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Medicine and Handmaking:
From the Crafted Object to the Body, and Back

by

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in

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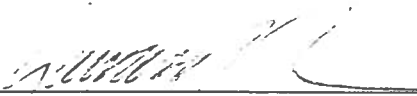
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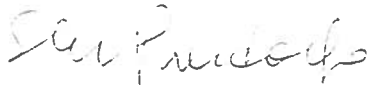
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Table of Contents

Preface: In the Workshop.....	i
Introduction	vii
Chapter 1. Theory of the Handmade	1
Chapter 2. The Medicine Pot	28
Chapter 3. Biomedicine and Handmaking	45
Illustrations	61
Bibliography	62

Prologue: In the Workshop

1. Loading the large kiln would take about six hours. There were three tiers, each about five feet high. No piece could touch any other, but the load had to be as "tight" as possible, each piece as close as it could be to every other so as to not waste gas. On the top shelf of the front tier (the last part to be loaded) I would always place several pieces of sculpture: a horse, a nude woman, a fish, a rhinoceros — things to provide some sort of protection for the kiln as it fired. I would pause for about three seconds with my eyes closed, then shut and seal the door.

The firing took from fourteen to eighteen hours. I didn't do any other work during the firing. Some people were able to, others were not. The end was the worst part; one never knows the right time to shut it off.

Unloading the kiln inevitably produced a depression in me, which I likened to a post-partum depression, although of course I have no idea of what that's actually like. The pieces never came out how you imagined them coming out. But ironically, some months later, you might end up really liking a piece that originally you thought to be an ugly failure.

2. I loved to see the black, stinky stuff. This was an anaerobic bacteria that lived in clay, that 'aged' clay, that grew in big black streaks throughout the clay and stank. But its presence meant the clay had been aged, had grown ripe, and was ready to throw.

Some potters urinated in their clay; urine was supposed to make it more acidic and therefore better to work with, although there probably were other explanations. I tried this once. I can't really say whether or not it helped. There really is no way to control materials in pottery, as it turns out. Something you try once might be a success that one time but a failure the next time, and you were never sure what, if anything, had changed,

and even if you did change something, it might not even have been that thing but something you didn't notice that made the difference.

3. In college I became obsessed with ancient Greek forms, and thought reproducing them was the highest achievement I could aspire to as a potter. But when I graduated from college and apprenticed to an actual Greek-American potter it turned out that *he* had been obsessed with Korean and Japanese folk pottery and it was then that I began to see how I was too extreme in my aesthetic; there were other ways of doing pottery. He introduced me to glazes made with wood ash. He made his students use a Japanese hand wheel which is a weighted wheel that sits close to the ground that has four small holes at its edge: one at twelve o'clock, one at three o'clock and so on. The potter uses a stick to spin the wheel, then puts down the stick and works the clay until the wheel slows down, then picks up the stick, spins the wheel again, and so on. He claimed that I would fall in love with this type of wheel. I didn't. I went back to using an electric kick-wheel, several layers of purity removed from the Japanese hand wheel.

4. I disliked Misami and I wasn't the first one to accuse him of imitation. He had learned all his pottery since coming to the U.S. I had even been generous enough to show him a number of techniques I learned. It was common to share this way in the cooperative studio we worked in. I became uncomfortable when I noticed that he would not do likewise and kept as closely guarded secrets the very knowledge that others had shared with him. When I saw some forms he was making that were exactly like mine I couldn't contain myself and went public. I won't dwell on the unpleasant details of what followed, but when the ashes settled I realized that whatever the case might have been, Misami was enormously successful commercially and this ate at me from within.

5. I liked to playfully construct analogies between the craft of pottery and critical phenomena in human life, like birth: What was the kiln if not a womb? And what were pots if not babies, and firing if not gestation, and so on. The most extensive analogy had to do with life changes: Clay, like a baby, is pluripotent, able to be shaped into any form, but occurring in stages each one successively declining in its degree of reversibility. When a pot is thrown, this is like early childhood when the basic personality is formed. And then when it is stiff but still damp and a foot is trimmed and handles added, this is like later childhood when fundamental extensions into the world occur. And when the pot is dried and decoration is applied, this is like adolescence, when one begins to dress oneself and to speak and act according to fashion. And when the pot is fired, this is like the passage into adulthood when one is irreversibly hardened and will now proceed to work, to perform the function that the potter or the family/culture has prepared you for. Yet I had the sinking feeling that while these analogies were clever, they were possibly meaningless.

6. We had students working in our studio. I liked to watch them struggle with throwing sometimes, something of the sadist in me, I suppose. But I would help them. The main thing in learning to throw is a counter-intuitive move. When clay is off-center everybody tries to push it to the center with both their hands, squeezing it from either side. But this does nothing since equal and opposite forces cancel each other out. The irony is that to center clay you have to push more from one side than the other, pushing it off-center precisely to put it on.

7. I collected ashes from an Indian restaurant downstairs from the place I was living which had a tandoori oven that used mesquite charcoal. This was fine with the owner — I guess I was doing him a favor by hauling away the ashes. Putting ashes in glaze gives you effects you cannot get any other way. The simplest glazes are made of just clay and ash. Others use only ash and feldspar or all three. There isn't a need for anything more, and if you

collected your own naturally occurring clay from a local deposit and used ashes from your fireplace, or better yet, from your wood-burning kiln, then there you have it: a self-contained technology, natural and beautiful, and unfettered by expensive, quarry-mined and factory-purified materials that one received as aseptic white or gray powders. Some potters took the practice this far, farther in fact, often isolating themselves tens or hundreds of miles from the nearest towns, growing all their food, mining all their materials themselves. I guess I compromised a little.

8. Early on I knew I wanted to make only functional pottery and not ceramic art. This is the big debate in studio pottery. Are we potters or ceramic artists? Why don't people who want to make ceramic art simply call themselves sculptors? Why don't potters realize that they are obsolete, out produced a hundred times by factories now, and that they can't possibly sustain a decent living unless they begin to consider their work as art and not just craft? Why don't ceramic artists realize that they rob clay of its essence by using every technological trick to make it hide its clayness? Aren't they aware that the very space open to them now was made by artists who visited Japan and elsewhere and realized that a folk-pottery tradition existed, and was in danger of dying out, and returned with it to England and the States, and convinced numerous people of its value, and that this led to a rebirth of handmade pottery, and that it is this tradition, brief though it may be, to which these ceramic artists no longer consider their work to owe a debt?

9. I have not traveled much, but by doing pottery I thought that if I couldn't visit every or even many countries, I could somehow know them by gaining appreciation of their ceramics. I could even encounter dead cultures this way. The ancient Greek *kylix*, the medieval Japanese tea bowl, the dark ages German beer-stein, and so on. By looking at the pieces, I could know how they were made and so how those people worked and what they thought was beautiful.

10. The choices in the ceramic supply store are fantastic. Every conceivable shade of glaze has been formulated for every conceivable firing temperature. There are hundreds of tools to choose from. Having trouble centering your pot? Here is a device to do it. Need clay? Here are thirty choices. Trimming pots? I have fifty different trimming tools for you. After a few minutes in these places I thought to myself, Why bother?"

11. I was told that no one who wanted to sell pottery worked in stoneware anymore. "I love your work, but no one buys that type of pottery anymore. It was popular in the 1970's, but now everyone uses porcelain and bright colorful glazes, that's just the style now," Lynn told me. I had thought of porcelain as something special, perhaps for a special vase or bowl, but not for every day pottery. Who wanted to eat food out of a fuchsia-colored bowl? The entire world, apparently...

Introduction

The human body then, and pottery, share a number of structural and functional correspondences. It is in this observation, a part and parcel of my experience practicing pottery and studying medicine now, that this text originates. Both fields have at their center a body, one human, one clay (potters in the U.S. and England call their clay a 'clay body', or simply a 'body'). Both have, as well, an intense concern for this body's internal soundness, its protection from assaults from without and within, and its functioning and integrity as it is transformed and used. Through doing research on this question it also became clear that it is not only pottery that may be mapped onto the body and body experience, but other crafts as well: What is cloth but the extension and enhancement of skin and hair? What are the handles of the basket, but an aid to our own hands to allow us to carry it with less trouble? What are the legs of a chair but a replacement to allow ours to rest? And the same interest and care that potters express for their clay body is shown by weavers for their cloth and carpenters for their wood.

It was therefore toward the broader topic of handmaking that I became oriented. Handmaking, for my purposes here, is defined as a process whereby a person takes a raw material and turns it (constructs it molds it, carves it, weaves it) into an artifact. There are several important facets to this definition. First, it is assumed that the person has knowledge about all stages of this process, if not directly at least through people close to her. In particular knowledge and interaction with the raw material of the making are important. for it is here that some of the most significant aspects of handmaking are realized, and here as well that some of the most sinister consequences of the corruption of handmaking are made possible. A number of do-it-yourself activities such as handicraft 'kits' have in them already assembled much of the materials. Little is left to the hand when the manufacturer has done most of the making already. Finally, though this definition most strongly suggest types of handicraft (pottery, woodworking, weaving), no process of

making is necessarily excluded (writing, painting, medicine). Handmaking then, as I intend to explain it, is both a term broader and more narrow than it is usually thought of.

The relation of handmaking to medicine begins not only with the observation that clay and human are at once referred to as 'body, but that doctors themselves (past and present, East and West) describe medicine often as an art or craft, and it is precisely in such characterizations of medicine located, for example, at the introduction of current textbooks, that the authors seem to take the most pleasure in their subject.¹ If something moving is occurring at the moments when medicine is conceived as an act of handmaking, it would seem to beg a closer look.

This is not a simple undertaking. In the first chapter will initially try to delineate some of the intrinsic and extrinsic difficulties in talking about and coming to understand our relationship to the handmade without any reference to medicine or illness. One that should be stated immediately is that simply in using the term we have already acknowledged that a process of reification has taken place. Objects that are sold that have the label "Handmade" on them only came to have this label after a certain point in time. Before this certain items could not be made any other way.

One important aspect of this, an obverse to the observation of how the handmade has become a concept, can be gleaned from understanding the quality of our relationships to the objects we surround ourselves with, relationships which have become intensely uncomfortable and hypocritical as Elaine Scarry points out:

It is important to become reacquainted with the interior structure of material objects because people in the West, though deeply committed to material objects in their actions and intuitions, often verbally disavow and discredit their own immersion in materialism, sometimes even scorning the tendency of less materially privileged cultures to aspire to the possession of these same objects: that blue jeans are cherished in the Soviet Union, that a picture from a Sears Roebuck catalogue should appear on the wall of a hut in Nairobi, that Sony recorders are prized in Iran, are events sometimes greeted by western populations with bewilderment as though the universal aspiration toward such objects (both in countries where they are plentiful and countries where they are scarce) were a form of incomprehensible corruption or an act of senseless imitation rather than itself a confirmation and

signal that something deep and transforming is intuitively felt to happen when one dwells in proximity to such objects².

And in visiting or just learning about places such as the Soviet Union, Nairobi, or Iran we go in search of what is not contained in blue jeans, Sears Roebuck catalogues, or Sony recorders: an experience of the authentic, of a culture whose food, music, language, architecture, and crafts are pure and unblemished by the corruption inherent in "modern" Western objects and ways. A large part of what we go in search of can be described by the notion of the handmade, and just as the objects of Western technology fascinate and obsess the non-Westerner, so are we obsessed with returning with samples of native handicraft that embody this authenticity. They interest us not because they are foreign, but precisely because they are so familiar. Daniel Miller notes that in this interest we "conflat[e] the dimension of space with that of time. Thus, contemporary peoples living in distant areas are viewed as though they were relics of one's own past."³

The two contrasting attitudes displayed by us and the foreigner, the one thoroughly fake in its feigned lack of concern for material objects, the other purely genuine in its unmitigated embracing of these objects occur within a context in which there has been an immense change in the way in which created objects are formed: While items are still made by hand, they exist in juxtaposition to a world where the normative functional object is made by a machine. The very nature of this former type of making and made object cannot be understood without reference to the latter.

Though we may attempt to pass off our ambivalence about material objects as not all that important, as in fact the proper attitude to have about what we conceive as impermanent and contingent aspects of our environment, claiming for example that what truly counts in human experience are precisely those qualities found inside of us, emotions, passions, thoughts, personalities, in fact what will be argued here is that this ambivalence is specious. What it represents is a reaction to a particular kind of object, rather than an

outright disdain for objects, per se. No one, if they are in their 'right mind', would for a second accept the actual diminution of their material situation, and while the Western terrain is replete with examples of ascetics, these people have always gone into poverty precisely at the moment when their rights to a given material situation were the most secure. The rhetorical divestiture that Scarry describes must correspond to some sort of real one.

Much of this work depends on the literature of medical anthropology, a field that grew out of the observation that Western ideas about medical practice were (and are) inadequate to even begin to understand what was happening within other cultures' medical practice. As work proceeded to try to come to terms with what went on elsewhere, the shadow of these efforts fell upon Western medicine or 'biomedicine' itself. These critiques often begin with the observation that biomedical practice objectifies the body, that it is constructed on a theoretical framework that radically divides the mind from the body. This observation helps explain, for example, why psychiatrists are not thought of as 'real' doctors. Biomedicine is further accused of fragmenting and commodifying the body so that not only is the body itself thought of as an object (it may rarely be conceived of as an object in its entirety), but in fact its constituent organs, systems and tissues are also legitimate, even more legitimate objects of inquiry. This explains why amongst 'real' doctors, specialists are afforded the highest status; it explains also the forms of texts that focus on a single organ without reference to its human container, as well as the language of hospital personnel who refer to patients by their pathologized organ. It underlines in some sense the crisis in medical practice that is accursed by a plethora of specialists who cannot afford to see 'whole' patients.

Such criticisms can broadly be considered to arise from a phenomenological position which takes as its foundation a critique of the *Cogito* as formulated by Descartes. While one can argue about the extent to which and the ways in which the *Cogito* still informs Western thought and practice in medicine and elsewhere, the question I wish to pose here is

based on the supposition that it is not the objectifying tendency in medicine or any other practice that is at fault (its splitting the mind and body, and so forth); other cultures do this as well and it is, as we shall see, essential to in some way separate one part from another in order to accomplish any sort of work. The process of objectification itself will not be questioned and I will take the observation at face value (and accept then that in some way or in some situations or at some times we will perceive ourselves as objects). I intend instead to focus on the particular type of objectification that has arisen in this era in order to investigate practices in medicine which I will claim has everything to do with how objects are made.

The second chapter will examine a medical practice amongst some tribal groups in Northern Nigeria in which handmaking is directly employed to treat disease, while the third chapter will try to locate several types of handmaking that occur in biomedicine. In part I am using this comparative approach because it will help highlight how elusive or else marginalized the practice of handmaking is in biomedicine. Through examination of the text of *Frankenstein*, a story about an act of handmaking by a doctor, the third chapter will suggest why biomedicine has had such a difficult time employing activities that attempt to construct artifacts in its task of dealing with the sick body. I claim this study only to be a beginning and agree with Scarry who, during her own study, observed, "[L]ike the activity of "making," the activity of "understanding making" will be a collective rather than a solitary labor."⁴

A potter named Bernard Leach said: "Factories have practically driven folk-art out of England; it survives only in out of the way corners even in Europe, and the artist-craftsman ... has been the chief means of defense against the materialism of industry and its insensibility to beauty."⁵ Folk-art, and more exactly, the handmade object survives, as well, I will argue, as a significant structure in the human mind, a structure that exists exactly because it is through the use of the hands that the artifacts of culture come to be.

The eyes, the ears, the nose, the voice, these can extend our bodies very far out into the

world, but it is significantly or even mainly through the hands that our bodies can change what we confront in it. If Leach laments the literal marginalization of hand-crafted pottery in England, his own life provides an example of the existence of a desire for the handmade that transcends the time and space he claims have nearly eliminated the work. Leach's work gives evidence, then, of an internal location of the handmade and of a fear of what may become of the body should we entirely give it up. It is my contention that as difficult as it may be to locate the activity of handmaking in our own form of medicine, it is worthwhile to try to find it for it is precisely the nature of disease to unmake our bodies, and precisely our task to do the opposite.

