "consideration" in the legalistic sense.

On the negative side, however, without providing access to a discursive negotiation of this Oedipalized hierarchy, Burden's bed pieces stop at placing the key in the ignition of the apparatus of the masochistic contract,

without turning it. Through his activation of, or reference to, masochism's elements of suspense and contract, he displays psycholegalistic elements to be critiqued, but then simply lets them, along with the potential sense of his body as both subject and object, "evaporate." In so doing, the world indeed begins to look empty--not only of goodness, but of problems.

Allowing masochism to take a turn into melancholia eradicates the power of masochism to continue to "blow the whistle" on these problems, to do its inherently critical work, to aim criticism at appropriate institutional targets--that is, to stay forever tethered to the "real world," as Burden himself so ironically put it.

NOTES - CHAPTER THREE

1. Vito Acconci, "Trademarks," Avalanche 6 (Fall 1972), 10-11. This issue of Avalanche, by the way, is a special edition on Acconci's work.

2. I am indebted to Kristine Stiles for first stimulating me to consider issues of complicity in performance art in her seminar on the history of performance, University of California, Berkeley, Fall 1979.

3. I am reliant here on Roman Jakobson's notion of the "shifter," well summarized by Rosalind Krauss in "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America (Part 1)," October 3 (Spring 1977) as a "sign, waiting each time it is invoked for its referent to be supplied" (69). Citing Krauss's essay is apropos here inasmuch as she is addressing not only art of the 1970s in general but, more specifically, in the section of the essay in which she raises the question of the "shifter," she is speaking about a work by Acconci. See also "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America (Part 2)," October 4 (Fall 1977), 58-67.

4. Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (1915), in The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. James Strachey, vol. 14, 127.

5. Acconci, "Trademarks," 11. All subsequent quotes from the Trademarks text are from this page.

6. Freud, "Instincts," 127. For a discussion of the role this interstitial moment plays in the collages of Max Ernst, as well as (apropos of my argument regarding the goals of masochistic performance artists) the challenge of maintaining the tension produced there, see Hal Foster, "Convulsive Identity," October 57 (Summer 1991), 40-42.

Foster's psychoanalytic approach to Ernst's work is of special interest to my study, inasmuch as the author recognizes the way in which linguistic, visual, as well as tactile elements may interact in a work of art in a clearly masochistic manner. Moreover, he emphasizes that masochistic workings in art cannot be readily dismissed as simply reflective of the environment in which the work is made; nor should they be viewed as necessarily perverse, trivial, etc.

Overall, an approach such as Foster's (and my own) can lead toward a fuller understanding of the masochism-based work of art as instructive metaphor. However, as Foster also warns in his conclusion, the operation of metaphor (and any psychical stirrings for which it may stand), though issuing from the unconscious, should not be

considered an exposure of "intentional referents or literal origins of this art," but be examined for the ways in which it expands an understanding of the art's "structure" as a "working over that is never purely involuntary and symptomatic or controlled and curative" (52). See also his discussion, this page, of metaphor in contrast to metonymy as operative elements in surrealist imagery and objects, respectively.

I am in complete agreement with Foster's methodological approach as well as his caveats. However, I wish to place more emphasis on the historically instructive role metaphor plays in art and how it shows its motivations to be sourced in various interwoven histories, chiefly: psychical, legal, economic, and political histories.

7. It lies outside the scope of this dissertation, but a provocative connection could be made at this point to a discussion of eating disorders and their position within the psychodynamics of masochism. For two different approaches to just one aspect of this disorder, anorexia, see Susie Orbach, Hunger Strike (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986) and Rudolph M. Bell, Holy Anorexia (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).

Orbach argues that the impulse to starve is driven by social and cultural pressures of a given historical period. Bell, while not denying this claim, establishes a history of willed starvation stretching back to the medieval period, thus somewhat universalizing this tendency. Neither author expands their discussion beyond anorexia to bulimia or compulsive overeating in general. Nor do they approach their topic through a discourse on masochism which, if one were careful to consider the legalistic construct of contract in such an analysis, could enrich the discourse tremendously, casting light on the unspoken agreements, most of which are no doubt problematic, between individuals with eating disorders and others in their environment. I shall return very briefly to this topic in the last chapter.

8. Freud, "Instincts," 128.

9. Vito Acconci, pulse (for my mother) (pour sa mère) (Paris: Multiplicata, 1973) n.p.

10. This is not to say that Acconci did not participate in any anti-Vietnam protests. As he said in an interview, "I think all of us at some point were involved in some demonstrations against the Vietnam War. It was so much a part of normal life."

11. Jan Butterfield and Chris Burden, "Chris Burden:

- Through the Night Softly," Arts 49 (March 1975), 69.
12. Quoted in Robert Horvitz, "Chris Burden," Artforum 14 (May 1976), 27.
13. Dorothy Seiberling, "The Art-Martyr," New York (24 May 1976), 50.
14. Butterfield and Burden, "Through the Night," 69.
15. Chris Burden, "Velvet Water," in Chris Burden 74-77 (Los Angeles: Chris Burden, 1978), n.p.
16. Seiberling, "The Art-Martyr," 58.
17. Ibid.
18. Thanks to Vito Acconci for conversation in which the connection between mirroring and the simultaneous feedback afforded by video was made.
19. The videotape is viewable by appointment. A transcription of the audiotaped text heard in the piece can also be found in the de Appel archives.
20. Antje von Graevenitz, "Then and Now: Performance Art in Holland," Studio International 192 (July/August 1976), 52. (There is an unidentified photograph of Discours mou et mat in an interview with Panne published in Performance--Another Dimension [Berlin: Künstlerhaus Bethanien in assoc. with Frölich & Kaufman, 1983].)
21. Ezio Quarantelli and Gina Pane, "Travels with St. Francis," Contemporanea 1 (November/December 1988), 46.
22. von Graevenitz, "Then and Now," 52.
23. Barthes, "Rhetoric," 44.
24. Such pieces might be called "performance-based films," just as videos made in the same context could be called "performance-based videos." I have explored the latter in my essay "Performance, Video, and Trouble in the Home," where I define the term as "video [or film] made as an integral part of a performance piece. Such a definition necessarily excludes videotapes [or films] produced as straightforward documentation and assumes the maker's interest in complicating viewers' preconceived notions of difference between presentation (generally associated with performance) and representation (associated with video)" (Kathy O'Dell, "Performance, Video, and Trouble in the Home," in Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video

Art, eds. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer [New York: Aperture in assoc. with Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990], 501, n. 1).

25. Vito Acconci, "See Through," Avalanche 6 (Fall 1972), 15. All subsequent quotes from this text are from this page.

26. Bryan S. Turner, The Body and Society (1984; reprint, New York and Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 7.

27. Ibid., 7-8.

28. Marina Abramovic/Ulay, Ulay/Marina Abramovic, Relation Work and Detour (Amsterdam: Ulay/Marina Abramovic, 1980), 96-101.

29. Ibid., 96.

30. See Deleuze's definition of contract, Chapter Two, n. 41 supra.

31. Ulay played with this concept in an earlier work called Renaissance (1973), consisting of a narrativistic series of autopolaroids in which he cast himself in various cross-dressing scenarios. Poster-documents of the work can be found in the de Appel archives.

32. Helena Kontova, Marina Abramovic, and Ulay, "Marina Abramovic-Ulay," Flash Art 80-81 (February-April 1978), 43.

33. Jennifer Licht, Eight Contemporary Artists (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1974), 10.

34. Vito Acconci (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1979), n.p.

35. Ulay and Marina Abramovic were introduced to one another on November 30, 1975. Given the "coincidence" of having met on their joint birthdays, they presented an annual performance honoring the two events (their birthdays and first meeting). Talking About Similarity, discussed in Chapter One, was the first of these annual performances.

36. Abramovic/Ulay, Relation Work, 164-79.

37. Ulay/Abramovic's artist statement, entitled "Art Vital," consists of a string of conditions for their work: "no fixed living-place, permanent movement, direct contact, local relation, self-selection, passing limitations, taking risks, mobile energy, no rehearsal, no

predicted end, no repetition." See Abramovic/Ulay, Relation Work, 19.

38. Ibid., 175.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., 173. Ulay's birth name was Uwe Laysiepen.

43. Examples of individual performances by Abramovic would include: Rhythm 10, 1972, Edinburgh, in which she knelt, leaning on one hand, with fingers spread, before an arrangement of ten sharp kitchen knives and a tape recorder, and proceeded to pick up one knife after another in quick succession, driving each between two different fingers, cutting herself in the process, all of which was audiotaped and replayed as she repeated the drill with the other hand; Rhythm 0, 1974, Naples, in which for six hours she stood motionless near a table displaying fifty assorted objects including drawing materials, a motorcycle chain, feather, loaded pistol, and a card with the words "There are some objects on the table. You may use on me [sic]. I am an object," which prompted responses ranging from benevolently arranging the artist's body in sculptural positions, to holding the pistol to Abramovic's head, placing her finger on the trigger and threatening to press it, at which point a struggle ensued with another audience member who prevented the shooting. (These descriptions have been culled from: Interviews with Marina Abramovic, March 1986 and April 1987; Marina Abramovic, "Marina Abramovic," Flash Art [June 1974], 78; Tom Marioni, "Real Social Realism," Vision 2 [January 1976], 27 [also see 9, 28-30]; Thomas McEvelley, "Marina Abramovic/Ulay," Artforum 22 [September 1983], 52; also see Biljana Tomic, "Marina Abramovic," Data [September-October 1975], 74-75.)

Examples of individual works by Ulay would include Identity Analysis, 1976, Wuppertal, performed two months before his first piece with Abramovic, in which the artist, appearing in the performance space naked with a life-sized mirror strapped onto his body, stood motionless for ten minutes before falling forward onto another piece of mirror lying on the floor, where he remained until everyone had left the space. (Details of this piece have been published in: the artist's exhibition catalog entitled Fototot [Zagreb: Galerija suvremene umjetnosti, 1977, n.p.]; McEvelley, "Marina Abramovic/Ulay," 52.) For other pre-collaboration (with Abramovic) work, especially

an example of performances conducted with Jurgen Klauke, see von Graevenitz, "Then and Now," 51-52.

44. Leo Bersani, The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). I shall discuss Bersani's theories on masochism and art in greater detail in Chapter Four. For now, references to the notion of "self-shattering" can be found scattered throughout his text, but see especially the chapter entitled "Sexuality and Esthetics." I am taking liberties with Bersani's notion of self-shattering here in my text by connecting it to mirror-stage dynamics.

Also see my review of Bersani's Freudian Body in Critical Texts 4/3 (1987), 34-37.

45. Stephano and Pane, "Performance of Concern," 24.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid. For more discussion of Posthumous Work, see Francois Pluchart, "Gina Pane's Performances," ArTitudes 3 (February-March 1973), 15.

48. Gina Pane died in 1990. I am uncertain, at this time, about the status of this piece.

49. Pane thought it possible to do work that would qualify as transformative: "If the artist has a social conscience he feels his responsibility in the society in which he lives. I believe he can become a catalyst of social and moral change because he has complete liberty of expression" (Stephano and Pane, "Performance of Concern," 24).

Pluchart confirmed that (at least in Self-Portrait) Pane had accomplished this goal: "Pane undertook a risk at the Stadler gallery that no artist had yet dared to take. In her suffering, she risked a definition of herself: from her artistic transformation to her principle of action upon society....she gave her definition of art history by making a peremptory place for herself, and she proved, by the state of tension that she was able to attain, that her art acted directly and immediately on everyone" (Pluchart, "Gina Pane's Performances," 15).

In a more extensive study, it would be useful to cross-reference these quotes with a discussion of Stiles's notion of transformation and its basis in DIAS-organizer Gustav Metzger's theorizations on destruction in art; see esp. Metzger's comments quoted in Stiles, "Destruction," 143ff, and her responses thereafter.

50. Stephano and Pane, "Performance of Concern," 24.

51. See n. 18 above. Acconci's comments have contributed greatly to the development of my theory connecting the reception-dynamics of video, the phenomenon of mirroring, and developmental aspects of the psychical mirror stage.

52. Ibid., 26.

53. For excellent discussion of this political scenario in France in this period, see Reader, Intellectuals and the Left in France Since 1968, cited earlier, n. 28, Chapter Two.

54. Plagens, "He Got Shot," 3. According to Barbara Smith, whose report on the incident I shall discuss shortly, Burden was considered to be in violation of penal code section 148.3 which indicts "Any individual who reports or causes to be reported to any city, county...vehicle that an emergency exists knowing that report to be false...." (Barbara T. Smith, "Burden Case Tried, Dismissed," Artweek (24 February 1973), 2).

55. My description of this piece is based on details provided by two audience members who wrote about the work: Cara Montgomery, "Review, Chris Burden," Arts 47 (March 1973), 66; Barbara T. Smith, "Art Piece Brings Arrest," Artweek (6 January 1973), 3; Barbara T. Smith, Letter to "Editor's Mail Bag Re: Chris Burden's Performance," Artweek (10 February 1973), 2; Barbara T. Smith, "Burden Case Tried," 3, cited in n. 50 above.

56. According to Montgomery, "Review," 66.

57. According to Smith, Letter, 2.

58. According to Montgomery, "Review," 66.

59. Smith, "Art Piece Brings Arrest," 3.

60. Leslie Woolf Hedley, Ph.D., Letter to "Editor's Mail Bag Re: Chris Burden's Performance," Artweek (10 February 1973), 2.

61. Diana Hobson, Letter to "Editor's Mail Bag Re: Chris Burden's Performance," Artweek (10 February 1973), 2.

62. Will Glickman, Letter to "Editor's Mail Bag Re: Chris Burden's Performance," Artweek (10 February 1973), 2.

63. Smith, Letter, 2.

64. Ibid.

65. Stiles, "The Destruction in Art Symposium," 148.
66. Ibid., 672.
67. Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1990.
68. Smith, Letter, 2.
69. My argument here also goes against the grain of the predominant view of Burden's work as exclusively focused on the rending of his flesh. While there are plentiful examples of the latter, his "bed pieces" constitute a major portion of his oeuvre--often overlooked in favor of an attraction to the more spectacle-oriented status of his other performances.
70. Seiberling, "Art-Martyr," 64.
71. Donald Kuspit, "Chris Burden: The Feel of Power," in Anne Ayres and Paul Schimmel, Chris Burden: A Twenty-Year Survey (Newport Harbor, Calif.: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1988), 42.
72. Kuspit's citation for Parsons' notion of the "social contract" is as follows: Talcott Parsons, The Structure of Social Action (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1949), 93, 768.
73. Kuspit, "Chris Burden," 42-43. All quotes since n. 71 are from these pages.
74. In particular, I would agree that in Burden's later work, which focuses on the military institution, that he tampers, as Kuspit argues, with the "illusion of dominance that the social contract of technology gives us....Burden tries to counteract this control by introducing into the museum space of art uncontrollable social power in the form of war machines" (Ibid.).
75. Kuspit does make a reference to Burden's "sadomasochistic mentality" [my emphasis] (Ibid., 41), but does not pursue a discussion of the specifics of either sadism or masochism in psychoanalytic terms.
76. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), in A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. John Rickman, M.D. (1937; reprint, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1957), 129.
77. Ibid., 131.
78. Ibid., 132.

79. Ibid., 132.

80. Reik, Of Love and Lust, 366.

81. It is important to note that Freud is clear on the facts that, clinically, mere contradiction of the melancholiac is ineffective and that the analyst must understand the melancholiac to be, in some measure, accurate in his views. He observes that the melancholiac "has a keener eye for the truth than others who are not melancholic. When in his exacerbation of self-criticism he describes himself as petty, egoistic, dishonest, lacking in independence, one whose sole aim has been to hide the weaknesses of his own nature, for all we know it may be that he has come very near to self-knowledge; we only wonder why a man must become ill before he can discover truth of this kind" (Ibid., 128).

This line of thinking brings Freud's theory of melancholia close to my own regarding masochism and its inherent ability to cast light on that which needs to be seen, especially in terms of institutional dysfunction. However, as I have been arguing, without negotiation over what precisely is being illuminated, the masochist's (or melancholiac's) exercise is futile and formalistic; this is where acknowledgment of a contractual structure at work for the masochist is crucial, clarifying the dynamic of agreement between the masochist and another (or other) individual(s) in his or her midst.

Freud seems confounded by the melancholiac's (and I would add, masochist's) strategies of, in his words, pointing to the "truth," and he more or less gives up on figuring it all out. This gesture might have been unnecessary had he: pursued his original point regarding the instructive aspects of seemingly perverse actions; recognized his own status within the unspoken agreement with his patients; and actually negotiated with them over what those aspects might be. Instead, he concludes his essay by resigning himself to a therapeutic impasse: "We see that the ego debases itself and rages against itself, and as little as the patient do we understand what this can lead to and how it can change" (Ibid., 139).

82. Ibid., 130.

83. Quoted in Horvitz, "Chris Burden," 25.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

86. Robin White and Chris Burden, "Chris Burden," View 1/8 (1978), 4.

87. Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 128.
88. Chris Burden, "Oracle," in Chris Burden 74-77 (Los Angeles: Chris Burden, 1978), n.p.
89. Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 125.
90. Ibid., 127.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSIONS

Burden's "real world" of which he just spoke is precisely the domain in which, as I have been claiming, the psycholegalistic workings of contract can be manipulated toward change by soliciting a "meeting of the minds." This "Gilmoresque" possibility was historically facilitated, as discovered in Chapter Two, by another sort of meeting--one in which the possibility existed for the legal processes of contract and tort to meet each other half way. To review, this juncture came about in the late 1960s-early 1970s, at the end of an approximately one-hundred-year reign of a classical, highly formalized notion of contract.

Burden's (and the other four artists') "real world" was comprised of many such historical occurrences, in the contexts of which the artists' work must be situated. I have touched on many of these contexts already, but it is time now to revisit them for summary's sake and, where useful, to elaborate upon them. En route, I shall draw final, general conclusions regarding early 1970s masochistic performance.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF SLAVERY

The shifting history of contract has been quite thoroughly covered in my foregoing study and just

summarized above. But what I have not talked about--and now must, due to its relevance to any conclusions that might be drawn regarding the question of masochistic practice as self-liberating or self-enslaving--is the fact that classical contract had itself come into being around the time the American Civil War put an end to the official, law-bound (or, said another way, tort-bound) institution of slavery in the South.

Some theorists have argued, and I shall agree, that the genesis of the modern, highly formal contract absorbed the fundamentals of slave law, producing a situation in which the alleged autonomy associated with the modern, bourgeois notion of contract provided only the illusion of freedom. In other words, contract provided conditions in which individuals would enslave themselves. Walter Benn Michaels speaks to this point by summarizing the work of early twentieth-century Progressive writer Richard T. Ely:

Ely worried that it [slavery in the West] had really only changed its form and was now reappearing in the guise of the "peonage contract" employed in the South and increasingly in the world at large. In his massive Property and Contract in Their Relations to the Distribution of Wealth [1914], Ely offers the example of a contract that came before a South Carolina judge in 1901 in which, having acknowledged the "right" of his employer "to use such force as...he may deem necessary to compel me to...perform good and necessary services," the contracting laborer goes on to specify that his employer "shall have the right to lock me up for safekeeping, work me under the rules and regulations of his farm, and if I should leave his farm or run away he shall have the right to offer and pay a reward of not exceeding \$25 for my capture...I agree to work out under all rules and regulations of this contract."¹

Michaels gives another example of a turn-of-the-century writer whose concerns connected the newfound rights of women with a contract-based justification for their exploitation. In 1895, John Commons, a colleague of Ely's, wrote in protest of an Illinois Supreme Court ruling that the workday limit for women, set at eight hours for factories and sweatshops, was unconstitutional. "The grounds," he wrote, "seem to be that the Constitution guarantees freedom of contract...that women are receiving higher legal rights in other directions; and to deprive them of the right to freely sell their labor power under any conditions whatever is to remand them back again to a lower legal position."²

What is peculiarly left unproblematicized in Michaels' discussion of these examples, however, are more detailed issues of race and gender. Two rather obvious questions arise in examining his otherwise useful examples of contract: Would there have been other opportunities for employment outside those for which the subjects (very possibly a former slave in the first example, and women in the second) contracted their labor? Were wages in any way equitable at this time (between whites and African-Americans and/or between men and women)? These questions are, of course, rhetorical, but lead to the point most relevant to my study--a point yielded, ironically, by the

absence in Michaels' essay of any discussion of race and gender.

That is, while the laborers may have represented themselves, via the instrument of contract, as willing to be dominated, they really had no other immediate choice in their historical moment but to continue, indeed masochistically, to enslave themselves. It is this element of choice--the willingness to endure pain--that can be so easily manipulated by dominant power and ideologically disguised as freedom.

And so, the more specific issues at stake in a discourse relating masochism and slavery have to do with race, gender, choice, the ideology of freedom, and the way in which all these factors work together in a masochism-based establishment of class divisions. These interconnections comprise that which Michaels leaves unproblematicized. In doing so, he formally, but unself-consciously, reproduces the founding precept of classical contract as it existed from the post-Civil War period up to the late 1960s--the unspoken, but dangerously operative, precept that says there should be a great distance between "that which is said" and "that which is meant" in a contractual agreement. The distance duplicated by Michaels through his lack of a more specific exploration of "that which was meant" by the contracting laborers' statements was precisely, I should like to

argue, the distance that was finally noticed--by the artists we have discussed, for instance--as problematic vis-à-vis the body during the Vietnam War, and that which prompted legal theorists like Gilmore to argue that the "death of contract" was at hand.

Now, it is of crucial importance not to conflate, in a facile manner, masochism in early 1970s performance works, and pre-twentieth-century slavery.³ To do so would be to belittle this troubling history, to suggest that African-American slaves had a choice in their suffering like masochistic artists had in theirs. What is crucial to see in the work of the artists under discussion in terms of the history of slavery, however, is the way in which they took the notion of modern contract, as it was in its death throes, to its limits.

Thus, they betrayed the ideology of classical contract--namely, its tendency to legitimate the existence of both slavery and masochism by letting them exist in the name of freedom. It is the vulgarization of the term freedom--whether it be thought of as the freedom to work under oppressive conditions, as in Michaels' examples given above, or the freedom to fight in a war, as many individuals did during the Vietnam era--to which the artists studied in this dissertation were responding, I believe, in their masochistic performances.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE VIETNAM WAR

The concept of attaining freedom through embattlement has, historically and ideologically, been promised by the structure of contract, especially its vulgarization in assumptions of public consensus. It was this structure--specifically, the relationship between "what was being said" and "what was being meant" by those in positions of power to those over whom that power was to be wielded--that began to break down in the early 1970s at precisely the moment these artists were challenging the tacit agreement of their viewers to witness the production of masochistic pain. I argued this point preliminarily in Chapter One and illustrated it in numerous examples of performances in Chapter Three. But two additional historical examples of the structural breakdown in contractual agreements between the state and its citizens in this era help clarify the profound motivational base from which the artists were working.

One: It was just a few months before the decade of the 1970s began, in November 1969, that reporter Seymour Hersch broke the news on the events at My Lai, in which hundreds of civilians--mostly old men, women, and children--were massacred. In response to the massacre, it was later learned, General Westmoreland had sent a message of "Congratulations to officers and men of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry for outstanding

action" that "dealt enemy heavy blow."⁴ It was largely due to Hersh's efforts to get at "what was meant" by "what was said" by individuals such as Westmoreland that the world became aware of many such breaches of contract that were being carried out by the institution of the military in direct violation of injunctions against the decimation of civilian population.⁵

Two: In 1971 Congressman Ronald Dellum's unofficial war crime hearings exposed major discrepancies in the tallying of the enemy dead--i.e., in "body counts," as the tallying procedure was labeled. In those hearings, a captain described the institutional pressure to inflate statistics and gave an example of how it was carried out:

Our...Battalion...had not been getting the body count that the other battalions in the division had, and General Williamson told that battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Carmichael, that he had better start producing or we would get a battalion commander in that battalion that could produce. Colonel Carmichael got the message loud and clear.⁶

The captain goes on to explain how bodies were simply added here and there--for example, 100 Vietcong seen moving across a field, possibly toward an ambush, were included in the tally. And thus, the count magically rose from approximately 30 dead bodies actually observed to a fictionalized 312.

This testimony was cited by James William Gibson in The Perfect War: The War We Couldn't Lose and How We Did, in which the author explores various ways in which rational

systems, like statistics, "helped make war-managers appear legitimate to the American public."⁷ But as more and more discrepancies between what was being said and what was being meant in terms of the Vietnam War (to say nothing of the Watergate scandal) came to light in the early 1970s, it became increasingly evident that the contract "the American public" assumed was operative with the state and subsidiary institutions like the military was being violated. Said another way, it became evident that the legitimizing function of contract was being exploited.

Moreover, it became increasingly clear that what was at stake in that contractual agreement, and had been all along, was the human body. The objecthood of the body was dwindling in importance--not only on the obvious level of its expendability, but on the less obvious, and for a long time completely invisible, level of dishonoring that expendability further by recording the number of dead bodies inaccurately. And so it was, I would argue, that a paradigm shift was taking place. The body was being converted into pure subject--a de-objectified entity, an abstraction, a signifier untethered from its concrete referent, a mathematical figure to be manipulated by Vietnam War commanders under pressure or, as Gibson indicates in yet another example of fictionalized statistics, by numbers-crunchers in think tanks.⁸ He cites a letter written by one of these individuals to his

wife:

You should have seen the antics my people and I had to go through...to make the February enemy strength calculations come out the way the general wanted them. We started with the answer and plugged in all sorts of figures until we found a combination the machine could digest, and then we wrote all sorts of estimates showing why the figures were right which we had to use. And we continue to win the war.⁹

As the body was reduced to a mere object on the battlefield, then converted into pure subject in its representations, Burden, like the other four performance artists of the early 1970s, commented on this conversion through irony. That is, while they dealt with their own bodies directly, highlighting the concrete objecthood of the body in the performance arena, they did so in a way that illustrated how indirect, how metaphoric, its connection was to the subjecthood of their own bodies (and vice versa) and beyond that to others'.

