

Body Knowledge
and Curriculum



PETER LANG

New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • Bern
Frankfurt am Main • Berlin • Brussels • Vienna • Oxford

Stephanie Springgay

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Pedagogies of Touch in Youth
and Visual Culture



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the hand reaches out—touching, grasping, caressing. “External Openings” is emblematic of inter-embodiment; a doubling between proportion and disproportion, inside and outside, control and excess. It is excess, Miller (2005) reminds us that creates “slippages between text and world, knowledge and the real, and the intended and unintended audiences” (p. 129). Such slippages make it possible for subjects “to deviate the citational chain toward a more possible future to expand the very meaning of what counts as a valued and valuable body in the world” (Butler, 1993, p. 22). Ultimately it is the body in excess as a/r/tographical research that materializes knowing and being.

CHAPTER 2

The Fantastical Body and the Vulnerability of Comfort: Alternative Models for Understanding “Body Image”

The study of “body image” has been an important aspect of research on adolescent development. Researchers have argued that during adolescence, body image begins to play a central role in how youth negotiate the contested terrain of their bodies (Driscoll, 2002; Oliver & Lalik, 2000). Such research contends that body image is a “concern” or a “problem” that needs to be reconciled within education, and as such, body image is addressed through curricular topics as media awareness, health, and physical education. Moreover, this research tends to represent body image as a discrete phenomenon that can be examined apart from the lived experiences of bodies and in doing so neglects to understand how body image is interconnected to embodied encounters.

In contrast Gail Weiss (1999) argues that individuals do not have one body image but rather a multiplicity of body images that are created through a series of corporeal encounters and exchanges. She writes,

To describe embodiment as intercorporeality is to emphasize that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and nonhuman bodies. Acknowledging and addressing the multiple corporeal exchanges that continually take place in our everyday lives, demands a corresponding recognition of the ongoing construction and reconstruction of our bodies and body images. These processes of construction and reconstruction in turn alter the very nature of these intercorporeal exchanges, and, in so doing, offer the possibility of expanding our social, political, and ethical horizons. (pp. 5-6)

Body image as intercorporeality is an awareness of our body in relation to its gestures, movements, and positions in space. It is a responsiveness that is

determined in relation with other bodies, objects, and the environment, in addition to the coordination and sensations of our own functioning body. This awareness in turn shapes our encounters with other bodies, thus rendering body image as integral to knowledge production and our relationship with the world.

Thus, I argue, new models of inquiry need to be posed that interrogate body image as immanent and dynamic, a folding that is informed through interactions and processes rather than maintained by substances and boundaries. In this chapter, I reconceptualize body image from the perspective of the fantastical body.⁷ To begin, I provide a brief summary of body image as equilibrium, which suggests that any movement or change to body image is in fact a stabilizing momentum. From here, I offer a theoretical understanding of the fantastical body contextualized through student artwork and conversations around the theme “comfort.” The ability to fantasize about changing clothes and thereby changing image, and the embodied inter-relations of touching fabric pose alternative questions about the ways students might understand discourses of body image. The third section of the chapter extends theoretical understandings of inter-embodiment through a discussion of two sculptural pieces that examine skin as “a becoming body” that is permeable, open, and unknowable. As a way of conclusion, I maintain that an analysis of the fantastical and becoming body poses certain possibilities for thinking further about how *pedagogies of excess* might work with and against the contradictions of body image. However, before I begin the section on body image theories, I’d like to briefly look at one of the student’s videos, in order to think about the rationales for a reconceptualization of body image as inter-embodiment.

Never Stop Thinking

There are a number of popular misconceptions and limitations of body image and how it functions as an aspect of body knowledge. During the first few weeks of the research study, I noticed a woman at my gym wearing a t-shirt with the words “fat is not an emotion” printed across the front. I pondered such a blatant statement and laughed at the irony of a message intended to empower the individual body but that simply continued to imprison it devoid of touch, sentient knowledge, and emotion. At school that week I asked a number of the students what they thought about the saying. The students talked about how the importance of the intended message was displaced given that it disallowed, what to them was a fundamental understanding of

body image—feeling. The message, they argued, was meant to suggest that fat, in the strictest sense, should be understood from a body mass index perspective, and prohibited an awareness of one’s body in relation to other bodies, experiences, encounters, and the environment. It was poignantly summed up by one of the students: “It reduces the body to a piece of meat and forgets about how we live our bodies.” Students showed me covers of popular teen magazines, both of which had similar mottos emblazoned on their covers. Body image—at least as an emotion—it seemed was being obliterated. If we could get rid of body image, then perhaps youth might adopt a “healthier” attitude towards their bodies. This I felt was absurdly wrong.

While educators agree that body image is a complex phenomenon they have often created overly simplistic curricular practices entrenched in the conviction that if we can teach students to be critical of the media and to understand the unreal possibilities of fantasizing and trying to achieve an ideal body, only then will we be able to repair adolescent body image. This educational praxis embraces the idea that adolescent bodies are diseased or unhealthy and in desperate need of control and restoration (see Oliver & Lalik, 2000). This belief is problematic because it reduces body image to “representation” and does not account for tactile and emotional epistemologies (Boler, 1999; 2004). It also maintains an understanding of body image as static, fixed, and certain. Instead, as Oliver and Lalik (2000) advocate, body knowledge education needs to provide students with alternative ways of living in the world—alternatives, I argue, that include fantasy.

Heather’s video “Never Stop Thinking” is an interesting visual example of pedagogical models of body image that fail to address the lived experiences of students bodies in the construction of body image. In her video, Heather demonstrates the ability to critique the media as she manipulates images from fashion magazines, interviewing fellow classmates about their opinions of the media and its affects on body image. She and her friends are all too familiar with fashion magazines’ air-brushing techniques and the very limited possibilities of obtaining particular body types.

The opening segment to her video shows images torn from fashion magazines and placed in cardboard boxes. These women seem imprisoned by fashion and standardized notions of body image. As the video sequences move through a series of similar images mostly depicting fashion models and film stars, the voice-over of Heather and her two friends, talking candidly, alludes to the haunting reality of how youth negotiate the representation of a body image ideal within visual culture. The students are very aware of the

media's manipulation of body image and offer a somewhat humorous and sarcastic account of the absurdity of many of the models poses, clothing, and body types.

In one film clip Heather captures an advertisement for *Jlo* perfume. She found an ad in a female teen magazine and the same ad in a magazine for popular music. In the female teen magazine the model's gauze-like covering was less transparent, while in the music magazine, which she and her friends believed was targeting male youth, the model was more visibly naked. Heather and her classmates could easily talk about the effects of such exploitation, the body as object, and the unreal representations of body types. In fact their responses were almost too candid. I couldn't help but interpret their words as "schooled" in the sense that the students seemed adept at critiquing the media and the praxis of trying to achieve an ideal body type. Further to this there was a strong understanding of how the circulation of images globally oppressed particular body types, whether it was through gender, age, or race. I recognize that these girls at age fifteen to seventeen may have already benefited from educational practices on body image, however their responses also revealed a disturbing tension between the sterile understandings of body knowledge posed through media critique, and their own lived experiences of body knowledge that they defined through comfort, feeling, and sensory experiences. Thus, while in no way am I calling for an abandonment of body image education that includes media awareness through critical forms of pedagogy, I want to enable an alternative discussion of body image through *pedagogies of excess* that examine student understandings of fantasy and becoming. I believe that these considerations will further enrich educational practices that include body knowledge. But first, let me return to a brief summary of body image theories that foster a stable yet pliable body.

