

# WOMEN'S PHILOSOPHY REVIEW

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*Edited by Penny Florence and Nicola Foster*

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<i>Editorial</i>	2
Call for Papers	5
<i>Conference Essays and Reports</i>	
Monique Roelofs, <i>Aesthetics, Ethics and the Theory of Address: A Report on the Dutch Conference</i>	6
Hilary Robinson, <i>Feminist Strategies: Between Impact and Disaster: A Report on the 1999 American Society for Aesthetics Conference</i>	25
Kit Barton et al on <i>Aesthetics and the Continental Tradition</i>	27
<i>Essays</i>	
<i>Subverting the Sublime for a Female Subject</i> by Rachel Jones	30
<i>Transgressing with-in-to the Feminine</i> by Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger	56
<i>Working Hot: Materialising Practices</i> by Barb Bolt	86
<i>Surveys and Reviews</i>	
Hilary Robinson on <i>Ireland: Super-Impositions</i>	108
Melanie Selfe on <i>Algeria: The Aesthetics of Mourning</i>	112
<i>Book Reviews</i>	
Margaret Whitford on <i>Visions capitales</i> by Julia Kristeva	116
Jo Sullivan on <i>A Companion To Feminist Philosophy</i> by Alison M. Jaggar & Iris Marion Young (eds)	119
Melanie Selfe on <i>Aesthetics: The Big Questions</i> by Carolyn Korsmeyer (ed.)	122

## EDITORIAL

### SPECIAL ISSUE ON AESTHETICS

Edited by Penny Florence and Nicola Foster

In recent years there has been considerable upsurge of interest in aesthetic issues, as the response to our Call for Papers for this issue shows: it was so great that a complementary book, *Differential Aesthetics*, is to be published (Ashgate 2000, ISBN 07546 1493 X). But a gulf still exists between the degree of impact that feminist scholarship has had in the arts in general, including discussions of aesthetic issues, and in philosophical aesthetics. Furthermore, as the three Conference Reports below show, within philosophy the feminist presence in aesthetics is still more problematic than in other areas, a situation also reflected in the relatively small section titled Art in Alison Jaggar and Iris Marion Young's *Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, reviewed below.

And yet, that is not to say that feminist scholarship is undeveloped in aesthetics. But while much of this work has by now become central to feminist discourses on art, it is not widely seen as part of *aesthetic* discourse, either by those working in aesthetics or by feminists, who have defined the philosophy of art far more broadly. Some of the latter, indeed, have constructed feminist art and analysis in opposition to aesthetics.

The eighteenth-century interpretation of aesthetics as 'judgement of taste' is clearly a major reason for the rejection or neglect of aesthetics by feminists, based as it was on an understanding that rendered sense perception—the etymological meaning of 'aesthetic'—universal and disinterested. Several feminists have since shown (e.g., Battersby, Korsmeyer and Brand) how this interpretation which claims universality relies on leaving women (not to mention non-Western

cultures) on the margins, or outside accounts of subjectivity altogether. The structural patterning of exclusion through the subject/object relationship, as generated by disinterested aesthetics, is now widely recognised outside philosophy to imply a singular subjectivity, whose 'others' can only participate to the extent that they adopt the dominant point of view. On this, those who would define the dominant as male agree with those who would not.

Rather than primarily exploring the deleterious effects this has had, the three essays in this volume seek to open out further possibilities for aesthetics, breaking the mould while addressing the crucial points. Together they afford a sense of the major currents in contemporary thinking on aesthetics. Rachel Jones looks at the work of German Expressionist poet Claire Goll as providing moments when women's otherness has become a productive disruption. She shows that Goll offers moments where subject/object relationships are disrupted. These moments, Jones argues, allow the reader glimpses into how poetry might 'function for those who write from the side of woman, the side of the "other" and the "object"'. Goll's poetic texts, Jones suggests, 're-chart the sublime to map the possibilities for a self grounded in a non-oppositional logic inclusive of difference and change, from the perspective of the one who is *both* material object *and* active subject'.

A very different approach, which utilises psychoanalytic theory, and yet also seeks to expose a non-oppositional relational space, is taken by the artist and psychoanalyst Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger. Unlike many feminist critiques of Lacanian female sexuality, Ettinger reads in the later Lacan a positive account that would allow for the emergence of a possible psychic space of traces which is heterogeneous and relational. This is also his account of the aesthetic. She calls this 'space of traces' the 'matrixial space', in which 'hybrid feminine instances "between centre and absence"' allow for 'partial-subjects and partial-objects' as well as their linkage. Like Jones, Ettinger focuses on a literary text—here, the Greek tragedy of *Antigone*—and her interest is in moments which are 'in-between' and unstable. However, in reading *Antigone* through Lacan

she explores, in relation to aesthetics, his claim that 'both "woman" and death bear witness to that which is "impossible"'. Ettinger's artistic work is equally engaged in mythical figures 'between two deaths'. For several years she has been working on a series of works titled *Eurydice*.

In touching on Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the artist and philosopher Barb Bolt suggests the relevance of her critique to the literary. But she links the questions around the material in representation that are raised by the story to her own practice and to that of Aboriginal Australian painters. The portrait and the sitter are understood as permeable to each other, the painting partaking of the subject's being, not representing it. The Western premise that splits the sign from its object is challenged in favour of a dynamic relation in which the material practices of art might have real material effects. As Bolt puts it, 'To argue such a position is to cast into doubt the identity of the sign.' It is also to put what she calls 'the performative representative act' into a crucial position in rethinking 'an aesthetics of visual practice.' Drawing on the work of Kirby, Mitchell and others, and deploying semiotic concepts such as methexis and indexicality, Bolt radically extends the range of the aesthetic.

Together with the Conference Reports and Essays commented on above, we have included two outline surveys of feminist artists and writers in Ireland (Hilary Robinson) and Algeria (Melanie Selfe), as representatives of the many politically difficult cultures within which women are currently working. Three reviews of significant recent texts of different kinds in the field bring the main part of this special issue to a close: Margaret Whitford on Julia Kristeva's exhibition *Visions capitales*, Jo Sullivan on Jaggar and Young's *A Companion To Feminist Philosophy* and Melanie Selfe on Korsmeyer's *Aesthetics: The Big Questions*. As a postscript, Brand and Devereux's *Call for Papers* at the end of the Editorial looks to the future.

We have sought to give, in outline at least, and within the necessary constraints of the Journal, a sense of how broad and exciting an area is implicated through contemporary feminist work on aesthetics.

The interested reader is referred to our companion book and its associated website for a complementary and more extended discussion, statements on aesthetics by practising artists, and illustrations, several of them in colour. See [www.ashgate.com](http://www.ashgate.com) and go to *Differential Aesthetics*.

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**Call For Papers: Special Issue Of *Hypatia*  
on Feminist Aesthetics**

edited by Peg Brand & Mary Devereaux

Call for Papers for a Special Issue of *Hypatia*  
on Feminist Aesthetics.

This volume will explore a range of issues concerning the interconnections between work in aesthetics & feminist philosophy.

The paper submission deadline is **March 1 2002**.

For more details on topics and submission  
& style guidelines see the *Hypatia* web site:

[www.is.csupomona.edu/~ljshrage/hypatia/index.htm](http://www.is.csupomona.edu/~ljshrage/hypatia/index.htm).

## CONFERENCE ESSAYS AND REPORTS

### **Aesthetics, Ethics, and the Theory of Address: An Interdisciplinary Encounter An Essay on the Dutch Conference by Monique Roelofs**

#### **I. Analysing Address**

Questions of the form 'Who can say what?' and 'Who can speak for which culture?' have been of central significance to feminist analyses in the aesthetic domain. These questions examine the capacities of 'modes of address', in other words, forms of speech and response activated in aesthetic interactions. Motivated by these queries and their variations 'Who can produce/perform/interpret/critique what and for whom?' feminists have explored cultural identities of aesthetic creators and respondents. A vast body of critical art theory, accordingly, has registered facts about the production and effects of social difference and accommodated these in studies of aesthetic experience, interpretation, and value.

In the last two decades, however, feminists, postcolonial critics, and race theorists have exposed ways in which such inquiries, which have been labelled 'identity politics', may rigidify our understanding of cultural exchange, in overlooking sites of contestation and foreclosing avenues of resistance that rest on creatively redeployed processes of signification. Analyses of the subjective positions of aesthetic agents frequently leave intact the conceptual structures in which such agents are seen to participate. Far from stable, however, such structures keep altering under the impact of vanguard aesthetic movements and other cultural forces, on both local and global scales, such as hybridisation or homogenisation. It is precisely these structures which demand critical analysis in order to formulate a morally viable cultural politics, one that is able to draw out the liberatory dimensions of aesthetic exchange.

Feminists have brought the concept of 'address' up to speed with this conceptual work. 'Address', as it is deployed in contemporary

criticism, corresponds to a level of analysis that reaches far into the conceptual joints, to moments where categories of subjectivity and experience are under negotiation. Feminist film theorists use the concept of address to refer in the ways in which a film solicits its viewers in order to convey its pleasures and meanings.<sup>1</sup> Films become comprehensible and enjoyable by engaging their audiences in specific spectatorial roles. The aesthetic demands with which a film meets its spectators tend to be tailored to specific appreciative competencies and psychical dispositions. The appreciative investments that are required for cinematic pleasure and understanding activate deeply ingrained psychosocial structures of experience, and therefore take different forms for the differentially positioned spectators which a film finds in its audience.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of address connects qualities of the form, medium, and context of the film with tensions, contradictions, pleasures, and harmonies that are generated in its spectators in consequence of their individual realisations of the work's aesthetic demands. Thus a critical framework in terms of address can clarify what happens in the encounter between the work and its viewers. It is in reference to this level of exchange that one can think of an artwork, as, say, opening a dialogue, freezing communication, or staging an illusory form of reciprocity.<sup>3</sup> It is also in this sense that a critical reading can register how a work complicates the enjoyment of a black female spectator or develops a new mode of articulating a female body<sup>4</sup> Forging connections between aesthetic material and codified response, address represents junctures where spectatorial norms are mobilised and re-established in interaction with social norms. At these points aesthetic subjectivity is under formation. Thus address realises junctures where aesthetic productions make political interventions, and where political interventions form aesthetic productions.

The concept of address registers interconnections of artistic form, interpretive experience, and political stance. Literary theorist Ellen Rooney (1996) brings out such interconnections in an account of feminist modes of address. Rooney analyses feminist strategies in terms of

distinct narrative forms, which are underwritten by specific types of address. Each feminist mode of address represents different connections between a person's experience and her/his feminism, on the side of the addressor no less than the addressee, as well as reciprocally, linking the addressee's experience with the addressor's feminism, and *vice versa*. By engaging in address, accordingly, agents place one another's experiences, identities and relations in motion. The concept of address grounds the parameters of this motion in an aesthetic basis.

Address, in these approaches, emerges from dynamical and mutually formative interactions between aesthetic agents, artworks, media, and contexts. It is from this interactive basis that address derives its force, aesthetic as well as political. For in its reliance on form, medium, and context, address activates the normative horizon realised by aesthetic traditions. Setting up normatively coded dependencies between artists and audiences, address produces a level of exchange where artworks can intervene in processes that are formative of subjectivity in its various modalities, which comprise cultural identity, moral stance, political position, aesthetic agency, and individual personality. In virtue of this double action, address crystallises political structures within aesthetic configurations and aesthetic structures within political configurations. This, schematically expressed, seems to be the import of address, as it functions in contemporary art criticism.

While originating in ancient rhetorical systems, the concept of address has been developed most explicitly in feminist, Marxist, psychoanalytical, and postcolonial art theory, at a distance from analytical aesthetics.<sup>5</sup> In view of the importance which address has taken on in contemporary criticism and aesthetic practice, however, it has become urgent for philosophical aesthetics to examine this concept, not in the least given the resurgence in this field of queries about the connections between aesthetic and ethical values.<sup>6</sup> Intricate philosophical problems loom: In which ways may address affect art's moral import? What place should it have in aesthetic interpretation and experience? Does address

amount to a level of meaning where ethical and aesthetic dimensions coincide? What follows for the relations between aesthetics and ethics?

These questions were the subject of the conference 'Address and the Aesthetics–Ethics Dichotomy', organised by the Study Group Analytical Aesthetics of the Dutch Association for Aesthetics, in Utrecht, The Netherlands, in February 2000. Examining address in the context of philosophical approaches to the interrelations between aesthetics and ethics, ten speakers attempted to create rapprochements between aesthetic theories in the analytical tradition and feminist theories in the continental tradition, in literary theory, and cultural analysis.

Entrenched oppositions have crafted this arena. Considered from an analytical perspective, address appears to violate the boundaries between the fictional and the real, to erase the differences between the appropriate and the inappropriate in aesthetic experience, and thereby to epitomise the problems of psychoanalytical and Marxian art criticism. Considered from a feminist perspective, these very distinctions funnel uncritical conceptions of experience, value, and subjectivity, and take categories of post-eighteenth-century European canons, both artistic and theoretical, for the makings of an ontology. Precisely from these themes stretched the divisions that our debates in Utrecht alternately ventured to probe, to enforce, or to bridge.

## **II. Address and the Aesthetics–Ethics Dichotomy: The Utrecht Conference**

Speaking for myself, the main objective in my work for the conference, as a member of the Study Group, was to create a space for productive exchange on an exciting problematic that I see emerging from an interlocking of several fields. The speakers' collective at the Utrecht meeting represented profoundly divergent disciplinary languages and methodologies. As we were leaving, however, I came to realise that one fundamental point of difference was actually our idea of

what our common subject could be, and our sense of what might matter about this subject.

In order to produce a shared terrain, but also to bring out the theoretical tensions that inhibit the formation of this terrain, I would like to chronicle the talks in their own categorial register. In this way, I hope to distil their implications for a sharable problematic without forcing their analytical schemes. In ending, I will then set up a dialogue on the philosophical structure of address and its implications for the aesthetics-ethics interrelation. Under this construal, it becomes possible to see that the papers advanced 'our subject' in three ways. First, by proposing a set of fairly discontinuous desiderata for a theory of aesthetic experience that acknowledges art's moral import. Secondly, by deepening the concept of address. Third, by producing a sharper sense of the normative problematic that circumscribes the intersections of feminism and cultural analysis with aesthetic theory.

The papers by Ellen Rooney, Elizabeth Weed, and Richard Wollheim examined the capacities and limitations of different modes of interpretation and address. Ellen Rooney explored the notion of a semi-private room, the standard description of which is a hospital room that is shared by several patients, but which, in Rooney's view, also expresses the peculiar intermingling of the public and the private that marks class rooms and academic disciplines. Defined by exclusions, but also by a welcoming of the unknown, such semi-private spaces create an impersonal form of intimacy. Semi-private rooms can neither be privatised by closing them off from outside intervention, nor made public by levelling conditions for participation. As a form of feminist address, the semi-private mode enables one to claim other people's stories as exemplars of one's own feminist stance, and thereby to re-draw one another's experiences, identities, and relations. Within the field of literature, literary critics can be seen as pulling their readers into semi-private rooms, creating forms of intimacy that always remain open to critical re-readings.

With respect to the problematic of our conference, Rooney's talk emphasises the need to critically investigate the concept of aesthetic

experience for the ways in which it mobilises public–private distinctions, and to explore the capacities of address to re-establish these distinctions.

Elizabeth Weed analysed the Freudian process of condensation (*Verdichtung*), and attributed to this process a form of address which she also saw exemplified in Freud's own metacritical stance. Condensation for Freud, is an unconscious formation in which a single, manifest idea represents several chains of associated, or latent ideas. The relation between these two kinds of ideas is one of translation, not description. This difference, Weed argued, is the difference between an indicative and an interpretative mode of address, one cold and stagnant, the other engaging and transformative, 'taking you to places where you don't know you'll go'. It is precisely this stimulating quality of address, according to Weed, which yields a productive relation to language, a relation that got lost from Freud in Lacan, and from poststructuralism in much contemporary cultural studies.

Reading Weed's paper in light of the problematic of our present themes, I think that it invites a picture of aesthetic theory as a field in which metacritical modes of address help to generate new modes of address as they enter into interaction with the modes of address that are embodied in aesthetic expressions and experiences. So conceived, Weed's paper invites aestheticians to explore the nature and the significance of these interactions.

In his public lecture 'How Literary Works Come by Their Meaning', Richard Wollheim suggested that the understanding of literary meaning transcends the understanding of linguistic meaning, in requiring special knowledge on the part of a suitably sensitive and perceptive perceiver. Such special knowledge is demonstrated, for example, in the ability of a psychoanalyst to reach beyond the manifest content of a client's narrative to its latent content, and by way of countertransference, to develop a reading that is both acceptable and transformative to the client. Juxtaposing this clinical process with the reading of literary narratives,

Wollheim examined how the understanding of literary meaning might be theorised by analogy with psychoanalysis.

The import of Wollheim's discussion for the subject of the conference, to my mind, was that Wollheim circumscribed a mode of address that is essentially two-fold, in other words, that has double capacities, depending on its role in a narrative exchange. Wollheim indicated that these capacities are two dimensions of the same entity, operating differentially in several registers of meaning while leaving one another fully intact. This kind of two-foldness seems to be crucial to the ability of address to traverse both aesthetic and ethical terrain. This idea could be recognised in other talks as well.

Related forms of two-foldness figured in a second group of talks, by Paul Crowther, Rob van Gerwen, and myself. These talks studied conditions for historical and interpersonal reciprocity in aesthetics, and examined the implications for the aesthetics–ethics interrelation.

Paul Crowther defended an alternative canon of art. In virtue of their relation with the imagination, artworks of high quality, according to Crowther, are able to transcend their address to specific groups and to participate in a transhistorical horizon of aesthetic comparisons, generating a form of historical reciprocity. Transcending their original contexts, good artworks can become paradigms of what art can aspire to, modify ways of representing the world, and change ways of thinking. In this way, Crowther argued, these works achieve a fusion of the aesthetic and the moral.

Rob van Gerwen argued that an artwork's address is directed not at particular persons or groups, but at a generic type of observer, marked by a specific cognitive background. In this way art conveys general stylistic properties. A great work of art, however, in the moral and artistic sense, reaches out to the personal to implicate the audience in a further way, resulting in a two-fold address. Through an appeal to the imagination, it mobilises personal experience. This enables it to engender empathy for its represented characters, and thereby, to intimate phenomenal consciousness.

Van Gerwen illustrated this phenomenon with a free rendition of Gershwin's *Summertime* by Albert Ayler on the saxophone, which makes its audience aware of the physicality of the performance to the point of hearing the performer's presence in the music. Another example was the film *L'Argent* by Robert Bresson which makes us imagine the slapping of a woman by a man, not by way of direct image of this event, but indirectly, by way of its sound effects, and the image of a shaking cup of coffee. By mobilising empathetic imaginings, Van Gerwen argued, these works successfully intimate human consciousness, and exemplify the reciprocity that marks face-to-face emotional empathy.

My own paper worked out elements of the above analysis of address through a reading of Anna Deavere Smith's one-woman documentary theatre piece *Fires in the Mirror*. This is an exploration of Jewish-black racial conflict through the juxtaposition of verbatim enacted interviews. By orchestrating and enacting some twenty oppositional perspectives a single stage performance, Smith re-contextualises and re-addresses her interviewee's words. Through a thematic and performative foregrounding of the modes of address adopted by her interviewees, Smith makes her spectators aware of attractions and resistances with which they encounter other people's addresses. Provoking shifting empathies and identifications with her characters, Smith facilitates a critical recognition, and a subsequent intensification, or overcoming of automatic and stereotypical responses.

In virtue of this structure of address (which we considered in an edit from a video production of the performance), the work makes an aesthetic intervention in modes of relationality that are formative of social identity, racial consciousness, and religious stance, exercising an ethical impact through aesthetic means. My argument was that in recognising this relational dimension of aesthetic exchange, the concept of address helps to identify ethical potentialities of aesthetic exchange and to theorise a form of cultural reciprocity in aesthetics.

Collectively, the previous three talks spoke to the need to investigate how a theory of aesthetic interaction can account for various forms

of reciprocity, by examining in which ways historical traditions, personal experiences, and cultural relations may legitimately affect the relevant terms of exchange.

An alternative connection between aesthetics and ethics was forged by Rosi Braidotti, who outlined how a Deleuzian field of energies and forces can produce an aesthetic and an ethics of becoming. In Braidotti's view, the discontinuous, transformative, and interactional processes that realise what she calls 'nomadic subjectivity' are able to set their own limits in the form of thresholds of sustainability. What needs to be preserved in order to sustain a nomadic process of becoming is the capacity to desire. According to Braidotti, the attitudes and actions that intensify and support such continual becoming (for example, stopping *just* before the last impulse you can take) are both aesthetic and ethical.

Considered in light of the current problematic, Braidotti's argument was that a postmodern notion of the subject can support a new vision of the aesthetics–ethics interrelation. Aesthetics and ethics, on a Deleuzian scheme, are two faces of the same coin. Here the idea of twofoldness reappears. For the questions of the conference, this means that an adequate theory of the aesthetics–ethics relation must consider its intertwinements with theories of the subject, and may therein find alternative ways of connecting aesthetic and ethical values.

Graham McFee considered conditions for aesthetically appropriate perception in a paper that was critical of the notion of address. McFee pointed out that suitably informed and sensitive audiences are required to perceive artworks *as artworks* and as artworks *in specific categories*. All that matters when it comes to a characterisation of the powers and capacities of audiences, McFee argued, are questions about the concepts that appropriately mediate one's perception of an artwork. Accordingly, insofar as considerations of address might *seem* to have philosophical relevance—for example, in postulating sympathy for certain values on the part of a spectator, say, the values of Victorian women—this relevance can be cancelled out in terms of constraints on the knowledge

and sensibilities that are required of appropriate spectators. Where an account of an artwork's address relies on actual properties of appropriate audiences, such as matters of power, class, or identity, it is therefore extraneous to the field of philosophical aesthetics, in McFee's view.

Like many of the above speakers, Berys Gaut took up the notion of art-appropriate perception and recognised in the imaginative components of such perception the basis for a link between the aesthetic and the ethical value of an artwork. Gaut argued that literary works allow us to learn facts about the world through their appeals to the imagination. Such learning from art, which includes the acquisition of moral knowledge, can be aesthetically appropriate and humanly significant, according to Gaut. As such it is partly determinative of a work's artistic value.

The talks on reciprocity and Gaut's paper collectively emphasised the importance of several joint aesthetic-ethical achievements, namely the abilities of artworks to generate new moral and cognitive insights, to create alternative modes of representation, and to produce genuinely mutual aesthetic exchanges, that invite imaginative empathy.

The conference concluded with a talk by Robert Hopkins. Hopkins examined epistemological parallels and differences between aesthetic and moral reasoning in order to explain why we do not seem to be able to form justified aesthetic and moral beliefs solely on the basis of another person's testimony.

Hopkins' paper, like those of Wollheim, Braidotti, and Gaut before him, suggested that initially the conference theme had not provoked them to engage with the problems raised on the other side of a disciplinary fence. The discussions, however, were more than sufficient challenge for all of us to cross over in some ways.

