Louise Bourgeois's Provisional Stitches: An Examination of Bourgeois's Production of Subjectivity, Materialized

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

September 2009

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-63040-2
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-63040-2

Abstract

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In recent years, artist Louise Bourgeois has begun incorporating her garments, and those of friends and family, as well as household textiles into her artworks. Anchored in poststructuralist thought, this thesis, written from a feminist perspective, examines Bourgeois's material use as the production of her subjectivity, materialized. Deconstructing existing presuppositions of the essentiality of subjectivity, Bourgeois's latest fabric is explored as the metaphoric ocillatory movement between self and other, mirroring the process of the subject in the making. Based on the premise that the work of art is not a reflection of the artist's experience but the site of experience itself, Bourgeois's material is examined as the site of the process and perpetual transformation of her subject position. Situating the significance of Bourgeois's works outside of the restrictive interpretive framework of the biographical details of her life, this thesis instead situates the meaning of her works within the dialogistic encounter between viewer and artwork. In exploring Bourgeois's subjectivity in relation to her latest material, her age is also considered, for she has reached the extreme old age of ninety-seven. The issue of ageism is therefore also considered in order to better understand this artist and the production of her work and self.

Ode à ma mère, Gisèle Dupras

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking my supervisor, Dr. Catherine MacKenzie, for her unwavering support throughout the writing of this thesis. Her guidance has been truly invaluable. To Dr. Loren Lerner, my committee member, I extend my sincerest gratitude. Her insightful advice has been a tremendous help. I also want to thank the Department of Art History at Concordia University for their constant support during my studies. To Professor Robert Gifford I would like to say that sometimes the words, thank you, are not enough. And, of course, I offer my sincerest thanks to Dr. Janice Anderson for her wisdom over the years. Finally, I thank my little sister, Estelle Grandbois-Bernard, for her through-thick-and-thin encouragement throughout the writing of this thesis, and especially, for her friendship.

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Introduction

It's not done.
Louise Bourgeois

Louise Bourgeois is a story-teller. For the last quarter century she has woven tales that stem from her childhood, and seemingly dictate the very contours of her sculptures. A clever wordsmith, Bourgeois has dazzled us with her words, leading us down many a labyrinth of spellbinding stories, filled with tragic episodes of betrayal and deep disappointment, only to then lead us back, in a round-about way, to the point of departure, her sculptures. Bourgeois's story-telling first began to emerge in 1982, at the time of her retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.[1] Ingrid Sischy, then editor of *Artforum*, had asked her to make a project for the magazine. Bourgeois created "Child Abuse,"[2] a childhood photography series in which the sordid tale of Sadie Gordon, the governess-turned-mistress, would unfold.[3] Bourgeois has stated that the "Child Abuse" piece was her attempt to explain the person behind the artworks.[4] Deflective in nature, Bourgeois's words seem to have functioned as protective shields, warding off criticism while simultaneously offering justification. In the last few years

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[1] Robert Storr, "The Discreet Charm of Louise Bourgeois," *Tate: The Art Magazine* no. 6 (Summer 1995): 29. Bourgeois was the first artist who is a woman to have a retrospective at the MoMA in New York City.
[2] Louise Bourgeois, "Child Abuse," *Artforum* vol. 20, no. 4 (December 1982): 40-47.
[3] Sadie Gordon was hired as governess for the Bourgeois family in 1922. She would become M. Bourgeois's mistress, and even though known to Mme Bourgeois, Gordon would stay on as governess/mistress for ten years. The discovery by the young Louise of this affair was seen as a complete betrayal and would later become the source of many of her artworks. See, Child Abuse and "Louise Bourgeois: Album," in *Louise Bourgeois: Destruction of the Father, Reconstruction of the Father: Writings and Interviews, 1923-1997*, edited with texts by Marie-Laure Bernadac and Hans-Ulrich Obrist (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press in association with Violette Editions, London, 1998) 277-285.
[4] Cheryl Kaplan, "Cut in Two: A Conversation Between Louise Bourgeois and Cheryl Kaplan," *db-artmag* vol. 24, 12/06/04 - 01/11/05, http://www.db-artmag.de/art/2004/9/e/1/293.php

however, Bourgeois's words have begun to wane.[5] Robert Storr writes that as the end of her life nears, Bourgeois is no longer so apt to retell her tales of unhappier times. With the ebbing of Bourgeois's stories, Storr maintains that we have now been given the opportunity to explore her sculptures anew, and gain fresh insight into the works themselves. As Storr further writes,

> Now that Bourgeois's story-telling has largely come to a halt, while her febrile mind reprocesses the same fecund residue of anguish and desire in more purely abstract terms, we are at liberty to look at what she does without the confirmation—or crutch—of her prepared exegesis. Moreover, we are free from that vantage point to reexamine the whole of her oeuvre and re-imagine its trajectory with the memory-based narrative pared away.[6]

Thus, following suit in this re-imagined trajectory, the underpinning objective of this thesis will be to try to avoid the viscous web of words that Bourgeois has woven, and, moving beyond her restrictive, pre-fabricated narrative, seek out the other possible stories, instead of the one, prescribed story. Terry Eagleton writes that with the advent of poststructuralism came the movement from 'work' to 'text.' With this movement the novel, and for our purposes here the artwork, which was once perceived as a closed entity laden with its finite meanings for us to decipher, instead became an irreducibly plural entity, unfurling an endless play of signification which could never be seized nor reduced to a single essence or meaning.[7] Within this endless unfurling of signification, we the viewers thus become an integral part of the very production of meaning. The approach of this thesis is thus a poststructural one which examines Bourgeois's works of art without

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[5] Bourgeois no longer gives interviews. See, Amy Newman. "Louise Bourgeois Builds a Book from the Fabric of Life," *New York Times,* 17 October 2004, AR, 30.
[6] Robert Storr, "Abstraction: L'esprit géométrique." in *Louise Bourgeois,* exhibition catalogue, ed. Frances Morris (London: Tate Publishing, 2007) 21, 25.
[7] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) 138.

the hindrance of her prepared exegesis, and which, moving beyond her biographical details, enters into the dialogistic realm that exists between viewer and artwork.

Bourgeois's biography is however still a very current approach to her works. Accompanying Bourgeois's recent retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2008, chief curator Nancy Spector organized the exhibition *A life in Pictures: Louise Bourgeois*,[8] which consisted of Bourgeois's personal ephemera such as journals and photographs. Ironically this exhibition in itself is something of a circuitous tale for it harkens back to Bourgeois's 1982 retrospective at the MoMA where she herself had made the autobiographical slide show *Partial Recall* for the exhibition.[9] Similarly, two recent films; Brigitte Cornand's film *Louise Bourgeois: C'est le murmure de l'eau qui chante. A Portrait of the Artist*, 20002[10] and *Louise Bourgeois: The Spider, the Mistress and the Tangerine*, 2008[11] by Marion Cajori and Amei Wallach also examine Bourgeois's works from this perspective. Cornand's film is an intimate look at Bourgeois's recent fabric sculptures with particular emphasis on the works done with tapestry materials, tracing Bourgeois's familial tapestry lineage.[12] Cajori and Wallach's film, while similarly relying on interviews and Bourgeois's personal background as the interpretive lens from which to approach Bourgeois's artworks, does however move beyond this framework, specifically questioning the issue of Bourgeois's biography as being the key to her works. In the section on the mistress in the film, Jerry Gorovoy, Bourgeois's long-

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[8] The exhibition ran from June 27 – September 12, 2008. See, Guggenheim Museum Media Release at: http://waand.rutgers.edu/news/guggenheim_lifeinpictures_release.pdf

[9] Storr The Discreet Charm 29.

[10] Brigitte Cornand, director, *Louise Bourgeois: C'est le murmure de l'eau qui chante. A Portrait of the Artist*, (France: Les Films du Siamios, 2002) DVD.

[11] Marion Cajori and Amei Wallach, directors, *Louise Bourgeois: The Spider, the Mistress and the Tangerine* (USA: Zeitgeist Films, 2008) DVD.

[12] Bourgeois's tapestry use is not explored in this thesis for this is a vast subject which deserves a much more extensive examination than can be permitted here.

time assistant, states that the story of the mistress Sadie has proven to have been quite detrimental to the general interpretation of her works, further stating that her works are far too complex to be reduced to one such narrow source.[13]

In a similar vein, in recent years others have also chosen to approach Bourgeois's artworks from a perspective that reaches beyond her restrictive stories, exploring instead the dialogistic encounter between viewer and artwork. Hilary Robinson's book, *Reading Art, Reading Irigaray: The Politics of Art by Women*, is such an example.[14] In her chapter "Gesture," Robinson argues that Bourgeois's biographical narrative can confound as much as it can aid legibility to her works, further writing,

> There is no overt narrative content to the works, and any attempt, detective-style, to seek one or impose one—whether it is one drawn from the words of the artist or from those who speak about her work—we are in severe danger of forgetting that the significance of all art forms and artworks is not reducible to any singular overt narrative.[15]

Thus Robinson also locates the significance of Bourgeois's works outside of the boundaries of her prepared explanations. Robinson suggests that the meaning of her works of art is neither fixed in her words, nor in the works themselves, but rather is to be found circulating amongst the many possible narratives that arise between viewer and work. Likewise, Alex Potts's chapter "Conclusion: Arenas and Objects of Sculpture: Bourgeois" in his book, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist,* takes a comparable approach.[16] Herein Potts situates Bourgeois's oeuvre within sculptural art practices which deny the viewer a stabilized self-awareness that usually

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[13] Also in recent years, Mignon Nixon has taken a unique approach to Bourgeois's works of art, examining them from a psychoanalytical perspective in her book, *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005).

[14] Hilary Robinson, "Gesture," in *Reading Art, Reading Irigaray: The Politics of Art by Women* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris; New York: Distributed in United States by Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 125-145.

[15] Robinson 137.

[16] Alex Potts, "Conclusion: Arenas and Objects of Sculpture: Bourgeois," in *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 357-379.

happens when a sculpture is apprehended as a substantial autonomous other. Instead, Potts proposes that Bourgeois's artworks posit a presence, instilling something unstable, resembling an utterance, which rather than being anchored in the form itself, is activated in the contingencies of a viewer's encounter with Bourgeois's work. Potts further asserts that it is within this contingent viewing space that psychic splitting and dispersal ensues, and where a refusal of the integrative structuring associated with the ideal sculptural form occurs.

Michael Bishop's chapter, "Sublimation, The Irreducible and the Sacred: Louise Bourgeois" in his book *Contemporary French Art 1: Eleven Studies*[17] draws similar conclusions. According to Bishop although Bourgeois's artworks stem from profoundly subjective experiences, the power of the works are however drawn from circumstances that reach beyond the autobiographical details of Bourgeois's life, rooted instead in a more universal terrain that speaks to and engages the viewer. Rather than seeking out the one and only meaning, Bishop argues that the significance of Bourgeois's works of art is to be found at the crossroads of signification. Located between ambiguity and clarity, the polymorphous and the simplistic, and well beyond fixable meaning, Bishop maintains that the signification of Bourgeois's artworks is to be found at the intersection between viewer and artwork. Federico Sabatini, in his article, "Louise Bourgeois: An Existentialist Act of Self-Perception,"[18] also locates Bourgeois's oeuvre within the realm of the timeless and the universal. Bourgeois's works of art, Sabatini maintains, should not be dismissed as merely autobiographical, but rather seen as articulating existential

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[17] Michael Bishop. "Sublimation, The Irreducible and the Sacred: Louise Bourgeois." in *Contemporary French Art 1: Eleven Studies* (Amsterdam; New York: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2008) 49-63.
[18] Federico Sabatini, "Louise Bourgeois: An Existentialist Act of Self-Perception," *Nebula* vol. 4, no. 4 (December 2007): 1-10.

ideas and achieving a high degree of sublimation. From a philosophical, poststructuralist approach, Sabatini argues that an infinite range of possible interpretations, rather than a final unique message, are conveyed within Bourgeois's works, and that hers is an art of rapprochement with the viewer, which takes full advantage of the viewer's encounter with her work. In the chapter "Power and Vulnerability in the Work of Louise Bourgeois," in her book *The Creative Feminine and Her Discontents: Psychotherapy, Art, and Destruction*,[19] Juliet Miller maintains that by offering up her own explanations for her artworks, Bourgeois has in a way defused the power of interpretation for others, stating, "It cannot be done to her because she got there first."[20] Moreover, Miller argues that while Bourgeois's early childhood experiences are crucial to her creativity, it is actually through the harnessing of the power of the creative act, and through the consistent reworking of her relationship to her past, that she is able to transcend these childhood experiences.[21] It is this consistent, repetitive reworking of Bourgeois's past, which in turn perpetually transforms her present, which this thesis will examine through the use of her latest material, that is, her incorporation of garments and textiles as a central theme into her oeuvre.

Bourgeois is known for the wide array of materials that she has, throughout her practice, explored. In her continuous exploration of media, she has employed materials ranging from wood, rubber, bronze, and steel, to marble, latex, and alabaster, to name but a few (figs. 1-7). In 1997 Bourgeois partook in the *XXIII Bienal Internacional de São*

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[19] Juliet Miller, "Power and Vulnerability in the Work of Louise Bourgeois," in *The Creative Feminine and Her Discontents: Psychotherapy, Art, and Destruction* (London: Karnac, 2008) 101-119.
[20] Miller 104.
[21] Miller 105.

Paulo, exhibiting *Cell (Clothes),* 1996 (fig. 8) a work especially prepared for this show. Paulo Herkenhoff writes that during this time he had a meeting with Bourgeois, where he saw some sewing manuals, amongst which were *The New Dressmaker* and *Manuel Méthodique et Pratique de Couture et de Coupe.* These manuals were, "[O]rganized according to their size, as if they were the articulation of concepts, methods, and an order of sculpture. [And as Bourgeois states,] 'They are books on the science of tailoring, and sculpturing is to cut in three dimensions.'"[22] Meticulously placed according to form, these books reiterate the concepts and methods of sculpture according to Bourgeois. Transforming malleable fragments of material into three-dimensional entities, Bourgeois approaches sewing from a sculptor's perspective, for in her eyes all materials can be used to cut through, and take shape in space. Bourgeois began using fabric, her latest material in the mid-1990s. During this time, as Amy Newman writes, "Jerry Gorovoy, Ms. Bourgeois's right-hand assistant for over two decades, was told to 'bring all the clothes' from a storage closet that held garments from as long ago as the 1920s through more recent times. The artist began using them and other odd remnants she had accumulated—and when she had worked her way through the clothing, she started mining a lifetime's worth of linens. . . ."[23] Thus began Bourgeois's incorporation of her own clothing, and that of friends' and members of her family, as well as sheets, towels, and a myriad of other textiles from her home, into her artworks.[24] Frances Morris writes that Bourgeois

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[22] Paulo Herkenhoff, "Louise Bourgeois," in *XXXIII Bienal Internacional de São Paulo: Salas Especiais*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Nelson Aguilar (São Paulo: Fundacao Bienal de São Paulo, 1996) 255.
[23] Newman AR, 30.
[24] Bourgeois states, "The clothes I include in my work belong to the artist, the maid and to friends. It is very inclusive. 'Friends' means anybody who has visited the house and who, by inadvertence, left an old book, a scarf, or galoshes, and by doing so enters the 'collection.'" See, "Interview. Paulo Herkenhoff in Conversation with Louise Bourgeois." in *Louise Bourgeois*, Robert Storr, Paulo Herkenhoff, and Allan Schwartzman, ed. Thyrza Nichols Goodeve (London: Phaidon, 2003) 21. According to Eimear McKeith when Bourgeois's father died [in 1953] all the contents of the family wardrobes were shipped from France

has frequently employed the language of spinning, sewing and weaving formally and metaphorically within her oeuvre.[25] This textile vocabulary is linked to Bourgeois's ancestral tapestry lineage, dating back to her maternal grandmother who lived and worked in Aubusson, a town in France founded by tapestry makers in the sixteenth century.[26] Her parents would later also have their own tapestry restoration business which was run from her childhood home, situated first in Choisy-le-roi, and thereafter in the small town of Antony.

Growing up surrounded by seamstresses, Bourgeois has said that she has always been fascinated with the needle and the magic of its power to repair the damage done.[27] For Bourgeois sewing is, "[A]n attempt to keep things together and make things whole."[28] Thus, the needle imbued with its magical powers, is an implement of both material and metaphoric reparation. Employed to impede disintegration, this metaphoric tool can continually return, repetitively, like the very gestures of sewing itself, to that elusive original whole. Storr writes, "The obsessional return to . . . traumatic times, and the hope-against-hope that the damage can be retroactively undone or patched has been the driving force behind everything that [Bourgeois] has made." However, as Storr further maintains, what is at stake is not so much what Bourgeois has tapped into, but rather how

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to her studio, and would equally be mined for material use. See, Eimear McKeith, "Stitching the Threads of the Past," exhibition review, *Irish Times,* 29 November 2003, 55.

[25] Frances Morris, *Louise Bourgeois: Stitches in Time,* exhibition catalogue (Dublin; Miami: August Projects, Irish Museum of Modern Art, and Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, 2004) 22.

[26] Louise Bourgeois, "A Memoir: Louise Bourgeois and Patricia Beckert *Late 1970s,*" in *Louise Bourgeois: Destruction of the Father, Reconstruction of the Father: Writings and Interviews, 1923-1997,* edited with texts by Marie-Laure Bernadac and Hans-Ulrich Obrist (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press in association with Violette Editions, London, 1998) 117.

[27] Louise Bourgeois, "Self-Expression is Sacred: Statements," in *Louise Bourgeois: Designing for the Free Fall* (Zurich: Ammann Verlag, 1992) 178.

[28] Louise Bourgeois, "Gerald Matt in Conversation with Louise Bourgeois," in *Louise Bourgeois. Aller-retour: Drawings and Sculptures,* exhibition catalogue, eds. Gerald Matt and Peter Weiermair (Wien: Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg und Kunsthalle, 2005) 201.

radically she has transformed it.[29] He therefore argues, and I concur that it is the transformation and the importance of the process of this transformation that needs to be further examined in Bourgeois's artworks. Metaphorically mending past events, Bourgeois's provisional stitches resemble the basting stitch which is done prior to the 'real' sewing. A provisory stitching, baste sewing allows the seamstress to verify that the final outcome will be the desired one. In essence basting is a trial run. Loosely stitched, it is always meant to be undone, yet it can be redone again and again *ad infinitum*. Thus while the baste stitch is a unifying gesture, it is always temporary, and always provisional. Similar to basting, Bourgeois's own stitches, which while retroactively repairing the damage done, are thus always in the process of provisionally transforming the present.

Questioning the creative process, Bourgeois has herself asked the question, "What conditions the birth and growth of the work of art?" The very experience undergone during the actual process of creation was one of the conditions that she would cite.[30] This experience undergone, is also significant in the interpretation of an artwork, for as Griselda Pollock writes, "[I]n the traditional model [of art historical practices], the artwork is a transparent screen through which you have only to look to see the artist as a psychological coherent subject originating the meanings the work so perfectly reflects. The critical feminist model relies on the metaphor of reading rather than mirror-gazing . . . for art is a semiotic practice."[31] Thus, Pollock proposes that the signs that we read are not

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[29] Robert Storr. "A Sketch for a Portrait: Louise Bourgeois." in *Louise Bourgeois*, Robert Storr, Paulo Herkenhoff and Allan Schwartzman (London: Phaidon, 2003) 40, 41.
[30] Louise Bourgeois. "Artists' Sessions at Studio 33." ed. Robert Goodnough. in *Modern Artists in America*, eds. Robert Motherwell *et al.* (New York: W. Schultz, 1949-1950) 17.
[31] Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's History* (New York: Routledge, 1999) 98.

the artist's experiences, but rather the site of experience itself. Indeed, rather than encountering a coherent subject on an all-revealing screen, instead, what we find is a subject that is unstable and shifting, and is perpetually in the process of becoming, and therefore, the site of experience that we come upon is thus the very production of the artist's subjectivity. It is this site of experience, that of the production of the artist's subjectivity, that this thesis will be investigating in relation to Bourgeois's latest material use. For, imitating the very process of this production, Bourgeois's new material, that is, her use of her own and that of her familiars' clothing, as well as the textiles that dress her home, takes on a great significance in the process of her subjectivity. And as it will be illustrated, Bourgeois's fabric use in her latest works of art is therefore the production of subjectivity materialized, and is thus the site of experience itself, emulating, embodying, and inscribing her subjectivity.

In exploring this subjective tale, it is however important to take into account that it is a tale told by an artist who, at ninety-seven years old, has reached extreme old age. Kathleen Woodward observes that while it is now preferable to use the term 'late life' or 'later life' in order to expunge negative connotations associated with the term 'old age,' she continues to use this term precisely because aging and old age have for so long been repressed in Western society. For these reasons, I too have decided to follow suit and use the term 'old age.'[32] Therefore taking into consideration the extreme old age of Bourgeois, age studies[33] become an important means of better understanding this artist and her work. Maintaining that age is largely socially constructed, Woodward writes that

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[32] For further reading see, Kathleen Woodward, Introduction, in *Aging and Its Discontents: Freud and Other Fictions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) 1-25.

[33] It is age studies as opposed to the art historical categories of old-age style and late style that is being referenced here. These art historical categories in relation to Bourgeois's practice will be addressed in the conclusion of this thesis.

age studies are concerned with understanding how differences are produced by material conditions as well as discursive and social practices. Furthermore, Woodward argues that while cultural studies have explored gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and class as markers of social difference, to date very little attention has been paid to age itself as indicative of difference. As Woodward further states, "Our disregard of age is all the more curious because age—in the sense of *older* age—is the one difference we are all likely to live into. Thus one of our most urgent tasks is to understand why we have kept the subject of aging at arm's length, that is, we must understand ageism itself."[34] The term 'ageism' was coined by Robert N. Butler in 1969 in his essay "Ageism: Another Form of Bigotry." In this essay Butler argued that, "Age-ism reflects a deep seated uneasiness on the part of the young and middle-aged—a personal revulsion to and distaste for growing old, disease, disability; and fear of powerlessness, 'uselessness,' and death."[35] Hence, in understanding ageism and its intricate mechanisms within Western society, we must also understand that ageism is partially perpetuated by the very internalization of this fear of aging and old age, and thus, it is also with this in mind that Bourgeois's recent artworks will be considered. In regards to my examination of age studies in relation to Bourgeois's artworks in this thesis, I owe my gratitude to the expertise of Kathleen Woodward.

In 1913 Rebecca West wrote, "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express

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[34] Kathleen Woodward, Introduction, in *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*, ed. Kathleen Woodward (Publisher Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1999) x. All emphasis in the quotations in this thesis is from the original sources.

[35] Robert N. Butler, "Ageism: Another Form of Bigotry," *The Gerontologist* vol. 9 (1969): 243.

sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat. . . ."[36] Louise Bourgeois's own relationship to feminism is I believe, a complicated one, which I will not venture to try and untangle here. Furthermore, while Bourgeois acknowledges that artworks made by artists who are women stem from a different place then that of works made by artists who are men, she does not think that feminist art exists. I will also not be entering into a dialogue on this issue with her here, for it is beyond the scope of this thesis.[37] I will however be approaching her artworks from a feminist's perspective, relying on critical feminist theory within art history, as well as within other disciplines to do so, for I too differentiate myself from a doormat, and that is in thanks to Rebecca West and all the other like minded women who came before me. Within art history's critical feminist discourses, I am especially indebted to the scholarship brought forth by art historian Griselda Pollock. Therefore, from a feminist perspective which takes ageism into account, this thesis is constructed within a poststructuralist discourse on the production of subjectivity, which deconstructs existing presuppositions of the essentiality of subjectivity. In this regard, I have relied on the work of Jacques Derrida in my approach to Bourgeois's latest artworks.

The works of art chosen for the exploration of the production of Bourgeois's subjectivity were selected in order to trace the parallel development of her incorporation of her latest material into her oeuvre with that of the perpetual transformation of her subjectivity in the making. This thesis is therefore not a survey of Bourgeois's recent fabric sculptures, but rather an exploration of the significance of the material itself in

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[36] Rebecca West, *The Young Rebecca: Writings of Rebecca West, 1911-1917*, ed. Jane Marcus (New York: Viking Press, 1982) 219.

[37] For further reading on Bourgeois and feminism see, Kaplan Cut in Two, and Elisabeth Lebovici. "Is She? Or isn't She?" in *Louise Bourgeois*. exhibition catalogue, ed. Frances Morris (London: Tate Publishing, 2007) 131-137.

relation to the production of her subjectivity. In the first chapter of this thesis, "Unraveling the Supplement," Derrida's logic of the supplement will be examined in order to explore thereafter Bourgeois's use of garments and household textiles as a material in relation to the production of subjectivity. In the second chapter, "The Production of Subjectivity, Emulated," the Derridean supplement is coupled with new scholarship pertaining to the notion of dress, which argues that while much has been written on the body, little research to date has been done in problematizing dress in relation to the body.[38] Dress, situated between self and other, will be considered as 'dress-as-supplement,'[39] for as it will be demonstrated, functioning as an neither/nor, or an either/or, Bourgeois's metaphoric sartorial self emulates the movement of Derrida's supplement, which in turn perfectly mirrors the very production of the artist's subjectivity. In this early phase of Bourgeois's use of clothes, the resemblance of the movement of the Derridean supplement occurs at two levels. At one level Bourgeois's metaphoric self, clothing, moves between self and society, delineating the contours of her subjectivity. At an additional level, the garments themselves further the supplementary movement by oscillating between the sartorial self and that of the form of a sculpture. Indeed, in a state of trans/formation, clothes in this phase starts to move between itself and sculpture, for it is at this moment that Bourgeois's first fabric sculptures in their most preliminary shapes, begin to materialize. Therefore, in the early development of Bourgeois's garment use a double gesture is performed in the production of her subjectivity, and it is therefore at both these levels that the implications of the use of

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[38] See, Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson, "Introduction Body Dressing," in *Body Dressing*, eds. Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson (Oxford: Berg, 2001) 1-9.