¹For example, Seidel et al., *Mosby's Guide to Physical Examination*, Second ed., Mosby - Year Book, Inc., 1991.: "The relationship with the patient mandates the exercise of an art that, when well done, leads to marvelous benefit," p.679.

²Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, Oxford University Press, 1985. p. 243.

³Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1987, p. 124.

⁴Scarry, p. 280.

⁵Bernard Leach, *A Potter's Book*, Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1940, p. 1.

Chapter 1

Theory of the Handmade

Though the handmade may seem intuitively graspable to us by nature of its apparent simplicity, its palpable and sympathetic proximity to our bodies and experience, its position is no longer so simple, if it ever was. To discuss the activity of handmaking today is to already be caught within a number of paradoxes, two of which will be looked at in the first part of this chapter. The first has to do with a structural problem involving the relation between language and created objects: How can language 'reach' or 'know' physical artifacts since it is by definition removed from them? The second, which is closely related, concerns the historical shift in methods of production and reveals an uneasy and on-going structural problem with handmaking as we now know it: What is the status of the handmade object in relation to the machine-made one? In order to have a better hold on notions of the handmade and to understand what relevance it may have for other practices (such as medicine) it is first necessary to immerse oneself in such paradoxes.

While we may claim to have a very firm idea of what the handmade is both because of the physical nature of these objects and because most of us have at various times made things by hand, these items (pots, chairs, story books, embroidered pillow cases, or beaded bracelets), are not known for the traditional functions they serve¹ but because they are handmade: They are things "I did myself". Their value as objects is not that they are the useful objects that they are, but because the objects came into being in a certain way, and so the object is not entirely itself, but functions to a considerable degree as a representation (or reification or fetishization) of the activity of handmaking². The recognition of this is not meant to degrade these items, or our feelings about them. Quite the opposite. What I observe is that in a number of different locations people (consumers, manufacturers, decorators, craftswomen) continue to express an interest in the handmade

object as the "real thing", as an authentic and better-made object, as somehow superior to the machine-made version (the interior of a car, a wallet, a shoe, a boat, a mug). That we love these objects very much, that they figure amongst the most valuable objects both personally and at large (think of the most valuable objects in a home and a museum) is not being questioned here; on the contrary such observations are what prompts this study. But what must be acknowledged and dealt with is that the other side of our love for these objects is an intense ambivalence for them which has arisen during the age of mechanical reproduction. This is the essence of the second paradox which I will discuss in a moment.

The former of these paradoxes is quite closely related and can be gleaned by asking the question of what it means to name the handmade and the practice of handmaking, a question worth posing at the outset. The problem is that speaking about the handmade is an operation occurring within two disparate realms, one physical and concrete, the other symbolic and abstract. A discussion about a poem, a political meeting, a novel, a conversation, or a lawsuit has the salient advantage of using a language isomorphic to the language in which the original transaction was performed, a language as we ordinarily think of it³. But the 'language' of the handmade ultimately must risk mis-translation as it is placed within the verbal register. It is impossible to learn to perform a surgical operation, rebuild an engine, or weave a basket solely from a text. Without the body, the pistons, the reeds in front of you, without being able to see, feel, perhaps even hear or smell them, without allowing them to make themselves palpable and reveal their textures, structures, and logics as only a physical presence can, no amount of verbal description and concomitant imagination will reveal a method for transforming them effectively and efficiently. Likewise, it would follow, any discussion about the handmade as a concept cannot reach it at its fundamental level.

Daniel Miller (1987) asks us to try the following exercise:

Imagine for a moment attempting to describe in detail the difference in shape between a milk bottle and a sherry bottle, or the taste of cod as against haddock, or the design of some wallpaper. Clearly, compared with our ability to make fine discriminations of perceptual qualities and immediately to recognize and

discriminate amidst a profusion of ordinary objects, linguistic description may appear slow and clumsy. (p. 98)

When verbal language tries to speak about something other than itself, it must admit to certain, and perhaps at times severe, limitations.

Yet the homonymy between 'text' and 'texture' points to the fact that both derived from the Latin word *texere*, to weave. This is not merely a metaphorical relation. It demonstrates that despite the seemingly abstract nature of activities such as writing, that it is conceived of in its own terms as a word as a crafting activity, a product of the hands (which is why, for example, playwright is so spelled)⁴. This not only throws into some confusion the activity of modeling practices in language, but suggests that it is language and the systems of thought modeled in it that may derived from such undertakings as crafts, and not the other way around. While it can certainly try to describe physical processes such as craft, it might also be worthwhile to ask what craft can say about language.

A similar point is made by John Onians in relation to Plato's notion of ideal form (*eidos*) and Aristotle's doctrine of the four causes; the latter is summarized by Heidegger:

(1) the *causa materialis*, the material, the matter out of which, for example a silver chalice is made; (2) the *causa formalis*, the form, the shape into which the material enters; (3) the *causa finalis*, the end, for example, the sacrificial rite in relation to which the chalice required is determined as to its form and matter; (4) the *causa efficiens*, which brings about the effect that is the finished, actual chalice, in this instance, the silversmith.⁵

It is in the *causa formalis* that Onians discovers the problem of schematizing the activity craft activity:

The form, or *eidos*, of man is analogous to the form of a physical craft-product, rather than the other way round. It is from the world of craft...not from the world of philosophy, that Plato borrowed the notion of 'idea' and Aristotle that of 'formal cause'⁶

Onians argues that the particular structure of the workshop, markets, and trade that evolved in ancient Greece brought about the use of model pieces shown to customers, called *deigma* ("I show"), to assure them of what they would get. As Greek cities, particularly Athens,

colonized to the East and elsewhere, the pottery workshops of Athens and Corinth remained the sole sources for vases, which were considered items essential for establishing one's status and definite (and superior) cultural origin. Each member of the resulting trading circuit (customer, merchant, potter) required a constant notion of form in order to assure certainty about the authentic nature of the Athenian product. Moreover, workshops would use *paradeigmata*, a "perfect specimen", as the highest standard to be aimed at by the craftsmen, a structure of creating that Onians finds described in the Creation story by Plato:

'A craftsman of anything will only produce something beautiful if he makes it after the pattern (*paradeigma*) of something which is always the same. If he makes it after something which came into being he will not achieve beauty' (p. 69)

And Aristotle's addition of three other causes to the Formal cause are not fundamental modification of Plato's ideas, rather, they are a more thorough description of what goes on in and from the workshop.

A double set of contingencies is implied by Onian's arguments, one that claims that language and its concepts (e.g. "form") are grounded in physical and social practices of production, and another that notes that these practices take place in a particular time and place. The latter has been pointed out by writers who call for a reevaluation of disciplines whose authors claim contain truth-bearing sets of immutable concepts at their foundations but which in fact can be shown to be historically contingent⁷. However I wish rather to focus attention to the first point: How is it that and what does it mean that something so seemingly abstract as a set of philosophical notions can bear such a striking resemblance to the seemingly mundane, day-to-day practices of the workshop?

Although a case is made here that developments in methods of creating led in turn to the use and acceptance of a certain abstract concepts, it could be argued that the scheme could as easily be temporally modified, even reversed. However, conceiving of the scheme temporally is probably not fruitful. Workshops, societies, royal lineage's, trading routes and so forth are all constructed as much as pottery, language, ships, and port towns. They

all can and will be continually modified through the processes of making and modification. What is significant that is suggested by Onian is that although we posit in philosophical concepts a transcendent quality, it is in the handmade that these notions can actually follow their trajectories from tangible to intangible; without originating at the locus of control, the human maker, they would not and could not exist.

Recent work in medical anthropology⁸, as well as other social science disciplines and the humanities, have come to focus on the body as a kind of fundamental signifier, as an entity so immediate and central that it may possibly allow for a better containment of highly abstract and intangible concepts that result when language is allowed its natural tendency to become hyper-reflexive. Perhaps it is because it is something everyone has in common (unlike language, philosophies, architectural styles, social orders, or medical systems) that it may also allow for a clearer understanding of people's (particularly other people's) experiences and specifically their formulations of these experiences. In any case, such theories are broadly informed by a phenomenological position which itself begins with a critique of the *Cogito* and specifically the mind-body problem. Its importance to handmaking begins with the observation that the hands are the source of the body's ability to manipulate the contents of the world (see note 4). Not unlike lenses, they are the points through which an enormous amount of energy within the body of wide-ranging location is gradually focused and intensified, and then beamed outward and impressed upon the equally wide-ranging world. And the energy emanating from these made objects beams inward in no less intense a fashion. This is to say that the mind is by no means the sole locus of the animate.

Avner Cohen locates the radical opposite of this position in the First Meditation quoting the following passage:

I suppose, then, that all the things that I see are false; I persuade myself that nothing has ever existed of all that my fallacious memory represents to me. I consider that I possess no sense; I imagine that body, figure, extension, movement and place are

but the fictions of my mind. What, then, can be esteemed as true? Perhaps nothing at all, unless that there is nothing in the world that is certain.⁹

It is not simply that post-Cartesian thought enacts a separation between mind and body or between consciousness and external objects, these are separations that ancient Greek and non-Western thought contain; instead "With Descartes the universe is divided ontologically between two type of entities: the *res cogitans* which is mental, and the *res externa* which is physical. The two are said to be mutually exclusive substances. As a whole the Cartesian universe consists almost exclusively of lifeless *mechanical*, extended entities"¹⁰ (my italics). "Almost", with the exception being man, and particularly his possession of this newly understood substance, consciousness, which is incorporeal and unlocatable, and yet is the thing, the only thing that can perceive, locate, understand, and explain the external world and its objects. And what, in fact, assures us even that this external world is not merely a product of consciousness? Nothing, which is precisely what the world becomes in such a formulation.

As noted, Greek thought certainly contained dualities for Greeks too had a notion of mind (psyche) and body (physic), but the specific and mutual exclusivity of these entities would have been alien to Greek thought. Cohen notes:

For Aristotle in *De Anima* the very problematic of the mind versus the world does not arise at all, since "actual knowledge is identical with its object" (Book 1, 429b); "the thinking part of the soul must therefore be...capable of receiving the form of an object...must be potentially identical in character with its object without being the object" (Book 1 414a). Aristotle has no need to be assured of the existence of the external world.¹¹

As can be seen with the Four Causes above, Aristotle finds it perfectly consistent and in fact essential to draw together several causes (each occurring in realms that post-Cartesian thought would consider exclusive) to explain how an object comes to be. The use of craft and other types of making in illustrating the concepts contained in the Four Causes is again not an accident or a coincidence. They are embedded within the structure of the act of making, an act that begins out of an locus of need within the body that reaches out through the hands into the world transforming it and bringing it back within.

As Cohen notes, the implication of the Cartesian position is that entities outside the body and more importantly the body itself have a mechanical quality for which he uses the modifier "lifeless". The radical mind-body division allowed for the advent of a science, a way of thinking, that "did away with all properties which might have impeded the mathematical-causal analysis of physical functioning" and allowed in turn for a mathematical and mechanical mapping of the body, now "tested experimentally and blueprinted in detailed anatomical study"¹². In other words, the stage was set for a new type of making, one that would do away with human handmaking and increasingly replace it with non-human machine making.

But as machines have gradually come on the scene the older types of making, those done by man, nature, or God become more complexly layered. This observation allows us to investigate the second paradox of handmaking noted above which relates to the first when we make the observation that in order to become a concept, a part of language, there had to exist some other sort of making which hand making was *not*.. This can be gleaned by noting that the very definition of the word 'handmade' has undergone an ironic transformation during the last 150 years or so. The Oxford English Dictionary states this succinctly: "Formerly distinguished from the work of nature (=artificial), now usually from that of machinery." An example of the former is cited: "PURCHAS *Pilgramge* (1614) 511 A hand-made strait of Sea water", immediately followed by examples of the latter: "1840 *Penny Cycl.* XVII. 109/2 Hand-made paper is now commonly marked with the name of the maker, and the date of the year when it was made", and "1879 LUBBOCK *Sci. Lect.* v. 156 Hand-made pottery is abundant."¹³ Furthermore, the words artificial, artifice, and artifact are all derived from the Latin *artificium* literally translatable as craftsman¹⁴. That is, previous to our age, when made items are primarily made by machine, what was 'handmade' stood in contrast to what was made by nature, and was further designated as 'artificial' so that there would not rest a confusion about the source of the object.

However, before attending to this scheme in detail, it would probably be best to start at a point when the picture was less confusing, before the era of machine and factory technology, in order to clear up what is strange to our way of thinking about the handmade: as an artificial thing. Though it would be difficult to generalize, we find in diverse texts a common concern about the work of man and that of nature.

The Winter's Tale ¹⁵ contains several scenes in which the handwork of man is contrasted to that of nature:

<i>Perdita</i>	Sir, the year growing ancient, Not yet on summer's death nor on the birth Of trembling winter, the fairest flow'rs o' th' season Are our carnation and streak's gillyvors, Which some call nature's bastards. Of that kind Our rustic garden's barren; and I care not To get slips of them.
<i>Polixenes</i>	Wherefore, gentle maiden, Do you neglect them?"
<i>Perdita</i>	For I have heard it said There is an art which in their piedness shares With great creating nature.
<i>Polixenes</i>	Say there be: Yet nature is made better by no mean But nature makes that mean; so over that art Which you say adds to nature, is an art That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry A gentler scion to the wildest stock, And make conceive a bark of baser kind By bud of nobler race. This is an art Which does mend nature — change it rather; but The art itself is nature.
<i>Perdita</i>	So it is.
<i>Polixenes</i>	Then make your garden rich in gillyvors, And do not call them bastards.
<i>Perdita</i>	I'll not put The dibble in earth to set one slip of them; No more than were I painted I would wish This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore Desire to breed by me... ¹⁶

The debate contained here was a common one in the Renaissance, and though it in itself could provide material for a separate study, I here wish to point out the fundamental force with which the idea of man-made objects playing on or substituting for the work of nature

is met. Polixenes' nervous, mistaken speech ("mend nature — change it rather") belies his awareness about the sensitivity of the topic as his elliptical and specious reasoning tells of the impossibility of convincing Perdita or anyone else in his audience of his claim. And the uncertainty with which Polixenes argues for controverting the structure of handmade-as-artificial is met by Perdita with a confidence that demonstrates on what solid ground the structure lies in her mind, so that she separates herself syntactically as far as possible from these unnatural products without fear: "I'll not put The dibble in earth to set one slip of them;". This then points out precisely the embeddedness of the definition of handmade as artificial to a Renaissance audience. And we notice, most importantly, that the contempt Perdita expresses towards the practice of flower breeding manifests itself at the moment when she imagines the practice coming around to her own body.

It is just such an occurrence of man-imitating-nature that her final words describe that foreshadow her mother's fate, who later will be apparently reproduced by the artist Julio Romano "who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape."¹⁷ What is presented as a statue of Hermione is in fact Hermione herself, and is taken by her husband and all those in attendance as a statue. Leontes exclaims: "Would you not deem it breath'd, and that those veins Did verily bear blood?" Though the mimesis here is used as a dramatic device it was not, in fact, extreme for an era in which the *trompe l'oeil* technique could cause viewers to believe painted flames were real.¹⁸ The now 'animate' Hermione absent for sixteen years makes a single speech before the end of the play in which she utterly ignores her husband, his court, or her participation is the bizarre transaction of her body-as-statue coming to life. She dwells entirely on what is to her the singular, natural product of her body, her daughter, exclaiming that it was solely because of the possibility that Perdita might still exist that she continued to live. Her statement parallels her daughter's attitude several scenes earlier. The artificial products of man (bred flowers, portraits, statues) are worthy

of contempt or worthy of no attention at all for they impinge and impugn the true and essential locus of making, nature.

