AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND SELF-PORTRAIT
AS RESISTIVE FORM IN QUEER MOVING-IMAGE

by

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THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

In the
Faculty of Contemporary Arts

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Summer 2007

APPROVAL

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Degree: Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies

Title of Project: Autobiography and Self-Portrait as Resistive Form in
                                   Queer Moving-Image

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Date Defended/Approved: _May 18 2007_____

ABSTRACT

This paper accompanies a multiple projection moving-image. It examines the subversive representations of unfixed queer identity in DIY (do-it-yourself) autobiography and self-portrait. In the fictional telling of a fairy who leaves home to find others like herself, the narrative references journey myths from popular culture, religion, literature, and theatre. A post-modern pastiche that plays between reality and fantasy, the artist uses herself as subject and herbody as object to represent the multiple personalities existing in one queer changing body. The form is an experiment in mutable cinema – one that moves between parodying mainstream narrative, drawing from expanded cinema, video art, handmade filmmaking and animation – to create a queer changing art form. The paper discusses how self-representation, -production, and -distribution gives queer feminist women the agency as resistive subjects to create personal myths of an unfixed, denormalized, identity.

Keywords: queer; DIY; self-portrait; autobiography; film; video

Subject Terms: queer cinema; DIY moving-image; feminist self-representation; experimental film and video

To Clint for inspiring the trickster in me,
and to Roberto for encouraging me to make my films by hand.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GLOSSARY

DIY   Do it yourself, often referred to by the acronym "DIY," is a term used by various communities that focus on people creating things for themselves without the aid of paid professionals. Many DIY subcultures explicitly critique consumer culture, which emphasizes that the solution to our needs is to purchase things, and instead encourage people to take technologies into their own hands.[1]

Heteronormativity   In gender theory and queer theory, heteronormativity is the perceived reinforcement of certain beliefs by many social institutions and social policies. These beliefs include the belief that human beings fall into two distinct and complemeary categories, male and female; that sexual and marital relations are normal only when between people of different sexes; and that each sex has certain natural roles in life. Thus, physical sex, gender identity, and gender roles should in any given person align to either all-male or all-female norms, and heterosexuality is considered to be the only normal sexual orientation. The norms this term describes or criticizes might be overt, covert, or implied. Those who identify and criticize heteronormativity say that it distorts discourse by stigmatizing alternative concepts of both sexuality and gender and makes certain types of self-expression more difficult.[2]

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[1] "Do it yourself," Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DIY>

[2] "Heteronormativity," Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heteronormativity>

INTRODUCTION: A PERSONAL MYTHOLOGY

"Gayatri Spivak has however questioned whether the 'subaltern', the woman in a subordinate position, can ever 'speak', since she is required to use the dominant discourse of the oppressors that effectively silences her own voice."[3]

In the summer of 2005, while making a DIY (do-it-yourself) super8 film with women from my home community where we all played boys, I realized that the work I'd been doing was based in my own personal experiences of gender in a heteronormative culture. I decided to bring these experiences into my academic practice, and produce an MFA project that was informed by my understanding of queer theories, the media of film and video, and its histories. I wanted to bring DIY and self-representational work into the academic discourse, and vice versa. The story that emerged was a merging of the genres of fantasy, science fiction and mythology, but drawn from my own experiences in the queer community. Because the narrative merged styles, I created the form of the piece to comment and reflect on it by producing it using different moving-image genres or disciplines. In representing myself, I wanted as much control of the image as possible, and the discourse it spoke from. In order to do this, I adopted a DIY method, doing most of the work myself, including performing for the camera, or working collaboratively with close friends. In fact, I didn't have much choice, as my budget was extremely small – I couldn't hire a professional cast or crew to do the work. In order to keep costs low, I even shot most of it on video, which is not my usual practice. I used what materials I had at hand – my body as performer, my bedroom as location, or guerrilla filming in Stanley Park. Because of my association with the school, I had access to equipment, and some production support. Of course, some limitations came up here and there, and especially with no money, how can I make all the dreams I have for this project happen? What resulted is a piece that shows its low-budget – its visual roughness from hand-touching and painstaking manipulation, its crackly and reverberant sound from using minimal recording equipment, its campy, over-the-top performances from a lack of acting training. But, what it represents is myself and my way of making work – the lack of

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[3] Gayatri Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," quoted in "Introduction," edited by H. Gates, *Race, Writing, and Difference*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 9.

expertise I have in any one area, but the skills I have in bringing it altogether and doing almost everything myself.

Empowering oneself through one's own hands is what a DIY (do-it-yourself) practice allows. This way of working disregards established modes of production and disciplinary skill – for the production of DIY work requires moving between various different tasks. DIY is not only about doing-it-yourself, it is also about doing things one's own individualized way, which could be at odds with conventional practices in the chosen field(s), or combine methods from various different disciplines. Many artists work this way, especially at the beginning of their careers, experimenting with different methods to see which ones they like, and using what resources they have at hand with their limited budgets. Unless one is independently wealthy and can afford to play all day with artmaking, a DIY approach is generally what is required to keep making work with limited resources. Of course, once an artist gets recognition, they may abandon this method if they start receiving substantial funding. Some will start hiring professionals to assist them with their work, or as in the case of Hollywood cinema, be hired themselves to work with a large team of people in a hierarchical system.

I use the term *DIY* to bring a grassroots sense to filmmaking. *DIY* has been used to describe home repairs for a long time, and since the 1970s punk and 1990s Riot Grrl movements, for independent music-making and zine production. Rarely have I heard it used to describe moving-images (or other visual media for that matter) except for the work of punk-inspired filmmakers such as Nick Zedd, Richard Kern and Lydia Lunch. The term *DIY* has somewhat of a political edge in its association with grassroots anti-establishment movements. At its core, doing-it-yourself (DIY) undermines the traditional power structure of industrial capitalism, which is strongly based in the ideas of *expertise*, and *assembly-line* production. What results from a DIY mode of production is a unique object – showing the effects of its individual maker. This can result in artworks that are extremely personal and intimate – we see the artist in their work, their hands are all over it, and often, the form becomes part of content – inseparable, I would say.

Before experimental film became the canonical *Experimental Film,* it was a grassroots movement aiming to take artistic and technical control of individual and independent filmmaking. The use of this term in contemporary artmaking signifies, for me at least, a

certain way of making work that has conventions, a canonical art history, and, if adopted, grants access to high-profile film festivals, art galleries, and funding bodies. Of course, not always. And as the canon derives a lot of its history from the avant-garde, modernist and male-dominated discourses, it prompts a resistive reaction in me. I won't deny that my methods of practice don't have much in common with experimental filmmaking. They do in fact. They also have much in common with the traditional methods used in video art, performance art, photography, and, yes, even dramatic narrative cinema. Recently, a new movement of filmmakers have been referring to their mode of practice as *hand-made filmmaking*. This way of working uses a DIY practice towards the celluloid medium of film. Artists working in this way are often driven because of the high costs of film production. In order to reduce costs and subvert the capitalist structure, filmmakers will process motion picture film by hand in a darkroom (hand-processing), hand-paint, draw or scratch directly on the film's emulsion frame-by-frame (camera-less animation), duplicate, reverse or skip images frame-by-frame (optical printing), hand-scratch a sound optical track, or coat emulsion onto sprocketed plastic to make their own film, etc. There are numerous methods in handmaking films, all referring to the direct contact of the celluloid medium by the artist's hands. I, too, am a handmade filmmaker and employ the techniques of hand-processing and tinting in this project, *Æonsroom*. But, the entirety of this project is *not* a 'handmade film,' because I primarily use the digital medium of video. For this reason, and because I use methods of production that are employed in the different disciplines of dramatic narrative, video art, and photography, I use the term, *DIY*, to refer this project's tactical approach in subverting gender norms and sexuality. First, and foremost, my aims are political.

What I wanted to do with *Æonsroom* was create a personal mythology of mutable gender and mutable cinema. The characters in the story undergo transformations, exhibiting both masculine and feminine codes in an effort to expose the masquerade of gender. The form of the story brings together a fictional dreamworld and self-portrait footage, playing between a parody of narrative cinema (camp), experimental film and self-representational video art, crossing the boundaries between them. The linear form of the medium shifts between layers of video, 16mm, super8, and regular8mm film, creating a mutable cinema. Unlike slick modes of dominant cinema that hide their techniques behind masterful illusion, the DIY mode of practice imprints itself visibly and aurally in the work, becoming part of the content. It can result in work that is remarkably

intimate, showing the artist in its material. I use my own body and fictionalized aspects of my life to make this work, so I am seen *all* through it. This is a self-portrait, not only of my own body, but also of the DIY imprint of my hands on the work. The mutation of cinema occurring in *Æonsroom* reflects on and speaks with the subject matter. The statement is a refusal to follow the norms of cinematic production, gender, and sexuality in patriarchal capitalism. I use a language of my own to undermine imposed definitions. The essay that follows is an examination of the self-representational DIY production of *Æonsroom*, relating it to the work of others who employ similar tactics of subversion. Many of the examples I use are women's self-representations. Through this method, they rewrite 'woman' by presenting one that is made through their own definitions.

In the collaboration of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, they present a woman whose gender contains mixed codes, which places her outside of heteronormative desire, averting the male gaze in the process. The photographs represent self-portraits of Cahun, with her mirror being Moore behind the camera. Their mutual desire can be seen as narcissistic in this way, but also queer – as Moore figures as both Cahun's mirror and her other. In this closed loop of desire, they play within their own world, often never even exhibiting their work outside of it, and, hence, creating their own language. Even though they use the already established tools of photo-portraiture and codes of gender, they bend it to their own meaning by blurring the boundaries and playing in the margins. With *Æonsroom*, I do a similar thing. I use my own body to present characters that contain mixed codes of gender, queering myself from mainstream desire, but also playing with its norms. The eroticized characters and scenes are not completely separate of hetero-normativity. I am influenced by a world that sees a woman's body as a sexual object, and this translates into my work. Often, queer representation (especially lesbian), is seen as nonsexual, as in the case of how some view Cahun's work. To be outside heteronormative desire can often be seen as not desired at all. But, Cahun *is* desired by Moore, and, I would speculate, other queers. I am wary about theories that want to move away completely from the sexualizing of women. For we are sexual creatures – both men and women. To be completely asexual would be inhuman. I *do* objectify my body in *Æonsroom*, but I also present a subject that speaks in her own voice. In this, I move towards presenting a subject that can be desired and identified with at the same time. In my discussion of the theories of Linda Williams, I show that it is the norms of gender, not the sex act, that objectify women in pornography. It is gender that needs undoing, not

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the gaze of desire. By mixing gender codes, Cahun and Moore expose the masquerade of femininity – that 'woman' is a construction. In my work, I do the same, but I not only do I present a woman that expresses mixed gender codes, but one who is also a desired sexual creature.

Sadie Benning also plays with codes of gender in her self-representational videos. She uses the camera as a diary, creating very intimate works made mostly alone or sometimes, with a lover. Turning the camera on herself, which acts as a mirror, we are allowed into these private moments. Like Cahun, she represents a self whose gender is mixed and queer. With her use of text and voiceover, she tells stories from her life, or makes them up, to undermine established norms of gender and sexuality. Her DIY method is political in its representation of a self that speaks from the margins. She uses what she has around her, the camera, her voice and her body. Her artist's touch was imprinted on the form of video through her use of a highly rare camera. The Fisher Price Pixelvision camera, a child's toy, was only on the shelf for one year. Using audiocassette tapes to record onto, the camera gives a low-resolution black & white image, that when played back on a TV monitor has a thick black border around the frame. The sound of the camera has a very loud whirring noise which is recorded onto the audio track along with the image and sound captured. Benning's first videos with this camera contained the camera noise and tape-to-tape editing glitches. In her later videos, we see that she learned to record her audio track in post-production and to use a more advanced system of editing that eliminated the glitches. The video is still recognizable as a Pixelvision video, with the black border and the low-resolution black & white image. The use of this camera, whether she wanted it to or not, contributed to the style of her videos. They would not be the same videos if she used a different camera. Her DIY method resulted in a very personal style that represented her. Benning is Benning through her use of the Pixelvision camera. With *Æonsroom*, the forms that I use represent myself as an artist. I use these various media to show that I am capable of each, and to avert being fixed in any one style, as the characters avert being fixed in any one gender. In this way, I adopt the traits of trickster in my production. The trickster is a character that plays within the margins and blurs boundaries between things – it's a DIY practitioner. It does this by confusing the signs (of gender or cinematic style), which then subverts the meanings of such, causing us to pay attention to what the signs are actually telling us. The agency I use in adopting my own discourse of style and content empowers my self-representation

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to denormalize what it means to be a queer woman in contemporary culture, thereby creating my own personal mythology.

CHAPTER 1: GENDERED SELF-REPRESENTATIONS

To be queer is to cobble together identity, to fashion provisional tactics at will, to pollute and deflate all discourses.[4]

Coming of Age in Autobiography and Self-portraiture

"Depicting oneself is not as natural an activity as it might appear; it inevitably implies that an artist is challenging more general principles of organization in the culture, even when he is not aware of doing so (moreover, each of us knows more than we think we do, since, even unwittingly, culture is manifested in our expressions)."[5]

Memory does a strange thing. It rewrites our history as it forgets and fills in the blanks. Recording things in photographs, video or on paper is a pointer to help us remember. But, often, memories disappear and we remember the document but not the events or sensations that it refers to. In autobiography, artists fill in the blanks where memories have failed them. Often this is the case when remembering childhood, which could've been so long ago, and was most likely undocumented by the autobiographer's own hands. The modern idea of childhood began with the Victorians, when autobiography, and its focus on transformation from immaturity to maturity, became a valid form of art.[6] A look back on one's past life armed with wisdom of the present can transform one's history into a coming of age story. The artist lets us know where they've come from and shows us how they came to where they are, or *who* they are. Through reflection, an artist can alter and chose the course of events to posit a theory of the world and their existence in it. In *Outside Belongings*, Elspeth Probyn discusses how childhood in queer story-telling is often forgotten and put together through creative fictionalizing.[7] She, herself, feels lucky that her sister remembers their mutual childhood and she can piece things together through photographs and her sister's memory. She places an emphasis on childhood as "a staple of the coming-out story, a point at which many recollect the

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[4] Lawrence Rinder, "Introduction," in *In a Different Light: Visual Culture, Sexual Identity, Queer Practice*, edited by Nayland Blake, Lawrence Rinder and Amy Scholder, (San Francisco: City Lights, 1995), 13.

[5] Omar Calabrese. *Artists' Self-portraits*. Translated by Marguerite Shore. New York: Abbeville Press, 2006. p379.

[6] George P. Landow. "Childhood as a Personal Myth in Autobiography." *The Victorian Web*. 1988. <http://www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/landow/victorian/genre/autobio4.html>

[7] Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, (New York: Routlegde, 1996), 95-103.

realization of their queerness. Individual and common, story after story recounts the feeling of somehow not belonging, of not fitting in, until the move is made to belong to another community and another kind of family."[8] She describes how, in misremembering, nostalgia can be used to disrupt a naturalized ordering of childhood. "In this way, childhood may take on its full, visible emptiness – a void that compels other uses of childhood than ones which stake its meaning as originary."[9] Instead of remembering those hurtful feelings of not belonging, loss of memory protects the self from re-living those moments and lets a new story emerge through the storyteller's re-creation of the past. A new childhood, a new story, is made from the fragments. On the other hand, Leigh Gilmore describes Minnie Bruce Pratt's refusal of nostalgia as a way to get at the truth and move beyond her past and represent a present identity.[10] Even those these two points contradict each other, the truth must out through a refusal to let past experiences get in the way of present life. Perhaps memories of childhood are forgotten because the changes that occurred are drastic. When one's realization of difference comes, a new life is born – a new person emerges, and a new way of being in the world is established. The whole world changes from the person's point of view. Autobiography is a way for this person to come to terms with who they were, and how they became the person they are. In queer writing, often this is seen in coming-out stories, a sort of coming-of-age. Through creative fictionalizing in *Æonsroom*, I present a story from my life that protects the identities of the people in it. I mix and match characteristics and events to reflect myself rather than the individuals I draw from. I play all the characters as I also recognize that these characteristics are in me, and that this is the reason I am attracted to these individuals in my life. This is my coming of age.

Self-portraiture has a long history in visual art, as various means to express a person's status or ideas about the world. Truly, what does one know except oneself and one's own worldview? We can gather knowledge from books, but they become part of us. Our memories and perceptions are shaped and changed through our experiences, and what we bring to them individually. Every person has a unique expression on this planet. But those on the margins of a society have something else to offer, and that is a reflection on those spaces that exist between two or more worlds. These are the boundary crossers,

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[8] Ibid., 98-9.

[9] Ibid., 103.

[10] Leigh Gilmore, "Autobiographics," in *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, edited by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) 188.

ones that exist in two places at once, acting as a communicator (or mis-communicator) between their, often, contradictory locations. For me, this is where the most interesting and exciting possibilities catalyze, for in this combining is where new ideas are born. Many artists occupy this space of the in-between, and this is reflected in their artmaking. Often, depictions of the self are used to explain this contradictory existence. Sadie Benning uses Pixelvision video to examine her self as a queer body within her patriarchal working-class American community. By turning the work to the self, she uses her body as a case-study that investigates the margins of patriarchal and homophobic oppression. By using herself as an example, she makes real the impact this has on a body. For it's on our bodies and the fixity with which our genders are placed on them where this oppression is felt. In contemporary society, where feminism has achieved, theoretically by law, equal rights for women and men, we need to show that we, as women, are still struggling in a world that wants to keep us outside of it and in the margins. This is why I use my own body in *Æonsroom*, for it exhibits the traces of influence that gendered oppression has had on it.