[39] I am greatly indebted to Dani Cavallaro and Alexandra Warwick for this term. See, Dani Cavallaro and Alexandra Warwick, *Fashioning the Frame: Boundaries, Dress and Body* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 1998) xv.

clothing in her artworks shall be examined. The third chapter, "The Production of Subjectivity, Embodied," looks at two of Bourgeois's fabric torsos, both created in 2001. The torso, by virtue of its very nature, is the quintessential in-between, and as such, will be considered as the very embodiment of the process of subjectivity. Suspended in their transitional state, Bourgeois's fabric torsos will be examined for their ambivalent, marginal position in order to illustrate how perfectly they embody the production of the artist's subjectivity. Here, Bourgeois's material use has undergone a full transformation and has become a sculpted body; hence it is the implication of this further alteration that will be explored. The materials used for these two torsos, which consist of average household textiles, will be considered here as the interwoven, multitude of threads that make up one's life. As well, Derrida's notion of the *parergon* will be introduced as an additional supplementation to be explored in relation to Bourgeois's torsos. In recent years Bourgeois has also produced fabric books. In 2002, she would make her first book *Ode à la Bièvre,* followed by *The Woven Child* in 2003, *Ode à l'oubli* in 2004, and her latest book, *Hours of the Day* in 2006-2007. The fourth chapter of this thesis, "The Production of Subjectivity, Inscribed," will examine her book *Ode à la Bièvre* in order to explore the inscriptions of Bourgeois's production of subjectivity. Seeking out what Pollock terms 'inscriptions in the feminine,' this chapter will look to uncover the traces of a subjectivity formed in the feminine within art historical discourses that are structured in a language of sameness.

During a visit to Bourgeois's studio in Brooklyn, Christiane Meyer-Thoss states that one of the artist's frequent remarks about her work was, "It's not done."[40] Bourgeois

[40] Christiane Meyer-Thoss, "Designing for Free Fall," in *Louise Bourgeois: Designing for the Free Fall,* trans. Catherine Schelbert and Jörg Trobitius (Zurich: Ammann Verlag, 1992) 66.

is known for undoing and redoing, that is, for reworking her artworks and of even incorporating old works into new ones. In her sculptor's hands, it seems that any work which has not yet left her work space is thus at all times, open to change. Julia Kristeva states that in order to take into account the destabilization of both meaning and the subject, she thus came to the notion of the 'subject in process.' Kristeva states further, "Process in the sense of process but also in the sense of a legal proceeding where the subject is committed to trial, because our identities in life are constantly called into question, brought to trial, [and] over-ruled."[41] Thus, in the constant renegotiation of subject positions, subjectivity is not only brought to trial, but also consistently caught in a process of trial and error and trial again. The beauty of Bourgeois's latest material, in all its malleable splendor, is that it can continually be called into question, brought to trial, provisionally stitched and then undone again. As such, Bourgeois's latest artworks are always potentially, 'not done.'

[41] Susan Sellers, "A Question of Subjectivity: An interview," in *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*, ed. Mary Eagleton (Blackwell Publishing, 1996) 351.

Chapter One:
Unraveling the Supplement

Each material that Louise Bourgeois has employed has had its own particular properties which have functioned to convey what she has wanted to articulate. The use of fabric as a material for her artworks was already on the horizon, brewing in the recesses of her mind, as early as 1969. That year, Bourgeois reviewed the first exhibition on contemporary weaving, "Wall Hangings," held at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City. In this review she wrote the prescient statement,

> I feel that though [the exhibition] showed very fine weaving, it could have been a little wilder. . . . I could think, for instance, of all kinds of turned shapes—cubes or any three-dimensional forms that could have been used. The pieces in the show rarely liberate themselves from decoration and only begin to explore the possibilities of textiles. They can be woven into any shape and then made rigid by spraying. They can be stretched over armatures, draped, and pulled. All this is still open to exploration by the many fine artists who have shown their work in this exhibition.[42]

Some thirty years later, Bourgeois would pick up this thread in her own explorations, beginning in the 1990s, when she began using clothing and other textiles as a material for her sculptures.[43] While Bourgeois is very well known for her versatility of material use, the premise of this thesis is that the use of this latest material is by far the most personal.

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[42] Louise Bourgeois, "The Fabric of Construction," *Craft Horizons* vol. 29, no. 2 (March-April 1969): 35.

[43] Also, in 1991 Bourgeois participated in an exhibition of artist-designed scarves at The Fabric Workshop and Museum. Bourgeois made an enormous cotton gauze 'scarf,' printed with a story that she had written in 1947. The scarf would later become the central object in a performance entitled *She Lost It* held in 1992 at the FWM. Choreographed by the artist, the one-time performance was based on a high fashion runway show, featuring models who were FWM staff members and friends of the artist, Robert Storr included, who paraded across the stage wearing various garments embroidered with texts written by Bourgeois. See, http://www.fabricworkshop.org/exhibitions/bourgeois.php and Marion Boulton Stroud, *New Material as New Media: The Fabric Workshop and Museum*, 1st MIT Press edition, ed. Kelly Mitchell, designed by Takaaki Matsumoto (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002) 52-59.

When alone, Bourgeois now recites to herself soothing rhymes, composed of her own invented syllables.[44] No longer audible, her stories have turned inwards, into internal lullabies, to which we no longer are privy. But Bourgeois has not left us stranded, for in the void of her words she has left us with her most subjective works. For, as Joanne Entwistle writes, "Dress lies at the margins of the body and marks the boundary between self and other, individual and society. This boundary is intimate and personal since our dress forms the visible envelope of the self and, [as Fred Davis writes serves as a] 'visual metaphor for identity.'"[45] However, this visual metaphor of self is situated at the very fringe of self and other, and while it clearly separates, it also simultaneously unites. Hence, it is within this sartorial position, between individual and society, that we locate the production of subjectivity in motion, and as such, it is in Bourgeois's use of clothes, her own and that of her familiars, that we find subjectivity in the making, and as it were, materialized.

Within the new discourse on dress which seeks to problematize its relation to the body, Dani Cavallaro and Alexandra Warwick write,

> Should dress be regarded as part of the body, or merely as an extension of, or supplement to it? Even confining dress to the apparently secondary status of a supplement hardly resolves the problems inherent in the assessment of the relationship between dress and the body, since, as indicated by Derrida's analysis of the logic of supplementarity, the supplement operates simultaneously as an optional appendix and as a completing and hence necessary element. The notion of *dress-as-supplement* only serves to complicate further the already baffling partnership of body and dress.[46]

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[44] Storr Abstraction 22.
[45] Joanne Entwistle, "Fashion and the Fleshy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice," *Fashion Theory* vol. 4, no. 3 (2000): 327. For Fred Davis see, *Fashion, Culture and Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 25.
[46] Cavallaro and Warwick xv.

This notion of dress-as-supplement may indeed complicate the issues concerning dress in regards to the body, but what are the implications when dress is used as a material for artworks? It is these implications that I will further explore, for what I would like to demonstrate is that, in Bourgeois's hands, dress is indeed dress-as-supplement. For, if as Pollock proposes, the signs that we read in an artwork are the site of the production of the artist's subjectivity, it therefore follows that Bourgeois's use of her own and other's clothing as a new material takes on a great significance in this production, and as will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, mirrors the very production of her subjectivity.

In order to further investigate the site of production of Bourgeois's subjectivity in relation to Derrida's logic of the supplement, we must however first explore these ideas in relation to poststructuralism. On the concept of the subject, Chris Weedon writes,

> The terms *subject* and *subjectivity* are central to poststructuralist theory and they mark a crucial break with humanist conceptions of the individual which are central to Western philosophy and political and social organization. 'Subjectivity' is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world. Humanist discourses presuppose an essence at the heart of the individual which is unique, fixed [centered] and coherent and which makes her what she *is*. . . . Against this irreducible humanist essence of subjectivity, poststructuralism proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak.[47]

Instead of an irreducible humanist essence, poststructuralism proposes a subjectivity which is constantly shifting according to current discourses. A subject, rather than being self-determined, is instead a product of a process of negotiations within historically specific discourses, and is hence continually constructed within and by these very

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[47] Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996) 32-33.

discursive practices. This shift in the conception of the subject is of great significance, for as Weedon further writes, the political significance of decentering the subject and discarding the belief in the notion of essential subjectivity is that it opens up the production of subjectivity to change.[48] It is precisely this decentering and this opening up to change of subjectivity that is of importance in relation to Bourgeois's artworks, and will eventually lead us to Derrida's notion of the supplement. However, in order to do so, we must first begin with a cursory overview, if such a thing is possible, of Derrida's larger project, namely Deconstruction.[49]

Deconstruction is what happens when Derrida does a rigorous, transformative reading of a philosophical and/or literary text. Through a critical, attentive reading, Derrida locates what is already there, within a text; an internal paradox which is often suppressed, and/or even unseen by the author, and which may reveal an alternative meaning, and/or even threatens to unravel the very meaning of the text. As Derrida writes, the very condition of a deconstruction may be at work, in the work, within the system to be deconstructed; it may already be located there, already at work, not at the center, but in an eccentric center, in a corner whose eccentricity assures the solid concentration of the system, participating in the construction of what it at the same time threatens to deconstruct.[50] Situated within poststructuralist thought, Derrida's deconstructive strategy seeks to reveal the instability of Western conceptual structures, insisting that far from being inherent, fixed truths, concepts within Western philosophy/thought are not only cultural constructions, but are also open to

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[48] Weedon 33.
[49] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to rigorously explore Derrida's entire project of Deconstruction; rather, the objective here is to work towards an understanding of his idea of the logic of the supplement.
[50] Jacques Derrida, "The Art of Mémoires," in *Mémoires: For Paul de Man*, trans. by Jonathan Culler (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 73.

deconstructive readings. To this end, as Alan Bass writes, Derrida seeks to examine the structured genealogy of concepts of occidental classical thought in order to reveal that which has always remained hidden within it, namely an examination of the function of the notion of (Heideggerean ontological) presence.[51] Derrida defines metaphysics of presence/Being as presence, as all names relating to fundamentals, to principles, to the origin, or to the center of the tradition of Western philosophy.[52] Furthermore, as Bass writes, Derrida examines the treatment of writing by philosophy as a particularly revelatory symptom of the repressive logic of this notion of presence. As such, Derrida exposes the persistent exclusion of writing, done in the name of presence, for according to Western philosophy, meaning as full presence is allegedly most present in the spoken word.[53] Derrida identifies this anchoring in the assumption of the metaphysics of presence as 'logocentrism.' Logocentrism is from the Greek word *logos*, which pertains to speech, reason, logic, the word of God, and as such, is thus centered on the notion of presence. Derrida also identifies the privileging of the former term of hierarchal oppositions as logocentric. Hence, Derrida deconstructs the notion of presence by undermining the hierarchal oppositions existing within the tradition of Western philosophy/thought. Indeed, Derrida deems these dichotomies to have been the most constant and profound metaphysical gestures within this tradition, stating that all metaphysicians—from Plato to Rousseau, Descartes to Husserl—have proceeded in this way, in conceiving the positive before the negative, the pure before the impure, the essential before the accidental, etc. and hence, have consistently throughout the ages

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[51] Alan Bass, Translator's Introduction, in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) x-xi.
[52] Jacques Derrida. "Structure. Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. with intro. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) 279-280.
[53] Bass Translator's Introduction xi.

privileged the former term of opposition, while rendering the latter secondary and inferior.[54] However, Derrida further elucidates that the center, the notion of presence, is in fact a contradictory position, for as he writes,

> [I]t has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality. This is why classical thought concerning structure could say that the center is, paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside it*. The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality *has its center elsewhere*. The center is not the center. The concept of centered structure—although it represents coherence itself, the condition of the *epistēmē* as philosophy or science—is contradictorily coherent.[55]

The center is hence paradoxical for it is simultaneously both inside and out, and as such not truly inherent to its structure. It is through this thinking of the structurality of structure that Derrida seeks to expose that the tradition of philosophy/thought, has throughout time had the persistent need for full presence, stability and coherence, thus engendering the supplementation of one center for another, in a chain of substitutions for the center, which is not a center, and therefore making the very structure of the center consistently contradictorily coherent.[56]

Thus, in an effort to destabilize the notion of presence, and hence the center which is not the center, Derrida subverts/inverts the presence/absence dichotomy, privileging absence, that is, the lack of presence, for Derrida maintains that the opposition of origin, of the transcendental signified, full meaning, is not absence but rather a trace which replaces a presence which has never been present.[57] Indeed, according to Derrida,

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[54] Jacques Derrida, "Limited Inc a b c . . . ," in *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988) 93.
[55] Derrida Structure, Sign and Play 279.
[56] Derrida Structure, Sign and Play 278-280.
[57] Jacques Derrida, "Ellipsis." in *Writing and Difference*, trans. with intro. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) 295.

whether spoken or written, no element can function as a sign without referring to an other element/sign, which itself is not simply present, for each element is constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements within the chain of signification, and hence as Derrida states, "Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces."[58] For, if as linguist Ferdinand de Saussure maintains that in language there are only differences, that is, difference without positive terms,[59] and therefore that all signs are defined by what they are not, then it follows that meaning is not inherent within the sign, and that the sign is indeed constituted by what it is not, that is, by deferral, by difference. As such, Derrida writes that the movement of play which produces these differences is the movement of *différance*. Neither a word nor a concept, *différance* is derived from the French verb *différer*, which means both to differ and to defer,[60] and it is this very movement of differing and deferring that divulges that the notion of presence is perpetually postponed, and is therefore neither present nor absent, but rather continually deferred in a play of difference. In privileging speech over writing, logocentric thought maintains that because of the unmediated, immediacy of the spoken language, it transmits authentic, intended meaning, while writing always remains a mere representation of speech. As Derrida writes, "The epoch of the logos debases writing

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[58] Jacques Derrida, "Semiology and Grammatology: Interview with Julia Kristeva," in *Positions*, revised edition, trans. with annotations by Alan Bass (London: Continuum, 2002) 26.

[59] For further reading see, Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, new edition, eds. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, in collaboration with Albert Riedlinger (Paris: Payot, 1968).

[60] *Différance*, a neologism, is derived from Derrida's clever homophone word play with the French word *différence*. The replacement of the letter a for the letter e, which is inaudible when spoken thus further underscores the limitation of speech, while simultaneously putting into question the very prioritization of speech over writing. For further reading see, Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. with intro. by David B. Allison, preface by Newton Garver (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973) 129-160.

considered as mediation of mediation and as a fall into the exteriority of meaning."[61] Thus, this exteriority signals a difference to the interior, a difference to/within itself, for "The outside bears with the inside a relationship that is, as usual, anything but simple exteriority. The meaning of the outside was always present within the inside, imprisoned outside the outside and vice versa."[62] Hence, meaning is never self-identical, and through a play of difference and deferral, that is, through the very production of meaning itself, all that remains from the trail of this production is the ceaseless residual marks of difference.

Derrida writes, "Deconstruction does not exist somewhere, pure, proper, self identical, outside of its inscriptions in conflictual and differentiated contexts; it 'is' only what it does and what is done with it, there where it takes place."[63] Hence, a verb rather than a noun, specifically con-text-ualized, deconstruction is the action undertaken when trying to expose an internal aporia, a paradox within the meaning of the text, which occurs due to the detection of what Derrida terms an 'undecidable.' However, such an undecidable, does not easily reside within the logic of binary oppositions, and will therefore create a destabilization within the text, bringing about a decentering of meaning. Derrida describes undecidables[64] as, "[U]nities of simulacrum, 'false' verbal properties, (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical

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[61] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, corrected edition, trans. with intro. and preface by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) 12-13.
[62] Derrida Of Grammatology 35.
[63] Jacques Derrida, "Afterword: Toward an Ethic of Discussion." in *Limited Inc* trans. Samuel Weber (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988) 141.
[64] An undecidable, whatever its name, always destabilizes the meaning of a particular text. Specific to the particular text that Derrida is deconstructing, the undecidable will as such acquire its name from that text. As Gayatri Spivak points out, Derrida has numerous nicknames for the undecidable, for example; trace, reserve, supplement, hymen, *greffe*, *pharmakon*, and *parergon*. Furthermore, Derrida states that his list of undecidables has no taxonomical closure, nor does it constitute a lexicon. See, Jacques Derrida, "Positions: Interview with Jean-Louis Houdebine and Guy Scarpetta." in *Positions*, revised edition, trans. with annotations by Alan Bass (London: Continuum, 2002) 40. For Spivak's comment see, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Translator's Preface in *Of Grammatology*, corrected edition, trans. with intro. and preface by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) lxx.

(binary) opposition, but which, however, inhabit philosophical opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, *without ever* constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics. . . ."[65] Thus, without ever providing a solution to the contradiction created, nor proposing a dialectical synthesis, an undecidable, is an either/or, residing between oppositions without resolution. As Jonathan Culler writes, to deconstruct an opposition is not to reduce it to a monism, but rather to undo and displace it, to situate it differently.[66] The undecidable, in its oscillatory movement between dichotomies, therefore pries them open, creating a space wherein the production of meaning can transpire in a different way, and which indeed opens them up to the possibility of change.

The con/text wherein the undecidable, the supplement emerged, is in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Derrida defines the supplement as neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, in short, the supplement is an neither/nor, and as such is simultaneously an either/or.[67] Indeed, the supplement follows a similar trajectory to that of *différance*, for as Derrida states, the movement of *différance* between two letters, is thus a *différance* which belongs neither to the voice nor to writing but rather is located in the strange space between speech and writing and as such equally resists binary oppositions.[68] And it is within this strange space, located between self and society, imitating the very movement of supplementation, that I situate Bourgeois's new material, be it in the form of garments, or yet again in the shape of household textiles. Hence, the oscillatory movement of her new material will be examined in order to show

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[65] Derrida Positions 43.
[66] Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982) 150.
[67] Derrida, Positions 43.
[68] Derrida Différance 133-134.

how their vacillating motion decenters and pries open the dichotomy of self and other, and how the production of subjectivity therefore transpires in a different way. For, situated within this eccentric space Bourgeois's new material is caught in a transitory movement between self, other, and otherness, saddled at the interstices of subject and society, slipping inside and out, and never completely present in either/or. It is there that we locate the significance of Bourgeois's new material, and where we find the very site of the production of her subjectivity.

Chapter Two:
The Production of Subjectivity, Emulated

No metaphor completes her.
Luce Irigaray

Like the stories she has collected, and recollected, Louise Bourgeois has been saving clothes for the past eighty years. Their wrinkles and creases bear testimony to long journeys, many having moved from one continent to the next, and then some from attic to studio, only to be folded and refolded, and then stored once again. Safely kept away, these clothes lay out of sight for many a year, but then, like the stories that would unfold in "Child Abuse," one day they would resurface and take on a life of their own. In 1996 Bourgeois made her installation *Cell (Clothes),* (fig. 8), and also began working on her series of *Poles,* 1996-1997 (figs. 9-10); these will be some of the first artworks in which she will begin incorporating her garments of old as a central theme.

In pursuing the subjective tale of an artist who has reached extreme old age, it is important to take into account the very real physical limitations of old age. Unlike other social markers of difference, such as race and gender, which are discursively constructed, Woodward reminds us that, "[O]ld age cannot be theorized or understood as a social construction only, one that erases the real changes of the body that can come with aging and old age."[69] For Bourgeois some changes began to occur during the mid-1990s when she had become quite frail, and as a result rarely left her home.[70] She was in her mid-eighties at the time, and seemingly there was a need to make some age-related

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[69] Woodward Figuring Age xxii.
[70] Jan Garden Castro, "Vital Signs: A Conversation with Louise Bourgeois, *Sculpture* vol. 24, no. 6 (July-August 2005): 29.

adaptations to her daily activities as well as to her art practice, for no longer able to go to her studio, she began to work at home. A more sedentary lifestyle however does not necessarily entail a more secluded life. A prevalent stereotype of the life of older people is that they lead secluded lives. Erdman Ballagh Palmore states that while there is a decline in total social activity, the majority of people in advanced old age are not socially isolated.[71] And although Bourgeois had become less mobile at this time, this did not prevent her from maintaining her art practice, as well as her Sunday Salons. Begun in the mid-1970s, Bourgeois's Sunday Salon, fashioned after Parisian salons of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, is an arena where emerging and established artists, as well as writers, dancers, musicians, curators and art historians are invited to bring their work and engage in lively discussions.[72]

It was during this new phase in Bourgeois's practice that artworks made of garments of yesteryear began to take form. These clothes, having long lain dormant in trunks and chests were in the flurry of her newfound artistic activity, released from their mausoleum. In a passage on her own mausoleum, Margaret Morganroth Gullette writes,

> I keep a drawer full of fabrics, from clothes whose styles or patterns were made obsolete. . . . The drawer is a mausoleum, in which are housed the relics of objects I learned to love and then learned to relinquish publicly. I'm not nostalgic about them; I don't yearn to be the self that wore them. . . . [The drawer] expresses my originally intuitive resistance to the required second half of the fashion process: the death of the loved object, the making of the current into 'the past'—the emotional production of the passé and every other dire outcome that is thus foretold—in short, the shedding of pieces of the self.[73]

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[71] Erdman Ballagh Palmore, *Ageism: Negative and Positive* (New York, NY: Springer, 1990) 23.
[72] Paulo Herkenhoff, "Sunday Salon," in *Louise Bourgeois,* exhibition catalogue, ed. Frances Morris (London: Tate Publishing, 2007) 285. See also, Kelly Devine Thomas, "Inside New York: Show and Tell. Louise Bourgeois at her Sunday Salon," *ARTNEWS* vol. 105, no. 6 (June 2006): 114-116.
[73] Margaret Morganroth Gullette, "The Other End of the Fashion Cycle: Practicing Loss, Learning Decline," in *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*, ed. Kathleen Woodward (Publisher Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1999) 40-41.

Proposing the fashion cycle as analogous to that of our society's construction of the stages of life, Gullette maintains that the process of the fashion cycle teaches us that what is new/young is desirable and what is old/the grown old is easily discarded. The end phase of the cycle, the discarding phase, according to Gullette, "[T]eaches us that the self can expect to *lose* from living in time—[can expect a loss of] selfhood."[74] Echoed in her sculptor's tongue Bourgeois states, "[T]he shapes of garments are a metaphor for ongoing and changing life from day to day. So, what is new today will be old tomorrow."[75] Demonstrating that the fashion cycle is a cultural practice which constructs our age identity and our sense of the meaning of aging, Gullette's drawer symbolizes her resistance to the indoctrination of decline, to the stripping of temporal selves, and to being outmoded by culture. Fashion clearly delineates the marks of time. Indeed, a style speaks so eloquently of its era. The flapper dress, the powder-blue bell-bottom pants, nylons, all evoke an image of a period in history. For a woman born in 1911, to go through the varying past selves that paraded out of storage must have been an incredible journey. These ephemeral entities serve as a genealogy of sorts of Bourgeois's past lives, marking her passage in time. As Bourgeois remarks, "You can retell your life by the shape, the weight, the colours, the smell of those clothes in your closet."[76] On Bourgeois's engagement with fashion Herkenhoff writes,

> Louise Bourgeois knows that the manoeuvre of fashion is to become present, urgent even, and thus to subvert the promise it makes of becoming surpassed—i.e. to precipitate itself into the past for the circumstance of being out of fashion. This is a game of/with time. . . . [Bourgeois] knows that working with fashion does not necessarily mean a guarantee of

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[74] Gullette 36.
[75] Paulo Herkenhoff, "L.B.: The Unmentionable, Blades, Fabrics and Fashion." in *Louise Bourgeois Recent Works*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Marie-Laure Bernadac (Bordeaux and London: capcMusée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux and Serpentine Gallery, 1998) 107 n23.
[76] Herkenhoff 104.

> contemporaneity, but even of being, beforehand, out of fashion, in the perspective of its process.[77]

In the novel, *Another You* by Ann Beattie, the character Sonja turns her embroidered dresses into summer nightgowns, and of this she says, "[I]t wasn't judiciousness so much as a desire to make the past fit in with the present."[78] Thus as a means of resisting the mandatory phase of the fashion cycle, that casting aside of the old and out of fashion, Beattie's character and Bourgeois have found a creative manner of manipulating ageist cultural values and reforming them, in order to make the past fit in with the present provisional self. Releasing her garments from her mausoleum, Bourgeois has therefore destabilized the fashion system's narrative of decline and re-stitched its game of time.

As stated earlier, Derrida's deconstructive reading of the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau is the context in which the undecidable, the supplement is found. For Rousseau writing is a destruction of presence and a disease of speech, for according to him, "Languages are meant to be spoken, writing only serves as supplement to speech."[79] The word supplement means to both substitute and add. Thus, this dual signification does not fit comfortably within clear distinctions, for it is simultaneously a replacement and an addition. Derrida writes, "The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence."[80] Indeed, as an addition it

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[77] Herkenhoff 105.

[78] For this source I am indebted to Margaret Morganroth Gullette's essay "The Other End of the Fashion Cycle: Practicing Loss, Learning Decline," 41. See, Ann Beattie, *Another You* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995) 41.

[79] Derrida Of Grammatology 142, 144. In this chapter on Rousseau. ". . . That Dangerous Supplement . . . ," Derrida demonstrates how Rousseau simultaneously valorizes and disqualifies writing, that is, writing in the conventional sense. However, it should be noted that Derrida, in his work on the science of writing (grammatology) does not mean writing in the conventional sense when he refers to writing, but rather of inscriptions in general that go beyond the realm of the voice. Derrida will at times call this an *archi-écriture*, a proto-writing existing prior to speech and writing. See especially Part I in Of Grammatology, 1-94.

[80] Derrida Of Grammatology 144.

creates an excess, however, as a substitute, that is, in order for the supplement to function as a substitute, it thus necessarily also indicates a lack. Therefore, as Derrida further writes, "As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness."[81] However, whether as a substitute or an addition, the supplement will always remain exterior to the 'core' of the matter, and as such, as the misfit that is omitted for it cannot respect its limits, it will therefore always press up against, and disturb these very limits. As Derrida further writes, "The supplement and the turbulence of a certain lack fracture the limit of the text, forbidding an exhaustive and closed formalization . . . of its themes, its signified, its meaning."[82] Hence, it is within this turbulent atmosphere of fragmented limits that we shall explore the movement of dress-as-supplement.

