

A DISCUSSION *READER*

JUNE 13, JUNE 21, JULY 19 AND JULY 26, 2015

JEN LIU AND MEREDYTH SPARKS

A Discussion

Jen Liu and Meredyth Sparks

3:00 – 6:00pm on June 13, 21 and July 19 and 26

RSVP to ism@parmer.info necessary: readings and links will be sent one week in advance of meetings.

A Discussion continues Jen Liu and Meredyth Sparks' exploration of current feminist discourse through a series of screenings, readings and conversations centered on artistic production. Central to these discussions is a (re)thinking of art history through the lens of feminist concerns: what are the possibilities, processes, implications of reclamation, recovery, and rewriting, and relationships and responsibilities to preceding artists. Through historical and contemporary texts, images, film and video, we will address four thematic categories – *Misattribution (Claiming)*, *Following*, *Forgetting*, and *Future TBD* – as guides for specific selections of material and initiators of broader exchange. We will consider attempts to integrate 'recovered' female artists into the historical canon, the implications of correcting misattributions of artworks, and the complicated relationship of second and third wave practices and personae to contemporary art discourses and expanded/intersectional identity positions. Readings and links will be sent one week in advance of meetings and attendance is by RSVP to ism@parmer.info for the whole series, or individual sessions.

June 13, Misattribution (Claiming)

Misattribution starts with the structural problems that arise in attempts to integrate "recovered" artists into the canon and to "correct" the record. When we claim originary status to the work of female artists of the past, how does it alternately affect the perception of the individual corpus and/or the canon?

June 21, Following

In Following, we will discuss our complicated relationship to 2nd and 3rd Wave discourses and aesthetics, whether it is characterized by cooperation, competition, homage or hostility. While it is crucial to discuss the work of artists that have come before, this session will explore the difficulties in revisiting some of these works, which strike at the heart of what was/is/should be and could be feminist.

July 19, Forgetting

Forgetting will focus on issues around the act of forgetting as a possible proactive necessity. What are the psychological and intellectual stakes of forgetting, as questions of worth get linked to the advance of future possibilities? As practitioners, we are largely left to determine what is to be preserved and discarded, a position that is fraught with problematic responsibilities.

July 26, Future TBD

Future TBD will follow through on any loose threads from prior sessions, while orienting us towards future paths in discourse and identity. We will solicit prior attendees for suggestions, while anchoring ourselves with pieces and texts that seem to look forward while keeping an eye on the past.

MISSATtribution (CLAIMING)

JUNE 13, 2015

READINGS:

Griselda Pollock, *Differencing The Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writings of Art's Histories*, Routledge (London and New York), 1999, pp. 23-29

Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada and Everyday Modernity, A Cultural Biography*, MIT (Cambridge), 2002, pp. 218-227

Alastair Gordon, *House of Usher: Eileen Gray, Le Corbusier and the Strangely Twisted Fate of E. 1027*, Wall to Wall, posted January 27, 2014

<http://alastairgordonwalltowall.com/2014/01/27/house-of-usher-eileen-gray-le-corbusier-and-the-strangely-twisted-fate-of-e-1027/>

VISUALS:

Fountain, Marcel Duchamp (Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven), 1917, porcelain urinal:
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/nov/07/duchamp-elsa-freytag-loringhoven-urinal-sexual-politics-art>

E. 1027, Eileen Gray, 1926-1929, villa in Roquebrun-Cap-Martin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TT1HJMpkMFI>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iN_5nqb1oAQ

DIFFERENCING THE CANON

Feminist Desire and the
Writing of Art's Histories

GRISELDA POLLOCK



London and New York

2

DIFFERENCING

Feminism's encounter with the canon

Feminism's encounter with the canon has been complex and many-levelled: political, ideological, mythological, methodological and psycho-symbolic. I want to lay out a number of different strategies which correspond to the related but also contradictory positions of feminism's encounter with the canon since the women's movement in the early 1970s first entered the culture wars. These different positions represent tactical moments, each as necessary as they are contradictory, while the accumulation of our practices and thinking is beginning to produce a critical and strategic dissonance from art history that allows us to imagine other ways of seeing and reading visual practices than those locked into the canonical formation.

THREE POSITIONS

Position one

Feminism encounters the canon as a structure of exclusion.

The immediate task after 1970 was the absolute need to rectify the gaps in historical knowledge created by the consistent omission of women of all cultures from the history of art (Fig. 2.1).¹ The only place where work by a woman might be glimpsed was in the basement or storeroom of a national gallery.² The recurring shock of discovery that there have been women artists at all, and so many and such interesting ones, which we as teachers, lecturers and writers regularly witness with each new class of students or new audience for our lectures on women artists, is proof of the reiterating need for this basic research. Evidence of women's uninterrupted involvement in the fine arts is still the fundamental step in exposing the canon's selectivity and gender bias. Yet, despite the expanding volume of research and publications on artists who are women, Tradition remains *the* tradition with the women in their own special, separated compartments, or added as politically correct supplements. In the Story of Art *women* artists are an oxymoron, an incomprehensible addition, available in our post-feminist days, for those women disposed to be interested to read about such marginalia. The real history of art remains fundamentally unaffected because its

mythological and psychic centre is fundamentally or exclusively to do not with art and its histories but with the Western masculine subject, its mythic supports and psychic needs. The Story of Art is an illustrated Story of Man. To that end, and paradoxically, it needs constantly to invoke a femininity as the negated other that alone allows the unexplained synonymy of man and artist.

Yet, as the phrase 'Old Mistress', first used in 1972 by Ann Gabhart and Elizabeth Broun, so tellingly suggested, the exclusion of women is more than mere oversight.³ There is no equivalent term of value and respect for great *mistresses* of art comparable to the old *masters* who form the very substance of the canon. Structurally, it would be impossible to re-admit excluded women artists like Artemisia Gentileschi or Mary Cassatt to an expanded canon without either radical misunderstanding of their artistic legacy or radical change to the very concept of the canon as the discourse which sanctions the art we should study. The canon is politically 'in the masculine' as well as culturally 'of the masculine'. This statement does not in any way belittle the vitally important work that has been done in producing the research, documentation and analysis of women artists in anthologies, monographs and comprehensive surveys. The terms of the selective tradition render completely revising the neglect of women artists an impossible project because such revision does not grapple with the terms that created that neglect. So, after over twenty years of feminist work rectifying the gaps in the archive, we still face the question: How can we make the cultural work of women an effective presence in cultural discourse which changes both the order of discourse and the hierarchy of gender in one and the same deconstructive move?

Position two

Feminism encounters the canon as a structure of subordination and domination which marginalises and relativises all women according to their place in the contradictory structurations of power – race, gender, class and sexuality.

In response to not only exclusion but systematic devaluation of anything aesthetic associated with women, feminists have tried to valorise practices and procedures particularly practised by, or connected with, women that lack status in the canon, for instance art made with textiles and ceramics.⁴ Patricia Mainardi wrote in 1973:

Women have always made art. But for women the arts most highly valued by male society have been closed to them for just that reason. They have put their creativity instead into needlework arts which exist in a fantastic variety, and which are in fact a universal female art form transcending race, class and national borders. Needlework is the one art in which women controlled the education of their daughters and the production of art, and were also the critics and audience . . . it is our cultural heritage.⁵

Work on quilting, weaving and embroidery by women has exposed the troubled nature of the Western canon's attempt to valorise its fine art culture above all others by a hierarchy of means, media and materials. It has become more culturally advanced to make art with pigment and canvas, stone or bronze than with linen and thread, wool or clay and pigment. Feminists, however, have argued that textiles are both the site of profound cultural value beyond mere utilitarian usage and the site of the production of meanings that traverse culture as a whole: religious, political, moral, ideological. Thus the canonical division between intellectual and manual art forms, between truly creative and merely decorative practices, has been challenged on behalf of not only Western women but non-Western cultures in general. By showing the ways in which the art of embroidery, once the most valued cultural form of medieval ecclesiastical culture, was progressively deprofessionalised, domesticated and feminised, feminist art historians have exposed both the relativity of cultural valuations and the intimacy between value and gender.⁶

Such cultural practices that are typically downgraded because they are (mis)-identified with the domestic, the decorative, the utilitarian, the dexterous – that is with what patriarchal logic negatively characterises as quintessentially 'feminine' – appear as merely instances of difference, and paradoxically confirm (rather than afflict) the canonical – normative – status of other practices by men. This is a prime instance of being trapped in a binary where reverse valuation of what has hitherto been devalued does not ultimately breach the value system at all. None the less, feminist discourse on and from the position of marginalisation, interrupting art history by a political voice challenging hierarchies of value, does have subversive force. It gets entangled with the underlying structure I insist on drawing out: art is often a debate in disguised form about gender. So the basis of the revaluation of patchwork quilts and weaving is the shifted appreciation of the work and creativity of the domestic sphere, or of traditions of working-class female aesthetic choices and challenges. Inside the categorical division of the genders there is a realignment of what is aesthetically valued through determining more complex relations between art and the social experiences of its classed and gendered producers.

The difficulty remains, however, that, in speaking of and as women, feminism confirms the patriarchal notion that woman is the sex, the sign of gender, perpetually the particular and sexualised Other to the universal sign Man, who appears to transcend his sex to represent Humanity. This interest in art that stays close to the practices of everyday life also keeps this art tied to the realm of the Mother. The tropes of Other and Mother, always powerful resources for resistance, none the less trap us in a regressive compartment of a patriarchal narrative and mythicisation of Culture as the realm of the Father and the Hero. Thus to speak openly of the repressed question of gender is to confirm the dominant culture's worst suspicions that, if women are allowed to speak, all they can speak of is (their) sex.

Position three

Feminism encounters the canon as a discursive strategy in the production and reproduction of sexual difference and its complex configurations with gender and related modes of power.

Deconstructing discursive formations leads to the production of radically new knowledges which contaminate the seemingly 'ungendered' domains of art and art history by insisting that 'sex' is everywhere. The canon becomes visible as an enunciation of Western masculinity, itself saturated by its own traumatised sexual formation. The key difference from position two is this. In the same gesture as we confirm that sexual difference structures women's social positions, cultural practices and aesthetic representations, we also sexualise, hence de-universalise, the masculine, demanding that the canon be recognised as a gendered and an *en-gendering* discourse.⁷ Not a matter of reverse sexism, this third strategy overcomes sexism and its straight inversion by naming the structures which implicate both men and women because they produce masculinity and femininity relatively, suppressing, in the same move, the complexity of sexualities that defy this model of sex and gender. The feminist interruption of the naturalised (hetero)sexual division identifies the structures of difference on which the canon is erected by examining its mechanisms for maintaining only *that* difference – woman as Other, sex, lack, metaphor, sign, etc.

This third position no longer operates within art history as an internal contestant or corrective to the discipline. Its purposes are not equity. It does not aim at only more women in the art history books or at better coverage for decorative as well as fine arts (position one). Nor, however, does it operate outside, or in the margins, a voice for women's absolute difference, valorising the feminine sphere (position two). It implies a shift from the narrowly bounded spaces of art history as a disciplinary formation into an emergent and oppositional signifying space we call the women's movement which is not a place apart but a movement across the fields of discourse and its institutional bases, across the texts of culture and its psychic foundations.

The play on the word 'movement' allows us to keep in mind the political collectivity in which feminist work must be founded and, at the same time, it enables us to refuse containment in a category called feminism. Feminism will not just be one more approach in the chaotic pluralisation to which a threatened art history desperately turns in the hope of maintaining its hegemony by tactical incorporation. The notion of movement is also associated with that of the eye as it reads a text: re-vision in Adrienne Rich's terms. Reading has become a charged signifier of a new kind of critical practice, re-reading the texts of our culture symptomatically as much for what is not said as for what is. Meaning is produced in the spaces between, and that is what we are moving across canons, disciplines and texts to hear, see and understand anew. It is precisely through these movements between disciplinary formations, between academe and street, between social and cultural, between intellectual and political, between semiotic

and psychic, that women were able to grasp the interrelations between the dominant formations around sexuality and power which inform but are mystified by the outward and visible signs of a discipline's or practice's particular habits and professional procedures.

Thus from the novel space and connections between women practising in many fields created by the formation of the women's movement, feminists intervene in art history to generate expanded forms for art's histories.⁸ I study some of the same objects as the canonical art historian – Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas, Manet – as well as those ignored by art history: Artemisia Gentileschi, Mary Cassatt, Lubaina Himid. I use some of the same procedures and analyse some of the same documents. But I work in and on another domain of study which produces a different object. Michel Foucault defined a discourse not by the given things it studies but through the objects discourse produces. Thus, art history is not merely to be understood as the study of the artistic artefacts and documents left deposited in the present by time. Art history is a discourse in so far as it creates its object: art and the artist. From the 'space off' of feminism, I do not confirm the mystical status of the art object nor the theological concept of the artist that are the central projects of art historical discourse. The terrain I explore is the socio-symbolic process of sexuality and the constitution of the subject in sexual difference, itself within the field of history, as it shapes and is shaped in a history of aesthetically crafted visual representations. The phrase 'the subject in difference' moves us beyond some fixed idea of masculinity or femininity towards the dynamic process of subjectivity as socially, historically constituted at the level of the psycho-symbolic which is the level at which cultures are inscribed upon each sexed, speaking person.

History is traditionally conceived in terms of rapidly changing, event-led developments. The *Annales* school of French historians, however, turned their attention to the impact, on social and cultural life, of factors that have a long duration, like climate, geographical location, food production, established culture and folklore. Many things which, because of their extended temporality, seem to be unhistorical can thus be differently understood as, none the less, historical. Julia Kristeva has taken up this challenge in thinking about the issues of sexual difference and their inscription through psychic formations that have such long histories – like the phallogentric order in the West – that they come to appear as natural and unchangeable givens.⁹ Freud's theories of subjectivity and sex are often deemed to be universalist and ahistorical for the same reasons. Clearly sexuality and subjectivity have histories on several planes and temporalities – changing under the force of immediate social, political and economic upheaval, while, at other levels, remaining more constant.¹⁰ Feminism – a product of a modernist historical conjuncture dating actively from the mid-nineteenth century – has a *longue durée* in that we are still, at the end of the twentieth century, attending to its unfinished business: the modernisation of sexual difference that has gone through several phases from philosophical to political and now on to the corporeal, the sexual, the semiotic and the psychological. But that attempted modernisation could also be read as a new chapter in the history of ancient structures of sexual difference. Feminist

theory in its contemporary complexity rooted in its historical legacies is now able to imagine and fashion a challenge to the *longue durée* of the deep structures of patriarchal or phallogocentric systems the world over that have reigned so long that they have come to appear as a 'fact of nature'. This is why one major partner in feminist interventions in historiography and art history is psychoanalysis. It has become the provisionally necessary theoretical resource within modernity that enables us to operate on the cusp of these intersecting if often extended temporalities of sex, subjectivity and difference.

According to psychoanalytical discourse, each subject, each sex, each identity passes through processes and structures of differentiation that are, however, figured in cultural representation from language to art, as separate positions, as fixed sexes, as distinct identities that need no production. Moving away from the representation of innate, anatomically or biologically determined difference to the ever unstable and unravelling processes of psychological and semiotic *differentiation*, with the always dynamic play of subjectivity, creates the space for a feminist differencing of canonicity, which is an element in the larger politics of differencing current orders of sexual difference.

If this engagement with histories of the subject and theories of its sexing enables us to destabilise the illusory image of the masculine subject, it also undoes any comparable myth of femininity, the idea that femininity is or has an essence, that it is the opposite of masculinity, that the feminine is in any way less conflicted or desiring. For the feminine subject, by definition, must be just as much a complex, ambivalent, contradictory and precarious subjectivity as the masculine. At times both share comparable processes in their archaic formation. Yet they are subject to marks of distinction where a culture already erected on the difference of sex anticipates as yet unformed subjects with fixed and fixing expectations. These cultural signs of a particular system of sexual difference feminist analysis takes as its cue for its contest with phallogocentrism. Yet far from simply repudiating all signs of femininity and feminine difference as the effect of a phallogocentric system, feminism also recognised in the variations, labelled feminine, of the trajectories that lead to the (unstable) sexing of subjectivity, the sources of pleasure in and for the feminine and the articulation of specifically oppositional feminine desires.

There are, of course, femininities in the plural rather than femininity *tout court*. The encounter between feminist readings and the canon must disorder the familiar regime of difference, but neither in the name of liberal sameness (we are all human beings) nor in terms of an absolute and fundamental difference (men versus women). (What men? and what women?) The project of a feminist critique is undertaken in the name of those who suffer most the effects of a regime of difference which demands its price of all the subjects it constitutes. Those living under the sign of Woman, marked 'feminine', have a special investment in the deconstruction of phallogocentrism, and a particular purpose in the expanded understanding of all subjectivities and their social conditions to which feminist re-readings contribute. The term 'feminine' can thus be radically understood to signal both the negated other of the phallogocentric model – an

absence – and the as yet uncharted potentiality of what is beyond the phallogentric imagination – an enlargement. The feminine is, therefore, both a ‘difference from’ the norm and the signifier of a potentially *differing* structure of subjectivity.

Feminist interventions must involve a materialist and social conception of what Gayle Rubin has called ‘the political economy of sex’.¹¹ Equally, by addressing the social also by means of subjectivity as process, we need to attend to an interrelated but irreducible domain theorised by psychoanalysis – the psycho-symbolic domain.¹² The subject of this theory is split, conscious and unconscious, and is formed through its involvement with the use of symbols, namely language, that radically separates it from its own never fully known materiality. The subject is an accumulation of losses and separations which cast it adrift from the mother’s body and space, creating, in that division, retrospective fantasies about wholeness, unity and undifferentiation. It is here that the terror of difference first marks the masculine subject with an anxiety towards the other, signified by the feminine. The division from the process of its becoming a subject which is marked by accession to the Symbolic domain of language, each culture shaping that in specific ways, generates another signifying space, which always accompanies the speaking subject. This Freud named the unconscious. The unconscious is the active determining location for all that is repressed from the long and arduous journey the individual undertakes to become a subject, within sex and language. What is not admitted to consciousness by the regulated order of the culture, its Symbolic order, is reshaped by its transformation into the other signifying regime that characterises the unconscious, known to us only through dreams, slips of the tongue and in incomplete repression surfacing within aesthetic practices. In turn, the repressed becomes a kind of structuring unconscious of the subject – who, as a result of both the cultural unconscious embodied in the language to which the subject accedes, and because of its individual unconscious produced by its singular familial and social history, lives in a paradoxical condition of perpetually not knowing what it is, yet filled with illusions and representations which fabricate an identity that remains ignorant of its real conditions of existence.

ABOUT DIFFERENCE AND *DIFFÉRANCE*

Difference, sociologically defined as gender difference, and more recently conceived as a psychic and linguistic position through psychoanalysis as sexual difference, has played a vital role in feminist theory. Difference signifies division between ‘men’ and ‘women’ resulting in a hierarchy in which those placed within the social category of the female gender or assigned the psycho-linguistic position as feminine are negatively valued relative to the masculine or ‘men’. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida has invented a new term, *différance*, to draw out two meanings in the French verb *différer*: ‘On the one hand, [*différer*] indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernibility; on the other, it expresses the interposition of delay, the interval of *spacing*, and *temporalizing* that puts off until “later” what is presently denied.’¹³ This is closer



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the gamut...from hedda to banquette
never...glorious one...having to my knowledge
taken advantage of any innocent word in our
and why? Iena, nativelllement
most perfect legs since Pabine Hall
so the old ducks say.
shall we phone for Lily?
salimbanoes are from HEAVEN
cest tout...ma chere...
TOTO...pay...WATTS...Pay
give us these gentlemen pay...who into PIKOUETTES
into handspins...standing upon shales
of wood...and upon
muscles of chalcidony
salimbanoes are from HEAVEN
beatrice...and murel
astarte of the SKATING rink
juco of the TIGHT wire
Tappets fill their own strings if having the
intelligence...of bea...
they pull them well
W...P...L...I said
salimbanoes are from HEAVEN
Franklin and Charles...muscles...muscles
George and dicky...lines...lines
salimbanoes are from HEAVEN
experience...without...explanation
everyone's rabbi...an...parent
I have a thousand mouthors
send us many another bandwagon...GOD
filled with salimbanoes like
Franklin and Charles
and ELIA
and TOTO
You have heard what I said
SALTIMBANAOES ARE STRAIGHT
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That's all
ALL
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Dance hellions all of you...lives...
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NEW YORK DADA:

You ask for authorization to name your periodical Dada. But Dada belongs to everybody. I know excellent people who have the name Dada. Mr. Jean Dada; Mr. Gaston de Dada; Fr. Picabia's dog is called Zizi de Dada; in G. Ribemont-Dessaigne's play, the pope is likewise named Zizi de Dada. I could cite dozens of examples. Dada belongs to everybody. Like the idea of God or of the tooth-brush. There are people who are very dada, more dada; there are dadas everywhere all over and in every individual. Like God and the toothbrush (an excellent invention, by the way).

Dada is a new type; a mixture of man, naphthalene, sponge, animal made of ebonite and beefsteak, prepared with soap for cleansing the brain. Good teeth are the making of the stomach and beautiful teeth are the making of a charming smile. Hallelujah of ancient oil and injection of rubber.

There is nothing abnormal about my choice of Dada for the name of my review. In Switzerland I was in the company of friends and was hunting the dictionary for a word appropriate to the sonnettes of all languages. Night was upon us when a green hand placed its ugliness on the page of Larousse—pointing very precisely to Dada—my choice was made. I lit a cigarette and drank a demitasse.

For Dada was to say nothing and to lead to no explanation of this offshoot of relationship which is not a dogma nor a school, but rather a constellation of individuals and of free facets.

Dada existed before us (the Holy Virgin) but one cannot deny its magical power to add to this already existing spirit and impulses of penetration and diversity that characterizes its present form.

There is nothing more incomprehensible than Dada.

Nothing more indefinable.

With the best will in the world I cannot tell you what I think of it.

The journalists who say that Dada is a pretext are right, but it is a pretext for something I do not know.

Dada has penetrated into every hamlet; Dada is the best paying concern of the day.

Therefore, Madam, be on your guard and realize that a really dada product is a different thing from a glossy label.

Dada abolishes "nuances." Nuances do not exist in words but only in some atrophied brains whose cells are too jammed. Dada is an anti "nuance" cream. The simple motions that serve as signs for deaf-mutes are quite adequate to express the four or five mysteries we have discovered within 7 or 8,000 years. Dada offers all kinds of advantages. Dada will soon be able to boast of having shown people that to say "right" instead of "left" is neither less nor too logical, that red and valise are the same thing; that $2765 = 34$; that "fool" is a merit; that yes = no. Strong influences are making themselves felt in politics, in commerce, in language. The whole world and what's in it has slid to the left along with us. Dada has inserted its syringe into hot bread, to speak allegorically into language. Little by little (large by large) it destroys it. Everything collapses with logic. And we shall see certain liberties we constantly take in the sphere of sentiment, social life, morals, once more become normal standards. These liberties no longer will be looked upon as crime, but as itches.

I will close with a little international song: Order from the publishing house "La Sirene" 7 rue Pasquier, Paris, DADAGLOBE, the work of dadas from all over the world. Tell your bookseller that this book will soon be out of print. You will have many agreeable surprises.

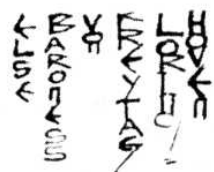
Read Dadaglobe if you have troubles. Dadaglobe is in press. Here are some of its collaborators:

Paul Citroen (Amsterdam); Baader Daimonides; R. Hausmann; W. Heartfield; H. Hoeh; R. Huelsenbeck; G. Grosz; Fried Hardy Worm (Berlin); Clement Pansaers (Bruxelles); Mac Robber (Calcutta); Jacques Edwards (Chili); Baargeld, Armada v. Dulgedalzen, Max Ernst, F. Haubrich (Cologne); K. Schwitters (Hammovre); J. K. Bousset (Leyde); Guillermo de Torre (Madrid); Gino Cantarelli; E. Bacchi, A. Flozzi (Mantoue); Kru-senitch (Moscon); A. Vagis (Munich); W. C. Arensberg, Gabrielle Buffet, Marcel Duchamp; Adon Lacroix; Baroness v. Loringhoven; Man Ray; Joseph Stella; E. Varese; A. Stieglitz; M. Hartley; C. Kahler (New York); Louis Aragon; C. Brancusi; André Breton; M. Buffet; S. Char-chonne; J. Grotti; Suzanne Duchamp; Paul Eluard; Benjamin Peret; Francis Picabia; G. Ribemont-Dessaigne; J. Rigaut, Soubeyran; Ph. Soupault; Tristan Tzara (Paris); Melchior Vis-cher (Prague); J. Evola (Rome); Arp; S. Taeuber (Zurich).

The incalculable number of pages of reproductions and of text is a guaranty of the success of the book. Articles of luxury, of prime necessity, articles indispensable to hygiene and to the heart, toilet articles of an intimate nature.

Such, Madame, do we prepare for Dadaglobe; for you need look no further than to the use of articles prepared without Dada to account for the fact that the skin of your heart is chapped; that the so precious enamel of your intelligence is cracking; also for the presence of those tiny wrinkles still imperceptible but nevertheless disquieting.

All this and much else in Dada-globe.
TRISTAN TZARA.



The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England



Freytag-Loringhoven [with Morton Livingston]
17. Plumbing trap on a carpenter's miter box.
Arensberg Collection, 10 1/2 in. Philadelphia

Prufrock" (1917), the pivotal modernist poem of diminished humanity and masculinity. Both are the products of exiled artists: Eliot, an American in Europe; the Baroness, a European in the United States. "Prufrock," too, presents a debating structure, a dialogue between "you" and "I." In a creepy Kafkaesque image, Prufrock morphs into insect "sprawling on a pin / When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall"; in another scene, he fantasizes himself with a "pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas," humanity transmorphing into shell-protected animalistic world.³⁵ Eliot had completed "Prufrock" in the summer of 1910, whereas

"Cast-Iron Lover" belongs more firmly in the war era. While Eliot's male Prufrock is subdued in tone and raises questions ("Do I dare to eat a peach?"),³⁶ the female Baroness shouts in capital letters, as a military officer might holler his commands to the troupe. She brutally assaults poetic conventions, while also displaying skilled prosody: "Chiselled lips harden—shellpale skin coarsens—toadblood OOZES/ in reddish pale palms [. . .]."³⁷ Blood's pulsating spurts are poetically evoked in plosive / p / sounds, while the liquid / l /'s and long vowels suggest the oozing of blood. Prosody reveals a heightened aural sensitivity in the midst of this violent poetry. Her predilection for archaic forms (*thou, mine soul, singeth, cometh, maketh*) further highlights the violence performed on traditional language.

Like Mina Loy's and Gertrude Stein's, her diction ultimately remains a dense thicket, oblique and impenetrable, yet unlike any other poet's her style is aggressive and excessive. An "unconscious volcano," is how the New York poet Maxwell Bodenheim described her style in his defense of "Cast-Iron Lover": "It is refreshing to see someone claw aside the veils and rush forth howling, vomiting, and leaping nakedly."³⁸ Or as the American literary critic Cary Nelson writes more recently, Freytag-Loringhoven's "poems open at a peak of intensity and yet their energy typically increases as the phrases reform and implode each other, with capitalized passages often taking over toward the end."³⁹ And like no other poem, "Cast-Iron Lover" blasts aesthetic tastes. Its unpoetically heavy metal imagery ultimately suggests that it was conceived close in time to the cast-iron plumbing sculpture *God* (1917).