Said another way, as the body was rendered more and more a floating subject in the early 1970s, the more there seemed to be a desire on the part of artists to render its objecthood so concretely that their actions would illustrate the vast distance being experienced between these two aspects of the body in the arena of war, contractual agreements sustaining the war, representations of that war, and in society at large--by and for whom those representations were being produced.

It was precisely this distance that the five artists in

Chapter Three--with the exception of Burden in his bed pieces--demonstrated. However, they did so in a manner that showed this distance as not only a problem to be reckoned with but as part of the answer. That is, they showed how those very distant and different aspects of the body could be and needed to be understood as such--distant from one another, different, but nonetheless coexistent--not only for the well-being, but the survival, of the body.

By "coexistent" I do not mean "contiguous" or "contingent" in the sense in which Stiles used these terms. As a reminder of her theory, discussed at length in Chapter One, I quote:

The artist, by literally acting as the mediator between...[art and life]...in philosophical terms, created an event that provided a link between the alienated space of subject and object--linking the world of the viewer to the world of the art object through the transit of the body. The artist now inhabited the position traditionally occupied by the art object and, in so doing, mediated between the viewer and the meaning of the event. The alienation between subject and object was thereby reduced, although not resolved. In other words, the artist as being-in-the-world visualized the contingency and inter-dependence of subject identifying with subject.¹⁰

Unlike Stiles's observation regarding the perpetuation of the 1960s artists' power to diminish boundaries--or what I have argued, to review briefly, is sheer belief in such power--the 1970s artists I have discussed proclaimed their profound disbelief in this possibility.

Acconci, Ulay/Abramovic, Burden, and Pane maintained

boundaries, thus displaying the difference between subject and object--a difference that they showed did not need to be collapsed, as in Stiles's thinking, nor exploited, as in wartime think tanks, but usefully sustained through a simultaneous presentation and representation of the body. This balance of presentation and representation--which is always already operative in the historical study of all performance work through the medium of documentation that calls forth reciprocating processes of vision and touch--yielded an awareness of the coexistent subjecthood and objecthood of the body and its power to serve as metaphor.

What this distantiation allows the artists to effect, then, is a continued routing of viewers' attention to two complementary "in-between" zones of triadic experience: one, of psychical development in which the mirror dramatically and necessarily painfully reconfigures one's sense of self; and two, the stage in "contractual agreement" wherein, through their "silent acceptance" of what they see before them, viewers come to understand their complicity in the self-induced pain they are witnessing. The alienating effects of masochistic display, in other words, push apart the two poles of psychical reminiscences (of the oral stage and of the Oedipal scenario) and the two poles of contractual processes (offer and consideration), rather than bridging them--as an extrapolation of Stiles's theory might assert.

The open space left in between allows for continual negotiation to take place, a negotiation over identifications of subjecthood and objecthood, vulnerability and invulnerability, etc.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU'S "SOCIAL CONTRACT"

Lack of openness to negotiatory procedures can have brutalizing effects. As twentieth-century history has shown us, totalitarianism can be engaged wherever processes of negotiation, of a "meeting of the minds," are obviated or vulgarized. Even Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notion of "social contract," which is founded on the "general will" of citizens¹¹--a notion which can serve, and has long served, as the theoretical basis of democracies providing negotiatory systems for their citizens--can be vulgarized.

As intellectual historians J. Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish have pointed out:

Although Rousseau explicitly opposed despots and aggressive wars, his idea of the general will was particularly suited to be exploited by tyrants. For example, Germany in 1935 was filled with hordes of people shouting "Sieg heil!" in unison, in order to give themselves the impression that, somehow, they were consenting to a general will which was interpreted for them by one man.¹²

Interestingly, Bronowski/Mazlish see a weak spot in Rousseau's theory of the general will that lay in its lack of just the sort of in-between space (or "intermediary"

entity, as they would call it) of which I am speaking.

They write:

We can see the totalitarian seeds [in Rousseau's theory] clearly if we continue with our analysis of the general will. In order to reach the general will, Rousseau decreed that there would be no partial societies, representing particular wills....This means, in effect, that there is to be no intermediary barrier between the citizen and the force of the state. The conception of "freely associated" groups, such as political parties and religious sects...is totally excluded.¹³

The lack of an "intermediary" (for Bronowski/Mazlish, Rousseau's denigration of anything but a one-party system) corresponds precisely to what I see as a dangerous obviation of negotiatory procedures in the structure of contract--a dynamic played out in Burden's melancholia-producing bed pieces. I say "dangerously," because it is precisely these procedures that assure participants (in truly democratic systems, for example) that their voice will be heard and that they can skirt disempowerment as well as, indeed, the melancholia that generally goes along with it.

In both Bronowski/Mazlish's argument and my own, then, the exploitation of contract leads not to freedom but to the illusion of freedom. The concept of illusory freedom has been a part of many histories of slavery, as far back as Roman slave law of antiquity. In that era, according to legal theorist and historian Alan Watson, "[t]he slave could make contracts with the master's permission, could

live wherever the master wished, could indulge in whatever activities (that were otherwise lawful) that the master allowed."¹⁴

Just as there was an illusion of freedom for the Roman slave who could move within the parameters circumscribed by his or her master, so was there an illusion of freedom in Rousseau's schema of social contract. "Anyone who refuses to obey the general will," he writes, "shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing else than that he shall be forced to be free, for such is the condition which gives each citizen to his country..." [my emphasis].¹⁵

Coercion generally invites processes of masochism on the part of individuals who feel there is no other way out--which, in the scenario sketched by Rousseau, seems to be the case. At the foundation, then, of Rousseau's theory of contract--a theory which figures heavily in the history of contract overall--lay the unspoken principles of masochism. This observation makes it important to acknowledge how the piece missing from his theory--the need for intermediary structures--allows for these principles to be perpetuated.

Now, besides the historical specificity of contract I have been insisting upon in this study, a geographical specificity is called for as well. In terms of the relationship between the histories of contract and

slavery, I need to briefly address the different ways in which various countries constructed laws of slavery. As Watson tells us, like most laws of the colonies, slave laws tended to be based on their homeland's legal models. But this was not always possible, leading to results worthy of noting and relevant to my conclusions regarding masochistic performance.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF GEOGRAPHY

France, for example, had no slave law. Thus, Watson writes, "it was the French practice to look to Roman law to develop private law, and Roman law provided a ready-made model for slave law. Roman law was thus the inevitable model for the French law on slavery."¹⁶ The Code noir was published in 1742, just a decade before Rousseau was concluding his treatise on The Social Contract. Despite his vociferous opposition to slavery contained therein ("If separate individuals are successively subjugated to the domination of one man...I see only a master and his slaves, not a people and its ruler"¹⁷), the ease with which his theory of social contract can be slipped into the theory of totalitarianism, as discussed above, betrays a certain lack of ability on his part to totally disengage from the French tradition of considering Roman law, complete with its slave laws that incorporated rights of contract for

the enslaved, paradigmatic.¹⁸

When it came to establishing slave laws in the English colonies, however, there was a different problem, since England not only lacked a preexisting slave law but, as Watson writes,

there had been no Reception of Roman law [in England]. Certainly, Roman law was at times made use of in England, but there was no tradition of relying on it for legal development. Thus Roman slave law in whole or in large measure could not be automatically taken over for the English colonies. A law of slavery had to be made from scratch.¹⁹

Slave laws here in this country were excessively brutal, as everyone knows. Watson provides the history of slavery in South Carolina as the most extreme case that speaks to this point.

South Carolina, he notes, was the only English colony initially settled by slaveholders and one of two colonies where the majority of the population was nonwhite. But "these features," he argues, "only emphasize that the law was not so very different from elsewhere in English America."²⁰ South Carolina's "Act for the Better Ordering Slaves" was adopted in 1690; it borrows, almost verbatim in sections, from slave law put into effect a few years earlier in Barbados. Watson cites a section from each of these laws, providing a horrifyingly vivid example of the English colonies' slave brutality, legitimized by the technique--or "nature of the legal game," as Watson calls it²¹--of borrowing from a tradition based elsewhere.

The Barbados statute rules that "any Negro or Slave," upon a first offense perpetrated against "any Christian," should be "severely whipped by the Constable," and for a second offense "shall be severely whipped, his nose slit, and be burned in some part of his face with a hot iron." The South Carolina act was almost identical, although significantly more brutal in that it included female slaves and was even more racist (if such a relative statement is possible to make). In the latter, "any negro or Indian slave," in a first offense against "any white person" would be "severely whipped by the constable;" and in the second, "severely whipped, his or her nose slit, and face burnt in some place."²²

One of the basic social differences between the slave laws of the English colonies and the Roman model is that in the former, as Watson concluded, "one might say that a slave belonged to every citizen--at least he [and, as the South Carolina act was sure to make obvious, "she"] was subordinate to every white."²³ Watson referred to this feature as "the public dimension" of slavery in this country, contrasting it to that of Rome where the slave was under the personal supervision and command of his or her master, who designed all parameters of the slave's life, from issues of fashion to forging contracts, as indicated earlier. In contrast, according to Watson, in the English colonies,

a slave off a plantation could be stopped by any white and questioned on his activities. Citizens were organized by law in patrols to recapture runaways....[I]f within a certain time the master did not inflict [penalties upon the captured slave] the state would. The government declared that only appropriate clothing was to be worn, and it might even determine what clothing was appropriate....Slaves could not buy and sell as their master wished, they could not live apart from the master whenever he wished, they could not keep horses, cattle, and pigs; they could not, even if the master would allow it, hire out their time. These rules did not apply at all times and in all colonies or states, but they do give the flavor of the general law.²⁴

Watson's observation of a historical phenomenon in which nonenslaved individuals' responses to the practice of slavery were directly shaped by law, as they were in the English colonies, is of profound importance to my study. Building on this observation, I would argue that nonpracticing masochists' responses to the practice of masochism (practices including performance artists tampering with their bodies and/or skin, soldiers putting their lives at risk, political protesters leaving themselves vulnerable to arrest, individuals verbally denigrating themselves, anorexics or bulimics denying the body's need for sustenance) are shaped by the contract in which they are undeniably, albeit tacitly, engaged by simply observing such practices.

As laws and contracts are specific to the culture and/or legal history that initiate them, so will responses to slavery and/or masochism be specific to the society and culture in which those practices take place.²⁵ My

position on the practice of masochism and its reception on the part of audience members of early 1970s masochistic performances reflects this point.

As Americans, I would argue, we have been acculturated to hold ourselves responsible for masochists in a functional, positive sense, despite the basis of this acculturation in the dysfunctional, negative model of slavery, in which every non-slave was under legal obligation to operate as a state-appointed sadist. This element of accountability within slave law, I would also argue, was both carried over into the theory of modern contract and suppressed there by a formalism favoring an economically based power. Thus, the possibility of "a meeting of the minds" between those with and without power was eradicated.²⁶

The masochistic artists of the early 1970s pointed out the dematerialization of accountability on the part of society-at-large through a materialization of the vulnerability of the body-as-object. By putting the material objecthood of the body at risk in acts of masochism, they showed that it is this bottom-line status of the body which is at stake when negotiation over the body's many dualistic identities is elided.

Their efforts were not only descriptive of these conditions that grew out of the history of slavery but prescriptive. The early 1970s artists pointed toward the

possibility of acknowledging the subjective and objective dualities (among others) of identity as mutually existent, rather than acting out such dualities as mutually exclusive--as is the case, for example, in the arena of war. By operating to one degree or another in the in-between zone of contractual procedures in which masochism flourishes, these artists revealed, with relative degrees of clarity, as I have shown, the flaw in modern contract that was becoming evident to legal theorists like Gilmore. One might call the latter, however, the "flaw that could become the cure."

The obviation in modern contract of an "intermediary barrier" or a "meeting of minds"--to once again recall the terms of Bronowski/Mazlish and, of course, Gilmore--was made obvious by these artists. The only form, I would argue, in which artists could let that which had been historically submerged surface was to literalize contract negotiation's psychoanalytic parallel--the psychical fragmentation experienced in the early moments of the mirror stage. In choosing masochism, artists betrayed their own enslavement to and tried to free themselves from (to "cure" themselves of) modern contract. Their work is situated, then, on the threshold between those two states (of enslavement and freedom)--a threshold upon which the body finds itself contorted, where the possibilities of a coupling, as Gilmore put it, between contract and tort

leaves no other option but a consideration of the functional properties of contortion itself.²⁷

Inasmuch as American art after Abstract Expressionism held sway internationally, for better or for worse, well into the 1970s, I would like to assert that it is valid to interpret (almost all) the performances I have discussed from an American perspective. This perspective, as I have just described it, is rife with a culturally historical sense of accountability for suffering. Due to America's cultural imperialism in the postwar period, one may assume that Ulay/Abramovic and Pane, along with Burden and Acconci, are responding in large part to American issues--be they cultural, economic, political, psychological, etc.²⁸

It would take me beyond the limits of the present study to undertake a meticulous analysis of the ways in which my argument is or is not borne out in all the work produced by these artists. However, such a study would prove useful; so, as a suggestion for the manner in which it might be conducted, I offer an exception to my assertion in Gina Pane's oeuvre. The example does double duty: it shows how a culturally specific twist to contract law can show up in an artist's work; and it leads to a discussion of how just such a twist may have influenced Deleuze's scholarship. The latter is important in that it reminds the reader of the need to resist, as I already warned

earlier, the temptation to consider this scholar's theories of masochism universally applicable.

Paradoxically, the transhistorian himself--Watson--comes to my assistance once again with his well-executed and detailed historical account of law and contract. In an interesting footnote to his 1985 Evolution of Law he tells us how:

[i]n French law any noncommercial (in the technical sense) transaction above a very small amount can be proved only by a notarial act or a private signed writing except, under article 1348 of the Code Civil, when it is not possible for the creditor to procure writing. "Possible" here refers to moral possibility as well as physical, and in certain close relationships--such as, at times, those involving one's mother, mistress, or physician--the obtaining of a writing is regarded as morally impossible.²⁹

Out of the five artists discussed in the previous chapter, Pane was the least oriented toward writing about her work.³⁰ However, in interviews, she was the most vocal about the relationship between her performances and the psychical aspects of family issues--with an emphasis on what she sees as traditionally gender-specific symbolic elements like milk and blood, which she relates to the maternal figure. One may reasonably infer that this emphasis, for example, when considered alongside her de-emphasis on writing as a possible expression of the contractual elements explored in her masochism, reflects her acculturation (despite her actual birth and childhood spent in Italy) in France, with its legal prohibitions on

written contractual transactions with one's mother, as just outlined by Watson.

Conversely, French theorist Deleuze emphasizes, with great fervor, the written contracts between Masoch and his mistress. His choice to do so, given the legal and cultural context Watson outlined, suggests one of two things. Either Deleuze is conceding to the immorality of the relationship between the count and Fanny von Pistor, or to the status of their relationship, conducted under written agreement, as commercial. Since the question of morality is not pertinent to Deleuze's interests here, it may be concluded that the latter is the case. And this is no small point. Tying Deleuze's analysis, and thus Masoch's work, to an economic foundation more accurately directs the reader's attention to the body and its status as a commodifiable entity in the masochistic contract, thus dissolving Deleuze's own transhistorical position.³¹

These two brief examples illustrate the necessity and benefit of continuing a detailed legal, as well as geographical, contextualization of masochism not only in relation to performance art, but to the already existing writings on masochism upon which one must necessarily draw in an effort to make sense of masochistic performance or masochistic practice in general. In a longer study it would be important, for example, to examine the impact of German contract law on Krafft-Ebing and Freud--the two

individuals whose writings formed the cornerstones of much of the early work done on this topic. For the time being, a few pertinent remarks, focused on Krafft-Ebing, will have to suffice.

Such an investigation would provide particularly useful insights in the case of Krafft-Ebing, whose own mission was motivated by the desire to expiate masochists in a court of law. In his manifestolike introduction to Psychopathia Sexualis he wrote that his goal was to

record the various psychopathological manifestations of sexual life in man and to reduce them to their lawful conditions....It is the sad privilege of medicine, and especially that of psychiatry, to ever witness the weaknesses of human nature and the reverse side of life. The physician finds, perhaps, a...solace in the fact that he may at times refer these manifestations which offend against our ethical or aesthetical principles to a diseased condition of the mind or the body. He can save the honour of humanity in the forum of morality, and the honour of the individual before the judge and his fellow-men.³²

By tracking the geneological pathologies of masochists, Krafft-Ebing tried to prove that their proclivity toward the "perversion" of masochism--as he and so many other thinkers after him called it--was unavoidable on the basis of natural predisposition, mixed with the fairly frequent and predictable citation of "mother blame." The subject of "Case number 69," for example, who had "developed a weakness for ladies' boots with high heels," leading to fantasies of women kicking him or pressing a heel between his thighs until he would ejaculate, was diagnostically

described as follows: "hereditarily and constitutionally neuropathic, claimed to have had pollution at the age of eleven, when he was chastised by his mother on the buttocks."³³

Krafft-Ebing's in-depth reporting on masochism at the end of the nineteenth century did not exclude the exploits of well-known writers, some of whom have been discussed in this study. The position he generally took in the analysis of their conditions was passionate in tone, betraying a bias that could run in either a positive or negative direction, depending on his personal opinion of the individuals and/or their work.

He spared no criticism of Baudelaire, for example, and the writer's desire for "ugly, repulsive and deform[ed] women," or for beautiful women whom he would mistreat. He was quick to point out that Baudelaire came from an "insane and eccentric family." And he concluded the case study by declaring that "the man displaying these masochistic and sadistic inclinations died of parietic dementia."³⁴

In contrast, in the case of Masoch, from whose name, as I pointed out at the beginning of this study, Krafft-Ebing derived the term "masochism," the psychoanalyst strove to save the novelist's reputation:

As a man Sacher-Masoch cannot lose anything in the estimation of his cultural fellow-beings simply because he was afflicted with an anomaly of his sexual feelings. As an author he suffered severe injury so

far as the influence and intrinsic merit of his work is concerned, for so long and whenever he eliminated his perversion from his literary efforts, he was a gifted writer, and as such would have achieved real greatness had he been actualized [sic] by normally sexual feelings.³⁵

Interestingly, this rescue attempt, apropos of my suggestion that Krafft-Ebing's passion was more than a bit biased and personalized, was made as much on his own behalf as the novelist's. He directs the above analysis not only to "some admirers of the author," but to "some critics of my book," who had complained, he writes, of his coupling of "the name of a revered author with a perversion of the sexual instinct...."³⁶ By absolving Masoch, then, he tried willy-nilly to absolve himself of his own suspiciously detailed, amazingly indefatigable, possibly voyeuristic interest in the subject of masochism.

He went to great lengths, as well, to exonerate Rousseau, who had admitted in his posthumously published Confessions of being aroused as a teenager by a schoolmistress who had flogged him. The psychoanalyst's expiation of the philosopher actually entailed a rewriting of Rousseau's own self-awareness of what his masochism involved:

The essential element with Rousseau was the feeling of subjection to the woman. This is clearly shown by the Confessions, in which he expressly emphasizes that "To be at the knee of an imperious mistress, to obey her orders, to have to ask her pardon, this for me was a very tender pleasure."

This passage proves that the consciousness of

subjection to and humiliation by the woman was the most important element.

To be sure, Rousseau himself was in error in supposing that this impulse to be humiliated by a woman had arisen by association of ideas from the idea of flagellation: "Never daring to declare my tastes, I amused myself at least by relationships which reminded me thereof."

It is only in connection with the numerous cases of masochism, the existence of which has now been established, and among which there are so many that are in no wise connected with flagellation, showing the primary and purely psychical character of this instinct of subjection--it is only in connection with these cases that a complete insight into Rousseau's case is obtained and the error detected into which he necessarily fell in the analysis of his own condition.³⁷

Perhaps it is not surprising that Rousseau's theories of contract have not heretofore been connected to theories of masochism, inasmuch as his own personal masochism has never been connected to the construction of his legal philosophy. One might think that Krafft-Ebing, whose interests in law were almost as primary as his interests in psychoanalysis, would have been just the individual to interrelate and extrapolate upon these aspects of Rousseau's work and life. The theorist's own biases and agendas, however, as with all writers and thinkers, clearly impacted his conclusions.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF RACE, CLASS, AND PLEASURE

One last point needs to be made regarding the other type of connection I have been trying to clarify--the

connection between masochism and slavery. The ease with which ideology encourages a conflation of these two practices in the name of freedom, obfuscating the very different elements of choice operative in each, was troubling enough, perhaps, to attract very few artists of color or, say, laborers in lower income classes, into the circle of performance artists who engaged in masochism in the early 1970s.³⁸

Not enough time had elapsed, perhaps, since the centuries of officially law-bound slavery in this country, or abroad, for an artist of color to willingly endure pain--that is, outside the arena of political protest that directly links such willingness to self-defined notions of freedom, like those expressed in the civil rights movement. Masochistic artists' deconstructive actions, I suggest, would have been too oblique for the immediate needs of artists of color in the early 1970s. Deconstruction in this context would have run the risk of misinterpretation. It would have implied, perhaps, a willingness to be enslaved, rather than function as a highlighting of that willingness for the purposes of critique--critique of the ways in which the notion of willingness itself can be ideologized as a justification for writing off masochism as an act of self-proclaimed liberty, or just plain pleasure.

Similarly, masochistic performance, with its reliance

on alienation for purposes of critique, could never have served as a model for labor protests, as Happenings had in the 1960s. French Happenings artist Jean-Jacques Lebel, for example, helped Renault factory workers outside Paris utilize his performance format to organize strikers in the late 1960s.³⁹ The effectiveness of this format hinged on the ability of Happenings to establish a closeness between performer and audience that would solicit participation from the otherwise passive viewer. Such solicitation is a necessary tool of political protest, which not only focuses on confronting its observers with complaints, but aims at winning them over. Thus, alienation is attenuated.⁴⁰

The foregoing should not be taken as an implication that artists are not themselves laborers, or that performance art cannot comment on class-related conditions of labor without necessarily offering a model for protest as direct as Lebel's. In a close examination of the relation between Robert Morris's performance works and his Minimalist sculpture, Maurice Berger has pointed out this artist's references to labor issues. For example, for the opening of his 1970 exhibition at the Whitney Museum, Morris worked alongside his crewmembers on an installation that was compared by one reviewer, Berger quotes, to "a midtown construction site." Berger compares Morris's labor to his performance work, calling the Whitney event a

"valorization of actual labor only symbolically represented in his dance Site" (a 1964 performance with Carolee Schneemann in which Morris, wearing work gloves and a mask, moved large pieces of whitewashed plywood to construct a setting around Schneemann, whose position simulated that of Manet's Olympia). And Berger discusses at length Morris's, and other performance artists', leadership and participation in political demonstrations such as the 1970 Art Strike Against War, Repression, and Racism--actions that were no doubt nurtured by performance art's, as well as Minimalism's, activation of the body.⁴¹

Even more relevant to my study, however, is Berger's psychoanalytic commentary on the relationship between 1960s performance and labor issues. His account is of crucial importance to a discussion of 1970s masochistic performance inasmuch as this type of performance can be seen, perhaps predictably, as a deconstruction of its predecessor. In a statement that synthesizes the principles explored in depth in his doctoral dissertation and subsequent book on Morris, Berger claims that

[a] number of sixties performances (such as those by Robert Morris, Carolee Schneemann and Lucio Pozzi) were about pleasure and art as a mechanism of desublimation, as a response to being a worker in industrial society. Perhaps these were naive or utopian gestures but the artists thought they could possibly skirt oppression or show how, in the end, that possibility itself was a myth.⁴²

Indeed, 1960s performance was, in general, about pleasure,

including works that are often seen as influences upon masochistic artists' actions--namely, the "destruction" works analyzed by Stiles.

As cited earlier, Stiles saw the artist of 1960s destruction-oriented performance as a mediating agent who had "reduced, although not resolved" alienation.⁴³ In contrast, as I have illustrated time and time again, masochistic artists of the 1970s no longer avoided the alienation of which Stiles speaks. Nor did they "skirt the oppression" of which Berger speaks. Instead, they defied pleasure in the most easily misinterpreted manner possible--by presenting and representing pain which, since the work of Freud, has been erroneously considered to be naturally accompanied by pleasure. The artists I have discussed showed the oppression of their artistic endeavors by projecting the pain and alienation inherent in labor, as well as in oppression and/or enslavement. They refused to hide such issues behind a mask as Morris did in Site or glorify it as Nitsch does in his Orgies Mystery Theatre, to which I referred in Chapter One.

In this process, the artists addressed in my study completely transformed the expectation that pleasure is the accompaniment of pain--an expectation so comfortable, I argued earlier, that it lets the observer off the hook from dealing with the complexity of an individual's choice to endure it. They transformed this expectation into an

understanding that if there is any pleasure attainable here at all, it is in the way in which pain's only actual accompaniment, alienation, can be used toward critical and deconstructive ends.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

Taking the risk of their work being seen as a mere description of the conditions of masochism, oppression, pain, or alienation, the five artists I have looked at staged their works in institutional sites, utilizing the institutionalized strategy of masochism, which itself required the activation of the institutionalized instrument of contract, in order to expose the intertwined roots of all these conditions in the phenomenon of institutionalization itself. The artists' self-chosen masochism--the ways in which they "put themselves down," so to speak--betrays the top-to-bottom spatialization of this phenomenon, displaying, through the abuse of their bodies, the oppressive workings of its hierarchical structure.

Their consistent utilization of aspects of the domestic setting and/or material elements involved in the individual's psychical development that takes place there--the mouth, the mirror, the bed--allows for ever-circling connections to be made between the specifics of psychical development, the domestic site, and all other

institutional sites modeled thereafter, especially that of (patriarchal) law. The artists' performances, then, function as emblems of the institutionality of law and the way in which it rules both our conscious and unconscious lives, and as demonstrations of how it is institutionality itself that is not only the problem of social relations but, on a prescriptive level, part of the cure.