I think that our speakers' collective advanced the subject of the conference by articulating two sets of desiderata, one for a philosophical account of address and one for a theory of aesthetic experience that acknowledges art's moral import. I have described some of these desiderata in my conclusions from the papers. These conclusions, however, do not yet represent a shared terrain of inquiry. For I doubt that

any of my colleagues would be in agreement with the implications that I have drawn from this collection of papers. Besides, there is little in this chronicle of desiderata that resonates with both the delight and the disorientation that in my experience accompanied the episodes of recognition and faltering dialogue that jointly came to shape this interdisciplinary encounter. Common ground I find beyond these conclusions.

A shared area of inquiry extends behind the question: How do the desiderata for a theory of address *link up* with the desiderata for a theory of the aesthetics—ethics interrelation? Precisely *this* is the point of controversy, the point at which we talked past each other, misunderstood, collided, or disconnected. Our disciplinary goals were too diverse to generate genuine agreement or disagreement on this theme. Hence, frustration. But also: inspiration. For shared terrain took a programmatic form.

We opened up range of questions that must be confronted by those who wish to develop a philosophical stance on address that reflects the relevance which the theory of address and the theory of the aesthetics—ethics relation may have for one another. As a step in this direction, the notion of address itself needs critical attention from both sides.

Wollheim, van Gerwen, Crowther, and McFee, if I'm right, saw address as a direct, communicative relation between artists and audiences, a view that is not surprising given the abundance of empirically oriented work happening in cultural studies. However, this conception produces a mismatch between philosophical aesthetics and the theory of address. Conceived as a direct, communicative relation, address does not do anything which contemporary analytical aesthetics does not already do in a more subtle fashion. Taken in the relevant sense, however, address is a normative entity. In my earlier analysis of address, I have attempted to describe how audiences are expected to come up to a work's terms of address, and how these terms of address are established

through artist–audience interactions mediated by artworks in a socio-aesthetic context.

Address shares this normative dimension with the sphere of art-appropriate meaning, as it is conceptualised in analytical philosophy. For address concerns the ways in which audiences are *solicited* by a work's demands.<sup>7</sup> The point of difference between address and the art-appropriate lies in the conditions that ground their normative dimension. These conditions differ because address ranges over differential responses of different publics. Philosophical aesthetics, on the other hand, aims to abstract from such differential responses. Precisely *how* the normative conditions underlying address mesh with the normative conditions underlying the art-appropriate is a complex question, but *that* they mesh, is crucial to the double aesthetic and political function which address performs in feminist cultural theory. It is also essential to the philosophical import that address may have.

This normative problem is the heart of the clash between the aesthetics of the art-appropriate and the aesthetics of difference. Only interdisciplinary collaboration promises to advance us beyond this clash. Once the normative dimension of address is recognised, I think address can be construed so as to match up more fruitfully with the lineaments of analytical aesthetics than its divided theoretical history suggests. The normative problem, however, arises with equal intensity for both forms of aesthetics. Within the paradigm of difference, it is the problem of balancing the rootedness of address in psychical, linguistic, and cultural relations with its ability to gesture beyond these relations in a transformative fashion.

Within the paradigm of the art-appropriate, it is the problem of balancing the fullness of aesthetic engagement, its rootedness in the whole range of personal and cultural resources, with the demands for reciprocal aesthetic interaction. Once however, the reciprocal dimension of the art-appropriate is acknowledged, I think that the conditions for what counts as aesthetic experience may line up more smoothly with the

structures of address. From both sides then, possibilities for shared terrain are beginning to come into relief.

At another level, the key question takes the following form: How can address conduct its political work in a context that believes in the viability of aesthetic experience, and holds up the cultural and ethical import of aesthetic value? In this form, the question has two faces, depending on whether one's stance on address is critical or affirmative. For those who believe that artworks must transcend their address in order to make true their aesthetic and ethical potential, the challenge is to create alternative analytical instruments that are able to do the aesthetico-political work for which feminists have devised address. For those who affirm the potential of address to articulate how artworks engage or establish structures of difference, the challenge is to work out the precise normative structure of address. This involves theorising its relations to aesthetic experience, subjectivity, and value; examining its relations to historical conditions that are formative of the relevant aesthetic publics; studying its dependence on cultural and psychological structures; and balancing its rootedness with its transformative dimensions.

If any conclusion follows from this juxtaposition of perspectives, it is that a spectacular array of interdisciplinary questions is calling for attention in the area where aesthetics and ethics interface with the politics of culture. This field of questions pushes boundaries, and promises to play with the relations of the disciplines.<sup>8</sup>

### **Epilogue**

A discussion of aesthetic address cannot sidestep the question of its own disciplinary politics. The main objective in my work for this conference was to create a space for productive exchange across (or in) the interstices of feminism and aesthetics. My adversary was the current disciplinary state of aesthetics, which divided itself between philosophical aesthetics and cultural studies, between analytical and continental

aesthetics, between philosophy and literary theory, and the theories of the other arts.

My persuasion is that these perspectives can be as supplementary as they are divisive, that their potential for integration must be expanded, or that their divisions, at a minimum, must be redrawn. The splits here, more than anything else, are the products of a set of problems of the sort we explored in our conference. These splits facilitate containment strategies, which inhibit a full working through of feminist innovations in the field, and prohibit effective debate on the problems that are at issue. Feminists working in aesthetics, I believe, are able to deploy the expertise accumulated in an extended history of breaking disciplinary boundaries toward a strategic questioning of these divisions, in light of the problematic that tends to solidify these divisions and fasten them in the place where they have arisen.

The point of this work is not to efface all boundaries, but to probe and redraw them where they constrain innovation in the different fields. With this historical equipment, feminism is able to offer aesthetic theory a momentously vital theoretical impulse. Since the relevant disciplinary barriers take their own forms in different academic settings, international feminist collaboration is a necessary and powerful step toward resolving this situation in aesthetics. To my mind, the Utrecht conference exhibited not only the desirability, but also the difficulties and the potential effectiveness of such work. While feminism is essential to the progress of aesthetics as a field, the effects are fully mutual, since questions about aesthetic address profoundly engage issues in feminist theory.

Disciplinary tension, at the Utrecht conference, was also interdisciplinary joy. Creating a shared problematic is a matter of formulating new questions. While I have strong persuasions about the philosophical import of address, I have an equally abiding sense that crucial questions have not yet been formulated, and that each of the talks invited a richer picture of our themes, outlining more questions to ask, producing more complex links to elaborate. A new interdisciplinary area of inquiry can

be revealingly animated through some stage-setting. This is how I intend my address in this paper.<sup>9</sup>

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## NOTES

- 1 See, for example, Doane (1984 & 1991) and Hanson (1991). Doane approaches the viewing process in light of psychoanalytical categories of experience and subjectivity. Her analyses of spectatorship concentrate in particular on the ways in which films are operative in the articulation of sexual difference (1991, 32 & 93). The terms of address of a film, i.e. the conditions for understanding that the film outlines, rest on the positions which the film assigns to its viewers (35), among other things, by deploying assumptions about its historically specific audience (41). Doane conceives of the subjective identities that are activated in the viewing process as social constructions. This given, film theory can find in a film's anticipation and articulation of forms of subjectivity a basis for theorising the possibilities of female spectatorship and feminist filmmaking without the postulate ahistorical feminine essence (see especially ch. 8).

Hansen (1991) describes the transition from early to classical cinema (from c.1907–c.1917) in terms of the elaboration of a mode of address which posits a universal spectatorial subject, standardising previously diverse acts of reception that cinema inherited in part from older popular entertainments and bourgeois culture (68–89). Hansen argues that this mode of address is a response to shifting sociocultural arrangements (e.g. the transformation of working-class, immigrant audiences and the ascendancy of female consumerism and movie-going), and contributes to the formation of a new kind of spectatorship, new conditions of experience, and a new kind of public sphere. For an involved historical argument that deploys a concept of address toward an analysis of developments in the public dimension of the cinema in this period. (See esp. 1–16 & 60–125.)

Lubiano (1994) traces a morally ambivalent treatment of black cultural specificity in Bill Duke's *Deep Cover* to the film's depiction of a black nationalist sensibility within a set of constraints imposed by its activation of older narratives about race, masculinity, and patriarchy. While Lubiano does not explicitly use the term 'address,' her reading of the film explains the moral complications of the film's pleasures in terms of a dynamic of black, white, male, and female spectator accommodations and resistances. In rendering the meanings and pleasures of *Deep Cover* sensitive to such textual strategies, in particular to the way the film evokes and rewards (or perhaps 'reproduces') spectatorial needs and myths, I think Lubiano's analysis in fact brings out structures of address in the sense that is under discussion here.

- 2 See e.g. Doane (1991, pp. 20–25, 30–2, and 165–6); Hansen (1991, pp. 5, 7, and 89); Lubiano (1994, pp. 196 and 198–9). One aim of theories of address is to analyse how films, as cultural entities in a broad sense of the term, do not simply encounter pre-established identities in their audiences but help to articulate them (through a process named 'subject positioning') and thereby contribute to the perpetuation of what is called 'ideology.' One can then support more or less strong views of what is involved in such articulation or 'subject positioning.' This is a complex and controversial point. For an influential critique of this aspect of theories of address see Noël Carroll (1988, Ch. 2).
- 3 Javier Sanjinéz (1992) attributes these modes of address to a testimonial narrative, a mass-suicide action, and a talk-show.
- 4 For an example of the former, see Lubiano's reading of the film *Deep Cover* (Lubiano 1994, 185 & 198); and for examples of the latter, see Doane's reading of Chantal Akerman's film *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce-1080 Bruxelles* and Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's *Riddles of the Sphinx* (Doane 1991, 176–7).
- 5 For an initial notion of address as a rhetorical figure that configures the relation between speakers and addressees through indirect means, see Quintilian (1921). Perhaps the most influential contemporary analysis is Louis Althusser (1971). Groundbreaking initial discussions in the feminist literature are Laura Mulvey (1989); Gayatri Spivak (1988); and Teresa De Lauretis (1987). An

early stance on address in the postcolonial debate is Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino (1971). For discussions of address in the Black Arts Movement, see the special issue of *The Drama Review* on black revolutionary theatre, edited by the playwright Ed Bullins (Bullins, 1968).

6 Some important recent discussions of the interrelations of aesthetics and ethics are Eaton (1997), Davies (1998) and Levinson (1998).

7 Of course, this idea by itself raises a host of philosophical issues and does not yet make address a philosophical tool that is ready to be used for the purposes of philosophical aesthetics. Some of these issues have arisen in the debates about hypothetical intentionalism and more broadly, the conditions for representation, in the analytical tradition.

8 I should note what probably goes without saying—that the views offered in this article make no claim to representing the perspective of the workgroup as a whole but express solely my own stance. All biases and selective readings are mine.

9 I am grateful to the members of the Study Group Analytical Aesthetics of the Dutch Association for Aesthetics, especially, Rob van Gerwen, Erik Benders, Marjolein Efting, Raf de Clercq, and Aldo de Martelaere for engaging in this cooperative adventure, and I am excited to see where our collaboration is going next.

Special thanks are due to Rob van Gerwen, from Utrecht University, for taking on the greater part of the organisational work, in programming, finding support, and locating beautiful spaces for the conference. Without this work the conference would not have been possible and would not have been nearly as productive, or, for that matter enjoyable. I look forward to the follow-up meeting, *Aesthetics and Ethics Part III*, which the workgroup is planning for next year (*Part I* was organised by Raf, Aldo, and Rob in Leuven, Belgium, May 1999), and to further collaborative work that may come out of this series of conferences which is beginning to take shape, or that may follow in the context of the international research group on aesthetics and ethics which Rob is currently setting up. My thanks go to all of the participants in the conference for their willingness to help us think about further directions for various cooperative connections, as well as to Mary Ann

Doane, Ellen Rooney, Jerry Levinson, and Stephen Davies for their background texts, which gave us a basis to depart from.

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**Feminist Strategies: Between Impact and Disaster**  
**A Report on the 1999 American Society for Aesthetics Conference**  
by Hilary Robinson

This took place in Washington DC from 27–30 October 1999. The annual ASA conference is relatively small, with a maximum of four two-hour panels at any one time. It is therefore possible to meet and discuss issues with a large percentage of the other delegates, and perhaps to gain a broad sense of the spectrum of members' positions and approaches to aesthetics. There was, in fact, a wide variation from a feminist point of view. Certainly, while some panels seemed no-go areas for women, there were very interesting papers with a feminist approach in other panels, including presentations by Monique Roelofs, Yuriko Saito, Elizabeth Ann Dobie, Estella Lauter and Claire Detels (the last four in a panel chaired by Hilde Hein). In addition, the main plenary session was chaired by Peg Brand, and consisted of short presentations by the authors in her recent anthology, *Beauty Matters* (Indiana University Press, 2000). Most of these were from a distinctly feminist position; and while a handful of the audience left after Arthur C. Danto had made his presentation, the vast majority stayed.

In the US, the College Art Association has a Committee for Women. Indeed the Women's Caucus for Art developed out of the CAA. But the ASA has a *Feminist* Caucus and so it places politics firmly on the agenda. The lunch-time meeting of the Caucus was, however, a small affair, although this may have been attributable to an ambiguity in the programme. About eighteen attended, out of about two hundred, and around a quarter of those present were men. The primary issues under discussion included whether the Caucus should rename and broaden its remit to include a gay and lesbian group and a cultural diversity group. The consensus was that a feminist politics should include awareness and activity in these directions anyway, and that the caucus should keep its name.

The Feminist Caucus also sponsored a panel on the aesthetics of ageing, and here some real difficulties became apparent. None of the three papers had a noticeably feminist approach, and one was an unmitigated embarrassment. The only male contributor showed slides he had taken in France of billboards and shop displays representing young women; his approach was non-academic, attempting a light-hearted tone, and contributed nothing to serious debate.

Perhaps this was possible because few in this audience had the stomach for academic or political criticism of colleagues. In the discussion which followed the papers, it was left to James Woods of the Studio Watts Housing Corporation, LA, to raise (with insight, grace and generosity) the question of how one brings political analysis into an academic forum. This question rose in other, informal discussions I had with delegates. The difficulties of the US tenure system, and the resultant need to 'behave' in the eyes of colleagues who can vote for or against your tenure, has huge impact upon feminist scholarship in general and it seems in Aesthetics in particular. That acknowledged, I was surprised to hear from some women an utter bewilderment about how to build critiques of their discipline into academic papers. The lack of crossover between feminist art historians or critics and feminist aestheticians is a weakness here. It was strange for example, that the caucus had not contacted women such as Josephine Withers, Mary Garrard and Norma Broude, who are resident in Washington, and who knew nothing of the conference happening.

Yet in the ASA the work of feminists such as Peg Brand, Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Hilde Hein is making a huge impact—not only their academic work, but also their work within the structures of the ASA and the Feminist Caucus itself. Their task will be to keep a live politicised presence through working strategically in the Society; as Washington showed, this is not always easy.

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## **Aesthetics and the Continental Tradition**

### **Report on the Sixth Essex International Graduate Philosophy Conference**

The Conference took place at the University of Essex on March 4 2000. Speakers came from a variety of countries and institutions, ranging from Germany to Israel and the USA, making it a truly international conference. The sessions were organised thematically, with two papers in each session and two sessions running parallel for the entire day. It opened with a parallel session on tragedy and the aesthetic theory of Merleau-Ponty. After lunch came two parallel sessions: one on Heidegger and music followed by a parallel session on Adorno and Memory and Representation. The conference closed with a plenary paper by Christine Battersby from the University of Warwick, on 'Schopenhauer, Kant and the Female Sublime'. Battersby's paper sought to show how the fleshy materiality of the female subject-position subverts the sublime, in both its Kantian and Schopenhauerian versions. It was illustrated by the work of two 20th-century women artists: Dorothea Tanning and Mona Hatoum.

The papers on Merleau-Ponty sought to present a new engagement with his aesthetic theory. Corey McCall (Boston College, USA), argued that the French phenomenologist's conception of the flesh, as the subversion of traditional dualistic ontologies, finds its best expression in painting. McCall's guiding question was 'How can a painting mindful of colour open up a thinking freed from representational obligation?'. Brian Treanor (Boston College, USA) stressed the inherent limitations that Merleau-Ponty finds within language and yet also the particular ability that painting has to reflexively acknowledge this limitation and generate a unified form.

In the session on tragedy, Moran Svorai (Tel Aviv University, Israel), attempted to deepen our understanding of Freud's notion of the unconscious by way of Nietzsche's conception of the place of the

chorus in Attic tragedy in the session devoted to tragedy. Both the analyst and the chorus are neither actor nor spectator; rather they create a space in which the truth of the analysand's or tragedy's unconscious can be revealed. William Behun (DePaul University) showed how tragedy, understood in a Hölderlinian sense, can be seen as a constitutive element of temporal being-in-the-world.

The session on music presented two very different papers on the relation between philosophy and music. Francesca Albertini's (Freiburg, Germany) focus was on Rosenzweig's treatment of music and poetry in his masterwork, *The Star of Redemption*. Nicholas Smith's (Vanderbilt, USA) paper concerned Adorno and the process of commodification in contemporary Japanese 'noise music'. Given their respective content it would have been unreasonable to expect any overlap or 'correlation' between the two papers or in the discussion afterwards. In fact, it may have come as a surprise to 'hear' (and we were treated to musical samples) a paper on the two apparently diverse worlds of Adornian theory and the avant-noise music of the Japanese group The Boredoms. Perhaps this was a concrete, and welcome, example of the non-identical breaking into philosophical discourse.

The Heidegger session gave two very different approaches to Heidegger's 'The Origin of the Artwork'. In her paper 'Nothingness and Art' Natalie Kosoi (Essex University) attempted to show concrete examples of the presence of nothingness in modern art, using the work of Mark Rothko and Yves Klein. Brian Soucek's (Columbia University, USA) paper juxtaposed Benjamin and Adorno through a reading of Heidegger as offering two opposing views of art.

Two very different papers on Adorno's *Negative Dialectic* followed. Marcia Morgan (New School for Social Research) examined the relationship between Adorno and Kierkegaard, suggesting that both saw in modernity a failure of ethical life. Kierkegaard's religious life and Adorno's aesthetic model of existence are both attempts to overcome this failure. Dorte Andersen (University of Essex) attempted to re-state, contra Habermas, the importance of aesthetics for critical theory. She

argued that a distinctive reading of Hegel's *Science of Logic* can bolster Adorno's negative dialectic, in order to dispute Habermas's charges against Adorno's 'aestheticisation' of critical theory.

The session 'Memory and Representation' reassembled two distinctly different perspectives on the nexus between philosophy and literature. The first speaker, Amanda Dackombe (QMW London), gave a highly graphic account of the link between biographical memories, writing, and the cognisance of colour. In a short reiteration of Beckett's writings on Proust, Dackombe explored the status of colour in reference to the literary *topos* of remembrance. Intertwining this illustrative line with an argumentative thread derived from Kierkegaard's literary and edifying works, she argued for colour as a compelling bridge motive, not only carrying textual expression across biographical phases but also across aesthetic and ethical existential stages.

Hector Kollias (Warwick), interpreted Walter Benjamin's early writings on Romanticism and on Goethe's late work with particular emphasis on Benjamin's critique of Platonic aesthetics. Kollias sharply exposed the rift between the mimetic or representational understanding of artworks and the Romantic idea of the literary fragment as reworked by Benjamin. For Kollias, the crucial figure of the work's self-disruptive evanescence, epitomised by Benjamin's key concept of the expressionless, constitutes the work as truly autonomous and thus is central for our critical understanding of the non-representational structure especially of modern works of literature.

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## ESSAYS

### SUBVERTING THE SUBLIME FOR A FEMALE SUBJECT

Rachel Jones

Once imagine that woman imagines and the object loses its fixed, obsessional character. As a bench mark that is ultimately more crucial than the subject, for he can sustain himself only by bouncing back off some objectiveness, some objective. If there is no more 'earth' to press down/repress, to work, to represent, but also and always to desire (for one's own), no opaque matter which in theory does not know herself, then what pedestal remains for the ex-sistence of the 'subject'? ... The Copernican revolution has yet to have its final effects... (Irigaray 1985, 133).

The 'Copernican revolution' to which Irigaray is here referring is Kant's transcendental turn, which grounds a philosophical modernity where neither the (transcendental) subject nor the (transcendental) object of experience are 'given' (Irigaray 1985, 133). Instead, it is only via the synthesising work of the faculties that an objective world comes into being. This objective world functions as the necessary other against which, and as a correlative of which, the transcendental subject can be posited as a kind of stable reference point for perception, thereby securing its (self-)identity through time. Irigaray charts the ways in which woman has herself been objectified within the history of Western metaphysics, such that she has repeatedly fulfilled the role of this necessary 'other'. Indeed, as we will see, woman's status as a human subject is problematised by Kant's suggestion that it is only proper for her to remain part of the phenomenal, natural world—the realm of 'opaque matter'—which the fully-developed moral subject will seek to transcend.

However, Irigaray also suggests that the constitutive role attributed to the object by Kant has effects beyond the control of the rational Enlightenment subject. The very necessity of the external 'object'/'other' against which the subject is positioned as a unity of consciousness accords a potentially excessive power to the material realm of nature with which woman has been culturally, socially, and philosophically aligned. Indeed, even within the Kantian system, the aesthetic of the sublime invests external nature with a power that ruptures the spatio-temporal forms via which the subject attempts to grasp and contain the world. The sublime is provoked by powerful or apparently boundless natural phenomena—raging seas, vast mountains—which threaten the physical and imaginative limits of the self. By overcoming its terror of such potentially overwhelming natural forces, the subject is capable of imaginatively transcending both nature within (that is, its own fear) and without (the might of the phenomenal world). Thus, although nature must retain its boundless power within the phenomenal realm if it is to serve as a provocation to transcendence, its excessive materiality is ultimately mastered by the subject, who thereby feels a strengthened sense of its own rational and moral potential.<sup>1</sup> In the end, the feeling of respect [*Achtung*] generated by Kant's sublime is for the transcendent potential unlocked in man through the aesthetic encounter with nature's might.

Despite appearances, then, it is in the sublime that the very structures of Kant's transcendental subject make themselves most deeply felt, as man's phenomenal and material aspects are transcended via an imaginative striving towards infinity, the unconditioned and the absolute. Hence the far-reaching implications of Kant's exclusion of women from this mode of aesthetic feeling: it is not that women cannot but rather that they *should* not experience the sublime.<sup>2</sup> In the post-critical *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, this exclusion stems from Kant's insistence that women have a duty to the species which entails that they should retain their instinctive fear of nature, rather than being educated into modes of transcending the phenomenal realm (Kant

1974, 169 [7: 306]; Battersby 1995, 96). However, as we have seen, the dynamic confrontation with nature in the sublime provokes an affirmation of man's supersensible destination. Thus excluding women from the sublime also bars them from developing both the reverence and awe that mark the fully developed moral identity of 'civilised man', and the capacity to transcend the limits of human experience which is essential to genius. As Christine Battersby has commented, Kant's critical and post-critical writings align women (uncritically) with instinct and nature 'even though the gendering of human excellence disrupts and disturbs the whole of his critical system' (Battersby 1995, 93).

