



**GRRRLS AND DOLLS:  
APPROPRIATED IMAGES OF GIRLHOOD IN THE WORKS OF  
HANS BELLMER AND RIOT GRRRL BANDS**

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**Abstract**

Images of girlhood and doll figures, especially, occupy central positions within social, cultural, and even political thought. While unlikely parallels, Surrealist photographer Hans Bellmer and Riot Grrrls bands each utilized images of little girls and representations of doll bodies as political tools; through these reappropriated images and refashioned figures, they each leveled counter-hegemonic resistance against their respective patriarchal social orders. Bellmer and Riot Grrrl artists perversely reimagined girls and dolls, especially through acts of violent sexualization and subversive fragmentation, and in doing so found a similar voice through such appropriated bodies. While Bellmer and feminist Riot Grrrls are chronologically separated by decades, contextually divided by national borders, and have been interpreted along disparate scholarly planes, they are nevertheless provocatively united in their subversive redeployment of girlhood imagery. This article analyzes the ways in which images of girlhood and dolls have been reappropriated and re-presented within select works from Bellmer's oeuvre and Riot Grrrl music/art production. It launches an investigation into how Bellmer and Riot Grrrls have similarly utilized girlhood and doll bodies as political mouthpieces. It aims to present a new reconsideration and re-reading of Bellmer's work in relation to the similar manipulations of girlhood and doll bodies as they were later re-presented within the Riot Grrrl movement.

**Getting All Dolled-up: An introduction**

A naked doll with splayed legs and exposed genitals is grasped by an ominous hand that pinches in vice-like fashion at its vulnerable head (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> A limp and motionless figure reminiscent of a Degas ballerina is passed through a raucous crowd who rips and tears at her gauzy dress.<sup>2</sup> A limbless jumble of doll parts sits pressed against a harshly lit wall, topped with a decapitated head sporting Shirley Temple curls and a Minnie Mouse bow (Figure 2).<sup>3</sup> While the artists behind these respective images vary, a provocative common denominator unites them: images of girlhood and violent (re)interpretations of doll-like bodies that have been reappropriated for counter-hegemonic agendas. From the surrealist photographs of German artist Hans Bellmer (1902-1975), to the Grung-era music videos and album covers created within the Riot Grrrl music movement (1990-present), images of girlhood and representations of doll arise within each as dominant modes for expressing cultural resistance.

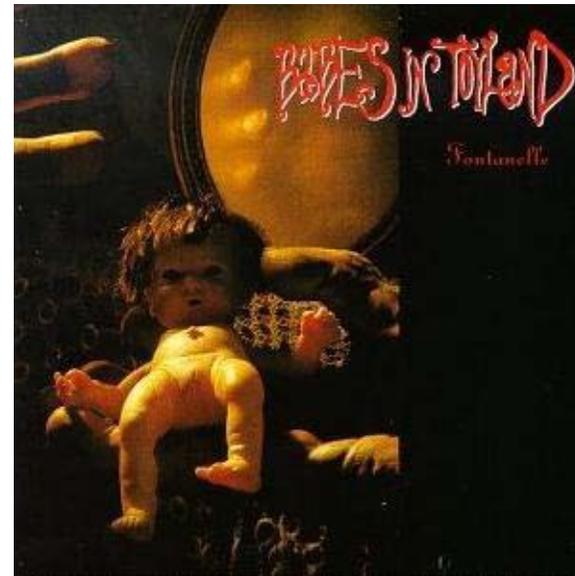


Figure 1: Bjelalld, K. and L. Rinaldo (co-producers), C. Sherman (album cover photographer). (1992). *Fontanelle*. [CD album cover], Image© Reprise Records.

