TURNING TABLES: WAR, PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE POLITICS OF SUBJECTIVITY IN THE WORK OF MONA HATOUM, JENNY HOLZER AND DORIS SALCEDO

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SEPTEMBER 2016

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores works by Mona Hatoum, Jenny Holzer and Doris Salcedo produced in response to recent wars in which subjectivity is examined as a precarious condition rather than fixed certainty. Following in the footsteps of their feminist predecessors and previous efforts of artistic resistance to war, these artists continue to investigate the capacity of subjective experience to intervene in authoritative war and art discourse. Through the productive dialogue between art and psychoanalysis this thesis examines the deep fantasy investment these works demand from their viewers and how spectatorship is considered as a politically charged experience. Insisting on the importance of the psychic dimension of war, these works deploy identification as an artistic strategy that produces an interval for reflection in which silence emerges as resistance to dominant, patriarchal historical narratives.

These artists position the table as a specific object of interest in representations of violence, capable to produce informed insights on the subjects that gather around it and the relationships formed between them. The table's structural and theoretical capacity traces a rising artistic awareness of the horizontal axis of lateral relations and the need to negotiate difference beyond the vertical, Oedipal paradigm that results in unyielding debates on war and subjectivity. Specifically, by tracing war to the unconscious and examining the intricate relationship between individual and state aggression, the artists interrogate the perpetrator, the victim and the witness as interchangeable positions that the viewer is called to occupy. Turning tables and the domestic and familial or bureaucratic and institutional associations that they invoke, these works examine the protagonists of war as subjects that emerge from relationships based on interdependency and kinship rather than rigid opposition. This thesis argues that the effort for a collective understanding of the war phenomenon is dependent on assuming individual responsibility for one's own violence.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was driven by my desire to think, talk and try to make sense of things that are sometimes difficult, but reached its completion through the support and help of many people to whom I will remain forever grateful. First and foremost, I owe my biggest thanks to Dr Jo Applin, the best supervisor I could have asked for to accompany me on this journey. Her sharp insights, specialized knowledge and impassioned engagement, as well as our many stimulating conversations on art that is unafraid to address the complex psychic dimensions of our lives, were major driving forces for this project. Without her kind encouragement and unwavering belief in my ability to write this thesis, I would not have been able to complete it. Her sensible and sensitive approach throughout these years not only empowered me and made me believe in myself as an academic, as a great supervisor would have done, it is also a strong testament to who Jo is as a person. Jo has my deepest gratitude.

My doctoral studies and the writing of this thesis would not have been possible without the tremendous support I have received from the foundations and organizations who believed in my project and allowed me to pursue my research with their practical and multifaceted backing. I am indebted to The Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation for supporting my PhD degree in its entirety, to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for providing me with a full scholarship for its second and third years and to the Department of History of Art at University of York and the Dimitris Daskalopoulos NEON Foundation for supporting the first and fourth years respectively.

I am very grateful to the Department of History of Art at University of York, the vibrant academic community there, my fellow students and the wonderful members of staff, past and present. I owe special thanks to Professor Jason Edwards for his incredibly generous feedback, his thoughtful and informed approach to my work as a second reader and his genuine interest to help me through it.

I am indebted to Professor Mignon Nixon for inviting me to participate as a graduate researcher in the MA in History of Art, titled "Art and Psychoanalysis: Fifty Years of War in the Time of Peace, 1960-2010", which she co-taught with Professor Juliet Mitchell at the Courtauld Institute of Art in 2011-12. It was a formative year during which I was very fortunate to be part of fantastic discussions that further propelled my doctoral research. I want to thank Professor Nixon for our numerous conversations and generous feedback on my research topic, an area in which undoubtedly her work is inspiring and influential. I would also like to thank Dr Catherine Grant for an amazing MA year at the Courtauld and for her help when I was beginning to formulate my research proposal. I am also very grateful to the members of the Psychoanalytic Thought, History and Political Life Graduate Forum, run by Professor Jacqueline Rose and Professor Daniel Pick, for our thought-provoking conversations, inspirational meetings and for the constructive feedback I received on my work.

I want to thank Mona Hatoum for inviting me to visit her studio and allowing me access to her wonderful and invaluably detailed personal archive. I aim also thankful to the Jenny Holzer Studio for sending me vital material and resources for my work and to White Cube for providing me with access to their own

terrific and immense archive, which was extremely helpful for my writing on Doris Salcedo and Mona Hatoum.

I owe a very big thank you to Ioanna Zouli and Maria Livada, Amy Tobin and Louisa Lee, my wonderful fellow PhD students who have been alongside me these years. They have made my PhD an amazing experience through our cherished moments together and by always standing by me, I am forever grateful to and for them. I want to thank all my friends who have supported me in many extraordinary ways, for believing in me and making me feel very lucky to have them in my life. They know who they are and that I hold them very dearly in my heart.

My other biggest thanks go, of course, to my family. To Agni, the best sister I could have asked for and for being the remarkable, talented and sensitive young woman that she is. To Martha and Antonis, my mother and father, the people I am fortunate beyond words can describe to have as parents. Without their endless support and unfaltering love I would not have been able to write this thesis nor be the person that I am today.

Finally, this is for Albert Bonay, for his sense and love of the world, de todo corazón.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

INTRODUCTION

> The sound of sawing overhead has increased. All the searchlights are erect. They point at a spot exactly above this roof. At any moment a bomb may fall on this very room. One, two, three, four, five, six... the seconds pass. The bomb did not fall. But during those seconds of suspense all thinking stopped. All feeling, save one dull dread, ceased. A nail fixed the whole being to one hard board. The emotion of fear and of hate is therefore sterile, unfertile. Directly that fear passes, the mind reaches out and instinctively revives itself by trying to create.
>
> Virginia Woolf, 1940.[1]

Lying in bed on the night of October 21, 1940, Virginia Woolf started thinking and writing about peace during an air raid. Writing her essay, she listens to the German aerial assault above her London house, to the "doodlebugs", the first pilotless planes, the flying bombs deployed by Adolf Hitler in the Second World War during The Blitz. She writes that this "queer experience" has "a sound that interrupts cool and consecutive thinking about peace. Yet it is a sound –far more than prayers and anthems- that should compel one to think about peace".[2] It is a sound that breaks her otherwise silent contemplation, which, although it has the potential to disturb rational and collected thinking about peace, is immediately mobilized as one that should propel it. Its capacity to null all sentiment, save dread and fear, to fix the subject like a nail to a wall, can be overturned by the mind's innate ability to revive itself, by instincts which, reaching out, will sooner or later begin to create new thoughts and betray new feelings. "Unless we can think peace into existence we –not this one body in this one bed but millions of

[1] Virginia Woolf, "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid" (1940), *New Republic*, (undated), accessed September 1, 2016, https://newrepublic.com/article/113653/thoughts-peace-air-raid
[2] Ibid.

bodies yet to be born- will lie in the same darkness and hear the same death rattle overhead", Woolf pens.[3] Thinking at night, with fantasy and the unconscious, Woolf wonders "how far can she [i.e the female subject] fight for freedom without firearms?" and proposes that "there is another way of fighting for freedom without arms; we can fight with the mind", a mental fight which "means thinking against the current, not with it".[4] Thinking about peace involves fighting with the mind, thinking about peace means thinking about war. This is a kind of fight that can start in silence, in bed, in darkness, a mode of clandestine contemplation that fantasizes as much as it rationalizes, a searchlight during dark times that is grounded in the unconscious.

There have been many studies and attempts to define war throughout history and no doubt these efforts have never nor will they ever end. It seems that there has been a sustained and intense preoccupation with finding one all-encompassing definition of war, which, of course, would in turn bear the promise of its resolution. "On War" (1832) by Carl von Clausewitz is probably the most famous study of the war phenomenon and often the most cited across many disciplines that participate in the dialogue with war discourses. Clausewitz, working on the subject after the Napoleonic wars, between 1816-1830, amassed ten volumes of writing with a close analysis of what war may mean for the individual, the state, the citizen on a personal, political, economic and practical level with a clear conviction that these levels of experience are always interconnected.[5] One of the first things Clausewitz says on the subject is that

[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (1832), eds. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

"war is nothing but a duel on the bigger scale".[6] I want to focus on this definition for the time being, embracing its abstract phrasing, since such a simple phrase is capable of setting the scene for the dialogue that this thesis aims to instigate, a conversation that does not adhere to the often professed and required structure of dualism: good or evil, innocent or guilty, one nation against another, the civilian versus the state; a structure that works on keeping people and discourses apart ill-founded on a presumed psychic division of self and other, of us and them. It is a dialogue that returns on many occasions to what to this day is being denied: that war is always both outside and inside the individual, war as an expanded version of battles that we face, individually and collectively, more frequently than we might want to admit in our daily lives. That war is a duel, a battle fought with someone else as "the enemy", which might also be our own self. To think of a duel on a bigger scale ultimately leads us away from thinking in binary terms and compels us to look at the bigger picture; to think about war is to think with rather than against each other, and it also requires to think with one's self, to think with the unconscious.

This thesis examines works of art that deal with war, individual violence and state aggression, thinking with psychoanalysis, feminism and political theory. It looks at works that invite the viewer to think with the unconscious, to follow their attempt to provide alternate modes of seeing, thinking and feeling, which avoid nailing our whole being to a hard wall. It engages with the work of a variety of scholars from these fields of inquiry in order to unpack and articulate the complex theoretical and creative insights these works offer, which are frequently circumvented or censored by the authority of patriarchal discourse in

[6] Ibid., 75.

art history and beyond. The difficult subject matter and the inherently political nature of these works can often be perceived as perilous ground that the majority of writers are likely to avoid, more so when works of art that require this kind of critical engagement with such dark and challenging material are produced by women artists. Mona Hatoum, Jenny Holzer and Doris Salcedo created work about war during war, during times when the mind's capacity to reach out and create is challenged, dark, historical times designed to return by those who aim for intellectual numbness, who call for aggressive action and suppress contemplation. The works of these artists directly engage with wars of their time: Hatoum's *The Negotiating Table* (1983/2012) (Fig. 1) is a performance about the Lebanese Civil War of the 1980s, Holzer's *Lustmord* (1993-96) (Figs. 29, 55, 59, 69) is a project about the Bosnian War of the 1990s and Salcedo's *A Flor de Piel* (2011-12) and *Plegaria Muda* (2007-8) (Figs. 78-79) address the ongoing, armed Colombian conflict that began in the 1950s.[7] They open the conditions of debate and the dialogue itself on these conflicts, by insisting that the psychical and subjective dimension to war cannot be a discursive area that is left unaddressed, nor can this type of experience be divorced from the social and political aspects

[7] These works deal with recent civil wars from the 1980s until today. This, of course, adds an important layer of experience that this thesis examines further on: that of a nation being at war with itself. As Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton suggest: "In a war which functions internally gains are always at the expense of oneself. The term 'civil' is recorded by the *Oxford English Dictionary* in the late fourteenth century in the phrase 'civil war'. 'Fratricidal' and 'brotherly' are other adjectives which conveniently gloss these conflicts". The fact that "civil" has been so closely deifined with the term "war", as well as the real and fantasied dimension of being at war with your fellow citizens, your "brothers", is an important dimension of these works and of the discussion that this thesis aims to participate in, thinking together with psychoanalysis, particularly with reference to sibling relationships and group behavior in war. See Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton, "Identifying War: Conflict and Self-Definition in Western Europe" in *War: Identities in Conflict 1300-2000*, eds. Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton, (Cornwall: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 4.

of our frequently violent lives. These artists produce artistic interventions in war discourse, claiming a space around tables that sanction and orchestrate wars, occupying a seat that is perpetually denied and emptied, but a position that one immediately looks to when war and violence become frighteningly subjective.

Chapter One focuses on *The Negotiating Table*, a three-hour performance Hatoum embarked upon in 1983, and re-enacted in 2012, to directly address the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres that took place during the Lebanese Civil War. Viewers of the performance entered a dark room where a table was lit by a single light bulb creating a circle of glow around it. The artist lied silently on the table, firmly enclosed in gauze, wrapped in plastic, covered with entrails and breathing heavily. Three empty chairs surrounded the table and the soundtrack coming out from loudspeakers consisted of news reports and peace talks by Western leaders about the war in Lebanon. Sabra and Shatila were refugee camps in Beirut, mainly occupied by Palestinians, which were attacked by Phalangist, right-wing paramilitary forces and Maronite Christians for two days in September 1982. The massacres resulted in the murder of thousands of victims, including many women and children, and were supported by the state of Israel, which actively participated in the events, perpetrating a crime that is disturbingly similar to the nation's deeply traumatic history. This chapter analyzes Hatoum's muted and visibly traumatized performing body, as well as the inadequacy of language to describe the failure of conventional thought to grasp how such horrific violence, whose wounds are still fresh, can so closely repeat itself, even by the victims who have suffered it before.

In Chapter Two I turn to *Lustmord*, a project by Holzer that has taken many forms and which has been presented in a number of different settings. Lustmord,

a word that in German connotes murder coupled with sexual gratification, is the title that Holzer chose for this project that addresses the mass rapes of the Bosnian War in the 1990s. Holzer wrote an imaginary rape scene script from three different points of view: the perpetrator, the victim and the witness. The lines of the script were written on bodies and then photographed close up, so as to conceal the gender or part of the body that bore them. The viewer reading these lines was not able to readily identify whom they belonged to. These photographs were featured in a German magazine, a Sunday newspaper insert that reached thousands of readers in November 1993. The magazine included a card affixed to its cover, where one of its phrases, "I AM AWAKE IN THE PLACE WHERE WOMEN DIE", was handwritten in red ink that contained a small portion of donated blood, which caused public outrage at the time based on fears of HIV contamination. The following year Holzer developed the project further producing an exhibition in New York that included a leather-lined hut that featured the text on its walls and a table on top of which she had arranged an array of human bones. A selection of bones were wrapped with silver bands that had the text incised on them, which the viewer was encouraged to pick up and handle. In addition, in 1996 Holzer projected the *Lustmord* text on the Battle of the Nations Monument in the city of Leipzig, a towering monument that commemorates Napoleon's defeat at the battle of Leipzig in 1813.

Holzer wrote a text that is frighteningly psychically invasive and delivered it across different media and multiple audiences as script lines to be read and be performed in fantasy. *Lustmord* was created to urgently address the intense sexual violence of the Bosnian War that was waging at the time, during which tens of thousands of women were victims of mass rapes by different agents of

that war. It was the first time that rape as a weapon of war and its strategic use for ethnic cleansing received widespread public attention and condemnation. Holzer's project set to implicate viewers bodily and psychically in a scene of rape through language and materials that required of them an embodied understanding of the sexualized violence of war and its psychic aftermath. The way the artist matched content and form, words and materials, object and viewer, commented upon the boundaries we set upon ourselves and imagine the self to have, especially when we engage with war narratives that segregate their subjects in order to avoid the political implications of a dialogue. Through richly coded surfaces and materials and her alarmingly relatable description of a rape scene, Holzer asked the viewers of her work to join the perpetrator, victim and witness of this crime in the different *Lustmord* environments she created, in order to examine, and then to collapse, the distance that viewers and critical discourses typically assume in such psychically troubling circumstances.

Chapter Three focuses on recent work by Salcedo, an artist who frequently produces work that closely examines the ongoing conflict of her native Colombia and the political violence that has been embedded in the daily lives of its citizens for over the last fifty years. *A Flor de Piel* is a peculiar sculptural object, a floral sheet that was produced from the suturing of thousands of rose petals, preserved by the artist in a suspended state between life and death. This carpet of roses is placed on the exhibition floor, covering a large surface area, while its elastic nature makes the work look like it is folding and expanding towards the feet of the viewers. Salcedo produced the work as a tribute to a nurse that was kidnapped, raped and tortured to death by paramilitary forces in Colombia. This chapter discusses the work emphasizing its excessive bodily materiality that

directly references the skin, an approach that has not been explored in depth by previous accounts, despite the fact that the artist stressed she felt the need to create a work that would be coherent, materially and imaginatively, with the victim's experience. *A Flor de Piel*'s remarkable expressive qualities and its peculiar orientation in the exhibition space are hereby examined as able to provide crucial insights on the Colombian conflict and its representation in art that can often evade the critical eye of Western art discourse.

Finally, the chapter turns to *Plegaria Muda*, a work that addresses the scandal of "false positives", the mass killings of innocent civilians sanctioned by the Colombian army and carried out by official and paramilitary factions. The perpetrators of this crime, under false pretenses of job offers, lured young men from poor rural areas to their deaths in order to present them as guerrilla combat kills to receive financial rewards by the state. It is a mazelike installation of over one hundred sculptural units, in which each of them is comprised of a dark table supporting a thick layer of soil on its surface, while an identical inverted table is placed on top of it to seal the earth in between. Moreover, blades of grass appear to perforate the belly of the top table, giving each unit, and the installation as a whole, a chilling living quality. I focus on *Plegaria Muda* not as a representation of a cemetery, which is a proposed reading by most of the writings on the work, but as an unnerving representation of a killing ground, a field in which the vertical and horizontal axis of the tables is in direct dialogue with the vertical posture of the viewers walking though the installation. This part of the chapter focuses on the relationship between individual and state violence, how the state exploits the individual aggression of its agents in order to perpetrate crimes against its own citizens. The chapter concludes considering the intense repetition

of the table and the prevalently silent experience of this work as symbolic carriers of an alternative political consciousness, one that examines warfare's psychic pillars and which stems from the inherent potential of a collective, quiet pause for reflection.

"Artistic resistance to war is often faulted for its futility. It is as if artistic responses to war succeeded only in stripping art, and its audience, of their political dignity", art historian Mignon Nixon claims in her work on feminist art that responds to war.[8] This peculiar but prevailing kind of reception is one that especially follows women artists, whose work continues to be historically marginalized, its political dignity suppressed, while its elaboration of resistance still manages to be silenced as irrelevant. Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo follow their predecessors, artists like Louise Bourgeois, Nancy Spero, Yayoi Kusama, Yvonne Rainer, Mary Kelly and Martha Rosler, whose work dealt with the persistent splitting of the personal from the political, the psychic from the social, and articulated the importance of subjectivity in public life, especially at times of war. Their work benefits from their legacy and continues the momentum of second wave feminist art, trailing the political activism of 1960s and 1970s artistic practice that rattled the increasing masculinism and militarism of the state, protesting at the time the American war in Vietnam. It borrows from the dynamism of previous feminist interventions in theory and praxis, which deconstructed the oppression of patriarchal narratives on gender, difference, space and labor that aim to lock artists like them into the thematically structured cupboard of the domestic and the "feminine".

[8] Mignon Nixon, "Louise Lawler: No Drones", *October* 147 (Winter 2014), 23

Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo have produced work that insists on the political urgency of addressing these still pervasive and unfair divisions, which are further perpetuated by war discourse and in writings on art that deal with their politics, at a time when a certain "fatigue with the politics of difference [can be felt] across the board".[9] Speaking in the mid-1990s, Hal Foster detected "a fatigue with the politics of subject position, of the mobility of the subject in fantasy, of gender performativity".[10] This kind of ideological exhaustion is still curiously present, as if we have reached a time in history when the work of feminism, psychoanalysis and queer theory is done, and their concerns, supposedly properly addressed and resolved, can now be put to the side. In the same conversation, Rosalyn Deutsche elaborated on Foster's word-choice of "fatigue", describing this disposition as one that "is also steeped in an idea of change that is promoted by a market mentality" and suggested that "it's perhaps what very often happens in the art world and in the academic world, where ideas are commodities as much as the works themselves".[11] This thesis, following the mandates of the works it examines, echoes Foster's and Deutsche's remarks twenty years later, argues against the notion that works of art which delve into the war phenomenon from the realm of psychoanalysis, feminism and subjectivity are to be faulted as futile or outdated, and suggests that such critical predispositions are based on a type of fatigue that is "dangerous".[12]

[9] Hal Foster quoted in Silvia Kolbowski, Mignon Nixon, Mary Kelly, Hal Foster, Liz Kotz, Simon Leung and Ayisha Abraham, "A Conversation on Recent Feminist Art Practices", *October* 71 (Winter 1995), 55
[10] Ibid.
[11] Deutsche quoted in Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

The works in this thesis investigate the relationship between individual and state violence at times of war and contribute to the way their interplay has been theorized through a reflexive approach that thinks of the psychical and the social together. These artists examine war crimes and the experience of aggression from multiple subject positions, through individual stories and personal testimonies, creating works that hover between reality and fantasy. It deemed thus pertinent to approach this body of work and its difficult subject matter through the productive dialogue art history has historically enjoyed with psychoanalysis, a discursive position that is startlingly absent from previous scholarly accounts on these works. The ability of psychoanalysis, as Jacqueline Rose suggests, "to uncover truths that would remain hidden, and to unsettle the most rigid forms of identity as they play themselves out across the stage of political life", was apparently lost on critical accounts that engaged with the political nature of the works presented in this thesis.[13] They instead opted to situate the politics of each work –the radicalism of 1980s performance for Hatoum, the poststructuralist assault on language for Holzer, and the representation of absence and mourning for Salcedo- in formal but ultimately sterile descriptions of their relation to the traumatic events they address. These narratives significantly bypassed the challenges these works posed to such unyielding and stringent theorizations through their subversive materiality and the queer relationships they established with their viewers. Such accounts betray a penchant to neutrality figured as a position of intellectual authority and superiority and mobilize a very specific vocabulary with accepted words and ideas to be used in politically and psychically challenging art. They follow what

[13] Jacqueline Rose, *The Last Resistance* (London: Verso, 2007), xi

Helen Molesworth has described as an academic tendency to be "accustomed to a version of political art that is imagined to be all content and no form".[14] According to Molesworth, "this is partly due to the inherent deficit of language, partly due to the easy reduction of complicated ideas into truisms that become the lingua franca of an art world perpetually on the move".[15] One of the most important aspects of the works presented here is their insistence "to complicate such anodyne formulations", and, in doing so, to expose how the art object's materiality and the viewer's subjectivity are resistant to them.[16]

It is precisely this sort of critical approaches that advocate the irrelevance of psychoanalysis and feminism, and of art informed by them, in a broader field of political discourses that aim to critique and protest militarism and war culture. Their arguments are meditated on a version of masculinism, which, according to Deutsche, "has also been reconsolidated in some sectors on the left; that is, the pressing nature of the world situation is invoked to legitimate a return to leftist political analyses that refuse feminist theorizations of the political".[17] The psychical dimension to war, torture, nationalism and the spectacle, continues to be largely blindsided by theoretical attempts, even those on the left, that attempt to account for them, and, "psychoanalytic feminism is [still] treated as politically expendable".[18] As Nixon further argues:

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[14] Helen Molesworth, "Doris Salcedo's Readymade Time" in *Doris Salcedo*, eds. Julie Rodrigues Widholm and Margaret Grynsztejn (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 207
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Rosalyn Deutsche quoted in Rosalyn Deutsche, Aruna D'Souza, Miwon Kwon, Ulrike Müller, Mignon Nixon, Senam Okudzeto, "Feminist Time: A Conversation", *Grey Room* 31 (Spring 2008), 52
[18] Ibid., 53

> Pressured into conformity within a militarist research culture suspicious of subjectivity, but also estranged from a left political culture that considers subjectivity antithetical to politics, psychoanalysis finds itself in the untenable position of being both an orthodoxy –a theory that does not go against the grain of ideology –and an orphan- a theory of subjectivity deemed superfluous by a culture that, like most war cultures, disavows subjectivity itself.[19]

Psychoanalysis, however, has always maintained its capacity to deflect such arguments and arrest the theoretical and cultural seize that Nixon describes and under which it often finds itself. It expands the terms of this intellectual war through its very nature: developing the dialogue, suggesting that there is a "talking cure". It continues to insist on the importance of talking things over, of speaking of and about our problems. It also takes into account the importance of silent moments, of times when subjects may appear mute or inarticulate in the face of authoritative language or violent praxis, but that does not mean they are also unsignifying. It is a theory that was broadly elaborated during widespread aggression and destruction, during the First and Second World Wars that fragmented the preciously safeguarded perception of integrity of society and of the individual, a theory that strived to address the pressing question that was then formed and which still resides in everyone's minds: "Why War?".[20]

Psychoanalysis, perhaps most importantly, is also theory that is capable to evolve and check itself, contrary to popular sentiment that believes it to be a fixed,

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[19] Mignon Nixon, "Minimal Difference: On Siblings, Sex, and Violence" in *Juliet Mitchell and the Lateral Axis*, eds. Robbie Duschinsky and Susan Walker (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 195

[20] Alfred Einstein directed this question to Sigmund Freud in their famous exchange of letters on the subject. See Sigmund Freud, "Why War?" (1933) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXII (1932-1936): New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 195-216. For an excellent discussion of the topic, the developments and returns to the question see Jacqueline Rose, *Why War? Psychoanalysis, Politics, and the Return to Melanie Klein* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993)

outdated and reductively pathologizing account of human nature and civilization. It listens and benefits from critical objections, such as the theoretical arguments that stem from the vexed but important relationship that was historically established with feminism. Contemporary psychoanalysis can be seen to be critically revising its positions in its recent attempts to articulate radical and creative arguments, rather than its previous remedial and additive prescriptions, in order to provide "a theory that goes against the grain of ideology".[21] In its determined efforts to theorize the complex relationship between individual and social subjectivity, it provides alternative but complimentary points of view to the discourses that so often resist it, disentangling the theoretical obstacles and intellectual stalemates they sometimes set upon themselves by insisting on splitting, in their fields of inquiry, the subject itself. The decidedly psychoanalytic approach this thesis embraces in relation to art and its histories feels pertinent and responsible, to account for art that can also be, at times, afraid to openly betray its feminist credentials in order to avoid the urgency and content of its message being decoded as emotional, hysterical and, indeed, irrelevantly subjective.

Beginning with the coded signification of silence, with the bodily, psychic and symbolic potential that silence may hold, I was led to research works by Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo that seemed to require this type of communication and viewing experience from their audience. During my initial research for this thesis I was fortunate to experience these works firsthand: I visited the Onasis Cultural Center in 2012 where *The Negotiating Table* was reenacted in 2012 as part of the

[21] Juliet Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 114

sixth Meeting Points Festival, I own a copy of the German magazine that Holzer's *Lustmord* first appeared in 1993, I visited group shows where the *Lustmord* tables were exhibited and I spent a lot of time with *A Flor de Piel* and *Plegaria Muda* when they were exhibited for the first time at White Cube in London in 2012 and at the Guggenheim Museum during a research trip in New York in 2015.

Through my experience of these works, which includes a close observation and consideration of the experience of others around me, I suggest that the presence of silence in each work is as formal of a decision as the material choices the artists made to produce objects that communicate the force of violence and trauma in war.[22] The artists' strong emphasis on silence is hereby tied to the prevailing societal silence over the crimes their works are focusing on and to the vacuum of art historical accounts that could have addressed the clear political urgency they tried to communicate. It is linked with a certain kind of silence that psychoanalytic theory often associates with the analysand's resistance to analysis that aims to block access to memories and the unconscious. Resistance in many ways is what we do to protect ourselves from the awareness of what we fear will overwhelm us. In this way, it is understood not only as a reactionary measure against injustice –the way the term has been typically used by artistic practice and theory alike, but also, as psychoanalysis suggests, as one of our most common defense mechanisms and as a process or interaction between structures

[22] I also want to make clear that the way I approach these works in terms of audience reactions and, most importantly, in the emphasis I place on their viewer, is also strongly tied to rigorous archival research, the results of which produced numerous accounts from the fields of art history, theory, criticism and even personal testimony that substantiate the claims this thesis makes and are made clearer in the footnotes where appropriate.

of our mind that is central to our functioning. It is not only a question of what we are willing to put up a fight against but also of what we are prepared to protect, withstand and admit in ourselves.

After spending time with these works, it became evident that each one created its own environment of analytical promise, resisting neat narrative categorizations, and together, beginning from the 1980s and reaching the early 2010s, these works seem to follow the postwar crisis in and of representation, while silently trailing the evolution of warfare itself. These artists deviated from traditional representations of war that have heavily relied on depicting the figure, and, through performance, sculpture, multimedia installations and public projections they brought attention back to what effects war has not just on the body but to the soul. As Elizabeth Adan argues, "many cultural and artistic engagements have aligned traditional modes of representation with oppression, embracing instead unrepresentability and its perceived potential for resistance".[23] The works in this thesis certainly move away from this notion of traditional representation and engage with the aesthetic and strategic potential of the unrepresentable in art in order to problematize the terms of the debate on war further. For Jacques Rancière, "the unrepresentable is lodged […] in the impossibility of an experience being told in its own appropriate language. But this principled identity of the appropriate and the inappropriate is the very stamp of the aesthetic regime in art".[24] This hovering between representation and the unrepresentable, the appropriate and inappropriate is something that Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo

[23] Elizabeth Adan, "Seeing Things" in *Doris Salcedo*, eds. Julie Rodrigues Widholm and Margaret Grynsztejn (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 35
[24] Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (London: Verso, 2007), 126

embrace with critical and creative potentiality. For their works balance between familiar binaries, teasing one side and then the other, knowing that if they go too far towards one kind of approach then their work will receive vehement criticism from the other. But, most importantly, their work's theoretical and material drifting is calculated so as to highlight that when violence and aggression, on the individual or state level, are readily relegated to the domain of the unrepresentable, then this move may escape the resistance politics of unrepresentability and end up serving the systems of oppression it strives to oppose.

These works rely on their radical, excessive materiality and on the encounters they form with their viewers, who activate the structures of fantasy that are embedded in their making and which in turn relate to the exploitation of the unconscious by warfare's calculated game of aggression. These works stage "events" with their viewing subjects that are "related to both personal and collective history", and which "exceed but also inhabit the subject who is 'seized by' [the event] and thereby opened to the otherness of history".[25] The physical and psychical experience of the works is interconnected to real testimonies of wartime violence and it is this association that sets up these "events", which, consequently, gain the ability to form a sense of community between the participating viewers, however ephemeral that may be. In these moments silence emerges as a strategy of resistance, as a political alternative to art that delivers hard-hitting messages, and, significantly, as an opposition to dominant patriarchal narratives, through works that deliver quiet and masqueraded derision, which undermines their structure and authority from within. Thus, I

[25] Deutsche quoted in Deutsche et al., 37

suggest that these works are not straightforward "case studies" within a psychosocially informed strand of art history. Instead, I approach them as "theoretical objects", which, according to Mieke Bal betray the qualities of what Ernst van Alphen calls "art that thinks".[26] The term, coined by Hubert Damisch, refers to an object that "obliges you to do theory but also furnishes you with the means of doing it. […] It is posed in theoretical terms; it produces theory; and it necessitates a reflection on theory".[27] The works examined here are theoretical objects that are perfectly situated to facilitate these kind of "events" and dialogues: art encounters structured on the intellectual dynamism established between the works as objects, their viewing subjects and their time together, linked to the social framework that surrounds them and the psychic bedrock that unites them to ensure the emergence of "a compelling collective thought process".[28] To activate such an experience for their viewers, Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo worked closely with an object of high familiarity and theoretical capacity: the table.

Situated at the center of each of these works, a unifying element curiously noticed after I had already begun my research on them, is a table. This simple, all-too-familiar object immediately struck me as an important component of every aspect of the theoretical work that these objects, and me with them, were doing. The presence of the table pointed to the theory work needed to be done and provided the means to do it: these works were dealing with issues that required those willing to be part of their conversation to gather around a table,

[26] Mieke Bal, *Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedo's Political Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 7
[27] Hubert Damisch quoted in Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

around a shared horizontal surface that would enable a dialogue between multiple subject positions. Deployed by Hatoum as a place to lie on during a performance, utilized by Holzer as an object on which she could arrange human bones and reimagined by Salcedo as a burial or killing ground, the table, at the hands of these artists, critically extends the "decidedly domestic tradition of the readymade" and its "overt concern with the quotidian […] [that] harks back to the feminist movement of the 1970s".[29] It adds on these historical concerns, by infusing this ordinary object with the capacity to instigate a multidirectional theoretical and psychical exploration on the topic of war and violence through art.

"There are other tables besides officer tables and conference tables", Woolf notes in her essay and asks: "Are we not leaving the young Englishman without a weapon that might be of value to him if we give up private thinking, tea-table thinking, because it seems useless?".[30] Building on the ideas she explored in *Three Guineas* (1938) that offered a feminist reflection on war as arising from masculine pride, self-centredness and megalomania, and on the importance for women to claim a space to think and write as a political act in *A Room of One's Own* (1928), Woolf returns to these questions and describes a space that is different but also similar to the ones that are typically known to declare wars.[31] Hers is not a straightforward juxtaposition between the masculine energy of conference tables and situation rooms versus the delicate and feminized perception of the tables in the domestic sphere. Woolf describes the domestic

[29] Molesworth, 203
[30] Woolf, "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid"
[31] See Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One Own* (London: Penguin Classics, 1928) and *Three Guineas* (Florida: Harcourt Inc, 1938)

space as an artillery closet, a space from which women can gather around tables and add to the weapons of the men at war, rather than solely seeing it as the notorious marginalized ground from where they can ridicule their actions when they critically reclaim it.

This kind of space offers a very close description of the theoretically complex and psychically compelling environments that Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo have created by placing the table at their epicentre as an object that is at once homely and warlike. As Sara Ahmed supports in her work on the queer phenomenology of objects and the subjectivities that are formed around them, "to use the table that supports domestic work to do political work (including the work that makes explicit the politics of domestic work) is a reorientation device".[32] Maintaining the tension that the object choice of a table creates between the private and the public sphere, between the psychic and the social, individual and social subjectivity, these artists produced works that actively directed and reoriented these tensions towards the viewers in their quest to understand, with them, what supports violence and aggression. To strike a constructive balance between critically approaching the formal qualities of these works and the formal vocabularies and boundaries of the theoretical work they require us to perform is a challenge that is embedded in their very conception, production and display. These tables mediate encounters between bodies and ideas that assemble around them precisely in order to form such polyphonic gatherings themselves, especially during testing times when these type of meetings are prone to be

[32] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (London: Duke University Press, 2006), 61

dispersed by oppressive and aggressive structures that are afraid of their radical potentiality.

As Hannah Arendt describes in *The Human Condition* (1958), "to live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it".[33] In this way, if we insist on thinking the world of things and ideas –no matter the level of divergence between them- as a space that is created by and located between those who coalesce around it, then there is much to be gained from focusing on the gathering around –rather than the sometimes inevitable disagreement on, the table. Moreover, the vast rift between popular configurations of the table as either masculine and bureaucratic or feminine and homely is challenged by these artists to strategically redeploy the table "not only as a symbol but also as a symptom of our culture of war" that genders space and segregates subjectivity.[34] The frequently varying perceptions of the table as divisionary in war rooms or as a friendly object in dining rooms are undermined and creatively brought together in these works, as one would join two disparate tables across the same room in order to facilitate a larger family seating. These are tables that are, as Ahmed proposes, "kinship objects", they mediate the way subjects relate to each other, whether they are relatives or not.[35] They present the subjectivities of war aggression and political violence as structured by similar relationships of kinship that are familiar to us through the family model. What is more, these works bring the subjects and objects of violence together to gather around or rest on tables,

[33] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 53
[34] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Un-War: An Aesthetic Sketch", *October* 147 (Winter 2014), 6
[35] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 81

recognizing and mobilizing fantasy as a core constituent of our private and public selves and tracing the rising awareness of the horizontal dimension of experience and of lateral relations in postmodern and contemporary art.

The table in these works is set in imaginative ways so as to guide the viewer's attention to the way subjects are formed around it, the ways they relate to each other, as well as to the frames and the axes that structure our lives and on which they travel. It directly references the influence and power of the family model over the constitution of the subject within and outside the home and draws an important analogy to the familiar order of the subjects of war and violence that strangely escapes consideration when sociopolitical discourses engage with these issues. This thesis, inspired by Juliet Mitchell's seminal work on psychoanalysis and feminism and in particular by her theory of the horizontal axis that explores the effect of sibling relationships on psychic development, culture and politics, understands the concentration of these artists on the table as a close investigation and effect of disavowals of structural binaries that proliferated in postmodern artistic practice and theory.

According to Mitchell, psychoanalysis has been historically trapped in an Oedipal paradigm since Sigmund Freud, in a structure that privileges vertical models of thought on masculinity and femininity, sameness and difference, psychic authority and inferiority, which results from a capitalist and idealized romanticization of the nuclear family that is based on patriarchal ideology. As Nixon further suggests following the theoretical implications of Mitchell's work in art history, "if psychoanalysis itself suffers from what might be deemed an Oedipal obsession, privileging parent-child relationships to the detriment of

sibling dynamics, the humanities are also dominated by Oedipal thinking".[36] What this patriarchal cultural hierarchy sustains is the overshadowing of alliance and affinity by an overt emphasis on descent and difference.[37] This imbalance influences and is felt across different aspects of the subject's formation, from its time in the home to its entry in public life, from parent-child relationships to the ones we establish with our siblings and peers, and to the ways individual and state violence are expressed and controlled. It is a trenchant insight that these works on a pragmatic and fantasied level, put on the table.

Mitchell proposes that the strong emphasis placed by psychoanalysis, politics and culture on parent-child relationships is to the detriment of sibling relationships, to the crucial insights they can provide on how the subject is formed through relating to others that are the same but different to it. The first relationships of this kind the subject embarks upon are with its siblings, real or fantasied, during infancy when the self first emerges as, and realizes itself to be, social. This, according to Mitchell, is a traumatic moment since the subject loses its sense of omnipotence and of being the only one in the world when it realizes the presence of others like it. It generates an aggression and "hatred for a sameness that displaces [the subject] which then generates the category of 'other' as a protection".[38] It is the mother who has to step in this crisis and teach her children not to act upon this aggression and not murder each other, to allow space for others to emerge that are similar to them but may appear different. Mitchell calls this "the law of the mother", situates it as parallel to Jacques Lacan's law of the father and the child's ascension to language, and describes it

[36] Nixon, "Minimal Difference: On Siblings, Sex, and Violence", 195
[37] Ibid.
[38] Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, 48

as a process that allows the concept of seriality to emerge in lateral relations, which "although it takes place within language, is about numeracy not literacy".[39] The law of the mother introduces seriality, which in other words stands for social subjectivity, and allows the subject to understand itself and its relationships to others as the result of "minimal difference".[40]

This, of course, is a model of thought that continues to shed new light both on how and for what reasons psychoanalysis itself was blind to the dimension of lateral relations and to the ways that the horizontal axis of experience – emblematic of the preoccupations of the politicized artistic practice of the 1960s and 70s- has been reiterated by Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo in the decades to follow. As Nixon describes:

> In art, "representing seriality" became crucial in the so-called Minimalists, or Serial Art, of the 1960s and was bound up with the shift from an expressive model of subjectivity, centered on the sovereign self (as in Abstract Expressionism), to a model of social subjectivity predicated on what Mitchell would later call minimal difference. Psychoanalysis has rarely been brought to bear on seriality in art. For as long as lateral relations were perceived to fall outside the perspective of psychoanalysis, seriality was construed as anti-subjective.[41]

The works of Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo presented in this thesis negotiate difference and subjectivity beyond the vertical Oedipal model of modernism that frequently articulated a sense of self based on feelings of grandeur, mastery and

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[39] Ibid., 44

[40] Ibid. As Robbie Duschinsky and Susan Walker explain: "Mitchell coins the phrase the 'law of the mother' for the prohibitions, operative on the lateral axis, against sibling murder and sibling incest. These prohibitions do not operate through negation as do the Oedipal prohibitions, which forbid desire for the mother and permit only a deferred desire for her substitute in adult partners. Instead, they operate through differentiation, in giving each sibling a place. This role is named for the mother, but can be played by any figure including by the siblings themselves". Robbie Duschinsky and Susan Walker, "Introduction" in *Juliet Mitchell and the Lateral Axis*, eds. Robbie Duschinsky and Susan Walker (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 6

[41] Nixon, "Minimal Difference: On Siblings, Sex, and Violence", 203

sovereignty. They serve the repercussions of this modernist model on the table and follow the developments in and of representation, which read such pronunciations as the symbol of war trauma and the symptom of a culture that describes itself as being "post" war. Seriality is imagined and embraced by these artists as a radical model of subjectivity, capable to articulate a politics of alliance that can decipher the vertical social structures and psychic circumstances that lead to war and trauma and to challenge the patriarchy anew.

In art that takes up the subject of war, "the need to understand and think through, aspects of 'minimal difference', 'alliance and affinity', which the lateral axis allows, is especially important in a militaristic culture".[42] In doing so, the works in this thesis unpack and allow us to understand and think through the regularly undisclosed aspects of war: the sexualized violence of warfare, how the male and female subject have been historically theorized in reference to hysteria –a condition that war precipitates regardless of gender- and the ways a vertical understanding of the relationships formed at times of war often results in unyielding conversations over its causes and consequences, inviting the horrific past to repeat itself with uncanny specificity. These works permit us to think of the perpetrator, the victim and the witness, this group of subjects that the literature on war typically focuses on, as a gathering of different but similar subjectivities, of their relationships as ones that are also based on kinship, even within the divisive and overpowering aggressive environment in which they are formed.

These works openly invite viewers to explore the subject position of a perpetrator, a victim and a witness through "relational ethics", a thinking process

[42] Duschinsky and Walker, 18

that according to Stephen Frosh is "concerned with the quality of connections that people […] form with one another" and which "can prise open apparently closed and defensive psychosocial identities".[43] The ways that these artists examine the stories on which they base their work and the strategies they follow to bring their viewers closer to the subjects of war and violence, attest to the presence of relational ethics in recent war-related artistic practice, as "an important way of thinking about and promoting efforts to link with otherness across fractures of hurt, oppression and suffering".[44] These works mobilize a vocabulary that "leans heavily on articulations of brokenness", which respects the psychic fractures that war causes on subjectivity, but also communicates how they are linked to the traumatic circumstances that precede the subject's experience of warfare.[45] By insisting on silence, on the hushing of language and on instilling their environments with a dramatic quieting of experience, Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo examine what Rosalind Krauss has called "a retreat from language" to levels of experience that are "beyond or beneath speech".[46] They bestow muteness with the potential to resist the subjugation of patriarchal language, war's "hysterical recourse to action in preference to speech" and with the capacity to avoid fixing the subject to a prescribed and politically convenient position.[47] They allow the subjects of war to produce their own forms of speech, to devise their own kind of language and the viewers to embrace the insights on experience that these variations may provide. They invite them to follow these

[43] Stephen Frosh, "The Relational Ethics of Conflict and Identity", *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society* 16, no.3 (2011), 225
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Rosalind Krauss, "Eva Hesse: Contingent" in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2002), 28.
[47] Mignon Nixon, "Spero's Curses", *October 122* (2007), 20

stories in silence, in inner monologues, in fantasy, to attest to the need to think with the unconscious, to examine the psychic dimension of war.

Within these fantasy driven environments, viewers are asked to occupy the identity positions that war generates through "an awareness that each of us is opaque to ourselves".[48] By focusing on the perpetrator, the victim and the witness as kindred subjects, Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo challenge our sense of self by inviting us to consider that, even at times of frenzied aggression and destruction, "we are in the same relationship to the other that we are in with ourselves when we face that dark hole of non-knowing that is, among other things, perhaps, the unconscious".[49] They present stories of perpetrators who are also victims, victims who become perpetrators and witnesses who can be seen as complicit in crime and whose presence alone disrupts the authoritative explanations provided by a reductive binary understanding of good and bad or a simplified and pathologizing account of violence. These works ask viewers to "drag up to consciousness" what Woolf describes as "the subconscious Hitlerism that holds us down", felt in our "desire for aggression; the desire to dominate and enslave".[50] It is what psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin detects as a type of "unbearable knowledge" that the subject at some point in life is asked to deal with, "the most recalcitrant being the unbearable knowledge that one is oneself a 'perpetrator'".[51] It is what allows the subjects of war and violence to be presented and perceived beyond "a one-dimensional space of 'victimhood',

[48] Frosh, 229
[49] Ibid.
[50] Woolf, "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid"
[51] Jessica Benjamin quoted in Frosh, 235

which has its complement in one-dimensional 'perpetratorhood'".[52] These works expose the identities that war produces as distinct positions to be occupied by anyone that attempts to make sense of it to be, in fact, constructs that can also drive war's exploitation of its agents' aggression and which frequently mask the intersubjective network of its violent relationships. They invite viewers to test their ability to think from the standpoint of somebody else and to examine whether the terms we are provided with by war discourse are adequate for our political judgement.[53] And to embark upon this quest, to take the test of stepping into someone else's shoes and see what follows from it, Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo produced works that instigate complicated psychic movements in their viewers, based on the oldest trick in the book: identification.

As Diana Fuss writes, tracing the emergence and evolution of the concept of identification in psychoanalytic theory and the ways it has come into sharp focus in feminist and queer theory, "identification is an embarrassingly ordinary process, a routine, habitual compensation for the everyday loss of our loved-objects", including the loss of previously held perceptions and images of ourselves.[54] It is "one of our most familiar psychological experiences", but also "a profoundly defamiliarizing affair", which installs "surrogate others" to fill the

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[52] Nina Thomas, "Whose Truth? Inevitable tensions in testimony and the search for repair" in *First Do No Harm: The Paradoxical Encounters of Psychoanalysis, Warmaking and Resistance*, eds. Steven Botticelli and Adrienne Harris (London: Routledge, 2010), 61

[53] Lyndsey Stonebridge, "The Perpetrator Occult: Francis Bacon Paints Adolf Eichmann", *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 17, No.2-3, (2011), 111. Stonebridge refers to Arendt's observation that during his trial, Adolf Eichmann betrayed an inability "to think from the standpoint of somebody else". See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 49

[54] Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers: Readings on Psychoanalysis, Sexuality, and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1

psychic voids within us.[55] Through works that invoke the presence of others and the furtive language of haunting subjects that begin to converse with the viewers, Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo seem to understand identification, as psychoanalysis does, as a "remnant of the unconscious", a "ghost of the past", a "shadow other" and the "phantasmal relic of our complicated psychical histories". [56] They ask viewers to identify with victims, perpetrators and witnesses by digging into their own unconscious where remnants of these identities may reside. They test the willingness or aversion of viewers to occupy each position, but also problematize their readiness to perceive each of them as the result of a supposedly pure, neatly categorized –and thus likely safe to identify with- subjectivity. They show viewers that "identifications are the origin of some of our most powerful, enduring, and deeply felt pleasures [but] also the source of considerable emotional turmoil, capable of unsettling or unmooring the precarious groundings of our everyday identities".[57] These works are unafraid to indicate that identifying with the perpetrator can produce feelings of pleasure, that the position of the victim or witness are not always the most safe or readily available, and that at various points in our lives we may have traveled through all three.[58]

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[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 2
[57] Ibid.
[58] I want to note here that this thesis focuses on identification while taking into account, but not directly engaging with, the concept of disidentification, the process with which we refuse many of the identifications that occur throughout our lives. As Fuss explains following Judith Butler's thoughts in *Bodies That Matter* (1993), "what at first may appear to be a refused identification […] might in some cases more accurately be termed a disavowed one –an identification that has already been made and denied in the unconscious". Although viewers of the works discussed here may embark on disidentifications as well, I suggest that it is more fruitful to discuss the psychical and political work these works make

By deploying identification in artistic practice that intervenes in war discourse, Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo mobilize it as a useful concept for, as psychoanalyst Steven Botticelli describes, "theorizing the elusive link between the psychic and the social, traversing as it does the boundary between the two".[59] They bring perpetrators, victims and witnesses to the domain of the home, to the private sphere where the psychic is usually relegated, and also allow the subjects that are trapped there to claim their right of appearance in the public sphere, to participate in the understanding and discussion on war with everyone else.

While identification is important as "the psychical mechanism that produces self-recognition", the fact that it originates in the unconscious assigns it with a fleeting disposition, making it a process that the political subject by definition has a hard time to control.[60] Fuss, among other writers, rightly asks then the pertinent question of "what is political about identification?".[61] The strength and trajectory of an identification cannot be clear in advance, but the fact remains

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them do through the understanding that a disidentification represents, as Butler analyzes, "an identification that one fears to make only because one has already made it". In this way, while the concept of disidentification has certainly important theoretical and political potential, I believe that in these cases it is mobilized and merged with the identificatory connection that the works ask of their viewers, rather than their brief identification antagonisms. Fuss, 7 and Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 112. For an excellent discussion of the potential and pitfalls of disidentification as a strategy of resistance and survival for minority subjects see José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999)

[59] Steven Botticelli, "The Politics of Identification: Resistance to the Israeli occupation of Palestine" in *First Do No Harm: The Paradoxical Encounters of Psychoanalysis, Warmaking and Resistance*, eds. Steven Botticelli and Adrienne Harris (London: Routledge, 2010), 327

[60] Fuss, 2

[61] Ibid., 10. For an extended conversation on the politics of identification see Butler's *Bodies That Matter* (1993), as well as the chapter contributions that examine its relationship to warfare in Steven Botticelli and Adrienne Harris eds., *First Do No Harm: The Paradoxical Encounters of Psychoanalysis, Warmaking and Resistance*, (London: Routledge, 2010)

that, as a process, for psychoanalysis, "identification defines the very nature of the political bond".[62] As Freud wrote in his work on group psychology: "in the individual's mental life someone else is invariably involved, as a model, as an object, as a helper, an opponent; and so from the very first individual psychology […] is at the same time social psychology as well".[63] Politics for Freud are understood through the individual's relationship to the social group, thus, "to the extent that every social group is constituted […] through identification between its members, through social ties based upon a perception of similarity and shared interests, there can be no politics without identification".[64] This is the kind of negotiating process that the viewing subject goes through upon encountering these works and after spending some time with them. These works offer a series of identifications, which while they destabilize any secure sense of self, they do so as to help us realize how others, such as our family members and peers or perpetrators, victims and witnesses, are invariably involved in our mental lives. This process occurs and is contained in the environments that Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo designed, which relate to their viewers as individuals and as a group, creating in this way a platform that allows them to converse and identify with the subjects of war and violence, examining the stories of social ties, shared interests and similarities, rather than the familiar narratives that keep them apart.

During their time with these works, it is likely that some viewers will feel uncomfortable by the messages they communicate and the psychical work they

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[62] Fuss, 9

[63] Sigmund Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (1922) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII (1920-1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 69

[64] Fuss, 10

require them to do. This is because, as Fuss adds, "identification inhabits, organizes, instantiates identity […] opening up a space for the self to relate to itself as a self, a self that is perpetually other".[65] Feelings of unease may arise not only because the issues at hand are dire, but also because it is possible after their examination to find the self to be moved, ideologically and psychically, to find the perception of our self to be other than what we thought it was. What is more, Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo instigate this process in their viewers through conversations with perpetrators, victims and witnesses of violence, asking them to relate to the self as a self through identifications with subjectivities that the self typically "others", pushing the political potential of identification in war discourse a step further. Understanding identification, as Fuss maintains, "as the play of difference and similitude in self-other relations, [which] does not, strictly speaking, stand against identity but structurally aids and abets it", these artists examine the politics of the speaking positions in the debate on war by offering a psychically drawn schema of the mechanisms that produce them.[66] They emphasize the important of alliance, affinity and political coalition by intervening in art and war discourse together with their viewers, at a moment when it becomes important, as Douglas Crimp has explained, "to rethink identity politics as a politics of relational identities, of identities formed through political identifications that constantly remake these identities".[67] It is a moment in which the politics of subjectivity and difference come back, like the return of the repressed, to haunt the discourses that are fatigued by the exploration of the

[65] Ibid., 2
[66] Ibid.
[67] Douglas Crimp, "Right On, Girlfriend!" in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 313

psychic dimension to war, a time when revisiting the vocabulary of its subjects, and of how they and we, relate to and construct each other, counts as important.

Drawing on a range of psychoanalytic writers this thesis will follow closely Mitchell's work on the hysterical and sexualized violence of war, what she calls "war sexuality", to further the dialogue on war rape, a subject that all of these artists touch upon in their work and which has not been adequately addressed by the literature so far. This account, as Mitchell's work itself, is supported by a close engagement with Melanie Klein's theory of object relations, which examines the relationships between subjects and objects, internal or external, as well as between subjects themselves, starting with the mother-child relationship and the experience of aggression and repair in the infantile stages as a defining stage of subjectivity structured on psychic drives that enduringly follow the subject in adulthood. Klein's theorization of these relationships, frequently defined in terms of aggression and orality, of phantasmatic introjection and incorporation, will provide new insights on the ways these artists manipulate language and silence to challenge the conventional art historical narratives on art that speaks about war and violence. This perspective will support the engagement with Mitchell's "law of the mother" that theorizes language, difference, traumatic repetition and its symbolization into seriality that is so pertinent in approaching the simultaneous emphasis these works place on language and materiality, a theoretical and formal artistic decision that many writers have missed. Moreover, Mitchell's concept of seriality and the serial subject attends to the formal and theoretical qualities of these works and her writings on how sibling and lateral relationships play out the socially legitimized

peer killing of war, will help us unpack and understand how these objects relate to the testimonies on which they are based.

Didier Anzieu's theory of the Skin Ego, a psychoanalytic model and concept that understands the ego to be structured by the coexisting, rather than divided, relationship of a bodily and psychical ego will provide crucial insights on how these works address the viewer as a subject constituted through interpersonal relationships that perforate what we perceive as bodily and psychical boundaries and which in turn leave their marks on our skin. This model of thought, which allows for a more reflexive and intersubjective understanding of violence that is required by these works, is further supported by Donald Winnicott's work on the limiting membranes of the subject's inner world and the emergence of an intermediate area of experience that can be inhabited by the ego in its attempts to work through trauma. Fuss' work on the politics of identification and Lacan's theorization of the concept will provide the critical ground to reflect upon the elaboration of haunting as an artistic strategy deployed by these artists in order to psychically approach their viewers, as well as to tell the stories that are often foreclosed from the majority of historical accounts. Finally, the formative work of Freud and Franco Fornari on war psychoanalysis will further ground this thesis' argument on the importance of the psychic dimension to war that these works are based upon, linking the urgency of their political message with the concerns Freud and Fornari have historically traced and with which the humanities should still engage.

From an art historical point of view, this thesis engages with Nixon's work that follows Mitchell's psychoanalytic framework and provides important insights on art that deals with the war phenomenon, the subjective and feminist practice.

Nixon's focus on the drives in 1960s and 1970s feminist artistic practice, on object relations, fantasy and aggression, and on the language one uses to speak about war and violence, informs the readings provided here for work produced in later decades. Deutsche's writings on what art can offer during war and the critical images that result from feminist critiques of representation will extend this approach further, to examine in particular the effect of war-related artistic practice in the public sphere.

David Joselit's suggestion that the influence of previous feminist interventions on language can be felt and seen in the work of artists working in the 1990s, which brings language and representation together, will inform the debate on the curious materiality of these works and its relationship to their political messages. Molesworth's thoughts on how discussions of form often occur at the expense of the political content of art, as well as her focus on time as a structural element of the object and of the viewer's experience, will attest to the need to problematize the reasons why critical discourses divide the concurrent material and theoretical directives of politically and psychically demanding work. Charles Merewether's focus on art's capacity to take into account the psychosocial context of its production and its potential to create a moment in which private experience can be translated into social knowledge will support the redirection of the scholarly discussion on political art towards an inclusive theoretical model of thought that this thesis aims to maintain. Moreover, Briony Fer's thoughts on the "objecthood" of art objects, particularly ones that betray an excessive bodily materiality such as the works discussed here, together with Jo Applin's work on the radical and transformative qualities of eccentric sculptural objects and how they relate to viewers, will support the new insights on these works that this

thesis unlocks, highlighting how they elude the conventional narratives art discourse produces when thinking about them.

From a theoretical and interdisciplinary perspective, Ahmed's writings on the phenomenology of domestic objects and her collaboration with Jackie Stacey in their study of skin, its testimonial function and provision of an interface between inner and outer worlds and different subjectivities, will provide an important understanding of the multifaceted relationships these works establish with their viewers and the multilayered interventions they perform in theoretical and artistic practice. Thinking through the skin is an approach that this thesis decidedly embraces as the suitable critical and creative model of reflection to approach the rich surfaces and messages of these works. Margrit Shildrick's thoughts on the topics of "bodiliness" and monstrosity will underscore the need for a relational understanding of the subjects of war, which, together with Lyndsey Stonebridge's research on representations of perpetrators and Frosh's work on conflict and identity, will highlight the unproductive and often insensitive ways that historical discourses use to associate with them. The theoretical work of Rose and Judith Butler on the challenges faced by political and historical discourse in its engagement with war and subjectivity in the Middle East, provides the foundation for this thesis' insistence on the importance of thinking with the unconscious and embracing the political and transforming potential of fantasy in our moments of reflection on war. Arendt's "space of appearance" in the democratic sphere, where subjects are allowed equal space to make themselves seen and understood is hereby examined as a crucial aspect of the experience these works produce for their viewers and a constructive strategy of resistance to the divisive narratives of war. Finally, Woolf's experimental

novel *The Waves* (1931) and its radical exploration of individuality, the self, otherness and collectivity, will accompany the recurrent visceral and theoretical tasks these works set upon us, approaching the subjects, objects and feelings we, as viewers, are invited to encounter, like waves that return to trace the shore of our bodies, hearts and minds.

Writing this thesis often proved to be a challenging task. Engaging with difficult topics and dark, but very real, levels of experience that many writers chose to avoid certainly proved not to be easy. Learning about these works and their stories in this way here, might also be, for some, a difficult read. But this kind of work in front of these objects is what feels responsible. Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo created works that, to my understanding, do not make sense if one refuses to even consider the violence they so closely engage with, so much so that it can be seen as one of the core material elements of these environments. The deep investment of these works in the foundational and constructive role of fantasy in our lives and in the subjectivities of war, asks of the viewer –and reader- to approach violence thinking with the unconscious. Going beyond consciousness, in order to examine the limits posed by the deployment of knowledge and the mastery of language in the face of unending violence, is a decision first made by the artists themselves and one that they took with responsibility.

They suggest that trying to handle our violent past, present and foreseeable future using the conventional grips to navigate reality, such as the official statistics of casualties released by government or independent reports, could prove to be futile and often results in finding that very reality to be ungraspable. Their task as artists becomes clear, as Salcedo describes, in making the responsible decision to

work with the unconscious in order "make sense out of brutal facts [and] […] make violent reality intelligible".[68] The works discussed in this thesis relate to the violent reality from which they were produced, by acknowledging the fantasies that work to structure that very reality of violence. They form, as Nixon suggests, an "interrogation of experience, which is also an interrogation of responsibility".[69] Each artist does not just take responsibility for violence as an ethical gesture, but assumes an artistic and critical position that is prepared to explore the repercussions of this shift and what follows from it. Moreover, by designing their work around the viewer's experience and fantasy investment, Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo communicate an important message to those willing to participate in the debate on war: "taking up the proposition of violence, taking responsibility for violence can also be taking on the charisma of violence".[70] These works help subjects to speak of war inside and outside the self, inviting their viewers and interlocutors, real or fantasied, to consider Fornari's proposition that "in tracing the war phenomenon to the unconscious of each man we arrive at considering each man responsible for war".[71] They are able to show us that even today, a time of perpetual war that is characterized by increasing sexualized aggression, the resistance of the humanities and other critical

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[68] Doris Salcedo, "Traces of Memory: Art and Remembrance in Colombia", *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America* (Spring 2003), accessed April 11, 2016 http://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/book/traces-memory

[69] Mignon Nixon, "Future Bourgeois Panel Discussion", *The Fruitmarket Gallery*, (February 7, 2014), accessed April 11, 2016, http://www.fruitmarket.co.uk/archive/louise-bourgeois

[70] Ibid.

[71] Franco Fornari, *The Psychoanalysis of War*, trans. Alenka Pfeifer (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), xxiii. This conflict, that war is waged by the state and thus outside ourselves while it is also foundational and a part of the self, has also been addressed by Gertrude Stein in her 1945 war memoir in which she famously asks: "What is there inside one that makes one know all about war?". See Gertrude Stein, *Wars I Have Seen* (London: Brilliance Books, 1984), 9

discourses to psychoanalytic insights is also a negation of responsibility for the unconscious, a refusal based on an ill-founded "belief that psychoanalytic ideas about subjectivity are a distraction from politics".[72] To think with the unconscious and reflect on individual responsibility does not automatically necessitate a diversion of our focus from and need for political collective action. What these works offer to their viewers, are challenging encounters with this kind of responsibility, which, albeit its fleeting predisposition, could summon welcome ghosts; violent but familiar phantoms of the self that we habitually keep away due to their potential to disintegrate our sense of self far beyond their initial scare.

[72] Deutsche, *Un-War: An Aesthetic Sketch*, 14

CHAPTER I

MONA HATOUM

Extract from an interview:

MH: I like to walk through London with friends.

What do you talk about when you're walking?

MH: We don't talk, we shout.