In the Margins: Claude Cahun's Masquerade

A queer body is one that resists normalization and, like a chameleon who changes colour to avert predators, it changes shape to subvert established ideas, to avoid being pinned down, categorized, swallowed up in the mainstream, and hence, captured by dominant society, or to masquerade as normal. Teresa de Lauretis first used the term 'queer theory' in 1991 to encompass a large body of people who occupy the margins of established gendered and sexual roles. A few years later, she abandoned the term because of her belief that labelling such a group would cause its demise – it would be incorporated into the mainstream and no longer be on the margins.[11] Annamarie Jagose explains that Judith Butler furthers this notion by posing 'queer' as a critique of identity politics,[12] and that, to identify this large group as 'queer' is to put them into a category of identity, whereas that what it is to be queer is so diverse and changing that in its very definition, it contradicts itself. What 'queer theory' has become is a fluid, changing term that allows for movement and shape-shifting. How can one define what is *queer*, when

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[11] Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory,* Australian Humanities Review, 1996,
<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-Dec-1996/jagose.html>
[12] Ibid.

what is *normal* keeps changing? Queer will always be something that's different from the average. The term itself has been used for centuries to denote someone or something that is odd, and not necessarily gay, lesbian, or transgendered. Now it is almost exclusively used as such. The meaning of the word itself has even changed. Even so, if a person is described as queer, then they are not considered normal. Therefore, queerness will always be outside, just in its very definition. Acknowledging 'queer' as a mutable force also acknowledges that what is normal changes as well – clothing fashions change, just as behavioural expectations of gender do. To define homosexuality as queer is to marginalize it. And, arguably, if we go back to the older meaning of the word, anything that is marginalized is queer – because it's outside of the norm. Feminism is, then, a queer movement, because it strives to give women equal standing with men, but also recognizes that women are outside of men. Beginning with Laura Mulvey's famous 1973 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," much writing has encompassed the idea of a male gaze that looks at representations of female and objectifies it as 'other.' Often, even pictures of men are feminized because the gaze is established as so thoroughly male, and female viewers are seen as looking through phallocentric eyes. When women make self-portraiture, it always presents a question for common notions of gender. "When they make their own gender a focus of their work, at least within their self-representation, they tend to question, rather than affirm, the status of that gender. They test its boundaries, and they see the representation of their gendered bodies as a challenge, rather than a given."[13] Sarah K. Rich curated a show for the Palmer Museum of Art on women's self-representation. In her catalogue essay, she states that self-representation, as a mirror, is the artist questioning who they are. She argues that when women represent themselves, it becomes "a question asked in defiance of any attempt to fix them within a confining definition."[14] In traditional representations of women, artists would distance the subject and it would become an object of our gaze – therefore making us male viewers with power over the vulnerable figure in the picture. Women's self-representation subverts this as the artist takes control of her own image and, often, places herself in a position of power by (sometimes) gazing at us, or presenting her body in a non-sexually explicit way, or playing with viewpoints. Early female artists had to struggle with their identity as women in a men's field, so self-

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[13] Sarah K. Rich, "And now, who am I?" in *Through the Looking Glass: Women and Self-Representation in Contemporary Art*, Exhibition Catalogue, Palmer Museum of Art, (University Park: Pennsylvia State University Press, 2003) 6.

[14] Ibid., 34.

portraits from this time became political sites to position themselves as valid artists –
these pictures of women automatically call attention to the gender imbalance in the field
of art, and become less about the female body than a statement about society. Many
contemporary female artists continue to subvert societal norms in the way they represent
themselves. "[F]ew are such explicit self-portraits. Rather, most of them use self-
representation as a means to another end – as, for example, a commentary on the
larger social structures through which "selves" are created."[15] In Æonsroom, I use self-
representation to subvert the phallocentric gaze. I present myself in many ways to
confuse how I am to be viewed, and to remain unfixed by an objectifying gaze. Sure, at
moments, I objectify my own body and present it as sexualized, such as in The Pink
Fairy's 'accidental' flashing of her breasts. In a way, I poke fun at objectification. If a
man's nipple is showing, it's nothing. I know, and the character knows, that the breast is
showing, but it's disregarded as anything to be ashamed or excited about. My breasts
are small enough to almost pass as belonging to a man's chest anyway. And later on in
the piece, the characters become more and more open about revealing their chests.

Claude Cahun is one artist who's spent her life exploring gender's masquerade. Her self-
representative photographs had her playing roles that crossed boundaries between
female and male, often mixing the codes defined for each in an effort to expose the
performativity of gender. "In many of the later portraits, Cahun exaggerated familiar
gender signifiers to the point of parody, appearing in heavy makeup or elaborate
costume... In these highly theatrical works, as in those featuring Cahun as a masked
female, the artist draws attention to the performative nature of both masculinity and
femininity, and the lack of stable meaning behind gender."[16] Most of her black and white
photographs are simply titled Autoportrait. In one of her most known works (dated 1928),
she stands before a mirror, dressed in a checkered suit jacket. Her hair is buzzed short
and shiny as if gilded or dyed, and she wears dark lipstick. In the photo, we see her face
turned towards us, away from the mirror, and her mirrored reflection looking off to the
right. Her gaze is unwavering and steady, head-on. The mirror is cast aside as a
narcissistic notion, and instead she looks at her viewers. In this photograph, she
represents an androgynous figure, one showing signs of both masculinity (the jacket, the

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[15] Ibid., 8.

[16] Julie Cole, "Claude Cahun, Marcel Moore, and the Collaborative Construction of a Lesbian Subjectivity," in
Reclaming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism, edited by Norma Broude and Mary
D. Garrard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) 349.

short hair, the steady frontal gaze), and femininity (the flamboyancy of the jacket, the shiny hair, lipstick, and the mirror). In this representation, she subverts our notions of what is meant by female or male. She could be either, neither or both. Her chosen pseudonym – Claude Cahun – is also one that could be perceived as female or male, as Claude is a French name for either sex. Likely, during the period these photographs were made, she may have been perceived as a male artist. She worked within the French Surrealist movement, which is known for their treatment of female artists as muses, or fetishized as sexual objects such as in Man Ray's erotic photographs of Lee Miller, a photographer herself. Cahun's collaborator was her step-sister and lover, Marcel Moore (also a pseudonym chosen for its androgynous connotations). It is uncertain to what extent they worked together, as almost all of their collaborations are attributed to Cahun alone. But someone had to be taking the photographs. Cahun appears to be looking at her photographer with a gaze that is not just for a machine, but, as if a lover. They are not, in a sense, actually self-portraits. But are they? Julie Cole argues that the body of work that produced the identity of Cahun was the work of two artists – Cahun and Moore. And that their relationship was so tied that they saw each other as one and the same. Their collage works of 1929-1930 are entitled *Moi-même*, and accompany a chapter on self-love in their book *Aveux mon avenus*. In this chapter, Cahun refers to Moore as *l'autre-moi* (the other me).[17] Cahun's self-love included her lover Moore as her other self. Cole illustrates her theory by investigating their photographs, especially the ones that show a doubling, or a mirror. The images with supposed narcissistic intent are directed out to the viewer, or in this case, to Moore – who is taking the photograph. Often, a mask or a mannequin will stand in for Moore alongside Cahun. And another photograph dated 1928, like the one described above, of Moore facing us, and her reflection (in the same mirror as in Cahun's portrait) beside her faces out to the left. If put side-by-side with photograph of Cahun, as in Cole's essay, the two stare out towards the viewer (each other as photographer), and their reflections stare at each other's reflections. Her argument extends through her pointing out that these photographs were rarely shown in Cahun's lifetime. And their lack of titles other than a long series of *Autoportraits*, could mean that they were never meant for outside eyes at all. "[Moore was] Cahun's original and only intended audience, her even gaze may have registered as engaging and conspiratorial, a sign that photographer and model were closely linked as equal participants in a mutual project, the disruption of

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[17] Ibid., 350.

gendered stereotypes."[18] The attire, poses, and gaze of the model provide mixed signifiers towards gender, but the viewer will bring their experience to it and make of it what they will.

So what happens to the supposed male gaze of the audience? Often, the photographs are credited to Cahun alone, this removes Moore from the equation altogether. But Moore's presence as main viewer and photographer adds another layer to the way the photograph is viewed. With Cole's insistence on the collaboration of the two, it makes the work more potent in its power to subvert the male gaze. She uses the 1927 photograph of Cahun in the strong-man outfit to illustrate this. "Although displaying attributes of both a coy, seductive girl and a macho, well-muscled ladies' man, Cahun refused to become a conventionally desirable member of either sex, making her pronouncement of sexual unavailability redundant and unnecessary for all but the one person who potentially could, and might presumably want to, interrupt Cahun's training – or her performance – with a kiss."[19] The picture parodies both femininity and masculinity by overtly displaying the codes through the use of makeup, a flat chest with nipples painted on, a coy pose, but yet assertive frontal gaze, and the text written on her chest 'I am in training, don't kiss me.' If she becomes undesirable through this parody, who would want to kiss her? Cole insists that by this, the text was meant for Moore, who *does* desire her, and because of that, it proves that Moore is present in the photograph as viewer. We can almost see her standing there with the camera. Her presence is undermined when her collaboration is ignored by the lack of credit as photographer. And with this, Cole claims that the photos could possibly be seen though a male gaze.[20] I would argue that even though Moore is not credited, the codes in the pictures present enough of a gendered subversion that the gaze is avoided regardless. I feel too much insistence on a supposed 'male' gaze is referred to in visual art. The claim that was made popular through Mulvey is that no matter the sex of the subject or the viewer, the object in the picture is automatically fetishized as female, and hence, the viewer becomes male. This is based on a gendered 'othering,' because as viewers we see the object in the picture in front of us as 'other.' In narrative cinema, this can be especially true because the objects we are seeing on screen are apparently unaware of the

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[18] Ibid., 345

[19] Ibid., 347

[20] Ibid., 355.

viewer's gaze. But in Cahun's work, and in much other self-portrait work, the subject gazes out towards the camera as if it were a mirror. Cahun's mirror was Moore, her other self. The gaze is subverted with the subject's gaze back at us 'I see you looking at me,' it says, 'and I am not afraid.' She becomes a *subject*, rather than an *object*, which allows the viewer to *identify* with, rather than 'other' the person in the picture. By taking on codes from both genders, a disruption of identification occurs. A very masculine person might identify with some of the codes, and feel threatened by the mixture with the feminine codes. I can see how these photos might be labelled as perverted or pornographic, because they threaten the entire heteronormative structure. David Bate suggests that Cahun perhaps presents a feminine gaze.[21] I don't think I would go so far to agree with that, because although her poses were meant for a woman, Moore, they are viewed within a culture that gives power to men. The male gaze is subverted, but not eliminated. The photos function to destabilize gender norms, and expose them as being performative, creating an unease with the viewer who has faith in a truly bi-gendered system. Often, the photos are seen as drag, but they function in a different way. Drag and to more extremes, transsexuality, although subverting gender through crossing over, still places an emphasis on masculinity or femininity, reinforcing the codes between each. What Cahun and Moore have done has thrown these notions into flux, creating an in-between gender, or 'third sex.' Cole mentions that Cahun would often reference Havelock Ellis' writings on the third sex, and that homosexuals lived outside normal categorization.[22] "Neither male nor female, according to cultural definitions, the lesbian was not required to conform to either identity but could draw from each."[23] Abigail Solomon-Godeau concurs with these sentiments in an essay about Cahun's work. Drawing from Monique Wittig's writing, she proposes that these photos create a subject that is neither woman nor man, but lesbian – a sex not in either category but one of its own, and that these works be read as a lesbian self-representation and not a female one.[24] The distinction here loses its impact when considering feminist self-representation that is not from a lesbian body. Are we then supposed to read works by Frida Kahlo as purely feminine? Her thick monobrow and cropped hair move us beyond pure feminine representation. Her gaze was as assertive and frontal as Cahun's ever was – I would

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[21] David Bate, "The Mise en Scène of Desire," in *Mise en Scène,* Exhibition catalogue, Institute of Contemporary Arts (London: ICA, 1994) 10.

[22] Cole, 349.

[23] Ibid., 356.

[24] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "The Equivocal "I": Claude Cahun as Lesbian Subject," in *Inverted Odyseys,* edited by Shelley Rice, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999)

argue even more defiantly so. Kahlo's self-portraits were not about her sexuality, but one can't help but see, especially in the portraits of her and her husband, Diego Rivera, how they were about her as a woman in a man's world. Cahun and Moore more overtly explored gender, yes, but the parallels are there in how they represent themselves. These are self-portraits of women artists who struggled with barriers put upon them because of their sex. Cahun shows us that despite her sex, her gender is fluid. If we take a look outside our own culture and era, we can see examples of how codes of gender change. Gender is a fashion, subject to change, incorporation, and appropriation. How we dress and behave are codes for others to read. One's daytime clothing could be radically different than what one wears when going out at night – is this then a different gender? The behaviour one exhibits at work might be very different than out with friends – is this then a different gender? Cahun puts these questions out there, she does not discount her being a woman, she is very much a woman. A lesbian is also a woman – a woman-loving-woman. She reacts to the codes that were upon on her by being a woman in this world that does not accept masculine gendered behaviour from a female-bodied person, and came out with art that shows the inherent falsity (or masquerade) of the culture's gendering of sex. That a woman's body is used to display these mixed codes exposes the masquerade of womanliness, as discussed by Joan Rivière in 1929.[25] Very simply and overtly, Cahun shows us that a woman's body need not be a feminine body. I mean, what should it matter – she's a woman, and that has everything to do with sex, and not gender. Someone's choice of gender, whether it means donning drag, playing up femininity, or being androgynous, does not discount their sex. As Cole pointed out, Cahun becomes undesirable, like a butch woman would be to a heterosexual male who prefers very feminine women. She takes herself out of the equation in a so-called normal female/male pairing. In this, she is removed from the 'othering' that occurs by a male gaze, because she cannot be seen as a feminine fetishized object. The codes exhibited place her in a different sexuality, one that can be desired or identified with through a queer gaze. The 'othering' that occurs here is not within a male/female dichotomy, but a queer/straight one. The male gaze is not subverted, it's avoided. It is the *straight* gaze that 'others' Cahun's images of queer representation. A question arises for me on why we must place sexuality on an image of a single person. Jane Rule's writings on this subject have called for an insistence that we see people as individuals and not by who

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[25] M. Catherine de Zegher, editor, *Inside the Invisible: an elliptical traverse of 20th century art, in, of, and from the feminine*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996) 21.

they love. With Cahun's images, it's difficult to see outside of that, as most of the work was done collaboratively with her partner Moore. Alone, the pictures still hold the meaning of their intentions. By taking herself out of heteronormative desirability, she is either seen as asexual or queer. It is the codes of gender that define our desirability. One can't help but place signification on how a person behaves. That is why, even in queer communities, femme and butch become visual codes for desire. The images of Cahun subvert even those notions. A queer gaze on the character that she and Moore have created might result in confusion – is she a butch woman attracting femme desire, or a femme attracting butch? In any one picture, the codes are mixed and mutated. This character is not easy to define or pin down, it exhibits both and shifts between masculine and feminine behaviour and attire. Not only is she exposing the masquerade of gender through its mutation, but she's also subverting desire and its response to visual codes. What has been created with these self-portraits is a queer gender of shifting signifiers. Cahun's performativity comes from the margins of society, being here nor there, translating between genders, complicating what we know of each, making room for more than two, and exposing our own performativity of gender. My own exploration of gender performativity in *Æonsroom* mixes codes of gender. I play characters that exhibit femme and butch traits, often to the point where one viewer referred to the Sheela character as 'he.' By confusing the signs, I avert the phallocentric gaze. In this fantasy world, all desire is for women; all the characters are women who show signs of both masculinity and femininity. The mirror I gaze into, the literal one in the scene, and the metaphorical one of the camera, looks out to the audience and taunts them with the question 'who am I?' Like Cahun, I made most of these images either by myself or with close friends. The one scene where I shot sync-sound, I used a crew of all women. Not that I feel this would subvert the gaze any less, but it helped my comfort level in performing the character I wanted to represent. The scenes where I show the most intimacy, the regular8mm footage with The Pink Fairy in the tree, were shot by my lover, Sacha Fink. I feel that the footage shows the caressing desire with which it was shot. Like Cahun's relationship with her photographer/collaborator, wherein she exhibits an uncompromised desire for the person behind the camera, I felt my performance was unhindered as well. I feel that in the self-shot scenes, my gaze back at the camera is colder, as I'm staring at a machine. And in the scenes of video, that were shot by my close friend, Kai Ling Xue, I felt that an intimacy with the characters was exhibited towards the camera. The sex scenes were fun to do because we had previously talked about our mutual desire to

shoot a pornographic film. We laughed a lot during these sessions, and played at being real pornographers – her as a director of phallocentric porn, and me as a porn star. These scenes, I felt, became direct parodies of actual pornography.

Femininity, Parody and Pornography

Some see Claude Cahun's self-representation as an androgynous non-sexualized woman, but why then would there be images of hers and Marcel Moore's that were destroyed because they were labelled as pornographic?[26] Because the character in their photographs is seen as neither feminine or masculine, heteronormative desire is lost. But, as I argued above, a queer desire is formed through the shifting signs of gender. I can only put forth my own opinions as a queer viewer towards the images I see of Cahun, and to me they do not look non-sexualized. In fact, I find the character in these pictures very sexy and hot – perhaps *because* they show an androgynous mutable person. One of which is rarely shown in mainstream pornography. Although, in my teens, I do remember being excited while reading an article in my boyfriend's Playboy magazine written by Annie Sprinkle about her transsexual lover. The thing that stuck in my mind was that, as a bisexual person, she was happy that he had kept his female genitals in addition to getting a surgical penis because she got the best of both worlds. That was the point where I started to question my own sexuality, even though I never came out as queer until many years later. Sprinkle has done much in the way of creating a sexualized queer persona. For awhile, she was doing showings of her cervix in an effort to demystify the female anatomy, and hence bring it out of the 'other' unknown realm of female desire. She is a queer person who is imbued with sexuality and spreads her love of it openly. A friend of mine once called her the 'fairy godmother of porn.' She currently does seminars where she talks about sex and pornography from a feminist, yet sex-positive, point of view. I attended one such seminar in Oct. 2004 at the Western Front, Vancouver, BC, where she stressed that the sex-positive point of view was underrepresented, especially by feminists. In her book, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible,"* Linda Williams presents the culture of pornography as based around the symbolic meaning of the power of the phallus. Differentiating between the

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[26] Cole, 347.

actual representation of a man's penis, and the power of patriarchy, she counters the attack anti-pornography feminists have on images of penetrative sex.

> "In attacking the penis we seem to attack the phallic authority that it symbolizes as well. But the tempting conflation of meaning between the two accedes to the impossibility of change. We would do well to remember, therefore, that the phallus is fundamentally not real and not possessed by anyone. In psychoanalytic theory, it is the illusion of the power of generation, the control of meaning, the belief in an integral unity of self that no one actually attains but everyone desires. A penis, in contrast, is an organ that men really have. Hardcore pornography is not phallic because it shows penises; it is phallic because in its exhibition of penises it presumes to know, to possess an adequate expression of the truth of "sex" – as if sex were as unitary as the phallus presumes to be. While the physiology of sex is not likely to change, its gendered meanings can. In attacking the penis rather than the phallus, anti-pornography feminism evades the real sources of masculine power."[27]

She further explained that sexual imagery made by and for women is often labelled 'erotica' because of the lack of penetration, the lack of hierarchical power structure, or lack of a penis in the case of lesbian erotica. But, of course, not all sexual imagery made by and for women has these elements and could be labelled as pornography. And an image seen by one person could be deemed pornographic, whereas another could see it as erotic. It's pretty much up to the whims, or comfort levels of the individual viewer. A friend of mine had a film that was coming back from a queer film festival in the U.S. confiscated at Canadian customs and labelled pornographic. The only image in the piece that could remotely be seen as such was a short clip of her kissing her girlfriend, both of them fully clothed. This is an example of blatant homophobia, and not a response to actual sexual imagery. This was probably the case with Cahun and Moore's photos that were destroyed, but we'll never know. Williams poses an interesting notion about sexual imagery. "Pornography as a genre wants to be about sex. On close inspection, however, it always proves to be more about gender."[28] She explains that in attempting to be about the universal sex act, in actuality it uses images of the penis, or hierarchical power (as in the case of sado-masochism) to display truth of sex. Just witness the 'cum-shot' present in many numerous pornographic videos. Forgive me if I'm wrong, but the physical pleasure for a man must be diminished if he pulls out to ejaculate (sure, maybe he gets another kind of pleasure of domination). The shot is only

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[27] Williams, Linda, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible,"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) 266-7.