In tracing this movement, we must however follow an elliptical path for as Storr writes, "The essential narrative connecting everything to everything else within her heterogeneous oeuvre, and the whole to the person who made it, is not one of more or less fixed *being* . . . [rather] it has always been a narrative of perpetual, protean *becoming*."[83] Furthermore, the strand of this becoming is now being interlaced into the most subjective of her materials, that is, the fluctuating fiber of the visible envelope of self, dress. Within the metaphoric movement of her latest material, we can now follow this process of becoming situated between self and society, through the motion of dress-as-supplement. However, this movement that we trace is one of resistance and change, for it must be recalled that the concern in this thesis is not about synthesis, but rather about creating a new way of perceiving and working within an existing framework. The

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[81] Derrida Of Grammatology 145.
[82] Derrida Positions 45.
[83] Storr Abstraction 35.

concern is with the dislodging of presuppositions of the essentiality of subjectivity. It is therefore not a simple reversal of the essential versus the accidental, the fixed versus the process, but rather of prying open this dichotomy, in order to decenter and open it up to a way of thinking that is beyond the preconceived notions that have hitherto existed about subjectivity. Bourgeois's recent material thus speaks volumes of this protean process of becoming, and is hence being interwoven into her heterogeneous oeuvre.

The installation *Cell (Clothes),* 1996 (fig. 8) is part of her *Cells* series, which dates from 1989 to 1998. The use of the word cell was intentionally chosen by Bourgeois due to its multiple meanings.[84] The word cell can be interpreted as a template for life itself, or yet again, it can mean a place which arrests life, keeping it captive. Bourgeois's choice of this word reminds us of the undecidable and its duplicity. Furthermore, her installations themselves reiterate this dualistic nature by invoking an ambivalent atmosphere, which is at once inviting and repelling, and at all times somewhat claustrophobic, for they are always enclosed environments. The installation *Cell (Clothes)* is also a closed off space (fig. 11), which is circular in shape and measures 210.8 x 444.2 x 365.8 centimeters. Inside this installation an array of garments, all of which have been worn by the artist during her lifetime, are suspended from above on wires and hangers.[85] The colour scheme of this *Cell* is composed entirely of dark, mostly black, and light, mostly white, elements. These colours recall a written text, or that of hard facts and truths, and thus, an uncompromising space is conjured; a black and white realm where little room is left for the ambiguity of grey areas. This murky mixture of

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[84] Rainer Crone and Petrus Graf Schaesberg, *Louise Bourgeois: The Secret of the Cells* (Munich; New York: Prestel, 2008) 85.

[85] Brooke Hodge, "Cell (Clothes)," in *Louise Bourgeois,* exhibition catalogue, ed. Frances Morris (London: Tate Publishing, 2007) 76.

black and white, grey, is an unwelcomed uncertainty within this categorical space. Composed of dark and light hues, a world unfolds which is diametrically opposed. Similar to the realm of the biological cell, that is, of genetics, where darker colours usually dominate and cancel out the lighter ones,[86] a hierarchal opposition reigns here. However, as Derrida states, in classical oppositions we are not dealing with a peaceful coexistence but rather a violent hierarchy, where one of the terms governs the other, or has the upper hand.[87] Yet nothing here appears to disturb this opposition, in fact, quite to the contrary, all seems quiet, all is motionless. A gathering of entities seems to be taking place, perhaps strangers, for one presence parallels the other without really interacting, and all seem to be going on about their business, barely aware of the other's existence. Bourgeois's multiple metaphors of self look to be quite oblivious to the oppressive atmosphere that they inhabit. There appears to be no visual disturbances in sight.

Bourgeois's artworks however, are rarely peaceful, and they are never still. What appears to be a rather innocuous quotidian affair in *Cell (Clothes),* 1996 (fig. 8) is thus all the more disquieting; its tranquility is even unsettling. But, this outward serenity is not sustained, and is brought to an abrupt halt in the form of red stitches. Found on the back of a white coat, we find the embroidered words, "The cold of anxiety is very real" (fig. 12). The red thread of anxiety inserts itself and wedges this realm open to difference. Kathy E. Ferguson writes that in defamiliarizing 'natural' givens and questioning what appear as self-explanatory categories, an approach to subjectivities could exist which would allow for the dismantling of apparently unified categories or secure dyads, and

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[86] Phillip T Slee, *Child, Adolescent and Family Development*, 2nd revised edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 86-87.
[87] Derrida Positions 41.

thus permit differences and tensions within them to emerge.[88] Within this categorical space, tensions emanate from the outskirts, but not in the simple shade of a synthesized grey, but rather in that of an irruptive, decentering crimson. Arresting what is conceived as inherent and real, here, within this site of experience, a shift occurs; one where in the cold sweat of an anxious moment, reality unravels, dispersing into a multitude of possibilities. In delving into this anxiety, Bourgeois has in this installation, reconfigured that moment of angst, and in so doing, has thus redefined its very meaning. Ferguson further writes that rather than accepting subjectivity as self-contained, a more promising alternative is instead a self with porous and permeable parameters, with no clear inside or outside. For, the hope is that loosening the boundaries of selfhood may enable questions of subjectivity to be recast in a fresh light.[89] Cast in this light, subjectivity within this installation has become unmoored and is thus able to roam as dress-as-supplement.

Empty garments are so evocative. Their very emptiness poignantly invokes those who are no longer with us. Elizabeth Wilson writes that in its dusty silence there is something eerie about a costume museum, further observing,

> We experience a sense of the uncanny when we gaze at garments that had an intimate relationship with human beings long since gone to their graves. For clothes are so much part of our living, moving selves that, frozen on display in the mausoleums of culture, they hint at something only half understood, sinister, threatening; the atrophy of the body, and the evanescence of life.[90]

In addition to this dusty silence, one imagines shrouded lights and the faint odor of embalming fluids. Indeed, there is a taxidermic quality to this setting where time has stood still and been encased in cabinets. Bourgeois's use of her clothing is however the

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[88] Kathy E. Ferguson, *The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 123.
[89] Ferguson 131.
[90] Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003) 1.

complete antitheses to this situation, for her clothes have long ago left their mausoleum, and are now on the move as dress-as-supplement. The white coat in *Cell (Clothes)* is both addition and substitute; excessive, its presence thus signals an emptiness. Marginalized, it creates a turmoil which reverberates to its very extremities, causing fissures to its parameters, splitting the essential seams of subjectivity. Indeed the coat's self-contained surrounding is shaken and brought into questioning. Change, though slow in coming, always comes through an alteration in our way of thinking, or as Gayatri Spivak would say, through revolutions that as yet have no model.[91] The stress exerted from the margins by the coat creates an opening, or what Derrida would call an imperceptible difference, which stretches beyond its very boundaries, and discreetly provides us with an exit from closure.[92] It is within this imperceptible gap of difference that selfhood can be re-imagined, or within an 'elsewhere,' which Teresa de Lauretis's defines as,

> [E]lsewhere is not some mythic distant past or some utopian future history; it is the elsewhere of discourse here and now, the blind spots, or the space-off, of its representations. I think of it as the spaces in the margins of hegemonic discourses, social spaces carved in the interstices of institutions and in the chinks and cracks of the power-knowledge-apparati.[93]

Thus it is within the crevices of current discursive practices that the rethinking of subject positions, that is, the deconstruction of the essentiality of subjectivity, occurs. Furthermore, in accepting that we are, as Ferguson writes, "[T]he outcome rather than the originator of discursive strategies and signifying practices,"[94] and that we are defined by,

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[91] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. "Revolutions That As Yet Have No Model: Derrida's *Limited Inc.*" *Diacritics* vol. 10, no. 4 (Winter 1980) 20.
[92] Derrida Ellipsis 295.
[93] Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1987) 25.
[94] Ferguson 126.

as much as we define these discursive strategies, then and only then, will we be able to begin to move towards a thinking about subject positions that is otherwise. Defined as much by her representations, as she defines them, Bourgeois's metaphor of self, her clothing are not encased and frozen in time, but rather are fluctuating in the white coat's defiant reverberations, in what appears to be their enclosed environment. Yet, while in essence closed off, the very walls of this installation are however made up of recycled doors. Hence, although in appearance an enclosed milieu, it is in fact more than meets the eye, for doors are an either/or space, both an opening and a closure, indeed an in-between, and as such, Bourgeois's garments of old are really part of a threshold.

Ferguson writes that the search for origins postulates some prior wholeness, but that to look for beginnings rather than for origins shifts inquiry towards a narrative of disconnections and disparities, initiating a search for the many possible stories instead of the one true story.[95] As mentioned earlier, Storr maintains that the importance of Bourgeois's work is not in what she has tapped into, but how radically she has transformed it.[96] Thus, Bourgeois is not necessarily re/establishing some sort of prior wholeness which she has accessed, but rather, has through the experience undergone during the production of the artwork itself, shifted her subject position. The myriad of metaphors of self within this installation, far from being strangers, represent rather the possibility of otherness, and of the multitude of stories that have yet to unfold. As such, through the re/negotiation and transformation of her subjectivity, Bourgeois has sewn a new beginning. But, this position is provisionary, and will in turn be displaced by yet

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[95] Ferguson 21.
[96] Storr A Sketch for a Portrait 41.

another new beginning, which in turn will also, already, be coming to pass, for as Derrida writes,

> Différance is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each element that is 'present,' appearing on the stage of presence, is related to something other that itself but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element. This trace relates no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and it constitutes what is called the present by this very relation to what it is not, to what it absolutely is not; that is, not even to a past or future considered as modified present. In order for it to be, an interval must separate it from what it is not, but the interval that constitutes it in the present must also, and by the same token, divide the present in itself thus dividing, along with the present, everything that can be conceived on its basis, that is, every being—in particular, for our metaphysical language, the substance or subject.[97]

Thus, it is through this interval, through *différance*, that subjectivity moves beyond the very boundaries of exiting knowledge. The subject in transience, then, travels in the dividing moments of time and space, on a journey that will always demand a re/negotiation of sorts. For, all that will be encountered along the way will leave its trace, thus eliciting a further transformation, all in the prospects of future encounters which will equally bring about fragmentation, and the promise of additional division and vacillation. And as such, Bourgeois's (metaphor of) self will always dwell somewhere in-between, in the here and now and the now and then, forever in a state of flux, much like the cell, that divides itself eternally.

In the mid-1990s, under the magical spell of Bourgeois's needle, beings in various stages of gestation began to emerge. Here we arrive at the genesis of her fabric sculptures,[98] and the transitional stage in which the garments themselves begin their trajectory from the visual envelope of self to that of their sculptural forms, and of their

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[97] Derrida Différance 143.

[98] Bourgeois prepares her pieces by cutting, pinning and providing the initial stitches for them, and then they are sewn into the final work by a seamstress. See Newman AR, 31.

further supplementary movement. In the work *Untitled,* 1996 (fig. 10/13), we find strange lumpy entities which are so un-formed it is almost too presumptuous to even call them distant ancestors of the soon to be sculptures. Upon closer inspection of this work, we find hanging nearest to the light summer dress, a pod-like creature that almost seems to assume a human contour (fig. 14). But is it its close proximity to the dress that has made it assume this nearly human form? The thick sluggish pair below (fig. 15) seem to have no truck with the anthropomorphic shape. How odd considering that they are much closer to the dress—is it perhaps the height of the junction that is important here? Is it legs rather that they choose to imitate? In the mind's eye a body is being reassembled. The pod to the right (fig. 16) certainly appears to be interested in extremities, indeed it is as if it is sprouting stumpy arms, or is it really sleeves that it yearns for? To the far right, as though having distanced itself, a semi-being, perhaps made of a blouse, hangs by itself (fig. 17). Set apart from the others, it is as if it wished to distinguish itself from those lowly pod-like creatures, for this entity's evolution is certainly much more advanced than theirs. However, perhaps it is the dress itself that it disdains, feeling so incomplete in comparison. Yet, is this inferiority complex not misplaced? For she is after all much more ample, indeed she is a buxom gal in comparison to that seemingly empty garden dress. She is without doubt more bodacious and indeed much fuller than the dress. For while the dress only has a modern dress hoop to boast about, that is, a discretely hidden bicycle wheel underneath, she on the other hand, has taken much more corporal proportions. Indeed, there is no denying, she has the true beginnings of a body.

Bourgeois has said that her body is her sculpture, and inversely that her sculptures are her body.[99] The buxom gal shows herself to be a first inkling of Bourgeois's fabric

[99] Bourgeois Self-Expression 195.

sculptures. But this gal is not alone; in *Cell (Clothes),* (fig. 18) we see an entity slouched over on a stool. And similar to its pod relatives, this entity is also hermetically sealed. However this particular being is also dressed up. This 'sloucher' dons what appears to be an undergarment. In these works, Bourgeois opens up her sculptures to a Derridean margin of difference and play. In a subversion of dualities, she allows the tension between the inside and the outside and the open and closed to emerge. What was once an open garment that could be inhabited by the body has been closed and transformed into a body of sorts. On the ambivalent nature of an undecidable,[100] Derrida writes, "[I]t constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other. . . . It is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production of) difference."[101] Here the cross over from dress-as-supplement to dress as sculpture occurs. For, within these artworks, it is the inside that has created the outside; indeed, the budding body has been sculpted from the interior, and the sculpture having retained a trace of its other, has become the sculptor. These beings in their transformative stance are thus further perpetuating the process of becoming, for it is the sculptures that now begin anew, to sculpt from within. Hence, the cycle is complete and dress-as-supplement has now been fully transformed into sculpture.

When Bourgeois states that the shapes of garments are a metaphor for the ongoing day to day changes of life and that which is new today will be old tomorrow,[102] we can

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[100] Derrida is here writing about the undecidable the *pharmakon*. See footnote 64 for the various names of the undecidable. It must be remembered that the name of an undecidable always arises from its own particular con/text, but that all undecidables are double in nature.

[101] Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination*, trans. with an introduction and additional notes by Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University Press, 1981) 127.

[102] Herkenhoff 107 n23.

well envision the implications when we take into account that this is a statement made by a woman who is well advanced in age. The fullness of this image takes on as much ampleness as the buxom gal, and is further reinforced when we consider these garments in the continuous flux between self and society. The openness of the formal qualities of Bourgeois's *Poles* (figs. 9-10) is especially conducive to this type of speculation; indeed, the vastness of these works is an invitation for us as viewers to roam freely in both body and mind. The outstretched poles, the lightness of the floating garments, the expanse of the space around it, all these fluid aspects attract us onto this tenuous terrain, our passage open and unhindered. Here, we enter into the dialogistic swing which occurs between viewer and artwork. Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson write, "[Meaning arises from] a *perpetuum mobile* where there can be neither a starting point for semiosis, nor a concluding moment in which semiosis terminates and where the meanings of signs fully 'arrive.'"[103] Mingling with Bourgeois's metaphoric selves, we interweave our own viewpoints and narratives onto these various scenes. Most of us not yet ninety-seven years old, we thus approach these works from the perspective of a younger person. Especially as women[104] however, we become involved in a complex situation, for we are given privy to our future selves with the gift of hindsight. For as North American women,[105] who on average tend to live longer than men, we are thus also more likely to

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[103] Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History," *The Art Bulletin* vol. 73, no. 2 (June 1991): 177.

[104] By 'women' I mean as Pollock writes, "[T]hose living under the sign of Woman, marked feminine" in patriarchal society. See, Pollock Differencing 28. Therefore, I am here addressing all 'women' living in contemporary North America who may be subjected to ageist discrimination, in all the multitude of ways and degrees in which this could occur, for issues of race, class, and sexual orientation, to name but a few, compounded with ageism, do produce a very different experience of ageist discrimination.

[105] According to the United States Census Bureau, "As in most countries of the world, older women outnumber older men in the United States, and women's share of the older population increases with age. . . ." In the year 2000, 5.8 percent of the American population 65 and older were women. Women accounted for a little over half (53.8 percent) of the group 65 to 69 years and more than two-thirds (71.1

live into Bourgeois's extreme old age. Hence, as Woodward writes, "The practice of ageism can . . . be a horrible self-fulfilling prophecy. As younger women turn these very prejudices against women older than themselves, they will in effect be turning against their very future selves as older woman."[106] Therefore, with these artworks, we can look ahead, envisioning our older selves looking backwards to today, and change our futures. Juxtaposed to our prospective selves, we interlace our past and present, imbricating time and our very subjectivities, and as such, we too are thus provided with the possibility of creating a patchwork of our former and future selves. And as subjects in this transient state of *perpetuum mobile*, we thus defer possible meanings of past/present ageist selves, creating a new context where self-fulfilling prophecies are dispelled, and where we, when confronted with our future selves through Bourgeois's artworks, are given the opportunity to subvert the internalization of ageism. Luce Irigaray writes, "Woman is neither open nor closed. She is indefinite, in-finite. . . . This incompleteness in her form, her morphology, allows her continually to becoming something else. . . . No metaphor completes her."[107] Through the imbrications of past/present/provisional/future selves, Bourgeois's artworks allow both maker and viewer to mix metaphors of self. Usually seen as a combination of inconsistent or contradictory metaphors, similar to the characteristics of the undecidable, this metaphoric mixture of self can instead be seen as the emulation of a supplementary movement, which resists closed formalizations, and as

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percent) of those 85 and older. Among centenarians, 8 out of 10 were women. . . .Historically the life expectancy of women has been higher than that of men's, and both African American and Caucasian women live longer than their male counterparts. . . . "[B]etween 1970 and 2000, overall life expectancy rose by 4.8 years for women and 7.0 years for men, thereby narrowing the gender [life expectancy] gap from 7.6 years to 5.4 years." See, United States Census Bureau. *Current Population Reports, Series P23-209, 65+ in the United States:* 2005, prepared by Wan He, Manisha Sengupta, Victoria A. Velkoff and Kimberly A. DeBarros (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2005) 23, 50, 51.

[106] Woodward Figuring Age xiii.

[107] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985) 229.

a perpetual incomplete production of subjectivity, is thus always loosely stitched, decentered, and forever open to change.

Chapter Three:
The Production of Subjectivity, Embodied

In Louise Bourgeois's sculpture *Three Horizontals* 1998 (fig. 19), we find three entities in various stages of development laid out on a three-tiered steel trolley on wheels. Roughly stitched into being, these figures are made of a pink fabric that is reminiscent of bandaging material, evoking wounds and sutures which the trolley further reinforces by recalling to mind a hospital trolley. The three figures range in size and states of evolution, with the bottom figure being the least developed, almost fetus-like, to the top figure being most fully formed. An established linear evolution appears to be in progress; however, a photograph taken of Bourgeois seated next to this work seems to suggest otherwise (fig. 20). While the order of the figures in this photograph is the same, the position of the middle figure has been inversed, with its head facing in the opposite direction. This change indicates that the state of these figures is not fixed, that their order is unstable, thus suggesting that their position may shift yet again. Furthermore, the stuffing of the top figure of this sculpture is exposed, seeming incomplete; however whether it is in the process of becoming, or becoming undone, remains open-ended. This instability is also further reiterated in Bourgeois's own bodily position, for seated on a high stool, her feet dangle in mid-air. Suspended, her feet are juxtaposed to the wheels of the cart, further calling to mind motion as well as ambivalence. Far from static, these figures are instead in a state of transition.

In this chapter Bourgeois's fabric torsos will be examined. In my opinion the most disturbing of her latest sculptures, these truncated beings beg the question: are they in the process of becoming, or that of becoming undone? In the last chapter, dress-as-supplement, oscillating in a supplementary movement, went from emulating the production of Bourgeois's subjectivity to being transformed into a sculpted body. Here dress is replaced by the quotidian fibers of life, mined from the wealth of Bourgeois's linens, sheets, towels, and any other household textiles that may have once dressed her home. The fabrics used for Bourgeois's torsos are thus composed of all manner of such fortuitous 'found' fodder. This sort of material bears the traces of life's everyday experiences, be it in the shape of a coffee stain, or in the creases of a sheet on which the long endless hours of the night can be counted, or yet again in the wear and tear of a favourite blanket. Instead of an inherent, stable subjectivity, an individual's subjecthood is composed of a patchwork of the fleeting moments that make up one's life. The constant renegotiation of subject positions, which the production of subjectivity entails, is thus partially produced by these everyday experiences. Constructed by an individual's sense of who they are and how they understand their relation in and to the world, subjectivity is therefore produced by their passage within it. In Bourgeois's fingers, the materialization of these ephemeral moments are here reassembled and transformed into a sculpture. But what does this signify when these threads of life are woven into a sculpted form? And what are the implications when the sculpted body is a truncated one? Suspended in their oscillatory state, two of Bourgeois's torsos, *Femme Maison,* 2001 and *Untitled,* 2001 (figs. 21-25) will be explored for their ambivalent, marginal position in order to illustrate how perfectly they embody the production of the artist's subjectivity.

Whereas dress once emulated Bourgeois's production of subjectivity, here the torso will be explored as the embodiment of this production. Cavallaro and Warwick write, "Though both literally and figuratively attached to the body, dress is simultaneously part of the material being and independent of it: it separates the individual body from other bodies, whilst also at the same time connecting it to them. Often thought of as one of the main isolating mechanisms designed to secure an autonomous identity, dress actually constitutes an uncertain frame."[108] Cut from the same cloth as dress, the torso is also an uncertain frame, and it is as such, as a precarious delimitation of subjectivity that it will be further examined.

Derrida writes that situated at the limits of the production of meaning, there is an opening which allows for a margin of difference and play, and that it is at this edge that the very boundaries of signification can become blurred and unclear.[109] In order to know what something is, one must know what it is not: the signification of what something is occurs through the identification with what it is not, that is, a categorization by negation, hence it is precisely this 'what it is not' that defines what it is. However, there is an interdependency at work between binary oppositions, for one term is always partially defined by its other, and as such they are never truly mutually exclusive. Derrida writes, "[O]ne could reconsider all the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is constructed and on which our discourse lives, not in order to see opposition erase itself but to see what indicates that each of the terms must appear as the *différance* of the other, as the other different and deferred in the economy of the same. . . ."[110] Therefore within this economy

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[108] Cavallaro and Warwick 3.
[109] Derrida Afterword 151.
[110] Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. with additional notes by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 17. This passage is translated slightly differently in

of sameness there is a spilling over of signification, over the slash mark of dichotomies as it were, wherein the trace of the oppositional term is always preserved within its other. Juliana de Nooy writes,

> Whereas we might conceive of a labyrinth as paths leading away from each other and separated by walls, Derrida invites us to understand the partitioning in different terms, as a gap that appears to separate and then disappears to join terms together. . . . The difference or deferral that, for Derrida, separates two terms or paths while knitting them together, is a sort of 'limit between' that is not a clear boundary.[111]

Therefore in a liminal space with indistinguishable boundaries, caught in a reciprocal movement of signification between two terms, is where the production of meaning is located. Bourgeois's torso, this quintessential in-between, vacillating to and fro in the process of becoming and then coming undone, is therefore the metaphorical embodiment of this liminal space, where, as Derrida states, discourses can no longer dominate, judge, or decide.[112] Consisting of a perpetual repetition of openings, the parameters of subjectivity are elliptical for its very delineation is perpetually punctuated by openings. Similarly ambiguous in its contour, the torso is also open-ended, and thus as an either/or, is here proposed as the uncertain frame of the production of Bourgeois's subjectivity.

Derrida writes that a parergonality occurs at the border of the production of meaning which dangerously complicates the limits between the inside and the outside.[113] The notion of the blurring of boundaries, which in effect makes it difficult to distinguish between what is intrinsic or extrinsic, is according to Derrida a discourse on the frame of

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"Différance," in *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. with intro. by David B. Allison, preface by Newton Garver (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973) 148. This translation meshes better with this text.

[111] Juliana de Nooy, *Derrida, Kristeva and the Dividing line: An Articulation of Two Theories of Difference* (New York: Garland Publishers Inc., 1998) 62.

[112] Jacques Derrida, "The Almost Nothing of the Unpresentable," in *Points . . . : Interviews, 1974-1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber, translated by Peggy Kamuf *et al.* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995) 86.

[113] Derrida Afterword 151.

signification.[114] As we have seen earlier, it is through a rigorous, transformative reading that Derrida locates an undecidable, that internal paradox within a text which destabilizes its very meaning. The undecidable is therefore always specific to the text that is being deconstructed, for deconstruction is only what it does and what is done with it, within its particular context.[115] The undecidable, the supplement for instance, came from Derrida's reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and of particular interest to our discussion on the torso, the *parergon* arose from a reading of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement.* In distinguishing what is intrinsic and extrinsic to the object of the pure judgment of taste, Immanuel Kant writes,

> In painting, sculpture, and in fact in all the formative arts . . . so far as fine arts, the design is what is essential. Here it is not what gratifies in sensation but merely what pleases by its form, that is the fundamental prerequisite for taste. . . . Even what is called *ornamentation* (*parerga*), i.e. what is only an adjunct, and not an intrinsic constituent, in the complete representation of the object, in augmenting the delight of taste does so only by means of its form. Thus it is with the frames of pictures or the drapery on statues, or the colonnades of palaces. But if the ornamentation does not itself enter into the composition of the beautiful form—if it is introduced like a gold frame merely to win approval for the picture by means of its charm—it is then called *finery* and takes away from the genuine beauty.[116]

Derrida states that this finery, that is *parerga*, is often defined as *hors-d'oeuvre*, accessory, as foreign or secondary object, or as supplement, further writing, "A *parergon* comes against, beside, and in addition to the *ergon,* the work done [*fait*], the fact [*le fait*], the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. [The *parergon* is neither] simply outside nor simply inside."[117]

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[114] Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 45.
[115] Derrida Afterword 141.
[116] Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*, translated, with seven introductory essays, notes, and an analytical index by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911) 67, 68.
[117] Derrida The Truth 54. The square brackets with italicized French words are in the original source.