I'm sorry I don't understand.[73]

Mona Hatoum arrived in Britain on what was meant to be a short trip in 1975 but this journey resulted in Hatoum making another home of London, after the outbreak of the civil war in Lebanon that year. What was meant to be a brief stay became a life in exile. Hatoum enrolled at The Byam Shaw School of Art where she studied between 1975-79 and then attended The Slade School of Art from which she graduated in 1981. It was in these years that the artist experimented with and embraced performance as a medium, until 1988, from which point on she became widely known for her immersive sculptures and installations. This chapter focuses on *The Negotiating Table*, a performance first realized in 1983 and then re-enacted in 2012, conceived as a response to the war in Lebanon in the 1980s and the Sabra and Shatila massacres in Beirut in 1982.

Hatoum's journey and stay in Britain was for her "another dislocation", one that followed the family's exile from Palestine in 1948. The details of her origin and journey has led writers and historians to "seem eager to define [her]", according

[73] Quote from a leaflet published by the artist to accompany her first performance tour in Canada, 1983 in *Mona Hatoum*, eds. Michael Archer, Guy Brett and Catherine de Zegher, (London: Phaidon, 1997), 122

to Hatoum, regularly leading to inconsistencies that bother the artist.[74] "People often expect tidy definitions of otherness, as if identity is something fixed and easily definable", she says.[75] At the same time, the literature on Hatoum has also explored the artist's oeuvre taking into consideration the structural ambiguity in her work and Hatoum's exploration of an "exilic space".[76] These different yet interweaving approaches attest to the inherent complexities of Hatoum's artistic practice, as well as to her reluctance to engage viewers in didacticism, "let alone trying to convince, convert or teach".[77] The writing so far has failed to engage in an in-depth consideration of Hatoum's work as an artistic response to war, focusing rather on its relationship with war's aftereffects such as displacement and exile. Moreover, writers often neglect Hatoum's performance work during the 1980s when considering the artist's trajectory. Only Christoph Heinrich and Guy Brett have engaged with Hatoum's performances at length, documenting and addressing this critical body of work that precedes all of the artist's sculptures and installations. Heinrich and Brett also look at Hatoum's preparatory sketches and studies for her performances, and this chapter aims to engage with them further, especially with those produced while preparing for *The Negotiating Table* that are distinct in their striking expressive qualities. Brett and Heinrich have provided important insights into Hatoum's performances but

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[74] Janine Antoni, "Interview with Mona Hatoum", *Bomb* 63 (Spring 1998), accessed October 15, 2012, http://bombsite.com/issues/63/articles/2130
[75] Ibid.
[76] Richard Noble, "Mona Hatoum: A Living Between", *Parachute* 108, (July 2005), 179. See also Edward Said, "The Art of Displacement: Mona Hatoum's Logic of Irreconcilables" in *Mona Hatoum: The Entire World as a Foreign Land* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2000), 7-18, Alix Ohlin, "Home and Away: The Strange Surrealism of Mona Hatoum" *Art Papers* 26, No.3 (May/June 2002), 16-22, and Fisun Guner, "No Way Home", *New Statesman* 12 (16 June 2008), 42-43.
[77] Archer et al., *Mona Hatoum*, 13

their layered political implications tend to be sidelined for a focus on how Hatoum challenged conventional spectatorship and challenged the art establishment, missing the recurring feminist concerns that her performances engaged with, as well as their multifaceted critique of subjectivity. It seems that the art critics who viewed *The Negotiating Table* in 1983, such as Dominique Roussel and Evelyn Erskine, communicated a more visceral understanding of the performance and managed to unpack its inherent complexities further than Brett and Heinrich later did.[78] Jessica Morgan, Angela Dimitrakaki and Vivienne Jabri are arguably the writers that have addressed Hatoum's practice with a more nuanced understanding of the more complex politics that her sustained interest in destabilizing binarism puts forward.[79] They rightly insist that the challenge Hatoum's work poses is far more intricate than a theoretical deconstruction of opposites and argue that this gesture extends beyond undermining such expectations since it also illuminates how they are systematically produced. Moreover, Anneke Voorhees' focus on displacement is one that addresses this popular issue for many texts on Hatoum's work by providing the contextual details that it needs.[80] Voorhees provides a critical, constructive and thoroughly sustained analysis of the historical, theoretical and psychosocial circumstances

[78] Dominique Roussel, "Hatoum approach brings urgency", *The Fulcrum* (1 December 1983), unpaginated, retrieved from the artist's personal archive and Evelyn Erskine, "Audience feels impact of vigil-like performance", *The Citizen*, (24 November 1983), 84

[79] Jessica Morgan, "The Poetics of Uncovering: Mona Hatoum In and Out of Perspective" in *Mona Hatoum*, exh. cat., ed. Jessica Morgan (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1997), 1-23, Angela Dimitrakaki, "Mona Hatoum: A Shock of A Different Kind", *Third Text* 43 (Summer 1998), 92-95 and Vivienne Jabri, "Mona Hatoum: Exiled Art and the Politics of Resistance", *Social Alternatives* 20, No.4, (October 2001), 37-40

[80] Anneke Voorhees, "Under Sieze: Mona Hatoum's art of displacement" in *Visual Worlds*, ed. John R. Hall, Blake Stimson and Lisa Tamiris Becker, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 223-235

that made displacement such a powerful reality and metaphor for many artists and writers alike in the first place.

This chapter will explore Hatoum's performances and how they examined and awakened the psychic processes pertaining to the war phenomenon through the insights that psychoanalytic theory can provide on these already psychically charged works, an approach that none of the writings on Hatoum has thus far taken. There have been references to psychoanalytic principles in the literature of Hatoum's work but writers have not explored them beyond considerations of displacement and the uncanny. Hatoum moved largely to installation and sculpture after 1988 and writers, historians and critics, such as Edward Said, Guy Brett, Tamar Garb and Catherine de Zegher, have addressed her overall practice by linking the experience of the viewer of her work with the displaced subject in search of a home.[81] Tied to her personal history and to participatory experience in art practice, Hatoum's installations have been seen in light of contemporary concerns with displaced and exiled subjectivities and (un)homely environments. It is strange, however, that none of these scholars chose to extend these valid considerations further, particularly deploying psychoanalysis in order to address the obvious recurring theme of domesticity in Hatoum's work and how this relates to war, violence and conflicts outside the home.

Hatoum's installations certainly have "this paradoxical aspect of being both attractive and repulsive", as the artist describes them, and in their "strong formal presence and through the physical experience […] [they] activate a psychological

[81] See Archer et al., *Mona Hatoum* (London: Phaidon, 1997), Edward Said, *Mona Hatoum: The Entire World as a Foreign Land*, exh. cat., (London: Tate Gallery, 2000), 7-17 and Tamar Garb, "Homesick" in *Mona Hatoum*, exh. cat., (Salamanca: Centro de Arte de Salamanca, 2002), 16-31

and emotional response".[82] Through the incorporation and manipulation of familiar objects such as cutlery, home furnishings, cots and beds, the viewer experiences "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar", what Freud defines as the experience of "the uncanny".[83] In this way, the literature on Hatoum's work is justified to talk of "home in her work [as] a mythical location: a place charged with loss and violence, from which we are permanently exiled, yet to which we are always drawn".[84] However, questions of violence and war have not been asked nor are they addressed at length in writings on Hatoum's work, especially ever since the artist embraced installation and sculpture; it seems that a vital narrative of Hatoum's early performances, one that binds unspeakable war crimes to the everyday and unravels their connection with the familiar, simply went missing.

Looking beside and beyond this previous scholarly interest in abjection, this account of Hatoum's early work, informed by psychoanalysis, will investigate violent objects, aggressive agents and the language that is deployed in order to speak about war. To do so, Freud's investigation into "the compulsion to repeat", the work of Mitchell on trauma and recognition, war and sexuality, Klein's theory of object relations and Nixon's sustained interest in tracing the historical circumstances of these concepts in art production, will inform this belated psychoanalytic engagement with the work of an artist that seems quite obviously psychically challenging. Ahmed's work on the phenomenology of furniture,

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[82] Hatoum quoted in Archer et al., *Mona Hatoum*, 17 and Antoni, "Interview with Mona Hatoum"

[83] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works,* ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 220

[84] Ohlin, 17

particularly on the associative character of the table, together with Mitchell's theory of the lateral axis will guide this exploration of subjectivity and violence that most of the debate on Hatoum's political agency has missed. Moreover, the chapter engages with the work of Rose and Butler on the challenges faced by political and historical discourse in addressing war and subjectivity in the Middle East, Stonebridge's research on the representation of perpetrators and Frosh's relational approach of conflict and identity; critical positions that seem pertinent to the issues these performances dealt with. Finally, Robert Fisk and Jean Genet, who witnessed the war crimes that *The Negotiating Table* addresses will provide crucial insights that naturally escape most of the literature on Hatoum that is mainly concerned with a privilege of theory and aesthetics over the way they link with and emerge from practice and lived experience.

Performing in London, 1980s

By the 1980s the (art) world was accustomed to artist émigrés and the communities they formed in their end destinations. However, the romanticism associated with the familiar artist émigré type was challenged when one needed to encounter and incorporate the (im)migrant, the political refugee, the exile en masse. As Voorhees has argued, "identity shaped by more than one history, language, or home was indispensable to the cultural and intellectual climate of 1980s London, and was embedded in the very fabric of its political and social history".[85] Voorhees highlights the rapid increase in immigration in 1960s Britain and to the resulting deferred panic in the 1980s, felt in Prime Minister

[85] Voorhees, 225

Margaret Thatcher's words: "This is an awful lot, and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people of a different culture. If there is any fear that it might be swamped, then people are going to be rather hostile to those coming in".[86] Voorhees refers to the challenges posed by Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall and Kobena Mercer to "concepts of nation and ethnicity as the basis of collective identity" and to Homi Bhabha's, Edward Said's and Gayatri Spivak's efforts "to illuminate diasporic subjectivities through language and the signifying process".[87] Talking about her work in 1987, with specific reference to *The Negotiating Table* (1983/2012) (Fig. 1), a performance based on the atrocities of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), Hatoum highlighted her collaborative "work with black groups in London on shared issues of colonialism, imperialism, racism and the stereotyping of people from other cultures".[88] It was a time when diasporic subjectivity and migrant experience were the object of investigation and cultural production from theorists and artists alike, who were sensitive to and receptive of artistic forms "resistant to received procedures of sociological and historical investigation".[89] This was precisely because it was their collective artistic practice that was shaping them, "sedimented together by the endless pressures of economic exploitation, political racism, displacement and exile".[90] Poststructuralism and postcolonial studies provided fertile ground for the negotiation of transmitted and transmitting culture in a milieu of noticeable flux and change, which in turn offered the chance "to

[86] Ibid., 225
[87] Ibid., 225-26
[88] Archer et al., 127
[89] Voorhees, 226
[90] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 82

reinscribe the repressed histories and social experiences of the historically marginalized" in confrontation with a "nation split within itself".[91]

Racial violence and discrimination were adopted by the Metropolitan Police in the capital and reached a peak in the 1981 "Bloody Saturday" riots in Brixton. Speaking of her *Roadworks* (1985) (Fig. 2) performance, Hatoum talked about the "predominantly black community" of Brixton and of "working 'for' the people in the streets of Brixton rather than 'against' the indifferent, often hostile audiences [she] usually encounter[s] in the art world".[92] For this piece, Hatoum walked around barefoot with a pair of Doc Martens boots tied and attached to her ankles, "a symbol of the fascists" and "what police wear".[93] Hatoum found the "'different nature of the audience very satisfying' and the circumstances of tying her 'personal/autobiographical' work with relevance to the addressed community, 'rare'".[94] She participated in "The Essential Black Art" exhibition in 1988 at Chisenhale Gallery and was part of a group of artists whose work was presented as a challenge to what Britain thought of as "black art" and its incorrect categorization in terms of race. Hatoum did not see her practice "as part of the black struggle" but recognized and appreciated the political stance of "blackness" and got involved with feminist and "activist groups outside the artworld".[95] Hatoum's rare feelings of freedom and satisfaction when performing on the streets of London were critically coupled with site-specific works for "the

[91] Voorhees, 226 and Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 148
[92] Archer et al., 131
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Rasheen Araeen, "The Emergence of Black Consciousness in Contemporary Art in Britain: Seventeen Years of Neglected History" in *The Essential Black Art*, exh. cat., (London: Chisenhale Gallery, 1988), 5 and Archer et al., 9-10

art establishment", where she "wanted to remind the audience that there are different realities that people have to live through".[96] In this way, "the spectator was forced to endure […] [Hatoum's] attempt to locate identity in different geographies at the same time".[97] Whether it was between countries, neighborhoods, galleries and streets or within a much more complicated topographical journey, that of individual and collective psychic reality and fantasy, Hatoum's work was an endurance test for the audience.

The performance works call for an exploration of Hatoum's work with the historical, social and political urgency of which it has been often deprived, and for a much needed and necessary background and context, or, in psychoanalytic terms, a milieu. "One notices a milieu less when one is plunged in it; more so when it is rather briskly altered or when one leaves it" notes the psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche, giving resonance to Britain's belated migratory panic and resultant hostility in the 1980s and to this psychoanalytically informed account of Hatoum's work.[98] "One ends up getting used to a milieu, no longer noticing it" contends Laplanche and Hatoum seems to know this too well.[99] Speaking from a position of someone who not only took notice but was also part of contemporary struggles, Hatoum "in [her] work at that time, was trying to remind people that wars were still raging in many parts of the world".[100] The viewers of Hatoum's performance work in London and elsewhere were in for "a shock of a different

[96] Archer et al., 127, 131
[97] Voorhees, 224
[98] Jean Laplance, as cited in Mignon Nixon, "Eva Hesse Retrospective: A Note on Milieu" *October* 104 (Spring, 2003), 149. See Jean Laplanche, "Transference: Its Provocation by the Analyst" in *Essays on Otherness*, ed. and trans. John Fletcher (London: Routledge, 1999), 217
[99] Ibid.
[100] Hatoum quoted in Archer et al., 13

kind", as Dimitrakaki suggests.[101] They were unaware that Hatoum's "feeling of in-betweeness that comes from not being able to identify totally with [her] own culture or the one in which [she is] living" –an eloquently described psychic condition but which, put in words, forecloses any associated violence and hardship- would enable her to construct performances that would lure audiences in a dangerous set of identifications.[102] It is the performance works of this era that remain to this day largely marginalized in records and analyses of Hatoum's artistic trajectory and even in the literature on Hatoum's later work, her motives still linger as only "quietly political".[103]

"Performance was very attractive to me because I saw it as a revolutionary medium, setting itself apart from the gallery system and the art establishment. It fitted exactly the issue-based work I was beginning to make", Hatoum said of the thirty-five performances she embarked on between 1980-88.[104] These works vary from impromptu actions and improvisations, to carefully prepared and considered actions, sequences, tableaux-vivant performances and "participatory experiments with calculated arrangements of electronic media".[105] Heinrich suggests that a common denominator to the performances is hard to find, but if there is any, "then it is the relationship to the audience", a remark that demands further exploration.[106]

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[101] Dimitrakaki, 92
[102] Hatoum quoted in Guy Brett, "Itinerary" in *Mona Hatoum*, eds. Michael Archer, Guy Brett and Catherine de Zegher, (London: Phaidon, 1997), 36 and Dimitrakaki, 92-95
[103] Dimitrakaki, 92
[104] Heinrich was the first to comprehensively document and publish Hatoum's performance trajectory. Christoph Heinrich, "Artist at Work" in *Mona Hatoum*, exh. cat., ed. Christoph Heinrich (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004), 81
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.

"My work is about my experience of living in the West as a person from the Third World, about being an outsider, about occupying a marginal position, being excluded, being defined as 'Other' or as one of 'Them'", Hatoum stressed in 1987, twelve years after the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War.[107] The Lebanese Civil War, a multifaceted war of numerous militia groups with different political and religious beliefs and aims, lasted from 1975 to 1990 and resulted in hundreds of thousands of casualties and a mass exodus from Lebanon. The core divide of Lebanon's Maronite Christians and their government influence with a large part of Lebanon's Muslim, pan-Arab and left groups who objected to the government's pro-Western ideologies, was closely followed by the influx of displaced Palestinian refugees following the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and its occupation of Palestine in the 1950s. This led to a considerable increase of the Muslim population and thus further polarization in a country that had suffered disintegration and divide during the Cold War, namely in the 1958 Lebanon Crisis between Maronite Christians and Muslims that led to a U.S invasion, Operation Blue Bat, authorized by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon in the late 1970s was largely militarized after the arrival of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), a political and military organization, recognized as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" by the United Nations.[108] These

[107] Archer et al., 127

[108] Madiha Rashid al Madfai, *Jordan, the United States and the Middle East Peace Process, 1974–1991*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993), 21: "On 28 October 1974, the seventh Arab summit conference held in Rabat designated the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and reaffirmed their right to establish an independent state of urgency".

escalating circumstances ignited an arms race amongst different Lebanese political and religious factions and led to sustained armed regional conflicts.[109]

Hatoum, who grew up in Beirut "in a family that had suffered a tremendous loss and existed with a sense of dislocation", was forced into exile in 1975 and created work with "a sense of disjunction".[110] This separateness was a core theoretical and psychical element of the 1980s performances in which both artist and audience found themselves engaged, yet dislocated from "wars […] still waging in many parts of the world".[111] Hatoum talked about *Under Siege* (1982) (Fig. 3), a performance in which "she spent several hours struggling in a slippery, muddy cell", as a work that traced the war as it unfolded: "*Under Siege* happened a week before the Israeli invasion and the siege of Beirut; it was almost like a premonition".[112] The artist, covered in clay in a transparent cell-like structure made of wood and plastic sheeting, was seen by audiences of "Women Live" at the London Film Makers Co-op in London in May 1982 "struggling to stand up, slipping and falling again and again".[113] A sense of disjunction structured this exhaustive action through "sound tapes (on loop) continuously blasting the space from different directions", where multilingual conversations, news reports and revolutionary songs selected by the mute artist, demanded to be heard.[114]

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[109] Voorhees, 223, and Spencer C. Tucker and Priscilla Roberts, *The Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO INC, 2008), 879
[110] Hatoum quoted in Antoni, "Interview with Mona Hatoum"
[111] Heinrich, 83
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid., 93

Viewers of the performance were free to move around and observe the artist's struggle, a choreographic action that Hatoum repeated in a number of works at the time. It was a journey through performative space and time that the members and the audience as a group had to take to discover the plenitude of end destinations available, which were structured around personal and collective, public and private, individual and social identifications in their (dis)engagement with war. Heinrich suggests that these "performances did not come across as agitation or propaganda, because the artist's subjectivity was clearly identifiable each time".[115] The performances indeed were not communicated as propaganda, given the artist's insistence on avoiding didacticism but it is hard to imagine that they did not agitate. In *Under Siege* the artist's body was trapped in a transparent cell-like structure that gradually became curtained from body-smeared clay, while in *The Negotiating Table* the body was firmly wrapped in gauze, delivering concealed subjectivities and agitated identifications rather than "tidy definitions of otherness" for those that were expecting them. Identification as a psychoanalytic concept is useful for "theorising the elusive link between the psychic and the social, traversing as it does the boundary between the two".[116] In these performances, artist, writers and audiences alike were required to be open to the elusive interplay of subjectivity and identification in order to understand what was political *about* identification.

Jabri suggests there is a "particular form of resistance to practices of confinement and discipline" found in Hatoum's work, which carries "a form of self-reflexivity that is aware of the complexities of the present and the dominant social matrixes

[115] Ibid., 97
[116] Botticelli, 327

surrounding the self".[117] In turn, Dimitrakaki's essay on Hatoum's work similarly proposes that her work is aware of contemporary art's focus on self-reflexivity during the 1980s and 1990s, exemplifying "an ambivalent attitude towards art as praxis […] granting the latter a certain urgency".[118] In this way, Hatoum's performance art "emerges as a practice which re-orientates signifiers towards a specific direction, while acknowledging that the achievement of radical directionality entails a process of disordering".[119] The artist's body was placed at the center of both *Under Siege* and *The Negotiating Table* but the performances were not structured with the body as a clear identification target for the audience to hit; instead, any attempts made to secure the artist's and the viewer's subjectivity were caught and redirected in a performative whirlpool of radical and disordering disengagement. "Condemned, confined, constricted, restricted, trapped" wrote Hatoum on the edges of a drawing in preparation for one of her 1980s performances.[120] Hatoum asked the audience "to live in the agonized understanding [s]he must have known very well".[121] Exiles and immigrants, citizens and war-makers, artworld characters and people on the street were asked to endure and understand as an audience; in a web of identifications, everyone was caught observing the prey and the predator.

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[117] Jabri, 37
[118] Dimitrakaki, 92
[119] Ibid.
[120] Heinrich, 96
[121] Adrienne Harris, "Dread is just memory in the future tense" in *First Do No Harm: The Paradoxical Encounters of Psychoanalysis, Warmaking and Resistance*, eds. Steven Botticelli and Adrienne Harris (London: Routledge, 2010), 353

Sabra and Shatila

> -We know, it's not to our liking, and don't interfere.
>
> Message from an Israeli army battalion commander to his men upon learning that Palestinian civilians were being massacred.
>
> September 17, 1982.[122]

Following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, in an area occupied by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), which included the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in Beirut, Phalangist forces, a right-wing, political and paramilitary organization supported by Maronite Christians, were admitted to these camps on September 16, 1982. Mass killings of 700-3,500 civilians, mostly women, children and elderly "some of whom were raped or castrated and killed in the most brutal ways possible" hit the news on September 18, 1982.[123] The IDF was in direct contact with the militia who committed the massacres. Surrounding the camps they granted access to Phalangist forces to enter and sealed off exits to refugees and civilians preventing them from any chance of escape. Following international outcry and a United Nations General Assembly in December 1982 "denounc[ing] the killings, calling them an act of genocide", Israel launched an official inquiry, the Kahan Commission.[124] It was officially confirmed that Israel's Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon, and IDF chief of staff, General Rafael Eitan, invited Lebanese Christian Phalangist militia and the South Lebanon Army (SLA) "to flush out PLO fighters who were supposedly using the refugee

[122] Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 359
[123] Tucker and Roberts, 879
[124] Ibid., 880

camps as safe havens […] [but] were in fact not in evidence".[125] Foreign journalists, including Fisk, documented the indiscriminate "62-hour killing spree" of innocent Palestinians an hour after the perpetrators departed from the camps.[126] In February 1983 the Israeli Supreme Court concluded that "while the Phalangists themselves were directly accountable for the killings, Israeli forces were indirectly responsible [and] Defense Minister Sharon was held directly responsible for the incident".[127] Sharon, Eitan and the director of Israeli military intelligence, Yehoshua Saguy, were asked to resign but no further legal action was taken against them, and in the future, they all enjoyed political careers with Sharon becoming Israel's eleventh prime minister in 2004.[128]

Fragments and Sketches

> This piece was the most direct reference I had ever made to the war in Lebanon. I made this work right after the Israeli invasion and the massacres in the camps, which for me was the most shattering experience of my life.
>
> -Mona Hatoum, 1997. [129]

It is very often that such statements by artists are misread and mislead theoretical and historical conclusions driven by, as Hatoum describes, a "journalistic attitude that wants to explain or validate my work specifically in relation to my background".[130] These attempts frequently result in nonsensical embellishment in press releases describing an exhibition and an artist's practice or worse in

[125] Ibid., 880
[126] Fisk, 359
[127] Tucker and Roberts, 880
[128] Ibid.
[129] Archer et al., p.127
[130] Ibid., 30

retrospective psychobiography through ambiguous efforts to unlock meaning. Responding to news of the Sabra and Shatila massacres from London, Hatoum deployed performance "fuelled by anger and a sense of urgency".[131] "Working in the area of performance which at the time had a subversive edge to it, I was trying to make political comment through my work", said Hatoum, inscribing personal anger, aggression and protest in the public realm while working with political groups in 1980s London.[132] Hatoum's performance work was part of a generation of artists in London whose live art was charged with "the 'unruly polivocality' required to express the experience of identity based on constant movement".[133] Staging the tension of psychic trauma to news of horror and death in an (un)homely "elsewhere", Hatoum found herself feeling shattered away from her motherland. A traumatic assault staged on land that manifested itself as a home or a mother in unconscious fantasy was what fuelled Hatoum for more than a year as she prepared for her first performance.

A "residual definition" for trauma, Mitchell writes, "is that it is a breaking through of protective boundaries in such a violent (either physical or mental) way that the experience cannot be processed: the mind or body or both are breached, leaving a wound or gap within".[134] However, Mitchell argues that "something other than the breaching event" constitutes our response after trauma and it is inextricably linked with language and recognition when one tries to find the words to describe this ripping of body and mind.[135] Hatoum has frequently

[131] Hatoum quoted in Antoni, "Interview with Mona Hatoum"
[132] Archer et al., 131, 134
[133] Voorhees, 224
[134] Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, 9
[135] Juliet Mitchell, "Trauma, Recognition and the Place of Language", *Diacritics* 28, No.4 (Winter, 1998), 121-22

referred to the mind/body split she experienced after her arrival in Britain and "how divorced people were from their bodies, although recently the art word [had] become far more preoccupied with the body".[136] She performed *The Negotiating Table* a year after the massacres took place at SAW Gallery in Ottawa, Canada, in November 1983.[137]

The Negotiating Table involved a yearlong preparation in a complicated environment for Hatoum. The London artworld of the 1980s "favored intellectual inquiry", but it was in a yet uncertain new fascination with the body according to the artist.[138] Hatoum faced the difficulties of being surrounded by "disembodied intellects" and decidedly focused "intensely on the body, first using its products and processes as material for the work, and later using it as a metaphor for society –the social body".[139] What shatters produces pieces by definition. This psychical shattering served as the artist's primal matter for *The Negotiating Table*; steadfast in her theoretical and artistic concerns, in which nothing is taken for granted, Hatoum utilized this shattering to bring together the bodies of the innocent victims, the psychic forces of relentless perpetrators and the fragments of everyone else involved, including those who witnessed the massacre. In the end, the artist laid tied on a table for three hours, while members of the audience surrounded her during the performance, collectively making up "the social body" in their individual separateness and distance. It comes as no surprise that such a feat was in need of some sort of preparation but what exceeded expectations in

[136] Archer et al., 8
[137] Prior to *The Negotiating Table* and following news reports on the Sabra and Shatilla massacres, Hatoum performed *And another summer of...mourning* and *Untitled* in March 1983 and *An hour in the day of another bloody year* in June 1983.
[138] Hatoum quoted in Antoni, "Interview with Mona Hatoum"
[139] Ibid.

this belated art historical examination of *The Negotiating Table* are the preparatory studies Hatoum produced and how divorced these studies are from the artist's habitual sketching groundwork for her other performances. This account is the first to look at *The Negotiating Table* studies closely and in detail, something that has eluded the previous literature on this work. This series of studies clearly portray the usual, violent separation of the psychical from the social register and its consequences in the long-withstanding refusal to understand war in psychic terms.[140]

The Drawings

Prior to the performance itself, Hatoum produced four studies to prepare for *The Negotiating Table* (Figs. 4-7). These studies are very different to the detailed sketches she would usually create for her performances, where she would inscribe evocative words, technical considerations and ideas to reflect on for their construction and duration. Hatoum never exhibited these studies but they were published when Heinrich wrote the first and only comprehensive account of her performance works in 2004. Even though the table is at the center of the compositions, these studies present significant differences in their shared objective to prepare the artist for what was about to follow.

The sequence in which the studies were produced remains uncertain. One of the four "studies", as Heinrich describes them in consultation with Hatoum, largely retains the white background of the fine paper and depicts the table with three

[140] Rosalyn Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq: Three Studies in Art and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 4

figures sitting around it and a figure lying on it, clearly cut in half (Fig. 4). The table and the figures are represented by broad red gouache brushstrokes that bear resemblance to finger painting in this simple yet brutally expressive, almost childlike, drawing of violence. Simple, thick brushstrokes compose the three perpetrators and the table is given a rough outline, whereas its surface only consists of the victim's body on offer for dismembering and apparently suspended on thin air. Hatoum prepared for her performance with an attack on "the fragile wrinkled sheets with gouache […] generating a cartoon-like imagery of ferocious, apocalyptic violence".[141] Red paint dominates this fine sheet of paper, tracing the table and the participants in wide lines, giving them their abstract form, in a way that a child would use a finger dipped in red paint to produce a drawing that is both of the body and of phantasy. The way gouache is applied suggests movement; a more opaque and sophisticated material than children's watercolor, gouache is used to portray an adult, yet horrifically childlike, deathly affair. The hands of the perpetrators are set on the table, ready for action, as the figure on the left takes initiative and reaches forth with its left arm to grab the leg of the victim. The direction of the brushstrokes that form the participants' hands is evident and thus hints at the direction of the dismembering movement in this scene of brutal fantasy.

Red stains float along the bottom part of the sheet, in a study that was obviously meant to be as messy as the violence it angrily depicts and as unruly as the way perpetrators acted in the camps of Sabra and Shatila in 1982. What happened and what is depicted is blood-like, murderous and shared across the world as news of the atrocities in Lebanon broke out. However referential to the war in Lebanon

[141] Nixon, "Spero's Curses", 13

this drawing may be, it is also quite secretive. It is a single action performed in a bloody colour on a white background, framing what feels like a private scene not to be interrupted. Like the sealed off exits to the camps in Beirut that trapped the victims of the massacre, the study's frame captures and implicates the viewer in this lethal feat with one important twist: this crime is to be witnessed. The perpetrators and the victim are faceless, there is no way to anchor their identities; they could be anyone, anywhere at any time, able to engage in this violent act that has been brought to the surface by news reports and in this case by Hatoum. The fine paper of the drawing wrinkles, as gouache is applied and subsequently dries, the bloody color on it remaining almost translucent, giving the impression that this brutal scene rises to the surface of the paper, revealing and igniting a fantasy from deep within. A large black mark to the left re-orientates the table and the action carried out around it to an unconscious level, through the density and size of the black paint that disrupts the red consistency of the drawing, and warns of the darkness that dominates in the rest of the drawing series.

The black mark may be accidental or intentional; it is nevertheless present, tying the depicted scene's rise to the surface down to the level of the paper or even further psychically, in what feels like a "return of the repressed".[142] Hatoum dives to the level of the drives and destructive fantasy to produce bloody drawings in response to war. "I was making small works on paper using bodily fluids and body rejects as materials", says Hatoum describing her work on paper

[142] Jean Laplanche and J.B Pontalis define the "return of the repressed" as a "process whereby what has been repressed –though never abolished by repression– tends to reappear, and succeeds in so doing in a distorted fashion in the form of a compromise". Jean Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), 355

before and during her performance years.[143] In this capacity, Hatoum closely follows Nancy Spero's mode of production of the *War Series* in the 1960s, which the artist produced in response to the waging of the Vietnam War (Fig. 8).

"I would spit and rub" Spero recalls of the works on paper she made in response to the Vietnam War. Like Hatoum, Spero too was "fuelled by anger" and this fury is "unleashed on an external threat and is invoked as a protection, an "exorcism to keep the war away"".[144] Should one focus solely on Hatoum's studies for *The Negotiating Table* they too may appear as an exorcism of violent instincts that often surface in war and everyday life but which are rarely spoken of, admitted or analytically embraced. However, these studies were made to prepare the artist for a different kind of painstaking war, the performance itself. Both artists in their work on paper "incarnate the phantasmic dimension of war, to invoke the infantile, sadistic, often sexualized mania that pervades even the most calculated and controlled form of aggression".[145] As calculated and controlled as the scene depicted in Hatoum's preparatory studies and the performance itself may be, aggression and infantile destruction rise to the surface of a table, in a violent clash of times past and present, where inhibited instinctual impulses return with vengeance. Bringing to light the irrefutable links of infantile sexuality and aggression with the psychical mechanisms of war, Hatoum implicates us all in a return of what shocks us as violent, Other and familiar, and

[143] Archer et al., 8
[144] Nixon, "Spero's Curses", 13
[145] Ibid.

implies that "we ought not to regret it if it has brought us close to the problems of the renunciation of instinct".[146]

There are two drawings in Hatoum's preparatory gouaches for *The Negotiating Table* where the three chairs and the table are clearly occupied (Figs. 5-6). Three figures are "viciously tearing apart the body on the table and gulping down the separate pieces".[147] In one drawing the figures on the chairs appear to be men dressed in black suits, whereas the body lying on the table cannot be readily identified as male or female. The victim's head hangs off the table, deathlike and exhausted with its gaping mouth and lifeless face covered in streams of blood. Red gouache is at the epicenter of this monstrous feast, where the three men dismember and devour the victim's body in what feels like a silent agreement of unbridled impulses in a shared private terrain of violence.[148] The background has now been painted a dark brown color by Hatoum to slightly contrast the devouring men in black suits with their mouths covered with red gouache. These dark surroundings come in sharp contrast with the surface of "The Negotiating Table" that has been painted white and on which an accumulation of red gouache forms a large pool of blood around the dismembered body, where the action is taking place. Hatoum articulates the threshold between background and foreground in the drawing, where liminality dominates over something private and violent that comes to the fore and rises to the white surface of the table, clearly on offer for everyone to witness.

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[146] Sigmund Freud, "Moses and Monotheism" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXIII (1937-1939): Moses and Monotheism, An Outline of Psycho-Analysis and Other Works,* ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 127
[147] Heinrich, 101
[148] Ibid.

It is not just the static body of the victim that is on offer but the vibrant and aggressive force with which the victim is gruesomely taken apart. Every one of the three perpetrators grasps onto a limb, with the suited man on the left looking at the victim's leg in ecstasy and astonishment, while the faces of the remaining two are harder to decipher. This treatment of the face, rendering its facial characteristics riddling and unclear, with a mouth open in ecstasy and as faceless as a portrayal of a ghost, in front of limbs and a ribcage on offer, is reminiscent of Francis Bacon's, *Figure with Meat* (1954) (Fig. 9). Working in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Bacon produced his famous "Pope Series", grotesque, violent and mysterious paintings based on the *Pope Innocent X* (1650) portrait by Diego Velázquez. These works emerged "just as the [Second World War] ended and horrors of the Concentration Camps were revealed".[149] "By linking the pope with these carcasses, Bacon allowed viewers to interpret the pope alternately as a depraved butcher, or as a victim like the slaughtered animal hanging behind him".[150] An interplay of positions, between victim and perpetrator confronting additionally that of the witness, surfaces in both Hatoum's and Bacon's conjuring of "the atmosphere of horror at manmade violence […] with specific references to recent history and historical characters".[151] The events from which Hatoum and Bacon drew inspiration and linked to specific photographic evidence of horror are "secured in the public realm".[152] Trading the Pope's cloth for black suits, Hatoum dresses her perpetrators with similar authority and power to Bacon's protagonist as she also sets them up against flesh and blood. The

[149] Chris Stephens, "Animal" in *Francis Bacon*, Matthew Gale and Chris Stephens eds. (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 91
[150] "Figure with Meat", Art Institute of Chicago, (undated), accessed December 20, 2012, http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/4884
[151] Stephens, 91
[152] Ibid.

violent repercussions of such positions of power are caught in a maze of undermined diplomatic negotiations and determined participation in atrocity, inflicted by men wearing suits or military uniforms. However, being dressed in a suit or being covered in plastic and gauze does not a perpetrator or victim make. Nor does being seated at a table upright feasting on a horizontally laid defenseless body. The victim's severed arm is held by the perpetrator on the right and is perhaps the most vertically imposing element of Hatoum's study. It recalls "the shambles at the scene of mass killings […] [where] the limbs of victims and perpetrators frequently get mixed up".[153] The victim's other hand stretches upwards, as if reaching for divine intervention, but the severed arm is tightly held down to the table's surface by the perpetrator, to where the victim lies. Witnessing this scene, Hatoum's viewer is implicated in considering both positions. One cannot identify with sitting on the chair or lying on the table, since such apparent routes are always intricately tangled and destabilized in Hatoum's work. Moreover, the table in these studies is missing a seat as one side is freely facing and critically addressing the space of the viewer, who thus emerges as a subject that comes across this curious gathering. The upright severed hand captures the viewer's gaze, directs and holds it firmly to the table, setting up a simultaneous examination of both the lateral and vertical dimension of this scene, calling victims, perpetrators and witnesses to come together as subjects, which in the face of violence get mixed up rather than set apart. This peculiar alignment of the subjects of violence hints at the uncomfortable realization that "in adult wars we defeat, kill and rape our peers".[154] Assembling

[153] Adriana Cavarero, *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p.9
[154] Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, xv

victims, perpetrators and witnesses as peers in this encounter, Hatoum examines whether some form of resistance can surface from entwining these subject positions in our fantasied and real lives.

The next drawing finds the perpetrators depicted in white gouache, indicating that their black suits have come off (Fig. 6). This color austerity is quickly overturned as the blood inscribed on their naked bodies further augments the forcefulness of their violent action. These studies have never been exhibited and the few published references to them, only mention the nakedness of the three men depicted with a "harsh expressiveness" participating in a "cannibalistic feast [of] grotesque savageness".[155] What has been missing in these accounts, but also in the historiography of *The Negotiating Table*, is that this attack is not just violent; it is rather that "something violent has become sexualised".[156]

The background is now black, so is the surface of the feast; the men are painted white in their nakedness, the victim red in its suffering. Finally, the chairs make their appearance, announcing the future set up of Hatoum's performance. The central figure is devouring a hand and a leg, the perpetrator on the right grasps the victim's upper body and looks intensely at their face, while the figure on the left chews on a small piece of red gouache. Each of them seems focused and lost in their respective actions but everyone comes together in collective devouring. The perpetrator on the left, despite sharing the table as an equal feasting participant, stands out as he looks smaller, somewhat childlike. This impression grows stronger from the previous drawing too, where it is evident that his posture is significantly minor and more so from the bewilderment in his gaze as he

[155] Heinrich, 101
[156] Juliet Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 135

grasps the victim's foot. But this is no family dinner. Despite the familial unison of suits or nudity in this private dining sphere, this tripartite group is endlessly intertwined leading to no safe conclusions, no exit in sight. The table's surface, the chairs and the background are covered in darkness; what now rises to the surface are the perpetrators: stripped adults and minors consuming the bloody victim and conflating life and death when the red gouache reaches their white bodies, in an analogy with the blood that stains the skin and clothes of war criminals. The perpetrators and the violence they are consumed with are the only ones that are lit by Hatoum in this study. In this private and dark sphere, the act of devouring the victim's body comes to the fore. Murderousness manifests both from afar, as news of the camp massacres of war crimes emerge, and from within Hatoum's studies that trace the unconscious level of infantile phantasy and the world of object relations, where sex and violence come together. The study's scene is hard to bear, agonizing to look at and describe and closely follows the images of the bloodshed of Palestinian refugees in Sabra and Shatila in 1982, where victims were raped and massacred for the duration of two days. In an effort to bring to light the complicity of Lebanese Christian Phalangist militia, Israeli authorities and the voices of Western leaders spearheading posthumous condemnations of atrocity Hatoum depicted the dynamic return of neglected and undermined psychic forces, placing them on the table; where the victim's blood-soaked red hand reaches out, through the darkness, to the white edges of the drawing, to where the black background colour fades, to consciousness.

Hatoum often operates at borderlines, shedding light on oppressive binary configurations and the point that separates and structures them, with the urge to disorient and confuse rather than deconstruct and unravel. The study's unpainted

areas at the edge of the paper follow Hatoum's preparation for the performance in the next one too (Fig. 7). These unpainted areas, bring into focus the black background of *The Negotiating Table* as a cloud of fantasy that engulfs those who are caught within it, and summons those left on the edges, thinking that they were secure as witnesses. The examination of the scene, the attempt to understand it while participating in and through fantasy, are left as the only options for the audience, since in occupying the margins they are in danger of being engulfed in darkness. Viewers are required to assess their endurance to "unbearable" witnessing and the stretch of their desire for inactive, perpetrating voyeurism. The perpetrators have disappeared and the chairs are now fully formed, drawn with pencil and left untreated, so that the fine paper comes through intact. The table is also formed in pencil and its surface is produced by the surrealist technique of frottage developed by Max Ernst. Rubbing the paper over a textured surface forms this characteristic pattern, reserved by Hatoum for the table in this study. Frottage has traditionally been linked with an interest in the exploration of fantasy and the unconscious and this sets the scene for Hatoum's preparatory study too. Lifting something from the unconscious, beneath the paper, underneath the table, Hatoum forms the surface on which the now wrapped, tied and bloodstained victim lies. The victim is also reduced in size and looks like a baby, lying on a bed of unconscious fantasy, on the hard texture produced by Hatoum's frottage, on an inconvenient bed of psychical, social and historical material that support this now infantile-looking body. Already wounded it is still on offer, on a inverted cradle, lit by a large lampshade to make it visible and surrounded with available seats ready to be occupied; the table is finally set.

The performance

Imagine yourself walking into a dark space with your attention instantly grabbed by its illuminated centre, where your eyes meet an object on a table (Fig. 10). At first you cannot figure out what this form on the table is, so you shift your focus away from this "vanishing point" to examine the scene; the chairs around the table, the lamp right above it, the circle of light it creates around it, and, of course, the soundtrack, composed of detached and agitated spoken statements that after a while start to repeat. Imagine now that you decide to get closer. Moving away from the darkness of the room and into the circle of light you see plastic, red paint and rope, all tightly wrapped around a body-like object with bloody entrails. The form is further wrapped with gauze, lying on a white cloth on the surface of the table that is stained red with what looks like blood and spatter from the injuries incurred within. What is not immediately apparent from a distance and demands closer inspection is the subtle movement in what otherwise seems and feels like a static scene; the object's only movement is the regular breath it takes, "the only indication of muted life".[157] This is the moment when you decide to get closer, walk around it or move away.

In November 1983 at the Saw Gallery in Ottawa, Hatoum performed *Bars, Barbs and Borders: The Negotiating Table*, the initial title of the work, and constructed the space that was imagined in the preparatory studies. Hatoum played with the audience in this darkened room and attempted to make them consider the implications of the "mind-body split" that was so alien to her in the 1980s after she had arrived in London.[158] Hatoum, "dissatisfied with work that just appeals

[157] Roussel, "Hatoum approach brings urgency"
[158] Hatoum quoted in Archer et al., 8

to your intellect and does not actually involve you in a physical way" decided to use the body as "the axis of our perceptions".[159] "A photograph has two dimensions, so does a television screen; neither can be walked through", wrote Jean Genet, one of the first people to witness the camp massacres in Beirut.[160] A preparatory study, of course, cannot be walked through either, and so Hatoum moved from paper to action. The performance was repeated in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States during 1983-84.[161] It was also re-enacted in 2012 as part of the sixth Meeting Points Festival, titled "Locus Agonistes: Practices and Logics of the Civic", which took place in Brussels, Berlin, Athens, Beirut and Amman, despite Hatoum's conviction in the past that she was finished working with performance as a medium. Gone were the bars, the barbs and the borders both from the title of the work and as structural elements that surrounded Hatoum's body in the first few performances in 1983. In 2012, it was decided that the audience would be in an even more direct confrontation with the performance's violent scene.

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[159] Ibid.

[160] Jean Genet, "Four Hours in Chatila", *Radio Islam* (undated), trans. Daniel R. Dupecher and Martha Perrigaud, accessed February 1, 2013, http://www.abbc.net/solus/JGchatilaEngl.html.
As Rose notes, Genet's "famous report on the Sabra and Chatila massacres of 1982, 'Quatre heures à Chatila', breaks a writing block that had lasted sixteen years". See Jacqueline Rose, *Proust Among the Nations: From Dreyfus to the Middle East* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 151.

[161] The performance was repeated at N.A.C. St. Catherine's, Canada, November 24, 1983; The Western Front, Vancouver, December 5, 1983; "2nd International Festival of Performance", South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell, Berkshire, June 23, 1984 and Franklin Furnace Gallery, New York, November 29, 1984. Heinrich, 101

The Table

Hatoum's body, used by the artist, according to Heinrich, as "a metaphor for silent suffering and personal powerlessness", laid on the table available for examination and consumption.[162] The artist's body was enclosed in and surrounded by rope, paint, plastic sheeting and animal entrails; structural elements of the performance setting that Hatoum used to indicate that this body had sustained torture and undergone brutal confinement. Keeping in mind that the body was additionally surrounded by barbed wire in the initial version of the work, the metaphorical alignment of Hatoum's body with the bodies of the victims within the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in Beirut becomes clear. It could be argued that the artist receiving news of the events from afar occupied and subjected herself to the position of the victim, but this reading is at best unstable. During Hatoum's residency at the Western Front, an artist-run center in Vancouver, Canada, where she performed *The Negotiating Table* in 1983, the artist also produced *So Much I Want to Say* (1983) (Fig. 11), a video in which her mouth and face are gagged and obscured by a pair of male hands in close-up, as she attempts to speak, "while her voice on the sound track repeats over and over again the words of the title".[163] It was clear that Hatoum had many things to say about the atrocities that took place in Lebanon, but what remained obscured was that her "quietly political" motives had a subversive and troubling edge.

In a leaflet published by the artist to accompany her residency tour in Canada, Hatoum answers a direct question with a psychically charged fantasy:

[162] Heinrich, p.104
[163] Brett, 42

> "Do you visit your parents often"? "It's a nightmare when I do. I went to Beirut looking for my parents and in the wreckage of their home I found two plastic boxes – a pink one and a blue one. I opened up the blue box and it was full of tiny toy soldiers that exploded out into the air around me becoming a cloud of flies that took on the shape of a black gravestone – "we were only obeying orders!" I heard them say. There were two names on the stone, but as I strained to read them they began to pulsate in a rhythmic heartbeat that faded away. I struck out at the black stone, trying to smash it and agonizing screams rose up around me. When I turned back to the pink box, the lid was open disgorging human entrails in an endless stream. I heard my mother's voice saying: "They were disembowelling pregnant women, that's why we had to leave".[164]

Hatoum's dream manifested both in her performance and the actual events in Lebanon. The animal entrails on the table were positioned around the artist's stomach, an assault that was also reported by Fisk from within the camps, where perpetrators tried to kill unborn children.[165]

Robbed of a baby, the masked body lying on the table in the fetal position is of unknown identity (Fig. 12). The table, in its structural and theoretical capacity, offers a body to feast upon visually and psychically. It invites a Kleinian psychoanalytic reading of object relations, which for Klein were frequently defined in terms of aggression and orality, phantasmatic introjection and incorporation. According to Klein, infants are, from the outset, inclined to destroy their objects of love and envy through their own aggression, violent means and destructive impulses.[166] The first objects available to them are "a series of part-objects –breast, milk, penis, children, womb- to which the infant fantasizes the connection of other part-objects –mouth, teeth, urine, feces- in frenzied attacks enacting, according to Klein, the force of the death drive".[167] The body on the table appears to have been hit by the force of the death drive as

[164] Undated documentation retrieved from the artist's archive.
[165] "Someone had slit open the woman's stomach, cutting sideways and then upwards, perhaps trying to kill her unborn child". Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 362
[166] Melanie Klein, *Envy and Gratitude* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1975), 273
[167] Mignon Nixon, "Bad Enough Mother", *October* 71 (Winter, 1995), 81

it stands simultaneously as a mother robbed of a baby and as an infantile body in the fetal position. The body and the table, by their structure and arrangement "resist the integrity and vertical orientation of the adult body, operating instead at the level of the infantile drive".[168] This orientation and libidinal investment appear "lateralized", allowing Hatoum to construct a fantasied horizontal bridge that connects the artist with the victims in Lebanon in a dark performance space in shared physical and psychical "positions".[169]

Years later another bridge was created. Hatoum decided to re-enact *The Negotiating Table* during the 6th Meeting Points Festival in a number of cities across Europe and the Middle East. A different actor in each city performed each re-enactment during the traveling festival. *The Negotiating Table* is a task of great physical and mental dedication and exhaustion and the artist's body is challenged at best. George Symeonidis, the actor who reenacted the work at the Onassis Cultural Centre in Athens, Greece in March 2012, recalls that the audience did not realize he was alive while as a performer he was in great pain trying to keep still on the table.[170] "When my hand was falling out of position because of the pain, an assistant would come to me through the darkness and

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[168] Ibid.

[169] Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, 17. "Lateralised" here refers to Mitchell's psychoanalytic theory of siblings and the realization that sameness arises from minimal difference as structured by the "law of the mother" and the precondition of seriality in groups. The "law of the mother" is posed opposite and examined together with Lacan's "law of the father" and it concerns numeracy rather than language. "The mother has enforced, but the lateral relationship itself instigates its own processes of managing sameness through constructing difference", Mitchell holds, 53. This model will be further investigated in the second chapter of the thesis.

[170] This part of the chapter is strongly related to my personal experience of the reenactment of *The Negotiating Table* in Athens in 2012 and the conversations I had with George Symeonidis, who kindly agreed to talk to me about his experience as a performer, his relationship to the artist and his memories from his interactions with the audience.

instruct me to adjust it", George recollects.[171] "Wherever my body was touching the table the pain was immense. I decided to fire-up my mind, to think a new thought each time I felt I was hurting in order to overcome it; and then the pain traveled to my mind", he added.[172] A network of performers across decades, countries and backgrounds was created, aligning more bodies with the victims of the massacre. Pain traveled through history and from body to mind for Hatoum and the descendant performers who continued to critically stage the persistent "mind-body split": "a violence in the symbolic order that fatally separates culture, history and politics from 'the realm of love and the body where the mother carries, bears, and tends her children'".[173] "Pregnant women will give birth to terrorists; the children when they grow up will be terrorists", said one of the Phalangists involved in the massacre when questioned by Israelis in West Beirut in 1982.[174] If the performer's body is a small representation of the numerous victims' bodies in the camps, then, as Morgan suggests examining Hatoum's early works, her familiar distortion of scale "allows Hatoum to reveal what is concealed or held in abeyance –ideologically, materially, and aesthetically".[175] Through material and aesthetic perception Hatoum illuminated via the position of the victim just how immense the ideological distortion of the perpetrators was when they committed the crimes.

[171] George Symenonidis in conversation with the author, January 3, 2013, Athens, Greece.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Jane Gallop, *Thinking Through the Body* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 2
[174] Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 359
[175] Morgan, 1

"The revelation is never complete, and it engenders deep discomfort on the part of the viewer", Morgan suggests.[176] In this way, "Hatoum herself, as performer, is the site of conflict" and the body on the table becomes "the system of measurement of all judgments of scale".[177] Thinking of the body on the table as a "stand-in" for the bodies of victims is too neat a conclusion when scale and judgment are taken into consideration; after all this is the artist's or the performer's body and not the sculptural objects that Morgan refers to.[178] Hatoum created "a juxtaposition of two elements, one referring to the physical reality and the brutality of the situation, and the other to the way it is represented and dealt with in the West".[179] "An existential metaphor was set against a concrete historical background by means of a sound-collage", as the artist lay wounded on the table.[180]

What cannot be escaped in the room is the blasting soundtrack from the loudspeakers that the artist manipulated. On the off chance someone did not know of the massacre, Hatoum made sure that they heard about it when entering the room of *The Negotiating Table*. "Thatcher's regal 'it is all very tragic indeed', Reagan's smooth 'the hard work of diplomacy can now go forward' and all the other catchphrases of international debate were hammered into one's head as the victim expired on the negotiating table".[181] Combining hearing and sight, a powerful antithesis comes forward. The muted artistic and apparently victimised

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[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid., 1, 10.
[178] Roussel in her performance review reports: "The show left no doubt as to what specific form of oppression [Hatoum] was dealing with, and where her sympathies lie, not with any […] ideology, but with the victims". Roussel, "Hatoum approach brings urgency"
[179] Heinrich, 101
[180] Ibid.
[181] Roussel, "Hatoum approach brings urgency"

body lies beneath voices that alternate between composed detachment and abrupt aggression, enhancing the hazy conditions of this already splitting fantasy field. At the centre of the room lies Hatoum's literal muteness but also fantasized speech, embodying the political urgency to present and simultaneously protest the violent splitting of individual from social subjectivity. Hatoum examines the implications of what Krauss has called, in reference to Eva Hesse's work, "a retreat from language" to levels of experience that are "beyond or beneath speech".[182]

Manipulating the statements that make up the soundtrack of the performance, each sentence is doubled, superimposed and at times echoed, emphasizing and breaking the silence. The preparatory studies and the performance clearly link the body on the table with speaking and eating; there is a silent dismembered victim and perpetrators that attack with hands and teeth. These actions enact what Nixon has described in relation to the work of Louise Bourgeois and Rona Pondick as "the experience of the body riven by the drives, an experience that much other recent feminist work has also investigated".[183] The negotiating table becomes a kitchen table and the artist complicates familiar familial relationships, perpetrators and victims and table manners. The table is at the artist's service for negotiating war crimes and domestic activities, the latter being a theoretical space that concerns Hatoum throughout her subsequent installation work. And,

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[182] In her discussion of Eva Hesse's *Contigent* (1969) Krauss suggests that the work "delivered a message of privacy, of a retreat from language, of a withdrawal into those extremely personal reaches of experience that are beyond, or beneath, speech". Krauss, 28.

[183] Nixon, *Bad Enough Mother*, 81. Nixon refers to the work of Louise Bourgeois and Rona Pondick in the early 1990s. It is my argument here that this tendency can be observed a decade earlier as well in the performances of Hatoum during the 1980s.

as Ahmed suggests in her work on the phenomenology of tables, "to use the table that supports domestic work to do political work (including the work that makes explicit the politics of domestic work) is a reorientation device".[184] Silence and violence, words and food are reoriented as signifiers by the passive performing body lying on a table, the same body that also designed and studied this environment on a domestic or artist table in advance.

"Eating might produce a complex fantasy of incorporating a good object and of devouring a bad one – of cutting an object into bits that, once swallowed, might turn into a swarm of internal persecutors", Nixon writes in relation to Louise Bourgeois' *The Destruction of the Father* (1974) (Fig. 13) with which *The Negotiating Table* (Figs. 14-15) is in clear dialogue. In Bourgeois' oral sadistic desire to dismember and eat the body on offer, there is, too, the desire to eat her father's words; a feminist strategy imbued with urgency and a means to expel the violently authoritative, patriarchal speaking agent to silence, to reclaim speech. As Nixon suggests, "in order to shut the father up it is necessary to eat him up", and the "withdrawal from language is not so much private or personal as resistant".[185] Dramatizing the body's muteness under the belated and overbearing statements from the speakers, as well as "war's hysterical recourse to action in preference to speech", Hatoum reminds viewers that a massacre has gone unpunished.[186] In eating the words of Western leaders Hatoum incorporated troubling sound bites, pieces that transformed to internal persecutors and subsequently expelled them outside the performing body to be doubly hunting

[184] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 61
[185] Nixon, "Bad Enough Mother", 74 and "Eating Words", *October* 22, no.2 (1999), 59
[186] Nixon, "Spero's Curses", 20

and haunting those who remain unscathed. Hatoum violently performs the suppression of her speech and insists on registering this very disruption as speech.[187] Just as the artist introjects these statements and expels them to the darkness, she feeds her audience words: words spoken by Western leaders making them complicit in crime, in feasting upon the victim in silence. The body on the table becomes "the site of conflict" in which the victim is wounded and the artist perpetrates her viewers. The centre of the dark room thus becomes this performative vortex that attracts everyone around the table who felt safe in "fixed and easily defined" identity positions, to feed them words that lose their meaning as they too are dragged down beneath speech.

The Chairs

"The chair allows me to reach the table, to cover it with my arms" writes Ahmed in her work on the queer phenomenology of objects in which she closely examines the table in its structural and theoretical capacity and potential.[188] Ahmed notes that phenomenology, queer studies, feminist theory and critical race theory, together with Marxism and psychoanalysis, have shared concerns in "how objects and bodies acquire orientations in part by how they 'point' to each other" and this is certainly the case with *The Negotiating Table* and how it is designed and installed as a performance by Hatoum.[189]

[187] Nixon, "Eating Words", 67-68. Nixon refers to Benjamin Buchloh's suggestion that in Nancy Spero's *Codex Artaud* (1972) "the subject is not recognized as a speaker, and yet speaks". It is my argument that in *The Negotiating Table*, Hatoum "speaks" through the borrowed words of the soundtrack, even if the performing body lies silently on the table.
[188] Ahmed, 5
[189] Ibid., 43

The chairs that surround the table are at once available and occupied, inhabited and haunted by perpetrators who come and go, in and out of focus, appearing and disappearing (Fig. 16-17). The chairs have been occupied by men in dark suits and their naked, ghostlike renditions in the preparatory studies and by real men and women whose "negotiating" statements are heard by the audience in the performance room. "The talk of peace plans drawn up around 'civilized' conference settings struck one as fantasies on paper while the reality was barbaric mayhem" wrote the Canadian press in 1983 for the performance at SAW Gallery.[190] Referring to the supposed peace talks of the soundtrack, Erskine also, ironically and inadvertently linked them to Hatoum's studies that were not exhibited, as fantasy once again dominated paper and body.

The psychoanalyst André Green has suggested that "absence is the precondition for fantasy" and the initial occupants that come to the viewer's mind for these empty seats are the people who negotiate, the voices that are coming out from the loudspeakers.[191] "The Middle East, as I said, is vital to secure our economic wellbeing", "we spent billions and billions of dollars for arms overseas", "we must be more determined than ever, that they cannot take over that vital and strategic area of the earth" and "they only nothing [sic] to offer but words, angry words" are statements that one can hear among the phrases that Hatoum manipulated, so that they were overlapping, skipping and doubling in parts while the whole soundtrack was repeated on a loop. These statements implicate the American and allied forces in their shared responsibility of the camp massacres, since they left west Beirut earlier than anticipated, having promised the PLO that

[190] Erskine, 84
[191] André Green quoted in Mitchell, "Trauma, Recognition, and the Place of Language", 123

the Israelis would not enter the city if there were no guerrillas present. Agitated statements of wartime geopolitical expansion, coupled with shocked news reports and detached political consolations in the face of revealed war crimes, played like a broken record.

Freud has examined the "compulsion to repeat" as a phenomenon present in the behavior of children, war neuroses, hysteria and in psychoanalytic treatment as such, linking it to the most intimate of instincts and considering it capable of overriding the pleasure principle.[192] These doubled and repeated statements that were "hammered into one's head as the victim expired on the negotiation table" fall under this compulsory feeling to sadistically and repeatedly relive hell.[193] Those who physically or psychically –through the performance's imaginary trespass- occupy these seats are mouthing words, which, like daggers, attack the victim in looped, death-like repetition.[194] The occupants may be physically absent from their seats but they are corporeally present through voices: whether they are those of leaders "negotiating" from the loudspeakers or the dialogues between the viewers circling the prey on the table. The voices gather around the performing body, perceived as a victim, and manifest as bodies through the artist's perpetrating authoring of the work that invites members of the audience

[192] Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII (1920-1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works,* ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 3, 22

[193] Roussel, "Hatoum approach brings urgency"

[194] Through the resistance of the "compulsion to repeat" to the pleasure principle, Freud was led to the formulation of the death instinct ten years later in "Civilization and its Discontents". Sigmund Freud, "Civilization and its Discontents", *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI (1920-1922): The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents and Other Works,* ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 118-20

to consider whether they would take a seat around the table. "I wanted the visual aspect of the work to engage the viewer in a physical, sensual, maybe even emotional way; the associations and search for meaning come after that", Hatoum has suggested.[195] Getting closer to the table invites the fantasy of taking a seat, and in doing so, those who amuse it are imaginatively associated with Western leaders, Phalangists, Israelis, allied military forces; perpetrators. Like Genet's feelings of disorientation within the camps, sitting down in the performance room means to find oneself at "the center of a compass whose quadrants contained hundreds of dead […][while] the mind can't get rid of this 'invisible vision': what was the torturer like? Who was he? I see him and I don't see him".[196] Thinking of ourselves occupying the chairs, the body on the table becomes a victim and Hatoum as the author of the work creates a fantasy cloud of repetition that engulfs the viewer in perpetrating reiterations. Audience members are subjected to reliving a traumatic moment of history that has been left unresolved. "Repetition is a transference of the forgotten past" Freud suggests and further emphasizes that one "yields to the compulsion to repeat, which now replaces the impulsion to remember".[197] Hatoum punishes the audible culprits of Sabra and Shatila and the fantasized embodiments of perpetrators in the performance room by making them repeat sentences devoid of meaning, responsibility and accountability that have sentenced thousands to death. The only way of curbing "the compulsion to repeat and […] turning it into a motive

[195] Although Hatoum here refers to *Current Disturbance* (1996), she often repeats this conviction about her work, which, arguably *The Negotiating Table* also instigates in the viewer. Quoted in Antoni, "Interview with Mona Hatoum"
[196] Genet, "Four Hours in Chatila"
[197] Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through", *Sigmund Freud, Volume XII (1911-1913): The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works,* ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 151

for remembering" is through the potential and dynamics of transference in analysis, Freud declares, but the room of *The Negotiating Table*, in its rich transferential exchange, does not offer such a clear pathway.[198] In this case repetition is not turned into a motive for remembering but used to repeatedly relive the horror that those statements unleashed. Like the Furies of Greek mythology, the female deities of vengeance that were often imagined as voices in one's head and punishing sinners repeatedly even after their death, Hatoum distorts and repeats these voices not to resolve the traumatic past, but to underline the political and psychical mechanisms that allow it to be repeated.[199]

Sitting around the table means being directly linked to the attacked body in a very clear way since the lamp above the table is not of a negotiating tone but of a strong interrogating light (Fig. 17). Phalangist forces were later confirmed as those directly responsible for the massacre and "it is an irony –but an important one, nonetheless- that the only nation to hold a serious official enquiry into the massacre, albeit flawed, was Israel".[200] Sharon and numerous members of the Israeli military forces were held indirectly responsible for securing entrance to the perpetrators and no escape to victims, but were never brought to justice. Imagining those "indirectly responsible" sitting around the table and the body, which in the beginning was surrounded by barbed wire, another terrifying irony arises. The refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila are in direct dialogue with the

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[198] Ibid.