[28] Ibid., 267.

there to show the penis in all its glory of conquest. The sex act becomes not about the pleasure of the individuals involved, but about the power of the phallus, which has been falsely given to the man's penis. It stands in for the symbol of masculine power. Most often, heterosexual pornography shows a very certain type of female – a highly feminine woman who fits into contemporary standards of beauty. The male's looks are insignificant and often his body is not even shown, except for his penis. Often, gay male pornography also has a similar hierarchical structure – where the bottom (the one being penetrated) is feminized. He is usually younger and more attractive than the top, who's body is sometimes not seen as in the case of heterosexual porn. There are exceptions when certain fetishes come into play, such as if the top is a 'bear' (a larger, hairy man). Of course, these are generalizations of the majority of porn that is out there, especially on the internet where most of my research has been done. What there is a significant lack of is pornography made by and for women, either heterosexual or lesbian. Of the very little that I have seen, as in the Toronto-based Dirty Pillows' *Pornographlics* and Shine Louise Houston's *Crash Pad*, the queer women performing in the videos were mostly either gendered butch or femme and acted according to codes outlined for each. The butches wore strap-ons to simulate the penis, the femmes were penetrated. The hierarchical structure is subverted when women play with these gendered stereotypes, and it becomes a parody of heteronormative behaviour. Often, with queer women, femmes will assert more dominance than butches. And, as is the case when wearing a silicone appendage, the butch penetrates the femme to orgasm, but her own physical pleasure rarely includes an orgasm. The only 'cum-shot' in a queer woman's porn is female ejaculation. It doesn't need a penis to occur, or the phallus, as this can happen with manual stimulation. And most often occurs with a lot of attention to (the usually femme) woman receiving the stimulation, and none whatsoever on the woman giving it. I am uncertain what kind of an impact this gives to a viewer in a phallocentric context. But what I've found is a lot of fetishistic interest and mystery based around it. There is a quite numerous amount of heterosexual porn for a male viewer that features female ejaculation. Unlike biological men, there are few women who actually can ejaculate. Annie Sprinkle believes that any woman could learn to ejaculate and outlines the steps to this process. There are also quite a lot of educational videos on the subject, some of which are quite erotic under the guise of 'educational.' My viewing of pornography that contains female ejaculation does not lead me to see the power structure that is inherent in heterosexual pornography with the display of a 'cum-shot.' It becomes a different thing

– perhaps a woman's mastery and comfort with her body? And then does this mean it's a source of feminine power outside the hierarchical structure of patriarchy? If Sprinkle's claims were true, that with a lot of comfort and attention to the female anatomy, any woman could ejaculate, then perhaps it is a site for feminine power. Because, within hierarchical models of patriarchy, women devalue their own sexuality and bodies in order to place a higher value on the masculine symbol of the phallus – the penis. Queer women's porn featuring a femme/butch dynamic is very similar to heterosexual porn in its presentation of the sexual act, minus the 'cum-shot.' They reiterate the models of gender that exist in heterosexual porn. Usually, the female (or queer femme) is portrayed as highly feminine in manner and attire – revealing lingerie, lots of makeup, high heels, very vocal, and could be either submissive or dominant. The male (or butch) is either highly masculinized – muscular, hairy, quiet, and either submissive or dominant. Often, in queer women's porn, the femme will perform fellatio on the silicone member of her partner, in a direct parody of the heterosexual act. Not always the case, but more often in queer porn, the femme displays more of a dominant character than the butch, and in heterosexual porn it's the other way around. But the model of hierarchy is almost always present – either partner taking control of the other. In the cases where no strap-on is used, either through manual penetration or clitoral stimulation, or, in very rare cases, tribadism (genital-to-genital stimulation) these seem to me to exhibit the least hierarchical structure. In an example from *Crash Pad*, there was one character who in one scene joined a femme/butch couple in a threesome. She was more androgynous looking than the butch, but definitely more butch than the highly seductive femme who she penetrates with a strap-on, and receives no orgasmic release for herself. In a later scene, she returns with another androgynous looking woman who manually penetrates her until she ejaculates. This character is one who changes depending on circumstance or the partners around her. In one scene, she is a butch who submits to the seduction of the more powerful femme, in the later one, she is penetrated and also ejaculates. In my viewing, she exhibits both masculine and feminine traits, and at the same time, neither, so like Cahun, averts the hierarchal structure of patriarchy by stepping outside of it. This androgyny and mutual pleasure-giving and receiving is often seen in lesbian feminist erotica, which, since the 1970s, I feel has done much to pave the way for contemporary expressions of queer women's pornography. This softer expression of sexuality between women was essential during a time when attacks were quite prevalent from anti-pornography feminists. Today, queer women's porn is hard-core, penetrative and looks

much the same as heterosexual porn in its hierarchical model. What is different is in how these gender roles of femme/butch are played out. With the butch unable or unwilling to be touched or brought to orgasm, the focus is on the femme's ability to seduce the butch into pleasuring her. Even though the camera focuses on the female in heterosexual porn, ultimately it's about the pleasure the male receives through his penis in watching this 'othered' partner. In femme/butch porn, the pleasure in viewing is still focused on the femme, but she has power in her seduction and in the orgasm. Heterosexual porn is over when the man comes, femme/butch porn is over when the femme comes. In a sense, femme/butch porn gives hierarchical power to the more feminine character, and hence imbuing femininity itself, and its ability to seduce, power. Not to say that this doesn't exist in heterosexual porn, or that this is always the case in queer women's porn, but this is the site where it's often most prevalent. The sex scenes in *Æonsroom* contain no penetration of any kind. This was impossible because the characters were only brought together in post-production, and, by choice, I opted to not show any scenes of penetration to avert a hierarchical imbalance. In the first sex scene, with Sheela, Wendy and The Pink Fairy, the characters are only ever on screen by themselves and do actions that mimic lesbian sex acts. They use their hands and tongues a lot and rub their own bodies to signify desire and desirability. The second sex scene with Æon and The Pink Fairy parodies heterosexual porn in its miming of fellatio, but with no penis in sight. These characters also use their hands a lot, as I see this as one of the main sexual organs in lesbian sex. At first, The Pink Fairy is fetishized as the sexual object to fulfil the desire of the more butch Æon, but it ends with Æon satisfying The Pink Fairy, who then fuses with Æon to become a new person.

The feminine power of beauty and seduction is not new by any means; it's been around since pre-history, in the worship of idols such as the Venus figure, and so on. Our North American and Christian-based culture attempts to devalue this source of power through the phallus, symbolized in porn through the phallus. I see femme/butch porn as an attempt to regain some of that power. In the contemporary mainstream, instances of feminine power can be seen as well. In Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* movies, Uma Thurman's character of the Bride undergoes several transformations, which empower her to resist the conformities placed upon her femaleness. In the TV series *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, Buffy is a young girl with the strength and power to destroy demons. And in the very last season, defeats an extremely powerful misogynist preacher. Both

Buffy and the Bride are very feminine, pretty and blonde. It's the Bride's blondeness that gives her power. Her foe, Bill, admittedly has a weakness for Blondes. She's an all-American girl, empowered by her resistance to traditional roles of feminine weakness. Buffy is also such, but over her 154 episodes she's developed a more complex character. Sure, they both kick ass, but Buffy's not a cold-hearted killer like the Bride is. She only kills demons, who are technically not alive, and who act as metaphors for real life demons – symbols of the phallic. In the Buffy universe, there is supposed to be only one Slayer per generation, and only when she dies is another born, and they are always young girls. In her final battle against the misogynist preacher, Buffy, together with her community of friends, orchestrate a ritual that makes every potential slayer into a Slayer – empowering them with the same superhuman strength that she has. This physical strength is metaphorical for the superhuman emotional strength that women require in order to throw off patriarchy's oppressive burden. In the 1970s, feminists garnered the term 'superwoman' to explain how women had to be more than men in order to be seen as equal. Today it's not so different. The term 'yummy mummy' is being used for Hollywood stars who've just had babies and still look hot. Realistically, it's nearly impossible to achieve this without a nanny to look after the baby, and the time and freedom to be able to go to the gym everyday. Stars can achieve this because of their wealth, but working women cannot. Buffy and the Bride still look beautiful and put-together even after hours of fighting back predators. Their power is in their ability to fight back the men who desire them, or seduce them if they so desire. There are high expectations on women to look pretty, even now more than ever. It's a show of strength – feminine power lies in her ability to seduce, but on her terms. An odd-looking woman, who does not draw the gaze of male eyes, such as Cahun, has no power over patriarchy because she doesn't attract it – she can't use it. In queer terms, this woman could be butch-identified and gathers power from her masculinity. Androgynous and butch women are visible signifiers of their marginality, and avert gender norms by living on the outside of heterosexual normativity. Queer femmes parody heterosexual femininity, often to the point of being criticized for looking too straight. Kami Chisholm's film *Female to Femme* explores this phenomenon. Her documentary poses an interesting statement about the gender of *femme*. She takes approaches usually seen when talking about transgendered female-to-males, with the title of her film and by filming a mock support group for femmes unhappy with their bodies, who then feel empowered by taking on a feminine

gender presentation.[29] In a sense, she is going to the extremes to show how, for women, taking on femininity is as much a masquerade as taking on masculinity. But, even from within her own community, Chisholm received attacks on her ideas with claims that 'femmes were already female' and therefore already presenting their gender naturally. As she told me this, she laughed and said that that reaction just proved how much she needed to make that film, that these ideas of an essentialist gender were still perpetuating, and from within the very community of people who were exploring gender transgression themselves.

Contemporary artists who explore the feminine masquerade using their own bodies are often under similar attacks. And especially when they play with sexualized imagery, they are at risk of being censored. In Cahun's work where she dons a more feminine persona, she is often masked. This, I think, emphasized the masquerade that goes into femininity. Mainstream portrayals of feminine power do not show femininity as anything other than natural. Buffy and the Bride are both 'naturally' beautiful. At one point, the Bride does transform into a more powerful being when her character becomes more seductive, but this is subtle and her feminine masquerade is not much different from her ruthless killer persona. Queer femmes play up femininity to the point of being excessive, and often mix codes of gender – showing leg or armpit hair – to signify their queerness. In the photographic work of Liz Cohen, the femininity she displays is highly erotic – wearing attire and posing as if for pornographic material. She often poses alongside large machines, parodying automobile magazines with their display of sexualized women with sexy cars. Her work is highly polished and looks as if it could be straight from one of those magazines; her body is also one that is seen as desirable by contemporary heterosexual standards. What differentiates her work from photographs seen in automobile magazines is her process. In *Bodywork*, of 2006, she videotapes herself repairing and customizing an antique car at an auto body shop, as well as documenting her own body-training process to become a model for the layout. The car we see her laying on top of in the large-scale photographs is not one that she is selling, it's hers. When looking at the photographs at first glance, it may be difficult to ascertain, but because of my knowledge in the process, I can see her pride in the workmanship she has done.

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[29] Kami Chisholm, co-director of *FtF: Female to Femme*, in conversation with Julie Saragosa, Chicago, Nov. 2006.

Laurel Nakadate is another artist who works with her own body in a display of feminine sexuality. She produces videos and photographs that show eerie staged performances of the everyday. Her settings are usually at home, and show her playing around, often with a male partner who is much older and fully clothed. These men are single older strangers who she befriends on camera.[30] She appears very young herself, because the clothing she wears is very girl-next-door and often these images seem on the verge of pedophilia – as she playfully stretches next to a much older man who looks on with a smile on his face. She also exhibits many death scenes, with large unrealistic blood spatters on her body. Her pose as a drawing model in *Lessons 1-10* shows a man sketching her from behind as she looks at the camera assertively and defiantly. Her body is contorted in a sexually inviting way, yet she seems to be in control because the older, seemingly gentle, man is situated behind and below her. They are both clothed, her in pink bikini briefs and a tank top, and him in a plaid shirt. With her images, I feel she is playing with our perceptions of the scene. Like Cindy Sherman, who, in her series of *Untitled Film Stills*, played feminine characters caught in a moment of performance, Nakadate seems to capture a moment of the everyday in her images. Unlike Sherman's work, Nakadate's character is consistent throughout her body of work. Sherman's work is about the performativity of feminine representation in the mainstream and plays with the various characters it represents – often representing the feminine as vulnerable and victimized. Nakadate's character could perhaps be herself, but it's the situations she puts herself in that set the scene. The settings are filled with a lived-in atmosphere – it could perhaps even be her own home – a bedroom, a kitchen, a tree outside of a house. The actions she performs in these images are also eerily realistic, unlike the highly stylized poses of Sherman. Nakadate's stretching and contortions of her body in the scene do not look uncomfortable, in fact they look very comfortable. They seem like candid moments from everyday reality. The death poses even seem real, despite the unrealistic blood splashes. Her comfort in the environment of her scene, and with the men around her, serve to show her comfort with her own body and her own feminine sexuality.

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[30] Laurel Nakadate, interviewed by Scott Indrisek, *Believer Magazine*, Oct. 2006, <http://www.believermag.com/issues/200610/?read=interview_nakadate>

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These self-representational works discussed above of Cahun's, Nakadate's and Cohen's show gendered re-workings through an awareness of the self as a woman in a phallocentric culture. They come of age as they explore their womanhood through play, performance and social construction of identity. Cahun by mixing codes, Cohen through an outward display of feminine eroticism and Nakadate through a childlike playfulness of femininity. These artists all use their own bodies in photographic (or video) imagery to represent themselves as empowered female subjects. *Æonsroom* explores femininity through its representations of many different kinds of women. The characters all exhibit some sign of both masculinity and femininity, but it's in the main character, The Pink Fairy, where the most change occurs. She begins the quest as childish femme, and by the end transforms into a more androgynous adult. Her sexuality as femme gives her the power to seduce these other creatures, and to be desired by them. She doesn't really recognize this power until she meets Wendy, who seduces her with her burlesque dancing. Her mimicry of the dances prompts her to take on traits of these other characters. She seduces Sheela through flirtation, embracing her feminine power. But leaves the femininity behind when she encounters Kali, who gives her the idea of fusing with another, which she does when she meets Æon. These characters all represent my own explorations with gender. Not feeling fully feminine or masculine, my identity shifts around, and is reflected by the people I surround myself with. There are theories out there that desire is formed through lack. When we meet someone who we feel has something that we feel is lacking in ourselves, we other them and desire them. But my own personal theory contradicts this. I am attracted to people who I feel are similar. And this is reflected in the story that I tell. The characters are *me*, but their traits are taken from other people in my life who I've had a romantic relationship with. Like Cahun, they are my mirror, and I become theirs. From the margins of gender and sexuality, I represent a changing self that parodies and pokes fun at heteronormative representations. The following chapter further discusses Sadie Benning and her similar uses of self-representation, combined with an investigation of how her medium of the Pixelvision camera adds another layer to her subversive explorations.

CHAPTER 2: DIY MOVING-IMAGE

[W]e are in the midst of a mighty recasting of literary forms, a melting-down in which many of the opposites in which we have been accustomed to think may lose their force.[31] (Walter Benjamin, 1934)

"Film will only become art when its materials are as inexpensive as pen and paper." (Jean Cocteau)

With the Materials at Hand

I'd like to speculate that Cocteau's meaning of 'art' in the above quote refers to the ability of an artist/author to speak from subjective experience through independent and accessible means – a channelling of ideas that receives the greatest freedom from capitalist standards of production. The materials of independent film and video production may not be as inexpensive as pen and paper yet, but certain tools and practices bring it rather close. Cameras made for home movie use like Pixelvision and super8mm are easy to use, and the materials are relatively cheap and accessible. Hand-made filmmaking practices such as processing film by hand, or drawing directly on strips of found film detour steps of production involving expensive lab work. Outdated film stocks can be acquired for free through smooth-talking pleas of poverty. Of course, these materials are only available in a culture where mass-production has occurred, a bourgeois society where capital has created these objects of consumption, and subsequently discarded them as obsolete or inferior. The continued use of these artifacts disrupt norms, countering dominant ideals of what film and video production should be or do. Their very existence is a threat. Why make a $6M production involving hundreds of crew and cast members when you can do it for $100? Hollywood-style moviemaking functions to create a commodity for the masses. In an effort to speak to popular cultural desires, a film on this scale risks investment in hopes of high return, and can be quite successful. The goals of high-art film and video can be similar. DIY production refers to a way of making wherein the artist uses independent means, outside of professional standards and funding, to make their work. Even experimental

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[31] Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Cultural Resistance Reader*, edited by Stephen Duncombe (London: Verso, 2002), 71.

filmmakers can have their efforts appropriated. Once they become established artists, they can get access to funding from institutions such as foundations, arts councils, and private investors who sometimes act as filters of production, making choices as to which projects receive support – both for production and for distribution later. Although this may not be the original goal of the creators involved, money talks. Even the most genuine creative expression can be appropriated by the investors and turned into 'product.'

For example, several years ago, I was hired as a sound editor to work on a video through the National Film Board of Canada. The NFB kept insisting that the artist, who conceived of this autobiographical documentary, was allowed more freedom in his production than they usually give. My conversations with the artist revealed to me that he argued with them on a regular basis as to what could or could not be included in the editing (of his own story!). They eventually came to a compromise with him and finalized the picture cut. My sound edit was then brought to the sound house for mix-down, and as we were involved in this process, the NFB decided the video was too long and wanted to cut out less than 2 minutes from this feature-length production. They had specific segments in mind; ones that the artist felt were integral to the representation of his story. But there was nothing he could do, the NFB would not finish the video unless their demands were met. When 'his' video won an award, the NFB producer went up to receive the statue. The artist and his girlfriend, both dressed in drag, went up on stage and started dancing around excitedly. They were kicked off the stage. Frustrated with his experiences with the NFB, the artist's next (and very last) video was funded out-of-pocket, and went on to receive awards despite lack of support or investment from normative structures. Even at a level where investors supposedly allow freedom to play, hegemonic forces undermine the efforts of artists to author their own stories. By no means representative of all of the NFB's behaviour, this is a specific incident that I want to draw attention to because it fits my theory. And because the artist who's work this was inspired me to make the kind of work that I do now. He would often talk about the idea of trickster as a subversive tactic in film production, and was disheartened by how his ideas were appropriated. He wanted to remain in the margins to retain control of his self-representation.