1. Babes in Toyland, *Fontanelle* (1992, CD cover)

2. Hole, "Violet" (1994, music video)

3. Bellmer, H. *La Poupée, Seconde partie* (circa 1934, photograph).



Figure 2: Bellmer, H. (photographer). (circa 1934). *La Poupée, Seconde partie*. [Gelatin-Silver Print], Image© 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Bellmer's photographic oeuvre of grotesque, dismembered female dolls has historically been demonized as a misogynistic assault against femininity. However, when recontextualized within Bellmer's adolescence and his adult resistance to the German Nazi regime as well as comparatively re-read against the similar violent images of girls and dolls favored by Riot Grrrl bands in early 1990s U.S. popular culture, a new re-reading emerges and presents a different understanding his work and use of girl/dolls images. Under this reclaimed reading, Bellmer can be re-understood as posing a "[r]esistance to patriarchal discourse [which] takes the form of a rearticulation of girlhood" (Wald, 1998, p. 592). Later Riot Grrrls images and agendas will present a similar a resistance through reappropriated images of girls and dolls that provocatively mirror Bellmer's.

Images of sexualized girls marked the works of Bellmer and his fellow Surrealists in the 1930s, and poignantly resurfaced in the early/mid-1990s as a subversive motif for the outspoken, girl-fronted band and artists of the Riot Grrrl movement. While representing different historical moments and cultural contexts, Bellmer and the Riot Grrrls can be put into generative conversation with each other through their similar reappropriated utilizations of girlhood and doll images. The songs, music videos, and album covers produced by Riot Grrrl bands, including Babes

in Toyland, Bikini Kill, and Hole (amongst others), are undoubtedly compelling in their own right yet become especially striking when considered alongside the artwork of Hans Bellmer. The uncanny similarity between Bellmer's infamously grotesque dolls and the later renditions of abused, sexualized girl/doll bodies produced by Riot Grrrl artists incite a new line of questioning: how can these images and artists can be contextualized, analyzed, and put into conversation vis-a-vis each other? Do they similarly use dolls as vehicles for political and anti-patriarchal critique, even though separate by decades and political contexts? Historically, these bodies of works have been considered along separate and even oppositional lines: Bellmer—a male, Surrealist photographer with a colorful history of personal preoccupations, fantasies, and sadistic drives towards little girls—is reviled as a misogynist (Suleiman, 1998, p. 135).

Conversely, Riot Grrrls like Kathleen Hannah, Kat Bjelland, and even Courtney Love are praised as champions of feminism, even though their violent images and depictions of girls and doll bodies essentially mirror Bellmer's work. Using key examples drawn from Bellmer's photographic oeuvre and biography along with Riot Grrrl music videos, album artwork, and song lyrics, this article will not only analyze the ways in which images of girlhood are defined and reappropriated, but will even more provocatively reveal how each of these unlikely oeuvres unite in a shared use of girls and doll as vehicle for anti-patriarchal and political resistance against their respective hegemonic societies.

### **Bellmer's Belles: Hans Bellmer and his use of girlhood imagery**

Throughout much of his work as a photographer and surrealist artist, Hans Bellmer seized upon young girls and doll images. While his work is predominantly reviled within art historical discourse as misogynistic, an oppositional reading of Bellmer can be forged through a recontextualization of his work within his Nazi Germany milieu. While prevailing interpretations of Bellmer read his sexual and violently fragmented dolls as purely anti-feminine, other theorists such Rosalind Krauss, Hal Foster, and Theresa Lichtenstein have sought to push beyond this surface level reading. These rogue theorists offer a more provocative

and ultimately generative reading of Bellmer's works—an oppositional reading that, while marginalized within dominant art history theory, seems to find compelling resonance and support when not only considered in relation to Bellmer's own contextual moment, but also when later Riot Grrrl images are comparatively read vis-a-vis his work and counter-hegemonic use of girlhood and doll imagery.