[199] The Furies (Erinyes), deities of vengeance in Greek mythology, also appear in Dante's *Inferno*. Persecuting crimes such as oath breaking, disrespect, injustice and murder they would punish sinners repeatedly, even after their death, until they finally showed remorse.

[200] Robert Fisk, "The Forgotten Massacre", *The Independent* (September 15, 2012), accessed January 3, 2013, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/the-forgotten-massacre-8139930.html

Nazi extermination camps in an aggressive game of identity politics between victim and perpetrator.[201] Hatoum's decision to remove the barbed wire from the performance and its title avoids the didacticism she does not care for and allows the viewer's associations and search for meaning to be open ended; she lets the furniture do the job.

Tables and chairs "wait for some bodies more than others", Ahmed suggests.[202] Once settled into position perpetrators wait for their objects of aggression and in Sabra and Shatila Israeli soldiers that surrounded the camps were heard saying: "Stay off the streets, we are only looking for terrorists. Stay off the streets. We will shoot".[203] "The Israelis were instructing the dead to stay off the streets", reported Fisk when he visited the camps.[204] The perpetrators were waiting for bodies that could not stand up, that were already murdered and for bodies who were in fact not in evidence. Israeli officers were walking manically up and down the streets looking for terrorists. "Terrorists, terrorists, terrorists. The word came up in every sentence, like a punctuation mark".[205] When words lose their meaning, and war agents hunt for phantom bodies to attack, we are taken back to the Kleinian subject in whom fantasy is to be understood as a bodily operation in "an immediate and fragmented bodily experience unmediated by language".[206]

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[201] Fisk also pondered on the analogy when he met an Israeli soldier in 1983: "Look I said, forgive me for saying it like this, but there are scenes in there that look like something out of Treblinka. It was the first comparison I could think of to what I had just witnessed […] He could at least have pointed out –correctly- that there was no comparison in scale between what had happened in Chatila and what happened in Treblinka. But he did not. He had to pretend that he did not know what was in Chatila". Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 367

[202] Ahmed, 59

[203] Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 368

[204] Ibid.

[205] Ibid., 369

[206] Nixon, "Bad Enough Mother", 73

"We were only obeying orders" the soldiers say in Hatoum's dream and reappear as toys in her sculptures installations, such as *Misbah* (2006-7) and *Infinity* (2009) (Figs. 18-19). The "phantasmic dimension of war [characterized by] the infantile, sadistic, often sexualized mania that pervades even the most calculated and controlled forms of aggression" is invoked by actual perpetrators this time, who in the name of misleading orders look for non-existing terrorists and participate in wartime rape.[207] The recurring image of the toy soldier in Hatoum's work "is not surprising considering the number of wars the artist has witnessed in her lifetime", Salwa Mikdadi suggests.[208] But the surprise does not lie there nor was the artist's intention so direct. It is worth noting that along with toy soldiers, toy grenades appear in Hatoum's installations too. *Nature morte aux grenades* (2006-7) (Fig. 20) consists of a table on top of which the artist has arranged numerous brightly colored crystal grenades that, from a distance, look like baby rattles. The grenades that appear as playful sculptural objects or the soldier that emerge as lit figures on the walls of a dark exhibition room creatively address the infantile fantasies of aggression that end up being warfare's exploitation objects. As Nixon describes:

> At the extremes of aggressive fantasy, as […] Klein observed, the body in the grip of the drives experiences itself as an annihilating force. […] The body, or more precisely the body-in-pieces, fragmented and in turmoil, wreaks indiscriminate destruction on the entire world –a world that is for the infant, synonymous with the maternal body.[209]

Before her material focus on fantasies of aggression in sculpture and installation, Hatoum addressed the subjects that experience the grip of the drives and the

[207] Nixon, "Spero's Curses", 16
[208] Salwa Mikdadi, "The State of Being in Mona Hatoum's Work" in *Mona Hatoum*, exh. cat., (Amman: Darat al Funun – The Khalid Shoman Foundation, 2008), 61
[209] Nixon, "Spero's Curses", 16

destruction that they can unleash from the maternal position through performance.

She lay on the table with her belly imaginatively slit open and missing a phantom child, linking fantasy and practice with the real events that took place in those camps that perhaps no sculptural object could sufficiently communicate. The feminist politics of assuming a maternal position to speak about war was also highlighted by Genet during his visit to the camps, where he remembered the women of the Palestinian resistance he came across in 1971 in one of his travels: "Heroes! What a joke! I gave birth and spanked five or six of them who are in the jebel. I wiped their bottoms. I know what they are made of, and I can make some more", one woman said to him.[210] Even though these women referred to PLO men, not responsible for what happened in Sabra and Shatila, speaking as mothers they underscored that so long as war and violence par excellence or their discourses are imagined as the exclusive terrain of masculine action and thought, then the patriarchic narratives that will emerge will only perpetuate further aggression and we are missing the point that, more often than not, they are ridiculous.

"If making a feminist point returns us to the table, then the terms of its appearance will be different. It might be that quite a different table comes into view", Ahmed proposes.[211] Summoning the agents of the atrocity and the viewers of the performance to gather around a fantasied childless mother on a table, Hatoum creates an environment in which perpetrators and victims could become speaking subjects in their shared experience of violence, if it all starts

[210] "Jebel" means "mountain' in Arabic. Genet, "Four Hours in Chatila"
[211] Ahmed, 62

from the cradle, or, in this case, a cot turned on its head and used as a table. "Hi George, I'm Mona", Symeonidis, the re-enactment performer, heard through the darkness in Athens in 2012. "Thank you for doing this. I am sorry", Hatoum said to him. "She was asking how I was and if I was doing ok and my attempts to reply were moans and grunts. I didn't see her; I only heard her voice as I was lying on the *bed*", Symeonidis recalls.[212] It appears that perpetrators, victims and witnesses need no table to convene in violence. The point to meet and negotiate keeps changing as our eyes open and close in the performance room; the conflict is elsewhere. Performing on the table the danger of the renunciation of instinct, Hatoum communicates the need for an embodied understanding of violence and stages a "return of the repressed that has to be worked for rather than defended against".[213]

The light

"Did you realize that there was a woman standing over you for one whole hour?" Symeonidis was asked by one of the performance invigilators.[214] He had not, but apparently the woman had made an impression on others in the room. Reviews of the 1983 performance in Ottawa spoke of "absurd behavior" from audiences who at first "crowded around the victim on the table, examining it on an impulse not unlike the ghoulish curiosity of those who stop to look at a car accident".[215] Audience reactions were similar in 2012 as people approached the table to take a

[212] George Symenonidis in conversation with the author, January 3, 2013, Athens, Greece.
[213] Frosh, 240
[214] George Symenonidis in conversation with the author, 3 January 2013, Athens, Greece.
[215] Erskine, 84

closer look at what was resting on it, as Symeonidis recalls. Spectatorship was structured on decision-making, viewers would either get closer, perhaps circling the body on the table, or they would stay away from it.

The Negotiating Table has been described as a "live work" by Hatoum as opposed to her other performances, while Heinrich called it a "tableau vivant" with its "atmosphere of paralyzing coldness due to the complete absence of movement and the blinding overhead light".[216] The limited literature on this performance suggests that this is a work of "absolute stasis", "no development" that forces viewers to stay behind and ponder on their own passivity.[217] This is a problematic conclusion that nullifies the audience's reaction, the viewer as an integral element to the work, as well as the conjured or actual bodies that materialize within this performance, perhaps with greater impact than its static furniture. The stasis, paralysis and lack of development that Brett and Heinrich detect are barely scratching the surface of this work and avoid directing light onto its rich unconscious pool that is in flux.

Those who moved closer to examine the table and the body found themselves within a circle of light. The intensity of the light and the circle it creates in the room interrogates its darkness and has alarming potentiality. "This effect is heightened to the real possibility of getting too close, of becoming the imagined victim of oneself, of getting hurt. In this sense the imagined body is also always my body, the confinement, my confinement", wrote Desa Philippi for *The Light at the End* (1989) (Fig. 22), one of Hatoum's first installations after her

[216] Heinrich, 101
[217] Brett, 43 and Heinrich, 101

performance years.[218] In a similar interplay of light and dark, Hatoum's viewers in this installation are required to consider how close they can get to the illuminated and fiery metal bars in the end that exude dangerous heat, while imagining someone else or themselves incarcerated behind them. In *The Negotiating Table*, the wrapped body on the table, with its skin concealed behind layers of gauze, challenges the viewer's identification with a specific subject position. Projecting one's own inner victim onto the horizontal body's injured skin is not an option; the viewer is there to stand up and witness, like the incorporeal, directed light.

It took a long time for word to get out about what was happening in Sabra and Shatila and after three days of uninterrupted murderous actions, the first to enter the camps were journalists who saw perpetrators in "cleanup" operations after having learned that their crimes were being reported and that people knew what was happening. Genet, one of the first witnesses, remembers a dialogue with a Lebanese soldier that took place as he was leaving the camps: "He looked at my passport, and said to me in French: -'Have you just been there?' He pointed to Chatila. –'Yes'. –'And did you see?' –'Yes'. –'Are you going to write about it?' –'Yes'. He gave me back my passport".[219] Seeing apparently was not witnessing enough; to witness was to become something more than just seeing and leaving. Yet no appropriate or substantial witnessing action was found in the reports from Sabra and Shatila. Writing about it was also downgraded within the camps when Fisk encountered a Palestinian woman on the street: "'Got some good pictures, have you?', she asked. 'Got some good things to write? Is everything all right for

[218] Desa Philippi, "Do Not Touch" in *Mona Hatoum*, exh. cat., (Bristol: Arnolfini, 1993), 12
[219] Genet, "Four Hours in Chatila"

you? It's a nice day, isn't it?', the woman asked again".[220] Like Fisk, "Genet is struggling with the issue posed to him as a writer by the Palestinians", as Rose highlights, "the obligation of language to a reality that it also betrays".[221] Genet spent four hours in Shatila as the title of his article indicates; time is of the essence. "Timeless –these things happen everywhere- they also belong to their time. The exact number of days, the silence, the days it took for the news to emerge –all are a crucial part of the story. Language must be bent to the unrepresentable", Rose argues in reference to the massacres.[222] When reporters entered the camps, the morning sun made everything clear and hard to bear, and, perhaps, the light of *The Negotiating Table* offers a similar kind of clarity that interrogates the dark tactics of war and the audience on their capacity to endure witnessing.

The victims of Sabra and Shatila, the ones that survived, demanded more from the external witnesses for no words or pictures could adequately convey what had happened. "'There is no doubt', [Genet] writes in *Un Captif amoureux* (1986), 'that the Palestinians precipitated a breakdown of my vocabulary'".[223] Those who entered had to devote time and to walk around the camps to discover bodies everywhere and at arms length. Being close to victims for a long time destabilizes your perception of your self as witness, as well as how others see you or listen to what you have to say. "Please burn them, Mr. Robert. They are no good", Fisk was told the next morning by his cleaning lady who refused to

[220] Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 368
[221] Rose, *Proust Among the Nations*, 172
[222] Ibid., 171
[223] Rose, *Proust Among the Nations*, 171

wash his clothes.[224] His clothes had captured the smell of the victims; their violent death had penetrated and marked his protective coat, his fabric barrier, his skin. Some audience members of the performance in Athens in 2012, according to Symeonidis, could not stay close to the performing body for too long because of the unpleasant smell of the entrails on the table. To be a witness was to experience an endurance test, one that could not be avoided even at the level of language: the terms witness and martyr "both stem from the Arabic root word "shahada".[225] Reactions to the performance in 1983 included "macabre fascination, sometimes disguised as detached interest".[226] Symeonidis used to fantasize about his viewers, about who they were, about what kind of shoes they were wearing judging from their footsteps and most importantly why did some stay so long, standing close to him, while others, the majority, did not. As Erskine notes in her account of the 1983 performance:

> The horror of it soon translated into silent repulsion as everyone moved back. They kept moving back slowly until most were as far away as possible, sitting along the room's walls. It was a distance which most closely approximated the safety of following the crisis on TV.[227]

Hatoum offered her viewers a glimpse into witnessing as martyrdom, as they never had to endure this kind of proximity to violence before. The offer of distanced witnessing was non-negotiable and self-retracted from the table for audience members of the West, caught unaware of an etymology that structures war experience elsewhere.

The darkness

[224] Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 372
[225] Mikdadi, 72
[226] Roussel, "Hatoum approach brings urgency"
[227] Erskine, 84

> I want to create a situation where reality itself becomes a questionable point, where one has to reassess their assumptions and their relationship to things around them. A kind of self-examination and an examination of power structures that control us: Am I the jailed or the jailer? The oppressed or the oppressor? Or both.[228]

In 1984 Hatoum performed *Variation on Discord and Divisions* (Figs. 23-25) at ABC No Rio in New York, a collectively run center for art and activism. The floors and walls of the performance room were lined with newspapers and the artist entered crawling on the aisle between the rows of spectators. Hatoum, dressed in black overalls, with an opaque stocking masking her face, tried in vain to scrub the floor with a brush she would dip in a bucket full of water and red paint. Standing up and slitting eyeholes on her masked face with a long-bladed knife, a perpetrating female gaze appeared. The artist circled a table and brutally fell off chairs as she tried to sit on one of the available seats. She then proceeded to set the table with plates, and removing raw kidneys from under her clothes, she cut them in small pieces and offered them to the audience. The artist jumped from the figure of a hooded victim, forced to clean a floor that would only be stained red, to that of a violent surveyor armed with a menacing knife staring at the audience, asking them to eat parts of her self. Hatoum then proceeded to hold sheets of newspapers on which images of violence and death were projected, indicating that there may be some sense of violence inscribed in witnessing "alone".

The Negotiating Table's setting was more dark, intentionally less clear and harder to decipher, and perhaps this has influenced the limited literature on the performance that insists on the infliction of a terrible experience for spectators, who were forced to "face [their] own inaction and passivity" as the majority

[228] Hatoum quoted in Antoni, "Interview with Mona Hatoum"

chose to stand outside the circle of light, sidestepping the implications of being in the spotlight.[229] Philippi suggests that there is a structuring "economy of binary opposition" in Hatoum's work, where there is a clear contrast of "order with chaos, while drawing attention to the interdependence of these two opposite states".[230] She rightly proposes that in Hatoum's work, "in the most ordered and rational of arrangements, the habitual ways of categorizing and rationalizing are rendered dysfunctional".[231] But what these arguments may come to conclude, ironically, is a binary focus of light and dark, good and evil, reality and fantasy, victim and perpetrator, forgetting or dismissing the fact that *The Negotiating Table* most importantly involves a third subject position, that of the witness. Hatoum was first witness to the shattering events back home and then usurped the roles of victim and perpetrator. The self-examination of being either or both "the oppressed and the oppressor" stems from a third space of subjectivity that Hatoum approaches with a desire "to induce a physical or psychological disturbance to contradict those expectations" that fall on didactic binaries.[232] In a performance environment "where reality itself becomes a questionable point", expectations and fantasies of being a witness were mundanely aligned by the literature so far with a "quiet" politics that is disturbingly reserved to solely reflect on one's own "inaction and passivity".

In examining this third space, that of witnessing, one must be careful not to overtly assign Hatoum the usual subject position of exilic, diasporic in-betweeness, proposed by many in her work, that in turn sustains the witness as

[229] Archer et al., 101
[230] Philippi, 5
[231] Ibid.
[232] Hatoum quoted in Voorhees, 232

consolidation and consolation for the binary ills of victim and perpetrator. For example, Ari Folman's animation film *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) (Figs. 26-28) problematizes the narratives that emerge from such distinct positions as it tells the story of Sabra and Shatila from the point of view of an Israeli soldier. The film follows its protagonist who was present at the massacre, "and who –with psychic effects that are only just catching up with him- has blotted it from his mind".[233] With the help of a psychoanalyst, who reminds him of the parallelism between Sabra and Shatila and the Nazi extermination camps in Europe where his parents were killed, the soldier begins to remember what happened at the camps in Lebanon in September 1982 and of his complex role in the events in a story that challenges the usual categorizations of the subjects of violence.[234]

Hatoum's strategy for the performance is similar to the film's nuanced examination of the Sabra and Shatila subjects. *The Negotiating Table* offers viewers no conceited witness positions and no safe withdrawal from the table; for in retreating to the walls at the back of the performance room, as many reportedly did in Canada and Greece, does not mean that these viewers are immediate and unproblematic configurations of witnesses. Instead, their image resembles the Israeli soldiers who not only sealed gates, but also threw flares into the camps from the rooftops of surrounding buildings where they stayed, witnessing and helping the perpetrators to carry out their business into the night. Like the lamp above the table does in this very room. "The massacres did not take place in silence and darkness. Lit by Israeli flares, the Israelis were listening

[233] Rose, *Proust Among the Nations*, 168
[234] For a discussion of how Folman's film unravels Israel's national amnesia by telling "the story of the perpetrator who suffers" and the insights that such a narrative invites, see Chapter 4 in Rose, *Proust Among the Nations*, 146-188

to Chatila as early as Thursday evening, […] laughing on top of Akka Hospital", wrote Genet.[235] The slow retreat from the horror of the table to the back of the room re-orientates the subjects that gather around it anew; the lamp becomes a flare and the witness is reconfigured as a perpetrator.

Looking for phantom terrorists and "only obeying orders", Israeli soldiers locked thousands of victims in refugee camps, actively assisting and participating in war crime and repeating a paradoxically all-too-familiar "lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying, banality of evil".[236] Adding a juridical twist to this irony was the fact that the Israeli Kahan Commission "interviewed no Palestinian survivors but it was allowed to become the narrative of history", Genet presses.[237] Residing in victimhood and the vicissitudes of witnessing became increasingly incoherent for some of the speaking agents of this story. Israel's official evaluation of the massacres came under scrutiny in international press, yet this did not propel further investigations. Stonebridge, in her examination of Bacon's "Pope Series" and its relation to the glass cage in which Adolf Eichmann was placed during his trial in Jerusalem, suggests that:

> Rather than seeing the genocide's victims and perpetrators as historical agents and subjects, we see instead the worst that happened and, in a psychic and political sense, a worst that keeps on happening. This is the perpetrator occult: a timeless on-going nightmare that locks us in an image of hell leaving no space for reflection.[238]

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[235] Genet, "Four Hours in Chatila"
[236] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 252
[237] Robert Fisk, "At Last the Truth about Sabra and Chatila Massacres", *The Independent* (28 November 2001), accessed January 3, 2013, http://www.counterpunch.org/2001/11/28/at-last-the-truth-about-sabra-and-chatila-massacres/
[238] Stonebridge, "The Perpetrator Occult: Francis Bacon Paints Adolf Eichmann", 112

Associating the "perpetrator occult" with the "otherworldly" and the "diabolic" is dangerous, Stonebridge argues, referring to Karl Jasper's advice to Hannah Arendt to avoid "bestowing the perpetrators with a streak of 'satanic greatness'". [239] Focusing on perpetrators alone creates a melodramatic infrastructure where "the image of hell" they create is kept "dangerously intact" and crimes are trivialized.[240] In launching the official investigation for the massacres of Sabra and Shatila, Israel, whose ministers and military force were found indirectly responsible, brought meaningfully, yet again, the perpetrator and witness in direct dialogue. Nevertheless, the voice of the victim was lost in what became the official narrative and the massacre was trivialized since the crime was never tried. Still, one cannot abandon the Israeli soldiers on a rooftop of assigned evilness, just as one cannot indefinitely expel the viewers who marched towards the back walls of the performance room, to darkness. In *The Negotiating Table*, nothing is kept intact as the interplay between light and dark, table and chairs, bodies and phantoms, collapses the possibility of any overt categorizations as well as Hatoum's own reservation about her early performance works being read solely as articulating an "obviously political, rhetorical attitude".[241] Like Eichmann's glass cage on which the trial's witnesses (victim survivors of the Holocaust) found themselves reflected, Hatoum's circle of light engulfs the rectangular table in the performance room and dulls sharp edges, seating arrangements, subject positions.

The Negotiating Table presents history's victims, the people of Israel, simultaneously assuming the roles of witness and perpetrator and traces the

[239] Stonebridge, 108-9
[240] Ibid., 115
[241] Hatoum quoted in Antoni, "Interview with Mona Hatoum"

complex psychical and social moves that are required to reach and attempt to understand this hybrid position. Abandoning the psychical reassurance that a linear understanding of time provides, identification in this environment is experienced as a historically borrowed death. As Fuss suggests, "to be open to identification, is to be open to a death encounter, open to the very possibility of communing with the dead".[242] The performing body on the table re-establishes the connection between the dead of Sabra and Shatila and their Israeli perpetrators and the latter with their own Nazi perpetrators. Not only were the living communing with the dead, but the dead also forged a complex alliance with victims exterminated in camps elsewhere that in turn produced an unsettling dialogue between perpetrators and witnesses, in which official records on the massacre and the literature on *The Negotiating Table* failed to participate.

At the same time, as Goldie Rans has rightly argued, "it can be difficult to discuss Hatoum's [performances] when the agency of her message nearly overwhelmed the meaning of the strategies she used in their construction".[243] For, as Stonebridge underlines, one can end up "menacing reason with the very nightmare it is attempting to master".[244] However, Hatoum's strategy of shattering is not a process that merely reminds the subject of the need to master trauma and resolve its deathlike repetition, nor is it an act of psychic reparation for viewers and artist alike. Instead, Hatoum embraces the creative potential in menacing reason and in associating the fragments of different subjects that end

[242] Fuss, 1
[243] Goldie Rans, "Review", *Vanguard* (October 1985), unpaginated, retrieved from the artist's personal archive
[244] Stonebridge, 103

up isolated even when they are produced by such collective distress and suffering.

"Hatoum's works embody multi-directional relations to a world where 'threatening' differences are mitigated and negotiated", writes de Zegher, highlighting the dangers of equalising negotiation with neutralisation.[245] Since the early 1980s the artist, as Caryn Faure Walker has claimed, "worked with what society considers to be unpalatable, even unspeakable material".[246] This is precisely the kind of problem that presents itself in *The Negotiating Table* and in re-reading the journey from Nazi Europe to Palestine, necessary in the case of Sabra and Shatila that, as Rose suggests, "is seen by many as breaking a taboo".[247] It is not easy to speak critically against Israel without these utterances being immediately charged with anti-Semitism, writes Butler. Critical thought, speech and writing are frequently silenced through perpetual perpetrating fears. "One fails to fails to speak, or one speaks in throttled ways, in order to sidestep the terrorizing identification that threatens to take hold" Butler argues, tracing the reasons why some things are rendered unpalatable and unspeakable even by Jewish thinkers and writers.[248] *The Negotiating Table* theatrically stages the terrorizing tension between speaking and holding your tongue. Alternating between victim, perpetrator and witness seems to be the connecting thread across many of these performances, as is the sense of urgency and desire to make one

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[245] Catherine de Zegher, "Mona Hatoum: Beyond the Violence Vortex into the Beauty Vortex" in *Mona Hatoum*, exh. cat., (Barcelona: Miro Foundation, 2011), 119

[246] Caryn Faure Walker, *ECSTASY. ECSTASY. ECSTASY. SHE SAID. Women's Art in Britain; a Partial View* (Manchester: Cornerhouse, 1994), 39

[247] Rose, *The Last Resistance*, 6

[248] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), xix

speak about war. Terror is formative of the (in)ability to speak and Hatoum knows this all too well.

"Hatoum, as a Palestinian growing up in Beirut, understands the plight of the dispossessed", Canadian critics wrote in 1985, and Morgan justly insists that much of the writing on Hatoum misses the mark in its biographical focus: "to view Hatoum as 'authentically', purely Palestinian cannot account for either the critique of authenticity or the coalition-building aspects of her work".[249] In building coalitions with victims in her performances Hatoum did not rely on reductive biographical links but in the questioning of authentic coalition as such. "How can the dispossessed claim their legitimate rights without taking on the psychic trappings of the oppressor?" asks Rose, mapping this very problem, which Hatoum visually and performatively explores.[250] In *Variation on Discord and Divisions* she cuts through the mask that covers her mouth and face but no minced words come out like those from the loudspeakers of *The Negotiating Table*; there is only silence, for there is resistance in retreating from language. It compels and "lays claim to the interval of reflection" that binary and authoritative narratives work to undermine.[251] Manipulating the statements as she did for the performance is to stage an assault on language itself, to claim a critical moment of silence while thoughtfully carrying herself as unable to speak.

Hatoum, having been "moulded into the role of the political artist" by people whose expectations she was internalising, moved from performance to

[249] R. Lees, "Mona Hatoum: A Review", *Parallelogramme* 10, no.4 (April-May 1985), unpaginated, retrieved from the artist's personal archive and Morgan, 9
[250] Jacqueline Rose, *States of Fantasy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 53
[251] Rose, *The Last Resistance*, 14

installation.[252] It was an allocated identity that was starting to be irreconcilable even with the artist's natural inclination to contradiction. The artist's body disappeared in silence yet no quietness prevailed, for attention was shifted even more to one's own body and its utterances and silences. For some, Hatoum's installations and materials beyond 1988 "align themselves with another unstable border: that between language and social action".[253] Convincing as this statement sounds, it also sets up multiple failures: failing to recognise that this instability was there all along in Hatoum's performances, failing to avoid simplistic categorizations and thus recreating the divisions these perforating performances structured and collapsed, and within and outside of that, failing to understand our own failure to witness. The performance appeared to be critical of the historical presence and recurrence of "'failed witnesses', perhaps the worst kind – those who appear to be witnessing but are not, in fact doing so".[254] What *The Negotiating Table* also produced was the desire to fail better as witness, as perpetrator, as victim. Because the artist's wish "to provoke some kind of investigation, so that people will find some truth for themselves", was fulfilled regardless of its potential for quick and implausible personal assumptions.[255] It was perhaps fitting that this search for words, took place in darkness.

[252] Hatoum quoted in Antoni, "Interview with Mona Hatoum"
[253] Whitney Chadwick, "Situated and Unsettled: An Introduction to the Work of Mona Hatoum" in *Mona Hatoum: Undercurrents*, exh. cat., (Ferrara: Gallerie d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea dei Commune di Ferrara, 2011), 20
[254] Frosh, 236
[255] Hatoum quoted in Roussel, "Hatoum approach brings urgency"

CHAPTER II

JENNY HOLZER

> Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words. My language trembles with desire.
>
> Roland Barthes, 1978.[256]

Jenny Holzer's *Lustmord* realized between 1993-96, resists the immediate poststructuralist associations that feature in previous critical approaches of her work that have tended to account for her work in terms of deconstruction and the familiar narrative of the death of the author. It is also not readily identifiable as a series, a word used to describe many of the artist's famous works. *Lustmord* exists in different versions, or more aptly described, different incarnations, across media, materials and agencies, through voices. It is a work that has come to being in magazines, LED signs, tables, walls, and through projection; a journey exploring the reaches of corporeality and the challenges of representing violence in words and form. The different versions of *Lustmord* tell the same story and will unfold sequentially in this chapter, like Holzer's project itself did between 1993-96.

Lustmord was inspired by the atrocities of the Bosnian War in the early 1990s and particularly the tactical use of mass rape as a weapon of war that marked the conflict in former Yugoslavia. The Bosnian War, an international conflict that lasted three years, between 1992-1995, sprang from the dissolution of Yugoslavia and involved several factions. The main belligerents were the

[256] Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 73

Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the self-proclaimed entities of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats within the geographic region that also contained Republika Srpska and Herzeg-Bosnia. The Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat factions were directed by Serbia and Croatia respectively. The initial stages of the war were characterized by Serb superiority in weapons and resources but the situation changed after the Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) and Croats allied themselves in 1994, creating the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina under the Washington Agreement. In 1995, after the Srebrenica and Markale massacres and the subsequent international outcry, NATO forces intervened targeting the army of Republika Srpska, leading to the end of the war, which was officially marked by the Dayton agreement that year.

The Bosnian War has become a key historic moment in the discussion of rape as a weapon of war. While many women from different ethnic groups were victims of rape during the war, the vast majority of mass rapes were perpetrated against Bosniak women by men from the Bosnian Serb forces who used rape as part of their policy and strategy of ethnic cleansing. It is estimated that between 20,000-50,000 women were raped, 100,000 people were killed and over two million people were displaced. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was established in 1993 in The Hague, Netherlands, to prosecute the crimes and perpetrators of the wars in former Yugoslavia and is expected to complete all trials and appeals in late 2016. It is the first time in international law that sexual violence has been recognized as a weapon of war.[257]

[257] Carole Rogel, *The Breakup of Yugoslavia and Its Aftermath* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004) and "Bosnia War Dead Figure Announced", *BBC News* (June 21, 2007), accessed 8 November 8, 2014, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6228152.stm

Holzer conceived *Lustmord* in 1993, when the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* commissioned her to create a work for the magazine insert of their Sunday edition.[258] At the time, Holzer was working on writing her *War* series (1992), which was a response to the Gulf War and its detailed coverage by the media and news channels. She continued to work on the theme of war for the piece she made for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, as the news of the mass rape, torture and murder of women in the former Yugoslavia were reported around the world. On November 19, 1993, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the first incarnation of *Lustmord* hit the German newsstands and reached the homes of half a million readers. On the cover of the magazine a white card was affixed with a message in red ink, containing blood, that read in German: "I AM AWAKE IN THE PLACE WHERE WOMEN DIE" (Fig. 29). Following the cover were thirty pages of full-page, close-up photographs of skin surfaces with text inscribed on them and an interview with the artist. The photographs featured Holzer's *Lustmord* text, describing a rape scene from three different points of view: the perpetrator, the victim and the observer. Running concurrently with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* issue and in collaboration with the magazine and the artist, Haus der Kunst in Munich hosted an exhibition of the photographs. The following year, Holzer produced an exhibition of *Lustmord* in New York, where alongside the photographs, she constructed a hut lined with red leather walls that bore the text on them. A metal grid surrounded this large structure, which was also accompanied by 3D imagers that delivered her text in a spinning motion. In the

[258] Jenny Holzer was the fourth artist to contribute to the magazine following, Anselm Kiefer, Francesco Clemente and Jeff Koons. The commission occurs once per year and the project is called Number 46 after the issue number. Joan Simon, "No Ladders; Snakes: Jenny Holzer's Lustmord" in *Parkett* 40/41, (1994), 81

room downstairs, she placed a table that featured an array of bones, some of which bore silver rings that had the text incised on them. Finally, in 1996, Holzer was invited by the city of Leipzig to create a public work of art at the Battle of the Nations Monument, where she decided to project, among a selection of other works, the *Lustmord* text in full.[259]

Bloodlines

Holzer's work has often been analyzed with a particular emphasis placed on language and content at the expense of its form. "Yet it is how Holzer situates her texts in space that makes for an experience different from –though critically based in- reading", Joan Simon suggests.[260] Attending to the marriage of form and content in Holzer's work has led many writers to associate her with the Minimalists of the 1960s, the Conceptual art movement, and with the way Andy Warhol and Joseph Beuys targeted society in and out of mass culture.[261] Holzer herself has admitted to being influenced by artists such as Beuys, Bruce Nauman, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Joseph Kosuth, Lawrence Weiner, Daniel Buren and Sol LeWitt and often speaks of the importance and formative influence of Louise

[259] Lustmord has been presented in different versions across the world, featuring more tables, benches that bore the text, as well as LED signs in galleries, which are outside the scope of this chapter. For more information see Beatrix Ruf, ed., *Jenny Holzer: Lustmord*, (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz Verlag, 1996)

[260] Joan Simon, "Other Voices, Other Forms" in *Jenny Holzer*, ed. David Breslin, (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2008), 11

[261] See Simon, "Other Voices, Other Forms", 11-26, Diane Waldman, "The Language of Signs" in *Jenny Holzer*, exh. cat., ed Diane Waldman, (New York: Guggenheim Musem, 1990), 17-27, David Joselit, Joan Simon and Renata Salecl, eds., *Jenny Holzer* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2010) and Michael Auping, "Reading Holzer or Speaking in Tongues" in *Jenny Holzer: The Venice Installation* (New York: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1991), 13-29

Bourgeois, Nancy Spero and Alice Neel.[262] Holzer's work has been habitually discussed together with that of her contemporaries such as Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler and Cindy Sherman, while many texts and exhibitions have been devoted to their work and the feminist legacies in the artistic production of the 1980s and 1990s. Keeping in mind that "Holzer's art seldom exists as self-contained language", it is important to note that the work of women artists during the 1970s and 1980s sought to explore "the expression, (re)presentation or simply the confrontation of the problem that art is a system dominated by language" and these were definitely concerns carried, if not with further force, in the decades ahead.[263] This kind of work has often been analyzed with respect to a hijacking of consumerist and mass media language as a strategy of subverting patriarchal authority and as reclaiming what was, supposedly, never there; a woman artist's ability to speak.

However, Holzer in the early 1990s was able to explore much more complicated matters in her "language art" that had benefited from the first and second waves of feminism. "By the 1980s it was pleasantly routine for women to make art and for people to look at it –even to watch for it… [sic] Courtesy of the women's movement, 1980s women were encouraged and able to thrive", Holzer stated.[264] As Joselit suggests, reading Holzer's work together with Mary Kelly's *Post Partum Document* (1973-77) (Fig. 30) and Martha Rosler's *The Bowery in Two*

[262] Elizabeth A.T. Smith, "PROTECT PROTECT: The Socially Useful Art of Jenny Holzer" in *Jenny Holzer*, ed. David Breslin, (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2008), 31
[263] Auping, 20 and Zsófia Bán, "Women on the Verge of a Semiotic Breakdown: The Work of Cindy Sherman, Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger" in *Ceremonies and Spectacles: Performing American Culture*, eds. Teresa Alves, Teresa Cid and Heinz Ickstadt, (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2000), 348
[264] Smith, 30

Inadequate Descriptive Systems (1974-75) (Fig. 31), these artists move away from the singularity of textual statements that are able to carry their intentions, and, as feminist authors, are "*situated* [sic] within language, not so much its source as its effect".[265] Kelly and Rosler, followed by Holzer, deployed the dispossession of language from patriarchy and the pluralization of political perspectives trailing the feminist strategies of the 1970s and 1980s, at a time also marked by the advent of psychoanalysis in art practice and theory. What sets Holzer apart, however, from attempts to pinpoint a particular speaking subject in this heavily analytic milieu, is that her work "often prevents her texts from being attached to a particular point of view, or individualized character".[266] It is through this dissident distinction and the intricate relationship of content, form and site that Holzer has been able to develop "her own form of guerrilla warfare" to explore her favorite themes of "sex, death and war".[267] But, in doing so, Holzer further developed the familiar death-of-the-author artistic strategy by delivering her work's messages with subversive materiality.

Lustmord is a German word dating from the end of the nineteenth century, tracking a fascination with sexuality and perversion before falling out of fashion by the mid-twentieth century. "'Lust' in German is specifically out-of-control desire and, when conjoined with the word 'mord', connotes a sadistic, pathological derivation of sexual pleasure from killing".[268] Lustmord, as a murder practice, as well as its representations, has a distinctive history starting

[265] David Joselit, "Voices, Bodies and Spaces: The Art of Jenny Holzer" in Joselit, et al., 47
[266] Ibid., 48
[267] Auping, 13
[268] Alison Young, *Judging the Image: Art, Value, Law* (New York: Routldge, 2005), 111

from the late nineteenth century, through to and after the First World War in Weimar Germany. It was there that a series of violent murders and dismemberments of female victims was reported, in which the perpetrators declared a pathological fascination with the body's insides. During and after the war several German male artists, including Otto Dix and George Grosz, began depicting such scenes in paintings and drawings that feature mutilated female bodies, which have attracted various critical responses for their representations of urban life, bourgeois culture, gender, violence and power that have informed this chapter but are outside of its scope.[269] I will investigate, instead, the title's emphasis on the convergence of sexual pleasure and death in war sexuality and Holzer's direct link with the systematic rapes of the Bosnian War that none of the writers have considered using an in-depth psychoanalytic approach.

This, of course, is no easy feat and writing this chapter of the thesis required a lot of sensitivity and sensibility, as well as maintaining an analytical and theoretical conviction that had to be mobilized in a way that would do *Lustmord*, but most importantly its core preoccupation, rape, justice. Producing work or writing about rape is inarguably a very different mode of involvement in this subject from the actual experience of rape. The bibliography on *Lustmord* suggests that Holzer was very aware of this imbalance, as in turn was I as a writer on her work. The sources cited here, particularly the ones where Holzer speaks directly about the *Lustmord* project, all state that the artist focused on real testimonies

[269] For more on this topic see Beth Irwin Lewis, "*Lustmord*: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis" in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. Katharina von Ankum, (Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1997), 202-232

that she gathered from a variety of sources ranging from war reports of the time to those of actual survivors of the Bosnian war rapes.

Susan Brownmiller's "Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape", written in 1975, is a groundbreaking moment not only for feminism but for society at large as it reignited the dialogue on rape and heavily influenced public attitudes and outlooks on the subject of rape itself. In her eloquent and detailed examination of the subject, Brownmiller underlines that:

> To a woman the definition of rape is fairly simple. A sexual invasion of the body by force, an incursion into the private, personal inner space without consent –in short, an internal assault from one of several avenues and by one of several methods- constitutes a deliberate violation of emotional, physical and rational integrity and is a hostile, degrading act of violence that deserves the name of rape.[270]

Speaking from the point of view of the woman on rape, a position that is to this day starkingly dismissed as a valid point of reference due to its resultant traumatic language, Brownmiller calls attention to the violation of the victim's integrity on the emotional and rational level as well as the bodily and the sexual. Moreover, Brownmiller is adamant that "rape is a crime not of lust, but of violence and power".[271] It is this aspect of rape that becomes more focused in *Lustmord* and this chapter's account of the work, since we are specifically talking about rape as a weapon of war, more so when one reads Holzer's perpetrator script, a chilling account of wartime sexuality. Together with rape's sexual invasion, often problematically excused by the patriarchy as "lust", comes an invasion of the mind and psyche, where the conversation gets awkward for the assaulter since the constituting elements of violence and power, which the male

[270] Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1975), 376.
[271] Ibid., 15.

subject rarely admits to, come into sharp focus. Time and again efforts to engage with rape purely as a violent sexual that is to be condemned and punished have proven to be unfertile. This chapter, will focus on these aspects of violence and power that are so structural in the act of rape following Mitchell's definition, formulated through her previous work on war, hysteria and trauma: "Rape is not sexuality that is violent but violent that has become sexualised".[272] Moreover, in order to unpack *Lustmord*'s challenging narrative and account of rape, following the work's own prerogatives, this chapter aims to participate in this difficult dialogue through the point of the perpetrator to understand what underscores such behavior, as well as the limits of our own position as witnesses of an intense but unlived traumatic experience.[273]

The various incarnations of *Lustmord* have attracted different scholars focusing on particular aspects of the project but missing the rich links that are formed between them. Simon, Joselit and Diane Waldman have produced surveys of Holzer's career and for *Lustmord* they have mainly concentrated on the text as it appeared in the magazine, the hut and the table respectively. Simon has provided a detailed context for the skin photographs in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and has underlined the importance of the domestic environment in *Lustmord*, evidenced in the artist's descriptions of the magazine project and her exhibition in New York. Joselit, as discussed earlier, describes Holzer's work as structured by a curious manipulation of language and representation that follows the postmodernist concerns of feminism and psychoanalysis to focus on the artist's

[272] Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas*, 256.
[273] The script of Lustmord, written by from the perspectives of the perpetrator, the victim and the observer can be found in the Appendix of this thesis. It is suggested that the reader first approaches *Lustmord*'s script as it is presented there in order to follow each position's narrative continuity.

strategically anonymous texts and their potential to problematize subjectivity, through her sometimes unusual choice of materials. Joselit's description of the *Lustmord* hut as a bodily environment that destabilizes the boundaries of the private and public registers, as well as Waldman's emphasis on the strange tactile intimacy that the table of bones established with exhibition viewers, are in line with this chapter's critical approach.

Beatrix Ruf's engagement with *Lustmord*'s language in relation to "warfare's cultural text of destruction", her suggestion that Holzer's materials and forms "operate directly with our somatic state", and Renata Salecl's observation that the skin photographs are related to the psychosocially charged symbolic inscription of rape, have informed the chapter's intense focus on Holzer's psychically volatile surfaces.[274] Lastly, Yvonne Volkart and Sabine Sielke have concentrated on the *Lustmord* text in detail, acknowledging that the project "is not literature, nor Jenny Holzer a literary artist", yet retaining the significance of its content and pace.[275] Segregating the text into the three participating voices, the perpetrator, the victim and the observer, their analysis has offered valuable insights into the psychic mechanisms and cultural mandates that are at play in a scene of sexual violence such as rape. What has been missing in these accounts, however, is the fact that the content of this text, as well as the script's materiality, is present on surfaces full of analytical promise that are able to shed light on a neglected aspect of *Lustmord*; its sharp focus on the unconscious and its examination of war sexuality.

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[274] Beatrix Ruf, "Tautological Revelations – Linguistic Monuments – Trojan Horses" in *Jenny Holzer. Lustmord.*, ed. Beatrix Ruf, (Kartause Ittingen: Kunstmuseum des Kantons Thurgau, 1996), 114 and Renata Salecl, "Cut-and-Dried Bodies, or How to Avoid the Pervert Trap" in Joselit et al., 81

[275] Yvonne Volkart, "I SING HER A SONG ABOUT US" in Ruf, 115

Mitchell's work on male hysteria, war sexuality and in particular war rape, forms the backbone of this chapter's psychoanalytic investigation of *Lustmord*. Klein's object relations theory will be used to facilitate a close reading of Holzer's imaginary rape scene, and Mitchell's "law of the mother" that theorizes language, difference, traumatic repetition and its symbolization into seriality, will help produce a more informed understanding on how Holzer's emphasis on language and materiality underscores the importance of the psychical dimension of war. Mitchell's work on siblings, subjectivity and the horizontal axis of experience are hereby examined as important concerns that *Lustmord*'s surfaces are examining, especially in how the viewers of its different versions encounter and relate to them. Inspired by Freud's conception of the bodily ego, Anzieu's theorization of a Skin Ego for the relationship of psychical containments with the body's surface, provides a model of thought that accounts for *Lustmord*'s strong double emphasis on the body and the unconscious. It is read together with Winnicott's thoughts on the limiting membranes of the subject's inner world and the existence of an intermediate area of experience that can be inhabited whenever subjectivity is in turmoil. Ahmed's work on the phenomenology of tables and on skin as a site of continuous inscription, where bodies take form, offers a reflective and critical way of thinking about subjectivity and interconnectedness that this chapter mobilizes to analyze the contribution art can make in the debate on war rape.

I draw too on Nixon's work on the representation of war and sexuality in art, in particular her writing on Barbara Kruger, an artist that is of Holzer's generation and who shares her deep interest in how language structures power. Like Kruger's work and exhibitions in New York in the early 1990s, Holzer also

evolved from two two-dimensional works to large-scale installations, while both artists maintained their sharp focus on subversive language and feminist politics. Holzer's move to large-scale installations is hereby examined as a crucial aspect of *Lustmord* that emphasizes the various processes of identification that the work demands of its viewers. Nixon's focus on sadomasochism, the viewing body and the politics of identification in Kruger's work will be instrumental in understanding how Holzer's installation also deployed fantasy as a feminist strategy to destabilize the authority of patriarchal language in the constitution of subjectivity. Finally, for *Lustmord*'s last adaptation, Holzer's projection on a war monument, Klaus Werner and Eva Ungar Grudin have provided accounts that address how the subject of war rape eroded the familiar masculinist narrative of the monument, but they did not concentrate on the symbolism and effect Holzer's installation had in its reflecting pool. This chapter analyzes the projection and reflection as an important extension of the artist's preoccupation with the lateral dimension of individual, social and political experience. Finally, the work of Deutsche on what art can offer during war, on the critical images that stem from feminist critiques of representation, as well as Arendt's "space of appearance" in the democratic public sphere, hones this chapter's claim that *Lustmord* is a project with a difficult but crucial task: allowing the subjects of violence to appear and speak together, is a constructive strategy of resistance to the language of war that rarely offers opportunities for reflection.

Bad Blood

A week before the publication of *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, news agencies such as Reuters and Agence France-Presse reported that the liberal daily newspaper was preparing to print its Sunday issue using human blood on its cover, "signed by American artist Jenny Holzer who organized the unusual print-run to draw attention to the suffering of women in the war raging Bosnia-Herzegovina".[276] Holzer was quoted saying that "history is being written on the bodies of women, I want to be as shocking as the problem itself" and that she "wanted to use a medium that is as shocking as the subject of [her] pictures".[277] Readers were assured that the "blood was first tested for the AIDS virus as a precaution, and to ward off criticism in a country which has been rocked in the past month by revelations that patients were given transfusions of contaminated blood".[278] Moreover, the German Red Cross was quoted saying that "the exercise was 'absurd and repugnant'".[279] Finally, one of the reports explained that inside the magazine, and thus beyond the bloody cover, the pictures of text-inscribed skin are "quotations from a rape victim, a rapist and a bystander".[280] In the end, due to the uproar already caused before the magazine's circulation, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published a statement assuring its readers that all necessary precautions

[276] "Paper prints in blood to protest Bosnian War", *Agence France-Presse*, (November 12, 1993), accessed November 8, 2014, accessed at the British Library through the online database Factiva, Inc.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid.
[279] "German newspaper to print on magazine cover using blood", *Reuters News* (November 12, 1993), accessed November 8, 2014, accessed at the British Library through the online database Factiva, Inc.
[280] Ibid.

have been taken in the production of the issue and "the whole affair thus means no danger to the body –only to the soul".[281]

The first two pages of the magazine are dedicated to the contents of the issue and include a warning about its cover that, for the majority, surely arrived too late: "if you rest against the scripture, then rest against blood, the blood of women".[282] The editors of the magazine, inside the magazine and in regular red print, drew attention to the systematic rape of women in Bosnia. The article presented Holzer as a "political, activist artist", with "a moral conscience [who] destroys our distance to these atrocities, reconstructs the terrible atmosphere in which they happened" and highlighted the artist's ability to "crawl into the soul of the victim, the perpetrator and the observer".[283] The participants of a fantasy rape scene, created by Holzer, appeared on the following pages in photographs of marked skin, as "texts were handwritten on the bodies of women and a man, then photographed in close-up so that hairs, pores, skin are magnified as well as the words".[284] The *Lustmord* text was inscribed on skin in alternating black, blue and red ink. The fictional rape testimonies changed between German and English and did not disclose the identity of the speaking subjects (Figs. 32-47).

Coinciding with the publication in Munich, Holzer produced another installation of her famous *Truisms* (1977-79) on the streets of New York, addressing her audience on the marquees of old cinemas and porn theatres. The *Truisms* of

[281] Sabine Sielke, "'I HAVE THE BLOOD JELLY': Sexual Violence, the Media, and Jenny Holzer's "'Lustmord'" in *Blurred Boundaries: Critical Essays on American Studies*, eds. Klaus Schmidt and David Sawyer (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996), 239
[282] No author, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, (19 November 1993), 3
[283] Ibid.
[284] Holzer quoted in "Joan Simon in conversation with Jenny Holzer" in Joselit et al., 30

1993-94 and *Lustmord* are certainly part of the artist's "social critique [with] a commitment to the political", as Elizabeth Smith suggests, but their simultaneous release in Munich and New York included a message that was left largely decoded.[285] The cover of a German publication proclaimed in blood "I AM AWAKE IN THE PLACE WHERE WOMEN DIE", while a marquee on 42nd Street in New York announced that "MURDER HAS ITS SEXUAL SIDE" (Fig. 48). Looking back at the controversy of the project, Holzer said: "this is not as simple as reading (about war) in the newspaper… [sic] Because this is a crime against the body, it made sense to somehow insist that this is alive in the world. To have evidence. Almost [sic]".[286] Mixing red ink with the donated blood of eight German and Yugoslav women to print the invitation card that was attached on the cover of the magazine caused a ripple effect in societal panic that was not anticipated, as public reactions and outrage were focused around irrational fears of HIV contamination. The project became perceived as a "deadly threat" and caused, according to the artist, a "ridiculous reaction" and "a major press conference; talk in some regional court of impounding the magazine –public health menace".[287] The reactions in Germany, the vast majority of which overlooked the fleshy insides of the magazine, sidestepping the concurrent violence against women in Bosnia, ironically echoed a question that Holzer had placed on the streets of New York at the same time: "WHAT URGE WILL SAVE US NOW THAT SEX WON'T?'"(Fig. 49).[288]

[285] Smith, 31
[286] Young, 111
[287] Simon, "No Ladders; Snakes", 82
[288] Ibid. Interestingly, the tabloid press gave substantial coverage to the project, running every day for a week discussing a different aspect.

Lustmord is situated within the escalating AIDS crisis to which many artists such as Kiki Smith, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Robert Mapplethorpe and David Wojnarowicz responded by producing work that sparked controversy and censorship based upon social and cultural fears of AIDS and sexuality.[289] Holzer had already worked on *Laments* (1987-90) (Fig. 50), a series that linked the AIDS crisis deaths with domestic violence and created in order to "give these people who had died unnecessarily a chance to say what they couldn't say".[290] Repeating one of her *Truisms* in New York, Holzer had asked a direct, timely and important question that despairingly linked sex and death while staying close to their psychic realities: sex was being perceived as separate and antidotal to death and that fantasy was no longer realistic.

Following *Laments*, Holzer created *Lustmord* featuring imaginary voices that constructed a dialogue between sex and death, but the delivery of their message ended up being more terrifying than what was trying to be communicated. Wolfgang Joop, a German fashion designer, financially backed *Lustmord*, which allowed Holzer and her collaborator Tibor Kalman, a New York designer, to produce the cover with the help of chemists, lawyers and medical experts, who ensured that all medical, ethical and legal issues were kept in check. The donated blood was heated to kill any infectious agents and only a very small amount of hemoglobin was mixed with printing ink to be used for the handwritten cover

[289] For an excellent analysis of this topic see Chapter 5 in Richard Meyer, *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002) and Richard Bolton, ed., *Culture Wars: Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts* (New York: New Press, 1992)

[290] Simon, "Other Voices, Other Forms", 17

card.[291] German newspapers spoke of contamination fears and *Time* magazine reported that the German publication "tried to bring violence done to women in war into 520,000 readers' homes".[292] *Time* wrote that many found the approach "too sensational" and reiterated the "repulsive and absurd" comments made by the German Red Cross. At the same time, the cover of the *Time* issue that featured the article posed a question: "Is Freud Dead?" (Fig. 51). Its cover, like Holzer's *Süddeutsche Zeitung* cover, were ironically both calling for something that the world had missed in the news coverage of the Bosnian mass rapes and what the psychically uninformed readings of *Lustmord* have omitted: a psychoanalytic insight.

Skin Deep

That Sunday in Germany, many people went out to buy their newspapers and returned to the comfort of their homes to enjoy the day's usual rituals. That day, however, newspaper habits were disrupted by a strange typeface. As part of her project for the magazine, Holzer had decided "to print in blood, so that words would be on and from bodies".[293] This "strange sacramental offering, had suddenly turned into a creepy uninvited guest", Simon suggests, one that "brought forward fears archetypal and immediate: of blood, of women's bleeding, of the unclean, ill or wounded, of death itself".[294] In doing so, *Lustmord* also tapped into the public's fear of AIDS and the marginalization of

[291] Simon, "No Ladders; Snakes", 82-84
[292] No Author, "Talk of the Streets: Written in blood, a son's death, a bizarre caper and…", *Time* (November 29, 1993), 18
[293] Holzer quoted in "Joan Simon in conversation with Jenny Holzer" in Joselit et al., 30
[294] Simon, "No Ladders; Snakes", 82

the affected population. It publicly aligned the social uproar of the AIDS crisis with society's silence on the Bosnian rapes, both structured on cruel divisions between the unaffected and the unclean. *Lustmord* widely underlined how a fusion of the sex and death drives also involves a complex psychic aftermath on personal and political levels alike that needs to be deciphered. Anger escalated for having "touched" the blood of women, upsetting the domestic environment, bringing the war home. "Death is not a clean affair", Holzer stated in her interview with Christian Kämmerling, the magazine's editor.[295] "So much blood is shed in this world and we watch tranquilly while it happens. When we finally touch the blood, when we really have it on our hands, then we are shocked", she proposed.[296] It was this touch, the contact with blood and its invasion of the home that allowed *Lustmord* to shatter the distance between the safe and the unclean, the empowered reader/viewer and the object, skin and blood, inside and outside.

Once the magazine reached the readers, once they took it in their hands and touched the red message, a trail of blood started to form on the streets, in public cafes and inside homes, wherever people read their newspapers. The card was no longer a simple typeface; it turned into a voice through a textual phantom body hovering on a surface between life and death. Someone announced, in hauntingly animated red words: "I AM AWAKE IN THE PLACE WHERE WOMEN DIE". It was a message of Holzer's written fiction but with a horrific reality attached to it, for what it delivered was murderous, the news of the deaths of Bosnian women and blood artfully placed on the hands of the public. "We wanted to use

[295] Christian Kämmerling, "Interview" in *Jenny Holzer: Lustmord*, ed. Beatrix Ruf (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz Verlag, 1996), 122
[296] Ibid.

something real that would confirm the terror. Any kind of thing… [sic] a body part. We even debated using sperm and finally decided on blood", Holzer stated in the interview inside the magazine.[297] "Doctors, chemists, lawyers and printers all just shook their heads. They pondered and pondered as if we were going to use a crazily dangerous high-explosive like nitroglycerin or something", said Kämmerling.[298] The production team's perplexity and overzealous analysis underlines Holzer's carefully calculated artistic strategy that was certainly meant to provoke but not terrorize directly, at least not in the way that it inadvertently ended up doing after its cautious implementation. "I wanted people to feel rather than simply to know. I thought they must touch the blood", Holzer proclaimed.[299] The artist stressed that this part of the work was meant to "confirm the terror" rather than deploy it, but perhaps this was a tough balance to strike.[300] "The blood-writing added a further dimension, making it seem as if an inner element of the body had come to the surface in order to symbolize the trauma that had disrupted it", producing hot-blooded readership and spectatorship.[301] *Lustmord* ended up not only highlighting but borrowing from and further inducing the public terror of the AIDS crisis, ironically yet fittingly tapping on fears and fantasies of deathly eroticism, as the work's title proclaimed. The blood became explosive and the magazine issue dropped like a bomb.

The volatile surface of the magazine takes *Lustmord* beyond the language-based, poststructuralist criticism that Holzer's work usually attracts and foregrounds the

[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Holzer quoted in "Joan Simon in conversation with Jenny Holzer" in Joselit et al., 31
[300] Ibid.
[301] Salecl, 81

materiality that carries her words. *Lustmord* claims part of a legacy of artistic interventions to the discourse of war by women artists that is habitually excluded from patriarchal art historical records and is tied to the spirited feminist politics that have only been partially recognized in Holzer's career. The *Lustmord* cover, like Hatoum's preparatory studies, recalls and borrows from Nancy Spero's *War Series* (1966-70), a body of work that responded to the waging of the Vietnam War and its broadcasted imagery, which remains a pivotal moment for generations of feminist artists. Spero's depictions of bombs are a distinctive motif of the series, as is its focus on the sexualized violence that characterizes modern warfare. Androgynous bodies, spinning heads, gaping mouths with protruding tongues cursing and spitting blood make up the imagery of the mushroom clouds that overtake fine sheets of paper in a distinctive bodily manner. In *Sperm Bomb* (1966) (Fig. 52) a blue mushroom cloud features tiny heads as part of the bomb, spinning around and cursing through their gaping mouths: "FUCK YOU" and "MERDE". In *Female Bomb* (1966) (Fig. 53), the bomb stems from a blue female body with multiple breasts, while comet-like heads with protruding tongues form the red toxic cloud, which traces the ends of the paper frame. The body appears to be bleeding and its multiple breasts are rendered in bloody color indicative of a targeted attack. While there is no inscription, this drawing is just as vocal in communicating Spero's configuration of sexual warfare, confounding further the material and the bodily.

Even though *Lustmord* does not trace figuration as the *War Series* does, Holzer acknowledges Spero's major influence in her work, especially her "insistence on

women's bodies as appropriate subject matter".[302] Yet it is not just the apparent or absent human form that links these two series, but how both figure bodies in the interactions that they facilitate between the artist, the work and the audience, challenging conventional boundaries. Both artists moved away from painting to mediums that were more direct and explicit to challenge the art establishment in small, bodily pieces of paper.[303] "'Demythifying' painting to deplore war", Spero used spit as a dilution agent for the gouache, while Holzer diluted her words in blood, charging their aggression with bodily resonance.[304] Bodies, male or female, present or absent, were strategically exaggerated as surfaces, as skin, upon which the culture of war is inscribed. In their departure from painting to explicit "bodily works" and their radical dissemination –with Spero producing over 140 drawings and Holzer's magazine reaching thousands of homes- both series call for a "'skin-tight politics', a politics that takes as its orientation not the body as such, but the fleshy interface between bodies and worlds".[305] For these works further undermine the usual mind/body dualism that is one of the challenges feminist art had to critically address. These works explore "the interfaces between bodies and their worlds […] made and unmade through social

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[302] Jenny Holzer, "Please Change Beliefs", *ada* (23 May 1995), accessed November 8, 2014, http://adaweb.walkerart.org/context/artists/holzer/holzer0.html

[303] "I came to language because I wanted to be explicit about things, but didn't want to be a social realist painter […] and it became clear that the only other way for me to do it was to use language. People can understand you when you say or write something", Holzer quoted in Simon, "Other Voices, Other Forms", 21. "Part of my resistance as an artist in the *War Series* was a decision not to work anymore on canvas. I shifted completely to work on paper. Big canvases carried the male look! The 'establishment'! No one was paying attention". Spero quoted in Christopher Lyon, *Nancy Spero: The Work* (London: Prestel Publishing, 2010), 76

[304] Nixon, "Spero's Curses", 13

[305] Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey eds., *Thinking Through the Skin* (London: Routledge, 2001), 1

practices, the pain of which may shatter language and defy its representational potential".[306] Dramatizing the violence inflicted on women's bodies, the assault of trauma on speech and the deafening silence on war crimes in their time, these artists offered fleshy messages of resistance through works that rippled and multiplied beyond their frames, asking of their viewers to let violence and language under their skin.

In the *Lustmord* cover, the utterance comes from an absent body. A bloody note left on a consuming dark background, announces a state of acute awareness, a presence and alertness to a territory of death reserved for women. Although there is significant impact in delivering this message of a gendered space, which I explore later in this chapter, the resonance of both bodies of works goes beyond gender binaries in their polyphonic screams and androgynous declarations. Spero's screaming heads belong to infants, men and women and Holzer's red cry on the cover conceals two more messages in black (Fig. 54).

Less angry in tone than Spero's messages, but perhaps more frightening in its narrative abstraction, Holzer's bloody note swam in a sea of darkness, the realm of the unconscious, where sex and death meet. What the media missed in their panicked response, judging the *Lustmord* project by its cover, was a clue that was there all along: the card was glued and folded, containing two more messages, in standard black ink but with different handwriting: "THE COLOR OF HER WHERE SHE IS INSIDE OUT IS ENOUGH TO MAKE ME KILL HER" and "SHE FELL ON THE FLOOR IN MY ROOM. SHE TRIED TO BE CLEAN WHEN SHE DIED BUT SHE WAS NOT. I SEE HER TRAIL". Underneath the bloody declaration, another two voices were hidden. The anxious realization of

[306] Ibid., 3

the red message was followed by an aggressive phrase, speaking of color, of insides and of killing. The next statement read more distanced. It too, like the media, appeared to be concerned with cleanliness while witnessing a woman at the moment of her death. The bloody trail left on the floor of the text's imaginary room mirrors the one that Holzer created with *Lustmord* inside and outside of homes. The card was, in fact, an invitation to talk, and one that was immediately rejected by many due to its dirty connotations. But even those who were prepared to converse with the victim, ready to go through the commonplace identification that results from distanced empathy, they were refused the chance to do so; the dialogue was tripartite, the perpetrator and an observer were present.