Mary Kelly, in her landmark article "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism," makes a connection between art (traditional and performance), law, and economics, and goes even further to link these institutions to the ideology of freedom. She argues that "[i]n terms of the law, man's freedom follows from his self-possession, thus he has the right to acquire property, moreover he is his own property. For the artist to sell his painterly property (products) or his labour (as in performance) is merely a confirmation of his freedom."⁴⁴ Her conclusion, however, is less hopeful than my own on the topic of the ability of art, given its ties to institutionality, to convey a prescriptive, "alternative," message. She continues:

[T]he work of art, filtered through the institutions and discourses that determine its specific conditions of existence, produces artistic authorship in the fundamental form of the bourgeois subject: creative, autonomous and proprietorial. In a sense there is no "alternative" to that passage; for the very moment that the work of art enters into circulation it is sanctioned by law as the property of a creative subject

(but not to enter into such contract would be to forfeit even the possibility that the artistic text, in the process of its construction of meaning, could indeed interrogate that form) [my emphasis].⁴⁵

Kelly's agenda in her article is to account for this process of interrogation--or criticism, as the title of the essay indicates. Following a metacritical methodology, she summarizes Clement Greenberg's definition of modernism--the touchstone of American modernist criticism--by using Victor Burgin's summary of it as "the tendency of an art practice toward self-reference by means of a foregrounding of the tradition of the practice; the difference of the practice from other (visual arts) practices; the 'cardinal norms' of the practice; the material substrate, or 'medium' of the practice."⁴⁶

Given this definition, one might argue that performance art is a modernist practice not only in its tendency toward "self-reference," but its full arrival in that domain via the "foregrounding" of the artist-as-self. But performance, especially that which is masochistic in nature, goes beyond this all-too-easy portion of the self-referring project of modernism, to deconstruct it by foregrounding the "material substrate" of the "self" in the form of the human body. This "arrival at" and "going beyond" a practice of self-reference locates performance art in the arena of postmodernism, I would argue, with its efforts trained upon the deconstruction of modernist

principles, especially those carried out in the interrogation and criticism of the "bourgeois subject."

Kelly agrees in principle with what I have just stated when she writes that

for criticism, performance art initiated an appropriate synthesis of the disparate elements that had fractured the modernist discourse. On the one hand it provided the empirical domain with a universal object--the body, and on the other, to the transcendental field, it brought the incontestable authenticity of the artist's experience of his own body.⁴⁷

However, I would argue that the performance artist, especially the masochistic artist, problematizes these notions of empiricism and transcendentalism through the implementation of a critique inherent in (and here Kelly would agree, as indicated by my emphasis in her quote regarding "alternatives" above) the institutional structure upon which their actions are based--contract.

Just as important as the critique of the "subject" that grows out of postmodernist discourse, then, is performance art's foregrounding of the institutional systems that shape our knowledge of the body as not only subject, but object. The early 1970s artists' postmodernist accomplishment of deconstructing the notion of "self-reference" by exceeding a philosophical notion of self, examining its materialization in the form of the human body, is not entirely matched, however, when it comes to a postmodernist deconstruction of institutionality per se. Rather, I would argue, the artists I have surveyed

represent a "tendency toward...institutional...reference" --to both use and make an apropos substitution in Burgin's quote. They "foreground" the institution in the form of its supporting instrument--the contract. But there their efforts stopped.

The accomplishments of the artists discussed in the last chapter in relation to issues of institutionality, then, could be called, once again, deictic. They pointed the way for other performance artists--some of them contemporary, but most of them of the later part of the 1970s--to more fully deconstruct modernism by negotiating not so much with the notion of the self by way of tampering with the material site of the body, but by negotiating and tampering with the actual site of the institution proper.

To wit, it was in the following period that artists would go beyond the conventional institutions in which performance had been presented--commercial galleries, museums, universities, and even homes⁴⁸--to construct an actual alternative. The latter would be called, officially and appropriately, an "alternative space." An investigation of this site and especially the question of whether the notion of "alternativeness" was fulfilled will be the subject of a sequel to this dissertation.

Deconstruction is operative in masochistic performance, however, in the ways in which the artists maneuver

viewers' relationship to the work, especially as it compares to other modes of representation. Performance deconstructs other representational forms by bringing attention to the structural aspects of viewer relations, making them obvious, playing them (proverbially) for all they are worth, and at times pressing their outside limits of possibility to the practice of masochism.

What I am saying here, then, expands upon points made in Chapter One and, more specifically, in discussion of Burden's Oh, Dracula: the relationship between a person doing the looking and that which is being looked at is part and parcel of the experience and interpretation of all forms of representation, but is generally repressed for purposes ranging from the political to the aesthetic (and sometimes a combination of the two). This deconstruction, to review my earlier argument, points out retroactively the way in which conventional modes of representation establish a relationship with viewers which, in its encouragement of processes like transcendence or alienation, is itself fundamentally masochistic. Indeed, transcendence and alienation are subtle forms of masochism, but masochism none the less--instructive and constructive forms of masochism, if exposed as such.

It is by going unexposed, however, that such processes can be appropriated by dominant power and turned into far

more dangerous forms of masochism that are experienced on a regular basis in institutionalized social relations where it is known by other names. One example, noticed by artists of the early 1970s, is "soldiering." Success in exposing the dynamics of transcendence and alienation depends, I have argued, on how artists bring attention to the relationship between their viewers and themselves--that is, whether they bring to light the agreement upon which that relationship is founded. The works discussed in this study have strongly suggested that such attention has the powerful potential of disallowing masochism's real-world fulfillment by providing the viewer the opportunity to replay, symbolically, its psychosocial--and, more specifically, its psycholegalistic--etiology. In this process, crucially important questions are opened up regarding the institutional sites in which the roots of that etiology are located.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF PREVENTION

My theory regarding the disallowance of masochism through the replay of some of its aspects is both similar to and different from that of Leo Bersani, as articulated in his numerous cross-referenced texts on violence, particularly masochism, in art and literature. Of particular interest to my study has been The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art (1986),⁴⁹ where the author

analyzes works in which logical resolution to narrative is denied the viewer or reader by means of a representation of violence that pulls his or her attention away from an otherwise linear, logical flow manifest in a visual or written work.

For example, in a segment of ninth-century B.C. Assyrian wall reliefs, Bersani notes the way in which the bodies of two men and a lion are intertwined. The hands of the huntsmen and limbs of the lion are overlapped in such a confusing manner (which hand belongs to which body?) that they become mere formal integers repeated across the flat stone space. Recognizing this repetition does not help the viewer to organize a pictorial logic. Instead, the repetition shakes up the observer's vision; it functions "as an arresting movement, or as an agitated and differential reproduction";⁵⁰ it jerks attention away from the violent anecdotal situation in which the bodies so clearly play a role.

This distraction not only de-narrativizes the work, releasing the observer from the bonds of linear logic, according to Bersani, but reintroduces the viewer or reader to "shattering stimuli" (called "masochistic" by Bersani) that are inherent in developmental stages of infantile sexuality, as outlined by Freud in his Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex. Here, Bersani summarizes, Freud argues that the shattering tension of

sexuality is something one seeks to repeat in life, not evacuate through logic.

Besides pointing out ways in which moments in art and literature such as the one addressed above are akin to points in Freud's own writings where his theory simultaneously approaches and falls away from logical resolution (thus affording Freud an ongoing sexual fix, one presumes, throughout his writing career), Bersani suggests that the overall benefit of these masochistic distractions is that they constructively remind viewers of their relation to real violence in the world. That is, observations of representations of violence make an individual aware of the power of such "mimetic appropriations of the world," thus deterring destructive impulses from being brought to dangerous climax in the world [my emphasis].⁵¹

While both Bersani and I are suggesting that a replay of masochistic impulses in art viewing can offset the possibility of flesh-and-blood masochisms, we differ on what these revisitations need to entail. For Bersani, the viewer's engagement in fantasy, in a continual self-shattering that resists the identificatory closure suggested by rigidly narrativized art and literature, is enough to offset the possibility of actual shatterings--of the body, of the mind, of life itself.

I would agree that fantasy--which, as I outlined

earlier, is a key component of masochism--holds rich, multileveled potential. Indeed, perhaps fantasy is the most valuable tool available to fight the rampant pessimism of the late twentieth century, but I do not believe that it is enough, alone, to deter violence. Unless fantasy continually loops individuals back to the materiality of the human body and an understanding of its own identity as both subject and object, active and passive, impenetrable and vulnerable, it becomes a frivolous avoidance of the vicissitudes of daily social relations in which violence is routinely meted out.

Unless one focuses, as the five artists in this study have guided viewers to do, on the institutional frameworks (for example, the domestic site) and do so within a well-defined methodological framework (involving theory and criticism aimed at all the institutions modeled after and including the home), the fundamental structure of violence can easily be: advanced in real, flesh-and-blood ways; rendered aestheticized by exclusively fantasy-oriented processes like those Bersani champions; "renamed," as Elaine Scarry argues in her expose on The Body in Pain; or denied completely.⁵² Ulay/Abramovic, Burden, Pane, and Acconci disallowed these options, in large part through their choice of representational strategies.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENT: PART ONE

Part of what facilitates the deconstructive strategies of these artists is their reliance on photography. It is only in the arena of performance art-making that photographic documentation of the artist-onlooker agreement is not only provided but is required by the ephemeral nature of the art form. As has been experienced in a "hands-on" fashion throughout the analyses of numerous performances, documentation allows for an ongoing experience of a performance on the part of a beholder.

Now, one could argue that this quality is shared with other art forms. After all, it is quite obvious that since the invention of photography, one can have at least an ongoing visual experience of a painting or sculpture of any era.⁵³ But it is only in performance works that documentation provides the viewer with a way to relate to the artist and his or her actions not only in a visual but tactile sense, thereby connecting the viewer to the chief materials of performance--the body and, subsequently and just as importantly, to the spaces in which the body accrues meaning. Thus, the willed involvement of the viewer--the choice to be an active, sensate participant in the event, a contracted partner, is made clear.

I have referred in general terms to the visual and tactile dynamics inherent in the reception of performance photos throughout this study. But it is time now to

elaborate upon my theory of this experience and what it implies. What I am arguing, quite simply, is this: the viewer of performance documentation touches the photograph taken by a photographer who touched the trigger of the camera as the performer touched his or her own skin, used his or her own body as both an instrument of touch and as performance material. This tautological chain of experiences, working backward in time, locks the viewer into complicity with the cameraperson as well as the performer, binding the viewer into the type of agreement--tacit, unwritten--that sanctioned the performer's action in the first place. The photograph thus becomes a form of "proof" of this agreement.

When the action involves masochism--either in the early 1970s sense of self-abuse or, to look at historical resonances of the same in, say, the Italian Futurists' sense of setting themselves up as virtual targets for their fruit- and vegetable-throwing audiences in the 1910s--a complex and profoundly significant psychodynamic surfaces. This psychodynamic--which, as I have discussed at length, entails a rerouting of the viewer's attention to the domestic site where identities are first formulated--underlies viewing experiences of all forms of art. But the process runs the greatest chance of being exposed when the body appears directly before an audience and/or appears to be directly touched. All performance

artworks, especially masochistic actions, drive this unconscious psychodynamic to the figurative surface of the conscious mind as the artists maneuver, manipulate, or tamper with the literal surface of their bodies.

Tangentially, but of critical importance: if, as I am claiming, this chain of experiences exists in all visual representation but is most acutely sensed in work involving the actual human body (and not just its figural abstraction, as found in painting and sculpture), then our study has enormous relevance to the topic of censorship, especially that which is exacted upon the documentation of violence. Ultimately, then, this study could be used in discussions of dominant power's desire to censor violence in areas of representation--ranging from the visual arts to literature to music to photojournalism--as a way of illusionistically removing viewers from a chain of experiences that pinpoints their complicity in the very agreement which allows masochism to exist and be practiced in the first place.

To pinpoint this complicity is the initial step in motivating criticism and change. Such processes, however, are not encouraged by those in positions of dominant political power who wish, for their own benefit, to deny their participation in (by virtue of their "silent acceptance" of) such acts, and thereby maintain a status quo.⁵⁴ I shall continue discussion of these concepts as

they relate to more recent resonances of masochistic performance in the work of Karen Finley and David Wojnarowicz shortly.

But first, I would like to return to the notion of "proof" I just mentioned. My reference to photographic proof embedded in documentation procedures puts a twist on what Roland Barthes, in his 1964 essay "Rhetoric of the Image," calls the denotative function of photography and, especially, the relation of that function to historiography.⁵⁵ As a simple theoretical base upon which to layer a more complex discussion of Barthes' essay, I would like the reader to think of the mechanical processes of photography as being deployed in the performance arena for the purpose of recording "history-in-the-making." That is, tautologically, "proof sheets" provide, in material form, "proof" that an event took place.

Links between the worlds of photographic representation and law--the latter being the world from which the term "proof" has been borrowed by the former--are apropos of the major points this study has raised. But especially relevant are Barthes' thoughts regarding the slant on history provided by photography's denotative powers. However, while his argument is useful--indeed, it already figured into discussion in Chapter Three--it nonetheless begs for critique, as we shall see.

Barthes argues that the denotative function of

photography creates a "new space-time category," a "real unreality." This category, he writes, as I already previewed, involves "spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction between the 'here-now' and the 'there-then'."⁵⁶ At first glance, Barthes' claim seems to fit one's experience of performance documentation exactly: documentation comprises an entity in the "here-now" (we can, as we have been doing, hold a photograph of a performance in our hands) as well as a record of the "there-then" (the place and time of the performance become aspects of it about which we can never fully recapture specific material meanings, only symbolic, metaphoric).

However, the ways in which Barthes explains his claim and how I have parenthetically applied it are significantly different. For Barthes, the photograph's "unreality" is its "here-now" quality. And this is overridden, he implies, by what he calls the "real" or temporal quality of a "having-been-there."⁵⁷ What is of interest to me in Barthes' schema is not so much his terminology of realism, or its opposite, as it is the way in which he feels compelled to theorize that one set of terms, one quality of the photograph, overrides the other. This "compulsion toward privilege," as it might be called, dissolves what seemed, upon first reading, to contain a very rich, and I would say accurate, indeterminacy.

Barthes preliminarily concluded that space and time form an "illogical conjunction" on photography's denotative level of meaning. One might construe from this claim that the "illogic" of the conjunction has to do with how photography's denotations call upon the viewer to carry out a conceptual balancing act, to attend to both the spatial and temporal aspects of photography simultaneously. Such different concerns would, indeed, operate indeterminately, each threatening to cancel out the other, but defying that threat by insisting on simultaneous attention.

Barthes' override theory forecloses, however, at least momentarily, on the possibility of carrying out this delicate balance. To think of the "here-now" quality of photography as providing a kind of "presence" is, in Barthes' mind, to think metaphysically or, as he puts it, "magically." Dogmatically, he proclaims that "the magical character of the photographic image must be deflated" [my emphasis].⁵⁸

Such an authoritatively dismissive tone is uncharacteristic of Barthes' theorizing. It is, therefore, a tone that calls forth a bit of suspicion. If followed, this suspicion ultimately points in the direction of what appears to be, to put it bluntly, fear--fear of the power of the photograph to operate in a "presence-producing" domain that might just not be

magical. Far from it, I would argue, it is entirely mundane; it is the domain of touch. Subsequent to this passage, Barthes betrays, on his own, the fear detected above. In a description of the photograph as protection, he claims that "in every photograph there is the always stupefying evidence of 'this is how it was,' giving us, by a precious miracle, a reality from which we are sheltered."⁵⁹

Why would one need such shelter, I wish to ask, save for the vulnerability conferred upon the viewer by being made aware of his or her object-status and interrelated subject-status--a vulnerability of which the viewer is made aware through photography's denotative solicitation of the function of touch? Sometimes this awareness is painful, to be sure, especially if the photographs being "handled" show acts of violence, and even more especially if the violence is masochistic. The questions that need to be asked here, then, are these: Are we really sheltered at all as we peruse photographic documentation? Or is Barthes' form of protection as fragile as the paper upon which the image is printed or, moreover, the skin that touches it?

The answers to these questions lie in a rhetorical gap produced by Barthes--this time in a manner more characteristic of his sense of formal irony (the title of the essay is, after all, the "Rhetoric of the Image") and

his seedling-stage commitment to inviting the reader into the writing of the text.⁶⁰ Perhaps recognizing the problematics of his own statements, he opens up a field of interrogation marked by the use of the conditional terms "probably" and "if," asserting that the "temporal equilibrium" of the photograph, its "having-been-there" quality

probably diminishes the projective power of the image....: the "this was so" easily defeats the "it's me." If these remarks are at all correct, the photograph must be related to a pure spectatorial consciousness and not to the more projective, more "magical" fictional consciousness on which film by and large depends [my emphases].⁶¹

Taking advantage of Barthes' gap of conditionality, I want to argue, on the basis of the experience of all the performance photographs perused in this study, that even the indeterminate potential of the denotative aspect of a photograph's meaning does not efface a viewer's identification with the subject matter pictured. The material possibility of a photograph being touched, as has been repeatedly witnessed, provides the viewer with a general point of identification that works in tandem with merely spectatorial possibilities to encourage an awareness of one's own physical presence in the form of bodily objecthood. This process of identification is solidified if that which is pictured happens to be a representation of the human body--the same sensory instrument of which the viewer has become aware from the

outset through tactile interaction with the photograph.

Even more important, however, is that through the "presentifying" experience of touch, the "now" temporal quality of the photograph expands to include the spatial "here" in which the viewing body is situated. The "it's me" quality is not only not defeated, but is restored locationally. From the restoration of the "here-now" scenario, one begins a complicated journey to one's own "there-then" psychological roots, never "losing touch," if you will, with present circumstances.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF MICHAEL FRIED'S "ART AND OBJECTHOOD"

My theory here is, quite obviously, tied to a whole discourse of "presence" and "objecthood" and their inculcation in the production and reception of art--a discourse initiated by Michael Fried in his essay "Art and Objecthood" and responded to by scores of scholars ever since its publication in 1967. "Something is said to have presence," he wrote, "when it demands that the beholder take it into account, that he take it seriously--and when the fulfillment of that demand consists simply in being aware of it and, so to speak, in acting accordingly."⁶²

The progression being articulated here--from thinking, to sensing, to acting--was enforced, in Fried's eyes, by "literalist" (i.e., Minimalist) sculpture. This type of sculpture and its obdurate objecthood set up conditions of

theatricality, he claimed, distancing the viewer and thereby undercutting the modernist aim of allowing the viewer to transcend a work of art, engage in its essence, and achieve what he called, in a benedictionlike conclusion to the essay, a state of "grace" (or "presentness," which he cleverly wishes the reader not to confuse with "presence").

Respondents to Fried's essay have, almost without exception, launched critiques of bits and pieces of his argument that bolster their own agendas; this is as true in inquiries into performance art as anywhere else. For example, Berger ends his analysis of Fried's commentary on Robert Morris by posing the one question he felt Fried had failed to ask: "Why was 'theatrical' space and time so important for artists in the 1960s?"⁶³ The question, situated early in Berger's study, allows him to make a transition into a political and historical contextualization of Morris's fascination with performative modes of artmaking and political activism.

Stiles, on the other hand, leaves primary discussion of Fried's essay to the conclusion of her dissertation. After a several-hundred-page discussion of performance artworks involving destruction and, more specifically, of the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) that provided these works with a legitimizing framework, she is at this point ready to argue that such performance pieces are, in

themselves, modernist, despite their obvious opposition to Fried's definition of the term. The parameters Fried set for his discussion, she argues, "prevented him from considering the dynamic transformation of Modernism represented in event-structured art."⁶⁴ ("Event-structured art," remember, is Stiles's term of choice for what I am calling, more generically, "performance art."⁶⁵)

My own interpolation of Fried into my text is no differently motivated than my colleagues'. One of the things that intrigues me most about the argument put forth in "Art and Objecthood," one of the elusive "bits" from the above quote which I wish to connect to my own agenda, is the following. For Fried, the passivity of "being taken" to a state of grace was to him a far healthier, even more legal, mission for art than the motivation to assertively "take action," to quote from his definition of presence. That is, he speaks of theatricality in medical terms, calling it "infectious." And "literalist sensibility" is labeled legalistically as "corrupted" by theater, to say nothing of being "perverted" by it.⁶⁶

Such strong charges, it seems to me, suggest the need to look deeper into the nature of illegality and pathology and how they might be manifested in so-called "theatrical" forms of art like performance. It is precisely this search in which the performance artists I have been discussing were engaged, precisely the inquiry upon which

they motivate viewers to "take action" by following the denotative cues of photographic documentation back to their connotative source.

Thus, what my analyses of these artists have shown, semiotically, I believe, is that which Rosalind Krauss has stated in a recent response to Fried's work (the following is actually a synopsis of Barthes' theory put forth in his 1970 S/Z). She writes, "denotation does not precede connotation; rather, it follows it, is in fact, produced by it....supposed denotation...is only the last of the codes to be put into place."⁶⁷ And so it is that the artists discussed prompt an observer to follow the lines of production of his or her psychical development backwards, keeping the "fact" ever in mind that that which stimulated this tracking activity does not constitute "fact" in and of itself.

Krauss's response is based on a disagreement with Fried over his muddling of the terminology of structural linguistics and his belief that by the time he wrote "Art and Objecthood" he had, in his own retrospective assessment, "moved into a realm of signification, ultimately Saussurian but mediated by Merleau-Ponty."⁶⁸ Indeed, as Krauss shows, such references are difficult to find in Fried's 1967 essay. But most important in Krauss's contribution to the discourse surrounding this essay is her specific evaluation of the place of the body

within it and her invocation of psychoanalytic theory--the latter being, I believe, a first in the ever-mounting paperwork triggered by Fried.

In the essay upon which the foregoing functioned as a meta-commentary--a paper presented on a panel with Fried in 1987--Krauss took issue with Fried's privileging of the visual under the disguise of concern for the body of the viewer. This body was, as she summarized his claim (in her meta-commentary), "experienced as distanced, hypostatized, alienated...like the object in front of it...submitted to and defined by the flow of material reality, a sort of brute physical plenum without beginning or end, without any inherent drive towards a culmination in meaning...."⁶⁹ Additionally, in her original panel paper, Krauss argued that Fried's privileging of the visual, his reduction of art to "pure optical glitter...establishes the corresponding illusion that its viewer is similarly bodiless, hovering before it as a kind of decorporealized, optical consciousness."⁷⁰

It is following this quote that Krauss makes the important link to psychoanalytic theory, connecting the structural aspects of the aforementioned "correspondence" experienced in art-viewing to the phenomenon experienced in Lacan's mirror-stage. She writes:

[I]t will...be sensed that this very situation, with its disembodiment, its constitution of the subject as a function of the image, its setting the stage for the occlusion of the subject through the mechanisms of

identification with the object--that this repeats as well the terms of the Lacanian Imaginary, particularly from the early period of his working out of the concept of the mirror stage.⁷¹

Krauss, like all others responding to Fried, invokes Lacan for the purpose of proving her own argument regarding the disembodied alienation of the subject (not in Minimalism, by the way, but in Pop Art and the like). However, her commentary also relates to masochistic performance, especially the ways in which the pieces I have discussed problematized interpretations of the mirror stage.

It is, very specifically, the "mechanisms of identification with the object" that the five artists, with the exception of Burden in his bed pieces, consistently activated. And in doing so, it was the "occlusion of the subject" that they simultaneously defied. Indeed, they "set the stage" for the loss of one experience or the other, but prevented that loss by staying in the stage-setting phase, by mining Lacan's "threshold" of the mirror stage.

The mirror stage, so germane to masochistic practice, as I have discussed at length, never lets the observer fully disengage from the material circumstances in which its chief instrument, the mirror, is situated--that is, the home and all its institutional permutations. If one considers their psychoanalytic origins, then, as Krauss suggests, the objecthood and subjecthood so feared and

prized by Fried can, in the end, be experienced simultaneously within the institutional framework in which those identities were initially constructed.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENT: PART TWO

The situational experience just described is accessed, I have been arguing, through the restoration of the "it's me" quality of the body that manifests itself through a series of substitutions, or sharings, of the positions of viewer, cameraperson, and artist. The restoration project occurs, in other words, through touch working in tandem with vision. More precisely, touch is activated through one's fundamental and simple knowledge of the shared materiality of the instrument of touch--i.e., the surface of the body, the skin, the only "external sense," as Anzieu stated, that functions reflexively.

If my remarks are at all correct (and here I produce my own, thoroughly intentional, Barthesian rhetorical gap), it is possible to expand the second portion of Barthes' conditional, ultimately interrogatory statement beyond the notion that the denotative function of photography is "purely spectatorial."⁷² While photography's denotation is undeniably spectatorial, I have demonstrated how it can also work projectively, drawing on the properties of touch as I have discussed it--a touch that mnemonically propels viewers "back" temporally and spatially, exposing

reflexive and anacletic moments that get constructed for every individual in early psychical development. Thus, skin, as it is metaphorized by and in the surface of the photograph--becomes the historicizing bridge linking Barthes' "here-now" (the physical materiality of the body) with the "there-then" (that body's psycho-social-legalistic roots).

It should be clear by now, but warrants emphatic reiteration here in the conclusion, that I am not suggesting that recognition of the shared materiality of skin or sense of touch in mediated experiences of the body yields an understanding of that body as exuding some sort of natural bonding effect that stands outside the influences and vicissitudes of culture and society. Such a theorization would only lead to its perversely rigid corollary--difference (be it gender-, class-, or race-oriented) based on obvious biological difference. On the contrary, it is also possible, as has been proven by this study, that by following theory such as Anzieu's selectively, integrating it carefully with aspects of other theorists' work, one can find an alternative to absolutist readings of human development that are bound by either a totalizing universalism or the most commonly endorsed reaction to the latter--a reductive Marxism.