For Bellmer, and later for Riot Grrrls, girlhood imagery and doll bodies functioned as political tools. Images of girlhood and childhood, as Lauren Berlant (1997) posits in *The Queen of American Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*, are indeed iconic and politically-charged figures. In U.S. society especially, iconized notions of “children” and the heteronormative reproductive nuclear family that produces them exist as nexus points around which political policies and standards for appropriate citizenship are formed. Children and images of childhood have, as Berlant argues, historically established themselves within the sociopolitical fabric of the United States as well as the Western World; children and objects of childhood have thus been successfully charged as loaded figures, ripe for subversive reappropriation and the manipulation of their inscribed sociocultural meanings. Through adopting, undermining, and reversing the aggrandized child figure, dissenters can directly speak back to the very sociopolitical systems that have exalted children, girls, and dolls as normative/normalizing figures. Bellmer's and the Riot Grrrl's reappropriations of girls/dolls aimed to do just this. Speaking through their own bodies and the body of the girl/doll figures, Riot Grrrls especially utilized both as political sites; they parodied patriarchal constructions of “daddy's little girl” while they simultaneously toyed with notions of power and desire (Isaken, 1999, para. 18). Similarly, Hans Bellmer utilized figures of children and female dolls as political tools; he reployed them within his subversive photographs as an assault against the standards of a Nazi regime that championed whole and idealized Arian bodies. In Bellmer's work, bodies are fragmented and undermined in an act of pointed violence that is not only leveled against them, but even more provocatively against the larger structures of political power that dictated artistic practice and sociopolitical life within Nazi Germany.

Bellmer's first utilization of doll bodies and other associated im-

ages of girlhood came at the age of twenty-one when he publicly cross-dressed as a young girl in order to embarrass his father, a prominent member of the Fascist party (Taylor, 2000). Bellmer's cross-dressing antics revealed his keen awareness of the constructed, performative nature of gender as well as the powerful, subversive effects that could be achieved through manipulated images of girlhood. Particularly, as Sue Taylor describes in *Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety* (2000), Bellmer began to appreciate how subversive manipulations of such childish, girly images could be utilized as sites of “aggressive hostility” against not only his father, but also “Father” Germany.<sup>4</sup> Theresa Lichtenstein has similarly argued that Bellmer's later 1930s photographs continue this “attack on the father by the son” through their continued fascination with perverted dolls and use of controversial childhood imagery (1985, pp. 102-103).



Figure 3:

Bellmer, H. (photographer). (1936). *Die Puppe (Selbstportät mit der Puppe)*. [Gelatin-Silver Print], Image© 2008 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP,

4. While many countries refer to their nation as “Mother” or the “Motherland,” Germany has historically referred to the nation as “Fatherland” or *Vaterland* as in the German national anthem, “Das Lied der Deutschen” (1922).

### Riot Grrrlhood: Riot Grrrl Bands and their Use of Girlhood Imagery

The Riot Grrrl movement first emerged in the early 1990s as an underground feminist, punk movement; it continued until the mid-90s, spreading from its original center in the Pacific Northwest to the entire United States, as well as internationally. The movement was primarily rooted in music production, and was lead by outspoken feminist musicians including Kathleen Hanna, her band Bikini Kill, and several other politically oriented, girl-fronted bands including Bratmobile, Heaven to Betsy, and 7 Year Bitch. Riot Grrrls also infiltrated other visual arts mediums—including self-published zines and “do-it-yourself” art production—to further broadcast their messages of reclaimed, counter-hegemonic identities and oppositional female empowerment. Hyper-sexualized images of girlhood were a defining characteristic and privileged aesthetic motif of the punk-influenced Riot Grrrl movement; particularly, images of little girls and dolls become a staple within the musical and artistic output of Kat Bjelland’s band, Babes in Toyland as well as Courtney Love’s band, Hole. In addition to songs laced with angry, accusatory lyrics directed against patriarchal powers and stereotypes of what “good girls” are, these two bands produced a plethora of images that subversively used images of dolls and young girlhood. Sexualized images of girls and reworked presentations of grotesque doll figures were especially utilized in the album artwork of Babes in Toyland—*Spanking Machine* (1990),<sup>5</sup> *Fontanelle* (1992) (Figure 1), and *Painkillers* (1993) (Figure 4). Additionally, the *Kinderwhore* aesthetic—which included various plays on the dresses and aesthetics of girlhood intermingled with violence and adult sexuality—came to define Riot Grrrl style, self-fashioning, and identity-making.