Moving forward, handling the magazine, felt, for some, like "turning the pages of a book of flesh".[307] Going through the pages and reading the words on skin was more horrifying than the blood card. As Salecl has suggested, "the writing on the skin actually opens up the incongruity between the rape as a traumatic act and its symbolic inscription".[308] These pictures transported readers to a rape scene but one that could not simply be turned into sensationalized news or a spectacle for consumption. Instead, one of the first feelings readers got was that of unnerving participation. The texts were written with alternating pronouns of "I", "SHE" and "YOU" as the pages turned, feeding readers lines for inner monologues. Across the first double page spread, the text on the skin escapes the contours of the pages and enters the reader's mind: "I FIND HER SQUATTING ON HER HEELS AND THIS OPENS HER SO I CAN GET HER FROM BELLOW" (Fig. 33). This voice, resonating from the "I" in the reader's mind

[307] Young, 111.
[308] Salecl, 81

was the second step in a series of bodily and fantasied movements; having touched the cover card, already with "blood on their hands", readers were now performing the perpetrator's script. No longer was the violence occurring on women's bodies elsewhere. The horror had entered the reader's home; it was audible and tactile.

Thinking of skin as "a site of unconscious investment", the *Lustmord* photographs figure a psychoanalytic preoccupation with the charged surface between the psyche and the body.[309] In Freud's conception of the bodily ego, the body's surface is given a key role: "the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface".[310] Taking his cue from Freud's "surface", Anzieu was led to the theorization of the Skin Ego: "a mental image of which the Ego of the child makes use during the early phases of its development to represent itself as an Ego containing psychical contents, on the basis of its experience of the surface of the body".[311] Refusing to take sides between object-relations theory and structuralist psychoanalytic orientations, seeing them as complementary positions, Anzieu posits the Skin Ego as:

> A reality of the order of phantasy: it figures, it phantasies, dreams, everyday speech, posture and disturbances of thought; and it provides the imaginary space upon which phantasies, dreams, thinking and every form of psychopathological organization are constituted.[312]

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[309] Jay Prosser, "Skin Memories" in Ahmed and Stacey, 53
[310] Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id" (1923) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX (1923-1925): The Ego and the Id and Other Works,* ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 25
[311] Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, trans. Chris Turner, (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 40
[312] Ibid., 4

Approaching skin as the space of phantasy but also as the edge "between psyche and body, self and others" charges the script inscribed upon the surface of Holzer's cover and photographs beyond the bodily and the material, to discover deeper levels of experience that can often be deemed violent and unclean.[313] The *Lustmord* photographs, and their words figuring on a reader's fingers and minds, point to the distance between inside and outside, artwork and beholder, delivering news of war, sex and murder, rubbing one language against others like skin, as Barthes suggests, carrying the weight of the unconscious.

According to Anzieu, skin has three main functions: "it operates as an envelope of the self, a protective barrier against the outside, and a means of communicating with others".[314] In *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, "the close-up color photos, cropped and reproduced as full-page bleeds, were presented as page after page of fields of skin, with hairs, pores, blemishes correspondingly magnified, though individual body parts are unidentifiable".[315] Unable to figure the gender or part of the body that bore the texts, readers read words formed by ink that occasionally spilled and filled the skin pores, and observed blemishes and hairs that marked and transgressed this bizarre reading field. The images also directly recalled the all-too-familiar practice of tattooing numbers on the skin of Holocaust victims in the Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War and the magazine thus also addressed the mark of recent traumatic history that is still hard to fade.[316] Handling the magazine implicated the readers

[313] Prosser, 53
[314] Tina Takemoto, "Open wounds" in Ahmed and Stacey, 110
[315] Simon, "No Snakes; Ladders", 83
[316] To my knowledge, Holzer has not discussed this link so far. While there are certainly important parallels to be drawn between *Lustmord* and the practice of tattooing and branding victims during the Holocaust, as well as how this could

physically and psychically in a way that is not conventionally associated with the experience of art or reading news of atrocity, for the object's smooth surfaces, folds and inserts became an animated surface like skin itself. Readers were left challenging the perception of their own skin as a protective barrier that could configure *Lustmord*'s content as being outside or inside of themselves and came across "a metaphorical topography of flesh, inscribed and invaded by language", that required them to communicate with three subjects.[317]

"I AM AWAKE IN THE PLACE WHERE WOMEN DIE" is according to Holzer the thesis sentence of *Lustmord*, who also stated that she envisioned the magazine as "slipping unheeded into people's homes, bringing with it accounts of brutality and horror".[318] The sentence on the controversial cover was also repeated in the last skin photograph in the magazine (Fig. 47). Speaking in German on the cover and in English on the photograph, "by way of repetition and translation", *Lustmord*, according to Sielke, constructed "a complex trace of solidarity and identification".[319] In transporting and reimagining a rape scene in this way, *Lustmord* is asking the same question posed by Mitchell: "How do we account for the rampant sexuality of war?"[320] Tracing war trauma together with the history of hysteria and its systemic disappearance and incorporation into the feminine, Mitchell posits hysteria as able to show us "how sexuality moves across the death and life drives".[321] Turning the pages of the *Lustmord* issue animated the full-page skin photographs and imbued its subjects with an

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have been perceived by the German readership, this discussion lies beyond the scope of this chapter.

[317] Joselit, 51
[318] Young, 111
[319] Sielke, 239
[320] Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas*, 129
[321] Ibid.,158

aliveness that came at a stark contrast with the messages of death they delivered. Readers were able to follow the perpetrator's short, simple and fast-paced sentences that betrayed a profoundly anxious and hysterical predisposition that dressed his sexual and murderous desire: "I STEP ON HER HANDS/I SPLAY HER FINGERS/SHE TIGHTENS AND I HIT HER". To write and read these short and brutal sentences is to examine male hysteria as a symptom of war trauma and to follow the narrative of soldiers and war hysterics. As Nixon describes, following the work of Mitchell on male hysteria, these soldiers frequently showed a variety of symptoms that related to language and the "most striking symptoms were disturbances of speech".[322] In this way, following Nixon's reading of Spero's work in relation to war psychoanalysis and hysteria, it can be said that writing the perpetrator's script was Holzer's invitation to her readers and viewers to "play out the hysterical logic of war, in which agents are stimulated to act out their fantasies of destruction but not to speak of them".[323]

Through the victim's voice, the perpetrator is given a different kind of cognition as soon as he appears on stage. "In contrast to the perpetrator, the victim addresses her opponent as 'You' and the 'fantasmatic' [sic] monologue on the abstraction of woman becomes a personalized dialogue", Volkart suggests.[324] No longer abstracted and objectified, the victim, "she", speaks and acknowledges her aggressor in an unnerving psychic confrontation: "THE BIRD TURNS ITS HEAD AND LOOKS AT ME WITH ONE EYE AS YOU ENTER". In doing so, the victim acknowledges the presence of another living being that symbolically witnesses the scene and challenges expectations of a binary violent scene

[322] Nixon, "Spero's Curses", 18
[323] Ibid., 19
[324] Volkart, 116-17

between a perpetrator and his victim. The bird looks at her and she is awake and attendant to its double vision: one eye looks at her, while the other looks away. "The reader's/viewer's voyeurism […] [is] symbolized by the cross-eyed bird", while scopophilic pleasure is further enhanced by its ability and privilege to look the other way.[325] In a metaphor of the reader's ability to look away, Holzer's victim posits vision against body, blood against skin, targeting and staining in red everyone as accomplice. She is watching the "You" who enters, her perpetrator, as well as her audience. Able to focus on their bodies as they concentrate on hers, she notices a violence of the symbolic order, everyone's culpability, against her inability, in looking away.

This bird also works as a metaphor for *Lustmord*'s observer, whose script informs us that the victim is also looking at him: "SHE SMILES AT ME BECAUSE SHE IMAGINES I CAN HELP HER". He or she is a subject that has spent time with the expired victim in the same room, observing the situation, paralyzed by the victim's ordeal, unable to help her. Pressing the issue of witnessing beyond its ethical dimension, Holzer focuses instead on the psychic toll that such an experience may bring. Realizing that the victim died, the observer says "I WANT TO SUCK ON HER TO MAKE HER RESPOND", a snippet of traumatic speech that performs a denial of her victimhood in its attempt to revivify a corpse and return a mother. The observer wishes for a regression to an infantile state where the victim would be alive again, perhaps only to resume the observer's nourishment. For the observer is now motherless, an infantilized character; without the victim to protect and guide his gaze, he or she becomes an orphan witness, attendant to a failed, posthumous object relation.

[325] Sielke, 244

Tightly knitting the observer's and the victim's story, Holzer opened a line of communication that becomes instrumental on the *Lustmord* table, which is discussed later.

But it is ultimately the victim's monologue that stirs the reader's imagination the most, as it is the only one who deploys the "You" pronoun that shifts the tone of the skin photographs as it turns the series into a conversation. "YOU CONFUSE ME WITH SOMETHING THAT IS IN YOU. I WILL NOT PREDICT HOW YOU WANT TO USE ME", she says. "A paradoxical and actually unbearable double-bind situation" is set out for the victim during an assault that renders her capable to see past barriers and step into another's skin.[326] The perpetrator pays notice yet he is unable to carry out the transgression the victim embarks upon. "Anything he can do, say […] or see (I WATCH HER AS SHE THINKS ABOUT ME) serves to assure him".[327] She is capable to understand his motivations in anticipation of the effect of his actions that will have to be sustained. "His invasion of her body is balanced –and even to some degree provoked- by 'her' invasion of his mind. He brutally brings his 'outside' –his penis- into her in order to exorcise what she represents 'inside' his mind", Joselit suggests.[328] Mediated through skin, this concurrent and bilateral invasion of body and mind marks out a complicated landscape of identification that undercuts traditional associations of masculinity with reason and femininity with the body.

To further complicate the dichotomy of body and mind that in many ways validates and propagates rape culture, one of the victim's lines in the photographs also inserts into the conversation the issue of how and who gets to

[326] Volkart, 117
[327] Ibid., 116
[328] Joselit, 51, 53

speak about rape, while its inscription on skin emphasizes the silence of its victims: "YOU HAVE SKIN IN YOUR MOUTH. YOU LICK ME STUPIDLY", she says. "Taken from a pornographic narrative [which] provokes pleasure'" and "playing on the metaphor of eating, which suggests oral sex", these lines "suggest a sense of being eaten alive, of losing one's ego boundaries (which, in a literal sense, are made up of one's skin)".[329] We are informed that the perpetrator attempts to provoke the pleasure of his victim through the victim's monologue that is also addressing the voyeuristic pleasure of its readers who have been given access to this scene. The victim is quick to spot "his pitiful attempt to ease his mind by 'pleasing' her" and mockingly dissociates this gratification in perpetrator and voyeur alike.[330] In her critique of, and attack on, masculinity she hits back with "YOU LICK ME STUPIDLY" in an imaginary internal dialogue of derision and defiance. The skin photograph that bears this testimony delivers an additional visual punch with "STUPIDLY" being inscribed in a different color to the rest of the text (Fig. 42). The connection between skin and mouth in her monologue is strategically established to examine the silence of sexual assault. Fusing the site of speech and devouring with the sensory excitability of the epidermis, Holzer points to the blindness and silence that surrounded the mass crimes of sexual violence in the Bosnian war and how "screaming can come straight from the body".[331] As Anzieu suggests:

> The third function –which the skin shares with the mouth and which it performs at least as often- is a site and primary means of communicating

[329] Volkart, 117 and Sielke, 240-41
[330] Sielke, 241
[331] Holzer quoted in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "An Interview with Jenny Holzer" in Breslin et al., 119

> with others, of establishing signifying relations; it is, moreover, an "inscribing surface" for the marks left by those others.[332]

The skin photographs are not only targeting readers through touch but enter their minds through speech as they mouth their words in fantasy. Approaching these texts distantly, and reading them as neatly categorized on-the-couch testimonies of traumatized subjects, is to ignore the signifying relations, the connection that these photographs create with the skin of the person who beholds them or an analyst who listens; it is to dispense with the dynamism of Holzer's inscribed surfaces, which create transferentially complex cartographies of skin.

A house of skin

In May 1994, Holzer evolved *Lustmord* further and produced a haunting installation at Barbara Gladstone Gallery in New York (Figs. 55-58).[333] Walking into the gallery viewers were faced with a "ludicrously disproportionate to its quarters […] [and] uncanny hulking construction, fostering a sense of claustrophobia in no way diminished by the impossibility of grasping its overall shape".[334] Holzer had constructed a "simplified barrel-vaulted 'hut' suspended

[332] Anzieu, 40

[333] This part of the chapter is based on the literature cited here who provided my research and thinking with detailed accounts on the installation at Barbara Gladstone Gallery (particularly Simon, Joselit and Avgikos), as well as with personal narratives on the works in the installation. Moreover, my own experience with the *Lustmord* tables at the Welcome Collection in London and at Hauser & Wirth Somerset in 2015 is also what informs my arguments about the viewer's experience, taking into account my own as well as the experiences of those around me. The version of the Lustmord tables I personally encountered was very similar to the one presented at installation at Barbara Gladstone Gallery and Jenny Holzer Studio was able to confirm this with detailed documentation and images with which I was kindly provided.

[334] Jan Avgikos, "Jenny Holzer: Barbara Gladstone Gallery", *Artforum International* 33, No.1 (September 1994), 184

within a [metallic] structural grid" (Fig. 55).[335] This peculiar shelter featured on one end a single entrance with no door, from which a dim but warm red color escaped its enclosure and glowed invitingly to those outside it. But just outside this entrance, "like a sentry", stood an "anthropomorphic and futuristic three-dimensional LED sign", spinning around words that became sentences (Figs. 55, 56, 58).[336] These peculiar objects acted like magnets and prompted the viewer to start walking towards them through the dark recesses of the gallery. "Literally shrouded in darkness, the 'thing' […] exuded seduction and menace, invitation and entrapment", Jan Avgikos reported.[337] To enter the hut, the viewer would have had to bypass this robotic guard slowly and silently forming sentences. The *Lustmord* script appeared like a helix that never stopped rotating and was delivered in a painstakingly unhurried fashion, word for word.

Looking into the hut through its open entrance, viewers came across a second LED sign identical to the one that had just greeted them (Fig. 56). Faced with the decision to enter or not, the viewer's gaze was already split between two sources of revolving information delivering red words. Upon entering the hut, the viewer shrouded off the preceding darkness and was embraced by a very visceral red light that felt more corporeal. This red light was a result of what the light fixtures inside the hut were illuminating. The walls of this room were lined in red leather, "tanned skin, as a visceral evocation of body cavities".[338] Getting closer to the room's surfaces produced an even deeper understanding of their fleshy richness (Fig. 57):

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[335] Joselit, 70
[336] Ibid.
[337] Avgikos, 184
[338] Joselit, 70

> The red leather that covered the hut's interior was embossed with patterns and Holzer's texts. On the floor, she used a lattice-and-floral design. On the walls, the *Lustmord* texts were arranged within a diamond-shaped pattern that conveyed the look of a chain-link fence, with a letter placed in the middle of each diamond.[339]

The *Lustmord* scripts were separated on the walls of Holzer's hut: the victim's was to the left, the observer's to the right and the perpetrator's was on the wall directly in front of the entrance. The cylindrical LED sign was placed in the middle of the room and its rotating motion created a contrast to the static words trapped in the diamond pattern. Usually when light passes through a diamond its speed changes, creating the familiar rainbow of colors, giving diamonds their distinctive sparkle. But Holzer's words were meant to be trapped within their diamond prisons; to fix the voices of their owners in place, to disclose the stories one would hear if these walls could talk. Nonetheless, these stories were not dead in their leather inertia, for they were also fractured and constantly repeated by the LED signs in three dimensions. "The texts seem[ed] to float and collide, appear and disappear in a transparent shell" both inside and just outside this idiosyncratic house.[340] Holzer's LED signs not only reproduced the tales of the walls but also made them travel in space, shining light on their wall duplicates, piercing the dark air of the gallery, haunting this red house and filling exhibition rooms with spectral life.

Holzer described the 3D imagers as "cylindrical, appropriately penile", a posture that disrupts the warm, womblike form and feeling of the hut, taking *Lustmord*'s examination of war rape a step further, installing sex and violence in three dimensions. "The imagers are on cylindrical pedestals. Hard phallic things… [sic] One of the imagers is placed inside the hut –as if somebody is waiting in the

[339] Waldman, 25
[340] Ibid.

house and one is just outside the door- threatening", Holzer added.[341] Standing tall inside and outside of the skin-lined hut, these hard phallic things constantly erupted words in three dimensions and seduced viewers to join them in a sensual but treacherous world of role-play. Like teleprompters they delivered the *Lustmord* lines, including a couple by the victim and the perpetrator that felt more site-specific than the rest: "THE COLOR OF HER WHERE SHE IS INSIDE OUT IS ENOUGH TO MAKE ME KILL HER", the perpetrator said, while the victim replied "WITH YOU INSIDE ME COMES THE KNOWLEDGE OF MY DEATH". Turning subjectivity inside out, challenging what separates and distinguishes the individuals in this conflict, the inside of skin is colored as enough to kill one of its participants. The perpetrator experiences the thrill of interconnection yet fantasizes about breaking this bond with murder, which the victim feels and anticipates. "Of every individual who has reached to the stage of being a unit with a limiting membrane and an outside and an inside, it can be said that there is an inner reality to that individual, an inner world which can be rich or poor and can be at peace or in a state of war", Winnicott suggests, tracing inadequate descriptions of interpersonal relationships and "good-enough" mothering.[342]

The perpetrator's line can be read as describing a mother-infant and infant-object relationship gone wrong that the victim seems to known about, bringing them closer in this womblike room. The line that the cylinder delivers, communicates that the perpetrator's inner world is in a state of war, that the limiting membranes

[341] Holzer quoted in Simon, "No Ladders; Snakes", 83-84
[342] D. W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena—A Study of the First Not-Me Possession", *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 34, (1958), 90

of his inside and outside have disappeared, that such interconnectedness with other subjects and objects is terrifying enough to make him kill, a hysterical act from which he will also derive sexual gratification. As Nixon describes tracing Mitchell's theory of war sexuality:

> For the soldier, […] hysteria is a reaction to the violence that warfare exacts. Forced to break the social taboo against killing, the soldier is urged to revive, and to act upon, infantile fantasies of murder and revenge. To put it another way, warfare exploits the fantasies of its agents, unleashing violence that is both exhilarating and terrifying for the subject.[343]

Carving both lines on the hut's walls and spinning them through the cylinders, stirring the infantile fantasies of aggression that structure war sexuality, Holzer created an important textual communication between victim and perpetrator that rarely occurs and facilitated a dialogue that usually happens in teleological opposition rather than embodied consideration. For what these lines and their material carriers communicated, beyond the exploitation of infantile fantasies and the violence that warfare exacts, is that there is still critical potentiality that lies within the interconnectedness of its subjects. The victim's line pointed to a painful but possible mode of thinking that occurs through the skin of the perpetrator, a psychical and critical inhabitation of a body that is exiled and discarded as terrifying and undesirable. As Winnicott proposes:

> Part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, is an intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area which is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated.[344]

[343] Nixon, "Spero's Curses", 19
[344] Winnicott, 90

Holzer's hut materialized, within a troubling intermediate area of experience, the infantile fantasies that often lead to the sexualized violence of soldiers, as well as the traumatic cognition of violence that only a victim can communicate, thus claiming an area for subjects who find themselves at odds with the consolidation of their inner and outer realities and fantasies. Within this environment, the texts and their rich materiality underlined how approaching the subjects of violence as separated yet interrelated might be a difficult task, but it is one that could bring an informed insight to the conversation.

Carved on walls and traveling in air, language filled the whole room, completely enclosing the viewer in *Lustmord*'s tale. "I wanted the installation to be enveloping, because it is about the body… [sic] It is crucial to this piece that it be literally around you and work on your whole being", Holzer declared.[345] Closely following Anzieu's suggestion that skin can be "revealed to the other as a fragile envelope inviting physical penetration and psychical intrusions", Holzer's hut was revealed to the audience as a living organism capable to excite their bodies and breach their minds, as well as dream and fantasize itself.[346] Engulfing its visitors, the hut as an envelope "is not merely a containing sac; it plays an active role in putting the psyche into contact with the external world and in gathering and transmitting information".[347] Its skin walls are active surfaces that gather and transmit information to the hut's visitors through their grid and text-punched texture. This treatment creates a surface with visual gaps and breaks that breathes and perforates, diffusing information and stimuli as every other surface in *Lustmord*: the ink that spills and fills the pores of skin in the photographs, the 3D

[345] Young, 114
[346] Anzieu, 33
[347] Ibid., 83

imagers that fill thin air with pulsing words, the metal grid that surrounds the red leather room and the viewer's psychic envelope, the most active surface of them all.

Holzer's hut was inspired by news of "women being dragged from their houses, raped in their houses, their houses burned".[348] In addition, Holzer stressed it was about "women at large [… and] that this stuff goes on everywhere all of the time".[349] Thus, the hut also staged an intervention on the symbolism of woman as house. Standing tall in darkness, the hut lured visitors to linger in a place that communicated both the specific violation of Bosnian women and what if feels like for millions of women across the world to be buried alive inside their houses.[350] In contrast to Avgikos' review in *Artforum International*, which claimed the hut to be "ludicrously disproportionate to its quarters", Simon rightly declared the house as *Lustmord*'s locus and central image after conversations with the artist.[351] Holzer confessed that she "would have preferred to use the text-embossed leather panels to line an existing room, but as there was no appropriate one at New York's Barbara Gladstone Gallery, she decided to build her own".[352] Dressing one of the gallery's existing rooms would not have achieved the same effect as building her own house, for it would have been too site-specific and ephemerally poignant. It was an appropriate decision to make this house "portable"; its panels can be broken down, it can follow and reconstruct houses of violence anywhere.

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[348] Holzer quoted in Simon, "No Ladders; Snakes", 84
[349] Ruf, 111
[350] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell, 1963), 325
[351] Avgikos, 184 and Simon, "No Ladders; Snakes", 84
[352] Simon, "No Ladders; Snakes", 84

Describing that it felt "extravagant" to build a house, Holzer also "acknowledges a sense of ritualistic building to match the urgency of speaking".[353] Inside the hut its leather skin bears the marks of its inhabitants; tortured graffiti, hieroglyphs of a bloody war ritual, scratched walls that absorbed the testimonies of aggression and despair of their caged beasts. Thinking of Holzer's structure as a womb, stepping into the hut is like re-entering a maternal body. But now its newly imagined subversive form takes center stage in the public realm. It is a body that pulses, breathes, and speaks while playing host to invasive phallic objects –3D imagers and viewers walking in- and eventually gives birth to multiple, clandestine and injurious forms of speaking and screaming. This "heated-up display" radically proposed a visceral mode of spectatorship, "collapsing the distance between viewer and object and enveloping the body in a pulsing surround of stimulus […] deflect[ing] critical composure and aggressively corporealiz[ing] viewing".[354] This corporeal display heated up the sexual core of the deathly Bosnian War and pushed the envelope for distanced audiences in the Western world. Inside the hut different testimonies may have been on opposite walls, but the skin that bore them was the same and it was bleeding. Holzer's installation underlined once more that victim, perpetrator and observer share the same lineage of skin and her hut, imagined as a bleeding womb, was mother to all.

Adding to the symbolic weight the hut already carried as an object were the viewers of the exhibition who entered the installation. Standing tall inside it, they activated the structure with their physical and psychical presence. Reading the

[353] Ibid.
[354] Mignon Nixon, "You Thrive on Mistaken Identity", *October* 60 (Spring 1992), 68

incised words on the walls, they recreated in their minds the history of this house. Like the 3D imagers that materialized all of the occupants' testimonies in holograms, so did viewers giving them form in fantasy. What is more, the floor's lattice and floral design literally and metaphorically undermined the vertical posture of each viewer and underlined that there were to be no wallflowers in this gathering. Pulled by the hut's active membrane enclosure, the viewers were subsumed by relentless identifications that destabilized each member's viewing position and sense of self. Anzieu, referring to Wilfred Bion's notion of a "psychical 'container'", outlines such fears associated with this sort of confinement:

> The dangers of depersonalization are bound up with the image of a perforable envelope and with the anxiety –primary, according to Bion- of a flowing away of vital substance through holes, an anxiety not of fragmentation but of emptying.[355]

Holzer's leather script facilitated the cultivation of such anxieties for those who entered it. The dread of losing one's self was associated with the hut's fearsome membrane embrace; the viewer's sense of boundaries collapsed as his or her skin was colored by the hut's red light and the film separating their individual fantasies from *Lustmord*'s imaginary hell got thinner. It was not fragmentation that Holzer's hut was after, as the viewer moved from one wall to another, from one identification to another. The 3D imager that kept repeating all of the *Lustmord* voices, shining one protagonist's words onto the walls of another, was following the viewers' inner motions as they were bouncing the same texts on the walls of their minds. It is thus not an anxiety of losing and mentally fracturing one's self by hitting one specific wall that featured one of *Lustmord*'s distinct narratives. What was put forward was the experience of a recurring

[355] Anzieu, 38-39

anxiety by reading and feeling the stories of all of its subjects at once, a feeling of emptying out, of taking residence in this house.

"Using techniques of unconscious fantasy […] to divide the field of identification", Holzer's installation ignited in the viewer the terrible realization that they could see themselves in all of *Lustmord*'s characters, even the perpetrator's.[356] Playing on violence's sexual side and using materials and forms, such as leather and metal cages that prompted associations with an environment of sadomasochism, Holzer problematized the viewer's identification movements further. Each identification with the victim, the perpetrator or the observer invited a sense of shame as one realized the pleasure available through the infliction, reception or voyeurism of pain, which usually positions the woman in the receiving end of all three. Putting her viewers in such troubling circumstances, Holzer destabilized conventional modes of spectatorship structured around the masculine gaze and female body and "exploit[ed] masochistic pleasure, pleasure in the loss of a stable identity, to counter sadistic gratification".[357] What is more, her attack on patriarchal oppression was multifaceted and turned the (art) world inside out: the space that facilitated such psychic movements was an iron-clasped womblike room, which unlike its sister buildings at the time –the rape houses in operation in Bosnia- took pleasure in welcoming even more visitors to its quarters in Chelsea, New York. Holzer's hut appeared as a caged mother in its metal grid, a symbolic link with the women locked and tortured in the Bosnian War, who were thereby rendered in grandiose form. Moreover, in its allusion to a war shelter, like those built underneath

[356] Nixon, "You Thrive on Mistaken Identity", 64
[357] Ibid., 61

American houses, Holzer's hut also underscored the anxieties of the nuclear family.[358] It provided a home to a victimized female, a perpetrating male and an observing child, recording their violent altercations on its walls.[359] The hut, like the faraway rape houses, saw people come and go. But for as long as they were inside it, they were hers, and, like a mother who does not differentiate between her children, she welcomed them all in her seized and turbulent embrace.

The perpetrator, victim and observer of *Lustmord* were played on the stereotypes of a violent father, a helpless mother and a traumatized child, tying a familiar but distressing narrative with the violence and infantalization that pervades war rape. Seen as a metal-clasped but pulsing womb, the hut took up the consequences of perpetuating the stereotype of the female masochist, used as a justification for war rape and domestic violence alike. Hiding multiple subjects inside it that oscillated between rape's subject positions the hut produced a viewing process that could be experienced as identificatory sadomasochism. Following Nixon's work on Kruger, Holzer's hut also shows that:

> This already destabilized structure [of sadomasochism] still coerces; we identify with the roles it sets out even as we may also refuse them. But this condition of "even as" is already a displacement, shifting the relation between these two processes, identification and refusal, from a sequence to a pulse. What this oscillation, this switching back and forth, interrupts is the stereotype's speed, its ability to get there first. So one way of reading this tension […] is as an attempt to bring refusal onto the ground

[358] "Our parents were busy building atomic bomb shelters. We thought that our days were numbered. Someday we'll all be blown away, one little mistake and 'boom'! That has been impressed upon me". Holzer said in her interview with Kämmerling in 1993. Kämmerling, 123

[359] "These texts were also prompted by Holzer's participation in a roundtable discussion to develop the Family Violence project for Liz Clairborne. Holzer found herself, along with many others in the 20-odd member group, so upset by the discussion of violence done to women in their homes that her texts began to be 'peopled by women outside war zones, too'". Simon, "No Ladders; Snakes", 80-81

> of identification, that is, to juxtapose or imbricate the two in an ambiguous figure.[360]

Viewers were afforded the chance to readily jump from one stereotype to another even as they refused them. The segregated testimonies on the hut's walls did not have any labels to pinpoint their owners, and viewers, reading from left to right, moved across walls into identifications with an ambiguous pulse. Like Holzer's 3D imagers, they pulsed a variety of words on the walls of their minds, with "I", "YOU", "SHE", and "THEY" flickering and changing the rules of the game so fast that no particular psychic sequence could be established. "Susceptible to the excesses of identification", viewers fell prey to the artist's use of "fantasy as a strategy for restaging subjugation as tension, as a spatial and temporal oscillation that radically decenters subjectivity".[361] Within the hut's eccentric embrace the viewing experience was one of spatial and temporal tension, and Holzer prompted a loss of the sense of self in an environment that deployed its excesses as resistance, designed not to make viewers lose their minds but to realize that there is an art to losing oneself.

A sequence of skin

Leaving the hut behind and re-entering the darkness, viewers continued to the exhibition rooms downstairs. Walking down they came into a room with dim lighting that shone on fourteen photographs hung on the gallery's walls. The text that was featured in the hut installation above was repeated on the photographs,

[360] Nixon, "You Thrive on Mistaken Identity", 64
[361] Ibid., 65, 74

"seemingly branded on human skin [when] in fact they were written in ink".[362] This was a selection of the skin photographs that Holzer had published the year before, quite possibly featuring only the ones written in English. Most visitors would not have encountered these photographs before, as they were only disseminated and exhibited in Germany. The red leather lining of the hut above acquired additional investment as it was now much more directly tied to the fantasy and reality of human skin. *Lustmord*'s narrative stretched further, folding and unfolding upon its viewers and itself.

Unlike the walls of the hut above, the photographs' subjects were unsorted, but their presentation –hanged horizontally and sequentially- promoted the same destabilized reading, as the tone and content of the texts changed between perpetrator, victim and observer, setting in motion a war of identification anew. Here, Holzer's decision to crop the photographs, so that the text their skin bore was not to be ascribed to a particular body part or gendered body, addressed the discourses that frame art objects. With the experience of tactility eliminated in this version, critical focus fell on the viewing gaze and its fantasies of mastery. Reading texts marked on naked bodies, especially ones that exuberated sexual tension, viewers were faced literally and imaginatively not only with troubling identifications but also with the authority of their own viewing position, even if this abuse of power was something they rejected. The other alternative offered to exhibition viewers was to start again their attempt to identify and categorize the subject of the texts they were reading, whose actions and thoughts they were performing in fantasy, a kind of identification ordering that could bring some

[362] Holland Cotter, "Art in Review", *The New York Times* (13 May 1994), accessed February 21, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/13/arts/art-in-review-084786.html

peace of mind. But with their eyes adjusting to minimal light and traveling across skin, this endeavor proved to be testing, as psychic movements are not easily controlled.

Holzer's photograph installation was dependent on the time needed to give in to identification and to think on the experience, to get these pictures. In this dim light, it became clear that "the photograph [was] cropped not only to intensify pleasure but to refuse it, removing the pleasurable part and picturing only the instruments of its construction". [363] Situating language on skin to tell stories from unoriginally segregated subject positions while managing to challenge their authoritative infrastructure, Holzer "exposed the coercive methods of the stereotype but also the resistant ways that people read".[364] Viewers were thus offered the chance to read and learn more about *Lustmord*'s family through their unusual wall photographs.

A Table of Bones

The next room featured a single composite object that possessed perhaps greater summoning power. In the middle of the room and lit from above was a simple, wooden table whose surface was covered with what appeared to be an array of human bones and teeth. Getting closer to the table and observing its unnerving display, viewers noticed that some of the bones featured on its wooden surface

[363] Nixon, "You Thrive on Mistaken Identity", 67. Nixon further suggests that: "Viewers do give in to identification, even as they resist it. By simultaneously dramatizing the compulsion to identify with stereotypical scenarios –the certainty that one will be taken in, will get the picture- and demonstrating their extreme susceptibility to subversion, [this kind of art] strains gendered identification from two angles at once".
[364] Ibid.

were fixed with silver bands that were engraved with text. All of the bones were sorted by type and size across the table's surface, creating a display that was carefully arranged (Figs. 59-61).[365]

While bodies were physically kept apart in the otherwise imaginative skin photographs, in this room, viewers were invited by Holzer to pick up the bones and turn them around, so that they could read the text that was engraved on the immovable silver clasps, fixed on a selection of these bones. Reading the press release or the exhibition wall text, viewers were informed that these were, in fact, female human bones. Once again, the *Lustmord* voices started echoing in viewers' heads but this time the embodied testimonies were closer and more tactile than ever. "These relics of human suffering tagged as fragments of war" also meant to turn up the heat of the psychic conflict.[366] "They recalled 'reliquaries', 'women's secrets', and 'mass death', according to the artist, and the silver served as a 'crude allusion to the fact that these deaths, any death has value'".[367] For Ruf, these silver bands evoked "markers on birds, newborn babies, soldiers or dead bodies" and demanded "a strange, tactile intimacy […] to be establish[ed] with them".[368]

Presented on a simple table, traditionally associated with family gatherings, and being objects that are also remnants of flesh, this table setting suggested an

[365] Although the image shown here is from a later installation of the *Lustmord* table, my research shows that this could be the original table presented in the Barbara Gladstone exhibition or that the original is very similar to the table featured here.
[366] Waldman, 25
[367] Ibid. Holzer has mentioned that she bought the bones for her installation at a curiosity store in SoHo, New York. These bones were mainly used by physicians and doctors for clinical and educational purposes but the fact that somehow they ended up for sale in a store adds another troubling dimension to the installation, which lies beyond the scope of this current discussion.
[368] Ruf, 114

action that had already taken place, and what had already occurred was a meal that had reduced human flesh to the bone. Yet these bones were pristinely cleaned and neatly organized in a way that was not suggestive of eating, so this table was preparing the bodies around it for another kind of introjection. Using the table as the structural and theoretical support for her display of bones, Holzer retraced the violence that is so often expelled to the public sphere back to the home. However, the orally aggressive activities that the *Lustmord* script describes, further challenge the perception of Holzer's table as a friendly, homely object, shifting its traditional shape in the viewer's mind. As Ahmed proposes, "the table has a horizontal surface, which 'supports' the action for which it is intended" and it is this "tending forward" of the object that ultimately communicates to us how it is different from others. [369] What we do on the table is "what makes the table the object what it is", an object that "is assembled around the 'support' it gives", Ahmed presses.[370] Holzer's carefully placed array of bones did not intend to highlight this table as a place for eating. Instead, viewers were instructed to pick up these objects and spin them around in a direction that would allow them to read the messages they carried. Reading the messages, it quickly became clear that this table was assembled to allow a perpetrator to "BITE HER CLOSED AGAIN", while the victim "HUNTED [HIM] WITH HER MOUTH". Its horizontal surface supported the perpetrator to "SINK ON HER" and "LICK HER STUPIDLY". This was no dinner table; this was a rape table.

[369] Ahmed, 46
[370] Ibid.

Further attesting to the idiosyncratic oral aggression that this table supports are the perpetrator's declarations that "HER BREASTS ARE ALL NIPPLE" and "I WANT TO FUCK HER WHERE SHE HAS TOO MUCH HAIR", which, as Sielke argues, redefine male violence as a reaction to female excess.[371] In disclosing the perpetrator's profound anxiety in this imaginary scene of rape, where there is a proliferation of breasts and hair and an insurgence of devouring, Holzer exposes "war sexuality (rape) [as] the ultimate detachment of sexuality from reproduction and the attachment of death to sexuality", what Mitchell describes as "hysterical sexuality".[372] For the perpetrator, the victim's breasts appear as objects capable to attract and attack, experienced as sources of concurrent pleasure and annihilation. The deathly, sexual violence unleashed upon his victim is imagined as an attack on a maternal body ("I AM NEAR HER MILK") yet one that is no longer perceived as nourishing, since its primarily good object, the breast, has turned bad and all fearsome ("HER BREASTS ARE ALL NIPPLE").

As Klein has theorized: "from the beginning the destructive impulse is turned against the object and is first expressed in phantasied oral-sadistic attacks on the mother's breast, which soon develop into onslaughts on her body by all sadistic means".[373]Attacking the victim's breast in its terrifying excess and violating the woman where she purportedly has "too much hair" sends the perpetrator's vengeance into hysterical overdrive. The female body is perceived as a double menace in its perceived simultaneous abundance and lack. Profoundly unnerved

[371] Sielke, 240
[372] Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas*, 129
[373] Melanie Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms" (1946) in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell (New York: Free Press, 1986), 177

by the absent phallus, where the victim is reduced to nothing but hair, the perpetrator attacks and murders his victim. Even the victim, a loan mother in the perpetrator's fantasy, is attacking both of their bodies with her mouth ("SHE HUNTS ME WITH HER MOUTH/MY BREASTS ARE SO SWOLLEN THAT I BITE THEM"). Infusing her desperate defense attempts with a violent inversion of the cathexis offered by object relations, the victim's actions highlight the consequences of a maternal aggression that was assigned to her. Tending towards the *Lustmord* table and reading its story off its deathly offerings, viewers were informed what business deal was struck around it: "in war, rape is normal… [sic]; It is part of the soldier's income, so to speak, a payment in kind", Holzer stressed.[374] The viewers that accepted the invitation to handle the bones reproduced in inner monologues the sexual fantasies that led them to lie on the table. The perpetrator's hysterical bone script communicated how the trauma of annihilation in war shapes the psychic reality of soldiers, in which "sexuality may be overloaded with the destructiveness of the death component, in a way to which wartime rape bears testimony".[375] Setting her table with bones and asking viewers to consider this aspect of wartime experience, Holzer, however, also emphasized that this kind of violence hits closer to home than we may think and that it is not necessarily structured on a gender binary or a two-subject opposition.

"I WANT TO LIE DOWN BESIDE HER/I HAVE NOT SINCE I WAS A CHILD", reads one of the bone rings. Although it is unclear who speaks, the viewer who reads this line is struck with a different mode of address, one that

[374] Holzer quoted in Waldman, 25
[375] Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, 45

attempts to be close to the victim and her suffering. It is someone who wants to align him or herself with the victim, lying down with her, in a move that awakens childhood memories. Due to the first person narrative, it could also be assumed that it is the perpetrator who speaks in a prelude or closure of his violent explosion. After all, the mother-child relationship that is being outlined here has been an instrumental fantasy in his aggressive outbursts over the course of the struggle. Holzer's narrative of the Bosnian war rape crimes could also have been that of a tripartite family that could be anywhere. Moreover, while the bones on the table belonged to a female skeleton, their appearance, apart from the larger pelvic bones, could not testify to this. The visual and textual anonymity of the bones, as well as the non-gendered observer, could lead both male and female viewers to identify with positions they also might refuse. "The hardest text to write, the hardest text to speak was that of the rapist. And that was difficult because it was too easy to enter this mindset. I was frightened at how quickly I could imagine being that cruel", Holzer stated about her own identification journey.[376] "Rape is not sexuality that is violent [often associated with male penetration] but violence that has become sexualized [which is an experience not necessarily instructed by gender]", Mitchell holds.[377] Holzer took up war sexuality by laying the residues of the *Lustmord* tale on the table and by working with the language of the unconscious that all subjects share as mother tongue.[378]

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[376] Jenny Holzer, "Lustmord Interview", video archives of the Jenny Holzer Studio.

[377] Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas*, 256.

[378] Mitchell also suggests that: "There are of course gender differences in the experiences of every subject which will inform manifestations of the unconscious through what are known as 'the day's residues' (that is to say, what actually happens to the subject, which may be gender-related, is what will trigger the dream or symptom). However, women and men do not produce sexually differentiated symptoms, either dreams, or slips of the tongue or pen. There is no

While attending to the gender differences and gendered spaces that propagated the criminal Bosnian rapes, she also produced a scene of violence that most people could dream of and wrote inner monologues that could hardly be dismissed as slips of the tongue or pen. Slowly turning the bones to read the inscription of their engraved silver bands, produced a spinning motion parallel to that of the 3D imagers in the hut above that spiraled the same text in every direction, manipulating and unsettling the ever-elusive pronouns of "I", "YOU", "SHE" and "THEY". Visitors of this exhibition entered "a choreography of shifting positions" as they moved from the hut to the table that literalized "the de-essentializing of identity": "the viewing body was subjected to a series of manipulations that dramatize[d] its vulnerability and deliver[ed] an object lesson in the contingency and consequences of identification".[379] The hut's imagers and the table's silver voices betrayed the urgency to come closer to the subjects of violence but also to speak of the fantasies that assemble them in such houses and gather them around such tables.

The bones on the table may belong to a female body but the silent screams that verbalized from their silver bands were not just hers; the victim surrendered her remains to the language of all *Lustmord* subjects, borrowing from their force in the afterlife. Having lost her teeth, as evidenced in the dental array on the table, and her head -"EXPLODE[D] IN THE FIRE"- as there is no skull present, her bones now stand in for a subject incapable of speech. Reading the bones, the viewer listens to the perpetrator who "SING[S] HER A SONG ABOUT US", in "a cynical euphemism for the powerful subordination of others through

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gender difference in the way in which the unconscious works, its 'language'". Ibid., 189.

[379] Nixon, "You Thrive on Mistaken Identity", 69

language", while she is thinking: "YOUR AWFUL LANGUAGE IS IN THE AIR BY MY HEAD".[380] She shifts the viewer's interest to what is rarely figured in the examination of violence against women: her mind that is awake and trying to figure out the contours of her bodily and psychical violation and confinement. The words of the perpetrator travel in the air like a poisonous, vaporous body that engulfs the victim's head in a cloud of verbal aggression, setting and trespassing the boundaries of language itself.

Returning to the realm of language and its associated patriarchal symbolic oppression, Holzer gives voice to a dead mother. The maternal body has been reduced to the bone but it remains a site of speech, hanging between life and death and operating between language and the symbolic. Holzer examines "what kind of language emerges when you are excluded from the symbolic in language", putting forward the suggestion that there is resistance instilled in "dramatizing one's position as not being part of the conversation".[381] "SHE BEGINS TO MAKE MISTAKES IN HER LANGUAGE AND I CORRECT HER THE WAY SHE HAS TAUGHT ME", the observer adds. In a language taught by and borrowed from her, the observer follows her speech closely, identifying its inadequacies and failures, filling in the gaps of her testimony the way he or she thinks she would have. This scene involves a double regression to an infantile state: the observer lies down next to the victim as if he or she were a child, and in turn, the victim who is presented as a mother to the observer, is covered in blood and unable to speak properly, like an infant at the moment of

[380] Volkart, 115

[381] Mignon Nixon, "Sperm Bomb: Art, Feminism, and the American War in Vietnam", video lecture, 85:04, *IAS: Institute for Advanced Study* (April, 17, 2012), accessed November 14, 2014, https://video.ias.edu/nixon-art-lecture-3-2012

birth. We would expect this traumatized and infantalized victim to be screaming but she attempts to articulate in words what has happened to her. Incapable to adequately express it and failing at the level of language, it is the observer, her offspring, who lends her the ability to speak.

This seemingly paradoxical scenario, which brings together mother and child in a codependent speaking relationship, goes against "Lacan's notion of the 'law of the father': […] the law of castration –the symbolic penalty for trying to stand in the father's place with the mother […] [which] is cognate with what he designates as 'the Symbolic' and the child's accession to language".[382] It is through the figure of the mother, and aligning with her, that victim and observer find a common language and come to speaking terms. Thus, the kind of language that emerges from the table is from the "law of the mother", which according to Mitchell is "a law allowing space for one who is the same and different".[383] Calling for "a mother who has been left out of the picture, a mother who is a subject and whose law contributes to the establishment of the subjecthood of her children", Mitchell posits the "law of the mother" parallel to the vertical authority of Lacan's laws and restrictions that control desire and the rules of communication.[384] In superimposing the language of the victim and the observer, alluding to the bidirectional communication between mother and child, Holzer undermines the kind of language that structures wars, produces violent soldiers, legitimizes the killing of "others" and authorizes assaults on women. *Lustmord* facilitates a rare encounter between victim and observer, who are examining together narratives of violence unleashed by vertical authorities of patriarchy that

[382] Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, 43-44
[383] Ibid., 52
[384] Ibid.

sanction the use of rape as a weapon of war and control the rules of its communication. Symbolically linked with motherhood in the fantasies of perpetrator and observer, as well as in her own monologue, the victim and her remains are bound by silver tongues that wrap themselves around bones like serpents to reclaim the language of the dead and of the dispossessed.

Destroyed and fragmented, reduced to an arranged series of bones, but still giving birth to different kinds of speech, the table presents an "all powerful mother, bearer of birth and of death [that] comes to hold centre stage in an even more absolute way".[385] When this dead mother speaks, she speaks on behalf of everyone, still trying to press from the afterlife her "law": we should allow space for one who is the same but different. The serial nature of the testimonies, the horizontal plane of the bones, and the calculated indeterminacy of speaking positions, provide a curious democracy of expression in which perpetrators are allowed the same space to talk as victims and observers. For after the mother's law has been enforced, comes a "lateral relationship [that] itself instigates its own processes of managing sameness through constructing difference".[386] Enforced by the mother as a horizontal law "to prohibit her children from murdering each other" and further theorized by Mitchell to analyze wartime killing and rape, the law of the mother, and *Lustmord*'s rich surfaces, introduce seriality, which, "although it takes place within language, is about numeracy not literacy".[387] By serializing and not merely repeating *Lustmord*'s bones and their

[385] Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas*, 258
[386] Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, 53
[387] Juliet Mitchell, "The Law of the Mother: Sibling Trauma and the Brotherhood of War", *Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis* 21, No.1 (2013), 147, Juliet Mitchell, "Psychoanalysis: War and the Law of the Mother", (unpublished manuscript, January 2012), and Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, 44

different claims to language, Holzer assigns equal responsibility to the imaginative narratives that still protract sexual violence against women as a weapon of war. By carefully arranging the different bones according to their shape and size, she is not visually repeating the skeletons hidden in the history closet of the traumatic events that inspired *Lustmord*, but offers an understanding of what structures them. For "repetition is a response to trauma [whereas] seriality is the symbolization of the repetition of trauma. That's the movement".[388] It is not just an artistic response to the traumatic events of the Bosnian War but an intervention that aims to infiltrate the psychical, societal and historical symbolizations that persistently produce them.

What is more is that this language emerged from liquid form before it was serially crystalized to deliver hard-hitting messages on bones, "for their silver tags were made, in an act of grief and loss, from the melted-down remains of some of Holzer's mother belongings".[389] The death of her mother, who passed away at the time Holzer was writing *Lustmord*, was reportedly very instrumental to the end result. "Suddenly the death of my mother was all wrapped up in the even more horrible deaths of women in Yugoslavia"; "my mother died when I was writing and this influenced every part of the work", Holzer observed.[390] But, as Joselit rightly suggested, it is not the autobiographical dimension that should be stressed here to explain personal circumstances that often lead to naïve

[388] Mitchell quoted in Tamar Garb and Mignon Nixon, "A Conversation with Juliet Mitchell", *October* 113 (2005), 20
[389] Waldman, 26
[390] Holzer quoted in Kämmerling, 123 and in Simon, "Joan Simon in conversation with Jenny Holzer", 30

psychobiographical musings that circumvent the art object's inherent qualities.[391] Part of Holzer's fantasy script and part of her deceased mother's silverware legacy, *Lustmord*'s subjects materialized on the table as deathly part-objects. In contrast to Louise Bourgeois' *The Destruction of the Father* (1988) (Fig. 13), in which cutting the father figure to bits –part-objects- installs the silent subject with the ability to speak though their introjection (a direct assault on Lacan's Law of the Father), *Lustmord*'s logic proposes a different kind of oral sadism, for what is introjected is part-victim, part-perpetrator, part-observer and all-mother. Asking her viewers to handle peculiar objects that provoke fantasies of introjection, without knowing whose words they will incorporate and perform in fantasy, Holzer gave them "more to chew on".[392] The destruction of the *Lustmord* mother produced part-bone, part-silver fragments that were then made available for the viewer's "shining" devouring act. But before that, the artist deceivingly categorized them, making their introjection more appealing; to feed her viewers words and identifications they may have been resistant to. But this was no vengeful or punishing force-feeding, for the installation also played on the public's readiness to devour such disturbingly evocative objects and subject matter. Instead, thinking of her mother and as a mother, Holzer produced an additional incarnation of *Lustmord* that carried and gave birth to multiple subjects yet again, which facilitated a "breakdown in the distinction between the

[391] Joselit, 53. This information, the melting down of her mother's silverware, is not readily available. Waldman is the sole author that fleetingly references it in her overview of Holzer's work. Waldman, 26.

[392] Holzer speaking of her anonymous *Truisms* highlighted a strategy of anonymity that is in play throughout her practice: "Nobody knew who was saying these things; people had to wonder what was going on and that gave them more to chew on". Jenny Holzer quoted in *Inside the Studio: Two Decades of Talks with Artists in New York*, ed. Judith Olch Richards (New York: Independent Curators International, 2004), 29

individual and the mass, and between private and public registers" that was anxiously recurring, rather than conveniently cathartic.[393]

In addition, Holzer's table gathered viewers around a torn and open body in a clean-cut presentation of atrocity, underlining the public's fascination with such images and its expectations of a distanced, clean aesthetic when these issues are taken up by artists. The shock of contact that the table and its objects delivered was meditated on cleanliness, as opposed to the magazine's staining strategy. However, the bones on the table phenomenologically appeared to be clean but the messages and the symbolism they carried contradicted their pristine appearance and challenged the viewer's somatic and mental barriers at the level of skin once more. As Ahmed proposes, objects and subjects leave impressions on our skin, we perceive them as distinct from the self only by co-inhabiting a space in which the boundaries between the co-inhabitants do not hold.[394] Informing her viewers that the bones on the table were tactile, Holzer asked them to touch and be touched by the messages they delivered, to not stand apart from them, to feel them with their skin, to change their spectatorship habits and co-inhabit this exhibition space that weakens the boundaries between them, following the haunting and unbound story of the *Lustmord* subjects. "Viewers were invited to handle the bones and, in so doing, to imagine a death, perhaps a violent one, as though it were their own".[395] "Creating a field of sculptural elements that starkly materialize the deaths referenced in her texts", Holzer produced a complicated dialogue between the installation's horizontal "grave

[393] Joselit, 53
[394] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 54
[395] Avgikos, 184

material" and the viewer's standing living body.[396] The array of unsoiled remains and the dirty messages they carried from multiple subjects, worked on the viewers' "whole being", co-inhabiting and haunting with them a space with weak boundaries.

In reference to the observer, Holzer stressed that: "death is not a clean affair, especially when it happens violently. There's always someone left at the end who has to do the dirty work".[397] This opposition between the table's deathly horizontality and the viewer's animated vertical posture was also felt in her observer's words: "SHE IS NARROW AND FLAT IN THE BLUE SACK AND I STAND WHEN THEY LIFT HER". Standing up, the observer makes a small gesture to recognize the victim's death but one that sets him or her apart as well. This motion decisively distinguishes the observer from the victim, as he or she joins those who came to remove her, indicating with their vertical bodies the world of the living, from which she has been expelled. The table facilitated a crossover between the vertical and the horizontal, through which the distinctions between the living and the dead, between perpetrators, victims and witnesses, are formed. Holzer's inanimate table had bones to pick with the upright posture of the viewer that went beyond a simplistic representational opposition of life versus death. Instead, through the table, the artist produced a space where these two axes collided in a tactile manner, offering corporeal and fantasied meetings between objects and viewers that illuminated the ephemeral orientations they

[396] Simon, "Other Voices, Other Forms", 15 and Robert Bailey, "Unknown Knowns: Jenny Holzer's Redaction Paintings and the History of the War on Terror", *October* 142 (Fall 2012), 153. The expression "grave material" is a description Bailey assigns to Holzer's *Redaction Paintings* (2007).
[397] Hozler quoted in Kämmerling, 122

assumed in their precarious identifications with the *Lustmord* subjects.[398] Viewers that refused the phantasmatic horizontal dimension of the bone vitrine were orientated as the living, thus assuming the identification mandates of the observer or the perpetrator, while consuming the victim with their eyes or hands. But since the polyphonic bone carriers of *Lustmord*'s messages actively undermined even the most rigid of such orientations, Holzer's subjects, those of her script and the viewers that brought it to life, were invited to co-habit or share a space that threatened the integrity of subjectivity itself.

For picking up one of *Lustmord*'s bones, observing others doing it, or picturing the scene in fantasy, disrupted the orientation of every subject linked to the table (Fig. 62). Extracting a bone from Holzer's neat arrangement also disturbed the order with which they were placed, more so if the bone in question was tagged with silver and raised a voice from its material silence. As Ruf suggests:

> These groups of bones convey the most diverse expressive qualities: they remind us of the obsessive tidiness and aesthetics of the mass graves of fallen soldiers; they evoke memories of archaic rites, and quote the insidious precision of order-structures and techniques which our culture has achieved through perfecting warfare.[399]

In picking up the bones, Holzer asked viewers to rid of their skin, read the tales that are systematically kept censored and reflect on the mechanisms that construct them and allow them to happen, which also train the public to expect

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[398] The tactile encounters that Holzer's table facilitates trace Ahmed's suggestion that: "[Subject] orientations are tactile and they involve more than one skin surface: we, in approaching this or that table, are also approached by the table, which touches us when we touch it. […] This body with this table is a different body than it would be without it. And, the table is a different table when it is with me than it would be without me. Neither the object nor the body have integrity in the sense of being 'the same thing' with and without others. Bodies as well as objects take shape through being orientated toward each other, as an orientation that may be experienced as the co-habitation or sharing of space". Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 54

[399] Ruff, 114

clean, ordered versions of these storylines in order to bury their horrific reality. While there is surely an aesthetic reference to the mass graves of fallen soldiers, Holzer's table, however, succeeded in exhuming the testimonies of women's deaths, placing them at arm's length, disrupting the precise order-structure of culture that keeps them silenced behind closed doors. Moreover, *Lustmord*, authored by a woman artist (Fig. 63), actively intervened in the authoritatively ordered war discourse by deliberately exposing the sexual violence that oils its machinations. The vertical authority of such narratives was tested on the table, where death strikes subjects on a horizontal plane, a surface from which perpetrators and observers were not allowed to escape.

"Whenever people are threatened by death they begin to tidy things up… [sic] In photographs of disasters the dead bodies are always arranged in rows. There's no rational reason for it. It only helps somehow to come to terms with the disaster", Holzer notes.[400] Mimicking the way men lay their dead after a battle, Holzer rested women's bones to stand in for the rows that were never arranged to come to terms with this kind of disaster during or beyond the Bosnian War (Figs. 64-65). The reaction to tidy things up, initially perceived to be irrational, led Holzer to a table arrangement that offers the bodies orientated around it the opportunity to deal with what this work claims to have happened. When you have "a traumatic reaction, which means that the psychic protective shield has been broken into, there's too much excitation. You feel in chaos, you feel fragmented, and you don't feel you're anybody. You feel annihilated. Then, you begin to recover", Mitchell argues, describing the need for psychic reorganization after

[400] Holzer quoted in Ruf, 114

trauma.[401] The *Lustmord* table contains the force of the Bosnian War trauma of sexual violence and its psychic aftermath, but also proclaims the need to directly address these crimes as systematically and as serially as they were organized. As Mitchell describes:

> Seriality is a way of theorizing what happens to the compulsive repetition that we know happens after trauma. People traumatically, compulsively repeat something […]. But […] if you can stop the compulsive repetition by symbolizing repetition into seriality, then you're not just going around in a huis clos.[402]

In producing this peculiar field of sculptural objects, which appear serialized rather than obsessively repeated, Holzer's table and the compelling psychic motions it instigated in its viewers, did not stage a hysterical post-traumatic reaction in response to war, something that historically has been instrumental in other artistic interventions that influence and precede it, like Spero's *War Series*. Neither did it aim at consolidating traumatic history and artistic production in its "conjunction of historical subject matter and unsettling form", through strategies that mobilize the psychic mechanisms of repetition and reparation.[403] Instead, the table was set in order "to point out how certain images and practices open a space of resistance, even subversion. This potential for resistance depends on the possibility of a tension between identification and refusal, between constraint and mobility in reading".[404] For in asking viewers to read bones, *Lustmord* undermined and resisted the narratives that either exclude or overwrite testimonies of wartime rape, which, like history itself, assault women's bodies and repeat themselves. It offered both a psychically challenging schema of the

[401] Mitchell quoted in Garb and Nixon, 20
[402] Ibid., 22
[403] Bailey, 152
[404] Nixon, "You Thrive on Mistaken Identity", 66

issue at hand, as well as a politically charged anticipation of the normative reactions that accompany wartime rape.

The *Lustmord* table catered its viewers with a body-in-pieces that was assembled by the fragments of many others. Whether gathering to mourn around a blasted open casket or convening around a dinner table that had hosted a deathly feast, attendance was open to all. There were, of course, the usual guests, perpetrators and observers, but, this time, the women who were the victims of sexual violence and their plight were finally recognized as the backbone of such calculated assemblies. The table's offerings called for an acquired taste but at least this was no exclusionary meal; its guests ate, spoke and most certainly got served.

Projecting War

In 1996, Klaus Werner, the director of the Leipzig Gallery for Contemporary Art, invited Holzer to create an installation at the Völkerschlachtdenkmal, the Battle of the Nations Monument in Leipzig (Fig. 66). Holzer decided that, for three evenings, she would project a selection of her texts under the title *KriegsZustand*, which in German means "state of war". From the 14th to the 16th of June, Holzer selected excerpts from *Truisms, Inflammatory Essays, Living, Erlauf* and *Laments*, but chose to project the entire *Lustmord* script in German, as well as five phrases in English. Engaging with the inherent complexities and symbolisms of war memorials is no easy task for an artist undertaking a public commission and Holzer allowed herself a year to contemplate this particular one.

Designed by Bruno Schmitz in 1913, the monument to the Battle of the Nations is one of the world's largest war memorials, "built on the site where one hundred

years earlier Prussian-led multinational forces shattered Napoleon's power over Europe".[405] The battle is considered as a victory of the German people, even though Germans fought on both sides of the conflict, and Germany, as we know it today, did not exist until 1870, almost sixty years later. A hundred meters at its widest and conceived as a truncated pyramid, it features colossal statues of armored guards both on the façade and in interior chambers, while offering visitors who climb its five hundred steps a panoramic view of the entire former battlefield. Moreover, its structure is mirrored in the enormous reflecting pool right underneath, creating a double image of the towering monument. "The Battle of the Nations complex is nothing if not overwhelming, the quintessential 300,000 ton heroic monument. In its undeniably phallic presence, the monument serves as a triumphant encomium to the traditional male virtues of war and military achievement".[406] Even though it celebrates a victory of the early nineteenth century, it is a cultural product of twentieth-century Germany, finally delivered to the public on the eve of the First World War and seen by many as "the last moment when Germany could wax patriotic over an uncomplicated memory of military achievement without defeat".[407] Tracing Germany's problematic way of memorializing war and its dead, also evidenced in the existence of over 100,000 war memorials in West Germany alone, Ungar Grudin highlights "James Young's assertion that 'no one takes their war memorials more seriously than the Germans'", perfectly exemplified by this particular monument

[405] Eva Ungar Grudin, "Thesis/Antithesis" in *Jenny Holzer – KriegsZustand*, eds. Klaus Werner and Josef Filipp (Leipzig: Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig, 1997), 34
[406] Ibid., 35
[407] Ibid.

alone.[408] "It was no surprise that Jenny Holzer would see the waste of male energy on warfare and the mythology of war as a challenge", Werner recalls from his meeting with the artist.[409] The monument's grandiose structure, as well as its heavy symbolic weight, was certainly not lost on Holzer, who decided to work on it at night, shutting the lights and doing away with its dreamlike, yet equally heavyweight, nocturnal illumination (Fig. 67-68).

At 10pm each night until midnight, Holzer made an appointment with over 3,000 people who attended the projection and participated in this curious public reading of her texts with *Lustmord* presented intact as the leitmotif of the project. "Conceived as a laser projection of colored light onto the darkened monument", excerpts from Holzer's other series appeared in a chilly green-white color, while only *Lustmord* was projected in a heated red light (Figs. 68-74).[410] Holzer's text sequence was projected successively in both horizontal and vertical blocks, which challenged the public's reading pace, as the rhythm of the text varied from slow to fast. Adding her blazed script to the monument's own language, but also teasing the crowd's desire for spectacle –even if it was only textual- by disrupting its expected speedy consumption, Holzer demanded her viewer's psychic investment anew.

While writers have rightly approached Holzer's projection in terms of its "material" contradictions and the fantasied erosions it created on the monument's surface, there has been no interpretation of the deeply analytic scene the work created, framing the historical structure, the viewer and the reflecting pool.

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[408] Ibid., 34-35
[409] Klaus Werner, "Public Reading/Foreword and Acknowledgements" in Werner and Filipp, 14
[410] Ungar Grudin, 38, 44, 51

Moreover, although *KriegsZustand* was built from a number of Holzer's works, it was *Lustmord* that was presented in its entirety in bloody beams every day as night fell, something that has only been mentioned in passing so far in the critical accounts. A year after the end of the Bosnian War, Holzer returned to her perforating script and having already dealt with bloody paper trails, but still picking bones with those responsible for systematic and sustained war rape, she made a phallic war memorial bleed with phantom words.