What my integration of selected theories has shown, in summary, is this: After the development, as Anzieu said

above, of reflexive actions involving touch (taking place in what Freud would call the oral stage of human development), comes one's first reflexive visual experience in front of a mirror (what Lacan would call the mirror stage), followed by a leap into the realm of thought (referred to by Lacan as the symbolic stage, the benchmark of which is the Oedipal scenario). Oral stage, mirror stage, Oedipal scenario--these episodes in psychical development constitute a three-part course traversed, though not necessarily in a linear fashion, by the five selected performance artists in the highlighting of their bodies via masochism. Looking at specific performances has revealed how masochistic practice could provide the opportunity for charting this course and why, historically, these artists chose to take it.

What I have been maintaining, at base, throughout this study is that the types of touch and vision that mobilize an individual through oral, mirror, and Oedipal stages are experienced for a brief but intense moment by everyone. But, just as the shock of touching a finger to a hot iron, or the jolt received from unexpectedly happening upon one's reflection in a hidden mirror, or the surprise of discovering another person's biological sex to be other than previously thought (three hypothetical events that connect, respectively, to the three stages of psychical development at issue)--just as these reactions might be

shared for a fleeting moment by all individuals, so are they followed by protracted moments in which each individual's interpretation of the events will be determined by the personalized context in which they occurred. One's mnemonically inspired movement, then, through corresponding stages of human development after the brief, shared intensity of being catapulted into each stage by touch and sight, is dependent on the more narrowly defined economic, political, and psychological makeup of the specific sites in which that development originally took place, the nature of which has been, is, and always will be under the influence of culture.

Everyone knows enough about photography at this point in history to know that the photograph cannot sustain a viewer's attention on its denotative level of meaning alone. While the denotative message, according to Barthes, can be construed as corresponding to the domain of the natural because it takes place mechanically, seemingly outside human intervention, it only constitutes, as I have been discussing, the registration of that which takes place on the connotative level, where symbolic meanings are, conversely, constructed by human intervention.⁷³ The latter process is infused, Barthes reminds the reader, with culturally induced determinants; these might include the manner in which mechanical processes will be used, what will be photographed, and who

commissions the photograph.

Here, Barthes actually suggests a reading of photography in which the denotative and connotative functions might work off each other consistently and symbiotically. It is this suggestion, perhaps, that culminates in Barthes' greatest contribution to the discourse on the politics of representation. Traditionally, this symbiosis has been manipulated in order to slant meanings to the benefit of those in power, those in command of the technology of production and distribution.

The sophistication of technology, as he argues, can bury cultural codes under a seemingly seamless, natural gloss: "the more technology develops the diffusion of information (and notably of images), the more it provides the means of masking the constructed meaning under the appearance of the given meaning."⁷⁴ If images can be made to look natural, it is reasoned, they will look as unchallengeable, immutable, and indispensable as nature itself. As is well known, this precept has fueled various uses of representation, from propaganda to advertising (the latter being the object upon which Barthes focused his critical gaze in "Rhetoric of the Image" and other essays of this period). The most constructive implication on Barthes' part, however, is that if one knows this symbiosis is manipulated, then one knows it can be

manipulated, by anyone, most importantly by those who benevolently wish to accede to power, in the sense of empowering themselves.

To conclude my critique of Barthes on photography vis-a-vis the artists I have studied and, moreover, performance art in general, the two key points I have tried to make are as follows. One, it is the operation of touch, along with vision, that give birth to an experience of the body in which the balancing act between its inherent identities as object and subject, constituted by both nature and culture, is sustained. By ignoring this operation, as most theorists of photography have done, the material presence of the volatile, potentially active body is effaced. The risk that is run in this oversight is that possibilities of intervention and change, which necessitate the activation of that body, are also elided. The five artists in this study refused to be ignored, as the extreme masochism they have represented avows; and, thus, their work has contributed greatly to keeping these possibilities in clear sight.

It is precisely the aforementioned elision, of course, that dominant power would most like to preserve. By activating the body in performance art, which in turn requires photographic documentation experienced not only through vision but touch, performance artists in general have maintained the possibilities of a "felt presence" on

the part of the viewer as well as, most importantly, his or her subsequent mobilization. From this perspective, performance art is always-already political.

Two, performance artists of the twentieth century do not allow fear or dogmatism to mask an unsettling, indeterminate consciousness of the body. Male and female performance artists alike foreground the body, risking a simplistic reading of it as the ultimate emblem of nature. Through an even greater risk of meddling with the apparent seamlessness of that emblem in visual and tactile ways, they temporarily restore for the observer proof of the "it's me" sameness of the body, as well as provide access to experiences of the body that are culturally different. In so doing, they challenge the stereotyped fixity of those differences. Performance brings this proof into view and makes it undeniably graspable, through its reliance on the denotative possibilities of photography--i.e., the possibilities of relocating observers in the substance of its connotative meanings.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Clearly, not all performances, especially those of the early twentieth century (Futurist performances, for example, that resonate with the same masochistic implications as the ones I have concentrated upon, though their actual practices of masochism were less extreme)

have extant photographic documentation. Thus, inquiry into the representation of performance must go beyond questions of exhibition and/or photo-publication practices. This lack requires the observer to reconstruct performance works from texts, of which there are two forms--one written, one unwritten.

The written texts are those that describe, interpret, and criticize the original work. Obviously, such texts exist for most works of art, but in the history of performance they are not only produced by critics and historians, but in almost all cases by the artists themselves. The manifestos of the Futurists and the performance documentation published by the artists looked at from the early 1970s serve as examples of the artist taking control over the explication of what would otherwise be left solely to the sheer possibility of photographic documentation or whim of the art historian or critic.

Barthes' theories are again helpful here, where we need guidance regarding what he would call the "linguistic message" of such writings. This message, he argues in the "Rhetoric of the Image," functions in written documentation as "anchorage;" it attempts to "fix the floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs." This terror, as I quoted earlier, issues from the "polysemy" of an image, which

"poses a question of meaning...[which]...always comes through as a dysfunction."75

It is of interest, in looking at an array of performance works across time, that the written texts of masochistic performers are authoritatively descriptive to a degree proportionate to the terror encountered in the photographic imagery accompanying them. Thus, in Italian Futurist work where masochism was practiced in a relatively mild form (and where there is very little photographic documentation due to the work's placement in the history of photographic technology) the artists' manifestos go beyond mere description of performances to a poetic interpretation of (or even prescription for) their impact. Sometimes the poetry involved neologisms--and almost always, superlatives.

For example, in the Futurist manifesto for "The Variety Theatre" (1913) the group's founder, F. T. Marinetti, wrote: "To psychology, it [the Variety Theatre] opposes what I call 'body-madness' (fisicofollia)."⁷⁶ Psychology (interestingly enough, given the theoretical context of the discussion in previous chapters) is situated by Marinetti on one side of an imaginary divide, where he aligns it with "conventional theatre" and "stupid analyses of feelings"--that is, any process that requires the viewer to enter deeply into something, be it the illusionistic space of narrativistic drama or the unknown

territory of the psyche. Placed in contrast to psychology is the Futurist performance strategy of "fisicofollia"--a made-up strategy involving the framing of the body as a consummately malleable surface convertible into spectacle, into its own extreme, into the "greatest anatomical monstrosity," Marinetti writes, or "greatest female beauty" or "greatest muscular frenzy."⁷⁷

The Futurist conception of the body's use as artistic material, one might surmise from this text, entailed the practice of pushing it to its limits and there inscribing it with madness. All feelings and thoughts that might define an individual's subjectivity could thus be read on the exterior of the body. Functioning exclusively as object, in other words, the body's external morphology could reveal all there was to know.

The body itself was thereby freed up to be an integer in pure physical activity (especially war activity, as the interventionist Futurists would have liked their audiences to analogically think). Indeed, this was the point of the manifesto--to promote pure body action on the part of the performer, as divorced from intellectual or emotional action. Moreover, the image of the performer, it was implicitly suggested, was to be reproduced by the audience (thus, the performing body-embattled body analog would be complete).⁷⁸

While the specific, grandiose theater plans outlined in

this manifesto (to offer "the finest gymnastics and acrobatics of the Japanese," for example) were never fully realized by the Futurists, some of the ideas were successfully carried out on a metaphoric level in a December 1913 performance in Florence. By this time, audiences came expecting an inversion of the ordinary performer-viewer (active-passive) relation that had become the trademark of Futurist performance since it had begun in the latter part of the first decade of the 1900s.⁷⁹

As soon as the curtain rose, the artists and writers were treated as the masochistic targets they had come to signify to audiences everywhere. Rather than waiting for the action on stage to begin, however, the audience immediately bombarded the performers with food items. Calm was temporarily restored as Marinetti began his oration--until, that is, he read the lines "Oh how beautiful to die with a red flower opening at one's temples." At this point a viewer, inspired out of his passivity, simply handed Marinetti a pistol and ordered: "Carry on, kill yourself."⁸⁰ Marinetti was not at the time presenting his own physical body as monstrous, frenzied, or mad--as the "Variety Theatre Manifesto" had so poetically suggested--but his orated image of the body nonetheless converted it into a metaphor of the "fisicofollia" the Futurists so desired.

While Marinetti's actions on stage were far less

extensive in their masochism than those studied in the foregoing chapters, his use of the written and orated word was far more extensive and ornate. By the early 1970s, when photography could provide full, even close-up, views of the piercing, biting, slicing, and puncturing of flesh, masochistic artists relied for the most part on terse, unromanticized description of their work.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 1970S: FINAL REMARKS

The claim I just made has been borne out in Ulay/Abramovic's contractlike written documentation and Pane's measured statements in interviews. Even Acconci's texts, for all their own inherent poetry, were minimal in terms of volume. And with the exception of Burden's account of Oracle, his self-published catalogs (Chris Burden 71-73 and Chris Burden 74-77) consist of short, one-paragraph statements and accompanying black-and-white photographs documenting performances from these periods. His description of Shoot is typically terse: "At 7:45 p.m. I was shot in the left arm by a friend. The bullet was a copper jacket 22 long [sic] rifle. My friend was standing about fifteen feet from me."⁸¹

It is as if the almost clinical nature of these artists' texts could provide them with a way to control, or at least mitigate, the "terror" (to recall Barthes' term from above) of their acts--for themselves as well as

their viewers. These artists' written documentary efforts might, in fact, be seen by Barthes as "repressive." The anchoring function of the text, he argues,

directs the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others....language clearly has a function of elucidation, but this elucidation is selective....With respect to the liberty of the signifieds of the image, the text has thus a repressive value and we can see that it is at this level that the morality and ideology of a society are above all invested.⁸²

But performance artists in general and masochistic performers in particular prevent this repression from taking hold, despite the apparent intention of their written efforts to enforce it. Their efforts are ironic, then, the irony rooted in the temporary believability of the writer's words.

The artists' writings--either extremely romanticized (as in the Futurist examples) or extremely terse (as in the early 1970s)--hold a reader's attention only for a moment before he or she starts to question the alleged "truth" they posit. Questioning is augmented, I would argue, when the function of touch (as it applies to photographic documentation) takes over, keeping the meaning of a performance forever unfixed, insisting it convey meaning both in its own historical context and that of any viewer, anytime, anywhere. Moreover, the artists defy potential repression by choosing to engage in masochism in the first place, thus challenging the

audience to be complicit in their actions--which, in and of itself, can only lead to further questioning.

What this dissertation has demonstrated is that by the time the five artists studied turned to masochism and performance--that is, by the waning years of the Vietnam War and the social, political, and cultural revolution that coincided with it both here and in Europe--the phenomenon of the modern contract had begun to lose its beneficial valence. During its century-long reign, modern contract had allowed complicated "meeting-of-the-minds" processes of acceptance (and its inherent possibilities of negotiation among participants in any given contractual agreement) to be overlooked for the purpose of advancing, for better or for worse, processes of offer (in which the foundations of new ideologies, ranging from Socialism to Nazism and Fascism, were established) and processes of consideration (in which ideologies were continually formulated at the expense of the body and its consideration as an entity of exchange, as in the wartime "exchange" of life for death).

By the early 1970s it had become clear, if only on an unconscious level, that something was wrong with this picture. The contractual underpinnings of social, political, and economic life had failed. And that which had been overlooked--namely, contractual acceptance--needed to be brought into the light and overhauled for the

benefit its negotiatory processes could produce.

Political theorist Stanley Aronowitz speaks to the history of disillusionment over the broken promises of what I have been calling, after Gilmore, the "modern contract" and what Aronowitz refers to loosely as a "social contract."⁸³ Due to his comments' comprehensiveness and conclusiveness--qualities appropriate to having reached the final moments of my study--they are worth quoting at length. Despite the chronological and geopolitical limitations he places on his observations, they may, as I shall argue below, be expanded to apply to the various topics I have raised in this dissertation. He asserts that

the Depression of the 1930s would certainly not have produced a mass popular left if capital had not reneged on its promise of the good life to both immigrant and native youth. For the American dream was synonymous with economic security. Capital had thus broken the social contract by closing the frontier of economic opportunity. Of course, young workers fared better than their older comrades who were consigned to the bread lines and Hoovervilles. But if one was lucky to have a job it did not mean dignity: wage labor in these times was self-evident humiliation. By 1933, mass organizing among the unskilled and semi-skilled, most of them young, brought millions into both new industrial unions and old AFL craft unions.

The 60s revolt was caused by another kind of broken contract, one generated by the very success of the system during the New Deal in reconstituting the American Dream. The generation born around 1940 and after never experienced the culture of deprivation and this opened the possibility of seeing the injustice of American foreign policy, racial discrimination and poverty as signs of the moral decay of late capitalism. These concerns were in fact mirror images of the middle-class discomfort with the banality of everyday life in the suburbs. Consumer society obliged its

white, middle-class beneficiaries to accept the end of history as the price of economic security. For the new historical subjects this was too steep a price to pay: a euphoria grounded in mediocrity.

The end of the [Vietnam] war removed the one universal issue from the public eye. When activists were forced back into single, often locally based, issue movements, or into trying to recapture the initiative by forming national organizations that substituted somebody else's revolution for our own, the era had ended.⁸⁴

I believe Aronowitz's insights can be expanded beyond the shorelines of America and beyond a causality based in capitalism, to include other countries and other political triggers. It is important to consider, for example, the disillusionment experienced by certain individuals, many artists included, in the 1930s over the increasingly compromised politics of Socialism and/or Marxism.⁸⁵ In taking a look at this more political aspect of disillusionment, one may utilize Aronowitz's astute observations retrospectively to see how the groundwork of the broken modern (or social) contract lay in such ideologies as Fascism.

To elaborate upon these historical issues would take me well beyond the parameters of my discussion of the early 1970s. But I wanted at least to raise the issues inasmuch as any thorough investigation of performance art which looks at intimations of Ulay/Abramovic's, Pane's, Burden's, and Acconci's work in that of the Futurists--or Dadaists, Russian Futurists, Surrealists, Bauhaus members, or Happenings artists--needs to take these more broadly

articulated issues concerning contract into consideration.

Returning now to my specific time frame, I want to focus on what I see as Aronowitz's most provocative point, made in the last sentence quoted. Here, he quickly outlines the direction activism took after the Vietnam War had ended. He expresses concern over the ways in which "someone else's revolution" was taking the fore in this period, siphoning energy from original goals of the New Left. In terms of the objects of my study, it was precisely in this period that the most intense level of masochistic performance began to wane, and the alternative space movement began to burgeon. The original goal of both these phenomena, I would argue, was to address the trouble embedded in the structure and psychodynamics of the domestic site, upon which other troubled institutions were modeled.

In the history of performance art I have surveyed here and the history of alternative spaces that will be the subject of this study's sequel, one sees Aronowitz's concern played out. In closing, then, I would like to touch on some highlights of these histories and suggest how artists' concerns of the 1970s, in the era of masochistic performance and the early alternative space movement, indeed, became "someone else's." Simultaneously, I wish to open a polemic concerning performance art and its institutions that will help bridge

to issues in the contemporary art world that are equally as troubling as those previously explored.

MASOCHISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF MORE RECENT EVENTS

It is hardly even necessary to note that by the turn of the decade into the 1980s there had been a marked shift in performance art toward a mode that would be considered, due to its formality and scale, more theatrical. Some individuals have suggested that one of the causes for this shift had to do with a change in the primary funding system for performance and the institutions that present it--namely, the establishment of the Interarts Program at the National Endowment for the Arts in the early 1980s.

The intention of this program was to support the integration of media in presentations which could be called, very flexibly, "performance art" pieces. The program placed emphasis on processes of cross-fertilization--i.e., collaboration of artists in many fields. Thus, grant proposals and funding tended to be larger in scale than performance artwork in its previous permutation had enjoyed.

Apropos of this topic, a former director of an alternative space in Los Angeles known as the Woman's Building, Terry Wolverton, made the following controversial statement:

I think funding killed performance art. This is not

meant to sound downwardly mobile or imply that artists shouldn't make money. But in the 1970s when there was [very little] money for performance, it was an exceedingly democratic art form....You could, in fact, invite five people to your garage and have a legitimate art experience that everyone would understand as such.⁸⁶

Indeed, one might consider those "garages" to be alternative spaces which, out of their total funding, might be able to offer an honorarium to a performance artist of a few hundred dollars. Wolverton continues:

In the 1980s....the Interarts Program at the NEA provided funding for a very particular kind of performance art--a collaboration between experimental dance, experimental music, visual art--which is not really performance art in my view. But press attention, audiences, "presenting spaces" began gravitating to where the funding was. With the rise of festivals like BAM's [Brooklyn Academy of Music's] Next Wave Festival, the democratic aspect of the art form [is lost]. The person who's got a few hundred bucks to invite people over to their garage can't compete with [someone] who's got....\$50,000 worth of production value....I don't think this grew organically out of the art form; I think it grew out of the funders imposing a view of what direction they wanted the genre to take.⁸⁷

By 1980 alternative spaces were known as "artists' spaces," and by 1982 as "visual artists' organizations" (or "vao's," as they are most commonly called today).⁸⁸ The dropping of the term "alternative" suggests that these institutions were trying to meet the Interarts Program sensibility halfway. These spaces' programming, as alternative-space historian Stephen Kahn reported, shifted its emphasis to "commercially marginal work in general," including even painting and sculpture.⁸⁹ That is, these

spaces reoriented themselves to all media, thus setting themselves far from alternative spaces' original highlighting of performance art.

If it is true that such funding transitions as that manifested by the establishment of the NEA's Interarts Program perpetuated the demise of an outspoken "alternativeness" on the part of vao's, aka alternative spaces, what is of interest to my study is the following. Inherent in the described transition is a refined notion of the contractual "meeting of minds," a refined notion of "collaboration." However, if one were to look at the funding record of the Interarts Program in the early 1980s, one would not find a true collaboration--or negotiation--with fields, topics, or issues other than those distinctly circumscribed by the word "art" (i.e., dance, music, visual arts). "Refined" is the appropriate choice of terms here, for one finds very little representation of such unrefined, messy, or vague issues as those seen in this study of performance work which collaborated and negotiated with, among other things, the world of law.

It has only been in the last few years that artists have ventured into this world once again. And when they have, it has been in the most literal way possible--by actually being indicted for producing what legislators have deemed "obscene." It could be argued, as I hinted

earlier in this study, that artists like Karen Finley and Robert Mapplethorpe were drawn into the arena of law because they pushed the masochistic contract straight into their viewers' faces--at times rubbing their proverbial noses in it.

The image of Finley that most affronted the conservative Right in this country was the image of her body covered with chocolate. It was rarely noted, however, that the text she read as she smeared the feces-like brown goo all over her body had to do with bulimia and the masochistic habit of some individuals with this eating disorder to overmedicate themselves with laxatives until, awash in their own uncontrolled defecation, they have created, in their own eyes, a parallel image of themselves as nothing other than "shit."

I suggest, despite the fact that most individuals who objected to Finley's work had never heard nor read this powerful text, that the masochism implied in this image called forth in observers an unwanted sense of responsibility for such troubling psychological disorders. Finley's images, as well as those by Mapplethorpe in which men are seen in positions of self-induced pain, expose the workings of the masochistic contract, making its observers into automatic participants. Proponents and opponents alike are denied the possibility of denying their own complicity in any permutation of the depicted acts.

Unfortunately, what is possible is a displacement of this complicity, a transfer of the dynamic of working hand-in-hand with the masochist, into working hand-in-hand with precisely that against which the masochist reacts--the law, in all its psychoanalytic, institutionalized versions. Thanks to Finley and Mapplethorpe, then, one can begin to see the trap into which masochistic performance can always fall.

Deleuze's caveat regarding the relationship between contract and law is apropos here and worth repeating as I approach the end of my study. He wrote:

[W]hile the contract implies in principle certain conditions like the free acceptance of the parties, a limited duration and the preservation of inalienable rights, the law that it generates always tends to forget its own origins and annul these restrictive conditions....For the law, once established, violates the contract in that it can apply to a third party, is valid for an indeterminate period and recognizes no inalienable rights.⁹⁰

This third party of which Deleuze speaks is constituted by the personification of the law--in its fullest figuration, the Supreme Court. Those uncomfortable with their position in a contractual arrangement will view this third party metonymically--in other words, as an individual whom they employ, precisely, for the purpose of restraining rights, hopefully for as long as the life term of the threatened second party.

In applying Deleuze's caveat to the performances discussed in Chapters One and Three, its institutional

ramifications, and the more recent work of Mapplethorpe and Finley mentioned briefly above, it may be concluded that when the masochistic contract is made too prominent, law does indeed take over. Any constructive notion of contract can thereby get left behind. This takeover constitutes the "underbelly," so to speak, of Gilmore's glorification of the deformalization of modern contract and the requisite, concomitant reintegration of tort.

Gilmore hinted at the presence of an underbelly to the two-headed beast of contract and law when he suggested that the historic changes in the theory of contract--changes taking place at about the same time as the performances investigated in this dissertation--be viewed in terms of "contort." The grotesque-ification of the body carried out by Acconci, Burden, Ulay/Abramovic, and Pane stands as an illustration of his point. However, just as these artists showed that one cannot hold a contorted position forever, so can it be argued that there is in fact life after the death of contract pronounced by Gilmore.

What the artists studied in this dissertation have led me to conclude is that it is time now, in the art world of the 1990s, for a reformalization of contract--not in the modernist sense of driving a wedge between that which is said and that which is meant by its terms, nor in a postmodernist sense of its "tortification." Rather, what

is called for is a transformation of contract that would allow for its flexibility, its ability to maneuver in the nooks and crannies of tort/law for the purposes of making the latter less monolithic and more subservient to the needs of contractual partners.

The delicate balance of conflictual identities borne out of the mirror stage could, then, always be in effect, generating an understanding of our perpetual status as both subjects and objects, simultaneously. Taking the liberty now of addressing the reader directly in my concluding remarks, I suggest that the latter situation would entail accepting our complicity in all acts around us, in seeing that we are continually in the process of, or on the verge of, witnessing others' vulnerabilities, others' masochisms. It is precisely this position that the artists discussed in this dissertation forced us to take up as we witnessed their performances.

Put bluntly, these artists demonstrated to us through their masochistic practices that we are consistently on the verge of witnessing a suicide. It is important to understand here that recognizing this fact, as well as our complicity in its circumstances, does not mean we are responsible for stopping such an act nor guilty for causing it. Rather, what these artists have shown us, and the proposed transformation in contract emphasizes, is that we must come to terms with our silent acceptance of

institutions to which the masochist responds, the institutions over which we are entitled to have power. As we do so, we see that complicity can entail empathy--empathy deep enough to prompt an understanding, on a highly metaphoric level, that our own suicide could be next.

For the lay person, flexibility of contract can be attained by: acknowledging our simultaneous differences from and similarities to others in our environment; engaging in a perpetual meeting of minds that disallows a signing of any form of contract (the making of any sort of agreement) that considers the body to be an entity of exchange; perpetuating a negotiated acceptance of the body as nothing other than an object whose vulnerability can be managed through the exertion of the power of the subject. Unless we make and keep contract flexible, the "suicide rate"--real or metaphoric--will climb. This, I believe, is the message given to us, in far more viscerally recognizable metaphoric terms than those I have just used, by the artists of the early 1970s who chose to grapple with their bodies and the psychodynamics by which the body comes to be known.

These artists' efforts were carried out at an increasing level of risk as they themselves came to understand the nature of the modern contract into which they had been born but which, by the early 1970s, had been

broken. The hope with which they leave us is derived from confronting our silent acceptance of the invisible institutional mechanisms that powerfully affect our lives in far from invisible ways.

A still photograph of performance artist David Wojnarowicz with his mouth sewn shut in a recent AIDS activism film entitled Silence=Death speaks to these issues (Fig. 19). Wojnarowicz, who died of AIDS on July 22, 1992, was yet another artist whose work was indicted as "obscene." Thus, he was well acquainted with the far-from-invisible ways in which various institutions (from the medical to the legal) affect our lives. The photograph--a formal echo of the 1970s image of Ulay with which I began this study--is a fitting image upon which to close. For it serves, along with Ulay's, as a poignant reminder of the ongoing and ever-increasing urgency of confronting our silent acceptance of institutional operations that are oppressive.

The answers to the dilemmas these images represent lie in upholding a belief in the power of alternatives and in promoting processes of negotiation with those we encounter on all levels of social relations--relations which always have been and will continue to be based on some version of contract and its inherent capacity to mobilize critique. What that version will be is up to us.

NOTES - CHAPTER FOUR

1. Quoted in Michaels, The Gold Standard, 125-26. Michaels provides the following as original citation: Richard T. Ely, Property and Contract in Their Relations to the Distribution of Wealth (New York, 1914), 716-17.