START HERE

A pivotal art work in the annals of dada, the iconoclastic *God* (figure 8.3, plate 3) is strangely humanized in a twist of cast-iron bowls mounted on a miter box and pointing to heaven. Jones describes

the sculpture as a "penis/phallus [. . .] contorted into a pretzel of plumbing," while Michael Kimmelman in the New York Times sees "the loop of the trap as a cryptogram for the lowercase letters g-o-d."⁴⁰ Indeed, the very idea that God should produce quotidian bodily wastes dismantles the omnipotent deity of Western culture, for his power resides in his abstract bodylessness. Besides echoing the blissful scatology of the squatting, infantilized, and bowel-fixated cast-iron lover, the conception of this sacrilegious dada artwork returns us to the Baroness's childhood. Recall the religious conflicts between her mother and father, with her antireligious father taking the wind out of Ida's sails by equating the ritual of the nightly prayer with the constitutional visit to the toilet for urination, a scene discussed in chapter 1. Moreover, she wrote in her autobiographical poem "Analytical Chemistry of Fruit": "My bawdy spirit is innate/ Bequeathed through my papa/ His humour was crass—I am elected/ To be funny with corrupted taste."⁴¹ Indeed, she had appropriated her father's antireligious scatology, profanity, and obscenity for her dada art, repudiating feminine propriety.

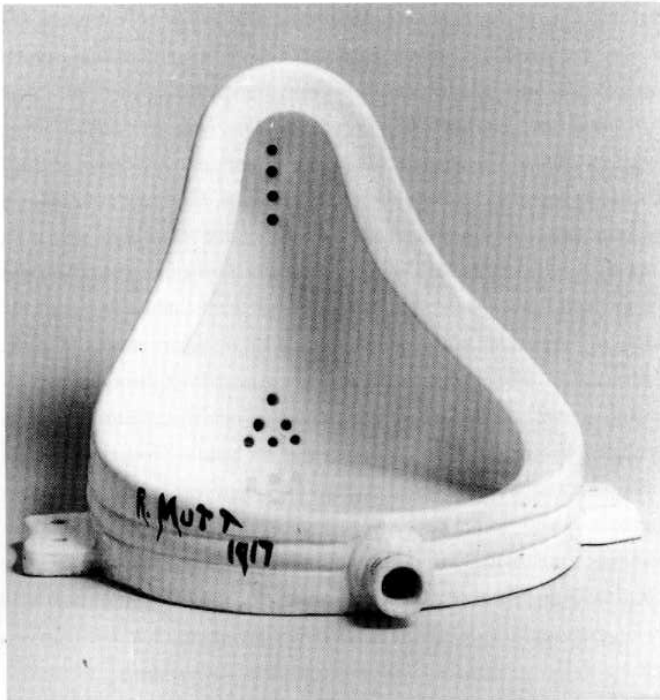
To gain deeper insight into the psychology of her art, let us briefly look ahead to George Biddle's visit to her tenement apartment on Fourteenth Street in Greenwich Village, where she would settle after her excursion to Philadelphia. As we enter her unusual living space, we find ourselves startled by the pungent perfume emanating from her museum studio and from her body. As Bidde recalled:

It was in an unheated loft on 14th Street. It was crowded and reeking with the strange relics which she had purloined over a period of years from the New York gutters. Old bits of ironware, automobile tires, gilded vegetables, a dozen starved dogs, celluloid paintings, ash cans, every conceivable horror, which to her tortured, yet highly sensitized perception, became objects of formal beauty. And, except for the sinister and tragic setting, it had to me quite as much

authenticity as, for instance, Brancusi's studio in Paris, that of Picabia, or the many exhibitions of children's work, lunatics' work, or dadaist and surrealist shows, which in their turn absorb the New York and Paris intellectuals.⁴²

Biddle called hers an "anal-acquisitive" type. Yet her personality is perhaps even more accurately described as "anal-expulsive"—that is, "messy and disorganized" rather than neat and clean—because she persistently ignored the conventional systems of order imposed by society.⁴³ Her dada attraction to society's quotidian wastes takes us back to the toddler's erotic pleasure in controlling the retention or expulsion of feces and to society's focus on regulating these functions with respect to place and time. Since toilet training functions as one of the earliest ways of social regulation and social order, dada's disruption of that social order is perhaps appropriately located in the realm of toilet matter, obscenity, and waste. As Picabia put it in a scatological dada joke that matched the Baroness's *God*: "Dieu nous aide et fait pousser le caca" (God helps us and makes excrement grow).⁴⁴

Originally *God* had been attributed to Morton Schamberg, who had photographed it, but recently it has been assigned to the Baroness. This is thanks to Francis M. Naumann, who has argued that *God* is out of character with Schamberg's sleek machine images, many of which decorated the walls of the Arensberg salon. Nor was the impeccably dressed Schamberg a likely candidate for fantasizing objects of waste and abjection into art objects. Schamberg's self-portrait shows him sitting on a chair posing in profile in suit, high collar, finely trimmed hair and moustache, slim hand delicately resting on the chair's back. Naumann concludes that Freytag-Loringhoven "probably came up with the idea of combining the extraneous elements in this sculpture, as well as of assigning the unusual title, while



Fountain, 1917 (1964 edition). Estate of
(Paris)/SODRAC (Montreal) 2001.

Schamberg was probably responsible only for mounting the assembly and for recording the work."⁴⁵ The details remain shrouded in mystery, but we know for a fact that Schamberg photographed *God* in front of his machine paintings and dated the print 1917.

The furor surrounding *God* has not abated since the work's inception in 1917. Though canonized in American art history, the sculpture remains controversial even today, as seen in a recent polemical debate about appropriate university curricula featured in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. "Presumably, slides of

classical nudes and mythological rapes may be freely shown and discussed," writes the American art history professor William B. Rhoads and continues: "But what about that notorious work of art, 'God' (1917), by the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven with Morton Schamberg, where the supreme deity is identified as mildly revolting plumbing trap? Will the fact that this disturbing object is owned by the Philadelphia Museum of Art make it acceptable for classroom viewing?"⁴⁶ Like the "Cast-Iron Lover," the sculpture housed in the Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art raises questions of borders and boundaries of acceptability, taste, and pedagogical value. And these questions extend to the entire canon of the Baroness's work, making her a pivotal figure in the debates of those boundaries. The artist Margaret Morgan calls *God* a "renegade object": "Eighty years after its emergence as a work of art, it has not collapsed into the beautiful. It stubbornly remains an ungainly object, a bit like the figure of the Baroness herself. Sacrilegious, impulsive, intelligent, she was all that was parodic, anarchic and truly, fabulously ridiculous in Dada."⁴⁷

God is a sister piece to Duchamp's sensually gleaming urinal, *Fountain* (1917) (figure 8.4), the scandalous *pièce de résistance* of the 1917 exhibition of the American Society of Independent Artists, where it sat on a pedestal, turned upside down and signed with the artist's name, R. Mutt. Thus displayed in April and May 1917, *Fountain's* toilet aesthetics detonated the unity of the vanguard itself, sparking a raging debate after Duchamp's colleagues, including his friend Katherine Dreier, refused to recognize the item as a legitimate work of art and requested that it be removed from the Independent Art Exhibition. In protest, Duchamp and Arensberg immediately resigned from their positions as directors of the society.⁴⁸

Fountain was a political test case for the democratic parameters established by the Independent Artists committee, as requested by the American reviewer Bolton Brown in the *New York*

Times on 17 February 1917: "The only further reform yet waiting the turning of the wheels of time is to abolish signatures on paintings and the publication of the artists' names in the catalogues."⁴⁹ Not only was *Fountain's* signature anonymous, it was deliberately androgynous, the initial R. making the gender ambivalent; when the initial is turned around and read phonetically, the pseudonym R. Mutt becomes Mutt R. or *Mutter* (*mother*) (Charles Demuth writes *Mutte*, in German phonetics the same as *Mutter*). Indeed, R. Mutt phonetically corresponds to *Urmutter* (great mother), the concept that so preoccupied the Munich Kosmiker and that anticipates Duchamp's later formulation that "[t]he artist is only the mother of art."⁵⁰ Read phonetically, R. Mutt also suggests most immediately the German *Armut* (poverty), the Baroness's chronic state of impoverishment, frequently referred to in her correspondence.⁵¹

This gender and linguistic blurring is all the more important if we consider William Camfield's study of the history of *Fountain* documenting that the provenance of this artwork remains shrouded in intriguing mystery: Did Duchamp buy it? Steal it? Or was it given to Duchamp? The authorship becomes even more complex in light of Duchamp's 11 April 1917 letter to his sister Suzanne informing her that *Fountain* was conceived by a friend:

[One of my female friends who had adopted the pseudonym Richard Mutt sent me a porcelain urinal as a sculpture; since there was nothing indecent about it, there was no reason to reject it.] Une de mes amies sous un pseudonyme masculin, Richard Mutt, avait envoyé une pissotière en porcelaine comme sculpture; ce n'était pas du tout indécemment aucune raison pour la refuser.⁵²

While it is possible that a bashful Duchamp was telling a white lie to his sister (but why make up so intricate a white lie in a personal letter?), it seems more plausible that his words are truthful. Camfield speculates that the female friend was a "shipping agent" and raises

this question: "Did she live in Philadelphia, since newspaper reports consistently identified Mutt as a Philadelphian? To date, no Philadelphia contact has been identified."⁵³ Yet if we consider that around this time, in the spring of 1917, as Biddle confirms, the Baroness was in Philadelphia, was involved in the 1917 conception of *God*, a piece focusing on bodily wastes, there emerges the question of whether the rabble-rousing Baroness may have had a hand in the mysterious *Fountain*. If this is the case, then this *pièce de résistance* must surely be seen as one of the most profoundly collaborative works in the annals of New York dada.

Indeed, while final evidence of the Baroness's involvement may be missing, there is a great deal of circumstantial evidence that points to her artistic fingerprint. Take the religious subtext that emerges in the subsequent discussions of *Fountain*, discussions involving a close-knit circle of Duchamp's friends, all of whom appear to be in the know, some also providing interviews to the media. In the May issue of *The Blindman*, Duchamp's friend Louise Norton discussed the piece under the heading "Buddha of the Bathroom." It was eventually rebaptized "Madonna of the Bathroom" when photographed by Stieglitz at his 291 gallery, where position and lighting change the *Fountain* into a silhouetted Madonna.⁵⁴ While this intriguing religious twist is not commensurate with Duchamp's work, as Camfield admits, it is a signature trait of the Baroness's work. Indeed, we come full circle to the Baroness's childhood memory: her antireligious father's highly idiosyncratic equation of religious worship with urination (prayer = going to the bathroom). This childhood association of religion with bathroom matters, embedded as it was in a memory of parental conflict, may have been posttraumatically reawakened in the conflictual tensions as the United States was entering the European war against Teutonic Germany. Ultimately, the association with the Buddha or the Madonna makes *Fountain* a sister piece to *God*.

If the urinal's provenance is Philadelphia, who transported it? Since Duchamp's friend Charles Demuth was commuting from Philadelphia on a weekly basis during this period,⁵⁵ might he have been persuaded by the Baroness to transport it and deliver it to Duchamp along with the instructions (just as the Baroness later persuaded Abbott to carry her dada fare to André Gide and cajole Man Ray and Gabrielle Picabia into carrying her dada submissions to Tristan Tzara)? In fact, Demuth appears to have been in the know, for he adds his defense of *Fountain* in the May issue of *The Blindman* ("When they stop they make a convention. / That is their end").⁵⁶ Indeed, Demuth, a gay man whose watercolor paintings document his curiosity about New York's homosexual spaces, would likely have associated the urinal with New York's gay subculture. For this gay viewer, the urinal as spatial icon would conjure up the so-called teahouse trade—the lavatories in subways, which were spaces of homosexual cruising and forbidden furtive pleasures. For the contemporary gay viewer, the public display of the urinal must have created a powerful spatial affect all the more politically charged, if we consider the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice's intensifying crusade against homosexuals and John Sumner's systematic raiding of gay spaces, including the lavatories. Demuth would have decoded *Fountain*'s profoundly subversive sexual message, a message further enhanced by the fact that the urinal was consistently described by viewers in sexual terms (as "gleaming," "glistening," often described as simultaneously "hard" and "soft," a none too subtle evocation of the erect penis as fluid-spurting *Fountain*).⁵⁷

There is further evidence that points to the Baroness's having had a hand (so to speak) in the *Fountain* case. The pseudonym Richard Mutt, referred to by Duchamp in his letter to his sister Suzanne, is consistent with the Baroness's fingerprint. We recall the earlier discussion of Elsa and Felix Paul Greve's collaborative pseudonym Fanny Essler, and Elsa will soon introduce herself to *The*

Little Review editors under the name Tara Osrik. Richard is the name of her father's elder brother, already used in *Maurermeister Ihle's Haus*, although Richard is admittedly also a common name—orthographically the same in French, English, and German. *Mutt* is the English word for a mixed-breed dog whose parentage is unknown (she had an unusually intensive attachment to dogs and had adopted several of them), which also explains the innocent metamorphosis from urinal to *Fountain*, as it becomes a water dish for the Mutt/dog. Moreover, she freely used the word "shitmutt" as a swearword and displayed a general fondness for urinal humor as seen in her designation of William Carlos Williams as "W. C." or Louis Gilmore as "'Loo' Gilmore."⁵⁸ Consider, moreover, the selection of a quotidian object spatially segregated as male, a sexually aggressive choice consistent with the Baroness's intrusions into space socially and juridically defined as male (as in her intrusion into the Naples museum's pornographic collection or her appropriation of the fake phallus). Add to that the late submission of *Fountain*, when the 28 March catalogue deadline was already past, a pattern fully consistent with the Baroness, who was notoriously late to all her appointments, often infuriating people waiting for her (in contrast to the sensitive and considerate Duchamp). Add further the information leaked to a Boston paper that "Mr. Mutt now wants more than his dues returned. He wants damages!"⁵⁹—a pattern in keeping less with Duchamp than with the Baroness, who frequently threatened to sue people to extort money (see chapter 11). Finally, many years later, when discussing "Duchamp's sculpture," Williams called it a "magnificent cast-iron urinal,"⁶⁰ a fascinating linguistic slippage, conflating Duchamp's work (urinal) with the Baroness's (cast-iron). While final evidence is missing, a great deal of circumstantial evidence suggests that if a female friend was involved in the conception of *Fountain*, the Baroness was probably that friend.

As for the Baroness herself, she unfortunately gives us few clues into this mystery. Her frequent identification with

Duchamp—"I am he," "I am him," "I possess his soul. I am m'ars teutonic"—proclaimed a unique artistic bond and cross-over that has been noted by scholars. Yet she disparagingly referred to Duchamp's "plumbing fixtures." "And m'ars came to *this country*—protected—carried by fame—to use his plumbing fixtures—mechanical comforts," she wrote to *The Little Review* editors, adding: "He merely amuses himself. But—I am he—not yet having attained his height—I have to fight."⁶¹ This is not unlike her disparaging references concerning *Fanny Essler*, claiming and disclaiming ownership in this novel. The connections are intriguing, but in light of the fragmentary materials, crucial authorship questions remain unanswered.

With *God* and *Fountain* as companion pieces, what do profanity and obscenity mean within dada? Within dada's explosively deconstructive thrust, religion takes a central role, for it allows dadaists to tackle Western culture's most sacred authority upholding "the cultural sign system."⁶² Sacrilegious examples abound in dada art. There is the naming of the Cabaret Voltaire, the French philosopher-writer Voltaire as the epitome of the atheist in European culture. There is Picabia's *La sainte vierge*, a stain of ink shockingly questioning the virgin's immaculateness. There is Picabia's equation of the sacrament of holy communion with the chewing of gum, while his Christ takes a bath in cobalt with angels flying around as kites.⁶³ Perhaps most provocatively, Kurt Schwitters's "Anna Blume hat Räder" (Anna Blossom has wheels) (1919) reads like a mock rosary, dripping with overtly sexual references: "Anna Blossom! Anna, A-N-N-A, I trickle thy / name. Thy name drips like soft tallow [. . .] / Anna Blossom, thou drippes animal, I love thine."⁶⁴

END HERE

The Baroness is less a nihilistic and cynical anti-Christ poet than a mephistophelian jester who tickles God with her irreverence until he dies in an explosive fit of laughter. In "Holy Skirts," she contrasts the poem's all too human *God* ("Old sun of gun—" she calls him, "*old acquaintance*") with a group of nuns, who morph

into a religious sex machine speeding up to heaven. Forming a religious locomotive, they begin their journey slowly and sluggishly but then speed up ("hurry—speed up—run amuck—jump—beat it!") until the locomotive is running at full steam in a final section of very short and breathless lines in a mock intercourse with God.⁶⁵ Likewise, her personal correspondence is saturated with dada aphorisms in which God and Christ are stripped of their omnipotence in the wake of the war's devastation: "Christ never acted—flabbergasted prestidigitator,"⁶⁶ she wrote in one letter, while in another she described God as "densely slow—He has eternity backing him—so why hurry?"⁶⁷ The dada Baroness makes God acknowledge his flawed humanity, an old man, baffled and slow, having settled into all-too-human foibles. In the competitive modern American world of Henry Ford, who had produced one million automobiles by October 1915, God is sadly lagging behind and in need of getting up to speed, as she writes in this hilarious letter to Peggy Guggenheim:

All know—[God] is tinkerer—limitless of resources.

But why so much tinkering?

He better fordize—learn from America—start expert machinshop—Ford can supply experience—funds—is rumored—for as yet he is clumsily subtle—densely—intelligent—inefficiently—immense—(Lord not Ford—of course). [. . .]

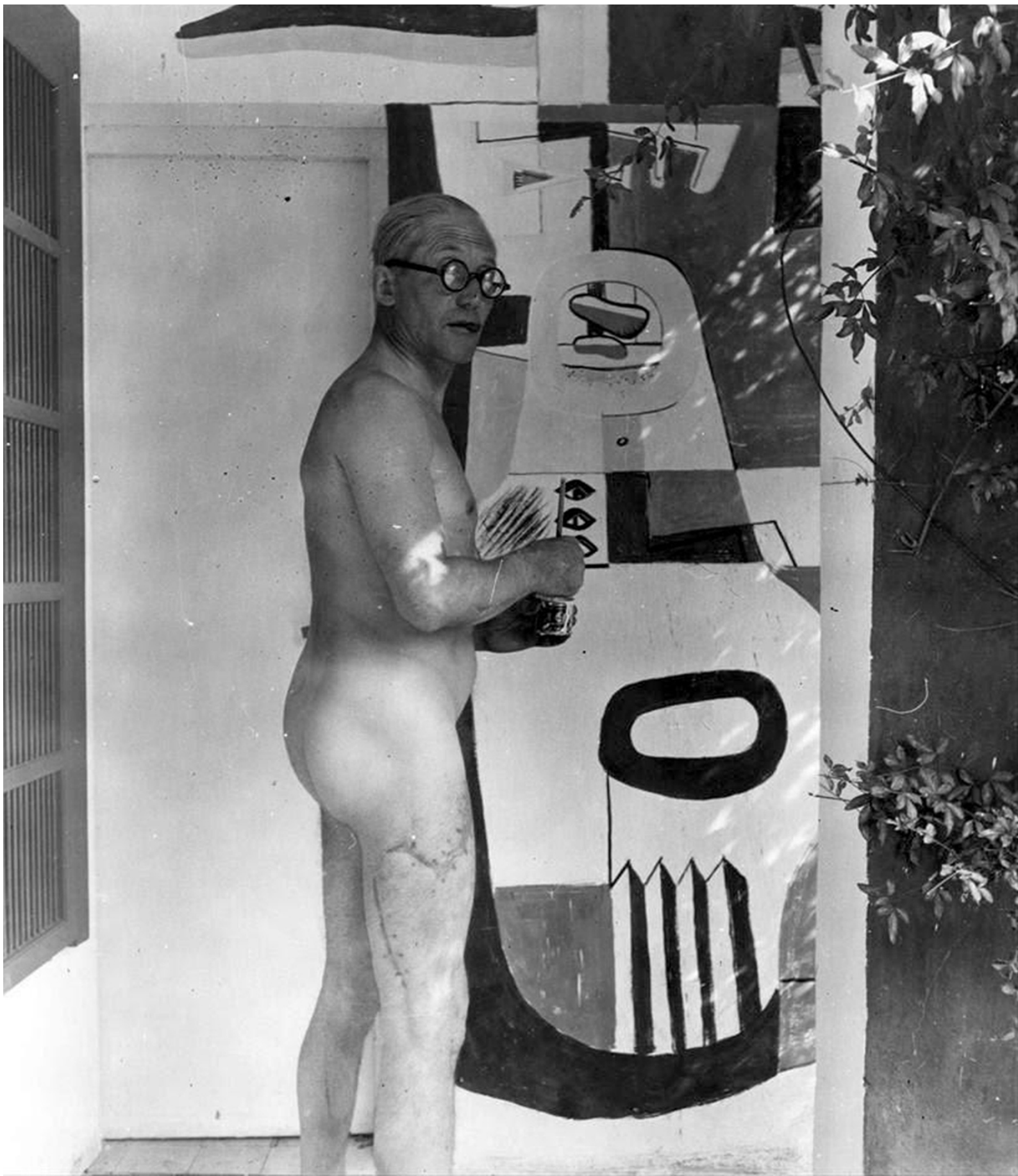
[God] better hotfoot it towards progress—modernize—use his own omnipotence intelligently—smart or we'll all expire in tangle. Well Lord knows—(Does he?)⁶⁸

While the Baroness's dada anti-Christ was fed by the influence of the Nietzschean Kosmiker in Munich, it was ultimately American in using central U.S. cultural icons to bring the highest godhood down to earth. "In Germany we had already Nietzsche," she told Heap: "Old Christ has died there at last—never to soar up again. He has









HOUSE OF USHER: Eileen Gray, Le Corbusier and the Strangely Twisted Fate of E.1027

Alastair Gordon, *Wall to Wall*

Entering a house should be like the sensation of entering a mouth which will close behind you. – Eileen Gray

Cap Martin, October 15, 2000. There are glass doors leading to a narrow balcony and after all the funky smells of the interior, it feels good to step into the fresh air with hints of piñones and mimosa wafting up from the garden. I'd passed through here in October, thirty years ago, hitchhiking with two friends, and when people asked us where we were going, we shrugged and said *aucune idée*, laughing out loud. And it was true. Other than some half-baked plan to meet Robert Graves in Deià, we'd set out without any particular destination, carrying \$40 in traveler's checks, only the clothes on our backs, the same clothes we'd worn to a Friday-night party on *Quai Créqui*, near the bridge in Grenoble, overlooking the *Isère*, but it didn't matter. We were on the run, eighteen years old and fully empowered, hitching our way south through Digne, following the ancient Roman way, eating garlic soup in Entrevaux, napping on a haystack in Le Brusquet, wrapped together in a blanket "liberated" from a pensione in Gréolieres. We reached Vence the next day and stood bathing in the blue-green reflections of Matisse's chapel, and visited a house where D.H. Lawrence once lived—the ancient widow, supposedly one of Lawrence's lovers, served us watercress sandwiches and chamomile tea—then we hitched a ride to Nice and walked along the coast, stopping here, in Roquebrune, for dinner in a tiny bistro that no longer exists, and we used the same pathway that follows the railway today, less than fifty feet from E.1027, but knew nothing about Eileen Gray or her infamous house at the time, so passed into Italy without a second thought.

Now the garden is overgrown with thistle, olive trees and umbrella pines with clumps of lavender sprouting here and there. The exterior staircase, once daringly cantilevered, is propped up by timbers and overgrown with bougainvillea. The original solarium is still in tact, sunken in the earth, lined with iridescent tiles, and I try to imagine Eileen lying there naked in the sun, out of the wind, on a day much like this, limbs intertwined with her lovers', Jean Badovici of the crooked Romanian nose, architect and magazine editor, leaning down beside her, sipping anise-flavored liqueur from a tiny glass. I'm not a big believer in *Feng Shui*, but I have to admit that the place has odious lines of Chi—"poison arrows and killing breath"—flowing through its ruined chambers. Maybe it's the railway cutting too close to the property line, or the tragedy of Eileen's own disaffection and heartbreak. Maybe it's Le Corbusier pissing like a dog all over this, her *chef d'oeuvre*, painting his murals on every available surface, or maybe it's the German storm-troopers who used the walls for target practice in 1943, or Peter Kägi, gynecologist and morphine addict, who was murdered in the master bedroom, or the homeless *droguers* who squatted for months and spray-painted the walls with cultish graffiti. It's hard to say. I arrived on a late flight from Amsterdam and it was too dark to see anything so I just went to the hotel and fell asleep. My first real glimpse came early the next morning, looking across the bend of beach and it was everything I'd anticipated with sun breaking through the clouds, illuminating a horizontal slab of white, as if in a dream, distant, mysterious, crystalline, hovering above the rocks and sea. You can't drive to the house because it's situated in a kind of cul-de-sac, isolated and wedged between the rail line on one side and the coast on the other. There are ugly new villas and condominiums stacked in tiers, so you have to walk a narrow alley, *Promenade Le Corbusier*, that runs from Cabbé to Cap Martin.