"*KriegsZustand*, was a temporary phenomenon, not in the least suggestive of any notion of permanence".[411] In its temporary disruption, its time-based narrative, and finally, in its disappearing act, *KriegsZustand* was a performance. As Deutsche writes about Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Hiroshima Projection* (1999) (Fig. 75) that *KriegsZustand* precedes, but with which it shares the same formal and theoretical concerns, "the projection anthropomorphized the [monument], whose 'body' seemed to be the source of the voices and thus became a speaking rather than mute witness to trauma".[412] And yet this performance retained its silence; the voices were delivered as text and called for the monument to speak them out, as well as for the audience to let them ring in their minds. "The rapid succession of their appearance produce[d] a conflict of feelings in [the viewer] difficult to withstand", as words and sentences vanished as swiftly as they appeared.[413] Maintaining their perplexing anonymity, Holzer's lines, traveling across the dusk onto the monument and reflecting on dark waters, reached the audience that gathered each evening to deliver words of the night that stirred their conscience.

[411] Ungar Grudin, 38
[412] Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq: Three Studies in Art and War*, 59
[413] Anne-Marie Bonnet, "At the Spot" in Werner and Filipp, 63, 58

When the *Lustmord* script started running across the monument's granite surface, the words and thoughts of its characters were once again anonymously delivered, instigating a sentiment of unease in the audience. "I SING HER A SONG ABOUT US, [span] us around when we realize[d] it [was] spoken be a rapist. Irony has rarely been more unstable", Ungar Grudin reported.[414] The projected words seemed to make the audience sing along, in fantasy, with a song that was different to the monument's tune. In identifying with this seemingly romantic line, viewers quickly realized that their orientation towards this monumental structure had changed: the text and its movement caused them to spin around disconcerting words in their heads as they inadvertently reproduced the perpetrator's point of view. This struck a different chord to the ones targeted by such monuments that celebrate and commemorate the actions of soldiers at war and undermined its heavyweight material and symbolic investment.

According to Werner, if the viewer "glance[d] up from the rapidly changing horizontal texts to the top of the monument he [or she] notice[d] it swaying, an optical illusion which cause[d] dizziness".[415] This destabilization was also facilitated, according to Werner, by Holzer's "unexpected female aspect" in her projected texts, which he described as "a form of vital angst".[416] Indeed, the artist consciously attacked this "phallic symbol of blissful male commemoration" and declared a state of war.[417] In a conversation with Ungar Grudin, Holzer referred to the monument as "Darth Vader's dick", which led the writer to suggest that the artist engaged in a fantasied laser-weapon combat with the famous Star Wars

[414] Ungar Grudin, 42
[415] Werner, 12-13
[416] Ibid.
[417] Ibid., 11

villain.[418] There is no doubt that the monument was visually struck by Holzer's laser words that imaginatively cut its rich façade, but what was also at stake and receiving sustained attacks, were its conceptual foundations that secure its emblematic vertical posture. Interestingly, the monument's actual foundations were taken over by political art as well. Open at the same time as Holzer's projection and taking place at the monument's crypt and arches, was a photographic installation by Dennis Del Favero, titled *Motel Vilina Vlas* (1995) (Figs. 76-77), that "portrayed the rape of Bosnian women as a perpetrator's monologue in front of 'sexless' images of bodies".[419] Outside, Holzer's words caused the structure to sway in the eyes of the assembled audience, its singular upright monumentality crumbled by the force of the group's imaginary that followed and re-enacted what was being communicated on and by the monument's surface. A conflict ensued between the monument's modernist, patriarchal, vertical authority and Holzer's lateralised, psychic language and postmodern aesthetics. *Lustmord's* script of sexual violence and war was projected on a memorial that sanctions such wartime behavior, but lateralized to and performatively introjected by a large audience. In projecting on the monument, Holzer also illuminated the creative mobilization of hysterical speech by feminist postmodern practices such as performativity, and how, in contrast to the monument's authoritative cultural mandates, "postmodernism activates a lateral dimension of social experience".[420] Ungar Grudin rightly highlights the tendency of monuments to "notoriously mythify and speak euphemistically" and further presses that "rape, such a common by-product of war, would have never

[418] Ungar Grudin, 48
[419] Werner, 15
[420] Garb and Nixon, 20

been a permissible subject for the mythifiers".[421] Holzer added words that demystified the silence surrounding wartime rape, placing it on the horizontal axis of social experience and delivering it to the public through a monument that systematically conceals it.

The projected *Lustmord* narrative relied only on the viewer's imagination in order to materialize, and when it would, the space that was reserved for patriotic commemoration, turned into a place where its audience imagined women dying, as the line "I AM AWAKE IN THE PLACE WHERE WOMEN DIE" presented itself across the monument's surface. Disrupting the monument's tribute to the soldiers-come-heroes that fall in battle, *Lustmord* shifted the viewers' attention to the women who are raped and killed by "fallen" men, and for whom no monuments are erected. Changing *Lustmord*'s previous material mobilization of fantasy to laser light alone, Holzer, this time, asked her audience to imagine this rape scene with nothing at hand but the view in front of them. As Sielke argues:

> According to […] Mieke Bal, "rape is by definition imagined; it can exist only as experience and as memory, as image translated into signs, never adequately 'objectifiable'". Holzer's [*Lustmord*] embodies this seeming paradox, the fact that the actual physical pain and psychic violation, on the one hand escapes representation, and that rape, on the other hand, is to be communicated as "text" only.[422]

For what ultimately communicated the rape scene in all of *Lustmord*'s incarnations was the text itself. The objects and materials used in this project were meant to "confirm the terror" rather than deploy it themselves.[423] Still, the projection's text-only approach managed to render the monument as explosive as

[421] Ungar Grudin, 43
[422] Sielke, 234
[423] Holzer quoted in Kämmerling, 122

the magazine's bloody ink and propelled viewers to meditate on cleanliness in their violent, colorful fantasies anew:

> Sometimes the effect was almost comical, for example when the word ejaculate appeared vertically in the middle of the façade, shot up the phallic edifice and disappeared into the sky. However, [since] this statement originated from the *Lustmord* series […] the associations became painful. The effect became almost unbearable when the writing turned to red and inscribed itself like a stream of blood both onto the monument and into the mind of the [viewer].[424]

Catching the viewer off-guard, strategically making them part of a joke at the expense of assaulted women, Holzer tried to make viewers feel uncomfortable, underlining how war rape often becomes the laughing matter among groups of soldiers. Holzer launched her own derision on the monument's "phallic edifice", ridiculing its excessively and exclusively masculine posture that stimulates and dignifies violence in the name of motherlands.[425] Holzer did make the monument bleed but as the writing inscribed itself onto the minds of viewers, it also infiltrated the reflecting pool standing in between the structure and the audience, disturbing its clear waters, turning it into a blood sea with a deep unconscious expanse.

Reflecting Rape

"The laser beam texts were projected from the ancient Egyptian grave pylons, which border the memorial grounds towards the city, onto the towering

[424] Bonnet, 66. The word "ejaculate" appears in the German version of the *Lustmord* script.
[425] Ungar-Grundin, 51. Interestingly, "within the Battle of the Nations Monument itself, five meters above the crypt, are four colossal statues of Mothers, each with two children in her arms, each embodying a heroic national virtue: National Power; Courage and Bravery; Willingness to Sacrifice; Religious Strength".

construction and reflected in the water, even conquering its reflection", Anne-Marie Bonnet reported.[426] Waging war on a war memorial and raising voices that were delivered from tombstones, Holzer's words cut through the air, hit the monument and spilled on its reflection at the pool beneath it. Werner reports that:

> On Sunday at midnight […] the very last image showed "I am awake…" [sic] reflected vertically and on the motionless water from the mirror image of the monument. The artist smiled. This was what she had always wished for.[427]

It is stated that Holzer consciously wanted to favor the reflection rather than the monument, and, in the beginning, attempted to directly hit the water with the laser beams, which proved technologically impossible, as "the laser beams would not have left their mark on the surface".[428] It would be misleading to suggest that the end product was the result of a technicality, since her intention to focus on the grounds surrounding the monument is already conceptually attacking the structure in itself. In the end, the projection encompassed the whole field and the performance could only be enjoyed in its entirety if viewers stepped to the back of the grounds to visually take in both the disrupted monument and its reflected double.

To think of the reflection as a repetition of the projection, as being one and the same would be a mistake. Although the projection repeated itself on the water, it was inverted and even the smallest breeze would disturb and stir its surface, causing the words to fragment, lose their clarity and become momentarily illegible. Hence, being at once like and unlike the projection, the reflection was not a repetition but a serialization of the monument, but even more so of the

[426] Bonnet, 62
[427] Werner, 17
[428] Ibid., 14-15

Lustmord testimonies. The private thoughts of a perpetrator, a victim and an observer interchanged on the monument, multiplied as they were reflected on the pool and rippled their way through the basin to reach the viewers' bank.

As the sentences appeared on the monument, their nighttime reflection shifted the audience's focus away from its demanding presence. The bearing of the monument and its historical symbolism melted away into the reflecting pool in front, undermining the stability of the concrete structure through its own liquid image. This was, of course, also possible because, on these nights, *Lustmord*'s sentences produced words and subjects that foregrounded women and violence, "a topic ordinarily taboo in any public discourse on war".[429] *Lustmord*'s anonymous and equal treatment of war's subjects re-inscribed, if only for three nights, the monotonous and triumphalist language of wartime violence and the monument's singular vision. As Ruf proposes:

> In warfare (WAR IS A PURIFICATION RIGHT), the cultural text of destruction and humiliation is the rule; medals are bestowed on those who adhere to them. Spectacular acts of wartime killing elevate the perpetrator above the masses; he sets himself a monument for achieving the perfect execution of a social "mission": rape, abuse, humiliation, expressions of superiority are among the heroic deeds.[430]

Unlike the *Lustmord* table, on which the victim's remains were used to deliver the script's messages, in this case, it was the monument and the perpetrator that collapsed horizontally in the reflection on the water, finally dethroned and made to converse with victims and observers alike. With the monument and *Lustmord*'s script being visible from hundreds of meters, Holzer turned the language of war propaganda on its head, as the structure semantically kneeled before its reflection that was spatially and affectively far closer to the public. By

[429] Ungar Grudin, 38
[430] Ruf, 113

simultaneously contributing to and intervening in testimonial practices, Holzer's projection "provid[ed] a new framework for public speech –a work of visual art".[431] Serializing in the reflection the projected testimonies of perpetrators, victims and observers, and finally giving rape victims a voice, which undulated in a place of rigid, phallocentric language, Holzer invoked "Arendt's famous definition of the democratic public sphere as 'the space of appearance', of, that is, what phenomenology calls coming into view".[432] According to Arendt, "it is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly".[433] Holzer's projection marked the monument's public sphere as a space that facilitated the appearance of everyone that colonized it, dead or living, fantasied or not. The monument for three nights appeared as a living body, a talking subject, conversing with its viewers on an enhanced imaginary level than that usually offered. *Lustmord*'s characters materialized as text-only, looking similar, but each sentence's tone betrayed its subject, and, enforced by their inverted reflection, they showed the audience that objects and subjects are not always what they appear to be, so allowing equal time and space for them to appear is crucial.

Not everyone, of course, embraced this wholeheartedly. "There [was] a growing unrest in the crowd as the anticipated spectacle, the entertainment, fail[ed] to materialize", Bonnet reported from the ground, as some people were not

[431] Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq*, 62
[432] Ibid.
[433] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198-99

entertained by the projection's alarming content and unnerving irregular pace.[434] "Some of the crowd beg[an] […] singing the German national anthem", a reaction that might be seemingly at odds with the project's intention, but highlights the extensive resistance of the public sphere to the appearance of others.[435] As Deutsche argues:

> Latent in Arendt's […] notion of the public sphere as the space of appearance is the ethico-political question not of how we appear but of how we respond to the appearance of others. To be public is to be exposed to alterity. Consequently, artists who want to deepen and extend the public sphere have a twofold task: creating works that help those who have been rendered invisible to "make their appearance" and developing viewers' capacity for public life by asking them to respond to, rather than react against that appearance.[436]

The inverted and, at times, rippled water script that appeared on the same level as the projection's audience, recorded this tension, and ironically commented on the perceived uniformity of the group versus the diversity of its viewers, by offering its own peculiar physics of reflection.

Taking into consideration these difficulties, Deutsche detects a problem between the two tasks artists face when working in the public sphere, illustrated by "feminist critiques of representation [that] have analyzed vision as precisely the sense that, instead of welcoming others, tends to meet them in relations of conquest, to make them disappear as other".[437] Although there is ground from which Holzer's projection could appear as problematic to feminist critiques of representation, –which further explain the risks of it being reductively perceived as an "unexpected female aspect" and "a form of vital angst"- the frame which *KriegsZustand* produced, and within which *Lustmord* appeared, is inherently

[434] Bonnet, 58
[435] Ibid.
[436] Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq*, 64
[437] Ibid.

more complex and thus resistant to such interpretations. While the *Lustmord* projection favored vision significantly more than the project's previous installations, Holzer kept the somatic and imaginary experience at the dynamic balance she had struck before and invested the vivid red laser beams with the feminist potential of fantasy to disrupt the mastery of language, vision and (monumental) form. In so doing, Holzer asked the same question posed by Deutsche, "of what art can offer in a situation of war, of how in a period of war it can help develop the capacity for being public".[438] And, of course, these questions, though raised by *KriegsZustand* itself, were delivered for debate to the viewers who were then asked to project and reflect upon their own investment individually and as a group.

"Projections invite reading, which typically is a quiet, private activity. At a projection, reading is possible with many companions or solo, as preferred. There is no single point from which to watch", Holzer maintains.[439] Inviting viewers to embark on a journey of identification as structured by *Lustmord*'s psychic underpinnings, the monument absorbed the anonymous testimonies of Holzer's subjects and the multiple fantasies that the script initiated in the audience. Perhaps the rippled, reflected images that *KriegsZustand* produced, also visualized a different kind of projection, that of the viewers: having gone through identifications not necessarily enjoyable, but nonetheless underscored by *Lustmord*'s emphasis on pleasure, viewers deployed their own projections as a defense mechanism that expelled feelings and qualities they refused to accept

[438] Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq*, 64
[439] Holzer quoted in Buchloh, 120

and recognize in themselves and attached them to the nearest object at hand. As Deutsche emphasizes in reference to Fornari's work on war psychoanalysis:

> Building on Freud's notion that early stages of mental life persist in and are available to the adult psyche, Fornari argues that the individual subject's projection of its internal terror […] onto external enemies operates in war, with the difference that in adult life, the love-object that needs protection has become a group or nation. Projection, motivated by terror and love, allows us to express aggressiveness without guilt. As a result, war defends people against deep-seated anxieties about internal enemies by finding real enemies to kill.[440]

Holzer's projection instigated with uncanny site-specificity the psychic mechanisms of the individual that are available to be shared by the group or the nation and to be exploited by the state in war. Only this time, *KriegsZustand*, this particular state of war, was fantasied, and aggression was not only projected but reflected as well.

Reading and fantasizing a wartime rape scene with companions or solo created many different points of view around the banks of the reflecting pool that imaginatively stirred its calm waters. More so when one sentence, "I SWIM IN HER AS SHE QUIETS", undoubtedly belonging to the perpetrator, appeared on the monument and in its reflected invasion of the water's calm bed. This particular sentence polarized the monument as a phallic subject that aimed to destroy and conquer the symbolic potential of the water's horizontal reflecting surface, quieting the resistance it posed. The monument, in a moment of imaginary trespass, sought to make the pool into "'woman', that silent other, that void which guarantees [its vertical] 'I'", like the perpetrator did to the victim who gave him that "oceanic feeling".[441] It is "a sensation of 'eternity', a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded, –as it were, 'oceanic'", according to

[440] Deutsche, "Un-War: An Aesthetic Sketch", 12-13
[441] Volkart, 116

Freud.[442] This feeling, Freud explains, is that "of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole", and it can be characteristically observed in the infant's primitive-ego and his initial relationship with the breast, during which the infant has no concept of self and believes the breast to belong to it.[443] Adults in possession of an oceanic feeling can actually be seen as experiencing a preserved primitive ego feeling and a regression to the stage when they believed there are no other people in the world. In this way, the fantasy movement that this particular projection and reflection set in motion, challenged the boundaries of the monument, the water and the psychic envelopes of the viewers, who read and repeated the perpetrator's hysterical delusions and desire for omnipotence. Holzer created a visual case of the perils that Freud assigns to moments of oceanic feeling, in which the monument, the perpetrator and the identifying viewer "ascribe to the external world things that clearly originate in [their] own ego and ought to be acknowledged by it".[444] The dominion of the monument's perpetrating text on the water's surface was as short-lived as the duration of that projected sentence. Moreover, the viewers who rejected such a feeling and the pool's ripples that did not allow its "I" image to settle met this violent claim of space with further resistance.

What also contributed to the delivery of these conflicting messages and feelings was the city and people of Leipzig who commissioned the installation with an openness that provided a space for them to appear in "a nightly questioning of

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[442] Sigmund Freud, "Civilization and its Discontents" (1930) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI (1920-1922): The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents and Other Works,* ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 11
[443] Ibid., 13-14
[444] Ibid., 13

values".[445] In choosing not to rely on the monument's daily image and in allowing it to be filled with Holzer's take on sex, war and violence, the people who attended the performance conversed with a sea of Others and with the monument anew, which, without its regular nighttime illumination and marked by the artist's texts, had turned into "a creature of the night", an inadequately visible conversation partner.[446] Following Deutsche's remarks on Wodiczko's *Hiroshima Projection*, it can be argued that:

> Insisting on inadequate vision, [*KriegZustand*] belongs within a feminist practice of contemporary art that produces what have been called critical images, images that undo the viewing subject's narcissistic fantasies, fantasies that blind us to otherness […]. Critical images interrupt self-absorption, promoting answerability to the other, establishing non-indifferent modes of seeing, and thereby developing the experience of being in public.[447]

The potential of such critical images was addressed by Holzer's self-awareness about the limitations of her projected messages and her practice in general: "so far nothing has stopped the abuse of women –men won't give up- and the failure is not that of feminism or art".[448] But this did not discourage Holzer who describes turning to projections as a need "to be where people look".[449] For *Lustmord*'s final message Holzer chose to blast the monument with its thesis sentence "I AM AWAKE IN THE PLACE WHERE WOMEN DIE", only this time, upside down (Fig. 71).

Her wish to benefit the water rather than the monument was explicitly communicated by this image, as the reflection's rather than the projection's message was the one legible. The viewer's gaze was actively directed to the

[445] Werner, 12
[446] Ungar Grudin, 38
[447] Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq*, 67
[448] Holzer quoted in Buchloh, 122
[449] Ibid., 120

reflecting liquid surface, where the inverted message delivered to the monument's unyielding façade could be deciphered. The victim's sentence awakened the viewers by reversing the double vision they were accustomed to thus far and delivered news of women's deaths at their level. No longer projected on a surface that represents history but on one that reflects contemporaneity, Holzer, through the victim's voice, reminded viewers that the wounds of the women that were raped and killed in the Bosnian War were of their moment. Viewers were awake in a place that authorizes and conceals these deaths in and across their time. Reversing the projected script Holzer obstructed the identification of and with the victim that would have been facilitated by the performance's previous mode of reading. Instead, by reading it at the surface of the water, closer to their own bodies, the viewers could begin speaking the victim's words as observers. They witnessed themselves as observers to the traumatic realities the *Lustmord* victim attested. "Witnessing is a way of seeing and listening that requires an acceptance of inadequacy, a renunciation […] of the will to mastery, for, […] to bear witness to the truth of suffering over a traumatic event, […] is to bear witness to that event's incomprehensibility for its victims", Deutsche argues.[450] The incomprehensibility of the systematic Bosnian rapes was described through the victim's chillingly open-ended sentence that encompassed both her living hell and the world's largely passive wakefulness to it. It communicated the victim's hopelessness behind the closed doors of a Bosnian rape house that has been erected in order for women to silently die until someone does something besides observing.

[450] Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq*, 69

This "torture-by-identification" that *Lustmord* activated in its viewers closely followed the victim's fantasied ordeal, but also anticipated that of the actual victims during the then-upcoming International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.[451] For the Bosnian victims of wartime rape in the Tribunal had to deal with the "tension between the private and the public [as] frequently described by victim-witnesses", being at once the victim of and the witness to the crime that was perpetrated.[452] Ending her projection with the victim's inverted message, in which only the word "DIE" appeared and read the same on the monument as it did reflected in the water, Holzer stressed that all subjects in spaces like this have one thing in common: death. But contrary to the monument's usual recognition and commemoration of wartime death, in this particular gathering it was the death of women that was finally, albeit momentarily, observed face on, since "die" in German stands for the feminine of "the". As "DIE" appeared one and the same on the monument, the water, and in the minds of the viewers, the whole ground filled with "her" voice. "The words then dissolved and faded" and after Holzer's "state of war" concluded on the third night, "absenting itself from this sight […] [the monument's] patterned light and shimmers on the water", began to lure again its viewers.[453] But somehow, even if for a moment, the monument had swayed.

[451] Nixon, "You Thrive on Mistaken Identity", 81
[452] Thomas, "Whose Truth? Inevitable tensions in testimony and the search for repair", 55
[453] Ungar Grudin, 38

CHAPTER III

DORIS SALCEDO

> The waves fell; withdrew and fell again, like the thud of a great beast stamping.
>
> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, 1931.[454]

Doris Salcedo's recent works *A Flor de Piel* (2011-12) (Fig. 78) and *Plegaria Muda* (2008-10) (Fig. 79) mark a departure from a distinguishing feature of her previous artistic practice, which this chapter focuses on. Known for creating work that addresses the everlasting cycle of violence in Colombia and its perpetually ascending death count, Salcedo created two sculptural works that for the first time in her career do not involve readymade objects. Rather, they are produced with what one would call "new" materials. Unsurprisingly, what remains unchanged is the artist's focus on violence, human tragedy, loss and remembrance and the theoretical and visceral transmission of such themes in art and representation. While taking into account the emphasis placed by many writers on whether Salcedo's art is able to represent, signify or code violence, trauma and loss at times of war, this chapter will provide a psychoanalytic account of the artist's recent work aiming to address topics that have been largely avoided. It proposes that the exhaustive scholarly preoccupation with Salcedo's idiosyncratic approach to representation is perhaps a symptom of painful realities art history and other critical discourses have traditionally strived to repress and dress with neutralizing narratives, through an overt emphasis on mourning that

[454] Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 83

ultimately accounts only for the aftereffects of violent deaths and fails to encompass the experience of violence that leads to them.

I was particularly fortunate as I was employed by White Cube, Salcedo's representing gallery, when the artist first exhibited *A Flor de Piel* and *Plegaria Muda* in the summer of 2012. In my initial research period for this thesis I spent a lot of time with these works during installation and throughout the exhibition, observing the artist and her assistants at work and the gallery's visitors when they visited the exhibition. In addition, in 2015 as I was writing this chapter of the thesis I had the opportunity to visit the Salcedo retrospective exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, where *A Flor de Piel* and *Plegaria Muda* were presented to a wider audience and among Salcedo's other works produced throughout her career, an experience that further informed my understanding of these works and their relationship to the viewer that this chapter explores.

A Flor de Piel, a large carpet-like object made of thousands of sutured flower petals, is a work that was created in response to the disappearance and violent murder of a nurse by paramilitary forces in Colombia in 2003. *Plegaria Muda* is an installation of over one hundred sculptural units, each one comprised of a table that holds a thick layer of soil and an identical inverted table that lies on top of it. It was inspired by the covert murder of more than 2,500 young people from precarious socioeconomic backgrounds by the Colombian army between 2003 and 2009. Many of Salcedo's projects begin with a violent event that she witnesses in the media, which she then investigates and researches for lengthy periods of time, collecting statements from witnesses, victim testimonies and listening to the experiences of implicated family and surviving members, while

specific narrative details in her finished works are creatively manipulated so as to remain unseen.[455]

The Routine

Salcedo grew up in Colombia and made the conscious decision to continue to live and work in her native country in the midst of civil war and political violence, despite her work's early international recognition and acclaim. The difficult situation Colombia has been facing for nearly seventy years, starting with the decade-long civil war in 1948, somberly known as La Violencia, and the since ongoing asymmetric war between the government, paramilitary groups, drug cartels and left-wing guerrillas, continues to lay a double claim on everyday reality: the increasing number of lives lost and lives spent amidst death.

La Violencia is a war ignited on 9 April 1948 with the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, a Liberal Party presidential candidate, while the Conservatives were in power. This murder kindled an enormous revolt and violent clashes on the streets of Bogotá that resulted in the death of 5,000 civilians by state forces. The enraged response to Gaitán's murder spread throughout the country and lead to a Conservative backlash and eventually to the ten-year period of violence known as La Violencia. During these years images of wounded and dead bodies were strategically spread in the media to cultivate fear and horror and a state of terror became part of everyday life. At the time, the emergence of liberal, communist and peasant guerrilla groups, as well as counter-insurgency groups and a politicized faction of the police force, led to a period of extreme brutality

[455] Julie Rodrigues Widholm, "Presenting Absence: The Work of Doris Salcedo" in *Doris Salcedo*, eds. Julie Rodrigues Widholm and Margaret Grynsztejn (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 17

that included massacres, torching of villages and communities. It created a ritualization of violence, and what Gonzalo Sánchez Gómez describes as "a liturgy and solemnization of death, which required an apprenticeship in the art of causing pain" that was publicly widely displayed.[456]

Despite the fact that the rural areas did not really figure in the sociopolitical and economic interests of the capital, they nonetheless became the main battleground of the factions. A "routinization of guerrilla activity" molded the lives of many people, disregarding them as marginal and paradigmatically terminating those who raised voices of dissent.[457] It was during the 1950s and 1960s in these distant places that guerillas and paramilitary forces flourished, followed by the rise of drug traffickers later. In 1958, the Conservatives and the Liberals reached an agreement to end the decade-long violence by forming the National Front, a bipartisan political alteration system, while most of the Liberal guerrilla groups were demobilized. However, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or FARC), which was the largest Liberal guerrilla band, as well as other Communist and paramilitary groups, maintained their forces in the countryside and La Violencia slipped into what is now known as the ongoing Colombian conflict.[458]

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[456] Gonzalo Sánchez Gómez, ed., *Colombia: Violencia y Democracia, Informe presentado al Ministerio de Gobierno* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia-Financiacion Colciencias, 1987), 19. For a thorough and detailed overview of recent Colombian history and the intricacies of the multifaceted war across the years, see chapter 1 in Mary Emily Schneider, *Material Witness: Doris Salcedo's Practice as an Address on Political Violence through Materiality*, doctoral dissertation, (Harvard University: 2014), accessed March 23, 2016, http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:11746516

[457] Schneider, 36

[458] See Chapter 9 in David Bushnell *The Making of Modern Colombia, a Nation in spite of itself* (University of California Press, 1993), 201-223

The paramilitary forces are one of the major players in this game of social, economic and political power and still retain their influence on the pervasive net of violence across Colombia today. They are also the main perpetrators behind the crime that inspired *A Flor de Piel* and participants in the killings of *Plegaria Muda*. The paramilitaries were proposed by the US government as a civilian armed force that would collaborate with the Colombian army, in order to "perform counteragent and counterpropaganda functions and, as necessary, execute paramilitary, sabotage, and/or terrorist activities against known communist proponents".[459] Legalized by the Colombian Congress in 1968 and issued with arms by the Ministry of Defense, paramilitary forces were able, under government permission and authority, to use violence without tarnishing the official face of the military. This state-sanctioned formation quickly escaped its originally planned confines and paramilitary forces grew exponentially, as they began collaborating with the rising drug cartels, private businessmen and real estate moguls, dedicating their services to protect the cocaine production line and its export routes.

In 1987 the Colombian government appointed a Special Commission for the Study of Violence to investigate the phenomenon of violence that had come to define the country for such a breadth of time. The nature, causes and context of violence were its primary research aims. Moreover, "Violentology" ("Violentologia") is an academic field created by scholars in the same year to study Colombia's violence and civil war, further attesting the need to decipher how violence has entrenched all levels of Colombian life. "In short, the study

[459] Stephen Ferry, *Violentology: A Manual of the Colombian Conflict* (New York: Umbrage, 2012), 66

found that Colombia's development has relied on violence as a means of ensuring control and economic growth, with violence seeping into the daily life of its citizens".[460] It was in these years, the mid-1980s, that Salcedo started making her first works, which addressed the violent events that unfold daily in Colombia such as political violence, assassinations, murder, massacres, torture, rape, kidnapping and the practice of "disappearing".

The disappeared or "desaparecidos" refer to people who have been kidnapped and held captive, a snatching and arresting tactic that concludes with their murder and leaves no body or remains to be found. This is a common strategy that guerrillas and paramilitaries employ to spread terror and profess their power. As this practice began to spread across the country, it intensified both in the numbers of the victims and the frequency of disappearances. It has created over the years an atmosphere of silent yet tremendous terror and paralyzing fear, as vulnerable groups hold their tongues over crimes, threatened with the next potential disappearance that could be their own, whilst being kept in the dark regarding the fate of relatives and loved ones lost. Both *A Flor de Piel* and *Plegaria Muda* are based on stories of people who "disappeared". During the longest-running civil conflict in the Western world, in more than fifty years of aggression, the government, the guerrillas and paramilitaries have killed more than 220,000 people and displaced more than five million.[461] On June 23, 2016, after more than fifty years of fighting and four years of negotiations, the government and FARC signed a ceasefire. However, due to the longstanding and

[460] Schneider, 31-32
[461] "Colombian conflict has killed 220,000 in 55 years, commission finds", *The Guardian* (July 25, 2013), accessed March 25, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/25/colombia-conflict-death-toll-commission

deep running historical relationship the country has had with violence, many remain skeptical on whether there will be any noticeable change in their lives.[462]

The Creatures

Throughout her career Salcedo has worked with readymade objects, especially furniture, which she then incorporates in her sculptures and installations. From filling household furniture with cement and clothes as in *Untitled* (1989-95) (Fig. 80), joining tables together and covering their surface with hair, thread and silk in *Unland* (1995-98) (Figs. 81-84), to large-scale and site-specific public installations such as *Untitled* (2003) (Fig. 85) and *Noviembre 6 y 7* (2002) (Fig. 86). The majority of the writers who have engaged with Salcedo's work insist on exploring the themes of mourning, memory and domesticity, strands that, although exhausted, are frequently revisited at the expense of other topics, such as the experience of violence, which are often hard to grapple.

Julie Rodrigues Widholm has emphasized the artist's focus on objecthood and materiality and her break from 1980s autobiographical multiculturalism in artistic practice, to suggest, like Salcedo, that her work is mostly about funerary oration and that her "contemplative objects […] prompt viewers to consider individual lives lost and families torn apart".[463] Widholm's focus on Salcedo's "relentlessy disrupted domestic sphere" only briefly escapes its formal considerations and briskly refers to "the risk to humanity when the loss of the

[462] "Peace, at last, in Colombia", *The Economist* (June 25, 2016), accessed June 25, 2016, http://www.economist.com/news/americas/21701178-government-declares-end-its-war-against-farc-peace-last-colombia
[463] Widholm, 17-18

most disenfranchised is not properly marked or mourned and when victims become mere statistics or headlines".[464] Madeleine Grynsztejn has concentrated on Salcedo's "care" and "long, deliberately painstaking labour", to suggest that it is the only way the artist can feel as an adequate witness to the pain and suffering her work is based on, an observation that can also read Salcedo's work as a process of psychic cleansing that can disengage with the accountability of the witness in the discourse of violence that Grynsztejn only hints at.[465] Euridice Arratia has examined *Unland*'s uncanny and bodily qualities, in which the table "conjures up an image of an injured body [that] becomes an emotional metaphor of resistance".[466] Without specifying what that emotional metaphor of resistance may be, Arratia also refers to the work's invocation of "the domestic activity of mending, which is generally related to the realm of the 'feminine'" and abstractly notes that *Unland* "dissolves the protective domain of the home".[467] Beatriz Acevedo suggests that Salcedo's work "goes beyond the surface, inviting the spectator to a journey inside…[sic] into memories and feelings, into fears and intimate spaces", but does not describe or engage with what these complex psychic spaces may be.[468] Finally, Katherine Brinson presents mourning as the central tenet of Salcedo's practice, further supporting this claim through the artist's use of organic elements that according to Brinson produce "images of

[464] Ibid.
[465] Madeleine Grynsztejn "Voice of the Invisible", *Tate Etc.* (Autumn 2007), 48
[466] Euridice Arratia, "Spotlight: Doris Salcedo", *Flash Art International* 202, (October 1998), 122
[467] Ibid.
[468] Beatriz Acevedo, "Memories of Violence in the work of the Colombian artist Doris Salcedo: A subjective view", *Journal of Arts and Communities* 2, (June 2010), 154

renewal and despair".[469] Brinson is also the only author to directly reference psychoanalytic theory, suggesting that Salcedo's works linger on Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia, since they do not provide "a straightforward redemption or compensation", a reference that is made in passing, only to end her text with the suggestion that her works do not "represent mourning, but rather facilitate mourning itself".[470]

Valid to a certain extent as these points may be, they are addressing a vocabulary of language and index of themes that seem to be the approved choices in engaging with Salcedo's work. What is more, they are made in passing reference, and only evoke rather than explore the themes of mourning, domesticity and the realm of the "feminine", without following through key concepts and experiences such as violence, the distinction between the public and the private domain and feminist politics, which are the foundations on which most of these points are based. Consequently, these writers concentrate on Salcedo's work with a selective approach to the subjectivities it addresses, providing reductive readings that magnify the pain of witnesses, and at times of victims, which eventually overwrite the violence that caused it and that is still present. Salcedo herself is a very outspoken artist, whose eloquent interviews, lectures and essays on her own work provide useful information, but at the same time these sources are also capable to mislead. It is tempting to follow the artist's words and thus produce critical texts that regurgitate the same topics and concerns, an approach that many of these writers have followed. This chapter also closely engages with

[469] Katherine Brinson, "The Muted Drum: Doris Salcedo's Material Elegies" in *Doris Salcedo*, eds. Julie Rodrigues Widholm and Margaret Grynsztejn (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 209
[470] Ibid., 209, 213

Salcedo's written work, but attempts to provide a new insight, with care, since it is one that comes from recent, and so far unexamined claims the artist has made regarding her alleged new emphasis on victims and perpetrators.

In her examination of Salcedo's "readymade time", Helen Molesworth focuses on 'time' as a structural element of her work's production and reception, suggesting "perhaps discussions of form are seen to be naïve in the face of the torture of innocent civilians by the State".[471] Molesworth, while pursuing her formal analysis and theoretical arguments, also makes valid and important points that are connected to the violent reality with which Salcedo's work is so closely linked. She emphasizes how "the dominant reception of […] Salcedo's oeuvre as a whole has been to see it as performing mute witness to the state-sponsored violence of her native Colombia".[472] Adan, who traces the themes of visibility and absence in Salcedo's sculptures, importantly argues that Salcedo's work looks back to the art of the 1960s and 1970s "and specifically to Minimalism and Postminimalism, in conjunction with early second wave feminism and subsequent developments in feminist and queer theory, to […] address the politics of representation".[473] Molesworth and Adan have made interesting points that this chapter aims to build on through its sustained engagement with the violence that Salcedo's work carries and the feminist politics it embodies, which are strands of thought that the majority of writers avoid.

"I can only give form to works which, once completed, are autonomous creatures, independent of my intentions. Sculpture for me is the giving of a material gift to that being who makes his or her presence felt in my work",

[471] Molesworth, 202
[472] Ibid., 201
[473] Adan, 31

Salcedo describes.[474] Her works are thus communicated as objects that have mystical qualities, a sort of aliveness that allows them to hold their ground and perhaps go against their maker's intentions. This seems a more productive approach to her practice and it is one that supports one of the main claims of this chapter, which suggests that, beyond Salcedo's intense focus on the plight of survivors or victims, perpetrators are also making their presence felt in her work, as does the theme of violence alongside the more frequently professed premise of mourning.

For *A Flor de Piel* also looks like a large patch of skin. Its title, literally translated as "on the surface of the skin", is a Spanish idiomatic expression "used to describe an overt display of emotions".[475] According to Lauren Hinkson, "while that meaning is lost when literally translated, the phrase 'a flor de piel' links flowers and skin, suggesting a sensation so overwhelming that it is expressed physically through a coloring of the body's surface".[476] Starting from its title, the work's deep psychic layering, when read together with Salcedo's declaration that the work began when she wondered how she could "initiate even the slightest movement towards a tormented body, even if only to present a flower offering", adds an important physical and psychical dimension to its story that may be uncomfortable to unpack.[477] It has led writers including Brinson to

[474] Salcedo quoted in Charles Merewether, "Interview with Charles Merewether, 1998" in *Doris Salcedo,* eds. Nancy Princenthal, Carlos Basualdo, and Andreas Huyssen (London: Phaidon Press, 2000), 141
[475] Lauren Hinkson, "Doris Salcedo: A Flor de Piel", *Guggenheim Collection Online*, (undated), accessed May 30, 2016, https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/31379
[476] Ibid.
[477] Doris Salcedo, "A Work in Mourning" in *Doris Salcedo*, eds. Julie Rodrigues Widholm and Margaret Grynsztejn (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 216

acknowledge the woman's ordeal that the work addresses, but to also suggest that *A Flor de Piel* invokes "lush romantic associations of a carpet of red roses" and that "the woman, once brutalized, is now perfected".[478] The refusal to closely follow the story of this work, contrary to what Salcedo did in order to produce it, can lead to problematic conclusions, the intentions of which this "autonomous creature" does not necessarily follow. This chapter examines another line of thought that focuses on the story and bodily allusions of the work, to provide a reading that is based on a psychoanalytical and feminist understanding that Salcedo's work has yet to attract.

A sibling work to *A Flor de Piel*, *Plegaria Muda* (Silent Prayer) was realized between 2008-10 after what has been described by Salcedo as a rigorous process of investigation and reflection. It began with her visit to the ghettos of Los Angeles in 2004 and the discovery of official reports that declared the violent deaths of over 10,000 local youths in the last twenty years. This led the artist to focus on "the violence caused by the youth gangs and particularly on the murky relationship that is established between the role of the victim and the killer perpetrator".[479] This is the first time that Salcedo declares the perpetrator as a subject of interest in her work and refers to the intricate relationship established between perpetrator and victim and the cloudy waters of its unconscious pool. The artist calls it "a perverse and fluid interchange between roles [made] possible because both inhabit a grey-undefined area which some writers have called 'social death' or 'death-in-life'", which refers to citizens not being recognized or

[478] Brinson, 211
[479] Doris Salcedo, "Plegaria Muda 2008-2010" in *Doris Salcedo: Plegaria Muda*, ed. Isabel Carlos (Munich and London: Prestel Publishing, 2011), 25

accepted as fully human by society.[480] Salcedo traced a correlation "between this so-called social death, or death in life, and the subsequent violent, anonymous and invisible death" that comes as a result of "living with others inhabiting in deprived areas under precarious conditions".[481] The situation that the artist witnessed in Los Angeles made her think that despite the difference in setting, this experience is not that dissimilar to the state-sponsored killings of young men in Colombia.

While Brinson has suggested that the installation stands for the safe interment of the story's missing bodies, as a kind of cemetery, I argue that such readings are another instance of critically evading the horrific realities and fantasies of violence and aggression that the artist also investigates.[482] This chapter focuses on Salcedo's recent emphasis on the murky relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, particularly the fluid interchange established between them through their shared experience of violence and precariousness. It is a powerful statement that hasn't been addressed so far and which destabilizes the segregated accounts of subjectivity that the majority of the literature on Salcedo provides. Moreover, I propose that *Plegaria Muda* also highlights how Salcedo's work circulates objects that are capable of signifying political violence, even if they are traditionally associated with the domestic sphere, which is where the effects of such violence are usually relegated, gendered and made hysterical, as a specifically "feminine" condition that has no place in the public realm.

Marked by Responsibility

[480] Ibid.
[481] Ibid.
[482] Brinson, 210

"I take on with full responsibility the theme of violence and war", Salcedo stresses.[483] She also adds that: "as an artist I have a responsibility. I have to look at historical events and work with whatever material is given to me".[484] The question of responsibility that Salcedo directly addresses structures the new insights into *A Flor de Piel* and *Plegaria Muda* that this chapter attempts to articulate. It is based on the material that Salcedo used to produce these two works, an in-depth investigation of the real stories and testimonies of Colombia's war and violence, in a critical approach that engages with the formal qualities of both works and which also feels responsible.

For its examination of *A Flor de Piel*, this chapter engages with the work of Merewether, who, following Salcedo's career closely and taking into account its psychosocial context, stresses emphatically that her work opens up "a transforming "in-between" moment, translating private experience into social knowledge".[485] Merewether's investigation of the intricate relationship the living establish with their dead in Colombia and of how objects "serve as signs that mediate a frontier between the living and the dead", offers a crucial insight into the work's context and facilitation of embodiment.[486] As he rightly argues:

> The challenge that [Salcedo's] work faces is that in seeking to re-present [sic] the scene of violence, it folds the [perpetrator] and victim into one another; to speak of one implies, produces, the presence of the other. Compelled to repeat the scene of violence, the danger lies in producing a

[483] Doris Salcedo quoted in Merewether, "Interview with Charles Merewether, 1998", 140
[484] Salcedo quoted in "Doris Salcedo: Variations on Brutality", *Art21* (undated), accessed April 11, 2016, http://www.art21.org/texts/doris-salcedo/interview-doris-salcedo-variations-on-brutality
[485] Charles Merewether, "Zones of Marked Instability: Women and the Space of Emergence" in *Rethinking Borders*, ed. John C. Welchman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 257
[486] Charles Merewether, "Return of the Dead" in *The Interrupted Life*, exh. cat., (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1991), 77

> vicious and suffocating circularity, whose symbolic unity comes to stand for the social fabric of Colombia as a "culture of violence".[487]

This challenge is an important element that both works are concerned with. Following Acevedo's suggestion that Salcedo's work is also targeting "the trace of violence in those left behind", I propose that *A Flor de Piel* moves away from readings of commemoration and destabilizes the barrier between the living and the dead, the perpetrator and the victim.[488] This approach is supported by the work's direct consideration of skin as the appropriate carrier of the victim's story, and, as such, Ahmed's and Stacey's theoretical work on skin's testimonial function and its provision of an interface between inner and outer worlds and different subjectivities, illuminates *A Flor de Piel*'s subjects as folding into one another.

Following Nancy Princenthal's remark that Salcedo represents psychic processes, which are coded through an experience of violence that escapes language, I suggest *A Flor de Piel* also significantly encrypts the silence surrounding war rape and war sexuality, as theorized by Mitchell.[489] *A Flor de Piel*, when examined alongside similar works by Colombian artists, provides crucial insights into how war violence and the symbolism of flowers play out in the rural fields of Colombia. These works, together, figure war violence against women in a way that evades the perspective of Western art history takes on the context of their production. The work's direct engagement with questions of "bodiliness" and "the monstrous" is vital in any discussion of *A Flor de Piel*, as these inherent qualities problematize scholarly accounts that describe it as

[487] Merewether, "Naming Violence in the Work of Doris Salcedo", *Third Text* 24 (Autumn 1993), 39
[488] Acevedo, 154
[489] Nancy Princenthal, "Silence Seen" in *Doris Salcedo,* eds. Nancy Princenthal, Carlos Basualdo and Andreas Huyssen (London: Phaidon Press, 2000), 49

funerary oration.[490] These descriptions are based on a recuperating Kleinian understanding of aggression and repair and ultimately nullify the uncomfortable feeling produced by its stitched and uneven, skin-like surface. *A Flor de Piel* is a work that addresses the psychic need to imagine a bounded body and ego in a way that unsettles conventional narratives of violence, since it manages to figure a skin that is shared by all of its story's subjects.

Salcedo's suggestion that *A Flor de Piel* appears both as object and image is a point that is missed by the literature so far, a theoretical and sensorial remark that can be best understood through the identification processes the work instigates in its viewers. Its wavy surface encourages a series of psychic movements, which can be described as a sensual experience that decenters and dissolves the viewing subject. This reading is formally grounded in the work's wavy expanse and also inspired by Virginia Woolf's 1931 novel *The Waves* and its experimental explorations of individuality, the self, otherness and collectivity. The silent shared consciousness Woolf's characters seem to share in her novel, is hereby recalled as a concern that is also pertinent to the experience of *A Flor de Piel*. Moreover, the work's fluid materiality is of an excessive bodily nature, as this is an object that transcends its "objecthood", in order to propose a more radical and precarious subjectivity.[491] Jo Applin's suggestion that certain eccentric objects declare war on sculpture, and thus on the space of subjectivity, illuminates *A*

[490] The topics of "bodiliness" and "monstrosity" will be discussed together with Margrit Shildrick's work on skin. See Margrit Shildrick, "'You are there, like my skin': Reconfiguring relational economies" in *Thinking Through the Skin*, eds. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey (London: Routledge, 2001), 160-173

[491] This reading is based on Briony Fer's essay on the work of Louise Bourgeois and Eva Hesse within the context of eccentricity and abstraction in minimalist objects. See Briony Fer, "Objects Beyond Objecthood", *Oxford Art Journal* 22, No. 2 (1999), 27-36.

Flor de Piel's wavy expanse as one that restores movement to the often rigidly categorized subjects of war.[492] The fragmentary and fugitive character of subjectivity that *A Flor de Piel*'s waves communicate, is thus inextricably linked to the series of identifications it extends to its viewers, which as Fuss and Lacan suggest, do not leave solid traces in the make up of the self, but fleeting and haunting images, which, like waves, may return and unsettle its core.[493]

Plegaria Muda's discussion here is based on interesting observations that Bal and Moacir dos Anjos have provided, which problematize the work's obvious reference to a cemetery. Bal, a theorist who has engaged with Salcedo's work in detail through the years, underlines that the mass graves *Plegaria Muda* addresses are also killing grounds. It is an important dimension to the story that the work also formally represents through the grass that shoots up from the top tables, which according to Ball, "conceal[s] the place of violence, the invisible grave, by overgrowing it".[494] Dos Anjos' observation that the viewers of *Plegaria Muda* appear "half-buried" when walking through it underlines the violence of those responsible for the creation of these so-called graves and problematizes the immediate availability of mourning as an appropriate critical response.

Ahmed's work on the table as a kinship object for the subjects that cohere around it provides a new insight on how the installation's sculptural units are linked to familial and domestic environments that have been mostly imagined as devoid of violence and responsibility by the literature on *Plegaria Muda*. In this way, the

[492] Jo Applin, *Eccentric Objects: Rethinking Sculpture in 1960s America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 41
[493] Fuss, 1
[494] Mieke Bal, "Waiting for the Political Moment" in *Doris Salcedo: Plegaria Muda*, ed. Isabel Carlos (Munich and London: Prestel Publishing, 2011), 80

violence that is shared by *Plegaria Muda*'s subjects is felt through the installation's challenge to the viewers' orientation as disembodied witnesses, as it literally surrounds their bodies. *Plegaria Muda* is a sculptural field that has striking horizontal and vertical lines, which compromise the vertical authority of the viewer's posture and that of dominant war discourse, by emphasizing the importance of lateral experience. Mitchell's work on siblings, lateral relationships and how they affect the legitimization of peer killing in war, guides an alternative reading of Salcedo's haunted ground, as an installation that serializes rather than repeats its sculptural units. *Plegaria Muda* is thus a crucial representation of seriality. It produces a constructive framework that approaches the self as minimally different in relation others, a process that, according to Mitchell, can instigate a lateral control of violence.

Moreover, the arresting similarity between *Plegaria Muda* and a 1968 work by Alfonso Quijano that also presents mass murders on tables, suggests a chilling continuity and sustenance of violence in Colombia, recorded in Colombian art, which none of the writers so far have detected. It is addressed here as a central message of *Plegaria Muda* and examined through Freud's and Fornari's psychoanalytic writings on war. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the insightfulness of silence that the work so closely follows and invites. It is a moment during which the viewer is able to grasp the overarching concerns of this work, communicated by its formally repeated units, and by the psychically recurring moments of silence during the viewing experience. *Plegaria Muda*, like the majority of Salcedo's work, invites a pause for reflection that is often denied by the militarism of the state and the militantism of the patriarchal version

of history, in which, the silence of the ephemeral community that is formed, emerges as resistance.

A shroud of skin

A Flor de Piel was created alongside *Plegaria Muda*, and Salcedo has noted that although "they were thought of together […] each one is its own creature".[495] The artist highlights that "they are very much a continuation" and stresses the existence of a unifying element for the two works that marks a new direction in her practice:

> Before […] I was thinking of the survivors, how the life of the ones who had survived had transformed itself after a violent event. In these cases I focus more on the victim itself for the first time in my life, so that's why these two pieces are different and in a way joined together.[496]

Even though there is a distinction that the artist wishes to make with respect to the shifting focus of these new works, the boundaries that separate the subjects that define her research, and ultimately her sculptures, are always kept thin or finely veiled. *Atrabiliarios* (1992) (Fig. 87), for example, one of Salcedo's most famous works, is a series of installations that sees the artist carving multiple niches into the gallery's white walls, in which she places shoes of "desaparecidos", mostly of women, and seals each of them off with a sheet of animal fiber stitched to the wall with surgical thread. Having extensively researched the phenomenon of disappearances in Colombia, Salcedo realized that most female desaparecidos were held captive for lengthy periods of time before their execution. The artist followed the relatives of the missing to mass graves, where she witnessed them identify the remains of their loved ones by their shoes. Closely involved with the survivors and mourners, Salcedo was reportedly

[495] Salcedo quoted in White Cube, "On 'A Flor de Piel' and 'Plegaria Muda'", online video, 12:51, posted by White Cube, May 2012, accessed May 27, 2016, http://whitecube.com/channel/in_the_gallery_past/doris_salcedo_on_a_flor_de_piel_and_plegaria_muda/
[496] Ibid.

"thinking of the impossibility of burying loved ones, of elaborating mourning".[497] However, speaking of *Atrabiliarios*, the artist has also stressed that the work is "based upon the experience of people who went missing" and is "defined by the nature of the victim's ordeal".[498] It appears that although Salcedo insists her previous work was heavily concentrated on survivors rather than victims, the edges of her inquisitive practice refuse to appear as sharply defined when specific subjects are requested to present themselves. Nonetheless, Salcedo wishes to place emphasis in this shift of focus to the victim and it can be argued that both *A Flor de Piel* and *Plegaria Muda*, in their exclusion of readymade objects, attempt to grasp and materially articulate a new dimension to age-old experience.

For *A Flor de Piel* Salcedo decided to focus on the experience of a specific, individual victim, a nurse who was kidnapped and tortured to death, whose body was dismembered and never recovered. The artist claims that she does not "illustrate testimonies" and this is certainly an interpretation mandate that most Salcedo literature follows closely.[499] However, this chapter aims to trail Salcedo's own working process of exhaustive research into the testimonies that inspire her work, precisely because such stories continue to be evaded by the patriarchal version of history, not in order to avoid falling into an illustrated, simplistic analysis of artwork, as it is often misleadingly professed, but to circumvent any narratives that might resist the neat arrangement it strives to maintain in concealing its personal and psychic pillars. It is thus imperative to

[497] Princenthal, 49
[498] Salcedo quoted in Merewether, "Interview with Charles Merewether, 1998", 16, 18
[499] Salcedo quoted in Princenthal, 82

examine the story behind Salcedo's floral carpet as closely as one would formally analyze each of its petals, and in doing so, to follow the artist's work with responsibility and further problematize her suggestion that "all of [her] work is based on individual stories that are of little interest to historians and the Colombian justice system".[500] Aligning the blind eye that Colombia's justice system turns to the country's disappeared and dispossessed with the missing pages of a porously fashioned history drained of individual stories, Salcedo lays on the table, and in this case on the floor, its silenced victims as an offer.

Spilling across the exhibition floor, *A Flor de Piel* is over forty feet long, and, at first glance, looks like an enormous floral carpet made out of thousands of rose petals. Its color is not exactly red or brown. It is hard to describe. It is neither the typical red of fresh roses nor the brown tone they take when they start to die. In fact, as the viewer spends more time with the work, the first impression of a carpet begins to fade and *A Flor de Piel* appears more like an enormous pool of dried blood on the floor of a museum; this is a more accurate description of the work's color. Getting closer to this peculiar sculpture causes its perception to change again. Its surface is not flat, it raises and drops, folds and re-expands in places, now making this pool of blood to look more like a large patch of the organ that usually contains it: the skin (Fig. 88). This is the moment when the viewer's awareness to the presence of violence within these white walls is sharpened.

The first line of the wall text for the work at Salcedo's retrospective exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2015 informs the viewer that this piece is a tribute to a nurse tortured to death in Colombia without giving

[500] Salcedo, "Traces of Memory: Art and Remembrance in Colombia"

any context to the story. The text then speaks of the artist's long research and development period in her attempt to find a way to arrest the flowers' disintegration and to preserve their texture and color. It emphasizes the intensive labor required to hand-stitch each petal in order to create this enormous shroud (Fig. 89), suggesting there are "romantic and fairytale" associations with a carpet of red roses and that "the petals seem to possess an enchanted immortality".[501] The description ends with a warning tone that the work "can also easily inspire horror; the undulating red fabric also conjures flayed skin, materializing the unspeakable pain endured by the tortured body".[502] Combining image and text, viewers can be left with a feeling of unease, as they begin to realize that this flowery sheet is moving further and further away from any notion of romanticism that the wall text initially suggested. Instead, the object on the floor starts to invoke a human body, and, more specifically, one that has been tortured and rests dead elsewhere.

Questions are likely to form in viewers' minds about this missing woman, and the desire to know more about her and her fate, may substitute the initial sense of wonder brought by *A Flor de Piel*'s floral excess. Salcedo's refusal to offer more information than that given, as well as the relevant literature's evasive treatment of the work's specificities, is hereby examined as a critical oversight for a work that was designed "to be coherent with the experience [the nurse] has gone through".[503] The reality of this story might be horrible to investigate and narrate,

[501] Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York 2015. Wall text to accompany "A Flor de Piel" shown at the *Doris Salcedo* exhibition, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum: New York, 26 June – 12 October 2015. Visited on 27 June 2015.
[502] Ibid.
[503] Salcedo quoted in White Cube, "On 'A Flor de Piel' and 'Plegaria Muda'"

but, ignoring it, has lead to an emphasis on the work's romantic associations of flowers, which can ultimately write off its feminist concerns as irrelevant by omission. The fact that this is the first work Salcedo has created in response to an individual case, a real story that inspired one of Colombia's most recognized artists to create a large-scale work as a tribute for a female victim of war and torture, cannot be simply bypassed.

Her name is María Cristina Cobo Mahecha and she was 28 years old and three months pregnant when five members of Bloque Centauros, one of the most powerful paramilitary groups in Colombia with an army of over 5,000 men and the first to be formed to fight left-wing guerrillas, took her out of a public bus near the village La Marina on April 19, 2003. Her mother, Paulina, lead the difficult charge for the recovery of her daughter, receiving death threats in the process. She questioned a former doctor to the paramilitaries, who then described the details of what happened to María Cristina to the prosecutor, accusing two men by name as the perpetrators of the crime. Since that day, he too has disappeared. The perpetrators who abducted María Cristina held her for days in the municipality of Calamar, where they accused her of being a guerrilla collaborator and tortured her viciously. They asked her to confess her links with the FARC, something she denied to the very end. Three of the perpetrators confirmed the doctor's testimony and were sent to jail. One of them had promised three times on official record to reveal where María Cristina's remains rested, but his promise to this day remains unfulfilled. [504]

[504] "Maria Cristina, enfermera torturada y desaparecida en 2003", *Verdad Abierta* (undated), accessed May 28, 2016, http://www.verdadabierta.com/reconstruyendo/2458-maria-crsitina-enfermera-torturada-y-desaparecida-en-2003

"All I want is to find her and to bring her flowers, a candle. I do not care if they take them as prisoners, I only want them to make a humanitarian gesture", her mother has stated in another attempt to find her daughter's resting place.[505] Echoing the first part of Paulina's wish, Salcedo stresses that she "wanted to present a flower offering to her, so that's the way it all started".[506] At the same time, according to the artist "this flower offering had to be coherent with [her] experience" and this is how the work escapes the narrowly defined terms of tribute, shrine and memorial that have been used in most attempts to describe it.[507] The limitations of such interpretations are paved by *A Flor de Piel*'s frail materiality, bodily allusions and the fantasy investment it requires upon encountering it. In order to extend this flower offering to the deceased from the part of the viewer, no physical action is necessary and no ceremony will take place. This offering takes place in fantasy with a stimulated mind, an animated skin and a psychic envelope that expands in order to enclose viewer and object in unruly communion.

Given the story's circumstances, the encounter that the work facilitates with the nurse is materially and psychically demanding at best. Brinson suggests that "the first reaction to *A Flor de Piel* is usually one of aesthetic delight, as the lush romantic associations of a carpet of red roses come to the fore", but this reading is quickly undressed.[508] As soon as the wall text communicates the criminal information to viewers, the mysterious nurse enters their minds to signal that what lies on the floor is a sculptural relief of her bloodshed and flayed skin.

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[505] Ibid.
[506] Salcedo quoted in White Cube, "On 'A Flor de Piel' and 'Plegaria Muda'"
[507] Ibid.
[508] Brinson, 211

What is brought to the fore, through this idiosyncratic representation of gore, is a subject, emptied out and reduced to the thinnest possible carrier of its bodily and psychical containments, to a floral ghost sheet that signifies the haunting presence of María Cristina's tortured, undiscovered body. This flower offering thus cannot be simply approached as a sculptural gesture for making peace with violent death. Instead, it can be seen as a psychical Trojan horse deployed into public discourse in order to recover a woman forcibly taken. Her spectral image returns to chill the skin of the viewers, to haunt the pages of official records, and revivify her claim to her lost body and dignity.

A Flor de Piel's unsettling coherence with María Cristina's experience is largely what creates this skein of psychic demands to the viewer. It is a funerary offer, a shroud, a body, a ghostly veil and tortured skin all at once. The perplexity of this object can be understood following Merewether's suggestion that certain art objects strike a peculiar balance between the material reality of the body and its representation. He argues that therein "lies a movement from death to the dead, from the real to the symbolic, manifest in innumerable objects and images with which we not only mark the passing of life, but bring the dead from beyond the grave back into the land of the living". [509] Questioned about the origins of the shroud idea Salcedo replied by calling attention to the fact that "her body was dismembered as were thousands and thousands of bodies of victims in Colombia".[510] "I wanted to bring all these bodies together to be presented in the most respectful and dignified manner, given to death in a proper way", she

[509] Merewether, "Return of the Dead", 77
[510] Salcedo quoted in White Cube, "On 'A Flor de Piel' and 'Plegaria Muda'"

adds.[511] Going beyond the typical gesture of a flower offering to the dead, Salcedo makes a direct reference to the body, its mutilation, its connection to thousands of similar bodies and finally to their collective absence. "I wanted to make this piece that was not only a flower offering but a shroud that would sort of cover [all these victims]", whose families did not have the opportunity to perform "rituals of giving loved ones to death in the proper manner", Salcedo explains following real-life testimonies of survivors.[512]

In her description the work thus emerges not as an afterlife blanket that would keep tortured souls, bodies and ghosts out of sight, but as an expansive second skin, an enormous shroud weaved to wrap and interconnect the victims of Colombia's war. *A Flor de Piel* delivers an object with a peculiar materiality that has the imaginative capacity to link the dead with the living, as it explosively spills images of blood and fragmented bodies across the floor. Its complex examination of the body's material reality and representation is wrapped with undermining the body's perceived singularity as a reassurance of the self, of sovereignty, and indeed aliveness. *A Flor de Piel* was made to embody María Cristina's story and memory in order to serve as a sign that mediates –but is not, as its death-arrested petals confirm- a frontier between the dead and the living.

The intense sense of mediation and embodiment that *A Flor de Piel* protracts to the viewer, as well as its enigmatic title, links its floral breadth to a material and imaginary examination of what Ahmed and Stacey have argued we must think of as: "a skin-tight politics, a politics that takes as its orientation not the body as

[511] Ibid.
[512] Ibid.

such, but the fleshy interface between bodies and worlds".[513] Understanding *A Flor de Piel* as an interface between bodies and worlds, addresses the work's peculiar orientation in the exhibition space, its fleshy surface and the emotive charge of its title. Translated literally from Spanish the title reads as "on the surface of the skin", which, on a symbolic and psychical level could invite a misreading of the work's deep layering. Further research on this expression's nuances reveals that it describes the act of bringing up the innermost skin layer all the way to the top. It ties raw emotion and sensitivity with their visibly perceptible attributes. It also has to do with a range of feelings that are able to register on the outermost layer of our blushing bodies, such as embarrassment, shame, fear, anger and sadness. To do something "a flor de piel" is to carry out a task with extreme emotion or even to be overcome by it in the process, and, in certain occasions, the expression is used to describe subjects that have stepped beyond reason and into unrestrained emotional turmoil. The title holds the key to Salcedo's close engagement with this woman's experience and how viewers may become implicated in the story's psychical process too. For to be "a flor de piel" is a recurrent state of being that can be understood by most as a familiar feeling. What the title also brings to attention, together with the imagining of an excited and excitable skin, are the strata of one's self that are not visible to the eye. It is a moment when bodily and psychic life can be noticeably figured together, folded into one another, and *A Flor de Piel* emerges as an exercise to represent their unfeigned coexistence, as well as the anxious and desperate efforts towards its schism.