“Playing savagely on women’s identification with dolls and with images of themselves as cute little girls,” Anne Higgonet writes, “groups

5. See image at: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/3/3c/Babes\\_in\\_Toyland\\_Spanking\\_Machine.JPG](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/3/3c/Babes_in_Toyland_Spanking_Machine.JPG)

like Hole, Bikini Kill, and Babes in Toyland have all identified their



Figure 4:  
Bjelland, K., J. Endino, L. Ranaldo, L. Barbero (co-producers), C. Sherman (album cover photographer). (1993). *Painkillers*. [CD album cover], Image© Reprise Records.

music with juxtapositions between photographs of abused dolls, photographs of themselves as children, and very tough photographs of themselves as adults” (1998, pp. 193-194). The image of “girlhood” that was re-appropriated, problematized, and exploited by Riot Grrrls developed out of the eighteenth century model of the “Romantic” child, which Higgonet (1998) explicates in *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*. While the romantic child was fetishistically exalted and reified as an exemplar of purity, naïveté, and innocence, the modern, *knowing* child was conversely theorized as psychologically self-aware with sexual agency over his or her own body, desires, and passions. Exploding romanticized images of innocent childhood, as established in Romantic period literature and art, Riot Grrrls subversively and oppositionally refashioned themselves as knowing and active pastiches of childish yet sexualized vamps. Riot Grrrl bands like Babes in Toyland and musicians like Courtney Love latched-on to notions of the romantic child, as

metaphorically embodied in the female doll figure, and reworked them into new, amalgamated versions of sexually-aware, confrontational, and knowing adult/girl/doll figures. Their reformulations of girlhood and connoted girlhood objects—ranging from baby-dolls to children’s dresses, barrettes, and even children’s cameras<sup>6</sup>—reveal how girlhood and its associated images are an especially powerful locus for cultural, social, and political identity formation and critique (Kearney, 1997). Their mindful manipulation of childhood images and, especially, the dolls of little girls made such a critique possible.

The doll arose as a particularly salient image and tool within the Riot Grrrl’s subversive repertoire. Not only is the doll imbricated with childhood, little girls, and women (Suleiman, 1998, p. 139), its plastic, whitewashed façade can be interpreted as a metaphorical representation of the efforts to mitigate and control female sexuality through defanged cuteness. In her writing on the fetishized commodification of cuteness, Lori Merish notes how “[c]uteness performs the de-sexualization of the child’s body (...) [s]tagging the disavowal of child eroticism and the sublimation of adults’ erotic feelings toward children” (1996, pp. 188-189). However, in their dress, songs, and music videos, Riot Grrrl bands ironically played with these forged associations between femininity, girlish purity, and passive innocence; in doing so, they effectively foregrounded and called into question society’s fetishistic desire for the child and these ascribed qualities. By violently re-sexualizing images of dolls and refashioning themselves as “child-women, [or] fucked-up Lolitas” (Eileraas, 1997, p.128), Riot Grrrls exposed, attacked, and ironically reversed “cute” images of girls; ultimately, they reversed images of fetishized cuteness, passivity, and innocent purity by subversively reinscribing sexual agency. Shattering the glossy covers of prettiness and cuteness that were constructed around both girlhood and femininity, Riot Grrrls excavated an active, knowing sexuality that patriarchal constructions otherwise sought to eclipse. As Karina Eileraas aptly notes, the Riot Grrrls’ surreal juxtapositions of conventional, girlish prettiness with violent, violated images “create[d] a visual economy that emphasize[d]

6. Sadie Benning, an experimental filmmaker and founding Le Tigre band member, used a children’s Fischer-Price PXL-2000 camera and Barbie dolls to visually negotiate her sexual coming-of-age and lesbian identity politics.

the violence to and alienation from the body that obedient performances of ‘pretty’ femininity entail” (1997, p.124).