Body Image Theories

According to feminist scholars Gail Weiss (1999) and Elizabeth Grosz (1994) the most salient characteristics of body image are: 1) The body's plasticity and its ability to constantly change its body image in response to changes in the physical body and/or the situation; and 2) The dynamic organization of the body image offers an equilibrium, which enables it to serve as a standard. Changes are then measured against this centre or origin. These characteristics call attention to both the adaptability and the stability of body image, emphasizing that instability is in effect in constant renewal of a

unified body image that is measured against standardized norms. For example, in Oliver and Lalik's (2000) study with preteen girls, images of women provided a set of standards that they associated with being "normal." Adopting different clothes, hair styles, or body shapes "represented one of the cultural codes or rule structures that linked them to others and provided them with a logic and set of criteria for a life well lived" (p. 56). Changes to the girls' body image (i.e., through the manipulation of "fashion") created a normalizing process. This normalizing process is always oriented towards a stable and unified body. In Heather's video example, the girls' conversations about the use of airbrushing techniques and photoshop style manipulation of models' bodies illustrate an understanding of this normalizing process. No matter what style of garments are worn by a model or what features of a model's body are highlighted, sculpted, or exaggerated, the overall effect is to comply to a standardized norm of beauty.

Another way of thinking about body image is from the perspective of "body habits" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). These habits are the postures that we fall into such as sitting at a computer, driving a car, and walking. However, it is these habits that structure and bind our body. Some of the ways that we resist this boundedness is through "playing," such as clothes, decoration, and other body modifications. In the research study, the students' play with fashion, whether they dressed sporty or goth, allowed them to challenge and manipulate their body habits. However, as Elizabeth Grosz (1994) notes, because body image is fluid, dynamic, and plastic it has the ability to incorporate external objects into its postural model. For example, clothing, jewelry, and other accessories become part of the body's awareness and experience in the world. These objects are no longer objects but understood as incorporations into the unified body image. Similarly, intermediate objects, such as those defined as the abject (spit, semen, blood, urine etc.) are bound up with body image resulting in the various investments accorded the body depending on psychical, interpersonal, and socio-historical meanings. Thus, over time even resistance is adopted into the habit body, marking and inscribing a set of norms that function to maintain the body's equilibrium. In the case of Emma and her friends, wearing clothing that was comfortable initially marked them as different from the pop icons like Britney Spears who sport, in the girls' minds, uncomfortable low-rise jeans and belly-baring shirts. However, the students' own comfortable style soon became adopted as the "norm."

Socio-cultural models of body image, while locating the source of change as external to the body, also establish the adaptability of the body image towards unity and stability. Susan Bordo (1997) locates two aspects of

body image that are central in establishing the practice of change and stability. The *intelligible body*, which includes the academic, scientific, philosophic and aesthetic representations of the body, establishes the “rules” and relationships of the cultural conceptions of the body. The intelligible body is perceived of as a fixed, static, and certain body, often translated as the “ideal” body or a “normal” body. Each society, community, group or individual has its own definition of what constitutes the ideal. So while it is virtually impossible to describe an ideal body as a particular size and shape, what we do know, according to Bordo, is that the perfect body has tight, monitored boundaries. The ability to control and modify the corporeal schema to maintain equilibrium is a symbol of emotional, moral, intellectual and physical power. “The ideal here is of a body that is absolutely tight, contained, “bolted down,” firm: in other words, a body that is protected against eruption from within, whose internal processes are under control” (Bordo, 1998, p. 294). The soft, loose, excess flesh threatens the borders of the body, the stability of the individual, and the premise that one is “normal” and in control of their life. The ideal body is excess-free, maintaining the borders between inside and outside.

To achieve this ideal body a particular praxis is required, which is the *useful body*; body sculpting, dieting, fashion, cosmetics and body grooming. In extreme cases of self-management, for example anorexia, the body’s desires have been rigidly contained. Weiss (1999) describes the body’s maintenance of stability as the ability to accommodate slight changes in the corporeal schema over time. When the body schema becomes inflexible the body dissolves into disequilibrium. While the useful body appears as an active body that is engaged in the process of change, it is a transformation marked by efforts to defend a static and stable corpus. It is an activity aimed at regulating and working the body to fit into a normative discourse of wholeness and unity.

What is clear from this cursory glance at body image theories is that body image is defined by movement but that this activity is oriented towards the maintenance and control of a stable body, and is marked by borders and boundaries of containment. Moreover excess is either something to be expelled or adopted into normalizing practices that aim to preserve stability. Alternatively, what I want to focus on is the fantastical body rendering body image as continuous processes that are always becoming, always immanent, and which operate in resistance to determinate organization.

The Fantastical Body

The fantastical body is a body that conceptualizes corporeal difference through processes of creation. It is a body that is dynamic, creative, and full of plentitude, potential, and multiplicities. Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) conceptualization of the body as a series of processes, flows, energies, speeds, durations and lines of flight is altogether a radically different way of understanding the body and its connections with other bodies and objects. The body, they argue neither harbors consciousness nor is it biologically predetermined, rather it is understood through *what it can do*—its processes, performances, assemblages and the transformations of becoming. Not only do they propose very different models of materiality and encounters between bodies, they also develop a different understanding of desire. Desire, they contend, is a process, something that can be produced when new kinds of assemblages are created. It is not a desire *for* something, a desire determined and organized through a norm, but a *desiring production* that makes its own connections. Grosz (1994) argues that this desire is one of articulation, contiguity, and immanent production. For Grosz, and other feminist scholars any model of desire that dispenses with the primacy of lack is worthy of examination (see Braidotti, 2002, 2006; Kennedy, 2004).

Reconceptualizing desire as production (versus lack), Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 1983) posit the *Body without Organs* (BwO). The BwO is a body without discrete organizing principles. This is not to say that it is an empty body, but that it does not organize itself according to hierarchical orders such as those associated with the functions of organs.⁵ The concept of an egg helps to describe the processes of a BwO. An egg (embryonic) is a system of flows and intensities. It has no boundaries and represents potentiality before individualization. It’s becoming is organized through various forms that could always have been otherwise—change is constant and inevitable. The BwO involves a letting go of determinate properties; a deterritorialization that allows for new assemblages. This mutable, amorphous, body knowledge resists predisposed patterns in exchange for assemblages that constantly mutate and transform. Tasmin Lorraine (1999) suggests that the BwO opens up awareness to creative processes by challenging “one’s sense of corporeal boundedness and one’s social identity as well as one’s perceptions and conceptions of everyday life” (p. 171). It is a concept which challenges the traditional mind or body dualism of Western thought. Focusing on processes rather than substances, the body’s becoming subverts conventional boundaries while suggesting new forms of living in the world.