In his 1934 essay, "The Author as Producer," Walter Benjamin posits that by producing with their own accessible means, the proletariat achieves a certain autonomy that cannot be had through the support of bourgeoisie who claim to be siding with the proletariat's class struggles. He calls this kind of relationship 'tendentious.' [32] Aligning themselves with the struggles of the working class, and speaking for them, results in a silencing, reasserting the 'us' and 'them' in the very accessibility to means of production. Can the working classes not speak for themselves? Benjamin was referring specifically to writing and the tools of printing books for distribution. With the advent of photocopying in the 1960s, the tools of publishing became more accessible. Zine culture was spawned. Independent writers and activists could get across their message to a wider audience. The punk movement of the 1970s used zines extensively, popularizing the format as a strategy of subversion to dominant societal norms. DIY (Do-it-Yourself) production of moving image is a strategy not unlike zine-making. Punk rock filmmaker, Nick Zedd, used a hand-wound 16mm Bolex camera to produce his transgressive films, in an attempt to break as many rules as he thought possible. Speaking against a rising film school tradition of Structuralism, Zedd writes; "Nothing is sacred. Everything must be questioned and reassessed in order to free our minds from the faith of tradition. Intellectual growth demands that risks be taken and changes occur in political, sexual and aesthetic alignments no matter who disapproves. [...] We pass beyond and go over boundaries of millimetres, screens and projectors to a state of expanded cinema. [...] We propose transformation through transgression – to convert, transfigure and transmutate into a higher plane of existence in order to approach freedom in a world full of unknowing slaves." [33]

In self-representational DIY work, filmmakers take individual (or smaller communal) control to subvert meaning in normalized hegemonic construction. Their ideas are rejected by the norm, so they work within the 'other'. Chris Atton calls for a Foucaldian revolt in his 2002 book "Alternative Media". "The range of voices that is able to speak directly about these 'subjugated knowledges' moves closer to a situation where 'the Other' is able to represent itself[.]" [34] Filmmakers who work this way challenge the

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[32] Benjamin, 67-81.

[33] Nick Zedd, "The Cinema of Transgression Manifesto," *Abnormal: The Sinema of Nick Zedd*, DVD: Dist. by Rubric Records, 2001.

[34] Chris Atton, *Alternative Media*, (London: Sage, 2002) 9.

"hierarchy of access."[35] By making a film with their own hands, they control their own representation of their ideas about the world. Just by representing their own image in their own language, filmmakers are validating the existence of such ideas and worldviews, and this can give power to groups or individuals who lack that power by the hegemonic exclusion of such. DIY filmmaking, in this way, can free the voices of the oppressed from the shackles of exclusion imposed by hierarchical systems. For a female or queer filmmaker, the dominant mode of production could either be Hollywood narrative cinema with all its patriarchal tropes, or high-art experimental film with an historical trajectory based in a white male hetero-centred avant-garde. But many have established themselves within these worlds, and often the way they do this is through their own individualized use of the medium, making it their own, and thereby controlling their own representation.

Camp and Queer Experimental Film

Both 'queer' and 'experimental' are characterized as non-identities, or critiques of identity – a resistance to identifying with established norms. Lawrence Rinder describes queer as a crisis in identity. "Queerness, as opposed to gayness, or lesbianism – or, for that matter, straightness – is becoming a term which subverts or confuses group definition rather than fostering it[.]"[36] He also links the struggles of queer visibility to a similar struggle by the punk and riot grrrl movements of the 1980s, which is what spawned the Benjamin-inspired DIY movement of self-publishing zines. Punk fills in the gaps where consumerism has failed to, it gives self-producers "permission to wrench culture into their own meaning."[37] The Riot Grrrl movement in the 1990s signalled an omission of female voices in the male dominant punk movement. Punk feminists appropriated strategies of subversion for their own uses, such as zine-making. "Because of their ability to be used as tools of intervention, zines testify to the powerful influence of feminist thought in subcultural spaces, particularly in the contested site of representations where many feminist battles have been and continue to be fought. [...]

[35] Ibid., 10.
[36] Ibid., 7.
[37] Ibid., 21.

Writing and exchanging life experiences, riot grrrls used the female body as a site for common experiences that engendered a style of representing grrrl."[38]

Alexander Doty[39] finds a queer viewpoint in dominant cinema through his queered and deconstructive readings of several classic *mainstream* movies in his text *Flaming Classics* (2000). In *Out Takes* (1999), Ellis Hanson argues that all Hollywood cinema is queer, in that there are modes and gestures readily available for consumption by queers, and also that by being out (or censored) is also being in – by excluding queer representation, Hollywood has recognized its inclusion and shut it out. Hanson dismisses experimental film as unworthy of his attention,[40] including only one chapter on Kenneth Anger by Matthew Tinkcom, while Doty ignores it completely. I would like to argue that experimental film is the 'queer' to Hollywood's 'normal'. 'Camp' is a form of narrative cinema that parodies it to its excesses, often displaying outlandishly queer characters and extreme situations. As Jack Babuscio points out, it's a parody, an exaggeration of dominant cinema's excesses, and is resistant in its borrowing and subversion of such.[41] From his definition, we can almost drop in the word *queer* or *drag* for *camp* and it still holds the same meaning. Unfortunately, camp has been appropriated by mainstream culture, and no longer has the impact of resistance it once did.

Queer theory is a relatively recent field of discourse. *Queer*, as a word, had been used up to this point as a derogatory label towards anyone considered out of the ordinary. The emergence of queer theory has a legacy in feminism, and ties itself specifically to third wave feminist politics of fluid genders and sexualities, gender as a social construct versus essentialist notions of identity. Indeed, the very notion of queer is similar to the notion of the shifting signifiers of the trickster. Judith Butler is one theorist who has been very prolific in her writings on queer theory and a deconstruction of gender identities. Arguing that gender itself is a social construction, she sets up a condition in which

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[38] Doreen Piano, "Resisting Subjects: DIY Feminism and the Politics of Style in Subcultural Production," *The Post-Subcultures Reader*, eds. David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl, Oxford: Berg Press, 2003, 260.

[39] Alexander Doty, *Flaming Classics*, New York: Routledge, 2000.

[40] Ellis Hanson, ed., *Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film*. (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999), 11.

[41] Jack Babuscio, "Camp and the Gay Sensibility," in Richard Dyer, *Gays & Film*, (London: BFI, 1980).

gender transgression can subvert established norms of gender identity.[42] This condition is an in-between space, one navigated between the established social constructs of what is male and what is female. Trickster occupies an in-between place, much like queerness. Trickster sits on fences, stands in doorways, and straddles lanes. It can change gender, status, class, viewpoints, intentions... mid-breath. It is contradictory and resistant, yet not to the point of rebellion. Trickster likes to play around, make fun of things that are taken too seriously. Through illusion, make-believe and play, it wants to open our eyes to the lightness of life, while also making a political statement about the darkness of it. Trickster will pull the wool over our eyes until the very last minute, but by then he's gone - the trick's been played and we're deep in it. Queer, like trickster, contains ambiguities and resists a coherent definition. Australian theorist Annamarie Jagose declares queerness as less of an identity, than a critique of identity that points ahead without knowing what it's pointing at. It's "the ambivalent reassurance of an unimaginable future."[43]

Jean Fisher uses the figure of trickster to address artistic agency, calling it a language of subjective agency, something other than the norm. Trickster's disorder is a "latent form of resistance to hegemony."[44] The forms that trickster uses are ones that disrupt normal production, reshaping the very ideas within our normalized worldview. Trickster exists in many cultures all over the world, and has existed throughout the existence of literary time. The character of trickster has various functions depending on the culture it's situated in, but always has a sense of humour and play, and acts as the third man or woman in an exchange between two opposites. Lewis Hyde has done much to contribute to the writings on this slippy figure. "Trickster shifts patterns in relation to one another, and by that redefines the patterns themselves."[45] Sometimes viewed as a translator, trickster also acts as betrayer. Indeed, in Italian, the very word for translator (traduttore), is a pun on the word for traitor (traditore). This "reminds us that the translator who connects two people always stands between them."[46] Trickster joins them by separating them and creating ambivalence, a stance of indecision, one foot here,

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[42] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), 175-80.

[43] Jagose.

[44] Jean Fisher, "Toward a Metaphysics of Shit," in *Documenta 11_Platform 5: Exhibition Catalogue*, (Kassel, DE: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 63.

[45] Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World*, (New York: North Point Press, 1998), 257.

[46] Ibid., 264.

another there, connecting both sides at once to any equation, in order to destroy any established norm that sets in. Trickster is there in order to keep the world changing, "[creating] noise to engender a new pattern of relations."[47] This is not unlike what queer and experimental filmmakers do when controlling their own means of representation. "The very word queer invites an impassioned, even an angry resistance to normalization."[48] Queer experimental film goes one further and disrupts many established norms at once. Queer filmmakers who use DIY methods of production are in control of their own image and create an alternate universe with which to view the world from, disrupting the hegemonic modes that repress diverse sexualities, genders, and classes.

The canon of experimental film includes the works of Kenneth Anger, Jack Smith, and Barbara Hammer; all who identified as gay and made films about queer experience. Kenneth Anger used elaborate settings and costumes that he had access to through his parents' connection to a Hollywood production studio. The films he made, such as Inauguration of the Pleasuredome of 1954, were lush and rich with colour and queer subjects. His exploration of the medium included layering of imagery and multi-screen projection. He worked with very little money or resources and held nightly shows in his apartment.

His contribution to experimental film includes Flaming Creatures, of 1963, an exploration of queer characters and bodies that intertwine – sometimes making it difficult to ascertain where one person's body ends and another begins. He created an alternate world where bodies and genders intermixed and were allowed to flourish. He often found random strangers on the street to be in his films, like Mario Montez, claiming that this is where people's reality actually was, and it was their everyday life that was the falsehood.[49] Like most artists who dedicate their lives to their work, Smith remained poor throughout his life. In her film, Mary Jordan presents an image of Smith that was dedicated to doing things his own way, within his own means. A DIY artist through to the core, he would probably have resisted any attempts to highly fund his projects. He even

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[47] Fisher, 64.

[48] Hanson, 4.

[49] Jack Smith And The Destruction of Atlantis, film directed by Mary Jordan, (A Tongue Press and Monk Media Production, 2006).

went so far as to alter his films for each showing so that they would be finished and therefore avert the censor boards.[50]

Feminist experimental filmmakers, such as Barbara Hammer, also used their own bodies as sites to speak from. Working within the experimental film world, these women were critiqued heavily for their use of sexuality, and the female body, especially in the wake of Mulvey's essay. Working in the 1970s and 1980s, Hammer's open display of masturbation and nudity countered the notion that women were objects of the male gaze by hand-holding the camera and including self-reflexive moments, which included the filmmaker and camera as part of the scene.[51] She most recently made the film *Lover, Other: the Story of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore*, which talks about their collaborative effort as I outlined earlier from Julie Cole's essay. Her exploration of the medium of film has spanned many experiments in hand-processing, using expired film stocks, exploring the self, painting on film, etc. I find her work to be a combination of documentary and personal filmmaking – a discourse of her own making. She chooses topics that mean something to her personally, and put herself in the picture. But, these are not self-portraits. In the male-dominant experimental film world, these films subverted ideas of male genius by including feminists in the canon.

Wrik Mead is a queer experimental filmmaker who has not yet made his mark in the canon. His almost exclusive use of pixilation *(stop-motion animation using live actors that move slightly between each frame taken)* creates a sense of film puppetry of his actors. In conversation with him, he is known to say that he does this because he works with untrained actors and can control their gestures more easily. He often employs techniques of hand processing celluloid film to capture a rough, visceral quality to his work. Film critic, Mike Hoolboom, puts it so eloquently:

> *Wrik Mead is the maestro of low-tech portraiture, working with a small group of friends to produce a gestural cinema of ritual and intimacy. Invariably photographed in super-8, his films are pointedly grainy, dirty, scratched, and ravishingly beautiful. They often last just 3 minutes, the length of a super-8 roll, showing a one-person performance directed towards the camera. If he prefers his actors naked, it is because he hopes to read, in their exposed flesh, the way the body has been bent to the rule of another's desire, subject to the gravity of*

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[50] *Jack Smith And The Destruction of Atlantis.*

[51] Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, "Introduction," to *Experimental Cinema: The Film Reader,* eds. Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, (London: Routledge, 2002),13-4.

opinion and consent. His figures struggle against the desire to conform, longing to touch, to be allowed to express a same-sex abandon. Over and over, Mead renders the act of 'coming out' gay allegorically, showing his actors struggling against unseen forces which he creates by shooting one frame at a time. These live animations push and pull at the body, trying to find a way out of a universe they seem to inhabit alone. Pitilessly unromantic, often pessimistic, but filled always with a luscious materiality, bargain basement means, and a wry sense of humour, Mead's darkly drawn schemes of desire mark him as a potent new force of the Canadian fringe.[52]

These extremely personal, and delicately vulnerable films, are made on the fringes, in the margins, and off to the sidelines of dominant cinema. He works within the, rather large, community of hand-made filmmakers in Toronto, Ontario, and could be seen as part of this movement. As a participant in this community myself, I am well aware of his work and have been influenced by it. Specifically, he spends a lot of time on the form of his ideas so that the image speaks with and of the content. In his 2004 film, *Filth*, Mead presents a character who is obsessed with cleanliness and hires a hot young boy to clean his, already pristinely white, apartment. As the boy starts cleaning, and the main character leers on, dirt begins to form until it fills the entire apartment, signifying the character's dirty mind. For the last segments, in post-production Mead layered dirt on the actual piece of film, adding another layer with the medium. In this way, his medium references the content and becomes part of it. As I mentioned earlier, the media I use in *Æonsroom* speak to the content. As the form changes mediums, so the characters change identities.

All of these artists show how with their use of the materials at hand; Anger through the use of his privileged access to free props and costumes, Hammer with the use of expired film stock and positioning of a feminist point-of-view, Smith with almost no resources whatsoever, Mead with his painstaking efforts to pixilate his actors and have the form speak of the content; they've managed to create a way of filmmaking that is their own and speaks of their queer experience. Their DIY methods have brought some of them into the canon of experimental film, even Smith who probably would've refused it.

Bruce la Bruce and John Waters are two filmmakers who work within the genre of camp. Waters makes Hollywood movies that push boundaries of acceptability from within the

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[52] Mike Hoolboom, *Inside the Pleasure Dome: Fringe Film in Canada,* (Toronto: Pages, 1997), 101.

mainstream. His 2000 film, *Cecil B. Demented*, is a tribute to DIY filmmaking. The narrative story follows a group of outcast filmmakers who make a movie with no money and with a star that they kidnap to play the lead. By creating characters that are outside heteronormativity, and a story that displays them creating a film in their own way, he is setting a scenario that could inspire others to make films of their own. He's showing that, although Waters himself has access to the means of making dominant cinema, not having the resources should not stop artistic production. The high camp style makes it otherworldly though, and may be read as unattainable.

Bruce LaBruce works from within the margins of the queer community with limited access to resources. Many of his films are shot on super8 film for its inexpensiveness, and the subjects he tackles are from the dark and dirty side of queer life. His work plays between the boundaries of art and pornography, often exhibiting explicit scenes of gay sex. Many of his actors are untrained, and few rehearsals are done. So his films have a very raw aesthetic. He seems to be happy to maintain his outsider status, and revels in it. In his bio-pic *Super 8 ½*, he critiques pornography and art while also implanting himself within the margins of each. "Bruce LaBruce is driven by a strong desire not to belong, but to participate through not belonging... "Super 8 1/2" accomplishes something that legal scholarship has been unable to - the breakdown of the binary opposition between art and pornography - while taking care not to merely valorize postmodernism."[53] LaBruce himself started out by making zines, and credits himself for the explosion of Toronto's queer punk community – leading artists such as Scott Treleaven to make *This is the Salivation Army*, a series of zines with a goal to homosexualize people through the use of magick, and later, Will Munro to head a queer punk revival in the form of a monthly party called *Vazaleen*, where DIY drag performances of locals proliferated. Queer punk is at the core of LaBruce's work, with a strong resistance to anything that would bring him to mainstream status; he will always do things *his* way and remain in the margins.

Camp film exhibits itself in a myriad of ways, but each artist, whether from within the mainstream like Waters and exploring camp storylines and characters, or with a purely resistive strategy such as LaBruce's, use their own methods to establish a queer

[53] Heather Schuster, "Soup or Art": "Super 8 1/2" and the Politics of Genre Reference," *Women & Performance - A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 12:2:24, 2002, 35.

discourse in narrative cinema. Queer experimental filmmakers such as Anger, Smith, Hammer and Mead use the strategies of their discipline towards their own means in order to explore subjects that resist hetero-normativity. All of these artists find their own methods of queer representation. Their skill with the medium of film places them within either an experimental or camp mode, but their presentation of queer subject matter is one that they make up on the fly and is not established in any dominant mode of expression. I have employed some of these techniques in my own work. In *Æonsroom*, I used my own body as performer in a campy, over-the-top style, and created costumes and props from found materials or discount clothing stores. The resources I had access to ranged from a sync-sound camera and lighting package, to a pocket-sized hand-wound regular8 camera. I processed some of the film by hand, and shot video to lower the costs. I played with mixing formats, not a new thing when shooting, but when exhibiting, it's rare. This experiment I call mutable cinema, as it mutates from one form to another, sometimes overlapping and layering onto each other. With this method, I hope to create my own discourse of movie-making in order to represent my self in my own way and through my own means.