An old woman was clearing away a tangle of branches and dead palm fronds that had washed down the hillside during last night's storm. She called to her husband who was repairing tiles on the roof of a neighboring house but he couldn't hear her. I tried the metal gate but it was locked with a sign that read *Propriété de l'État* in bold red letters warning that entry was strictly forbidden. I walked back to the tracks and hopped the local train to Mentone on the Italian border,

bought the *International Herald Tribune*, a box of *Oscillococcinum*, and sipped a cappuccino while watching English and German pensioners strolling down *Promenade du Soleil* without any *soleil* in sight. The train from Ventimiglia streamed past and I could see the faces of Italian day workers peering out, on their way to the hotels of Monaco and Nice. I then returned to my own hotel and waited for the local architect who was supposed to show me around the site. The room was shabby and there were suspicious smells wafting up from the foyer. I tried to take a nap but was still wired from jet lag and just lay there, staring up at the ceiling. I could have stayed at the Hotel Victoria, much fancier and further up the hill, but preferred this, the Diodato, with its sleepy, Graham-Greene languor and blossoming bougainvillea. The former villa of a Russian aristocrat, the hotel is situated on a rocky promontory called *Pointe de Cabbé* and there are cracked Etruscan pots filled with daisies that lead down steps to the *Plage du Buse*. It felt as if I was the only person staying there. When he arrived an hour late, Renald Barrés was dressed in a tweed jacket, bow tie, round spectacles, looking like Professor Tryphun Tournesol in the *Tin Tin* series, which seemed oddly fitting as we were going to enter the lost and ruined world of E-1207 like two archeologists digging for a future that never happened. He was an architect based in Nice and had been put in charge of restoring the house. As we approached, he assured me that I was the first, or at least one of the first, allowed on the property since the French government took charge a few months ago. He unlocked a padlock and waved me across the threshold to the overpowering smell of urine, old, sad, vagrant piss. At first I'm shocked by the dystopian ruin, nothing like the shimmering mirage I'd glimpsed across the bay that morning. There were rags, broken bottles, flies buzzing over shit. The milky glass was cracked, the roof sagged in places, and the mildewed stucco erupted here and there with fissures and swollen joints. "A house is not a machine to live in," said Gray in response to Le Corbusier's oft-quoted line about a house being a *machine à habiter*. "It is the shell of man," she said, "his extension, his release, his spiritual emanation," suggesting a softer, more enveloping style of modernism, and I was glad to be seeing her house in its ruined state before the restoration "experts" had stripped away its patina and soul. After all, this is how a modern masterpiece should be witnessed, with scars and bruises in tact. I want to catch some of the rhythms of her life, her sensitivity to light and shadow, her obsessive but playful attention to detail. I want to walk in her footsteps, see the same views, feel the same breezes, walk down the same narrow pathway to the beach where she swam every day. But how much could I learn from this ruined shell of a house, from a wall tinted blue or a broken staircase? Despite so many years of neglect, rot, vandalism and tabloid-style mayhem, Gray's vision still flutters through here and there. It's not at all a big house but feels expansive because of the transcendent views and the way that Eileen positioned the house on the bluff, so that each room spills outside. The scale is surprising, almost feline. The Mediterranean casts a sea-brewed luminosity that she captured, somehow, and sculpted so as to suffuse the interior with its subaqueous glow. The light itself becomes an architectural presence in the mottled white surfaces and translucent skylights. I try to imagine her here, eating *fruit de mer*, bathing in the sea, arranging her art and furniture with quiet purpose. Gray worked on the design and construction of the house from 1926 to 1929 with her erstwhile lover, the Romanian-born architect and magazine editor Jean Badovici, and everything about E.1027 was premised on her love of the sea and sun, like its floor-to-ceiling glass, terraces and sunken solarium lined with iridescent tiles. Gray designed many of her most famous pieces of furniture expressly for the house, including the low-slung Transat armchair, the iconic Satellite mirror, and a circular glass side table. An ingenious skylight-staircase still rises from the center of the house like a spiraling nautilus made from glass and metal. In a sense it is the heart of the house, not only providing access to the roof but also drawing natural light down into deeper recesses.

Only three days earlier I'd passed through London and visited Peter Adam, Gray's friend and official biographer. I sat on a low, overstuffed divan and watched as he sorted through a box of old photographs and letters from Gray. The windows at the front of the parlor looked out across Addison Road to Holland Park and I could see the nannies pushing their charges in prams, gliding up the walkways beneath a line of poplars. "She was an introvert," said Adam, holding up the photograph of a young woman, quite beautiful with curly hair, downcast eyes, wearing a single

strand of pearls. He told me how she was born in Enniscorthy, Ireland in 1878 to a wealthy family and how she went to the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1900 and saw the work of Rennie Mackintosh which made a lasting impression on twenty-two-year-old Eileen.

She enrolled in the Slade School of Fine Art and then moved to Paris in 1902 to attend the Académie Colarossi. This was when she first saw the paintings of Cezanne, Van Gogh, and Gaughin. In another photo, Eileen is dressed like a man in a velvet coat with a high collar, looking like George Eliot. “She was reclusive, bisexual,” said Adam, who’d spent years trying to rescue Eileen from the fickle undercurrents of art history and was amazed at the recent popularity of her work. “Her furniture has gone through the roof,” he said, pouring me a cup of tea. “One of the lacquer screens just sold at auction for \$1.5 million.” Something clouded over in his eyes—perhaps the cruel and arbitrary twists of fate or how Eileen had lived until she was ninety-seven but had slipped into total obscurity. Only three people, including Adam, attended the funeral at Père Lachaise Cemetery on a rainy afternoon in 1976. A few months later, the gravesite was mistakenly destroyed and Gray’s remains were tossed into a mass grave, adding insult to injury. “She never took herself too seriously,” said Adam, looking up. “I’m sure she’s up there laughing about the whole thing.” There were louder noises filtering in from the street, vans and mini-cabs honking, busses accelerating up Addison Road, and the light coming through the windows seemed to grow paler, more anemic as the afternoon unraveled. Adam disappeared for a few minutes and came back with an old photo album that was bound in dappled blue leather. “It was rape,” he said, incensed by the apparent vandalism of Le Corbusier and his murals. He shook his head and handed me a photograph that showed Le Corbusier standing naked, working on one of his murals at E.1027, a Cubistic composition with stylized guitar, eyes, and a cloud. In the photograph, Corb turns to look at the photographer with an arrogant, quizzical smirk on his face, *le violeur* caught in the act of desecration, and I could see the paleness of his plump Swiss bottom and the zigzag scars where a propeller had ripped into his thigh while he was swimming in the Mediterranean, not far from E.1027. I’d never seen the photograph before and found it unsettling, vaguely obscene, almost as if the famous architect were literally *raping* the house.

“I’m warning you. It’s a dismal ruin,” said Adam as I walked onto the sidewalk and hailed a cab. “You might be shocked.” In Roquebrune, three days later, I am shocked but also fascinated and a little confused by the multiple layers of abuse that E.1027 had suffered since Eileen first lived here. The job of restoration would be challenging if not impossible. I could see that. What do you keep? What do you get rid of? It would take an archeologist—a brilliant archeologist of the modern—to make sense of the mess. We were upstairs in the main living area and Barrés pointed out a semicircular screen made of translucent celluloid. Eileen broke up the white walls with bands of vertical blue and a horizontal band of black that ran behind a cantilevered shelving system. Along the north wall she mounted a map and placed her low-slung Transat Chairs and one of her signature rugs. Despite the squalor, there was enough still in tact, for me to imagine what it might have been like when Eileen still lived here, bathing in the sea, eating fruit de mer, arranging art and furniture with quiet, mindful intent. Instead of a sentimental seaside name, Eileen chose a modern streamlined name: “E.1027,” as if it were something inventoried in an automotive catalogue. In fact, it was an enigmatic anagram for herself and erstwhile collaborator/lover, Jean Badovici, the Romanian architect and editor. (“E” stands for “Eileen.” The numeral “10” represents the tenth letter of the alphabet which is “J” for “Jean,” “2” for the second letter which is “B” for “Badovici,” and finally the numeral “7,” seventh letter of the alphabet, which is “G” for “Gray.”) Her initials, “E” and “G,” are literally embracing, making love to his initials, “J” and “B.”

Barrés turns and points at a composition that was painted in the late 1930s by Le Corbusier on a freestanding partition where Gray’s daybed used to stand. There are three figures—something akin to Picasso’s “Three Musicians” of 1921, but painted in a mannered surrealism. The figure on

the right resembles a wood cutout with a single eye, the middle one is a globular white figure, the third an amorphous red shadow with angry snout. They are three leering musketeers breaking into Gray's subtle arrangement of space. Barres guides me down the narrow staircase that spirals to the lower level like an umbilical chord. I can hardly fit at 6'4" and have to tuck my head into my shoulders like a turtle. We emerge into a utility room that has tables laid out with rusty brackets, latches, grilles and escutcheon plates, all tagged and numbered like so many archeological artifacts. This is the beginning, the first step in a painfully slow process of restoration and reclamation, but who will benefit the most? Eileen or Corb?

When betrayed by Badovici in 1934, Eileen left E.1027 behind like a snake shedding its own skin, and never looked back. I find this hard to comprehend. How could she abandon a place that she'd put so much of her soul into? Eileen was born on August 9, 1878, a strong-minded Leo with "grit and ability to come back from difficult circumstances," according to her astrological birth chart, and some of this seems to have been true as she picked herself up and started over without a second thought, leaving the house to Badovici without an argument or struggle: "*extremely proud, can seem vain, high ideals in romance, high level of energy, boundless ambition and immeasurable integrity...*" She simply designed another house, *Tempe à Pailla*, this one strictly for herself, and built it in Castellar, not far up the road from E.1027.

Between 1934 to 1956, Badovici had the house to himself and frequently invited Le Corbusier and his wife to visit. This is when the imposition, the so-called "rape" of the house began. There's a group of grainy photographs, recently uncovered, that shows Le Corbusier lounging around the house in his underwear, or naked, or in pajamas. The snapshots must have been taken some time before World War II and there's something vaguely pornographic and onanistic about the way he's lying on the divan in the living room, touching himself, drawing something on a table while his foot is propped on a stool, or posing in front of one of the murals, further indicting himself.

Le Corbusier sucks the oxygen from a room, at least that's how I imagine him, sitting on the divan, late August evening, rambling on about one of his perceived enemies—and there were many—while Badovici plays host, accommodating to a fault, indulging the *maître's* remarks about less talented architects while opening another bottle of Côtes du Rhône or running to the kitchen for a pot of *moules marinières*, Corb's favorite dish. Not that much is known about Badovici but he comes off as an opportunist and could easily be dismissed as one of those characters who flit in and out of art history, sponging off the talents of others and then slipping back into obscurity. While some of this may be true, it isn't entirely fair for he seems to have genuinely loved Eileen, encouraged and championed her and helped to expand her reputation beyond a mere "designer" of furniture and decorative objects. Badovici had an accommodating personality. He was an editor and enabler of sorts and encouraged those he admired, bringing out the inner cave painter in friends like Fernand Léger who, in 1934, painted a mural on a garden wall at Badovici's house in Vézelay and started something of a trend. Le Corbusier also did his first mural at Vézelay that summer, and then—again, encouraged by Badovici—turned his attention to the walls of E.1027. There's dispute about how many murals he painted in all. Some say eight. Others say as many as nine, and in his shamelessly self-congratulatory book, *My Work* (1960), Le Corbusier mentioned seven. During my own rather hasty investigation, I found evidence of only six, and could see that at least one had been painted over. Most were drawn in shallow depth with overlapping compositions of standard Cubistic elements: heraldic figures, clouds, guitars, vases, trees, bodies in motion, hands clasped together, etc. with vague sexual allusions and, in some cases, hints of voyeurism and violation. At the time, Corb was obsessed with Edouard Schuré's *Les Grands Initiés*, a book about secret initiatory cults, and at least one of the murals seems to suggest some form of Orphic rite with a symbolic figure painted in yellow that represents a *caduceus*, the staff carried by Hermes, messenger of the gods and guide of the Dead, with twin serpents intertwined. Was he trying to

exorcise Eileen's spirit? Counteract the feminine energy of the house? Claim it for himself? At the bottom of the mural, beneath his own signature, Corb wrote the date "1939." He returned to finish it after the war and added a looping green line and a vermillion bladder. He returned once again, after Badovici died, and a Madame Schelbert had taken up residence, and he continued to work on the same mural. Ever methodical, even in his madness, Corb recorded the date of each revision at the bottom of the mural: "1939" / "1949" / "1962", as if offering future art historians a key to this work of art that developed so slowly, over a twenty-two year period. Despite all that time, however, the composition never really gelled, or Corb simply lost interest, and it remains conspicuously incomplete. Le Corbusier saw the murals as perpetual works in progress, gestures that helped take his mind off the polemics of architecture, allowed him to unwind, but less consciously were crude markers of territory, both spatial and psychic.

The most aggressive and conspicuously territorial mural of all was the one that Corb painted at the main entrance to E.1027. A path curves around from the north into a protected little alcove, and a red wall serves as a kind of invitation where Eileen stenciled the words: "*Entrez Lentement*," just beside the door and the words "*Défense de Rire*," a bit further to the left. Are these riddles, puns, cryptic messages, Eileen's poems to the genie of the place, or as I prefer to imagine, the walls of E.1027 itself speaking out? They can be read in several ways. *Entrez Lentement*, might be a traffic sign to all those who enter E.1027, advising them to come in slowly, leave the hectic world behind, *relax*. Eileen and Badovici would come here to escape the city and be romantically close so it might be a simple reminder, but *Enter Slowly* also has sexual overtones, while *Defense de Rire* seems to be a whimsical play on the prohibitive signs that are posted all over the metros and streets of Paris: "*Défense de Fumer*," "*Défense de Cracher*," "*Défense d'Afficher*," but instead of forbidding smoking, spitting or the affixing of posters, Eileen's message forbids laughter, a tongue-in-cheek admonition to take her work (or perhaps herself as a woman architect or lover) more seriously. For Gray, the act of entering was a mysterious exchange, a coy seduction, the opening act of a gradual unveiling. In her notebooks she wrote about the "desire to penetrate", "pleasure in suspense" and most enigmatically: "Entering a house should be like the sensation of entering a mouth which will close behind you," combining the lure of sensual pleasure—a tongue searching a lover's mouth—with the anticipation of entrapment and pain.

For Corb, entry was more a frontal assault, a victory march: "*Voilà ce qui donne à nos rêves de la hardiesse: ils peuvent être réalisées.*" ("Here is what gives our dreams their boldness: they can be realized.") He appropriated Eileen's words and surrounded them with a cartoon-like sequence of stylized forms that spelled out "Entry" in his own cubo-heiroglyphic alphabet: a flesh-toned torso followed by bands of yellow, red, a perforated screen, ghostly white pages turning, and a teal-blue escutcheon. *Enter Slowly*? It not only defaced Eileen's original treatment, but distorted her intention in a way that I find unimaginable for one artist to do to another artist's work. What, I wonder, prevented Corb from painting over Gray's composition altogether? Had Badovici intervened or did Corb experience a sudden flicker of guilt? There's a photograph that shows the culprits at the scene of the crime: Le Corbusier and his wife, Yvonne Gallis, sitting with Badovici and you can see Corb's mural in the background. It's a blustery day in the summer of 1939 and they've escaped to the leeward side of the house to avoid the wind. They've just finished lunch and there's an air of conspiracy: Yvonne with eyeliner and leafy headband, looking bored, leaning into the shadows of the doorway, Corb sitting in a bathrobe, sucking his pipe with a complacent but petulant look on his face, turning away from Badovici who smiles as he points to the camera with a blurry paw: a piece of inculpatory evidence if ever I saw one.

I went back to my hotel on the opposite shore of the bay. I showered, changed clothes and took a taxi to Restaurant Casarella on Rue Grimaldi where I ate dinner alone—endive salad, homemade pasta and *moules marinières* with lots of garlic—and then walked back through the darkened

streets of Cap Martin, thinking about the peculiar feelings that E.1027 provoked in me. That night I dreamt about Eileen Gray. She walked right into my room, her ghostly hair brushed into long, silvery braids. She seemed warm and familiar like one of my Scottish aunts, and sounded genuinely pleased to have me visit her house, but she warned me not to stay too long and I woke up before I could ask her what she meant. The next morning I returned to E.1027 and met Barrés who guided me down to a shady, underlying area where Corb had drawn another mural as a looping fresco in wet plaster, as if the intertwined figures had been made with a single gesture of the artist's hand. It's the only mural at E.1027 without any color, just black lines on white background.

Some have read it as two lovers intertwined in erotic ecstasy. Others see the love-hate relationship between Eileen and Badovici or two women with a child lying between them. I see an entanglement charged with ambiguity and conflict: thighs, vagina, nipples, buttocks, a woman leaning back, naked, contorted into a knot, her arms raised above her head as if in self-defense, and I have to wonder if it's not really about Corb's own sublimated desires and the troubled relationships he had with women throughout his life. In one letter to his mother, Corb drew a naked self-portrait with sagging penis—who sends his mother something like that? Then there was Yvonne, former dressmaker and fashion model, who married him in 1930. She seems little more than a shadow, flitting in the background, a moody, long-suffering footnote to architectural history. In the photos that show them together, Yvonne appears withdrawn, sitting in a corner, her face turned away from the light or concealed behind a scarf. She was emotionally unstable. She starved herself, fell down drunk and crashed into furniture, breaking her brittle bones in the process. By 1947, she'd shriveled down to an anorexic scarecrow of eighty pounds at about the same time that Corb was painting this same mural on E.1027's foundation while also having an affair with Minette de Silva, a Sri Lankan architectural student in London. Does any of this come through in the mural? Not directly, but there's plenty of underlying ambiguity and a sense of pending violence in the mural, a pushing and pulling, as if the male figure were shoving the woman away in anger or pulling her closer in lust. Le Corbusier always complained about Yvonne's alcoholism and her "weak bones," but he stayed with her until the end.

Badovici died in 1956, the house slipped into a downward spiral of neglect and ruination, like some kind of Gothic tale, but updated for the 20th century, a modernist *House of Usher* that absorbed the wounded pathologies of its former tenants and self destructed as with E.A. Poe's "barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn." Badovici's sister inherited the property but she was a nun who lived in Communist Romania and the Romanian State asserted its rights, confiscated the property and put it up for sale in 1960. Le Corbusier encouraged Madame Schelbert to buy the house and preserve it, but this seems to have been a completely self-serving gesture on Corb's part because he wanted to make sure that his own murals were protected. The plot thickens when a character named Dr. Kaegi enters the scene.

Kaegi was Madame Schelbert's gynecologist and somehow convinced her to sell him the house. He was a morphine addict and a compulsive gambler who lived in perpetual debt. Claiming to need the money to restore E.1027, he sold off the iconic Eileen Gray furniture at auction for a paltry three million francs, but never made any improvements. In 1994 he put the house on the market for \$5 million, but was murdered before he could find a buyer. The official police version states that Kaegi hired two young Frenchmen to work in the garden and they stabbed him to death in the living room of E.1027 when he refused to pay them for sexual services rendered. The house remained unoccupied for the next five years and suffered leaking roofs, broken windows and vandalism from a group of indigent squatters. The City of Roquebrune assumed control in 1999, put up barbed wire, boarded over the windows, and placed the house under police surveillance.

By that point it looked as if the structure would either collapse on its own or be demolished as a public hazard. This was when I first learned about E.1027's precarious fate and became interested, but was unable to gain access until 2000 when the French Government stepped in and announced that they would help restore the house as a national monument.

Now I hear the tide rising with a rushing sound through openings in the jagged shore, and a sleepy melancholy steals over my entire body. The afternoon light flickers through pine needles as I stand on the roof and look across the bay to Monaco, the city-state that appears to rise up tall in the strident light. During morning hours it blended into the haze of the Alpes Maritime so perfectly that I hadn't even noticed. An adjacent garden descends in terraces, with cypress, quince, poplars and tiers of rotting trellis, clusters of honeysuckle and gorse, *gesse*, *ficaire*, like an ancient Roman garden, ordered yet overgrown and chaotic with stunted cedars, Judas trees, *marronnier* and mimosa. Le Corbusier acted as if this were his turf, his trees, his dappled southern light. That's how he spoke about the place, and Gray's "intrusion" infuriated him. She was a woman, an Anglo-Irish outsider, an "insignificant" designer of lacquered screens, and worst of all, a self-taught architect. On several occasions he attempted to purchase E.1027 and make it his own, but unable to buy the house, he settled for a small lot just to the east where, in 1950, he built himself a tiny cabin called *La Baraque* but now known as *Le Petit Cabanon*: "I have a château on the Riviera which measures 3.66m by 3.66m (12 feet by 12 feet)," said Le Corbusier. "It is wonderfully comfortable and pleasant."

I walk up a steep path behind E.1027, through a green metal gate with a hand-made latch to Corb's own perch with its darkly rustic, split-timber siding and a sloping roof of corrugated concrete. I have to wonder how this man who conjured up a sprawling *Ville Radieuse* for three million people could have squeezed himself (and wife) into such a tiny truffle of a shack where every inch had to be micro-planned like a submarine. The main room is tiny, only 108 square feet, but was designed to be as functional as a monk's cell. Furnishings are rudimentary, childish, like kindergarten furniture and designed to serve multiple purposes. Windows were positioned to take advantage of cross breezes and frame the most desirable views. The floors are stained yellow and the wood-veneer walls have a mellow, hand-rubbed patina. Thumb-tacked to a wall is the faded photograph of a woman sitting in a Thonet chair with a dog lapping at her face. There are shells and parts of a sheep's skull, bleached white in the sun, resting on a clumsily built shelf. In an early sketch for the cabin, Le Corbusier drew a stick figure looking through a slit window with binoculars, and the figure—one presumes it to be Corb himself—gazes down at E.1027, as if keeping vigil over his strange obsession.

Further to the east he built a tiny atelier, painted olive green, propped on rocks, with a single door at one end and two large shutters that swung open from overhead hinges, for light and air. This was where he came to draw and write in private and gaze out over his beloved Mediterranean. Corb came frequently to his rustic little shack for *vacances*. He walked up and down the hill, swam in the Bay of Cabbé and on rainy days sat with Thomas Rebutato, proprietor of *L'Etoile de Mer*, a little bistro that is weirdly attached to the *cabanon* through a vagina-shaped hatchway. There's a photograph that George Brassai took of Le Corbusier in 1952 and there's something hideous about the way he's staring out from the palm-frond doorway of the *L'Etoile de Mer*, his nose a ball of putty hanging from the black-rimmed spectacles, and he's wearing a bathing suit that looks like an oversized diaper. "*Je me sens si bien dans mon cabanon que, sans doute, je terminerai ma vie ici!*" ("I feel so good in my cabin that I will probably end my life here!") And there was already a sense that his days are numbered after the death of Badovici, his mother and then Yvonne in 1957, all within a two-year period. His personal world receded and he spent more time on his own, painting, writing, swimming against his doctors' orders, from the rocky outcropping below E.1027.

On my last day, I eat a *salade de tomates* and *loup de mer* at the *Grand Inquisiteur* in the precipitously steep village of Roquebrune. After lunch, I climb up to the cemetery perched high above the town and find Le Corbusier's gravesite, a concrete cube painted with strokes of yellow, red and blue. It's a beautiful spot, overlooking the sea. The hand-scribed dedication reads:

ici repose, Charles Edouard Jeanneret, dit, Le Corbusier, né le 6 octobre 1887 mort le 27 août 1965 á Roquebrune Cap Martin

After placing a little posy of lavender atop the grave, I walk past the church, down Escalier Chanoine Grana and Avenue Villaren all the way back to the beach where I take off my shirt and make myself go swimming in the spot where Le Corbuser drowned. He loved to swim and I love to swim so it seems like an appropriate gesture to make on my last day here. Waves are breaking against the rocks, and I can see how the current sweeps around the point and tugs out to sea. Was Corb caught in this same current? Was that why he drowned? I hold my breath, take the plunge, and kick past the swells—it's much colder than expected—and I find myself thinking, oddly, about Norman Jaffe, another architect who drowned while swimming, and how he once told me about Corb's death, almost as if it were a final design challenge: planning an elegant demise, and I had to wonder if their deaths were linked, somehow. Were they both suicide? Had they suffered heart attacks or had they simply drowned? "A current under sea picked his bones in whispers," wrote T.S. Eliot in the "Death by Water" section of *Wasteland*, and that's what I'm thinking as I swim around the point, imagining Corb's pale corpse lying at the bottom, amid a spectral kingdom of seaweed and coral, and I think about how we start life in the amniotic fluids of our mother's womb and then struggle through life, only to come back to the sea again, to drift and die, in a symmetry that Le Corbusier must have appreciated. In the end, Eileen Gray outlived him by twenty years and she undoubtedly lived a happier life, never bothering with cities for three million, simply wanting to create a beautiful environment for herself and a handful of friends. On the very last morning of her life, at age 97, Eileen sent her maid out to buy cork panels and other materials so she could start working on a new piece of furniture.

I stayed in the water for another few minutes, bobbing and splashing, kicking against the current, dunking my head below the salt water, saturating myself in the vaporous folds of sea and sky and the aura of unfulfilled dreams that haunts this southern coastline. I frog-kicked back to the landing, pulled myself up by a rope railing, climbed the coral steps, dried off with a towel and hurried back to Hotel Diadato where I packed my bag and left for the airport. As I walked the beach for the last time, I could hear the tide receding and then swelling against the shore with the pull of the moon, oblivious, remembering nothing.

FOLLOWING

JUNE 21, 2015

READINGS:

Sarah Wilson, "Daughters of Albion: Greer, Sex and the Sixties," *The Sixties: Great Britain-France, 1962-73, The Utopian Years*, Philip Wilson (London), 1997, pp. 75-85

Michelle Goldberg, "What is a Woman? The dispute between radical feminism and transgenderism.," *The New Yorker*, August 4, 2014 Issue

Rosa's Letters, edited by Pia Rönicke, Mousse Publishing, 2011, pp. 28-31

"How (Not) to be a Feminist: No platform for hate speech: End Germaine Greer," Sunday, March 8

<http://heyevent.com/event/23qicmizoikwia/no-platform-for-hate-speech-end-germaine-greer>

VISUALS:

Rape, Yoko Ono, 1969, 1:18, 16mm color film
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8j59ufKDZ6Y>

We Imitate, We Break Up, Ericka Beckman, 1978, 30 minutes, Super-8
http://www.erickabeckman.com/We_Imitate_We_Break_Up.html

Daughters Greer, sex and the Sixties



'Sexual intercourse began in 1963,
Which was far too late for me...'

The poet Philip Larkin was wrong: the beginning of sexual liberation in the Sixties may be dated to November 1960, when an Old Bailey jury decided, finally, that D.H. Lawrence's novel, *Lady Chatterley's lover* (1928), was not obscene. Penguin Books, who had had the temerity to publish it, sold over 200,000 copies within a few days. The judge and the defence, who asked whether the jury would wish their servants to read Lawrence's novel (focused on Constance Chatterley's liaison with her husband's gamekeeper), exemplified the rigid attitudes of a class society in confrontation with a new order.¹

But 1963, an *annus mirabilis* for the Sixties, beginning with a winter freeze such as had been unknown since 1741, soon hotted up. On 22 March the Conservative Secretary of State for War, John Profumo, made a statement to the Commons denying any improper relationship between himself and the model Christine Keeler – icon of the new era as she was represented in Lewis Morley's classic photograph, nude, astride a curvaceous Arne Jacobsen chair; on 4 June Profumo resigned, admitting that he had lied to the Commons. It was sleaze... Harold Macmillan's government, dishonoured, entered its final phase.² Harold Wilson came to power in October 1964. His promises of a new era rushing to embrace the 'white heat of technology' envisioned a bright, scientific future, symbolized by the phallic, silver Post Office Tower, London's highest landmark which opened in October 1965. Women became a force in Parliament at the top level of government: Barbara Castle moved from her post as Minister of Overseas Development (1964–5) to Transport (1965–8), becoming First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity (1968–70); Jennie Lee had a seminal role to play in government policies on the arts; the 21-year-old Irish nationalist, Bernadette Devlin, made a tempestuous maiden speech in the House of Commons in 1969.³ Ambitious young women entered the new 'red-brick' universities as well as Oxbridge on equal terms with men. While for the majority, women's lot remained, at first, largely unchanged, it was womanpower, rather than technology's upward curve, that genuinely revolutionized the decade of the

Sixties. Sexual liberation and an evolving, feminist consciousness fundamentally changed life in England in a way incomparable to France, where the very word 'féminisme' and the spectres it evokes are anathema, where a delayed vote for women (granted in 1944!), delayed decisions on contraception, and the conflicting demands of Marxism and psychoanalysis constituted an essentially Seventies phenomenon.⁴ In England feminism gained its heroines and its 'lettres de noblesse' in the Sixties, with outrage, flamboyance and a sense of humour, despite the odds.