The fantastical body borrows from the concept of the BwO, most notably its organizing principles: processes rather than substances, and its refusal to be contained or determined by fixed boundaries. Likewise, the fantastical body is material, sensuous, and tactile. Fluid, uncertain, and ambiguous, it attests to body knowledge as intercorporeality—in and through touch. Changes to the fantastical body are not a result of maintaining equilibrium, but are modifications, new assemblages that challenge determinate organizing principles, interrogating bodied encounters, and offering possibilities and potentials to actively engage with the world. In the following section, I turn to student artwork and conversations that uncover the tensions at work in the fantastical body.

“Un/attainable Comfort”: Student Understandings of Body Image

A soft fuzzy blanket lies folded on the floor. Nearby a large pillow from the same fabric invites you to nestle yourself comfortably within its flesh. A pair of slippers appears discarded, the body left to lounge on the soft folds of blanket and pillow. The slippers look warm and comforting until you notice that they are studded with thumbtacks, the fierce sharpness threatens your feet. The blanket and pillow also allude to this false sense of comfort. The blanket is stitched together so that it cannot be un/folded and the pillow, full of hard cardboard and paper makes it a less than luxurious place for your head. There is a tension at work between the sensuousness and extravagance of the fabric, the generous size of blanket and pillow that invite the body into its folds, and the exposure to harm from the thumbtacks. The space is fraught with conflict, frustration, and pain, while simultaneously conjuring up notions of warmth, delight, comfort and frivolity. Hot red and plush. Danger; a warning.

“Un/attainable Comfort” is an installation created by Jamie, Emma, and Maura. It operates on a number of different levels attesting to the uncertain and fragmented terrain of body knowing. Group discussions reveal divergent understandings of body knowledge moving between the body as passive vessel that the mind controls, to a more fantastical understanding of body image. Arguing that works of art are interlocutors—conversations and theories that attest to the complexity of the body, I resist any notion that the

student’s words simply illustrate or describe their visual investigations. Rather, what I hope to expose is the ways in which these students navigate through art the complexities of bodies and knowledges. As a conversational device I have tried at times to keep the students’ words in dialogue form to illustrate the ways in which their thoughts about art and the body reverberated between each other, allowing for their incompleteness and hesitations. In addition, there is an aesthetic to their words, both spoken and written. An aesthetic that is tangled, felt, and partial. In allowing for the conversational form and the excerpts of their writing, I want to “image” their words so that they do not appear as explanations of the art, rather in conversation with and through the artworks and each other.



Jamie, Emma, and Maura are joined by some of the other female students in the class. We hover in the back of the room to talk as Trinity, with help from Emma, glues dried flowers to the skirt of her art piece.

Alexandria: When people first see it they think... Oh... I like it. It looks warm and cuddly and comforting, and then when you are

actually closer you see you can't un/fold it, it's actually stuck together.

Emma: Because in fashion magazines all those dresses, the tight jeans... and its not comforting. But it looks really nice.

Alexandria: It's taking something that is comfortable and making it uncomfortable.

Emma: Jeans could be comfortable but not the ones that barely cover anything.

Trinity: Comfort is important especially in the world today, especially with Fashion. Things are advertised more as looking beautiful...not so much about feeling comfortable. I think it's important that you feel comfortable in it; that's much more important than actually looking or being a part of the trend.

Emma says that particular clothes are less comfortable than others. The girls cite the fashions worn by pop stars like Britney Spears, fashion models, and even some of the more everyday clothing that adolescent girls wear—very low cut jeans that expose the pelvic bone—as uncomfortable. Emma personally doesn't find these types of clothes appealing. As the girls sit in a circle discussing the latest uncomfortable fads I notice that two of them have their sweat pants dropped well below the waist with the tops of their underwear, brightly coloured thongs, peeking out at the waistband. Another one is wearing pelvic revealing jeans. As the conversation continues and in subsequent weeks when we revisit the theme of comfort, the girls all agree that *comfort* is an important aspect of body image. However, comfort I discover, is itself not a stable and static signifier. Comfort, they tell me is the ability to choose what you want to wear based on: 1) how you feel (emotions); and 2) what image you want to project.

Emma: You can dress sporty or chic then you start wearing sweat pants and it's not that you are trying to express that you are a slob but its comfortable. You just change the way you dress all of a sudden.

Jamie: There are two different ways people can dress—in whatever

they feel like wearing. Or people trying to be something they are not.

Dressing differently, Alexandria explains is dependent on moods or emotions. If you feel a particular way in the morning you will choose clothes that reflect that mood. She continues to describe moments when sweats would be more preferable to dressing up, for instance when you are stressed and have a test.

Alexandria: One day you'll wear heels and a skirt to school and the next day you're in sweatpants next day jeans....one day you feel like dressing up and the next you don't care and I'm not going to shower today because I don't give a crap and then you just go to school....

Emma: Dressing goes with what you feel like and your mood for the day. If you're really grumpy or tired...clothes are a statement of how you express yourself.

Alexandria: On Valentines Day, not my favourite day of the year, I dressed all in black.

Maura: Also, if you get older. Different clothes mean different things. Some of my clothes express myself when I was younger.

One might assume that the girls understood emotions as stable internal markers that exist prior to the signification of clothing. Yet, Emma shared an example of wearing sweats, which seemed to be the clothing of choice when feeling stressed due to the pressures of school. Emma stated that the opportunity to come to school in comfortable clothing shifted her mood from anxious to being relaxed. "Sometimes I just put on sweats because I'm tired but then during the day the comfort of the clothes makes me feel less tired. I sort of feel happier."

Iris Young (1990) reminds us that body experiences are often imagined through the tactile sensation and the pleasure of cloth. The material-semiotic nature of fabric allows for both tactile sensations of skin touching cloth and sensuous bodied knowing characterized through memories associated with the pleasure of wearing clothes. Describing women's fascination with

clothes, Young (1990) suggests that women's imaginative desire stems from three pleasures associated with the body: touch, bonding, and fantasy.

Touch immerses the subject in fluid continuity with the object, and for the touching subject the object touched reciprocates the touching, blurring the border between self and other. By touch I do mean that specific sense of skin on matter, fingers on texture. But I also mean an orientation to sensuality as such that includes all senses. Thus we might conceive a mode of vision, for example, that is less a gaze, distance from and mastering its object, but an immersion in light and colour. Sensing as touching is within, experiencing what touches it as ambiguous, continuous, but nevertheless differentiated. (pp. 182–183)

Touch as a primary mode of perception displaces the measured and distant gaze with a desire that immerses the subject in fluid continuity and a folded relation with the world. Touch ruptures the containment of the body as unified and discrete, rendering the body as permeable and porous.