Elaine Scarry discusses in detail a similar attitude toward handmade objects that is found in the Old Testament except that instead of nature, God stands as the sole author of genuine artifacts, the human body being the most important work¹⁹. Any act of making by man, and particularly the making of graven images, objects that give god a body, are seen as violations of this essential structure, and therefore a weakening of the position of God as the prime creator²⁰. If men are allowed to make objects without God's involvement, God gives up a portion of territory in the field of making and so accepts a diminution of his power as creator. Graven images more profoundly subvert this structure, for not only do they give evidence of man's ability to create outside the authority of God, they embody God, and in so doing force god to embody himself in order to speak out against the idols. Thus, he demonstrates that he has a voice and a body and further offers that it is precisely this ability to be sentient that distinguishes him from the graven images for, as Scarry points out, it is during these passages that God denounces graven images for their lack of sentient awareness that he himself both implicitly demonstrates and specifically states his possession of such:

"And there you will serve gods of wood and stone,
the work of men's hands, that neither see nor
hear, nor eat, nor smell. (Deuteronomy 4:28)"

*"...now I will cry out like a woman in travail,
I will gasp and pant.
I will lay waste mountains and hills,
and dry up all their herbage...
They shall be turned back and utterly
put to shame,
who trust in graven images... (Habakkuk 42:14,15,17)"²¹ (italics in the original)*

God's reactions in these passages, his embodiment, his statements, his emotions, his actions, all attest to the power and the problem of the handmade object, for in giving god a body, the category between man and god is blurred. The Old Testament hostility toward

man-made artifacts goes beyond that expressed in the Renaissance: not only are they artificial, they are scarcely allowed to be.

A possible problem arises, however, when we notice that the objects referred to in either the Old Testament or *The Winter's Tale* are images, and that in some sense we divide categories of handmade objects along a line on one side of which lie artifacts that contain a high degree of representational status (graven images, portraits, statues) and on the other are those we describe as functional, where that functionality is described as meeting needs of bodily physiology (pots, clothing, chairs, housing). Our categories of art and craft exemplify this. Scarry solves this problem without even stating it. She takes it as virtually axiomatic that artifacts, no matter what, all have the primary function of somehow acting to modify the fact of human sentient awareness, either to help (amplify, protect, raise, intensify) it or hurt (destroy, disable, lower, dilute) it. In this sense she does not place poems, telephone wires, the Constitution, shoes, posters, refrigerators and so forth in separate categories since they all act to in some important way change human sentience.

This position taken by Scarry, which is foundational for my purposes, deserves elaboration before returning to look at the handmade within the modern context. Few writers have given such prominence to the significance of making and made objects, a fact which she acknowledges: "Knowledge about the character of creating and created objects is at present in a state of conceptual infancy." Daniel Miller similarly observes,

there is an extraordinary lack of academic discussion pertaining to artifacts as objects, despite their pervasive presence as the context for modern life...Political philosophy is more concerned with objects as properties than the properties of objects, while phenomenology, as that branch of philosophy which claims more direct concern with everyday objects, considers these mainly as media for addressing the role of agency and the nature of subjectivity.²²

This may have precisely to do with the nature of the interaction between language and objects elaborated above; language is much more comfortable and able to talk about itself than about an object qua object. In any case it is in the work of Scarry, Miller and earlier,

Marx and Mauss²³ where keen attention is given to what Scarry would term the "interior structure" of the artifact, which has everything to do with how an object comes to be.

She follows her analysis of making in the Old Testament with that of Marx in Capital:

Marx eliminates from his description of material culture the outlines of God's presence, the entry of the Original Artifact into its successors, a work of entry accomplished and long since in place by the time he reopened the subject. But his assessment acknowledges the interior design whose shape is traced in the older account: he throughout his writings assumes that the made world is the human being's body and that, having projected that body into the made world, men and women are themselves disembodied, spiritualized. A made thing remade not to have a body, the person is himself an artifact. For Marx, material culture incorporates into itself the frailties of sentience, is the substitute recipient of the blows that would otherwise fall on that sentience... . Through this generous design the imagination performs her ongoing work of rescue, and because of that design Marx never disavows or discredits the western impulse toward material self-expression but is, instead, in deep sympathy with it. (p. 244)

For Marx and for Scarry the act of making "deprives the external world of the privilege of being inanimate"²⁴, the world that due to its lack of sentience does not care if a human being should become cold or wet, hot and dehydrated, or should, because of the lack of a road, be unable to climb a certain hill, or because of the lack of a pot be unable to store enough food and water to survive a drought, or because of a lack of a painted image of a bull be unable to enter in communion with other hunters and be unable to begin to possess the spirit of the animal before a hunt. All acts of making are efforts, successful or not, to mediate the experience of physical pain. Pain, for Scarry, is a state that "is exceptional in the whole fabric of psychic, somatic, and perceptual status for being the only one that has no object."²⁵ All other forms of sentience (seeing, desiring, smelling, fearing) are directed at and only able to exist due to their involvement with an object, and the object world, because it already contains these objectified forms of sentience (paintings, companions, roses, night) does not require itself to be supplemented due to these states. It is only when an objectless state is felt (=pain) which can occur with any form of sentience when its object, its perceived content forces the sensation back into the body (such as when the sun is extremely bright I no longer see, but become aware of pain in my eyes or when I

hear very loud music I no longer hear anything but become aware of pain in my ears) that there immediately is perceived a need to create objects (sunglasses, earplugs).

Through the use of the imagination we build a world in which there are objects that assure (protect, guard, shield) against the experience of pain, the avoidance of which would not otherwise be guaranteed by the exigencies of the unmodified external world. Moreover in doing so these objects also act to extend (amplify, enhance, enlarge, elaborate) sentence. What Scarry means by the "interior structure" of the artifact is that the activity of making and the resulting made objects contain in an objectified form some aspect of our ability to see, feel, smell, hear and so forth.

To illustrate this Scarry chooses the example of the making of a chair and asks us to imagine that the wood is not present and that we are simply watching a man perform the actions of making. We would observe "a dance entitled 'body weight begone'" where the maker would enact the awareness of another's pain (a woman in her example), his movements embodying this compassion. If we now place wood before the man and tools in his hands we would gradually see this feeling embodied by a chair-coming-to-be. "Thus in work, a perception is danced; in the chair, a dance-perception is sculpted."²⁶ The chair, once made, has, according to Scarry, two advantages over a simple verbal expression of concern over, in this case, the woman's having to stand up to the point of discomfort. First, "when both persons are free of the problem of her weight, they share endless other concerns, work to eliminate other pains, so that increasingly the pleasure of world-building rather than pain is the occasion of their union."²⁷

It is in describing the second of these advantages that Scarry attends to the historical change in the nature of production that was noted earlier, a point to which I now wish to return. For not only does the chair relieve weight and allow people to attend to other concerns, it also, due to the fact that it is "free-standing", provides this service independent of the contingencies of a particular person's disposition toward another person. "The general distribution of material objects to a population means that a certain *minimum* level

of objectified human compassion is built into the revised structure of the external world, and does not depend on the day-by-day generosity of other inhabitants which itself cannot be legislated." She then continues by examining the effect such objects may have on victims of political imprisonment:

This is also why a woman imprisoned under a hostile regime in Chile once clung passionately to a white linen handkerchief slipped to her from another country, for she recognized within the object the collective human salute that is implicit in the very manufacture of such objects²⁸; just as this same salute has been recognized by many prisoners of torture who mention (often with an intensity of gratitude that may at first sound puzzling) the solitary blanket or freshly white-washed walls one day introduced into their midst by the quiet machinations of the International Red Cross²⁹. It is almost universally the case in everyday life that the most cherished object is one that has been hand-made by a friend: there is no mystery about this, for the object's material attributes themselves record and memorialize the intensely personal, extraordinary because exclusive, interior feelings of the maker for just this person — This is for you. But anonymous, mass-produced objects contain a collective and equally extraordinary message: Whoever you are, and whether or not I personally like or even know you, in at least this small way, be well. Thus, within the realm of objects, objects-made-for-anyone bear the same relation to objects-made-for-someone that, within the human realm, *caritas* bears to *eros*.³⁰

This is the first and only instance where Scarry compares the specific natures of the hand-made and machine-made artifacts. But there are several problems with her argument here. First, I am not as certain as she is that "it is almost universally the case in everyday life that the most cherished object is one that has been hand-made by a friend". Although my evidence is perhaps no better than hers, I have noticed that just as often as they are cherished friend's hand-made objects are placed on the top shelf of a cupboard towards the back never to be seen again. In fact, this is just as natural a reaction since although one can appreciate the sincerity of a hand-made gift, unless that person is, in fact, a skilled craftsperson, in all likelihood this object will not be well-made, and obviously inferior to even a machine-made version (hand-knit items are, in my experience, notorious for this).

Furthermore, by making the craftsperson and friend the same person, she avoids making any claims about the origin and nature of most hand-made objects, those made by craftspeople who are skilled, and her argument may say nothing more than something no one would disagree with, namely that it is friends who are universally cherished. This is

an important point to recognize, because one of the main effects that machine-making has had is a profound diminution in the quality of hand-made objects, precisely due to the sentiment contained in Scarry's argument, a sentiment which, as was stated earlier, tends to look upon hand-made items as representations of hand-made items, and it is therefore not the interior structure of the artifact, the actual nature of the construction-for-a-purpose, which is of importance, but rather something on the surface of it. That in her example of the chair she is able to discuss the specific playing-out of pain, sentience, etc. so poetically and convincingly is not incidental to her choosing to describe a hand-made object. It might have been a more difficult for her to make her argument had she chosen to focus instead on a plastic Honda bumper guard.

In addition, while I do emphatically agree with the notion that any made artifact contains an objectified form of human compassion, her discussion of the mass- (i.e. machine) produced object takes place in relation to someone who is being tortured, for whom any material reminder of human beneficence would have profound consequences. By placing the machine-made object in relation to the tortured body she chooses a situation where these qualities are as amplified as they ever will be. Scarry does in her discussion of Marx's description of the capitalist system and its effects on the created object in its relation to the body of the worker and capitalist demonstrate at least some of the effects of the particular way machines have been employed in production. She describes the difference in the degree of sentient projection available to the worker and the capitalist due to the structure of the capitalist system: The worker experiences a very limited amount and therefore close to pain, the latter a great deal and so insulated by many layers from pain. This is due to the structure of the capitalist system which separates and privatizes the products of labor (changing the made artifact into a commodity which is in turn changed into money which is then changed into capital) so that the worker's attempts through making to embody sentience, to share his awareness of other's pain, is stolen away and expropriated.

In the end, that creator has not only ceased to be the recipient of his creation's beneficent disembodying powers but, in some ways more radically, has even cease

to be recognizable to himself and to others as the "creator". It ceases to be self-evident that tens of thousands of workers who have made the commodities have also collectively made the excessive residue of value that appears in later forms as money and capital.³¹

As was noted in the discussion of Onians (and as Scarry herself emphasizes), economic systems are also constructed, are themselves artifacts and so can be analyzed vis a vis their tendency to allow or disallow for sentient projection through making. But by focusing on super-structural elements I think she misses what can be said about the particular kinds of making that go on within these structures, for these are not incidental to what goes on at higher levels. In other words, Scarry by ignoring the particular effects of machine-making and tending to focus on what is good about hand-making begs, but does not confront the possibility that an element of, for example, the economic system she describes is bound up with the particular kind of making it employs. There would seem to be some contradiction between the observation that even mass-produced objects contain this projection of sentience and the claim that due to capitalism workers are cut off from it, that it is no longer recognizable in the made artifact. What is missing from her analysis, I think, is specific attention paid to the consequences of the machine as the locus of making and its effects on such phenomena as projection and sentience, as well as its implications for hand-making, which I think are more complicated than she lets on.

To return to the definition of handmaking that was cited above, we can construct the following figure which schematizes the historical shift in making suggested by the OED definition:

Before c. 1800:	Nature —> Real
	Man —> Artificial
After c. 1800:	Man —> Real (hand-made)
	Machine —> Artificial

The complex position of nature within this tentative scheme deserves some attention. As we saw in *The Winter's Tale*, previous to the large-scale supplanting of handmaking by machine-making, the former competed with and was a threat to nature. In the Old Testament, it was God-as-maker that man's making impugned. Part of the reason for this tension is due to what making, as Scarry analyzes it, does to human sentience. It externalizes it, projects it outward and therefore implies or suggests that man can make his own body, that by constructing artifacts and somehow placing sentience outside of himself, he can, if this is taken to the extreme, make *himself*, a situation which is imagined in myths and which in them, as we will see in the third chapter, inevitably has dire consequences. And it is for this reason that it was important to designate handmade artifacts as artificial.

After the advent of large-scale machine-making the status of "nature" becomes layered. On one level nature, like the handmade, starts to be viewed nostalgically. In writing about the communal movements in the United States of the early 1970's John McDermott writes:

American urban man has been seduced by nature. By this I mean that at the deepest level of his consciousness urban man functions on behalf of nature metaphors, nature expectancies, and a nostalgia for an experience of nature which neither he nor his forbears actually underwent.³²

What such sentiments indicate, I think, is an attempt to return nature to a more secure position, a position which according to the philosopher of science François Dagognet is itself a construction. He argues that it is specious to suppose that there is some sort of original, and superior natural state: "Either one adopts a sort of veneration before the immensity of 'that which is' or one accepts the possibility of manipulation."³³

But there is another effect upon the arrangement of the elements and sources of making in the machine age which Dagognet's comments flush out. Handmaking (literally manipulation) continues to be the type of making located and carried out in proximity to the human body. Making by nature and by machines do not, and in this they are alike, and therefore able to be confused, and if this is so then it may be machine-making that begins to

be looked at as a natural kind of making. This possibility was observed early in the history of industrial production. The British Arts and Crafts Movements of the 1880's and 1890's, for example, was informed by a group of social critics whose contempt for industrial production and its social effects has been unrivaled. Perhaps the first of these, Thomas Carlyle writing for *The Edinburgh Review*, is quoted by Brian Moeran (1984):

Our old modes of exertion are all discredited, and thrown aside. On every hand the living artisan is driven from his workshop, to make room for a speedier, inanimate one. The shuttle drops from the finger of the weaver, and falls into iron fingers that ply it faster. For all earthly, and for some unearthly purpose, we have machines and mechanical furtherances...We remove mountains and make seas our smooth highway; nothing can resist us. We war with rude Nature; and by our restless engines, come off victorious and loaded with spoils...Not the external and physical alone is now managed by the machinery, but the internal and spiritual also. Here, too, nothing follows its spontaneous course, nothing is left to be accomplished by old natural methods....The same habit regulates not our modes of action alone, but our modes of thought and feeling. Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavor, and in natural force, of any kind. Not for internal perfection, but for external combinations and arrangements, for institutions, constitutions — for Mechanism of one sort or other, do they hope and struggle. Their whole efforts, attachments, opinions, turn on mechanism, and are of a mechanical character. (From *Sign of the Times*, in the *Works of Thomas Carlyle*, vol. 2, pp. 233-236)³⁴

The particular relationship with nature that Heidegger in "A Question Concerning Technology" describes as "standing reserve" ("remove mountains", "make seas", "loaded with spoils") is presaged here, as is the dangerous relation of technology to the human spirit that may allow it to become alien to itself: "he fails to see himself as the one spoken to, and hence also fails in every way to hear in what respect he ek-sists, from out of his essence...so that he can never encounter only himself."³⁵ Throughout Carlyle's passage there seems to be a siege going on by some disembodied force ("modes of exertion are...thrown aside", "the living artisan is driven from his workshop") that comes quickly to the location of the craftsman's hands ("The shuttle drops from the finger") and finally penetrates to organically possess man ("Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart"). The confusion between the machine and the natural is manifest here as a spirit sweeping through the new scene of production. The categories of natural, man, and machine no longer distinct, simultaneously possess and disembody each other.