The *parergon* is therefore neither an addition nor inherent to its structure, but rather stands at the edge, situated at a certain outside, rubbing up against, and playing off of the *ergon*. Moreover, in its cooperation with the *ergon*, the *parergon* is thus making up for an absence, for as Derrida maintains, "[I]t is the internal structural link which rivets [the *parergon*] to the lack in the interior of the *ergon*. And this lack would be constitutive of the very unity of the *ergon*. Without this lack, the *ergon* would have no need of a *parergon*."[118] The *ergon* therefore needs the supplementation of the *parergon* in order that it can function as a coherent structure and so that its very meaning can be produced. Similar to the position of the center which is not the center and which escapes structurality because it is paradoxically situated both inside and outside of its structure, supplementing a structure which is seemingly whole, the *parergon* also occupies a place at the fringes of signification. Therefore, the production of meaning is found in the space between the *ergon* and *parergon*, moving between the inside and outside, hovering at the margins. It is this oscillatory movement between the inside and the outside which opens up categorical definitions, decentering fixed meanings, and thus allowing signification to transpire beyond the boundaries of preexisting suppositions. Bourgeois's fabric torsos, as it will be demonstrated here, are the very embodiment of the oscillatory movement of the *parergon* and thus of her production of subjectivity.

A recurrent theme in Bourgeois's practice is her *Femme Maison*, which she has frequently revisited over the years. This *femme* has been drawn, printed, painted, and sculpted. Depicted on several occasions beginning in 1945 (figs. 26-28), she would later reemerge in marble for instance, in 1994 (fig. 29), only to then return in more recent years in fabric form in 2001 (figs. 21-22). Morris writing on the series of *Femme*

[118] Derrida The Truth 59-60.

Maison, dating 1945-1947, states "Bourgeois has portrayed the home as an essentially female place; it has been for her the principal realm in which to explore ideas of female identity, experience and emotion. Nowhere is this more explicit than in the formal combination of house and female body. . . ."[119] The experience undergone during Bourgeois's creative engagement with this theme seemingly parallels the very trajectory of the production of an individual's subjectivity throughout a lifetime. Transformed over time, this *femme* has occupied very different positions in relation to this building/house/home. In the early representations of *Femme Maison* (figs. 26-28) the house, which encases the standing woman, appears as both straitjacket and shelter, oscillating somewhere between the two. But, if it is a shelter, it is one that stifles, for her identity is collapsed into its very walls. The conflation with the space that she occupies is not an extension of her being but rather of the restrictive confines that threaten to engulf her totally.

Gert J. J. Biesta maintains that the objective of deconstruction is to open up the metaphysics of presence in order to show that the condition of possibility of metaphysics of presence is at the very same time its condition of impossibility. Therefore, presence is only possible because of its relation to absence, just as identity is only possible because of its relation to alterity.[120] This possibility and impossibility therefore lies at the intersection between sameness and otherness, where neither is mutually exclusive to the other. The *femme* of the earlier years is coerced into an essentialized, foreclosed position in relation to the house, and by extension to society, flatly denied the possibility of any

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[119] Frances Morris, "*Femme Maison*," in *Louise Bourgeois*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Frances Morris (London: Tate Publishing, 2007) 138, 142.
[120] Gert J. J. Biesta, "Education After Deconstruction," in *Poststructuralism, Philosophy, Pedagogy*, ed. James D. Marshall (Dordrecht; Boston; London: Kluwer Academic Press, 2004) 37.

relation to alterity or change. The clear-cut position of women in society, that is, those living under the sign of Woman, the known femininity in patriarchal society,[121] in these representations is however not a reflection of that lived experience, but rather is the site of experience of an encounter with that position. Biesta suggests that we think of Derrida's Deconstruction project as, "[A]n attempt to dismantle our preconceived understanding of identity as self-sufficient presence, in order to expose us to the challenge of a hitherto concealed, excluded and suppressed otherness; an otherness which has been ignored in order to preserve the illusion of identity as self-sufficient presence."[122] Bourgeois's encounter here is with the imposition of this *femme*'s fixed identity, an identity which is enclosed within a certain frame that suppresses all possibilities except for her relation to her house, rendering her identity as house-bound. Furthermore, Bourgeois's encounter takes place at the interface between *femme* and house, and by extension between the interior and the personal, and the exterior and society. For it is there, at the very point of collision between the two, that the reciprocal dependency of the one upon the other, and the impossibility of a finite distinction between the two, is most clearly exposed. Therefore, the site of this experience depicts the production of the woman, Louise Bourgeois, in the process of reformulating her own subject position in relation to that of the *femme* 's imposed position.

The oppressive environment of the 1940s, would in the 1990s however be transposed into the soothing, cool atmosphere of marble. In *Femme Maison*, 1994 (fig. 29) the *femme*, measuring 11.4 x 31.1 x 6. 7 11.4 x 31.1 x 6. 7 centimeters, is offered a space where she can shut the world out and come to a state of repose, seen by the relaxed

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[121] Pollock Differencing 28, 33.
[122] Biesta 35.

stance of her body. Where there was once a struggle between the *femme* and the house, now there is only tranquility. A truce has ensued wherein the house no longer dominates, but neither does the *femme,* rather a comfortable oscillation seems to be occurring in which the clear distinctions between the two appears to have disintegrated. In 2001 the *Femme Maison* (fig. 22) returns in a patchwork of soft white material reminiscent of terry-cloth, measuring 35.5 x 38.1 x 66 centimeters, displayed in a vitrine which measures 173 x 89 x 66 centimeters.[123] This female torso is thus composed of the average threads of life, the washing up or even a bath perhaps. The softness of the fabric and its colour evoke a peaceful environment, where a calmness has settled and been enveloped in the very snugness of the material. The house rather than encasing the *femme*, here issues forth from her body, with each seamlessly disappearing into the other. Of this indiscernible distinction between house and body, Mignon Nixon writes,

> What if you folded your body into a certain house, gave up the separation between them? This would not be like imagining your body as a house, or figuring a house as your body. So if not, then, a matter of constructing a metaphor—body as house, house as body—what would it mean to collapse your body into a certain house? Distinctions like this—the differences between body and environment, inside and outside, subject and object, male and female, to name a few—have been disappearing within the work of Louise Bourgeois since the late 1940s. . . .[124]

The disappearance here of the distinction between the *femme* and the house appears flawless. It is impossible to determine where the *femme* begins and where the house ends. The *femme*'s exterior is the house, while the house's interiority is constructed of

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[123] The display vitrine for this fabric torso, as well as the one for the torso *Untitled*, 2001 (figs. 22-23), appear to also function as a means of protecting these sculptures, which could otherwise quite easily be damaged and/or destroyed.

[124] Mignon Nixon, "Disappearance," in *Louise Bourgeois: The Locus of Memory, Works 1982-1993*, eds. Charlotta Kotik, Terrie Sultan and Christian Leigh (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994) 77.

her very subjectivity. The permeable nature of the *femme*'s parameters render it as never truly '*hors*' the house, rather the one folds into the other and both are perfectly enmeshed.

The site from which the house sprouts is the transitional topography of the torso, an indefinable terrain that simultaneously merges and separates. Mary Douglas writes, "Danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is indefinable."[125] As an either/or, as the embodiment of transitional states, the torso can never fully frame or be framed, and is therefore dangerously indefinable. Continuously pushing the envelope of subjecthood, the torso frays its fringes, thus making its categorical coherence an impossibility. As the provisional site wherein the production of subjectivity resides, the torso in its perpetual state of becoming and/or becoming undone, always borders on the point of fragmentation. Rosi Huhn writes, "In denying the principle of Oneness, [subjectivity] forms by means of divisions and multiplications, fragmentations and montages, in borderline areas and transit zones, between two spaces and among several. Meaning wavers in fact between two poles."[126] Situated at the margins, never quite inside or out, an imbrication of everyday life is stitched together to form an indefinable space whereupon a shelter spawns. Constructed of her interiority, this structure is a site of multiplications, much like the funhouse filled with morphing mirrors, a site wherein the *femme* is permitted to stretch and contort the contours of her subjectivity. Indeed within this site, she is allowed the space for the production of her being, and the plethora of subject positions that that encompasses.

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[125] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969) 96.

[126] Rosi Huhn, "Louise Bourgeois: Deconstructing the Phallus within the Exile of Self," in *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art in, of, and from the Feminine*, ed. M. Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996) 141.

The torso *Untitled*, 2001 (figs. 23-25) is a stuffed entity made of brown corduroy,[127] crowned with a pile of light pink entrails, measuring 27.9 x 68.6 x 53.3 centimeters, displayed in a vitrine which measures 175.3 x 83.8 x 83.8 centimeters. The color and softness of the material of this entity perversely evokes, if only for a second, the teddy-bear of our childhoods, making this piece all the more alarming and extremely perturbing. The cuddly stuffed animal is however only a passing impression, for the protruding entrails immediately halt all teddy-bear imagery. And, if we could momentarily suspend the entrails in our mind's eye, the spread-eagle, splayed stance of this entity with its gapping orifice permanently dismisses all illusions of coddled childhood toys. Indeed, while childhood may hover at its edges, this beheaded, disemboweled entity is clearly not a child's play thing. Instead, this eviscerated, ambiguous adult object is the truncated distant remnants of those perfectly proportioned sculptures of antiquity, now reduced to a hunk of material.

The stitching of this entity is so coarse and ribbed it creates its own textuality. Far from dissolving into the fabric, these stitches take on a life of their own, enunciating their menacing message. Running a finger along the edge would surely translate into a Morse code of sorts; an S-O-S perhaps of the abusive punctures that persist, relentlessly threading in and out. The softness of the material all but evaporates through this rough treatment, leaving only the transmission of a distress signal. Situated at its margins, these violent sutures oscillate between the possibility of cohesion and rupture. Douglas writes, "[A]ll margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of

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[127] According to the OED, the word corduroy first came into usage in 1774. Although often assumed to come from the French, *corde du roi*, it seems that no such term has ever been used in French and that the name may perhaps originate from an English surname. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, at: http://0-dictionary.oed.com.mercury.concordia.ca/entrance.dtl

fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins."[128] Thus Bourgeois's stitches, in moving in and out between the dichotomised areas of becoming and becoming undone, not only continually transgress borders but also highlight the most dangerous of places, the margin. The vulnerable point of undecidability, which is by definition always left open to a profusion of interpretations, and as such is always the most unstable. Bourgeois's provisional stitches therefore reside at the periphery of signification, and if pulled this way or that, threaten to destabilize the illusion of self-sufficient subjectivity, enunciating their intimidating message of continuous fragmentation. And if this message is not received, then the spilling forth of this entity's viscera will surely reiterate this tiding. For, proudly perched atop this being, the soft pink entrails undeniably pronounce this entity's boundlessness.

Examining ageism in our language use, Palmore lists synonyms for the word old, some of which are: time-worn, thin, patched, faded, mended, dilapidated, weather-beaten, battered, decayed, stale, antiquated, and in rags, to name but a few.[129] The negative connotations are self-evident; however, to be wore-torn through extensive use can also signal other meanings. Think of a child's thoroughly loved stuff animal, that constant, through-thick-and-thin-friend that is always there. The tattered appearance of such a companion usually signals affection and attachment. The time-worn appearance of the corduroy of this torso indicates that it was once a faithful entity in Bourgeois's life. Bourgeois states, "Sleepwear for me means all bed wear, that is to say, bed sheets, linens, pillowcases and very special blankets."[130] The corduroy material for this torso was once,

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[128] Douglas 121.
[129] Palmore 79.
[130] Bourgeois Paulo Herkenhoff in Conversation with Louise Bourgeois 21.

according to Bourgeois's definition, her sleepwear in the guise of a bedspread.[131] The covering of the bed, the site of birth and death and thus of polar oppositions, with life as the liminal in-between space, is here transformed into the quintessential in-between, the torso, which like life itself is always open-ended. Formerly tough and rugged, this once resilient material which is so well suited to labor and colder climes, has here become so thoroughly threadbare, it is now in areas effectively bare and cordless.[132] The cords of the king have not retained their side by side unison, but rather have been razed into a patch of bare belly. A *tabula rasa*, this area has been wiped clear and can thus be formed anew. Like the bed, the site of birth, this clean slate juxtaposed to the vaginal orifice speaks of fresh starts, of birthing, and of the possibility of the rebirthing of the self. Not innate, but instead of a constructed nature, the self is here re-produced and embodies the possibility of continuous transformation. Made of a bedspread that covers the liminal site of life and living, which is then refolded into the liminality of the torso, this entity is therefore the very embodiment of Bourgeois's insistent process of retroactive mending. For if the importance of Bourgeois's metaphoric patching of past events is the process of transformation itself, then this birthing being, imbricated in the stuff of life, represents this on-going process of the re-production of the self.

Woodward maintains that the cultural dichotomy of youth and old age has for women long been sustained by the biological dividing line between the reproductive and post-reproductive years, with the symbolic date of older women understood as coinciding

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[131] Information obtained from the Bourgeois Studio forwarded, via e mail, to the author by Cheim & Read Gallery, NYC.

[132] According to the OED, corduroy is described as, "a kind of coarse, thick-ribbed cotton stuff, worn chiefly by laborers or persons engaged in rough work." *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, at: http://0-dictionary.oed.com.mercury.concordia.ca/entrance.dtl

with menopause.[133] Whereas the dividing line for men in older age in Western society is in relation to their productivity in the marketplace, women in later years are rendered socially useless by their un/re/productivity. As Jacquelyn N. Zita observes, womanhood is identified with the reproductively fertile years while post-menopausal women are relegated to the abhorrently unnatural other, to be hidden from sight or fixed by medical interventions.[134] Although Woodward is writing about a photograph of Bourgeois wearing one of her latex costumes (fig. 30), she could just as well be speaking of this torso when she states, "Bourgeois performs age differently, modeling the polarities that inform our cultural expectations of women in terms of youth and age and transmuting them in the process, presenting a creative female body that is not post-reproductive but productive. . . ."[135] Spawned from an artist who is a woman of advanced age, this ambiguous torso demonstrates that productivity, both that of creativity and of subjectivity does not cease because menses do. Indeed, Bourgeois's on-going process of metaphoric mending and transformation, albeit threaded in the emulation or embodiment of her subjectivity, will never be halted by age, but rather only through the cutting of the thread of the Fate of time.

In the early 1960s Bourgeois made *Torso, Self Portrait,* 1963-1964 (fig. 31). Having made very few self-portraits throughout her practice, Bourgeois here chose to represent herself in the form of a torso. A white plaster wall relief, this truncated self is seemingly teeming with seeds, pregnant with promise. Similar to Johannes Davidszoon de Heem's pomegranate in his painting *Festoon of Fruit and Flowers,* c. 1635-1684 (fig.

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[133] Kathleen Woodward, "Performing Age, Performing Gender," *NWSA Journal* vol. 18, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 168.
[134] Jacquelyn N. Zita, "Heresy in the Female Body: The Rhetorics of Menopause," *Menopause: A Midlife Passage*, ed. Joan C. Callahan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 68.
[135] Woodward Performing Age 170.

32), Bourgeois's *Torso, Self Portrait* is filled to the brim with the abundance of life. The vitality of this torso is reminiscent of her drawing *Girl Falling,* 1947 (fig. 33), where a pregnant woman is depicted, perhaps impregnated with the seeds of this plentiful fruit. In numerous faiths the pomegranate symbolizes fertility, abundance, and rebirth. Spivak writes that to deconstruct, is to locate the promise within the margins in order to reverse dualities, and thus disclose the undecidable moments and allow what is always already inscribed to reemerge.[136] Hence, this torso, and Bourgeois's more recent fabric torsos, rather than being dismemberment figures, are instead beautiful metaphors of the promises in the margins and of the continuous possibility of transformation.

[136] Spivak Translator's Preface lxxvii.

Chapter Four:
The Production of Subjectivity, Inscribed

A work of art is a language.
Louise Bourgeois

Now that Louise Bourgeois is no longer so willing to recount her stories of the past, Storr maintains that we have been given the opportunity to leave behind the biographical and psychoanalytic half-truths[137] that she and others, himself included, have propagated, advocating instead for an '*un*reading' of her art.[138] Within this *un*reading, I would like to propose a further *re*reading, that is, a rereading that seeks to uncover the inscriptions of Bourgeois's process of subjectivity, scripted 'in, from, or of the feminine.' An ode is a lyrical poem, usually meant to be sung: Bourgeois's book *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002 (fig. 34) is a lyrical dedication to a river which no longer flows but still murmurs in her mind.[139] Restitching the game of time, Bourgeois has turned Proustian involuntary memories into a tactile object coloured in the tannin of a river of yesteryear. *Ode à la Bièvre* consists of twenty-five pages,[140] which are composed in large part in hues of blue. The book is bracketed by two texts,[141] the first text appears on the first page, setting the

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[137] On this issue Pollock writes, "The problem with psychobiography which has in recent years progressively afflicted the slightly enlarging field of Louise Bourgeois studies is that it is both bad art history and bad psychoanalysis. But it is equally important to tread warily in the proliferating use of varied psychoanalytical paradigms and selections from complex theoretical models that, when reduce to passing asides of generalizing vocabularies turn insightful and difficult statements into trite supports for already known meanings, now said otherwise." See, Griselda Pollock, "Old Bones and Cocktail Dresses: Louise Bourgeois and the Question of Age," *Oxford Art Journal* vol. 22, no. 2 (1999): 88.
[138] Storr Abstraction 25-26.
[139] In 2007 *Ode à la Bièvre* was reproduced by Irving Zucker Art Books. A limited edition reproduction was also produced, consisting of ninety-five deluxe copies which are signed and numbered on the colophon. They include two signed photographs digitally printed on Verona paper and mounted on 300 gram watercolor paper, entitled: *The Garden in Antony,* 1921 and *The Bièvre River,* 1951. See, http://www.zuckerartbooks.com/cgi-bin/zucker/index.htm
[140] This includes both the front and back covers.
[141] Both of the texts and the title of the book are lithographed onto the material.

stage with a description of what the river brought (fig. 35). The second text, found on the last page, speaks of the river's disappearence, and of the trees that Bourgeois's father planted along its edge as the sole remaining trace of its existence (fig. 36).

Derrida writes that the interweaving of language, that is the interweaving which is purely language in language with the other threads of experience, constitutes a cloth.[142] For Derrida, cloth takes on a particular significance for he connects it with text, because *texte,* the French equivalent is derived from the Latin *textus*, which means cloth.[143] Therefore, if cloth is text, what does this signify when cloth, that is Bourgeois's latest material, which has now been transformed into a book, becomes *textus* again? Furthermore, if this *textus* constitutes the interweaving of the threads of experience of an artist who is a woman with language, what will this text enunciate? Pollock maintains that the pronouncements made by an artist who is a woman working within patriarchal society will be articulated in 'inscriptions in the feminine.' Pollock writes, "The phrase 'inscriptions in the feminine' has an archaeological ring to it. As if deciphering an ancient culture whose language is lost while its strange monuments remain to puzzle and provoke our curiosity, we must assume that we do not yet know what is being traced upon the surfaces of culture by artists speaking in, from, or of the feminine."[144] Therefore, situated in, from, or of the feminine, these inscriptions could be read as a translation of existing patriarchal discourses into a language that better articulates the

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[142] Jacques Derrida, "Form and Meaning: A Note on the Phenomenology of Language," in *Margins of Philosophy,* trans. with additional notes by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 160.
[143] Bass Translator's Introduction ix, xiii.
[144] Griselda Pollock, "Inscriptions in the Feminine," in *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art in, of, and from the Feminine*, ed. M. Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996) 74.

space from which the artist who is a woman speaks.[145] Pollock further writes that while inscriptions in the feminine may seem unreadable according to dominate narratives in art, for those of us willing to look beyond these narratives, seeking for the index to other meanings, lives, and traces of other configurations of the subject, she maintains that the surface of artworks made by artists who are women are rich in possibilities to decipher these inscriptions as dissidence, difference and heterogeneity.[146]

The term palimpsest in Greek, *palimpsēstos,* means to scrape, again.[147] Inscriptions on a papyrus and/or parchment were thus scraped away, erased, in order to make room for new inscriptions. Additional writing was superimposed on the traces of older ones, thus creating a multi-layered text, a palimpsest. Sarah Dillon writes,

> Although the process that creates palimpsests is one of layering, the *result* of that process, combined with the subsequent reappearance of the underlying script, is a surface structure which can be described by [the] term 'involuted'[148] . . . which describes the relationship between the texts that inhabit the palimpsest as a result of its palimpsesting and subsequent textual reappearance. The palimpsest is thus an involuted phenomenon where otherwise unrelated texts are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other.[149]

Similarly, the pages of Bourgeois's book are a result of the palimpsesting of her production of self. Constructed of the very fibre of her life, the pages of her book can be

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[145] Of the artist who is a 'woman,' Pollock writes, "In the work by artists we name women, we should not read for signs of a known femininity—womanhood, women like us...—but for signs of femininity's structurally conditioned and dissonant struggle with phallocentrism, a struggle with the already existing, historically specific definitions and changing dispositions of the term Man and Woman with sexual difference." See, Differencing 33.

[146] Pollock Inscriptions 75.

[147] *Pálin* means again, *psēstós* means scraped, *Online Etymology Dictionary*, at: http:// www.etymonline.com/

[148] As Dillon further states, the term involuted was coined by Thomas De Quincey, which he describes as the way in which "[O]ur deepest thought and feelings pass to us through perplexed combinations of concrete objects . . . in compound experiences incapable of being disentangled." Quoted in, Sarah Dillon, *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory* (London: Continuum, 2007) 4. For further reading see, Thomas De Quincey, "*Suspiria de Profundis*," in *Thomas De Quincey: Confessions of an English Opium Eater and Other Writings,* ed. Grevel Lindop (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998) 87-181.

[149] Dillon 4.

read for her protean process of becoming. For these pages are layered at one level with the envelope of self, which oscillating between self and other, then at an additional level becomes further intertwined by what could be the snippets of a friend's visit, or yet again by the traces of a relentless sleepless night. Entangled in a multitude of incongruous threads, Bourgeois's multi-layered *textus* transforms language into a heterogeneous patchwork which is textured by the difference its very production brings, and inscribes its surface in, from, or of the feminine, that is, in, from, or of Bourgeois the artist.

Keith Moxey writes, "[An artwork is part of] a system of communication in which the artist makes use of conventional signs—that is, socially meaningful processes of signification—in order to construct a cultural object that articulates and disseminates the attitudes of the society of which he or she is part."[150] However, if the artist is a woman working within a phallocentric culture, the signs used to construct cultural objects which articulate the attitudes of that society, will not possess the correct vocabulary to express the artist's experiences and narratives within that society. Therefore, it is in the actual reformulation of this vocabulary that we locate the site in which the artist who is a woman is found retelling and reformulating her own subjectivity. In the act of inscribing narratives in a language that better enunciates her own position, we are hence privy to the formation of the artist's subjectivity. Pollock writes, "A feminist reading for the inscriptions of the feminine means listening for the traces of a subjectivity formed in the feminine with and in conflict with a phallocentric system. Beyond that, it implies figuring out what working from that place, however unconsciously, might be *producing,*

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[150] Keith Moxey, *The Practice of Theory: Poststructuralism, Cultural Politics, and Art History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) 31.

as yet unarticulated, unrepresented, unsignified, unrecognized."[151] In working through some of these narratives that do not quite fit with the artist that is a woman's lived experience, the artist in the act of producing her artwork is thus producing the unsignified, the artist who is a woman in phallocentric discourses within art's history. And as such, in the production of her artwork the artist encounters herself, the unarticulated, in the process of becoming.

Ode à la Bièvre, 2002 opens with a passage describing an olfactory bouquet of what the river brought in the form of geraniums, and peonies, and the sweet smell of rain-drenched honeysuckle. A fertile reservoir, the primary gift of this river was its richness in tannin. The Bourgeois family bought the house in Antony because of the river's high tannin content. Tannin is used to fix dyes, and thus the river's main function was to service the Bourgeois family's tapestry restoration business.[152] Made of an assortment of materials ranging from nylon, satin, velvet, and linen, the book unfurls the river in a variety of tones of mostly blues with the exception of one page which is made up of saturated orange, red, and blue (fig. 37). Assembled so that it can be disassembled, the gutter of the book is punctuated with buttonholes, which are threaded with straps that are equipped with snaps, so as to take it apart for display purposes (fig. 38).[153] Thus of a provisional nature, this book like the river itself which continuously flows, is also in a state of flux. This fluidity is further accentuated by the composition of the pages themselves, for they are made of clothes, that is, metaphoric envelopes of self, as well as the threads of life's experiences, and as such, are of the same provisory nature. When

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[151] Pollock Inscriptions 74.
[152] Jonas Storsve. "Antony," in *Louise Bourgeois,* exhibition catalogue, ed. Frances Morris (London: Tate Publishing, 2007) 41.
[153] Newman AR, 31.

mounted on a wall for exhibition, the general striated motif of the pages begins to undulate, reiterating the rythmic flow of the river (fig. 39).[154] Hence, this book inscribed in the cant of fluidity, must be read in accordence to the cadence of the river's flow, which rises and falls to the current of Bourgeois's production of subjectivity. Ironically, the fluency of this re-imagined river also beautifully echos the course of Bourgeois's artistic career. For, over the past sixty years, far from following the straight and narrow path of art history's canonical developments, Bourgeois's practice has proceeded along its own particular path, and has for much of its run, been the unrepresented, unsignified, and unrecognized within art's history. For feminists in art history, Pollock writes, "The object is to challenge art history as a system of representation which has not simply lost our past but has constructed a visual field for art in which feminine inscriptions are not only rendered invisible through exclusion or neglect but made *illegible* because of the phallocentric logic which allows only one sex."[155] Working from the position of an artist in conflict with this logic of sameness, Bourgeois has produced an oeuvre which follows a non-linear course and is inscribed in a language that resonates the fluidity of the Bièvre river.

