

<http://www.bethspencer.com/body-as-fiction.html>

**THE BODY AS FICTION /
FICTION AS A WAY OF THINKING:
ON WRITING A *SHORT (PERSONAL) HISTORY
OF THE BRA AND ITS CONTENTS***

PART ONE - EXEGESIS

Beth Spencer

**This thesis is submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

School of Behavioural & Social Sciences & Humanities

**University of Ballarat
PO Box 663
University Drive, Mount Helen
Ballarat, Victoria, 3353**

Submitted 31 March 2006

SUMMARY

This thesis uses fiction as a research technology for investigating and thinking about issues to do with bodies and knowledge at the cusp of the 20th and 21st centuries.

It includes sample material from a novel in progress -- *A Short (Personal) History of the Bra and its Contents* -- to illustrate some of the unique outcomes of this approach to exploring cultural history and writing cultural criticism.

One of the advantages of fiction is that it allows me to create a discursive field in which it is possible for the very wide range of issues raised by my topic to coexist, work off each other and cross-fertilise. These include ideas regarding gender, sexuality, nurture and subjectivity; issues to do with the implants controversy, the cancer industry and the corporatisation of medicine (and hence various current debates within science and medicine); as well as movements in fashion history and popular culture -- all of which contribute to making up the datasphere in which and through which we continually reproduce ourselves as subjects.

More importantly, fiction allows me to write from within a specific historical, cultural and sexual body; thus engaging readers likewise as embodied desiring subjects. Which is to say, it presents a way to write about the body and to involve it in relationship at the same time; to engage and move readers on an emotional (visceral) as well as intellectual level -- indeed, to explore the place where these are inseparable.

As a companion text to this material, the first section of the thesis describes the discursive strategies used in the novel in the context of an exploration of points of convergence between post-structuralism, quantum physics and ecological spirituality -- in particular, regarding the relationship between body and mind, matter and spirit, nature and culture, as well as the overriding question of: 'how do we know what we know?'

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgement in the main text and bibliography of the thesis/portfolio.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Meg Tasker and associate supervisors Fiona Giles for their astute and patient guidance and encouragement, to Marcia Pope for her valuable associate-supervision in the early stages, and to the University of Ballarat for material and moral support throughout the writing of this thesis.

There are so many people whose love, friendship and intelligent conversation has helped me through. I'd like to say thank you, and *Namaste*, to Marija Bowey, Anita Hoare, Chrissi Spurgeon and Jennifer Kremmer, to Claudia Taranto, my brother Brian Spencer and my mother Iris V.F. Spencer, to Paul Brick, Peta Spear, Daryl Dellora and Jenny Hocking, to Brony Dennis, and to so many others who have offered something invaluable at just the right time.

My sincere thanks to the Literature Board of the Australia Council, for believing in this project from the start; to Dr Megan Mathews, Angelo Druda (TCM) and Sempai Chris Noller for their advice and feedback on the 'Art of Peace' chapter; to Di Clingen, Rosemary Green and the staff at the Research Office and School of Humanities; and a big thank you to Richard and Marianne for their mercy-printer-dash at the last minute!

'I dreamt I took the bull by the horns in my Maidenform bra...'

CONTENTS OF PART ONE

Introduction.....	1
 <i>Chapter 1: Writing On, About, and Through Breasted Bodies</i>	<i>7</i>
 <i>Chapter 2 :Post-structuralist Feminism and the Body.....</i>	<i>19</i>
 <i>Chapter 3: The Matter of Bodies and the Paradigm Shifts of Post-structuralism, Quantum Physics, and Ecological Spirituality...27</i>	
 <i>Chapter 3: Thinking Beyond the Mind/Body Split: Writing, Reading and Thinking with the Heart.....</i>	<i>52</i>
 <i>Chapter 4: Historiography and Method: Putting it into Practice.....</i>	<i>70</i>
 Conclusion.....	89
 Endnotes.....	93
 Select Bibliography.....	117