Young contends that touch is a form of relating to another, a relation that is contiguous and folded, not premised on possession or objectification. Alexandria remembers a particular sweater with fondness, telling us that when she wears it, it alters her mood, making her happy. Maura concurs, describing a few articles of clothing that she still has from elementary school, reminding her of past experiences and encounters. Alexandria and Maura often share clothes, a bond that Young (1990) describes as intimate and relational, "As the clothes flow among us, so do our identities; we do not keep hold of ourselves, but share" (p. 184). The encounters between beings, the relations formed through clothes allow us to touch and enter into each other's lives. Knowing is formed with, in, and through the folds of cloth, the lived emotional experiences of wearing, touching, and being caressed. The emotional, tactile, and embodied experience of clothing is often glossed over in schools. Instead too often teachers criticize students for wearing particular types of clothing or for spending so much time focused on something that is interpreted as frivolous and meaningless. Yet, clothing offers sensuous pleasure, tactile experiences of knowing self and other, and the comfort of being able to embody outwardly emotional sentient knowledge. Instead of structuring educational practices that limit students' self-obsession with fashion, understanding it as unhealthy and inappropriate, curricular practices would benefit from acknowledging the emotional and interpersonal meaning of fashion (see Springgay & Peterat, 2002–2003). While this may seem to be a rather simple tautology, educators often neglect to inquire into the conditions that produce particular appeals to clothing and the emotional, tactile, and comforting experiences of clothes. Writing about "dress stories," Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell (2004) suggest that dress be understood

as a "method of inquiry into other phenomena and issues" (p. 253), stressing the performative nature of wearing clothes. Dress as a mode of inquiry allows individuals to interrogate their own embodiment and bodied encounters.

As a mode of inquiry, clothing allows these students to change what they wear and thereby fantasize about who they want to be. For instance, the students tell me that if they dress sporty it does not mean that they are sporty people, just their *image* is sporty. Image they define as what you project on the outside, usually determined "through clothes and fashion." Fashion is more than the objects that makeup its constitutive parts (clothes, make-up, hairstyle, jewelry, body art) but also the *way* you chose to wear particular clothes, an example being the underwear craze that swept through the school (underwear showing above the waistline of pants). This outside image the students believe can be different from who they are on the inside.

Ming: If you change outfits you can be something else. So that's also to do with image and not your body. 'Cause your body is the same day-to-day but you change clothes and you are a completely different image.

I ask her to clarify image.

Ming: Your outfit is your image. If I was to wear fishnet stockings, high heels and black eye make up I would be a completely different image I'd still be the same person the same body just a different image.

Ming: You can completely change your clothes and still be your own personality. But if I was looking at you, then I would think your personality would be Goth.

Ming's articulations reflect on one hand "split subjectivity," where the seeing subject is limited, restricted, and objectified through the others gaze (Young, 1990). Young asserts that women's split subjectivity—akin to the Lacanian alienation—undermines the integrity and agency of the self. Split subjectivity occurs when women become aware of their bodies as others see them. Young advocates that women need to overcome this split by accepting the limitations of their bodies.

I am hesitant to assign such a reading to Ming's words. She and many of the other students spoke at length about the opportunities that the fluidity of

body image provided. This suggests, contrary to Young, that change can be an interrogation, a masquerading possibility, a becoming of an alternative and imaginary body schema that was created through inter-embodiment. In this way the splitting becomes a folding, an opening that intertwines experience in and through the body.

Inter-embodiment is an important aspect of student understandings of the fluidity of the body. Ming believes that who she is on the inside does not have to be reflected externally. This is not to suggest that internal and external body images are in opposition to each other, nor is one striving to maintain and stabilize the other. Instead, the splitting of inside and outside should be understood as a fold, where experimentation and assemblage become determining factors. Change is fragmented, vague, and not assembled by any predetermined organization. It was a change of becoming, a creative flow of potentiality. Changes to body image were not efforts to achieve an ideal norm, nor to maintain a practice of a true inner self, rather body image alterations were conditions of subjectivity in themselves. Therefore, educational models premised on acceptance of the body's limitations fail to address the unlimited potentialities of the fantastical body. Corporeal agency is found in the multiplicity of body images, which destabilize the normalizing practices of a specific body image. The fantastical body allows us to create a sense of corporeal fluidity.

The students believed that changes to one's body image were about *imaginary possibilities* that you could "be" if even for just a moment, what that image projected. For example, wearing sporty clothes even if you never played sports allowed you to try out the "image" of being sporty. Similarly, if you dressed Goth you weren't necessarily Goth, but you were trying it out for that moment. These articulations had less to do with others' perceptions of you but more with fantastical options that change provided for oneself. And yet, this change was not solely a personal change. While change was not *for* another, it was created in and of an encounter, and therefore in relation to another. Others' perceptions of you were part of shaping the fantasy of becoming. The perception provided through encounters did not split the subject, but rather opened up fantastical opportunities. Therefore body image needs to move away from a position of splitting to one that embraces the idea of un/folding—an open, ruptured, fantastical body. Instead of change towards equilibrium, change is a process that is dynamic and multiple.

The ability to change body image underscores the importance of thinking through the fantastical body as a body that is not defined by boundaries. This shifts body image from a self-image defined by limited borders towards an understanding of corporeality as a process of becoming with multiple points

of convergence in an infinite world, out of which body images are not only formed but continuously reworked and assembled as well. The fluidity of body image thus poses alternative possibilities for living in the world. Alternative corporeal schemas, according to Weiss (1999) provide "subversive tactics available for undermining social constraints on what bodies can and can't do" (p. 74). Thus, instead of perceiving of the body as a set of discrete characteristics, the body needs to be re-theorized from the point of view of processes. Bronwyn, the art teacher reflects on this: "We always think that when you put something on you become it. But students don't see it this way. There is an idea of things not fitting; a mutability—a trying things out." Change is welcome not because one image is more important or desirable over another, but as an interrogation of what it means to live as a body in and of the world. The fantastical body provides students with unlimited possibilities, the potential of which they understand as comfort. However, comfort is not a static condition, but a process marked by its own vulnerability. Comfort played an important role in how students described their school community and bodied interactions.

The "being-with" of Community

Given the small student population at the school and its alternative model to education, teachers and parent advisory groups often labeled the school as a community. However, their perception of community is consistent with what Etienne Wenger (1998) defines as a community of practice, where participants are mutually engaged in achieving a goal. In other words, practice "exists because people are engaged in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another" (p.73). A community of practice is not defined by structures, but by the daily interactions between students and teachers. Adopting Wenger's model, students make decisions about their school (extra curricular events, fundraising, educational and youth programs in the community they would like to participate in, and the maintenance of the school to name just a few) at a weekly school meeting, which is facilitated by students in the senior grades. All students attend this lunch hour meeting and actively participate in creating the school environment. They even run a small canteen/cafeteria, which generates revenue for projects such as the maintenance of the student lounge and telephone line.⁹

Wenger insists that *mutual* engagement includes diversity and difference. For example, he notes that individuals may join a community of practice for a variety of different reasons and that they *bring to* the community diverse

and unknowable, and it is in the uncertain terrain of unfamiliarity that body knowledges become unraveled.