Carlyle is followed by a number of other critics three of whom are considered to be been influential in the foundation of the Arts and Crafts Movement: A.W.N Pugin (1812-1852), John Ruskin (1819-1900), and William Morris (1834-1896)³⁶. Pugin formulated two essential ideas: a functional approach to the crafted object, "there should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction, or 'propriety'"³⁷; and second, an espousal of the notion that the character of the created objects of a society directly reflected the character of the society. Pugin was not, however, directly antagonistic to the use of machines: "We do not want to arrest the course of inventions, but to confine these inventions to their legitimate uses..."³⁸. Ruskin, however, did not share this view believing "all cast and machine work is bad; as work...it is dishonest"³⁹, and further elaborating the second of Pugin's ideas into a specific critique of the form of labor that had arisen with machine production so that "one man...always [be] thinking, and another...always working, and we call one a gentleman and the other an operative; whereas the workman ought often to be thinking and the thinker often to be working and both should be gentleman." In another such statement Ruskin starkly parallels the productive method with the social method of production:

It is not truly speaking, the labour that is divided, but the men: —Divided into mere segments of men — broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin or the head of a nail.⁴⁰ (Ruskin 1963:180, from *The Nature of Gothic*)⁴¹

Morris is notable because he is considered to be the father of the Arts and Crafts Movement, but more significantly for his direct involvement with production:

"...[A]proned from the armpits, with tucked-up shirt-sleeves, his fore-arms dyed up to the elbow, the great man lectured most brilliantly on the high art of dyeing".

This statement gives us a clue as to why it may have been so difficult for these critics (not to mention others) to have actualized the substance of their arguments. A relevant point is made by Miller:

William Morris...sought not only to recognize but also to ameliorate the social and aesthetic impact of the machine, partly under the influence of socialist ideas. Through the emergence of the arts and crafts movements, Morris succeeded in establishing a craft tradition in which the individual could retain some control over every stage of manufacture from design to execution, and thereby gain a far more satisfactory relationship with the product. Unfortunately, because this tradition tended to ignore the problem of consumption, the main impact of this craft revival was to promote a conspicuous handmade image, explicitly separate from the products of mass consumption, and immediately recognized as a quality or luxury product which signified, and thereby helped reproduce, the new moneyed elites [and] provided an effective means for the further development of precisely those class differences which in turn helped reproduce the conditions for the exploitation of labor. (p. 140).

"[T]he high art of dyeing", here perhaps a laudatory phrase, reveals something else. Whatever the intentions of the earlier criticisms by Carlyle, Pugin and Ruskin, the fruition of these critiques, the Arts and Crafts movement, became an Art movement, so that what was made was made for how it looked and for the fact that it was not made by a machine. This may have had to do with Walter Benjamin's observation that since art could be mechanically reproduced, it lost its "aura", "its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be."⁴² One way to counter this problem is to advertise a "conspicuous handmade image"; the marks of the hands on the work ensure a unique location in time and space and the impossibility of mechanical reproduction, and it therefore may not be a coincidence that the Arts and Crafts movement occurred just as the photographic technology to reproduce paintings was coming on the scene. But in any case, the "explicitly separate" status of these items from machine-made products left intact a structure of making where the machine-made had become the natural way of making. Even if these men noticed, were dismayed by and railed against this occurrence, their criticisms led to a movement that did little to ameliorate it and, if Miller is correct, may only have reinforced it.

There has arisen a problem therefore in following Marx's admonition: "Yarn with which we neither weave nor knit is cotton wasted. Living labour must seize on these things, awaken them from the dead."⁴³ Attempts to return to old ways, to in fact practice handmaking in a direct way become fraught with difficulties in a context where machine-

making, in fact, has supplanted it. Nonetheless, I believe that *handmaking*, as a way in which to 'manipulate' the world continues to be a fundamental structure of organization and as a process that, despite the fact that it is not practiced in the sense in which we understand it, continues to be a fundamental category of experience. For example, in the work of Elaine Scarry her reliance on handmade ways of making to make general points about the enormous importance of making for understanding the texts and processes (themselves artifacts) she describes in no way is to the detriment of her theses, but rather suggests the possibility that it is not simply the structure of making, but more specifically *handmaking* that is of central and enormous importance for explaining the importance of such artifacts. In the final part of this chapter I wish to look at the topic of materials since I think it is here, both in a literal and conceptual sense that *handmaking* begins, and where, when material is taken in an extreme sense, its deepest aspects can be appreciated.

We are often accused of being and accuse ourselves of being a materialistic culture. Yet the use of the word material seems strange. Why don't we call ourselves an objectist, or itemist, or thingist culture? After all it stands to reason that what fascinates and obsesses us are objects (cars, computers, rugs, compact discs, swimming pools), not the materials these objects are made from (steel, silicon, wool, plastic, cement). In fact, most of us would have to admit that we lack any serious knowledge of how these materials are transformed into the objects we are so interested in, much less how iron ore becomes steel, how silicon is extracted, and so forth. And one would think the opposite of a culture that describes itself as materialistic. This is all an effect of the same processes that have changed the relative meaning of the word '*handmaking*'. We rarely come into contact, in actuality, with these materials because their handling has been given over to machines. But in our characterization of our own culture, even if that characterization has negative connotations, we act as though it were otherwise. To understand the use of this word it might be worth actually looking, even briefly, at the topic of materials.

In the structure of the activity of handmaking as it is described by Scarry or as it occurs in the Four Causes the material stands apart from the others because it is the most removed from the location of the maker's body. Tools in the hands, ideal forms in the imagination, chalices involved in rituals all occur next to or within or otherwise engage the body and therefore articulate forms of desire that are already becoming realized. The material, in the extreme, does not do this. It stands at the beginning of making and at the end of the process of unmaking, and therefore in the scheme of things is located 180 degrees from the body. The material in its pure form is the embodiment of death and is structurally identical with it for the material contains what Scarry would term a state of non-sentience. It only begins to live at the moment that the human maker "seizes" upon and begins to transform it. This further makes clear why when Scarry discusses "making" she actually is describing handmaking; it is only in the latter sense of making that people can really understand then what's happening, that they can envision and sense the full spectrum of activities and substances that are involved, which may have to do, as we will see in the second chapter, with ways in which these materials are like their own bodies.

But to conceive of the material in this extreme sense is to miss something essential. Any raw material we can think of already imparts some aspect of itself onto the artifacts that it will eventually become (clay-pot, wool-blanket, tile-mosaic). The attributes that we give to raw materials (malleable, inchoate, protean, polymorphous, perverse) are only part of the story. Although such designations may be what excite the act of making, the plunging in of the hands and seizing upon, what craftspeople always recognize is that to a considerable extent their materials are already ordered. Perhaps the notion of a raw material *qua* raw material is itself an artifact of our need to contrast elements in order to understand them and is in itself, just like death, incomprehensible.

This is a critical point because it should draw our attention more specifically to one portion of making, the interaction of the maker with his raw material. For example, one problem with a division between the Aristotelian categories of the Material and Formal

causes, then, is that a material may already possess qualities that determine something about the forms into which it can be put. Such a phenomena is described by John Berger in relation to Western European art of the last 500 years, "What distinguishes oil painting from any other form of painting is its special ability to render the tangibility, the texture, the luster, the solidity of what it depicts. It defines the real as that which you can put your hands on." He points out that oil paint had existed since ancient times, "But the oil painting as an art form was not born until there was a need to develop and perfect this technique (which soon involved using canvas instead of wooden panels) in order to express a particular view of life for which the techniques of tempera or fresco were inadequate."⁴⁴ Something about oil paint, the infinite range of colors that can be mixed, the extreme opacity, the oily, luminescent surface appearance, the ability to cover its mistakes over and over, all lend themselves to a particular view of life and that these particular aspects of the material lend themselves to this view. What is perhaps most remarkable about it, however, is its ability to hide itself.

As much could be said about any other type of material. Roland Barthes compares the use of wood to plastic in the construction of children's toys:

The bourgeois status of toys can be recognized not only in their forms, which are all functional, but also in their substances. Current toys are made of a graceless material, the product of chemistry, not of nature. Many are now molded from complicated mixtures; the plastic material of which they are made has an appearance at once gross and hygienic, it destroys all the pleasure, the sweetness, the humanity of touch. A sign which fills one with consternation is the gradual disappearance of wood...It is a familiar and poetic substance, which does not sever the child from close contact with the tree, the table, the floor...Wood makes essential objects, objects for all time. Yet there hardly remain any of these wooden toys from the Vosges, these fretwork farms with their animals, which were only possible, it is true, in the days of the craftsman.⁴⁵

Although we could accuse Barthes of being romantic or nostalgic in his descriptions, such a characterization would exactly miss the point about materials which is a categorical rather than emotional or moral one. Wood, in Barthes' formulation, imparts certain qualities to toys *qua* wood, qualities that determine something about the forms of the toys which are created out of the wood, the experiences children will have playing with them, the

associations they will have, and so on. Rimbaud, whose contempt for work we saw already (note 4), takes this to its obvious conclusion: "Too bad for the wood that happens to be a violin."⁴⁶ In all this wood is not simply a "raw material."

When, therefore, scholars (or journalists or salesmen or seamstresses or lawyers) refer to their 'material' they are talking about 'substances' that are not entirely lacking in differentiation (texts, words, fabric, legal statutes). What a scholar (or scientist or literary critic) does is to structure these materials to suggest another, higher level of differentiation, so the use of the term 'material' only refers to a relative and not absolute sense of order or disorder. But in common these items begin to take on, in the right context — namely in front of the person making — qualities of rawness, of an undifferentiated substance despite the fact that we can recognize, for example in a text, already a huge amount of differentiation. Miller suggests why it is appropriate to refer to our culture as materialistic:

All the objects discussed are the direct product of commercial concerns and industrial processes. Taken together, they appear to imply that in certain circumstances segments of the population are able to appropriate such industrial objects and utilize them in the creation of their own image.⁴⁷

However, in assembling objects that already are themselves made artifacts, we do an amount of damage to the original artifact. This is why potters treat their clay with great reverence for even it already contains something of a personified character, ineluctable qualities, a spirit.

In discussing the concepts of body and voice Scarry says,

[I]t is useful to recognize that these are among the most elementary and least metaphorical categories we have. Compared to them, the rush of analytic categories we ordinarily use to enter and accommodate human experience — hierarchical and dialectical, form and content, authoritarian and egalitarian, reason and emotion...and so forth — are (however solid, legitimate, and fruitful) remote and fantastical elaborations of distinctions that are only apprehensible once we are already moving about in a richly fictionalized world — that is, their use arises at the point where we are already extended out into a dense sea of constructs and artifacts, deeply immersed in made culture. The concepts of body and voice, in contrast, though not themselves prior to culture and artifice, are perhaps as close to prior as is possible, for they appear to emerge as explanatory rubrics in early moments of creating, or when there is some problem in the relation between maker and made thing that carries us back to the original moment of making.

I would offer that as an elemental category materials should as well be included for they are equally prior to the constructed world. What is essential to realize is that contained within the material itself is always the tension or dialectic between its being an undifferentiated substance and its already containing qualities that give it a degree of artifactuality, not simply in the fact that the imagination sees in all sorts of potential artifacts, but intrinsic to the substance itself. What we will see in what follows is that the human body is no different, which may help explain, incidentally, why it is that potters refer to their clay as a clay body.

¹To give a strict functional definition to objects is of course specious, and not my real intention. As Miller states: "...a cursory examination of artifacts as actually employed within different societies reveals the extreme diversity of uses and connotations among physically similar forms..." (p. 109). However, as will become clear later, the physical relation of these items to our bodies is of importance in understanding how we use and understand them.

²This is not to claim that these objects do not have value in themselves. Certainly objects we have made ourselves and use do not entirely have value for what they represent. The first problem is that if such value is recognized it begs the question of why there exist so few of these objects.

³Daniel Miller discusses this point extensively in relation to language and artifacts. He notes that compared with studies of language there have been very few about artifacts. (Elaine Scarry (see below) makes a similar point about studies concerning the making of artifacts.) Furthermore, those studies that did focus on artifacts "took place at the expense of subordinating the object qualities of things to their word-like properties" (Miller, pp. 95-6) I am only claiming that the languages used by law, political discussions, novels, and so on are all verbal (spoken or written). Between and even within these languages there are, of course, differences, contradictions, and other sorts of tensions.

⁴In her analysis of a portion of Rimbaud's "Une Saison en enfer," Kriston Ross (*Rimbaud and the Resistance to Work*, Representations No. 19, University of California, Summer 1987) argues that "Writing is an activity of the hand as much as is plowing: the importance lies in the relation of the hand to a tool even if the tool is as light as a pen." (p. 65). Here she is analyzing a passage where the narrator expresses his repudiation of *métiers* (trades) on the basis by doing so he is able "to resist participation in a society where workers' activities -- those of artist or farmers -- are projected outside of and against them, in a work process in which the previous social labor, which has produced the tools, the pens, the plows, the language with which work is done, appears a dead structure automizing labor and worker at once... To have a *métier*, a trade, a specialty even that of an antisocial *métier* like a beggar or criminal (both professionals who "live by their hands"; in French *tendre la main* means "to beg") -- is to lose one's hand as an integral part of one's body as synecdoche for the social body, executing the wishes of another." The critique is valuable in itself and raises points that will be looked at further, but my point here is that she demonstrates both the centrality of hands and handmaking in activities seemingly more abstract and the location of the hands at mediating what goes on outside the body and inside it.

⁵Martin Heidegger, "A Question Concerning Technology" in *Basic Writings*, Harper and Row, New York, William Lovitt, trans., 1954, pp. 289-91.

⁶John Onians, "Idea and Product: Potter and Philosopher in Classical Athens", *Journal of Design History*, Oxford University Press, Volume 4, Number 2, part 2, 1991, p. 65.

⁷Two works often cited in this regard are: R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. (cited in Avner Cohen, "Descartes and Depersonalization", *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1984 and Paul Rabinow, *Artificiality and Enlightenment: From Sociology to Biosociality in Zone, Incorporations*, 1993) and Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, 1970.

⁸Two examples are: Csordas, Thomas J., "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology", *Ethos* Vol 18:1, 1990. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret M. Lock, "The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future

Work in Medical Anthropology, *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, Vol. 1:1, ed. Alan Harwood, American Anthropological Association, 1987.

⁹Descartes, R. *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, cited in Cohen, Avner, "Descartes and Depersonalization", *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1984, p. 13.

¹⁰Cohen, p. 10.

¹¹Cohen, p. 18.

¹²Drew Leder, "Medicine and Paradigms of Embodiment", *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1984, p. 30.

¹³Oxford English Dictionary, second ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 1078.

¹⁴The American Heritage Dictionary, Houghton Mifflin, 1985.

¹⁵Shakespeare, William, *The Winter's Tale*, 1611, Collins Alexander Shakespeare, 1951

¹⁶IV. iv, 78-104.

¹⁷V. ii, 93-5.

¹⁸Teresa Faherty, Dept. of English, University of Southern California personal communication, 11/20/94.

¹⁹Scarry, p.225. Nature as creator is not absent from the conscience of the Old Testament, but as Scarry points out: "... in a single stroke, the Old Testament mind has effectively subverted the entire "natural world" and reconceived the whole cosmos as the proper territory for acts of artifice and intelligence." (p. 222). For my argument, the precise locus of the whatever metaphysical entity it is that is the prime creator at a given place and time is not as important as an acknowledgment that it is its product that is genuine.

²⁰Scarry, p. 226

²¹Scarry, p. 229, 231.

²²Miller, p. 85.

²³Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, translated by W.D. Halls, Norton, New York, 1990 (1950).

²⁴Scarry, p. 285.

²⁵Scarry, p. 161.

²⁶Scarry, p. 290.

²⁷Scarry, p. 291.

²⁸(Scarry's note 13 of Chpt. 5, p. 368): "Sheila Cassidy, "The Ordeal of Sheila Cassidy," *The Observer* [London], 26 August 1977."

²⁹(Scarry's note 14, of Chpt. 5, p. 368): "These two objects are cited in medical and torture reports (e.g., "Transcript of the Torturers' Trial," 42) read at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International, London, 1977."

³⁰Scarry, pp. 291-2

³¹Scarry, p. 260.

³²John J. McDermott, "Nature Nostalgia and the City: An American Dilemma" in *The Family, Communes, and Utopian Societies*, edited by Sallie TeSelle, Harper, 1972, p. 2.