Battersby responds to the disturbing effect of women on Kantian thought by mobilising this critical blindspot as an opening which makes it possible to question the transcendental conditions of aesthetic experience. Rather than seeking to 'add women in' to the Kantian model, she asks what the sublime would become if reworked from a 'female' perspective which, in Western modernity, has been socially and culturally aligned with matter, embodiment, affect, and 'nature'. The emphasis is thereby placed on transforming aesthetic tradition by thinking a 'response to the infinite and overwhelming [that] involves immanence, rather than transcendence' (Battersby 1995, 97).<sup>3</sup> This shift in focus makes it possible to recognise transformed modes of the sublime in work by past women writers and artists, work that can aid us in re-imagining the structures of aesthetic experience together with models of the self.

In this paper, I aim to contribute to the collective feminist project of reading in the gaps of dominant philosophical and literary frameworks. Such a project forms a necessary counterpart to Irigaray's critique of the phallogocentrism of Western philosophy: reading for the female voices absented from the history of philosophy, literature and art entails looking for the gaps within those histories where women's otherness has become *productively* disruptive.<sup>4</sup> Hence I will not retrace here the reasons for Kant's exclusion of women from the sublime; rather, I will explore the possibilities for a feminist re-appropriation of

the sublime suggested by the poetry of a much neglected German woman Expressionist: Claire Goll (1890–1977). The paper will begin by siting German Expressionism as a crisis of the Kantian subject characterised by the dissolution of the oppositional structures orienting both subject and object. Goll's absence from most accounts and anthologies of Expressionist literature can be seen to stem from the ways in which her work does not fit with the dynamics of the posthuman sublime charted in the poetry of many male Expressionists. More importantly, as I will show, it is precisely through this lack of fit, through her exploration of the gaps and spaces in an already disruptive genre, that Goll's work encourages the 'imaginative or theoretical adjustments' (Battersby 1998, 56) that help us to philosophically reinstate a sublime for female subjects.

### **I Expressionism: Dissolving the Subject**

In the Kantian system, the stability of the constitutive subject–object relation depends jointly upon the schematisation of the transcendental object, the 'something = X' which marks only the formal unity of the manifold in intuition (Kant 1933, 268–71 [A250–253]); and on the schematisation of external matter as inert substance whose underlying permanence is the necessary counter-balance to an enduring transcendental subject.<sup>5</sup> Although the relative position and the appearance of such matter might change, these alterations—at least in terms of their extensive magnitude—are not a sign of agency or animation, but can always in principle be mapped out in terms of the obedience of objects to universal mechanical and causal laws of production. As Irigaray notes, this entails that the subject's stable identity is only guaranteed as long as the material 'other'/'object' against which it is positioned remains silently acquiescent in its own repression (Irigaray 1985, 135). By contrast, many key texts of German Expressionism (c.1911–c.1922), particularly those of the early Expressionist period, depict an ever more animate and threatening environment where the objects of the city, nature and, increasingly, the landscape ravaged by war, refuse to passively

comply with the causal laws that would allow the subject to order the world and secure his place within it.

Jacob van Hoddis's 'Weltende'—often positioned as the first archetypal Expressionist poem—depicts the collapse of propriety and order as natural and inanimate objects cease to behave as they should:

Dem Bürger fliegt vom spitzen Kopf der Hut,/ In allen  
Lüften hallt es wie Geschrei./ Dachdecker stürzen ab  
und gehn entzwei,/ Und an den Küsten—liest man—  
steigt die Flut.// Der Sturm ist da, die wilden Meere  
hupfen/ An Land, um dicke Dämme zu zerdrücken./  
Die meisten Menschen haben einen Schnupfen./ Die  
Eisenbahnen fallen von den Brücken. (Pinthus 1993,  
39)

[From pointed pates hats fly into the blue,/ All  
winds resound as though with muffled cries./ Steeple-  
jacks fall from roofs and break in two,/ And on the  
coasts—we read—flood waters rise.// The storm has  
come, the seas run wild and skip/Landwards, to squash  
big jetties there./ Most people have a cold, their noses  
drip./ Trains tumble from the bridges everywhere.]  
(Hamburger 1977, 83)

In this poem, the possibility of schematising the manifold of sensory intuition so as to produce objects that remain stable in their relation to the perceiving subject begins to disintegrate. The spatial disorder evoked by seas that hop onto the land is matched by a collapsing temporality: with the advent of modern technologies of communication, no sooner does one read about the rising floods than the storm arrives. The lack of logical or narrative connection between the events described in each line of this poem suggests a world which refuses to cohere into an ordered whole. Furthermore, the poem makes no evaluative distinction between natural disasters, train crushes, and the common cold, but treats them as equally important events in a detached tone which only adds to the sense of a world where hierarchical order has broken down.

This discontinuous style (*Reibungsstil*) characterises many texts by early Expressionists, which often convey a sense of the overwhelming absurdity of a world where objects are disturbingly alive. In Alfred Lichtenstein's 'Die Dämmerung' ('Twilight'), people, animals and objects are treated as equally and indiscriminately active: a fat boy plays with a pond, a horse tramples a woman, prams scream and dogs curse. Whilst wind and sky are treated as if human subjects ('Der Himmel sieht verbummelt aus und bleich,/ Als wäre ihm die Schminke ausgegangen'; 'The sky looks run-down and pale,/ as if all his make-up had run'), most of the humans in the poem are either mad—a blond poet seems to be losing his mind—or maimed: 'Auf lange Krücken schief herabgebückt/ Und schwatzend kriechen auf dem Feld zwei Lahme' ('On long crutches, crookedly stooped/ and prattling, two cripples crawl on the field') (Pinthus 1993, 47).<sup>6</sup> Like van Hoddis, Lichtenstein juxtaposes these descriptions to form an incongruous series of disjointed events. Both poems articulate a grammar of a-causality and disconnection which extends its indifference to the demise of man's ability to generate order and meaning through his rational powers, focussing instead on the chaotic materiality of a disturbed and disorderly world.

The literary critic Silvio Vietta has stressed the double-sidedness of the perceptual crisis figured by such Expressionist texts (Kempner and Vietta 1975, 42).<sup>7</sup> As objects assume more power, man becomes dehumanised and displaced; as they become active, he becomes more passively open, caught up in power-relations and forces beyond his control, in which he figures as an object himself. In poems such as those by van Hoddis and Lichtenstein, subject and object are simultaneously transformed: the activity of the animated object-world refuses the stability that would allow the perceptual subject to orient itself securely. Not only is individual human identity attacked and trampled on, but, as Lichtenstein's poem 'Punkt' ('Full-stop') makes painfully clear, the unified consciousness of the subject is finally emptied out altogether as man is caught up as just one more object in a flux of powerful material forces:

Die wüsten Straßen fließen lichterloh/ Durch den  
 erloschenen Kopf. Und tun mir weh./ Ich fühle  
 deutlich, daß ich bald vergeh—/Dornrosen meines  
 Fleisches, stecht nicht so.// Die Nacht verschimmelt.  
 Giftlaternenschein/ Hat, kriechend, sie mit grünem  
 Dreck beschmiert./ Das Herz ist wie ein Sack. Das Blut  
 erfriert./ Die Welt fällt um. Die Augen stürzen ein.  
 (Lichtenstein, 1962, 69)

[Through the extinguished head goes a blazing flow/ Of  
 desolate streets. Hurting me./ I know I'm not long for this  
 world—/ Briarrose of my flesh, don't prick so.//The night is  
 mouldering. Bilious lamplight/ has smeared her with a trail of  
 green filth./ The heart dangles like a sac. The blood freezes to  
 death./ The world comes tumbling down. The eyes cave in.]

The light of the desolate streets here flows through the head of the perceiving subject until it is burned out. However, the permeation of the subject by this intensity of light does not merely lead to a reversal of the roles of subject and object; rather, as the object-world becomes a flux of creeping luminosity, the gaze of the subject is extinguished, and objective reality itself collapses. The poem reflects the Kantian insight that there can be no subjective centre of perception if the world ceases to fit within the spatio-temporal limits that would enable such a subject to orient itself, but equally, that there can be no objective world without a subject to construct it. The undoing of the perceptual subject thus mirrors the collapse of the external world.

Expressionism is replete with such images, which figure the breakdown of reality as the boundaries between subject and object, self and world dissolve. Nonetheless, Vietta argues that what is at stake in such images is not a simple disappearance of subject and object, but their reciprocal and simultaneous transformation:

The subject is objectified, ... but the world of things is dynamised and 'animated'. Hence the conditions of being, and thereby the integrity of reality itself, are

attacked by dissociation. Persons are no longer persons, things are no longer things. (Kempner & Vietta 1975, 42)

Expressionism does not merely depict a world dissolving into chaos, but charts the dislocation of a specific mode of 'reality', namely, that underpinned by the constitutive opposition of an active subject to the dead matter of an external world which this subject organises and regulates. For Vietta, the collapse of this subject-object relation in Expressionism implies that subject and object are reconfigured together as a different ordering principle comes into view. People are no longer people and things no longer things because both are transfigured by a dynamics of flux. Understood in this way, Expressionist texts which depict the emptying out of the subject through its subsumption in a dynamised exteriority become legible as the simultaneous mapping of both the disintegration and the radical reconfiguration of reality.

Such a movement of disintegration and reconfiguration is powerfully charted in several poems by Alfred Wolfenstein, where the subject is eaten into by an aggressive urban environment that permeates not only his private domestic space, but also his bodily interiority. In one poem, the sights and sounds of the city-street burst into the poet's room ('Wieder schon ins Zimmer platzt die Straße'; 'Into the room, again, bursts the street'), which is simultaneously filled with noises that well up from within the building, as others are heard undressing, washing, gargling water and preparing for bed (Kempner and Vietta 1975, 42). The possibility of delimiting the realms of public and private, self and other, collapses: the walls and rooms of the teeming building no longer provide a protective barrier or shell. In both this poem and the following extract from 'Städter' ('Cities'), Wolfenstein deploys skin itself as a key trope of the fragile and permeable. No longer a boundary sealing the body as a container for the soul, skin becomes a porous surface allowing a threatening seepage between 'inner' and 'outer' realms until this very distinction breaks down:

Ineinander dicht hineingehakt/ Sitzen in den Trams die  
zwei Fassaden/ Leute, wo die Blicke eng ausladen/ Und  
Begierde ineinander ragt.// Unsre Wände sind so dünn  
wie Haut,/ Daß ein jeder teilnimmt, wenn ich weine,/  
Flüstern dringt hinüber wie Gegröhle ... . (Pinthus  
1993, 45–6)

[The two façades of/ People, tightly meshed in  
one another,/ Sit in the trams, where glances spread  
narrowly/ And desire rises in each other.// Our walls  
are thin as skin,/ So when I weep, everyone has a  
share,/ Whispers come over like bawling ... .]

In the city, bodies become inseparably enmeshed: desires surge between them, producing an intensive flow where individual identity is lost. Wolfenstein's poems turn interiority inside-out: domestic spaces and bodies alike are determined neither by enclosing boundaries, nor by the self whose integrity they should protect, but by forces filling them from outside until everything is subsumed into a de-individualised flux where subject and objects of perception become indistinguishable.

Wolfenstein's poems hover between fearing and celebrating this liquefaction of organic boundaries. In ways that conflict with the verses quoted above, where no separate self remains, later in the same poem he returns to a more humanist frame of reference, suggesting that people still feel utterly isolated and alone in the city. In contrast, and despite its title, 'Verdammte Jugend' ('Doomed Youth') celebrates the feeling of being 'schön allein' ('wonderfully alone') in the teeming metropolis, which is depicted as a bubbling, hissing stream of people, light and noise. Intrusive homely and human relations are finally escaped as the individual is plunged into the dehumanised flux of city life (the 'Entmenschlichte') which seeps through everyone and belongs to no one (Pinthus 1993, 54–5). Paradoxically, it is a poem which evokes primordial nature, and which may thus appear utterly removed from the Expressionist cityscapes, which most fully expresses the desire buried within the imaging of the latter:

O daß wir unsere Ururahnen wären./ Ein Klümpchen  
Schleim in einem warmen Moor./ Leben und Tod, Be-  
fruchten und Gebären/ glitte aus unseren stummen  
Säften vor. (Benn 1960, 25)

[Oh that we were our primal ancestors,/ A little  
lump of slime in tepid swamps./ Our life and death,  
mating and giving birth/ A gliding forth out of our  
silent sap.] (Hamburger 1970, 338).

The first stanza of Gottfried Benn's 'Gesänge: I' epitomises the Expressionist longing to melt the rigidified form of the human subject into a flowing, pre-human life, into an external world that is no longer formed and re-presented for a conscious, knowing subject, but dumbly seeping matter.

Such texts offer a radical challenge to the Kantian model of identity which privileges the persistent, unified and autonomous subject. Excessive materiality is no longer to be mastered, organised or transcended, but instead dissolves subject and object into an infinite flux of luminous life. The limits of the Kantian Enlightenment subject are broken down by the intensive forces of animate matter. Nonetheless, the ways in which this overcoming of limits provokes both anxiety and exaltation recalls the complex interrelation of pain and pleasure, attraction and repulsion that characterises Kant's account of the sublime in the *Critique of Judgement*. Indeed, the dynamisation of the external world that both precipitates and characterises the violent undoing of the subject-object relation in Expressionist poetry recalls the excessively forceful matter of the dynamic sublime. However for Kant, as noted above, the terrifying sight of nature's power is recuperated as it inspires man to transcend his phenomenal limits and reaffirm his supersensible destination. In many Expressionist poems, there is no such reinscription of the subject in a position of mastery. On the contrary, Expressionism maps the annihilation of the subject by an aggressively encroaching environment. In Lichtenstein's and Wolfenstein's threatening cityscapes, there is no sign of any transcendent consciousness. Not only is the

subject made to suffer, but the very possibility of individuated perceptual consciousness is extinguished, emptied out into the excessive forces of an exteriority whose ceaseless flux consumes the constitutive split between subject and object that held both in place in a Kantian world.

Nonetheless, these Expressionist poems do not merely figure the annihilation of the individual. In Kant's sublime, the conflict between the subject and excessive natural forces provides a point of release for man's capacity to strive beyond the phenomenal world, for what Gilles Deleuze has called 'a non-psychological life of the spirit' (Deleuze 1986, 54). In *Cinema I*, Deleuze positions the jagged and zigzagging movement of light in German Expressionist films as releasing just such a life, but in ways that go beyond Kant by turning the Kantian emphasis on the necessary interdependence of subject and object against itself. On Deleuze's reading, in Expressionist cinema—as in Lichtenstein's poem 'Punkt'—all possibility of mapping an objective Nature or organic exteriority burns up through light's intensity, along with the very possibility of positing a unified point of consciousness. However, in ways that echo Vietta's insistence that Expressionism does not merely dissolve but reconfigures both poles of the subject–object relation, this posthuman sublime does not open onto undifferentiated chaos.<sup>8</sup> Rather, the reciprocal meltdown of subject and object serves as a point of release for a dynamic life of transindividual intensive forces, unlimited by the organic boundaries of phenomenal nature or psychological unity:

intensity ... is raised to such a power that it dazzles or annihilates our organic being, strikes terror into it, ... *the non-organic life of things* culminates in a fire, which burns us and which burns all of Nature ... . But this latter, by the ultimate sacrifice which it demands of us, unleashes in our soul *a non-psychological life of the spirit*, which no longer belongs either to nature or to our organic individuality. (Deleuze 1986, 53–4)

Expressionism keeps on painting the world red on red; the one harking back to the frightful, non-organic life of things, the other to the sublime, non-psychological life of the spirit. (Deleuze 1986, 54)

If this doubled transfiguration can still be called a mode of the sublime, this is not only because it produces both suffering and exaltation, but because of the way in which it doubly culminates in transcendence: in the non-psychological life of intensive forces which transcend the very conditions of organic being, as well as in a world characterised by a perpetual and immanent overcoming as both subject and object are plunged into flux.

## **II Claire Goll: Somersaulting through the Sublime**

For the Expressionists I have discussed thus far, who figure the permeation of human being by an aggressively animate materiality, the disintegration of the subject–object distinction entails the disintegration of the very possibility of individualised identity. The latter dissolves not into chaos, but into a posthuman flux where, as objects cease to behave like objects should, so the subject ceases to be a subject. Whilst this dissolution ruptures the history of the modern subject, its significance is transformed if viewed from the sideways perspective of those who have not been historically positioned as fully constituted subjects. For those who have been aligned with, rather than constitutively opposed to, both materiality and the object, the sublime dynamisation of the external world and the breakdown of stable boundaries between subject and object holds open the possibility that identity itself might be differently configured. If materiality is no longer positioned as the passive ‘other’ of the subject, then to be a stubbornly material nexus of forces and intensities might no longer entail being that which constantly threatens the specificity of form and individualised identity. On the contrary, the activities of animate matter might become that through which identity is formed without needing to oppose subjects to objects. It is just such a possibility that is explored in the work of Claire Goll.

Although better known in literary history as the wife and literary executor of her husband, Ivan Goll, Claire Goll was a prolific author in her own right, publishing novels, political and pacifist essays, poetry, and an infamous autobiography over a long career. Her earliest poems belong with Expressionism, as the following text indicates, although she gives an imaginative twist to the dynamics of dissolution previously outlined.

Spitäler klammern sich wild an die Erde,/ Mansarden  
schlagen mit zerbrochenen Flügeln/ Und Schreie fallen  
klirrend auf die Straßen./ Jetzt brechen blutige Tulpen  
drohend auf/ In buckligen, vergrämten Vorstadt-  
gärten./ Jetzt öffnen Mütter ihren Leib wie Muscheln,/  
Draus Sterne fallen an den Strand der Welt:/ Rote  
Signale einer neuen Zeit./ Die Sonnenuhr schlägt  
dreizehn von den Himmeln. (Studer 1918, 18)<sup>9</sup>

[Hospitals cling ferociously to the ground,/ Garrets beat shattered wings/ And screams crash tinkling onto the streets./ Now bloody tulips threateningly break open/ In troubled, hunchbacked suburban gardens./ Now mothers open their bodies like mussels,/ And stars fall out onto the beach of the world:/ Red signals of a new time./ The sundial strikes thirteen from the heavens.]

The title—'Der Mensch steht auf' ('Man Arises')—is ironic: humanity is no longer in the ascendant here. Rather, images of a nightmarish city chart the now familiar breakdown of the subject-object relation: inanimate, man-made or natural objects become violently active and develop forceful and unpredictable trajectories of their own. The threatening materiality that provokes the sublime is once again mobilised to figure the disintegration of the Kantian binary fixing the human subject on the side of willed, autonomous activity and the object-world as a realm of inert, causally ordered matter.

However, though this poem does not reaffirm the subject, its focus is not so much on the dissolution of the human individual as on its displacement. The image that most strongly evokes the absence of any human life simultaneously evokes the persistence of a specifically sexed, female identity: man disappears as mothers birth stars which pulse to a new time. These female bodies which open like mussels no longer give birth to human subjects; nor do their glittering offspring need to transcend or separate themselves from the fluxing materiality of their birth for their own singularity to take shape. Rather, these stars fall from the maternal body into the sand, becoming embedded in the beach-world to which the mussel's regenerative capacities already belong. These red signals belong to the same material realm as the maternal body from which they emerge without simply reduplicating her material form. In this posthuman world where mothers are mussels birthing stars, generation is no longer the reproduction of the same; instead, glowing newness and difference also emerge through a generative materiality.

In this poem, we have left behind the world of the male Expressionist poets, where the dynamisation of objects entails the destruction of distinct identity, culminating in Benn's poetic invocation of what Deleuze calls 'the vital as potent pre-organic germinality, common to the animate and the inanimate, to a matter which raises itself to the point of life, and to a life which spreads itself through all matter' (Deleuze 1986, 51). Whereas the vitalism of Benn and the male Expressionists foregrounds life as de-individualised, pre-organic flux, in Goll's poem, the potency of the life that is spread through all matter is expressed as a power to generate specific new forms. Thus although meaning is no longer given to the world by a human subject, the emerging stars signal the birth of a new time, where order is generated through a capacity for material production which both encompasses and produces difference. For the female matter already positioned on the side of the animal, the non-rational and the passive, the collapse of an oppositional subject-object relation does not entail the collapse of all

differentiation between self and other. Far from melting away as the split between subject and object dissolves, in Goll's poem, a female materiality comes into a time and a life of its own. Within this non-human temporality, a body that can multiply itself allows singular forms to emerge, such that sameness and difference remain intertwined.

Several other poems by Goll similarly refigure maternal and material productivity. The poems avoid an essentialist reduction of woman to her organic reproductive body by privileging a birthing of identity generated between mother and daughter in an imaginative space of play. 'Schlaflied' ('Lullaby'), for example, uses uncomplicated, concrete language to depict a magical domain where the usual restrictions on movement are lifted. Mother and daughter run into the Milky Way to catch stars and the child waves to her mother from the rim of the sky, playing on the edge of a world whose boundaries are no longer securely delimited. In a fantastic universe where the moon is also a lollipop tasting of honey, mother and child do not just play amongst the stars, but play at being the sun itself: instead of opposing themselves as subject to object, they become part of a realm of celestial bodies by playing out material transformations.

Morgen wollen wir Sonnenaufgang spielen,/ Mit unserem Lächeln,/ Mutter schüttelt den Sonnenbaum,/ Da fallen goldne Blätter in dein Bett.// Aus den Traumbecken hängen noch Flöckchen/ In meines Vögelchens Gefieder./ Morgen zwitschert es wieder/ Hundert neue smaragdne Lieder. (Studer 1918, 17)

[Tomorrow we will play at being the sunrise,/ With our smiles,/ Mother will shake the sun-tree,/ And golden leaves will fall into your bed.// Little flecks from the basin of dreams still hang/ In my little bird's feathers./ Tomorrow it will twitter again/ a hundred new emerald songs.]

This apparently simple, song-like poem explores an imaginative space where material becomings are the norm, unlimited by a fixed

subjective horizon. The final stanzas, quoted above, suggest that the remnants of this dream topography seep into the child's waking world, enabling the daughter to sing in a glittering language of colour. The remembered realm of play here seems to provide an alternative, synaesthetic model for the production of meaning. Even though this child's body remains unlimited by fixed organic functions—her voice resounds in the visual medium of colour—neither is it an inchoate, sensory chaos, for it is from this body that song emerges. The child's not-quite-human voice does not articulate the world through a purely conceptual language, however, which would strive to solidify experience into fixed categories or disembodied 'truths'. If its song produces abstractions, these are the abstractions of colour which remain inseparable from the affective, intensive qualities of saturation, tone and hue; this shimmering language emerges from and is embodied by the mobile resonances of a jewel-like, multifaceted voice.