Film/Video Diaries: Sadie Benning's Pixelvision Self-Portraits

Originally introduced in the 1960s,[54] the super8mm camera offered an easier alternative to the harder to load 8mm home movie camera, with the use of a snap-in cartridge. This made it viable as a recording medium for amateur middle-class filmmakers with no previous filmmaking experience. Often these days, friends tell me of finding loads of super8 home-movies in their parents or grandparents basements and attics. Filmmaking had moved from the realm of the art-world and Hollywood to personal home-use. The 1970s saw the advent of the home camcorder, which continued this trajectory. Emerging from these home-moviemaking tools is the genre of film and video diary. Artists who recorded their daily lives called into question notions of cinematic art-making through their *presentation* of personal lived experience, rather than *representing* ideas. Jonas Mekas comments on his own practice. "To keep a film (camera) diary, is to react (with your camera) immediately, now, this instant: either you get it down now, or you don't get

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[54] "Super 8 mm film," *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Super_8_mm_film>.

it at all. To go back and shoot it later, it would mean restaging, be it events or feelings."[55] 'Time' in moving image shifts from something intangible and distanced to something more intimate. Videotaping from inside his apartment, Steve Reinke's *100 Videos* holds on long moments of seemingly nothing, scanning the contours of his space, occasionally breaking the silence with philosophical ruminations of the world, as he perceives it. In this way, both Mekas and Reinke can be seen as performing their lives for the camera, using it as a mirror. In contrast to Sadie Benning's video diaries, these men perform themselves without any question of the identity they display. Feminist video artists, such as Lisa Steele and Martha Rosler, would draw from their performance art practice and perform one-take shots for the camera, often drawing attention to their gender and performance thereof. Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, of 1975, has her playfully wielding kitchen tools as she recites the alphabet in an aggressive way. Steele's 1974 piece, *Birthday Suit-with scars and defects*, has her exploring her naked body and reciting a story for each scar as she gently caresses it as if lost in the memory. These works push the boundaries of female representation in film and video. So much so, in the 1970s and 1980s, video was adopted with great fervour by the feminist and queer art movements. Audrey Levasseur presents an interesting theory of how outsiders, such as queer-identified people, perform a double life in autobiographical film and video. Levasseur speculates on how, as children, we role-play to learn how to perform our social life in adulthood.[56] She argues that queers adopt performance techniques as codes, or strategies, to control stigma. Benning's performative videos call up the kind of role-playing that children do. Barely an adult herself when she started making videos, Benning plays for the camera, dressing up in different roles, and posing. "My grandmother wanted me to be one of those good little white girls,"[57] her voice-over states as she poses in a long, blonde wig in front of the American flag. In this over-exaggerated role-playing of 'good little white girl,' Benning calls into question societal norms of gendered performance. This campy performance is only one of the strategies of subversion in Benning's videos. Another is her use of the Pixelvision camera. As I mentioned earlier, my use of camp in the performances of *Æonsroom* is a subversionary tactic that I combine with my experimental aesthetic of mutable cinema.

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[55] Film-Makers' Cooperative Catalogue. 1989. New York: Film-Makers' Cooperative, quoted in David E. James, "Film Diary/Diary Film: Practice and Product in *Walden*," To free the cinema : Jonas Mekas & the New York Underground / ed. David E. James, (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1992), 155.

[56] Audrey Levasseur, "Film and Video Self-Biographies," *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, 2000 Winter, 23:1 178.

[57] Sadie Benning, *A Place called Lovely*, Dist: Video Data Bank, 1991.

Sadie Benning received a Fisher-Price PXL 2000 camera as a Christmas present from her father, the well-known Structural filmmaker, James Benning. She thought she was getting a camcorder, and was annoyed with the limitations of the Pixelvision camera.[58] Released in 1988, this low-end video camera was meant as a toy for kids. The camera only lasted one year on the market, and then it moved into obsoletion. Priced at $100 US, the camera had limited basic functions and was extremely easy to use. The fixed-focus lens did not allow for much range in focus, working especially well with closer objects than farther ones, and only recorded in black and white. It used 6 'AA' batteries and standard audio cassette tapes as a recording medium, so the resources were easily acquired, unlike the bulkier and more complex home video camcorders of the time which required power supplies, large bulky batteries and Beta or VHS tapes. Recording onto audio cassette meant loss of image resolution as compared to other recording formats of magnetic tape (VHS, Beta) that had a much larger surface area to record onto. The tape would move through the camera at extremely high speeds, causing a whirring sound that got recorded as part of the soundtrack.[59] This sound can be heard in some of Benning's work where she did not overlay other audio when editing. The size of the image was smaller than VHS or Beta, and when played back on a normal TV set, a black frame surrounded it. The resolution was lower, resulting in a pixilated (or as some would call 'grainy') effect, showing larger chunks or blocks of the digital display. Light and small, this was perfectly suited for small hands, not meant for people interested in creating something with dense image and sound quality.

Nevertheless, Benning began using the camera as a diary, recounting events and stories, and playing in front of it. She recorded hours of material, the first bits of which were edited in-camera. The editing glitches, seen in her first videos Living Inside and A New Year (1989), are split-second large white stripes that move across the frame, accompanied with clunky sound cuts. She never intended anyone to see the videos that she made in the solitude of her bedroom, they were diaries.[60] Which makes the works even more poignant when looking at them now. These are extremely honest portrayals

[58] Christine Milliken, "The Pixel Visions of Sadie Benning," in Sugar, Spice, and Everything Nice: Cinemas of Girlhood, eds. Frances Gateward and Murray Pomerance, (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 2002), 285.

[59] Greg Langille, "Dead medium: The Fisher-Price Pixelvision," from The Dead Media Project <http://www.deadmedia.org/notes/35/357.html>

[60] Sadie Benning interviewed by Gavin Smith, "Toy Stories", in Film Comment, 34 Nov/Dec (1998), 31.

of her views on the world outside. Her voice as an artist is still developing as she talks about a friend who was sexually assaulted, and her own emerging lesbian identity. She focuses the camera on long, quiet moments of her own eyes, her hands (a symbol of controlled self-image), her talking mouth, and the objects in her interior world. With *Jollies* (1990), she begins to form a story-telling style of filmmaking, acting out gestures and playing with the medium. She becomes very aware of the frame and how to use it to its full effect, incorporating it as part of the narrative. Moving between scrolled text and voice, her words utter a story with unspoken connotations. Her voice narrates, "so I got naked with this guy, he was my boyfriend [...] Afterwards, he got up and jacked off in the bathroom, and I got dressed," and text scrolls, 'I never touched his dick again.' The image that follows is of a clock, symbolizing the passing of time, then the text spelled out in candies, 'so I started,' back to the image of the clock, then the text in candies again, 'kissing girls.' She takes us back to the clock for a longer period of time before she then shows us the moving image of her tenderly kissing a girl. She makes us wait, through the clock, passing us through her time of waiting for answers, and the video time of waiting for the image of her kissing. By separating the elements – of time, visual, aural, and text – she calls attention to the fact that they have double meanings. The irony inherent in what is spoken versus what isn't is illustrated through these uses of the medium of video. She experiments with the choices available in matching image to sound, and voice to text. A close up on her eyes comes with the voice-over, "at 15, I thought about her everyday, and that meant love." Choosing the eyes as image in this case instead of her mouth, perhaps signifying that love is expressed through the eyes. No words follow, only her performance of shaving then posing quietly in several shots dressed as a man. These quiet moments draw the audience in, wondering how far she will go with this gender bending. Then after several moments, she says to the camera, "I might say, but I'm not a man." In a self-reflexive moment, she comments on cinema's illusory effects by performing a contradiction, playing a very convincing role as male, then destroying it. Chris Straayer's theories point to a kind of sexual power in the "intense double sexual signification" of bi-sexed performances in visual media. Straayer posits that such performance results in a transgression of gender boundaries that dismantles sex and gender differences.[61] Through the visual trickery of video and play, Benning embodies masculinity, and then abandons it. The introduction of her voice

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[61] Straayer, Chris. "The She-Man: Postmodern Bi-Sexed Performance in Film and Video," in *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies: Sexual Re-orientations in Film and Video*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 79-101.

destroys the illusion for us; her power is maintained through her assertion of female identity, or rather non-male identity.[62] By doing so, she illustrates how gender is a performance that can be achieved through gesture and clothing. The power she obtains is through her ability to play both sides. She tricks us, and in the tricking, subverts normal expectations of gendered performance. I also confuse gender norms by playing with codes of masculinity and femininity in *Æonsroom*. This crossing of boundaries empowers my resistance to heteronormativity. I show that I, too, can play both sides, playing a very butch Sheela or Æon, or a very feminine Pink Fairy or Wendy. Through this trickery, a DIY mode of presentation is exhibited – for I am making up my gender as I go along, as Benning does by showing all sides of her multifaceted self.

In Benning's later videos, we see her developing the story-telling and taking on other characters in her narratives. She intensifies the roles and camps it up for the camera. Babuscio outlines four elements that are maintained in expressions of camp; irony – usually in the form of drag, aestheticism – as in exotic or subjective fantasies, theatricality – role-playing as life-theatre, and humour.[63] 1990's *It Wasn't Love* fill all these requirements. Benning's performances are exaggerated stylizations of the characters in the story she tells. A much longer video than the earlier ones, *It Wasn't Love* tells one whole story about a cool butch that Benning goes on an adventure with. She incorporates more moments of self-reflexive cinema, showing more mastery of the medium. Poking fun at her own style of filmmaking, we see a close-up of her talking mouth shown in fast-motion accompanied by a voice over narrating the introductory audio. By showing multiple takes of her friend, offering cigarettes, and kind of laughing at her own messed up performance, Benning points to the playfulness of her videomaking, allowing us not to take it so seriously. Near the end of the video, she brings her hand around the lens, cupping it, to have it act as the cool butch's mouth that she kisses. This close-up draws us into the intimacy of the moment, and then she removes this illusion from us by moving the camera away to show her sucking her thumb. A hot make-out session becomes childish thumb sucking through the tricks of camera angles. Benning's performances in this video I find less convincing as gendered embodiment. Through the narrative of the story, we know that this is a story she is telling us, and the exaggerations of her performances illustrate the characters in a comical way. In *Jollies*, she pulls off a

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[62] Butler, 149.
[63] Babuscio.

convincing male, because she is playing herself as himself. Deconstructing Judith Butler's theories of parodic performativity, Jay Prosser lays out a theory of the transsexual narrative as one that moves beyond performance into physical embodiment. "Gender Trouble cannot account for a transsexual desire for sexed embodiment as telos."[64] Subversion of gender normatives occur in the use of video as a means of narrating a story with image and sound, that shows past, present and future selves, an embodiment of shifting ontologic identities. In *Jollies*, Benning embodies her own masculinity in her poses, and it's a serious quiet moment of reflection. But in *It Wasn't Love*, she takes on other characters; sporting a goatee, she smokes a stogie and plays with a cane, she does motorcycle drag as she plays the cool butch, and then does vampy lounge singer drag. I use the verb 'does' to signify that she is playing these roles, not 'being' them. Implicit in drag, and hence, camp, is the insistence on doing what the characters would do. When Benning is Sadie in this video, she is not acting for the camera, she plays with her friend, laughing at their fun. But in that very breaking of character, she subverts another norm of cinema – keeping the illusion. The roles she acts for the camera to illustrate the story are countered by the moments of supposed 'realness' that she exhibits while playing with her friend. *Jollies* contains no moments of acting. Even while posing as a man, Benning was Benning. Sadie Benning puts herself in her work. Like a self-representational zine, she works from the notion of 1st person cinema, playing with and for the camera, deconstructing identities with the tilt of her chin, the cock in her walk, and the poetic stylings of her fictional/ factual narratives. Through the use of her imagination, Benning role-plays characters that illustrate her lived experience. The DIY production of Pixelvision allowed her to play out queer gendered identities in the safe space of her bedroom, unfiltered or unfettered by dominant modes of production. Benning's exploration of gender through a shifting self-representation likens her to Cahun. Both of whom operated from within their own homes using the materials they had at hand, including their own bodies. Associated with the school, I had access to more resources in making *Æonsroom* than these artists had in making their works, and like Kenneth Anger, I used what I had and bent it to my means by creating a shifting work that moves between media. I drew from a variety of genres, and parodied them in a camp style. And by taunting the gaze, and averting it, I played with the audiences gendered expectations of the characters.

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[64] Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: the body narratives of transsexuality*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 33.

CHAPTER 3: PERSONAL MYTHS

A Technical Treatment of Æonsroom

One strategy of DIY production I use is to turn the camera on myself, like Benning does, or by collaborating with a close friend or lover, like Cahun. I use the materials at hand, my own body, my own limited resources and skills in order to make this piece. The DIY mode of production in film or videomaking necessitates an understanding of how a moving image comes into being from inception to exhibition. It's an interdisciplinary approach that utilizes a wide variety of skills, none of which are particularly honed to perfection[65]. The DIY approach results in a moving image that is raw, and rough around the edges – like a life not fully honed to one identity or another, but cobbled together from bits and pieces. The saying 'jack of all trades, master of none' applies well to DIY practitioners. I would rather say 'master of DIY arts'. For it's in the mastery of putting all the bits and pieces together where the art lies. This project required the ability to move from mode to mode easily and quickly.

For the script, I drew the story from my own life and actions, inter-weaving it with the worlds I immersed myself in from television, books, and movies. I appropriated songs from the popular culture music of *Pink Floyd* and *Sting*, rewording them to The Pink Fairy's predicament. I used a bit of the look and some of the bitterness of the *Wizard of Oz*'s Wicked Witch of the West character for Wendy, and made a Celtic exhibitionist birthing idol, Sheela-na-Gig, into the butch doula, Sheela. The goddess, Kali, has Barbie doll heads and arms strung around her, making her a childlike version of the more vengeant Hindu goddess. She comes to The Pink Fairy as a dark, underworldly character, causing her death and rebirth. The astronaut/alien character of Æon takes its name from Æon Flux, a subversive animated spy story set in the future. Both Æon and The Pink Fairy share the same space in literature – science fiction and fantasy – and both can fly. Æon is who The Pink Fairy becomes. Although she *is* all those characters

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[65] "DIY," Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DIY>

she meets along the way, she does not fully realize them, she discards them for the next step. The Pink Fairy is the child of the story, prepping for her coming of age. She lives in innocence and playfulness until she meets these other sides of her personality. Her wings, symbolizing her freedom and choice, take her on her journey from the safety of home into the big, bad world of the unknown. Her loss of wings come with her loss of innocence, and make her more vulnerable. The strength she gains from death, cause her to grow new wings – a rocket ship. The script was finished in less than 3 months; with a few minor revisions, it was ready for shooting. The tools and skills I used were ones I had borrowed and remembered from working in the commercial film industry. I had written a few dramatic narrative film scripts in the past, but would not have called myself a skilled scriptwriter – even though I wanted the scriptwriting process to emulate the one I had witnessed. Hence, I considered this a parodic emulation of narrative cinema, and intended to play with this form by pushing past its boundaries. How I was going to do this exactly, I did not know. I wanted the process to breathe, so I let intuition be my guide, and focused on each step individually.

The next step was to realize the characters. I knew I wanted to play all of the characters, as this was key to the idea of personal mythologies and a queer changing body. I worked with a dramaturge, Lindsay Reoch, to find the 'rivers' of each character. A theatrical process, rarely used in cinema, it allowed me to deepen my connection to those parts of me that had written those specific characters, and to find the relationships between them. I'd be acting without those relationships present. As I played one character, I would have to imagine those other characters and their reactions. Perhaps an easier feat for someone who has had many years of dramatical training and experience, but I have had virtually none. I attribute what little skill I have to my own everyday experiences of identity shifting and masquerading in heterocentrist society. The Shakespearian quote "all the world's a stage" rings true to me, as I believe that everyone plays a part in shaping their character for the world to see. Some people chose a role and stick to it, and others shift their identities throughout their life, or in different situations. Queers, I think, are the most susceptible to this shifting, because we are taught to be a certain way, yet we resist this by acting more strangely, or by putting bits and pieces together from different identities. Thinking about gender as the performativity of everyday life, I felt I could play these characters without much difficulty. With these characters, and this story, I wanted to show the complexity of personae that one person

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could contain within themselves. I wanted to open myself to the audience in a way that some live performance can do. To do this in a cinematic format is difficult. The ways I did this was by using the device of the camera as a mirror to gaze out to the audience for more intimacy with the performance, and by using different formats in projection that require me to practice with the timing of each format. The film projectors make various noises when they are running and call attention to their format when they are turned on and off. In this way, they become theatrical devices that have scripts for their actions. And, I, myself have a script for when I load, turn on, and turn off each projector.

Each section was shot with a different mode of production. With Scene 1, The Pink Fairy's bedroom, I gathered a small crew to shoot in a traditional 16mm sync-sound method, using the location of my own bedroom. We used an ARRI SR II to capture the image, and a DAT recorder to capture the sound. A standard three-point lighting set-up was used to light the scene. Scenes 4 through 15, The Pink Fairy's adventures in the woods and in Wendy's house, were shot on location at a friend of a friend's house on Salt Spring Island with one camera operator using a Sony PD 170 miniDV camera, the sound recorded only with the camera microphone, and using only available light. Scenes 16 and 17, The Pink Fairy meets Kali, were shot on location in the Stanley Park cruising loop with one camera operator using a Sankyo CM800 Super8mm camera, using only available light. No sound was captured. This scene was extremely rushed and done guerilla-style, as the nudity of Kali was calling attention to the passers-by. Scenes 2 and 3, The Pink Fairy flying and dreaming in the tree, were shot on location on Salt Spring Island, during a camping trip, with one regular 8mm camera operator, using only available light. No sound was captured. Scene 18, Æon's arrival, was shot in a photography studio at the Emily Carr Institute, on 35mm and video. Studio lighting illuminated the scene, a solid backdrop was used to enable easy keying in post-production, as the stills were to be animated. No sound was captured. During the editing process, I found that it made sense to add more footage that was not written into the script. This additional footage was self-shot, and unrehearsed, in my living room. Clamped photofloods lit the scene. I used a 16mm wind-up Bolex for the shots in front of the mirror, and a Canon XL2 miniDV camera for The Pink Fairy's mimic dances. For the majority of production, I used what was available to me – my own body, costumes and props that were acquired through discount means, cameras that I owned, borrowed from a friend, or signed-out from the school. My production budget was very low, akin to a

DIY mode of making. But by using different formats, I made each section look dramatically different.