### Play Money: Economic Subversions through Dolls

Commercial and economic concerns inform Bellmer’s work as well the artistic productions of the Riot Grrrl movement. Bellmer and the Riot Grrrls utilized girls and dolls to not only rebel against political hegemony, but also leveled associated economic subversions/critiques through their doll images. Concurrent with the Nazi’s rise to power in 1933, Bellmer abandoned his commercial artist position and, in a liberating act of public protest against both his father and the state, decided to start fabricating his own mechanical dolls (Lichtenstein, 1991) (Figure 2 and 3). With this, Bellmer staged an economic protest through his artistic pursuits and, specifically, he perverse interest in dolls.

Economic subversion and oppositional defiance was also essential within Riot Grrrl politics and practice. While Riot Grrrl bands were invested in generating revenue, they were also originally rooted in and remained true to a punk subculture that championed a rebellious anti-mainstream, “do-it-yourself” philosophy. This D.I.Y. attitude bucked official, corporate commercialization in favor of independent, self-produced content. In this regard, Riot Grrrl bands were part of an outsider counterculture similar to Bellmer: they both assumed positions outside the mainstream economic system and, essentially, sought to produce artistic products that publicly rejected and criticized hegemonic, (state or corporate) sponsored systems. For Riot Grrrls, this included independent, self-produced zines (including the “Riot Grrrl” zine produced by Molly Neuman, from the band Bratmobile, throughout the early 1990s), music, and videos that directly attacked corporate industry structures and their patriarchic figurations of women as infantilized yet sexualized objects. In her writing on the Riot Grrrl movement, Gayle Wald (1998) reveals how Riot Grrrl bands consciously and sardonically reappropriated images of girlhood in order to stake a subversive political position against hegemonic representations of infantilized female sexuality. Reclaiming marginalized and diminutive images of girls, children, and dolls, Riot Grrrls carved out new, defiant identities that flew in the face of the same

corporate machine that initially produced these stereotyped images. The subversive redeployment of girlhood, sexualized children, and doll images fueled Bellmer's and the Riot Grrrl attack against their respective hegemonic cultures and economic systems.

### Using The Father's Tools: Anti-patriarchal re-appropriations of Dolls

Bellmer's decision to continue experimenting with and pursuing the artistic fabrication of dolls sealed his position against the sociopolitical and economic mainstream as well as against his own father. Using old, childhood toys provided by his mother at the vehement disapproval of his father, Bellmer constructed his first disarticulated female *poupées*<sup>7</sup> in what Hal Foster describes as "an incestuous assault against the father"—an assault that turned the very tools of Bellmer's Nazi-sympathizing father, an engineer, perversely against himself (Foster, 1999, pp. 64-97). Some sixty years later, Riot Grrrls musicians similarly adopted doll figures to launch a subversive turn against hegemonic, patriarchal ideals of demure little girls; like Bellmer, they re-presented these images through a perverse prism that reflected and rebelled against the very figures/systems that originally created them. This notion of using existing patriarchal ideologies, or "the father's tools," against established societal and political norms not only emerged within the Riot Grrrl's visual images, but also in their lyrics, screams, and linguistic plays on the word "girl." Traditionally, the word "girl" has encapsulated normative qualities of being sweet, quiet, and appropriately demure (Isaken, 1999). "Distorted to 'grrrl' and pronounced with a growl, however," Judy Isaken writes, "[this] signification transgresses to defiant agency and confrontation (...) intended to move outside of phallographic ideology" and patriarchal language structures (1999, para. 6). Isaken continues to suggest that, "[b]y screaming, these young women [were] articulating a resistance to

7. As Ariés (1965) aptly highlights in his explication of early 19th century notions of childhood, the French term *poupée* was not only used to specifically refer to "doll," but was used to designate the female child, in general; thus, the intimate connection between femininity and dolls was clearly established – even linguistically – in early French society.