2. Quoted in Michaels, The Gold Standard, 130. Original quote from Ely, Property and Contract, 652.

3. Michaels lodges the same caveat in terms of comparing American and feudal slavery, connecting them with domestic issues that are of interest to our discussion. He warns that "it is impossible to understand the masochistic contract as a straightforward transformation of 'old-fashioned' or 'feudal' slavery. Apologists for American slavery had praised its familial and paternalist character, contrasting the security of a society modeled on the natural order of the family to the insecurity of an industrial society indifferent to natural modes of organization, and preferring the sentimental relations of the South to the market relations of the North....If slavery in the 'ancient world' invoked, however disingenuously, the ties of family and affection, modern slavery, as depicted in the masochistic contract, prohibits any noncontractual relation between owner and owned and seems to derive part of its erotic power from the very absence of any such relation" (The Gold Standard, 126-27).

While Michaels' caveat is well-taken, for obvious reasons, I would argue against both his and Deleuze's belief that the masochistic contract succeeds in dismantling the construct of family (for Deleuze this would necessarily take place in parthenogenetic rebirth), especially that its derivation of pleasure relies on this process. I believe that one engages in a masochistic contract for the express purpose of exposing dysfunction in the family and all institutional structures modeled after it. Furthermore, it is in large part because of this purpose that pleasure is really not an integer at all in the practice of masochism, except perhaps as an exercise of repression of the critique at hand--a repression enacted, generally, by the individual carrying out the contractual role of "silent acceptor."

Also, note Michaels' disagreement with Deleuze's (and my own) connections between contract and law (125, n. 14), which Michaels dismisses in favor of, as he puts it, "the relation between contracts and markets." I feel it is necessary to make both sorts of connections, which I have tried to do throughout this study.

4. Quoted in Marvin E. Gettleman, Jane Franklin, Marilyn Young and H. Bruce Franklin, eds., Vietnam and America: A Documented History (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 404. Hersch published a synopsis of his research into the devastation at My Lai, much of which was based on interviews with participants, in My Lai 4: A Report on the Massacre and Its Aftermath (New York: Random House, 1970); a portion of the Report is excerpted in Gettleman et al., 404-17.

5. As Gettleman et al. point out in their introduction to the excerpt from Hersch's Report, Hersch's news articles motivated individuals in the military to come forth with observations of similar incidents. For example, a lieutenant posted near My Lai told the press that his "Zippo squad" had burned down thirteen neighboring villages the month before the My Lai reports broke. (Gettleman et al., Vietnam and America, 404; originally reported in the New York Times, 26 November 1969.)

6. James William Gibson, The Perfect War: The War We Couldn't Lose and How We Did (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 125.

7. Ibid., 124. Gibson also explores practical motivations for the bending of numbers, like job advancement or even more subtle "rewards" which, apropos of my topic, operated on a highly masochistic level. As Gibson recounts, "in some stories, fabricating enemy body counts becomes an activity one party conducts to 'reward' another party for doing something. General Williamson's acceptance of the lie is a tacit reward for Colonel Carmichael's submission to his will" (126).

8. In the conflation of the entities "subject" and "signifier," I am relying on the general line of thinking initiated by Charles Sanders Peirce and elaborated upon by Emile Benveniste and Lacan regarding the identification of the human subject as sign or signifier. See Kaja Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 17ff, for a most helpful, concise summary of these scholars' thoughts.

She writes: "Man (and by 'man' Peirce means that which is constitutive of the human subject) does not only know the world through language; he is himself the product of language: [Peirce writes that] '...the word or sign which man uses is the man himself....the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought, proves that man is a sign....the man and the...sign are identical....' The point upon which Peirce here insists is that....we are cognitively available to ourselves and others only in the guise of

signifiers, such as proper names and first-person pronouns, or visual images, and consequently are for all intents and purposes synonymous with those signifiers.

"This passage from Peirce anticipates more recent developments in semiotics, in particular those conducted by Emile Benveniste and Jacques Lacan....For these theoreticians too the subject is a sign or signifier" (18). (Peirce quote is from his Collected Papers, eds. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931], vol. 5, 189.)

That to which Silverman is referring here as synonymy between one's self and sign is what I have been referring to as the indeterminate, delicately balanced relationship between body-as-object and body-as-subject. However, in order to understand the complex ways in which synonomies or indeterminate balances work, one must analytically and critically wrench their constituents apart in order to see how they go together. It is toward this understanding that Silverman's theorizations and, in a much different context, my own, are directed.

9. Gibson, The Perfect War, 166.
10. Stiles, "Synopsis of DIAS," 29.
11. Rousseau, "Social Contract," 24ff.
12. J. Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish, "Rousseau," in The Western Intellectual Tradition (Dorset Press, 1986), 300-301.
13. Ibid., 301.
14. Alan Watson, Slave Law in the Americas (Athens, Ga. and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 66.
15. Rousseau, "Social Contract," 20.
16. Watson, Slave Law, 85.
17. Rousseau, "The Social Contract," 15.
18. This slippage has occurred despite Rousseau's detection of flaws in the Roman system of law. "At the height of its glow," he writes, "Rome suffered a resurgence of all the crimes of tyranny, and was on the verge of perishing, because it had placed legislative authority and sovereign power in the same hands" ("Social Contract," 37).
19. Watson, Slave Law, 63.

20. Ibid., 67. The other colony was Mississippi.

21. Ibid., 69.

22. Ibid., 68-69. The South Carolina law's more severe nature was due to, one could argue, its being less religious in its stipulations--less religious, that is, for rather obvious, spurious reasons. The substitution of "white person" in the South Carolina ruling for "Christian" in its model not only perversely eliminates the possibility of letting a converted slave off the hook, but suppresses the suggestion that "any white person" in the South might want to consider the moral compromises of basic Christian tenets that were being enacted by the institution of slavery in the first place.

23. Ibid., 66.

24. Ibid.

25. Of course, in this presumption alone I am pronouncing my methodological difference from Watson, whose mission was to prove that "[l]aw made for one time and for one place lives on for a very different time and a very different place" and that "changed social circumstances do not in themselves change law" (Watson, Slave Law, 47). See Chapter Two, text at nn. 74-77 supra, for more discussion of his methodology.

26. A point of clarification: the terms "functional" and "positive" are being used here to suggest one's involvement in unraveling masochism's metaphoric meanings, specifically the individual's need for an indeterminate balance of dualistic identifications; my terms "dysfunctional" and "negative" are to be read in contrast to the foregoing and thus are more obvious in meaning. As a subtext to that which I am saying in my main text, I should also make it clear that I believe that by accepting responsibility for slaves, even if one did not own a slave, was to perpetuate slavery, the legacy of which is confronted daily in the form of modern masochisms, which leave individuals feeling as if there is no place to move because of the power of the economic system that holds their contractual structure in place.

27. See Chapter Two, text at n. 100 supra.

28. On America's cultural imperialism in the post-World War II era, see Serge Guilbaut, How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983). Guilbaut's text should never be read, however, without a parallel read of two important

critical responses: David Craven, "The Disappropriation of Abstract Expressionism," Art History 8 (December 1985), 499-515; Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "A Concrete History of Abstract Expressionism," Art in America 72 (March 1984), 19, 21.

29. Watson, Evolution, 126, n. 13.

30. One exception would be a piece written by Pane on "The body and its support-image for non-linguistic communication," in which she sketches her view of the role played by photography, especially in relation to the body, in performance work. Her thinking appears to be derived almost directly from three works by Roland Barthes: "The Rhetoric of the Image" (1964) as read through and overshadowed by Writing Degree Zero (orig. 1953), and Elements of Semiology (orig. 1964), esp. pages 90-91. She writes: "The body, which is at the same time project/material/performer of an artistic practice, finds its logical support within the image, through the photographic medium....A single image contains the "zero" degree of significance....The reading of an image, or a series, or a sequence establishes itself on two levels: on the one hand, on what is shown and on the other, on what it means. The first is the statement of a reality to which the images refer, as they do not contain any arbitrary or unmotivated sign, the second consists in identifying, deciphering the 'semantic message.' One is tied to the 'semiology of the optical image,' and inversely, the other is tied to the significance, that is, to the 'denotative structures.'"

Pane's position on photography and the body, as I suggested in my assessment of her sources, does not reflect a response to the nuances of the first source listed--Barthes' "Rhetoric," which I shall discuss at length shortly. That is, it does not link up with the direction in which Barthes seems to be going in this essay, which is toward a belief, articulated fully by 1970 and summarized by Rosalind Krauss in the same upcoming discussion, that "denotation does not precede connotation; rather, it follows it, is in fact, produced by it." (See n. 67, this chapter, and text supra.)

Pane's one-page statement was published twice: Artitudes 3 (February-March 1973), 10; Vergine, Il corpo come linguaggio, artist's entry, n.p.

31. Moreover, questions can be raised regarding the economic factors in the actual masochistic relations that formulated the basis of Masoch's novels. Such questions have, until recently, been as conveniently overlooked by literary theorists dealing with the author's writings as by the author himself. For an exception to this rule, see

a recent issue of RE/SEARCH devoted to Wanda von Sacher-Masoch's own writings. The suggestion is made in the publication that Wanda's economic needs as a single mother and her lack of training for any trade (in a culture and time that were already not conducive to survival of a woman supporting a family alone) played a large part in her decision--rather than choice--to "sign on" as Léopold von Sacher-Masoch's partner in masochism and marriage. See Wanda von Sacher-Masoch, The Confessions of Wanda von Sacher-Masoch, trans. Marian Phillips, Caroline Hebert, and V. Vale (San Francisco: RE/SEARCH Press, 1990).

32. Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia, xiv.

33. Ibid., 114-22.

34. Ibid., 112.

35. Ibid., 87.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 111.

38. A notable exception, of course, would be Adrian Piper, who in the early 1970s did a series of what she called "Catalysis" pieces, in which, as described by Lucy Lippard, she "'mutilated' and 'barbarized' her image as an attractive young woman (by wearing vile-smelling clothes and performing bizarre, nonviolent but antisocial acts) to mirror in repulsive exaggeration how the Other is perceived. By simultaneously emphasizing her difference and dissolving the usual means of communication between herself and a viewer of her art, she discovered a destabilizing strategy, a way of subverting social behavior to make it reflect upon itself." Lippard also refers to recent "accus[ations] of masochism" launched at Piper for "purveying bourgeois guilt by 'passing for black' when she could pass for white" (Lucy R. Lippard, Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America [New York: Pantheon Books, 1990], 43-44).

Tracking such accusations, speaking with Piper, and situating her work within the contractual context of masochism I have been discussing would constitute a provocative essay, remaining for the moment outside the scope of this study.

For Lippard's commentary (with quotes from Lowery Sims) on the relatively few people of color in the performance arena in the 1970s, with the exception of black women, see Mixed Blessings, 91-93.

39. Lebel spoke of his experiences at the Renault factory

in an unpublished interview with Kristine Stiles, 1982. Thanks to Stiles for this information.

40. The topic of attenuating alienation is complicated, as has been suggested throughout the dissertation, both in art and politics. Stiles, as quoted earlier, feels that destruction-oriented works (which indeed were influenced by Happenings) "reduce" alienation but do not "resolve" it. (See Stiles, "Synopsis of DIAS," 29.)

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, in assessing Andy Warhol's work in the context of the writings of Happenings artist Allan Kaprow, points out that Kaprow "speaks with astonishing naivete of the possibility of a new participatory aesthetic emerging out of Pollock's work: 'But what I believe is clearly discernible is that the entire painting comes out at the participant (I shall call him that, rather than observer) right into the room....'" This "participatory aesthetic" intended, as did much of avant-garde practice of the twentieth century, according to Buchloh, to activate the viewer (and thus diminish alienation, one might say) but had been appropriated by the institution of "advertisement design..., soliciting the viewer's active participation as Consumption" (Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956-1966," in Andy Warhol: A Retrospective, ed. Kynaston McShine [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989], 45; Kaprow quote is from "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," Artnews 57 [October 1958], 56).

Issues of alienation, its reduction through aestheticization, etc., must be considered in terms of their own historical context. Today, political protests on the part of ACT-UP members, for example, often exploit the distancing aspects of confrontational strategies in a dialectical effort to: 1) reiterate the alienation experienced both on the part of homophobic individuals (a self-willed alienation from the "Other") and gays (sometimes self-willed for purposes of protection and community-formation) and 2) attenuate the alienation for practical purposes of working together to solve a dilemma that is not, as is often thought in the first described form of alienation, specific to one's sexual preference (or gender, class, race, or life-style in general).

41. Berger, Labyrinths, 117. Preceding Berger citations are from this page as well.

42. Statement (unpublished by Berger) delivered in discussion at "The Scholar and the Feminist XV" conference, Barnard College, March 1988, and subsequently published in my "Performance, Video, and Trouble in the Home," 149.

43. Stiles, "Synopsis," 29.
44. Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism," 46.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 47.
47. Ibid., 53.
48. See "List of Illustrations" for information on where performances discussed in this study were presented.
49. For full citation see n. 44, Chapter Three.
50. Bersani, Freudian Body, 74.
51. Ibid., 54.
52. Scarry, Body in Pain, 66ff. See my n. 38, Chapter One, for more discussion of Scarry's observations regarding the practice of "renaming" the military activity of injuring.
53. André Malraux was the first to theorize the relationship between viewing painted and sculpted works of art and their photographic facsimiles, in terms of what he saw as a dialectics of pleasure and knowledge inherent in each of these viewing experiences respectively. See "Museum Without Walls," in The Voices of Silence, trans. Stuart Gilbert (orig. 1949, 1950 as The Psychology of Art; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 13-127.
54. Regarding my indebtedness to Kristine Stiles for first stimulating me to think about aspects of complicity in performance art see n. 2, Chapter Three. Our frequent conversations and editing of each others' written work since 1979 have been invaluable in the development of this thesis. I am certain that there are many ideas articulated herein that are as much Stiles's as mine. Wherever possible, I have provided citations. Any oversights, I am afraid, must necessarily be attributed to the nature of collaborative thinking.
55. Barthes, "Rhetoric," 42ff.
56. Ibid., 44.
57. Ibid., 45.
58. Ibid., 44.

59. Ibid.

60. See Sayre, The Object of Performance, 253-64, for a helpful chronology of Barthes' development of a performative notion of the reader's participation in the text. Sayre argues that it is in "Rhetoric of the Image" (1964) that Barthes begins to understand the limits of structuralism--an understanding that leads him, by 1970, to acknowledge the importance of readers' reception in essays like "The Third Meaning."

Perhaps a better example of this acknowledgment would be another 1970 publication--S/Z, Barthes' reading of Balzac's Sarrasine, which Rosalind Krauss recently used in a well-argued debate with Michael Fried (to be addressed shortly) as a formal illustration of the baseline project of poststructuralism--which, as she summarizes it, is about questioning not so much what constitutes "langue" or denotation (as structuralism did), but the relationship between "langue" and "parole," between denotation and connotation. She points out how Barthes' placement of the "untampered-with" Balzac text after his own illustrates his point that denotation, though seemingly the most important, primary, "realistic" meaning of things, is actually constructed by connotation--represented here by Barthes' interpretation and its anterior location in the book. (See Rosalind Krauss, "Using Language to Do Business as Usual," in Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation, ed. Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey [New York: Icon Editions, HarperCollins, 1991], 92-93.)

Barthes' and Krauss's observations bear importantly on the type of performance work under discussion in this dissertation--performances which, precisely by tampering with the body, undo any conceivable notion that the body can be "read" as constituting "untampered-with," pure, primary, "real" meanings.

61. Barthes, "Rhetoric," 44-45.

62. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," Artforum 5 (June 1967), 18.

63. Berger, Labyrinths, 10.

64. Stiles, "Destruction," 660-61. See also Stiles's response to Sayre's "use" (or "misuse" as she argues) of Fried's argument to make, as she writes, the "false assertion that 'Art and Objecthood' was 'perhaps the earliest essay to examine the aesthetic assumptions of performance art'....Fried's critical text was never about [these assumptions, and to claim it was]....is to construct a distorted and ahistorical picture of the

evolution of Performance and its histories" (Kristine Stiles, "Performance and Its Objects," 39). For Sayre's argument regarding Fried to which Stiles is responding see his Object of Performance, 6-7, 9.

65. I shall address my choice of terms in my opening remarks of the annotated bibliography.

66. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 20.

67. Krauss, "Using Language," 92; see nn. 30 and 60 above for more discussion of this concept.

68. Ibid., 90.

69. Ibid., 88. The panel was entitled "1967/1987: Theories of Art after Minimalism and Pop," held at the Dia Art Foundation, February 1987; for a transcript of the three panelists' talks (Krauss, Fried, and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh), see Discussions in Contemporary Culture, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987).

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid., 89.

72. Barthes, "Rhetoric," 44-45. Barthes puts forth this ascription in an effort to differentiate photography from the projective, fiction-projecting, denotative processes of cinema. His distinctions could prove useful in discussion of early-1970s performance artists' use of film and video for documentation purposes--a discussion that will, unfortunately, remain outside the parameters of this study.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid., 46.

75. Ibid., 39.

76. F. T. Marinetti, "The Variety Theatre" (1913), in The Documents of 20th-Century Art: Futurist Manifestos, ed. Umbro Apollonio, trans. Robert Brain, R. W. Flint, J. C. Higgitt, Caroline Tisdall (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), 129.

77. Ibid.

78. The possibility of drawing an analogy between the performing body and embattled body--or, said another way, between performing and soldiering--operated as a profound

motivation for the Futurists, reaching its peak in their "Synthetic Theatre" manifesto, published just four months before Italy entered World War I, in 1915. Here they wrote: "War--Futurism intensified"; and "We think that the only way to inspire Italy with the warlike spirit today is through the theatre" (F. T. Marinetti, Emilio Settimelli, Bruno Corra, "The Futurist Synthetic Theatre" (1915), in Documents of 20th-Century Art: Futurist Manifestos, ed. Apollonio, 183).

79. Documentation of these early performance evenings is sparse and perhaps even apocryphal, but all stories concur that the Futurists traveled from town to town, exhibiting their paintings on stage and declaiming their manifestos in a bombastic, antagonistic manner. Thus, they set themselves up as human targets for a variety of objects hurled from the traditionally passive audience. For example, when the "Founding Manifesto" (1909) was declaimed at the Teatro Ciarella in Turin in March 1910, the nearby vegetable store, so the story goes, was wiped out of its stock, which became "ammunition" aimed at the disturbers on stage. (See Michael Kirby, Futurist Performance [New York: E. P. Dutton, 1971], 14.)

Other references to the Futurists' self-targeting approach to their work can be found in the Italian popular press, as Ester Coen pointed out in her catalog for the 1988 Boccioni exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. For example, La Sera (1 March 1913) reported that "the continual heckling of the audience and the infernal noise of a few groups of merry interrupters almost totally prevented the young and bold-spirited orator [Umberto Boccioni] from being heard." And in Lacerba (15 March 1913), a fair-minded writer urged readers to think twice "before condemning these young men [Futurists] once and for all, before burying them under ridicule and a rain of ripe tomatoes." (Quotes are from Ester Coen, Umberto Boccioni [New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988], xxviii.)

80. Cited in Caroline Tisdall and Angelo Bozzolla, Futurism (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1978), 92.

81. Chris Burden, Chris Burden 71-73 (Los Angeles: Chris Burden, 1974), 24.

82. Barthes, "Rhetoric," 40.

83. Cf. Donald Kuspit's discussion of "social contract" (a la Talcott Parsons' definition), Chapter Three, text at nn. 70-72 supra, and my earlier discussion of Rousseau's "social contract," this chapter, text at nn. 11-15 supra.

84. Stanley Aronowitz, "When the New Left was New," in The 60s Without Apology, eds. Sohnya Sayres, Anders Stephanson, Stanley Aronowitz, Fredric Jameson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press in cooperation with Social Text, 1984), 41-42.

85. See Guilbaut, How New York, esp. Chapters 1-3.

86. Interview with Terry Wolverton, Los Angeles, Calif., 23 March 1989. Wolverton was Executive Director of the Woman's Building from 1977-1990.

87. Ibid.

88. See chart of name changes included with a paper delivered by Michael Faubion, "A Survey of Visual Artists' Organizations," at a conference held in Rochester, New York, 1986, its proceedings published as "The Visual Artists' Organization: Past, Present, Future," Afterimage 14 (October 1986), 9-20; chart is on page 11.

89. Stephen Kahn, "Communities of Faith, Communities of Interest: The Alternative Space/Artists' Organizations Movement From Its Beginnings to the Present Day" (Herbert H. Hyman Outstanding Masters Thesis, Wesleyan University: Self-published, 1986), 26.

90. Deleuze, Masochism, 79.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

In the course of this study I have referred, either in my text or lengthy notes, to most of what could be considered the major, non-anthology-oriented, scholarly works on performance art published since the term first came into use in the early 1970s: works by RoseLee Goldberg, Kristine Stiles, Maurice Berger, and Henry M. Sayre. However, other writings deserve bibliographic mention. While it would be impossible to cite all relevant works, those I shall be addressing will provide a glimpse at changes in methodological approaches to performance art from the early 1970s, when the literature on performance art began to grow with great force and volume, to the present.

Some works will be dealt with in depth; others will be referred to merely in passing--all in an effort to at least register acknowledgment of writings I feel would be helpful to future researchers on this topic.¹ Additionally, the annotations will serve as a backdrop for final comments on that toward which, as the title of the dissertation indicates, the last several hundred pages have consistently aimed--a theory of performance art based on an investigation of its sites, namely the body and the spaces in which it has been made to perform.

One word, before beginning, on a subject I have avoided

throughout this study: terminology. My term of choice for the work I have been examining has been, quite obviously, "performance art." For encouraging me to use this term flexibly as a label applicable to all work done live by artists trained in other areas of the discipline (painting, sculpture, or even writing), who felt moved for a variety of reasons, over the last several decades, to turn to this form, I have RoseLee Goldberg to thank. In both the 1979 and 1988 versions of her survey book, the term "performance" or "performance art" was uniformly used to speak of nonstatic work produced from the early twentieth century to the present.

I believe that the term "performance art" places emphasis on the action and function of the artist, thus highlighting the instrumentality and, indeed, the objecthood of the art form's primary material of the body. Other terms can be defended and may even be more precise for clusters of work done in certain periods, like Stiles's use of "event-structured live art" to describe the destruction-oriented works of the mid- to late-1960s DIAS era.² But I feel that global usage of such specific terminology closes off the field from perusal by a broader range of observers, who might feel they first need to understand the term before they can understand what it describes. "Performance," on the other hand, provides instant entree to the material inasmuch as we all perform,

every minute, every day. Knowledge of this fact, moreover, sets up a condition in which one automatically approaches the work with a critically comparative agenda: the question "How does what I see match up with what I do?" inevitably hovers on some level between the observer's unconscious and conscious mind.

However, other terms have been ushered in and out of use throughout the post-World War II period, with more rapid changes since Allan Kaprow's coining of the term "Happenings" in 1959. One such term, "Body Art," and permutations such as "Body Work," became operative in the late 1960s and early 1970s on the part of artists and writers addressing the very type of performances on which I have been concentrating. Given the approach I have taken to the art discussed in the previous chapters, I could easily argue for more flexible use of this term, suggesting it be used retroactively to even talk about, say, Futurist work that also foregrounded the materiality of the body in a live format. However, while it is necessary to recognize the historical usage of the term by the artists and writers intimately involved with the work as it was being produced, more general usage of a term such as "Body Art" has obvious problems.

"Body" has been and probably always will be a term that pushes its referent too forcefully into observers', listeners', and readers' faces. Thus, the issues for

which it is being mobilized can be trivialized, vulgarized, or just plain lost. "Performance art," on the other hand, keeps the observer, listener, and reader focused on the action within which it is, obviously, the body which is at stake--at stake as an object with which one must come to terms, in one's own time, using one's full powers as a thinking, sensate subject. My choice of term, in other words, holds forth the possibility of a thinking of the body that allows for a conscious balancing of its dualistic characteristics.

Nonetheless, as I just said, a certain honoring of contemporary choices of terminology is necessary. The first bibliographic pieces I shall discuss all used some version of the term "body art." They were, in some cases, written by individuals who thought of themselves as active participants in the work they were addressing, as opposed to passive observers. This participatory stance possibly accounts for their ease with the term.

A writer on general aspects of performance art, Bruce Barber, in an exhaustive historical scan of the different labels used for this art form, found that the term "Body Art" was first employed as a category heading in Art Index in 1971-1972, despite the fact that it had been in common usage for some time. "Performance Art" first appeared the following year and has been preserved to the present.³ Other headings have either slipped in and out of usage or

continued to exist with diminishing entries.

With the discussion of vocabulary out of the way, I shall now proceed with a brief survey of what I consider to be some of the most provocative writings on performance art published since 1970. The list, arranged in a loosely chronological order, is in no way exhaustive but should provide researchers with a solid beginning for their own work.

By the fall of 1970, in New York, a noticeable enough change had taken place in the field of artwork being performed live--that is, a shift from more Happenings-oriented work, in which the body of the artist was one among many parts of the total event, to works in which the body was being utilized as primary material--to warrant, in the eyes of artist Willoughby Sharp and his colleague Liza Bear, the publication of a magazine. Called Avalanche, the inaugural issue featured an article by Sharp entitled "Body Works"--probably the first article to deal with the type of performances I have been exploring.⁴

In an effort to come to terms with the ways in which artists were using the human body in their work, Sharp catalogs the uses in the vocabulary of labor and theater, establishing categories such as: "The Body as Tool"

(Richard Long's "walk" pieces are cited inasmuch as the artist uses his feet to create a work, much as a traditional sculptor might use his hands, according to Sharp), or "The Body as Backdrop" (William Wegman's Wound, in which the artist's face appears in five photographs with a different letter of the title spelled across it in Band-Aids, is used as an example).

Of most interest to the discussion in previous chapters, however, is Sharp's category "The Body as Object," in which he paradoxically refutes the existence of such a category. "The only case in which a body approaches the status of an object," he claims, "is when it becomes a corpse";⁵ several examples of works in which artists have simulated death are provided. This denial of the objecthood of the body could have been, though it was not stated, an attempt to counter Michael Fried's 1967 denunciation of just such a conception of the body, as I discussed earlier.⁶ The fact that Sharp did cast some of his observations in the language of theater (another category was called "The Body as Prop") suggests that the lines between theater and performance at the time he wrote might have been construed as just vague enough to warrant, in Sharp's thinking, a defensive stance regarding the question of the body serving as an object, thus occluding the possibility of problematizing its status as such.