The footage was compiled in Final Cut Pro for non-linear digital editing. The animated sequences for Scene 18 were created using digital animation software, After Effects, in a sort of photo-collage animation technique where photos are taken in a sequence, keyed for the character, then arranged spatially and temporally over a background image. In a previous film, *Green*, I used a similar technique, but I photocopied my original photos, cut them out by hand (vs. keying), and moved the shapes individually as I exposed short shots of super8 film. With *Æonsroom*, I wanted to experiment with this technique digitally, so I cut out my characters with Photoshop, and manipulated sizing, placement, and lengths with After Effects. I also created what I call the 'fairy animations' in After Effects. In Scene 1, I created a red glow to show The Red Fairy passing outside The Pink Fairy's window. In the prelude film to *Æonsroom*, *The Pink Fairy*, The Red Fairy is a character that figured prominently, aiding in her transformation. This is the only time she appears in *Æonsroom*, acting only as an impetus for The Pink Fairy to leave on her quest to find others like her. In Scene 2, I added a video layer of The Pink Fairy caught in a bubble (signifying her entrapment in suburban normalcy) to the Regular 8mm footage of the trees she flies over. In Scene 4, there's a moment after The Pink Fairy has fallen from the tree during her Big Voice dream. In her dreamstate, little animated fairies buzz above her head showing her hope that she will find them. As she awakes they disappear because she's not ready for them to be there. She has a lack of faith that they really exist, a fear of actually finding what she thinks she's looking for, and a desire to be independent. Some of the motion film footage was hand-processed in a darkroom (Scenes 16 & 17 and the additional b&w footage) – this reduced costs drastically, and gave me a feeling of intimacy with the image whose scratches I made as I swished the film with my rubber-gloved hands in buckets full of chemicals. The Pink Fairy footage in Scene 16 was also toned with a chemical that removes the silver in b&w film, replacing it with blue. The shift between colour and the toned image in this scene was used to signify The Pink Fairy's capture and transformation by Kali. Once the motion film sequences were locked in the video timeline (Scenes 1-3, 16 & 17), I matched the edits on film using portable winders and viewers, and cut them with tape-splicers. Some film sequences remained transferred to video (additional footage and part of Scene 16), but most are projected on film. The look of film transferred to video has a different feel than

film projection. With the DIY video transfer that I did – taping the film projection off a wall – the flickering of film is captured and emphasizes the original format. Video flattens the image, reducing the blacks to greys, but also allows for video effects such as the slow motion, boosting of brightness, and overlaying I used in the Kali sequence, and the reversal of negative to positive used in the mirror and mom's mouth sequences. All of this was composed in Final Cut Pro. Where there were several characters in a screen, I used matting to bring in the various video cuts. The matting tools within FCP are limited and resulted in characters that fluttered in their space, limbs that disappeared or merged into others. It also gave me the ability to resize characters – adding complications to their personalities. For the additional footage, I created little boxes within the main storyline to act as thought bubbles for The Pink Fairy. When we reach Scene 16 with Kali, the image starts to break up into multiple boxes within the frame.

The sound was edited digitally using the non-linear digital audio software Nuendo. I transferred the audio out of Final Cut Pro using OMF (Open Media Format) files which combine the audio files used and their corresponding edits into one file – so, when one opens these files in a program like Nuendo, the audio is in place. This saves time in matching all the audio files to the video. Of course, I could've just cut the recorded sound in FCP, but my professional sound editing experience gave me the desire for professional-quality sound. This was one aspect of the production where I felt that my expert skill brought me outside the DIY mode of production. This, in addition to gathering a crew for the sync-sound filming of Scene 1. But, even though these aspects come dangerously close to professional practice, there are elements that differ from such. With the filming of Scene 1, I did not *hire* a professional crew, I had undergraduate film students and friends helping me out. The crew was made up of all women, which is highly unusual in this professional industry, where an overwhelming majority of personnel are men – this I know from experience working on film shoots. For the sound edit, I did not have access to a mix house with high quality amplifiers, I produced it on my laptop using built-in speakers. The skill with which I executed the sound track was professional-quality, but my resources were limited. For the score, I produced one track for Scenes 16 & 17 by myself using my 1980s synthesizer. The rest of the score was created by Sacha Fink, who has observed the production of this project through almost every step. I wanted to bring her into this process because I wanted her presence felt in the image, adding another layer to this self-portrait of myself. Like Marcel Moore as

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photographer was mirror to Claude Cahun, Sacha's music is the mirror to my visual image. She created the music using the tools we have at home – guitar, synthesizer, drum kit, beat box, and 4-track recorder. In our collaboration, I acted as director, telling her what segments needed music and the feel of each. She interpreted this and combined it with her own knowledge of the project to score it.

The outside support I received for the project included short-ended (leftover) film stock from Cineworks, equipment and a small amount of funding from the SFU's School for the Contemporary Arts, and an exhibition space from VIVO (Video In/Video Out). Some friends helped me out along the way, and the undergraduate film students volunteered their time and skill. But, the majority of this project was undertaken by my own hands, with the skills that I have. My self-representation of a subversively fluid gender was unhindered by a dominant discourse of traditional cinematic practice, one that could potentially censor or discourage my output, and leave my story untold. This DIY practice allowed me to control my own representation, and learn new skills in the process. I feel that by engaging myself directly and intimately with the processes involved in putting together such a large project (the largest I've ever made), I came to learn more about myself, and to empower my own sense of accomplishment. For example, I never thought of myself as an animator, but it's something I've always wanted more practice with. This project required me to learn how to do things I've never done before with digital animation, and I did it all on my own.

The Pink Fairy Comes of Age

The childlike playfulness of Laurel Nakadate and Sadie Benning's work intrigue me because my own work exhibits the childlike character of The Pink Fairy. Who, like Nakadate's character, is also sexualized. Being a fairy in and of itself, gives the impression of childishness. Her actions are like those of someone who has not yet matured into adulthood. She plays with toys, and she acts immaturely towards those who she perceives to have more authority (her mother, Sheela and Wendy). They also treat her like a child, and she insolently tries to refute their claims. On the phone to her mother, she whines "I'm not a little girl anymore." This is true, but she still acts like one. Sheela calls her "little one," and Wendy offers to make her food and take care of her like a child. Even though she doesn't want to perpetuate this perception of herself, The Pink Fairy's naïve questioning, and whiney attitude make her seem like a child, and this is

why others treat her as such. Although guised under a search for 'others like her' (home), by running away from her childhood home, she hopes to move past her sheltered existence and grow up. Her story follows a typical coming of age quest. She meets creatures along the way who reflect characteristics of herself. Wendy represents her seductive femininity and calls attention to The Pink Fairy's childishness by taking on a mother role, even repeating like an echo the Mother's lines from the first scene; "What do you want for dinner?" The first phone call to the Mother reminds us that The Pink Fairy still has tethers to her childhood home that she hasn't let go of. When the second phone call is unanswered, we see that the connection to home is gone and she must fend for herself. In Kristevian psychoanalysis, The Pink Fairy has moved from the semiotic stage and entered the realm of the father – the symbolic[66]. The umbilical cord is severed from the mother as The Pink Fairy becomes aware of herself and her relation to others. Until this point, she is considered to see herself as part of her mother's body and sees no separation from it. As she separates herself, she sees her mother's body as an abjected form – ugly, undesired, grotesque, and tries to wrench herself from this in order to become the woman she must be in the patriarchal realm. Her wings stand in for the umbilical cord. They represent her ties to home, both the one she left and the one she's searching for. The loss of her wings also signify her growth. They allow her to leave home and give her a goal for her quest – finding other fairies. Tumbling down after her dream in the tree shows us that the wings may not be of particular use after all – why does she walk away from this when she could really fly? The Big Voice's words gave her some doubts that she would actually find what she's been looking for, but she perseveres despite her wounded faith. Wendy lures her in with comfortable promises, but she realizes it's not much different from what she's left behind. She's met yet another representation of 'mother.' Kristeva drew her theories from Lacan's theories of the Imaginary and the Symbolic[67]. In his theories, he poses a Mirror stage for the pre-Oedipal stage of development when the child starts to recognize it's detachment from the mother. This can be seen in Aeonsroom through the self-portrait footage of myself looking into the mirror. This mirror, both literally as a prop in the image, and figuratively as a mirroring of images within each other, fragments the subject (myself). As The Pink Fairy meets Wendy, she is still attached to the mother, still drawn to the mother as if it

[66] Samantha Pentony, "How Kristeva's theory of abjection works in relation to the fairy tale and post colonial novel: Angela Carter's The Bloody Chamber, and Keri Hulme's The Bone People," in Deep South, v.2, n.3 (Spring 1996), <http://www.otago.ac.nz/DeepSouth/vol2no3/pentony.html>

[67] Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics (New York: Routledge, 2002), 97.

were herself, her home. When Sheela comes into the picture, she brings the phallic representation of masculinity with her, causing the child to separate from the mother as she recognizes her own lack of phallic power[68]. As there is no actual male sex in this image, the phallus is represented by the masculinity of Sheela. Kristeva sees this as the abjection of the mother, or, as I would see it, her rejection of femininity. Sheela's appearance gives her new hope. Although she might see The Pink Fairy as young and naïve, she sexualizes her, and presents her with new opportunities of being. This butch character reflects The Pink Fairy's sexual desires and presents her with a more mature version of her own tomboyish self. When her wings disappear, it's because she doesn't need them anymore – she's severed the umbilical cord. She wails about their loss though because she believes it means she's not a fairy – and she's not, she's so much more. It's like the loss of childhood. Often, we hold onto it longer than we need to, because it was safe to be there and it's what we know. Our future selves are unknown and can be scary – as with The Pink Fairy's interaction with Kali, an even darker, more fearsome aspect of the abject mother, who destroys her in the language of the symbolic - (the subtitled text now removes us from vocal communication). This juncture signifies the major turning point of the story, and in any traditional journey where the main character meets the dark, destructive force that causes them to wrestle in the final battle with the old self, overcome the main obstructions (usually fear) in order to transform themselves into what they will become. I use the representation of Kali here for a number of reasons. She is, in Hinduism, the symbol of the dark mother – one that causes a look inside to dispel fear and bring one back to a state of connection to the mother (bringing us back to the Imaginary, or primary). And also because of her representation of "the collapse of typically 'Western' binary thinking."[69] Specifically used to dislodge the binaries of good versus evil, I actually turn this usage into the binaries between man and woman, or nature versus nurture. Kali's character contains codes of both a new world and an old world. She wears doll's heads and a paper crown with a bicycle light as an eye. She resides in Stanley Park's gay cruising loop – an ironic turn on my part to bring to it a feminine presence. While filming, we felt we were on the gay men's turf as they strode by and peered at us, most not saying a word. I also use Kali

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[68] Julia Kristeva, *Desire In Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, edited by Leon S. Roudiez, translated by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 191.

[69] Vrinda Dalmiya, "Loving Paradoxes: A Feminist Reclamation of the Goddess Kali," in *Hypatia* (vol.15, no.1 Winter 2000), 126.

and her dark blue skin as a pointer to my own dark skin. I often get read as of East Indian/South Asian or Persian descent. My own ethnicity is mixed and I do not know exactly where all of my ancestry comes from. As such, I have grown up with an affinity towards East Indian culture and as a child, I often felt that if I were to go to India I would find my home. I realize now that this is a primitivist notion. "The metaphor of finding a home or being at home recurs over and over as a structuring pattern within Western primitivism. Going primitive is trying to "go home" to a place that feels comfortable and balanced, where full acceptance comes freely and easily."[70] But I do feel that my experiences in being read as a darker person (whether my ancestry is from a non-white ethnicity or not) align me to the struggles felt by these communities. This representation of Kali is a parodic play on the ideas of primitivism that resided in myself as I dealt with how my own body was perceived as a darker person. In Marianna Torgovnick's decontstruction of the Tarzan novels, she outlines the Western notion of a racial primitive as wild, destructive, promiscuous, etc. Several characters, like *La* or *Nemone*, can be seen as similar to Kali in that they weild a large knife, do wild dances, and are matriarchal figures in their societies.[71] Torgovnick shows how these books are not only racist but also sexist in how they put these characters in their places through Tarzan's control over them. But my character, Kali, is not ruled or controlled by any man – there are no men in this story, nor does she die. She has control over the entire situation and kills The Pink Fairy. Through Kali, The Pink Fairy looks into her reflection – sees herself as she is, and transforms herself into the evolved human that contains *all* of these characteristics. Kali's character reflects The Pink Fairy as unruly, self-sufficient, and powerful, with a little bit of playfulness (the dolls' limbs, the wild dance) thrown in. She shows The Pink Fairy that she can still have fun in a grown-up body. What she becomes, the astronaut Æon, returns her wings in the form of a spaceship, and therefore her freedom and self-sufficiency. Who she becomes is no child anymore, the astronaut is sexual, independent, mature, and androgynous in a non-tomboyish way. Lacan would characterize this stage as The Pink Fairy entering the realm of the *Symbolic* – the speaking subject, one who is able to speak for themselves. Oddly, The Pink Fairy loses her voice at this very same time. She starts to gain awareness of her own identity as she loses her ability to speak. The Kali character comes in as a representation of the dark and abject mother, but also the one that further reflects The

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[70] Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 185.
[71] Ibid, 65.

Pink Fairy into herself, who then rejects the mother and all motherly figures as Æon appears – and even more oddly, language disappears completely, bringing us back into the realm of the *Imaginary*, when the subject perceives itself as still part of the mother. The Pink Fairy gets reborn into Aeon through a ritualized sexual process. The masculinity of Æon is yet another phallic Oedipal moment, but in this, The Pink Fairy copulates, and conceives a birth of her own self. She fuses her body with the astronaut and becomes, not feminine or womanly as Lacan or Kristeva have characterized this stage, but androgynous.[72] Lacanian and Kristevian psychoanalysis describe a world through the sexual politics of male/female dichotomies. But this *Imaginary* world of The Pink Fairy's does not actually contain a male sex. It's like the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, we can throw the phallic theories of masculinity onto the butch and androgynous characters, but they are not actually men. There is no phallic representation in the form of a penis, as in this imaginary world of Æonsroom it does not exist. Some audience members have read the Sheela character as a male, but I explicitly show her naked body containing female genitals. I agree that she can be read as a transgendered character. But, my point is that all of these characters are transgendered – from the extreme femmes, to the extreme butches. Femme is a gendered identity that is non-essential, just as butch is. These theories of psychoanalysis get complicated by queer politics and gender-shifting, and cannot be simply explained by this body of theory. Audience members read this production and these characters from their own perspectives and will place gender them in the way that feels comfortable to them. With the story ending in a place of non-language, The Pink Fairy/Æon is brought back to the *Imaginary* realm, resisting its placement in the patriarchal *Symbolic* world. And with the lack of male characters, it resists the phallic order that would bring the fairy there. She keeps being pulled into the land of the *Symbolic*, but everytime she meets the mother yet again and transforms yet again – ie; leaving home, losing the wings, becoming an astronaut. The Pink Fairy resists patriarchy by resisting the realm of the *Symbolic* and staying within the realm of the *Imaginary*. But, separating herself from the mother takes her out of the *Imaginary* realm into a state of constant change and transformation. She is always in-between.

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[72] Kristeva, 195.

This story of *Æonsroom* is counter-played with the self-portrait footage playing as an aside, or bubble in the main screen. I use Omar Calabrese's theories of self-portraiture to identify the narrative trajectory of *Æon* as auto-biographical, and the side-screen footage as self-portraiture. In his compendium, *Artists' Self-Portrait*, he posits a simplified theory that autobiography is the retelling of events, putting the artist's life into a historical discourse as though in third person (if not literally, then figuratively), and self-portraiture is the self-representation of an artist and their ideas through a first person address to an audience – 'this is who I am'.[73] The events described in The Pink Fairy's coming of age and transformation into *Æon* are fictionalized accounts drawn from my own life. The characters are taken from people I know, who have their own stories, so I felt it fair to alter them enough to show just those aspects that affected or reflected me personally. Personalities and events are merged to create a cohesive trajectory to follow a typical heroic quest. Guidelines of which I followed according to Maureen Murdock's *The Heroine's Journey*, and other journey stories gathered from my life of reading fantasy, myth and science fiction. In a sense, this is a work of fiction, as one can argue that all writers or artists draw from what they know. I swing my story out like a boomerang into the world of fiction, then pull it back in towards myself by playing all the characters and also by accompanying it with the additional self-portrait footage. This footage is unscripted and unrehearsed, and it represents me as I am, playing dress-up in my own home. I emphasize the word *playing* versus *being* here to denote a difference between what the character does in the fictional story and in what I do dressing up as The Pink Fairy who dresses up as the other characters. Oddly, I *play* dress-up in the self-portrait footage, and I am *being* The Pink Fairy in the fiction. This becomes a site of transgression as the trickster plays between the boundaries of fact and fiction, blurring their definitions. Through a direct address to the audience, I gaze in the mirror – the literal prop in the scene as well as the mirror of the camera – and become the pink fairy in plain view by donning the costume. As the pink fairy, who is me, I mimic the other characters playing in the fiction, who are also me. The cinematic space becomes a tripartite mirror. In the one image of myself in front of the visible mirror, a gaze towards the audience attaches myself in the here and now, in front of 'you,' a screen within the screen which is playing an image of myself playing out my imaginary and real characters. Without the additional footage, the *Æonsroom* story is just a fiction. I am

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[73] Calabrese, 315.

under the scrutiny of the audience's gaze until I empower my own image by looking back at them through the camera's lens. In my position as technician, operating the projection, I cause a fourth dimension to occur in this gazing. I am behind the audience, watching them watching me watching them, as I self-represent and project myself onscreen in front of all of our eyes. In traditional cinema, an actor makes themselves vulnerable by being put on a screen for eyes they do not know. Usually, their own eyes avert the lens as if it was not there. As an audience, we are safe to gaze at the screen without the shame we feel when staring at a person who is looking back. It is a one-way kind of intimacy with a character who feeds us without us having to return our own vulnerability. In self-portrait cinema, such as in Sadie Benning's video diaries, the artist looks directly into the lens and addresses the audience, subverting the audience's gaze, who may feel compelled to look away if it were not for the safety of it being 'just a recording.' In this case, Benning does empower her own image by acknowledging her vulnerability to the audience. She is openly sharing herself with us, being intimate, and we are given license to receive without giving it back. In Æonsroom, this is also the case. But, what the audience may or may not know (unless the noisy film projectors catch their attention), is that I am in the back projecting the image in front of them. I acknowledge their gaze, and I watch them watching me, but not directly. In a way, I gain back some of this vulnerability, because as I remain hidden from their view, I can see them shifting in their seats and hear their vocal reactions (except when I play the regular8/super8 projector because it's so noisy, with my ear right next to it, it's all I can hear).