the phallographic language of the father" (1999, para. 11). The lyrics of most Riot Grrrl songs, as well as their punk-inspired style of scream-singing, further challenged the linguistic law of the father (Isaksen, 1999) and gave Riot Grrrls musicians alternative voices to shatter socially acceptable, quite, and passive femininity. In addition to reimag(in)ing their visual images and appearances, Riot Grrrls bands reengineered hegemonic prescriptions of girlhood through the perversions of language—transforming *girl* to the aggressive *grrrl*, and screaming out with previously silenced voices.

### "Your Father let you out like that?!": Riot Grrrls and the Kinderwhore Aesthetic

While Kathleen Hannah and Kat Bjelland initially defined Riot Grrrl music, Courtney Love would come to define Riot Grrrl style through her *Kinderwhore* fashions displayed in the music videos and live performances by her band, Hole. Hole's music video for their 1994 song, *Miss World*, reflects multiple levels of anti-patriarchal resistance and critique through subversive lyrics as well as appropriations of girlhood and doll visual aesthetics. *Miss World* not only features scream-singing and musical lyrics that mix girlhood with adult sexuality and violence (Love, for instance, screams out "I've made my bed, I'll die in it" during the song's chorus), but it also utilizes images of girls and dolls that undermine conventional, idealized figurations. The video presents a perverse version of a high school prom, with images of violence and sexuality intermingled with childhood and the innocent purity ascribed to little girls. Flatly declaring that she is the "girl you know" and "want," the video opens with Love dredging herself in white powder—foregrounding an overt tone of excessive, unruly femininity and performative masquerade that is carried throughout staged prom, cum-beauty pageant, narrative. As the video continues, Love presents two incarnations of herself: a garishly made-up, prom queen/beauty contestant<sup>8</sup> and, as MTV reporter Kurt Loder has remarked, a "dollored-up" but more innocent looking "tattered

8. Similar, in fact, to the grotesque, "monstrous feminine" beauty contestant images produced by Cindy Sherman.

baby doll” garbed in the trademark *Kinderwhore* aesthetic (in Roberts, 1996, p. 88).

Costumed to evoke a simultaneously naïve school-girlishness and tawdry adult sensuality, Love embodies and epitomizes the *Kinderwhore* look that sought to exploit and problematize the fetishistic fantasies constructed around innocent children. *Kinderwhore*, a style defined by bricolage and pastiche, conflated girliness with maturity, innocent purity with overt sexuality. Performing in front of a twinkling backdrop that spells out “Cleanliness is next to Godliness”—an adage meant to instill obligations of purity into little girls—and dressed in knee-high socks, Mary Jane shoes, and a Peter Pan collar dress, Love models a discordant pastiche of adult and girl, sexual unruliness and juvenile innocence, in the *Miss World* music video. By combining ripped baby-doll style dresses with heavily smudged makeup and barrette-accented, tousled hair, the *Kinderwhore* aesthetic turned the innocence cuteness of doll-like girls into a real-life “glistening sex doll”—a hybrid figure of tattered, sexual exploit(ation) that provoked audiences to question their attitudes towards female sexuality embodied by adult woman and by little girls (Attwood, 2007, p. 241). Through conflating hyperarticulated sexuality with canonical images of baby-doll cuteness, purity, and innocence, Riot Grrrls garbed in *Kinderwhore* attire sought to reveal and rebel against fetishized images of girlhood, as well as expose the Madonna/whore dichotomy pervasively pinned to female sexuality.