The question did not rest unproblematized with Sharp's

well-intentioned but didactic cataloging, however. The next year, 1971, critic Cindy Nemser wrote an important article in which the possibility of considering more than one identification of the living body was foregrounded in its very title: "Subject-Object Body Art."⁷ After leading off with what would become in later publications on performance art a ubiquitous reference to Marcel Duchamp, Nemser builds the case that an artist focusing on the body in a live work of art is mobilizing "the desire to know oneself as both subject and object in relation to one's surroundings."⁸

As such, Nemser's theory verges on proposing a thinking of the body in which identities might be held in balance. However, her specific wording reveals more of a leaning toward theories which implicitly endorse mythic processes of metamorphosis: "the subject is continuously transformed into the object and then back into the subject through his ongoing physical interaction with the environment."⁹ Her reference to "environment," however, bespeaks an interest in context and, perhaps, even institutional issues that places her essay well ahead of its time.

Nemser was the first writer, and one of the few in general, to engage in a discourse of subject-object relations vis-a-vis performance art for some years to come. Perhaps the repression of this topic in writings

had to do with the fact that there is a necessary connection, as Nemser herself noted, between this discourse and issues of masochism. "[W]e cannot help but notice," she writes, "the strain of bizarre, sado-masochistic exhibitionism that runs through this account of body art. Yet when interviewed, none of these artists [her discussion included, among others, Acconci and Burden] admitted to any personal sense of pleasure or pain while acting out their works."¹⁰ Rather than investigate these observations, however, Nemser falls back on artists' intentionality as justification for burying disturbing evidence.

Nemser's Duchamp reference was to Tonsure, a piece also held up in the next three publications I shall address as a historical emblem of artists' work concentrating on the body. Nemser cites the 1921 version of this piece, referring to it not by name, but descriptively as the piece in which "Duchamp lathered his scalp and shaved off his hair in the form of a star," exhibiting, she claims, "his knowledge that the artist and his object are in reality one and the same."¹¹

While Nemser is not inaccurate in her claim, I view Duchamp's Tonsure more as a complicated problematizing of what she concedes is a balanced way of thinking about dualistic identities. Such a problematizing gives way to a questioning of what could be called the "ideology of the

star system," in which artists were becoming increasingly entrenched in the twentieth century as both autonomous subjects and anonymous objects (and, vice versa, as autonomous objects and anonymous subjects) in an unsteady hand-holding between the art and film industries, especially in the post-World War II period.

Inquiry into this ideology, especially the ways in which performance art of the twentieth century has established, in my mind, a bridge between the industries mentioned, obviously exceeds the bounds of this annotated bibliography. (I have explored the topic elsewhere, in preliminary stages; a more official examination will be undertaken in the near future.¹²) But let it suffice to say for now that writers on performance art of the 1970s were instinctively on the right track in raising Duchamp, especially his Tonsure piece, as emblematic of indeterminate ways of thinking the body.¹³ However, this instinctive leaning was generally glossed over by a stronger desire to use Duchamp for purposes of bestowing an art historical pedigree upon an art form exceeding even those limits to which Duchamp himself had taken his art (and body).¹⁴

By mid-decade, the bulk of artists doing performance pieces in which the body was the "starring" material had gained enough attention in European and American art circles to produce three major texts on the subject: Lea

Vergine's Il corpo come linguaggio (La 'Body-art' e storie simili) (1974);¹⁵ Francois Pluchart's l'art corporel (1975);¹⁶ and Ira Licht's Bodyworks (1975).¹⁷ The last two, exhibition catalogs for shows at the Stadler Gallery in Paris and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, respectively, are slim in comparison with Vergine's long essay and ambitious cataloging of dozens of artists and their contributions to the field; but together, the three form a landmark in the bibliographic history of performance.

Vergine's book goes the farthest in trying to account for the underpinnings of this art form, constituting in and of itself a "meta-limit-text" on artists taking their bodies beyond ordinary limits in their work. Among the artists represented in one- and two-page entries are Pane and Acconci. Written with a sense of urgency and passion, the introductory essay ranges in an almost stream-of-consciousness manner among a variety of discourses touched on, as Vergine sees it, through the artists' extreme manipulation of their physical selves.

She quotes psychoanalysts, phenomenologists, and philosophers, but resists embracing any particular theory or methodology to "explain" the work. Her rhetoric is of the "advance-retreat" school: she offers an option to the reader, then retracts it in an effort to stimulate questioning, never fixing an answer that would lend

credence to a preexisting line of thinking. For example, she makes passing reference to the dynamics of masochism but elides further discussion by claiming that

if we were interested in relations to perversion, we could talk about fetishism, transvestism, voyeurism, kleptomania, paidophilia [sic], necrophilia, sado-masochism, rupophobia, scatophagia. A search for psychotic symptoms would lead our attention to the aspects of the work connected to dissociation, melancholy, delirium, depression, and persecution manias. But this procedure would lack commitment.¹⁸

Vergine's repression of the topic of masochism does not, however, prevent her from speaking of subject-object relations. The artist, she argues, "becomes his object....[T]he artist is the thesis with respect both to himself and his subject, this is to say that he posits himself as object since he is conscious of the process in which he is involved."¹⁹ Albeit vaguely, with this reference Vergine at least gives a nod in the direction of a discourse on subject-object relations and leaves open the possibility of making necessary connections between these general relations and the more specific subject (and object) of masochism.

Paradoxically, Vergine's resistance to looking deeply into any of the listed topics--an effort, on her part, as I just suggested, not to attach performance art to any particular theoretical model--also does not prevent her from issuing a rather dogmatic edict as to what this form of art is all about. This edict made its way to America,

by way of England, when her essay appeared in a cut-and-paste version in the magazine Art & Artists soon after Il corpo come linguaggio's publication. In both versions she claims that "Body Art"

always involves...a loss of personal identity, a refusal to allow the sense of reality to invade and control the sphere of the emotions, and a romantic rebellion against dependence upon either people or things. Tenderness is always the goal aimed for and missed and therefore surrounded by frustration. And all of this is always accompanied by the anguish that derives from the absence of an "adult" and altruistic form of love.

At the basis of "body art"...one can discover the unsatisfied need for a love that extends itself without limit in time--the need to be loved for what one is and for what one wants to be--the need for a kind of love that confers unlimited rights--the need for what is called primary love.²⁰

While a provocative conclusion, the contradiction between Vergine's self-consciously free-floating analysis and absolutist, no-room-for-debate summation is troubling. The double-bind produced for the reader seems to reproduce, in fact, the very conditions of the legal institution and its chief instrument of contract that both allows and disallows an agreement-based "freedom"--the conditions, I have argued, that triggered masochistic performance art in the first place.

Nonetheless, Vergine's essay was and still is a major contribution, housing more ideas for further cogitation on the topic of performance art than almost any piece previously written. Possible exceptions would include

Allan Kaprow's 1966 Assemblage, Environments, and Happenings or Adrian Henri's Total Art: Environments, Happenings, and Performance, also of 1974 (although both of these publications took in much more than just the topic of art presented live).²¹

Pluchart's and Licht's catalogs pale in comparison but add notable points. Pluchart's two-page essay reads like a manifesto, one page consisting of "Ce qu'il [l'art corporel] est," the other "Ce qu'il n'est pas." The latter is as affirmative as the former, however, and situates Pluchart's notion of this art form squarely in the realm of liberation theory. He claims

for the first time in Western history, an attitude of thought does not want to be an open trend, but, on the contrary, to be one which is closed by its own choice, like a community whose only raison d'être is to welcome novices who will sing in their turn the coming of a new man building a new society, at last free and harmonious, and rid of false ethics, all dictators of whatever type, repressive ideologies, and censors, in other words, cops.²²

Tending, as liberation theory always does, toward grandiosity, Pluchart nonetheless raises the important question of the institution of law--a question which, as should have become clear through the previous chapters of this study, is crucial to tackle when undertaking the topic of performance art and its sites.

Licht's catalog essay, perhaps because of its status as the first essay issuing from an American institution on the topic of performance art's focus on the body,

doggedly--indeed, almost desperately--seeks historical sources for the obviously disturbing work of artists like Acconci and Burden, who were included in the show.²³ In a gesture not unlike much American art history and criticism that seeks acceptability by rooting itself in a European tradition, Licht scrambles as far back as mid-nineteenth-century France to find a model for what he calls the "cult of self." He suggests this phenomenon "may be said to have begun with Courbet's egocentric paintings, his radical political activities and his public posturing...."²⁴ And as in Pluchart's and Vergine's texts, Duchamp--or at least a star-shaved head posing as Duchamp's--puts in the requisite appearance.

Vergine's essay almost immediately reverberated through American critics' writings. In a 1975 essay, Max Kozloff approaches Il corpo come linguaggio in three ways: praise, criticism, and as a springboard for his own views of what he decides to call "bodyworks." Kozloff seems to favor, although not too clearly nor vociferously, Vergine's departure from an overly politicized (in Kozloff's thinking) European discourse, calling the book "a product of an almost manically radicalized European artistic and intellectual milieu; it shares some of the jargon of this ambience, but finally not all the remoteness, the concern with the generalities of political right-thinking over the health of people."²⁵

Almost in contradiction to this statement, Kozloff faults Vergine on not situating the work she addresses within a political context. He points out, rightly, that the work she represents, except for Viennese Aktionism examples from the mid-1960s, was produced during a time of tumult for which one needs to account. Curiously, however, in a gesture of repression all his own but typically American, Kozloff draws attention only to the historical events taking place in Europe (mainly in France) between 1968-1974 (the period Vergine focuses on) and not in America and/or Vietnam--despite the fact that several American artists were represented in the book.

He writes:

This moment [1968-1974] opens in France with a revolt of Parisian students exasperated with Pompidolian [sic] oppression, and "concludes" when plans for the Centre Beaubourg, a highly ambitious and state-financed museum of experimental arts, staffed in part by quasi-Maoists, is shortly to open. In 1972, artists made the old official nationalisms and corrupt marketeering of the prize system at the Venice Biennale so uncomfortable as to finish them off, but they also staged, in 1974, a gigantic, populist and polysyllabic Biennale of their own, while tolerating the Basel art fairs.

Il corpo... does not knowingly detect the ironies of this background, a serious flaw, but it is sensitive to the alarms that a reactive art expresses.²⁶

It is from this last point that Kozloff launches his own critique of "bodyworks," wishing, it seems, to fill the gap left by Vergine who, despite her "sensitivit[y] to the alarms" of the art she addresses, "wrestles less and less successfully," in his estimation, with its meanings.

Kozloff's view of "bodyworks" proceeds to take on mythic proportions, as indicated in the essay's title. His language and style grow more and more intense toward the climax of his argument, in which he charges artists like Burden and Acconci with "moral cretinism," with having "install[ed] such elastic boundaries of permissibility that they offer too much slack to test anything very conclusive." And, finally, such artists are accused of having reversed the story of Pygmalion. By making the living body inert, instead of vitalizing the inanimate, they support, he suggests, "the denial of life."²⁷

Given Kozloff's previous oversight of Vietnam War issues, these points seem particularly problematic. Is it so strange, let alone immoral, that one might feel inclined to examine the violent context in which one lives by examining its structure, which necessarily means its boundaries? As Therese Lichtenstein argued in her writings, noted earlier, on art and sadomasochism: "[R]epresenting ruptured physical and psychic boundaries can also be a search and desire for boundaries by acknowledging their absence."²⁸

More precisely, the boundaries I have been suggesting that "bodyworks"/masochistic artists were seeking, but were routinely forestalled in sustaining (thus stimulating the repetition of their acts), were those inherent in

contractual structures. This "boundary to boundary-making" was due, in large part, to the common repression (like that exemplified by Kozloff) of acknowledgment of historically contracted violence (like that exemplified by the Vietnam War)--violence constituting an invasion of boundaries on all levels from the national to the personal. These boundaries, masochistic artists seemed to be announcing, must be kept mobile, mutable, but always makable. They must be set and unset through the practice of contract's central activity of negotiation, the metaphor for which is the agreement-based relationship that exists between performance artist and audience member.

Lucy Lippard addresses this relationship, more or less, in an Art in America article of the following year, 1976, entitled "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: Women's Body Art." Here, she presents her observations on performance art's specifically narcissistic aspects, as well as important commentary on Vergine's and Kozloff's previous work.²⁹ Lippard counters Vergine's claim, for example, that the origins of "body art" lay in the "sado-masochistic" work of the Viennese Aktionism group. (Lippard decides to use the label "body art" although, she avers, "I am less interested in categorizing [the work] than in the issues it raises and in its relationship to feminism."³⁰) Instead, Yves Klein's use of the body as a

"living brush" in his performances of 1960, she suggests, along with works by the Japanese Gutai group from the late 1950s, or Carolee Schneemann's work dating from the early 1960s (such as Eye-Body (Nude in Environment) [1963]) should be seen as antecedents. Lippard's history of origins, especially her citation of Schneemann's work, is important to her observations regarding narcissism, as the following will show.

After rightly complaining that "articles and books on body art include frequent pictures of nude females, but few by women artists"--an indictment pointed at Kozloff's brief discussion, without illustration, of women body artists in his "Pygmalion" article--she goes on to make the claim that

[m]en can use beautiful, sexy women as neutral objects or surfaces, but when women use their own faces and bodies they are immediately accused of narcissism. There is an element of exhibitionism in all body art, perhaps a legitimate result of the choice between exploiting oneself or someone else. Yet the degree to which narcissism informs and affects the work varies immensely. Because women are considered sex objects, it is taken for granted that any woman who presents her nude body in public [as Schneemann did consistently in this period] is doing so because she thinks she is beautiful. She is a narcissist, and Acconci, with his less romantic image and pimply back, is an artist.³¹

Lippard discusses over a dozen women artists' work employing elements of both pain and pleasure, as her title indicates. She thereby not only disallows the possibility of the work being trivialized on the basis of its inherent narcissism, but complicates that feature by addressing

certain manipulations of it ranging from "defiant narcissism" (applied to Lynda Benglis and her tautologically exhibitionist advertisements for her exhibitions) to masochism.

When Lippard reaches the latter topic, however, she is quick to paper over its complexities in a dismissive manner ironically akin to that which she had previously criticized. "A good deal of this current work by women," she writes, "from...psychological make-up pieces to...more violent images, is not so much masochistic as it is concerned with exorcism, with dispelling taboos, with exposing and thereby defusing the painful aspects of woman's history."³² While it is commendable that Lippard did not conflate catharsis and masochism here, her resistance to grappling with the latter topic is unfortunate. However, it is not out of step with other writings by women during the same period.

Lisa Tickner avoids the term masochism altogether in her 1978 essay "The Body Politic: Female Sexuality and Women Artists Since 1970" (published in the very first issue of the journal Art History), preferring instead to speak in the broader terms of "domination and submission."³³ Interestingly, her brief look at this topic directly follows commentary on Gina Pane, whom she describes as a "rare example of a woman body-artist who actually damages her own body."³⁴

Lippard, too, had described Pane as "almost the only woman who engages in such practices [of self-inflicted damage]."35 The oversight by both Lippard and Tickner of Abramovic's work is curious, since she was just as prolific. The fact that she worked collaboratively may have augmented (indeed, doubled) the problematics of masochism (with which the writers clearly did not wish to deal in the first place), and may also have raised the sticky question of how to address the role of the man in such a partnership. The writers' discrimination, then, would appear to be twofold, foreclosing on the subject of masochism as well as male sexuality. In any event, Tickner's essay keeps pace with Lippard's in many ways, but also differs, especially in terms of its audience, as I shall show.

Tickner's veiled reference to masochism is coupled, like Lippard's, with the topics of narcissism and taboo. Women, she claims, "already have a reputation for narcissism. Since women are not expected to be disgusting, the violation of certain established taboos...symbolizes a disrespect for the social order, and a rejection of the normal patterns of domination and submission which are enshrined within it."36 Her aim in this part of the discussion is to help explain a type of body artwork to which she assigns the label "transformation and process." Her method of constructing

a typology of the work at hand hints at the composition of her expected readership and thus reveals her training.

Unlike Lippard's art-world readers, Tickner's audience would have consisted more exclusively of other art historians. Trained within the canon of modernist methodologies, art historians tend to fix meanings--especially for troubling work--by constructing boundaries around the conceptual matter with which the work deals, rather than delving into those concepts, questioning the nature of boundaries, and taking the risk of getting a little "unfixed" oneself, in the process.

The results of such a process, in Tickner's case, was a four-tiered typology of body art, including both performance and more static work: "the male as motif" (not collaborator); "'vaginal iconology'" (in quotes due to its attribution to another writer, Barbara Rose³⁷); "parody"; and the category already cited, "transformation and process." Examples of work in each included, respectively: Sylvia Sleigh's paintings of nude men; Judy Chicago's paintings featuring what she saw as essentially feminine imagery in "centralized voids"; Hannah Wilke's Starification Object Series, in which the artist manipulates bubble gum, already chewed by an audience, into vaginal-like shapes and applies them to her naked body; and Pane's performances.

Despite her methodological predictability and elision

of such loaded topics as masochism, Tickner's article made a strong contribution to the bibliography on performance art. In fact, it would appear that "The Body Politic" was the first publication on this art form by an individual situated within academia. Thus, the essay marks a point in time when performance art would begin to be integrated into the discipline of art history. Indeed, the very first courses on the history of performance would be taught the following year--on the East Coast by RoseLee Goldberg at the School of Visual Arts in New York, and on the West Coast by Kristine Stiles at the University of California at Berkeley.

It is only fair to note that Tickner's level of predictability is evident solely from a historically distanced vantage point. To wit, at the time it was published, "The Body Politic" met with some shocked, strident opposition. Perhaps the most biting example is from an arch-conservative member of the field who, in reviewing the new journal in which the essay appeared, quipped: "A male chauvinist Fascist-pig may be tempted to wonder if women have been either quite such demure little misses or such vampires as Miss Lisa Tickner and her patron saint, Mistress Linda Nocklin [sic], like to pretend....As for the sex war, does this not add a touch of spice to the art of the alcove?"

Tickner responded by clarifying that "[n]either I nor

Professor Nochlin...have ever divided women into vampires and venuses. We have, however, not been alone in remarking a strong tendency in the Romantic movement to represent them as one or the other." Continuing, she points to the plaintiff's "use of gendered titles...and other reminders of the subject's sex" as a tactic which "is adopted as both effectively dismissive, and amusing in itself (Why else the smirking reference to 'Mistress Linda Nocklin' (sic)--would 'Master Anthony Blunt' reflect well on its writer's spelling and wit?)"³⁸

Along with the attention art critics and historians were giving to the specificity of feminist issues at stake in performance art came recognition of the fact that there were regional differences in the production of this art form as well. Foremost in addressing not only California performance in general, but differences in work being done in the northern and southern parts of the state, was Moira Roth. In a two-part article in Arts (1978), entitled "Toward a History of California Performance" (the first part addressing northern California; the second, southern), Roth provided sketches of dozens of artists' work, possibly introducing some of these artists to readers for the first time. The article also situated the work in its often neglected yet rich cultural and historical context.³⁹

For example, in Part One, performance art of the Bay

Area is set against the background prepared for it by artists and poets of the Beat and Funk generation, dancers like Ann Halprin, and makers of experimental theater like the San Francisco Mime Troupe. The political history of the area is also outlined, beginning with the groundbreaking demonstrations held in 1960 on the steps of City Hall where the House Un-American Activities Committee was holding hearings--demonstrations that inaugurated an era of protest that would reach its peak with Mario Savio's provocative rallying of students at the University of California at Berkeley a few years later.⁴⁰

Against this backdrop, Roth presents the work of northern California performance artists like Jim Melchert, Paul Cotton, and Stephen Laub, arguing that these artists were "not overtly political in their art; rather, there was a social Utopian vision implicit in their work, and surely Utopian visions inspired much of the political activity of the decade."⁴¹ Roth also emphasizes the importance of certain institutions ranging from academia (where artists like Melchert at the University of California at Berkeley, or William Wiley at U.C. Davis wielded a great deal of influence on younger performance artists including Jim Pomeroy, Howard Fried, and Jock Reynolds) to proto-alternative spaces (like the Reese Palley Gallery in San Francisco, the new building of the University Art Museum, Berkeley, and its program run by

Peter Selz, and performance artist Tom Marioni's Museum of Contemporary Art [MOCA] in San Francisco).

In Part Two of the essay, Roth points out how performance art in southern California was more affected by East Coast art, due to an influx of artists doing visiting teaching stints and performances, or resettling in the area.⁴² For example, after Allan Kaprow's move to California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, in the 1960s, other New York artists like Simone Forti, Nam June Paik, and Alison Knowles went to teach there for various lengths of time. Eleanor Antin, also originally from the East Coast, influenced artists in the area.

Roth makes two other distinctions between performance art of the northern and southern parts of the state. In the south, she claims, "the Feminist Movement in art was and remains powerfully influential...[and]...there has been a consistent thrust toward the theatrical aspect of Performance art."⁴³ She provides a detailed account of the history surrounding the formation of the Woman's Building, discussion of the more theatrical work of artists like Instant Theater-founder Rachel Rosenthal, and an annotated list of other artists matching in length and substance the list found in Part One of the article.

Beyond Roth's impressive cataloging and regional distinction-making, one point surfaces from her study that warrants special attention; it has to do with the

similarity between northern and southern California performance art. "[W]hat is common to all of West Coast Performance," she argues, "particularly in its formative stages, is that, with the passing of time and a concurrent lack of local critical support, the vagaries of fashion and randomness of professional contact have allowed only a very few artists to achieve national fame while denying it to others equally worthy."⁴⁴

It is impossible to claim that Roth's lauding of work outside New York and her plaintive observation were heard and responded to as quickly as it would appear in reviewing the bibliography on performance art. But it is interesting to note that by the next year, 1979, a whole new level of publication on the topic had been reached, and it was generated from areas not only outside New York, but outside this country.

The level of publication was "new" in three senses: breadth of material covered (both in terms of types of performances and geographical areas addressed); variety of contexts from which the writings were produced (that is, rather than coming from solo writers, the works were issuing from conferences, symposia, festivals, etc.); and more consistent intellectual sophistication in the handling of the material. Of course, these aspects were manifested in differing degrees in the individual contributions about to be discussed. But overall, it is

accurate to say that there was an explosion of substantive thinking on performance art in the 1980s.

This decade of bibliographic expansion actually began in 1979 with a Canadian publication, an anthology edited by AA Bronson and Peggy Gale entitled Performance by Artists.⁴⁵ Balanced between entries by artists on their own work (some well-known at the time, like Acconci and Ulay/Abramovic; some about to be well-known, like General Idea and COUM Transmissions), and essays by critics and art historians, the book deployed a consideration of postmodernism into the discourse on performance.

It is important to note that this consideration was first made a few years earlier, in 1977, in Michel Benamou's and Charles Caramello's anthology Performance in Postmodern Culture (also, interestingly enough, coming from an outlying area--Wisconsin).⁴⁶ However sophisticated that anthology was, though, with essays by Herbert Blau, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and others, its focus--almost entirely on theoretical notions of performance as they might apply to text, as opposed to the materiality of the body--makes it difficult to fit into the bibliography on performance (the body-as-text was not at issue). Nonetheless, the book clearly influenced one contributor to the Bronson/Gale anthology, Chantal Pontbriand, who asserted that

we may consider the notion of performance as a fundamental characteristic of post-modernism. For

this, we must take it as a premise that post-modernism corresponds to the calling into question of languages, of established codes, to the breaking down of divisions between disciplines, to the explosion of hierarchical structure between institution--producer--product--receiver. "Performance, the unifying mode of the postmodern," says Michel Benamou.⁴⁷

In 1980, Carl Loeffler and Darlene Tong of San Francisco published their extremely helpful reference book, Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Performance Art,⁴⁸ which featured short essays by, among others, Moira Roth, performance-video artist Judith Barry, and the editor of High Performance magazine, Linda Frye Burnham. (High Performance is another major contributor to the bibliography on performance art, having begun publication in 1978.⁴⁹) The book is primarily devoted to a detailed listing of performance artists of the area, short descriptions of performance pieces, and plentiful citations for further research.

Pontbriand continued her examination of concepts of postmodernism in 1981 with the publication of papers presented at a conference addressing "Multidisciplinary Aspects of Performance: Postmodernism," held in Montreal the year before. The anthology, entitled Performance, Text(e)s & Documents, exceeded Benamou and Caramello's attempts by bridging disciplines, thus allowing considerations of the body-as-text to be made.⁵⁰ And so they were, by most of the participants, in particular by Craig Owens and Douglas Crimp.