So often we tell our students to take risks and that risk taking is about crossing borders, thinking outside "the box." But this notion of risk taking is impossible if we consider border crossing as privileged and inaccessible to everyone. Furthermore border crossing insists that a boundary is about containment, and that risk taking is contingent on being on the other side. If we want to begin to think about risks in education and body knowledges that do not take sides, we need to think about being in the threshold, a being-with, and that this within is a space of movement and dislocation, where meaning hesitates, slips, and un/folds. We need to image(ine) education as undecidable and undeterminable, where curriculum and pedagogy become performative acts suspended in the undecidable time of learning to learn as being(s)-in-relation. Learning, writes Chandra Mohanty (1986) "involves a necessary implication in the radical alterity of the unknown, in the desire(s) not to know, in the process of this unresolvable dialectic" (p. 155).

"Un/attainable Comfort" challenges the protective mechanisms surrounding the body. There is an illusion between the softness and the hardness of the pillow and the threat posed by the tacks. It creates a discordant perceptual system between what looks soft and easy to penetrate and something that can't be opened, used, or made accessible. It is this vulnerability that is open for discussion.

Despite the openness of the student's investigations, there remains a sense of literalness to this piece, especially through the incorporation of materials that lend themselves immediately to issues of representation. In fact it is the title that is most telling. It is not the notion of something being uncomfortable that the girls are exploring in this piece. Although each would describe in different ways what is or is not comfortable, their piece speaks to the idea of "comfort" as something that is un/attainable. Having used the slash often in my writing (in the class), the students picked up on this doubleness and used it in their title to attest to the vulnerability and uncertainty of comfort. Is comfort a source of strength or power that is conditional on the basis of whether it has been voluntarily embraced, or whether it has been imposed on one's subjective experience of the world?

The pieces all positioned on the floor invite viewers into a compromised proximity to the work without any physical awareness that they have crossed a spatial threshold. There is an ambiguity between being drawn to the work, our desire to touch and experience the flesh of the soft fabric, between our visual understanding of something from a distance and the reality we face

when up close. There is a relational awareness of one's own body in position to this art piece.

Given that the blanket and the slippers are on a human-scale, the pillow seems over sized, looming larger than our bodies, accentuating the threat of violence, insecurity, and the vagueness of belief in the comfort that these articles offer. In conversations with the three students we agreed that scale could have been manipulated even further in both the blanket and the pillow, allowing the slippers to function as a marker for our own bodies in relation to the piece. The viewer's vantage point becomes precarious. The viewer has to get very close to the piece to see the tacks and to pick out the stitching in the blanket and the sharp contours of the pillow. The visceral experience of invitation is pushed to a limit without even employing the human touch. There is a threat to resolution, which is displaced by the realization that new knowledge and experience does not after all provide one with reconciliation. Instead of seeing new structures that simply replace existing ones, it is in the perilous penetration of instability that knowledges past and present come together and are reworked.

"Un/attainable Comfort" became a focal point in class discussions around notions of comfort and in particular student understandings of bodies and knowledges. Comfort, they argue, is not a bounded space but a threshold. This threshold allows new and alternative assemblages to be created without any predetermined model of organization. The threshold differs from a boundary in that it is not a limit that holds things in place, but is the experience of being exposed, open, and folded. In what follows, I analyze two sculptural pieces that explore the idea of skin as a threshold—a becoming body.

Skin and a Becoming Body

To differentiate between the familiar and the strange is to mark out the inside and the outside of bodily space; to establish the skin as a boundary line. (Ahmed, 2000, p. 42)

Skin is often employed as a metaphor for the fragility and temporality of existence. Depicted as decaying, marked, and ephemeral, artists have used a number of materials to evoke this body boundary, suggesting its determination to make meaning, memory, and to signify change. As Jay Prosser (2001) suggests, "We become aware of skin as a visible surface through memory... the look of our skin—both to others and to ourselves—

together creates a surface that vibrates and hums, almost like a murmur. It seems to overpower the rusty metal, which is cracked, torn, and falling apart, and almost unrecognizable. The dress as skin appears as if it is inside out, imperiling the very notion of boundaries and containment. The acrid odors of the dying petals further augment the fleshiness of the figure. It is heavy, thick, and engorged, the weight of the skirt pulling on the metal bodice, a threatening impression.

In contrast, "Vacancy" almost seems to float and hover in the air; neither grounded nor soaring off into the expansiveness of space. Made from white tulle, the feminine dress pattern encases a large, scarlet red, organic form—perhaps a heart, a kidney, or a lung. Its ambiguity only distinguished by reference to location on the inside of the dress. Unlike "Worn Out," which appears turned inside out, looking at "Vacancy" our sight passes through the dress, distorting objects on the other side. The dress is machine sewn giving it a uniform or generic appearance, while the pattern used is reminiscent of a classic trope of gender, femininity, and sexual desire; virginal white, pristine edges and seams. Inside the organ pulses—fleshiness—its edges fraying and basted together with loose, uneven stitches, which unravel and hang loose from the body's form. Both pieces draw attention to skin as a boundary, as a threshold, an uncontained within.

Skin. The first thing I think about when one says skin is of course the coat that covers our body. Our skin is a very important matter because it protects our body—an internal body from harmful things. Aside from clothing skin is our cover, our shield, our mask. It is another layer. The difference between skin and clothes is that it cannot be removed. You can't wear another person's skin. Therefore skin doesn't always protect us. Sometimes it can tear. It can even get stained.—Trinity

Trinity wrote this passage in her journal as part of a written exploration of her piece "Worn Out." Trinity was initially attracted to the muffler and the petals because of the tactile and synaesthetic qualities that they evoked. Many of her journal entries reference this aspect of art making and a knowing that is bodied and sensual. "When I first saw the muffler in the alley near the school I just knew that I wanted to make something with it. I could almost feel its roughness in my hands. It looked so delicate lying in the mud. I left it there, this was months ago and then when you talked about our first art project I went back to see if I could find it again." As the weeks passed and Trinity and I met to discuss her piece we thought about other signifying traces in her work.

Trinity says of her dress: "It could be a shelter, a cover, a mask—I guess a camouflage. So it almost acted like a bubble and created a world of its own. It gave me a sense of release and my own little space." I asked her if she could have conveyed her ideas another way. "Hmm, maybe a cage. But that would give a different message because it is a cage." I wondered what she meant between her own space and a cage and so pressed her further. "A cage is associated with things like animals and stuff. Thinking of it as a shelter makes it think that you were put there for a reason. That it wasn't your own choice. Your hopeless kind of thing and you don't have that power. And you're not released. You're in isolation almost, so it's kinda opposite to this sense of space. And it doesn't have that sense of comfort."