The contraceptive pill, invented in 1952, banned by the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales in May 1964, must take much of the credit, lifting the curse of our sex with promises of euphoric freedom. The Bishop of Woolwich declared: 'Few will now bother to ask whether the Pope is infallible. They are more concerned with whether the Pill is infallible.' (It was certainly problematic.)⁵ The beautiful female pioneers, armed with this new infallibility ('You've got to excite me and you've got to be jolly marvellous to attract me... If I want you I'll have you ...'⁶), were most likely to be a metropolitan phenomenon. London was where, suddenly, the conflation of 'high and low', the impact of mass culture across the spectrum of the arts and the interchange with the world of music and fashion involved women, crucially, as creators and consumers; poets (Sylvia Plath), novelists (Iris Murdoch, Edna O'Brien), models (Twiggy, Jean Shrimpton), singers (Sandy Shaw, Cilla Black, Dusty Springfield), groupies (Marianne Faithfull who immortalized a particular usage for Mars Bars), dancers (Babs and Pan's People on *Top of the Pops*), actresses (Vanessa Redgrave, Julie Christie, Honor Blackman clad in kinky leather in TV's *The Avengers*), girlfriends, fans – the teenagers screaming for the Beatles – all were essential for the Sixties spectacle.⁷ And with these confluences of categories, class itself was to some extent dissolved and absorbed in a field of new energies, where for the first time to speak Cockney was chic; dissolved, that is, except for the very poor, who in the wake of the exposé of the Angry Young Men generation (John Osborne's play *Look back in anger*, 1956, with its 'kitchen sink' realism still described a *status quo*), began to find a voice in such works as Nell Dunn's novel *Poor cow*, dramatized for television and directed by Ken Loach. He directed its sequel, *Up the junction*,



Photograph
of Christine Keeler
by Lewis Morley,
1963. National
Portrait Gallery.
© Lewis
Morley/Akehurst
Bureau

The sixties, utopian years

followed by Jeremy Sandford's *Cathy come home* in 1966. Immense public concern, as a result, finally generated the Shelter campaign for the homeless in London.⁸ As for the permissive society, those who were at the centre, such as Mary Quant, could proclaim: 'We are less permissive to authority And we are less permissive to violence The Beautiful People are non-violent anarchists, constructive anarchists... the young today are less materialistic and more intelligent than they have ever been.'⁹

Mary Quant epitomised the new London looks; her first mini-skirt dated back to 1958. 'Rightly or wrongly, I have been credited with the Lolita Look, the Schoolgirl Look, the Wet Weather Look, the Kinky Look, the Good Girl Look and lots of others and it is said that I was first with knickerbockers, gilet chains, shoulderstrap bags and high boots.' Gorgeous eye make-up went with the essential dark fringe. The successful woman appreciated the importance of clothes – as opposed to the 'intellectual girl' or the 'square', who neglected these issues at her peril. The first *Sunday Times* colour supplement of 1962 showed Jean Shrimpton modelling clothes by Quant, photographed by David Bailey. Quant recalled: 'I just happened to start when that "something in the air" was coming to the boil. The clothes I made happened to fit in exactly with the teenage trend, with Pop records and espresso bars, and jazz clubs, the rejuvenated *Queen* magazine, *Beyond the fringe*, *Private Eye*, the discothèques and *That was the week that was* were all born on the same wavelength.'¹⁰ In contrast to the practical and dynamic Quant look, the Biba boutique, which opened in

Kensington in 1964, offered Barabara Hulannicki's neo-Pre-Raphaelitism in Art Nouveau surroundings: smudgy purple eyes, dark and dingy robes for more languorous, frizzy-haired beauties. In this period of revivalism and a Portobello Road aesthetic, Alphonse Mucha, Aubrey Beardsley and Burne-Jones reproductions vied with the psychedelic posters on many a teenage wall.

Biba wasn't just a label, it was a scene: Keith Richards and Anita

Pallenberg dined in the Rainbow Room; Jean-Paul Belmondo and Diana Ross bought lampshades; Mick Jagger and Rod Stewart bought satin shirts and fake-fur jackets; Jean Shrimpton bought four of everything. David Bowie in his glam-rock phase would trawl the cosmetics counter, and Twiggy would drop by to see her best friend Barbara.¹¹

England witnessed a brief and lovely feminization of the male, long-haired, clad in silks and velvets, gentle, dreamy, creative. Carnaby Street had seventeen boutiques out of which thirteen were for men:

When young men grew their hair, a great many pin-headed or coarse-featured people became suddenly finely pro-

portioned. Being unexpectedly beautiful they found themselves able to behave unexpectedly well. Long hair and the mystique of gentleness brought the sexes together quite unconsciously, and so other developments became possible. People made better love, and more of it, than before, for which relief much thanks.¹²

As far as art was concerned – and in striking contrast to France, whose major female figure of the 1960s, Niki de



Pauline Boty,
It's a man's world I,
1964, oil on board.
Courtesy Estate of
Pauline Boty.

Saint-Phalle, enjoys a curiously over-determined or invisible status (she is, once again, excluded from this show) – women made their mark too on the London scene.¹³

Witness the experimental poem machines, the copper light columns, the dreamy perpetual motion machines with lamps, turntables and acrylic balls by Liliane Lijn, or the early collaborative works of Joan Hills with Mark Boyle. While Jann Haworth's outrageous soft sculpture, *Snake lady* (1969–71), confronts us

with a sexy Eve in snake-skin trousers who is almost throttled symbolically by her pet python, some forms of art may be seen to invite more subtle proto-feminist interpretations: David Alan Mellor has remarked upon the emergence of an art which might now be thought of as a form of "écriture féminine". The artist Gillian Ayres described her own sweeping gestural painting as 'A shape – a relationship – a body – oddness – shock – mood – cramped – isolated – acid – sweet – encroaching – pivoting – fading – bruised'. Contrast her statement with that of Bridget Riley: 'running ... early morning ... cold water ... fresh things, slightly astringent'.¹⁴ Riley's

art, with its optical zing coming out of geometrical Abstraction, had an extraordinarily distinctive psychic and sensory impact – soon copied by the fashion designers in Paris and New York. Her first solo show was held in 1962: she participated in the *New generation* show at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1964, *Painting and sculpture of a decade* at the Tate and by 1965 in the international *Responsive eye* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

In 1969 she won the international prize for painting at the 34th Venice Biennale.

The only English female Pop artist, Pauline Boty, opted for a figurative painting with strong geometrically-structured, coloured backgrounds which may well be compared to the work of Peter Blake, her mentor and admirer at the Royal College of Art. Indeed she posed for the photographer Lewis Morley naked on a couch save for Blake's heart-

shaped tribute, *Valentine* (1962), echoed by her *Monica Vitti heart* (1963), containing her self-portrait.¹⁵ Whereas Blake's 'fanzine' attitude in his *Girlie door* (1959), with its female pin-ups, or homage to Elvis, *Got a girl* (1960–1), is shot through with frustration and a wistful sentimentality, Boty – through her sex and authorship alone, but surely with deliberately referential irony – subverts the genre with the *Playboy*-like, boob-shot painted fragments of *It's a man's world II* (1965–6). It was not easy at first: Jane Percival, Boty's contemporary, claimed that 'Women painters like myself felt very alienated, the full feminist movement hadn't come in and we worked in isolated pools, mostly of depres-

sion'.¹⁶ Boty, however, the 'Brigitte Bardot of the Royal College of Art', enjoyed displaying her own sexuality, if apprehensively, and performing for both the theatre and television. From 1959, with the *Daily Express* profile of Boty as secretary of the 'Anti-ugly society' (a campaign against the boom in ugly buildings), Boty combined the role of painter with that of model, actress and provocateuse. She appeared as the only female artist and in Ken Russell's television pro-



Allen Jones,
Brigitte Bardot
T. Shirt, 1964,
lithograph.
Courtesy the artist

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Allen Jones,
Life class, 1968,
lithograph.
Courtesy the artist

gramme, *Pop goes the easel* (1962), starring with Derek Boshier, Peter Phillips and Peter Blake. Produced by Huw Weldon for the 'Monitor' series it was broadcast on 25 March 1962 (Blake's sequence involved a dream fantasy devoted to Brigitte Bardot). Boty posed for the photographer Michael Ward in 1963, pouting suggestively in bra and suspenders in front of her paintings *Tom's dream* and *Celia with some of her heroes* (1963), and again for Lewis Morley, Roger Mayne and *Vogue*, where she was photographed by David Bailey. Besides acting herself she made costumes for a production of *The firebird* and stage designs. Her art has been rediscovered only recently.¹⁷ The spiralling, red rose-petal square in *It's a man's world I* (1964) performs a 'mis en abîme' of the female sex, mocking the sharp exteriority of the painted male mug-shots (sometimes viciously cropped) of astronaut, Elvis, Proust, Einstein. The same flower, dangerously hairy, is the centrepiece of the orgasmic 5,4,3,2,1 (1963), with its explicit slogan 'Oh for a fu...'; a dark eyed girl in shades with open mouth screams ecstatically at the base of the image. Boty's premature death in 1966 at the age of 28 deprived the Sixties of one of its most original female artists.

To what extent she was genuinely subversive – to what extent complicitous with the essentially phallogocentric constructions of Pop art – remains the moot point essentially at the heart of the problem of women, sex and the Sixties.¹⁸ The raw material of Pop art itself was of course the world of mass culture, for which woman herself functioned as the impotent sign. From the sublime to the ridiculous – impossibly idealized in the dream-figures of the stars (Marilyn Monroe above all, Brigitte Bardot, Elizabeth Taylor), down to the shapes and forms of new kitchen appliances – woman had to be at once unattainable, pneumatic and 'supremely, housewife, mother, cupcake' (Richard Hamilton).¹⁹ She was treated with an almost respectful awe by Peter Blake, with a lofty intellectualized irony by Hamilton, with a 'hard-on' slickness by Allen Jones, whose horny, porny girls were painted in virulent colours with long legs and extended stilettos, or modelled on all fours as the ultimate Sixties coffee-table. (Was this liberation? Jones, of all these artists, has suffered from a feminist backlash.) The 'liberated' woman was caught in an impossible dilemma. As participant in the carnival, she enjoyed the very masquerade that signified her



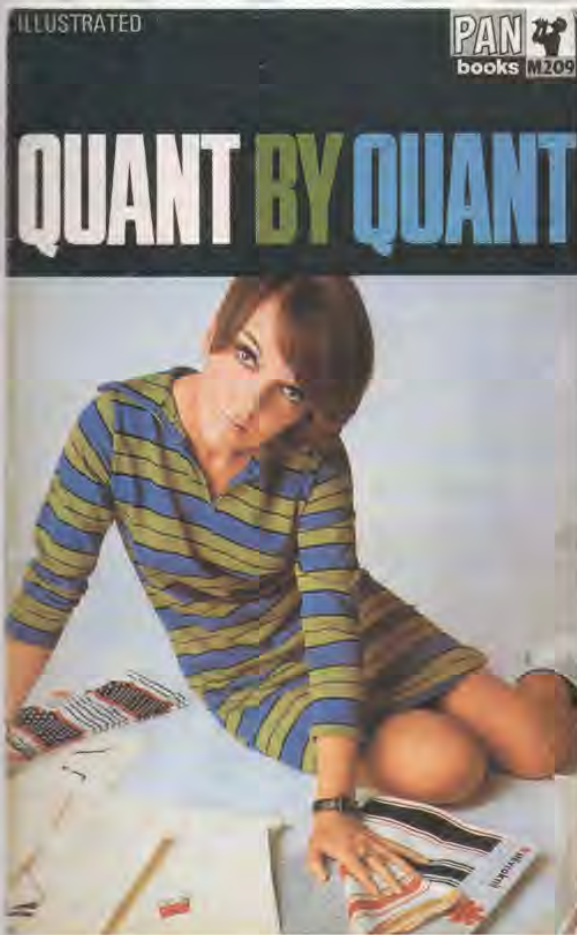
own subjection, her 'desire for the fetish': she became what Germaine Greer would call a 'female eunuch'. Certainly for Greer, an exultant participant for much of the time (see her hoydenish antics in Robert Whitaker's film *Darling, do you love me?* 1967), there was at the very least a case of 'Germaine' versus 'Dr G.', made explicit in the contrast between her contributions to *Oz* magazine and *The female eunuch* (1970):

The gynolatry of our civilisation is written large upon its face, upon hoardings, cinema screens, televisions, newspapers, magazines, tins, packets, cartons, bottles, all consecrated to the reigning deity, the female fetish. Her dominion must not be thought to entail the rule of women, for she is not a woman ... For she is a doll: weeping, pouting or smiling, running or reclining, she is a doll. She is an idol, formed of the concatenation of lines and masses, signifying the lineaments of satiated impotence.²⁰

Oz appeared in 1967, slipping in between the glossy fashion magazines, *Vogue*, *Harpers* and *Queen*, the intelligent man's pornography such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, or the satirical, newspaper-format *Private Eye*. Founded in Sydney, Australia in 1963, *Oz* was edited by Richard Neville, with photography and design input by Robert Whitaker and Martin Sharp.²¹ The intellectual scene in Melbourne would emigrate in part to England, subsequent to the Beatles' tour

of Australia in 1964: Barry Humphries, Clive James, above all Germaine Greer would have a lasting impact on British media culture. Reborn in London, *Oz* mingled a cornucopia of revelry with hard-Left politics; its Ozzie input was a refreshing corrective to the passion for all things American that had marked the beginnings of the English Independent Group and the birth of Pop art in a tense Cold War context. Indeed the craze for the American consumerist dream (itself a class issue in Britain) was irremediably soured, with news of black and female liberation struggles and, above all, Vietnam. *Oz* was a marvel of psychedelic design, specializing in illegible coloured overprinting, spiced with the odd invocation of Richard Dadd, the Victorian fairy painter, or Magrittean Surrealism. 'British breasts' (to which Greer

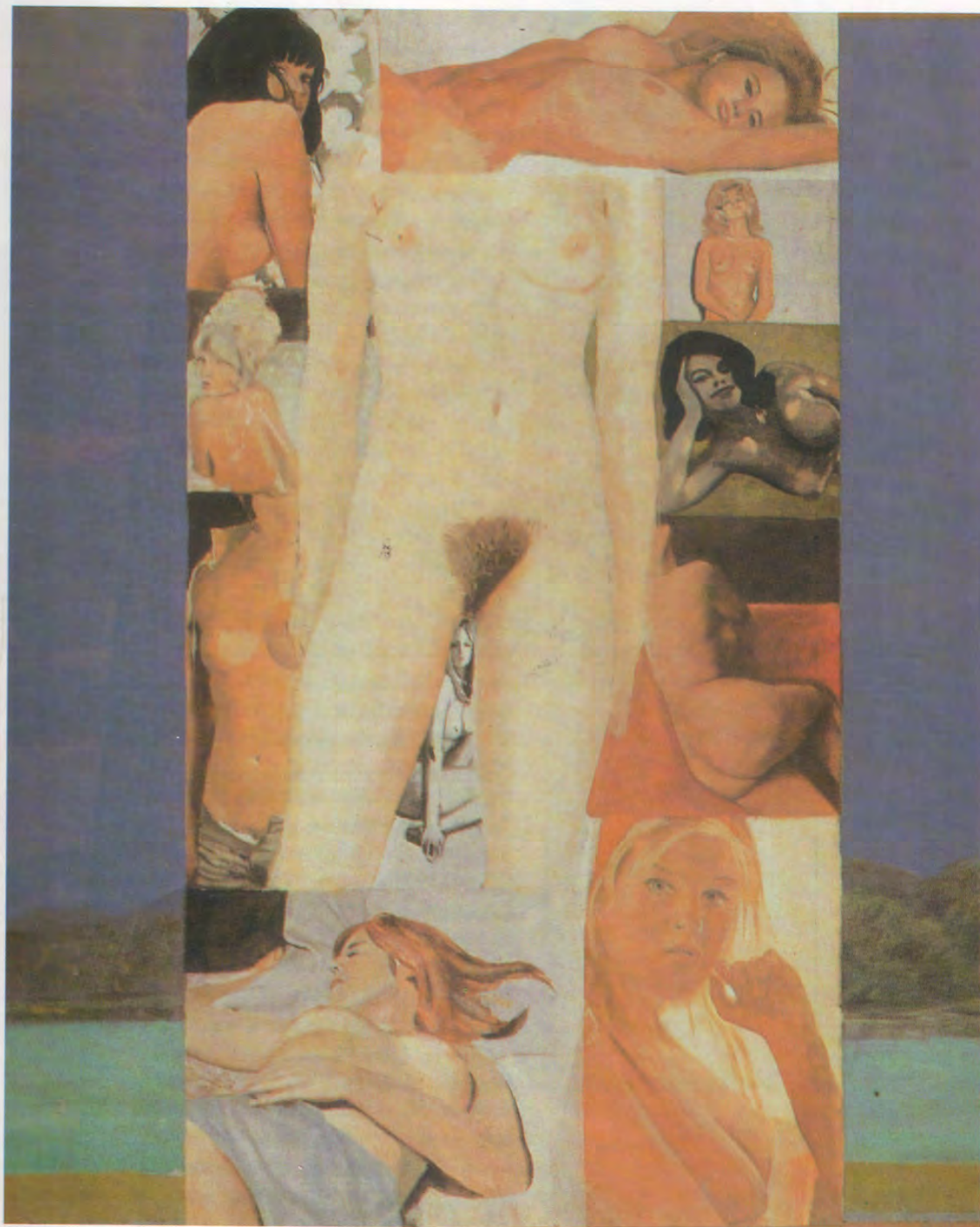
could not lay claim) signed 'Germaine' appeared in the second issue. After the interruption of the Paris events of May '68 (extensively covered by Angelo Quattrochi), *Oz* no. 14 returned to the breast with 'Nipples or nozzles'. A major theme of *The female eunuch* was anticipated here with the description of the woman whose role and image cried for liberation: 'Woman as a sheltered, stultified sentimentalist is a figure of pathos, as is the man on whom she makes her cloying demands for sustenance'. Greer (educated at the universities of Melbourne, Sydney and Cambridge, teaching English literature at Warwick) demonstrated her necessarily schizoid predicament in *Oz* no. 19 of February 1969: 'The Universal Tonguebath. A groupie's vision. Staff-writer Germaine talks to Dr G., a celebrated (and over-educated) international groupie'. Dr G confessed: 'I guess I'm a star-fucker really'. Groupiedom in all its musical and sexual variations was described, superbly lyrical passages alternating with the crude Anglo-Saxon words that nice girls didn't use.²² In no. 26, February 1970, on 'Women's Liberation (pussy power)' Greer published 'The slag-heap erupts, by Germaine', with its reference to Valerie Solanas's shooting of Andy Warhol and her SCUM (The society for cutting up men) manifesto. The 1969 second-wave of women's liberation in America was depicted in all its complicated relationship to the sensationalist media. An English intelligentsia was already familiar with American classics such as Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and civilisation* (1956, with its postulate of a non-repressive society) or Norman O. Brown's more delirious, Freudian, citational *Love's body* (1966), as well as the bra-burning and more aggressive tactics of the Women's Liberation sisterhood. 'The American way of sex' caused a furore when published by the BBC in 1965.²³ Here, in 'The slag-heap erupts', Greer describes WITCH (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell), Betty Friedan's National Organisation for Women (founded 1966), proliferating sub-groups and individual actions: 'Valerie Solanas had to shoot her man to get him to take more than patronising notice of her In England the situation is a paler and more confused reflection of the American scene.'²⁴ Here, too, was enshrined the memorable, if intolerant, maxim: 'A woman who cannot organise her sex life in her own best interest is hardly likely to reorganise society on more rational lines'.²⁵ No. 29 (July 1970) was 'Female energy' num-



Cover of
Quant by Quant, 1967.
Private collection

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Pauline Boty,
It's a man's world II,
1965-6,
oil on board.
Courtesy Estate
of Pauline Boty



ber, guest-edited by Greer, 'Welcome to cuntpower Oz', with her article: 'The politics of female sexuality', a daring and tender paean to the female sex organ (expanded in 'Lady, love your cunt' for *Suck* magazine in 1971).²⁶ Yet the ironic postscript to the erupting slag-heap belied the 'cunt-power' message: 'Meet Wendy – Oz's yum-yum rubber fun substitute, silent, clean, insatiable', and Judith Malina in 'The kiss of the lash' described 'the dirty jokes and dirty cartoons and the *Playboy* atmosphere' as 'the most dramatic example of female repression and female suffering', opinions ratified by the proliferating small ads for sex aids and pornography.²⁷ After national scandal with the notorious *Oz* trial (the police finally busted the magazine after the Schoolkid's *Oz*, no. 28, edited by minors), 'Whatever happened to the hippies?' in *Oz* no. 39 expressed the malaise which by 1971 signalled the end of euphoria, the Sixties and *Oz* itself: 'This sagging of spirits may reflect simple depression at the endless and sickening war, at the realisation that it may be too late to do anything about ecological catastrophe, at the difficulty of finding employment even in the sterile busywork of government and the big corporations'.²⁸

The year 1969 marked the 50th anniversary of female suffrage in England; Greer's *The female eunuch*, first published in 1970, was a serious and brilliant summary of the battles of the Sixties, won and lost. The *Oz* mode was abandoned for a more passionate, more intellectual discussion in which Greer situated herself within a tradition of significant precursors: Simone de Beauvoir's *The second sex* (the first English edition appeared in 1953) and Betty Friedan's *The feminine mystique* (1963), with its exposure of the fallacy of the American 'happy housewife syndrome' (the very material of Edouardo Paolozzi's 'Bunk' series of scrap-book collages) come first to mind. However, *The female eunuch* is orchestrated throughout with the great voices of liberation whose battle began in eighteenth-century England, Mary Wollstonecraft (*A vindication of the rights of women*, 1792), William Blake (*Visions of the daughters of Albion*, 1793) and John Stuart Mill (*The subjection of women*, 1869). One may argue that the influence of such figures had led, directly, to the entry of women to Oxford and Cambridge in the late nineteenth century, creating, long before women's suffrage in 1919, the proud tradition which Dr Greer, in blue-stocking mode, inherited.²⁹ *The female*

eunuch, divided into sections on Body, Soul, Love, Hate, Revolution, and within these into parts (Body comprises Gender, Bones, Curves, Hair, Sex, The Wicked Womb) delightfully mixes high and 'low' culture in Sixties style, 'low' ranging from Chaucer's bawdy *Wife of Bath* to the contemporary Merseyside poet, Roger Macgough's 'Discretion':

Discretion is the better part of Valerie
though all of her is nice
lips as warm as strawberries
eyes as cold as ice....³⁰

'So what is the beef?' Greer asks. 'Maybe I couldn't make it. Maybe I don't have a pretty smile, good teeth, nice tits, long legs, a cheeky arse, a sexy voice Then again, maybe I'm sick of the masquerade I'm sick of being a transvestite. I refuse to be a female impersonator. I am a woman, not a castrate.'³¹

Photograph
by Lewis Morley of
Pauline Boty, 1963.
Courtesy National
Portrait Gallery.
© Lewis Morley/
Akehurst Bureau



The theme of the female eunuch, the woman 'castrate', is developed in another frame of reference, contemporary America, with quotations from Philip Roth's *Portnoy's complaint* and Solanas's 'SCUM manifesto': 'To be sure he's a "Man", the male must see to it that the female is clearly a "Woman", the opposite of a "Man", that is, the female must act like a faggot'.³²

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Transvestism itself was however a leitmotif of the 1960s; indeed, Greer takes April Ashley, the sex-change model (who married the Hon. Arthur Corbett), 'disgraced, unsexed', as 'our sister and our symbol'.³³ The art world was exploding with confessional self-representations from David Hockney's *We two boys together clinging* (1961) to Andy Warhol's self-portraits in drag, complemented by those of Michel Journiac in France or Urs Luthi in Germany. From the 1950s, the homosexual writer Genet enjoyed great popularity in the United States and England; indeed Pauline Boty created extravagant sets for a production of Genet's *The balcony* in 1964–5. Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to the translated edition of Genet's *The maids*, where he speaks of 'this perpetual challenging of masculinity by a symbolic femininity and of the latter by the secret femininity which is the truth of all masculinity', is astonishingly close to Solanas's 'Women, in other words, don't have penis envy; men have pussy envy'.³⁴ Only recently has the rise of Pop art in the United States been seen not merely as a figurative and popular celebration of consumer opulence, but as 'closely allied with the rise of gay identity'.³⁵ From Greenberg's notorious *avant-garde* and kitsch of 1939, to Susan Sontag's 'Notes on camp' of 1964 in the United States, followed by Greer's analysis of the changing London scene from 1967 to 1970, the art of the Sixties, embodied by Pop, can be seen to short circuit, precisely at the intersection of image, simulacra and masquerade, with sexual identity. Astonishingly, Sixties histories are still being written from a masculinist/formalist point of view....³⁶

Not all Sixties girls had Dr Greer's powers of analysis or sublimation, however; the Quant girls, the Biba girls, the Oz girls had lots of fun (as well as tears), as did many less visible, ordinary mortals. Greer's challenge to the Daughters of Albion was to replace the 'idol... signifying the lineaments of satisfied impotence' with what William Blake had called 'the lineaments of Gratified Desire'.³⁷ Alas! it was never easy. Greer's propositions, full of energy and hope, now seem impossibly dated: 'Ultimately, the greatest service a woman can do her community is to be happy; the degree of revolt and irresponsibility which she must manifest to acquire happiness is the only sure indication of the way things must change if there is to be any point in continuing to be a woman at all'.³⁸ While happiness appears as the nostalgic

quest of the Sixties, from Nell Dunn's heroines to the great festivals of love and music in Hyde Park or the Isle of Wight, it was, as always, elusive – more likely to be found, Mary Quant declared, 'eating baked beans in the middle of the night' than as a Sixties super-icon.³⁹

An immediate riposte to Greer came in the form of voluptuous Greek-born, Cambridge-educated Arianna Stannisopolous: *The female woman* (1973) attacked Greer and Women's Lib at its most militant (an act of both doomed competition and homage).⁴⁰ The American Kate Millet in her *Sexual politics* (1970) complemented and extended Greer's literary analyses; by the 1970s both authors had become essential reading for university literature courses.⁴¹ All told, Greer's impact was decisive, influencing far more than her own generation. Time has turned *The female eunuch* into a rather poignant, while still exhilarating, document of its age. Greer's preface to the 21st anniversary edition of *The female eunuch* acknowledges the local emphasis of the original publication and refers to 'women of the rich world, whose oppression is seen by poor women as freedom'. Leaving the Sixties, Greer here alerts us to the predicament of poor women the world over in post-Communist consumer society, appallingly unprotected, the battle for freedom still to begin: 'Freedom from Fear, freedom from Hunger, freedom of Speech and freedom of Belief. Most of the women in the world are still afraid, still hungry, still mute and loaded by religion with all kinds of fetters, masked, muzzled, mutilated and beaten'.⁴² Frenchmen may well cry 'Vive la différence!' for it is cultivated unceasingly in all aspects of life.⁴³ 'Plus ça change...' we may say, looking at France and England today. But with our freedoms come responsibilities: the battle continues.