[513] Ahmed and Stacey, 1

In considering the work as a shroud that covers, but also replicates the body's boundaries, the viewer is asked to approach skin "not only as [an] object, but as a point of departure for a different way of thinking".[514] Salcedo's decision to have this woman as the focal point of attention through a work that is not a direct representation of her tortured body, is part of, what Ahmed and Stacey describe as "an intimate dialogue with growing feminist literature on lived and imagined embodiment, [that] avoids taking 'the body' as its privileged figure".[515] The work can thus be understood to be focusing on skin as the envelope of the body that both "protects us from others and exposes us to them".[516] Moreover, the lack of a figuratively bound body in *A Flor de Piel* points to, and is critical of, its absence and invoked presence in art and feminist theory and practice alike. For as Ahmed and Stacey argue, thinking through the skin not only contributes to feminist theories of embodiment, but also problematizes how the body can often be a privileged object and topic within feminist theory: "in some sense, the very argument that 'the body' has been elided, negated and devalued in masculinist thought can fetishize the body, can allow it to appear as if it is an object that could be simply missing".[517] Salcedo underlines this intricate interface of different approaches to representation offering a work that stimulates the critical eye and mind, by disrupting the expectations of the gaze to meet a body, and, consequently, the pattern of the identificatory investments and aversions that follows from it.

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[514] Ibid.
[515] Ibid.
[516] Sue L. Cataldi quoted in Ahmed and Stacey, 1
[517] Ahmed and Stacey, 3

A Flor de Piel insofar it is imaged as a shroud, it is not one that aims to conceal María Cristina and prepare her interment. Instead, it wraps her absent body in order to revivify and proliferate her skin, which will accommodate the fantasy deposits of its viewers and summon the subjects of violence from across interconnecting layers of experience on the same plane. It is this simultaneously fleshy and ghostly quality of the work that confounds its many possible readings and produces a perplexing skin that is, as a result, phenomenologically exhilarating and terrifying. "To the extent that all bodies are phantasmatic, what matters is not any empirical claim to anatomical certainty, but the production of a morphological imaginary", Shildrick suggests.[518] Salcedo invokes the nurse's missing body, the physical and psychical aspects of its pain, to create a skin that slithers away from claims of anatomical or psychical certainty. Looking at the work is discursively linked with imagining the phenomenology of this peculiar skin, the phantom of its owner and the possibility of the self to be wrapped with it or even to inhabit it. It propels an experience of one's own body being as phantasmatic as María Cristina's is when it is summoned in this space through fantasy. At the same time, *A Flor de Piel*'s complex material and symbolic repertoire manages to produce a morphological imaginary that fits like a glove to the violent history Salcedo addresses, for there is a particular lineage for skins like this.

In 1962 Alejandro Obregón, a recognized Colombian artist, won the prize of the Salón de Artistas Colombianos for his painting *La Violencia* (Fig. 90). The painting depicts a woman who is a victim of the violence that escalated during the 1950s. The woman appears pregnant, her body lies dismembered on the

[518] Shildrick, 160

ground, while the skin on her face looks like it has been torn apart and part of it has been lifted. Her body is rendered with the painting's dominants colors and blends with the white sky and black earth. There are soft hues of brown and patches of red on the body that indicate sites of antemortem injury. It depicts the murder of a female victim, whose tortured pregnant body is left in an abstract landscape, in Obregón's representation of a frequent occurrence in the rural areas of Colombia during and ever since La Violencia.[519] A year later, another celebrated Colombian artist, Luis Ángel Rengifo, created a series of etchings titled *Testimonios* that was directly inspired by photographs and evidence of crimes during La Violencia. The series included *Piel al Sol* (*Skin on the Sun*) (1963) (Fig. 91) in which the body of a female victim is reduced to its skin, stretched and spiked to the ground with her head disjointed and her breasts flattened. *La Violencia* presents a body that, albeit its violent fragmentation, is more complete when compared to the one in *Piel al Sol*, which in turn follows more closely *A Flor de Piel* in reducing a subject to the level of its skin. Nevertheless, all of these works are based on real individual cases and are not products of the artists' imagination. They suggest that "there is an intercorporeal exchange between bodies and land that involves proximity, if not merger", as Ahmed and Stacey hold, and, as such, they testify to the fact that sometimes "skin becomes the same "substance" as country; both carry the traces of an ancestral past".[520]

[519] María Margarita Malagón-Kurka, "Dos lenguajes contrastantes en el arte colombiano: nueva figuración e indexicalidad, en el contexto de la problemática sociopolitical de las décadas de 1960 y 1980", *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 31 (December 2008), 21

[520] Ahmed and Stacey, 13

In Obregón's *La Violencia* the body's curves, especially her breast and expectant belly, are placed on the same plane as the sky on the white upper half of the painting, while the rest of her mutilated body is rendered in black and red and disappears into the dark earth at the bottom. There is a clear allusion to the boundary between life and death as the body forms the horizon of the landscape. But in order to perceive it as the signifier of an absolute boundary, its brutal fragmentation and torture have to be circumvented. Adding to the perplexity, the victim's face and belly are painted in reverse colors, light for the half that faces the earth and dark for the part that looks to the sky. What is more, the skin of Obregón's subject, like that of María Cristina, holds within itself that of another, her unborn child, as life and death fold upon each other in this bodily horizon, overtaking Colombia's countryside with its own history of violence.

Rengifo, on the other hand, clearly depicts the female victim as skin, stretched out, nailed to the earth and left to dry in the sun to extract any remaining traces of aliveness that she may bear. *Piel al Sol*, like Salcedo's work, is based on documented evidence of atrocity, adding to the work a layer of realism and shedding a bright light onto the experience of marginalized social groups in Colombia, such as farmers and workers, who were often the victims of political violence. Looking back at the 1950s, the lead researcher of the 1987 Commission suggests that:

> The mutilation and profanation of bodies was a way to extend the work of conquering, looting and devastating enemy territory; the impression caused by hacked, skinned and burned corpses seemed to form part of the mental landscape of a scorched earth policy.[521]

[521] Sánchez Gómez, 19

Although Rengifo's print is small, the skin that it frames is expanded to the extreme, and, in fact, its resultant morphology resembles the map of Colombia.[522] The woman's mutilated body is represented as instrumental in the formation of Colombia's mental landscape and becomes the same substance as country; it merges with the land for which the war is waged over, the same war that sanctions and legitimizes assaults against the country's women. Rengifo's print touches upon the association of femininity with the body and the earth, as well as the symbolism of the nation as a motherland, which in war is usually imagined as a female bodyscape to be defended, a psychical connection that in this case did not form. *La Violencia*, *Piel al Sol* and *A Flor de Piel* demonstate how "the skin, as bodyscape, is inhabited by, as well as inhabiting, the space of the nation and the landscape", and examine how violence against women eventually becomes the symbolic ground on top of which the subjects of war stride.[523]

Salcedo, following Obregón and Rengifo, reinserts a similarly troubling land and bodyscape in the cultural domain, but this time her contribution is sculptural. She fashions an object that traces a peculiar national cognizance of violence, contributing to its representation in Colombian art and figuring skin as a powerful symbolic threshold that is often crossed. *A Flor de Piel*'s material gesture towards the victim of its story is also a physical and psychical move that attempts to decipher what is it that allows violence to readily travel across the synapses of the body, the mind and the nation, to claim its reign over the subjects. *A Flor de Piel* becomes a shroud of skin that covers the entire country

[522] Malagón-Kurka, 22
[523] Ahmed and Stacey, 2

on a symbolic and pragmatic level, as thousands of bodies remain undone, undiscovered, unburied. The curious morphological imaginary that results from these works designates a territory, like the rural fields of Colombia, in which bodies are reduced to a single layer, where their phantasmatic incarnations rise from the earth to perpetually impale living subjects to deeper, darker levels of experience.

Salcedo's initial intention to cover and imaginatively bury María Cristina's body, wherever it may be, ends up highlighting its eternal hovering above the earth in a space that captures the viewer's gaze and imagination. To produce such a space, Salcedo created a sculptural object that unwraps the familiar symbolism that flowers carry for commemoration, which typically works by diverting the gaze away from the painful carnal and psychic reality of death. This is not a carpet of flowers laid upon the dead to take them away from sight and mask the smell of their decomposing bodies. It is an object that was produced after extensive research into mummification processes so that the petals could be arrested in a state between life and death.[524] It is not a flowery shroud to mask a skin that transgresses life and death, but one to preserve and amplify its discernible terror. This skin is not left outside to dry under the sun; it is fastidiously preserved (and exhibited) as a constant reminder of the shared living qualities between victims, perpetrators and survivors. *A Flor de Piel* figures a violence that abates with

[524] Salcedo's studio assistants described how thousands of roses were placed in buckets of water, so that their petals could absorb it in order for it to be later replaced by glycerin and collagen, so that they could retain their color, elasticity and flexibility. White Cube, "The Making of 'A Flor de Piel'", online video, 12:51, posted by White Cube, May 2012, accessed May 27, 2016, http://whitecube.com/channel/in_the_studio/doris_salcedo_in_the_studio_2012/

death, as well as the latency of "the trace of violence in those left behind".[525] Pulling the viewers' attention down to a realm that belongs to shared worlds – lived or imagined, alive or dead, conscious or unconscious- Salcedo asks them to explore the many ways they can be unsettled and torn apart by experiencing the dominion of violence on one's own skin.

The Cut

Moving closer to *A Flor de Piel* is a moment in which the viewer approaches what is now perceived to be a representation of a tormented body. The air in the exhibition room is different, it feels more humid and there is a distinct smell that originates from the organic materiality of the work. "Trying to preserve rose petals in a stage that is neither dead nor alive, [Salcedo] treated them so that they remain suspended between the animate and the inanimate" in order to create this uncanny atmosphere.[526] The steps taken towards the red matter on the floor ahead may produce a sense of trepidation to the viewer, as the object's unusual imbalance between the animate and the inanimate disrupts conventional modes of spectatorship. This tense feeling is also likely to be induced by approaching the work after being informed by the wall text of its violent backbone, a combination of the work's affect and narrative that prompts the viewer's unconscious to send ripples through its expanse, as *A Flor de Piel* does in its many undulations across the floor.

[525] Acevedo, 154
[526] Salcedo, "A Work in Mourning", 216

Coming close to the work intensifies the usual silence that overtakes exhibition spaces, as viewers examine an animated object that is so closely linked to violence and death. This mode of silent contemplation is similar to Salcedo's initial working stages, when she reads testimonies, establishing relationships of "silent collaboration" with people who are not there.[527] She describes that she is always led "to cases where the victim is persecuted beyond the possibility of self-defense, [where] the victim has no defense in language […] [and] becomes a solitary being for whom the mediation of language is not possible anymore", an accurate description of María Cristina's experience.[528] "Consequently, there is no one the victim can talk to; no one would listen to [her]. There is just silence", Salcedo adds.[529] Yet, the silent layer that *A Flor de Piel* adds on the exhibition space is anything but vacant; it is the channel of communication that it establishes with its viewers. It exposes, as Merewether suggests, the erasure of language by dominant forms of representation and certain institutions, and lifts "the veil of secrecy that surrounds the workings of violence, the silence of 'disappearance' and the suspension of all 'traces' of a person's existence, the silencing of dissenting voices".[530] *A Flor de Piel* designates a peculiar place in which the silence between viewer and object is of codified signification, in an institutional space where muffled dialogues that are able to produce a sense of discomfort to those unable to perceive and thus control them, are usually cut short.

[527] Salcedo, "Traces of Memory: Art and Remembrance in Colombia"
[528] Ibid.
[529] Ibid.
[530] Merewether, "Naming Violence in the Work of Doris Salcedo", 44

This secret communication is instigated by the surface of *A Flor de Piel*, which bears evidence of the workings of violence in a coded language that belongs to a haunted body. As Princenthal suggests: "Salcedo represents […] a psychic process in which the experience of violence is sequestered, transposed, written into a code not well recognized by ordinary language and therefore always threatened with […] disappearance".[531] For this is a ghostly "creature" that holds its story, as well as those of the nation, in its stitched skin that attempts to imaginatively fuse with that of the viewer, to furtively communicate the country's experience of violence that ordinary language is often not willing to utter. Attesting to this line of thought is that Salcedo's conception of flowers as skin for *A Flor de Piel* is not coincidental and has further pragmatic and psychic connotations, which the literature on this work so far has missed altogether.

Colombia is known for its rich biodiversity and large-scale production of flowers due to its geographical position and climate, with the rose being one of the country's primary and most profitable exports, putting Colombia in second place after Holland in the world flower market. Additionally, after Colombia's independence from Spain in 1820, the Spanish crown sent a botanical expedition to Colombia to study its flowers at the end of the eighteenth century. It is described as "a very important moment because it was the first time that the religious point of view shifted to a rational point of view", according to Colombian artist and writer Juan Manuel Echavarría.[532] Echavarría suggests that the effect of the Enlightenment in Colombia was to bring in "the rights of man –

[531] Princenthal, 43
[532] Juan Manuel Echavarría quoted in Calvin Reid, "Juan Manuel Echavarría by Calvin Reid", *BOMB* 70, (Winter 2000), accessed June 4, 2016, http://bombmagazine.org/article/2276/juan-manuel-echavarr-a

women's rights still haven't happened in Colombia- and the ideas of the French Revolution. That botanical expedition ushered in the independence of Colombia. It was a moment of reflection".[533] Echavarría mobilized this historical moment to create his work *The Flower Vase Cut* (1997) (Figs. 92-93), a series of thirty-three black and white photographs depicting flowers as botanical specimens, whose stems, petals and leaves were replaced with what looks like human bones. The title of the series refers "to the name of one of the mutilations practiced in the Colombian Violencia of the 1940s and 1950s in which the amputated limbs were stuffed, so it is said, into the thorax via the neck of the decapitated corpse".[534] Each of the titles of the photographs names another chilling "flower arrangement" and resembles the style of the Latin names given to the plant illustrations of the Spanish botanical expedition. Asked about his coded messages on human bones and this layering of the historical and the contemporary, Echavarría simply highlights that: "if you and I were to go on a botanical expedition to Colombia right now, what we would find is dead bodies. […] We would find massacre upon massacre and miles and miles of graves".[535] It thus becomes imperative to problematize the funerary and commemorative readings and the emphasis placed on mourning and representation that *A Flor de Piel*, and Salcedo's work in general, attracts. These narratives are mainly produced by Western art discourse, whose critical eye either misses or avoids the layers of experience that are particular to the context of these works. These layers have to do with a different kind of language and sensorial relationship to

[533] Ibid.
[534] Michael Taussig, "The Language of Flowers", *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Autumn 2003), 98
[535] Echavarría quoted in Reid, "Juan Manuel Echavarría by Calvin Reid"

the reality and fantasy of violence that art history rarely grasps or decides to speak about.

In an attempt to describe Colombia's lush yet deathly countryside Michael Taussig refers to Michael Herr's 1977 book *Dispatches* in which Herr, a former US war correspondent, links the sexualized violence of the Vietnam War, as previously discussed through Spero's *War Series*, with the noticeable intertwinement of life and death in flowers: "sitting in Saigon was like sitting inside the folded petals of a poisonous flower, the poison history, fucked in its root no matter how far back you wanted to run your trace".[536] "In Colombia, the act of killing was an artistic expression that materialized in the way of dismembering a corpse", writes Álvaro Medina and suggests that this is something that twentieth-century Colombian art closely traces.[537] For what *A Flor de Piel*, *La Violencia*, *Piel al Sol* and *The Flower Vase Cut* also record and examine is the hysterical sexuality that characterizes Colombia's ongoing war, the presence of sex and death across its countryside as a fused drive, how "something violent has been sexualized", and, in this case, aestheticized.[538] The perpetrators of such crimes abducted their victims with a clear plan to torture, rape and kill, in a sequence of events that enacts the "sexualizing of death wishes, of violence", but one that also takes additional pleasure from their thoughtful display.[539] *A Flor de Piel* is a skin that joins all of Colombia's victims, whose mutilated bodies lie somewhere in the countryside, arranged and

[536] Taussig, 111
[537] Álvaro Medina, "El arte y la violencia colombiana en la segunda mitad del siglo XX" in *Arte y Violencia en Colombia desde 1948*, exh. cat., (Bogotá: Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, Grupo Editorial Norma, 1999), 52
[538] Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas*, 135
[539] Mitchell, 135

sexualized like flowers. “It is an interface that allows [us] to come near the broken bodies of torture” and speak their muted language.[540]

The “language of flowers” appears in Freud’s early psychoanalytic writings, which were “used during Freud's adolescence as a coded disguise for fantasies of love, lust, and longing”.[541] Freud later used it as a symbolic and metaphoric language for his self-analysis of the dream of the Botanical Monograph and an autobiographic screen memory, “in which the deflowering metaphor describes his fantasies of sexual aggression directed towards a virginal woman”.[542] As Barbara S. Rocah suggests:

> Freud's adolescent poetic imagination was transformed into a scientific imagination; the imagery and metaphors derived from the language of flowers were incorporated into his theory of masculinity, equated with aggressive sexuality, differentiated from femininity, characterized by submission and masochistic fantasies.[543]

It is this context that the commemorative critical accounts and romanticized descriptions of *A Flor de Piel* miss. Not engaging with the sexual connotations of a work that was produced to be coherent with war rape and torture, is not only disengaging with its formal or coded messages, but it may ultimately contribute to the sustenance of violence paved by the psychic associations that some find hard to address.

Freud’s hypothesis that a female patient of his “was thinking about defloration and used [flowers] as a symbol of being violated and as a verbal bridge to the

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[540] Salcedo, “A Work in Mourning”, 216
[541] Barbara S. Rocah, “The Language of Flowers: Freud's Adolescent Language of Love, Lust, and Longing”, *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 57 (2002), 377
[542] Rocah, 378. Freud’s dream of the Botanical Monograph, dated March 10, 1898, appears in “The Interpretation of Dreams” (1900) and the screen memory in “Screen Memories” (1899).
[543] Ibid., 377

unconscious", led him to the conclusion that this symbolism "revealed an unconscious masochistic fantasy of pleasurable suffering that complemented the sadistic fantasies of men".[544] This kind of outdated masculinist thought still pervades in the narratives that structure violence against women, within and outside the discourse of war, as previously described through Holzer's work. It produces masochism as an intrinsically female complement to a naturalized, aggressive masculine sexuality that stems from a phallus with the power to penetrate, or further dress, femininity as a virginally cloaked and reproductively tied condition. Adding to this interpretation are Anzieu's thoughts on Freud's musings:

> I would contend that the present action in the [Botanical Monograph] [sic] dream –opening a folded plate on which a flower is "reproduced"- represents an intellectualization of a past, carnal action –opening the folded "flower" of a little girl, in other words her sexual organs, whose purpose is precisely, to "reproduce", and where the little boy imagines he can see the results of castration. The reproductive functions of the human body are often explained to small children through the analogy of botanical examples.[545]

It is precisely this kind of thinking that has led "women [to be] associated with the skin itself, or its skinlike dissimulations, webs, veils, folds, fabrics, buds, oils and the vaginated involution of hearts and flowers".[546] It is striking that, although *A Flor de Piel* is literally and symbolically connected to skin by the title itself, there is still no account that links this work to the violent story of the female victim it so closely follows. It is as if its quite obvious verbal bridge to the

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[544] Ibid., 385

[545] Anzieu quoted in Carlo Bonomi, "Withstanding trauma: the significance of Emma Eckstein's circumcision to Freud's Irma dream", *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 82, no.3 (2013), 720

[546] Steven Connor, "Mortification" in *Thinking Through the Skin*, eds. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey, (London: Routledge, 2001), 48

unconscious language of violence and war is one that the majority of writers are unwilling to cross.

It is reported that María Christina's perpetrators targeted her and branded her as a guerrilla, because she was deeply involved in training midwives as a nurse, in order to improve the quality of life for newborns and mothers in the countryside.[547] Pedro Guerrero, also known as "El Cuchillo" (The Knife) is one of María Christina's and Colombia's most famous killers, having committed over 3,000 murders before his conviction. He was known for his love of women and for "taking the victims in his hands and ripping through with a knife".[548] Associating women with folded skin that terrifies, and the vaginated involution of flowers with sex and death, the perpetrators of this crime tortured and opened up the body of an expectant mother, who later became a symbol of pain for the country and nation. This crime, like so many others, was based on the definition of masculinity as aggressive sexuality and femininity as submission, the structures that warfare exploits in the fantasies of its agents, which Mitchell explored in her early work addressing Freud's problematic assumptions. *A Flor de Piel*'s floral excess thus also expresses the hysterical nature of war sexuality. Its flower skin figures "the ultimate detachment of sexuality from reproduction and the attachment of death to sexuality", in its coherent representation of an attack on a mother that was carried out by a perpetrator, who, through cutting

[547] "María Cristina Cobo Mahecha, un sacrificio que no fue en vano", *Comunicaciones Unillanos*, (August 3, 2015), accessed June 4, 2016, http://comunicaciones.unillanos.edu.co/index.php/2015/08/03/maria-cristina-cobo-mahecha-un-sacrificio-que-no-fue-en-vano-2/

[548] Francisco Argüello, '"Cuchillo": vanidoso, amante del alcohol, las joyas de oro y las mujeres hermosas' in *El Mundo*, 29 December 2010, accessed 4 June 2016, http://www.elmundo.es/america/2010/12/29/colombia/1293653943.html

and rape, attempted to reinstate his lost sense of omnipotence in the name of a motherland filled with flowers. [549]

Eschevarria's and Salcedo's flowers hence follow the fantasied, yet very real, associations that Colombia's perpetrators adhere to, which they also code in their work that stems from real victims' stories. *A Flor de Piel* takes up these ongoing associations, which are perpetually reproduced in part due to their silent and uncontested acceptance, and lays them on the ground. Salcedo's intense material focus on this particular individual story is important: it animates maternal skin as a metaphor for a country engaged in civil war that also continues to disappear or silence its victims. It asks for an embodied understanding and debate of violence because "although skin may have a testimonial function, the act of bearing witness to trauma, injustice, violence and the pain of others cannot involve simply the transformation of skin into voice".[550] Spread across the floor, *A Flor de Piel* is an attempt to expand rather than cut the individual stories of violence. It is one that is unafraid to offer an alternative language and representation of violence, to betray its unconscious thrill on its skin and to take on its charisma in its fight for a responsible, collective consciousness.

The Stitch

With the tormented body of María Christina in mind, Salcedo "began looking for the most fragile way of touching the untouchable, and the process of making this piece pushed [her] to the limits of the fragile and the most delicate within the

[549] Mitchell, Mad *Men and Medusas*, 129
[550] Ahmed and Stacey, 6

frame of sculpture".[551] *A Flor de Piel* stongly invokes the desire of touch on the part of the viewer, but, unlike Holzer's bones, forbids it. On a material level, "the piece demands extraordinary care [to be preserved] and I think that's a beautiful part of it. The way we move, even the way we breathe around the piece is crucial for its survival", Salcedo describes.[552] The elements of fragility, prohibition of touch and survival are fundamental to the kind of communication the work tries to establish with its viewers and the intervention it aims to stage in public discourse. Its violent but tender surface, made from suturing thousands of petals stitched to each other, alludes to the fragmented bodies of the victims across Colombia, which through the death-defying suspension of the arrested petals, are joined with the world of the living that includes their perpetrators.

Looking at images of *A Flor de Piel*'s production, Salcedo's studio looks like a scene of violence itself (Fig. 94). The process of producing the desired color and shape for the petals looks like injuring something that is alive, making it bleed (Fig. 95). This offer for a victim of violence looks a lot like repeating the original experience, adding more and more layers of pain (Fig. 96). However, once completed, *A Flor de Piel*'s frightening materiality reproduces the scene of violence, rather than violence par excellence. It leaves space for the viewer to imagine what making this skin entailed and how it might feel to inhabit the scene of violence. Although *A Flor de Piel* seeks a way to come closer to María Christina's tortured body, this expedition also initiates a movement towards her perpetrator. Its mission ultimately ends up stitching the dead with the living, and victims with perpetrators, in a vicious circularity, which suggests that "skin is

[551] Salcedo, "A Work in Mourning", 216
[552] Salcedo quoted in White Cube, "On 'A Flor de Piel' and 'Plegaria Muda'"

very much the 'stuff' of culture, and […] it is involved in the production of the very distinction we call 'human'".[553] It goes against Salcedo's claims that the work aims to link the victims of Colombia's violence, for the imaging of this victim's skin and the emergence of her haunting spectral image, is dependent on that of the people who last saw and touched her body. *A Flor de Piel* surfaces as an exercise on reimagining and stitching together, society's distinctions of what we call human, two bodies habitually perceived as polar opposites: the victim and her perpetrator.

Fusing the bodies of victim and perpetrator alludes to the sexual prelude of their deathly encounter, and, as such, *A Flor de Piel* contests "bodily boundaries by exploring the skin as surface, encounter and site, in which more than one body is always implicated".[554] To suggest that each petal is a representative of each missing, dismembered body, is to miss to the point of how it arrived to be there: it was touched, handled and arranged in place. Salcedo together with her army of assistants stitched each petal by hand to thousands of others, to show how "the industrial production of violent death [often] lies beyond the scope of art".[555] In this way, the interlaced surface of *A Flor de Piel* extends the understanding that "bodies do not necessarily end at their skins, […] skins do not necessarily end at their bodies".[556] It also indicates that the "social fabric of Colombia as a 'culture of violence'" is necessarily fashioned out of its victims, perpetrators and witnesses alike.[557]

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[553] Ahmed and Stacey, 13
[554] Ibid., 14
[555] Salcedo, "A Work in Mourning", 216
[556] Ahmed and Stacey, 15
[557] Merewether, "Naming Violence in the Work of Doris Salcedo", 39

Each of the work's petals is joined to the others by a process of overlaying prior to stitching on the same plane, creating an uneven surface (Figs. 97-98). As Shildrick suggests:

> Once the normative standard of ordered and sealed bodiliness, against which monstrosity is measured, is understood as an impossible ideal in itself –as something to be achieved rather than as a given- then it makes good sense to take the incoherence of the monstrous as the starting point.[558]

The body revivified here is of hybrid skin and open to interpretation as monstrous, since it defies the ordered and sealed bodiliness demanded by the neat categorization of subjects in dominant accounts of violence. To imagine the victim's body and skin as fragmented and stitched together again, is to encounter a stereotypical image of the "monstrous", typically reserved for the perpetrator. The work invites us to look at "the issue of monstrosity as a manifestation of the always already unstable corpus, and as a difference that defies distinction".[559] Moreover, the viewers who follow the ripples and stitches across its surface are invited "to uncover the extent to which the western notion of the sovereign self, and of the bounded body, is, in general, both guaranteed and contested by those who do not, indeed cannot, unproblematically occupy the embodied subject position".[560] In this way, even if the work is psychically utilized as an offering to make peace with the dead and hide them away, its broken and unsealed bodiliness, evidenced in the uneven surface of its skin, discourages such politics of psychic recovery. The image of *A Flor de Piel* is also characterized by a pattern of more obscure areas that evidences the suturing of the petals and suggests that this strange epidermis registers the rise of something dark to its

[558] Shildrick, 160
[559] Ibid.
[560] Ibid., 162

stitched surface (Fig. 99). The betrayal of emotion on its surface might be stitched in place, but the open space between the overlaid petals signifies an emotional state that is not sealed and cannot be contained; its psychical discharge and physical scent fills the whole room.

A Flor de Piel's stimulation of the viewers' imagination is dependent on their unsettled embodiment, which excites and blemishes their skin ego. The skin ego, as theorized by Anzieu and previously discussed together with Holzer's *Lustmord*, "is the interface between psyche and body, self and others. The self derives from the skin, from those first touches in childhood that create a sense of ourselves as contained and social".[561] Moreover, according to Anzieu, what threatens the structure of the skin ego, "i.e. the space between its outer and inner faces, as well as the difference between its function as a protective shield and as a surface for the inscription of signifying traces", is pain.[562] To (be)hold *A Flor de Piel* as skin, in the artist's hand or in fantasy by the viewer, is like embracing a body in pain and subjectivity in turmoil (Fig. 100).

"As every one of us knows from experience, intense and lasting pain disorganizes the psychical apparatus, threatens the psyche's integration with the body, and […] affects our […] thinking", Anzieu explains.[563] The relationship that *A Flor de Piel* establishes with its "beholders" produces, like pain, "a topographical disturbance and, by a circular process, the awareness of an obliteration of the founding and structuring distinction between the bodily and psychical Ego".[564] Spread on the floor, rather than hanged on a wall, *A Flor de*

[561] Prosser, 53
[562] Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, 201
[563] Ibid., 200
[564] Ibid.

Piel's topographical disturbance disrupts normative approaches to art, and, in turn, the viewer's sense of containment. It embodies a kind of pain that targets both the individual and the social order of the exhibition space. "Pain […] cancels out differentiation, reduces the differences in level among the psychical subsystems and tends to spread in every direction. […] Pain is the ordeal of de-differentiation", Anzieu writes.[565] It is not just the victim's pain that is imaged and felt, who during torture experiences an obliteration of the self, but a pain that de-differentiates the viewer's orientation towards the other constituting subjects of *A Flor de Piel*'s story too. To ask the viewer to "hold" the work as skin is to invite him or her to take the place of the perpetrator or survivor in a process that instigates multiple and shifting identifications through de-differentiation. The psychical pain evoked in the room produces a threat to the viewer's perception of containment, facilitated by *A Flor de Piel*'s representation of disturbed and disorderly subjectivity.

This work goes against official narratives that expect and present violence as ordered and clear as possible, presenting history in a way that can be rationally digested rather than corporeally problematized. *A Flor de Piel* invites such overlaying and examines how creativity and uncertainty in addressing violence could foster new insights about its unconscious bedrock, which is largely blindsided by dominant forms of scholarly accounts that focus on its formal representation. For if it is only the themes of mourning and commemoration that the literature is willing to talk about, then these readings are based on reading *A Flor de Piel* as an object of reparation, which, following Klein's theory, the subject upon unleashing his or her the aggression on it, now feels guilty and

[565] Ibid., 200-201

wishes to repair it. But the artist's insistence on creating something coherent with the experience of violence, and the declaration by one of her assistants that they are "not trying to embroider, [they're] trying to join", diminishes any suggestions that the work is produced in order to make reparative amends and adorn an ugly wound.[566] It is thus not an attempt by Salcedo to deploy creativity driven by an unconscious desire to repair the story in a Kleinian sense and produce a representation of violence that stitches up the wounds of a traumatic past. *A Flor de Piel* aims to recreate the scene of destructive attacks, aggression and blood-rising violence itself in some recognizable form that travels beyond traditional institutional and analytical frames. In doing so, its subversive stitch highlights the possibility of failure in the representations or accounts of traumatic history that aim for an aestheticized version of reparative violence, which barely scratch the surface of its making.

Salcedo further stresses the inaptitude of artistic production and discourse to delve in the theme of violence, describing her attempt to provide an accurate representation of its experience:

> Even worse and more difficult than failure was the sense of finding yourself so awkwardly inept. I was never subtle enough, I was never delicate enough, I was never intelligent enough to deal with it. So it kept tearing apart and destroying itself. The piece was confronting me with all my inabilities.[567]

This feeling of failure is one of the most important aspects of this work. It invokes Klein's reparation not as a dissociated state from the aggression and destruction that brings it forward, but also, as a process that, like stitching itself, is inseparable from violence. Stitching the petals together simultaneously looks

[566] White Cube, "The Making of 'A Flor de Piel'"
[567] Ibid.

like an attack on their integrity, on their capacity to be recognized both as individual fragments and as unified skin. These petals therefore show that the physical and theoretical effort to produce a cohesive model of thought and experience of violence is necessarily entrenched in violence itself. To the extent that each petal stands in for a subject in *A Flor de Piel*'s story, then, to follow its stitched surface in order to approach one of its subjects means to come close to all of them.

It is a process that mentally follows the initial stage of the undoing of a rosebud to provide the artist with the material basis to approach María Christina's undone body. Like skin, *A Flor de Piel* represents how the containment of violence itself is fragile, and if touched in a particular way, it may tear apart and unleash a troubled sea of emotion. *A Flor de Piel* essentially suggests that if the wishful fantasy to recreate and repair the nurse's body is to be granted, viewers are required to consider its troubled floral symbolism, to challenge any fixed perceptions of subjectivity, and, imaginatively picking its petals off, to ask themselves: "am I violent or am I not"?

The Waves

Sprawling across the floor towards the viewers, *A Flor de Piel* attempts to bodily and psychically unite them with those who have been cut open. For skin is often understood as carrying and securing a pool of bodily and psychic vitality, necessary to keep in place a sense of differentiation and omnipotence of the self that the subject wishes to protect. It is when *A Flor de Piel*'s contents are spilled out that this perception of the self is disintegrated, and, alongside skin itself, the

work becomes the focus of attention in its emergence as a precipitate. Yet, this precipitation of skin is one that undulates, falls and rises again, and *A Flor de Piel* as a vast and elastic surface area also represents the contents themselves, in the way it communicates their excessive and wavy imaginative spillage. Asking viewers to lower their gaze to their floor, across and beyond its surface, it points to a fluid-like motion of bodily and psychical matter that recalls the rush of the water and the stillness of death.

The technical drawings for the production and installation of the piece look like maps that depict a geographical area that has many rivers. These drawings appear like territorial maps of *A Flor de Piel*'s psychic conflicts, a cartographical blueprint of a motherland cut in pieces with severed arteries (Figs. 101-102). Examining its petals closely, it is impossible not to notice the preservation of their veins, spread across each petal and *A Flor de Piel*'s entire surface, which in turn now appears like a red sea made from the deposits of crimson rivers. While the veiny materiality of the petals further secures the work's allusion to human skin, the inevitable and disturbing seascape image it creates, draws its terror from the roots of Colombia's historical violence and María Christina's story. In 2013, the governor, mayor and members of Colombian NGOs instated a plaque in Calamar in her memory outside the hospital she used to work at. It provided a short biography, making it clear that her remains have not been found and are still probably "somewhere in the Guaviare", one of Colombia's largest rivers.[568]

[568] Juan Miguel Álvarez, "La lucha por el honor de una enfermera ejemplar", *Reconciliación Colombia*, (undated), accessed June 2, 2016, http://www.reconciliacioncolombia.com/web/historia/1486/la-lucha-por-el-honor-de-una-enfermera-ejemplar

Familiares Colombia, an organization that represents the families of the disappeared, has researched the reasons behind the failure to recover their bodies and found out that paramilitaries frequently throw the dismembered bodies of their victims in the Guaviare.[569] "The only thing left to do is go to Guaviare with a shovel and look for my daughter", Paulina said while waiting outside the office of the Attorney General who was prosecuting one of her daughter's perpetrators.[570] Asked about the work's living quality, Salcedo insisted that it is "absolutely important" because of the weird stage these families are left at, consumed by doubt and uncertainty.[571] "Among the tortures and devastations of life is this then -our friends are not able to finish their stories", as Neville says in Woolf's *The Waves*.[572] While María Christina's life may have ended, her death did not wash away in the minds of the living. Looking at *A Flor de Piel*'s surface the living are asked to follow the channels that make it up, the veiny membranes of the suspended petals, the arrested rush of their life fluids and their visual reference to Colombia's rivers that keep swelling with more bodies.

In order to recreate the scene of this story's violence by reading its surface area, the viewer symbolically travels across Colombia's bleeding national fabric, pursued by ghosts that the state and its official records aim to keep at a distance. This journey is traveled on land that engulfs the subject, on the symbolic ground of *A Flor de Piel* that expands like skin and rivers that flood, immersing the viewer in its long waves, stretching the subject to try on María Christina's

[569] Milena Sarralde Duque, "La carrera contra el tiempo para encontrar a 17.000 desaparecidos", *El Tiempo*, (October 18, 2015), accessed June 4, 2016, http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/justicia/desaparecidos-en-colombia/16406236
[570] "Maria Cristina, enfermera torturada y desaparecida en 2003"
[571] Salcedo quoted in White Cube, "On 'A Flor de Piel' and 'Plegaria Muda'"
[572] Woolf, *The Waves*, 21

experience for size, to embody Colombia's violence itself. This fluid site of reflection is tailored to the need, according to the artist, "to be immersed in a world where contemplation, distance and indifference are not possible", if one is seeking to understand Colombia's war and political violence.[573] "On the outskirts of every agony sits some observant fellow who points", says Bernard in *The Waves*, outlining a position that *A Flor de Piel*'s contests in its sweeping fluidity.[574] Its large surface motions within the exhibition room towards the world of the living and serves as a "reminder of the cultural confinement that […] defines the institution of the Museum and camouflages death".[575] The work's tidal pull critically addresses the viewer's upright, static posture across the room and does not allow for an easy escape from its waves of skin.

Salcedo claims that "what defines this piece is our gaze, our relationship with it", but at the same time the wavy appearance of *A Flor de Piel* "works to displace or disrupt the surface of the contemplative gaze".[576] In effect, the work calls attention to the power of the gaze and returns, like waves, the effects of its disembodying vision, unqualified to provide an informed understanding of the psychic effects of violence. To look across the poetic undulations of *A Flor de Piel*'s surface is to be constantly hit with images of this violent skin. Torn apart and stitched together, it continues to deliver recurring, embodied memories of tending to open wounds (Figs. 103-104). After spending some time with the work, the power of the gaze subsides and a different faculty is mobilized, the viewer begins to see with his or her skin. His or her thoughts are the result of a

[573] Salcedo, "Traces of Memory: Art and Remembrance in Colombia"
[574] Woolf, 141
[575] Merewether, "Return of the Dead", 83
[576] Salcedo, "A Work in Mourning", 42

fluid stream of consciousness, with the potential to dissolve the sense of self, as Rhoda's words in *The Waves* communicate when she lets her feelings flow and cascade onto one another:

> I see nothing. We may sink and settle on the waves. The sea will drum in my ears. […] Rolling over the waves will shoulder me under. Everything falls in a tremendous shower, dissolving me.[577]

To sink and dissolve in the dark red sea of *A Flor de Piel* is what happens to the viewer extending his or her gaze over its surface following the waves. It is not seeing nothing. It is a kind of inner vision that rises and fluctuates, as the floral waves do, a rolling over motion on a sea of skin that unsettles the subject and stirs the pool of the unconscious. It is as if the viewer's eyes have gone cloudy from the overload of sensorial information. The contained sense of self is dissolved yet the viewer still sees in a different way; he or she has the eyes of a haunted subject.

Salcedo claims that upon encountering her work "viewers desperately try to come to terms with the fact that vision gives them no answers. A surface reverberating no specific character allows the communion [with the dead] to arise".[578] The lack of specificity in *A Flor de Piel*'s surface, the hovering over the bodily and the fantasied, is not nothingness. It results from its double claim on the body and the mind: it does not address a bodily or psychical ego separately but together. It speaks to the skin ego, so that the viewer's vision cannot be thought of along the lines of a disembodied gaze. It is both object and subject that together establish a relationship of fragile dissolution. Salcedo stresses that:

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[577] Woolf, 116

[578] Salcedo quoted in Merewether, "Interview with Charles Merewether, 1998", 25

> The fragility *is* [sic] the work […] because I wanted to make an image not an object. I really wanted to be as far away as I can from objects of violence or tools of violence or a representation of violence as such. It's an image that is almost immaterial. It is in a way sculpture, I am a sculptor, but it is totally immaterial. So its fragility is about to disappear, it is so insubstantial.[579]

Salcedo's description of the work as totally or almost immaterial may read for some as a contradiction. However, it is this very incoherence in her words that holds *A Flor de Piel*'s competence for bodily and imaginary trespass. To be insubstantial does not mean to be nothing, and, to not readily provide the tools or objects of violence does not mean that they will not be returned to the viewer in some other form. The conflict between approaching this work as an object or image is not necessary. It is an object that embraces its literalness to a point that goes beyond its "objecthood", as Fer argues in her work, and, thus, the images it is able to project emerge from its "realm of excessive, bodily materiality".[580]

Its excessive surface and multilayered psychic imagery propose "the radical possibility of a more precarious subjectivity", one that is formed at the interface of the binary between the work and its viewer, a world in which *A Flor de Piel* flickers both as image and object to the viewing subject.[581] The dematerialization of the object and dissolution of the subject is a war that *A Flor de Piel* wages "on the space of sculpture, and the sculptural discourses that it resists, with concerns more far-reaching than a shift in form, medium or site".[582] It is a conflict staged in front of the viewer, and, as Applin argues in her work on the dematerialization of the 1960s object and on sculpture that can elicit threatening viewing encounters, "the war on sculpture is also a war on the very space of

[579] Salcedo quoted in White Cube, "On 'A Flor de Piel' and 'Plegaria Muda'"
[580] Briony Fer, "Objects Beyond Objecthood", *Oxford Art Journal* 22, No. 2 (1999), 27
[581] Ibid., 29
[582] Applin, 41

subjectivity".[583] And a war between object, subject and image in the field of sculpture is a war of identification.

Despite her insistence on the immaterial, Salcedo ends up making an image *and* an object and *A Flor de Piel* appears as the interface of both: it is an image of the object of violence and an object of the image of violence. And what this oscillating interface instigates in the viewer is an appearance and disappearance of the subject's boundaries in an excessive capacity. The images that flicker in the viewer's eyes are of bodies and stories stitched and told together: María Christina's body, its fragmentation, her perpetrators, her mother, the survivors, the human pool of the disappeared, and the self, in front of *A Flor de Piel*. Being in the scene of (the work's) violence many objects are lost and images are created. "'If one has lost a love-object', Freud writes, 'the most obvious reaction is to identify oneself with it, to replace it from within, as it were, by identification'".[584] Salcedo has attempted to articulate this feeling to describe her working process on a project about a person that was brutally lost:

> I can't really describe what's happening to me because it's not rational: in a way, I become that person. There is a process of substitution. Their suffering becomes mine; the center of that person becomes my center and I can no longer determine where my center actually is.[585]

This decentering is the kind of dissolution the viewing subject experiences as he or she rolls over *A Flor de Piel*'s waves, sinking his or her upright posture with its horizontal petals, showered with images of violence and death. But it does not bring a straightforward sense of becoming, of substituting the self with that of another, for this would be too neat of a recovery from a lost sense of self, and, in

[583] Ibid.
[584] Fuss, 1
[585] Salcedo quoted in Merewether, "Interview with Charles Merewether, 1998", 14

a way, a move towards the reparation of a subjectivity that frightens. As Fuss suggests referring to Lacan's understanding of identification:

> It is not the object itself that the subject takes inside but a likeness or facsimile: "What one cannot keep outside, one always keeps an image of inside". […] Identification, in other words, invokes phantoms. By incorporating the spectral remains of the dearly departed love-object, the subject vampiristically comes to life.[586]

From the part of the viewing subject, approaching *A Flor de Piel* as an object that stands in for the dearly departed protagonist of the story, sets up the victim as the first, but not exclusive, identification position he or she can assume. In this psychic move, assuming the experience of the victim extends beyond a conventionally empathetic mode of spectatorship, the viewer is witnessing his or her contents emptied out, spilled on the floor, rippling across the room (Figs. 105-106). Yet, at the same time, due to identification's fleeting and elusive nature, in re-assuming his or her own vertical position, the viewing subject experiences the self as sitting on top of the pool of the victim's blood or flayed skin, towering over her as a perpetrator or witness to the crime would. *A Flor de Piel* brings forth a series of identifications, which extend beyond that of the victim, questioning the certainty behind the location and make-up of the self's center.

Its surface is an identity puzzle that the viewer is called to resolve in order to explore "the radical possibility of a more precarious subjectivity" in the discourse of violence.[587] As Fuss notes:

> At the same time that identification sets into motion the complicated dynamic of recognition and misrecognition that brings a sense of identity into being, it also immediately calls that identity into question. The

[586] Fuss, 1
[587] Fer, 29

> astonishing capacity of identifications to reverse and disguise themselves, to multiply and contravene one another, to disappear and reappear years later renders identity profoundly unstable and perpetually open to radical change.[588]

By taking away the tools and objects of violence that can be used to establish fixed identities, Salcedo's work "enact[s] both a physical and psychical assault on viewing subjects, opening up new ways of thinking about abstraction and violence".[589] The recurring appearance and disappearance of the victim, the perpetrator and the witness, like waves in *A Flor de Piel*'s fantasy sea, is an instance of traumatic repetition that has yet to be resolved, a game of identificatory fort/da for the viewer to take away and to rethink subjectivity, violence and trauma. "And in me too the wave rises. It swells; it arches its back", says the voice of Bernard describing the time of his death in *The Waves*.[590] There is no stable object to take in from this bodily and oceanic scene of violence. Only likenesses and facsimiles, phantoms and spectral remains of violent selves that make up the subject's core, formulated by *A Flor de Piel*'s identification images, that, like its waves, travel the expanse of the unconscious, attempting to map its sea in their many promised returns to shore.

The kinship table

Salcedo began formulating *Plegaria Muda* as a direct response to the murder of approximately 1,500 youths from deprived areas by the Colombian army

[588] Fuss, 2
[589] Applin, 6
[590] Woolf, 167

between 2003 and 2009 for no "apparent" reason.[591] The situation as it unfolded in these years began to show that:

> The Colombian government had implemented a system of incentives and rewards for the army if they could prove that a greater number of guerrillas had been killed in combat. Faced with the system of rewards and incentives, the army began to hire young people from remote and deprived areas, offering them work and transporting them to other places where they were murdered and then presented as "unidentified guerrillas: discharged in combat".[592]

The scandal of "false positives", referring to the methodical false recognition of innocent civilians as left-wing guerrillas, emerged in 2008 when eleven young men who had been missing from the town of Soacha after having been recruited for work, turned up dead in a mass grave over 200 miles away.

This practice had been known to governmental and non-governmental organizations for years prior to this event, with the government denying any implication of its armed forces in the killings. But, ever since the bodies of these men were linked to the missing young men of Soacha, this criminal phenomenon has received widespread attention. It is reported that over 4,475 civilians have been murdered as "false positives" by the Colombian army and its collaborators since 1996, with over 5,000 military and state officials implicated in the extrajudicial killings.[593] According to Human Rights Watch, "false positive killings amount to one of the worst episodes of mass atrocity in the western hemisphere in recent years, and there is mounting evidence that many senior

[591] Salcedo, "Plegaria Muda 2008-2010", 25. Salcedo in subsequent references changes the number of the victims to 2,500.
[592] Ibid.
[593] Adrian Alsema, "False Positives", *Colombia Reports* (August 14, 2012), accessed June 18, 2016, http://colombiareports.com/false-positives/

army officers bear responsibility".[594] Military agents targeted victims, mainly young men from deprived rural areas, luring them under false pretenses of job offers and executed them in secluded areas. They then dressed them as guerrillas placing guns and grenades near their dead bodies, which were photographed and presented as combat kills. Soldiers were given financial rewards, extra holidays and promotions upon presentation of their victims. The price according to an official document released in 2005 and signed by Defense Minister Camilo Ospina was $1,500 per body. What the practice was designed to do was to "inflate the apparent success of the government in its fight against left-wing guerrillas and right wing paramilitaries", in order to paint a different picture of the army's efficacy in combat killing and to secure the ongoing multibillion military assistance from the US.[595] The Colombian government despite the insurmountable amount of evidence gathered, continued to deny any knowledge or implication, whereas the army blamed "lone wolves" and "bad apples" for perpetrating the widespread and systemic killings.[596] To this day very few of the culprits have been persecuted, mainly low-level military officials, and only a small fraction of the victim's bodies have been recovered and identified.

Plegaria Muda, in its largest incarnation, consists of 162 sculptural units spread across a large exhibition area, with a short distance between each of them that creates a mazelike path (Figs. 107-108). Each unit is comprised of a dark grey table, a thick layer of soil on top of it, and an inverted identical table sealing the

[594] Sibylla Brodzinsky, "Colombia acts on massacres – punishing whistleblower and promoting officers", *The Guardian*, (June 24, 2015) accessed June 18, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/24/colombian-army-killed-thousands-civilians-human-rights-watch
[595] Alsema, "False Positives"
[596] Ibid.

earth between them, while green blades of grass appear to perforate the top table, growing from the soil underneath. Salcedo and her assistants assembled the tables using old, used pieces of wood to make them look weathered and aged and gave each unit "approximately the length and width of a standard coffin".[597] The dimensions of each unit roughly follow those of an average human body, working together with the sealed earth that both tables hold in place, as well as the grass that grows at the top, to invoke the image of a graveyard, further pressed by the somber repetition of the units in the vast exhibition space.

To insist on this interpretation, however, would be to provide an inflexible reading of *Plegaria Muda*, based on uncomplicated observations of form and color palette and a disembodied critical assimilation of its repetition, which completely surrounds the viewers as they walk through the installation. While Lidija Haas describes *Plegaria Muda* as a "woodland cemetery" and Brinson suggests that it "communicates a sense of the body safely interred", I would like to suggest that the image the work ultimately invokes, overturns precisely this expectation of relinquishing the dead into the ordered rows of cemeteries, especially the dead that *Plegaria Muda* addresses, who have been unceremoniously interred in mass graves.[598]

The installation may be organized and carefully planned but the sculptures have not been arranged in rows like the graves in cemeteries. They have been put in place so that the viewer can get lost in them, following the physical and psychical journey of those left behind. Salcedo accompanied a group of mothers

[597] Salcedo quoted in Bal, "Waiting for the Political Moment", 79
[598] Lidija Haas, "Committed to memory: the art of Doris Salcedo", *Apollo Magazine*, (June 4, 2016), accessed June 20, 2016, http://www.apollo-magazine.com/committed-to-memory-the-art-of-doris-salcedo/ and Brinson, 210

of "false positive" victims to mass graves, where they awaited the disinterring process to conclude, in order to identify if any of the bodies belonged to their lost sons. The artist has pressed in interviews that *Plegaria Muda* indicates "that a crucial part of the grieving process for the families of victims can occur only when the bodies have been identified and properly buried".[599] As much as the artist and other writers on her work emphasize the importance of mourning as the central tenet of her practice, *Plegaria Muda* does not fit the image of a peaceful cemetery, put in place to reconcile the trauma of loss and facilitate mourning through the ordered repetition of a cenotaph. Instead, its mazelike arrangement invokes the disorder of the mass grave, as well as warfare's unbound aggression that leads to its creation. Moreover, while it might be tempting to follow Salcedo's optimistic suggestion that the grass pushing through the top table indicates that "in spite of everything life might prevail", there is certainly a more sinister root to the hues of green that disrupt the otherwise somber grey field of the tables.[600] Bal argues that the grass is "guilty by omission, complicit with the cruelty that not only killed but concealed the killing, thus preventing mourning".[601] The grass that pushes through the array of coffin-sized sculptures and sways as if hit by a breeze when viewers walk by, disrupts expectations of a quiet walk in a cemetery and orientates *Plegaria Muda* as a killing ground.

The installation therefore presents "mass graves hidden in green pastures, where the hiding is like a second killing, parallel with but opposed to the traditional second burial", as Bal suggests.[602] The tradition of the second burial, according

[599] Widholm, 23
[600] Salcedo, "Plegaria Muda 2008-2010", 27
[601] Bal, "Waiting for the Political Moment", 80
[602] Ibid., 79

to Robert Hertz and his work on the collective representation of death, is based on the belief that: "in the period immediately following death, a person's soul remains an unhoused spirit, and therefore restless and dangerous, until a second burial is performed. Only at that point can the spirit rejoin the body of the deceased".[603] For *Plegaria Muda*'s sculptural units refer to hidden victims that lie in green pastures, unsafely interred. Their perpetrators refuse to admit to their crimes and reveal the location of the victims' mass graves, their families never stop looking for them, the people of Colombia seek justice for the violence that keeps producing more bodies like theirs, and the victims' restless, unhoused spirits rise from the ground to haunt "the country of unburied dead".[604] Walking around and inside *Plegaria Muda* is like circling a mass grave that was meant to stay buried and unwillingly entering the set up of a killing ground. The viewer's very presence and motion in space activates Salcedo's "creatures" and animates concealed mass graves across Colombia, by treading the violence that produced them.

These peculiar objects that at first glance seem to signify death, escape its inanimate realm, charged with an inconspicuous force manifested by the grass that attempts to break through the wooden belly of the top table. As dos Anjos notes, it is as if whatever is sealed in the soil between each table is "declaring its silent and repressed presence".[605] *Plegaria Muda*'s dark earth matter rises from the ground towards the viewer's eye level, surrounding the body with a soil drenched in violence and a layer of "death-in-life" suspended mid-air. "Visitors

[603] Merewether, "Return of the Dead", 81
[604] Salcedo quoted in Haas, "Committed to memory: the art of Doris Salcedo"
[605] Moacir dos Anjos, "Inventing Politics" in *Doris Salcedo: Plegaria Muda*, ed. Isabel Carlos (Munich and London: Prestel Publishing, 2011), 131

to the exhibition also feel their bodies to be half-buried, thus experiencing themselves as vulnerable and sensorially implicated in a situation from which they can no longer deem themselves to be detached", dos Anjos holds.[606] In fact, the soil between the tables is hollowed out in places, its visible part is not evenly distributed and bears the marks of shovels digging into the earth (Fig. 109). The half-buried viewers are challenged through fantasy to converse with the phantoms of *Plegaria Muda*'s subjects in a maze of identifications: they are surrounded by soil like the dead, yet their upright posture aligns them with perpetrators digging graves or witnesses unearthing victims from the ground. *Plegaria Muda* suspends mid-air the space and time of these efforts to bury the evidence of Colombia's violence, so that it can be observed and felt around the body. It is an excavation of individual and collective experience, a dive into the workings of the unconscious, where the installation's viewers and the violence of its protagonists float half-buried, half-released (Figs. 110-111).

Plegaria Muda's expansive field is where the laterally and quiescently imagined world of the dead, crosses with the vertically and actively postured territory of the living. Salcedo's installation stages both a return of Colombia's dead for the mourning purposes that other writers identify, and a return of the repressed violence that continues to banish them underground. The legs of each unit extend to the sky and ingrain the earth, mirroring the upright bodies of the viewers and framing the imagined lying bodies of the dead. They allude to protracted arms and entrenched legs, to the efforts of the victims to escape their mass grave prison, to the shovels of the perpetrators working to keep them there, and to the half-buried lives of witnesses and survivors in Colombia, whose legs are stuck in

[606] Ibid.,133

this psychic mud. These upright fixtures extend cries of injustice about precarious lives buried away, whilst holding in place the troubled ground that arises when the psychic and social pillars of violence are done away with. The repetitive vertical forms above and below *Plegaria Muda*'s rising ground capture the viewer's imagination, multiplying it vertically and laterally across the room. The half-buried viewers are in an encounter with the repetitive murderous violence that produces Colombia's haunted ground, which rises to mid-body height to produce a mode of contemplation designed to hit viewers at their guts. The vertical limbs of the units dramatize the lack of a peaceful horizontal surface to negotiate violence, hereby replaced with the weight of a world that attempts to break free from what Salcedo describes as "the unstoppable spiral of mimetic and fratricidal violence that marks out internal conflicts and civil wars".[607] For to kill a civilian in order to be rewarded by the state is an unnerving instance of socially legitimated killing. It is breaking the prohibition of sibling murder that is "operative on the lateral axis" and that still has legs.[608]

Molesworth, one of the few writers who detect a feminist impulse in Salcedo's work, suggests that:

> Salcedo's use of furniture and clothing evoke[s] the bodies of those disappeared by the government, guerrillas and paramilitaries, and it [does] so in part via a feminist impulse to bestow value on the overlooked and the unseen and to resist the historical marginalization of the everyday.[609]

In this case, Salcedo took up the everyday familiarity and homeliness of the table and made it follow the dimensions of a standard coffin and the outlines of the human body. The table is also manufactured at the height and length of a dinner

[607] Salcedo, "Plegaria Muda 2008-2010", 25
[608] Duschinsky and Walker, 6
[609] Molesworth, 203

table, around which families meet everyday, a gathering that Salcedo's installation turns upside down. The table in *Plegaria Muda* evokes the physically absent body of disappeared, murdered youths, as well as the psychic void around the family table they left behind in order to provide for it. "I asked if he was going to leave without eating and he told me to save his dinner. He left at 7pm. And we never heard from him again, as if the earth swallowed him up", said one of the mothers of Soacha, describing the last time she saw her son.[610] Leading the charge for justice, the "Mothers of Soacha" is a group of mothers who turned every stone they could to find out what happened to their lost sons. "My son was killed and nobody cares. This impunity makes me sick. The sadness is killing me. But I will stay alive to make sure that our children did not die in vain; because if we bring these cases to light, we will save other lives", says the mother of a 16-year old victim.[611] This mother's description of a state of being that is arrested between a looming, slow death and a constant fight to stay alive, is parallel to that of the precarious lives led by these young men, to the social death they experienced in life, a kind of death that doubled and folded onto itself like the inverted tables of *Plegaria Muda*. Sanctioned and actively pursued by the state, death-in-life led to actual killing and the fake promises of labor turned working-class family tables across the nation into tombstones.

As Andreas Huyssen argues, Salcedo works with the homeliness of the kitchen table through and beyond "a negative aesthetic in an Adornean or avant-gardist

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[610] "Inside The Americas - The False-Positives Scandal", YouTube video, 4:13, posted by teleSUR English, August 28, 2014, accessed June 20, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzHwtcOX7lc

[611] Ander Izagirre, "How to Fabricate a Dead Guerrilla", *El Pais* (March 31, 2014), accessed June 20, 2016, http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/03/28/inenglish/1396016719_686708.html

sense of distortion or defamiliarization. At stake is rather the conscious artistic translation of a national pathology of violence into a sculpture that articulates pain and defiance by bearing witness".[612] When the initial distortion and defamiliarization of Salcedo's table subsides, what emerges is a queer object that stands defiant of ordering and censoring regimes. The table creates a space for an underground but familiar family meeting. It is not reserved for the congenial meeting of a loving family, but for the fantasied gathering of victims, perpetrators and witnesses. Orientating the table as an object around which all subjects of violence assemble, Salcedo invites viewers to re-examine whether such positions always adhere to prescribed seating plans, whether violence exists only outside the home, and if the vertical authority that insists on these hierarchies is sufficient to secure an informed meeting between the victim, the perpetrator and the witness. As Ahmed argues:

> It is no accident that "the table" is an object around which the family gathers, doing the work of the family or even bring the family into existence as an object that can be shared. In being given a place at the table, the family takes its place. The table can thus be described as a kinship object. The shared orientation toward the table allows the family to cohere as a group even when we do different things "at" the table.[613]

Plegaria Muda's table thus emerges as an object that is phenomenologically competent to reveal how the shared orientations of its subjects and viewers can give rise to a better understanding of subjectivities perceived to be distinct, of their making and their encounters.

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[612] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 115

[613] Sarah Ahmed, "Orientations Matter" in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, eds. Diana H. Coole and Samantha Frost (London: Duke University Press, 2010), 248

The table provides a resolution for what might be a good way to approach and account for tormented bodies without falling into reductionist representation. Its structural simplicity and the installation's complexity bring the lateral and vertical axes together in theory and praxis, generating the perpetrator and witness as subjects that form and cohere around the victim, creating a familial group whose subjects can now be thought of together. For in order to delve into the discourse of war and violence in Colombia, it is imperative to understand that its subjects, even if they do different things at tables, from nurture and care, to signing and sealing the deaths of innocent civilians, are structured on relationships of kinship.

"The irony of it all is that my son dreamed of being a soldier for the government", said one of the victims' mothers, witnessing the death of her son, sanctioned by the government he was willing to serve.[614] *A Flor de Piel*'s victim was a nurse who tended to surgery tables and according to her mother was "accused of being a guerrilla, when all she ever did was to treat the wounded, whether they were paramilitaries or FARC".[615] "In another case, a soldier […] said his unit murdered his own brother in April 2007 because the soldiers wanted days off to celebrate Mother's Day", a chilling instance of perpetrators killing relatives of fellow soldiers in order to reunite around a family table and celebrate

[614] Simon Romero, "Colombian Army is Accused of Killing Poor Civilians and Labeling them Insurgents", *The New York Times* (October 29, 2008), accessed June 21, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/29/world/americas/29iht-colombia.4.17352270.html

[615] *Verdad Abierta* (undated), accessed May 28, 2016, http://www.verdadabierta.com/reconstruyendo/2458-maria-crsitina-enfermera-torturada-y-desaparecida-en-2003

the maternal subject they so often attack.[616] To imagine a perpetrator as a victim and a victim caring for her perpetrators, is what Salcedo's sculptures ask us to do, to resist the dominant narratives of violence, through their articulation of pain and defiance by bearing witness. Tending towards the tables, Salcedo's viewers are invited to examine kinships previously thought unimaginable, positions earlier thought impossible to occupy, and how a witness can stand in defiance in a shared orientation with the other subjects of violence, to resist its reductively pathologized account, ultimately used by state and national narratives to control and lock violence in place.