As our conversations come undone we begin to see how "Worn Out" signifies the possibilities of touch and skin as a threshold of existence. In a short paragraph about boundaries, Trinity writes that boundaries are limits that impose borders on what one can or can't do. However, she continues writing that these limits are not imposed from outside as external markers, but individually determined. "Boundaries are the extent of our imagination

and creativity.” “Boundaries are things that happen through experience,” she tells me. “Boundaries are created when we come in contact with other things. They are open to change because they are associated with comfort.” Asking her to clarify, she reminds me comfort is similar to the materials she has chosen, decaying, temporal, and in constant and inevitable change.

The skin of her piece, its decaying and fragile materials are in conflict with its largeness, the weight of the petals, and the sense that we are looking at both inside and outside simultaneously. Trinity informs the class that originally she had this idea of making a dress, but that as she worked on the piece it wasn't a dress any more. Andrew asked her to explain how it wasn't a dress. She responds:

Well remember the dress pieces Stephanie showed in class, and we thought that the body was absent or hidden. I don't think my piece is about a hidden body. The body is very much here. I mean you can quite literally touch and feel it. It's kinda of beautiful and gross at the same time. Bronwyn is worried that it's going to get damaged in class, because of the flowers. But really no one wants to touch it. It's too much like flesh. It even smells rotting.

This prompts another student to respond: “Yeah, I see it as scars. The patterns of the petals. Or it could be not scars in a bad way but just marks on the body, maybe tattoos.” And another with: “So instead of a dress as a metaphor for skin, it is just skin. But not skin like a covering, more like if we peeled back skin, the inside and outside together.” What became apparent to me was that the students saw the body not as something absent or repressed in teaching and learning, but very much there—in abundance and in excess. At the outset of the research study I had expected to find a docile and coded body in the classroom (see Foucault, 1977). Instead I was confronted with a redolent, fleshy, and becoming body.

Alexandria's dress “Vacancy” is another complex example of student understandings of the excessive body. In class discussions some of the students raised comments regarding the somewhat ideal or perfect external shell of her piece, reflected in the white tulle fabric and classic dress design. They wondered if she had intentionally wanted to describe the outside of the body as clean and tidy, and the inside, represented by an organic and more roughly designed form, as messy. This Alexandria thought was an interesting interpretation, but reminded the class that a viewer never saw either the outside or the inside without the other. When looking at her piece the transparency of the tulle allows the viewer to see both the tulle form and the red organic shape simultaneously. Also, as James noted in a class discussion, other objects in the classroom could be seen through the dress, somewhat distorted and altered by the fabric. Alexandria explained that her piece was

not about a specific kind of skin. “Instead of perceiving the body as separate parts,” she writes in her journal, “I wanted to think of how the inside and the outside of the body is really inter-connected. I guess I'm not sure what I mean by the inside and the outside. Maybe that is what I'm trying to say that the definitions of what is inside and outside are different. It was really important that I find fabric that you could see through but that also distorted what you saw. Sort of the traces of the fabric where part of what you were looking at. Like the body is part of everything we experience.” Instead of describing experience as distinctive parts, “Vacancy” points towards the dynamic conditions that generate perceptual knowledge by challenging boundaries, opening knowledge onto multiple connections with the world.

Understanding the body in terms of relations and not of component parts provides an important development in rethinking body image. In exploring the concept of relations it is necessary to try to understand Deleuze's work regarding “becoming.” Becoming, according to Deleuze, refutes notions of a fixed identity or teleological order, replacing them with multiple assemblages and intensities. Duration, movement, and process are intrinsic to the sense of multiplicity. Subjectivity then, exists in flux, as affect, and through rhizomatic assemblages—in a state of becoming (see Kennedy, 2004). Deleuzian thinking about the body opens up new definitions of the term itself, providing a much more complex, situational, and contingent form. The body materialized in Alexandria's sculptural piece “Vacancy” engages with Deleuzian processes of assemblage (BwO) where multiplicities are signified amidst other multiplicities. The fantastical body, conceived in relation to other bodies (not invested with psychical fantasies as we see in psychoanalysis) is fluid and mutable, constituting itself through becomings. What these student artworks suggest is a body constituted through touch as openness, change, mutability, fluidity and complexity.

While touch was understood as physical contact of skin on matter, touch also played an important role in understanding affects, emotions and the body as becoming. In her journal Heather writes that skin tells us a lot about what a person has touched.

For instance if someone's hands are rough or smooth it might tell us about some of the things that this person has been touching. In terms of touch, skin can be very sensitive, which I think is really interesting. Because even though it works as a protective shell, it is still extremely sensitive to stimulus.

In another passage she continues with this reflection.

I think a big part of touch is emotion. Like if your hand brushes against someone else's hand who you are attracted to. It is a physical touch, but you would have a

somewhat emotional response. I think for most people the best way to learn is through touch. It is through touch and experience that one begins to understand how things work. I think contact with any and everything constitutes touch, which basically means that I view touch as the affect that any person, object, or situation can have on a person.

Trinity's reflection expresses a similar sentiment.

Touch is a difficult thing to describe because it's the sense of feeling. When someone tries to explain or describe to you what they have felt by touch, I usually cannot understand them until I myself have touched it. I think to fully understand the description of touch one must first experience what one is trying to describe or at least come in contact with it.

I wondered if Trinity was trying to say that she could only understand and make sense of things that were familiar. However, in one of our conversations she told me that it's not about things being familiar or not, but about being in a situation where touch helps us to understand. What she was describing then is the concept of proximity as knowledge production. Jamie concurs writing: "I find that I use touch to understand things because I am closer to it." Emma furthers this when she says that "touch implies more than one thing, it takes place between things." Instead of reading the surface of things (skins), or looking beyond the skin (penetration), touch accounts for the effects of surfaces, how knowledge is produced in the between, in and of the threshold. Skin is a border that feels. It is the threshold between bodies, the site of interactions and encounters. It is the space of exposure. Therefore, while it can separate and contain bodies, skin, as a threshold, is the opening of bodies to other bodies. Thus, touch calls for recognition that skin is formed and marked between beings; a site of inter-embodiment where difference is produced.

Locating the body at the threshold of meaning moves away from discursive analysis of the body's absence in education, towards an understanding of the body as fantastical, in excess, and as becoming. Previously, I had explored research that examined the dress as a marker for the absent body (see Springgay, 2001, 2002). Allowing for a particular feminist reading, dress stood in for the body, suggesting and imposing a boundary between presence and absence, inside and outside. Educational imperatives suggested rupturing the boundary, penetrating it and valuing both sides of the border. But the student's art and conversations shift away from a boundary of containment to the border, the site of contact itself, not as inside and outside, but as a threshold. Touch as a threshold in and of the body, is a body that is always already present—fantastical, vulnerable, and uncertain. Inter-embodiment opens up the space and time between

experiences and our responses to it. "It gives us time and space to come up with some other way of being in relation at that moment. It introduces a stutter, a hesitation" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 64). Inter-embodiment is a space where the skin-to-skin face off between self and other "has been pried apart so that a reordering of self and other can be set in motion so that we might go on relating to each other at all" (p. 64).