³³Francois Dagonet, *La Maitrise du vivant* (Paris: Hachette, 1988), p. 22, cited in Paul Rabinow, "Artificiality and Enlightenment: From Sociobiology to Biosociality," in *Incorporations*, Crary et. al., Urzone Inc., 1992, p. 249.

³⁴Thomas Carlyle from *Sign of the Times* in the *Works of Thomas Carlyle* vol. 2, pp. 233-236, cited in Brian Moeran, *Lost Innocence: Folk Craft Potters of Onta, Japan*, University of California Press, 1984, p. 10. (N.B.: Moeran apparently overlooked putting the full reference in his bibliography.)

³⁵Heidegger, pp 308-9.

³⁶Lucie-Smith, Edward, *The Story of Craft*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1981, 207-209.

³⁷Lucie-Smith, p. 207

³⁸Kaplan, Wendy, "The Art that is Life": The Arts & Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1987, p. 54.

³⁹Kaplan, p. 54.

⁴⁰John Ruskin, *The Genius of John Ruskin: Selections from His Writings*, ed. J. G. Rosenberg, London, Allen & Unwin, 1963. Cited in Brian Moeran, *Lost Innocence: Folk Craft Potters of Onta, Japan*, University of California Press, 1984. p. 11.

⁴¹ Cited in Moeran, p. 11.

⁴²Walter Benjamin, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., New York, 1968 (1955), p. 220.

⁴³Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes, introd. Ernest Mandel Random House-Vintage, New York, 1977, cited in Scarry, p. 247.

⁴⁴John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, British Broadcasting Corporation, London, 1972, p. 88, p. 84, respectively.

⁴⁵Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Annette Lavers, trans., Hill and Wang, New York, 1957 (1952), pp. 54-5.

⁴⁶Rimbaud, *Oeuvres*, p. 252, cited in Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley, Columbia, 1988.

⁴⁷Miller, p. 175.

Chapter 2

The Medicine Pot

By the way people behave, there would seem to be something uncanny about the breaking of a water-pot...Occasionally, the carriers drop one and it smashes to fragments. Accidents of this nature happen more particularly when going to and fro for the house-hold water supply. When it does occur, it is the signal for an outburst of violent distress. Shrieks and wails rend the air and, for a time, the [female] owner is inconsolable...I am not aware of any specific reason why there should be such an exhibition of grief at the breaking of a water-pot. It is probably the active expression of an old tradition of which the underlying reason has been forgotten.

—W. Basden, 1938, *Niger Igbos*, (cited in Barley, p. 92)

Within the field of handmade objects one form, the vessel, presents itself as allowing for a more extensive and intimate mapping of the human body than any other. As has been noted, other objects (chairs, blankets, cars, paintings, telescopes) while they modify bodily experience in some way and therefore act as sentient projections do so usually for only a part of the body or its functions (legs, skin, ambulation, sight, eyes); and while it might be argued that for example sculptures, particularly naturalistic ones, are much more accurate representations of the body and its parts, they act primarily like paintings as visual extensions, and although they may beg to be touched they remain aloof in a fundamental way. They do not participate in the activities of the human body, and cannot said to be acting as sentient extension for more than one sense, that of vision. In contrast to these and many other made artifacts more can be said about vessels, which are extensions not only of vision, but of several other sentient functions as well (e.g. holding, pouring, heating, storing, brewing, representing) and furthermore allow for a much more complete projection of the parts of the body (foot, belly, handle, shoulder, neck, lip)⁴⁸. The linguist George Lakoff has noted that

...the concepts OBJECT, SUBSTANCE, and CONTAINER emerge directly. We experience ourselves as entities, separate from the rest of the world - as containers

with an inside and an outside. We also experience things external to us as entities - often also as containers with insides and outside. We also experience things external to us as entities - often also as containers with insides and outsides. We experience ourselves as being made up of substances - e.g., flesh and bone - and external objects as being made up of various kinds of substances - wood, stone, metal, etc. We experience many things through sight and touch, as having distinct boundaries, and when things have no distinct boundaries, we often project boundaries upon them - conceptualizing them as entities and often as containers...⁴⁹

Scarry quotes Philip Fisher who comments on this very tendency to designate parts of objects with parts of the body:

"Imagine that a cultural taboo existed such that no word for a part of the body could also apply to things. Jealous and timid, the human race could fear a contamination from the flow of resemblances and linkages between man and things. That we in fact do the opposite makes possible both the flooding of the world of matter with human meanings and the subsequent recovery of the human image from that world".⁵⁰

With the vessel this recovery is more extensive than any other object form.

Of the vessels the pot, though similar to its sisters the basket, glass, or bronze urn in form and function, stands apart in demonstrating this embodiment to a greater extent because, to begin with, its material, clay, is in actuality more like the substances of the human body than any other vessel material. Its density, its color⁵¹, its tone, its moisture, its firmness, its softness all mimic human flesh or its product, feces. Relatedly, the pot and clay mimic the dialectic between my body and my feces: The latter is part of my body and is a product of my body, it is both an aspect of it and that which I must separate from myself. The pot owes something of its essence to its clay-i-ness, but through its elaborate production, the pot has come to be separated from it. It will take on during this production another quality of the body that initially it does not have: Warmth. It is this quality, which always connotes a living, active presence that the pot will, through its life, by being fired and later by being cooked or by insulating cooked food also come to embody. At the other end of its life, as a hardened, fired entity the pot shares another trait in common with human flesh: fragility, a vulnerability to forces that may come to bear upon it. As we will come to see in what follows, the processes that a pot undergoes as it develops and is used are not unlike some of the processes bodies undergo as they pass through time.

While these 'analogies' may be useful in understanding a set of practices employing pottery as medicine among several groups of peoples in Northern Nigeria, their use as such here is not meant to stand in isolation nor to suggest that Western "bio-medicine" would benefit from an injection of such practices, but rather to help explore the origins and significance of what can perhaps arguably be called the first technology⁵², because it is precisely an over-reliance on technology, and a complete technologization of the body within a technologized, regimented order, that, among other things, are accused of accursing our practice of medicine.

Although people continue to make pottery by hand in our age of machine making, their work does not merely consists of mugs, bowls, plates, and tea pots. Despite a movement which initially gained impetus from the experiences of Western artists in the East (in particular Japan)⁵³ who embraced and disseminated an aesthetic that regarded the utilitarian aspect of handmade pottery as essential⁵⁴, as great a counter-movement has since developed in Western ceramic practice which does not consider use in the kitchen or at the table to be of importance. This has led to an ideological split between 'potters' and 'ceramic artists' the ironic nature of which is expressed by a potter named Michael Cardew:

I note that all over the Western world there is a spectacular explosion of all kinds of fine-art ceramics — ceramics as sculpture, as satire, as social or political comment, as metaphysical or surrealist statements. Don't assume that I am against all that; I had better not be, since these or similar movements and works have always been an essential part of the ceramics scene in all countries and in all ages. I just think it is rather odd that we seem to have reached a stage where it is the "plain potters" who are expected to explain and justify themselves. I would have thought that the onus of explanation (if there is any) lay with the fantasy ceramists."⁵⁵

It is possible then, for example with the 'art tea pot' so popular these days, that a tea pot not only makes its functionality subservient to an aesthetic (to the point where it no longer can brew tea), but has its useful features completely aesthetized. That is, it is no longer necessary that this type of tea pot actually function as a tea pot, but rather it is the idea of a tea pot and perhaps the associations we have with it, that suffice to make the

object valuable. Whatever events occurred on the inside of the pot (an introduction of leaves and hot water, a seeping out of essences, a swirling, a giving off of scents, a holding of warmth over the course of a conversation) no longer can happen. Instead their traces and remnants move outward onto the surface of the pot, so that whatever longing once found satisfaction at the center has had its object pushed up and out, now made visible and immediate on a surface. What is left on the inside is not really even a truly empty space (if we take that an emptiness only has meaning in relation to fullness) but a kind of non-space.

We know that it is still a tea pot because it must retain enough semblance to be recognizable — it still has a spout, a lid, a handle — but these parts are no longer restricted by the dull exigencies of dealing with the flow of hot water or the need to be grasped and lifted. Their forms and surfaces are now free to be made into "art", and it is perhaps no accident that now that the canvas is irrelevant as a surface for artistic expression⁵⁶, the hands of the artist move to a new locale. But these hands still work in the same fashion so that John Berger's description of Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, painted 450 years ago, is still fitting: "[T]here is not a surface ... which does not make one aware of how it has been elaborately worked over ... and of how this working-over and the resulting richness of each surface has been finally worked-over and reproduced by Holbein the painter"⁵⁷. That is, just as in *The Ambassadors* where the luxuriant, handcrafted item has been painted into another crafted item (a painting), now there has been an inversion where a crafted item (a pot) has itself been elaborately painted. What was once painted into the canvas is now painted onto the pot as canvas. But it is a the painted scene derives its power from inside the pot, and in this makes the pot unusable, for these tea pots cannot function to brew tea.

What is interesting about these teapots aside from what they can tell us about hand-making and handmade objects is that they bear an uncanny resemblance to a kind of pot made by certain small tribal units in Northern Nigeria. It is not an absolute resemblance (these two kinds of pots do not look like each other) but rather an overall structural

resemblance. Like the art tea pot, they are elaborately decorated on their surfaces, but retain enough formal similarity to a kitchen pot to be recognized as such. Their insides similarly are no longer able to contain tea (or meat or milk or porridge) but instead their use or part of their effectiveness may have to do with their becoming a visible object and with the former associations that they have as kitchen pots. They are different in that their stated use is not as art, but as medicine.

In order to approach the Nigerian material, I am going to argue a point about medicine that relates to what I understand to be a fundamental aspect of illness, but one that is often is overlooked or at least not stated explicitly. I will be starting from the observation that illness, whatever its cause, is in some essential way experienced as unmaking from the inside, by a process of de-differentiating, a loss of form and concomitant function, in short a turning back into the 'clay' from whence we emerged. There is a tendency when people write about disease, and in particular the ways in which various people talk about disease, to focus on what disease is made into, as Susan Sontag does when she looks at the various metaphors for disease⁵⁸, or Michel Foucault when he describes the historical transformation in how disease was 'looked at'⁵⁹. This is not to reject these authors claims. Of course people do things when they get sick, and of course these things play themselves out in elaborate and fantastic ways which, given the powerful experience of disease, inflect and project in myriad ways through and with the rest of culture and back again upon the individual. But by looking anterior to these events, at least for a few moments, we can move closer to the subject of experience and perhaps know more fully the 'others' of it.

Accepting that this is the case, that at least at some moment during (and perhaps for great portions of) the illness experience, that I am confronted with the possibility of de-differentiating, of tracing forwards or backwards towards a state of being a raw material, it would follow that I would wish that someone might undo this process precisely by (re)making me, by, through the task of construction, opposing this process inherent in illness and allowing me to imagine and experience its opposite. This is not to make

normative claims about maturation, that there is only one end-point to arrive at and that it is the task of the doctor to reverse any deviation from this. Nor is it to claim that the de-differentiating takes place exclusively in a physical sense. In fact it is precisely one of the most damaging aspects of biomedicine that it is constructed with a single normative end-point for the body and that body is considered virtually exclusively as a physical entity (a legacy of Descartes). Rather in a sense the opposite is being claimed, for in the Nigerian material we will see an effort being made not to un-do the un-doing, but instead to construct something during the events, something which can stand for both the disease and the body and therefore acknowledge and literally work synchronically with the transformative aspects of illness.

The pottery cults which are described here, but which have now died out, took place within two tribal groups, the Cham/Mwana and the Longuda, both centered in a relatively small geographic area to the Northwest of the city of Numan which is on the Benue river in Northern Nigeria. Two sources are used here that describe this ritual, one is a monograph⁶⁰ exclusively about the practice written in 1983 by former British Colonial administrator John Hare whose main source was an old Mwana man who himself participated in this curing practice as a boy, and the other is an extensive ethnographic source book of tribes in Northern Nigeria written by a government anthropologist, C. K. Meek in 1931⁶¹ who does not, in this case, make his sources specifically clear.. According to these sources the practices between the groups differed somewhat and so I will present and discuss both of them. Considering how scant sources are, I will also try to draw in material describing the use of pottery in nearby groups.

According to Hare, the ritual among the Cham/Mwana called "Itinate" was performed as follows:

When a person is sick or feels in need of protection against forces that are outside his control or alien to his environment, he or she consults the tribal diviner. This man is regarded with great respect and formerly had great authority. He lives in a compound separate from the rest of the village and receives his visitors in a room without windows. Inside this dark, circular mud hut stand two terra-cotta figures, one male and one female. When the villager's problem has been put to the

diviner, he consults either the male or female pot according to the sex of the petitioner.

When the diviner receives his answer from the pot, he advises the person who has consulted him to go to a particular craftsman who has the skills to make the pot which will suit his or her need...The newly-built pot is then taken to the diviner who invests it with 'magical' power. This is usually done by an incantation accompanied by the spilling of a cock's blood...Payment is then made to the diviner and the pot is taken by the villager back to his or her own hut where it is kept until the individual's request has been answered or the particular sickness cured.⁶²

The Longuda ritual, called "Kwandalowa", though it differs remarkably in specific components of the ritual, seems to have an similar overall structure. Meek tells us that petitioners consult a woman diviner and that,

Having given her a gift and described his symptoms, the patient rolls a piece of grass and throws it into a calabash of water which the old woman has set in front of her. The woman then begins shaking a gourd filled with seeds, and soon closes her eyes and shows signs of possession. Then, speaking with the voice of the spirit [of the disease], she says: "I am Towa and I wish to take up my abode on the right hand of this person." On regaining consciousness the woman takes some soft clay and touches the patient's head and abdomen. It is believed that the disease-producing spirit enters the clay, and the old woman proceeds to fashion the clay into the conventional form of the Towa spirit. The spirits are always given a human form, i.e. the belly of the pot represents the body, the neck the neck. A headpiece with eyes, ears, nose, and mouth is added, and arms are fashioned along the body of the pot. But each spirit has differentiating features. When the woman has completed the shaping of the pot she circles it round the patient's head, and then hands it over to him. The owner takes it home, fires it, and deposits it in a shrine close to his house. Next morning he goes to the shrine with a chicken, which he slays, allowing the blood to drip over the pot. He pulls out a few wing feathers and, sticking them in the congealed blood, says: "Towa, here is your bull. I thank you for releasing me, and I pray that you will sit on my right arm when I go hunting and give me success in all things." Later he plucks and boils the chicken which he deposits in the shrine until the evening. At sundown he again enters the shrine, pours some of the chicken juice over the symbol, and removes the chicken to his hut where he shares it with his friends.⁶³

Perhaps a good place to start in trying to understand the effectiveness of these rituals is by looking at the pots themselves. The pots are elaborately decorated and are usually notched or incised or have pressed on ridges, pellets, and so on (fig. 1-3). Many if not most of the pots that Hare shows in his monograph demonstrate numerous recognizable parts of the body. The pots are usually formed to emphasize two regions of the body: The head and the belly (fig. 1 and 2). Some of the pots, however, are not anthropomorphic (at

least in how I see them), but simply look like pots, and others look like neither pot nor body (fig. 3).

These latter pots are important to keep in mind because they may indicate that it is not so much the formal aspects of the pots but something else (their being made of clay, their having been fired, etc.) that gives them meaning. It is possible, by focusing too much on the surface and design elements of pottery to miss some essential features, and error made by David et. al.⁶⁴ who begin by arguing that "pots 'are' persons and that concepts of the body are closely related to and partly determinative of decorative expression of pots..." (p. 365), but go on to suggest: "The interrelatedness of pottery decoration and symbolic structures quite incidentally justifies widespread use of decoration as the prime index of ethnicity preserved in the archaeological record...This provides a framework for the relation of stylistic to sociological variety that has great potential in archaeological interpretation" (p. 365). In the Comments section of this issue Nigel Barley makes the point that "Decoration on pottery need not always have symbolic implications," noting that certain types of "decoration" result from the way the pot itself was constructed: "[M]at impressions on Dogon pots is in fact a result of the hammer-and-anvil modeling technique" (p. 379). It might even be "the reluctance of potters to change a reliable pottery technique" that results in a particular form of decoration being employed, long after that form has lost its symbolic content. Whitney Davis bluntly states, "Although all symbols have style, not all style is symbolic..." (p. 380). Such observations caution one not to try to over-read forms or decorations, but to look elsewhere, not only to the way the pots look, but as much to their construction and use.