Three pages of *Ode à la Bièvre* appear to be dedicated to the river's special properties of high tannin content, dyed in a deep indigo blue. Page four[156] is striped horizontally with four indigo lines on a white ground, varying in thickness, ascending from thinnest to thickest (fig. 40). The page is further broken up vertically by three rows of seams. This page resembles dye swatches, as if reassembled in order to verify the

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[154] Although not an actual installation view of the book on exhibition, this is the order in which it would be mounted for displayed, with each page individually framed.
[155] Pollock Differencing 102.
[156] Although the pages of the book are not actually numbered, I have done so in order to facilitate the discussion.

strength of the dyes used. Page three, far from being a dye test, is a plunge into the depths of the river with eyes wide open (fig. 41). Coloured in a murky mêlée of indigo, this page appears to be the outcome of a disturbance of sorts, perhaps capturing the result of a hand grasping at the bottom of the river in search of something lost. Page nine, the last tribute to the tannin of the river, is occupied by six strange specters (fig. 42). Depicted across a white page, these indigo specters clad in what could be tie-dyed clothes from the Sixties, appear to be caught in a perpetual cycle of swimming to the river's surface in search of the sun. One specter however is slightly set apart from the others, separated by a seam, this entity has perhaps been signaled out for its most perfected proportions in comparison to the others. For while the others have 'heads' that are sometimes too thin, or even repeated by a shadow, or yet again sporting two, as does its immediate neighbor, this specter has the clearest contours, and as such, perhaps serves as the original specter of the river. However, like a provisory stitch that is so loosely bound that a slight tug might unravel it, this originary specter, could quite easily be displaced, for who is to say that two heads are not better than one? And indeed, if the stitch of the seamstress who is basting is but temporary, who is to say that this specter's position will not shift again, for it is after all cut from the same cloth as that of the river, that is, a constantly changing medium that is caught in an ever swirling vortex(t).

Turning the page, we come to page ten which is divided into three sections, a seductive pale, almost powder blue velvet piece occupies the top register, which is intersected by a translucent dark blue material, which covers a pink one, followed by a grey-like fabric which is pierced with six additional buttonholes on the bottom register (fig. 43). Clearly not there for assemblage purposes, the meaning of these additional

buttonholes is somewhat perplexing. Are they there to further accentuate the book's contingent nature? This is a possibility, for as an addition of sorts, it is perhaps their excessive quality that is being underscored. For in their excessiveness they create a gap, and within this strange space which is not a synthesized third space, alterity sows. As in-between spaces, these holes prohibit any categorical closure of significance, thus fracturing the very limits of this *textus*. Hence, by extension, in their disavowal of the foreclosure of meaning, they do indeed perpetuate the provisional quality of this book. Furthermore, as 'holes' they also recall the 'whole,' or rather an *a priori* wholeness, that elusive originary plenitude that is always sought in vain, instead of seeking narratives that are open-ended and speak of new beginnings. As additions, similar to the supplement these holes also indicate a lack, for nothing can be added to something that is whole, and as such, as lack, they therefore destabilize the very notion of full presence and centrality, and repudiate the *a priori* whole, and the essentiality of subjectivity. Hence within these buttonholes, difference flourishes, as does the production of otherness. Pollock writes of an 'other otherness,' which is the otherness of the other, that is, the otherness of those living under the sign of the known femininity in patriarchal society, the negated other of Man.[157] As she further states, "[*I*]*nscriptions of the other otherness of femininity* [are to be found in the] traces of the unexpected articulation of what may be specific to female persons in the process of becoming subjects—subjected, subjectified and subjectivised—in the feminine through the interplay of social identities and psychic formations with histories."[158] As gaps indexing otherness and difference, these eccentric holes of the third register are traces of unexpected articulations, which, speaking to the possibility of

[157] Pollock Differencing 28, 33, 100.
[158] Pollock Differencing 102.

thinking beyond the boundaries of existing subject positions, inscribe Bourgeois's other otherness.

Scripted in a fluctuating tongue, this book, undulating to the motions of the river, also marks the passage of time, which unfolds in two of the book's pages. Juxtaposed to the holes that displace the whole, on page eleven we find the future in the form of tomorrow (fig. 44). Right in the center of the page, caught in a stream of blue and white stripes, we find a tag attached with the word *demain* written in red. French for tomorrow, *demain* introduces an additional layer to this book, the flow of time. Swept along by the stripes, the future appears to surge forth, but is it really forward that it marches, or is that just the impression we are given because of the blue and white lines? Henri Bergson writes, "Every moment of our life presents two aspects; it is actual and virtual, perception on the one side and memory on the other."[159] Bergson postulated that the human experience of time does not perceive life as a succession of demarcated conscious states, progressing along a linear line, but rather as that of a continuous flow that does not necessarily follow a linear path. Time, Bergson maintains is presented to consciousness as 'duration' (*durée*), an endlessly flowing process, which cannot be reduced to measurable increments such as perceivable clock-time.[160] Hence, time as 'duration' flows in and out of moments not hindered by a linear progression. As Howard Eiland and Michael William Jennings write,

> Bergson argues that the concrete living present, which consists in the consciousness one has of one's body as a center of action, necessarily occupies a moment of duration very different from our ideas of chronological time. Every perception fills a certain 'depth of duration'

[159] Henri Bergson, "Memory of the Present and False Recognition," in *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, trans. Melissa McMahon, eds., Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey (New York: Continuum, 2002) 147.
[160] For further reading see, Henri Bergson, "The Evolution of Life—Mechanism and Teleology," in *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: The Modern Library, 1944) 1-87.

> (*épaisseur de durée*), prolonging the past into the present and thereby preparing the future. As a constantly varying spatio-temporal 'rhythm,' a flow of states, duration is the basis of matter, which, insofar as it is extended in space, must be seen as a present which is always beginning again.[161]

Thus, from the depths of the Bièvre, to the thickness of duration, this book in its multiple layers of the lives lived by Bourgeois, prolongs the past, be it in the snippets of a dress, or the fragments of a blanket, only to then become enmeshed in a palimpsest of a myriad of past, present, and future selves, elongating each state by carrying a trace of the other within it, for the present is not present to itself, but always already inhabited by the future, and always beginning again by leaving its trace on the future of *demain*. Of the times of the palimpsest, Dillon writes,

> The 'present' of the palimpsest is only constituted in and by the 'presence' of texts from the 'past,' as well as remaining open to further inscription by texts of the 'future.' The presence of texts from the past, present (and possibly the future) in the palimpsest does not elide temporality but evidences the spectrality of any 'present' moment which always already contains within it 'past,' 'present' and 'future' moments.[162]

Not anchored by a past, that is, a yesterday, nor even presented with the possibility of a today, *demain* floats on the water of a river of yesteryear. And like the river that could never repeat itself in the first place, both *demain* and the river are gone and never will be, for when tomorrow arrives it will already have been transformed into today. All made of the same fiber, the river, the morrow, and the self, are therefore always continually being restitched, if only provisionally, for the future will alter them yet again.

Leafing ahead to page twenty-one, we find there the times of the year vertically

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[161] Quoted in, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings. Volume 4 1938-1940*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Howard Eiland, eds., Michael William Jennings *et al.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) 344 n8. For further reading see, Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books 1991).

[162] Dillon 37.

inscribed across three yellow ribbons on a tricoloured background of blue, yellow, and pink. The first ribbon inscribes the months of the year, the middle one, the days of the week, and the last, the dates of the month (fig. 45). This calender of sorts can be read in numerous ways; if read from left to right for example, only the months from Febuary to August would have days of the week, and if the the third ribbon is added to this reading, then specific dates appear, the first of which would be Saturday August 15th. The verticality of these inscriptions compels us to read otherwise, indeed we are obliged to see time itself differently. Not laid out in the habitual chronolgical manner, here time flowing against the grain, scrolls. Pollock writes, "[I]f given conventions and stories are *other* in a way that provides only an alienating field of representation incommensurate with the shape and needs of the subject because the creating subject is feminine and the discourse phallocentric, there will be a contradiction."[163] Therefore, this aporia will be represented as a disjunction of sorts within their representations, jarring presuppositions and subverting pre-existing knowledge. In Bourgeois's hands, a year which unrolls to a tempo that is other, is reconfigured so that days seem unnecessary during some months, and where dates seemingly become of great importance in others. Rearranged, time itself flows in a completely new direction, moving according to a very different rhythm. In a passage from *A Sketch from the Past*, Virginia Woolf returns to her memories of St. Ives, where, as a child she would vacation with her family. Illustrating the shifting terrain of the past and present, and the persistence of the memories that reside within us, Woolf writes,

> Those moments—in the nursery, on the road to the beach—can still be more real than the present moment. This I have just tested. For I got up and crossed the garden. Percy was digging the asparagus bed; Louie was shaking

[163] Pollock Differencing 110.

> a mat in front of the bedroom door. But I was seeing them through the sight I saw here—the nursery and the road to the beach.[164]

In this passage we find Woolf in her garden, in her present time. From there, Woolf travels (backwards?) to the beach and nursery of a St. Ives past. In these travels, it is as if Woolf had passed through the stratums of time and her memories to reach her present day which shifted to and fro, conflating her past and present. And like the written lines of the palimpsest, in Woolf's garden the present intruded on the past and momentarily occupied the same space, thus conjugating one another, and in the process, reconfiguring Woolf's time and memories. Bergson writes, "In reality, the past is preserved by itself automatically. In its entirety it follows us at every instant; all that we have felt, thought and willed from our earliest infancy is there, leaning over the present which is about to join it, pressing against the portals of consciousness that would fain leave it outside."[165] In Bourgeois's book, similar to Woolf's garden visit to the past, the moments of life are presented from Bergson's two sides, that is, perception on the one side and memory on the other.[166] And thus, through the very production of self, Bourgeois has in the experience undergone in the process of art making, reformulated her subject position through the reformulation of time. A time rephrased, wherein the past peers in with the promise of pouring itself into a palimpsest of selves which occupy simultaneous pasts, presents, and an infinite possibility of futures. Hence, in her reformulation of time, Bourgeois has created a book, which does not flow chronologically with clear beginnings, middles, and ends, but rather unfolds through the thickness of its layers, in an order that is in, from, or of the feminine.

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[164] Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," in *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (London: Published for Sussex University Press by Chatto & Windus, 1976) 67.
[165] Bergson Creative 5.
[166] Bergson Memory of the Present 147.

Transcribed on the subjective fibers of her life, Bourgeois in old age thus displaces the passage of time, dislodging it from its chronological path. Indeed, within the pages of this book a palimpsesting of temporalities occurs which subverts the conception of the linear progression of time. Meyer-Thoss writes, "Louise Bourgeois turns to the past only to interrupt, contradict, and oppose herself in the process."[167] Thus, similar to the sentences in the palimpsest that are continuously interrupted and fragmented, at this late stage in her life, Bourgeois now turns time and the memories inhabiting it, into a layered *textus* which is inscribed not in the language of sameness, but rather is differentiated by the inscriptions of the heterogeneous experiences of the artist who is woman, well advanced in age. Barbara Hillyer, of her own experience of aging and the fear of memory loss, writes, "Memory is not 'lost,' but one must access it in a different way."[168] Like Bourgeois's play with time, Hillyer approaches this fear of memory loss differently, and in proposing an alternative way of accessing it, thus inscribes a new way of experiencing one's memory in old age, and thus one which moves beyond the stereotypical prescribed manner of thinking about cognitive capabilities in later life.[169] Elsewhere Pollock has written on the importance of Bourgeois's age in relation to her work, stating,

> We typically assume that as we mature and progress through life, the formative moments of childhood lose their intensity, and, with the distance of lived time, their charge wanes. In the case of Louise Bourgeois and her public reception, the reverse appears to be the case, thus putting her, the woman, at risk of being seen as 'stuck' in a rut, or worse as regressing

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[167] Meyer-Thoss 51.

[168] Barbara Hillyer, "The Embodiment of Old Women: Silences," *Frontier: A Journal of Women Studies* vol. 19, no. 1 (1998): 57.

[169] Palmore writes that contrary to prevalent stereotypes, most people advanced in age retain sound mental capabilities. Though perhaps slower in the uptake, most people in old age have little or no short-term memory loss, and although there may be some increase in long-term memory loss, in healthy circumstances, it is not of serious consequence, 21.

> towards the child a woman of advanced years can only re-become at the price of premature senility. . . .[170]

This speaks to the prevalent infantilization of people in old age in our society. As Jennifer Lorna Hockey and Allison James observe,

> The cultural pervasiveness of metaphors of childhood within the discourses surrounding ageing and dependency . . . has become 'naturalized.' It is seen as somehow inevitable, as the way things are. Through this culturally constructed model of dependency, many of those in old age and others who are infantilized—the chronically sick or disabled, for example—may be made to take a conceptual position alongside children on the margins of society.[171]

Due solely to her age, Bourgeois is now at the risk of being perceived as infantile and as having regressed back to her childhood. Besides ignoring the fact that the theme of her childhood has persisted throughout her practice, this ageist attitude hinders a deeper understanding of what is at stake in Bourgeois's revisiting of past events. For it is within these visits that Bourgeois interrupts and transforms herself; it is not in the past that she resides, but rather in the present, that is, in the present that always contains traces of the past and which is already turning into a multitude of possible futures. Therefore Bourgeois resides in the perpetual on-going process of becoming. The lyrical brilliance of *Ode à la Bièvre* lies in what it has captured, for not only has it captured the passage of time, but also the moment/s of becoming. George Bluestone writes,

> [L]anguage, consisting as it does of bounded, discrete units cannot satisfactorily represent the unbounded and continuous. We have a sign to cover a thing's 'becoming;' and one to cover a thing's 'having become;' but 'becoming' is a present participle, 'become' a past participle and our language thus far [offers] no way of showing the continuity between them.[172]

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[170] Pollock, Old Bones 90.
[171] Jennifer Lorna Hockey and Allison James, *Growing Up and Growing Old: Ageing and Dependency in the Life Course* (London: Sage, 1993) 13.
[172] George Bluestone, "Time in Film and Fiction," *The Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism* vol. 19, no. 3 (Spring 1961): 314.

Bourgeois's book shows this continuity, this becoming, in a way that is more telling than conventional inscriptions could ever do. Continually inscribing Bourgeois's process of becoming, this book shows not only these continuous moments inscribed, but also that the process of becoming is endless, never halting, and never halted at some arbitrary age which Western society constructs as old, or even too old.

Dillon writes that although the initial writing on a palimpsest seemed to have been eliminated, it was in fact often imperfectly erased, only to reappear centuries later due to the reaction of the iron in the remaining ink to the oxygen in the air which would produce a reddish-brown oxide.[173] Thus, initial inscriptions rose, while the superimposed came to occupy the same line, the same space. If, as Bourgeois maintains, a work of art is a language,[174] then her *textus* is inscribed in a palimpsesting in, from, or of the feminine. And if these inscriptions in the feminine are read as a palimpsest, a fragmented sentence would speak of its permeable layers rising and falling to the rhythm of the river, while the blue and white stripes of *demain* streamed through the renegade gaps that had displaced the *a priori* wholeness, only to then cross currents with a Monday which found itself in the midst of a mêlée of indigo, unable to hear, in the far off distance, the murmur of what could be a waltz. In *Ode à la Bièvre* linearity is replaced by diverse levels, depths, and surfaces, which all intermingle. Within these leaves of time and memory, nothing is permanently erased, and all is always provisional. And while all inscriptions stem from the same source: that source, the surface, the inscriptions, and the time of these inscriptions are all interwoven, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes at odds with one another, and always in disparity. Derrida writes, "The supplement is always the

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[173] Dillon 12.
[174] Louise Bourgeois, "Freud's Toys." *Artforum International* vol. 28, no. 5 (January 1990): 113.

supplement of a supplement. [If] one wishes to go back *from the supplement to the source:* one must recognize that there is *a supplement at the source.*"[175] Bourgeois's book consists of a myriad of inscriptions of her production of subjectivity, with each layer being neither originary nor secondary, but rather oscillating somewhere in-between the two, to the music count of 1 2 3, for this lyrical Bourgeoisian ode, according to page five, is in triple meter (fig. 46). On this page we find two seamstress's measuring tapes cutting down the middle of a striated page, with the inches 1 2 3 continually repeated like the time kept in this ode, or, by an artist who is a woman, and who keeps time to a rhythm that is, in, from, and of herself, Louise Bourgeois, the woman. the artist, in process of becoming *ad infinitum*.

[175] Derrida Of Grammatology 304.

Conclusion

Time and again, Louise Bourgeois has returned to particular events in the past, and we as viewers, as well as art historians and critics, have followed her. We have been mesmerized by her many pre-fabricated explanations, and having listened attentively, have on many occasions repeated her fascinating tales. However, as has been emphasized in this thesis, it is the artworks themselves that should speak to us, and it is those stories, those that arise during the dialogistic swing between viewer and artwork, that should thereafter be repeated. Therefore, the main contribution this thesis has made to the growing scholarship on the oeuvre of Louise Bourgeois is its lack of 'ventriloquism.' Storr maintains that a large number of books on Bourgeois are, as he writes, "[F]illed with more or less critical repackaging of her stories, the less critical of examples in effect being ventriloquist's dummies in bound form."[176] In following suit, in leaving behind her stories and prepared exegesis, and allowing her works to speak on their own, this thesis has thus tried to break away from the usual approach to Bourgeois's works, one which reduces her artworks to her biography.

Throughout Bourgeois's practice there has been the constant reiteration by art historians and critics alike, that her oeuvre has continuously defied all art historical classifications and narratives. As early as 1975, Lucy Lippard wrote "It is difficult to

[176] Storr Abstraction 22.

find a framework vivid enough to incorporate Louise Bourgeois's sculpture."[177] Some years later, in 1981, Judith Russi Kirshner wondered if viewers had then finally caught up to Bourgeois, when she wrote, "Are we at last the audience competent to receive Louise Bourgeois? We viewers of the baroque visions of *Dressed to Kill*, consumers of the polysexuality issue of *Semiotext(e)* magazine—are we the audience she has been waiting for?"[178] More recently, Morris has written that until new methodologies within art history are explored, Bourgeois will always remain a unique case.[179] This difficulty in placing Bourgeois's practice within existing art historical narratives has thus persisted to this day. The importance of breaking away from the usual biographical approach to Bourgeois's artworks, is that while the biography of an artist who is a man has functioned only to reinforce his privileged position within art historical discourses, the same cannot be said for artists who are women. As Nanette Salomon writes,

> The details of a man's biography are conveyed as measures of the 'universal,' applicable to all mankind. . . . In contrast, the details of a woman's biography are used to underscore the idea that she is an exception; they apply only to her and make her an interesting individual case. Her art is reduced to a visual record of her personal and psychological makeup.[180]

Therefore, as a feminist approach within art historical discourses to Bourgeois's works, it has been important to not perpetuate this focus on her biography for it is, and has been, only detrimental to her artistic career. And, although this focus has not engendered the legend of Bourgeois's exceptional position within art history *per se*, it is without doubt

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[177] Lucy Lippard, "From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art," *Artforum* vol. 13, no. 7 (March 1975): 27.
[178] Judith Russi Kirshner, "Louise Bourgeois, 'Femme Maison,' The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago," *Artforum* vol. 20, no. 3 (November 1981): 88.
[179] Morris Stitches in Time 10.
[180] Nanette Salomon, "The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission," in *(En)Gendering Knowledge: Feminists in Academe*, eds. Joan Hartmann and Ellen Meser-Davidow (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991) 229.

that it has in any case helped propagate it, and therefore the outcome has been the same, that is, one which has not been beneficial to Bourgeois's career.

The mainstream recognition of Bourgeois's oeuvre came to her much belated. Storr writes that Bourgeois had, long before the 'official' recognition of her MoMA retrospective in 1982, already gained acknowledgment amongst the younger artists of New York City's downtown scene. He ascribes this recognition in large part to the efforts of women in the art scene at the time, that is, critics such as Lippard and curators like Deborah Wye, further stating, "Bourgeois appeared destined to be an artists' artist and, as far as the larger world was concerned, a case apart."[181] Thus, if Bourgeois had to wait for the rest of us, her audience, to catch up, these women were certainly trying to keep pace with her. Bourgeois has always had an affinity with younger generations of artists, while often having had little common ground with her contemporaries.[182] Morris further writes, "Like the spiralling form that she often adopts as a formal device, there is a different, non-linear momentum at work [within her oeuvre] that is always emphatically of the present yet loops back over previous territory to unravel and recoil."[183] Of the present, yet looping to and fro over terrains of alternating presents, Bourgeois's practice has followed a course that is distinctively other, oscillating between generations and artistic movements, and never clearly part of either/or. Pollock writes,

> The absence of a critical acknowledgement at the right moment means that there is no recovery of that lost chance to be seen in one's own history, as the absence in the historical record or archive can never be retroactively filled by what was never said. 'Louise Bourgeois' presents then a historiographical puzzle of an artist who enters the archive that becomes art

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[181] Storr The Discreet Charm 26.
[182] Jerry Gorovoy, Pandora Tabatabai Asbaghi and Paulo Herkenhoff, *Louise Bourgeois: Blue Days and Pink Days* (Milano: Fondazione Prada, 1997) 260.
[183] Morris Stitches in Time 10.

> history out of synchrony with the moments and practices through which this practice was formed.[184]

Residing in the either/or, Bourgeois's practice has been out of synch for much of its duration, keeping its own time. Demarcated by the other otherness of an artist who is a woman existing within art historical discourses not vivid enough to incorporate her artworks into its language of sameness, the exceptionality of Bourgeois's oeuvre has therefore in part been produced by this very homogeneous vocabulary. Thus, while the reliance on Bourgeois's biographical tales in writings on her artworks have not caused her absence within the archive that is art history, these writings have none the less helped to enable her exclusion.

In examining the exclusion of artists who are women, Pollock investigates art history's structurality, and addresses the ongoing debates concerned not only with challenging the canon and its sanctified position within art history, but also with 'differencing' it. As Pollock writes,

> Proposing that the canon should be understood as both a discursive structure and a structure of masculine narcissism within the exercise of cultural hegemony, I examine the theoretical and political issues involved not in displacing the canon but in 'differencing' the canon, exposing its engagement with a politics of sexual difference while allowing that very problematic to make a difference to how we read art's history.[185]

In differencing the canon, Pollock thus also examines the selectivity of canonical discursive practices. Purporting neutrality, these discourses propose that an artwork's significance is said to pre-exist it, and thus to be an inherent component of the work itself. As Pollock further states, "Always associated with canonicity as a structure, is the idea of naturally revealed, universal value and individual achievement that serves to

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[184] Pollock Old Bones 87.
[185] Pollock Differencing xiv.

justify the highly select and privileged membership of the canon that denies any selectivity. As the record of autonomous genius, the canon appears to arise spontaneously."[186] By introducing difference to existing art historical narratives, the canon's structural exclusivity is thus revealed, and by extension, so too is the very construction of meaning itself. Thus, in revealing the selectivity of canonical discourses, the myth of inherent meaning is also dispelled, opening the artwork to the difference of the viewer and to all the potential new meanings that the viewer brings.

In recent years, Bourgeois's age has become an increasingly important subject in relation to her work. Griselda Pollock's article "Old Bones and Cocktail Dresses: Louise Bourgeois and the Question of Age" and "Performing Age, Performing Gender" by Kathleen Woodward are evidence of this new phase. In her essay "Old Age. Old-Age Style: Late Louise Bourgeois,"[187] Linda Nochlin questions whether Bourgeois's recent works can be considered as an 'old-age style,' or if the category of 'late style' is perhaps more appropriate. However, after unraveling these two categories, for they are often used interchangeably, Nochlin concludes that although Bourgeois's latest works are certainly products of extreme old age they do not conform to either of these categories. Although these categories have long circulated, there has as yet to be any consensus as to what they actually constitute, not to mention that there are some who even firmly deny the very existence of such styles. An old-age style according to David Rosand is, "[A] style built on a lifetime of experience in art and the absolute mastery of a medium, that rejects superficial refinement and works with basic structures, manifesting an impatience with

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[186] Pollock Differencing 4.
[187] Linda Nochlin, "Old Age. Old-Age Style: Late Louise Bourgeois," in *Louise Bourgeois*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Frances Morris (London: Tate Publishing, 2007) 188-196.

the rules and with the decorum of art, operating with a confidence and freedom that lead to a transcendence of the material. . . ."[188] Transcendence of material is also sometimes coupled with more existential notions of transcendence in relation to the late style.

Often regarded as a reflection of the wisdom and serenity that supposedly comes with older age, the late style is therefore sometimes characterized as otherworldly. Thomas Crow views this elegiac or autumnal interpretation of late works as an attempt to create a consoling view of old age.[189] Edward W. Said, questioning whether one really does grow wiser with age, writes, "We meet the accepted notion of age and wisdom in some last works that reflect a special maturity, a new spirit of reconciliation and serenity often expressed in terms of a miraculous transfiguration of common reality."[190] These approaches to works done in older age, both old-age and late style, therefore seem to suggest that presuppositions of the notion of aging and old age play an important role in the determination of these styles. Amir Cohen-Shalev maintains that the process of critical assessment of creative efficiency in late life is influenced by *a priori* assumptions on aging, further stating, "Age related deterioration has served as a convenient excuse for dismissing literature and art produced late in life on the grounds of mental fatigue or outright senility whenever a difficulty arose with regard to explicating certain curiosities of style, technique, or diction."[191] In our day and age, with continued advancements in the medical profession, life expectancy is apt to continue to rise, and hence the likelihood

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[188] David Rosand, "The Challenge of Titian's 'Senile Sublime,'" *New York Times*, 28 October 1990, H41.
[189] Thomas Crow, "Unknowing Parallels: The Last Artistic Thoughts of Mark Rothko and Eva Hesse," in *Late Thoughts: Reflections on Artists and Composers at Work*, eds. Karen Painter and Thomas Crow (Los Angeles, Calif.: Getty Research Institute, 2006) 55.
[190] Edward W. Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain*, foreword by Mariam C. Said, intro. by Michael Wood, 1st edition (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006) 6.
[191] Amir Cohen-Shalev, "Old-Age Style: Developmental Changes in Creative Production from a Life-Span Perspective," *Journal of Aging Studies* vol. 3, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 22, 24.

of artists producing artworks well into their old age is also likely to increase.[192] Perhaps this anticipated new trend will help to elucidate if old-age and late styles actually do exist, and if so, what they actually consist of. However, perhaps the more pressing question is not what these categories constitute, but rather if the very formation of these styles is not predicated on ageist assumptions.