Months into the semester Bronwyn abandons her nest project (see Introduction). Instead she too takes up the space of boundaries as the threshold of embodied experience. Retreating to her island home one weekend, she asks if she might be able to borrow one of my video cameras. The next week she returns with a short film. On the island she tells me are a number of public walk ways and paths that lead to various beaches and wander throughout the island. The island, however, she believes has become a closed community, one that does not like outsiders who come to explore the beauty of the island on weekends and holidays. Many of the residents put obstacles in the paths, large tree trunks and old metal appliances, anything large that impedes and blocks the paths. That weekend, Bronwyn and her daughter set out on a project of clearing the paths. They remove some of the detritus and then Bronwyn's daughter uses the lawn mower to clear the overgrown grass along the paths. The film documents this process and meanders around the island on these now exposed boundaries. It is not a removal of boundaries, but rather contact with, an uncovering of borders, that opens them up to new knowledges, difference, and encounters between being(s)-in-relation.

Pedagogies of Excess

Instead of understanding body image as a splitting of self, an awareness of one's body marked by inside and outside, body image through comfort, the fantastical body, and a becoming body becomes a means to interrogate limits. As Braidotti (2006) suggests, the enactment of limits as thresholds refers to embodied subjects in interaction and relation to others. As thresholds, limits become points of encounter as opposed to closure—"living boundaries not fixed walls" (Braidotti, 2006, p. 268). According to the students at *Bower*, limits are recognizable precisely because they are unfamiliar, and it is in the uncertain terrain of unfamiliarity that body knowledges become unraveled, enabling us to imag(e)-ine educational possibilities that focus on the fantastical body, rather than simply a critique of body image as something needing repair. Body image understood through

the fantastical body offers insights to student understandings of tactility, sensuality, and emotions—rupturing a place for embodied knowing in teaching and learning.

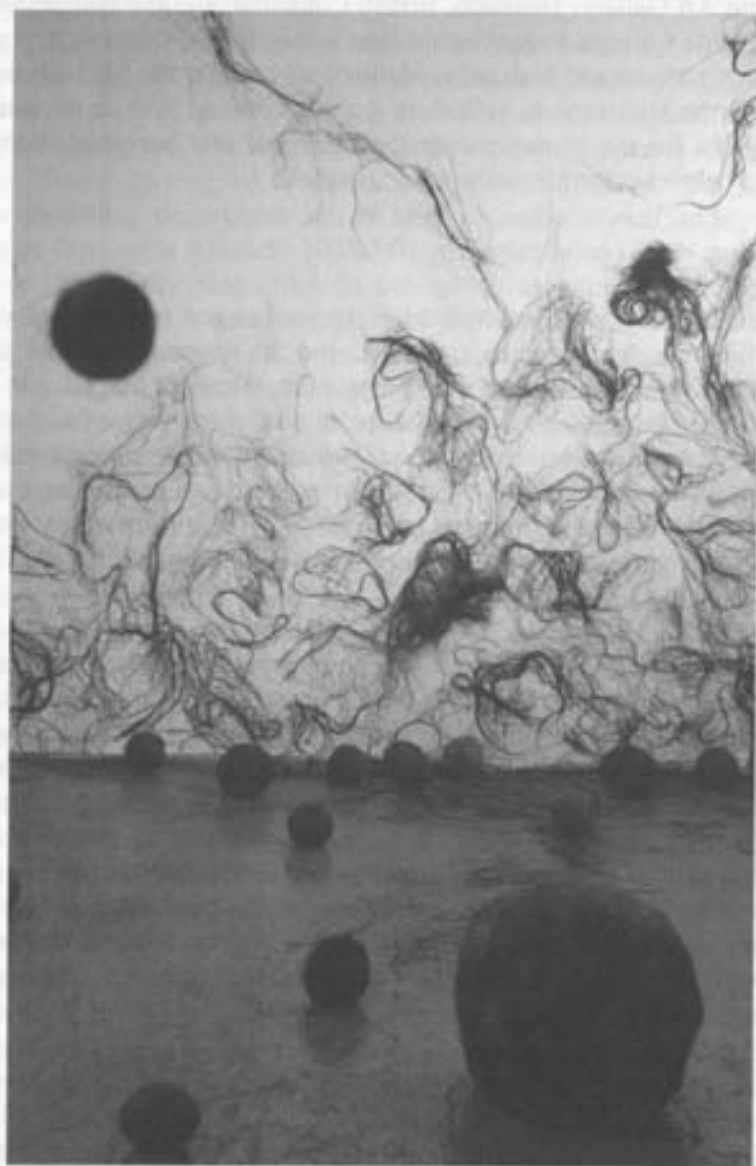
The girls' conversations, the installation and the sculptural dresses illustrate the tensions at work in adolescent understandings of body image. On one level there is a split between a visible, observable, and therefore knowable outside, and a hidden, private and thus more authentic inside. The girls are clearly drawing on modernist discourses of the self that suggest there is something deep inside us, an ideal or authentic self about which knowledge is possible (Gonick, 2003). Ming's articulation of self suggests a theory of subjectivity that links discourses of recognition with those of identity. Identity is not simply a matter of self-identification but, rather, is also shaped by the recognition or its absence by others. And yet, comfort so clearly defined as neither interior nor exterior and as something vulnerable and un/attainable complicates such understandings of bodied subjectivity. The ability to fantasize about changing clothes and thereby changing image, and the embodied inter-relations of touching fabric pose alternative questions about the ways students might understand inter-embodiment. What are the experiences that are mediated as an effect of a fantastical body? How is the fantastical body implicated in the relations of schooling? How is the fantastical body implicated in the production of "becoming somebody"? As they attempt to grapple with these questions the girls' use of art making seems a particularly provocative choice and poses certain possibilities for thinking further about how *pedagogies of excess* might work with and against these contradictions. The fantastical body allows students "to explore fantasies and fears, enact relations that would otherwise be restricted if not taboo, or temporarily dissolve boundaries, facilitating a loss of distinctiveness of the border between self and other" (Gonick, 2003, p. 182). Moreover, this type of work may open up the possibility of pedagogical practices that attempt to work across the contradictions between self and other, private and public, body and image, bearing witness to these contradictions, inviting students to bring them together, to examine them, to experiment with engaging them differently in the world. Shifting the terms of representation, the artworks and all of their tensions and contradictions may eventually produce transforming ideas—ideas that may work towards thinking about the world relationally, where "the goal is not to undo our ties to others but rather to disentangle them; to make them not shackles but circuits of recognition" (Gonick, 2003, p. 185). The artworks enabled the girls to perform a fantastical transformation and an active reworking of embodied experience

In thinking about the body as excess, I conceived of an installation incorporating felted human hair. The exhibition, "Excess," exhibited at the Nanaimo Art Gallery, Nanaimo, British Columbia, and the Palmer Museum of Art, State College, Pennsylvania, was a way for me to think through this bodied curriculum and pedagogy. Methodically felting the hairballs not only provided me with time to reflect on the students' art and conversations, it was a way for me to materialize the excessive and becoming body. The passage below is taken from the exhibition text:

On entering the space one encounters an unexpected relationship with the work. The familiar becomes grotesque, and the grotesque reveals itself as familiar—human hair trapped and entangled, soft tendrils that cling to a host. Hair, a seemingly stable substance is un/done becoming something else entirely. Thus, the piece is experienced twice; first as something familiar and reliable, then as a more intricately contrived world of interacting materials and elaborate visual patterns. Curiosity gives way to further curiosity, examination gives way to further examination: the piece breathes like a living thing.