Nevertheless, stepping back from the pots, viewing their forms in their entirety they are striking. Many of them show people in states of pain: mouths screaming, nostrils flared, eyes bulging. What is effective at this level may be that the potter/shaman "presents them with their sickness in a visible and tangible form...the illness which they had always considered as spiritual [i.e. objectless] in nature and had thus never dreamed of rendering

visible"⁶⁵. The pain of their disease which, according to Scarry, is objectless, is given a body; it is presented as an object and allows for a transfer of an internal and objectless state outwards onto a tangible item. It is an object, moreover, that is visible to others, and makes the experience of illness a shareable experience for not only does the petitioner get to 'see his pain', but so do others as well. And not only does the invisible become visible, but each disease, each particular experience of illness (earaches, headaches, burns, nervous trembling) has its particular form of pot, and so the petitioner is now recognized not as less of a person for having this particular disease, but as more of a person for having it. The articulated surface of the pot comes to articulate his experience and in doing so differentiates him further within his social context, his friends and family, instead of rejecting this aspect of him, come to know it and him better.

A second way in which the actual form of the pot acts to deal with disease could be as a trap. Just as the body can come to have disease in it, which is always experienced as something wrong inside of me, then pots, "also as containers with insides and outside"⁶⁶ can be utilized to contain disease, a use found amongst the Sirak of Cameroon: "Cooking pots, water jars and other domestic pots can be used to trap disease spirits and so end up hidden in rocks or buried."⁶⁷

However effective the immediately visible is, the "tangible form" of these pots depends itself on the work of the potter and the uses of the pot over its life. For as much as these pots may differ in their particular expressions and the diseases to which they are assigned, they all may draw on certain very common associations that are made with pottery, in particular the material and formative aspects of the craft as well as the general role of pots in these groups.

Levi-Strauss describes numerous myths in the Americas that connect in various configurations clay, earth, pottery, feces, humans, and deities. God fashions humans from clay; a God destroys a human — her body turns to clay; a God's wife's feces turns into potter's clay; the body of a Goddess' son named 'clay' turns into the earth. He attempts to

connect these and a number of other entities (Goatsuckers, jealousy) in relation to one another to try to decipher the basic structures of the myths and in turn the mind as it engages in mythic thought. But he demonstrates at the same time — whether intentionally or not — the connectedness of bodies and the natural (and supernatural) phenomena they interact with via pottery and clay. It is along these lines that Levi-Strauss makes an equivalence between pottery making and eating:

We have not touched on the essential point, however. Potter's clay undergoes extraction from the earth, then modeling, and then firing to become a container designed to receive a content: food. Food itself undergoes the same treatment, but in reverse: it is first placed in a clay container, then cooked, then processed in the body through the operation of digestion, and finally is ejected in the shape of excrement:

clay —> extraction —> modeling —> firing —> container
 excrement <— ejection <— digestion <— cooking <— food⁶⁸

In the associations that pottery has with food and in the particular way in which both clay is processed into pottery, and food into a substance like clay, an entire cycle is made. The pot holds and processes food which is life-sustaining; so does the body. But now in illness there is something wrong with the body inside it, and so the pot must stand twice in the cycle, it must act as a double for the body as processing container, an act which is made ever more effective not only because the pot stands for food and nourishment (i.e. health) in the first place, but because in its very construction, a construction that takes place during the course of the illness, and for the Longuda under the very nose of the petitioner, the pot recapitulates the processing of food.

But in its construction, it may do more than this, for analogous to the scheme that Levi-Strauss presents concerning food processing and digestion we can suggest other similar diagrams. For example,

clay —> extraction —> modeling —> firing —> container
 1. fetus —> birth —> childhood —> puberty —> adult

2. lovemaking —> orgasm —> gestation —> birth —> baby

3. baby <— birth <— gestation <— impregnation <— womb

I do not wish to place too much emphasis on these diagrams since we could modify them in their particulars or construct others that are just as valid. None of these are meant to be absolute and really are simply ways to 'read' a large amount of evidence among Nigerian and other African groups that demonstrate how the pot is intimately tied into various processes of life. In viewing some more of these we may be in a better position to understand the practices of the Cham/Mwana and Longuda.

Amongst the Chamba of Nigeria/Cameroon: "Sometimes an analogy with the potter's art is made, and the creation of a child is imaged in the act of God as a potter forming the child from the clay like substance of the mother. The analogy is carried through in the conceptualisation of the newborn child as wet, soft and red."⁶⁹ (Scheme 3). Once this infant 'clay' (or polymorphous-perverse being, to use another idiom) is born, it can be acted on by the forces of enculturation, so for the Dowayos, also from Nigeria, "Aging is held to involve hardening and drying of the head and a turning-point in every boy's life is the drying of the 'head' of his penis at circumcision at which time he is no longer susceptible to brain fevers. So the ritual of circumcision ends with the boys being piled up with branches over their heads which are then fired on the first day of the potting season."⁷⁰ Penis, boy-becoming-man's body, and pot are all undergoing a process, a change which involves hardening during this layered ritual (Scheme 1). Likewise, for the Dowayo woman, "Only when a spirit enters a womb, may the woman become pregnant and her flow be stopped. It is therefore only appropriate that the Dowayo potter is frequently also the midwife and that excessive menstruation is treated with the herb that seals leaking pots. Similarly a woman cannot fire pots while menstruating..."⁷¹. The womb, woman's-body-as-pregnant, and pot all must not leak their contents, 'impregnable' in our language. A woman whose body is menstruating, leaking, cannot fire pots whose bodies would leak (early part of Scheme 3). The beliefs in the equivalence of womb and

pot for the Igbo is held to such an extent that utilitarian aspects of the pot can be undone: "A pregnant Igbo woman must not, it is said, make pots. The fashioning of watertight vessels would result in a difficult childbirth for her. Some potters, however, cheat by poking a small hole in the bottom of their pots so that they leak. This ensures that the pregnancy is not threatened but makes the vessels useless as pots."⁷²

Nigel Barley (from whose book *Smashing Pots*, these examples are taken) cites numerous other ways African pots and bodies get along: a "perfect pot" is a mark of virginity; a man smashes a bride's pots upon discovering she is not a virgin (92); a woman denies a man's sexual privileges by inverting a jar; a pot is interpreted as a mother's breast or as the *labia minora*; an uninitiated girl is told that she is like an unfired pot; when a child dies he is buried in a broken pot as though he himself had broken; when she dies a woman's water jar is dressed up and filled with beer — the bubbling indicates the presence of her spirit; elsewhere pottery is smashed at the time of death. Furthermore, in addition to the close associations between the pot and the body, Barley shows that in Africa other processes, such as seasonal change, growth of crops, and religious and cosmological events and systems, involve pots and pottery in intricate ways; pottery within these spheres is not separable for these Africans.

In returning to the Itinate and Kwandalowa practices one notices, in the same vein, that for the participant there is no clear dividing line between illness and needing protection "against forces that are outside his control," and thus the pots are used, for example, to ensure the well-being of newborns and twins or to help a woman conceive. The pot and the body are intertwined for the Cham/Mwana and Longuda at many points during their lives, just as in the various other African groups cited, and any understanding of the practice must try to take account of the rich and layered aspects of these associations. But what any account must also consider are the specific qualities of the materials and processes involved, a story which, I think the above evidence suggests, tells itself.

The hardening of clay, and especially the firing of clay, is important for the Dowayo male initiate body and penis, and, perhaps for the same reasons, for the males of the Cham/Mwana and Longuda as well: Once fired the pot cannot undergo the reversal of substances that disease embodies; clay once fired is impervious to processes of decay (although importantly not breakage), so that at the same time pots draw on associations of sustenance, they also embody notions of impermeability and unchangeability. This implies a rebirth or a doubling in a form which is immortal, no longer vulnerable to the forces that un-do one.

We see such a conception of disease and birth with the Thonga of Southern Africa:

"At the birth of the first child the relatives visit the mother, clap and dance as they sing, 'I praise my cooking pot which did not crack!' Birth is like firing, which amongst this people takes place in a pit. All illness is like temporary excessive heat and the term *hola* for the recovery of a sick person is described as applied to a 'cooking pot, heated by fire that is put aside to cool'" (106).

Additional possibilities are suggested here: the material of the pot can survive the intense heat of cooking and firing; the healthy newborn has survived the intense heat of birth (and perhaps gestation); a sick person, if he is like a pot, can survive the intense heat of disease.

It may therefore be that the entire activity of making the pot takes the petitioner through the stages of development of his body, but this time, through the particular pot-embodying-disease-spirit which becomes a modified (perhaps temporarily, perhaps permanently) version of his personhood. Certainly this is suggested by the Longuda practice whereby "The owner takes [the pot] home, fires it, and deposits it in a shrine close to his house." He then performs a sacrifice and addresses the pot: "'Towa, here is your bull. I thank you for releasing me, and I pray that you will sit on my right arm when I go hunting and give me success in all things.'" The pot is not only there as a way to deal with disease, but becomes for him a part of his personal pantheon, a kind of helper spirit. Later he plucks and boils the chicken which he deposits in the shrine until the evening. At sundown he

again enters the shrine, pours some of the chicken juice over the symbol, and removes the chicken to his hut where he shares it with his friends.

The involvement of his friends in the ritual brings us back to the fact that his sickness is made "visible and tangible," not only to him but also more importantly, Levi-Strauss argues, to the group:

Furthermore, the public must participate in the abreaction, to a certain extent at least, along with the patient and the sorcerer. It is this vital experience of a universe of symbolic effusions which the patient, because he is ill, and the sorcerer, because he is neurotic — in other words, both having types of experience which cannot otherwise be integrated — allow the public to glimpse as "fireworks" from a safe distance.⁷³

For the Longuda and the Cham/Mwana the "fireworks" are anything but figurative.

The making of pottery trades one sort of potential un-doing for another, and this is tied up in the firing. Unfired clay can always return to its origin, initiate another cycle. But in this it is not fixed, and cannot stand against forces that come to bear on it (moisture) it has not obtained the status of a container. Once fired it cannot go back, it is fixed, a point of no return, but it can withstand water. But so is its fragility fixed, and here it always stands at risk of breakage, just as humans are tied into cycles of illness and death and so must ultimately admit their fragility.

Are these correct interpretations? I would suggest that their use lies not in their epistemologic certainty, but rather in the observation that they all involve the pot not simply as a static item, not just as an object to be viewed and contemplated (like an interpretation), but as a moving entity. If any part of the pot is static, it is the idea of clay at its origin. That is, as noted, one of the fundamental problems in understanding handmaking or a ritual involving a handmade object is a tendency to focus on the static, or word-like properties of the object. These are not insignificant for these groups, but their meaning as viewable objects must take root elsewhere, from within a set of practices that draw on the making of the pot and the making of the body in manifold ways. The one truly still object is the clay which in its stillness provokes its use. To be left unmoved would be to accede to the forces

of decay and death. The clay "depicts what heals and what harms at the same time...the remedy has in itself the principle of death"⁷⁴. The clay, like the body, like the pot, is involved in a complex, unending cycle. When disease threatens to end this cycle — to cut it short prematurely it is as though the pot returns in a form that makes visibly amplified its involvement in this cycle, not by trying to cut the disease out of the picture, but precisely by (re)creating it and its human container.

In an imaginary dialogue Michael Cardew's critic asks him, "Your teapot seems to be a challenge to its own aesthetic principles. There is a temptation to put it on a shelf to be looked at, and not to do anything so risky as actually to use it."⁷⁵ The art teapot only sits on a shelf. Not only would one hesitate to use it due to its costliness, its construction precludes its being used in any case. The making of real teapots has now been given over to the automated factory, which has become the new locus of making. We need not worry anymore, we need not feel the anxiety that surrounds the actual use of a handmade teapot, something which in its uncanny resemblance to the human body reminds us of our own fragility, because we are now safe from "the active expression of an old tradition of which the underlying reason has been forgotten." But in doing this we try to deny something wholly known to us, and in doing so obvious problems arise.

⁴⁸David, Nicholas and Sterner, Judy and Gavua, Kodzo 1988. "Why Pots Are Decorated", *Current Anthropology*, 29:371. The authors claim that virtually all peoples name parts of pots according to the parts of the body with identical or similar designations.

⁴⁹Lakoff, George. *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp 57-58. While I agree with and find useful Lakoff's fundamental observation it is worth examining the passage just preceding this quotation:

"Some of the central concepts in terms of which our bodies function - UP-DOWN, IN-OUT, FRONT-BACK, LIGHT-DARK, WARM-COLD, MALE-FEMALE, etc, - are more sharply delineated than others. While our emotional experience is as basic as our spatial and perceptual experience, our emotional experiences are much less sharply delineated in terms of what we do with our bodies. Although a sharply delineated conceptual structure for space emerges from our perceptual-motor functioning, no sharply defined conceptual structure for the emotions emerges from our emotional functioning alone. Since there are systematic correlates between our emotions (like happiness) and our sensory-motor experiences (like erect posture), these form the basis of orientational metaphorical concepts (such as HAPPY IS UP). Such metaphors allow us to conceptualize our emotions in more sharply defined terms and also to relate them to other

concepts having to do with general well-being (e.g., HEALTH, LIFE, CONTROL, etc.). In this sense, we can speak of emergent metaphors and emergent concepts.

First, there is certainly no proof that our emotional experience is less clearly defined than our physical experience "in terms of what we do with our bodies", and his formulation reflects the kind of Cartesian schematic that was discussed and criticized in chapter one. It may be the case that in another culture, or even in our culture, emotional experience is more tangible than physical experience. In any case, what is fairest to say is that both sorts of experience are interwoven and perhaps inseparable.

What Lakoff also fails to note is that it may be the case that in order for us to conceive of ourselves as containers, containers must already exist in some form. It is at least the case that the existence of containers facilitates one's speaking about one's body as a container. Just as with emotions, Lakoff makes the body as a physical entity prior to any other category of experience (emotions, containers) in forming the basis for metaphors. In fact, what will be argued below is that in certain situations such as illness just the opposite scheme may prevail: A container made of an impervious material like fired clay may be viewed as prior to the not impervious body.

⁵⁰Cited in Scarry, p. 368: Philip Fisher, "The Recovery of the Body," *Humanities in Society 1* [Spring 1978], 140.

⁵¹There was an obsession among European ruling parties starting in the seventeenth century to obtain and produce porcelain, such as had been imported from Ming China. The desire to own white-ware coincided with the ascension of white-down world view that rationalized the colonization and enslavement of more 'earthenware' colored peoples. In fact, although within this period European potters learned to produce white-ware pottery (e.g. Medici porcelain, French soft-paste), none could match the Chinese product in hardness and translucency and in the ability (which distinguishes true porcelain) to give off a sonorous ring when tapped, as opposed to the disappointing 'tock' of false-porcelains. There ensued during the next two-hundred years a considerable investment in discovering how to produce true porcelain, a secret which once discovered by the German chemist Böttger was closely guarded, (See: Warren E. Cox, *The Book of Pottery and Porcelain*, Crown, New York, 1944, Vol. 2, pp. 625-81.).

⁵²I do not want to press the case that pottery is the first true technology too strongly. But I do think it is worth noting that at least with pottery it was probably the first artifact where a series of steps were taken as the artifact was made that actually changed the material nature of the artifact.

⁵³Several people are prominent and perhaps could rightly be described as "seminal" within the handmade pottery movement that took place early in this century the United States and Europe. Bernard Leach (*A Potter's Book*) is generally considered to be the 'father' of the hand made pottery movement. His associations with Japanese potters, in particular Hamada, as well as Yanagi, the founder of the folk craft (mingei) movement in Japan in large part shaped his, his students, and subsequent potters' aesthetics and approach. Michael Cardew (*Pioneer Pottery*) was a student of Leach's, his own work in Africa (the Cold Coast and Nigeria) significantly distinguishes him. (See: Bernard Leach, *A Potter's Book*; Michael Cardew, *Pioneer Pottery*).