In his oft-reprinted essay "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," Owens discusses the role of metaphor, metonymy, and complicity in performance art, focusing on representations of the body in Laurie Anderson's text- and image-related work.⁵¹ Crimp, who also takes the representation of the performing body to task, questions the valence of such concepts as "presence." In "The Photographic Activity in Postmodernism," he claims that "[t]he extraordinary presence of their [Jack Goldstein's and Robert Longo's] work is effected through absence, through its unbridgeable distance from the original, from even the possibility of an original. Such presence is what I attribute to the kind of photographic activity I call postmodernist."⁵²

Also coming from outside the country was commentary on performance art found in such cross-disciplinary journals as Screen. Based in London, Screen focused primarily on film theory. It was in a 1981 issue of the journal that Mary Kelly published the essay discussed in my last chapter, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism," in which she too makes connections to issues of postmodernism and the body. As I already discussed (but which is worth repeating in the context of this annotated bibliography), she controversially argues that

for criticism, performance art initiated an appropriate synthesis of the disparate elements that had fractured the modernist discourse. On the one hand it provided the empirical domain with a universal object--the body;

and on the other, to the transcendental field, it brought the incontestable authenticity of the artist's experience of his own body.⁵³

While notions of the "authenticity" of the body and "transcendence" would later be critiqued in the discourse on performance art, Kelly's argument allows her to launch an important counter-argument to a Screen article of the preceding year, in which Gina Pane's work had been assessed as somewhat reactionary.⁵⁴

In "Textual Strategies: The Politics of Art-Making" (1980), Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman had argued that Pane's self-mutilatory work was a demonstration of the bipolarity of Western metaphysics, "accept[ing] as a given a pleasure/pain dichotomy."⁵⁵ Kelly responded:

Quite rightly, [Barry and Flitterman] point out that this type of art practice is not necessarily in opposition to the dominant discourse of art. However, it seems to be more a matter of phenomenology than metaphysics: an aesthetics of lived experience, rather than pain specifically, is being counterposed to that of the object, and not to pleasure as such....Pane's art addresses not the sexual body but the Husserlian body, discovered as what belongs to me, my body, the body of the self-possessing artistic subject whose guarantee of truth is grounded in the painful state.⁵⁶

Kelly's remarks are made in the context of issues concerning the legal institution (its dynamics of possession or ownership)--the very context within which I have argued that Pane and other self-attacking artists situated themselves in order to problematize both the identification of the body as an object and the contract-

styled agreements that consign such identifications. As I previously argued, this problematization entailed an undoing of the very "given" that Barry and Flitterman were so ironically quick, themselves, to accept and read into Pane's work--the idea that pleasure is necessarily part of pain. Kelly's comments were helpful in steering the reader away from the comfort of that assumption.

In 1983 the Kunstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin published an anthology documenting two performance festivals held at their space in 1981 and 1982. Entitled Performance--Another Dimension, the book consists mainly of interviews with participating artists. Also included are short essays by Heinz Ohff, who compares and contrasts the two events, and Michael Haerdter, who attempts a more political reading of performance art.⁵⁷

Haerdter begins his essay by drawing a comparison between the desire of a group of German academic writers to hold a meeting at a Pershing-2 missile site, and the impulse of artists like those in the Bethanien festivals to leave their studios for the purpose of performing in public. His intention here is to argue that performance art is inherently political (the assumption being that calling a meeting at a missile site automatically constitutes a political act).

Curiously, however, in a tracing of the history of "revolution" in the arts, the author starts with an

altogether apolitical reading of the role played by the Italian Futurists (no mention is made of their alliance with Fascism, for example). He ends with the argument that revolution today is taking place primarily "under the universal law of economy."⁵⁸ Thus, he claims, although performance art may indicate a return to individualism, it nonetheless can be seen as maintaining a position within a politics of resistance because it yields no marketable product.

Given the fact that all performance artists survive on funding from corporate, government, or private sources (often including the sale of objects produced in conjunction with, or as an adjunct to, their performance work), Haerdter's claim is transparently naive. As such, however, it allows him to leap to a final conclusion that echoes the verbiage of oft-embraced performance-liberation theory: he assigns the art form the character of an "emancipatory dialog."⁵⁹

Ironically, the flaw in Haerdter's thinking is motivated by a genuine interest in the dynamics of audience reception in the performance arena. This interest, together with his other points, could easily have been (and, indeed, as I have been arguing throughout this study, needed to be) parlayed into a consideration of the economics of said reception, into the question of psycholegalistic forces at work in the silently

"contracted" exchange between audience and performer. Without this inquiry, the book's greatest contribution, again ironically, lies in the almost three dozen interviews (among which are interviews with Ulay/Abramovic and Gina Pane) in which the "contracted" intellectual exchange between interviewer and interviewee is at least voiced.

Also in 1983, but returning now to the United States as a publication site, Moira Roth published a much-expanded version of Part Two of her above-mentioned article, this time concentrating on women and addressing work done throughout the country. Entitled The Amazing Decade: Women and Performance Art in America, 1970-1980, the anthology included contributions by other authors who, together with Roth, provided one-page essays on dozens of artists.⁶⁰

Roth's core essay concentrates heavily on what she sees as a trend in women's performance art of the period toward the use of ritual and mythology. While leaning toward an endorsement of this practice, she manages to maintain a critical stance, posing a series of questions to the reader concerning "the efficacy of such references drawn from the far away and long ago when transplanted into a modern and urban context," and the potential problem in "turning to far away and long ago history to empower women in the present. Sometimes this causes too great a gap

between myth and reality...."61

Of more interest were Roth's observations regarding the directions women artists were taking toward tampering with institutional boundaries, like city government and the media, for purposes of constructing broader concepts of "community" and a heightened awareness of social problems. An example here would be the work of Suzanne Lacy. The direction Roth noted has indeed been pursued in the late 1980s and into the 1990s, though in more theatrical, controversial, and provocatively entertaining performances than she was probably thinking of at the time. Examples would include the institution-lambasting pieces of women like Karen Finley or Holly Hughes.

Thomas McEvelley also addressed the use of ritual structures in performance art in his widely read 1983 article entitled "Art in the Dark."⁶² McEvelley's approach was far from critical, however, despite the direction initially indicated in the article by his employment of linguistic analysis.

He opens by arguing that in order to understand work like Chris Burden's Shoot one must have a "willingness to manipulate linguistic categories."⁶³ I would agree with this assertion, since Burden and other artists of his ilk were themselves manipulating categories; but I would go on to argue that they were manipulating the limits of those categories, using their bodies as the equivalent of the

text contained within, for purposes of critiquing the agreements that inscribe those limits in the first place. But McEvelley has something else in mind.

For him, the use of linguistic analysis is less about exercising the critical mechanisms inherent in it and more about mining it for its potential support of the "art-equals-life" theory of performance so popular in the 1960s. He continues:

The purely linguistic procedure of forcefully expanding the usage boundaries of a word does not create a wholly new reality, but shifts focus on an existing one. Any action that takes place in the appropriation zone is necessarily real as itself--yet semantically a kind of shadow-real. Insofar as the act's prior category is remembered, it remains what it was, just as a loan-word may retain a trace of its prior meaning--only it is reflected, as it were, into a new semantic category. Thus the process of universal appropriation has certain internal or logical limits; it is based on the assumption that a part can contain the whole, that art, for example, can contain life.⁶⁴

The concept of "expanding boundaries" is key to McEvelley's methodology, allowing him to introduce the reader to his admittedly impressive bank of anthropological and historical knowledge. He refers to shamanic rituals, "primitive cultures'" ceremonies of "female imitation and self-mutilation," and other "archaic practices,"⁶⁵ suggesting they be seen as templates against which contemporary performance work that tampers with the body must be read. McEvelley's investigations are fascinating, and his analogies between, for example, Tehching Hsieh's year-long performances and Simeon

Stylites's thirty-seven-year stint atop a pole in the early Christian era are provocative.⁶⁶ But his lack of attention to what was going on in the contemporary environments of these "performers"--politically, economically, psychoanalytically--is troubling.

"As the shoals of history break and flow and reassemble," he poetically writes, "to break and flow again, these and other primitive practices have resurfaced, in something like their original combination, in an altogether different context."⁶⁷ Unfortunately, what precisely that "different context" is, is left unquestioned.

In 1984, perhaps the most useful anthology on performance art to date was published. Its usefulness is hinted at up front, in the title's reference to critical discourse: The Art of Performance: A Critical Anthology.⁶⁸ Edited by Robert Nickas and Gregory Battcock (who died shortly before the project was completed), the book balances: history; theory and criticism; writings by or about individual artists; and documentation of performance pieces. In the history category, essays by, among others, Attanasio Di Felice, RoseLee Goldberg, and Annabelle Henkin Melzer explore, respectively, antecedents of performance art in the work of Renaissance artists, early twentieth-century artists, and Dadaists. While each could have been more detailed in terms of establishing

full historical contexts, adequate-enough connections are made to contemporary political and cultural struggles to stimulate the reader toward further research.

As for theory and criticism, one essay in particular stands out as an important link to the issues raised in this dissertation. Peter Gorsen explores concrete reasons for what he observed in 1979 to be, per the title of his essay, "The Return of Existentialism in Performance Art." Contrasting what he sees as hope-imbued performance work (like that of the "Soviet cultural revolution" or the politicized Happenings of Jean-Jacques Lebel) to less hopeful work (of the Viennese Aktionism group, Chris Burden, Gina Pane, or the failed artwork of the Weimar Republic or Soviet Russia), he concludes that it is

no coincidence that the presence of a return to existentialist attitudes should be so favorable, for, as in the 1930s, skepticism and a mood of crisis, as opposed to reason, rationality, progress, and technical enlightenment as the dominant meaningful factors in the capitalist system, are making themselves noticeable.⁶⁹

While I would not necessarily agree with Gorsen's casting of 1970s work under the rubric of existentialism--defined by the author in the Sartrean terms of "'naked existence'...which shows similarities with the modern 'I am in my body' tautology"⁷⁰--his insistence on looking at the material, historical context of the performances mentioned leads him to a remarkable observation.

Speaking in particular of artists like Burden and

Pane,⁷¹ he assigns performances such as theirs "the character of an open trial" [my emphasis].⁷² Although a passing comment, and although situated within an otherwise moot line of inquiry, Gorsen was perhaps the first critical historian to have suggested a connection between the world of performance and the world of law. However, far from engaging this connection for existential (which is to say, I believe, transcendent) purposes, I would argue that these artists' "open trials" exploited this connection for all it was worth, the result being a grounded examination of its institutional context and exposure of that context's dysfunctional psycholegalistic roots.

By the mid-1980s performance art had achieved enough of a cachet--due in large part, perhaps, to the writings I have been surveying--to warrant two museum shows in New York City. Each produced a catalog: Barbara Haskell's Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism, and Performance, 1958-1964 for an exhibition at the Whitney in 1984; and Marcia Tucker's Choices: Making an Art of Everyday Life for an exhibition at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in 1986. Haskell sets the exhibited work in an art historical context, but argues too simplistically that the works which were documented, reconstructed, or referred to obliquely in the show constituted an "assault on Abstract Expressionism."⁷³

Marcia Tucker grappled with the difficult work of the twelve artists included in her exhibition, among whom were James Lee Byars, Kim Jones, Linda Montano, Tehching Hsieh, and Ulay/Abramovic. Tucker even tackled the subject of masochism. However, her remarks on the topic were, by and large, dismissive. For example, she argues that Ulay/Abramovic "feel that since their work is about transformation, then it's necessary to employ both mental and physical efforts to this end. This is why their work 'permits pain'; this is somewhat different from masochism per se."74

Despite deficiencies in their texts, both curators deserve credit for bringing disturbing work to the attention of a broad spectrum of viewers and readers. Tucker, especially, should be praised for at least hinting at the question of what, precisely, makes up "differences" in masochisms.

As performance art became more and more "frameable" by mainstream institutions, the institutions which had been formed specifically for its presentation in the 1970s-- "alternative spaces"--became a well-warranted object of analysis. To date, the most ambitious work along these lines, referred to very briefly in the last chapter, has been produced in the form of a masters thesis by Stephen Kahn entitled "Communities of Faith, Communities of Interest: The Alternative Space/Artists' Organizations

Movement From Its Beginnings to the Present Day" (1986). Besides his strong material research on the changes in the movement over the years, Kahn's chapters on the conceptual art background of performance art, particularly that art form's political aspects, are of special interest.⁷⁵

By the 1980s performance art had gained enough volume and force to be included in art history survey books as well--at least the more inclusive texts. As is the case with the treatment of any particular art form in survey books, however, comments tend to be general, and conclusions sweeping. Among the more observant contributors is Peter Selz, whose Art in Our Times: A Pictorial History, 1890-1980, published in 1981, includes several examples of performances and makes an effort to link, however obliquely, issues of feminism and performance art of the 1970s.⁷⁶

Howard Smagula devotes a whole chapter to performance and video in his Currents: Contemporary Directions in the Visual Arts (1983), but seems to endorse what he sees as performance artists' belief that they can "shake...centuries-old dependence on the materiality of the object and communicate more directly to an audience."⁷⁷ Thus, artists like Joseph Beuys, Nam June Paik, and Laurie Anderson--whose work he focuses on in somewhat too glorifying a manner--are seen as "closing the narrowing gap between art and life."⁷⁸

Irving Sandler also includes references to performance art in his American Art of the 1960s (1988), but here one finds greater problems. Generally discussing performance art in the same context as conceptual art and what he sees as that art form's denunciation of the importance of the art object, Sandler overlooks the possibility of the artist's body functioning as object. Apropos of this point and its corollary, with which I opened this dissertation, he concludes his book with the claim that the 1960s

ended on the evening of 2 July 1970, with the opening of "Information" at the Museum of Modern Art, an event that marked the establishment of Conceptual Art. At its most extreme, Conceptual Art seemed as extreme as art could become, because, as I wrote at the time, it "eliminated what may be irreducible conventions in art--the requirements that it be an object and visible."⁷⁹

Sandler herein compromises the possibility of considering performance art to be art or, more specifically, to be a problematization of the body of the artist as an object inescapably operating within processes of representation. And so, he comes close to joining ranks with those who, as I argued in my opening pages, contribute to certain art forms' passage into oblivion by promoting the illusion that these forms lie outside representation, have no object, are not "original."

Nonetheless, Sandler does at least try to deal with the topic of performance art. And it must be said that when he considers its place in the 1970s, where he addresses it

outside the confines of his view of conceptual art, he does manage to suggest richer, but still moot, lines of inquiry into what he calls this decade of performance work's interests in "self-scrutiny, self-revelation, and self-realization."⁸⁰

Of all the more general treatments of performance art, it is two survey-oriented texts "bookending" the decade that produce the most provocative comments on the art form: from 1980, Edward Lucie-Smith's Art in the Seventies; from 1988, Griselda Pollock's Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art. To juxtapose Lucie-Smith's contribution to Pollock's is an admittedly lopsided venture, inasmuch as the former is a jazzy, "quick-read" book, and the latter a thickly layered, highly intellectual survey of the topics named in its title. However, both propel the reader in the same direction--a requisite direction, I would argue, for further analyses of performance art.

In keeping with the profile of Art in the Seventies I just provided, Lucie-Smith chooses not to use the generic term "performance art" in his text, preferring instead to stretch the term "Happenings" well beyond its 1960s bounds. However, it is the content of the works to which he attaches the label that is at issue here. For the content is unlike that with which most survey writers in this period would deal.

For example, the author addresses what he calls the "sado-masochistic" works of, among others, Chris Burden, Vito Acconci, and Gina Pane. His symmetrization of sadism and masochism can be overlooked (as can his superficial linking of the works with Viennese predecessors),⁸¹ given the fact that rather than just let his descriptions of the works rest unquestioned, he proceeds to point the reader toward psychoanalytic and institutional connections that might help provoke further inquiry. He accomplishes this with wit, verve, and what turns out to be a paradoxical prescience. To wit, he writes:

These sado-masochistic activities...fairly obviously have connections with...sexual fetishism. While the point seems to have largely escaped art critics, it has not escaped commentators with more specialized interests. Drummer, the best-known of all the American 'leather-cult' homosexual magazines, ran an article on the subject in its April 1979 issue, with the gleeful subheading: WHAT YOU DO AFTER MIDNIGHT MAY MERIT YOU A NATIONAL ENDOWMENT.⁸²

In just a few sentences, Lucie-Smith manages to bring the topic of masochism out into the open, although in the middle of the night, so to speak, and albeit in its most spectacular form. My sole argument with his insights is that rather than only being a practice theatricalized by individuals with "more specialized interests," the dynamics of masochism are experienced on a regular basis, in shockingly mundane ways, in broad daylight.

On the other end of the spectrum in terms of chronology and level of theorization--but, as I said, ironically

close in terms of its aims--is Pollock's chapter on "Screening the Seventies: Sexuality and Representation." The author comments on performance art fleetingly herein, but in a manner that hooks into several lines of inquiry I have pursued in this dissertation. Thus, the comment and that which surrounds it are worth quoting at length so that these connections can be seen--specifically, connections to the non-vision-privileging theories of Anzieu which have underwritten my text, the "Deleuzian problem" of inversion theory debated earlier, and ideas of Brecht. Taking this approach to Pollock's remarks will also provide a backdrop against which I shall make some final remarks on the methodologies I have been employing throughout this study.

In the following, I shall move from the section in which Pollock refers to performance art, to later commentary. Both sets of remarks are situated in the last chapter of Vision and Difference and together constitute a manifesto-type call for those working on aspects of the 1970s to employ particular methodological strategies. She writes:

There is no doubt a tactical importance in the construction of women's lives and histories with which the alienated woman spectator can enthusiastically identify as part of a political process known as consciousness-raising. But as feminists soon discovered the desire to make visible could not of itself produce knowledge. Vision may only confirm ideologically sanctioned perceptions of the world or at best simply invert them....Thus feminist artists concerned to explicate the character of women's

oppression within classed and racially divided patriarchal societies cannot be content to describe its appearances and symptoms. Structural determinations need to be excavated and tracked through their articulation in representation. Brechtian notions of radical art as non-unity,...which is open to the play of contradictions inspired new ways of making art works, in performance and time-based works, installations, videos, scripto-visual multiple projects [my emphasis].⁸³

And later, somewhat imbricated upon the foregoing:

One of the major problematics for feminist artistic practice must be working over the mechanisms which produce and sustain a patriarchal regime of sexual difference at the level of representation and its institutionalized conditions of viewing/consumption.

A critical resource for this enterprise will be psychoanalytic theories as they are re-read by feminists. But in terms of artistic practice the questions of subjectivity and sexual difference need to be developed in relation to Brechtian strategies and their political priorities....

At issue is the balance, crudely put, between the social and the psychic levels of socially constructed subjects. Psychoanalytic theory is no longer of marginal interest.⁸⁴

The same prescription Pollock suggests for artistic practice applies to critical practice of all sorts, I would argue, and not just that taken up by feminists. Psychoanalytic methodologies that lean heavily on theorizations of the problematic valence of alienation, like Brecht's, need to be employed in the analysis of art of all kinds if there is any hope of coming to terms not only with one's status as subject but, I would stress, as object.

Such methodologies are of unquestionable

appropriateness for works such as those I have been examining that continually challenge this status. The study of performance art, then, can become a paradigm for other studies in that it demands the sort of balance of which Pollock speaks. In so doing, it calls attention to the more complicated nuances of Pollock's term "social"--for instance, "legalistic" nuances. Thus, what is really at issue here--to rework her final statement with just as much crudeness, a crudeness required in this case by the unrefined, disturbing, destabilizing quality of the work I have been looking at--is the "delicate, indeterminate balance between legalistic and psychic levels of socially constructed subjects."

Psycholegalistic theory can help us attend to that which appears to lie at the margins of art history but is actually central to it--performance art, especially performance that tampers with the human body. "Tampering" transpires in our reception of all forms of representation, replete with their tendency toward visual domination and artistic mastery. This inherently masochistic experience is inflected in our everyday lives in the late twentieth century in increasingly seductive ways. Psycholegalistic theory can help us better understand: that to which, in one way or another, we contractually agree; that to which, without theoretical and critical strategies in hand, we feel contractually

bound.

It is my hope that this dissertation has, at the very least, provided a psycholegalistic theoretical model for the assessment of performance artwork--a model that can be followed in looking at performance of any era, if one is careful in the process to account for the correspondent historical shifts in the theory of contract and its instrumental position within the world of law. To the descriptive approach of RoseLee Goldberg, Kristine Stiles's linguistic model, the focus on cultural and political history of Stiles and Maurice Berger, and Henry M. Sayre's poststructuralist reading, I add my work, aspiring to round out the picture of performance art provided by these scholars and to join their voices in speaking to the issues of an art form that tries, often awkwardly and inchoately, to speak for the issues that trouble the performance of our daily lives.

NOTES - ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. I shall also only be focusing on works published in English, or bilingual texts (French and English, or German and English), of which there were an increasing number starting in the late 1970s.
2. Stiles, "Destruction," 648.
3. Bruce Barber, "Indexing: Conditionalism and Its Heretical Equivalents," Performance by Artists, eds. AA Bronson and Peggy Gale (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1979), 185.
4. Willoughby Sharp, "Body Works," Avalanche 1 (Fall 1970), 14-17. Stiles points out the importance of this article's 1970 appearance and the problem with its lack of appearance in Sayre's 1989 book Object of Performance; see her "Performance and Its Objects," 39.
5. Ibid., 16.
6. See Chapter Four, text at nn. 62-70 supra.
7. Cindy Nemser, "Subject-Object Body Art," Arts 46 (September-October 1971), 38-42.
8. Ibid., 42.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 39.
12. A paper entitled "Art Since 1945 and the Ideology of the Star System: de Kooning's Marilyn Monroe and Hawks's Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," presented at a symposium at the University of California, Berkeley (April 1988), was derived from a course I developed on star-system ideology in post-1945 art, film, and politics. The ideas explored in the course and the paper will soon be expanded into a larger work.
13. Tonsure, in which Duchamp is photographed from behind, leaves the viewer unsure of the figure's personal identity, but in command of attributing to the figure whatever identity he or she chooses (not the least of which is that of a "star," as it might be construed in both the "natural" and "cultural" sense of the term). Observers become mindful of the fact that not only are

they "viewing subjects" but, by virtue of standing in a position that mirrors the photographed figure, they are also, in effect, "subjects viewed/viewable." In a fashion reminiscent of cinema's material construction of frames that follow one another in rapid succession, with infinitesimal difference between images when analyzed next to each other outside the projector, the viewer stands, gazing from behind at a figure whose position, so similar to his or her own, signals the possibility of one's own anonymity-rendering viewability and one's own identity as an object stuck in a visual system of infinite regress. This object-status balances out the otherwise more autonomous sensibility with which the viewer takes in the figure from a position of visual mastery over it.

14. The work of Duchamp was itself fast approaching the fullest possible pedigree in these years. The first major retrospective of his work in this country would take place in 1973 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. See Anne D'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine, Marcel Duchamp (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1973).

15. Lea Vergine, Il corpo come linguaggio (La 'Body-art' e storie simili), trans. Henry Martin (Milan: Giampaolo Prearo Editore, 1974).

16. Francois Pluchart, l'art corporel (Paris: Editions Rodolphe Stadler, 1975).

17. Ira Licht, Bodyworks (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1975).

18. Vergine, Il corpo, 5, 9.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 1. The same quote appeared in Lea Vergine, "Bodylanguage," Art & Artists 9 (September 1974), 22.

21. See Chapter One, n. 27 and text supra for Kaprow citation and brief discussion; Adrian Henri, Total Art: Environments, Happenings, and Performance (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1974).

22. Pluchart, l'art corporel, n.p.

23. Other artists in the exhibition produced less alarming versions of what might be thought of as "Body Art"--like Gilbert and George. Licht no doubt felt that the presence of milder work was necessary for American museum-going audiences. The fact that he mounted the show at all,

however, and gave it the name he did, is quite remarkable and deserves recognition as I have tried to give it, albeit briefly, here.

24. Licht, Bodyworks, n.p.

25. Max Kozloff, "Pygmalion Reversed," Artforum 24 (November 1975), 32.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., 37.

28. Lichtenstein, "Hans Bellmer's Dolls," 62. See Chapter One, n. 41 for earlier citation. Lichtenstein's theories are touched on there, as well as in Chapter One, n. 59 and are discussed fully in Chapter Two, nn. 37-38.

29. Lucy R. Lippard, "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: Women's Body Art," Art in America 64 (May-June 1976), 73-81.

30. Ibid., 73. I would agree with Lippard on half of this point--the part having to do with the Aktionism group. I do not see the masochistic work I have been discussing as an outgrowth of an Aktionism model, inasmuch as I see most of the artists associated with that group (Hermann Nitsch, Otto Mühl, Rudolf Schwarzkogler) as being much more concerned with processes of sadism. The sole exception would be Günter Brus, who indeed performed masochistic pieces, as discussed in Chapter One, text at nn. 33-34 supra.

The operative theory for most of the Aktionism artists was reflection-liberation theory: by mimetically reproducing the violence they saw around them or in which their ancestry, as Germans and Eastern Europeans, was invested, they believed a catharsis of that historical legacy and the biologically determined impulses behind it could perhaps be enacted. For more on the Aktionism group see: Nitsch, Orgies Mysteries Theatre (cited in n. 12, Chapter One); From Action Painting to Actionism, Vienna 1960-1965 (Kassel: Museum Fridericianum in assoc. with Ritter Verlag, 1988).

Destruction-in-art work, like that discussed by Stiles, is irrefutably influenced by the Aktionism artists' ideas (many of the Aktionism artists were participants at DIAS), especially their embrace of reflection theory and the hope of cathartic liberation. Stiles summarizes a quote from Gustav Metzger, the artist-organizer of DIAS, that speaks to my point: "Auto-Destructive Art...would embrace the 'sadistic and masochistic components in human beings,' the 'key' to the 'aesthetic of revulsion' and,

like...[Artaud's]...Theatre of Cruelty, provide for the spectator and the artist 'the experience of catharsis'" (Stiles, "DIAS," 157; Gustav Metzger, Auto-Destructive Art: Metzger at AA [London: Creation/Destruction, 1965], 23).

While the latter connection may, as Stiles has shown, be accurately made (between destruction-oriented works like those presented at DIAS and Aktionism work per se), it is important not to conflate work engaged in processes of sadism with that of masochism (as Lippard does in the other half of her point by referring to "sado-masochism" as if the two practices were naturally joined, just as Metzger also did above), thus duplicating the flaw of psychoanalytic theory to see the processes as symmetrical. Such a conflation glosses over the historical specificity of early-1970s masochistic work in the waning years of the Vietnam War, and the array of inherent questions raised by that context--especially those questions concerning personal and geopolitical boundaries and artists' desire to tamper with and change them through admittedly problematic strategies of masochism.