For Goll, the imaginative space played out between mother and daughter is not a site to be ideally left behind as the child enters the 'reality' and order of adult identity. On the contrary, in this poem and others, Goll emphasises that this imaginative space of play already allows for a mode of ordering where both self and world are articulated together through patterns of movement and transformation. In the first stanza of 'Die Erwachsene' ('The Grown Woman'), for example, Goll again positions the material realm of nature as a site of infinite potentialities, where a child's world grows and takes shape.

O Kindheit, da in meinem Angesicht/  
Zwei Wunder brannten/  
Voll unbegriffener Welt./  
Hymnen schliefen im wachsenden Mund,  
/ Geschwister war man mit allen Engeln/  
Und hörte Gott im weißen Lied/  
Sich sehrender Lilien./  
Im Hollunder wuchsen blaue Märchen/  
Und reiften an den großen Dämmerungen,  
/ Da man zum erstenmal wußte,  
/ Daß Knabe und Stern dasselbe sei,  
/ Da, Liebe, deine heiseren Mittag/  
Mit dem Wind vorbeirauschten. (Goll 1922, 32)

[O childhood, when in my face/ two wonders  
burned/ full of ungrasped [unconceptualised] world./  
Hymns slept in a growing mouth,/ I was related to all  
the angels/ and could hear God in the white song/ of  
longing lilies./ In the elder trees blue fairytales grew/  
and ripened towards the great twilights,/ When it was  
known for the first time,/ that boy and star were the  
same,/ There, love, your hoarse middays/ Rushed by  
with the wind.]

The poet here celebrates a childhood existence where the world was not grasped via conceptual processes of ordering.<sup>10</sup> Instead, the world filled the child with a burning intensity that, far from extinguishing her gaze, was a source of abundance and growth. Hence although permeated by her environment, this child was neither overwhelmed by the violent matter characterising the poems of many male Expressionists, nor simply absorbed in a de-individualised flux. Rather, the world transformed the child with wonder, and her sense of order emerged slowly though a plenitude of potentiality: hymns slept in a growing mouth, waiting to take shape like the stories which grew out of the elder trees.

Far from dissolving identity, this generative materiality produces the imaginative structures that shape the child's world. This childhood realm cannot be equated with a preconceptual *lack* of differentiation, to be necessarily abandoned as the child matures and accessed only as a carefully circumscribed imaginative resource—the very resource of excessive matter that provokes and permits the aesthetic of the sublime. Nevertheless, the tales ripen towards privileged identification of boy and star thereby hinting that the processes of growth and becoming may be oriented by a more fixed and phallogocentric horizon. This foreshadows the second stanza of 'Die Erwachsene' which emphasises that the adult world has grown cold and dead because this generative material realm has been left behind and can no longer be accessed at all. Goll's poem can be read as an allegory for a Western metaphysical history in which, as Nietzsche reminds us, the world of being cuts itself off from the very

processes of becoming out of which it grew (Nietzsche 1990, 45–7), and, as feminist theorists have reminded us, what gets forgotten above all are the maternal processes of gestation and birth (Battersby 1998; Cavarero 1995; Irigaray 1985). However, Goll also challenges the necessity of this history, by positioning the imaginative childhood site where the self is immersed within an animate materiality not as a temporary stage of maturation to be overcome, but as an alternative and lost mode of ordering. Instead of a constitutive cut opposing a disembodied subject to the material realm of objects—and separating either the child from the maternal body or being from becoming—in the childhood realm Goll's poem mourns, self and world unfold together, the fecund growth of the imagination entwined and embodied in material processes.

The need for an imaginative return to a temporality shaped by somersaulting interrelations of play that chart the possibilities of a mobile materiality is powerfully expressed in the following poem, 'Gedicht' ('Poem'):

Vorgestern spiegelte ich dich,/ Sonne./ Nachts spielten  
wir Stern,/ Fingen Wind,/ Nachtigall sang uns näher zu  
Gott./ Gestern regnete es schon,/ Aber heut ist es  
erdkalt./ Meine Augen frieren zu,/ Oede Weiher,  
Scherben auf dem Grund,/ Rostige Nägel/ Und ein er-  
trunkenes Herz,/ Zerstoben,/ Stumm./ Nichts rauscht  
mehr von dir,/ Sonne,/ Wind,/ Stern. (Goll 1922, 33)

[Before yesterday I mirrored you,/ Sun./ At night  
we would play at stars/ Caught the wind,/ Nightingale  
sang us closer to God./ Yesterday it was already rain-  
ing./ But today it is earth-cold./ My eyes freeze over,  
Desolate pools,/ Shards on the ground,/ Rusty nails/  
And a drowned heart,/ Splintered,/ Silent./ No more  
rush of you,/ Sun/ Wind/ Star.]

The opening image suggests the specular ontology that has informed Western metaphysics, and its ancient origins in Plato: long ago, the self

reflected the light of the sun, that traditional symbol of truth and enlightenment. But in a playful subversion typical of Goll's poetry, the next lines undermine this specular logic: poet and sun together played at being stars and at catching the wind. No longer trapped in oppositional reflection, sun and self are as if on the same side of the mirror, where, as mobile objects playing in space, neither can serve as a fixed point of origin for an economy of reflection.

The fact that reflection does not here allow for the stable orientation of subject and object, but is inherently playful, does not entail a loss of the very possibility of coherent experience: on the contrary, reflection becomes another game played out between sun, self and stars, mapping out a spatiality through relations and transformative becomings. Despite its philosophical history, the image of the sun is not here deployed to invoke a stable origin of truth; neither is reflection the specular work of a subject on inert and manipulable matter. Instead, reflection becomes a dynamic process, shared between sparkling objects as they take shape through play. Once again, however, this magical transformative world has already been lost—the present is 'erdkalt', the 'T' of the poem is trapped in a frozen realm where change and becoming are barred. The playful immersion of self within the external world is destroyed: its eyes freeze over, and together with the shards on the cold ground, they figure the fragmentation of a once animate materiality into a frozen sea of surfaces. In ways that look forward to Irigaray's 'Une mère de glace', and back to Plotinus, Goll's poem mourns the reduction of a dynamic materiality into the 'dead matter' of Western metaphysics (see Irigaray 1985, 168–79).

Nonetheless, the play figured in several of Goll's poems where selves and objects take shape and shape a world together provides an imaginative access to the 'Vorgestern' she invokes. Such imaginative, preconceptual play both echoes and can be usefully contrasted with the role of play in Kantian aesthetics, where play is associated with the beautiful. According to Kant, in judgements of the beautiful, the imagination is freed from having to match the world to determinate concepts,

and instead plays over the spatio-temporal forms it is able to map within a particular perception, without unifying these forms into particular objects. This preconceptual 'free play' of the imagination intensifies the subject's sense of its capacity to order the world, as well as the way in which the world appears to lend itself to such ordering.

However, this 'free play' is in fact far from free: it reflects the ordering capacity required to structure a world of unified objects against which the persisting self-identity of the individual subject can be posited. By contrast, for Goll, imaginative play no longer reflects the perspective of a stable individual oriented *against* an inert and external materiality; rather, it is generated between subjects who are also material objects, and animate objects capable of agency and action. Together they organise space in ways that it is impossible to ground in any one subject. Such play generates continual transformations which traverse a space that is no longer simply external to (and potentially hostile towards) the self, but the material site within and across which its potentialities unfold. The animation of the world of nature and materiality does not lead to the disintegration of embodied individuality and singular identity, but to a different model of identity, one grounded in connection and (inter-)change rather than opposition and permanence.

Goll's poems refuse the limits that characterise the beautiful for Kant, where play is associated with soft, bounded and easily contained feminine forms, by relocating play in the infinite reaches of the Milky Way more usually associated with the sublime. As we have seen, for Goll, such stellar spaces no longer constitute an abyss in which the imagination fears to lose itself (Kant 1987, 115 [5:258]), but are instead the site of unbounded relations which orient those who are both active subjects and material objects via a ceaseless play of (self-) transformation. Her texts thereby confound the very distinction between the beautiful and the sublime by exploring an imaginative play that is no longer linked to the contained spatiality of a self-identical Kantian subject, but that takes sublime risks with both self and world.

By leading the imagination outwards, towards the limitless stellar spaces more readily associated with the inorganic strata of the planets, the burning intensities of the stars, Goll's poems, like those of her male counterparts, more strongly prefigure Deleuze's non-organic, intensive life than they recall Kant's turbulent nature. However, for Goll, if the dynamic forces of an animate materiality are no longer a threat the subject must resist and overcome, neither do they annihilate the specificity of all bodies—including but not exclusively sexed bodies—by decomposing singularity into formless flux. Instead, Goll seeks to recapture a fluidity of movement and generative force through which the possibilities for difference are multiplied and singular identity might itself be differently imagined as a temporal patterning shaped by shared becomings. Materiality is seen from the side of the object as a manifold potentiality allowing specificity to unfold in ways that defy the binary logic that would stage a choice between identity grounded in static self-containment and oppositional separation, or no identity at all. Goll's poetic selves and the stars with which they play are never opposed as subject and object but take shape together as distinct entities held within a web of interrelation and imaginative transformation(s).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the key figure in one of Goll's most effective poems ('Junge Akrobatin'—'Girl Acrobat'), and an appropriate concluding image, is that of an acrobat flying over herself through time:

Bunter Vogel du, der zwischen Welten/ Über Abend,  
 Stadt und Staunen schwebt/ Schwing dich auf dem  
 Trapez/ Über dich selbst durch die Zeit./ Deine Schen-  
 kel flattern zittern von Zweig zu Zweig/ Und dein Herz  
 von Mensch zu Mensch./ Goldne Flitterlibelle, deine  
 schwebende Sehnsucht/ Fällt nie durch die gierigen  
 Augen ins Herz./ Armer Stern, der allnächtlich aufgehn  
 muß/ am kleinen bezahlten Himmel der Gaukler./ Der  
 jeden Abend abstürzt in die Arme roher Athleten,/ In  
 den giftigen grauen Zigeunerwagen,/ Der dich gefangen  
 durch das unendliche Leben fährt. (Studer 1918, 16)

[You, brightly coloured bird, that hovers between  
worlds/ over evening, city and astonishment/ Swing  
yourself on the trapeze/ Over yourself through time./  
Your thighs flutter tremble from branch to branch/  
And your heart from person to person./ Golden se-  
quin-dragonfly, your hovering longing/ will never fall  
through greedy eyes into the heart./ Poor star, that  
nightly must rise/ into the little, paid-for sky of the illu-  
sionist;/ that every evening falls back down into the  
arms of raw athletes,/ In the poisonous grey caravans,/]  
Which carry you trapped through unending life.]

This acrobat is a hybrid creature, a golden, sequined dragonfly, part heavenly, part natural, part tinselly, who moves between different spaces and times. Her somersaults embody a dynamic of becoming, and although her trembling materiality seems always under threat, at the beginning of the poem the acrobat moves freely, generating a temporality of change. As she turns over and over herself, she allows movement to flow out of movement, mapping out space through the relations traced between her body and the air through which she flies, unfolding time in tumbling patterns of repetition wherein both sameness and difference are marked.

It is this acrobatic space-time which Goll seeks to recover through her poems, a playful space-time full of sublime risk and potential. Indeed, the risk involved in Kant's sublime is not lost from Goll's poems, but is in turn transformed. The danger is not that it might be impossible to secure the boundaries of the self against a manifold materiality, but that the material site of the transformative encounters which generate and sustain identity might not be recoverable, or, once recovered, might be all too quickly recaptured by the waiting arms of a more oppositional metaphysics. I would suggest that Goll's poems encourage us to take the philosophical risks required to think and sustain modes of the sublime that allow female selves to be the subject of aesthetics. In the interplay between her images and the structures of

philosophical modernity, we might find the material allowing us to re-work the structures of both self and sublime.

Although the defining body of Expressionism is constituted by a crisis of the (male) subject of modernity, the breakdown of the subject-object relation opens a space where other modes of constitutive relationality can be reworked. Goll's work indicates that Expressionism functions differently for those who write from the side of woman, the side of the 'other' and the 'object'. Her poetic texts re-chart the sublime to map the possibilities for a self grounded in a non-oppositional logic inclusive of difference and change, from the perspective of one who is *both* material object *and* active subject. Her work reminds us of the importance of looking for those who thread their way between the voices that have so often dominated accounts of Western modernity, for it is in their interweavings that we may find some answers to Irigaray's now famous question: 'what if the "object" started to speak?' (Irigaray 1985, 135) Threading our way through modernity with Goll, we find the 'object'-'woman' has not only already found a manifold emerald voice, but has begun to move in glittering somersaults.

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## NOTES

- 1 See especially *Critique of Judgment* (Kant 1987), §§ 28 & 29, 119–26 [5:260–66]. All references to Kant give the date of the translation & the page nos, followed by the reference to the *Akademieausgabe* in square brackets, except in the case of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1933), where standard A and B numbers are used.
- 2 The precise reasons for women's exclusion from the sublime change between Kant's pre-critical text, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1960 [first published: 1764]), and the transcendental aesthetics of the *Critique of Judgment*, also discussed in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1974 [first published: 1798]). For a careful discussion of the gendering of Kant's account of the sublime see Battersby (1995).

- 3 In particular, Battersby has shown how the 18th-century German poet, Karoline von Günderode, and the contemporary British artist, Evelyn Williams, differently deploy the antinomies that structure female identity, together with an ambivalence towards the individuated self, to generate alternative modes of the sublime. (See Battersby 1994b & 1994a.)
- 4 Although Battersby's philosophical position is partly inspired by Irigaray, she also critiques Irigaray's tendency to homogenise the history of Western philosophy as 'the expression of a seamless masculine imaginary' (Battersby 1998, 56).
- 5 Kant 1933, 217 [A189, B232]: 'Permanence is thus a necessary condition under which alone appearances are determinable as things or objects in a possible experience'.
- 6 All translations of German texts are my own unless otherwise indicated.
- 7 References to Vietta's argument are to *Expressionismus*, which was co-authored with Hans-Georg Kempner; all material used here, however, is from the section written solely by Vietta.
- 8 On this point, Deleuze's analysis of the burning intensity of light in Expressionist film can be productively compared to his analysis of Turner and catastrophe. As James Williams argues, for Deleuze, chaos is not simply valorised but rather 'catastrophe has to be controlled' (Williams 1997, 244).
- 9 Claire Studer is Goll's name from her first marriage.
- 10 'Unbegriffen' contains the German '*Begriff*', or concept, implying that which is ungrasped and non-conceptualised.

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## TRANSGRESSING WITH-IN-TO THE FEMININE<sup>1</sup>

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### I. Tiresias. The 'Impossible' Knowledge of/from Feminine Sexuality

'A conference on feminine sexuality is not ready to burden us with the threat of the kind of Tiresias' fate' says Lacan (1958, 728), meaning by this that we are not in any way getting closer to understanding feminine sexuality.

Tiresias is a male mythological figure transformed into a woman for seven years and then back into his original sex. As a male who had experienced female *jouissance* he could be seen as master of its knowledge. Tiresias is famous for replying to Zeus and Hera, that if ten parts of love's ecstasy—or *jouissance*—were given to human beings, women took nine parts and men only one. Hera, furious that the secret of her sex was revealed, punished Tiresias with blindness, while Zeus endowed him with the gift of prophecy. It is Freud who associates the punishment of blindness with the idea of castration connected to male's fear of the feminine (Freud 1919, 217–52) and we can add that the gift of prophecy hints at the link between the feminine and the time of the future.<sup>2</sup>

Fourteen years after this brief reference to Tiresias, Lacan mentions Ovid's version of that myth again, in order to say that we cannot incarnate such a figure. Knowledge of feminine sexuality is impossible because the structure of language itself, and the structure of the Symbolic—and therefore of the Unconscious—makes what would be a knowledge of heterogeneity impossible. This impossibility is what makes a woman 'not all' while man is the prototype of 'the same' and its reflections, of the *semblant*. He is 'hommo-sexuated'.<sup>3</sup> Lacan considers knowledge of femininity inaccessible to women no less than it is to men.

For feminine sexuality bears an 'impossible' *rapport*: a relation, which is beyond human relationships.

To say that a woman is *not-all* is to say that the myth indicates for us that she is the unique oddity whose *jouissance* passes beyond ... . What one calls sex (indeed the second, when one is an idiot) is properly, in supporting itself by the *not-all*, the *Heteros* which cannot arrest itself up with a universe ... . It is the logic of the *Heteros* which is to be made to depart ... from the incompatibility of the One with Being. (Lacan 1973 24; trans. Jack Stone)

The *Heteros*, Lacan continues, 'erects the *man* in his status which is that of the *homosexual*', while the *not-all* cannot recognise herself in the parades of truth, seeming (*semblant*), enjoyment (*du jouir*) and excess (*d'un plus de*) in man's universe. In 'the absence (*ab-sens*) of relation (*rapport*)' man is guided 'toward his true bed (*couche*)' as he is 'resituated by the return of the sublime phallus' (loc. cit.).

We recognise here an earlier, and somewhat clearer claim, which carries a similar meaning but an opposite conclusion, in the sense that for the late Lacan the woman partly escapes the phallic structure while for the early Lacan the libido is marked by the sign 'male' and woman must totally assume it and recognise herself in man's universe, the only one symbolically available (Lacan 1958, 735).<sup>4</sup>

Knowledge of/from the feminine-beyond-the-phallus is considered by Lacan impossible, in agreement with Freud's conception of femininity as either derived from the masculine Oedipal complex and its mechanism of 'castration', or a mysterious 'dark continent' of which we know too little. In this Freudian-Lacanian account, a difference that is not structured via the couple: phallus/castration is foreclosed from the Symbolic. Such a difference would be either absent, or present in fragments of nature, composing pure events of *jouissance*: the feminine is 'pure absence' or 'pure sensibility' (Lacan 1958, 733). Lacking with regard to masculinity, or a surplus to it, she is the Other-Thing, an

excess with no proclaim on subjectivising desire. Woman here is a subject of course, but by virtue of her participation as an object in what I have relativised as the *phallic subjectivising stratum*<sup>5</sup> which regulates sex difference, and where she can mark her resistance only by incarnating a masquerade,<sup>6</sup> while some obscure 'femininity' still hovers behind it like a phantom, forever enigmatic. Glimpses of/from such a *phantom of the subject* are considered mystical or crazy when appearing in the phallic domain.

Non-phallic psychical phenomena appear toward the end of Lacan's teaching in terms of the topological sphere, the Moebius strip, Klein bottle, cross-cap, and these terms join the feminine 'heterogeneity', 'not all' and 'no sexual *rapport* (relation)'.

It is the spherical topology of this object called (*a*) which is projected on the other of the composite, *heterogeneous*, that the *cross-cap* constitutes. ... a Moebius strip, that is the putting in value of the a-sphere of the *not-all*: It is that which supports the impossible of the universe, that is, to take our formula, that which encounters the real. The universe is nowhere else than in the cause of desire, the universal no more. It is from there that proceeds the exclusion of the real ... of this real: *that there is no sexual rapport* (Lacan 1973 30; trans. Jack Stone).

With no proper symbolic apparatus to encompass and repress these inscriptions, with no process beyond-castration to in-form human desire, and with no passageway beyond metaphor and metonymy to deliver their potential meaning, they remain inaccessible to knowledge.

Whether a Woman-Other-Thing, a product of the Real's non-sense, whether a radical Other, whether dangerously bordering on originary repression of the Thing, whether equated with an elusive almost-nothing (*objet a*)—even when described as 'not-all', the concept of 'woman' as defined in the Lacanian psychoanalysis is always automatically reinforcing the Phallic structure because 'woman' is perceived

as the holes in this structure, its scraps, rests, excess or surplus. If 'there is no sexual *rapport*' (Lacan 1975, 17 & 35) and 'a woman is *not-all*, there is always something of her that escapes discourse' (Lacan 1975, 34). She experiences in excess to the *phallic jouissance* a *supplementary jouissance*, but Lacan insists that she knows nothing about it.

From the woman's side, a sexual *rapport*—not organ, not essence, but some kind of relation—could have been elaborated into knowledge, had such an elaboration been possible, but, even a woman, says Lacan, cannot know anything of her own sex, and cannot report on a *rapport* that would have been feminine-Other if/where it does occur, because, precisely, what could have been qualified as heterogeneity escapes the Imaginary and the Symbolic by definition, and what can be included inside these domains is already phallic. In this conception, Tiresias's position of both experiencing feminine different sexuality *and* knowing it—is out of reach.

Yet, in departing from elaboration of the *not-all* and *supplementary jouissance*, it is difficult to clarify feminine *heterogeneity* in a way that would be independent from the *all* to which it is related and from the experience to which it is *supplementary*. Only a departure which should not derive at all from the phallic structure would allow to account for hybrid feminine instances '*between center and absence*' (Lacan 1972, unedited)<sup>7</sup> and their twilight zone. I propose departing from a difference which is feminine from the onset, from a *rapport* of *borderlinking* in an originary psychical sphere that I have named matrixial. In the matrixial sphere, *not-knowing the feminine difference* is impossible, inasmuch as this difference is in itself a *co-naissance* (an awareness or knowledge of being-born-together). A feminine in-between instance of '*rapport*' is a poietic process that carries in itself aesthetic knowing, a process I have named metramorphosis. Metramorphosis is both action, perception, inscription and memory of processes that I have titled 'borderlinking' and 'distancing-in-joining'. A mental swerving-in-borderlinking with the other<sup>8</sup>—opening a distance-in-proximity while separating-in-jointness with/from the other, or borderlinking while differentiating—is a

feminine matrixial process. My *encounters* in the Real with my others are swerved to register traces coming from me and from others concerning the *Thing* as a traumatic event.

These psychical traces witness and account for co-emergence or co-fading of several subjects, partial-subjects, partial-objects and of their links with one another and with the traumatic *Thing-event*. A non-cognitive mode of knowledge that reveals itself in such an ontogenetic witnessing-together, in *wit(h)nessing*, is what I call 'co-poiesis', where *transcription* occurs. It is here that following intimate encounter between several partners, which affects in different ways each *I* and *non-I*, traces of the affected events of my others are unknowingly inscribed in me and mine are inscribed in others, known or anonymous, in an asymmetrical exchange that creates and changes a trans-subjective matrixial alliance.

Such a trans-scription is a dispersed subsymbolic and affective memory of event, paradoxically both forgotten and unforgettable, a memory charged with freight that a linear story cannot transmit, a memory that carries dispersed signifiers to be elaborated and affects as sense-carriers. It is not the story inscribed for reminiscences that I carry in place of a non-I. Rather, fragmented traces of the event's complexity carry fractured and diffracted memory, memory of oblivion itself and of what could not be inscribed in others, even though it 'belongs' to a memory which is theirs, but only trans-scribed for/from them in me. Affected traces of a matrixial encounter echo, in the present, earlier matrixial encounters while modifying older traces and being modified by them. Traces of past metamorphic processes and matrixial events will in their turn modify the processing of further, future encounters.