⁵⁴Moeran, p. 5.

⁵⁵Cardew, Michael, "Why Make Pots in the Last Quarter of the 20th Century?", in *A Potter's Companion*, Ronald Larsen, ed., Park Street Press, 1993, p. 6.

⁵⁶The vast changes in the status of oil painting, and in particular its loss of importance as an art form, are explored in the works cited by Berger and Benjamin.

⁵⁷Berger, p. 90.

⁵⁸Sontag, Susan, *Illness as Metaphor*

⁵⁹Foucault, Michel, *The Birth of the Clinic*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, Vintage, 1973.

⁶⁰J. N. Hare, "Ritual Pottery of the Cham, Mwana and Longuda Peoples of Nigeria", *Ethnographic Arts and Culture Series*, no. 5, Ethnographica, London, 1983.

⁶¹C. K. Meek, *Tribal Studies in Northern Nigeria*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., London, 1931.

⁶²Hare, p. 8-9.

⁶³Meek, vol. 2, p. 352.

⁶⁴Nicholas David, Judy Sterner, and Kodzo Gavua, "Why Pots Are Decorated" in *Current Anthropology*, Volume 29, Number 3, June 1988.

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- ⁶⁵Levi-Strauss, Claude, "The Sorcerer and his Magic" in *Structural Anthropology*, Basic Books, 1963, p. 176.
- ⁶⁶Lakoff, p. 57.
- ⁶⁷Barley, p. 76.
- ⁶⁸Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Jealous Potter*, trans. Bénédicte Churier, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988, p. 175.
- ⁶⁹Nigel Barley, *Smashing Pots: Works of Clay from Africa*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 1994, p. 85.
- ⁷⁰Barley, p. 89.
- ⁷¹Barley, p. 88.
- ⁷²Barley, p. 92.
- ⁷³Levi-Strauss, "The Sorcerer and His Magic", p. 182.
- ⁷⁴Stefania Pandolfo, "Detours of Life: Space and Bodies in a Moroccan Village", *American Ethnologist*, 1988, p. 19.
- ⁷⁵Michael Cardew, *Pioneer Pottery*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1969, p. 241.

Chapter 3

Biomedicine and Handmaking

In this chapter I will examine handmaking as it occurs in the practice of what Foucault has termed "anatomy-clinical" medicine and what has been more recently called bio-medicine. Part of the reason for presenting the Nigerian material was to demonstrate an example of handmaking in medicine in which all elements of making were present (clay, potter, kiln, pot) and an entire process was carried through (forming, decorating, firing, using) in an attempt to remedy an illness. Part of the effectiveness of the ritual had to do with its completeness, not only as a complete action that produced an artifact, but as an action that during its completion intersected with other actions (preparation of food, digestion, maturing of the body, sexual relations, gestation) in a number of ways (metaphoric, ritualistic, literal, formalistic). We notice as well in all this that while some portion of the activities took place in private, an essential feature was its *publicness*, the fact that the pots were displayed.

Handmaking in bio-medicine is more fragmented and therefore must be discovered in a more piecemeal fashion. Handmaking often can be better appreciated if we keep in mind the way in which certain items, due to a deliberate positioning, take on the status of materials which are then further acted upon by people, such as doctors or patients, to become artifacts. Such a conceptualization allows to reveal itself the common element of handmaking and illness: A shifting movement along the course of making and unmaking; gradual or abrupt, each process has to do with the possibility of un-becoming, the reversal or realization in the center of one's body of what the Greeks termed *poesis*.

But at the same time the entire institution of biomedicine is itself an artifact, a product of the human hands. This observation is employed by Michael Taussig in what I feel is a particularly good critique of biomedicine because by taking this position he is able to

uncover why it is that what goes on inside of biomedical practice appears so natural⁷⁶. But it may be precisely this aspect of naturalness that leads to the marginalization of any actual example of artifactuality, of handmaking, as we will see with the case of art therapy. While the various instances of handmaking in biomedicine may seem to be fragmented or marginalized, this is not to argue that they do not inform aspects of biomedicine. I believe that by at least attempting to locate handmaking and to explain its role, a valuable approach to healing can be suggested — one which does not naively argue, for example, that we do away with technology in favor of new-age primitivism, or engage the "native" patient's system of thought and value in order to improve compliance. The approach I have in mind is more serious about and can attend more thoroughly to the subjective experience of illness, which has everything to do with becoming and unbecoming, being made and unmade.

To begin I wish to look at Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) because in it we witness an act of handmaking by a doctor in the sense in which handmaking is most easily understood — very similar, if fact, to the fashion through which one would make a pot. In the novel, a human being is made. The idea of making a person out of material reveals something about the kind of making that early nineteenth-century medicine and the science upon which it was based made (and makes) possible to the imagination. The early nineteenth-century marks the beginning of the very shift, Foucault argues, to medicine as it is currently known — a shift from what Foucault calls a "medicine of species" (where the nature of the disease was ultimately understood as a metaphysical entity for which "disease, doctor and patients...are tolerated as disturbances"⁷⁷) to a medicine in which "there is no longer a pathological essence beyond the symptoms: everything in the disease is itself a phenomenon...nothing more than a truth wholly given to the gaze."⁷⁸ Foucault argues that in modern medicine disease resides entirely in the patient, entirely visible to the doctor; the disturbance *is* the patient. *Frankenstein's* earliness may provide it with an extra clarity. To

adopt a phrase of John Berger, in a work that stands at the beginning of a tradition , "its character is undisguised."⁷⁹

Shelly's monster is a handmade construction that is pieced together from the ground up. In the original descriptions of the making of the monster the flesh that is assembled is of minute size; in other words, much more like a material in the sense of a clay than we are used to seeing in the movies:

After days and nights of incredible labour and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter. (p. 100)⁸⁰

As the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large. After having formed this determination and having spent some months in successfully collecting and arranging my materials, I began. (p. 101)

Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay? My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless and almost frantic impulse urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit. It was indeed but a passing trance, that only made me feel with renewed acuteness so soon as, the unnatural stimulus ceasing to operate, I had returned to my old habits. I collected bones from charnel-houses and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation: my eyeballs were starting from their sockets in attending to the details of my employment. The dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials; and often did my human nature turn with loathing which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion. (p. 102)

A key line is Victor's utterance: "my eyeballs were starting from their sockets" since one can legitimately ask, "Whose eyeballs?". Within the syntax of the passage, the "I" or "my" of Victor become lost because there are two (or more) sets of eyeballs present, a situation brought on by Victor's very undertaking. The eyes, which are his eyes, which are not his eyes, which are his eyes, watch him. There is already present an uncanny⁸¹ being in the room, alive, it is a specular demon, and it is Victor's work to give it a body. It is here, in microcosm, within the laboratory that the root of the problem of the Monster and of Victor's undertaking are contained for in making the being he will have to undo the

structure of making. In the idiom of the Four Causes, he will have to exchange the Material Cause for the Efficient Cause, the body of the maker becomes the material for the made body⁸², and in doing so, as we already witness, his own body, and in particular his own specular sense of the world, his own perspective, his point of view, is being undone. It may not be Victor's actual flesh that is being used, but it may as well be.

Peter Brooks argues that, "It is above all in the question of language...that the problem of the monstrous is played out."⁸³ "The monster understands that it is not visual relationship that favors him — indeed, his only favorable reception by a human being has come from a blind man — but rather the auditory, the interlocutory, the relationship of language." Brooks engages the Lacanian concepts of an imaginary order and a symbolic order to explain how the monster's monstrousness is structured and how it informs the rest of the novel:

The imaginary order is that of the specular, of the mirror-stage, and is based on deception, the subject's relation to itself as other. The symbolic order is that of language, the systematic and trans-subjective order of the signifier, the cultural system into which individual subjects are inserted. In any specular relationship the Monster will always be the "filthy mass;" only in the symbolic order may he realize his desire for recognition.⁸⁴

The monster himself comes to understand this while living next to the cottagers. He observes his reflection in a pool and realizes that it will only be by mastering their language that he will be able to insert himself into "the chain of existence and events", to gain recognition, to *mean* something to someone. According to Brooks the events that follow in the novel, and even the structure of the novel itself (a story within a story within a story within a story — a chain of signs and signifiers) can all be understood as originating with the Monster's original lack or failure to be recognized. When the Monster is cast out by the cottagers, he finds Frankenstein and insists the doctor create a companion for him, a "substitute for the Monster's inclusion with the human chain."⁸⁵ Frankenstein realizes that the "race of monstrous progeny" that might result would threaten the human chain of signifiers in its creation of "a new and uncontrollable signifying chain, one with unknown

rules and grammar."⁸⁶ Once Frankenstein destroys the partially created mate, the Monster's only course of action is to destroy all elements that mean something to his creator, to create for Frankenstein a situation that mirrors the Monster's own: A world devoid of signification, a destruction of the chain of persons and events in which the doctor securely resides. This accomplished the Doctor and the Monster engage in an potentially endless "dialectic of desire, in which each needs the other because the other represents for each the lack or gap within himself". This endless elliptical exchange leads them ultimately to the "very heart of non-meaning, toward the lifeless pole, the immaculate icecap."⁸⁷

Although Brooks gives a very consistent account for how the monstrousness, based on the structure and of language, plays itself out, he is less clear as to the origin, in the first place, of the monstrousness. Brooks suggests that "He appears to have been generated at the very frontier between nature and the supernatural, from Frankenstein's studies in physics and chemistry which are always on the verge of becoming metaphysics and alchemy."⁸⁸ As Frankenstein continues his work he becomes "'insensible to the charms of nature', and the seasons pass unnoticed. The Monster comes into existence as a product of nature — his ingredients are one hundred percent natural — yet by the fact and process of his creation he is unnatural."⁸⁹

By looking even more closely at the facts of making it is possible to glean more. What is it about this creation that is unnatural? It is not simply that Frankenstein is attempting to *imitate* the work of Nature or God (the prohibitions against which we witnessed in the first chapter), he is actually trying to *do* this work. This upsets the structure of handmaking two-fold: In the artifact that he creates he not only tries to exchange the Efficient for the Formal Causes and/or Final causes (i.e. making an object that looks like man and/or is a man) but goes a step further than earlier versions of the myth and adds the Material Cause (is made *of* man). Thus Frankenstein attempts to short-circuit the "circuitous paths to death"⁹⁰ by seizing not on a raw material such as clay as in older versions of the humanoid myth (e.g. Golem) but on human flesh, pulling it back from the abyss. But by seizing upon

this material his own fingers become profane because they themselves become unhallowed in the act which attempts to utilize the material of the self in the construction of other, an other that looks like and is self.

While Frankenstein thus attempts to close in his act of making the significatory gap that always exists in the chain of human events, a gap which is always expressed or experienced by desire, (between feeling cold and making a blanket, a gap exists which can be expressed by the phrase "wanting warm"). The particular way he does this is by superimposing the elements of handmaking upon one another; Frankenstein tries to do away with the insecurity that resides in these gaps, but because of this in fact self and other are destroyed in the process at the beginning.

But a question remains: Why is the Monster ugly to begin with? Why isn't he, for example, handsome and inarticulate? (Perhaps in another place and time an equally horrifying Frankenstein would have been made just so.) By pressing together the elements of his handmaking, Frankenstein causes to come to the surface the actual appearance of his materials, so that the monster's looks present the sign and the signified together at once, pressed, or smushed together, the internal structure coming to reside on the surface: "His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath...", "his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set" . The only attractive elements of the Monster's body are those with their own internal self-regeneration, ("his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness"), in other words those parts of the body that the body itself visibly remakes."⁹¹

As was noted there is a coincidence between the date of the novel and the date of the inception of Foucault's anatomo-clinical model of medicine, a new type of seeing illness which made the visible aspect of the disease of utmost importance in defining and in understanding the nature of the illness. Essential for this was a new type of seeing done by the physician, one in which his gaze, both along the surface and, due to the employment of pathological anatomy, inside the body, and it is with the study of anatomy that

Frankenstein begins his endeavor⁹². There was no longer any space, or gap, in which the nature of the disease could reside; all has been made visible, open to the physician's gaze. The ugliness of Frankenstein is essential because it makes visible, brings to the surface the corruption of the structure of making; it, in Foucault's terms, demonstrates the disease as visible, and what becomes visible is pathological anatomy.

It is less clear how the actual changes in manufacture that were also incipient at the time relate to the situation of Frankenstein, although one possibility may involve the fact that "Victor's discovery of the secret of life is fundamentally scientific; and he talks of his 'animation' of the Monster's body as a mere trick of technology."⁹³ According to Martin Tropp, "when Mary Shelley gave her intended 'ghost story' a scientific context, she linked the Gothic concept of the double with technology."⁹⁴ It is this same technology that is animating the mechanical world of making that begins to replace the human world of handmaking, and in this moves the task of extending sentience from in front of a sentient being, to inside a non-sentient device. In another idiom, that of the automaton, this entails a shift from a mythical automaton to a mechanistic one, "an attempt to dissect and copy the human body and the body of other living creatures... . The mechanical automaton...groups together concentrations of machines, workshops and factories, in accordance with very inflexible rules."⁹⁵ Heidegger observes that when "what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall, that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve."⁹⁶

By embodying technique in the machine it is the machine that will in actuality extend human sentience, and in doing so they become more human than their human makers. However, this opens the possibility that the human body itself becomes raw material due to this shift because it comes to occupy a position that would make it is less sentient than the very devices that have taken up this task. That is, after the advent of the machine, the only

legitimate handmaking becomes handmaking machines themselves; this then increasingly comes to push humans aside in the activity of extending their sentience, far enough even to be 180 degrees away, the position that is in an earlier structure of making occupied by the material. Despite attempts to argue a solution by accepting the incorporations of machines inside ourselves⁹⁷, what has to ultimately be admitted is that they do not feel. Nor does dead flesh. But for the former maker, the machine becomes like his flesh, or rather his flesh now becomes, needs to be felt, as mechanical. This is to take making as the fundamental way to modify the world. Language can modify it through a level of remove, but not directly, and it is the direct participation of the body (touching, pushing, gouging, scratching, breaking, polishing) materials that direct, fundamental sentience (the root of which is feel, as in tactile), comes to play itself out. If it is clay or another body, so much the better. Frankenstein then acts on this situation and attempts to animate what has been deanimated, to in other words close a gap between artifacts and humans into which has been inserted a type of technology that it appears is running off with the human body, but in this he "seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit".

Throughout the activity of handmaking, in production and in use of objects, we have seen the manifold ways in which these objects "almost"⁹⁸ come to be the human body, by having similar parts, by extending our own sentient powers, by being composed of materials like the materials of our own bodies. The human imagination has often carried this to the next logical step and imagined through myth the making by man of an animate being; but, like a warning against the corruption inherent in this upset of the structure of handmaking, all these stories have disastrous consequences. In Frankenstein we receive a yet more concentrated version of these older myths, one that due to the ascendance of new forms of technology and new ways of viewing the human body in medicine tries to superimpose in one stroke all elements of handmaking.

The particular configuration of biomedicine that Foucault describes continues to this day. And it is with one of its foremost elements, pathological anatomy that one encounters a strange form of handmaking. Certain types of lesions have come to be named according to what appears to be a very fanciful type of language, given the otherwise monotonous nomenclature of pathology:

Dew drop on a rose petal

Peau d'orange

Bread and butter appearance

Apple core lesion

Bird's beak appearance⁹⁹

Though such descriptions may not be in the true spirit of pathology or medicine, the rearing of their heads should be taken very seriously because they are so strikingly at odds with the language out of which they arise and because they continue, despite this, to persist. It suggests another example of the uncanny, the familiar appearing in an unfamiliar location, just as we saw with Frankenstein's monster, and it is specifically here that we see, despite its fragmented and contorted form, the appearance of the handmade.