An old-age style is also said to demonstrate a shift in an artist's work, as Martin S. Lindauer writes,

> Art historians generally agree that works with an old-age style, compared to youthful efforts, are characterized by changes that are 'sharp,' 'marked,' and 'drastic,' but the meanings of these terms are not spelled out, differentiated from one another, or distinguished from other labels, like 'developed,' 'matured,' and 'evolved.'[193]

Therefore, while what this category actually constitutes remains ambiguous, there does seem to be a general consensus that a marked difference seems to emerge in an artist's work. Bourgeois's recent material use cannot be said to constitute such a change as she has throughout her practice continually investigated varying mediums. However the recent appearance of her head sculptures could be said to signal such a shift in her work. Of all the body parts in Bourgeois's vast sculptural exploration of somatic fragments, the head is the one part that has very rarely been represented in her oeuvre. While heads and faces have always been present in her drawings, the three-dimensional head as a central

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[192] In recent years, the aging population in Western nations has given rise to a growing awareness of the issue of aging and old age. Curators and artists alike have also begun to tackle the issue of aging and ageism in Western societies. For instance, in 1999 Marcia Tucker organized the exhibition *The Time of Our Lives* at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, which ran from July 15th – October 10th 1999. The exhibition challenged preconceived notion of aging, addressing issues as wide ranging as sexuality in later life, medical technology in relation to aging, and cross-cultural attitudes towards aging. See, Marcia Tucker, Anne Ellegood, *et al.*, *The Times of Our Lives*, exhibition catalogue (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art: MIT Press, 1999). In a similar vein the exhibition *Die Macht des Alters: Strategien der Meisterschaft* was held at the Kronprinzenpalais in Berlin from September 4th – November 1st 1998.

[193] Martin S. Lindauer, *Aging, Creativity, and Art: A Positive Perspective on Late-Life Development* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003) 153.

theme is a new addition to her sculptural practice. These heads began to appear after the exhibition *Bacon, Bourgeois & Messerschmidt: Francis Bacon, Louise Bourgeois & the 18th Century artist Franz Xaver Messerschmidt. A Juxtaposition of the Three Artists* held at the Cheim & Read Gallery in New York City in 1998.[194] Enthralling and haunting, the expressions of these heads range from menacing to surprise, to that of breath-taking pain in *Rejection,* 2001 (fig. 47). A clear departure from all her previous body part representations, these heads could therefore be considered as demonstrating a marked difference to Bourgeois's practice. The significance of the appearance of these heads in her oeuvre, their powerful presence and whether they truly constitute the making of an old-age style must however here remain unanswered, for the investigation of these head sculptures is too vast a topic to be addressed here and is better left for another to answer. The irony however of considering Bourgeois's age in relation to her practice is that it displaces the attention so often given to the biographical details of her life in the interpretations of her works, that is, readings which have so often reduced her works of art to her biography.

Mieke Bal maintains that it is important to remember that anterior narratives are not the only ones, insisting that the tale of the work itself is in the end greater than the subject who made it. In order to have a closer engagement with works of art, Bal suggests that the work should come first, writing, "When we see [an artwork] with intelligence the question becomes not where the work comes from, but what the work *is,*

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[194] Curated by Jean Clair, French art historian and director of the Musée Picasso, the exhibition ran from November 18th – December 31st 1998. For further reading on this exhibition see. Jean Clair, *Five Notes on the Work of Louise Bourgeois*, trans. by Michael Gibson (New York: Cheim & Read, 1998) and Ann Coxon. "Messerschmidt, Franz Xaver," in *Louise Bourgeois,* exhibition catalogue, ed. Frances Morris (London: Tate Publishing, 2007) 181.

means, and *does* in the present time of viewing.[195] Therefore instead of reducing Bourgeois's *Poles* (figs. 9-10) for instance, back to the work area of the seamstresses of her parent's tapestry restoration business, we ventured away from the hindrance of Bourgeois's stories, onto a tenuous terrain that allowed us as women to envision ourselves in a future that will not treat us as un/re/productive old women who have been rendered useless, but rather as worthy members of a society that is no longer ageist. In advocating for an *un*reading of Bourgeois's works, Storr encouraged us to disentangle ourselves from Bourgeois's viscous stories and allow her artworks to unfurl in their endless strands of signification. Unlimited by biographical details, the viewer in this unreading/rereading mode, is therefore at liberty to experience Bourgeois's works of art unrestricted by anterior scripts. Bal further writes, "[T]he memories that inhabit [Bourgeois's works] cannot really be read, because they are personal, while the works themselves, made public, are no longer uniquely bound to one person's history."[196] Released from their mausoleum, Bourgeois's garments and textiles turned artworks have unfolded their own wide array of meanings, none of which are tightly bound either to the maker or to the viewer, for like the basting stitch which does not bind the fabric tightly, all possible stories are provisional and like a loose thread, can easily come undone.

In searching for the myriad of stories instead of the one originary true story behind Bourgeois's artworks, we as viewers are given the chance to seek out new beginnings. Of beginnings Said writes, "Beginning is making or producing difference; but difference which is the result of combining the already familiar with the fertile novelty of humans working in language. Beginning is basically an activity which

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[195] Mieke Bal, *Louise Bourgeois' Spider: The Architecture of Art-Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) xii.
[196] Bal 3.

ultimately implies return and repetition rather than simple linear accomplishment; beginning and beginning-again are historical whereas origins are divine. . . ."[197] In the here and now of our times, although we may follow Bourgeois down repetitive paths of metaphoric mending which crisscross the expanse of time, in order that she may interrupt herself along the way, and then begin anew her provisional production of subjectivity, we as viewers must now leave the divine behind in search of the many tales instead of the one and only. And thus, in so doing, it is the hope that in allowing Louise Bourgeois's artworks to speak their own tales, that we will be the audience that she has been waiting for, having finally arrived within her lifetime.

[197] Quoted in, M. Catherine de Zegher. "Introduction. Inside the Visible," in *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art in, of, and from the Feminine*, ed. M. Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996) 23. See, Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) xvii.

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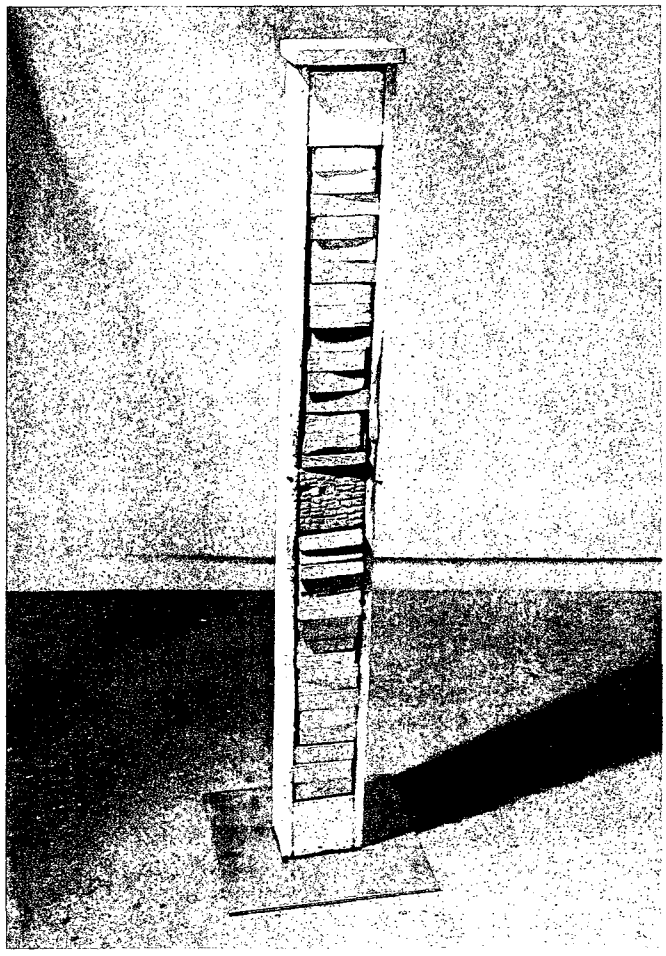

Figure 1. Louise Bourgeois. *Figure,* 1954
[A work from the *Personages* series 1945-1955]
Painted wood and stainless steel, 119.3 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, NYC

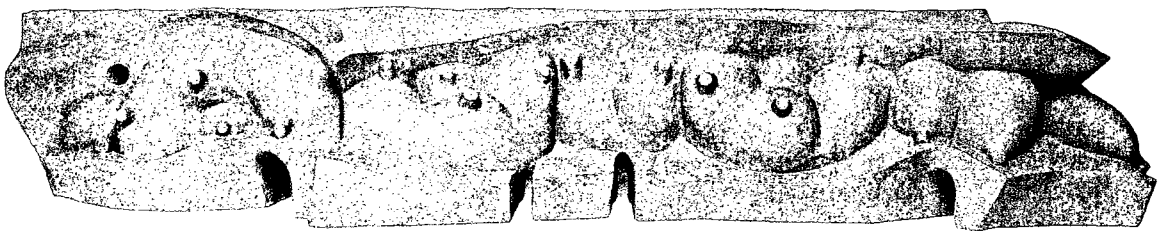

Figure 2. Louise Bourgeois. *Mamelles,* 1991
Rubber, Fiberglass and wood, 48.2 x 340.8 x 48.2 cm
Tate Modern, London

Figure 3. Louise Bourgeois. *End of Softness*, 1967
Bronze with gold patina, 17.8 x 51.8 x 38.6 cm
Cheim & Read Gallery, New York City

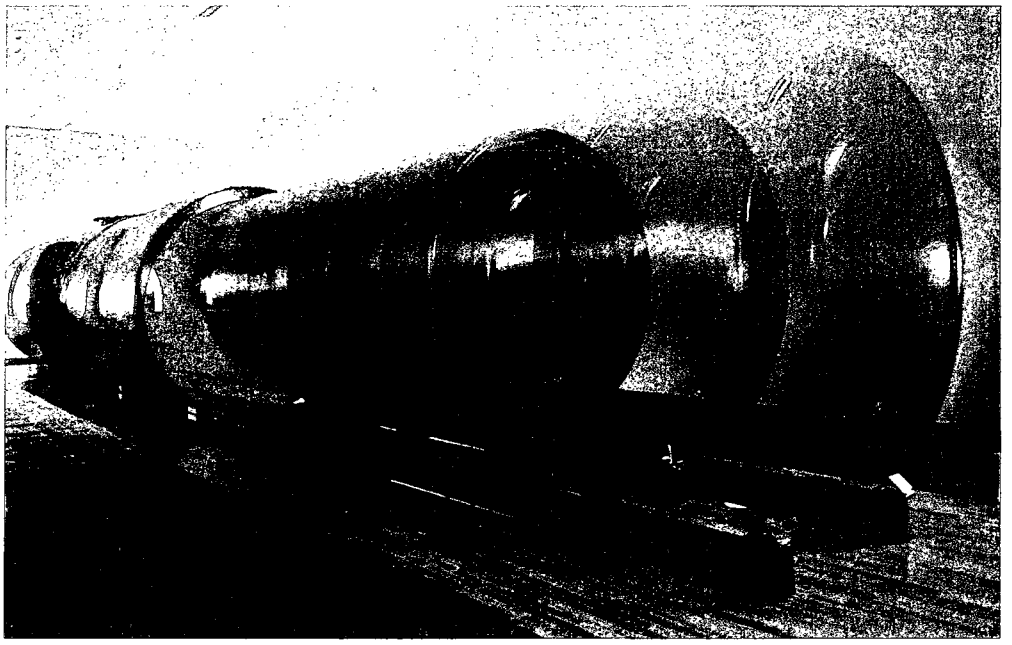

Figure 4. Louise Bourgeois. *Twosome*, 1991
Steel, paint, electric lights, 203.1 x 1158.2 x 203.1 cm
Collection of the artist

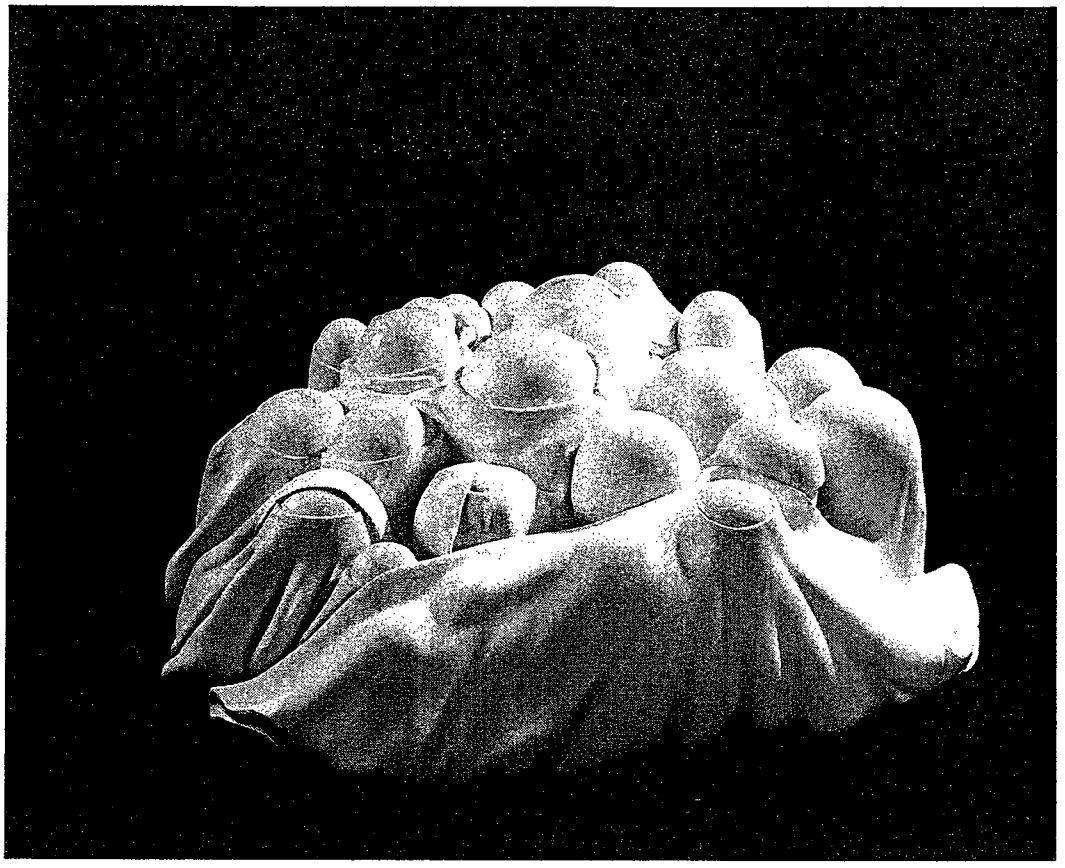

Figure 5. Louise Bourgeois. *Cumul I*, 1969
Marble, 57 x 127 x 122 cm
Centre Pompidou, Paris

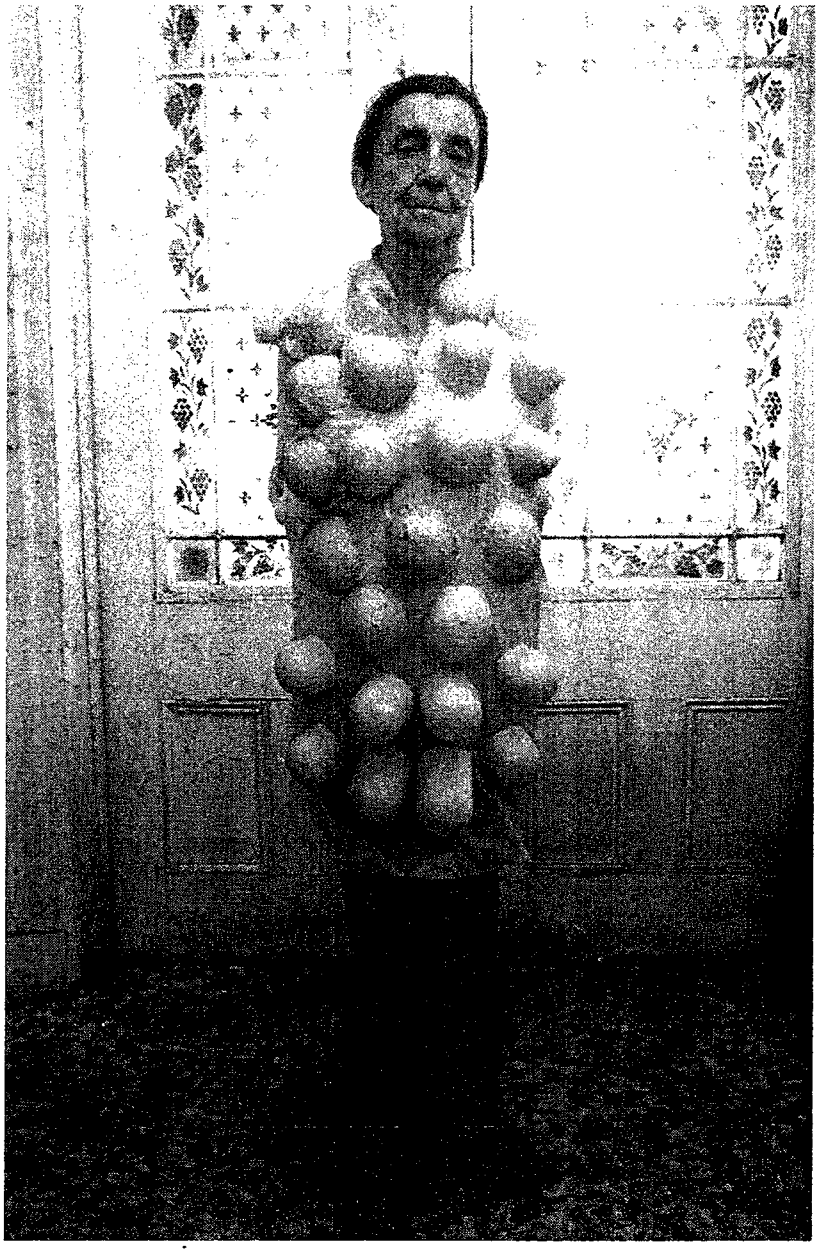

Figure 6. Photograph of Louise Bourgeois wearing a latex costume, made for the performance "A Banquet/A Fashion Show of Body Parts." Held at the Hamilton Gallery, New York City, on October 21, 1978.

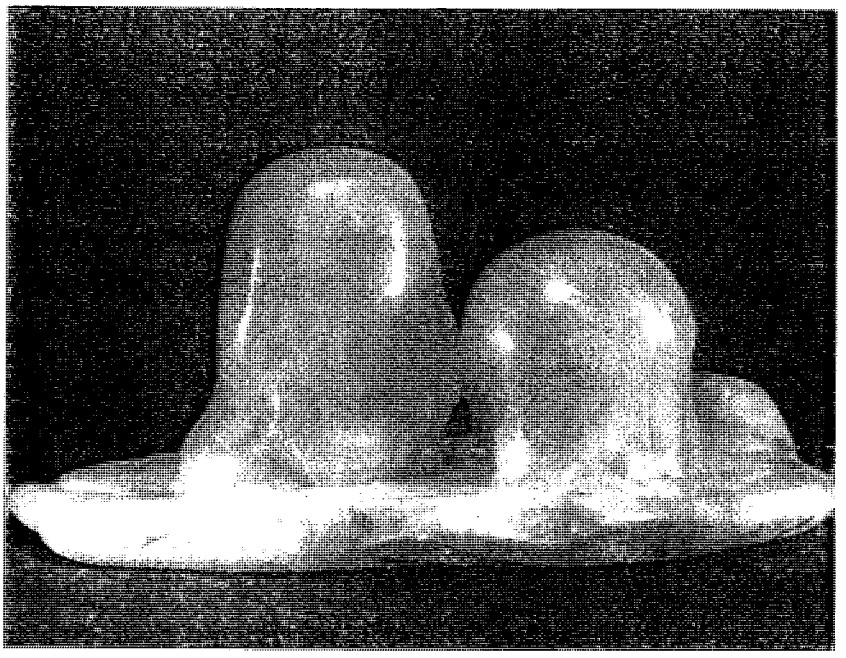

Figure 7. Louise Bourgeois. *Soft Landscape II,* 1967
Alabaster, 17.8 x 37.1 x 24.4 cm
Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern

Figure 8. Louise Bourgeois. *Cell (Clothes),* 1996. Interior view
Wood, glass, fabric, rubber and mixed media, 210.8 x 444.2 x 365.8 cm
Fondazione Prada collection, Milan

Figure 9. Louise Bourgeois. *Pink Days and Blue Days,* 1997
[From the *Poles* series, 1996-1997]
Cloth, ox bone, rubber and steel, 296.5 x 210.8 x 182.8 cm
Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC

Figure 10. Louise Bourgeois. *Untitled*, 1996
[From the *Poles* series, 1996-1997]
Clothes, wood, rubber and steel, 283 x 297 x 254 cm
Collection of the artist

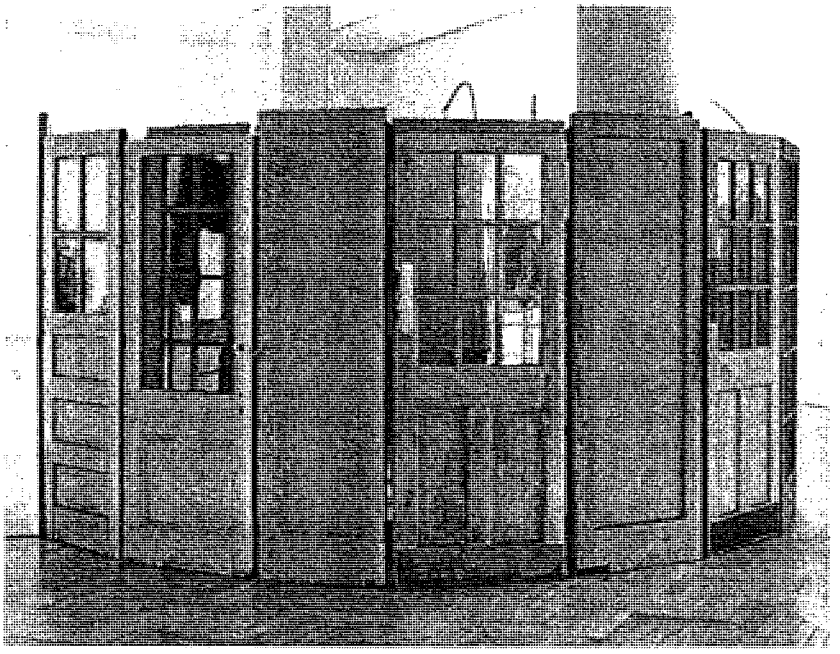

Figure 11. Louise Bourgeois. *Cell (Clothes),* 1996. Exterior view
Wood, glass, fabric, rubber and mixed media, 210.8 x 444.2 x 365.8 cm
Fondazione Prada collection, Milan

Figure 12. Louise Bourgeois. *Cell (Clothes),* 1996. Detail 1
Wood, glass, fabric, rubber and mixed media, 210.8 x 444.2 x 365.8 cm
Fondazione Prada collection, Milan

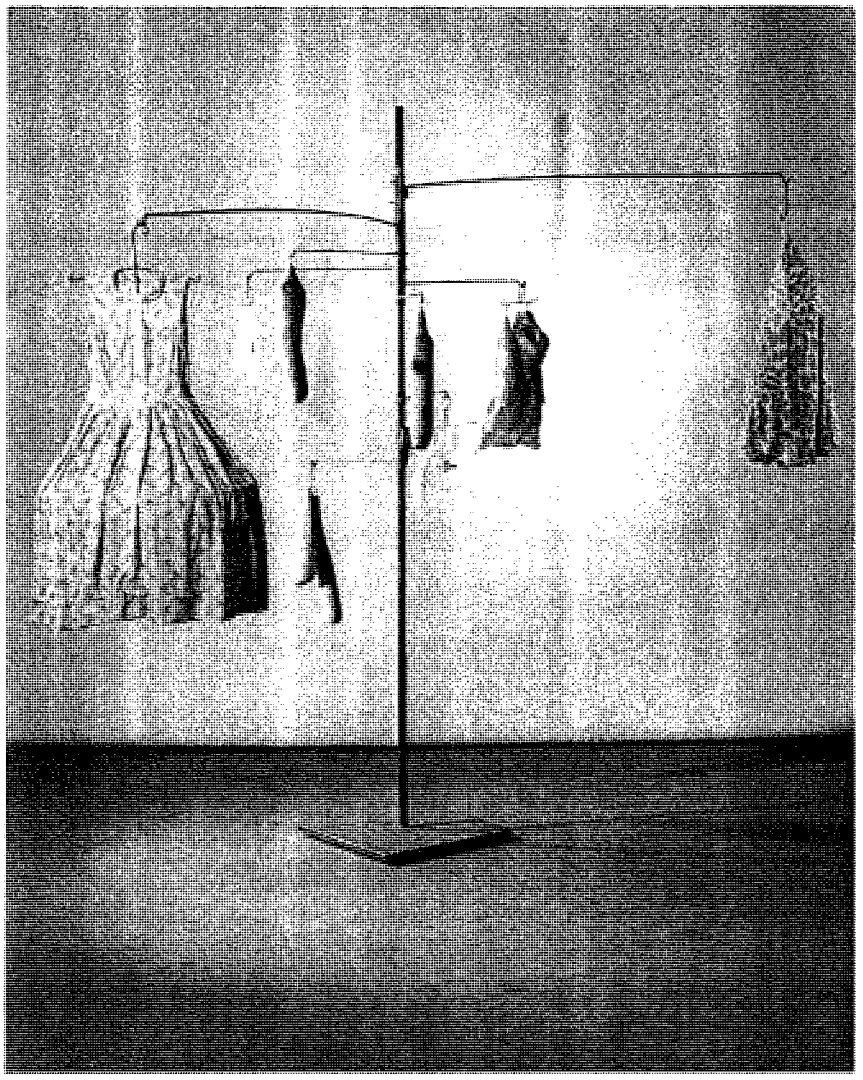

Figure 13. Louise Bourgeois. *Untitled*, 1996
[From the *Poles* series, 1996-1997]
Clothes, wood, rubber and steel, 283 x 297 x 254 cm
Collection of the artist