Sarah Wilson

Greer, sex and the Sixties



Photograph
by Robert Whitaker:
Germaine Greer in
make-up for the
filming of *Darling,
do you love me?* 1967
Courtesy Robert
Whitaker

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1. See Kenneth Tynan, 'Lady Chatterley's trial', *The Observer*, 6 November 1960 repr. in Ray Conolly, ed., *In the Sixties*, London, Pavilion Books, 1995, pp. 10–12.
2. See Clive Irving, Ron Hall, Jeremy Wallington, *Scandal '63*, London, Heinemann, 1963. Pauline Boty was commissioned to paint *Scandal '63*.
3. See Bernadette Devlin, *The price of my soul*, London, Pan, 1969.
4. See 'Dossier 1970–81. Que sont devenues ces féministes?', *Le temps de femmes*, no. 12, summer 1981; Danièle Léger, *Le Féminisme en France. 1970–80*, Paris, Editions de la Sycomore, 1982; Claire Duchet, *Feminism in France from May '68 to Mitterand*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.
5. By 1962, 3.536 women were taking the Pill in Britain; by 1969, 1.25 million (15%). See 'The Pill' and 'Contraception' in the indispensable Anthony D'Abreu, ed., *The Sixties* (with Christopher Booker, Tony Palmer, Roger McGough), London, Sociopack Publication, 1973 (unpaginated), and Germaine Greer, 'Contraception – 1972', *Sunday Times*, 12 March 1972, and 'On population and women's right to choose', *Spare Rib*, March 1975, in *The madwoman's underclothes. Essays and Occasional Writings. 1968–85*, London, Picador Paperbacks, pp. 105–107, 192–4.
6. Mary Quant on the Pill, interviewed by Alison Adburgham, *The Guardian*, 10 October 1967, in R. Conolly, ed., *In the Sixties*, op. cit., p. 148.
7. For women's achievements in finance (Lloyds of London), industry, education, journalism, theatre and television, see Germaine Greer, *The female eunuch*, London, 1970; Flamingo, 1993, pp. 151–3.
8. Neil Dunn's *Talking to women*, London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1965 (including interviews with the artist Pauline Boty and novelist and mother Edna O'Brien), is massively preoccupied with questions of love, happiness, sex, appearances, but also guilt, fear and the emotional price of achievement and marriage. Her novel, *Poor cow*, London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1967, depicting a working-class mother in slum conditions, with criminal lovers, permanently in prison – a life of drudgery pierced by fantasies and memories of love – won paperback rights of £10,000. (Dunn was an heiress, her husband, Sandford, an Old Etonian....) For the lot of the poor see also Tony Parker's 1969 television interviews of women in prison: *Five women*.
9. See Alison Adburgham, 'Mary Quant' in Conolly, ed., *In the Sixties*, op. cit., p. 146.
10. Mary Quant: *Quant on Quant*, London, 1966; Pan, 1967, p. 79, and on the 'intellectual girl' and the 'square' pp. 96–7.
11. Angela Buttolph, 'Return of the Biba babes', *Evening Standard*, 7 May 1996, p. 28.
12. Germaine Greer, 'Hippies in Asia', *Sunday Times*, 27 August 1972, in *The madwoman's underclothes*, op. cit., p. 120.
13. Despite her ferocious, angry and bloodied work of the Sixties, Niki de Saint-Phalle's work has constantly been infantilized through lack of scholarship in France; only in 1994 did her book *Mon secret* reveal the childhood abuse that generated this rage. Her film *Daddy*, with its incest theme and scenes of women masturbating or being masturbated, was shown in London at the Hammer Cinema, November 1972, and subsequently in April 1973 at the 11th New York Film Festival.
14. See 'Statement. Gillian Ayres, 1962' in David Alan Mellor, *The Sixties art scene in London*, London, Barbican Art Gallery, 1993, p. 29, and Bridget Riley quoted by Thomas Crow, *The rise of the Sixties*, London, Everyman Art Library, pp. 112–13, illustrated with a Riley copycat 'evening ensemble' from the Carpucci Winter Collection, Paris, 1965.
15. 20 out of the 54 works in *Blake, Boty, Porter, Reeve*, a group show of 1961 held by the Artists International Association, were by Boty. Christine Porter's works were apparently Abstract.
16. Boty quoted in Sabine Durrant, 'The darling of her generation! Pauline Boty was the heartbreaker of the Sixties art scene', *Independent on Sunday*, 7 March 1993, p. 14, quoted in Terry Ann Riggs, 'It's a man's world: An analysis of the life and work of Pauline Boty', MA report, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1996, p. 5, to which I am greatly indebted.
17. See *Pauline Boty. 1938–66*, London, Mayor Gallery, 1993, and Mellor, *The Sixties art scene*, op. cit. *Celia with some of her heroes*, 1963, has been acquired for the new Berardo Collection, Sintra, Portugal.
18. Boty's confusion and vulnerability are revealed in the conversation with Neil Dunn in *Talking to women*, op. cit. For the intellectualization of the problem of 'women's desire for the fetish', see Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality and the field of vision*, London, Verso, 1986, p. 212: 'woman is taken to desire herself but only through the term which precludes her', and Marjorie Garber on female fetishism and fetish envy in *Vested interests. Cross dressing and cultural anxiety*, New York, Routledge, 1992, pp. 126–7.
19. See Richard Hamilton's extraordinary text 'Urbane image', *Living Arts*, no. 2, June 1963, in Mellor, *The Sixties art scene*, op. cit., pp. 165–8 (conflating world capitalism, appliances, Jane Russell's Exquisite form bra, long-focus lenses, Mr Universe) and his depiction of 'feminized' cars, toasters, Braun appliances etc.
20. Germaine Greer, *The female eunuch*, op. cit., pp. 68–9.
21. See David Alan Mellor, *Underground London. The photographs of Robert Whitaker 1965–70*, Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, 1994.
22. Frank Zappa identified the 'grouple' as 'high priestess of free love and the group grope' in *Rolling Stone*, no. 27, 15 February 1961 (Greer, *The female eunuch*, op. cit., p. 297). A 'grouple's vision' is reproduced in Greer, *The madwoman's underclothes*, op. cit., pp. 11–13.
23. For recent summaries of the American feminist scene see Ellen Willis, 'Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism' (Ti-Grace Atkinson, Anne Koedt etc.), Rachel Bowlby, '60s feminism' and Sylvia Ferenc, 'Putting feminism back on its feet' (with bibliographies), in Sohnya Sayers, Anders Stephenson, Stanley Aronowitz and Fredric Jameson, eds, *The Sixties without apology*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pp. 91 ff., 326–7 and 338 ff.
24. Valerie Solanas, 'SCUM (Society for cutting up men) manifesto', New York, 1968; London, The Olympia Press, 1971, with a preface by Vivian Gornick c. 1967. Having nearly killed Warhol, Solanas sets out her agenda (including the destruction of 'Great Art'): 'there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex', p. 3.
25. For 'The slag-heap erupts' see Greer, *The madwoman's underclothes*, op. cit., pp. 25–9.
26. For 'The politics of female sexuality' and 'Lady, love your cunt' see Greer, *The madwoman's underclothes*, op. cit., pp. 36–40 and 74–7.
27. Greer would go on to write serious articles about both pornography, 'A needle for your pornograph', *Sunday Times*, 22 July 1971, and an extensive treatment of the politics of rape: 'Seduction is a four-letter word', *Playboy*, January 1973, reproduced in *The madwoman's underclothes*, op. cit., pp. 65–7 and 152–68.
28. Alan Watts, 'Whatever happened to the hippies?', repr. from *Earth*, June 1971, in *Oz*, no. 39 (undated).
29. The founding conference of the British Women's Liberation movement took place at Ruskin College, Oxford, in 1970.
30. For this lyrical poetry of the Sixties, contemporary with the Beatles' lyrics (where love was still sentimental, polite and gentle), see Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, Brian Patten, *The Mersey sound*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1967 and reprints.
31. Greer, *The female eunuch*, op. cit., p. 70. A plethora of delightful and

learned references run the gamut from the 'high' to the 'low' of English literature and make this a worthy successor to De Beauvoir's *Second sex*. See also Sarah Wilson, 'Femininities-Masquerades' in *Rose ... is a Rose ... is a Rose: Gender performance in photography*, New York, Solomon R. Guuggenheim Museum, 1997, for a comprehensive account of the 'masquerade' problem.

32. Ibid., pp. 86 (Roth) and 102, quoting from Solanas, 'SCUM', op. cit., p. 50.

33. Greer, *The female eunuch*, op. cit., pp. 70–72.

34. Jean-Paul Sartre, preface to Jean Genet, *The maids and deathwatch. Two plays*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, New York, 1954, Appendix III, pp. 677–8, and Solanas, 'SCUM', op. cit., pp. 6–7: 'the male, because of his obsession to compensate for not being female combined with his inability to relate and to feel compassion, has made of the world a shitpile...'

35. Kenneth E. Silver, 'Modes of disclosure: The construction of gay identity and the rise of Pop Art', *Hand-painted Pop: American art in transition, 1955–62*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; New York, Rizzoli, 1993, pp. 178–203.

36. See Marco Livingstone, 'A big sensation [sic] in UK Pop', *Pop Art*, London, Royal Academy of Arts, 1991, pp. 146–53, and notably Crow, *The rise of the Sixties*, op. cit., 1996.

37. William Blake, 'The question answer'd': Poems from the Note-book, 1793, in *Blake: Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, Oxford, OUP, 1966, p. 180.

38. Greer, *The female eunuch*, op. cit., pp. 316–17.

39. 'Now – it would seem – for a woman to be happy she must have ... a career ... a spindryer ... diamonds ... TV ... a mink-lined mackintosh ... a lover ... an electric toaster ... good health ... pep-up pills and sedatives ... two cars (at least!) ... Jane Fonda's face and Simone de Beauvoir's intellect ... a working knowledge of child psychology ... a child ... a husband who beats her every Friday.' Mary Quant, *Quant by Quant*, op. cit. pp. 143–5.

40. See Arianna Stannisopoulos, *The female woman*, London, Davis Poynter, 1973.

41. See Kate Millet, *Sexual politics*, New York, 1970; London, Hart-Davis, 1971.

42. Greer, *The female eunuch*, op. cit., p. 11.

43. Ibid., p. 34.

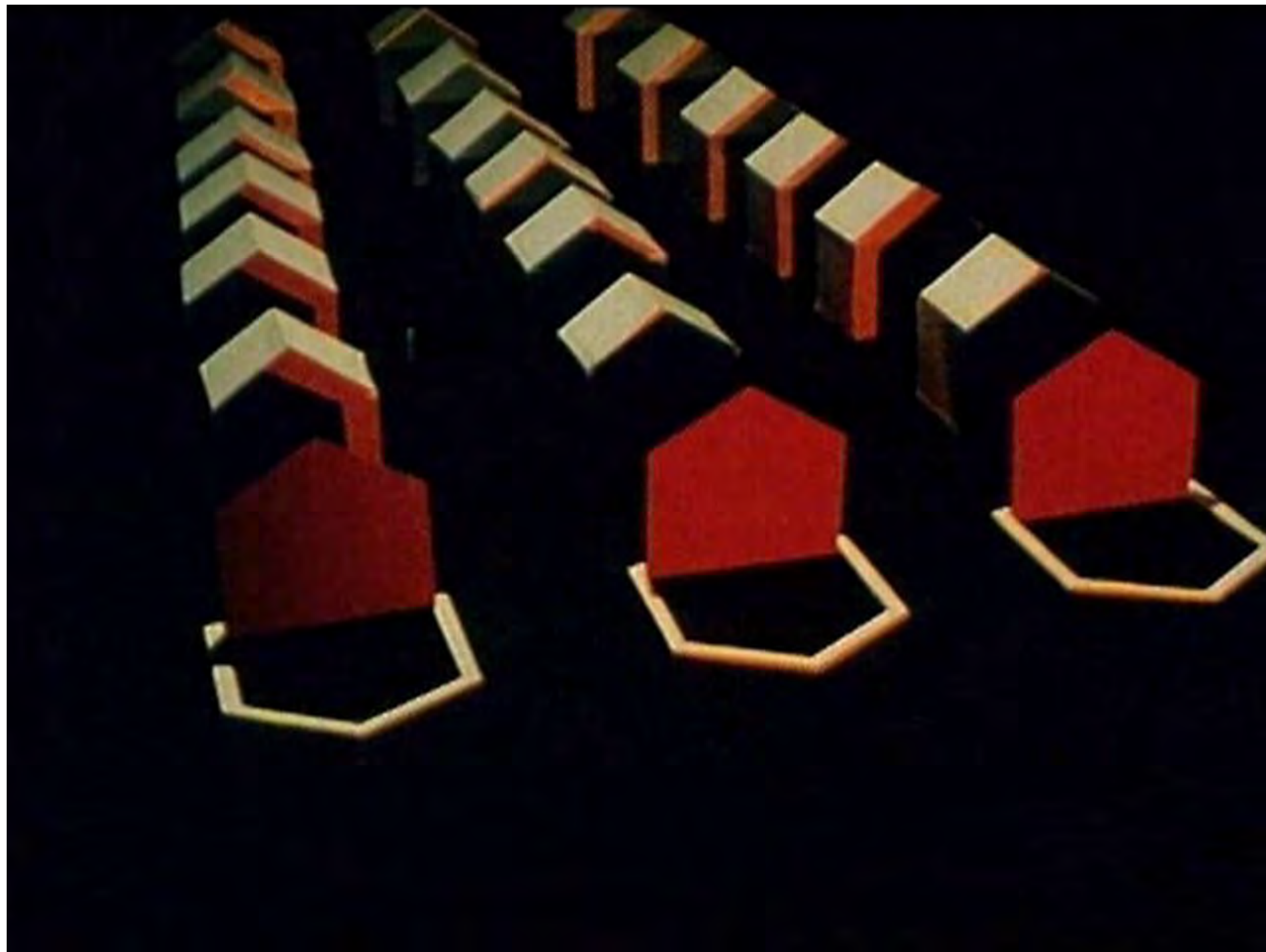


Photograph
by Robert Whitaker:
Germaine Greer with
make-up removed
after the filming of
*Darling, do you love
me?* 1967. Courtesy
Robert Whitaker









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WHAT IS A WOMAN?

The dispute between radical feminism and transgenderism.

BY MICHELLE GOLDBERG

As transgender rights gain acceptance, radical-feminist views have been shunned.

ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX WILLIAMSON.

On May 24th, a few dozen people gathered in a conference room at the Central Library, a century-old Georgian Revival building in downtown Portland, Oregon, for an event called Radfems Respond. The conference had been convened by a group that wanted to defend two positions that have made radical feminism anathema to much of the left. First, the organizers hoped to refute charges that the desire to ban prostitution implies hostility toward prostitutes. Then they were going to try to explain why, at a time when transgender rights are ascendant, radical feminists insist on regarding transgender women as men, who should not be allowed to use women's facilities, such as public rest rooms, or to participate in events organized exclusively for women.



The dispute began more than forty years ago, at the height of the second-wave feminist movement. In one early skirmish, in 1973, the West Coast Lesbian Conference, in Los Angeles, furiously split over a scheduled performance by the folksinger Beth Elliott, who is what was then called a transsexual. Robin Morgan, the keynote speaker, said:

I will not call a male “she”; thirty-two years of suffering in this androcentric society, and of surviving, have earned me the title “woman”; one walk down the street by a male transvestite, five minutes of his being hassled (which he may enjoy), and then he dares, he *dares* to think he understands our pain? No, in our mothers’ names and in our own, we must not call him sister.

Such views are shared by few feminists now, but they still have a foothold among some self-described radical feminists, who have found themselves in an acrimonious battle with trans people and their allies. Trans women say that they are women because they feel female—that, as some put it, they have women’s brains in men’s bodies. Radical feminists reject the notion of a “female brain.” They believe that if women think and act differently from men it’s because society forces them to, requiring them to be sexually attractive, nurturing, and deferential. In the words of Lierre Keith, a speaker at Radfems Respond, femininity is “ritualized submission.”

In this view, gender is less an identity than a caste position. Anyone born a man retains male privilege in society; even if he chooses to live as a woman—and accept a correspondingly subordinate social position—the fact that he has a choice means that he can never understand what being a woman is really like. By extension, when trans women demand to be accepted as women they are simply exercising another form of male entitlement. All this enrages trans women and their allies, who point to the discrimination that trans people endure; although radical feminism is far from achieving all its goals, women have won far more formal equality than trans people have. In most states, it’s legal to fire someone for being transgender, and transgender people can’t serve in the military. A recent survey by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force found overwhelming levels of anti-trans violence and persecution. Forty-one per cent of respondents said that they had attempted suicide.

Yet, at the same time, the trans-rights movement is growing in power and cachet: a recent *Time* cover featuring the actress Laverne Cox was headlined “THE TRANSGENDER TIPPING POINT.” The very word “transgender,” which first came into wide use in the nineteen-nineties, encompasses far more people than the term “transsexual” did. It includes not just the small number of people who seek gender-reassignment surgery—according to frequently cited estimates, about one in thirty thousand men and one in a hundred thousand women—but also those who take hormones, or who simply identify with the opposite gender, or, in some cases, with both or with neither. (According to the National Center survey, most trans women have taken female hormones, but only about a quarter of them have had genital surgery.) The elasticity of the term “transgender” has forced a rethinking of what sex and gender mean; at least in progressive circles, what’s determinative isn’t people’s chromosomes or their genitals or the way that they were brought up but how they see themselves.

Having rejected this supposition, radical feminists now find themselves in a position that few would have imagined when the conflict began: shunned as reactionaries on the wrong side of a sexual-rights issue. It is, to them, a baffling political inversion.

Radfems Respond was originally to have taken place across town from the library, at a Quaker meeting house, but trans activists had launched a petition on Change.org demanding that the event be cancelled. They said that, in hosting it, the Quakers would

alienate trans people and “be complicit in the violence against them.” The Quakers, citing concerns in their community, revoked the agreement.

It wasn’t the first time that such an event had lost a scheduled venue. The Radfem 2012 conference was to be held in London, at Conway Hall, which bills itself as “a hub for free speech and independent thought.” But trans activists objected both to Radfem’s women-only policy—which was widely understood to exclude trans women—and to the participation of Sheila Jeffreys, a professor of political science at the University of Melbourne. Jeffreys was scheduled to speak on prostitution, but she is a longtime critic of the transgender movement, and Conway Hall officials decided that they could not allow speakers who “conflict with our ethos, principles, and culture.” Ultimately, the event was held at a still secret location; organizers escorted delegates to it from a nearby meeting place. Radfem 2013 also had to switch locations, as did a gathering in Toronto last year, called Radfems Rise Up.

In response, thirty-seven radical feminists, including major figures from the second wave, such as Ti-Grace Atkinson, Kathie Sarachild, and Michele Wallace, signed a statement titled “Forbidden Discourse: The Silencing of Feminist Criticism of ‘Gender,’” which described their “alarm” at “threats and attacks, some of them physical, on individuals and organizations daring to challenge the currently fashionable concept of gender.” With all this in mind, the Radfems Respond organizers had arranged the library space as a backup, but then a post on Portland Indymedia announced:

We questioned the library administration about allowing a hate group who promotes discrimination and their response is that they cannot kick them out because of freedom of speech. So we also exercise our right to free speech in public space this Saturday to drive the TERFS and Radfems out of OUR library and OUR Portland!

(TERF stands for “trans-exclusionary radical feminist.” The term can be useful for making a distinction with radical feminists who do not share the same position, but those at whom it is directed consider it a slur.)

Abusive posts proliferated on Twitter and, especially, Tumblr. One read, “/kill/terfs 2K14.” Another suggested, “how about ‘slowly and horrendously murder terfs in saw-like torture machines and contraptions’ 2K14.” A young blogger holding a knife posted a selfie with the caption “Fetch me a terf.” Such threats have become so common that radical-feminist Web sites have taken to cataloguing them. “It’s aggrieved entitlement,” Lierre Keith told me. “They are so angry that we will not see them as women.” Keith is a writer and an activist who runs a small permaculture farm in Northern California. She is

forty-nine, with cropped pewter hair and a uniform of black T-shirts and jeans. Three years ago, she co-founded the ecofeminist group Deep Green Resistance, which has some two hundred members and links the oppression of women to the pillaging of the planet.

D.G.R. is defiantly militant, refusing to condemn the use of violence in the service of goals it considers just. In radical circles, though, what makes the group truly controversial is its stance on gender. As members see it, a person born with male privilege can no more shed it through surgery than a white person can claim an African-American identity simply by darkening his or her skin. Before D.G.R. held its first conference, in 2011, in Wisconsin, the group informed a person in the process of a male-to-female transition that she couldn't stay in the women's quarters. "We said, That's fine if you want to come, but, no, you're not going to have access to the women's sleeping spaces and the women's bathrooms," Keith told me.

Last February, Keith was to be a keynote speaker at the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference, at the University of Oregon, in Eugene, but the student government voted to condemn her, and more than a thousand people signed a petition demanding that the address be cancelled. Amid threats of violence, six policemen escorted Keith to the lectern, though, in the end, the protest proved peaceful: some audience members walked out and held a rally, leaving her to speak to a half-empty room.

K eith had an easier time at Radfems Respond, where she spoke on the differences between radicalism and liberalism. Two gender-bending punk kids who looked as if they might be there to protest left during the long opening session, on prostitution. A men's-rights activist showed up—he later posted mocking clips from a video that he had secretly made—but said nothing during the sessions. Several trans women arrived and sat at the back, but, in fact, they were there to express solidarity, having decided that the attacks on radical feminists were both out of control and misguided. One of them, a thin, forty-year-old blonde from the Bay Area, who blogs under the name Snowflake Especial, noted that all the violence against trans women that she's aware of was committed by men. "Why aren't we dealing with them?" she asked.

Despite that surprising show of support, most of the speakers felt embattled. Heath Atom Russell gave the closing talk. A stocky woman, with curly turquoise hair and a bluish stubble shadow on her cheeks, she wore a T-shirt that read "I Survived Testosterone Poisoning." At twenty-five, she is a "detransitioner," a person who once identified as transgender but no longer does. (Expert estimates of the number of transitioners who abandon their new gender range from fewer than one per cent to as many as five per cent.)

Russell, a lesbian who grew up in a conservative Baptist family in Southern California, began transitioning to male as a student at Humboldt State University, and was embraced by gender-rights groups on campus. She started taking hormones and changed

her name. Then, in her senior year, she discovered “Unpacking Queer Politics” (2003), by Sheila Jeffreys, which critiques female-to-male transsexualism as capitulation to misogyny.

At first, the book infuriated Russell, but she couldn’t let go of the questions that it raised about her own identity. She had been having heart palpitations, which made her uneasy about the hormones she was taking. Nor did she ever fully believe herself to be male. At one point during her transition, she hooked up with a middle-aged trans woman. Russell knew that she was supposed to think of herself as a man with a woman, but, she said, “It didn’t feel right, and I was scared.” Eventually, she proclaimed herself a woman again, and a radical feminist, though it meant being ostracized by many of her friends. She is now engaged to a woman; someone keyed the word “dyke” on her fiancée’s car.

Russell appears in Sheila Jeffreys’s new book, “Gender Hurts: A Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism.” Jeffreys, who is sixty-six, has short silver hair and a weathered face. She has taught at the University of Melbourne for twenty-three years, but she grew up in London, and has been described as the Andrea Dworkin of the U.K. She has written nine previous books, all of which focus on the sexual subjugation of women, whether through rape, incest, pornography, prostitution, or Western beauty norms. Like Dworkin, she is viewed as a heroine by a cadre of like-minded admirers and as a zealot by others. In 2005, in an admiring feature in the *Guardian*, Julie Bindel wrote, “Jeffreys sees sexuality as the basis of the oppression of women by men, in much the same way as Marx saw capitalism as the scourge of the working class. This unwavering belief has made her many enemies. Postmodern theorist Judith Halberstam once said, ‘If Sheila Jeffreys did not exist, Camille Paglia would have had to invent her.’”

In eight brisk chapters (half of them written with Jeffreys’s former Ph.D. student Lorene Gottschalk), “Gender Hurts” offers Jeffreys’s first full-length treatment of transgenderism. Ordinarily, Jeffreys told me, she would launch the publication of a new book with an event at the university, but this time campus security warned against it. She has also taken her name off her office door. She gave a talk in London this month, but it was invitation-only.

In the book, Jeffreys calls detransitioners like Russell “survivors,” and cites them as evidence that transgenderism isn’t immutable and thus doesn’t warrant radical medical intervention. (She considers gender-reassignment surgery a form of mutilation.) “The phenomenon of regret undermines the idea that there exists a particular kind of person who is genuinely and essentially transgender and can be identified accurately by psychiatrists,” she writes. “It is radically destabilising to the transgender project.” She cites as further evidence the case of Bradley Cooper, who, in 2011, at the age of seventeen, became Britain’s youngest gender-reassignment patient, then publicly regretted his transition the next year and returned to living as a boy. Jeffreys is especially

alarmed by doctors in Europe, Australia, and the United States who treat transgender children with puberty-delaying drugs, which prevent them from developing unwanted secondary sex characteristics and can result in sterilization.

Throughout the book, Jeffreys insists on using male pronouns to refer to trans women and female ones to refer to trans men. “Use by men of feminine pronouns conceals the masculine privilege bestowed upon them by virtue of having been placed in and brought up in the male sex caste,” she writes. To her critics, the book becomes particularly hateful when she tries to account for the reality of trans people. Explaining female-to-male transition is fairly easy for her (and for other radical feminists): women seek to become men in order to raise their status in a sexist system. Heath Atom Russell, for example, is quoted as attributing her former desire to become a man to the absence of a “proud woman loving culture.”

But, if that’s true, why would men demote themselves to womanhood? For reasons of sexual fetishism, Jeffreys says. She substantiates her argument with the highly controversial theories of Ray Blanchard, a retired professor of psychiatry at the University of Toronto, and the related work of J. Michael Bailey, a psychology professor at Northwestern University. Contrary to widespread belief, Blanchard says, the majority of trans women in the West start off not as effeminate gay men but as straight or bisexual men, and they are initially motivated by erotic compulsion rather than by any conceived female identity. “The core is, it’s really exciting for guys to imagine themselves with female breasts, or female breasts and a vulva,” he told me. To describe the syndrome, Blanchard coined the term “autogynephilia,” meaning sexual arousal at the thought of oneself as female.

Blanchard is far from a radical feminist. He believes that gender-reassignment surgery can relieve psychological suffering; he has even counselled people who undergo it. He also accepts the commonly held view that male brains differ from female brains in ways that affect behavior. Nevertheless, Jeffreys believes that the work of Blanchard and Bailey shows that when trans women ask to be accepted as women they’re seeking to have an erotic fixation indulged.

The last time a feminist of any standing published an attack on transgenderism as caustic as “Gender Hurts” was in 1979, when Janice Raymond produced “The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male.” Raymond was a lesbian ex-nun who became a doctoral student of the radical-feminist theologian Mary Daly, at Boston College. Inspired by the women’s-health movement, Raymond framed much of “The Transsexual Empire” as a critique of a patriarchal medical and psychiatric establishment. Still, the book was frequently febrile, particularly with regard to lesbian trans women. “All transsexuals rape women’s bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves,” Raymond wrote. “However, the transsexually constructed lesbian-feminist violates women’s sexuality and spirit.”