The Harvest of the Violent

Dreaming of being a soldier only to be killed by the army he was willing to serve, this victim of the false positives scandal was on his way to become part of the official body that perpetrated it. His mother made it clear that the state had no intention of ending the cycle of violence in Colombia. She communicated a very clear sense of disillusionment that tracks Freud's thoughts on war and death:

> The individual citizen can with horror convince himself in this war of what would occasionally cross his mind in peacetime –that the state has forbidden to the individual the practice of wrongdoing, not because it desires to abolish it, but because it desires to monopolize it.[617]

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[616] Jim Wyss, "Report: Extrajudicial killings in Colombia implicate top military brass", *Miami Herald* (June 14, 2015), accessed June 21, 2016, http://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/colombia/article25414081.html

[617] Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Post Psychoanalytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works,* ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 279

This mother, as a witness, gained insight into how the state desires to control and exploit the violence of its citizens, through the story of a victim killed before he was given the chance to become a perpetrator himself. From the point of view of the victim, however, to dream of being a soldier for a government known to kill for decades, provides an important twofold insight into the machinations of war in Colombia. First, as Nixon suggests, tracing the seminal work of Fornari in 1966, it shows that: "war is not so mad after all, but a solution to our madness. Without war, we would have all our madness to ourselves, and be destroyed by it".[618] Understanding war as a social institution that aims to manage the violent anxieties existing in most men, Fornari stressed that on many occasions "we convince ourselves that the state is responsible for war in order not to feel responsible for it ourselves".[619] But, to deposit individual violence "into the state, as into a bank" is not an action that clears personal responsibility, as if a psychic burden is lifted and hands are wiped clean.[620] Second, it shows that state manipulation of individual deposits of violence in Colombia did not necessarily build an army for the protection of its citizens, and, those who were willing to be part of it, must have observed this on some level. But in order to turn the tables of this debate, to go against a system that is designed to kill indiscriminately, hard evidence is needed to prove that the state will not hesitate to unleash this violence on the innocent and precarious lives of its own civilians.

In Colombia's ongoing civil war conflict the killing includes nurses and the poor, unemployed youth. Based on actual testimonies, Salcedo's works provide an

[618] Mignon Nixon, "Anatomic Explosion on Wall Street", *October* 142 (Fall 2012), 16
[619] Fornari, 199
[620] Ibid., xxvii

additional level of intervention to the state's intentions, giving real life stories the large scale they deserve in the cultural and public sphere. As a sibling work to *A Flor de Piel*, *Plegaria Muda*, this time, shows that something violent has been capitalized. The victims of false positives were lured to their deaths with money by perpetrators, whose aggression was further teased by state funding. "I did it because that's what they awarded me with", said lieutenant Garcia who trained and led his troops into organized false positive killings.[621] Unable to see his own responsibility, Garcia led his soldiers to kill fellow citizens because he was ordered and awarded by the state. As Mitchell argues: "in adult wars we defeat, kill and rape our peers. However, ironically, it is in societies based on the social contract of brotherhood that these activities are not laterally controlled. Our social imaginary can envisage only vertical authority".[622] And so long as our imaginary is not prompted to think how violence and death strike us and our peers across a shared horizontal level, the vertical structures of authority will continue to harvest killing grounds and produce victims dressed as guerrillas and soldiers as state executioners; subjects dressed to impress the social imaginary and manipulate it according to the state's will.

As Laura Garcia Moreno argues in reference to *Unland*, Salcedo's tables serve as "sign[s] of an intervention in the name of those involved in violence and testimony". [623] Tables especially have particular resonance in Colombia's everyday life and social imaginary. It is ordinary for the citizens of Colombia to

[621] Joe Parkin Daniels, "'False Positives': How Colombia's Army Executed Civilians And Called Them Guerrillas", *Vice*, (June 25, 2015), accessed June 23, 2016, https://news.vice.com/article/false-positives-how-colombias-army-executed-civilians-and-called-them-guerrillas
[622] Mitchell, *Siblings*, xv
[623] Laura Garcia Moreno, '"Troubled Materiality": The Installations of Doris Salcedo" in *Mosaic* 43, no.2, (June 2010), 110

encounter their dead laid on top of tables for identification, even in schools where children look on, where teaching tables become morgue tables, delivering frequent lessons on violence (Fig. 112). *Plegaria Muda* is also preceded by a frighteningly similar work that it too dealt with the country's violence on the table. In 1968, and in reference to the findings of a commission report of the same year, Alfonso Quijano created a woodcut called *The Harvest of the Violent* (Fig. 113), depicting a rural field filled with tables, on top of which a number of bodies lie. The bodies on the tables are both male and female: some lie alone while others are coupled, some women appear to be pregnant and all bodies are dressed in bright colors. Looming over the tables is a large tree rendered in black and white, its bare branches contrast the orange sky and exit the print's frame, while other trees surround the otherwise empty field that hosts the tables of victims. The towering tree is composed out of many other little trees, its trunk and thick branches formed by miniature versions of itself. The smaller extensions of its branches disturb the colorful sky and stretch menacingly like daggers towards the vibrantly dressed bodies on the tables underneath. What is more, this peculiar pasture appears to be completely overrun by the roots of its central tree, horizontal lines that begin at the bottom of its trunk, traveling the field to reach the other trees on the outskirts. They look like veins that transfuse vital elements between the field's constituents, reminiscent of *A Flor de Piel*'s veiny, organic expanse. The roots also trail towards the tables, overtaking their legs and the horizontal surfaces on top of which the bodies rest. This dark old tree is arguably the main protagonist of Quijano's woodcut, towering over the colorful bodies that look like its fallen fruit. It communicates something dark that shoots up from

the earth to take over its entire surface. Its monochrome vertical presence takes over the colorful surface of the land and the bodies.

Reading Quijano's bodies as the dead bodies of victims of violence, Luisa Fernanda Ordonez suggests that this panorama of death does not communicate warning but a feeling of stark resignation. According to Ordonez, "violence is actually inserted as an indissoluble factor in the [social] imaginary and national history. This is the family tree of generations of [the] violent and violated".[624] While Ordonez is right to examine Quijano's tree as a symbol of violence, inserted in the social imaginary and Colombia's history, she misses the structure's bleak, authoritative posture standing in as a symbol of the state. This dark tree, this grim tower of power, is made up of smaller versions of itself, as if composed by the deposits of other smaller trees. Moreover, it is not clear whether the bodies on the tables are dead or asleep. The whole picture looks like a perplexing dreamscape in which every element is repeated and connected. Following this line of thought, and the tracks of the dark tree's roots, the tables are fashioned from wood out of its flesh, and, together with its dropped fruit, they are still attached to its dark infinite core.

This scene of violence is very much one of a harvest: the violent state mounts over its citizens' dreams and deaths, lays down seeds and rips the benefits of this nightmare state. It is in direct dialogue with *Plegaria Muda*'s tables and their own harvest of violence, as the grass that is planted in-between the tables needs watering and tending to in order to keep growing. At the same time, the roots that

[624] Luisa Fernanda Ordonez, "Alfonso Quijano - La cosecha de los violentos (1968)", *Banco Republica*, (undated), accessed June 23, 2016, http://www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/textos-sobre-la-coleccion-de-arte-del-banco-de-la-republica/alfonso-quijano/la-cosecha-de-los-violentos

connect Quijano's frightening tree to the unconscious bodies underneath it facilitate a state of interdependency. These bodies sustain and feed the terror that is exerted by the tree through their colorful deposits, picturing war as "a strange import-export agency of destruction".[625] For these bodies are rendered in the same colors as the trees on the periphery, which in turn are connected to both the bodies and the central tree. Surrounding the violent harvest, they form the composite frame of its main elements: they are colorful as the bodies of this land and dark as the secrets of its core. They stand tall in a telling analogy of color with the horizontal victims, while their dark trunks carry the murky violence of the central tree.

Plegaria Muda's tables, fashioned from old pieces of wood, rather than redeployed found objects, invite a new understanding that the literature on Salcedo has missed by insisting on the obvious importance of mourning in her work. Making a large number of similar-looking tables from different pieces of wood, the artist produces a serial subject, like Quijano's color-composite trees, composed of victim, perpetrator and witness woodchips, offering an opportunity to focus on the aggression that leads to mourning, to approach one's own violence and understand Colombia beyond its victims. "I am no longer dealing with victims that are just victims, I'm dealing with victims that are perpetrators as well", Salcedo mentions in an interview, a statement that has not been addressed so far.[626] For some of the tables correspond to victims willing to kill for the state, and some of the viewers stand in for perpetrators or witnesses,

[625] Fornari, xxvii
[626] Salcedo quoted in Susan Sollins, "Doris Salcedo: Variations on Brutality", *Art21* (April 2013), accessed June 18, 2016, www.art21.org/texts/doris-salcedo/interview-doris-salcedo-variations-on-brutality

whose respective aggression or illusion, fell victim to the state's machinations. The viewer walking across *Plegaria Muda* may start feeling "bewildered in his orientation, and inhibited in his powers and activities", as an "individual who is not himself a combatant [but] a cog in the gigantic machine of war".[627] Salcedo's installation augments this feeling by prompting identification with victims that are also perpetrators, challenging further, in this way, the viewer's readiness to orientate him or herself as a disembodied, disaffected witness.

Identification is the viewer's battle in *Plegaria Muda*'s war of axes, where there is no clear side to pick and the subjectivities of war emerge at the intersection. Charging with mourning on the vertical axis and with violence and death on the lateral, Salcedo's sculptural field emphasizes the constructiveness of seriality in war discourse rather than the traumatic impasse of repetition. *Plegaria Muda* communicates a sense of loss of self to its viewers, comparable to the traumatic feeling of annihilation when a sibling comes along. As Mitchell argues in her work on siblings and lateral relationships, identifying with the subjects of *Plegaria Muda* might feel like the moment when: "somebody comes along who you think is you. You've been looking forward to it, but this person replaces you, displaces you".[628] It might be frightening to identify with perpetrators, victims and witnesses, to understand how close the self might be to them, and thus encounter them as subjects that are similar, as siblings of violence. But, *Plegaria Muda* offers the possibility to do just that and at the same time provides a representation of the psychic rapture it brings forward.

[627] Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death", 275
[628] Mitchell quoted in Garb and Nixon, 20

Salcedo's tables are not necessarily graves for the disappeared victims of Colombia's violence, objects that are produced through a straightforward sublimation of traumatic compulsive repetition. Instead, since the tables are both different and similar, individual and social, they can be seen as an example of sculpture that examines "seriality [as] the symbolization of the repetition of trauma" and the road to recovery.[629] "You begin to recover by knowing that a bit of you is the same as a sibling […] but you've also got something that's different", Mitchell explains, and, as such, the tables and subjects of *Plegaria Muda* are orientated as "the same in relation to the kinship situation, and […] different in relation to individuation".[630]

As Nixon suggests, following Mitchell's framework, the representation of seriality is very important, since it shows how the serial subject is able "to turn the sense of the death of itself into a mourning process for its unique self so that it can be re-created as one among others –a part of a series".[631] To think of ourselves as part of a series allows us to move away both from fantasies of uniqueness and of mass unity and emerge as social subjects. At times of war, lateral relations are brought to the fore, and, according to Mitchell, serial subjectivity is able to constrain violence among peers by instigating its own lateral authority.[632] Part of a series, each of *Plegaria Muda*'s tables, subjects and viewers is re-created as one among others, in a field inhabited by victims, perpetrators and witnesses, in a gathering that could produce "an expansion of

[629] Ibid.
[630] Ibid., 22
[631] Mitchell quoted in Nixon, "Minimal Difference: On Siblings, Sex, and Violence", 200
[632] Nixon, "Minimal Difference", 200

the social imaginary to encompass a 'lateral control' on violence".[633] In *Plegaria Muda*'s story there are victims that look like perpetrators, perpetrators who later presented themselves as victims, and witnesses who are caught between two. Providing a layered understanding of "false positives", of subjects that emerge from minimal difference, Salcedo is "working on the lateral axis of a cultural form that seemed 'trapped in the vertical'". [634] *Plegaria Muda* is a work that escapes its typical reading of mourning that rigidly arrests perpetrators and witnesses on the vertical axis and victims on the lateral. It is a work that asks us to stop and think about our fantasies, lives and deaths that are traveling through both of them.

A Moment of Silence

"What is the political structure that allows that to happen, that we can do that to such a large portion of the population?" Salcedo asks in relation to mass killings, saying this is what she is thinking about while she is working.[635] "It isn't enough to know who pulled the trigger. So far only the soldiers have been found guilty, but we want to know who gave the orders, and who paid the killers with the state's money", stresses the mother of a victim, insisting that her quest for the truth is what keeps her alive.[636] It is important to remember that it was the voices and fights of mothers that prompted the investigation and persecution of this mass-scale crime, mothers who teach their children not to unleash their violence against siblings, peers and anyone they might perceive as different. It was the

[633] Ibid., 202
[634] Ibid., 201
[635] Salcedo quoted in Susan Sollins, "Doris Salcedo: Variations on Brutality"
[636] Izagirre, "How to Fabricate a Dead Guerrilla"

maternal subject that was the first to the scene, the witness to stand in defiance and overturn the passivity ascribed to mothers and witnesses alike by the state, which in turn capitalizes from their portrayal as incompetent and hysterical as it exerts its authority over war. It was the calls of these women for truth and justice that broke the silence over the false positive killings, a silence that *Plegaria Muda* is now able to reclaim and redeploy as a mode of resistance to the state's power.

Being in the room of *Plegaria Muda* is an extremely silent experience. "The doubled tables require vast expanses of exhibition space […] and when exhibited, the rooms they occupy feel muffled, as if the wood and dirt conspire together to absorb almost all sound", Molesworth notes.[637] It is a silence that is also established as a prerequisite for the assimilation of its multilayered information and one that comes forward as an aftereffect of the overload of the viewer's imagination. It brings attention to the vertical and lateral worlds that collide in form and fantasy, allowing viewers to walk and work through the trauma of death and violence, showing them the ways they are structured and repeated. As dos Anjos argues, Salcedo's "large number of constituent units that give shape to this space also creates, for those inside it, the sensation of a fractured floor rising in segments that correspond to the perimeters of the tables".[638] The image of a rising fractured floor, produced by *Plegaria Muda*'s units, is reminiscent of the surface created by the units comprising the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin designed by Peter Eisenman (Fig. 114). Following Mark Godfrey's reading of the units that surround the visitors of

[637] Molesworth, 205
[638] Dos Anjos, 205

the Holocaust Memorial, walking through *Plegaria Muda*, might also prompt the sense that "a rational system has produced disturbing and unpredictable results" (Figs. 115-116).[639] Viewers might initially think that they are treading through a rational and organized ground of Colombia's violence, that these sculptural objects are graves to mourn and make peace with the dead. But, like Eisenman's memorial, Salcedo's field does not read history in a linear way.[640] Her installation also suggests that the current state of affairs could easily produce another round of legitimized, mass killings as "the disturbing product of a rational system", so that "reason and order, in other words, can once again give rise to chaos and violence".[641] It is a thought process set in motion by inner monologues, by the silence of disillusionment that comes from the realization that it is not enough to know who was holding the gun or who gave the orders and paid the state's bounty, but to understand how this series of tables keeps extending. It is a silence that lays claim to the often-refused interval of reflection, since, as Rose argues, "numbing its own citizens' capacity for judgment is one of the chief war aims of the modern state".[642] *Plegaria Muda* readily addresses art's faculty to interfere and sabotage the industrial production of violent death that many believe lies beyond its scope.

"Death is silence, the impossibility of dialogue. Art is communication without words; art is silence. Art is also mediation; and therefore it enables a self enclosed in his own tragedy to awaken another self, who is just as solitary", Salcedo explains, tracing art's potential to link solitary, asleep and helpless

[639] Mark Godfrey, *Abstraction and the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 246.
[640] Ibid.
[641] Ibid.
[642] Rose, *The Last Resistance*, 163

selves kept apart.[643] Reflecting on the significance of experience in her work, she examines the word's etymology:

> It comes from the Latin word experiri, which means "to test" or "to prove", and from the Latin word periri, which means "peril" and "danger", and also from the Indo-European root per, which means "going across". So experience means "going across danger".[644]

Walking through *Plegaria Muda*, working through its violence on a psychical level is to go across danger. It is the dangerous experience of losing one's self only to find it again, this time as similar but different to others, previously thought to be dead, monstrous or helpless. It is to imagine that lateral victims, vertical perpetrators and half-buried witnesses, are kindred subjects. It is to experience the self as a subject of minimal difference, and, in doing so, to mitigate "the catastrophe of [its] psychic annihilation, [as a welcome] return from the dead".[645] It is to go across danger: "that's where you get the connection with political violence, that's where you get the connection with war", Salcedo adds.[646]

Plegaria Muda forms a silent community that stands in defiance to the political violence that threatens the very notion of community and the "impulse of collective consciousness", dispersing its formation and locking each of its subjects "in the private sphere of the individual or of the family".[647] "And yet, for this reason, the relation to the dead, our dead, becomes a critical factor in […] culture because it is the contested site of identity which threatens military and

[643] Salcedo, "Traces of Memory: Art and Remembrance in Colombia"
[644] Salcedo quoted in Sollins, "Doris Salcedo: Variations on Brutality"
[645] Nixon, "Minimal Difference: On Siblings, Sex, and Violence", 203
[646] Salcedo quoted in Sollins, "Doris Salcedo: Variations on Brutality"
[647] Merewether, "Naming Violence in the Work of Doris Salcedo", 5-6

state power", as Merewether holds.[648] Salcedo attempts to form "an ephemeral community, one that takes place during the brief moment the viewer contemplates in silence the work of art" and provides the space to do this with others, with sibling subjects: dead or alive, fantasied or real, bad or good, violent or violated.[649] It is a community whose, as Rancière describes, "silent speech […] is the eloquence of the very thing that is silent".[650] *Plegaria Muda* is a silent prayer for a moment in which everyone, together, doesn't need to argue about violence, just think about it and feel it within, and make it, as the title of another of Salcedo's works describes, "audible in the mouth".[651]

[648] Ibid., 6
[649] Salcedo, "Traces of Memory: Art and Remembrance in Colombia"
[650] Rancière, 13
[651] Bal, *Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedo's Political Art*, 28

CONCLUSION

> Let us send these fragmentary notes to the huntsmen who are up in America, to the men and women whose sleep has not yet been broken by machine-gun fire, in the belief that they will rethink them generously and charitably, perhaps shape them into something serviceable. And now, in the shadowed half of the world, to sleep.[652]

The end of Woolf's essay "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid" describes a dreamlike scene, a serene silence that concludes her thoughts on peace, previously disrupted by the sound of machine-gun fire and the fear of annihilation by Hitler's flying bombs. "At last all the guns have stopped firing. All the searchlights have been extinguished. The natural darkness of a summer's night returns", she writes.[653] Among the peaceful sounds and the sweet darkness of a summer's night, "some half-forgotten words of an old English writer come to [her] mind: 'The huntsmen are up in America....' [sic]".[654] She thinks of the other side of the world waking up as she prepares to sleep and of the Allies of the Second World War that are preparing to continue their battle. They too are huntsmen. Fighting for peace and thinking peace into existence, means going to war. For Woolf, fighting with the mind can shed new light on darkness and death. But, for the time being, thinking in darkness and with the unconscious, putting ideas on paper and sending her bomb-ridden notes imaginatively to the other side of the world, she sleeps.

Taking to bed these fragmentary notes, the remnants of the day, Woolf gives in to sleep, to the night's darkness and to dreaming before waking up to see a new

[652] Woolf, "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid"
[653] Ibid.
[654] Ibid.

day and fight once more. Ending their encounters with the works discussed in this thesis, viewers will take away their own thoughts on war and peace, notes taken during formative art experiences, events of political, social, psychical and cultural significance that do not comply with the strict rules usually set by relevant debates. Actively intervening in art and war discourse, these works by Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo are premised on a dynamic relay between art, psychoanalysis and feminism, in which their joined concerns on subjectivity and politics produce an important dialogue that also underlines psychoanalysis' potential to challenge patriarchal ideology and to hold a radical potentiality.[655] By working with the viewer's intellectual, psychic and somatic state, Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo demonstrate that, as Deutsche argues, "subjective, psychic transformation, like material transformation, is an essential component, rather than an epiphenomenon, of social change".[656] These artists are not only trying to convey the specific message and political urgency of each war story that inspired their work, for this again, even with the help of psychoanalysis, can end up producing the opposite result. It can secure a place in an art discourse that is accustomed to categorize and shelf such politically and psychically provoking accounts of the violent self.

Instead, Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo work with the charged material and subjects of their work, perpetrators, victims, witnesses and viewers alike, to place subjective and psychic transformation on the negotiating table of war and violence to effect social change. They work with the table as an art object that can, like Mitchell's sibling matrix, mediate between "the restrictive implications

[655] Nixon, "Minimal Difference: On Siblings, Sex, and Violence", 195
[656] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Not-Forgetting: Mary Kelly's Love Songs", *Grey Room* 24 (Summer 2006), 27-28

of psychic subjectivity, understood as individual, introverted, and fragmentary, and the totalizing implications of a social economy defined as anti-subjective, extroverted, and unified".[657] The patriarchal restrictions on a subject's introversion and extroversion, on individuality and sociality and on moments of separation or unison, are hereby reclaimed by feminist art that benefits from the potential of creative disruption that fantasy holds, as well as its ability to bring us together in order to explore the intersubjective relationship of historical, collective trauma and personal experience.

Yet, we live in an age of perpetual war, which follows and profits from the evolution of heavy technological artillery, unleashing new and fast-advancing types of aggression that subsequently elide timely examination and theorization. This is also a time that current anti-war artistic practice trails warfare's evolution itself even closer, also focusing on new technologies, in a critical engagement that generates new, interesting and fluid networks of alliance and affinity among artists and other practitioners. In this way, the works discussed in this thesis might appear as dry and outdated for the majority of contemporary art criticism. But this kind of approach is prone to promote a critical premise that overlooks the milieu of these works, and, even though its proponents might share similar views on art and politics with Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo, they are likely to participate in the psychosocial myopia they so ardently strive to oppose. To dismiss these works on these grounds would necessitate bypassing the fact that they are of their time and to neglect the critical insights we are able to derive from them by responsibly contextualizing their conception, production and exhibition. This is a crucial initial step to take even if we end up finding them to

[657] Nixon, "Minimal Difference: On Siblings, Sex, and Violence", 202

be less politically or artistically poignant than what their or our time needs them to be.

Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo, working as artists, show us that the tables that declare and authorize our wars can be turned, and, working with the unconscious, they suggest that, in these rare moments, we must be prepared for what follows from them. For what these tables and the lateral axis help us to reflect on are "the possibilities that might be achieved within or on the horizon of collective movements", while taking on board that this process will also make us reevaluate "the very political and psychological valence of our capacities for love, violence, [destruction] and reproduction".[658] Mitchell's introduction of the horizontal dimension of experience in psychoanalytic theory certainly opens up novel and different ways to reflect on social and psychological processes from a less constrained point of view.[659] But, its potential to enact political change depends on our psychic credentials to go through individual and collective change in order to achieve it.

Producing work to directly address the psychic shattering that ensued when she learned of what had happened to the people in Sabra and Shatila, Hatoum embarked on a performance that anticipated the theoretical and psychical injunctions of critics that would approach *The Negotiating Table* as an obvious site of victimhood. However, the carefully constructed environment she created did not allow viewers to assume such inflexible and calculated positions, and, in an important analogy with the story behind her work, her performance explored "what allows one to move beyond an attachment to the identity of the victim,

[658] Duschinsky and Walker, 21
[659] Ibid.

alert to the function that the 'victim' status may play as a justification for aggression".[660]

In *Lustmord*, Holzer wrote the script of a rape scene, imagined from different subject positions and delivered its story on materials and spaces that required the viewers' embodied understanding of violence. Through the subjective, it shifted the viewer's attention to the mechanisms and schemas that produce aggressive subjects and gendered spaces. After the Bosnian War, there were victim-witnesses, women who had been raped and who were also the only ones that could attest to the crime, since they were alone in the room with perpetrators who appeared to not remember them during trial. "How am I supposed to forgive and forget when I am not recognized by my perpetrator?", asked one of the victims during a Tribunal hearing.[661] Within Holzer's environments, the viewer's capacity for the recognition of selfhood and otherness was imaginatively compromised in order to trace the boundaries between subjectivity and violence that the Bosnian War itself illuminated as questionable. "How can the dispossessed claim their legitimate rights without taking on the psychic trappings of the oppressor?", asks Rose, mapping the unclear psychic field that war creates for its subjects to inhabit.[662] In identifying with the victim, perpetrator or witness of Holzer's fantasied rape scene, viewers became part of this psychic minefield, as they trailed the potential pleasure that can be derived from occupying any of these identity positions, highlighting the composite psychical matter that is utilized for their construction.

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[660] Botticelli, 344
[661] Power, 61
[662] Rose, *States of Fantasy*, 53

Salcedo's *A Flor de Piel*, a work that was created as a coherent representation of torture, escaped its popular interpretation as a shrine for the victim of its story, in its excessive figuration of a terrifying skin that trembles between the beautiful and the monstrous. By focusing on the experience of the victim, the nature of which is mainly established by the perpetrator, *A Flor de Piel* allowed both subjects to emerge, figured by the same skin. Its peculiar waves rolled against what Stonebridge calls "the melodrama of the perpetrator occult" and its critically inelastic approach of the perpetrating subject, which "screens off other forms of imagination and judgement".[663] *Plegaria Muda*'s serialization of tables-come-graves, linked the domestic environment with the killing fields and mass graves that the Colombian state keeps harvesting. It showed the frighteningly prolonged Colombian armed conflict to be not an inexplicable phenomenon whose sustained and intense violence dulls our capacity for reflection and examination, but a well-grounded and socially legitimated way of dealing with individual aggression through an import-export channel that connects the state to each civilian home. *Plegaria Muda* unearthed the reliance of individuals on the hierarchical authority of the state to kill and rape their peers with their peers, while suggesting that examining closely the Colombian conflict by "looking cross-culturally to kinship and social orders in which lateral relations are more complexly articulated", we might be able to see "that our subservience to vertical authority in war is culturally specific, and potentially subject to change".[664]

These are challenging works that certainly open difficult issues and ask us to do demanding theoretical and psychical work. But engaging with their stories and

[663] Stonebridge, 115
[664] Nixon, "Minimal Difference: On Siblings, Sex, and Violence", 200

the dark messages of their subjects is an important task we should be able to carry out as viewers, as art historians. As Frosh notes, "facing the suffering prises open identities closed around historical self-justification: it reveals not only the opaque domain of each subject, but also the dependence of each of us on the others amongst whom we live".[665] It alerts us "of identities that harden like iron in response to the ills of the world", as Rose describes, a kind of closed-mindedness and psychical fortification that can only lead to further divisions, less dialogue and more violence.[666] These works ask of us to embark on identifications that we might reject, but whilst we are free to do so, we should also take note of the reasons why we might refuse them and of the potential pleasures we could derive if we go through them. They allow us time to think on what type of face and image we regularly assign to perpetrators, banishing them to the domain of the monstrous or the unrepresentable, because of our fear and anxiety to come close to them. "What happens if we begin with the assumption that the business of making judgments itself is implicated in identifications that are always at once violent and empathetic, intimate and distancing?", Stonebridge wonders.[667] Rather than asking their viewers to approach perpetrators as a psychic movement conditioned by a good or bad identification, Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo seem to be aware of the challenging but productive dialogue that can be ignited by asking questions about war and the politics of the subjective together.

The identification processes these works induced in their viewers were set in motion not only to tear down the divisions that patriarchal authority propagates

[665] Frosh, 240
[666] Rose, The Last Resistance, 163
[667] Stonebridge, 105

across war and culture, but also to trace the walls their obeying narratives build around our capacity to think and feel. Identification, as an artistic and feminist strategy, occurred within culture, in a place of experience that is typically silent, where the viewer is inclined to be more open to the self, to otherness and to art that is able to experiment with long-established perceptions. These artists deployed identification, as Fuss describes, in perhaps its simplest but more potent formulation:

> Identification is the detour through the other that defines the self. This detour through the other follows no predetermined developmental path, nor does it travel outside history and culture. Identification names the entry of history and culture into the subject, a subject that must bear the traces of each and every encounter with the external world. Identification is, from the beginning, a question of relation, of self to other, subject to object, inside to outside.[668]

The works discussed in this thesis are artistic interventions that enter the history of art and culture of war through the subject and vice versa. They follow what these discourses often cannot: a sense of self that can travel like a ghost through others, through inside and outside wars and barriers, a self that is itself the result of a haunted and haunting subjectivity.

To be open to identification, to be open to converse with the ghosts of our selves and of others, allows more space for the theoretical and psychical insights that a responsible approach to violence is able to provide. The experience of violence that these works examine and communicate is one that requires this kind of openness, which problematizes the rigorous allocation of violence either to the psyche or to the exacting force of an outside system. It is an experience that asks viewers to consider that "violence is not something that can be located on the inside or the outside, in the psychic or the social […] but rather as something that

[668] Fuss, 2-3

appears as the effect of the dichotomy itself".[669] In this way, the historical elaborations on violence that insist on callow structural binaries and disregard the contribution that psychoanalysis can make on the debate, run the risk of neutralizing past traumas. They can thus also prepare the battlefield for new expressions of our aggression, which, left unchecked by psychosocial theory, will also be left unimpeded to track the ruthless evolution of warfare itself.

However, as psychoanalysis informs us, this kind of practice is not for the fainthearted, and it is a difficult task to say the least. As Rose argues:

> It is a central tenet of psychoanalysis that if we can tolerate what is most disorienting –disillusioning- about our own unconscious, we are less likely to act on it, less inclined to strike out in a desperate attempt to assign the horrors of the world to someone, or somewhere else. It is not, therefore the impulse that is dangerous, but the ruthlessness of our attempts to be rid of it.[670]

Yet, taking up this task, thinking with these works, we are not alone. We are part of an open conversation and radical affiliation with the subjects of wartime stories, the artists who created their carriers, fellow viewers in the room, writers who have put down words about them, with our selves and others, co-authoring in fantasy and on paper, our efforts to come closer. We experience ourselves as "implicate[d] […] in lives not our own", we realize how we are "impressed upon others" and how others impress on us, we feel and recognize the vulnerability we share among us as a reason "to forge new ties of identification".[671] We try to tolerate our disorientation of the unconscious together, realizing that the perpetrators, victims and witnesses of war and violence are not always distinct

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[669] Jacqueline Rose, "Where does the misery come from? Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Event" in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, eds. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 28
[670] Rose, The Last Resistance, 166-167
[671] Judith Butler, "Violence, Mourning, Politics", *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 4, (2003), 14, 16, 26

identities but, at least in part, they are formed, as we all are, by "the enigmatic traces of others".[672] Thus, as Botticelli proposes, we are "enjoined to take responsibility and have concern for the welfare of these perhaps not fully identified people who have left their traces, which is to say, everyone".[673] We are not alone in this; we have our peers, our sibling enigmatic selves.

At the same time, however, "thinking siblings is not a refuge from our badness, only a theory that, like psychoanalysis itself, may help us to grapple with it", as Nixon rightly notes, in a complicated and demanding examination of badness that Hatoum, Holzer and Salcedo seem to also, I argue, put on the table.[674] Their work puts forward questions that are difficult to ask, rather than providing answers that will put the anxiety they raise to rest. It proposes "a way of staying in relation to history without being consumed by it".[675] It invites us to take a moment and reflect on what might happen if the conversation on violence starts by taking responsibility for it. What if we dive to the level of the drives to see what follows from it, to ride the waves of our own badness, to reinstall mobility on our frequently inflexible identity positions and come to terms with what it means to have subjectivity itself at war? In our time, this proposition also stands a chance of unleashing even more violence; it might feed into warfare's calculated game of aggression itself. But our age, perhaps more than ever, also shows us that the conventional perspectives and narratives on war so far have proven to be inadequate. So let us try to approach the darkness of dark times in

[672] Ibid., 32
[673] Botticelli, 346
[674] Nixon, "Minimal Difference: On Siblings, Sex, and Violence", 204
[675] Stonebridge, *The Writing of Anxiety: Imagining Wartime in Mid-Century British Culture (Language, Discourse, Society)* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 9

another way, one that associates it with the one within. Let us fantasize about violence to think about peace, thinking with the unconscious. Let us take these fragmentary thoughts to bed and try to shape them into something responsible and serviceable. This kind of fatigue seems pertinent and useful. Let us sleep on it and dream with it. To see what follows from it.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord* (script) (1993-96)

PERPETRATOR

I SWIM IN HER AS SHE QUITES.
I SINK ON HER.
I SING HER A SONG ABOUT US.
I STEP ON HER HANDS.
I SPLAY HER FINGERS.
SHE ROOTS WITH HER BLUNT FACE.
SHE HUNTS ME WITH HER MOUTH.
SHE HAS THREE COLORS IN HER EYES.
I BITE HER CLOSED AGAIN.
I AM NEAR HER MILK.
I TELL HER TO SOAP HERSELF.
SHE TIGHTENS AND I HIT HER.
I WASH HER OUT.
I WATCH HER WHILE SHE THINKS ABOUT ME.
HER SALIVA RUNS WHEN SHE SLEEPS.
I HOOK HER SPINE.
SHE HAS A URINE SMELL.
HER SWALLOW REFLEX IS GONE.
HER HEAD EXPLODES IN THE FIRE.
HER BREASTS ARE ALL NIPPLE.
SHE ACTS LIKE AN ANIMAL LEFT FOR COOKING.
I FIND HER SQUATTING ON HER HEELS AND THIS OPENS HER SO I CAN GET HER FROM BELOW.
I TAKE HER FACE WITH ITS FINE HAIRS. I POSITION HER MOUTH.
I WANT TO FUCK HER WHERE SHE HAS TOO MUCH HAIR.
I HOOK MY CHIN OVER HER SHOULDER. NOW THAT SHE CAN STILL CONCENTRATE.
SHE HAS NO TASTE LEFT TO HER AND THIS MAKES IT EASIER FOR ME.
THE COLOR OF HER WHERE SHE IS INSIDE IS ENOUGH TO MAKE ME KILL HER.

VICTIM

I AM AWAKE IN THE PLACE WHERE WOMEN DIE.
THE BIRD TURNS ITS HEAD AND LOOKS AT ME WITH ONE EYE AS YOU ENTER.
MY BREASTS ARE SO SWOLLEN THAT I BITE THEM.
YOUR AWFUL LANGUAGE IS IN THE AIR BY MY HEAD.
I DO NOT LIKE TO WALK BECAUSE I FEEL IT BETWEEN MY LEGS

HAIR IS STUCK INSIDE ME.
MY NOSE BROKE IN THE GRASS. MY EYES ARE SORE MOVING AGAINST YOUR PALM.
I HAVE THE BLOOD JELLY.
WITH YOU INSIDE ME COMES THE KNOWLEDGE OF MY DEATH.
YOU HAVE SKIN IN YOUR MOUTH. YOU LICK ME STUPIDLY.
YOU CONFUSE ME WITH SOMETHING THAT IS IN YOU. I WILL NOT PREDICT HOW YOU WANT TO USE ME.
I FEEL WHO YOU ARE AND IT DOES ME NO GOOD AT ALL.
I TRY TO EXCITE MYSELF SO I STAY CRAZY.
WHAT IS LEFT ON THE BLANKET IS CLEAR AND THE COLOR OF HELL.

OBSERVER

I WANT TO LIE DOWN BESIDE HER.
I HAVE NOT SINCE I WAS A CHILD.
I WILL BE COVERED BY WHAT HAS COME FROM HER.
SHE BEGINS TO MAKE MISTAKES IN HER LANGUAGE AND I CORRECT HER THE WAY SHE HAS TAUGHT ME.
I FIND HER TOWELS SHOVED IN TIGHT SPOTS. I TAKE THEM TO BURN ALTHOUGH I FEAR TOUCHING HER THINGS.
SHE ASKS ME TO SLEEP IN THE HOUSE BUT I WILL NOT WITH HER NEW BODY AND ITS NOISES AND WETNESS.
SHE SMILES AT ME BECAUSE SHE IMAGINES I CAN HELP HER.
SHE COUGHS THE MOUTH STRINGS.
I WANT TO BRUSH HER HAIR BUT THE SMELL OF HER MAKES ME CROSS THE ROOM. I HELD MY BREATH AS LONG AS I COULD. I KNOW I DISAPPOINT HER.
SHE STARTED RUNNING WHEN EVERYTHING BEGAN POURING FROM HER BECAUSE SHE DID NOT WANT TO BE SEEN.
SHE FELL ON THE FLOOR IN MY ROOM. SHE TRIED TO BE CLEAN BUT SHE WAS NOT. I SEE HER TRAIL.
HER GORE IS IN THE BALL OF CLEANING RAGS. I CARRY OUT THE DAMPNESS FROM MY MOTHER. I RETURN TO HIDE HER JEWELRY
THE BLACK SPECKS INSIDE MY EYES FLOAT ON HER BODY. I WATCH THEM WHILE I THINK ABOUT HER.
I WANT TO SUCK ON HER TO MAKE HER RESPOND.
I WALK OUTSIDE TO THE PATH AND SEE THE PLANTS, EACH HANDLED BY HER, UNMARKED BY HER DYING.
SHE IS NARROW AND FLAT IN THE BLUE SACK AND I STAND WHEN THEY LIFT HER.

APPENDIX B: ILLUSTRATIONS

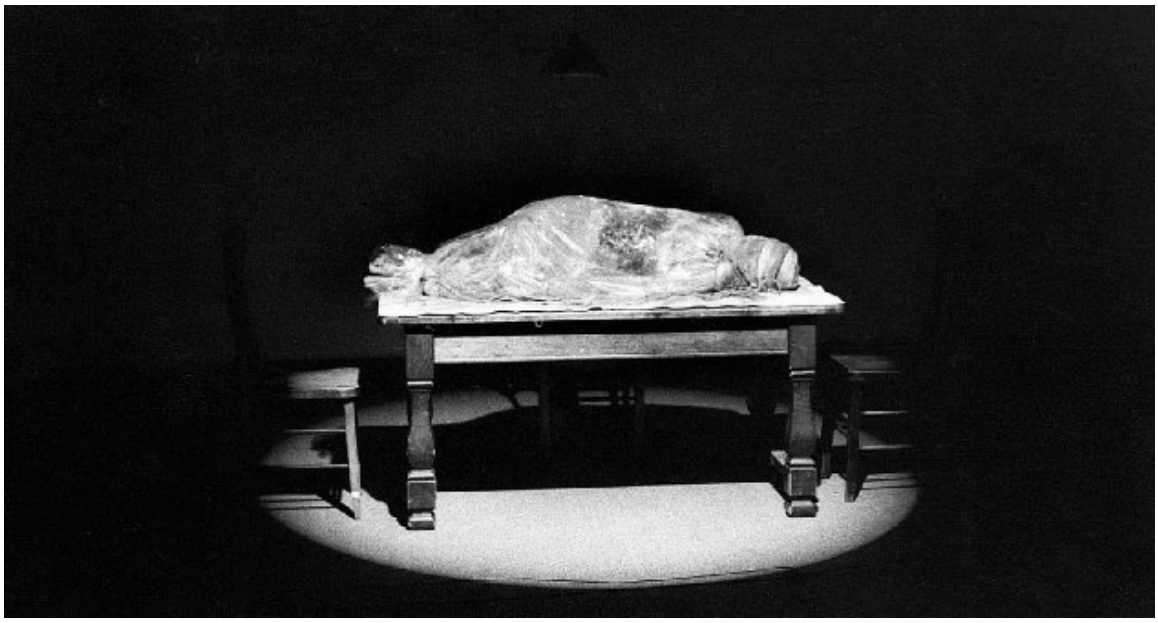

Figure 1: Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 1983/2012, performance still, courtesy of the artist.



Figure 2: Mona Hatoum, *Roadworks*, 1985, performance still, photograph, gelatin silver print on paper, mounted on aluminum, 76.4 x 113.6 cm, Tate Collection.

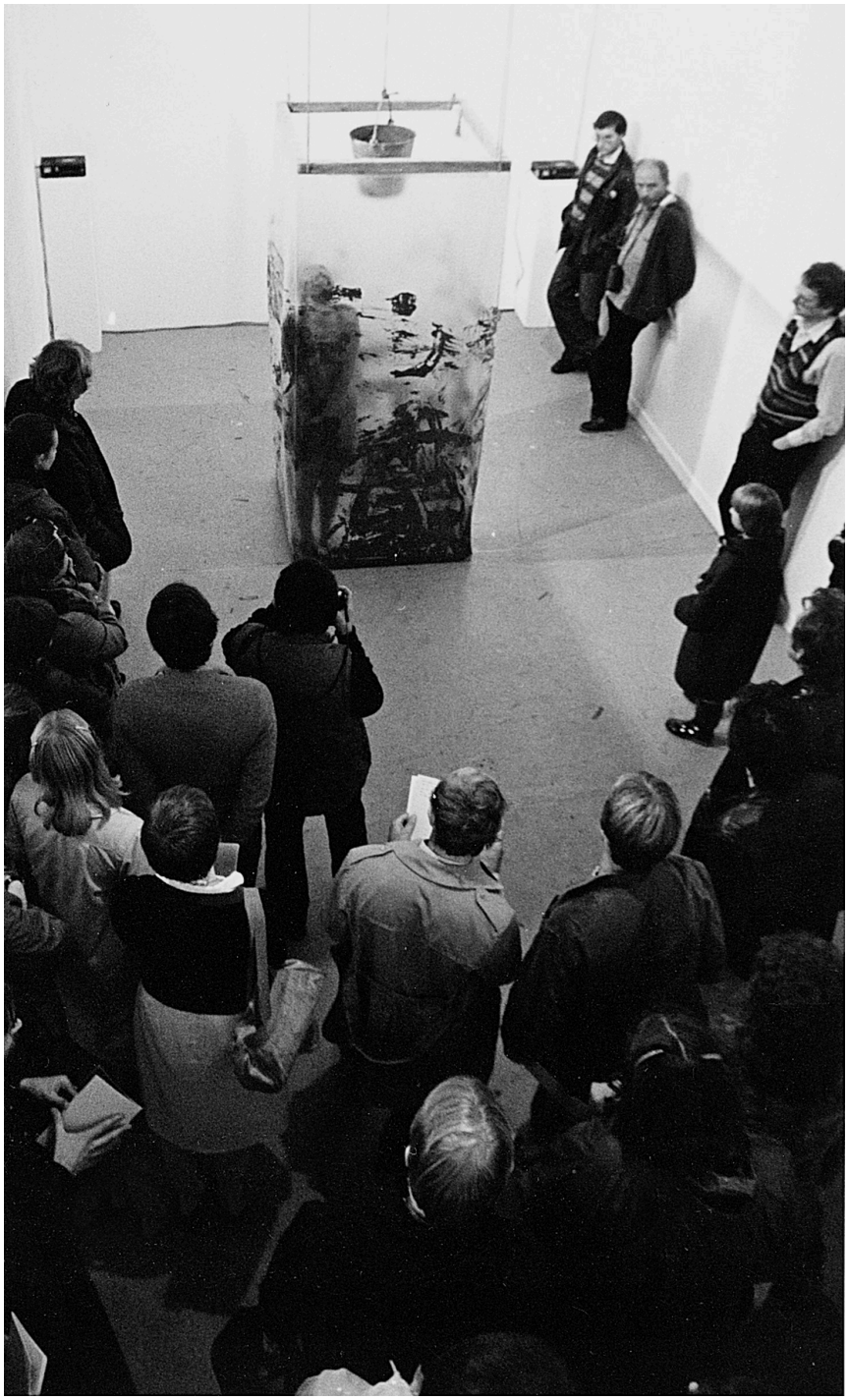

Figure 3: Mona Hatoum, *Under Siege*, 1982, photo documentation of the performance inside a wooden structure, with plastic sheeting and liquid clay. Photo by J. McPherson. Courtesy Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Le Moulin.



Figure 4: Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 1983, study, mixed media on paper, 31.6 x 45cm, courtesy of the artist.



Figure 5: Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 1983, study, mixed media on cardboard, 29.6 x 40cm, courtesy of the artist.



Figure 6: Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 1983, study, mixed media on paper, 31.2 x 44.8cm, courtesy of the artist.



Figure 7: Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 1983, study, mixed media on paper, 33 x 44.8cm, courtesy of the artist.



Figure 8: Nancy Spero, *Male Bomb,* 1966, from the *War Series*, gouache on paper, 86 x 68cm, University Art Collection, New School University, New York.



Figure 9: Francis Bacon, *Figure with Meat*, 1954, oil on canvas, 129.9 x 121.9 cm, Art Institute of Chicago Collection.



Figure 10: Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 1983, video still from performance documentation, courtesy of the artist.

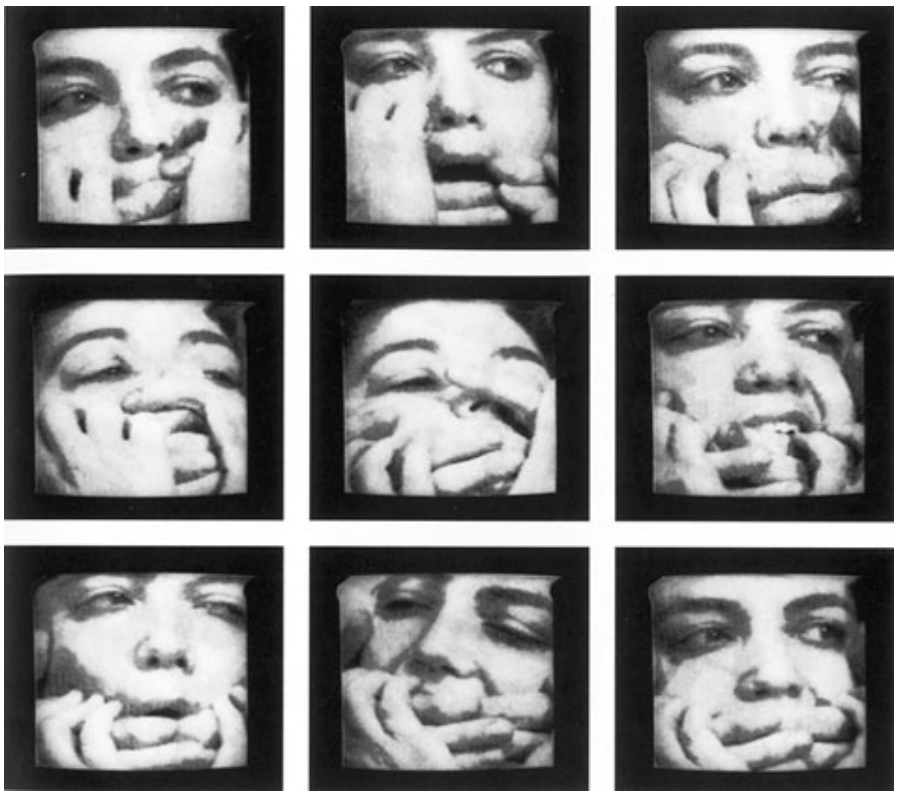

Figure 11: Mona Hatoum, *So Much I Want to Say*, 1983, 5-min video, A Western Front Video Production, Vancouver. Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Musée national d' art moderne, Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

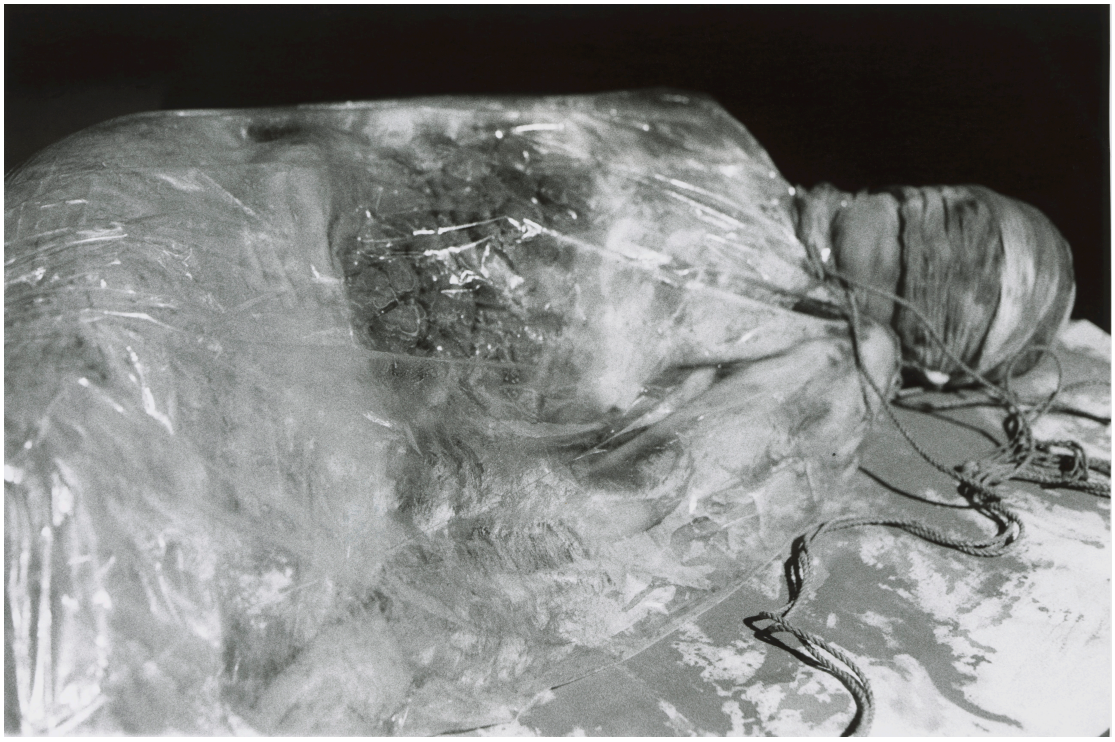

Figure 12: Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 1983, performance still from documentation, courtesy of the artist.



Figure 13: Louise Bourgeois, *The Destruction of the Father*, 1974, plaster, latex, wood and fabric, 237 x 362 x 248.6cm.



Figure 14: Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 1983, performance still from documentation, courtesy of the artist.



Figure 15: Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 1983, performance still from documentation, courtesy of the artist.



Figure 16: Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 2012, performance re-enactment by George Symeonidis, Onassis Cultural Center, March 7-11, 2012, Athens, Greece.



Figure 17: Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 2012, performance re-enactment by George Symeonidis, Onassis Cultural Center, March 7-11, 2012, Athens, Greece.

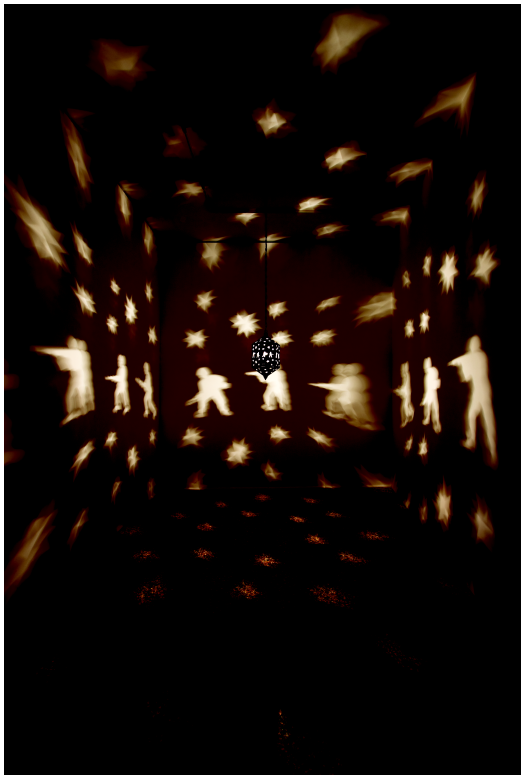

Figure 18: Mona Hatoum, *Misbah*, 2006-7, brass lantern, metal chain, light bulb, rotating electric motor, 56 x 32 x 29cm.



Figure 19: Mona Hatoum, *Infinity*, 2009, bronze, 61 x 34.5 x 34.5cm. Courtesy of Alexander & Bonin Gallery.



Figure 20: Mona Hatoum, *Nature morte aux grenades*, 2006-7, crystal, mild steel and rubber, 95 x 208 x 70cm. Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube.



Figure 21: Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 2012, performance re-enactment by George Symeonidis, Onassis Cultural Center, March 7-11, 2012, Athens, Greece.

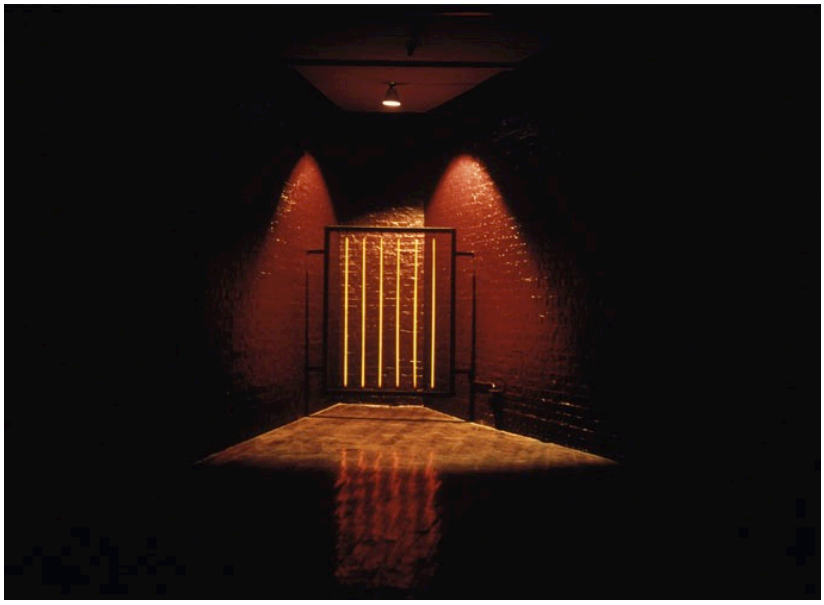

Figure 22: Mona Hatoum, *The Light at the End*, 1989, angle iron frame, six electric heating elements, 166 x 162.5 x 5cm. Installation at The Showroom, London. Courtesy Jay Jopling/White Cube, London.



Figure 23: Mona Hatoum, *Variation on Discord and Divisions*, 1984, performance still from documentation. Courtesy of Jay Jopling/White Cube.



Figure 24: Mona Hatoum, *Variation on Discord and Divisions*, 1984, performance still from documentation. Courtesy of Jay Jopling/White Cube.



Figure 25: Mona Hatoum, *Variation on Discord and Divisions*, 1984, performance still from documentation. Courtesy of Jay Jopling/White Cube.



Figure 26: Ari Folman, dir., *Waltz with Bashir* (Israel, France, Germany, USA: 2008), film still.



Figure 27: Ari Folman, dir., *Waltz with Bashir* (Israel, France, Germany, USA: 2008), film still.



Figure 28: Ari Folman, dir., *Waltz with Bashir* (Israel, France, Germany, USA: 2008), film still.

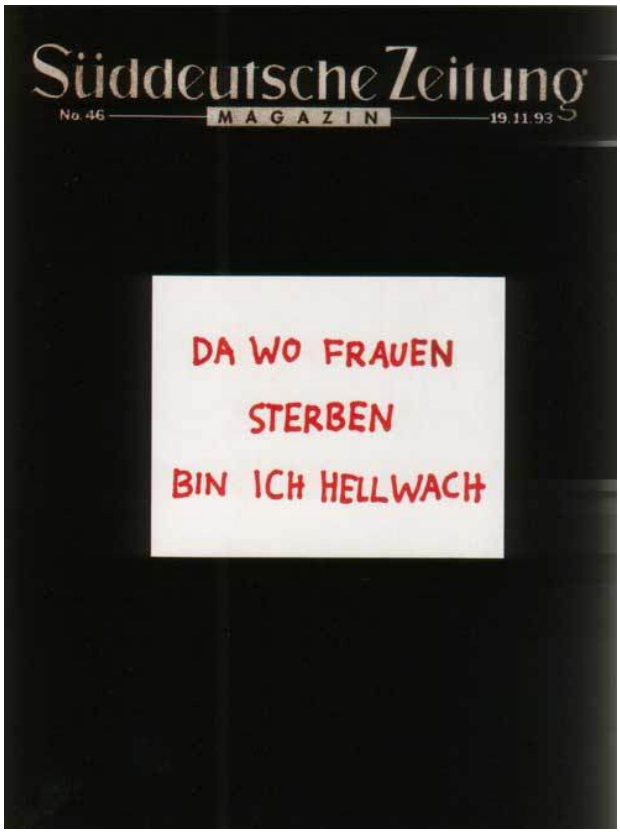

Figure 29: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin, November 19, 1993, cover page.



Figure 30: Mary Kelly, *Post Partum Document* (detail), 1973-77, dimensions variable.

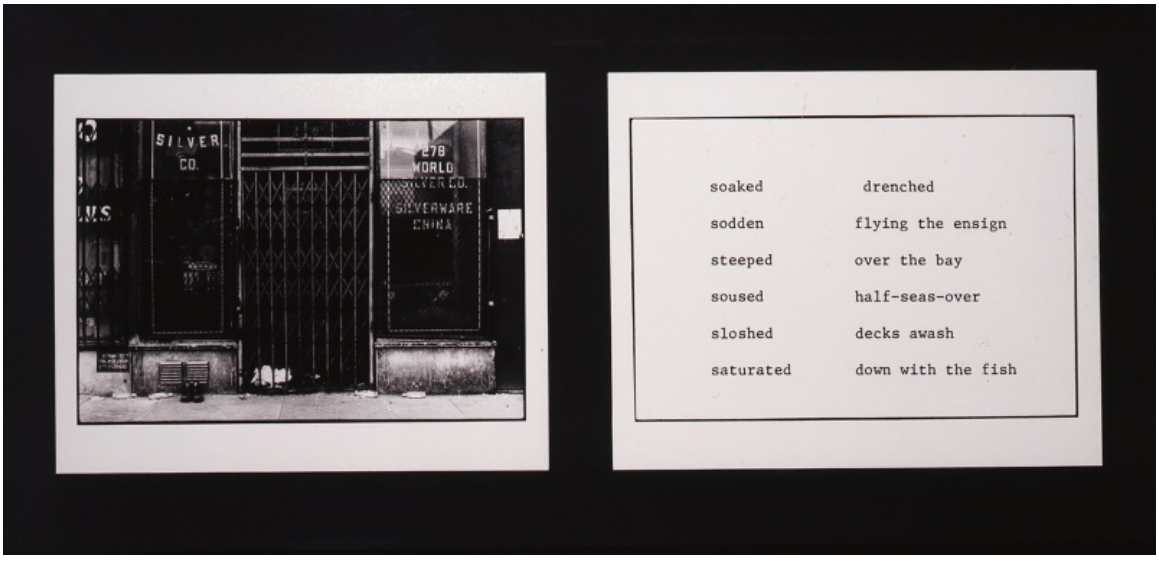

Figure 31: Martha Rosler, *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (detail), 1974-75, dimensions variable.



Figure 32: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin, November 19, 1993, pages 4-5.

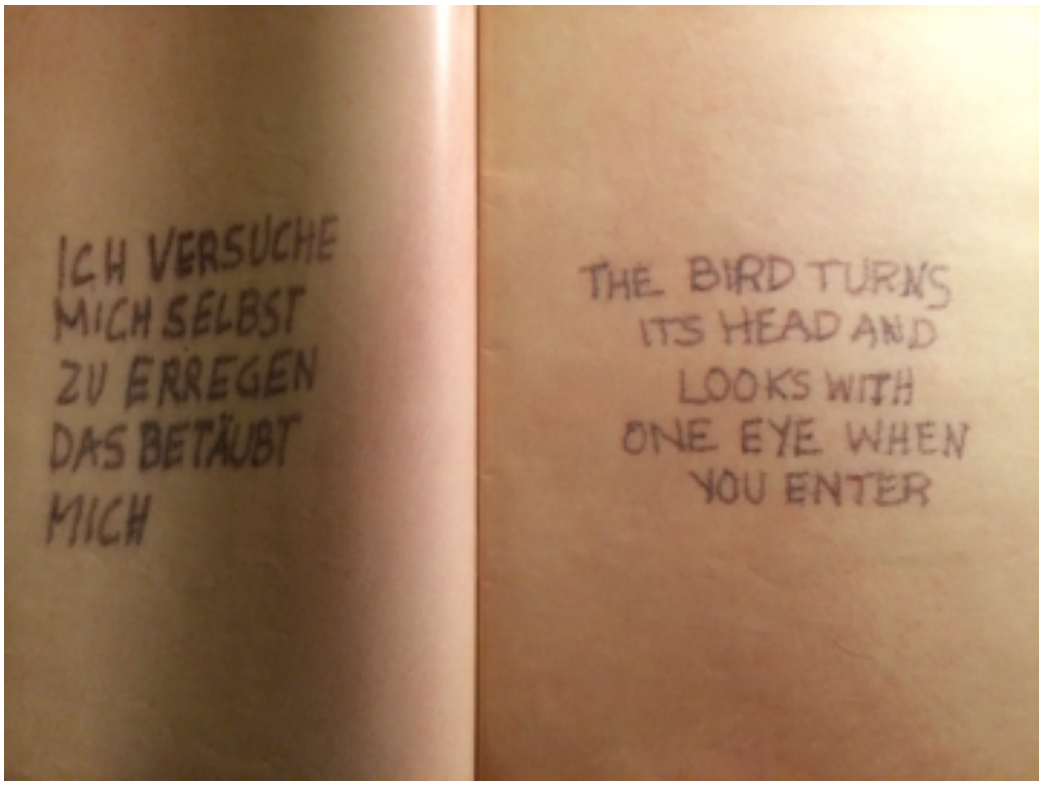

Figure 33: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin, November 19, 1993, pages 8-9.