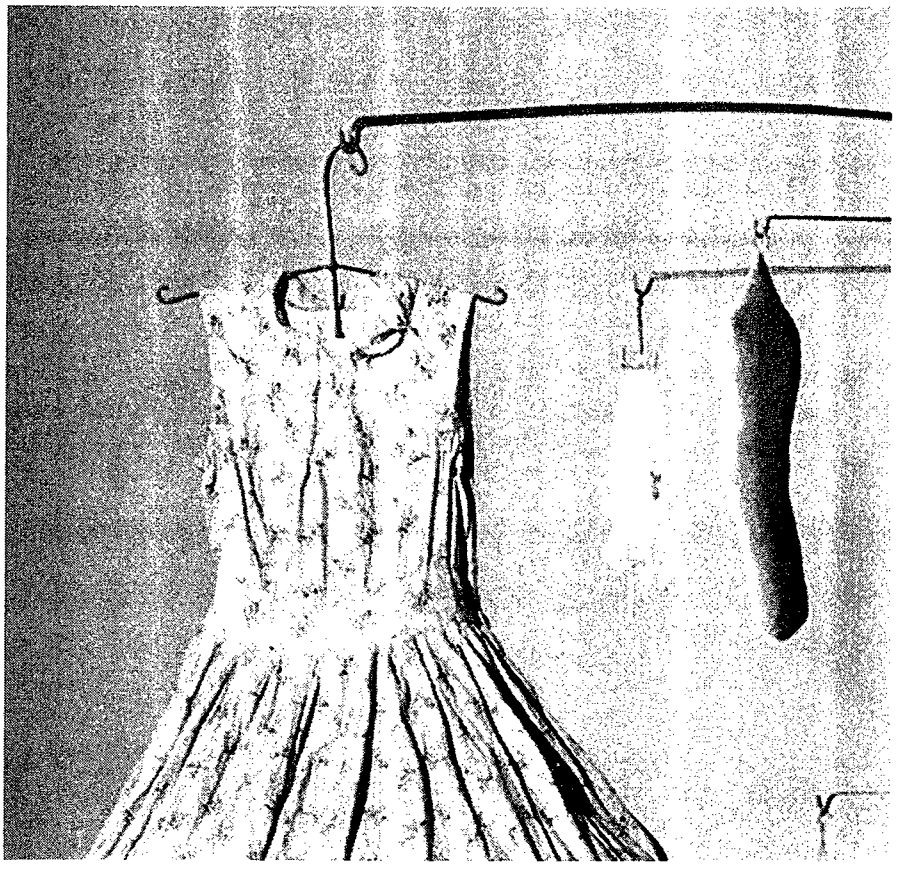

Figure 14. Louise Bourgeois. *Untitled*, 1996. Detail 1
[From the *Poles* series, 1996-1997]
Clothes, wood, rubber and steel, 283 x 297 x 254 cm
Collection of the artist

Figure 15. Louise Bourgeois. *Untitled*, 1996. Detail 2
[From the *Poles* series, 1996-1997]
Clothes, wood, rubber and steel, 283 x 297 x 254 cm
Collection of the artist

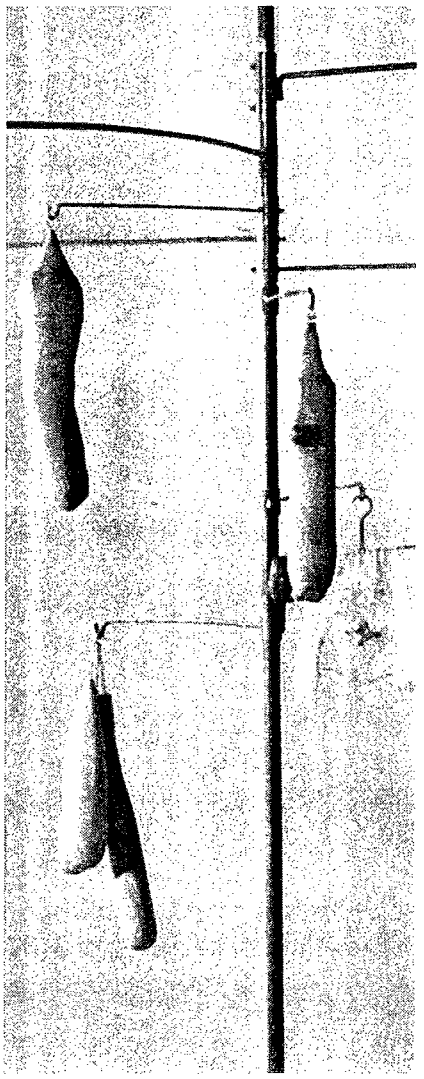

Figure 16. Louise Bourgeois. *Untitled*, 1996. Detail 3
[From the *Poles* series, 1996-1997]
Clothes, wood, rubber and steel, 283 x 297 x 254 cm
Collection of the artist

Figure 17. Louise Bourgeois. *Untitled*, 1996. Detail 4
[From the *Poles* series, 1996-1997]
Clothes, wood, rubber and steel, 283 x 297 x 254 cm
Collection of the artist

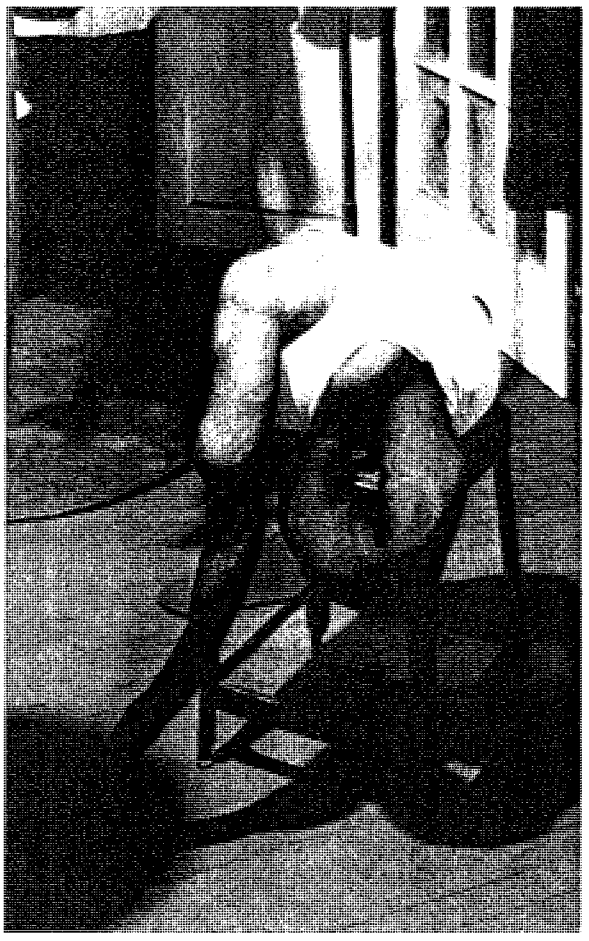

Figure 18. Louise Bourgeois. *Cell (Clothes),* 1996. Detail 2
Wood, glass, fabric, rubber and mixed media, 210.8 x 444.2 x 365.8 cm
Fondazione Prada collection, Milan

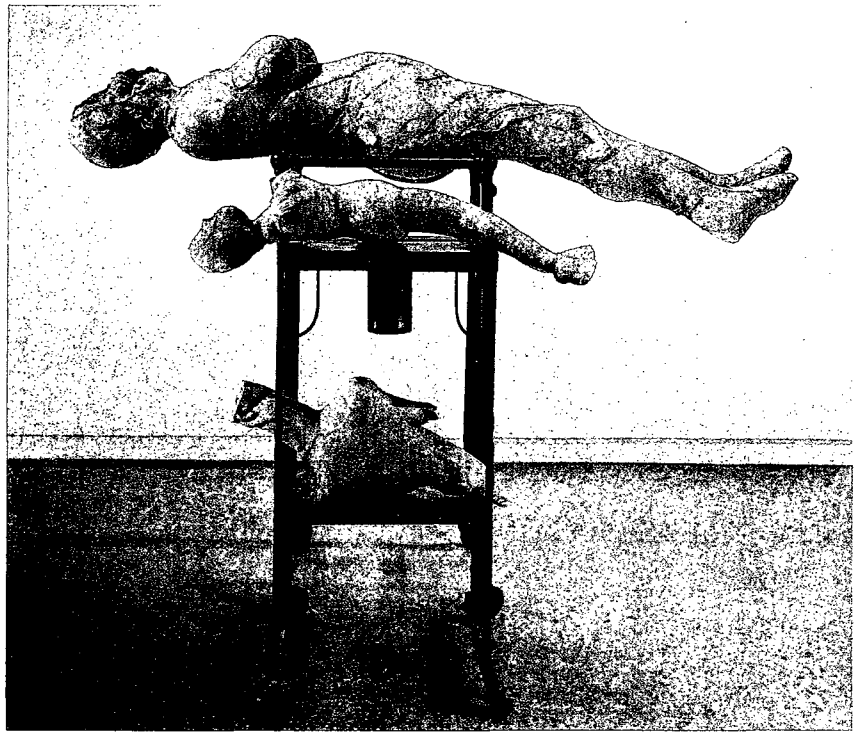

Figure 19. Louise Bourgeois. *Three Horizontals,* 1998
Fabric and steel, 134.6 x 182.9 x 91.4 cm
Daros collection, Zürich

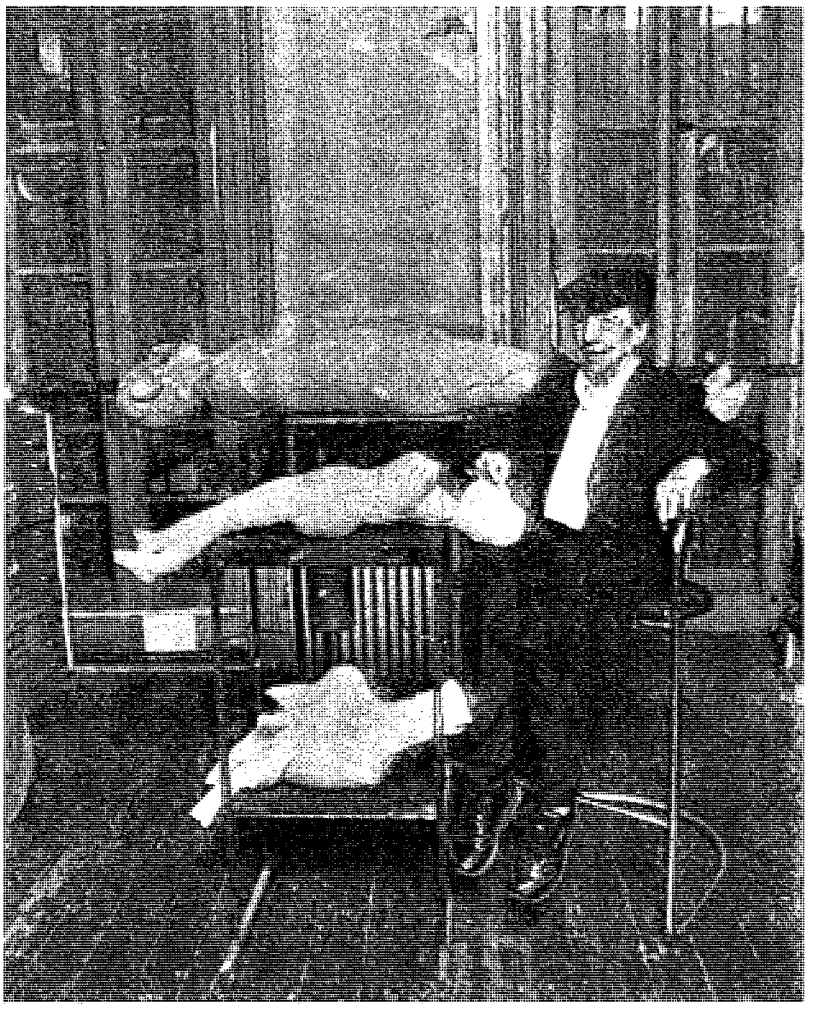

Figure 20. Photograph of Louise Bourgeois in her Chelsea home with sculpture *Three Horizontals,* 1998

Figure 21. Louise Bourgeois. *Femme Maison,* 2001
Fabric, glass, and steel, 35.5 x 38.1 x 66 cm (Fabric element);
173 x 89 x 66 cm (Vitrine)
Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Paris, Milan

Figure 22. Louise Bourgeois. *Femme Maison,* 2001. Detail
Fabric, glass, and steel, 35.5 x 38.1 x 66 cm (Fabric element);
173 x 89 x 66 cm (Vitrine)
Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Paris, Milan

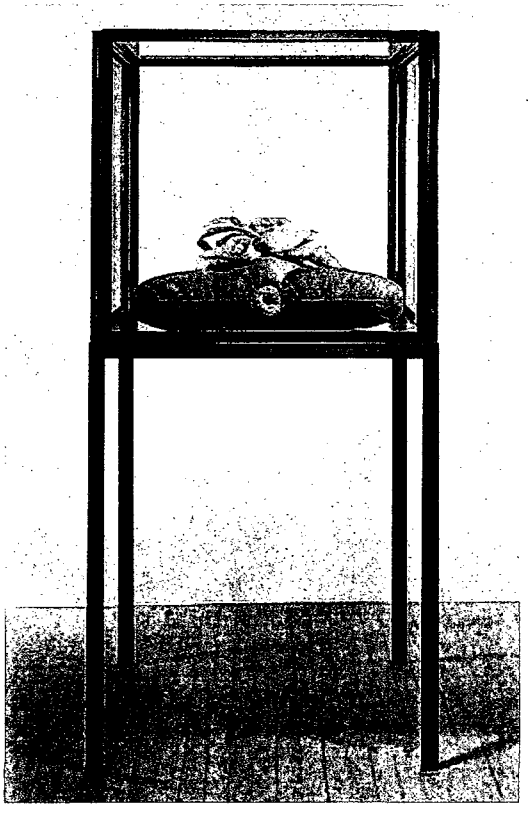

Figure 23. Louise Bourgeois. *Untitled*, 2001
Fabric and steel, 27.9 x 68.6 x 53.3 cm (Fabric element);
175.3 x 83.8 x 83.8 cm (Vitrine)
Cheim & Read Gallery, New York City

Figure 24. Louise Bourgeois. *Untitled*, 2001. Detail 1
Fabric and steel, 27.9 x 68.6 x 53.3 cm (Fabric element);
175.3 x 83.8 x 83.8 cm (Vitrine)
Cheim & Read Gallery, New York City

Figure 25. Louise Bourgeois. *Untitled*, 2001. Detail 2
Fabric and steel, 27.9 x 68.6 x 53.3 cm (Fabric element);
175.3 x 83.8 x 83.8 cm (Vitrine)
Cheim & Read Gallery, New York City

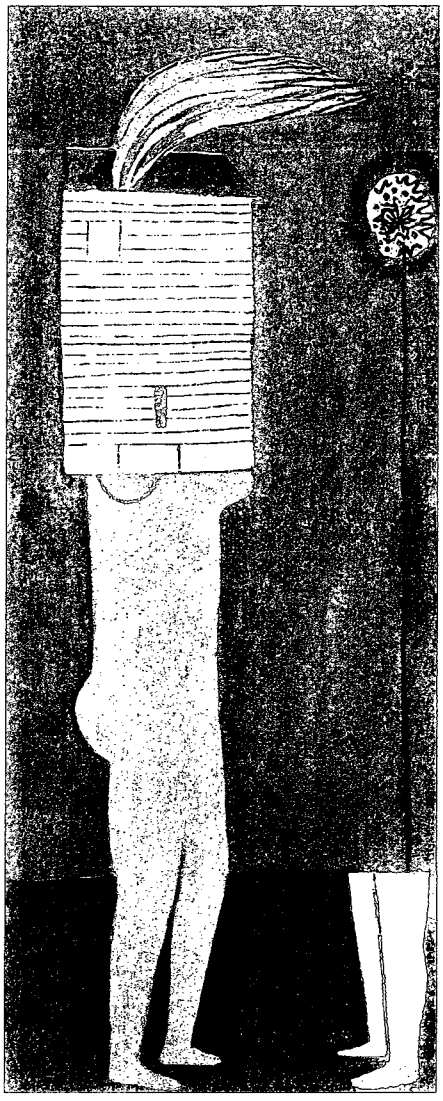

Figure 26. Louise Bourgeois. *Femme Maison,* 1945-1947
Oil & ink on linen, 91.5 x 35.6 cm
Private collection

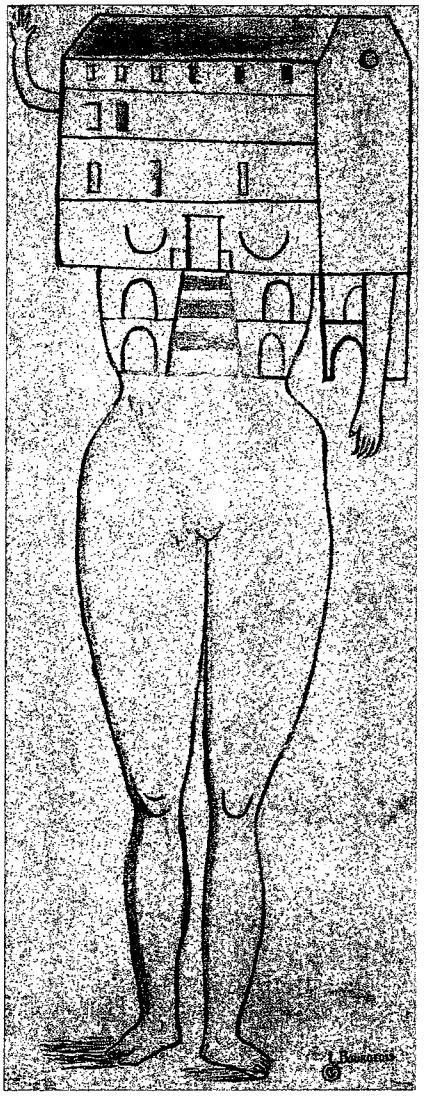

Figure 27. Louise Bourgeois. *Femme Maison,* 1946-1947
Ink on linen, 91.5 x 35.5 cm
Private collection

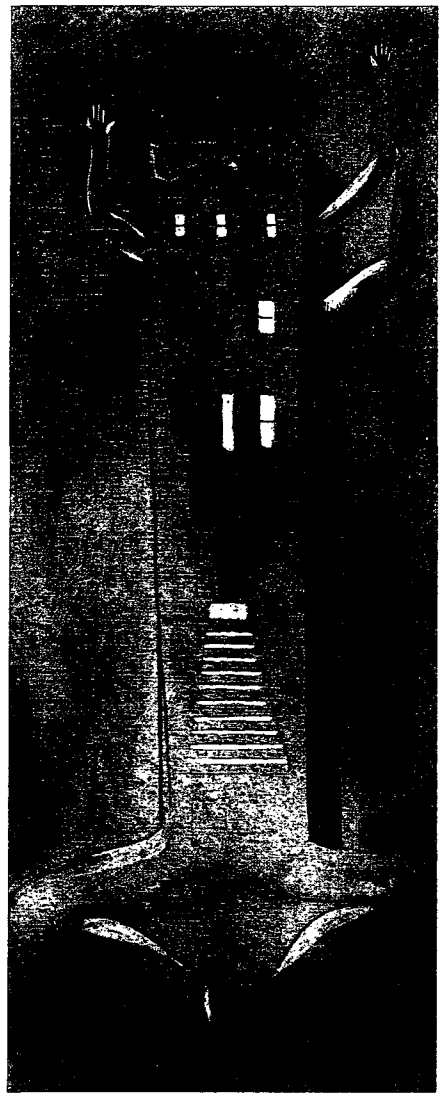

Figure 28. Louise Bourgeois. *Femme Maison,* 1946-1947
Oil & ink on linen, 91.5 x 35.5 cm
Private collection

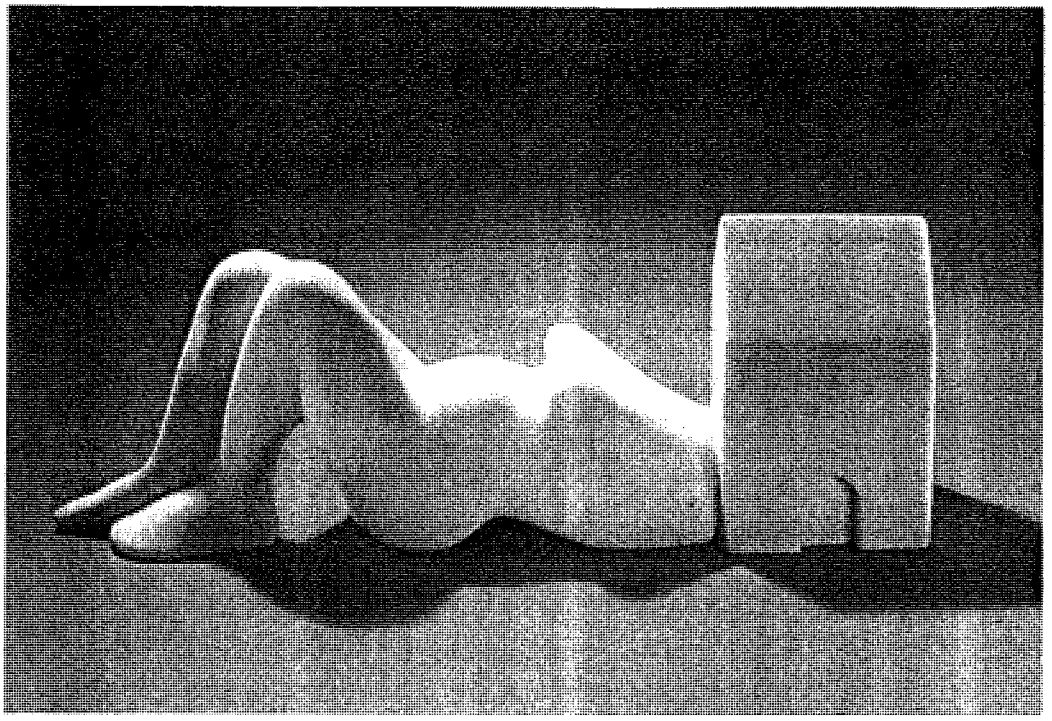

Figure 29. Louise Bourgeois. *Femme Maison,* 1994
Marble, 11.4 x 31.1 x 6. 7 cm
Private collection

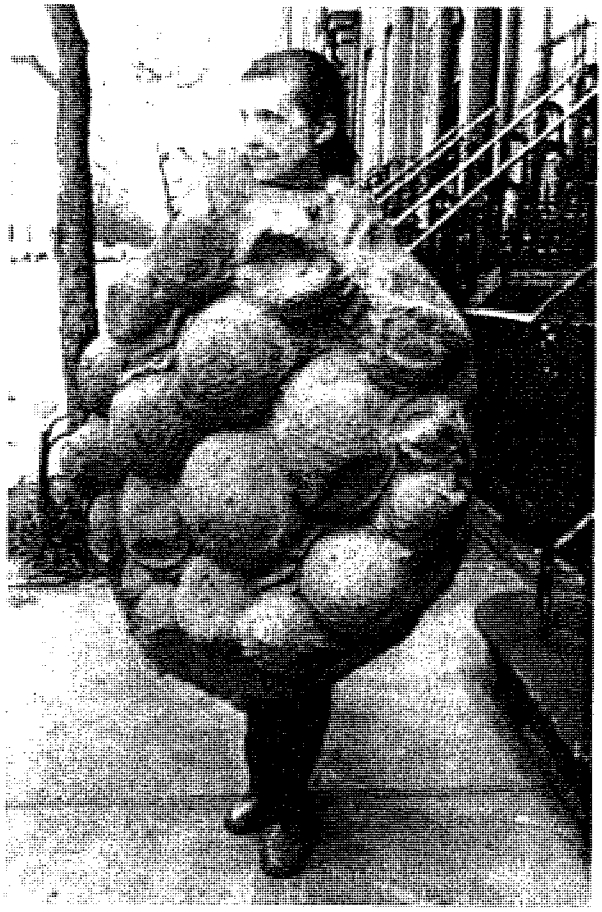

Figure 30. Photograph of Louise Bourgeois wearing a latex costume, designed and made by herself, 1975.