The characters that I play throughout this story present myself as a queer, changing being. The character that The Pink Fairy becomes, Æon, is a mixture of gendered codes. Seemingly masculine at first, Æon claims power over The Pink Fairy by sexualizing her in a parody of phallic pornography. The irony is that there is no penis, not even a silicone one. The Pink Fairy mimes fellatio on Æon, but it's only suggestive and becomes humourous. I play with the notion that male penetration is like a 'killing' of the female through penetration of a sword-like object. Æon kills The Pink Fairy with a laser though, which makes her death ambiguous – is it a death ray or a transformation gun? In the final scene, the astronaut is wearing The Pink Fairy's pink hair. Has Æon become The Pink Fairy, or has The Pink Fairy become Æon? Regardless, they have merged into one body. In fact, all the characters exhibit some mix of codes of masculine and feminine gendering. The Pink Fairy with her boyish toy and adventurous spirit, is mostly feminine

in overt flirtation and attire. Wendy is also mostly feminine in her erotic display of burlesque dancing, nurturing behaviour, tilt of the head, and attire, but her prominent nose is a masculine trait. Sheela is masculine in behaviour, referring to both Wendy and The Pink Fairy as "lovely ladies", and sticking out her arm for Wendy to hold as they walk off, but her attire is mixed – the vest displays her mostly flat chest, but her kilt could be seen as a schoolgirl's or a Scottish man's. At first The Pink Fairy wants to be girly and femme, so she is attracted to Wendy, but then when she meets the masculine Sheela, Wendy is forgotten. When she realizes there is no room for her in Sheela and Wendy's world – they are too static in their femme and butch personae, she leaves to go back on her quest to find others like her. And she still really doesn't know what that means yet. Kali's character is the extreme of powerful femininity in her goddess persona, but masculine in her ruthless destruction and the incorporation of her dead husband into her own body. Æon's attire is very masculine, but with a hint of femininity with shiny silver colour of the suit, the behaviour is also masculine in its display of phallic power, but feminized by the lack of a penis and display of breasts. Like Claude Cahun's work, I take these characters out of the heteronormative structure and the male gaze. Unlike Cahun's work, I display a story with sexual hierarchies by playing out femme/butch politics. I attempt to subvert these politics by transforming the main character. The Pink Fairy's mutation into Æon requires both a death and an incorporation of all the previous characters in the story. In the combining of feminine erotic power and masculine phallic power, I aim to transgress the limitations of women in phallocentric culture, and the limitations placed on queer women in hierarchical femme/butch representation. The fantastical story that is counter-played with self-portrait footage plays between the boundaries of the real and imaginary, and aims to bring together the two. "For it must be surely here in the intersection of social identity with fantasy, and the unconscious with cultural identifications that *mise en scene* takes on its full import as the staging of desire."[74] I stage a mythical autobiography that transforms a character from the inside and the outside. Embodying trickster, I unfix the heteronormative gaze through gender transgression, and unfix a dominant discourse of cinematic production through the use of DIY tactics. My subversive self-representation is played out through transformations of character and media, in order to become one that is multifaceted, complex, and mutable.

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[74] Bate, 5.

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APPENDIX A: PRODUCTION SCRIPT

ÆONSROOM

SCENE 1. INT. PINK FAIRY BEDROOM

Opens with music (The Overture - taking us through the plot) and darkness. Quick little glimpses of fairies pop up here and there on the wall. The projection of THE PINK FAIRY packing up her bags in her bedroom pushes away the darkness from one side. Sounds of a suburban home trickle in. She seems angry and flustered, her wings not extended (so we don't see them). As she packs, she finds a RED FEATHER amongst her piles of stuff. She gasps.

> PINK FAIRY
> Oh me, oh my. I wish I knew where you went to.

She looks around the room, hoping for something to appear. Nothing. She sighs, pleading.

> PINK FAIRY
> I don't know where I'm going, little one.

She collapses on the bed, despondent. She traces shapes in the air above her bed with the FEATHER, glancing at her half-packed mess occasionally - obviously distracted. Suddenly, she stops making shapes and gets up determinately, her wings at half-mast. She unpacks the packed bag and starts putting stuff away and cleaning up her mess.

> PINK FAIRY
> Don't want to leave a mess for the P.U.'s, they
> already think I'm enough of a fuck-up.

A slight chimey breath oozes past the open window (back two channels of the room, behind the audience), as a red glow settles over the bedroom.

> RED FAIRY
> Fairy-kin, you know what you must do. You don't
> need me. Follow your heart. Follow your heart.
> Follow your heart.

The red glow lifts as THE PINK FAIRY runs towards the window (out of frame).

> PINK FAIRY
> My heart... my heart? Wait, come back, I don't
> understand!

THE PINK FAIRY enters frame and flops on her bed, wings out. She is really agitated now, not keeping still, getting up, sighing, opening her closet door, closing it. There is a knock at her door. She's startled, and her wings retract, hidden again.

PINK FAIRY

Yes? What!

MOTHER

Honey, are you alright? I thought I heard something.

PINK FAIRY

It's okay Mom, just cleaning my room.

PINK FAIRY (TO HERSELF)

Like the good girl I should be.

MOTHER

Can I come in?

We hear the door-knob rattle a little, and the door creak slightly.

PINK FAIRY

No! ...I mean, not right now, I'm busy.

MOTHER

(Big sigh)
Well, if you need something, you just let me know
okay?
(pause)
If you want to talk...

PINK FAIRY (INTERUPTING)

Okay. I'm okay. Don't worry about me. I'm fine.

MOTHER

We're here for you, you know that, right?
(pause)
What do you want for dinner?

PINK FAIRY

Mom! I'm busy. I dunno. I don't care. Not hungry.

MOTHER

Oi Mariela! What am I going to do with you?

THE PINK FAIRY listens as her MOTHER's footsteps retreat down the hall.

PINK FAIRY

I'm fine. I'm fine. Fuck... *not* fine. They don't
understand, they'll never understand.

She sits on the edge of the bed, holding back tears as her brow furrows and her body tenses.
Taking some deep breaths, she picks up the red FEATHER slowly and examines it, looking
for answers...

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PINK FAIRY
...to questions I do not know.

She's now moving much more slowly, but deliberately, as she gets up off the bed and gets a different smaller BAG than the one before out of her closet. She packs a few items into the BAG (an old beat-up pink sketchbook, the red FEATHER and a few pairs of underwear). Looking around once more, she allows one sparkling pink tear to fall from her eyes. As she wipes it away, her wings unfold fully and she steps up to the window, bracing herself for a jump.

SCENE 2. EXT. MONTAGE

THE PINK FAIRY carries her little BAG as she flies above, through and around suburban houses, then city streets and buildings, then mountaintops, ocean beaches, trees, forest, rivers, etc. As she flies, she searches below. After awhile, it becomes night, she tires and finds a tall Douglas Fir to land on.

PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
Maybe I'm going the wrong way entirely. I wish
somebody would at least tell me that. My heart... my
heart. Where is it leading me? Away from there,
that's all I know right now. Away from there. I don't
belong there, they don't understand me. They
probably haven't even noticed I'm gone.

She tucks her little BAG under her head, yawns big and falls asleep.

SCENE 3. EXT. TOP OF A DOUGLAS FIR, MORNING

BIG VOICE
Halllooooooo!

THE PINK FAIRY starts awake, almost stumbling off of her tree-branch.

BIG VOICE
Halllooooooo!

PINK FAIRY
Huh? Hello?

She looks around, she doesn't see anybody except a few little snails inching their way along the branches of the tree.

BIG VOICE
Halllooooooo!

PINK FAIRY
I heard you the first time. Where are you?

BIG VOICE
          Hallllooooooo!

THE BIG VOICE cackles. Then starts repeating itself over and over again, cackling at the
sound of its own voice.

                            PINK FAIRY
              This isn't funny. If you want to talk to me, you're
              going to have to stop laughing and talk. Where are
              you? Who are you?

                            BIG VOICE
              It is I you are sitting on, little bird.

                            PINK FAIRY
                  (defiantly)
              I'm no bird. I'm a fairy!
                  (pause)
              Are you the tree?

                            BIG VOICE
                  (laughing)
              No. Yes? No. Trees don't talk silly.

                            PINK FAIRY
              Oh. Well, who are you then? This little snail?

                            BIG VOICE
              You will know me ... in time ... in space ... when the
              continuum wills it so.

In between the pauses, there are quick flash forwards to; 1) Aeon, 2) Pink Fairy without
wings, and 3) Pink Fairy merging with Nemo.

                            PINK FAIRY
              Huh? You lost me.

                            BIG VOICE
              No. You lost you.

                            PINK FAIRY
              I'm not lost.

                            BIG VOICE
              You can't get where you're going unless you know
              where you're going.

PINK FAIRY
So true. But it doesn't matter where I'm going. I just
had to leave where I was. And what's it to you
anyway?

No answer.

PINK FAIRY
Either show yourself or leave me alone!

A gust of wind swings in and a loud rumbling noise is heard, the PINK FAIRY is toppled off
the tall branches into a spiral-cone vortex of colours which turns into blackness as she falls
in slo-mo, screaming silently.

Fade to BLACK and SILENCE. Then THUD!

SCENE 4. EXT. FOREST DAY

The PINK FAIRY opens her eyes onto a spongey forest floor covered with extremely large
leaves. She looks up to a tree next to her with confusion. Then gets up, brushing off debris
and shaking her bristled wings as they retreat. She unzips her reg BAG and takes out a small
ASTRONAUT action figure. She plays with its arms and looks at it as if having a silent
conversation.

PINK FAIRY
Humph! Well, I may not know where I am going, but
I'll know it when I get there.

She gathers up her little red BAG and starts off lightly into the forest, singing and laughing
to herself.

PINK FAIRY
(Melody - Sting "King of Pain")
I have stood here before
On this mountaintop
With the world turning circles
Oh please don't stop.
I guess I wanna wander
And follow my dreams
Cuz it's my destiny
To be the pink fairy.

SCENE 5. EXT. FOREST NIGHT

The dark is coming on as PINK FAIRY is walking slowly through the forest, looking a little
tired. She sees WENDY, hunched over, gathering herbs into her BASKET. PF hides behind a
bush quietly watching her. WENDY is grumbling something, PF strains to hear. Suddenly,
WENDY stands up and stops, taking in the night (watching, listening, smelling). She turns
her sharp eyes (ECU) and looks directly at PF through the bush. Her lips do not move, but
we hear...

WENDY (V.O.)
Well... aren't you coming?

As she turns to leave.

PF in shock, starts giggling, then follows WENDY off-screen.

SCENE 6. INT. WICKED SHACK

WENDY and PF sit at WENDY's table drinking from stone cups. They are surrounded by big books, herbs drying from the ceiling, warm candle light, sounds of crickets, and light rain.

PINK FAIRY
What's in this, it's kind of funny.

WENDY
You don't like it?

PINK FAIRY
I'm just asking what's in it. I've never had anything like this.

WENDY
Oh. Lots of things. It's my brew, y'know?

PF looks around and sees the SHACK for the first time.

PINK FAIRY
Are you a witch?

WENDY
Not a real witch. I practiced with a coven for awhile, but now I'm just doing my own thing. I'm into healing... with herbs. And psychic work.

PINK FAIRY
Do you know any fairies?

WENDY (LAUGHING)
I used to know some. Us witches would go to fairy camp sometimes.

PINK FAIRY
OH! Tell me about fairy camp. Where is it? Can I go?

WENDY
Oh, I can't remember. That was a long time ago. You could probably find out about it online. I... don't have a computer.

PINK FAIRY (SIGHING)
          Hmm. So... is this drink a spell?

                         WENDY
          No! You think I'm trying to poison you?

There's a strange pause as PF looks startled, opening and closing her mouth, not knowing
what to say. She shakes her head and looks questioningly.

                       PINK FAIRY
          Just curious about the drink is all.

                         WENDY
          Too many things. It's nothing, it'll help soothe your
          tired muscles.

                       PINK FAIRY
          Come to think of it, I am quite tense and sore. I don't
          think it's the walking. Maybe it's the flying, my back
          hasn't... Oh!

PF has been stretching and rubbing her back and stops suddenly as she realizes that her wings
are peaking out and she's let the whole cat out of the bag about being a fairy anyway.
WENDY giggles.

                         WENDY
          I knew already, silly.

                       PINK FAIRY
          Are you reading my mind?

                         WENDY
          I can only read what someone sends me, and usually
          only people who know how... although there are some
          people who just naturally tend to vibrate from their
          third eye... like children and animals. But I can send
          you thoughts.

                       PINK FAIRY
          Yes! Exciting. Can you show me how?

                         WENDY
          It just takes practice. Here...

WENDY reaches over and touches PF's hand. PF rises and follows her over to the bed. PF
lays down on her front, and WENDY starts running her hands along PF's back (like Reiki),
WENDY is breathing deeply and making upward gestures with her arms. PF starts breathing
deeply as well, sighing and relaxing. Her wings are starting to peak out again and come to a
more relaxed state - half-mast.

SCENE 7. INT. WICKED SHACK - LATER

PF is sleeping, she gets up with a start, not realizing that she fell asleep. She looks around for WENDY, but finds the shack empty.

> PINK FAIRY
> I wonder if anything was in that concoction after all.
> I do feel better though.

She nods to herself. Dancing around the shack, she pokes into WENDY's stuff, singing little snippets of songs. WENDY returns the find PF engrossed in the book "The Herbal Fairy".

> PINK FAIRY
> I want to know this stuff! Have you read this whole book?

> WENDY
> You're not ready for that yet. Let me find you something to start with.

PF scowls as WENDY snatches the book out of her hands.

> WENDY
> Little one. You're not going to get anywhere with that attitude. Learning takes patience... and practice. Here.

She hands her a heavy book.

> PINK FAIRY
> "What is an herb?" I know what an herb is. I don't need this. I don't care about the herb part, I want to know about fairies.

> WENDY
> I'm just trying to help. Why are you so hostile?

> PINK FAIRY
> What? No. I just want to know about fairies.

> WENDY
> Oh little one.

WENDY pouts and holds PF in her arms, consoling her. PF stiffens at her touch, retracts her wings, but reaches her arms around her, still visibly annoyed. As WENDY's hands soften around her, PF relaxes a little, sighing as her wings release. WENDY leans in to kiss her. At first PF freezes, deciding what she wants - then kisses back uninhibitedly. Fade to BLACK, sound continues.

Flashes of fairies and sparkles and stars and other fun happy euphoric images scatter the screen from different projections. Various snippets of whispered dialogue, breathing, sighs, moans swirl around the room in a collage of sound.

SCENE 8. INT. WICKED SHACK BEDROOM - LATER...

PF and WENDY are lying in bed entwined.

                    PINK FAIRY
          Where did you learn that?

WENDY just laughs.

                    PINK FAIRY
          Why are you laughing?

                    WENDY
          Because you're funny.

                    PINK FAIRY
          Why? I just want to know. I've never... I mean....

                    WENDY
          I know.

                    PINK FAIRY
          How could you know? How do you know? You think
          you know me, but we just met.

                    WENDY
          You think you're all tough, but you're just a kid.

                    PINK FAIRY
          What? I've been around.

                    WENDY
          Yeah. Whatever. It doesn't matter. If you want to
          learn, then stay here... with me.

                    PINK FAIRY
          Could I?!

WENDY smiles.

SCENE 9. EXT. FOREST DAY - WEEKS LATER

WENDY is teaching PF about herbs who is noticeably bored and is distracted by all kinds of
other things - a red cutter ant highway, crows flying, gathering sea-shells.

                    WENDY (V.O.)
          Why aren't you paying attention to me? Isn't this
          what you want? Pinkie! Come on, listen to me.

PINK FAIRY

Oh! Sometimes it's hard. I can't tell sometimes if it's
my thoughts or yours in my head.

WENDY (V.O.)

Send it. Like this.

PINK FAIRY (V.O.)

Don't be mad.

WENDY (V.O.)

How can I not be? I keep giving and giving and you
keep pushing me away.

PINK FAIRY (V.O.)

What are you talking about? I'm here. I'm listening.

WENDY (V.O.)

Then look at me.

PF looks up from her toe-gazing play.

WENDY (V.O.)

I love you.

PF's breathing becomes shallow and she stiffens as WENDY touches her.

WENDY (V.O.)

Why do you push me away?

PINK FAIRY (V.O)

I'm not pushing you away, I'm right here. I love you
too.
        (pause)
Is that what you want?

WENDY pulls away and starts shaking and crying.

WENDY (V.O.)

I should just die. Is that what you want? After all I've
done, after all I've given you.
        (pause)
So cold. Why are you doing this? You just came here
to hurt me.

PINK FAIRY (V.O.)

I'm not doing anything! What do you want?

WENDY (V.O.)

I just want you.

PINK FAIRY

I'm here. I'm not going anywhere. I'm sorry I'm
impatient. I just want to learn all this stuff... now. It

seems I've wasted most of my life already doing things
because I had to, not the things I wanted to. Hiding
who I was. I don't want to do that anymore, and I
want so much and get frustrated or bored when I don't
feel like I'm getting anywhere.

                    WENDY
So it's my fault. I'm not teaching you what you want
to know.

                    PINK FAIRY
No. It's not. It's me.

Her wings flutter open as she continues.

                    PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
I want this... with you. The herbs, maybe not so
much.

The image is moving in slo-mo as PF gently lays WENDY down and dance/flies around her,
brushing her body lightly with her ribbons, sparkles, hair, feathers, etc.

                    PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
Wendy, my sweet witch. You know I love you.
You've shown me many things, and I know there's
more. Sometimes my instinct is to shut down when I
get upset, but I want to be open with you. I trust you.

                    WENDY (V.O.)
I know. Come here sweetheart.

Suddenly they realize they're being watched. They look around but don't see anyone.

                    WENDY (V.O.)
Who is it?

There's a strange giggle that seems to come from all around them.

                    WENDY
Sheela, is that you? I know your laugh.

                    SHEELA
Heh hey gorgeous chickas.

                    WENDY
It is you.

SHEELA appears through PF, heading upside down as if PF is giving birth to her, then
flipping around as she grows bigger, to appear as if it's the other way around.

                    SHEELA
What're all you lovely ladies up to on this fine
afternoon? Gathering herbs I see. Hello there
beautiful, I'm Sheela.

SHEELA sticks out a firm hand.

>   PINK FAIRY
>   Hi, I'm the Pink Fairy.

>   SHEELA
>   I can see that darling. But what's your name?

>   PINK FAIRY
>   Y'know. The... Pink... Fairy. It used to be something
>   else before I became a fairy.

>   SHEELA
>   Ah! So, you're the only one?

>   PINK FAIRY
>   The only one?

>   SHEELA
>   There's only one pink fairy? You?

>   PINK FAIRY
>   Oh. Well, there might be more. I just haven't found
>   them yet.

SHEELA looks over at WENDY and it appears to us and PF that they are having a psychic conversation that we cannot hear.

>   PINK FAIRY
>   Hey. No fair. Are you talking about me?

>   WENDY
>   Not everything's about you, little one.

>   SHEELA
>   It is my lucky day to have stumbled upon you two.
>   Why not let's all have a feast to greet the beast?

SHEELA points to herself as she cocks her head, first to PF, then to WENDY. WENDY nods in agreement. SHEELA takes WENDY's basket of herbs and her arm and leads them both back to WENDY's shack. PF looks on jealously as she follows them.

SCENE 10. INT. WICKED SHACK

SHEELA, grinning wildly, is sitting at the table as WENDY is getting food ready. PF walks in, tired and cranky.

>   SHEELA
>   Hey hey! What took so long. We've been here for
>   days.

<div style="text-align: center">

PINK FAIRY
</div>

I haven't been gone days.

<div style="text-align: center">

SHEELA
</div>

I've grown a beard waiting for you.

PF takes a good look at SHEELA and notices the facial hair. She smiles.

<div style="text-align: center">

WENDY
</div>

Pinkie. What do you want to eat?

<div style="text-align: center">

PINK FAIRY
</div>

What are you making?

<div style="text-align: center">

WENDY
</div>

I'll make you what you want.

<div style="text-align: center">

PINK FAIRY
</div>

Whatever is fine. Thanks.
    (pauses, pointing at Sheela)
How did you do that so fast?