Under the matrixial light, the transgression in the figure of Tiresias between man and woman is not a transgression of a frontier between known maleness and unknown femaleness. Rather, since the matrixial *I* carries traces of experiences of the matrixial *non-I*, inasmuch as *I know in the other* and my other *knows in me*, non-knowledge of the feminine, in the matrixial borderspace, is impossible, by virtue of the transgression itself. This cross-inscription is vehicled by matrixial effects

like empathy, awe, com-*passion*, languishing, horror and maybe telepathy. *However, the transgression itself is a bridging and an accessing to the other already in the feminine.* It is inscribed in a psychical matrixial channel opened to begin with between a future-mother and a prenatal subject-to-be, where it is only by joining the maternal's psyche that the subject-to-be will achieve separation, and where through differentiating-in-coemergence the m/Other caringly knows her *non-I*. Such transgressions transform the frontiers themselves, so that even though *my non-I(s)* are never entirely cognised they are not entirely cut away from me either. Transgressing with-in-to the feminine with-in borderlinking with-in-to the other is in itself a kind of knowledge, transcribed.

## II. Antigone. Beauty and the Impossible Knowledge of/from Death in Life

Before taking this idea of this matrixial feminine difference further and drawing out some of its aesthetic consequences, I would like to add to the picture the figure of Antigone from Lacan's seminar on *Ethics* in 1959–60 (Lacan 1992), an addition inspired by a strange allusion Lacan is making to her when he mentions Tiresias once more in 1972. There, the impossible transgression of the frontiers between maleness and femaleness, and the impossibility of extracting knowledge of/from/on the feminine, are associated with another transgression and another impossibility: the transgression of the frontiers between life and death and the impossibility to know of death in life. Let us first make resonate together two brief passages where Lacan briefly and enigmatically links the tragic transgression to death both to the mystery of the feminine and to the aesthetic experience:

You have satisfied me, little man. You have understood what was needed. Go on, from being stunned [*étourdit*] there is not too much, for it to return to you in the afternoon and after being half-said [*après midit*].<sup>9</sup> Thanks to the hand that will respond to Antigone who is called the child, the same that can tear you apart from

what I—feminine and sphinx-like—prophesy [*sphinge*] as my *not-all*, you will even be able toward evening to make yourself the equal of Tiresias, and like him, from having been made the Other, to divine what I have said to you. (Lacan, 1973, 25).

The second passage is introduced by Lacan's claim that 'the question of the beautiful can only be found at this level as operating at a limit. Even in Kant's time it is the form of the human body that is presented to us as the limit' (Lacan 1992, 298). Lacan then asks,

[I]s it the same image that constitutes a barrier to the Other—thing that lies beyond?

That which lies beyond is not simply the relationship to the second death ... . There is also the libido ... the only moment of *jouissance* that man knows occurs at the site where phantasms are produced, phantasms that represent for us the same barrier as far as access to *jouissance* is concerned, the barrier where everything is forgotten.

I should like to introduce here, as a parallel to the function of the beautiful, another function ... a sense of shame. The omission of this barrier, which prevents the direct experience of that which is to be found at the centre of sexual union, seems to me to be at the origin of all kinds of questions that cannot be answered, including notably the matter of feminine sexuality... (Lacan 1992, 298).

What associates Tiresias and Antigone together is a conjunction of beauty that blinds, the limits of feminine sexuality, the limits of death, and the impossibility of inscribing the transgressions of these limits as knowledge—an impossibility which in fact turns death-drive itself into a feminine *not-all* issue. Both figures have transgressed the frontiers of the laws of nature—transgressing the natural corporeal limit between the sexes in the case of Tiresias, and choosing death upon life in the case of

Antigone. Thus, in associating such a transgression into death with the enigma of the feminine, Lacan reanimates a mythological relation that traverses cultures and centuries: the relations of death to the feminine, and locates the *aesthetic* effect of 'the passage to the second death' in the domain of the feminine as the beautiful. This also qualifies the relationships that both 'woman' and death are bearing witness to as 'impossible'.

The aesthetic dimension arises in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959–1960* (Lacan 1992) via the question: what is the surface that allows the emergence of 'images of passion'? The extraordinary passion, which transports death into life and impels life onto death arises, says Lacan, from some contact with that which *is*, the unique, the irreducible and irreplaceable, with what has no substitute and cannot be exchanged. Beauty enters the picture through the idea of relations to the irreplaceable. A disappearance in appearance creates the beauty's effect. The effect of beauty results from the *rapport* of the subject to the 'horizon' of life, from traversing to 'the second death'. From Antigone's point of view, life 'can only be lived or thought about, from the place of that limit where her life is already lost, where she is already on the other side. But from that place she can see it and live it in the form of something already lost' (Lacan 1992, 318, 280). This limit, detached from historical time, is a source of creation *ex nihilo*.

If the surface of passion captures such a unique value to make an image of it, this image creates a barrier that blocks from traversing to the other side, and 'The effect of beauty is the effect of blindness'—blindness to the other side, blindness as a castrating schism. The function of the beautiful is precisely 'to reveal to us the site of man's relationship to his own death, and to reveal it to us in a blinding flash only'. (Lacan 1992, trans. modified). The beautiful is a limit of a sphere that we can only approach from the outside, a phenomenological limit which allows us to reflect on what is behind it. 'Outrage' is the term that carries, according to Lacan, the crossing of some invisible line which allows to join beauty with desire. 'Outrage' whose meaning is 'to go out

or beyond' (*'aller outre, outrepasser'*, is the aesthetic effect of Antigone) (281). This 'most strange and most profound of effects' arises in the limit zone *in-between-life-and-death*, where 'a fate' is enacted and a death is 'lived by anticipation, a death that crosses over into the sphere of life, a life that moves into the realm of death ... . The glow of beauty coincides with the moment of transgression.' The aesthetic question engages the beauty-ideal, which operates at a limit materialised and represented in art by the human body. The human body, 'the envelope of all possible phantasms of human desire' is that barrier which transports 'a *rapport* of the human being with its second death' (295, 298, trans. amended) and in doing so blocks the passage to it. Beauty, in form and image of the human body is the last barrier from the Other-Thing 'beyond'—to be understood as a 'second death', but also as 'supplementary femininity', because this barrier is also what keeps us from a direct apprehension of 'sexual *rapport*', which as we have seen, is feminine.

It is in the domain of aesthetics that the frontier that separates the human being from death converges with the frontier that separates the human being from the feminine. In the phallic structure the figure that transgresses them is sacrificed to death or blindness. I am suggesting that from a matrixial angle we cannot speak, in the dimension of the feminine, of separation, but rather of separation-in-jointness, whose risks and wonders are beyond the phallic scope where the act of creation concerns the individual with its presence/absence, subject/object and interior/exterior dichotomies. A matrixial transgression operates in a co-poietic psychical borderspace shared with several others from the start. Thus, the human body with-in the feminine is not the last barrier from the Other-beyond, but is the passage to a matrixial other. Therefore, the question of sacrifice moves to the margins in the matrix, to make place for the question of witnessing as witnessing: wit(h)nessing.

Antigone incarnates the death-drive, and Lacan adds that she incarnates the desire of the Other linked to the desire of the mother

which is the origin of every desire, 'the founding desire' which is also 'a criminal desire' for it was in this case incestuous. Transgression is thus fatally linked to and binding with death-drive, incest, and the desire of the mother. Antigone's transgression is a fate in the sense that it is a result of 'the crime', to be understood as the infliction of death or incest by one's ancestors, by someone else on someone else, played at the horizon of the subject's existence and thus being a part of what allowed the subject's coming into life.

At the centre of Lacan's argument lies his interpretation of Antigone's idea concerning 'having been born in the same womb ... and having been related to the same father', an interpretation that leads him to saying that the heart of the matter is the uniqueness of the brother (Lacan 1992, 279). In my view, in so referring to Antigone's hinting at the maternal womb, Lacan is folding the womb into the phallus/castration stratum. Being born of the same womb is equated with being of the same father and leads to paying the price of the parental crimes of incest or killing by traversing beyond the human chain of exchange. The specificity of this conjunction results in Lacan's representation of the brother, for whose memory Antigone is willing to die, as an incarnation of the idea of the unexchangeable One. The matrixial prism conveys a different interpretation to Antigone's referring to the womb, and a supplementary value to the figure of the brother. Transgression is still linked to death-drive, incest, and the desire of the mother, but this linkage itself is transformed, and with it, the meaning of each of these concepts in the feminine. To elucidate that I will first elaborate further the matrixial sphere. This will allow me to locate another conjunction between Tiresias and Antigone, in the *transgression with-in-to the feminine*.

### III. The Impossibility of Not-Transgressing in the Matrixial Sphere

Matrix is an unconscious borderspace of simultaneous co-emergence and co-fading of the *I* and uncognised *non-I*—or partial-subjects, or

unknown others linked to me—neither fused nor rejected, which produces, shares and transmits joint, hybrid and diffracted objects via conductible borderlinks. The matrixial is modelled upon a certain perception of feminine/prenatal borderlinking, where the womb is conceived of as a *shared* psychical *borderspace* in which *differentiation-in-co-emergence*, *separation-in-jointness* and *distance-in-proximity* are continuously reattuned by metamorphosis created by, and further creating—together with matrixial affects—*relations-without-relating* on the borders of presence and absence, subject and object, among subjects and partial-subjects, between me and the stranger, and between those and part-objects or relational objects. Co-emerging and co-fading *I(s)* and *non-I(s)* interlace their borderlinks in metamorphosis.

Metamorphosis is a process of intra-psychical and inter-psychical or trans-individual exchange, transformation and affective 'communication', between/with-in several matrixial entities. It is a passage-lane through which the affected events, materials and modes of becoming infiltrate and diversify onto non-conscious margins of the Symbolic through/by sub-symbolic webs. In a joint and multiple-several marginal trans-subjective awareness, perceived boundaries dissolve to become new boundaries; forms are transgressed; borderlines surpassed and transformed to become thresholds; conductible borderlinks are conceived, transformed and dissolved. Contingent transgressive borderlinks and a borderspace of swerve and encounter emerge as a feminine sex-difference and as a creative instance which engraves traces that are revealed/invented in *wit(h)ness-in-differentiation*. Relations-without-relating transform the uncognised other and me, and turn both of us into partial-subjects—still uncognised, but unthinkingly known to each other (prior to thought) and matrixially knowing each other—in subjectivity-as-encounter, where no other is an absolute separate Other.

Metamorphosis is a co-poietic activity in a web. It 'remembers' swerves (originary differentiation in the realm of affects echoing on Merleau-Ponty's *écart* in the realm of sensibility and perception) and '*rappports*', bifurcations and relations. It remembers operations of border-

linking, that inscribe affective traces of *jouissance* and trauma which are taking place in encounters, transferring the knowledge of these events with-in-to the feminine. Via art's metamorphic activity these traces are transmitted into culture and open its boundaries.

The matrixial designates a difference located, in its originary formation, in the linkage to female corporeal invisible specificity, to the archaic enveloping outside that is also an inside: the womb. However, by matrix I do not intend an 'organ' or an 'origin', but a complex apparatus modelled upon this site of female/prenatal *encounter* that puts in *rapport* any human becoming-subject-to-be, male and female, with female bodily specificity and her encounters, trauma, *jouissance*, phantasy and desire.

Through metamorphosis, each matrixial encounter engenders its *jouissance*, traumas, pictograms, phantasms, affects, and channels death-drive oscillations and libidinal flow, and their affected traces, in *several* partners, conjointly but differently, in com-passion. Traces circulate in a trans-subjective zone by matrixial affects and non-conscious threads that disperse different aspects of traumatic events between the *I(s)* and *non-I(s)*. Thus, as I cannot fully handle events that concern me profoundly, they are fading-in-transformation while my *non-I(s)* become wit(h)nesses to them. It may happen that because of their highly traumatic value I cannot psychically handle 'my' events at all. In the matrixial psychological sphere, 'my' traces will be trans-scribed—pluri-scribed and cross-scribed—in others, thus my others will process these events for me. Thus, female bodily specificity is the site, physically, imaginatively and symbolically, where a feminine difference emerges, where a 'woman' is interlaced as a figure that is not confined to the one-body, but is the 'webbing' of matrixial webs and metamorphic border-links between several subjects, who by virtue of such a webbing become partial. Metamorphosis, as a carrier of such originary difference and of its transforming potentiality, induces instances of co-emergence and co-fading *as* meaning and trans-scription as unforgettable memory of oblivion. In the matrixial borderspace a specific aesthetic field comes

into light, with metramorphosis as an aesthetic process with ethical implications.

The feminine/prenatal incest is here a necessary transgression. Not at all measured by, or compared to perverse or genital-phallic Oedipal incest. The feminine/prenatal one is a primordial psychological field of trans-cription and of transgressions between trauma and *jouissance*, phantasy and desire *in severality*: between several partial-subjects—of trans-subjectivity. Unlike the incest Lacan makes allusion to in Antigone's case (the Oedipal/paternal), in the matrixial sphere all mothers are incestuous in a non-phallic and non-oedipal sense, inasmuch as the intrauterine relations between future mother and future subject are by definition incestuous. Because of the highly psychotic potentiality of this pre-birth non-prohibited incest for the phallic subjectivising processes, this m/Otherly-incest was deeply silenced, not even excluded from the Symbolic (from which it could have returned as its repressed and produce an-other desire) but marginalised as unthought of and foreclosed. Whatever of the matrixial twilight zone that did get elaborated in the phallus was subjugated to its order, where it was regulated as a question of bringing children into a heterosexual framework where objects-women are exchanged in 'the Name of the Father'.

Julia Kristeva believes that giving birth must emerge as psychosis in culture.<sup>10</sup> I suggest that this is so only in a Symbolic articulated within the phallic paradigm. Evocations and irruptions of the feminine/prenatal encounters are not psychotic. They only become psychotic when they have no symbolic access. Already before birth, the subject-to-be aspires in phantasy, and contacts 'traumatically' a woman in whose trauma, phantasy and desire s/he already participates.<sup>11</sup> The *jouissance* that spurts on the level of pre-birth non-prohibited incest, and the links between the trauma and phantasy of the becoming-subject-to-be (*I*), male or female, and the trauma, phantasy, and desire of the 'woman' as its becoming-archaic-m/Other-to-be (*non-I*), both of them in their status of partial-subjects *and* partial-objects for each other

constitute a feminine cluster borderlinking *in-between several* participants while the link to the phallus is however always maintained through the woman's desire that is both phallic and matrixial, and where archaic traces of contact with female body are inscribed as archaic trauma and *jouissance*, and are revealed in the phantasy of both participants of the encounter (males and females).

Female subjects have a double access to the matrixial sphere in the Real, since they experience the womb both as an archaic out-side and past site, out of chronological time—which is true for males as well—and as an in-side and future site, whether they are mothers or not—that may (or not) become present. While the out-and-past-side/site is both female's and male's, the in-and-future-side/site is female's. Male subjects are more radically split from this archaic time-and-space of inside and future, since their *rapport* with it in the Real stays forever in the archaic *totally outside* and *too early* that is forever too late to access. *Female subjects have some privileged access to a paradoxical time of future-past and a paradoxical space of outside-inside.* Males however are in contact with this time and space, as women are too, by compassionate matrixial jointing-in-difference with others and with particular art presences—whether art-objects, art-actions, art-gestures, music, i.e. *as an aesthetic filter, the matrixial apparatus serves both males and females.* Various non-conscious lanes, that are opened toward and from femaleness, are not limited to women only, though they do carry a special resonance for women when they treasure and screen their bodily traces.

It was Freud who, in 'The Uncanny' (1919, 244, 248), suggested that pre-birth experience and womb phantasms participate in the aesthetic experience. In *The Matrixial Gaze* (1995) I have isolated these phantasms and developed the idea of a matrixial complex as a specific non-phallic psychical apparatus. Even though Freud himself did not fold the earlier phantasy inside the later,<sup>12</sup> in psychoanalytic literature the phantasy of the maternal matrice is generally *excluded* from any particular considerations by *inclusion* within the 'castration' complex, and it doesn't stand for any different psychical mechanism. In my view, these two

complexes (matrixial and castration) constitute different psychical dimensions, heterogeneous to one another, whereby feminine difference does not stem from masculine difference.

Matrixial awareness engenders a disturbing desire for jointness *with* a foreign world, with the unknown other, the uncognised, with a stranger who by definition is never a total stranger in the feminine when unthinkingly known without known in a non-conceptual way. Matrixial awareness channels the subject's desire toward the beauty and the pain, the phantasy and the trauma of others. My awareness can't master you via your traces in my psyche, there is no joining without separation nor separating without joining. The desire to join-in-difference and differentiate-in-co-emerging with the other doesn't promise any peace and harmony, because joining is first of all joining with-in the other's trauma that echoes backwards to my archaic traumas: joining the other matrixially is always joining the m/Other and risking a mental regression just until the maternal matrice. A matrixial desire can generate dangerous encounters, it can become pathological, it proposes no fixed settlement, no homogenous mixture but returning and hybridity, impureness, a continual contemplation of unabolished difference in jointness. A matrixial love is care-full and emphatic, yet painful because of inevitable processing of the other's trauma and because of inevitable participation in transformation and opening of boundaries for transmission or reception, fragmentation, contracting and withdrawal, and of what I call 'severalisation': dispersal and sharing of the *already* joint-several yet partial and fragmented trans-subjective memory of oblivion. A matrixial loss by definitive cut is, in this psychical zone, a horror beyond its scope. This is the horror experienced by Antigone in her reference to the womb that carried both herself and her brother: it is the matrixial prenatal incestuous co-emergence in different times with the brother that is fatally traumatised. And this trauma has no common measure with the effects of the paternal incest.

Thus, putting the feminine beyond a schism and out of reach for the masculine figure is in the matrixial borderspace an impossibility, and

likewise, a total disjoining of living death by anticipation from the meaning of life itself is another kind of impossibility, because life from the onset is linked to non-life. This impossibility of not-transgressing life and non-life in the matrixial sphere demands its price and originates its beauty; it has its solaces and moments of grace, but it is profoundly tragic. I therefore propose to locate Lacan's claim, that we are far from approaching Tiresias' position, in the phallic zone. I propose that, on the contrary, we have never been so close today in the domains of aesthetics and ethics to such a position, inasmuch as we are carrying in this second half of the twentieth century enormous traumatic weight of/for the other in wit(h)nessing, and certain contemporary art-practices are clearing the path to a better apprehension of the matrixial alliances that confront the limits of participating in trauma and *jouissance*.

#### IV. Meaning as a Transgression with-in-to the Trauma of the Other

We can now suggest to understand Tiresias as an evocation of the possibility of transgressing between male and female with-in a matrixial feminine dimension where Other and Outside are fatally engaged with *I* and inside, with no symbiosis nor foreclosure, where Other and Outside are knowable in/by *com-passing* between me and inside with others and outside—others of either sex, alive, not-yet in life or dead. In other words, transgression between male and female is not a passage to the radical Other nor transcending to the ultimately exterior, but a metramorphosing with-in-out of selves with-in-to the feminine that passes along the threads that turn, like a Moebius strip, the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside.<sup>13</sup>

Transgression with-in-to the feminine is not a jump beyond a frontier but an access to the surplus beyond, and thus, a transformation of the limits themselves with regard to my affective access to the question of the death of the other, and the death of my other's Other. Metramorphosis opens the frontiers up and turns them into thresholds. Transgression becomes an ontogenetic memory and meaning of sharing

in distance-in-proximity with-in the trauma of the other. Meaning becomes a transgression with-in-to others via borderlinking. Both partial-subjects transform and are transformed by one another differently, in a reciprocity without symmetry, creating joint compassionate and eroticised aeriels, to be further shaped by following traces of their further affective irradiation.

We know about the crimes at the source of Antigone's desire, we know who are their authors, we know who suffers for them and who scarifies herself, but we don't know *whose trauma it is*. If we rethink Antigone with the notion of trauma, and we ask the question where hides its ineffaceable affected traces, the matrixial perspective takes us onto further new turns. What is at stake here is the trauma of others with-in myself: by force of their matrixial alliance with the *I*, the *non-I(s)* are already, from the outset of any encounter, traumatic to the *I*. I am a wit(h)ness to traumas I didn't witness, like that of the death of others I was not in direct contact with—a death that, however, have traumatised my *non-I(s)*. The beautiful, accessed via artworks in our era, (and I emphasise again our era since we are living through massive effects of such a transitive trauma, captivated by some artworks) carries and produce new possibilities for affective apprehending of such a proximity of a double-distance wit(h)nessing. We are experiencing the uncognised *non-I* by/in its difference, as traumatised and traumatising. I propose to understand Levinas' enigmatic claim, that the Other in its vulnerability is traumatic to me, in such a matrixial prism.<sup>14</sup> Ethical first, but also aesthetic, therapeutic or wounding, is therefore the experience of reaching out to the affect-activity of the trauma of others in each encounter. The aesthetic is therefore, but indirectly also ethical, the experience of reaching out to the affect-activity of the trauma of others via a work of art. The aesthetic is the trauma's transformed affectability in wit(h)nessing in/by art, beyond time and in different sites and spaces, yet this move has also ethical and therapeutic consequences. Both the aesthetical and the ethical are therefore a healing potentiality offered by wit(h)nessing. The beautiful is that which offers whatever succeeds—as

object, subject or event—to suggest re-affectation-as-redistribution of traumatic traces of encounters with and of one's *non-I(s)*.

Matrixial transgression of affect creates instances of aesthetic trans-subjectivity, with-in-to the feminine inasmuch as it is inseparable from its archaic form. There is in it an originary, pre-birth incestuous encounter-Thing with-in the m/Other that is non-criminally incestuous. An archaic *wit(h)ness-Thing* is capsulated in this encounter. The archaic encounter, usually considered inaccessible to symbolic knowledge, is hereby considered the prototype of trans-subjective knowledge. Painting captures in producing, or produces in capturing knowledge of the *wit(h)ness-Thing*. A possibility of ethically acknowledging the Real emerges in transferential *wit(h)nessing*, when someone else apprehends in place of the subject the subject's own non-conscious matrixial sites.

Suddenly, in metramorphosing with the artwork, you might find yourself in proximity to a possible trauma, as if you have always been potentially sliding on its margins. You are threatened by its potential proximity yet also compelled by a mysterious 'promise of happiness' (Nietzsche's expression concerning beauty), a promise to re-find in jointness what faded away and got dispersed, on condition of matrixially encountering the *non-I*, since your own desire is the effect of others' trauma no less than of your own. By such an effect of beauty, the feminine borderlinking does not qualify as dwelling beyond a barrier, a frontier. Rather, in-between pure absence and pure sensibility, it is a surplus of fragility embedded with-in co-affectation and it makes sense as a transformation on the level of the limit. The artwork extricates the trauma of the matrixial other out of 'pure absence' or 'pure sensibility', out of its time-less-ness into lines of time, and the effect of beauty is to allow *wit(h)nessing* with non-visible events of encounter to emerge inside the field of vision and affect you.

Metramorphic beauty is co-affectation's obscure trail, skirting on sensation's edges and becoming visible when a passion based on marks of shareability becomes transgressive *again* and labours anew in compassion. When a world, internal and external, from which the artist has

to transfer and to which she has to transmit, is shared with-in-difference via artwork, this world is being brought into presence at the same instant that the work awakes its strange beauty and pain. A potentiality to make a difference with-in-for others becomes beauty when the artwork vibrates—and the spectator attracts to itself and transmits, back to it or onwards to others—availability for co-affectation. No content, no form and no image can guarantee that an event of co-affectation will take place via a particular artwork for particular viewers and that beauty will arise to attract a matrixial response. But when beauty arises, a matrixial co-affectability hides behind the form and the image and we can think of it as sprouting, overflowing and proceeding from shareable eroticised antennae of the psyche, acting all over the synaesthetic field and channelled by the scopic drive inside the field of vision.