### Broken Dolls: The Violation of Doll Bodies

Courtney Love constructed a subversive masquerade of girlhood with her *Kinderwhore* aesthetic, and then proceeded to beat and batter it in a number of Hole’s music videos. The violence imposed against the female doll figure in these videos parallel the images constructed by Bellmer in his seemingly misogynistic photographs. Love’s tousled, synthetic hair featured in Hole’s *Miss World* video echoes the jumbled doll with blonde wig pictured in Bellmer’s grotesque photograph, *La Poupée, Seconde partie* (circa 1934) (Figure 2). Visual resonance also exists between Love’s abused schoolgirl images and Bellmer’s series of contorted, bruised doll legs dressed in schoolgirl *accouterment*. In these photo-

graphs, epitomized by his *Doll’s Games* (1940) (Figure 5), Bellmer stripped his doll-bodies naked save for their slouching knee-high socks and black Mary Jane shoes. Bellmer then posed his exposed doll-bodies in compromising positions that intimate sexual availability and violation. Accentuating the suggestion of sexual violence, Bellmer applied an additional layer of red tinting to these photographs, especially where the doll’s legs join. This extra color application intimates physical violence and bruising, as well as suggests sexual penetration and bleeding (Suleiman, 1998).

Through his violent manipulation of these dolls—plastinated bodies that are usually presented as perfected specimens of beauty/purity, similar in many ways to the Arian body under Nazi rhetoric—Bellmer found a political voice and platform through which to stage a counter-hegemonic position.

The torn stockings and ripped dresses of the Riot Grrrls’ *Kinderwhore* style similarly suggested violent sexual activity and a violation of innocence; when coupled with lyrics that graphically explored adult female sexuality, these visuals called into question society’s construction and understanding of how an appropriate girl should behave under patriarchal law (Eileraas, 1997). By abusing and sexualizing their own “dolloed-up” bodies, Love and other Riot Grrrls struck back at the very hegemonic institutions that established and exalted the image of Romantic children and femininity. The destruction of little girls and doll



Figure 5: Bellmer, H. (photographer). (1940). *Doll’s Games*. [Hand-colored Gelatin Silver Print], Image© 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New

figures also characterizes the album covers and music videos created by Love's one-time bandmate and long-time rival<sup>9</sup> Kat Bjelland and her band, Babes in Toyland (hereon after: Babes). As previously noted, images of fragmented dolls were a favored motif featured in many of Babes's album covers and other artistic outputs. Babes even collaborated with feminist photographer Cindy Sherman on a number of their covers. For example, their 1992 *Fontanelle* cover (Figure 1) features a doll photographed by Sherman. Babe's following 1993 *Painkillers* (Figure 4) album also bears an uncanny similarity to Sherman's *Untitled, Doll with Mask* (1992); this further cements their mutual influences and reliance upon the doll figure, as well as opens doors for further investigation into their under-theorized relationship as feminist artists.

Echoing Bellmer's trademark use of fragmented bodies and the doll as a vessel for anti-patriarchal protest, Babe's *Spanking Machine* cover and He's My Thing (1990, respectively) music video also emerge as especially provocative and compelling examples within the Riot Grrrl oeuvre. Both *Spanking Machine*<sup>10</sup> and *He's My Thing* prominently feature fragmented doll bodies. The former displays the Babes band members laying in a pile of amputated dolls and strewn plastic limbs; the later depicts stop-motion animated dolls that ghoulishly disarticulate and set fire to each other. Following in the traditions of Bellmer and his Surrealist contemporaries, grotesque scenes of dismemberment and female fragmentation emerged as central motifs within Riot Grrrl productions, as these Babes in Toyland works exemplify (Eileraas, 1997). Turning themselves and the bodies of pristine dolls into mutilated fragments blatantly opposes hegemonic renditions of both femininity and young girls. By redeploying these bodies and undermining the dominant social codes that created them, countercultural agents like Bellmer and the Riot Grrrls renegotiated a new political and cultural agency through the literal "disarticulation-rearticulation" (Laclau in Wald, 1998, p. 591) of the girl/doll.

9. Love and Bjelland have a colorful personal history together as friends/enemies. Their relationship is marked by volatile, intermittent collaborations, public falling-outs, revenge songs against each other, and vehemently contested counterclaims over who first started the Kinderwhore trend..