31. Ibid., 75.

32. Ibid.

33. Lisa Tickner, "The Body Politic: Female Sexuality and Women Artists Since 1970," Art History 1 (June 1978), 245.

34. Ibid.

35. Lippard, "Pains and Pleasures," 79.

36. Ibid.

37. Tickner cites the location of the Barbara Rose quote as "Vaginal Iconology," New York (February 1974), 59.

38. This volley of remarks between Tickner and her opponent (whom Tickner cleverly chooses to leave unnamed in her response) was reprinted in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-85 (London: Pandora Press, 1987), 277, and originally appeared in Art Monthly 23 (1979), 22-23. Her opponent's editorial comment was originally published in Apollo (October 1978).

39. Moira Roth, "Toward a History of California Performance: Part One," Arts 52 (February 1978), 94-103; "Toward a History of California Performance: Part Two," Arts 52 (June 1978), 114-23.

40. An important performance art historical connection remains to be made between the political activity of the New Left and the political and cultural history outlined by Roth. Research into the inner workings of the San Francisco Mime Troupe and its influences on both art and politics, both on the West and East Coasts, will constitute a future project of mine, as stimulated by Todd Gitlin's provision of a substantial base of research on former Mime Troupe actor Peter Berg, an active participant in a street-theater group called the Diggers, known especially for their anarchistic disruption of a 1967 SDS conference, which Gitlin describes.

Berg, as Gitlin points out, claims to have influenced Abbie Hoffman's exploitation of the media. Gitlin refers to Hoffman as "an East Coast sort of street Digger" and discusses his performances as well: for instance, his infamous dropping of dollar bills onto the floor of the New York Stock Exchange and subsequent burning of them in front of news reporters covering the event (the Diggers had burned money in earlier performances, Gitlin claims). See Todd Gitlin, "Public Nuisances," in The Sixties, Years of Hope, Days of Rage (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 222-41.

41. Roth, "California Performance: Part One," 95.

42. Roth, "California Performance: Part Two," 114.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid. The artists she lists as having achieved this fame include, besides Kaprow and Antin, Chris Burden.

45. AA Bronson and Peggy Gale, eds., Performance by Artists (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1979).

46. Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello, eds., Performance in Postmodern Culture (Madison, Wis.: Coda Press, 1977).

47. Chantal Pontbriand, "Introduction: Notion(s) of Performance," in Performance by Artists, 10; Pontbriand is quoting Michel Benamou, "Presence and Play," in Performance in Postmodern Culture, 3.

48. Carl E. Loeffler and Darlene Tong, eds., Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Performance Art (San Francisco: Contemporary Arts Press, 1980).

49. High Performance was the first American magazine focusing solely on performance art. Other magazines,

based in Europe, which regularly featured performance work and published translations of articles in English included Flash Art and ArTitudes.

50. Pontbriand, Performance, Text(e)s & Documents. See n. 3, Chapter One for full citation.

51. Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," in Performance, Text(e)s & Documents, ed. Pontbriand, 37-48. See n. 3, Chapter One for full citation.

52. Douglas Crimp, "The Photographic Activity in Postmodernism," in Performance, Text(e)s & Documents, ed. Pontbriand, 70-75. See n. 3, Chapter One for more discussion of this essay and full citation.

53. Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism," 53. See Chapter Four, text at nn. 44-47 supra.

54. Concepts of authenticity of the body were grappled with at a symposium on "Feminism, Performance, and Postmodernism," at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, 1990.

55. Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman, "Textual Strategies: The Politics of Art-Making," Screen 21 (Summer 1980), 37.

56. Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism," 54.

57. Performance--Another Dimension (Berlin: Kunstlerhaus Bethanien in assoc. with Frolich & Kaufman, 1983).

58. Michael Haerdter, "The Artist and the Public," in Performance--Another Dimension, 220.

59. Ibid., 221.

60. Moira Roth, ed., The Amazing Decade: Women and Performance Art in America, 1970-1980 (Los Angeles: Astro Artz, 1983).

61. Ibid., 27.

62. Thomas McEvelley, "Art in the Dark," Artforum 21 (Summer 1983), 62-71.

63. Ibid., 62.

64. Ibid., 63.

65. Ibid., 66-67.
66. Ibid., 70.
67. Ibid., 67.
68. Battcock and Nickas, The Art of Performance. See n. 85, Chapter Two for full citation.
69. Peter Gorsen, "The Return of Existentialism in Performance Art," in Battcock and Nickas, The Art of Performance, 137. First published in Flash Art 86-87 (January-February 1979).
70. Ibid., 136-37.
71. Gorsen does, unfortunately, conflate these artists with the Viennese Aktionism group. See n. 30 above for discussion of this conflation as a problem.
72. Ibid., 140.
73. Barbara Haskell, Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance, 1958-1964 (New York and London: Whitney Museum of American Art in assoc. with W. W. Norton & Co., 1984), 15.
74. Marcia Tucker, Choices: Making an Art of Everyday Life (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986), 79.
75. Kahn, "Communities of Faith;" see 6-9, 11-15 for discussion of conceptualism. Cf. RoseLee Goldberg's emphasis on contemporary performance art's debt to conceptual art in her chapter entitled "The Art of Ideas and the Media Generation 1968 to 1986," in Goldberg, Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present, 152-210; and Irving Sandler's notion of the relationship between these two art forms (see upcoming text at nn. 79-80 supra).
76. Peter Selz, Art in Our Times: A Pictorial History, 1890-1980 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1981); see 517 and various performance art entries throughout.
77. Howard Smagula, Currents: Contemporary Directions in the Visual Arts (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 221.
78. Ibid., 224.
79. Irving Sandler, American Art of the 1960s (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 359. His self-quote is from his

introduction to Critic's Choice 1969-1970, exhibition catalog (New York: New York State Council on the Arts and the State University of New York, 1969), n.p.

80. Sandler, American Art of the 1960s, 362.

81. Again, see n. 30 above for discussion of the problems with this linkage between masochistic performance and Viennese Aktionism work.

82. Edward Lucie-Smith, Art in the Seventies (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), 91.

83. Pollock, Vision and Difference, 165. See n. 18, Chapter One for full citation.

84. Ibid., 199.

FIG. 1

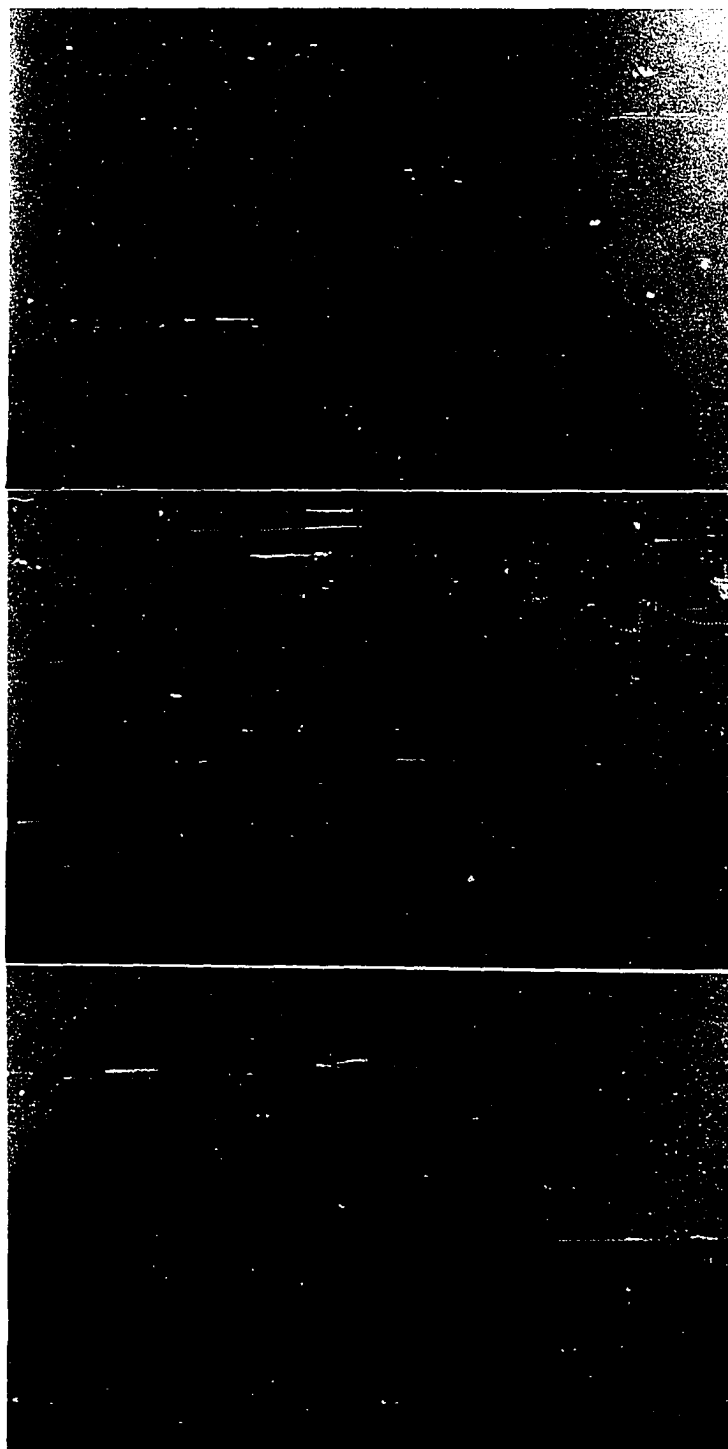
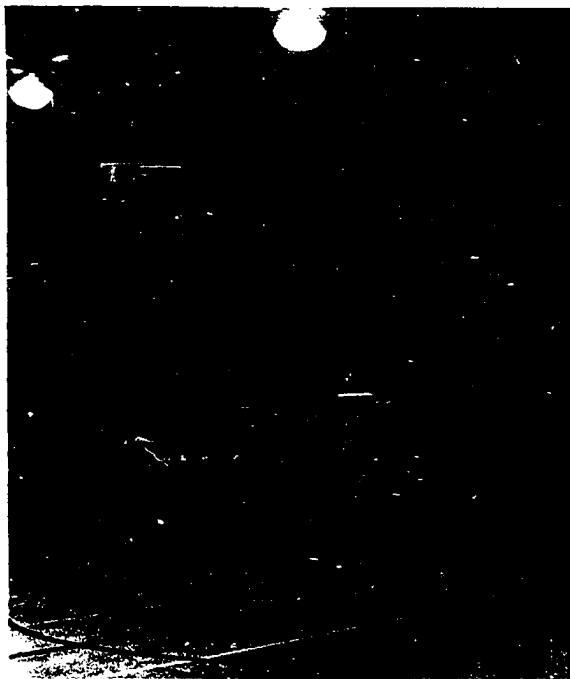
Ulay/Abramovic, Talking about Similarity, 1976

FIG. 2Chris Burden, Shoot, 1971

FIG. 3Chris Burden, Movie on the Way Down, 1973

FIGS. 4a-b

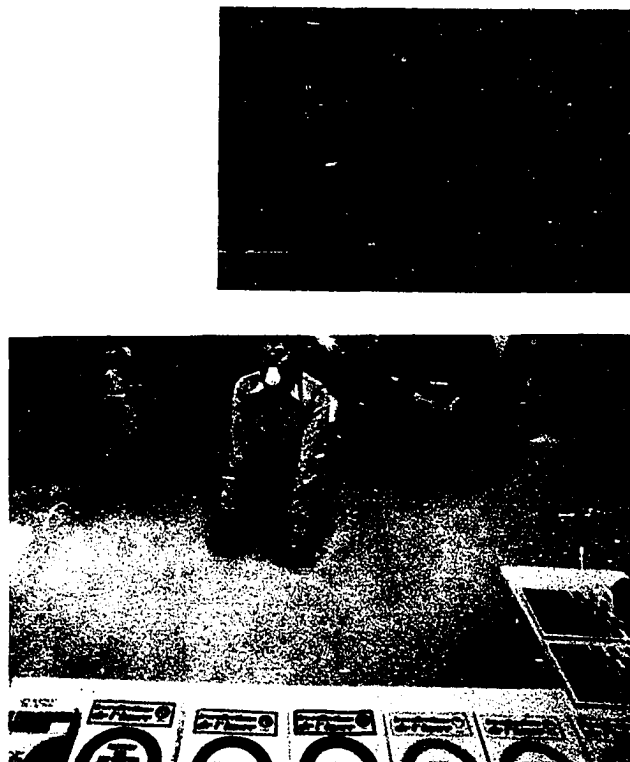
Gina Pane, Money-Meat-Fire, 1971

FIG. 4c

Gina Pane, Money-Meat-Fire, 1971

FIG. 5

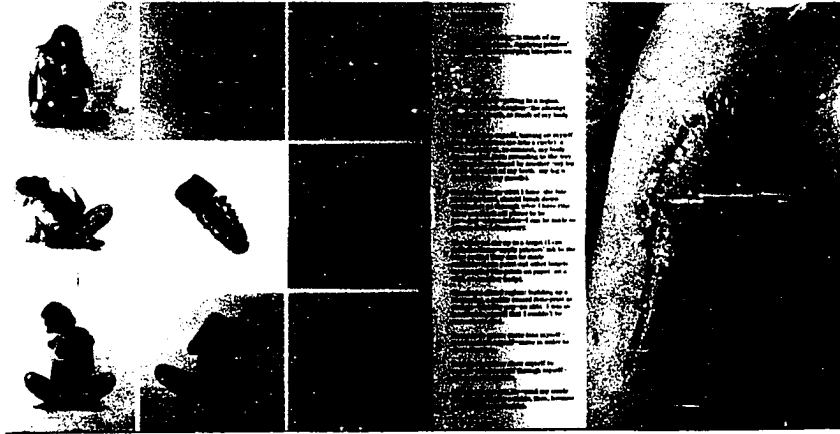
Vito Acconci, Trademarks, 1970

FIG. 6

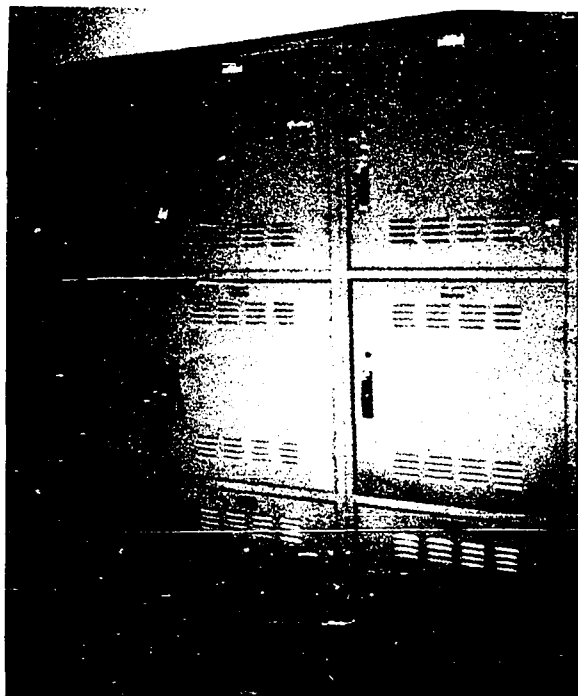
Chris Burden, Five-Day Locker Piece, 1971

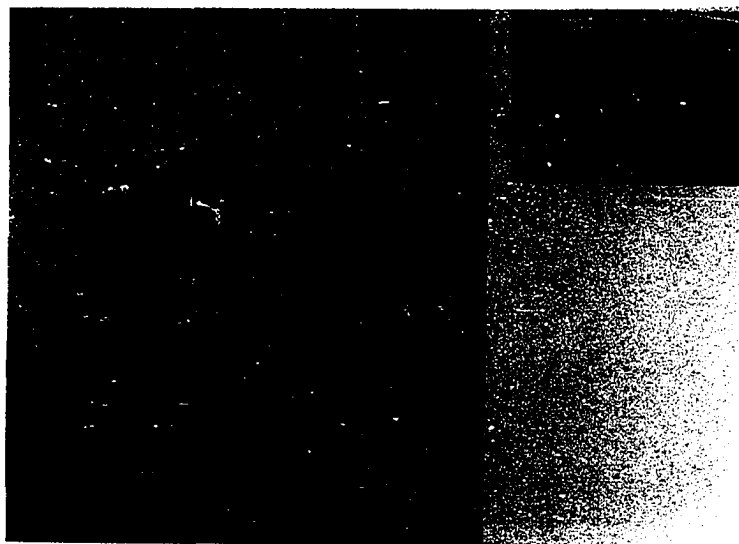
FIG. 7Chris Burden, Velvet Water, 1974

FIG. 8

Gina Pane, Discours mou et mat, 1975

FIG. 9

Vito Acconci, See Through, 1969

FIG. 10a

Ulay/Abramovic, Balance Proof, 1977

FIG. 10b

Ulay/Abramovic, Balance Proof, 1977

FIG. 10c

Ulay/Abramovic, Balance Proof, 1977

FIG. 10d

Ulay/Abramovic, Balance Proof, 1977

FIG. 10e

Ulay/Abramovic, Balance Proof, 1977

FIG. 11

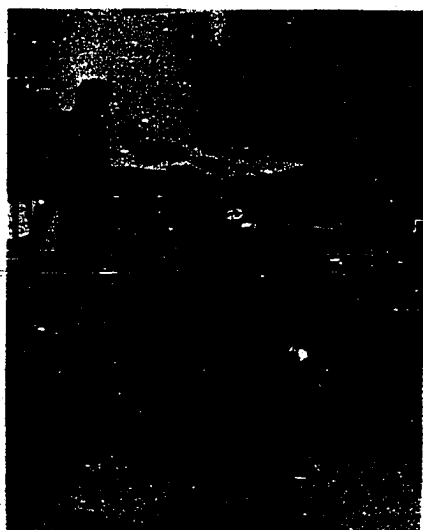
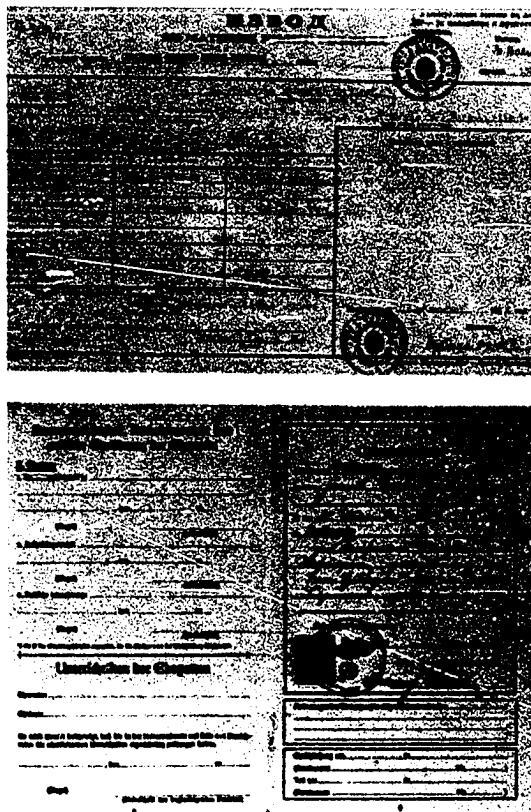
Vito Acconci, Reception Room, 1973

FIG. 12



Ulay/Abramovic, Communist Body/Capitalist Body, 1979

FIG. 13a

Gina Pane, Self-Portrait ("The Conditioning"), 1973

FIG. 13b

Gina Pane, Self-Portrait ("Contraction"), 1973

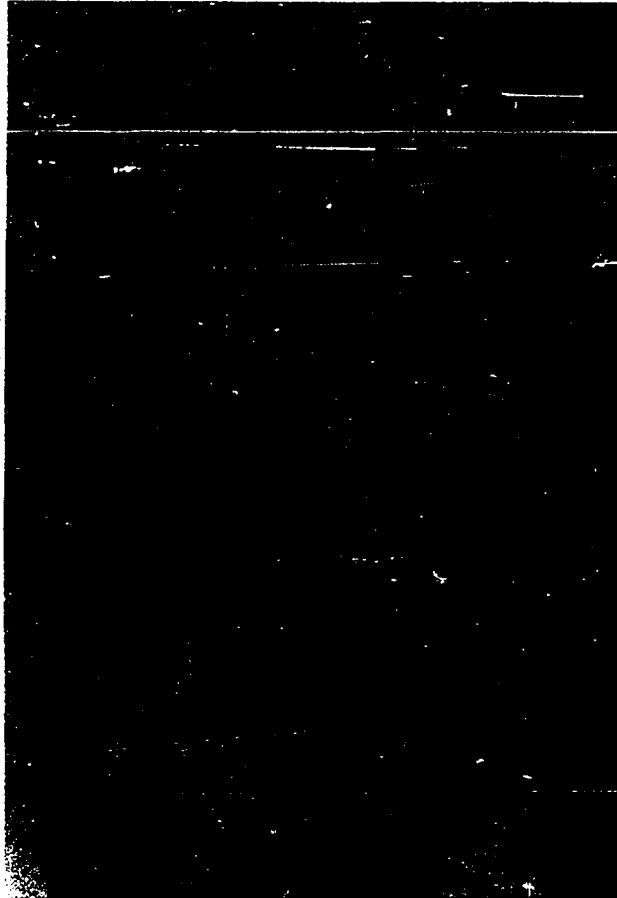
FIG. 13cGina Pane, Self-Portrait ("Rejection"), 1973

FIG. 14

Chris Burden, Deadman, 1972

FIG. 15

Chris Burden, Bed Piece, 1972

FIG. 16

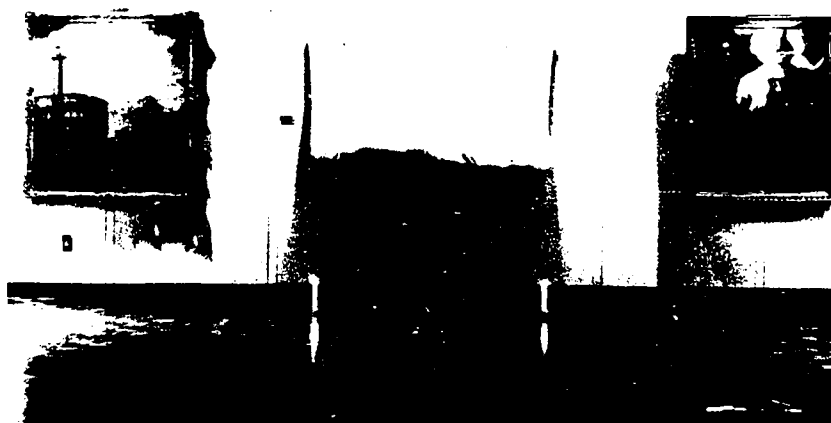
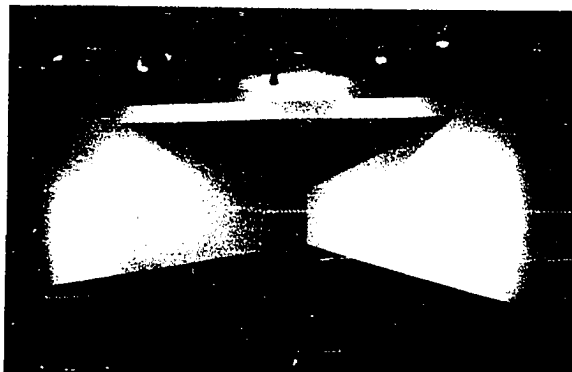
Chris Burden, Oh, Dracula, 1974

FIG. 17

Chris Burden, White Light/White Heat, 1975

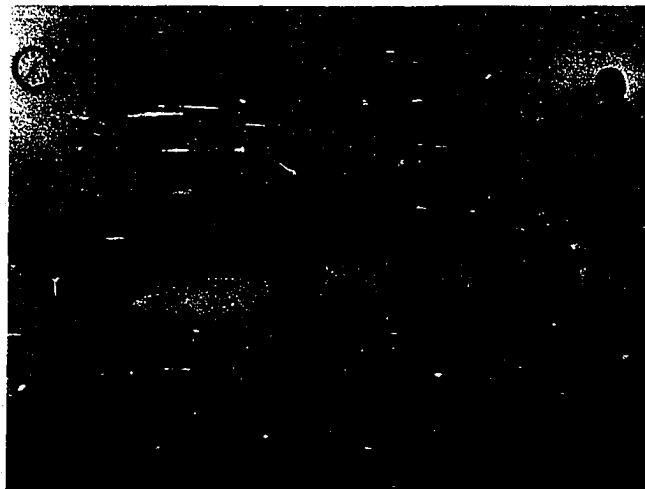
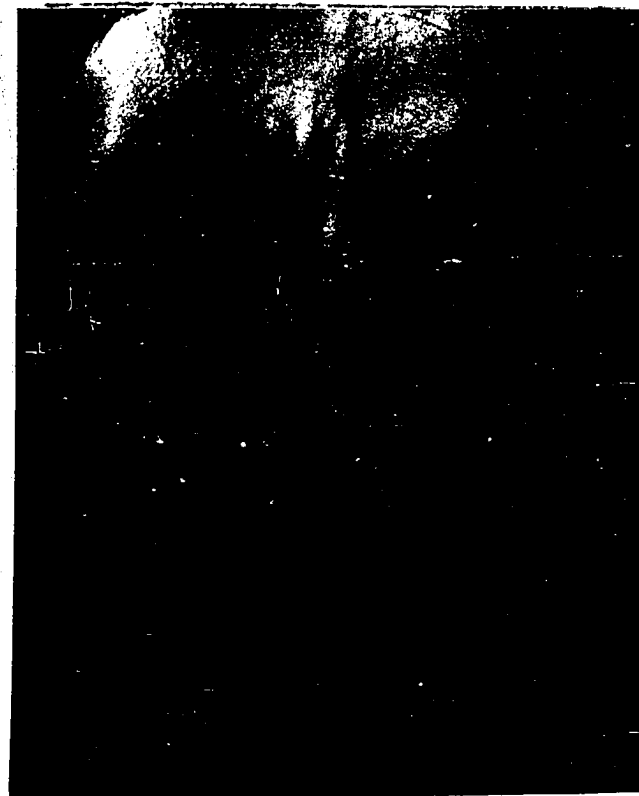
FIG. 18Chris Burden, Doomed, 1975

FIG. 19



David Wojnarowicz, still from film entitled Silence=Death

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