<div style="text-align: center">

WENDY
</div>

What? What so fast?

<div style="text-align: center">

PINK FAIRY
</div>

Her beard, not you.

<div style="text-align: center">

WENDY
</div>

I asked you a question.

<div style="text-align: center">

PINK FAIRY
</div>

I don't care! I'm not hungry.

<div style="text-align: center">

WENDY
</div>

Fine then.

WENDY storms out of the room.

<div style="text-align: center">

SHEELA
</div>

Hmm. Well I am.

SHEELA gets up and continues making the food that WENDY left behind. PF watches, at a loss for words. Then she leaves.

SCENE 11. INT. WICKED SHACK - BEDROOM

WENDY is huddled over and crying to herself on the bed.

<div style="text-align: center">

PINK FAIRY
</div>

I'm sorry Wendy. It's just...

PF sits down next to her, awkwardly reaching out to her.

<div style="text-align: center">

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</div>

WENDY
          I can't do anything right.

                              PINK FAIRY
          What do you mean?

                              WENDY
          I just make you mad all the time.

                              PINK FAIRY
          No. It's not you. It's not you.

                              WENDY
          Then what?

                              PINK FAIRY
          I dunno. But I don't mean to make you upset. I love
          you.

They hug. PFs wings expand a little.

SCENE 12. INT. WICKED SHACK - BEDROOM LATER

PF and WENDY are asleep in bed. SHEELA is watching them, standing near the door.
WENDY awakes and sees SHEELA standing there. She smiles and stretches. Sheela smiles
back and climbs into the bed with them, startling PF awake.

                              PINK FAIRY
          Huh?! What the... oh, hello!

                              SHEELA
          Hello, Miss Fairy.

                              PINK FAIRY
          Miss! I'm no Miss.

SHEELA laughs and reaches over to touch her.

                              SHEELA
          Is this okay?

                              PINK FAIRY
              Okay? It's okay... good... okay, what? I dunno. I...

PF sighs as SHEELA caresses her. WENDY starts touching as well, and the three of them get
entangled in a flurry of bodies and colours.

SCENE 13. INT. WICKED SHACK - KITCHEN

SHEELA and WENDY are sitting at the table drinking coffee and munching on food. PF comes rushing in.

PINK FAIRY

My wings! They're gone!

WENDY

What?!

PINK FAIRY

I dunno. I just woke up and wanted to stretch them out, but they're gone!! Can you look? Maybe they're stuck.

PF turns around. Both SHEELA and WENDY get up to examine PF's back.

SHEELA

Well. It looks like they're gone, yeah. The opening's there, but no wings.

WENDY

Oh Pinkie.

PINK FAIRY

Don't baby me. I'm not a baby. My wings are gone. Fuck!

WENDY

What did you do? Something must've happened.

PINK FAIRY

Nothing happened. Nothing! I didn't do anything. Fuck! I worked so hard learning how to fly - and now it's all gone. All ruined.

WENDY

Wings just don't go away on their own. You must've unleashed them somehow.

PINK FAIRY

You'd know. You're the witch. Maybe it was you! Did you cast a spell on me? Did you take my wings?

WENDY

I wouldn't do anything like that, you know that. I love you.

PINK FAIRY

Maybe it was you Sheela? Are you a witch too? Fuck!
I knew it. I knew it! I had a bad feeling about this
place all along. There are no fairies here, only lazy
witches who snatch away anything they want.

SHEELA

I'm not a witch.

PINK FAIRY

Whatever.

WENDY

Not whatever. Calm down Pink Fairy. We'll get your
wings back. We just have to find out where they went.

PINK FAIRY (WAILING)

Where they went is somebody took 'em because they
are the most beautiful things in the world!

SHEELA

I've seen more beautiful things.

PINK FAIRY

Well!

PF stands shocked and dejected, speechless and flustered.

SHEELA

Pinkie, you've lived without those wings before you
had them. Do you really need them?

PINK FAIRY

Of course I do!

SHEELA

Why?

PINK FAIRY

So I can fly?

SHEELA

Why do you need to fly?

PINK FAIRY

Why are you asking me this when you can see how
upset I am? You're just making me more angry.

SHEELA

Am I? You seem calmer to me. Why do you need to
fly?

PINK FAIRY

Because I'm a fairy. Fairies have wings.

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SHEELA
          Hmmm. Not all of them.

SHEELA gets up and starts doing a funny little dance. [This might be performed live.]

                           PINK FAIRY
          What are you doing?

                          SHEELA (V.O.)
          Dancing.

                        PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
          But we were talking.

                          SHEELA (V.O.)
          I thought we were finished. It was getting boring.

She spits and twists her head around while she undulates her hips, sometimes squatting and reaching under her KILT with her hands. PF stares incredulously, laughing a little. WENDY smiles, familiar with this happening. When the performance is over, WENDY claps and whistles. PF just laughs.

                           PINK FAIRY
          What was that?!

                              SHEELA
          That's my birthing dance.

                           PINK FAIRY
          What?

                              SHEELA
          I'm a doula.

                           PINK FAIRY
          A what?

                              SHEELA
          A doula - I help people with pregnancy, birth and
          early child care.

                     PINK FAIRY (INTERUPTING)
          No, I mean... why did you just get up while we were
          talking and do that funny dance.

                              SHEELA
          You asked if I was a witch.

                           PINK FAIRY
          Oh! My wings.

PF sits down to mope.

SHEELA
Maybe they were never yours to begin with.

PINK FAIRY
What?

SHEELA
It's a possibility.

PINK FAIRY
I grew them, they were mine.

SHEELA
And they're not yours now.

PINK FAIRY
Whatever. Then they can be mine again when I find
them. Hmm. Do either of you know the little Red
Fairy? Or where I can find her? She'll know how I can
get my wings back.

WENDY
We don't know any fairies except you. The sweetest
fairy in all the world.

SHEELA
Speak for yourself Wendy. I know a few fairies. Some
of my friends are fairies. But they're mostly all dead
now.

PINK FAIRY
Dead?

SHEELA
Don't you know your fairylore?

SHEELA pulls a book off the shelf and hands it to PF.

PINK FAIRY
Peter Pan? I saw the movie when I was a kid.
Tinkerbell was such an annoying creature. That's not
what real fairies are like.

SHEELA smirks.

PINK FAIRY
And it's just a story anyway. Surely that's not how it
works in the real world.

SHEELA
Are where are you now?

PINK FAIRY
Huh?

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SHEELA
Do you remember what happens to Tink?

PINK FAIRY
Hmm. She gets sick...

PF leafs through the book.

PINK FAIRY
Every time a child says, "I don't believe in fairies,"
there's a fairy somewhere that falls down dead.
     (gasp)
Maybe that's what happened! Maybe some stupid kid
said they didn't believe in fairies and that's how I lost
my wings!

SHEELA
But you're not dying. Are you dying?

Without waiting for a response, SHEELA turns to the audience.

SHEELA
She says she thinks she can get well again if children
believed in fairies. Do you believe in fairies? Say quick
that you believe! If you believe, clap your hands!!
Clap louder!!

Sounds of applause come from all the speakers, moving through them, swirling around. Then
we hear giggles and chimes and fluttering sounds as the picture becomes a kaleidoscope of
flashing shapes. SHEELA's last words are echoing throughout the soundscape, and sometimes
we catch glimpses of little wings and limbs in the picture.

Fade to BLACK and silence.

END OF ACT ONE

SCENE 14. INT. WICKED SHACK - KITCHEN

SHEELA, PF and WENDY are all standing around a very quiet kitchen. PF touches her back.

PINK FAIRY
It didn't work. I still don't have my wings back.

SHEELA
I suppose you'll have to find them for yourself, young
one.

PINK FAIRY
Why do you keep calling me that? I'm not that
young.

SHEELA
To me you are. I'm so old, I lost count ages ago.

                    PINK FAIRY
How can you lose count? Don't you remember what
year you were born?

                    SHEELA
This is making me want to do another dance. Get
outta here. Go find your wings.

                    PINK FAIRY
But where do I go?

SHEELA goes to the window, closes her eyes as a gust of wind rustles the curtains, takes a
deep breath and points out the window.

                    SHEELA
There, can you smell it? It's not so far. Only half a
day's walk from here. You should go now with the
remaining light. Better to be there waiting quietly till
they awake, than to arrive in the midst of their
playful antics.

                    PINK FAIRY
How will I know when I get there?

                    SHEELA
You'll know. Trust yourself. Breathe.

                    PINK FAIRY
I knew there was a reason I stayed. I had to meet you!
So I could finally find some fairies!

PF gives a big kiss to SHEELA. WENDY looks on, hurt.

                    PINK FAIRY
Oh, thank you. Thank you.

She dashes into the bedroom to grab her little red bag and runs back out.

                    PINK FAIRY
Okay, bye! Wish me luck!

She waves quickly and runs out the door.

                    WENDY
Well, I'm glad you're here to make me feel needed.

                    SHEELA
You fall so easily Witchy... you caught a slippy one
there.

WENDY
          Like you?

SHEELA sidles up next to her and nuzzles her neck.

FADE to BLACK

SCENE 15. EXT. FOREST - LATE DAY/SUNSET

PF is walking through the forest, obviously lost.

                              PINK FAIRY
          "Trust myself. Breathe?" I should've asked what she
          meant by that. It's almost night and I haven't found
          any fairies yet, or habitats, or whatever it is... I don't
          even know what I'm supposed to find. I might've
          already gone past it.. Whatever *it* is.

PF stops and sniffs. She licks her finger and points it in the air, turning around and sniffing.

                              PINK FAIRY
          Oh! Useless. I can't smell anything. And what are
          fairies supposed to smell like anyway?

PF sniffs herself.

                              PINK FAIRY
          Well, ich. Somehow I doubt fairies smell like this.
          Huh. I guess that means I'm not a fairy anymore.
          Anymore - was I ever? Too big, too stupid. What
          kind of fairy loses her wings?

                              BIG VOICE
          The kind that was never meant to be a fairy at all.

                              PINK FAIRY
          What?! You!

                              BIG VOICE
          Do you know where you are?

                              PINK FAIRY
          No, of course I don't, I'm lost! And wait, what? Why
          was I never meant to be a fairy?

                              BIG VOICE
          You tell me. YOU said it.

                              PINK FAIRY
          No I didn't. You mixed up my words. Just tell me.

BIG VOICE
          Does it matter what I think?

                    PINK FAIRY
          No. Hmpf. But why?

There is no answer.

                    PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
          I thought you were part of my dream. Maybe I'm
          dreaming now.

PF slaps and pinches herself.

                    PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
          If I was dreaming then I could fly.

She touches her back, then jumps up trying to release her wings.

                    PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
          Or maybe this thing is one whole big nightmare and I
          don't know what really is real anymore. Maybe I
          never lost my wings at all... Maybe I never even had
          wings to begin with. It all seems so long ago, so far
          away. Like it was something that happened to
          someone else... not me. I'm no fairy, who'm I kidding
          anyway? I'm just some stupid kid from the suburbs.

                    BIG VOICE
          Wait. wait wait.

                    PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
          What? Who are you? I am dreaming. I must be
          dreaming. Wake up! Wake up! Get up you lazy ass,
          stupid no-good fairy. Some kind of fairy you are,
          losing your wings.

                    BIG VOICE
          What are you doing?

                    PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
          I'm trying to wake myself up.

                    BIG VOICE
          Just open your eyes.

                    PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
          My eyes... are open... see?

PF widens her eyes and taunts the shadows.

                    BIG VOICE
          If they were open, you would know me.

<div align="center">PINK FAIRY (V.O.)</div>

I don't have time for all these crypticisms. Why can't
everyone just be straight up? I need to find the fairies
so I can get my wings back.
<div align="center">(pause)</div>
Ah-haahhh! You're the one who took my wings. That
dream, it was real! Why'd you do it? Answer me.
Where are my wings? Hello?

PF continues to call out, getting no answer from BIG VOICE, so she starts walking.

<div align="center">PINK FAIRY</div>

You did! You did! Where did you put them? Who are
you? Hello! Hello! Haalllllloooooooo!!

PF is running now, and shouting. Her words become layered and incoherent - swirling around
the speakers. She stumbles over some stones laid out in a circle.

CUT TO BLACK

PF's voice is still swirling, mixed with rhythmic drum beating. The drum beats get louder as
PF's voice fades out. As the drumming gets louder, they multiply into battlefield-like sounds
of fire, people screaming, monster roars, whooshes of heavy weapons. A loud distinct cackle
breaks it all into silence.

SCENE 16. EXT. FAIRY CIRCLE - NIGHT

PF looks up to see a dark cloud looming above her. The cloud, coming in and out of focus, is
filled with debris and moving towards her in an erratic manner. PF tries to get up, but her
legs are like lead. She opens her mouth to speak, but no words come out. She tries to lift her
hands to her head, slowly she is able to get her left thumb close enough to press into her
third eye centre.

<div align="center">PINK FAIRY (V.O.)</div>
<div align="center">What's happening? I can't...</div>

The cloud looms closer and comes into focus. It becomes KALI with a low-rumbled shriek,
and a cackle. Rain starts trickling down on PF.

<div align="center">KALI (V.O.)</div>
<div align="center">Cannot do anything at all!</div>

PF looks up with big, dark scared eyes. KALI cackles again.

<div align="center">KALI (V.O.)</div>
<div align="center">Lucky you who got away.</div>

KALI gestures to the severed head she's holding up.

<div align="center">KALI (V.O.)</div>
The queen likes to ask me for the heads of those who
have broken her heart.

PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
The queen?

KALI (V.O.)
Your friend, the wicked witch of the west.

PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
Wendy?

KALI (V.O.)
Hahhaa. Could you not feel the venom in those eyes?
So lovely. It is what I live for.

PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
No. It wasn't like that. Why? Are you another one
of her million lovers?

KALI (V.O.)
No, I do *love* all of my children, but I have only ever
had one lover - my husband, Shiva. And he is long
dead.

PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
Oh, I'm sorry.

KALI (LAUGHING + V.O.)
I was too for awhile after I killed him. My shame only
left after I ate him, and as his bodily energy fused with
mine, I became one... whole.

PF starts to tremble under the mighty power of KALI, and shrinks away, lost in her
paralysis. KALI holds open her right hand in a gesture of "fear not". The rain becomes
heavier, thundering and lightening occurs sporadically.

KALI (V.O.)
It was an accident. I never meant to kill him. We
were young, we wanted the universe, and believed we
could have it too. He was beautiful and pure, only
wanting it for himself like any truly enlightened
being. But I wanted more, I saw a world of injustice
and pain. The vengeance raged inside me. I wanted to
change things. I was naive. I was out of control. Shiv
was just trying to help, but he got in the way and he
perished for it.

PF's fear is dissipating, but still there. From this point on, her lips are moving, but her words
are thrown onto intertitles (not through sound).

PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
But you've killed other people, why?

KALI shakes her bejewelled head.

KALI (V.O.)
Only those already dead to themselves. When they
see me, it is the fear in their very soul that destroys
them, and their heads become mine.

                              PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
Are you going to take mine?

                                  KALI (V.O.)
Who knows what the future may hold?

KALI starts moving to a rhythm we can't hear. PF stands. A bright figure is invoked by
KALI's dancing - and we can see that she is actually following the light, and almost mocking
it. PF watches with fascination. The music recalls the earlier battle-sounds, but there is low
chanting mixed in. KALI's words are resonating throughout, as if they were not coming from
her body, but everywhere - with multiple layers overlapping.

[There is other stuff going on too (visually and aurally) - but this will be determined through
a tactile process with the film material.]

                                  KALI (V.O.)
What are you waiting for?

                              PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
The pain. It's too much.

                                  KALI (V.O.)
Stop fighting it. Look at it.

PF's voice sometimes comes in to the soundtrack.

                              PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
No! No! I am a fairy. I am! Being a fairy is the only
thing that makes me happy.

                                  KALI (V.O.)
Is this the truth? Open your eyes.

PF mouths and points.

                                PINK FAIRY
They're open, they're open.

                                  KALI (V.O.)
I feel your fear. Do you see it? The light!

PF mouths.

                                PINK FAIRY
No!

                              PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
I am not afraid.

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The image becomes completely unstable, flashing on and off. There is a sudden silence, the image shakes, audio comes back and fluctuates in and out with gasps, screams and struggles with weapons. The rain, thunder and lightening are really heavy and strong. Flashes of a spaceship landing, Nemo steps out in still image flashes, sparkling from interstellar travel dust.

END OF ACT TWO

SCENE 17. EXT. FAIRY CIRCLE - DAY

But different. The world is upside down. Audio doesn't match picture, time repeats. Flashes come from other parts of the film - PF flying, SHEELA and WENDY around the kitchen table, KALI's fearful presence, and EON stepping out of the spaceship. EON reaches a hand down to PF, who grabs it lightly, rises from the ground and floats into the spaceship with EON.

> KALI (V.O.)
> Look inside yourself. Where are you going?

SCENE 18. INT. SPACESHIP

> PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
> The eyes of my eyes are opened!

A kaleidoscope of PFs litter the screen. She looks at herselves, in all different aspects - with wings, pre-wings, post-wings, flying, stubborn, angry, whiney, loving, open, honest, light. Her hands reach out to touch each of herselves, embracing all the aspects individually. The kaleidoscope implodes into nothing but a tiny blip of a star that travels on the screen. Then other little stars appear in the darkness, and PF's bright little pink star interacts with them.

> PINK FAIRY (V.O.)
> The ears of my ears are awake!

The picture and sound are now working in a contrapuntal, collaged non-linear fashion. The montage of images show PF running, changing, growing wings, flying, becoming SHEELA, becoming WENDY, becoming KALI, and then becoming EON - an astronaut. EON pins up a picture of PF flattened like a squashed bug, and sits in the pilot's chair.

The soundtrack contains sound effects and music that reference these characters -sounds of wings flapping, cooking, babies crying, destruction, chaos, a spaceship approaching, a door opens. Snippets of songs and drumbeats weave in and out like someone flipping through a radio station. Bits of dialogue heard as follows:

> KALI (V.O.)
> Do not be scared. You are alive.

> AEON (V.O.)
> I'm not scared. I'm outta here!

> MOTHER (V.O.)
> Where are you dear? I've got your dinner. Your
> favourite.

AEON (V.O.)
I'm not coming back Mom! I found this used old
trailer, a little fixer-upper. I'm going on the road.

MOTHER (V.O.)
But your home is here. You need me.

AEON (V.O.)
I need to go. My home is here... with me. This is who
I am. stretching my skin...

MOTHER (V.O.)
Are you not my daughter anymore?

AEON (V.O. + GIGGLING)
I'll always be your daughter, no matter whoever else I
become.

MOTHER (V.O.)
But where will you go?

AEON (V.O.)
First stop, the ocean. Then off and away. There are
no destinations, only journeys.

THE END