10. See image at: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/3/3c/Babes\\_in\\_Toyland\\_Spanking\\_Machine.JPG](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/3/3c/Babes_in_Toyland_Spanking_Machine.JPG).

Bellmer's creations featured graphic fragmentations of dolls that, beyond a surface reading of misogyny or violence against the female body, can also be interpreted as signifying threats of castration and fetishistic defense: the disarticulation of bodily appendages evoke castration while the multiplied, disembodied parts serve as phallic substitutes (fetishistic defenses) for an undermined masculinity (Foster, 1999, p. 87). Babe's *Spanking Machine* album cover presents a similar usage of fragmentation. Scattered amongst the partial bodies, a doll limb juts out from the bottom left corner and takes on an overtly phallic appearance. With this, an undermined, disembodied phallic "power" is literally represented through the fragmented doll body. Foregrounded here is not only a phallic power that dictated the doll's initial figuration, but a power that also fetishistically fragments female bodies. *Spanking Machine*, and other Riot Grrrl productions like it, strike back against these phallic structures and practices through metaphoric references and allusions to castrated dismemberment. While fragmentation is pervasively and, perhaps, incorrectly flattened as an act of male-directed misogyny, theorists like Robin Roberts posit that when wielded by female performers like Babes in Toyland, fragmentation can be utilized to make powerful statements about gender construction and female sex roles. Fragmented images "[call] on the viewer to break down preconceptions about 'proper' roles and narratives. Fragmentation disrupts by calling into question each part of a preconception of what is 'natural' and hence unquestioned" (Roberts, 1996, pp. 14-15). Exemplifying this spirit, Riot Grrrls utilized fragmented images of doll bodies as defiant acts against the stereotyped images of proper, restrained, and neatly contained femininity.

Fragmentation emerged as a way for both Bellmer and the Riot Grrrls to speak back to patriarchal standards, especially through the fragmentation of girl/doll bodies. Theresa Lichtenstein lends support to this oppositional reading of Bellmer by noting how his dolls subversively counteracted Hitler's vision of a whole and healthy Aryan body (Taylor, 2000, p. 5). Bellmer's works are, under Lichtenstein's analysis, "violent attack[s] on the stereotypes of normalcy found in Nazi art and culture" (in Taylor, 2000, p. 5); they invert "Nazi representations of a healthy, untroubled youth dedicated to the nation and the family, symbolically [intertwined] with that state's attempts to construct identity" (Lichtenstein,

1991, p. 121). Bellmer's *poupées* shattered Fascist ideologies and images of Aryan perfection/beauty with their raw evocations of brokenness, violation, and sexuality. With this, Bellmer used images of girls and dolls to create deviant, uncontrollable bodies that acted against social and political norms. Fusing together erotic desire and abject destruction within the same girl/doll body, Bellmer's images destabilized and subverted dominant Nazi "visual and ideological codes of moral purity" (Lichtenstein, 1991, p.122). "This," Hal Foster writes, "is the very *raison d'être* of the Bellmer dolls" (Foster, 1999, p. 86), and is remarkably retaken-up by the Riot Grrrls in their later aims and actions that would resurface in 1990s U.S. popular culture.

### Conclusion

The power vested in images of girlhood infuses the social, political, and even pop cultural visualization of dolls. Speaking through imagined girl/doll bodies, Hans Bellmer and Riot Grrrls musician/artists leveled pointed critiques and staked oppositional positions against their respective hegemonic social orders. Through acts of violent sexualization and subversive fragmentation, Bellmer and Riot Grrrl members perversely reimagined girls and dolls; consequently, they found a similar voice through these appropriated plastic, girl bodies. While Bellmer and the feminist Riot Grrrl movement are chronologically separated by decades, contextually divided by national borders, and have been interpreted along disparate scholarly planes, they are nevertheless provocatively united in this shared, subversive redeployment of girlhood and doll imagery.

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