It's a measure of how much perceptions have changed in the past thirty-five years that "The Transsexual Empire" received a respectful, even admiring hearing in the mainstream media, unlike "Gender Hurts," which has been largely ignored there. Reviewing "The Transsexual Empire" in the *Times*, the psychiatrist Thomas Szasz called it "flawless." Raymond, he wrote, "has rightly seized on transsexualism as an emblem of modern society's unremitting—though increasingly concealed—antifeminism."

One of the women Raymond wrote about was Sandy Stone, a performance artist and academic who this fall will teach digital arts and new media at the University of California, Santa Cruz. When Raymond's book was published, Stone was a recording engineer at Olivia Records, a women's-music collective in Los Angeles. In the late sixties, after graduating from college, and while still living as a man, she had bluffed her way into a job at New York's famed Record Plant recording studio, where she worked with Jimi Hendrix and the Velvet Underground. (For a time, she slept in the studio basement, on a pile of Hendrix's capes.) She moved to the West Coast and transitioned in 1974. Olivia approached her soon afterward; experienced female recording engineers were hard to find.

Stone became a member of the collective the next year and moved into a communal house that it rented, where she was the only trans woman among a dozen or so other lesbians. According to "The Transsexual Empire," her presence was a major source of controversy in lesbian-feminist circles, but Stone insists that it was Raymond who created the dissension. "When the book came out, we were deluged with hate mail," Stone says. "Up to that point, we were pretty much happy campers, making our music and doing our political work."

Stone received death threats, but ultimately it was the threat of a boycott that drove her out of the collective. She eventually earned a doctorate in philosophy at Santa Cruz. In 1987, Stone wrote an essay, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," which is widely seen as the founding text of transgender studies. It's still taught around the world; a second French edition is about to be published, and Stone has received a request to allow a Catalan translation.

The last time that Janice Raymond wrote on transgender issues was in 1994, for a new introduction to "The Transsexual Empire." Since then, she has focussed on sex trafficking, and last August a Norwegian government agency invited her to Oslo to speak on a panel about prostitution legislation. When she arrived, however, an official informed her that she had been disinvited; a letter to the editor of a major Norwegian newspaper had accused her of transphobia. Raymond says that similar things have "happened much more frequently within the last couple of years."

The most dramatic change in the perception of transgenderism can be seen in academia. Particularly at liberal-arts colleges, students are now routinely asked which gender pronoun they would prefer to be addressed by: choices might include “ze,” “ou,” “hir,” “they,” or even “it.” A decade ago, no university offered a student health plan that covered gender-reassignment surgery. Today, dozens do, including Harvard, Brown, Duke, Yale, Stanford, and the schools in the University of California system.

There are young transgender-critical radical feminists, like Heath Atom Russell and Rachel Ivey, aged twenty-four, who was one of the organizers of Radfems Respond, but they are the first to admit that they’re a minority. “If I were to say in a typical women’s-studies class today, ‘Female people are oppressed on the basis of reproduction,’ I would get called out,” Ivey says. Other students, she adds, would ask, “What about women who are male?”

That might be an exaggeration, but only a slight one. The members of the board of the New York Abortion Access Fund, an all-volunteer group that helps to pay for abortions for those who can’t afford them, are mostly young women; Alison Turkos, the group’s co-chair, is twenty-six. In May, they voted unanimously to stop using the word “women” when talking about people who get pregnant, so as not to exclude trans men. “We recognize that people who identify as men can become pregnant and seek abortions,” the group’s new Statement of Values says.

A Change.org petition asks NARAL and Planned Parenthood to adopt similarly gender-inclusive language. It specifically criticizes the hashtag #StandWithTexasWomen, which ricocheted around Twitter during State Senator Wendy Davis’s filibuster against an anti-abortion bill in her state, and the phrase “Trust Women,” which was the slogan of George Tiller, the doctor and abortion provider who was murdered in Wichita in 2009.

To some younger activists, it seems obvious that anyone who objects to such changes is simply clinging to the privilege inherent in being cisgender, a word popularized in the nineteen-nineties to mean any person who is not transgender. Alison Turkos has heard complaints that the new language obscures the fact that cisgender women overwhelmingly bear the brunt of the current political attacks on reproductive rights. She replies, “It may not feel comfortable, but it’s important to create a space for more people who are often denied space and visibility.”

Older feminists who have not yet adopted this way of thinking can find themselves experiencing ideological whiplash. Sara St. Martin Lynne, a forty-year-old filmmaker and video producer from Oakland, told me, “When you come from a liberation, leftist background, you want to be on the right side of history,” and the debate “kind of puts you through your paces.” Last year, she was asked to resign from the board

of Bay Area Girls Rock Camp, a nonprofit that “empowers girls through music,” because of her involvement with the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, which bills itself as an event for “womyn-born womyn” only.

Michfest, as it’s called, takes place every August, on six hundred and fifty acres of land in the woods east of Lake Michigan. Lisa Vogel founded it in 1976, when she was a nineteen-year-old Central Michigan University student, and she still runs it. The music, Vogel says, is only part of what makes Michfest important. Each year, several thousand women set up camp there and find themselves, for a week, living in a matriarchy. Meals are cooked in kitchen tents and eaten communally. There are workshops and classes. Some women don extravagant costumes; others wear nothing at all. There is free child care and a team to assist disabled women who ordinarily cannot go camping. Vogel describes the governing ethos as “How would a town look if we actually got to decide what was important?”

She told me, “There’s something that I experience on the land when I walk at night without a flashlight in the woods and recognize that for that moment I feel completely safe. And there’s nowhere else I can do that.” She continued, “If, tomorrow, we said everyone is welcome, I’m sure it would still be a really cool event, but that piece that allows women to let down their guard and feel that really deep sense of personal liberation would be different, and that’s what we’re about.”

To transgender activists, Vogel’s stance is laden with offensive assumptions: that trans women are different in an essential way from other women, and that they’re dangerous. “The trope of trans women” constituting “a threat to women’s spaces has been tossed around forever,” Julia Serano told me. To her, it’s akin to straight people refusing to share a locker room with gays or lesbians. Serano, forty-six, is a biologist by training who now spends most of her time writing and speaking on transgender issues and feminism; last year, she lectured at schools including Brown, Stanford, Smith, and Cornell. (Sheila Jeffreys attacks her in “Gender Hurts,” using autobiographical details from Serano’s first book, “Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity” (2007), to paint her as an autogynephile who seeks to “reinvent ‘feminism’ to fit his erotic interests.”)

In the summer of 2003, Serano joined about a hundred people at Camp Trans, a protest camp near the Michfest site, which has run intermittently since 1994. Serano said that relations with Michfest attendees were often unexpectedly cordial. A few years ago, though, Vogel says, some protesters committed acts of vandalism—stealing electrical cables, cutting water pipes, keying cars in the parking lot, and spray-painting a six-foot penis, and the words “Real Women Have Dicks,” on the side of the main kitchen tent.

Since then, as with the case of Olivia Records, the demonstrations have been supplanted by a boycott campaign. Last year, the Indigo Girls, longtime regulars at Michfest, announced that they wouldn't appear again until the event became trans-inclusive. This year, the scheduled headliners, Hunter Valentine, pulled out for the same reason. Performers who do appear face protests and boycotts of their own; the funk singer Shelley Nicole says that her band, blaKbüshe, was dropped from a show in Brooklyn because it is playing at Michfest next month.

Before Sara St. Martin Lynne was asked to leave the Bay Area Girls Rock Camp board, she hadn't identified closely with radical feminism. Yet, as the campaign against Michfest—and against radical feminism as a whole—has grown, she's come to feel strongly about keeping the event “womyn-born-womyn.” She said, “This moment where we're losing the ability to say the word ‘woman’ or to acknowledge the fact that being born female has lived consequences and meaning is kind of intense to me.”

One of the trans women who showed up at the Radfems Respond conference, a thirty-five-year-old software engineer from California, with a tiny nose stud and long brown hair, agrees. She understands why trans women are hurt by their exclusion from Michfest and other female-only events and facilities, saying, “It's not really wanting to invade space. It's a deep-seated wanting to belong.” But, she adds, “if you're identifying with women, shouldn't you be empathizing with women?”

Sandy Stone shares this view—up to a point. Of the radical feminists' position, she says, “It's my personal belief, from speaking to some of these people at length, that it comes from having been subject to serious trauma at the hands of some man, or multiple men.” She adds, “You have to respect that. That's their experience of the world.” But the pain of radical feminists, she insists, can't trump trans rights. “If it were a perfect world, we would find ways to reach out and find ways of mutual healing,” she says. But, as it is, “I am going to have to say, It's your place to stay out of spaces where transgender male-to-female people go. It's not our job to avoid you.” ♦

MICHELLE GOLDBERG

Rosa's Letters

Edited by Pia Rönicke

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2011

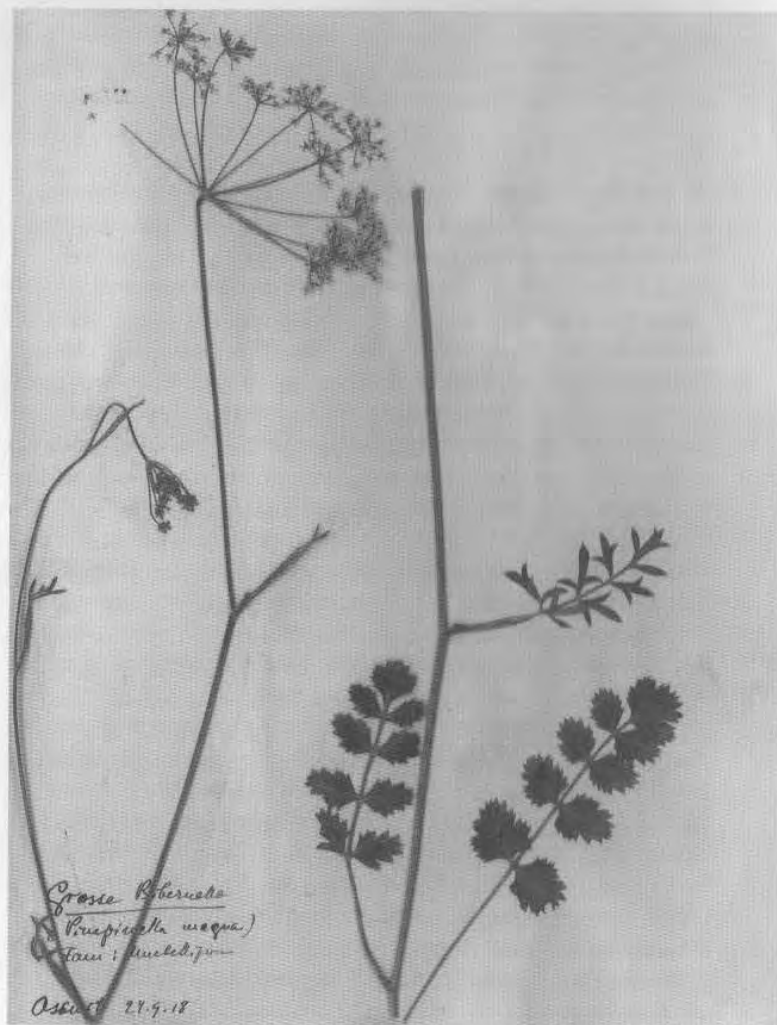
Translations of Rosa Luxemburg's letters

To: Sophie Liebknecht
November 24, 1917

My dear little Sonitschka,
I had intended to take the opportunity to write to you in any case. Then your letter arrived yesterday, and I have to chat with you, although unfortunately, to do so, I do not have as much time or peace of mind as I would like to have.
Don't talk to me of "hysterical ladies," my little bird. Don't you understand, have you not noticed, that the best women suffer from this affliction? Have you seen poor Marta's eyes, in which there lies such nameless suffering and such unspeakable fear—fear that the doors of life have already closed and that the real life has not at all been touched or savored. Luise—when I met her she was a completely different person from now: robust, content, almost thick-skinned, complete. Since then, suffering and association with people other than her husband have made her into a sensitive, soft being; look into her eyes: what amazement, unease, grappling and searching, and aching disappointment! And with all that, the same thing you complain of . . . I am not mentioning all of this in order to give you the vulgar consolation that because others suffer from the same thing, you should forget your suffering. I know that for each person, each creature, one's own life is the only, unique good there is, and that with each small fly that is carelessly crushed, the entire world collapses each time; for the dying eyes of that fly everything is as much over as if the end of the world had destroyed all life. No, I am telling you about the other women so that you do not underestimate and disregard your pain, so that you do not wrongly understand yourself and distort your own image before yourself. Oh, how well I understand you, when every beautiful melody, every flower, every spring day, every moonlit night creates yearning and enticement for the greatest beauty the world has to offer. And how I can sympathize that you are in love "with love!" For me, as well, love was (or is? . . .) always more important and holier than the object that inspires it. And precisely because it allows us to see the world as a shimmering fairy tale, because it elicits from people the most noble and beautiful qualities, because it elevates the most common and minor things, encasing them in brilliance, and because it enables us to live in a state of intoxication, of ecstasy . . . But, little Sonjuscha, you are

not, as Marta and Luise are, at the end of your life. You are young and beautiful, and you still have to live properly. Only these few fatal years must be survived, but then—many things must change, one way or the other. You may not and should not settle your accounts yet; that is absurd. I would like to immerse you in all the intoxication of the happiness of life and would resolutely defend your right to it.

You are wrong to think I am biased against the modern poets. Around fifteen years ago I read Dehmel with enthusiasm—some prose work or other by him—on the deathbed of a beloved woman—I only have a vague memory—very charming. Arno Holz's "Phantastus" I can still recite by heart. Johann Schlaf's *Frühling* (poetry in prose form) captivated and enchanted me back then. Then I deviated and returned to Goethe and Mörike. Hofmannsthal I just don't understand; for better or for worse, I don't get it at all. George I'm not familiar with. It's true: with all of them I'm a bit afraid of the complete masterful control of the form, of the poetic means of expression, and the lack of a greater, noble worldview. This discrepancy seems so soulless to me that the beautiful form becomes grotesque to me as a result. On the whole they marvelously convey MOODS. But moods do not make people. Sonitschka, there are such magical evenings now, like in spring. I go down into the yard around four o'clock and it is already dusk; then I see the horrid surroundings wrapped in the mysterious veil of darkness but the sky aglow a sweet blue shade, and a silver, clear moon floating in it. About this time each day, high above the yard hundreds of crows make their way in loose, wide bands to the fields, to their "sleeping trees," where they rest for the night. They move with leisurely flaps of their wings, exchanging strange calls—very different from the sharp "caw," with which they greedily hunt for booty during the day. This call sounds muted and soft, a deeper, guttural sound, which reminds me of a small metal ball. And when many blurt out this gurgling "cau-cau" to one another, it seems to me as if they were passing around a small metal ball in play that floated in an arc formation through the air. It is a calm chatting over the day's experiences, "about the day, about the day enjoyed today . . ." They seem so serious and important to me how they follow each evening their custom and prescribed path that I experience something like a sense of awe for these large birds, whom I watch, head raised—until the last. Then



III.

"Greater Burnet-saxifrage" [*Pimpinella magna*], umbelliferae family.
Osberg, September 24, 1918.

I wander back and forth in the darkness and look at the prisoners still hurriedly carrying out their labor in the yard, scurrying around like faint shadows, and I am happy that I myself am invisible—so alone, so free with my reveries and the clandestine greeting between me and the crows passing over above. To me it is even as if the linden tree were giving off a springlike breeze. Then, prisoners with a heavy cauldron (dinner!) go through the yard into the building, two by two, as if marching, ten pairs one after the other; I follow last of all. In the yard, the lights are gradually put out in the utility buildings. I enter the building and the doors are locked twice and bolted—the day is done. I feel very fine, despite the pain over Hans. I live, namely, in a dreamworld in which he did not die at all. For me he continues to live, and I smile to him often when I think about him.

Sonitschka, my little darling, farewell. I am looking forward to your visit. Write again soon—officially for the time being, that's also possible—and then at your convenience.

I embrace you.

Yours,
R.

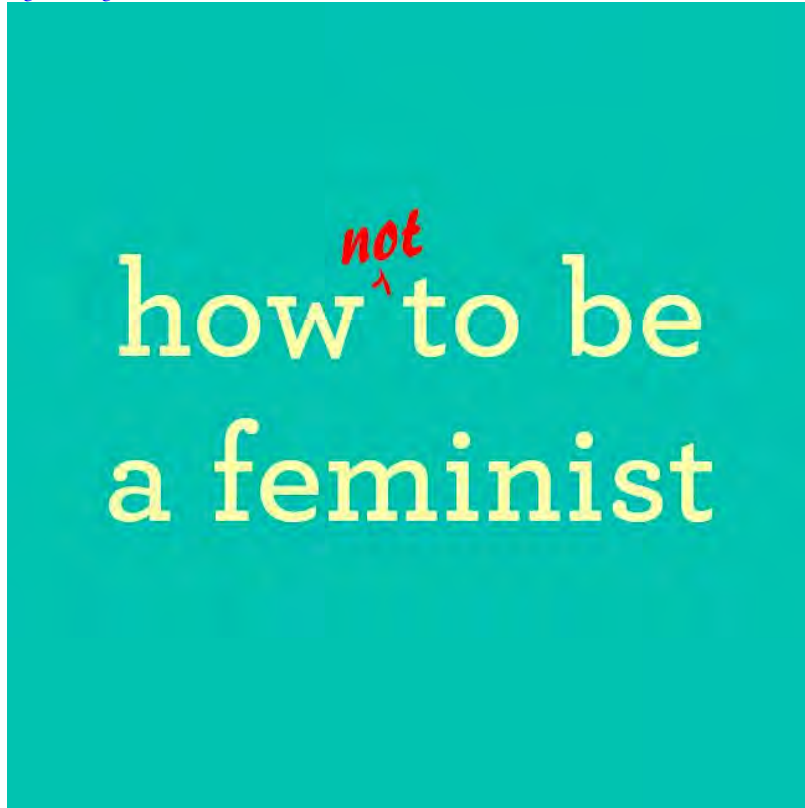
Source: Luxemburg, Rosa: *Gesammelte Briefe*, vol 2 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1984), pp. 333–35.

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No platform for hate speech: End Germaine Greer

- 08 Sunday, 8 March, 12:45
- WORD live conference screening: LAW108 Lecture Theatre, Business and Law building, Ilam Campus, University of Canterbury
-
-

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No platform for hate speech: End Germaine Greer

The era of transphobes like Gremaine Greer is over.
Trans women are women. Period.

WORD Christchurch and UC College of Arts are presenting 'How To Be a Feminist', a live broadcast from the Sydney Opera House's 'All About Women' festival on International Women's Day, Sunday 8 March.

We will be passing out headphones and ear plugs at the screening, so that when Greer comes on, participants can refuse to listen to her hate speech. We will be taking photos, to upload online and send a clear message to feminists everywhere: do not provide a platform for people like Greer to spread hate speech.

6/14/2015

No platform for hate speech: End Germaine Greer – Heyevent.com

We have spoken to the other panellists, who were unaware of Greer's transphobia, and assure us that they support trans women and plan to call out Greer's transphobia on the day.

We have also spoken to the Chch organisers are also in support of trans women, and against transphobia and transmisogyny, and have agreed to include a trans woman speaker in the talk which will follow this screening - Kait Nelson, a non-binary transfeminine person who advocates for the rights of transgender and intersex people and has previously presented lectures on deconstructing the gender binary.

We invite you to come to the conference, meet outside, and help us hand out earphones and information pamphlet which is being written by Team Fox in Socks - Transgender community workers/organisers and trans and intersex rights advocates.

We also invite you share this event and invite your friends to tautoko and to amplify.

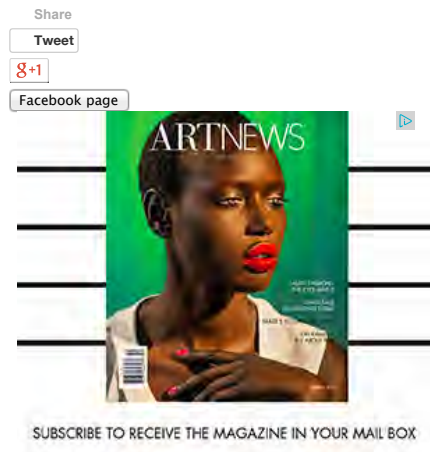
Trans women are a part of feminism.
Transphobes are not.

There is no place in feminism for transphobia and transmisogyny.





60 attendees (588 invited)

I'm going |
I might go |

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<http://heyevent.com/event/23qicmizoikwia/no-platform-for-hate-speech-end-germaine-greer>

2/5

FORGETTING

JULY 19, 2015

READINGS:

Emily Apter, "'Women's Time' in Theory," *d i f f e r e n c e s: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Volume 21, Number 1, Brown University, 2010

Annabel Nicolson, Felicity Sparrow, Jane Clarke, Jeanette Iljon, Lis Rhodes, Mary Pat Leece, Pat Murphy, Susan Stein, "Woman and the Formal Film," and Lis Rhodes, "Whose History," *Film as film; formal experiment in film, 1910-1975*, Arts Council of Great Britain (London), 1979

VISUALS:

Footprints on the Moon (Le Orme), Luigi Bazzoni, 1975, film
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5Q8K-dEwf8>

Dropout Piece, Lee Lozano, ca. 1970
<http://millineries.blogspot.com/2015/06/lee-lozano-dropout-piece-by-sarah.html>

Moyra Davey, images from *Long Life Cool White* (2008)
<http://murrayguy.com/moyra-davey/selected-works/#1999>

Sarah Charlesworth, images from *Modern History* series:
http://www.sarahcharlesworth.net/series-view.php?album_id=1449341&subalbum_id=1449475

“Women’s Time” in Theory

*I*n considering the dauntingly open-ended question posed by the editors of this special issue (“What’s the Difference? The Question of Theory”), my impulse is to answer laconically, “It’s time.” First, it’s about time to measure the difference between theory in its *heyday*—the eighties and early nineties, during which continental philosophy, situationism, Frankfurt School critique, semiotics, poststructuralism, feminism, queer theory, histories of sexuality, critical race theory, spatial urbanism, biopolitics, postcolonial subaltern studies, and cultural studies converged in productive cacophony—and *now*, when theory has arguably been reabsorbed by established disciplines and approaches such as ethics, political theory, phenomenology, cognitive psychology, book history, pragmatism, new media, and cultural and intersectional analysis. Second, it’s Time’s time, that is to say, a moment in which theoretical paradigms of temporality (Bergsonian *durée*, the untimely, the century, periodicity, the outmoded, contemporaneity) are garnering renewed critical attention. Third (and my focus here), it is women’s time, again, in feminist theory.

In fall 2008, I received an e-flyer circulated by two Whitney Independent Study Program participants, Jen Kennedy and Liz Linden. Announcing an event billed as “Back to the Future . . . An Experimental Discussion on Contemporary Feminist Practice,” it was both an invitation to and a preparatory brief for a town-hall meeting that took place at the Whitney Museum of American Art on February 21, 2009. What came to the fore—in addition to manifest rifts among self-identified feminists—was a distinct uncertainty about where feminism stands at the current pass: pro- or anti-theory? Alive or dead? Stuck in white middle-classness or responsive to wider communities of race, ethnicity, and social belonging? Politically activist (on behalf of equal pay, same-sex marriage, abortion rights) or politically enervated by reflexive pieties? Faithful to feminocentrism or committed instead to sex and gender pluralism (trans/homo/bi/inter/neutral/queer . . .)?

Listening to the discussion at the Whitney, I was struck by the fact that while temporal references abounded (labor time, the biological clock, intergenerational tensions in the women’s movement), nobody addressed the problem of time as such. This was all the more striking given that Kennedy and Linden’s manifesto-questionnaire highlighted contemporary feminism’s stakes in rethinking historical and temporal markers. The periodization of the women’s movement, the gerundive condition of “lived practice,” the coexistence of multiple chronotopes that “untime” the temporal measures of capitalist labor and tempo were signaled as defining concerns by the language of their short *Dictionary of Temporary Approximations*. “In drafting this dictionary,” they wrote, “we have intentionally selected potentially problematic words that *evoke the past and have thus helped pin feminism in one historical moment*. In their stead, we have suggested *temporary* placeholders to be used for the *duration* of our discussion. [. . .] HOW DO YOU PRACTICE FEMINISM TODAY? KEEPING IN MIND THAT WE HOPE TO CREATE A SHORT LIST OF WORDS PROBLEMATICALLY ROOTED IN THE PAST, ARE THERE ANY CHANGES YOU WOULD SUGGEST?” (my emphases; upper case in orig.). There was an interesting double desire to preserve keywords of feminist history while assigning them different values as placeholders of the present.

ACTIVISM; Protest, as in: *I support the potential of viral forms of activism to raise awareness and provoke debate in areas of life that otherwise go unconsidered.*

PREJUDICE; Misogyny, as in: *My friend was surprised to encounter prejudice when a colleague told her she should “stop being hysterical.”*

PARENTING; Motherhood, and/or the state of being a parent, as in: *I believed that parenting is socially constituted not biologically determined.*

LIVED IDENTITY; Womanhood/manhood/subjecthood, as in: *My lived identity is something I take for granted, which is in part due to my success in an atypical profession.*

LIVED PRACTICE; Feminism, as in: *I participate in lived practice through my dedication to equal rights and women’s health. Or: I am a lived practitioner because I want opportunities for my daughter.*

SUBORDINATION; Patriarchy, as in: *While subordination is intertwined with other forms of group oppression, we must attempt to distinguish it in our own lives, in order to combat it.*

PLEASURE; Sexual liberation, as in: *Part of my attraction to lived practice involves my right to pleasure.*

SEXUAL HEALTH; Reproductive rights, as in: *Sexual health is a priority to me in that it is a safeguard for my future.*

Here, the citations (a mix of conversation and declaration) favor the progressive present tense (being, parenting, living) and recall the kind of temporal fluidity that Julia Kristeva associates with “women’s time.” In her celebrated 1979 essay “Women’s Time” [“Le temps des femmes”], Kristeva argues that female subjectivity is divided between cyclical, natural time (repetition, gestation, the biological clock) and monumental time (eternity, myths of resurrection, the cult of maternity). These modalities are set off against the time of linear history (defined by project, teleology, progression, *Bildung*) and its territorial correlatives (national spatial imaginaries, supranational cultural and religious memory). Existentialist feminists aspired, according to Kristeva, “to gain a place in linear time as the time of project and history” (193). By contrast, post-’68 feminists sought “to give a language to the intra-subjective and corporeal experiences left mute by culture in the past. [. . .] [T]hey have undertaken a veritable exploration of the *dynamic of signs* [. . .]. By demanding recognition of an irreducible identity, without equal in the opposite sex and, as such, exploded, plural, fluid, in a certain way non-identical, this feminism situates itself outside the linear time of identities which communicate through projection and revindication” (194). Kristeva discerned in the successor generation not only a reclamation of motherhood on different terms but the emergence of

“aesthetic practices” devoted to demystifying “a community of language as a universal, unifying tool which totalizes and equalizes” (210). Globally speaking, Kristeva posed creative time against epic time.¹ In literary studies, epic time is typically enshrined in the largely male-authored tradition of the historical novel, which seeks to grab the event through an epoch-defining narrative of watershed dates (wars and revolutions). Kristeva provided the impetus for untiming these historical periodizing frames not just as Nietzsche did through his antiteleological, antihistoricist concept of the untimely (*Unzeitgemässigkeit*) or as the Althusserians did through the notion of “epistemological break,” but through a feminist recuperation of archaic and futural temporal measures: cycle, period, pregnancy, the creative time of aesthetic practice. Kennedy and Linden, some thirty years later and perhaps unwittingly, seemed instinctively to have returned us to the problem of “women’s time,” but instead of voting in cyclical over linear time, they alighted on evanescence and contingency played out in the situationism of “lived practice.”