The matrixial aesthetic effect attests that imprints are interwoven between several subjects: that something that branches off from others, engraving traces in me and relinquishing me (or mentally unbearable to me) is yet accessing others. This effect shows that we are sharing erotic antennae but processing different re(a)sonating minimal meaning from them. These erotic antennae register what returns from others as traces and transmit a centreless matrixial gaze.

The process of making art involves sensing a potential co-emergence and bringing into being objects or events that sustain it and transmit its inscription. Art evokes further instances of trans-subjectivity and makes almost-impossible new borderlinking available, out of elements and links already available in part, but that need to be transformed in ways that can't be thought of prior to the process of art itself. Trauma determines the trajectory of what is, out of art, a forever no-time. The beautiful links the time of too-early to the time of too-late<sup>15</sup> and plant it in historical time. Metramorphosing a traumatic encounter is extracting times of too-early and too-late out of indifference on-to with-in-visibility with-in-difference, when new affects wake up archaic ones from beyond the walls of foreclosure. Aesthetical that is bending towards the ethical is the transform-ability of the no-

time of archaic encounter, between several *I(s)* and *non-I(s)* in new co-emergence and co-fading.

The female body makes a sense based on knowledge of/from a body different to the male body. This in-body difference as sub-knowledge was undoubtedly neglected by Lacan when he claimed that knowledge of the 'supplementary' femininity is out of reach for women just in the same way as it is inaccessible for man. That such a difference in body induces an originary feminine difference was perhaps somehow perceived by 'authors' of mythologies and of the Bible, when they have chosen to appropriate and incorporate *symbolic* potentialities of the female body, and mainly the womb and its procreating forces, the breast and its nourishing forces, but even female genitals and sexual pleasure, and plant them into male God-figures or into the monotheistic merciful and Almighty God.

In the Hebrew Bible one of the many names for God is *El Harahmim*, translated as 'God full of Mercy' or compassion, and also as *misereri, misericordiam, caritas, pietas, gratia* and so forth. These are indeed the figurative meanings of *Rahamim*. But the literal meaning, the signifier, is: wombs, uteruses, Matrixes. The text literally signifies a 'God full of wombs' or (in Latin) full of 'matrixes'. Another name of God is *Shaddai*. In *Exodus* (6, 3) God reminds Moses that it is under the name of *Shaddai* that he established the Covenant, the alliance with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Indeed, each time that God appears in the Pentateuch as *Shaddai* it is in the context of the Covenant and the blessing of fertilisation, procreation, and transmission to further generations. 'I am the *El Shaddai* ...' says God to Abraham, 'and I will make my covenant between me and thee and will multiply thee exceedingly ... and I will make thee exceedingly fruitful' (*Genesis*, 17; 1, 2, 6)<sup>16</sup> *Shaddai* is interpreted by Rashi as 'the one who is sufficient for himself' and is translated as: 'Omnipotent,' or 'Almighty', yet the Hebrew signifier rhymes with: 'my breasts' 'my nipples'.<sup>17</sup> When we read in *Genesis* 43, 14: 'and God Almighty gives you mercy' we hear in the Hebrew: 'and God's

Breasts give you wombs/matrixes'. These meanings are abolished in all classical translations of the Bible.<sup>18</sup>

The abolition of the wombs and the breasts from God's name in translations from the Hebrew constitutes, in my view, not only the elimination of conventional feminine imagery from God's Image, but also a foreclosure of a matrixial-feminine symbolic dimension of alliance.<sup>19</sup> No less astonishing is the association between God's name: *Hessed*, and female genitals and sexual pleasure. *Hessed's* most common meaning is: mercy, kindness, compassion, pity, grace (*Genesis* 24, 12; 24, 14; 47, 29; *Exodus* 34, 6; *Numbers* 14, 18; *Psalms* 103, 4; 86, 15; 145, 8; 106, 1), but it also has, in the Bible, this sense of feminine genitals, more hidden and metaphorically hinted (*Jeremiah*, 2, 2) or more bluntly evoked in the context of incestuous iniquity (*Leviticus* 20, 17). I have suggested to see in the choice of such signifiers for symbolic Names of the God a potential meaning of the Covenant or the Alliance (*Brit*) between God and human-kind, whereby the ethical idea of responsibility to the unknown Other is expressed with signifiers of the feminine.<sup>20</sup> Matrixial articulation and comprehension of such a confronting-and-connecting between signifiers and the Real of the female body opens the Symbolic's frontiers, so that it may further account for this body, still in difference, but not in total Otherness.

Even though the matrixial filter transgresses the boundaries of the body-in-identity as male and female and provides meaning to a variety of shifting traces with-in feminine borderlinking beyond gender identifications, and even though the matrixial alliance concerns any human being, the specific reference to the female body remains pertinent. The trail of co-affectivity transgresses the affective individual limits not to become another quality but as an access to others and through forms that will *follow* and will temporarily 'capture' the excess, if a matrixial alliance will be in-formed.

The effect of beauty indicates for us, then, not only the place of relationships to one's own death—but also the *rapport* of the *I* to the matrixial partner before life and to the death of unknown others, a

death that traumatised either myself or my others and for whom, through care-full com-*passion*, I am processing affective memory they can't process alone, and I am digesting and transforming mental traces or inscriptions. When something that can't be looked at, that blinds us, arises at the horizon of visibility—a form of death-drive is embodied in the phallic zone, so that any apparition of a point of emergence can only be represented as a 'want-to-be'. But we can discuss now, in this same experience, the representation of the point of emergence as a co-poietic birth as well, when with every metramorphosis, inter-connected traces of the encounter with the archaic m/Other as a point of emergence are re-evoked-in-transformation, leading within the aesthetic field, through *sharing of trauma and phantasy*, to the ethical position of *co-response-ability with-to* uncognised others. An *impossibility of not-sharing* comes forth in the transgression with-in-to the feminine, in a way that holds some ethical implications: I have an alliance with others *even before* any full cognising of difference is possible. In the feminine-matrixial, *there is an Other of the other*.<sup>21</sup> But this other is an other-in-jointness. Antigone's brother who is the unique One in the phallic dimension is the partial-subject of a *unique Jointness* in a matrixial transgression. This is attested by the reference to the womb in the text.

The transgression with-in-to the feminine allows us to think the phenomenon of unconscious transmission between the sexes and between different generations and periods, beyond life and presence in time and place.<sup>22</sup> The matrixial gaze conducts traces of *events without witnesses*<sup>23</sup> and passes them on to witnesses who were not there, to what I have called *wit(h)nesses with-out events*. The viewer, and this partially includes the artist in its unconscious viewer position, is the wit(h)ness with-out event par excellence. The viewer will take in traces of the event in continuing weaving metramorphic borderlinks to others, present and archaic, cognised and uncognised, future and past.

### V. Borderlinking to the other Sex by a Feminine-Matrixial Differential Potentiality

I can now draw further guidelines for reading-together the myth of Tiresias and the tragedy of Antigone. Both Tiresias and Antigone represent transgressing with-in-to the feminine. In the phallic stratum of subjectivisation, if death and the feminine are the enigmas of which we can know nothing, the transgression to the other side via the process of art has a particular aesthetic effect because the artist bears witness to a process otherwise inaccessible: to its 'own disappearance from the signifying chain', and she can articulate such 'non-knowledge' of/in the Real as a 'dynamic value' (Lacan 1986 [1992, 295]). In the matrixial stratum the artist positions herself on an-other's sides, joining-in-difference the others' traumas and webbing passage lanes from this wit(h)nessing. We can now view the tragic quest of the figure trespassing into 'second death' as fatally linked not only to the One and Unique brother, but also as having to bear an unbearable total subtraction from a joint matrixial configuration that can't bear such a subtraction, for it can only bear fading-out and fragmentations but no total cuts. A subtraction, (rather than contraction yet not just separation), of *non-I* from shareability, and an extinction of possible borderlinking to the other in a matrixial borderspace, must be paid in 'your body' (Lyotard 1997, 109) as the body of the artist in which other bodies are cross-inscribed.

What in Antigone's argument is waiting to be heard and compassioned, is the suffering from tearing apart of her principal partner-in-difference up till now separated-in-jointness from her into total separateness. If the almost-impossible knowledge of the Thing-Event concerns the originary feminine *rapport*, it is not death in itself that inflicts the horrible cut in the matrixial web, but the passage to a bestiality that threatens to blow up and explode this sphere all together into separate pieces. For life and death are constituted in the psyche as already human even when beyond reach of human-symbolic exchange or communication, even at the corpo-real level. Human body is not

animal body. Non-human bestiality inflicted on my *non-I(s)* diminishes, and can also abolish, the capacity of the matrixial web for reabsorption of loss, for transference of memory and for processing mourning. Antigone's private death is less a price for her to pay than living through an irremediable explosion of the matrixial borderspace. She literally acknowledges the corpo-real source of this psychical space: the shareable maternal womb.

Why is Tiresias related by the 'feminine impossible *rapport*' to Antigone? What in Tiresias is waiting to be comprehended is, that passing into the female and back again is not either imposing on her a male's filter, mastering the experience by masculine knowledge, confusing it, or totally foreclosing a femaleness, but a specific kind of superposition-in-difference, or trans-position of maleness and femaleness. Such a superposition enables to extract hidden sub-knowledge of the other-sex into shareable co-poietic meaning. Tiresias delivers a promise of a behind-appearance access to the other-sex body. We might tune-in-difference our body with-in the corporeal sub-knowledge of the other sex, in keeping to our own sex, with no relation to gender identification.

If feminine originary sex-difference is an enigma of which we can know something through the matrixial prism, and if this prism opens to us the contact with spaces of non-life, the transgression with-in-to the feminine via the process of art has a particular aesthetic effect because in transmitting sub-knowledge from a site of transgression, in a borderspace that contacts the surplus by borderlinking, the artist can bear wit(h)ness and articulate sub-knowledge of/from the sex of the other. 'The kind of Tiresias' fate' which is 'impossible' for us in the phallic stratum is also a matrixial 'promise of happiness' even if such a beauty is tragic. The artwork is a promise to deliver what up to the appearance in a specific artwork of a particular encounter was a non-knowledge concerning the transposition with the other. Tiresias reveals-while-hiding the other sex in a superposition only as long as distance-in-proximity is kept, difference is held in suspense within jointness, and the

access to a surplus is captured for a while. But what I would like to emphasise is that this kind of transgression between the sexes is a transgression with-in-to the feminine—in a matrixial borderspace—whatever its direction is.

Thus, the function of the beautiful is to reveal instances of co-birthing and co-fading and articulate their sub-knowledge when an-other surplus is suddenly distinguished out in the artist's matrixial border-space. What is captured and given form to at the end of such a trajectory with-in the time of 'too late' as time of a traumatic encounter with-in the other and with the other's Other, is no other than what have always been experienced as such in the time of the 'too early', waiting for an almost-impossible articulation in a time of suspension—anticipation. Thus, a dynamic which indexes a difference in the Real is co-knowledged in with(h)ness, to become shareable, again on some levels and for the first time on other levels, via the process of art.

It is Henry Maldiney who, in speaking on forms of ambivalence in Leonardo's painting, succeeded in isolating an aesthetic dimension fit for describing the superposition of maleness and femaleness in a matrixial androgynous figure. Maldiney speaks of

a double issuing less from a behind-world than (from) Leonardo's before-world which remains the absolute past of his early childhood, not anterior but subjacent to his present world [and of a communication] on a single-same plane of emanation which is tied to the global schema of (their) crossed forms [... where] the occult in withdrawal bears that which is manifest. The latent meaning underlies the immediate meaning. But these two meanings, without excepting the occult, are immanent in the two visible images—one subjacenting the other (Maldiney 1970; trans. Joseph Simas).

Ambiguity here is not con-fusion, separation is kept in single-same plane of union as in distance-in-proximity. It communicates a subjacenting borderlinking that incorporates without exclusion and

without fusion, where an absolute 'before' world is, in the same breath, once again and for the first time available.

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## NOTES

- 1 This paper was presented at the symposium *Leonardo's Glimlach (The Smile of Leonardo)*, Gent University, Belgium, 16.12.1997.
- 2 For Emmanuel Levinas, future time is feminine. See Lichtenberg Ettinger & E. Levinas (1993) & (1997). I have discussed elsewhere the feminine-future dimension, and the foreclosure of the feminine from culture through the foreclosure of the future dimension from God's name in the translation from the Hebrew Bible (God's name 'I Will Be/Become that I Will Be/Become' is translated in classical biblical translations as: 'I am that I Am'). See Lichtenberg Ettinger (1994).
- 3 A word play on the word 'homme'—'man' in French. The second 'm' is therefore intentional.
- 4 According to Lacan, women in their sexuated position vis-à-vis the phallic universal split between 'pure absence and pure sensibility'. While men make of the phallic referent the universal supporting ground for their phantasm, built to make up for the deficiency of a primordial lack, a split from the Real, from the body and from the Other, for women there is an extra-territory beyond the phallus.
- 5 Thus reducing the domain of the Phallus in the determination of the Subject. See Lichtenberg Ettinger (1992).
- 6 Behind 'the mask of womanliness', she is 'either ... castrated (lifeless, incapable of pleasure) or (as) wishing to castrate', said Joan Riviere (1928) 54. Riviere's concept of 'masquerade' concerns hiding female 'factual' castration and her castrating wishes, and is therefore considered by me as a phallic concept.
- 7 Lacan (1972) is quoting the poet H. Michaux.

- 8 For more on this idea see my 'The With-In-Visible Screen' in de Zegher (1996).
- 9 'Étourdit' and 'après-midi' are word plays in French. The first expression is playing on: 'étourdir'—to stun, to daze, to make dizzy or giddy; to astound, to stagger, to divert one's thoughts, to deafen, to try to forget, be thoughtless, commit thoughtless act—on the one hand, and 'dit'—said—on the other hand. The second expression is playing on 'after-noon' and 'after being half said'.
- 10 J. Kristeva (1980). Among the psychoanalysts who elaborated on prenatal life we can mention R. D. Laing *The Voice of Experience* [1982] and S. Ferenczi *Thalassa* [1929].
- 11 This point is necessary for the understanding of women's claim over their pregnant body and their legitimate rights to keep or abort their foetus. It makes no sense, from the point of view of the matrixial, to speculate on a foetus' 'needs' separately from the mother-to-be's desires, as some anti-abortion militants are doing when trying to oppress women and limit their rights by means of the phallic imaginary. This imaginary posits the foetus mistakenly as a 'separate' entity with separate desires which they then pretend to defend against the mother's desire. I emphasise that the feminine-matrixial configuration supports woman's full response-ability for any event occurring with-in her own not-One corpo-reality and it disqualifies phallic regulations of it. The foetus is not a separate entity. It differentiates itself only in co-emerging with a woman's body-phantasy-desire complexity, and its 'fate' is inseparable from this complexity.
- 12 In several footnotes Freud continuously claimed that we must see the difference between birth-separation and other types of separations. Freud indirectly addressed A. Rank's idea of the trauma of birth. For Freud, this separation concerns the pre-Oedipal period only; and whatever should in my view be formulated as the Intra-uterine Complex, with its distinct apparatus, disappears by inclusion in the Castration Complex with the solution of the Oedipus Complex. Yet, since girls are not supposed to follow the same route as boys (boys move from Oedipus to Castration, says Freud, while girls move from Castration to Oedipus, and also, since for men the Pre-Oedipal territory

- 'dissolves' while for girls it persists in the Unconscious). A matrixial complex should, I argue, be treated as a feminine sex-difference issue that concerns females and males, with a special supplementary implication for females. See Lichtenberg Ettinger (1997).
- 13 I have presented Lacan's preoccupations with the Moebius strip in relation to the gaze in a catalogue (Lichtenberg Ettinger, 1998). In that essay I have also suggested a possibility for a matrixial rereading of it.
- 14 Emmanuel Levinas in conversation with the author. Unpublished, 1991.
- 15 The 'too early and too late', is an expression used by the poet Paul Celan to describe poetry. For Deleuze, the time of 'too late' is related to aesthetics.
- 16 All Biblical references are to the King James version.
- 17 Same vocalisation though different vowelising, responsible for the enigma of this word 'shaddai' in its biblical vowelising.
- 18 Chouraki's recent French translation of the Bible mentions 'matrix' and keeps *Shaddai* without translation.
- 19 This paragraph on God's names was fully taken from my early book (1993) where I go into this matter in more detail.
- 20 See the interpretations I offer to Levinas and his replies in Lichtenberg Ettinger and Levinas (1993) and (1997).
- 21 Lacan has endlessly repeated through many years of teaching, the idea that 'There is no Other of the Other'. I am suggesting that this is limited to the phallic field, and that in the matrixial sphere, *there is an Other of the Other*. In his very late writing, when discussing Joyce (1975-76), Lacan enigmatically delimits this statement only to the phenomenon of *jouissance*. Saying as usual 'there is no Other of the Other' he adds: 'at least there is no *jouissance* of the Other of the Other'. I propose that he hereby intends the possibility of certain exceptions to his usual claim. Such exceptions may concern a beyond-the-Phallus zone, such as the matrixial.
- 22 The question of the possibility of such a transmission via art, and particularly women's art, is a major theme in Griselda Pollock's recent writings. See for example, Pollock (1996).
- 23 See Lawb, in Felman (1992).

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## WORKING HOT: MATERIALISING PRACTICES <sup>1</sup>

Barb Bolt

### Materialising Practices

I asked Anne-Marie Smith if she would 'sit' for a portrait. At first she had some reservations:

My first reaction was I thought that at the time I was being asked out of politeness, that nobody would want to do a portrait of me, so I should refuse politely. And then when I was asked again and I realised there was some real interest there, I felt a bit scared. I was a bit nervous, quite nervous about being pinned down in one place; in one spot and somebody actually getting hold of me. I was giving some of myself away.

Anne-Marie's reaction to having her portrait painted raises questions about the nature of representation, particularly the relationship between the visual representation and the represented. For Anne-Marie, the act of sitting for a portrait involved a risk. The danger of being captured in paint evoked the fear of actual capture or of loss. The belief that some trace of her could be taken and transferred into the portrait, that she would somehow *be* in the portrait, suggests that for Anne-Marie an image does not just stand in for or represent her. The portrait comes to embody her being in some way. It could be said that it is an act in which representation 'transcends' its own structures and 'enacts the 'mutual reflection' of body and language' (Deleuze in Chisholm 1995, 25). If this is the case, and it is in many cultural contexts, the portrait is not just a sign, a representation of the person, but actually becomes them. As Lucien Freud observed to Laurence Gowing:

I would wish my portraits to be *of* people, not *like* them. Not having the look of the sitter, being them. (Freud quoted in Gayford 1993, 22)

I have painted many faces and I have made many drawings and I wonder what else I have done.

Anne-Marie's fear and Lucien Freud's provocation question a fundamental premise that has come to operate in western visual theory. This premise posits representation as a 'sign', a substitute, that only stands in for or represents its object. It can never be its object.<sup>2</sup> Representation circulates within the social realm of meanings. Its function is primarily communicative.

The influence of literary theory and cultural studies on visual art theory has situated the visual arts firmly as a discursive practice. According to this view, visual representation is conceived of as a sign or complex of signs that convey social meanings. The teaching of visual literacy and communication all too often assumes that the visual is first and foremost a language. Linking visual theory to literary theory and cultural studies has had advantages for the visual arts, enabling the mapping of how 'art' emerges or materialises, and comes to mean in a social context. How can we *also* engage the stuff of 'matter', the material production that implicates the matter of bodies, the matter of practice and the matter of the object? What if there was a dynamic relationship between the object and its representation instead of a relationship of substitution? What if the portrait of Anne-Marie was her in some way? How could we figure this?

In Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the eponymous hero, a young man of great beauty, is asked to sit for a portrait by the artist Basil Hallward. As the story unfolds, a transformation occurs between the materiality of the body of the sitter and the materiality of the painting. This transformation is ushered in by Dorian's performative speech act. Dorian Gray's overwhelming desire to remain young leads him to utter a wish that he should remain beautiful while the painting grew old. He never imagined that his words would effect or enact what he uttered. Yet his rational belief in the separation between the representation and reality was gradually undone:

Surely his wish had not been fulfilled? Such things were impossible. It seemed monstrous even to think of them. And, yet, there was the picture before him, with the touch of cruelty in the mouth. (Wilde 1980, 34)

Is this just a story, a moral fable, or is the relationship between 'real bodies' and representation more powerful than customarily thought? Does the speech act or the representative act have the power to bring into being that which it names, that which it represents? Judith Butler suggests that it does in proposing that the performative speech act brings into being that which it names (Butler 1994, 23). But what of visual representation? Does it or can it function performatively? If the function of representation does commit, in Bataille's words, the 'very life of those who take it on' (Wilson et. al 1996, 23), then representation takes on a very different value than currently believed in art theory.

The suggestion that the material practice of art has real material effects—that there could possibly be a mutual exchange between the matter of bodies and the representation of bodies has extremely limited currency in western art history and theory. To argue such a position is to cast into doubt the identity of the sign, since the dominant view is that there is a gap between the sign and its referent, and that the sign can never actually be in a dynamical relation to the materiality of the referent. It questions the assumption that representation is always (and only) mediated, or as Vicki Kirby sees it, 'second-order data removed from an originary source' (Kirby 1997, 113).

Refiguring the relationship between the representation and the object also raises questions about the production of the representation. If there is a dynamic relationship between the object of representation and the representation, what is the relationship between the maker and the work? How do we apprehend the space of interplay between 'artist', materials and technologies of production, the object of representation and the visual representation? How is this dynamism figured in an 'art-work'? How can we theorise about it without reducing it the circulation of signs or reverting to expressionist notions of art?

In his article 'Representation', W. T. J. Mitchell argues that according to the expressive aesthetic, the aesthetic object does not 'represent something, except incidentally; it 'is' something, an object with an indwelling spirit, a trace in matter of the activity of the immaterial' (Mitchell 1995, 16).

There may be another way to conceive the 'revelation' that occurs at the level of what Wilde's fictional painter called the 'flake and film of colour' in which he felt he had revealed too much of himself. I am interested in the suggestion that the aesthetic object 'is' something as well as representing something.<sup>3</sup> However, rather than this 'isness' being a trace in matter or an impress on matter, I want to suggest that this 'isness' is a scripting resulting from the activity of matter itself. Rather than form being imposed on matter, 'matter is becoming more articulate than ... imagined' (Kirby 1997, 114).

The material practice, the performative representative act, becomes of central concern in rethinking an aesthetics of visual practice. The material practice of art can be conceived as, in Paul Carter's terms, an 'act of concurrent actual production' (Carter 1996, 84), producing a representation that is both a materialisation of matter and a sign. It will be argued that the making of the work is performative, that the labour of making is productive, and that this productivity is materialised as a trace or index in the work itself.