Figure 34: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin, November 19, 1993, pages 14-15.

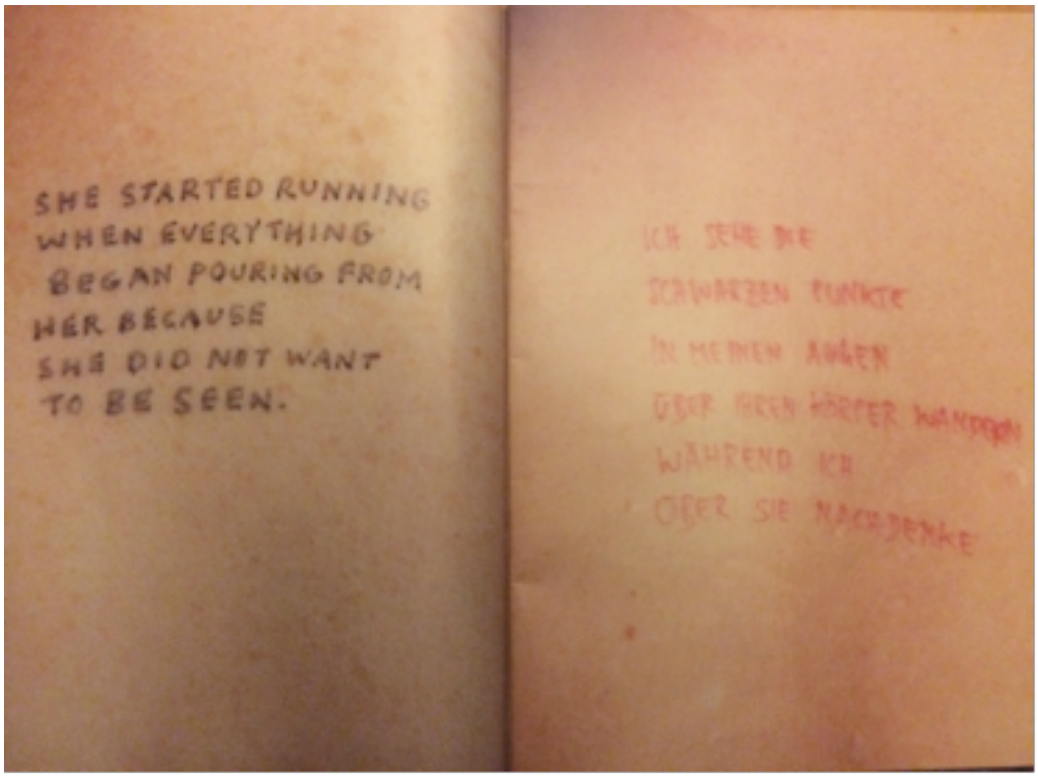

Figure 35: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin, November 19, 1993, pages 16-17.

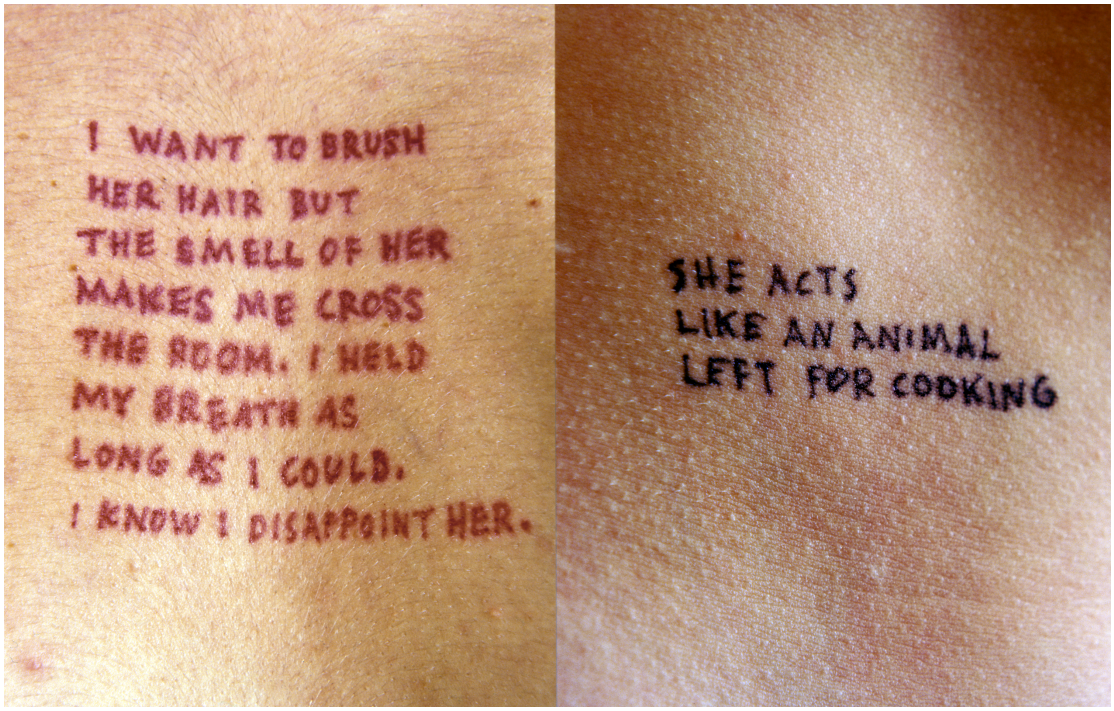

Figure 36: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, cibachrome print of ink on skin, 33 x 50.8cm.



Figure 37: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, cibachrome print of ink on skin, 33 x 50.8cm.



Figure 38: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, cibachrome print of ink on skin, 33 x 50.8cm.

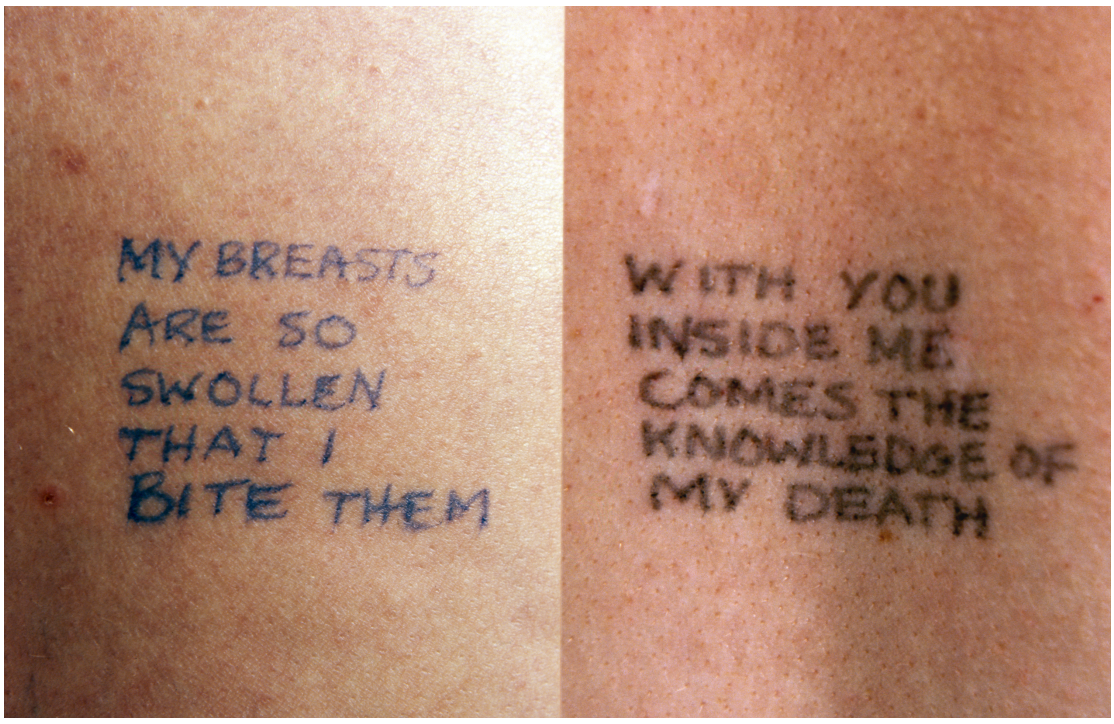

Figure 39: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, cibachrome print of ink on skin, 33 x 50.8cm.



Figure 40: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, cibachrome print of ink on skin, 33 x 50.8cm.



Figure 41: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, cibachrome print of ink on skin, 33 x 50.8cm.

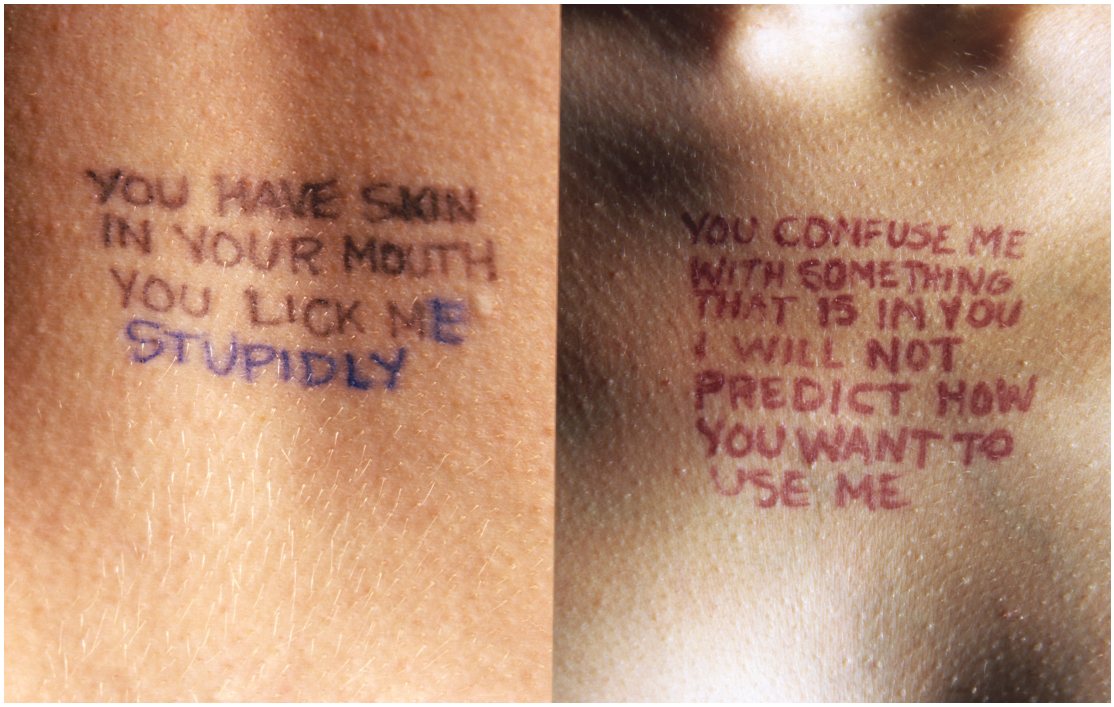

Figure 42: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, cibachrome print of ink on skin, 33 x 50.8cm.

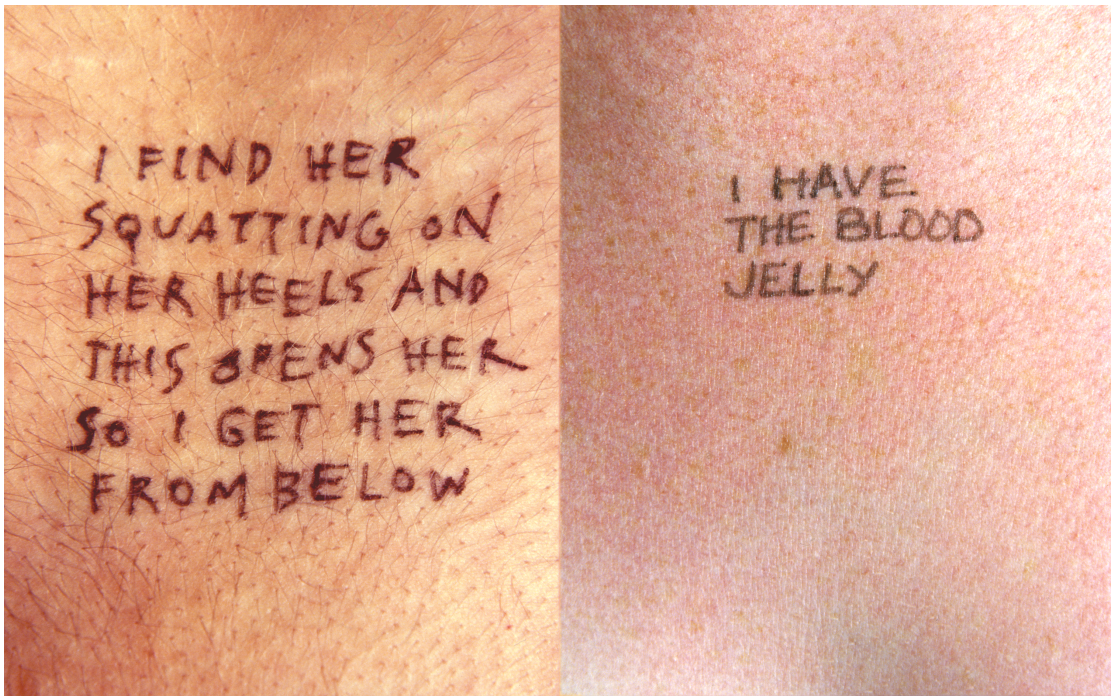

Figure 43: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, cibachrome print of ink on skin, 33 x 50.8cm.



Figure 44: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, cibachrome print of ink on skin, 33 x 50.8cm.



Figure 45: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, cibachrome print of ink on skin, 33 x 50.8cm.



Figure 46: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, cibachrome print of ink on skin, 33 x 50.8cm.

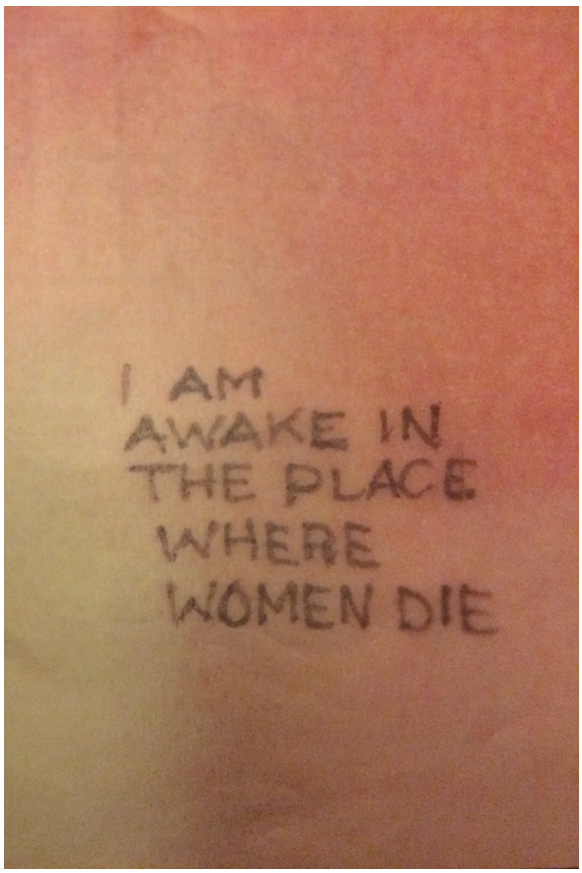

Figure 47: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin, November 19, 1993, page 31.



Figure 48: Jenny Holzer, *Truisms*, 1977-79, Theatre Marquees, dimensions variable, 42nd Street Art Project, New York, 1993-94.



Figure 49: Jenny Holzer, *Truisms*, 1977-79, Theatre Marquees, dimensions variable, 42nd Street Art Project, New York, 1993-94.

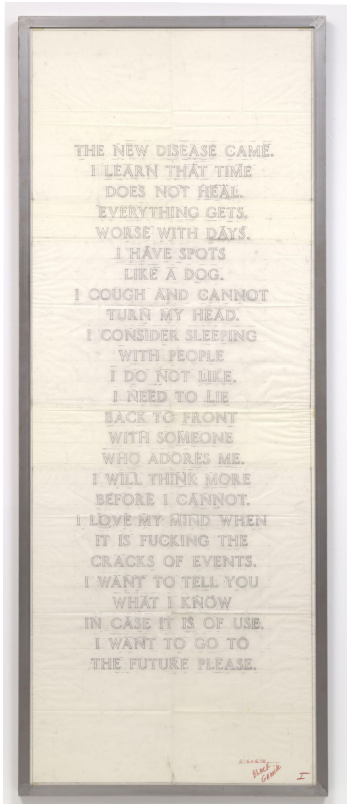

Figure 50: Jenny Holzer, *Laments* (detail), 1987-90, carbon, graphite on paper, 208 x 86cm.

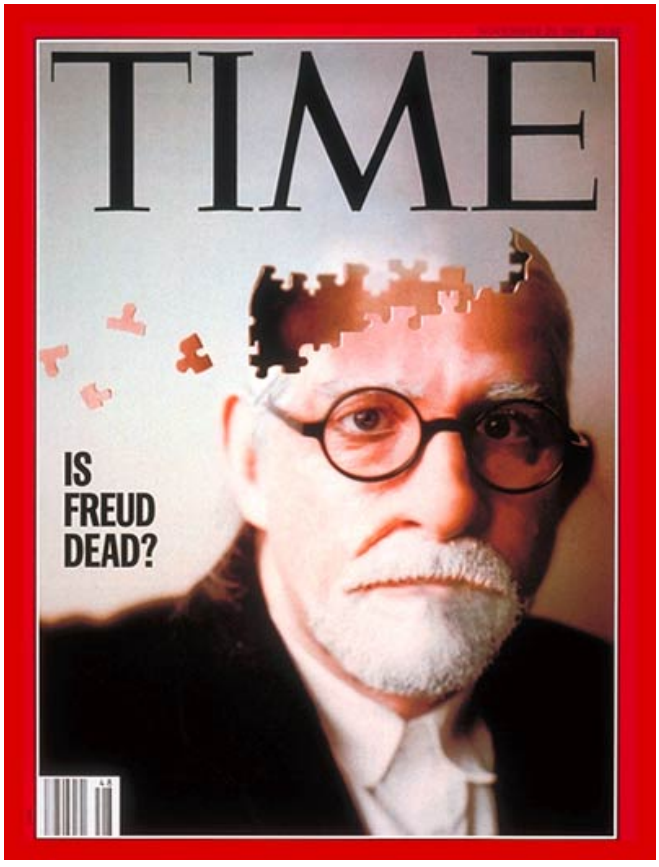

Figure 51: *Time Magazine*, November 29, 1993, cover page.



Figure 52: Nancy Spero, *Sperm Bomb*, 1966, gouache and ink on paper, 68.6 x 86.4cm.



Figure 53: Nancy Spero, *Female Bomb*, 1966, gouache and ink on paper, 68.6 x 86.4cm.

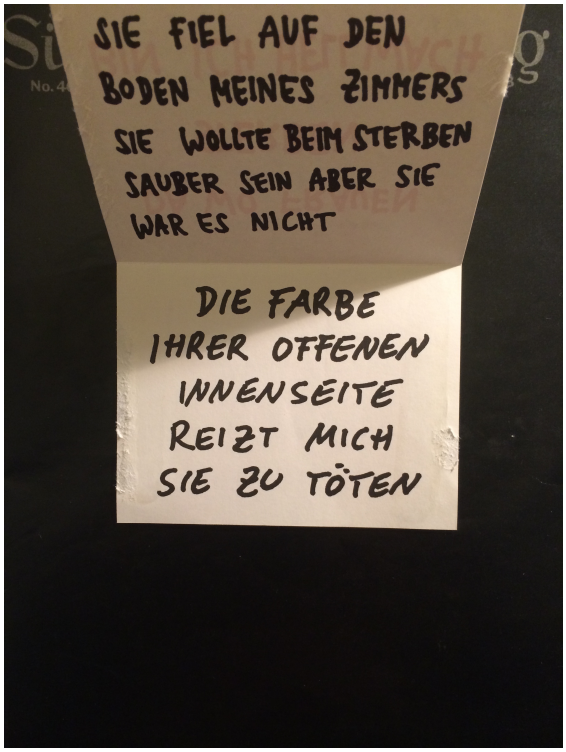

Figure 54: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord*, 1993, Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin, November 19, 1993, cover page.

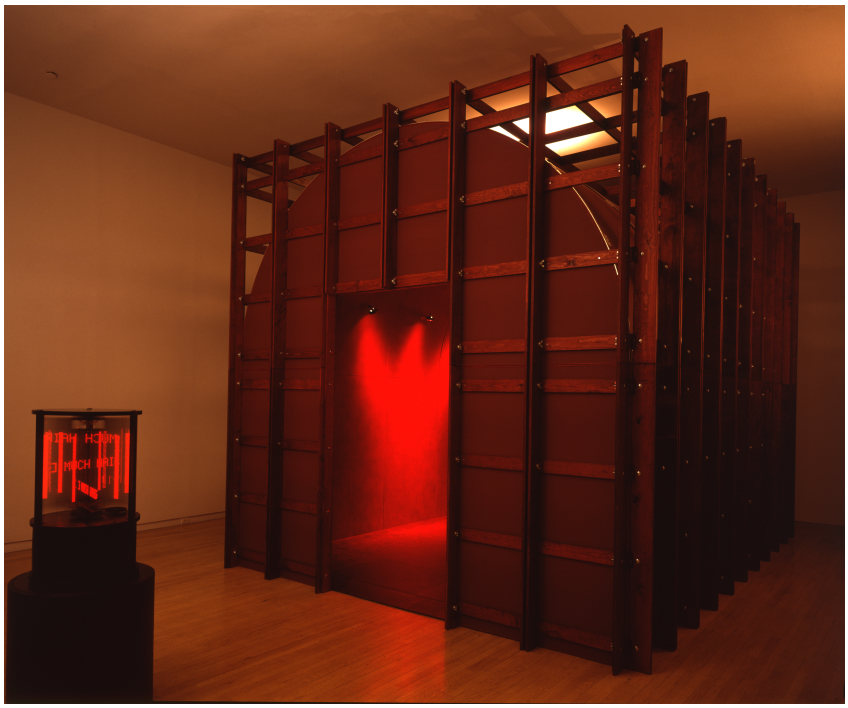

Figure 55: Jenny Holzer, *HUT: Selections from Lustmord*, 1994, hand-embossed leather and wood structure, 81 x 396.2 x 563.9cm, 2 3-D imagers, 88.9 x 68.6 x 68.6cm each. Installation: *LUSTMORD*, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York, 1994. Text: *Lustmord*, 1993–95.



Figure 56: Jenny Holzer, *HUT: Selections from Lustmord*, 1994, hand-embossed leather and wood structure, 81 x 396.2 x 563.9cm, 2 3-D imagers, 88.9 x 68.6 x 68.6cm each. Installation: *LUSTMORD*, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York, 1994. Text: *Lustmord*, 1993–95.

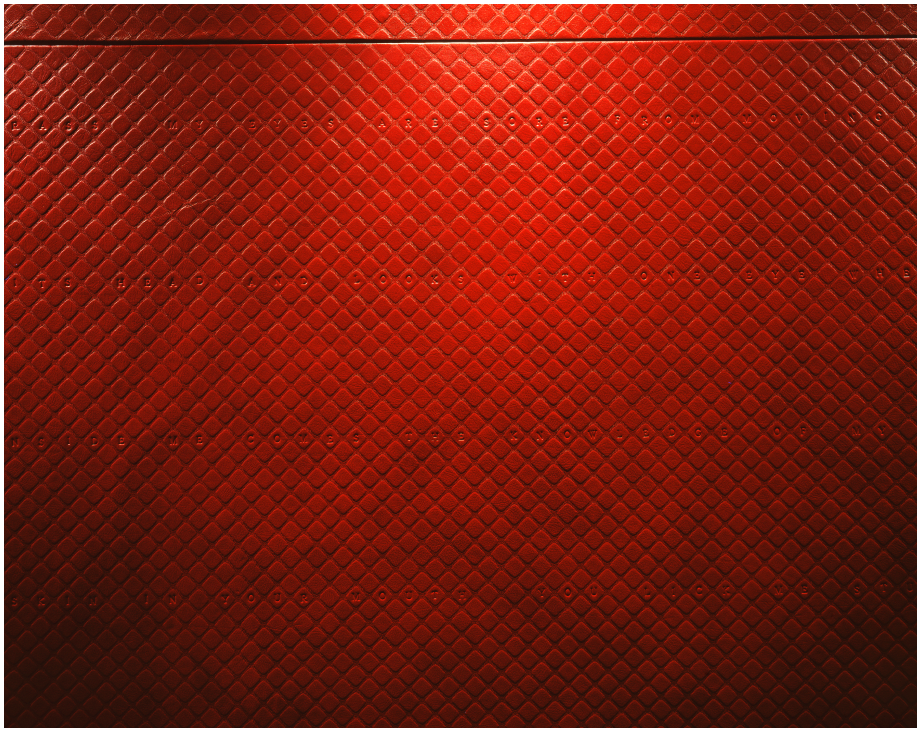

Figure 57: Jenny Holzer, *HUT: Selections from Lustmord*, 1994, hand embossed leather and wood structure, 381 x 396.2 x 563.9cm. Text: *Lustmord*, 1993–95. Installation: *Jenny Holzer*, Art Tower Mito, Contemporary Art Center, Mito, Japan, 1994.



Figure 58: Jenny Holzer, *Untitled (Selections from Lustmord)*, 1994, 3-D volumetric electronic LED display with embossed leather pedestal, 81.3 x 49.5 x 49.5 cm. Text: *Lustmord*, 1993–95. Installation: *LUSTMORD*, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York, 1994.



Figure 59: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord Table*, 1994, human bones, engraved silver, wooden table, 86.4 x 177.8 x 113 cm. Text: *Lustmord*, 1993–95. Installation: *I Am As You Will Be: The Skeleton in Art*, Cheim & Read, New York, 2007.



Figure 60: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord Table*, 1994, human bones, engraved silver, wooden table, 86.4 x 177.8 x 113 cm. Text: *Lustmord*, 1993–95 Installation: *I Am As You Will Be: The Skeleton in Art*, Cheim & Read, New York, 2007.



Figure 61: Jenny Holzer, *Lustmord Table*, 1996, human bones, engraved silver, wooden table, 86.4 x 177.8 x 113 cm. Text: *Lustmord*, 1993–95. Installation: *Jenny Holzer: LUSTMORD*, Galerie Rähnitzgasse, Dresden, Germany, 1996.



Figure 62: Jenny Holzer holding a bone from *Lustmord*, video still from the Jenny Holzer Studio Archive.



Figure 63: Jenny Holzer installing *Lustmord* at the Contemporary Art Gallery, Art Tower Mito, Japan, 1994.



Figure 64: Jenny Holzer installing *Lustmord* at the Contemporary Art Gallery, Art Tower Mito, Japan, 1994.



Figure 65: Jenny Holzer installing *Lustmord* at the Contemporary Art Gallery, Art Tower Mito, Japan, 1994.



Figure 66: Völkerschlachtdenkmal, the Monument to the Battle of the Nations in Leipzig, Germany.

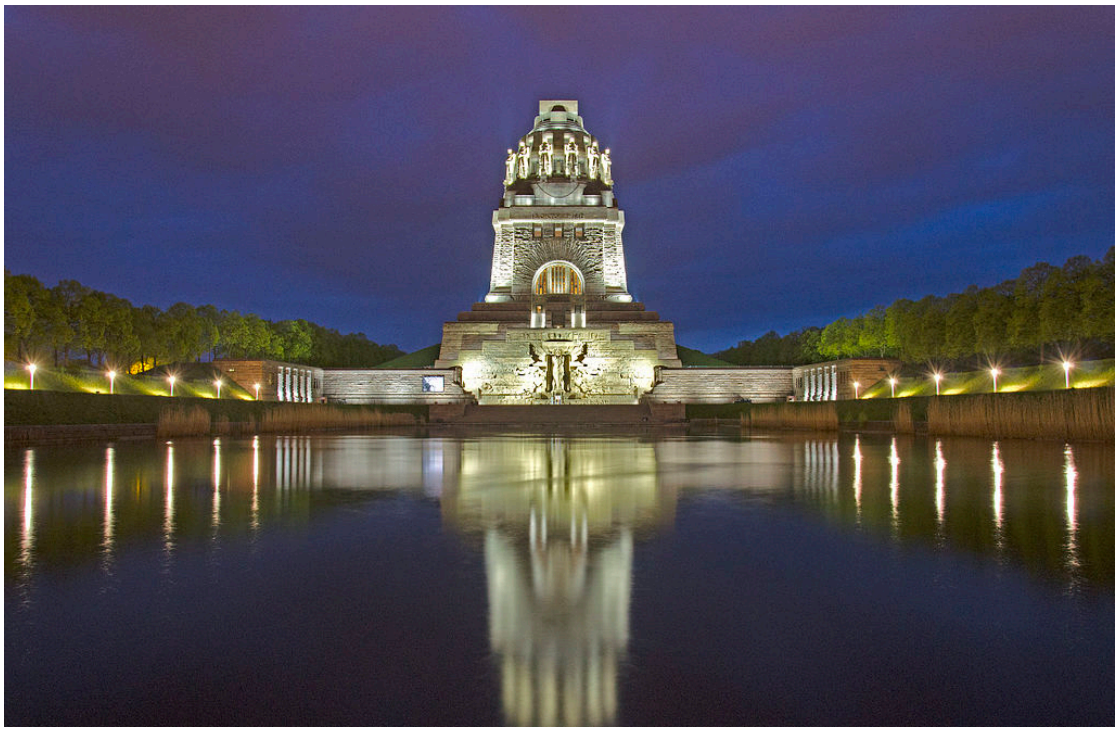

Figure 67: Völkerschlachtdenkmal, the Monument to the Battle of the Nations in Leipzig, Germany.



Figure 68: Jenny Holzer, *KriegsZustand*, public projection at Völkerschlachtdenkmal, Battle of the Nations Monument, 1996, Leipzig, Germany.



Figure 69: Jenny Holzer, *KriegsZustand*, public projection at Völkerschlachtdenkmal, Battle of the Nations Monument, 1996, Leipzig, Germany.

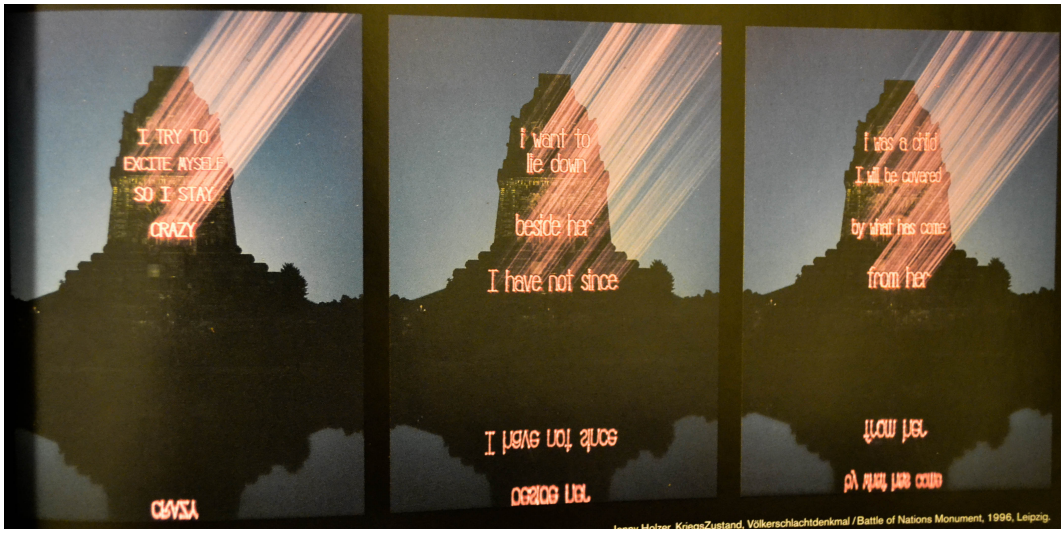

Figure 70: Jenny Holzer, *KriegsZustand*, public projection at Völkerschlachtdenkmal, Battle of the Nations Monument, 1996, Leipzig, Germany.



Figure 71: Jenny Holzer, *KriegsZustand*, public projection at Völkerschlachtdenkmal, Battle of the Nations Monument, 1996, Leipzig, Germany.



Figure 72: Jenny Holzer, *KriegsZustand*, public projection at Völkerschlachtdenkmal, Battle of the Nations Monument, 1996, Leipzig, Germany.

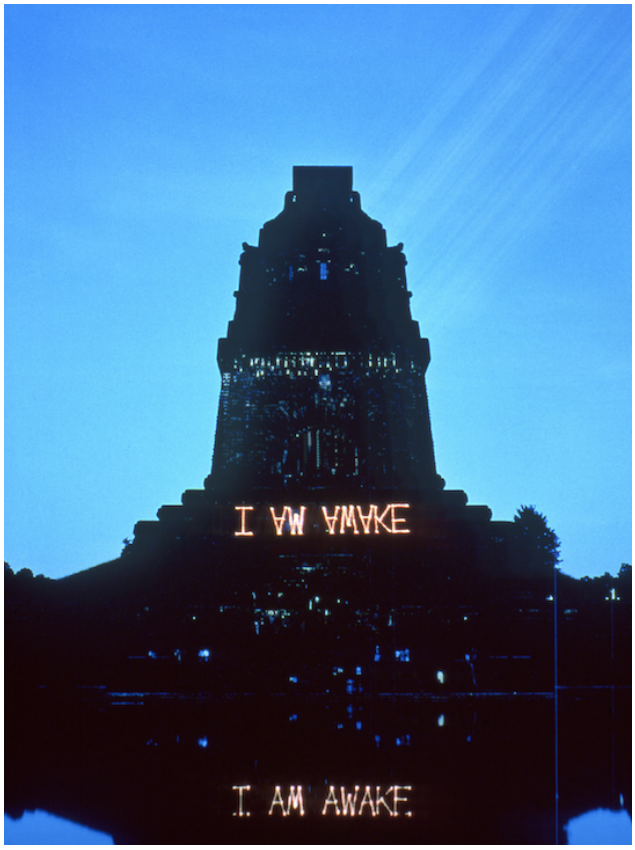

Figure 73: Jenny Holzer, *KriegsZustand*, public projection at Völkerschlachtdenkmal, Battle of the Nations Monument, 1996, Leipzig, Germany.



Figure 74: Jenny Holzer, *KriegsZustand*, public projection at Völkerschlachtdenkmal, Battle of the Nations Monument, 1996, Leipzig, Germany.



Figure 75: Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Hiroshima Projection*, 1999, public projection at the A-Bomb Dome, Hiroshima, Japan.



Figure 76: Dennis Del Favero, *Motel Vilina Vlas*, 1995, c-print photograph, 100 x 190cm.

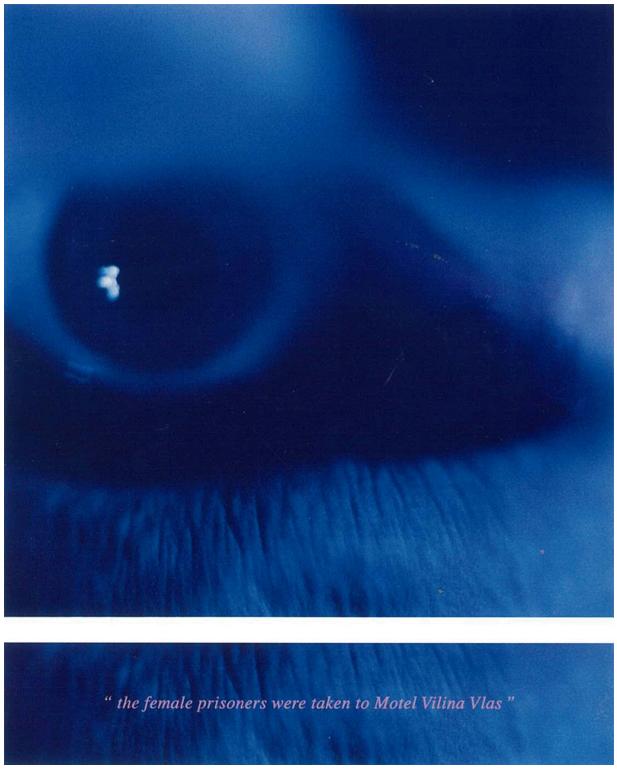

Figure 77: Dennis Del Favero, *Motel Vilina Vlas*, 1995, c-print photograph, 100 x 190cm.



Figure 78: Doris Salcedo, *A Flor de Piel*, 2011-12, rose petals and thread, 1,130 x 640cm, dimension variable.



Figure 79: Doris Salcedo, *Plegaria Muda*, 2008–10, wood, concrete, earth, and grass, 166 parts, each: 164 x 214 x 61cm, overall dimensions variable. Installation view, CAM–Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, 2011, Inhotim Collection, Brazil.



Figure 80: Doris Salcedo, *Untitled* (detail), 1995, wooden cabinet, concrete, glass, and clothing, 162 x 99.5 x 37cm.



Figure 81: Doris Salcedo, *Unland*, 1995–98, wooden tables, steel crib, silk, human hair, and thread, dimension variable. Installation view, SITE Santa Fe, 1998–99.



Figure 82: Doris Salcedo, *Unland: the orphan's tunic* (detail), 1997, wooden tables, silk, human hair, and thread, 80 x 245 x 98cm.



Figure 83: Doris Salcedo, *Unland: the orphan's tunic* (detail), 1997, wooden tables, silk, human hair, and thread, 80 x 245 x 98cm.



Figure 84: Doris Salcedo, *Unland: audible in the mouth*, 1998, wooden tables, silk, human hair, and thread, 80 x 75 x 315cm.



Figure 85: Doris Salcedo, *Untitled*, 2003, 1,550 wooden chairs, approx. 10.1 x 6.1 x 6.1m. Site-specific work, 8th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, 2003.



Figure 86: Doris Salcedo, *Noviembre 6 y 7*, 2002, November 6, 2:15 pm, 280 wooden chairs and rope, dimensions variable, site-specific work, Palace of Justice, Bogotá, 2002.

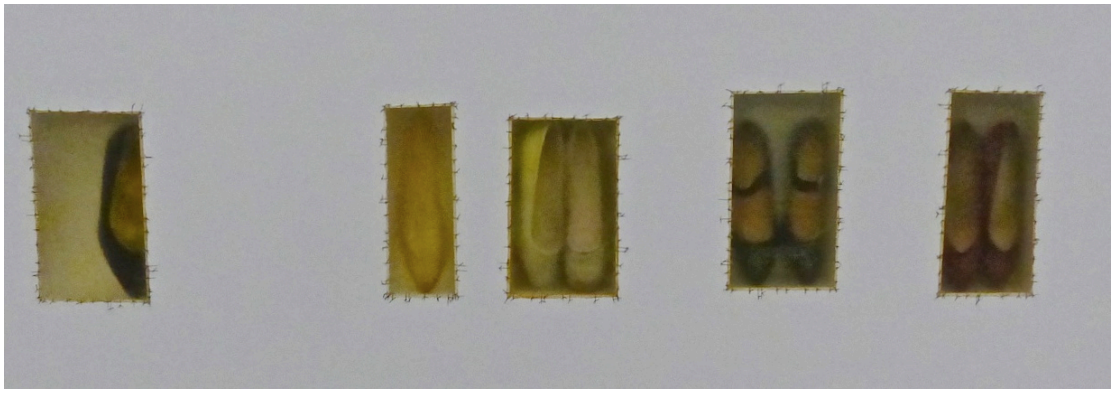

Figure 87: Doris Salcedo, *Atrabiliarios* (detail), 1992, wall niches, shoes, animal fibre, surgical thread, dimensions variable, installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 2015.



Figure 88: Doris Salcedo, *A Flor de Piel* (detail), 2011-12, rose petals and thread, 1,130 x 640cm, dimensions variable.



Figure 89: Doris Salcedo, *A Flor de Piel* (test fragment), 2011-12, rose petals and thread.



Figure 90: Alejandro Obregón, *La Violencia*, 1962, oil on canvas, 200 x 170cm.



Figure 91: Luis Ángel Rengifo, *Piel al Sol*, 1963, etching, 16 x 29cm.



Figure 92: Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Corte de Florero / The Flower Vase Cut: Orquis Lugubris*, 1997, 50 x 40cm, archival pigment print.



Figure 93: Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Corte de Florero / The Flower Vase Cut: Cattleya Putida*, 1997, 50 x 40cm, archival pigment print.



Figure 94: Doris Salcedo Studio working on *A Flor de Piel*.



Figure 95: Doris Salcedo Studio working on *A Flor de Piel*, making incisions on petals.

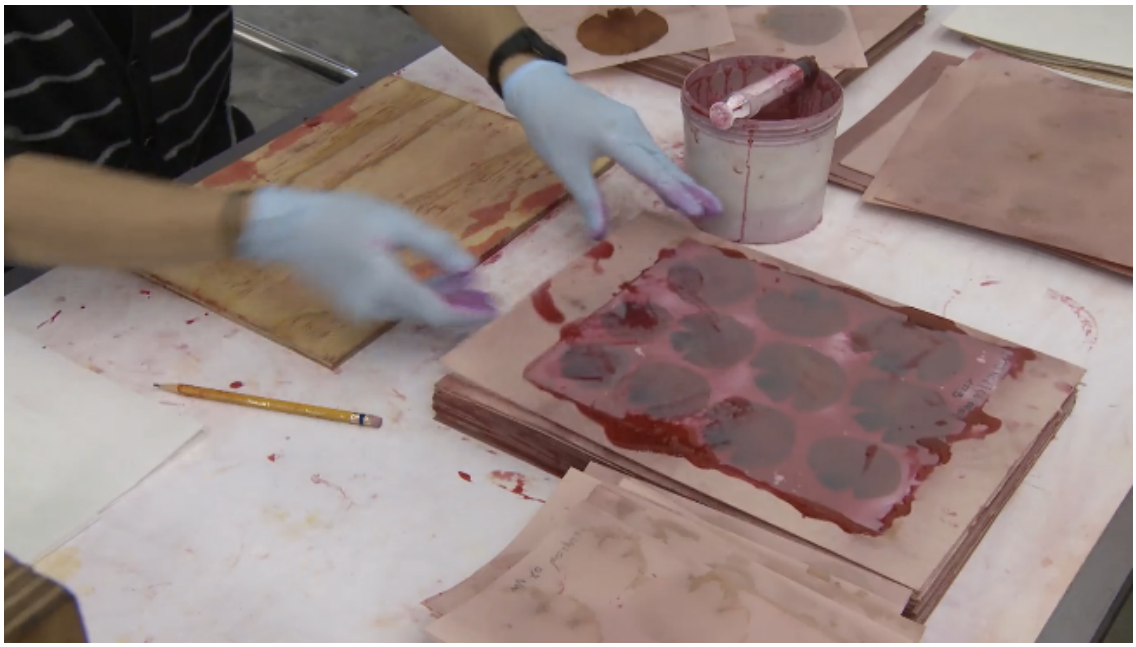

Figure 96: Doris Salcedo Studio working on *A Flor de Piel*, layering the incised petals to absorb the dye.



Figure 97: Doris Salcedo Studio working on *A Flor de Piel*, overlaying and stitching the petals.



Figure 98: Doris Salcedo Studio working on *A Flor de Piel*, overlaying and stitching the petals.



Figure 99: Doris Salcedo, *A Flor de Piel* (detail), 2011-12, rose petals and thread.



Figure 100: Ingrid Raymond, Doris Salcedo's assistant, holding part of *A Flor de Piel* in the studio.

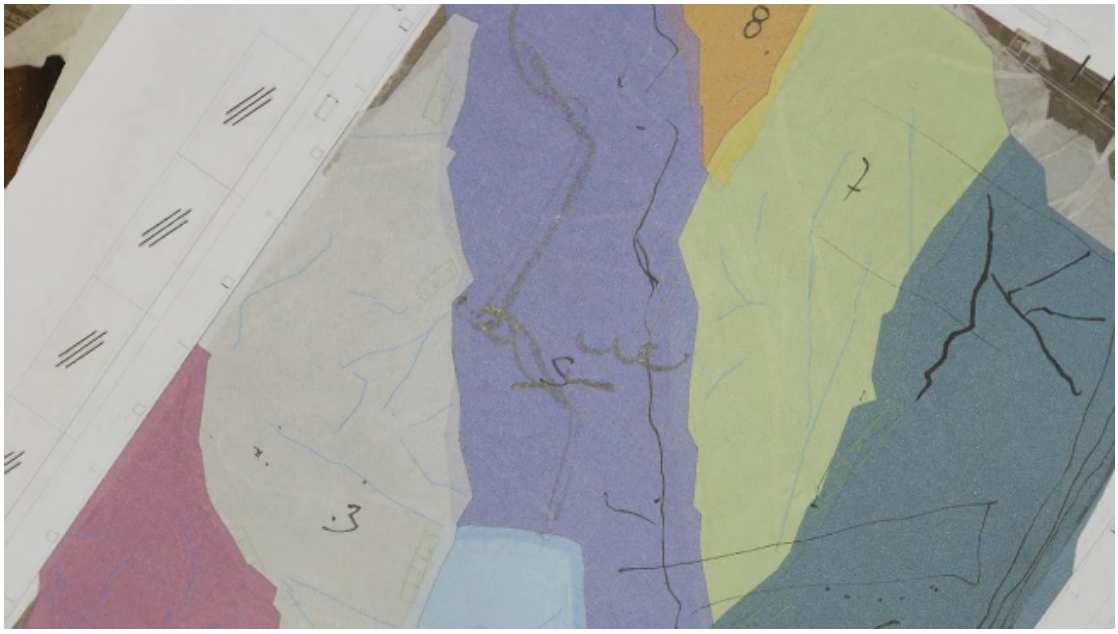

Figure 101: Technical drawing for *A Flor de Piel*.



Figure 102: Technical drawing for *A Flor de Piel*.



Figure 103: Doris Salcedo, *A Flor de Piel* (detail), 2011-12, rose petals and thread.



Figure 104: Doris Salcedo Studio working on *A Flor de Piel*.



Figure 105: Doris Salcedo, *A Flor de Piel* (detail), 2011-12, rose petals and thread.

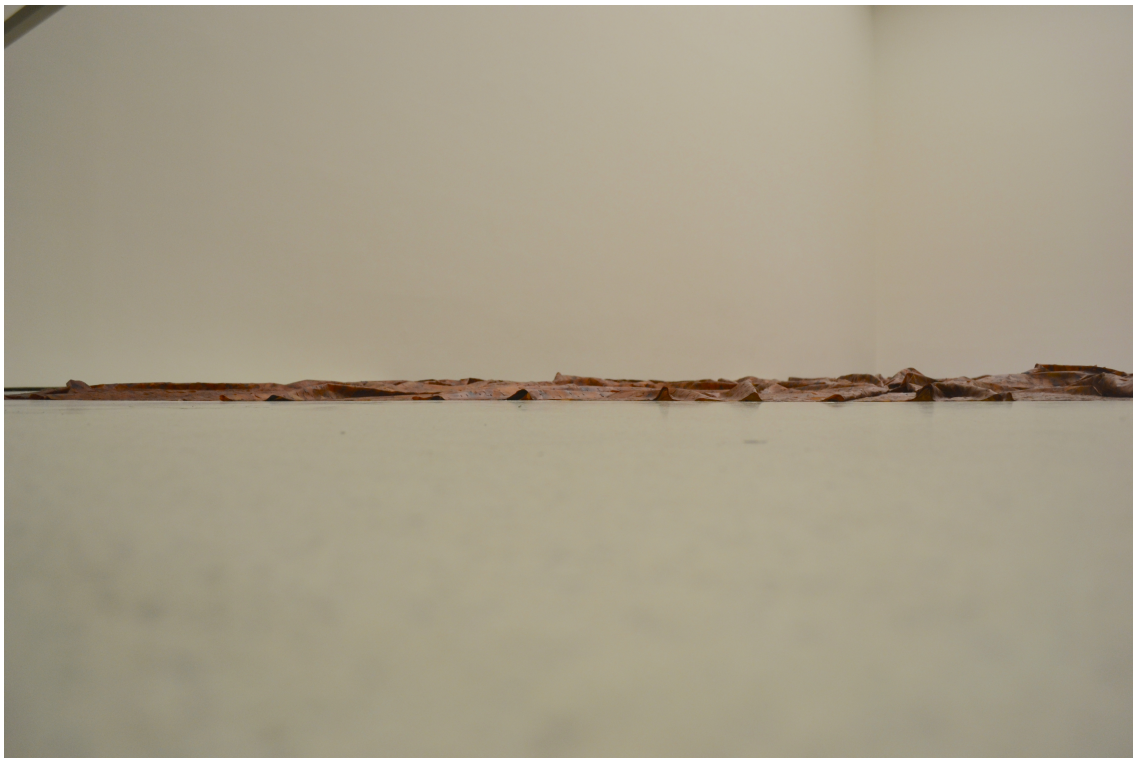

Figure 106: Doris Salcedo, *A Flor de Piel* (detail), 2011-12, rose petals and thread.



Figure 107: Doris Salcedo, *Plegaria Muda* (detail), 2008-10, wood, mineral compound, metal and grass, dimensions variable, installation view at Moderna Museet Malmö, Sweden.

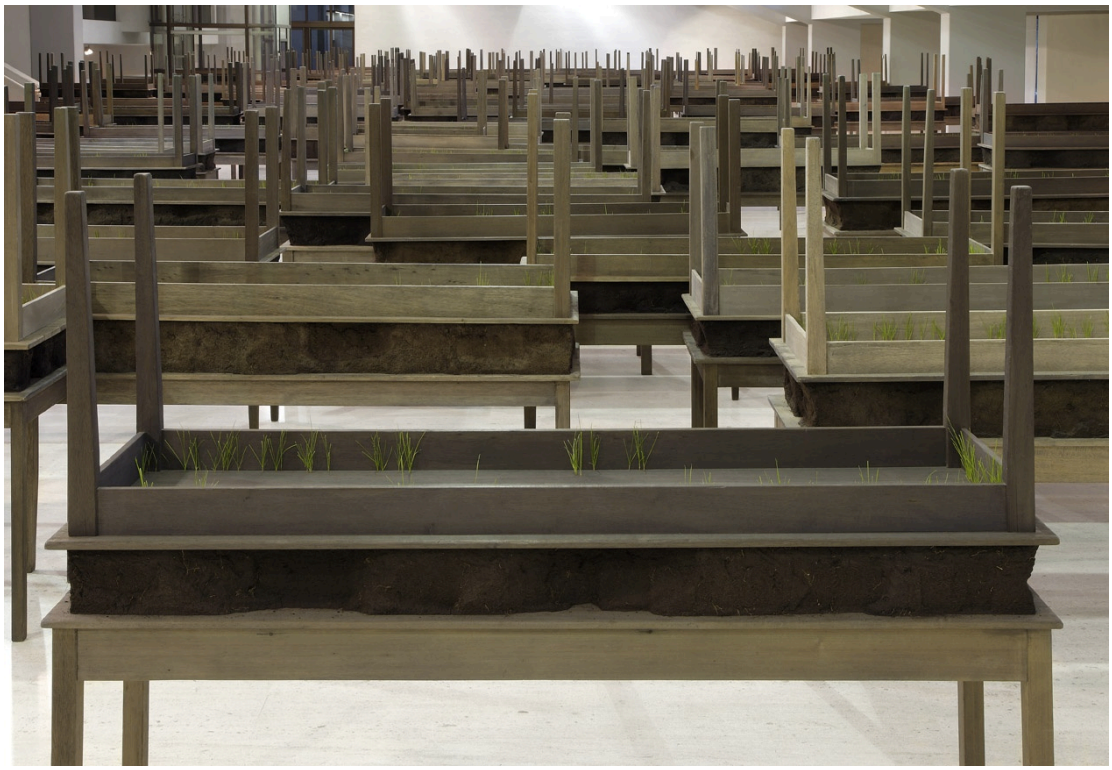

Figure 108: Doris Salcedo, *Plegaria Muda* (detail), 2008-10, wood, mineral compound, metal and grass, dimensions variable, installation view CAM-Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, 2011-2012.



Figure 109: Doris Salcedo, *Plegaria Muda* (detail), 2008-10, wood, mineral compound, metal and grass, dimensions variable, installation view MCA Chicago Inhotim Collection, Brazil.



Figure 110: Doris Salcedo, *Plegaria Muda* (detail), 2008-10, wood, mineral compound, metal and grass, dimensions variable, installation view Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.



Figure 111: Doris Salcedo, *Plegaria Muda* (detail), 2008-10, wood, mineral compound, metal and grass, dimensions variable, installation view Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.



Figure 112: Identification process of "false positive" victims, reported in *Colombia Reports* by Fletcher Berryman, September 17, 2015.

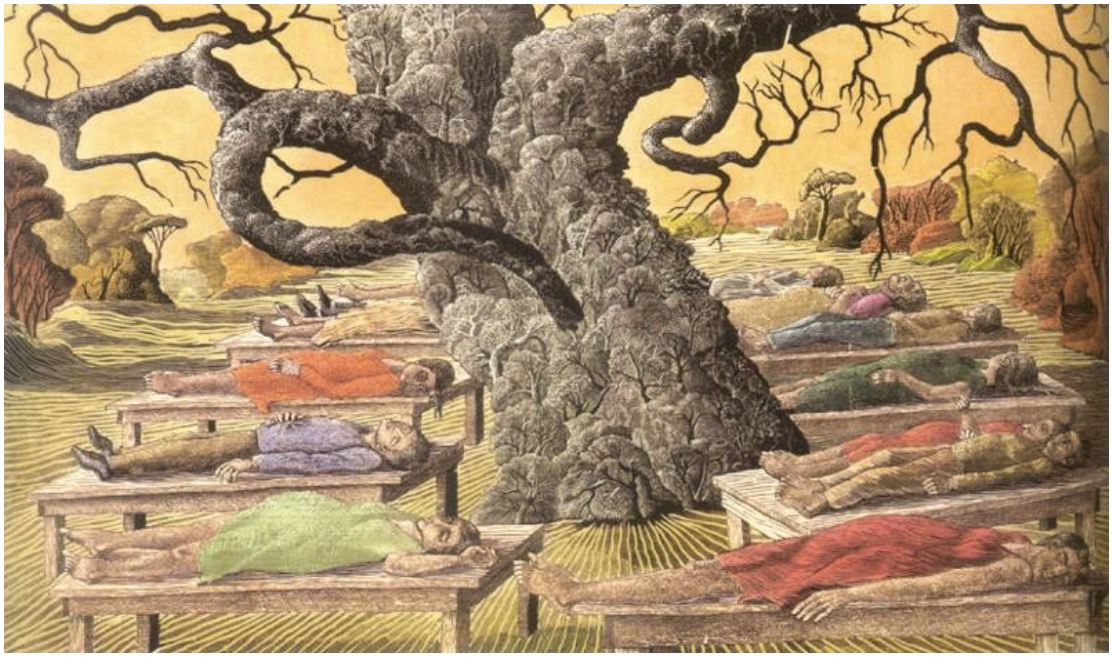

Figure 113: Alfonso Quijano, *The Harvest of the Violent*, 1968, woodcut, 45 x 75cm.

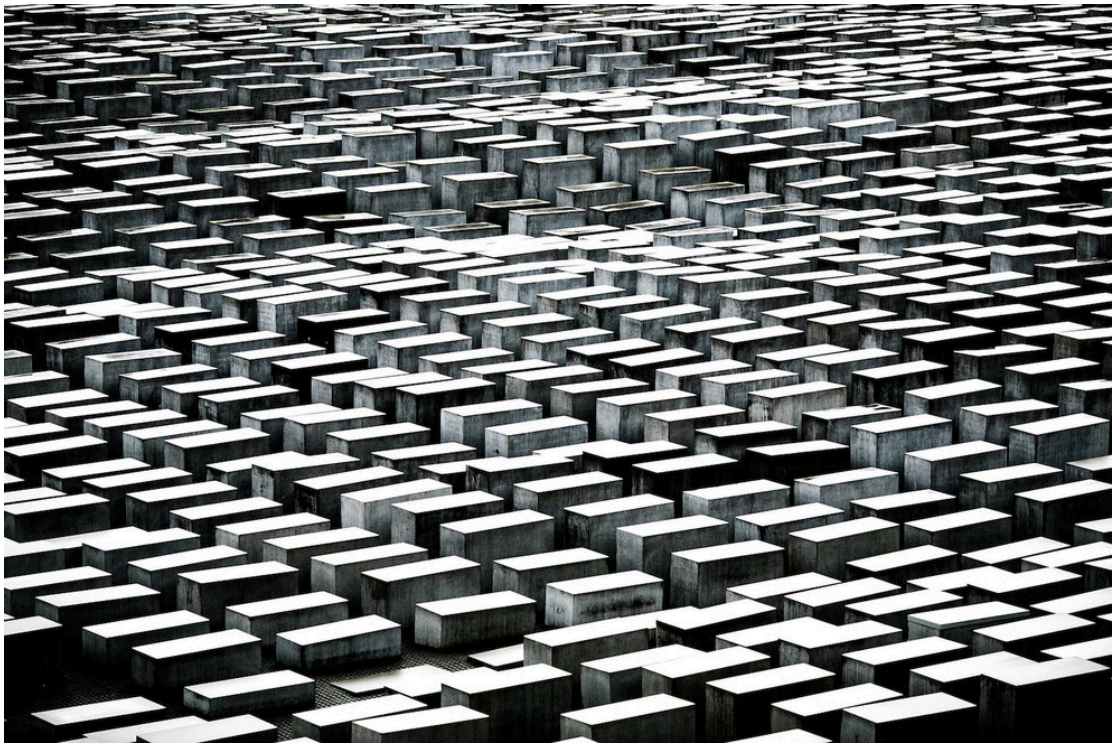

Figure 114: Peter Eisenman, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 2004, Berlin, Germany.



Figure 115: Peter Eisenman, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 2004, Berlin, Germany.

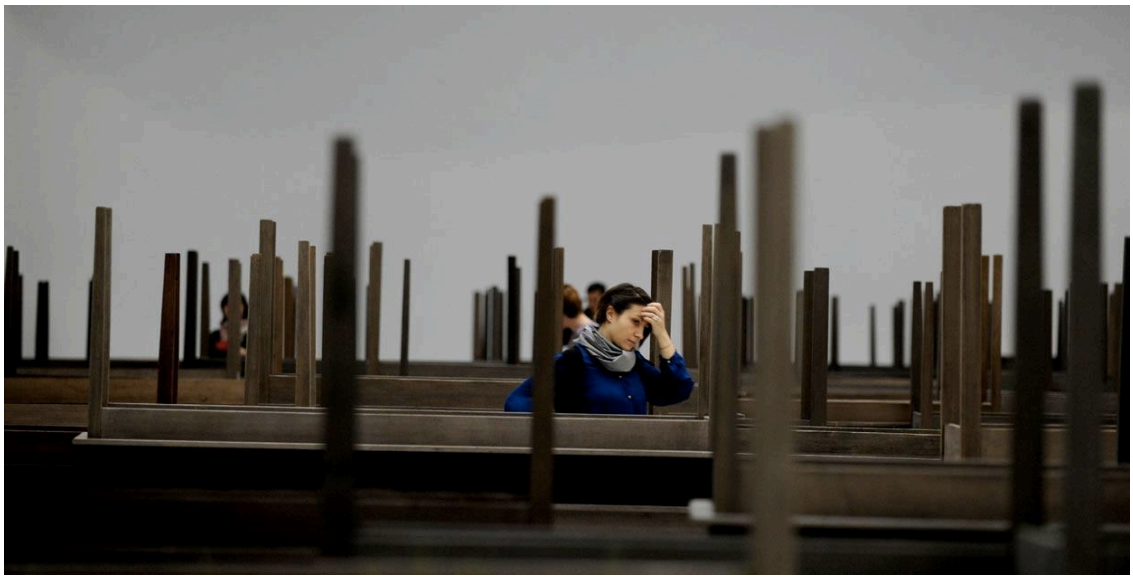

Figure 116: Doris Salcedo, *Plegaria Muda* (detail), 2008-10, wood, mineral compound, metal and grass, dimensions variable.

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