Between Kristeva and Kennedy and Linden there was, of course, a midterm generation of feminist thinkers engaged with temporality as a feminist issue. For Naomi Schor, periodicity was paramount. In “Depression in the Nineties,” a poignant essay whose very title activated periodizing consciousness, Schor used the nostalgic lever of the “decades” time-signature to snap into focus her personal and very melancholic sense of an era’s ending. The waning of feminist theory is traced to its implication in the affect-averse aloofness of postmodernism:

[I]n the age of postmodernist “waning of affect,” those who wish to bring back affects such as depression are not viewed as very good company. [. . .] Clearly there is a lot to be depressed about in these twilight days of the bloodiest of centuries, especially when one is, as I am, of a melancholic disposition. But I have no intention to invoke either Prozac or Zoloft or even the substantial clinical and autobiographical literature of and on depression. My aim is rather to speak of depression as a condition internal to academia [. . .]. I want to speak as someone who used to write, and write with a certain gusto, about gender and fiction, but who was sidelined by illness for a couple of years and woke up like a female Rip van Winkle to find herself plunged into a state of deep confusion over both the terms gender and narrative. [. . .] The old mapping, or mapping of gender onto narrative, which assumed

both the stability of gender and its privilege as a category of difference on the one hand, and the centrality of narrative as a mode of cultural expression, no longer holds. (159)

Schor's dismay over the loss of a clear-cut politics of sexual difference never abated, and her life was tragically foreshortened, depriving friends and colleagues of the chance to learn how she might have moved from the Kleinian "depressive position" to "reparative" intimations of gender theory's future. Had she lived, she might well have articulated *a new time for women's time* in her unfinished project on universalism (a concept normatively keyed to the "standard time" of established historical and philosophical milestones).

Schor's reliance on "decades-think" was notable in the preface to *Bad Objects*, where she mined associations around "the seventies" to summon recollections of her consciousness-raising youth. "The eighties" for Schor were especially marked by European, British, and American psychoanalytic feminism. Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, Michèle Le Doeuff, Luce Irigaray, Rosi Braidotti, Teresa de Lauretis, Laura Mulvey, Juliet Mitchell, Jacqueline Rose, Toril Moi, Mary Jacobus, Parveen Adams, Nancy K. Miller, Alice Jardine, Shoshana Felman, Jane Gallop, Judith Butler—all, like Schor herself, used Freud and Lacan against the grain to mount a critique of patriarchy, the phallic symbolic order, and the discursive sex-power axis. They stamped the period with a brilliant lexicon: *chôra* (unbounded semiosis), *jouissance*, fluid erotogeneity, *écriture féminine*, and "women's time." "The eighties," as Schor acknowledged, were equally galvanized by feminism's belated engagement with postcolonialism (initiated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's landmark essays "French Feminism in an International Frame" [1981] and "Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice" [1985]) and the politics of racial and cultural difference (mapped as a critical field by Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Nell Painter, Hortense Spillers, Valerie Smith, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Hazel Carby, and Françoise Vergès).

"The nineties," in Schor's timeline, belonged to queer theory, a movement that acquired momentum in response to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990). Though Schor worried that queer theory's plethora of indeterminate sexualities rendered feminism illegible as a configuration of gynocentric specificities, her coeditor Elizabeth Weed nonetheless wrote with verve about their "skewed coupling"

(viii) in a 1994 special issue of *differences* (later published as the book *Feminism Meets Queer Theory* in 1997). In this collection and others like it (*Coming Out of Feminism?* edited by Mandy Merck, Naomi Segal, and Elizabeth Wright [1998]), there was a kind of face-off between “women’s time” and “queer time,” with the former defined by an attachment to anachronism (as in Judith Butler’s claim that psychoanalytic feminism was justified by the need to examine the anachronistic traces of kinship in psychic life [16]), and the latter characterized by temporal supersession (of the category of woman).

The task of trying to resolve these “time wars” fell to a younger generation of critics writing in 2007. In *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*, a book that overtly announced its debt to Sedgwick’s classic, Sharon Marcus made it “women’s time” again in queer theory. Contesting Sedgwick’s defense of the absence of lesbianism in *Between Men* on the grounds that it was “a necessary decision, since my argument is structured around the distinctive relation of the male homosocial spectrum to the transmission of unequally distributed power” (18), Marcus replied:

Yes, homophobia was less powerful between women than between men, but was that because all forms of love between women were essentially interchangeable, as the continuum theory suggests? Yes, women’s relations were less violently policed than men’s, but are they therefore less interesting? Yes, women had more latitude with one another, but aren’t we beginning to see that some relationships between Victorian men enjoyed the fluidity Sedgwick considered the monopoly of women? Yes, relationships between women were different, but don’t we need at least an entire book to explore that—a book that engages Sedgwick’s wise insight that homo- and hetero- are inherently interrelated? (10)

Marcus herself devoted “an entire book” to retraining critical attention on relationships between women for “the 2000s.” Sedgwick, for her part, left us with a blueprint of “queer time” that was equally productive for twenty-first-century theory. In her introduction to *Novel-Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction* (1997), Sedgwick wrote about generationalism outside the confines of heteronormative chronometries and invoked the potential of queer life to modify pregiven notions of life span, survival, and community:

Think of the epiphanic, extravagantly reparative final volume of Proust, in which the narrator, after a long withdrawal from society, goes to a party where he at first thinks everyone is sporting elaborate costumes pretending to be ancient—then realizes that they are old, and so is he—and is then assailed, in half a dozen distinct mnemonic shocks, by a climactic series of joy-inducing “truths” about the relation of writing to time. The narrator never says so, but isn’t it worth pointing out that the complete temporal disorientation that initiates him into this revelatory space would have been impossible in a heterosexual père de famille, in one who had meanwhile been embodying, in the form of inexorably “progressing” identities and roles, the regular arrival of children and grandchildren. [. . .]

A more recent and terrible contingency, in the brutal foreshortening of so many queer lifespans, has deroutinized the temporality of many of us in ways that only intensify this effect. I’m thinking, as I say this, of three very queer friendships I have. One of my friends is sixty; the other two are both thirty, and I, at forty-five, am exactly in the middle. All four of us are academics, and we have in common a lot of interests, energies, and ambitions; we have each had, as well, variously intense activist investments. In a “normal” generational narrative, our identification with each other would be aligned with an expectation that in another fifteen years, I’d be situated comparably to where my sixty-year-old friend is, while my thirty-year-old friends would be situated comparably to where I am.

But we are all aware that the grounds of such friendships today are likely to differ from that model. They do so in inner cities, and for people subject to racist violence, and for people deprived of healthcare, and for people in dangerous industries, and for many others; they do for my friends and me. Specifically, living with advanced breast cancer, I have little chance of ever being the age my older friend is now. My friends who are thirty years old are similarly unlikely ever to experience my present, middle age: one is living with an advanced cancer caused by a massive environmental trauma (basically, he grew up on top of a toxic waste site); the other is living with HIV. The friend who is a very healthy sixty is the likeliest of us to be living fifteen years from now.

It’s hard to say, hard even to know, how these relationships are different from those shared by people of different ages on a landscape whose perspectival lines converge on a common disappearing-point. (26–27)

Sedgwick’s prediction that she would not reach sixty (she died of breast cancer at age fifty-eight in April 2009), adds a testamentary quality to this rich and complex idea of untimed lifespan and “uncommon” points of generational disappearance. And if we read this passage in connection with her work on Buddhism, queer time may be affiliated with the act of “conscious dying” (“Pedagogy” 167). In “Pedagogy of Buddhism,” Sedgwick gives us something like a model of companionate death defined by an ethic of care, an art of living with and through others, a transcendent experience of shared “unmaking” (175).

Buddhism (with its techniques for experiencing the sensation of spatial infinitude) was for Sedgwick not unlike Deleuzianism (with its Spinozist construct of extensive, virtual being) for Elizabeth Grosz. In both cases, time theory makes imaginable an ontology of post- or transfinitude. Sedgwick’s projections of queer intergenerationalism are affiliated with explorations into Buddhist circular time, while Grosz’s 2004 book *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* derives a nondialectical feminist politics of the virtual from Nietzschean, Bergsonian, and Deleuzian philosophies of time: “[F]eminist struggles of all kinds aim to produce a breach between the overwhelming weight of the patriarchal (or racist) past, its disruption in the present (which is to some extent controllable), and its overcoming in the future (which is not controllable or predictable). [. . .] The task is not so much to plan for the future, organize our resources toward it, to envision it before it comes about, for this reduces the future to the present. It is to make the future, to invent it” (258, 261). Grosz seems to be articulating here something on the order of what Alain Badiou (glossing Quentin Meillassoux) calls “transfinitude,” “a relation which simultaneously undoes the ‘necessitarian’ pretensions of classical metaphysics as well as the ‘critical’ distribution of the empirical and the transcendental” (vii).

Grosz’s commitment to a noncausal, redistributed critical present; Sedgwick’s inculcation in how to die together at off-points in life’s “normal” phasing; Schor’s polemical periodization of feminist theory’s recent past; and Kennedy and Linden’s feminist politics of “lived practice,” though discrepant, stand as preeminent examples of feminism thinking

the temporal (see also Deutsche et al. and Freeman). I would add to this representative list the *démodé* in its multivalent capacity as an aesthetic function of women's time.

Moyra Davey's photographs, particularly those included in her book *Long Life Cool White*, invite theorization through themes of archive, memory, fetish, the loss and possession of part objects, and domestic interiority. But for my purposes, the work's greatest interest lies in its use of the *démodé*—with that term understood in its full panoply of significations as the out of fashion, the outmoded, and the untimely.

The notion of the untimely (*Unzeitgemässigkeit*) is taken, of course, from Friedrich Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (*Untimely Meditations*), sometimes translated as *Unfashionable* (or *Unmodern*) *Observations*. The work was published in 1874, some two years after *The Birth of Tragedy*. In the chapter "History in the Service and Disservice of Life" ("Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben"), Nietzsche offered a comprehensive analysis of the ills of contemporary civilization, an analysis of decadence that hinged on a mythical idealization of Greece and an enthusiasm for the music of Wagner. Nietzsche invoked the notion of *Unzeitgemässigkeit* to refer both to a generic, confrontational stance against his own epoch and to a distaste for being "abreast of the times" typical of those who suffer from "historical malady." Philistinism, Nietzsche's other name for historical malady, rested on the notion of a civilization obsessed with the past, hobbled by the archaeological drive or will to knowledge. Extreme historical awareness, he argued, kills off any desire to invent the new. To create or to take action required historical forgetting, since a hyperconsciousness of life's ephemerality fostered servility to the status quo. For Nietzsche, historical malady embraced all strands of historicism, from *Geistesgeschichte* (spirit as telos, absolute spirit, classless society, progress of humanity) to historical relativism. The only way to break with this historicism—and its obsession with the recovery of lost paradise—was to embrace temporality and the concept of eternity.² The fundamental problem was how to give the nonhistorical element priority over the historical one, thus intensifying and enhancing action in the now. "Only from the highest power of the present can you interpret the past," he wrote (99), in what has been adduced to be a dogma of radical presentism. It was thus through the unfashionable, or history off its hinges, that one could have an effect on the future.

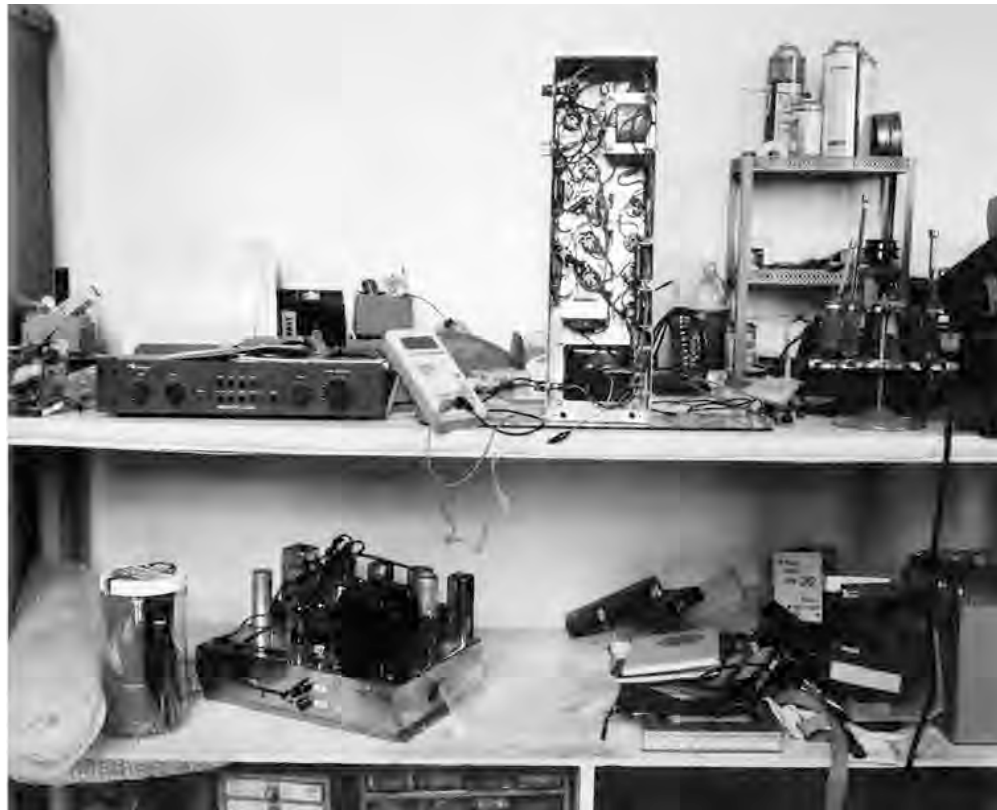
Figure 1
Moyra Davey,
“BirdSongs,”
1999.



Nietzschean efforts to untimely academic historicism, particularly those notions of *Zeitgeist* that anchor the archeological and political dating of history, take their place, paradoxically enough, in a long *history* of antiphilosophy. Premier philosophers of the “untimely” include Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger, and Walter Benjamin (who, in the words of Karl-Heinz Barck, invented “a new mode of writing history—*à rebours* in a nonlinear way, as it were—and in the ‘white heat’ of actual experience” [41]). Each theorist disabled the time signatures that assign tempo to the capitalist temporality underwriting labor, production, profit, and social calculation. And arguably, each helped lay the ground for antiperiod concepts like “epistemological break,” “situation,” and “event” (given their imprimatur by Althusser, Sartre, Foucault, and Badiou).

Davey’s photographs and writings expose the stigmatization of period within aesthetic ideology. According to a familiar formula, “Timelessness,” the guarantor of modernism whose trademarks comprise geometric abstraction, whiteness, minimalism, withheld ornament, formalist universalism, autonomy, and the psychically shattering experience

Figure 2
Moyra Davey,
“Nakamichi,”
1999.



of *Jetztzeit* or the “now-time,” is proverbially pitted against “Period.” Period or period style is what is most anathema to modernists: period rooms, photographic albums, vintage fashion, all are freighted with associations of historicism, cultural particularism, planned obsolescence, decadence, and the outmoded. Despite the common recognition that modernism has become a style, especially in the current era of recycled midcentury modernism in art, design, and critical theory, timelessness and period, like temporality and history more generally, continue to be played off against each other as polar opposites.

Davey’s *Long Life Cool White* offers relief from this stalemate. Timelessness and period fuse in images of modernist icons framed as outmoded media technologies. Vinyl records (fig. 1), speakers, receivers, turntables, household appliances (fig. 2)—all reference that moment when modern gadgets veer into obsolescence. They are still viable machines, not fully ripe for the dumpster or the Museum of Jurassic Technology, but they wear their programmed archaism on their sleeve. They offer, as it were, a glimpse of the preconscious period. This precocious periodicity

Figure 3
Moyra Davey,
“Bottle Grid,”
1996–2000.



is stored in Davey’s inventory of untimely objects, which fall in and out of modernist sequence. The sequence is marked visually by Davey’s reprise of the formal codes of geometric abstraction (a signature technique of Man Ray, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, or the *Neue Sachlichkeit* photographer so disliked by Benjamin, Albert Renger-Patzsch). Davey’s circular light fixtures, repeated squares of microwave and blocky fridge, and serial rectangles of radio consoles defer to timeless modernism, but in her images, this classic modernism is undercut by a period aura almost Old Masterish in its lighting effects: the radiant glow emanating from black and white studies of empty bottles of spirits (fig. 3); the deliciously tawdry layer of dirt on a white lighting fixture; the dust clumps under a dog’s paw (fig. 4); the

Figure 4
Moyra Davey,
“Paw,”
2003.



magical, midnight color glinting off a record-player arm; the holographic visage of a woman shimmering through a plastic LP sleeve (fig. 5). These photogenic touches cultivate viewer nostalgia for articles of modern life captured at a moment just prior to their being jettisoned.

Davey, it would seem, is not afraid to mine the aesthetic potential of outmoded *techne* in order to exonerate nostalgia: “In critical circles,” she writes, “nostalgia has a negative, even decadent connotation. But the etymology of the word uncovers other meanings. [. . .] I am told nostalgia is the intellectual’s guilty pleasure” (128–29). Often evoked in the same breath as postmodernism, nostalgia has been tainted as an expression of commercialized historicism, especially in its populist guises as kitsch, camp, or the *démodé*. Susan Sontag, a constant muse and interlocutor

Figure 5
Moyra Davey,
“Nyro,”
2003.



for Davey, was among the first to pinpoint the peculiar desire aroused by objects of congealed nostalgia: “[S]o many of the objects prized by Camp taste,” she wrote, “are old-fashioned, out-of-date, *démodé*, not out of a love of the old as such. It is simply that the process of aging or deterioration provides the necessary detachment—or arouses a necessary sympathy” (60). Following Sontag, it seems plausible that period style exerts a powerful appeal because it grants permission to submit to time’s ravages: decay, fade-out, erosion, discontinued brands, trash. Davey’s work, in its focus on the aging of modernism, poignantly engages with the psychic attraction to period aura that attaches itself to outmoded things.

In making timeless modernism appear mortal and the outmoded appear forever young, Davey’s work inadvertently responds to questions set out by the editors of *October* in their spring 2002 issue:

“The obsolescent, the ‘outmoded,’ the nonsynchronous, discarded forms, marginal mediums: all of these seem to be resources of special interest to many of the most interesting artistic projects today. How does obsolescence figure in your work? Do you mobilize it for critical purposes primarily? What is the critical purchase of obsolescence? Or does it serve constructive purposes in your work—i.e., the making of a new sort of medium or form?” (Baker 6). In the same issue, Hal Foster ponders whether contemporary art practice can usefully mine “the mnemonic dimension of the outmoded” or whether “the outmoded is now outmoded too—another device of fashion?” (195–96).

Responding to the questionnaire, the artist Martha Rosler takes a similarly dim view of the outmoded in contemporary art practice, arguing that “planned obsolescence, associated with manufactured objects, outdated by technical or stylistic innovation,” lends itself to an artistic obsolescence that panders to patrons by “dusting off the discarded and the overlooked.” Rosler objects to “translating these elements into treasures of taste and allegories of mortality.” For her, “Exotic objects and moments function as fragments revalorizing the bourgeois course, a Nanook narrative for the modernizing middle-class” (Baker 7).

Though Davey would no doubt be as averse as Rosler is to reducing obsolescent goods and places to the status of exotic eye candy for the bourgeoisie, she seems polemically eager to “love” the outmoded, even at the risk of embracing commodifiable period style. She credits Zoe Leonard with bringing “love and estimation of the old-fashioned gelatin silver print into the equation, at a time, in the early ’90s, when it was thought most uncouth to do so” (98). She applauds Thomas Hirschhorn’s loving recycling of Emma Kunz’s “healing images,” with their store of “pictorial energy.” And her own images, as we have seen, cultivate an unapologetic love for outmoded technology. “Fridge” (fig. 6) is especially iconic in this regard. “A well-stocked fridge,” the transcript of Davey’s video *Fifty Minutes* specifies, “always triggers a certain atavistic, metabolic anxiety, like that of the Neanderthal after the kill, faced with the task of needing to either ingest or preserve a massive abundance of food before spoilage sets in” (121). Atavistic, resurgent time, the time of metabolism (vitalist consumption), the lead time to spoilage—all these temporal modes are put into play.

Rather than fall into the familiar trap of simply dismissing the fashion for the outmoded as an engine of late capitalism dedicated to pumping up the flagging charts of world-weary consumerism (Foster) or as a symptom of patronage (Rosler), Davey’s work enables us to see the

Figure 6
Moyra Davey,
“Fridge,”
2003.



démodé as a mechanism that makes possible the radical dispossession of time. There is a temporal violence to outdating; when it erupts, it loosens periodicity’s possessive perimeters around spots of time and releases arrested images into the future.

The measurement of time in Davey’s work is also underscored by the title of the video piece: *Fifty Minutes*. Here, we see how Davey untimes (through the subtraction of ten minutes) the sacred sixty-minute hour. We are prompted to ask: what got lost or went unrecorded in those disappeared ten minutes? The video makes us aware of the normativity of the hour unit. *60 Minutes* is the name of a long-running television show, ritually turned on by millions of viewers every Sunday who enjoy the redemptive purgation of American scandals. It is also the sanctioned time

of the psychoanalytic session (Lacan, we recall, was excommunicated for tampering with its length). By setting the clock at “fifty minutes,” Davey instills a heightened consciousness of *durée*, along with the intimation that time might be apportioned differently once uncoupled from the measurement of profit. In Davey’s piece, the labor time of women’s work—repetitive multitasking, domestic chores—is placed on an aesthetic continuum with the unproductive activity of reading. Through such experiments with the decelerated pulse of daily accomplishment, Davey performs an art of the untimely, bringing us (as do Grosz, Kennedy, Linden, Schor, and Sedgwick) back to Kristeva’s seminal construct of “women’s time.”

In this reading, it is precisely the “dated” character of Kristeva’s *temps des femmes* that matters, for it describes the anachronistic resurgence of “seventies theory” in the guise of feminist theory now, itself focused on time and the politics of periodicity. Women’s time in this iteration is no longer confined to essentialist, universalist formulas of embodied cycle, reproductive measure, maternal history, “timeless” ideals of femininity and feminine beauty, domestic labor, or the eventual rupture with patriarchal social and political orders. It is identified instead with rethinking (among other topics) causality and teleology; the geopolitics of periodization; “deep” (transcivilizational) time; epochal historicity versus situational, contingent, or provisional eventuality; prophetic time signatures (familiar in contemporary invocations of a “communism to come”); epistemological break; psychic duration and endurance; pastness and futurity (fossil time to transfinitude); and temporal remainders. A recent collaborative project initiated by Judith Butler and provisionally titled “Remainders: Feminist Translations in Geopolitical Time” indicates how time has become indispensable to feminist theory: a component that helps move fields not marked as “feminist” per se (global geopolitics; translation studies) into position such that they become feminist concerns. There is then a “becoming-feminist” of time theory itself.

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Notes

- 1 Kristeva’s “creative time” conserves a referential foundation in the act of childbearing. It may be contrasted with Deleuzian theories of creative time that emphasize the singular, virtual unfurling of being. On Deleuze, see Hallward.
- 2 For an excellent exposition of the untimely in Nietzsche’s work, see Vattimo 30–42.

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Woman and the Formal Film

Annabel Nicolson, Felicity Sparrow, Jane Clarke, Jeanette Iljon, Lis Rhodes, Mary Pat Leece, Pat Murphy, Susan Stein

As the only woman involved in planning the 'Film as Film' exhibition Lis Rhodes decided to concentrate on the history of women making films and invited Felicity Sparrow to join her in this research. They focused on the work of Alice Guy, Germaine Dulac and Maya Deren, making personal contact with Ester Carla de Miro in Italy, who has been researching into Germaine Dulac for several years, and Millicent Hodson, Catrina Neiman, Veva Clark and Francine Bailey in America who have been making a comprehensive study of Maya Deren.

In response to requests for more women to be involved in this show Annabel Nicolson was invited to join the exhibition committee, which was responsible for deciding what would be shown and how it would be presented.

During this time the women 'officially' involved met regularly with a group of interested women to discuss developments. They felt themselves to be continually undermined by the lack of understanding and respect for their research by the Arts Council's committee.

For many reasons and with the support of women not officially involved in the 'Film as Films' committees they have decided to withhold their research and leave this gallery space empty.

This is our statement:

The gesture of withholding our work and the presentation in its stead of a statement of opposition is the only form of intervention open to us. It was impossible to allow the Arts Council to present our work as if there had been no struggle, as if it had been nurtured in the spirit of public patronage.

Informed by a feminist perspective it was our intention to begin a re-examination of the historicised past by introducing (welcoming) Alice Guy and re-presenting Germaine Dulac and Maya Deren.

Maya Deren and Germaine Dulac are both included in the 'Film as Film' historical survey but seen only in relation to the articulation of abstract/formal film. We were concerned that these women would be inaccurately 'defined' by the concepts that they had been chosen to illustrate and we felt a necessity to re-locate their work within the context of their own concerns, giving it a complexity and fullness that the 'Film as Film' exhibition denied by excluding: Dulac's contribution to the feminist movement; her interviews with women artists expressing their struggle for recognition; her belief in a specifically feminine creativity; her political involvement in the unionisation of film workers and support for the popular front before World War

II; Deren's (embarrassing) involvement with Voodoo; the relationship between her writing and her films; her interest in science, anthropology and religion; her attack on Surrealism.

Alice Guy is not represented in 'Film as Film' and has scarcely been recognised anywhere. She was actively involved in film-making at the turn of the century, experimenting with narrative structures and the use of sound with film, but has been forgotten by historians. Why are her films forgotten while those of Lumière and Méliès used as standard texts?

We hoped to carry the historical research up to the present and open up the closed form of 'Film as Film' by creating an active space within the exhibition where contemporary women could show personal statements and histories, find their own continuity and share ideas for future shows.

In general: we object to the idea of a closed art exhibition which presents its subject anonymously, defining its truth in Letraset and four foot display panels, denying the space within it to answer back, to add or disagree, denying the ideological implications inherent in the pursuit of an academic dream, the uncomplicated pattern where everything fits.