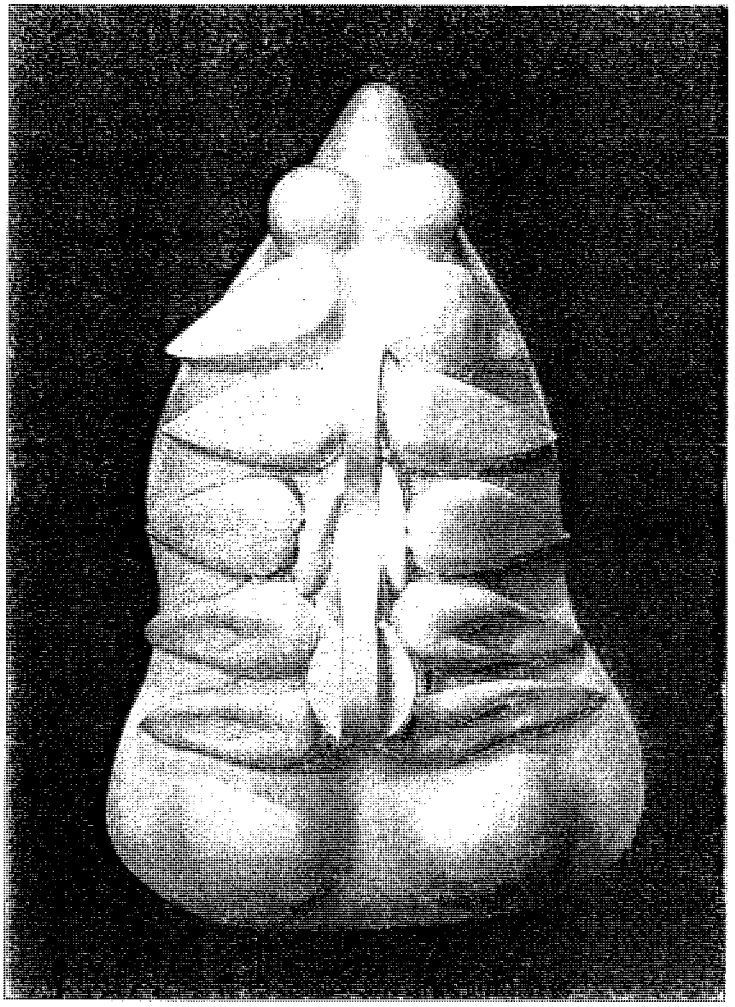

Figure 31. Louise Bourgeois. *Torso, Self Portrait,* 1963-1964
Plaster, wall relief, 62.9 x 40.6 x 18.1 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, New York City

Figure 32. Johannes Davidszoon de Heem.
Detail of/and *Festoon of Fruit and Flowers,* c. 1635-1684
Oil on canvas, 64 x 60 cm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

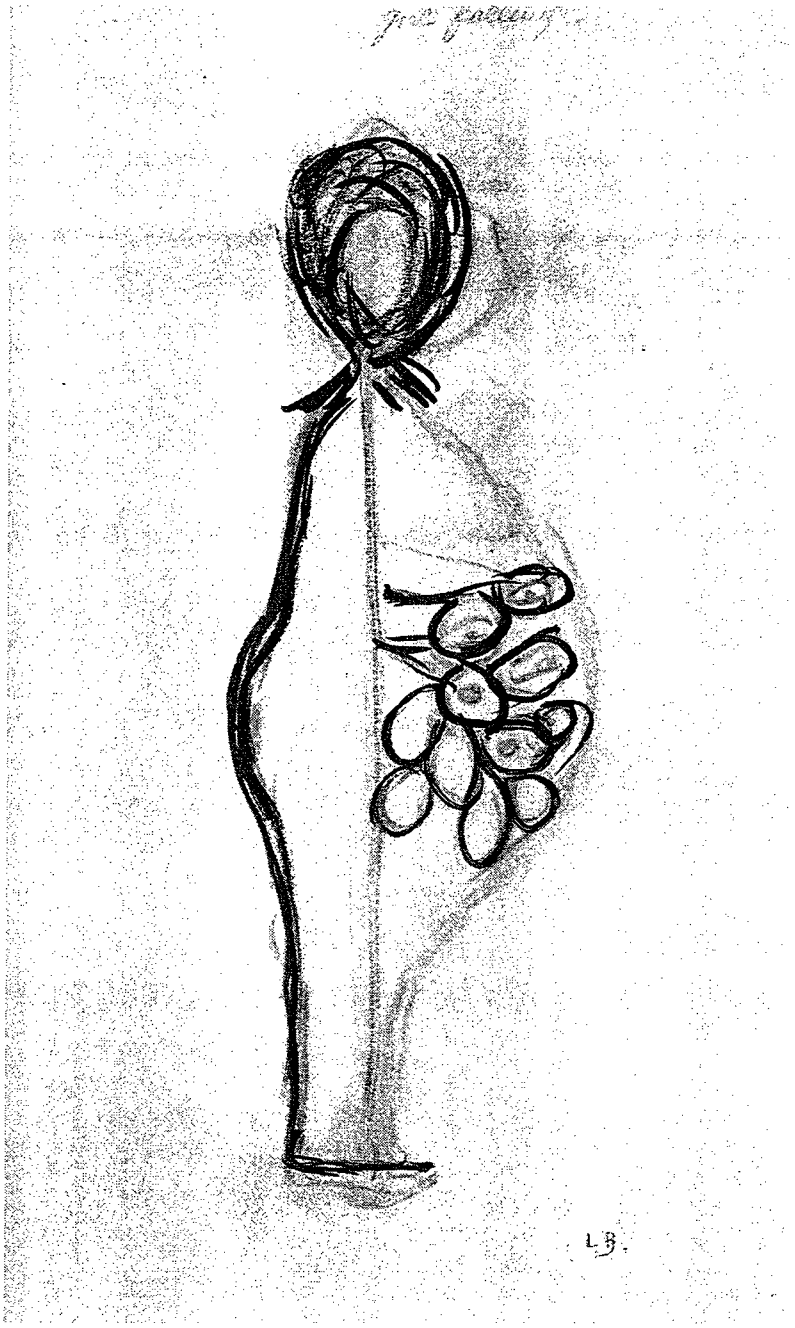

Figure 33. Louise Bourgeois. *Girl Falling,* 1947
Ink and charcoal on paper, 28.5 x 18 cm
Private collection

Figure 34. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002. [Cover]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

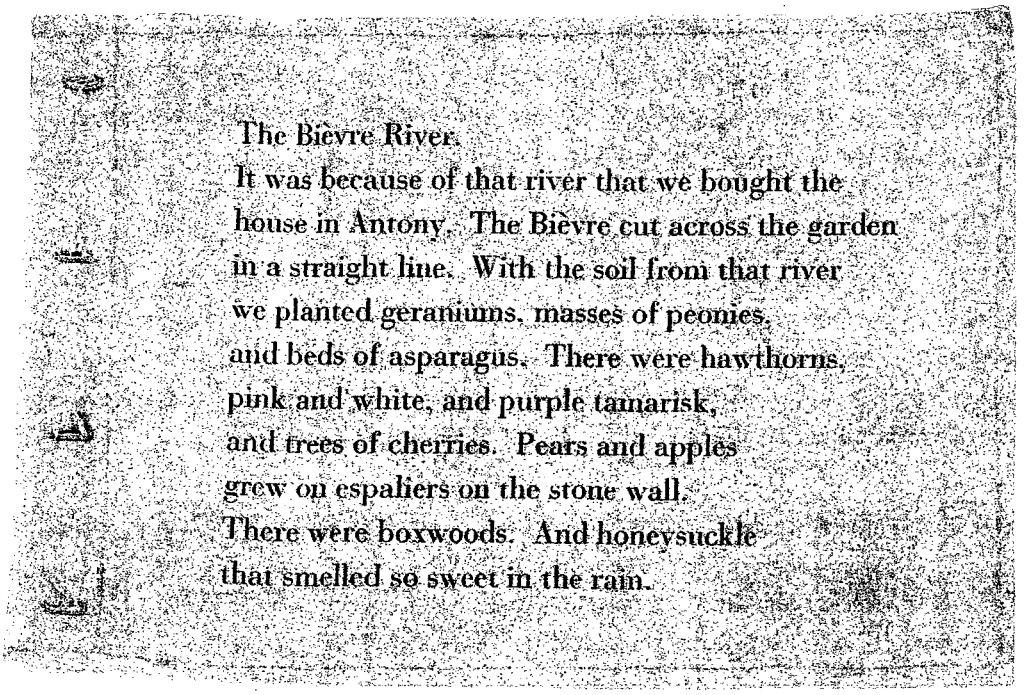

Figure 35. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002. [Page 1]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

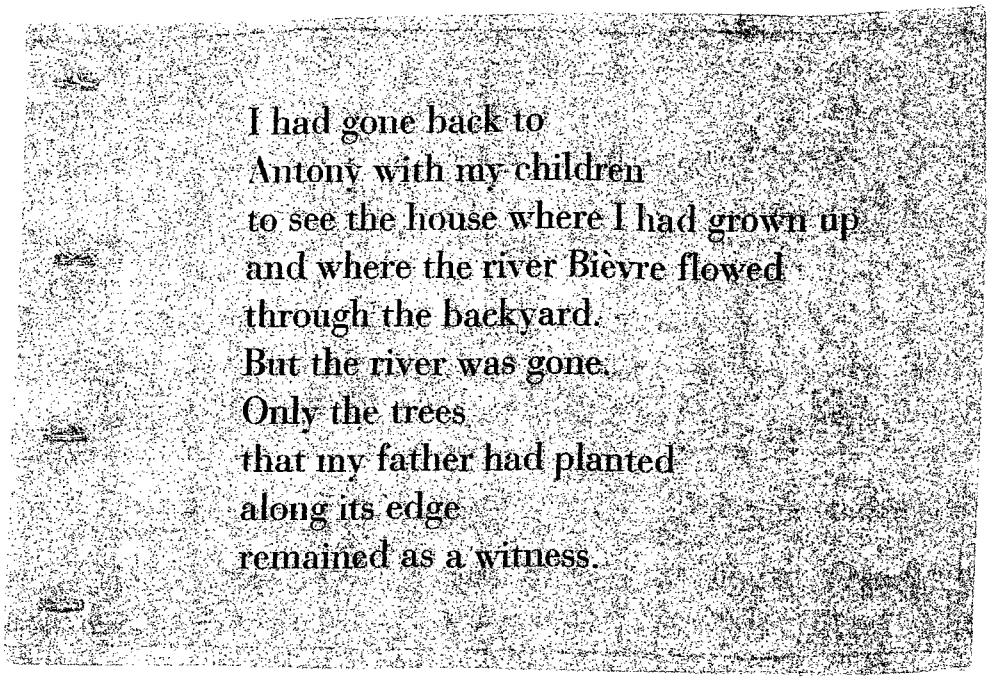

Figure 36. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002. [Page 23]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

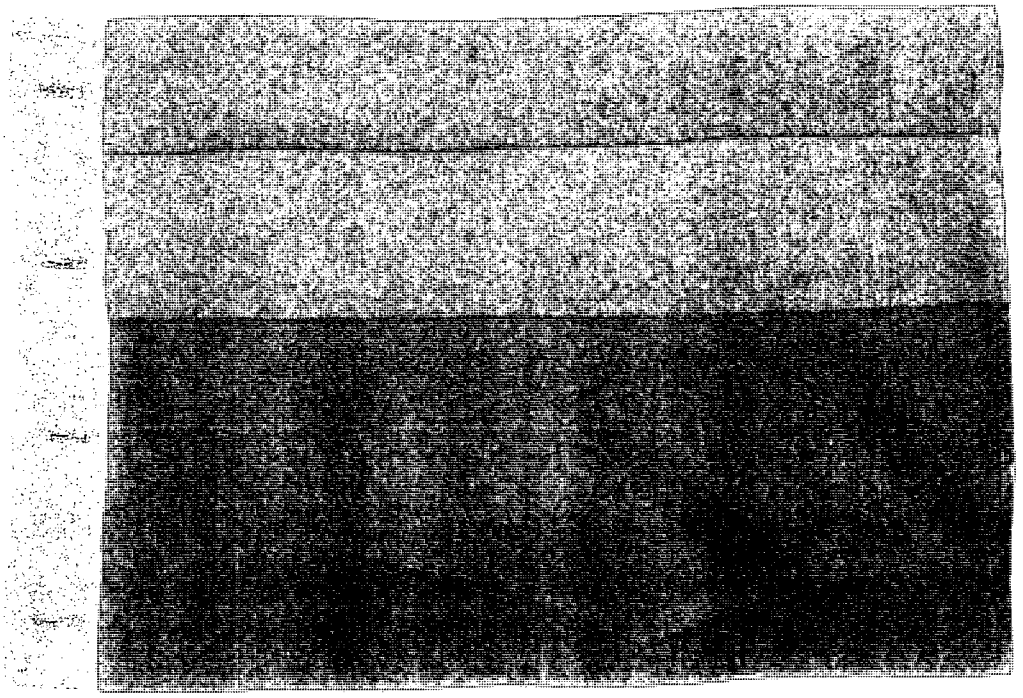

Figure 37. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002. [Page 13]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

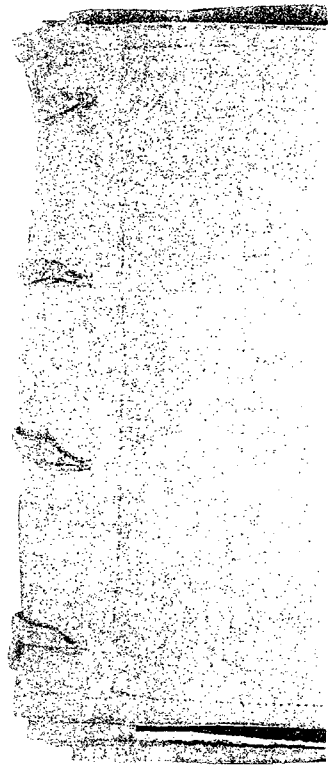

Figure 38. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002. [Cover detail]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

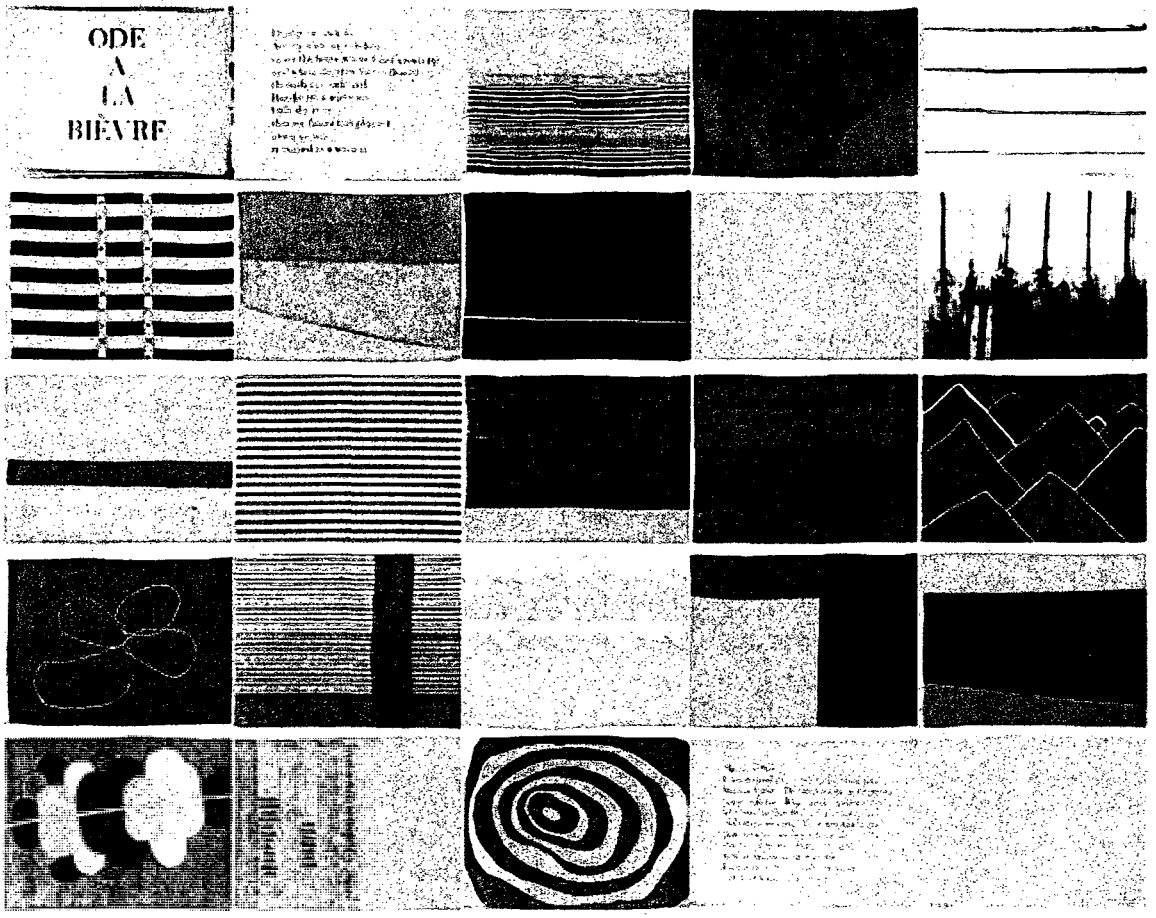

Figure 39. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002 [View as displayed]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

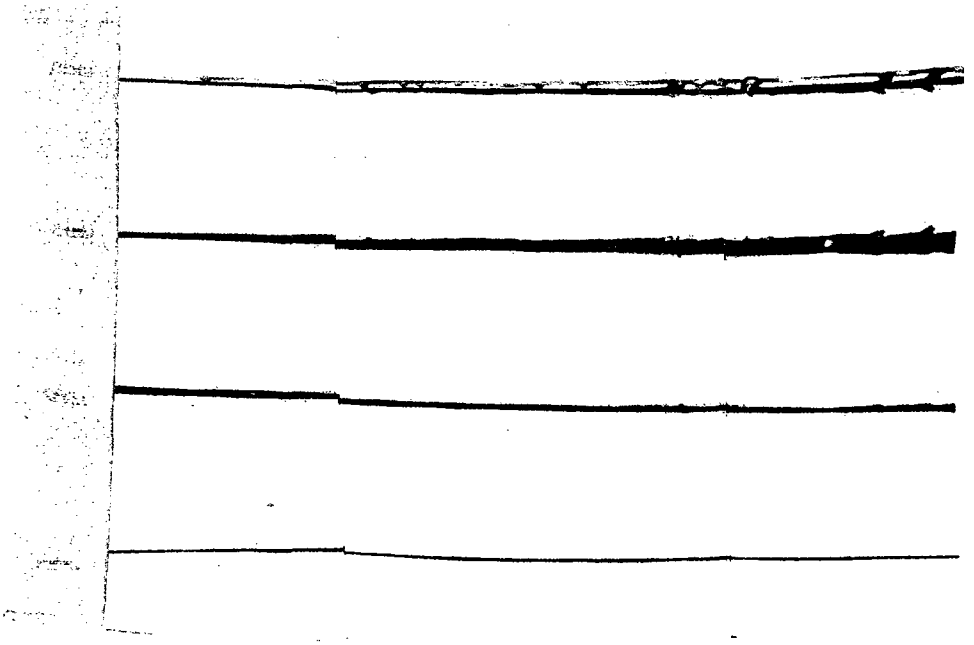

Figure 40. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002. [Page 4]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

Figure 41. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002. [Page 3]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

Figure 42. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002. [Page 9]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

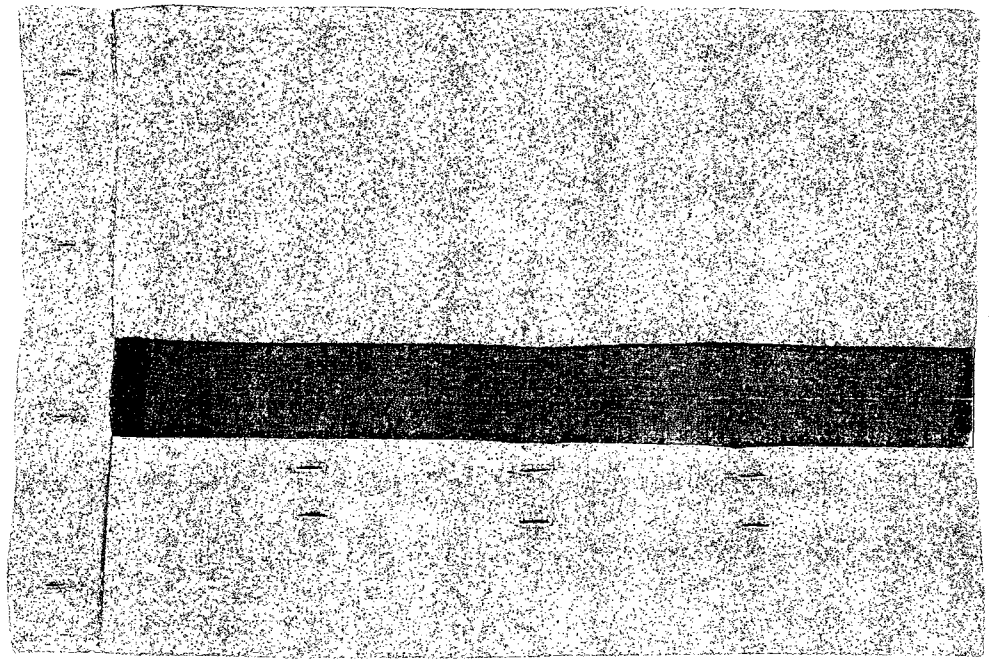

Figure 43. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002. [Page 10]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

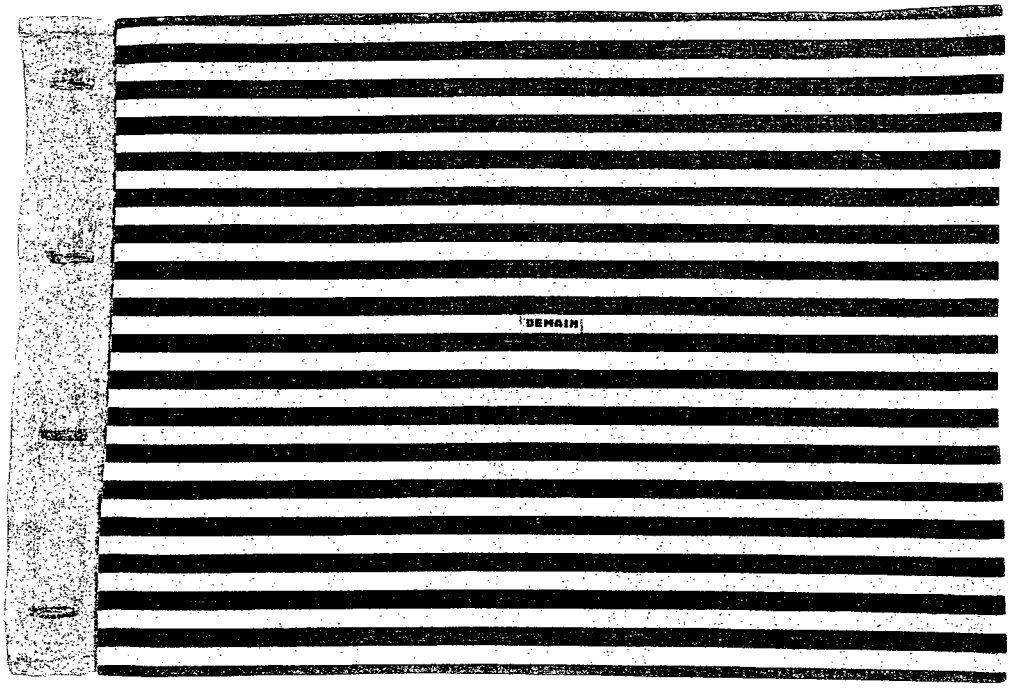

Figure 44. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002. [Page 11]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

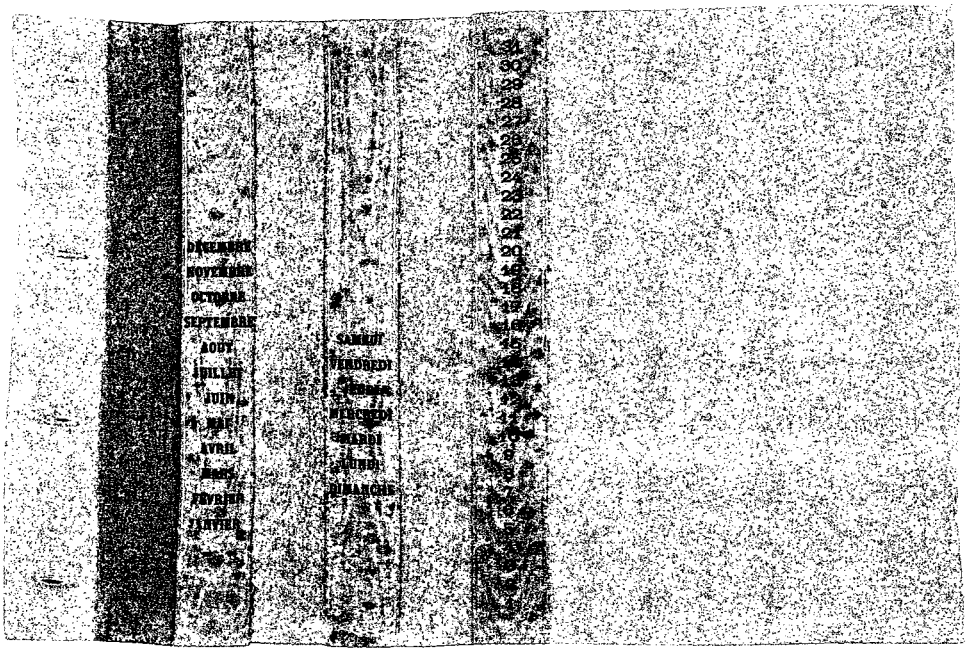

Figure 45. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002. [Page 21]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

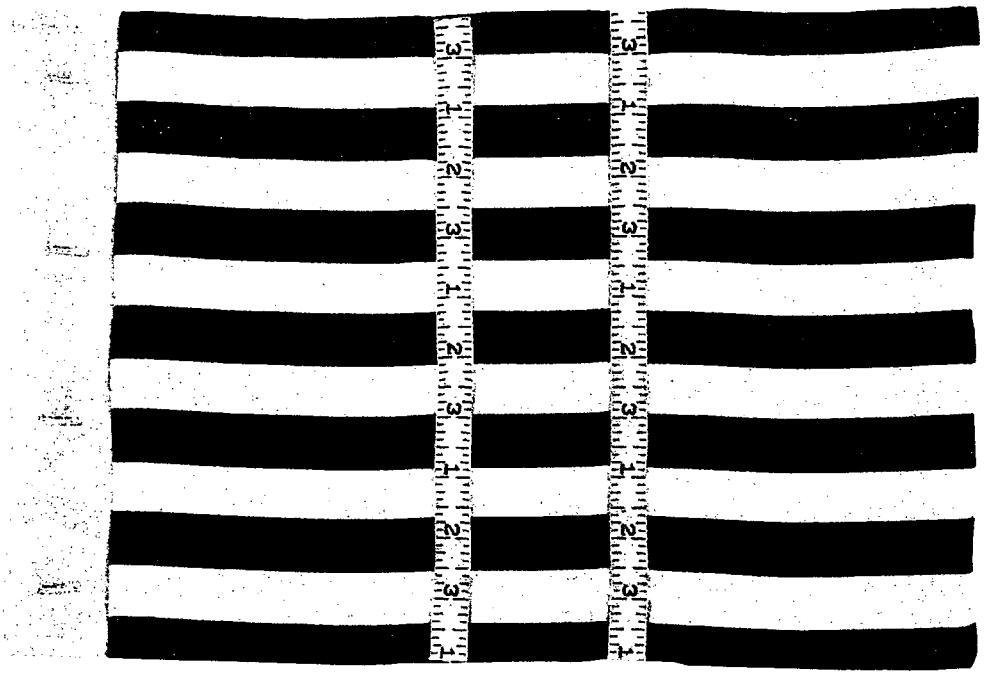

Figure 46. Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à la Bièvre,* 2002. [Page 5]
Fabric and colour lithograph book, 25 pages, 27.9 x 39.3 x 5 cm
Collection of the artist

Figure 47. Louise Bourgeois. *Rejection,* 2001.
Fabric, steel, and lead, 63.5 x 33 x 30.5 cm
Private collection