All of these designations (and many other examples could be cited) refer to the visual appearance of these lesions. But in this there is already embedded an artifactuality brought about by the particular visual orientation of anatomy-clinical medicine. In fact, the bread and butter appearance of serous pericarditis is only noted once the thorax is opened up and the heart viewed, which occurs during autopsy. The apple core lesion and the bird's beak lesion are ones noted during contrast studies: in the first case a radio-opaque substance is swallowed and allows the visualization of the esophagus affected by the disease achalasia; the same substance can also be injected through the rectum to let the apple core appearance of colonic carcinoma demonstrate itself. The first two lesions, it could be claimed, are

unaltered appearances, that is, these lesions appear on the skin, and it was simply in observing them that someone, at some point in time, saw in the lesion of chicken pox a dew drop on a rose petal, and in breast carcinoma an orange peel. However, the artifactuality, the made quality of these object designations already exists for they occur in system of medicine that uses visual appearances to make diagnoses, and in this the dew drop on the rose petal becomes a kind of miniature *emblemata*¹⁰⁰, perhaps not an entire scene, but the reminder of a scene occurring in another context.

And yet it is a scene that is at once artifactual, but by means of the object choices suggests nature or very close natural origins. When it does not, we notice that objects are chosen that are essential and simple artifacts, handmade items that are of the most basic sort (bread, butter), and are still very close to nature (wheat, cream). It is as though from the uniform material of pathology language (vesicles, macules, papules, pustules) springs out a cultivated piece of beauty, so that instead of a 'two centimeter erythematous maculopapular lesion with a central vesicopustule', we have a 'dew drop on a rose petal'. The language of pathology because of its very uniformity, its terms sounding so much like one another, itself has become an undifferentiated material, a soil, out of which grows a rose.

Furthermore, these lesions are what are termed classic lesions. That is, not all cases of colonic carcinoma will give a radiographic appearance of an apple core, but when they do, then this lesion becomes easily differentiable from its surroundings. This is one of the main reasons they are utilized, for the uniformity of pathology language reflects a uniformity of the physical material of the human body as it has been looked at by pathology anatomy, "the work of muscles and arteries beneath".

There are as well uncanny correspondences between signifiers and signified's that suggest they are not in an arbitrary relationship to each other. An apple core would seem to be the embodiment of colonic carcinoma, for it is in the colon that food rots. The globular orange peel exists on a globular breast, begging to be both touched and peeled away. The birds beak of achalasia is an embodiment of the piercing pain of this disease. The dew

drop on the rose petal may suggest the idyllic, bourgeois scene: the mother of the sick child, perhaps a little worried, looks outside and is reminded of the way in which nature has been tamed, and how this illness will as well. Although I would not argue that in every case it is possible to construct such neat correspondences, they are telling of what happens inside the doctor. It is as though the physician is saying about the disease: I cannot contend with you for you represent the very real possibility at this moment and the very real but removed by a period of time and therefore not real now certainty of eventually becoming a raw material. I therefore change you into a form that is immediately recognizable as effectively guarding against this eventuality, an object that is simple and natural or that suggests a simple and natural origin. And it is precisely because the language I use to otherwise describe you is so out of kilter with what I truly understand as the nature of the body, a natural product, that I reach back into my past for a language that feels better, that expresses these sentient qualities, but must at the same time subvert the very language I usually use to describe you, a language that would otherwise bear a terrifying resemblance precisely to the thing that I fear: uniformity, dedifferentiation (macules, papules, pustules, vesicles...), in other words dead tissue, which is I must admit after all, the material with which I work." All these objects express vivid and essential forms of sentience: Visual, tactile, olfactory, taste. They are reminders of qualities that have been removed from the body through its systemization within the idioms of anatomoclinical method and discourse, and they function in this discourse to anchor the physician, to remind him that he still has a body and what this body is really like. Despite this, the descriptions are still themselves artifacts directly and in sense in which they represent processes which originate in the hands of the physician (conducting a physical exam, administering barium contrast, performing an autopsy). The structure of the activity of handmaking which frames this activity, even if it has become in many ways subverted, still informs the processes at the fundamental levels of raw material, tool, and artifact.

While it is joked that it is the pathologist who knows everything and does everything only too late, it is in the realm of the psychiatrist, who knows nothing and does nothing, that the only complete, literal form of handmaking occurs. Nonetheless, despite its carrying through an entire handmaking process, the activity of art therapy is entirely marginalized, as noted by William Styron in *Darkness Visible* as he narrates his experience with art therapy while hospitalized for depression:

Art Therapy...is organized infantilism. Our class was run by a delirious young woman with a fixed, indefatigable smile, who was plainly trained at a school offering courses in Teaching Art to the Mentally Ill; not even a teacher of very young retarded children could have been compelled to bestow, without deliberate instruction, such orchestrated chuckles and coos...".¹⁰¹

Though we could fault him for hyperbole, he expresses, nonetheless, an attitude that is prevalent, and one which has led to the marginalization of the practice so that it takes place under the purview of doctors who 'know nothing and do nothing' and who do not even, in any case, actually direct the activities of art therapy, but leave them instead to specialized art therapists.

Yet to approach the practice naively, it would seem to make a lot of sense. A correspondence between pots and the body that was suggested earlier has to do with their fragility, a commonality suggested by our own metaphors for mental illness: having a nervous breakdown, falling apart, going to pieces, cracking up. Art therapy might be understood as allowing patients to rebuild themselves after such a breakdown: a whole piece of work in which a patient has invested himself is able to somehow allow the patient to experience a sense of wholeness, which is the opposite of his current experience. There is, however, a theoretical debate concerning the efficacy of the therapy, of which this view represents only one poll.

In "Art Therapy: Problems of Definition"¹⁰² Elinor Ulman quotes Margaret Naumburg who states that the practice

bases its methods on releasing the unconscious by means of spontaneous art expression; it has its roots in the transference relation between patient and therapist, and on the encouragement of free association. It is closely allied to psychoanalytic

therapy...Treatment depends on the development of the transference relation and on a continuous effort to obtain the patient's own interpretation of his symbolic designs...The images produced are a form of communication between patient and therapist; they constitute symbolic speech.¹⁰³

Just as a psychoanalyst would not instruct his patient on how to speak or whether to even speak full thoughts or sentences, so an art therapist in this formulation is not interested in instructing the patient on becoming a better artist or in having the patient necessarily finish a work. The goal is interpretation and a great deal can be gleaned from fragments, or even perhaps brush strokes.

In contrast Edith Kramer asserts,

The art therapist makes creative experiences available to disturbed persons in the service of the total personality; he must use methods compatible with the inner laws of artistic creation...His primary function is to assist the process of sublimation, an act of integration and synthesis which is performed by the ego, wherein the peculiar fusion between reality and fantasy, between the unconscious and the conscious, which we call art is reached¹⁰⁴.

In this scenario, developing technical skills and completing works are critical if the process of sublimation is to be completed. Whether or not interpretation is then practiced for the goals that psychoanalytic therapy aims at is secondary and not essential in order for art to be therapeutic.

These two positions are not incompatible and in fact really function as parts of a whole; their appearance is more a sign of the very way in which the practice itself is cut off from the rest of what otherwise would make the patient. In these debates is contained the same fragmenting that the process of handmaking has experienced at large and now is only reflected internally in art therapy. That is, that such debates appear within the art therapy community can only be a sign that something is amiss in the process of making within medicine itself, and the culture of which that practice is a part.

Certainly there is enormous potential in the practice and this can be understood by comparing it to a practice where such making occurs as a matter of course in medicine such as in Northern Nigeria. But in art therapy, the created objects even if completed (which according to Ulman needn't even be the case) only is viewed in a very tiny world, between

the patient and therapist, the works are not usually presented at large, for this after all, is a mental patient in a mental hospital and not an artist¹⁰⁵. Furthermore, the work of interpretation reverts the work of art into the role of material to be interpreted and in this positioning actually works, as was suggested before, to denigrate the very expressions and articulations the patient may have been trying to bring to light. We notice in this that the role of the therapist is not one that involves making directly (recall that in the Nigerian groups the petitioner does not make the pot himself), but rather it is placed entirely on the shoulders of the patient. These debates contain the problem of making and beg a look not at their own specifics, but at the artifactuality of the entire system that contains them, for it is inside this system that the processes of making, which could, in biomedical language, be therapeutic, is really undone.

The nature of this artifact is presented by Michael Taussig who observes,

The manifestations of disease are like symbols, and the diagnostician sees them and interprets them with an eye trained by the social determinants of perception. Yet this is denied by an ideology which regards its creations as really lying "out-there" — solid, substantial things-in-themselves. Our minds like cameras or carbon paper do nothing more than faithfully register the facts of life. This illusion is ubiquitous in our culture, is what Lukács means by reification stemming from the commodity-structure, and medical practice is a singularly important way of maintaining the denial as to the social facticity of facts.¹⁰⁶

This description contains precisely what was suggested was happening when the pathologist chooses to use terms such as "dew drop on a rose petal"; it is an attempt to make appear natural what is an artifactual construction, and this goes not only for the specimens of pathology, but for the entire system itself. The essential problem that Taussig discovers in this relates to the fact that people still need to have their diseases explained, made into something. Because this takes place in a social sphere, in relation to other people and artifacts that other people have made, the 'naturalness' of medical practice becomes particularly insidious and hypocritical:

[T]he patient and the concept of disease have been recruited in the service of building a reality whose stability, which cannot be denied so long as professional expertise bears down, is nevertheless prone to violent altercations as the pressure of denied authorship and reciprocity makes its presence felt. This presence of denial is

itself masked by the illusion of reciprocity of a different sort; the niceties of style in the bedside manner and the culture of caring...Don't contemplate rebellion against the facts of life for these are not in some important manner partially man-made, but are irretrievably locked in the realm of physical matter. To the degree that matter can be manipulated, leave that to "science" and your doctor.¹⁰⁷

In the final scene of *Frankenstein* the Monster addresses Walton,

I have devoted my creator, the select specimen of all that is worthy of love and admiration among men, to misery; I have pursued him even to that irremediable ruin. There he lies, white and cold in death. You hate me, but your abhorrence cannot equal that with which I regard myself. I look on the hands which executed the deed; I think on the heart in which the imagination of it was conceived and long for the moment when these hands will meet my eyes, when that imagination will haunt my thoughts no more.¹⁰⁸

Which deed? Whose hands? Whose heart and imagination? The Monster's final words recapitulate the uncertainty of authorship that was contained in the original scene of making and the human riot that ensues when makers try to dissociate themselves from their made artefacts, for it is in that moment, when hands turn away from their materials and instead cover their eyes, when I can no longer see the human origin of my made world, that my "imagination will haunt my thoughts no more".

⁷⁶Michael Taussig, "Reification and Consciousness of the Patient", Chapter 6 in *The Nervous System*, Routledge, New York, 1992.

⁷⁷Foucault, p. 9.

⁷⁸Foucault, p. 91.

⁷⁹Berger, p. 89.

⁸⁰Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Penguin Books, London, 1985, (1818).

⁸¹The use of the term "uncanny" is partly indebted to Freud's essay "The Uncanny", (in *On Creativity and the Unconscious: Papers on the Psychology of Art, Literature, Love, Religion*, Harper & Row, New York, 1958). Freud argues that the uncanny "is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar." (pp. 123-4) He demonstrates this linguistically by comparing the German words for 'uncanny' and 'canny', 'unheimlich' and 'heimlich', arguing that the one is really the other. In other words, in order for something to be uncanny, it first must be familiar to us, and then it needs to appear in a place or at a time which somehow causes a disjunction to occur in our minds. Such is the case with items such as dolls or wax figures when we become uncertain about whether they are simply made artifacts or really alive. Leontes underwent an experience of the uncanny when he observed the life-like statue of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*. It is possible for even simple (i.e. non-anthropomorphic) handmade artifacts to elicit the uncanny, a reaction that was observed by W. Basden at the breaking of a water pot by an Igbo woman. The possibility of remaking the non-sentient world to be almost sentient always contains a danger, namely that the non-sentient world actually becomes sentient. In *Frankenstein* and in particular in this scene of making these dangers become apparent.

⁸²One need only juxtapose two artifacts that, taken separately embody notions of cleanliness (soap) and the diffusion of artificial light (lampshades) to confront the enormous horror we encounter when the body itself is used as a material.

- ⁸³Peter Brooks, "Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts": Language, Nature and Monstrosity. In *The Endurance of Frankenstein*, edited by George Levine and U.C. Knoepfelmacher, University of California Press, 1979, p. 205.
- ⁸⁴Brooks, pp. 207-8.
- ⁸⁵Brooks, p. 212.
- ⁸⁶Brooks, p. 213.
- ⁸⁷Brooks, p. 214.
- ⁸⁸Brooks, p. 215.
- ⁸⁹Brooks, p. 215.
- ⁹⁰Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1920, cited in Pandolfo, p. 20.
- ⁹¹Shelley, p. 105.
- ⁹²Shelley, p. 99.
- ⁹³Levine, George, "The Ambiguous Heritage of Frankenstein", in *The Endurance of Frankenstein*, edited by George Levine and U.C. Knoepfelmacher, University of California Press, 1979, p. 16.
- ⁹⁴Martin Tropp, *Mary Shelley's Monster* (Boston, 1976), p. 52. Cited in Levine, p. 16.
- ⁹⁵Jean-Claude Beaune, "The Classical Age of Automata: An Impressionistic Survey from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century" in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, edited by Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff, and Nadi Tazi, Urzone, New York, 1989, p.433.
- ⁹⁶Martin Heidegger, "A Question Concerning Technology" in *Basic Writings*, Harper and Row, New York, trans. William Lovitt, 1954.
- ⁹⁷Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge, New York, 1991. It is interesting to compare the position taken in this essay to Scarry's. Haraway begins with the same sort of question, "Why should our bodies end at our skin?", but rather than argue for extension outwards of human sentience into the world of persons and artifacts, she prefers to bring inside the body the non- sentient machine: "For us, in imagination and in other practice, machines can be prosthetic devices, intimate components, friendly selves." (p. 178). While this does modify the position taken in the *Cogito*, it does so in a way which would not upset its fundamental assumptions and would, in fact, take them to their ominous conclusions, a world devoid of sentience and imagination.
- ⁹⁸Scarry, p. 285.
- ⁹⁹The diseases referred to are, respectively, chicken pox, breast carcinoma (cancer), fibrinous pericarditis (inflammation around the heart), colonic carcinoma, and achalasia (a constriction of the end of the esophagus).
- ¹⁰⁰The *emblemata* of Roman floor painting were "simulated panel paintings with figures and objects shown in their natural relationship in settings that suggest depth", and in particular the way in which they were placed in contexts that shifted notions of dimensionality: "Such panels when placed on the floor evidently were meant to make one forget the solidity of the surface they occupied...But since the surface which is being dissolved is the very ground on which the beholder stands, the effect on him can be startling.", Ernst Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making*, Harvard University Press, 1980, pp. 51-52.
- ¹⁰¹William Styron, *Darkness Visible*, p. 70.
- ¹⁰²Ulman, Elinor, "Art Therapy: Problems of Definition" in *Art Therapy in Theory and Practice*, Schocken Books, 1975.
- ¹⁰³Ulman, p. 4
- ¹⁰⁴Ulman, p. 6.
- ¹⁰⁵Schildkraut et al., "Mind and Mood in Modern Art II: Depressive Disorders, Spirituality, and Early Death in The Abstract Expressionist Artists of the New York School", *American Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 151, no. 4. The authors perform a kind of epidemiological study to demonstrate that these Abstract Expressionist artists are at significantly increased risk for various mental illnesses such as depression and for suicide. Such efforts by physicians began with Freud in his studies of Michalangelo and Leonardo di Vinci and reflect another facet of using art and artist as material for diagnosis and pathologization.
- ¹⁰⁶Taussig, p. 87-88.
- ¹⁰⁷Taussig, p. 88-89.
- ¹⁰⁸Shelley, p. 264.

Illustrations



Figure 1. The Cham pot called *Jini Ya Suneyu* used to treat ear problems. (Originally in Hare, p. 31)



Figure 2. The Cham pot called *Furru*, used for nasal difficulties. (Hare, p. 25)



Figure 3. The Cham pot called *Seben*, used to treat infantile diarrhea. (Hare, p. 25)

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