### **Performativity and Materialisation**

The two terms that are central to my proposition are performativity and materialisation. In *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Judith Butler argues the limits of social construction, positing an emergent model based on materialisation. Materialisation emerges through performance. Does Judith Butler's work on performativity and materialisation enable me to theorise how the material practice of art is an act of 'concurrent actual production', materialising matter; 'a becoming sign'?

Butler proposes that materialisation is a process of sedimentation that results from reiteration or citation (Butler 1993, 15). In her thesis,

there is no subject who precedes the repetition. Rather, through performance, 'I' come into being. (Butler 1991b, 24). Thus in western art, the avant-garde, and more recently feminist, queer and postcolonial practices have actively engaged in opening up the gaps and fissures that emerge through this process.

In an interview conducted by in 1993, Butler distinguished between 'performance' and 'performativity'. She proposed that:

[f]irst it is important to distinguish performance from performativity: the former presumes a subject, but the latter contests the very notion of the subject ... . So what I'm trying to do is think about performativity as that aspect of discourse that has the capacity to produce what it names. Then I take a further step ... and suggest that this production actually always happens through a certain kind of repetition and recitation. So...I guess performativity is the vehicle through which ontological effects are established. Performativity is the discursive mode by which ontological effects are installed. (Butler in Osborne and Segal 1994, 23)

Whilst Butler's project specifically addresses the way in which sex and gender are materialised, there are some curious similarities with the way in which 'art' materialises. Art practice is performative in that enacts or produces 'art' as an effect. For her, performativity is 'not a singular "act", for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition' (Butler 1993, 12). Similarly, 'artists' engage with, reiterate and question the norms of 'art' that exist in the socio-cultural context at a particular historical juncture. The reiteration of these through practice, give a 'naturalised' effect which we come to label as an artist's style and it is to this we attribute value. We can identify a work as an 'Ana Mendieta', or a 'John Constable'. Thus Butler argues that the 'process of materialisation

stabilises over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface'. She suggests it is what we call 'matter' (9). She argues:

[t]hat matter is always materialised has, I think, to be thought in relation to the productive and, indeed, materializing effects of regulatory power in the Foucaultian sense. (9–10)

The regulatory power of discourse shapes what we can think and say about art and yes it has material effects. Foucault's elaboration of the author function in his article 'What is an Author' (1983), attests to this. However there is another materialisation that seems to be excluded from Butler's account. In her concern with performativity as the 'discursive mode by which ontological effects are installed' (Butler 1994, 23), Butler seems unable to account for the materialisation that occurs in the interplay between the matter of bodies, cultural knowledges, or discourse, *and* the materials of production. The materialisation that occurs in a material practice is far more difficult to access or analyse than is language.

What makes an 'Ana Mendieta' or a 'John Constable' recognisable is not just the materialisation of power in a Foucaultian sense (although that produces effects), but also the specificity of the particular material process that produces as its effect, a material work that is also a work of 'art'. Yet even in this stabilisation there are variations in energy, differences in the flows and intensities. Dorothea Olkowski designates this, the 'science of the singular'. She proposes that:

we must be able to address each one in its singularity... . [I]t is useless to speak of a 'style' with regard to all the work... of a single photographer, a single artist, a single human being. While... series may resonate in relation to one another, there is no genus or species drawing them together as the unitary style of an integrated person. (Olkowski 1999, 209)

In Constable's works, for example, the particular energies evident in the *plein air* study are quite different from the studio studies. How do we explain that some works have a 'life' and 'breath' in them, whilst

others are 'heavy' and 'breathless'? Sometimes the process is hot and sometimes it is not. In the interplay between the matter of bodies, materials of production and cultural knowledges, particular energies emerge as an effect of the process. We sense it in the work even as words fail us.

The risk in the privileging of language, is the conflation of 'to matter' and 'to materialise' with meaning or signification. In returning matter to the sign, instead of establishing the facts of matter, 'matter' slips away (Kirby 1997, 108). If we have to return to the matter as sign, what happens to the matter of bodies and the matter of materials in this materialisation? Is there a space for an actual concurrent production, a materialisation of matter that doesn't just mean, but has effects?

Butler quite clearly admits to the problem. She acknowledges that: 'to think through the indissolubility of materiality and signification is no easy matter. If matter ceases to be matter once it becomes a concept, and if a concept of matter's exteriority to language is always less than absolute, what is the status of this outside?' (1993, 31) Does this again leave matter unthematized until discourse imposes some form on it?

Vicki Kirby finds 'we are only ever dealing with the signification of matter rather than the stuff of matter' (1997, 107). Just when we are getting close to dealing with what happens in the interaction between the matter of bodies and the matter of materiality, it eludes us. Kirby continues:

[o]ur sense of the materiality of matter, its palpability and its physical insistence, is rendered unspeakable ... for the only thing that can be known about it is that it exceeds representation. (108)

A return to the energetic potential of matter is necessary if we are to disrupt the inevitability of the logics of loss, ideality, language or desire as 'lack'.

### **A Quantum Leap**

In *Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal* (1997), Vicki Kirby looks to quantum theory to question Butler's insistence on the separation of the

'sign' from 'reality'. She cites Niels Bohr's critique of Albert Einstein's theory separating 'physical reality' from its representations. As Kirby explains, for Niels Bohr, representation is, 'not second-order data, removed from an originary and therefore distant source' (Kirby 1997, 113). Bohr's position is supported by the experiments of Alain Aspect, Jean Dalibard and Gérard Roger, who, in 1982, concluded that:

'particles' are inseparable 'identities' in/of space/time that are both infinite and indivisible, here *and* there, now *and* then (Kirby 1997, 113)

The implications of these experiments are profound as Kirby points out. It 'ruled out any sense of an enclosed identity of the particle ... [a]nd it also ruled out any sense of an enclosed, or local, context within which causality might be identified and contained' (113).

I would suggest that the discoveries made by quantum physics have direct implications for the relationship between 'reality' and 'representation' in the visual arts. They bring into doubt the separation of sign and referent and suggest that a continuum exists between the process of representation and the representation. Can representation, or the sign, exceed its own structure in a radical performativity that allows it to be or perform rather than to stand in for its object?

In western philosophy and western art, it is now very difficult to think outside the paradigm in which representation is conceived as involving a gap, an absence or as Kirby says a 'not here' or 'not now'. How can we envisage representation as an act of concurrent actual production? As we have seen, Judith Butler admits to this difficulty. She accepts that 'to think through the indissolubility of materiality and signification is no easy matter' (Butler 1993 31).

However, this 'difficulty' is not a universal difficulty. Other cultures, such as the Indigenous Australian culture, do see not such a gap. For Indigenous Australians, ritual activities, in particular what they refer to as 'increase rituals', involving dance, song and paintings produce reality. Thus, for example, the performance of fertility rites is not representative, but productive. Indigenous Australian painting rhymes the

rhythms of the landscape and the rhythms of the heart beat. The paintings produce a performativity where the 'language' of painting mimes the motions of the body and the landscape. Meaning and reality is constituted in the performance.

Paul Carter has termed this productivity *methexis*.<sup>4</sup> Carter sees the productivity of *methexis* as a 'an act of concurrent actual production, a pattern danced on the ground'. It is, he claims, the non-representative principle 'behind Celtic, and Aranda, art, whose spirals and mazes reproduced by an act of concurrent actual production a pattern danced on the ground' (Carter 1996, 84). For Indigenous Australians, *methexis* has real effects in bodies and on the ground. Imaging produces realities.

Viewing representation as an act of concurrent production through which embodied knowledge is produced shifts the terms of the economy of representation. Meaning arises out of the facts of matter. It supports Vicki Kirby's assertion that if 'there is no gap to be crossed or absence to be filled, then perhaps matter is more articulate than ... imagined' (Kirby 1997, 114).

### **The Signs of Making**

In Butler's notion of performativity, like *methexis* there is materialisation. However, whilst in Butler's conception this materialisation is produced through discourse, in *methexis*, the materialisation occurs through matter, in the interplay of culture, bodies, materials and languages. In methektic production there is a causal connection between the matter of bodies, the matter of the object and the matter of the materials of making.

The dialogical and emergent nature of *methexis* resonates with Edward Sampson's notion of the 'acting ensemble' (Sampson 1999). For him, the acting ensemble presents a dialogical construct that takes into account the emergent quality of creative practice. He would argue that creativity, like intelligence, is the property of the acting ensemble, not the individual. The acting ensemble takes in the totality of the acting environment. We are, Sampson proposes, 'woven together with context'. He speaks of 'embodied interactive emergence', arguing that the acting ensemble is characterised by its emergent property. This removes the

focus from the acting individual and places it in the relations between actors. In this shift from the individual artist to the relations between the individual body, the social body and the material conditions of making, the actors include paint, the canvas, the type of support, the weather, the wind and gravity as well as discursive knowledges.

### **Making a Painting**

*Not to recreate the world  
but to make paintings  
to evoke the sensation of  
being-in-the-painting as  
being-in-the-world  
Rothko meets Techno  
or something like that*

*but then there is the reality  
the making of paintings*

*I start with the staining of the canvas  
(why is it that a stained canvas appears more luminous than a  
brushed surface?)  
the mixing of paint  
the preparation of the canvas  
psychic preparation*

*the first stain is fairly straightforward: an even wash across the  
canvas  
vivid pink  
the perfect stain  
luminous  
and then they arrive  
bees, mozzies, insects I have never seen before  
they buzz around*

*dive bomb into the glory of pink  
swim in the creamy liquid  
and die  
a specimen and a speck on the surface of the canvas*

*being-in-the-painting  
but no-longer-being-in-the-world*

*I start again  
a second stain over the first  
it's forty degrees Celsius  
the sun starts to move across the surface  
the paint loses surface tension  
starts to spread uncontrollably across the surface  
sweats and weeps  
the sea breeze comes in  
dust, seeds, cat's hair settle in the drying liquid*

*I weep*

*I start again  
Rothko and techno begin to disappear  
I'm making paintings in Australia  
under an Australian sun  
out in the backyard  
not in a studio in America or Europe  
or anywhere else for that matter*

*another story begins to emerge  
sunlight, wind, heat, liquids moving in response to heat and  
gravity  
a different mode of working  
not mastery  
not purely formal  
nor shedding light on the matter*

*but something else*

*I lay in paint,*

*watch and wait*

*allow the paint to move*

*wet into wet, wet over dry*

*not total abandonment*

*but a lightness of touch*

*kick into the rhythm*

*respond to how the paint moves, bleeds, blisses*

*work with the paint, the sun, the heat and the wind*

*work in the heat of the moment*

*work hot.<sup>5</sup>*

In my own practice as a painter I have elaborated this interactivity as 'working hot'. In this state, as Estelle Barrett points out, 'sensory and other bodily responses are fully focussed on the demands of the unpredictable and uncontrollable materiality of paint interacting with the environment. Stimuli arise in the heat of the moment to which the creative gesture becomes a reaction that is released from conceptual ways of thinking' (Barrett 1999, 3). In that state:

[t]he process of painting is a response to what happens in the interaction between paint, oil, turps, canvas, gravity, sun, heat, the occasional live beast and my body ... . It is working in the heat of the moment. (Bolt, 1998)

This process implicates my body in the process. But it also implicates the materiality of the paint and the environment, processes that have actual causal relations, not merely signficatory relations.

What this suggests is that the sign is not separate from its production and is embedded in material practices—it emerges in the interactive labour of making. This dynamic relation figures material practice in terms of co-emergence rather than mastery. It is the play of the matter of bodies, the materials of production and matters of dis-

course in sign work. In a co-emergent practice matter is not impressed upon; rather matter is in process as a dynamic interplay through which meaning and effects emerge. As Andrew Benjamin has observed, 'matter insists' (Benjamin 1996, 51).

### **Performative Indices**

Re-configuring performativity in relation to visual practice requires a momentary return to Butler's account of signification. Whilst for Butler, language and materiality are embedded in each other, 'chiasmic in their interdependency' (Butler 1993, 69), representation is, for her, necessarily a 'language effect'. In this linguistic turn, materiality is disempowered, robbed of its insistence. Representation is reduced to the (Saussurian) sign, the play of signifiers. However, as James Elkin points out graphic marks need to be 'understood as objects that are simultaneously signs and not signs' (Elkin 1998, 45). What is at stake for Elkin 'is nothing less than the pictorial nature of pictures' (13). In other words, visual representation exceeds the sign as it is commonly understood. Pictures 'mean', but also they 'are'; both signs and a materialisation of matter.

In a methektic performativity, I have suggested, the sign is not separate from its production. It emerges in material practices as an act of concurrent actual production. How can we figure a matrix in which a work is both a concurrent actual production and a sign? Saussurian semiotics does not provide that scope. In being primarily concerned with the play of the signifier, Saussurian semiotics omits the process of making, both how signs are made and the relation between signs and their referent. The key term that is missing is that of 'effect' (Fiske 1990 51). C. S. Peirce's semeiotics provides this link. (Bal 1994).<sup>6</sup> His notion of the index addresses the Saussurian omission of 'effect'.

Peirce's 'indexical' sign, with its direct causal relation between the 'thing' and its sign, points to a way of considering the 'matter' of things: the matter of the body in process and the matter of the materiality of the work. The index does not produce 'meaning' in the same way that the symbol does.<sup>7</sup> It produces effects. It allows us to 'witness' in a very different way the process of materialisation that occurs in the interaction

between the matter of bodies, the matter of materials, technologies and the cultural. It is the actual modification of the sign by the object that gives the index its quality (Peirce 1955, 102). It allows us to get beyond the image to the facts of matter.

Peirce first used the notion of the index to theorise the relationship between the photograph and its object (Freadman 1986, 97). In photography (excluding digital and darkroom manipulation) there is no denying the existence of the referent. Olkowski asserts that:

[i]n ordinary photographs this remains unremarkable, but in certain photographs, those that are loved, the fact that the photograph is literally an emanation of a real body, that light is the carnal medium, that the image is extracted, mounted, expressed by the action of light and the body touches me with its rays, attests to the fact that what I see is a reality and not the product of any schema (Olkowski 1999, 209)

Activating Barthes's notion of the *punctum*<sup>8</sup>, Olkowski argues that it is the *puncti* that provides this expansive force in a photograph. This force becomes 'more than the photographic medium that bears it so that what you see, what is created, what is thought is no longer a sign within a symbolic system but becomes the thing itself' (Olkowski 1999, 208).

According to Olkowski's conception, could the photo-documentation of Ana Mendieta's work become more than the photographic medium that bears it? Miwon Kwon's claims that the photo-documents are 'souvenirs' is based on a notion of loss—'the missing body *in* the image and the missing event *of* the image' (Kwon 1995, 170). Following Olkowski, I would argue differentially. I would propose that, rather than being markers of loss, the 'souvenirs' of Ana Mendieta's land/body works can<sup>9</sup> burst the boundaries of their medium and actually become what Mendieta claimed for them; 'after-images' (Kwon 1995, 167).

So what of painting? I would like to return to the question of Constable's paintings and contrast the indexical qualities of the oil

sketch for *The Leaping Horse* (1824–25) with the ‘exhibited’ painting of *The Leaping Horse* (1825). This comparison demonstrates something quite different is happening in each. The elements (paradigmatic choices) and the organisation of these elements (syntagmatic combinations) would, if read using a Saussurian semiotic model, produce similar ‘readings’. A reiteration if you like. However there is something else at work. While the prevailing discursive frame affected what could be thought of as and exhibited as ‘painting’, the contrast is not the effect of discourse. It is the energy of matter in process. Two different works, two quite different energies.<sup>10</sup> This can be witnessed as an index in the work. John Walker articulates this in observing that the ‘horseman in the sketch seems to vibrate with energy’ (Walker 1978, 118–19). The work is both a sign, and if quantum physics can be invoked, it ‘is’.

In any theorisation of visual practice, it is vital that the links back to making are maintained, in such a way as to allow us to consider the ‘traces’ or ‘indexes’ of bodies in labour, both human and non-human.<sup>11</sup> The ‘causal’ link or the effect can relate to the ‘index’ of the maker’s body, the ‘index’ of the object and the index of the material processes. For Peirce, materialisation is an effect that points directly back to the body of labour.<sup>12</sup> It is not an absence that the sign attempts to fill. Rather it is a trace of a productivity, of the interaction between the different bodies of labour, both human and non-human. This productivity is the performativity of methexis.

## **Conclusion**

Theories of representation and theories of the sign in application have not tended to allow matter to matter, to be articulate. An over-emphasis on meaning and an inattention to the material practice will, to borrow Vicki Kirby’s phrase, lead to substance abuse. We need to allow for a theory of making and not just a representational theory. What I have proposed is a refiguring of the notion of performativity to take account of the ‘act of actual concurrent production’, the dynamical relation between, discourse or cultural knowledges, the matter of bodies and the materials of production. This expansion of the field of enquiry

from what is represented to how images emerge materially, allows us to begin to figure a different politics of practice.

If, as I have argued, matter insists rather than having form imposed on it, we can conceive of artistic practice as co-emergent rather than mastering. In its insistence, matter effects a force that is not reducible to the Saussurian sign. Matter is unruly. At the level of actual practice, mat(t)erialisation effects what Olkowski has termed 'the ruin of representation'.<sup>13</sup> It sets the system of visual representation in motion. In Butler's parlance, it is 'to 'cite' the law to produce it differently' (Butler 1993, 15).

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## NOTES

- 1 I want to acknowledge the novel *Working Hot* (1989) by Kathleen Mary Fallon. Carolyn Chisholm (1995) argues that Fallon uses language performatively to produce what it proposes. She links her argument to Deleuze's notion of flexion. Flexion is that 'act of language which fabricates a body for the mind'. It is an act in which 'language transcends itself as it reflects the body' (Deleuze 1990, 25). I have taken this phrase to describe that movement in visual practice where the matter of bodies (both human and non-human) erupt in the work and matter insists. It is both 'language' and body. I would suggest it is a productive turn, in which the visual image transcends its structure as representation. It is performative in that it sets the system of visual representation in motion. See also Olkowski (1999) 226–30.
- 2 The notion that a representation is second-order datum, or a substitute for things themselves, has its origins in the Platonic critique of mimesis. However this 'belief' was not established as lore till much more recently, since the Reformation. The divergence between Luther and Calvin over transubstan-

- tiation is critical in this discussion. For a discussion of this schism, see Belting (1994).
- 3 In Mitchell this 'isness' is a trace of the activity of the immaterial on matter. In Bryson's argument it is 'the impress on matter of the body's internal energy, in the mobility and vibrancy of its somatic rhythms' (Bryson 1983, 131). In both cases I worry that matter remains mute, a surface to be inscribed.
- 4 Paul Carter's elaboration of the theory of *methexis* is derived from his reading of Cornford (1991). For Pythagoras, Cornford argues, *methexis* or participation signifies the relation in which 'the group stands to its immanent collective soul. The passage from the divine plane to the human, and from the human to the divine, remains permeable and is perpetually traversed. The one can go out into the many; the many can lose themselves in reunion with the one'. (Cornford 1991, 204). See Bolt (2000).
- 5 The above formed part of the performance surrounding the *Technics* Exhibition on 21. 2. 98 and are not included in Bolt's Artist's Statement in the catalogue (Bolt 1998). [eds]
- 6 The chapter co-written with Norman Bryson, 'Semiotics and Art History' is especially relevant.
- 7 Jonathan Culler has renamed Peirce's symbol as the 'sign proper'. In this redesignation there is a recognition that both the icon and index have qualities that exceed the sign as commonly understood. See Culler (1975) 16–17.
- 8 See Barthes (1981). His notion of the *punctum* resonates with the concept of the *navel* as developed in Mieke Bal (1991).
- 9 Olkowski reminds us that 'not all emanations are for everyone. There will not be ... a single desiring-machine defining all desires' (1999, 209).
- 10 The 'problematic' of the thumbnail sketch exemplifies what happens in a 'conscious' reiteration. In the translation from these studies into the larger more sustained work, there is often a loss of energy of mark.
- 11 A painting practice involves the interplay of body, paint, environment and the technologies of painting. It is a dynamic interplay in which the traces of labour are installed in the work as an index or an effect. It is an interplay that for me parallels the experience of the digital, the human/machinic ensemble.

However, whilst in painting the human actant has historically been foregrounded, in this ensemble, the machinic becomes foregrounded. The deictic marker or index doesn't just refer back to the human body, but also to the machinic body and its particular qualities, capacities, energies, hardware and software.

- 12 The materiality and the 'dynamical relation' of the indexical sign is suggestive of Norman Bryson's deictic marker. It is 'utterance in carnal form' (Bryson 1983, 87, 88). The productive turn that I am proposing in this paper brings us closer to Aristotle's understanding of representation—the object, manner and means (Mitchell 1995, 13). While agreeing largely with his view, I would extend his notion of 'manner' to include the dynamics of making as well as the representation itself. 'Manner' becomes the way particular energies, materials and processes come to 'effect' existing signs and create new signs. It is 'a becoming sign of the matter'.
- 13 Dorothea Olkowski argues for an ontology of change that breaks open what she sees as the molarity of representation, and effects the ruin of representation. The phrase 'the ruin of representation' has been used by several feminist writers, including Joanna Isaak and Michèle Montrelay. Joanna Isaak initially used the term in her review of the exhibition *Difference: On Representation and Sexuality* (1984–85). She saw the aim of the exhibition as being to 'investigate the means by which the subject is produced and...to effect "the ruin of representation"' (Isaak quoted in Olkowski 1999, 69). This impetus underpins Olkowski's project.

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## **SURVEYS AND REVIEWS**

### **Ireland: Super-Impositions**

#### **A Survey by Hilary Robinson**

Approaches to figuration and representation of women's bodies have developed among Irish women artists in a subtly distinct manner from the UK or USA. Modernism is a factor here, which, with its discourse of a singular transcendent truth, is the culture of the colonisers, not of the colonised. Ireland is a postcolonial state, and as such has a tangential relationship to modernist culture. Accordingly, the development of feminism and women's culture of representation is distinct from that in England and the USA.

It is against this background that the successes and failures of many Irish women artists should be measured, but feminist art criticism has found the work made in this space hard to acknowledge: it is barely written about, and I have heard non-Irish feminists dismiss Irish women's work as 'essentialist'. This is in itself an essentialising and racist judgement, as it ignores the specificities of Irish representational history. Presented as if essentialism were universal in structure, effects and symptoms, such critiques may construct 'Irishness' as romantically primitive, wild, spiritual and close to nature. Add retrograde notions of 'femininity' to this, and the colonialist trap for Irish women is complete.

Many contemporary writers on Irish culture indicate the entwining of representations of identity and the Irish nation, and both of these with 'woman'. The effects of such identification on women's access to representation and language has been much discussed by women poets in particular. The poet Eavan Boland, commenting on nineteenth-century poetry, writes:

Within a poetry inflected by its national tradition, women had often been double-exposed, like a flawed photograph, over the image and identity of the nation. The nationalization of the feminine, the feminization of the national, had become a powerful and customary

inscription on the poetry of that very nineteenth-century Ireland, (Boland 1995, 196).