The body is revealed rather than represented; is delivered as fragment, effluence, or field, rather than as form or picture. The materiality is literally that which falls from the body, an excess through which to enact touch; and with its associative chain of cobwebs, dust, and mourning, it is a haunted touch, the space's atmosphere of loss memorialized in the fetishistic ritual of gathering and weaving locks of hair. But the loss is troubled by the in/temperance of hair crawling, growing, and feeding on the walls. It wants to take over. In this instance the space reverberates between an excess of loss and an excess of fecundity, where in tension and uncertainty, the doubling questions the bodies boundaries relocating the body as relational and intercorporeal.

Reconstituting body image as fantastical and becoming involves *pedagogies of excess* where knowing is constantly interrupted and deferred "by the knowledge of the failure-to-know, the failure to understand, fully, once and for all" (Miller, 2005, p. 130). It is the unthought which is felt as intensity, as becoming, and as inexplicable that reverberates between self and



other, teacher and student, viewer and image, compelling a complex interstitial meaning making process. Writing about pedagogical relations, Ellsworth (2005) states:

In excessive moments of learning in the making, when bodies and pedagogies reach over and into each other, the pedagogical address and the learning self interfuse to become "more" than either intended or anticipated. In some cases, they become more than they ever hoped for. The instability and fluidity of pedagogy hold the potential for an unknowable and unforeseeable "more," and the actualization of that potential is what springs the experience of the learning self. (p. 55).

This "more" or "other than" shifts teaching and learning away from representation of something with a meaning to an aesthetic assemblage, which moves, modulates and resonates through processes of becoming.

In proposing *pedagogies of excess* I draw on poststructuralist feminist pedagogies (Villaverde, 2008). In her critique of critical pedagogy, Ellsworth (1989) reminds educators that pedagogies need to move away from "reason" and recognize that thought, knowledge, and experience are always partial—"partial in the sense that they are unfinished, imperfect, limited; and partial in the sense that they project the interests of "one side" over others" (p. 305). Shifting emphasis from "empowerment," "voice," "dialogue," "visibility" and notions of "criticality," poststructuralist pedagogies problematize partiality "making it impossible for any single voice in the classroom...to assume the position of center or origin of knowledge or authority, of having privileged access to authentic experience or appropriate language" (p. 310). Rather, as Leila Villaverde (2008) suggests, it is important that pedagog(y)ies engage with "dangerous dialogues" in "order to expose the complexity of inequity and our complicity in it" (p. 125). Deborah Britzman (1998) asks similar questions about the production of "normalcy" in the pedagogical encounter, creating the myth of the stable and unitary body/subject as the centre from which all else deviates. Unhinging the body from such normalizing practices, how might *pedagogies of excess* "think the unthought of normalcy" (Britzman, 1998, p. 80)? Unsettling and rupturing the limits of normalcy and representation *pedagogies of excess* help us "get underneath the skin of critique ...to see what grounds have been assumed, what space and time have remained unexamined" (Roy, 2005, p. 29). Furthermore, *pedagogies of excess* stress the need for an ethics of embodiment where transformations are connected to body and flesh and to a perception of the subject as becoming, incomplete, and always in relation. Thus, ethical action becomes unpredictable and adaptive (as opposed to enduring and universal) and what happens when we venture into the complexities of the unthought.

Pedagogies of excess compel us into a place of knowing that is aware of how much it does not know, leading us to an elsewhere that is replete with what Barbara Kennedy (2004) calls an "aesthetic of sensation." An aesthetic of sensation "is not dependent on recognition or common sense" (p. 110), but operates as force and intensity, and as difference. This, argues Kennedy, has significance for the way we approach perception. Visual culture—images—then shift from being "representation" to a material embodied encounter as sensation. Images do not exist as static forms, but are experienced as processes and as movement. An aesthetics of sensation is not an aesthetic based on "normalcy" or structuralist semiotics, but an aesthetics that vibrates and reverberates in modulation with, in, and through bodied encounters, shifting such concepts as "beauty" from form to a process—an assemblage. Thus, in *pedagogies of excess* movement becomes an essential element. For instance, in the installation "Excess," the tendrils of hair that litter the gallery floor begin to attach themselves to other hosts—creeping up the gallery walls, clinging to visitors' shoes—slithering around only to be set in motion once more; the gasping gagging reflex of hair caught in one's mouth spit out until devoured again. The movement and sensation of the hair are not perceived outside of the body, but "rather affections localized within the body" (Kennedy, 2004, p. 118), thus materializing a pedagogical encounter imbued with forces, oscillations, intensities and energies. At the heart of *pedagogies of excess* normalcy, the common, and representation become un/done, entangled again and again as difference, as "hair balls" that grow, and feast, and exceed the limits of knowing, being, and creating.

 CHAPTER 3

Corporeal Cartographies: Materializing Space as a Textual Narrative Process

I love the idea of maps. As a nomad of sorts, a dreamer, traveler, and mover (I have lived in a dozen cities in four continents with a considerable amount of time spent dwelling in-between), I find maps an important means of orienting myself to new spaces. Maps facilitate new knowledge of the world. They enable discovery, exploration, and unending possibilities.

However, the maps I find most compelling are narratives, sometimes found in guidebooks, others posted on websites, and then there are those that are novels, short stories of places and travel adventure. I love to read these narrative cartographies, imag(e)ining places and encounters, searching, disclosing, and inventing the world in which I live. These types of maps are experienced and offer possibilities of what is yet to come, rather than simply reproducing what is known. These maps are less about orienting myself on the grid, and more to do with losing myself in discovery and the unknown.

Contemporary mapping theories argue that mapping is a creative activity that focuses on the *process of mapping* rather than on the object of maps (Cosgrove, 1999). As opposed to traditional views of maps as stable and complete, contemporary cartographies recognize mapping's partial and provisional nature. Thus, mapping is not just an archive of projected points and lines onto a surface, often referred to as a trace; it is a dynamic and complex actualization of un/foldings. While traditional maps chart and graph the lay of the land, codifying, naturalizing, and institutionalizing conventions, contemporary mapping that finds its place in visual art and culture, views maps for *what they can do*, the potential and possibilities of the unnamed. This mode of thinking finds the agency of mapping in its ability to uncover or to un/fold (Comer, 1999). The mappings that I find so