Mythical figures such as Cathleen Nì Houlihan, Mother Ireland, and the Sean Bhean Bhocht (the vulnerable virgin, the protecting mother, and, literally, the Poor Old Woman) were—are—all used as representational tropes of Ireland, both land and nation, in Irish culture, setting reductive limits for actual women. (See Loftus 1990 and Cullingford 1990 who discuss the triple configuration in contemporary literature.) Simultaneously, the cult of Mary as a reactive, compensatory figure was promoted specifically among women and re-enforced by the increasingly patriarchal structures of the Catholic reformation (Condren 1989).

Paradoxically, it should be easier for Catholic women south of the border to interrogate the relationships between the production and signification of such imagery, and identity. For example, women in the Republic can criticise the Church and remain secure in their Irish identity; in the North such criticism might open to question a woman's perceived identity and political allegiances.

The analysis of the superimposition of the feminine on the national has been problematised by Edna Longley. She argues that it depends upon a partial, yet totalising, representation of Irish identity (Longley 1990). From partition in 1921, emphasised first by the establishing of the Republic, then by the conflict in the North, Irish Nationalism has differed across the border in its strategies and imagery. Furthermore, representations of identity, mythology, and femininity differ across the Catholic/Protestant divide. Longley also questions the ethics of the re-investment in the mythic female imagery of Ireland by Northern Nationalism (as in Nationalist political murals):

To characterize Irish Nationalism (only constructed in the nineteenth century) as archetypally female both gives it mythic pedigree and exonerates it from aggressive and oppressive intent. Its patriarchal elements also disappear, (Longley 1990, 18–19).

Such images in the North could simply mimic patriarchal political structures unless they are very carefully rethought. Artists, in the Republic in particular, have shown more interest in the *sheela-na-gig* figures—Romanesque carvings of female figures exposing their genitals. These would appear to have more potential, as they are at present 'empty' images: it is not known who made them, what they represent conceptually or spiritually, what the name originally meant, nor how they functioned or were used (Kelly 1996).

They are not sexual fantasy figures, nor mother-nurturers: their breasts are either sketchy or not depicted, although despite this, some mis-read them as 'the mother-goddess ... of fertility in Celtic mythology' (Balzano 1996, 95). They are however also open to re-representation as timeless and a-historic symbols of mythic womanliness, unless attentively re-worked. But if Irish women are starting from places of difference—of history, culture, politics, language and concepts of womanliness—then their representations will result from their exploration of appropriate strategies to deal with those differences. This will have little to do with embracing or maintaining a fundamentally essentialist position according to English or USA criteria.

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## Algeria: The Aesthetics of Mourning and Resistance

A Survey by Melanie Selfe

A battle is being fought in Algeria over definitions, language and representation, over aesthetics, identities and authenticity. The power of women's speech, writing and bodily presence outside a strictly defined feminine space was traditionally seen as threatening. Now a whole generation of journalists, writers and intellectuals, artists and film-makers, women and men has been silenced—by murder and exile.

Yet there are voices that continue to defy this silencing. The euphoria of cultural expression that erupted in the few years between the popular uprisings of 1988 and the occupation of the streets by political Islamists is documented in *Expressions algériennes*, a dossier compiled by Christiane Achour, Zineb Ali-Benali and Dalila Morsly. There is discussion here not only of Arabic and French language literature but of a renaissance of writing in Berber, of a multiplicity of theatrical and musical troupes, exhibitions of painting, sculpture and photography, a diversification of forms for the expression of social criticism, political satire and utopian imaginings. The journal *Algérie Littérature/Action* continues in this spirit. Published in Paris, it presents the work of artists, writers, journalists, film-makers and others who are fighting for survival. Not everyone can choose the relative freedom of expression afforded by exile however.

Algerian women artists and writers who remain at home face many difficult choices, about whether to speak and write in French, Arabic or Berber, about how to escape the 'eloquence of silence' and the 'colonial harem' and about strategies for survival as visible intellectual or creative women producing their own images. The author and film-maker, Assia Djebar, may serve to represent many of these dilemmas. She speaks of the 'painful search' for a response to the 'Other's look at

woman, in a culture in which, for centuries, the eye had been closely guarded'.

Writing about making her film *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, she considers herself, the film crew, the male character, and the film audience looking at the woman in the scene and the problem of how to present an image that does not merely present her for scrutiny as for the 'alien eye of the colonizer'. The image of the Algerian woman was annexed by the Western artist, 'the orientalist painter of fantasies, of caravans, bedouins, dancers', and later by traveller-photographers, producers of postcards 'pictures of beautiful, more or less scantily clad "fatimas" across which ... soldiers and short-stay residents inscribed their messages'.

For Djébar, the medium of film presented an escape from the mono-lingual restrictions of the printed word and a means for Algerian women to emerge from being objects of desire to become desiring, speaking subjects. Djébar, as a woman film-maker, appropriated the camera and filmed the return of her character, Lila, from the confinement of her marriage to her own native region, showing her learning to see and finding a voice. The camera's eye follows Lila's eyes as she exchanges glances and words with the rural women, women from Djébar's own clan speaking in their own everyday language. These experiments then informed her writing, the short texts of 'Women of Algiers in their Apartment', for example, restoring 'the conversation between women' silenced by the colonial gaze of the famous painting by Delacroix.

In her book, *L'Amour, la fantasia*, Djébar interweaves French written military *mémoires* of conquest, often portraying Algeria itself as feminine, silent and sensual, with her autobiographical narrative and the transcribed spoken testimonies of Algerian women, whose Arabic and Berber stories had traditionally been transmitted other than through the written word. Djébar's literary text is an attempt to reproduce the immediacy and integrity of these voices. Her own story emerges as she writes of her education into French, her 'stepmother tongue', yet Djébar's narrator is acutely aware of the contradiction of writing in the

former enemy's language. In translating into written French the vitality of the women's speaking voices, she is covering their bodies again in written French. 'Can I twenty years later, claim to revive these stifled voices? And speak for them? Shall I not find at best dried-up streams? What ghosts will be conjured up when... I see the reflection of my own barrenness, my own aphasia?'

In *Le Blanc de l'Algérie*, Djébar mourns the premature disappearance of Algerians, writers, artists, teachers, who have been persecuted, suffocated, pushed to suicide and shot down by a desperate terror: Josie Fanon, Tahar Djaout, Abdelkader Alloula among them. 'Le blanc' evokes the beautiful whiteness of Algiers but also the ritual whiteness of mourning and the blank page. She speaks of the coupling of writing and death, of the white shroud that covers the dead, of the whiteness of loss, absence, longing and emptiness. Thus Algeria is for the moment a place of agony without the possibility of writing: 'l'Algérie de la douleur, sans-écriture; pour l'instant, une Algérie sang-écriture, hélas!'

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Visions capitales*

Julia Kristeva, Paris, Editions de la réunion des musées nationaux,  
Series: Parti pris 1998.

FF 190 2 7118 3668 1, p/b

This wonderful and lavishly illustrated book was published to accompany a small exhibition at the Louvre, April–July 1998. The theme of the exhibition was severed heads—interpreted in the most liberal sense, from paintings of the literally decapitated St. John the Baptist to portraits showing the head of the sitter ‘cut off’ at the neck. The title of the book could be loosely translated as ‘Scenes of Decapitation’.

Kristeva writes about art as a psychoanalyst, with an implicit thesis about the parallel between phylogeny and ontogeny, in which the history of human development is repeated in each individual developmental history. She is proposing to reconstruct simultaneously, via the image, the narrative of human (pre)history and the narrative of individual development from infant to adult. The evolution of the image goes from literal human sacrifice, to internalisation of it, to reproduction in an artwork. It corresponds, she argues, to the evolution of interior psychic space.

The itinerary which Kristeva traces starts in Palaeolithic times with the skull cults. Originally used in ritual cannibalism, skulls were later decorated, covered with plaster and moulded, or used as ritual drinking cups. Perhaps, Kristeva suggests, religious and aesthetic motivations were not distinguished. The next major landmark is constituted in Greek antiquity by the figure of Medusa, who is the key mythical figure in Kristeva’s account: ‘the patron goddess of artists?’ (40). After that comes Byzantium and the icon; Kristeva manages to trace a direct line of descent from the figure of the Medusa to the icon (in which the head of Christ ends at the neck, ‘severing’ it from the body). This leads into a discussion of Christian art, inaugurated by representations of John

the Baptist, the 'figure of Figure' (71), and a discussion of the redemptive value of decapitation in Jewish history (e.g. David and Goliath, Judith and Holofernes) which provides many of the narratives informing the paintings. Finally we come to the modern period, first the humanist era, where representations of historical massacres replace those of religious subjects, and then, last of all, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the move away from narrative towards less representational art, which is still, in Kristeva's opinion, concerned with the issues that inform the earlier periods discussed. She comments that the cinema, particularly the thriller, has taken over the role formerly fulfilled by religious or public art.

Kristeva does not think talent or technique are irrelevant; far from it. But in her vision, formal considerations are ways of finding fresh and original solutions to the problem of the management of fundamental human anxieties. Primarily these are anxieties concerned with death. Kristeva argues that from prehistoric rites to Picasso's women, representations serve to keep death at bay, momentarily triumphing over it, and over the death drive: 'The internalisation of mortality precedes the act of making a picture and is indispensable to its realisation' (29). Art is a way of sublimating violence, not only for the artist, but also for the beholder, or the collectivity. The more or less repressed or mastered violence of individuals is relieved by representations of violence (81). A second—and connected—source of anxiety is the fear of the feminine, the terrors aroused by the archaic mother, and male castration anxiety. Most of the discussion of the Medusan myth centres around the latter.

The parallel between phylogeny and ontogeny allows Kristeva to argue that classical art still has a resonance for us, even though we are no longer steeped in the classical and biblical stories that it depicts; we recognise ourselves in it because of the endlessly recapitulated drama of the struggle with fearful infantile anxieties, in which everyone must engage in order to grow up. Damien Hirst's installations of rotting meat continue the same struggle.

Images, then, are triumphs over archaic terrors. Kristeva's argument is that, by mediating and sublimating the terrors or fears of death or castration, the represented image is perhaps our only remaining link with the sacred which, in the modern world has become rather tenuous: the absence of the sacred leads to the technology of the robot (153). Technological rationality turns its back on the sacred, while the modern absence of the sacred leaves us relatively more exposed to the dangers of violence. If archaic phantasies are not given a representable shape or form, they are liable to overwhelm us or get acted out; frequent references to literal decapitations, in Biafra, Vietnam, Rwanda or Algeria indicate what Kristeva sees as the consequences of unmediated phantasy. If we coincide with our violent phantasies, the effect is deadly. But if there is a gap, an interval of thought, allowing reflection or representation, we can move on. Hence Kristeva's stress on the need for a *passage* between invisible and visible worlds. The phantasy, which cannot be seen, is evoked by the line on the page, the colour, the brush-stroke. Art connects us to the inner world of the feelings; drawings are not *copies* of the visible world, she says, but intimations of something subjective: inner sensibility, spirituality, even soul. On this account, art becomes the last—fragile and precarious—barrier against the unlimited possibilities of violence and massacre provided by modern technology in the service of an unsublimated death drive.

Most of the named artists are male (Artemisia Gentileschi is one notable exception). It is only comparatively recently, it seems, that women have acceded to the representation of their own specific fear of death and the terrors of abjection and the archaic mother. However, Kristeva does mention in particular the role of women psychoanalysts (Melanie Klein, Sabina Spielrein, Marion Milner, Piera Aulagnier) in exploring and conceptualising the catastrophic violence of psychosis, and the major place occupied by women in the crime and thriller genres—Agatha Christie, Patricia Highsmith and Patricia Cornwell are the authors she cites, but of course one can think of plenty of others. As women begin to emerge *en masse* as actors and protagonists, in a way

unimaginable in earlier periods of history, they will need to confront their own potential for violence. (This is a theme which Kristeva first explored in 'Women's Time'.) One of the areas which Kristeva's essay gestures towards—although she does not elaborate on it herself—is that of women artists' relation to the death drive.

This brief essay is immensely rich and fertile, and it is impossible to summarise all the connections made, the vistas opened up, and the provocative theories offered, sketched often in no more than an aside or an allusion. As usual, Kristeva's scholarship is unbelievably wide-ranging, and I am not competent to assess it. But read with the imagination, this is an essay that provides a feast of ideas and speculations from a theorist at the height of her powers.

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### ***A Companion to Feminist Philosophy***

**Alison M. Jaggar & Iris Marion Young (eds) Blackwell, 1998**

**h/b £75 1 5578 6659 7, p/b £17.99 0 6312 2067 4**

The *Companion to Feminist Philosophy* aims to offer a broad overview of the wide range of philosophical topics developed and discussed by feminist philosophers. The volume is substantial in size (over 700 pages), evidence of the range of philosophical work undertaken in the area. It is one of a series of *Companions to Philosophy*, ranging from the traditional areas of philosophy such as *A Companion to Epistemology* and *A Companion to Metaphysics* to the less familiar areas (for Anglo-American thinkers, at least) of *A Companion to World Philosophies* and *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*. The volume demonstrates that feminist philosophy rightly belongs with the philosophical corpus rather than exclusively, or even primarily, with women's studies, which can result in marginalisation.

The editors of the volume, Jaggar and Young, have produced a valuable resource for teachers and students alike. The volume is breathtaking in its scope. Fifty-eight survey articles, divided into ten sections,

range over feminist engagements with the traditionally demarcated areas of western philosophy from Ancient Greece to postmodernity as well as further afield, echoing the areas covered by the other volumes of the *Companion* series. Articles on feminist philosophy in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe are included, alongside sections on the western canonical tradition, language, knowledge and nature, religion, subjectivity and embodiment, art, ethics, society, and politics. The extensive bibliography, a useful reference resource in its own right, attests to the wide range of feminist scholarship and contributions to philosophical thought and critique.

Those with a particular interest in the philosophy of art and aesthetics may be disappointed that relatively little space is devoted to this specific area. Questions of race, gender, language, sexuality, embodiment, subjectivity, equality and values are all taken up within various strands of feminist philosophy and they are all represented in the volume. But these are also questions which figure prominently in the complex articulation of aesthetics, philosophy of art and art history and this contested field is not fully reflected in the discussion of aesthetics. The section on art comprises only two articles, one on aesthetics and one on film theory, so that related issues have to be excavated by the reader from the other sections. The essay on aesthetics by Cornelia Klinger is, however, excellent.

Klinger plots the path of the feminist engagement with aesthetics over approximately two decades. She shows that engagement, prompted by the exclusion of women from the activities and institutions of artistic production and criticism, starting with an interrogation of aesthetic ideology which exposes the occluded 'masculinism' of the humanism which lies at its heart. She outlines the response of the gynocentric feminisms of the 1970s, the positing of a 'feminine aesthetic', and the critical take on this position developed by feminist thinkers in the 1980s. She concludes with the historical perspective of the 1990s which denaturalises social institutions and cultural artefacts and, by extension, the relationship of artist to world.

A significant issue raised by Klinger is the intransigence of the problem of the masculine standpoint at the heart of aesthetic ideology as leading ineluctably to the question of the desirability and possibility of a 'feminine aesthetic', a question which finds two major trajectories in the 1970s feminist thought. The trajectories are, firstly, an attempt at a radical rejection of any aesthetic ideology and, secondly, the reconstruction, in counterpoint, of an aesthetic ideology from a feminine perspective which would value the lived experience of women. Both of these approaches are found to raise as many questions as they answer. The first can only ignore questions which remain of interest in the philosophy of art and aesthetics to feminist and mainstream thinkers alike. The second starts to collapse into the position of an essentialism and to look like a new species of an old and familiar philosophical fiction which identifies and fixes the different natures of women and men. In addition, or in consequence, it ignores, or occludes, the rich variety of women's artistic production. The problem which now faces feminist thinkers in this field is how to think 'beyond feminine aesthetics' in terms of the possibility of a feminist aesthetic theory which does not rest ultimately on any essentialising concept of the feminine.

Klinger's article constitutes a wide-ranging, well-contextualised and well-crafted survey of material which crosses the Continental/Anglo-American divide (echoing the volume as a whole). With the teaching of aesthetics or philosophy of art in mind, the article suggests many equally interesting starting places as it provides a fairly broad context for a cluster of important issues. It should also stimulate discussion and provide references for 'primary source' reading in areas specified for further study where students can engage with feminist philosophy in progress.

The editors start from the position of an important refusal to bind feminist philosophy to a 'particular set of propositions or methodological conditions', and their introduction provides an opening onto the on-going debate concerning the delineation of feminist philosophy. And yet, the editors describe feminist philosophy, as it is often defined

in Anglo-American publications, as 'a body of scholarship which began in the early 1970s as one branch of the women's studies movement'. This is, indeed, one way of telling the story, but it is problematical, not least because it disguises the rather different continental trajectory which resists such a correlation with women's studies. We also need to consider whether such an understanding can pursue 'the modest goal of ending the invisibility of women in much disciplinary knowledge' as it may fail to allow for a more fully historicised reading of earlier feminist writings.

The articles in the volume do not, in general, reflect any strict Anglo-American/ Continental divide but display a rich mix, eloquent of the range of feminist engagements and interventions in philosophy. If the lack of synchronism between the Anglo-American and Continental traditions of feminist thought persists this can be understood as thought-provoking rather than as a limitation. The *Companion* should be a valuable addition to any philosopher's library and I hope that it will encourage those teaching in mainstream areas to make use of the contributions of feminist thinkers to our discipline. It should also be of significant interest to those engaged in women's studies and cultural studies.

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### ***Aesthetics: The Big Questions***

**Carolyn Korsmeyer (ed.) Blackwell, 1998.**

**h/b £65 0 631 20593 4, p/b £16.99 0 631 20594 2**

This volume is edited by a philosopher who is well known for her feminist approach to aesthetics: Carolyn Korsmeyer. The volume is intended to introduce students to aesthetics and the philosophy of art and promises to offer 'coverage of the Anglo-American tradition of philosophy as well as the kinds of questions and challenges that it confronts today'. It does so by organising its entries into six sections each addressing what the above tradition has established as 'the most basic issues of aesthetics'. In addition to the general introduction, each of the

sections is prefaced with a useful introduction which indicates that while the questions may all be familiar, the content is by no means 'conventional'.

Thus the collection introduces new arguments into the examination of these familiar questions and at the same time provides students of aesthetics with extracts from the analytical tradition alongside classical texts from the history of aesthetics and feminist analyses.

The volume includes many traditional extracts such as those from Plato, Sophocles, Aristotle, Burke, Hume and Kant, and some less commonly included such as Nietzsche, Gadamer, Bourdieu and Foucault, although there is no Baumgarten, Schiller, Hegel, Adorno or Benjamin; no Freud or Lacan; no Derrida or Kristeva. The collection also includes articles by key writers in analytic aesthetics such as John Dewey and Arthur C. Danto including articles by female writers such as Marcia Eaton, Iris Murdoch and Martha Nussbaum. However it also includes several key feminist writers on aesthetics rarely included in such anthologies: Christine Battersby, Linda Nochlin, Hilde Hein, Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock. What is perhaps most striking is that one third of the contributors are women. Moreover, female writers are included in every one of the six sections—demonstrating female scholarship in all areas of aesthetics and feminist contributions to most of the central questions—not merely adding such works in a separate section under the title of 'feminist approaches'.

The volume opens with the traditional question: 'What is Art?', and groups together texts, most of which have been previously published, in response to this and the subsequent questions, on: audience and reception, aesthetic value, art and understanding, the tragic, the sublime and the horrible and finally the role of the artist. While the questions are all familiar to readers of analytic aesthetics, Korsmeyer's choice of articles makes this volume more inclusive than most traditional anthologies. In including Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock's essay, which seeks to expose the gendered hierarchy of traditional art and in particular the distinction between art and certain domestic crea-

tive activities practiced by women, classed as mere craft, under the section 'What is Art?', Korsmeyer introduces the issue of gendered tradition into the heart of the problem. Similarly, in introducing Christine Battersby's extract from *Gender and Genius*, arguing that the concept of genius is exclusionary, particularly of women, into the question 'Where is the Artist in the work of Art?', Korsmeyer suggests that we need to look at the tradition itself more critically.

In the section 'Experience and Appreciation: How Do We Encounter Art?' Korsmeyer includes an essay by Carol Duncan who argues that despite its formalist claims 'mainstream modernism' serves particular cultural and political purposes. She sees the modernist story of the struggle of individual artists to free themselves from representation, from the material world, and to achieve greater subjectivity and artistic freedom, as inseparable from the recurrent images of female bodies or parts of female bodies. She argues that 'the collection's recurrent images of sexualised female bodies actively masculinise the museum as a social environment'. The modern art museum thus understood is 'a ritual of male transcendence' and a place for the legitimisation of 'male sexual fantasy as high culture', and the iconoclasm of modern art attributed in part to the male flight from menacing women.

Karen Hanson's 'Dressing Down Dressing Up: The Philosophic Fear of Fashion' argues that despite the early associations of aesthetics with discourses of the body, of beauty, the senses and affections, the feminine to reason's masculinity, philosophy has treated personal appearance with disdain. She presents this as a result of philosophers casting themselves as the cognisers, whose aim is to know, not to be known. An interest in dress and fashion however depends on 'a recognition that one is *seen*, that one is—among other things—an *object* of others' sight, others' cognition'. Hanson sees it as a particularly feminist task to draw attention to the fact that 'we humans *are* seen—no one is really just a seer' and to help in the escape from the active/passive, masculine/feminine distinction but also to help philosophy to be 'brought to terms with our embodiment'.

The texts clustered at the end of the volume provide a glimpse of a wider world. W. Msosa Mwale draws on performance theory, cultural studies and identity discourse to examine a Likhuba dance performance from Southern Malawi. Michael Baxandall uses the example of Piero della Francesca's *Baptism of Christ* to argue against relying on assumptions about artistic intention when considering cultures or periods remote from our own. Bruno Nettl examines musical thought from an ethnomusicological perspective, taking as his examples songs of the Native American Blackfoot people, the classical music of Iran and contemporary myths about Mozart. These texts draw our attention to cultural diversity and difference and thus serve to highlight the need to challenge the universalising impulses of philosophy and philosophical aesthetics. In so doing they also hint at wider debates in postcolonial theory. The essays can be seen to function as a critique of the ahistorical and ethnocentric nature of several contributions in the volume whose focus is more traditional.

Carolyn Korsmeyer has produced a very useful anthology which will undoubtedly become a well used textbook for students of aesthetics and a valuable source of otherwise less readily accessible texts. It is regrettable that the introductory essays do not offer sufficient information to enable students easily to place the authors and their texts in their historical or geographical specificity. However, the volume is radical in enriching the discipline and Korsmeyer has made the presence of women scholars and feminist theory in philosophy felt in fundamental ways. While *Aesthetics: The Big Questions* perhaps inevitably embodies many of the contradictions that still persist, it is also representative of the emergence of approaches to philosophy that do not presume their own universality and ahistoricity and is thus to be welcomed.

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