Specifically: we object to being invited, presumably on the strength of our skills and past work, to participate in the organisation and definition of an exhibition, yet not being left free to characterise our own contributions. We object to the subtle insinuations of intellectual wooliness and inefficiency, as if our perspectives were tolerated rather than considered seriously.

Months ago we made 'requests' for more representation by women on the committees, for recognition of our ideas for the exhibition, for a space within the gallery and for the freedom to exhibit our work, to determine what it would include and how it would look. These requests could have become demands. We might have 'won' by subversive personal methods or by insisting on a democratic vote. But how does one demand collectivity, support and a real working relationship which includes discussion of ideas and ideological positions, within the framework of meetings structured by an hierarchical institution?

We made the decision not to carry on, not to continue working in a situation that was hostile and ultimately fruitless for the individual women involved. It is better that the historical research be published elsewhere and the work of contemporary women film-makers, artists and critics be presented in a context where they are valued.

Whose History?

Lis Rhodes

Feeling unwilling to write — an inability to manipulate ideas into a theory and facts into a convincing argument, an apprehension at intervening in the hierarchy of film history; an alienation from its underlying thesis of development — I began to reflect.

I stopped writing. I read a sentence written by Gertrude Stein, 'Define what you do by what you see never by what you know because you do not know that this is so.'

I knew that 'Film as Film' represented a particular history; 'facts' fragments of film, arranged in sequence; an illustration of a theory; film history *re-surfaced*, the underlying method unchanged. What was blindingly apparent was the lack of women both represented in, and involved with the selection and structuring of, the exhibition.

I began making notes. The first word of every heading I made was 'problem'; the 'problem' of history and historical method; the 'problem' of researching women who apparently don't exist; the 'problem' of whether to present material in an overtly alienating context. Who was to be represented, how and why?

I put these questions to a group of women involved in various aspects of filmmaking and creative practice. It is the thoughts and experiences of this group that lead to this different presentation of history; history made by women about women.

Remembering a few hours that my sister and I had spent, over last Christmas, looking through a drawer full of old photographs and postcards, I began to think about my own history; images, moments of emotion, fragments of an event. A sentence re-heard, the sound of... the sounds most of all crept back into my mind surrounding the crumpled snapshots. A remembered face, a forgotten figure, my sister and I remember differently. Moments of remembrance for her were nothing to me. Others were shared. We talked and laughed together. Traces of this and that remembered and forgotten centred around a photograph. Is this history? It is certainly my history, her history, our history.

The present is the centre of focus. The image moves moment by moment. The image is history. The view through the lens may be blurred or defined — focused or unfocused — depending on what you think you know; what you imagine you see; what you learn to look for, what you are told is visible.

There is another history. A history that I have been taught; that I am told I am part of: a reconstruction of events, that I had no part in, causes that I didn't cause and effects that testify to my sense of exclusion. This is the history that defines the present, the pattern that confirms and restricts our position and activities.

History is not an isolated academic concern but the determining factor in making 'sense' — 'nonsense' — of now. Yesterday defines today, today tomorrow. The value placed upon truth, changes viewed from different orientations, different moments flicker with recognition others fade into oblivion.

The reason for this discussion of other histories is not necessarily to prove or disprove the validity of the histori-

cal thesis presented by 'Film as Film', but rather to consider its relevance and question its authority. Such authority is implied by the didactic and impersonal approach, and reinforced by the circumstances and context of its presentation; therefore a history not only acceptable to an institution, but fundamentally determined by it. The focuses, permissions, controls, histories are all male orientated. Our problem was not to find an alternative thesis from that of 'formalism' or 'structuralism', or attempt to exclude women's work from this thesis, but to consider our own history. How do women need to look at the work they do, the lives they lead? Can we be satisfied with token representation, a reference here and there in support of a theory of film history, which is not our own?

Problems of history

In a patriarchal class based society a man's position is determined by social and economic factors, but women are further defined as secondary within that class system, the value of their activities and their contributions to that society are considered secondary. This difference in experience, difference in opportunities must produce difference in history; a history of secondary value and largely neglected and unwritten.

Film history defined by men necessarily positions women outside its concerns. Women appear, but on whose terms? Within whose definitions? Apparently historical accuracy is based upon acceptable 'facts', that is those facts that are the concern of men. Unacceptable 'facts' are forgotten or rearranged. If they are remembered they are contained within the existing fabric. Alice Guy made some 200 films between 1896 and 1907. Why has she been forgotten? Her films attributed to Jasset and Feuillard?

At the present time we need to show in a polemical but positive way the destructive and creative aspects of working as women in film, and examine these phenomena as products of our society, and the particular society of film/art. Women filmmakers may or may not have made 'formalist' films, but is the term itself valid as a means of reconstructing history? Is there a commonly accepted and understood approach? Historians cannot avoid value judgments. They select and value certain works. When women are not selected their work plays no further part in film theory, or in historical exhibitions such as this one. A system of theory and criticism uses authorship and uniqueness to create the value of a work; then through publication and exhibition it publicises the authors and perpetuates the values they are said to represent. The construction of 'new' theories or re-valuation still relates to the established authors and their works. The purpose of 'Film as Film' is to establish relations between and attribute influences upon, assign importance to... etc., both of film to film, and film to other works of art, irrespective of author. This establishes a system of recognition but does not necessarily reflect the ideas or sensibilities of the author. Historians take possession of a film or painting as something to be used or restated. Traditionally scholarship is not concerned with persons but works and it is, therefore, assumed that such discussions/writings are impersonal and unbiased. Any work can be included provided that analysis can reveal such elements of style as the

theory entails.

As a method of reconstructing film history the thesis of 'Film as Film' is useful only in so far as it satisfies an apparent need to classify, organise and contain. This imposition of a fixed point of view on film history is dubious and contradicts the idea that films can be evaluated on their own presuppositions and not manipulated to fit those of the historian. If we are to reconsider this method of reconstruction then we must appeal to our own experience, the experience of women filmmakers, not to theoretical generalisations that either exclude our work or force it into an alien impersonal system of explanation.

The history represented here is the illustration of a philosophical ideal, the meshing of moments to prove a theoretical connection. It is as though a line could be drawn between past and present, and pieces of a person's life and work pegged on it; no exceptions, no change — theory looks nice — the similarity of item to item reassuring — shirt to shirt — shoulder to shoulder — an inflexible chain, each part in place. The pattern is defined. Cut the line and chronology falls in a crumpled heap. I prefer a crumpled heap, history at my feet, not stretched above my head.

There is the obvious and enormous difference of experience (between women and men) in the first place; but the essential difference lies in the fact not that men describe battles and women the birth of children, but that each sex described itself. It is the case, perhaps, that men have described both. If this 'difference' is unmistakable then the concept of equality is neither useful nor relevant. Such a concept presupposes 'sameness'. It disguises 'difference'. Similarity, not difference, expresses the containment of female within the dominant masculine modes of creativity. Any attempt to express 'difference' must cause opposition and therefore appear as the expression of a minority; as is visibly demonstrated in this catalogue and exhibition.

It is neither a question of defining a feminine mode of filmmaking, nor of persuading any woman to a feminist point of view, but simply suggesting that seeing 'difference' is more important than accepting 'sameness'; realising our own histories and understanding their many, possibly divergent, forms. It seemed, therefore, more vital to present a separate approach to history than to argue for an equal part in the selection and presentation of 'Film as Film'.

The historical approach that surveys works either published or collected must reinforce the society/film system that leads to their publication or protection in the first place. Ideology, therefore, predetermines information and its availability. The source material valued, written about and conserved reflects a male dominated society. Had Alice Guy not written about herself would she be accessible now, as a woman, as a filmmaker?

Women have already realised the need to research and write their own histories; to describe themselves rather than accept descriptions, images and fragments of 'historical evidence' of themselves; and to reject a history that perpetuates a mythological female occasionally glimpsed but never heard. Women are researching and conserving their own histories, creating their own sources of information. Perhaps we can change, are changing, must change the history as represented by 'Film as Film'.

Problems of presentation

The group discussions we had during the autumn of 1978 centred on how to present a history that was our own. We visited film archives and libraries. This was revealing in two ways; first the discovery of a category called 'women', pleasant perhaps, as an indication of a demand for information, but distressing in its confirmation of history presumed to be male unless otherwise defined.

Without a particularly detailed search our discoveries were encouraging. We found numerous women engaged in filmmaking prior to 1975. How could we select a few from amongst them?

It was this last question that focused our attention on the problem of *who* makes history for *whom*?

This space at the Hayward Gallery should surely be about women making their own history; to show history being re-described, re-thought, re-evaluated. If there are differences in approach to filmmaking between women and men this will become explicit without theoretical pre-determination. The work presented should not be seen as illustrating a particular concept of either feminine or feminist filmmaking. The presentation is as much concerned with the women researchers and their attitudes as it is with the subjects of their research, women looking at their own history.

We were still faced with the problem: was there any sense in trying to intervene in the context of 'Film as Film'? Would any representation of women's work be seen as merely token in a predominantly masculine exhibition, a ghetto in a male environment? However, had no intervention been made then the 'Film as Film' exhibition would publicly confirm the apparent lack of women filmmakers and the authority of a particular history.

Even if the presentation was to be token in dimension and context, it could provide a public space for information and discussion, not only of what women have done, but how we understand ourselves and our history. Hopefully, it may encourage women who are engaged in research, writing or filmmaking to discuss and describe our histories, in our own ways, on our own terms. A different history.

1. Gertrude Stein, *The geographical history of America*.
2. Virginia Woolf reviewing R B Johnston's book *The Women Novelists*.



Maya Deren *Meshes of the Afternoon* 1943

The Artist As God in Haiti

by Maya Deren

Tiger's Eye 6, December, 1948

In the fall of 1947 I went to Haiti to film Voodoo rituals for inclusion in my film-in-progress which is concerned with the forms of ritualistic discipline. I felt that those who had circulated sensational accounts of 'a wild voodoo' had simply failed to recognize as form a form which differed from those to which they were accustomed. I wished to perceive their religious system in terms of its meaning for those whom it had so long served as a moral discipline and an intellectual structure. The account which follows is based on diary notes concerning my first contact with Voodoo.

Sunday, September 28, 1947

I do not know whether I shall manage to set it all down on paper. The mood is strange. I am both tense and exhausted, balanced on a razor's edge between sleep and violent action and the tension between them so utterly consumes my energy that a kind of balance of paralysis is achieved. I neither sleep nor move. I say to myself: you must write down everything now, today, before it is forgotten or becomes unreal. Yet so much would I rather dream on it that to arrange sentences, to formulate precisions, seems an impossible effort of the will. My mind flows like a thick, slow-moving liquid in and out of all the crevices of last night. How can I ever record all the sounds, smells, movements, relationships, memories, desires, and those flashes of "seeing" in that ancient sense — that totality of any moment which completely involves one and thus involves all history.

How reluctant my mind is to face its task! How it loiters about the edges and finds, suddenly, urgent interest in some tangential preoccupation. There are times when one must lash and leash it and lead it, as one would a reluctant beast, grasping first at one firm real object, and then another until there is no other way for it to go and one mounts the beast and rides it, perhaps fearfully.

Yesterday evening S. came to have a drink with me at the hotel. He is very nice, but, as does C., he imagines that progress (with which these city Haitians are so obsessed) consists in an increasing intellectualization. This, aggravated by his anxiety to please, made for what was almost a parody of an intellectual conversation. It was incredible to sit there on the verandah, politely passing back and forth the proper ideas, while, in the distance, the sound of drums, growing with the dusk as if this luminous blackness which is the Haitian night was indeed its color, vibrated like the murmur of blood in the pulse of a body which was living through something.

It is not morbidity which draws crowds to scenes of disaster or unusual joy. It is the desire to participate in a moment when life breaks through to some higher level of intensity so that one's life might take fire from that sudden spurted flame. A great heart pounds as if the body could not catch its breath in the hills above us. The cutlets, the rice and beans, are meaningless. Abruptly I announce that I am off to hunt down the drums. C. and S. may accompany

The material by Maya Deren was given by Catrina Neiman, Francine Bailey, Millicent Hodson and Veve Clark, who are collectively working on 'The Legend of Maya Deren' a documentary biography to be published in three volumes for Film Culture.

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THE REASON DROPOUT

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TO ARTIST LYING INERT AS ARTSTATEMENT)

IS THE HARDEST WORK I'VE
EVER DONE IS THAT IT IN-
VOLVES DESTRUCTION OF (OR
AT LEAST COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING
OF) POWERFUL EMOTIONAL

HABITS.

116

KEY → EMOTIONS ARE ALSO HABITS,
LIKE ANY OTHER REPETITIVE
BEHAVIOR.

I WANT TO GET OVER MY
HABIT OF EMOTIONAL DEPEND-
ENCE ON LOVE.

I WANT TO START TRUSTING
MYSELF & OTHERS MORE.

LUCIANO PERUGIA · MARINA CICOGNA.....1968

FLORINDA BOLKAN

LE ORME



LUCIANO PERUGIA · MARINA CICOGNA..... FLORINDA BOLKAN.

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READINGS:

Valerie Solanas, *S.C.U.M. Manifesto*, 1967

<http://www.ccs.neu.edu/home/shivers/rants/scum.html>

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VISUALS:

Squeeze, Mika Rottenberg, 2010, film and installation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzC90Ux1M2k>

Ulrike Müller, images from *Franza, Fever 103, and Quilts* (2012)

<http://um.encore.at/works/fever-103>

S.C.U.M. Manifesto, 1967

(Society for Cutting Up Men) by Valerie Solanas

Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex.

It is now technically feasible to reproduce without the aid of males (or, for that matter, females) and to produce only females. We must begin immediately to do so. Retaining the male has not even the dubious purpose of reproduction. The male is a biological accident: the Y (male) gene is an incomplete X (female) gene, that is, it has an incomplete set of chromosomes. In other words, the male is an incomplete female, a walking abortion, aborted at the gene stage. To be male is to be deficient, emotionally limited; maleness is a deficiency disease and males are emotional cripples.

The male is completely egocentric, trapped inside himself, incapable of empathizing or identifying with others, or love, friendship, affection of tenderness. He is a completely isolated unit, incapable of rapport with anyone. His responses are entirely visceral, not cerebral; his intelligence is a mere tool in the services of his drives and needs; he is incapable of mental passion, mental interaction; he can't relate to anything other than his own physical sensations. He is a half-dead, unresponsive lump, incapable of giving or receiving pleasure or happiness; consequently, he is at best an utter bore, an inoffensive blob, since only those capable of absorption in others can be charming. He is trapped in a twilight zone halfway between humans and apes, and is far worse off than the apes because, unlike the apes, he is capable of a large array of negative feelings -- hate, jealousy, contempt, disgust, guilt, shame, doubt -- and moreover, he is *aware* of what he is and what he isn't.

Although completely physical, the male is unfit even for stud service. Even assuming mechanical proficiency, which few men have, he is, first of all, incapable of zestfully, lustfully, tearing off a piece, but instead is eaten up with guilt, shame, fear and insecurity, feelings rooted in male nature, which the most enlightened training can only minimize; second, the physical feeling he attains is next to nothing; and third, he is not empathizing with his partner, but is obsessed with how he's doing, turning in an A performance, doing a good plumbing job. To call a man an animal is to flatter him; he's a machine, a walking dildo. It's often said that men use women. Use them for what? Surely not pleasure.

Eaten up with guilt, shame, fears and insecurities and obtaining, if he's lucky, a barely perceptible physical feeling, the male is, nonetheless, obsessed with screwing; he'll swim through a river of snot, wade nostril-deep through a mile of vomit, if he thinks there'll be a friendly pussy awaiting him. He'll screw a woman he despises, any snaggle-toothed hag, and furthermore, pay for the opportunity. Why? Relieving physical tension isn't the answer, as masturbation suffices for that. It's not ego satisfaction; that doesn't explain screwing corpses and babies.

Completely egocentric, unable to relate, empathize or identify, and filled with a vast, pervasive,

diffuse sexuality, the male is psychically passive. He hates his passivity, so he projects it onto women, defines the male as active, then sets out to prove that he is ('prove that he is a Man'). His main means of attempting to prove it is screwing (Big Man with a Big Dick tearing off a Big Piece). Since he's attempting to prove an error, he must 'prove' it again and again. Screwing, then, is a desperate compulsive, attempt to prove he's not passive, not a woman; but he *is* passive and *does* want to be a woman.

Being an incomplete female, the male spends his life attempting to complete himself, to become female. He attempts to do this by constantly seeking out, fraternizing with and trying to live through an fuse with the female, and by claiming as his own all female characteristics -- emotional strength and independence, forcefulness, dynamism, decisiveness, coolness, objectivity, assertiveness, courage, integrity, vitality, intensity, depth of character, grooviness, etc -- and projecting onto women all male traits -- vanity, frivolity, triviality, weakness, etc. It should be said, though, that the male has one glaring area of superiority over the female -- public relations. (He has done a brilliant job of convincing millions of women that men are women and women are men). The male claim that females find fulfillment through motherhood and sexuality reflects what males think they'd find fulfilling if they were female.

Women, in other words, don't have penis envy; men have pussy envy. When the male accepts his passivity, defines himself as a woman (males as well as females thing men are women and women are men), and becomes a transvestite he loses his desire to screw (or to do anything else, for that matter; he fulfills himself as a drag queen) and gets his dick chopped off. He then achieves a continuous diffuse sexual feeling from 'being a woman'. Screwing is, for a man, a defense against his desire to be female. He is responsible for:

War: The male's normal compensation for not being female, namely, getting his Big Gun off, is grossly inadequate, as he can get it off only a very limited number of times; so he gets it off on a really massive scale, and proves to the entire world that he's a 'Man'. Since he has no compassion or ability to empathize or identify, proving his manhood is worth an endless amount of mutilation and suffering and an endless number of lives, including his own -- his own life being worthless, he would rather go out in a blaze of glory than to plod grimly on for fifty more years.

Niceness, Politeness, and 'Dignity': Every man, deep down, knows he's a worthless piece of shit. Overwhelmed by a sense of animalism and deeply ashamed of it; wanting, not to express himself, but to hide from others his total physicality, total egocentricity, the hate and contempt he feels for other men, and to hide from himself the hate and contempt he suspects other men feel for him; having a crudely constructed nervous system that is easily upset by the least display of emotion or feeling, the male tries to enforce a 'social' code that ensures perfect blandness, unsullied by the slightest trace of feeling or upsetting opinion. He uses terms like 'copulate', 'sexual congress', 'have relations with' (to men **sexual** relations is a redundancy), overlaid with stilted manners; the suit on the chimp.

Money, Marriage and Prostitution, Work and Prevention of an Automated Society: There is no human reason for money or for anyone to work more than two or three hours a week at the very most. All non-creative jobs (practically all jobs now being done) could have been

automated long ago, and in a moneyless society everyone can have as much of the best of everything as she wants. But there are non-human, male reasons for wanting to maintain the money system:

1. Pussy. Despising his highly inadequate self, overcome with intense anxiety and a deep, profound loneliness when by his empty self, desperate to attach himself to any female in dim hopes of completing himself, in the mystical belief that by touching gold he'll turn to gold, the male craves the continuous companionship of women. The company of the lowest female is preferable to his own or that of other men, who serve only to remind him of his repulsiveness. But females, unless very young or very sick, must be coerced or bribed into male company.
2. Supply the non-relating male with the delusion of usefulness, and enable him to try to justify his existence by digging holes and then filling them up. Leisure time horrifies the male, who will have nothing to do but contemplate his grotesque self. Unable to relate or to love, the male must work. Females crave absorbing, emotionally satisfying, meaningful activity, but lacking the opportunity or ability for this, they prefer to idle and waste away their time in ways of their own choosing -- sleeping, shopping, bowling, shooting pool, playing cards and other games, breeding, reading, walking around, daydreaming, eating, playing with themselves, popping pills, going to the movies, getting analyzed, traveling, raising dogs and cats, lolling about on the beach, swimming, watching TV, listening to music, decorating their houses, gardening, sewing, nightclubbing, dancing, visiting, 'improving their minds' (taking courses), and absorbing 'culture' (lectures, plays, concerts, 'arty' movies). Therefore, many females would, even assuming complete economic equality between the sexes, prefer living with males or peddling their asses on the street, thus having most of their time for themselves, to spending many hours of their days doing boring, stultifying, non-creative work for someone else, functioning as less than animals, as machines, or, at best -- if able to get a 'good' job -- co-managing the shitpile. What will liberate women, therefore, from male control is the total elimination of the money-work system, not the attainment of economic equality with men within it.
3. Power and control. Unmasterful in his personal relations with women, the male attains to masterfulness by the manipulation of money and everything controlled by money, in other words, of everything and everybody.
4. Love substitute. Unable to give love or affection, the male gives money. It makes him feel motherly. The mother gives milk; he gives bread. He is the Breadwinner.
5. Provide the male with a goal. Incapable of enjoying the moment, the male needs something to look forward to, and money provides him with an eternal, never-ending goal: Just think of what you could do with 80 trillion dollars -- invest it! And in three years time you'd have 300 trillion dollars!!!
6. Provide the basis for the male's major opportunity to control and manipulate -- fatherhood.

Fatherhood and Mental Illness (fear, cowardice, timidity, humility, insecurity, passivity):
Mother wants what's best for her kids; Daddy only wants what's best for Daddy, that is peace and

quiet, pandering to his delusion of dignity ('respect'), a good reflection on himself (status) and the opportunity to control and manipulate, or, if he's an 'enlightened' father, to 'give guidance'. His daughter, in addition, he wants sexually -- he gives her **hand** in marriage; the other part is for him. Daddy, unlike Mother, can never give in to his kids, as he must, at all costs, preserve his delusion of decisiveness, forcefulness, always-rightness and strength. Never getting one's way leads to lack of self-confidence in one's ability to cope with the world and to a passive acceptance of the status quo. Mother loves her kids, although she sometimes gets angry, but anger blows over quickly and even while it exists, doesn't preclude love and basic acceptance. Emotionally diseased Daddy doesn't love his kids; he approves of them -- if they're 'good', that is, if they're nice, 'respectful', obedient, subservient to his will, quiet and not given to unseemly displays of temper that would be most upsetting to Daddy's easily disturbed male nervous system -- in other words, if they're passive vegetables. If they're not 'good', he doesn't get angry -- not if he's a modern, 'civilized' father (the old-fashioned ranting, raving brute is preferable, as he is so ridiculous he can be easily despised) -- but rather express disapproval, a state that, unlike anger, endures and precludes a basic acceptance, leaving the kid with the feeling of worthlessness and a lifelong obsession with being approved of; the result is fear of independent thought, as this leads to unconventional, disapproved of opinions and way of life.

For the kid to want Daddy's approval it must respect Daddy, and being garbage, Daddy can make sure that he is respected only by remaining aloof, by distantness, by acting on the precept of 'familiarity breeds contempt', which is, of course, true, if one is contemptible. By being distant and aloof, he is able to remain unknown, mysterious, and thereby, to inspire fear ('respect').

Disapproval of emotional 'scenes' leads to fear of strong emotion, fear of one's own anger and hatred. Fear of anger and hatred combined with a lack of self-confidence in one's ability to cope with and change the world, or even to affect in the slightest way one's own destiny, leads to a mindless belief that the world and most people in it are nice and the most banal, trivial amusements are great fun and deeply pleasurable.

The affect of fatherhood on males, specifically, is to make them 'Men', that is, highly defensive of all impulses to passivity, faggotry, and of desires to be female. Every boy wants to imitate his mother, be her, fuse with her, but Daddy forbids this; **he** is the mother; **he** gets to fuse with her. So he tells the boy, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, to not be a sissy, to act like a 'Man'. The boy, scared shitless of and 'respecting' his father, complies, and becomes just like Daddy, that model of 'Man'-hood, the all-American ideal -- the well-behaved heterosexual dullard.

The effect of fatherhood on females is to make them male -- dependent, passive, domestic, animalistic, insecure, approval and security seekers, cowardly, humble, 'respectful' of authorities and men, closed, not fully responsive, half-dead, trivial, dull, conventional, flattened-out and thoroughly contemptible. Daddy's Girl, always tense and fearful, uncool, unanalytical, lacking objectivity, appraises Daddy, and thereafter, other men, against a background of fear ('respect') and is not only unable to see the empty shell behind the facade, but accepts the male definition of himself as superior, as a female, and of herself, as inferior, as a male, which, thanks to Daddy, she really is.

It is the increase of fatherhood, resulting from the increased and more widespread affluence that fatherhood needs in order to thrive, that has caused the general increase of mindlessness and the decline of women in the United States since the 1920s. The close association of affluence with fatherhood has led, for the most part, to only the wrong girls, namely, the 'privileged' middle class girls, getting 'educated'.

The effect of fathers, in sum, has been to corrode the world with maleness. The male has a negative Midas Touch -- everything he touches turns to shit.

Suppression of Individuality, Animalism (domesticity and motherhood), and

Functionalism: The male is just a bunch of conditioned reflexes, incapable of a mentally free response; he is tied to his earliest conditioning, determined completely by his past experiences. His earliest experiences are with his mother, and he is throughout his life tied to her. It never becomes completely clear to him that he is not part of his mother, that he is he and she is she.

His greatest need is to be guided, sheltered, protected and admired by Mama (men expect women to adore what men shrink from in horror -- themselves) and, being completely physical, he yearns to spend his time (that's not spent 'out in the world' grimly defending against his passivity) wallowing in basic animal activities -- eating, sleeping, shitting, relaxing and being soothed by Mama. Passive, rattle-headed Daddy's Girl, ever eager for approval, for a pat on the head, for the 'respect' if any passing piece of garbage, is easily reduced to Mama, mindless ministrator to physical needs, soother of the weary, afeared brow, booster of the tiny ego, appreciator of the contemptible, a hot water bottle with tits.

The reduction to animals of the women of the most backward segment of society -- the 'privileged, educated' middle-class, the backwash of humanity -- where Daddy reigns supreme, has been so thorough that they try to groove on labour pains and lie around in the most advanced nation in the world in the middle of the twentieth century with babies chomping away on their tits. It's not for the kids sake, though, that the 'experts' tell women that Mama should stay home and grovel in animalism, but for Daddy's; the tits for Daddy to hang onto; the labor pains for Daddy to vicariously groove on (half dead, he needs awfully strong stimuli to make him respond).

Reducing the female to an animal, to Mama, to a male, is necessary for psychological as well as practical reasons: the male is a mere member of the species, interchangeable with every other male. He has no deep-seated individuality, which stems from what intrigues you, what outside yourself absorbs you, what you're in relation to. Completely self-absorbed, capable of being in relation only to their bodies and physical sensations, males differ from each other only to the degree and in the ways they attempt to defend against their passivity and against their desire to be female.

The female's individuality, which he is acutely aware of, but which he doesn't comprehend and isn't capable of relating to or grasping emotionally, frightens and upsets him and fills him with envy. So he denies it in her and proceeds to define everyone in terms of his or her function or use, assigning to himself, of course, the most important functions -- doctor, president, scientist --

therefore providing himself with an identity, if not individuality, and tries to convince himself and women (he's succeeded best at convincing women) that the female function is to bear and raise children and to relax, comfort and boost the ego of the male; that her function is such as to make her interchangeable with every other female. In actual fact, the female function is to relate, groove, love and be herself, irreplaceable by anyone else; the male function is to produce sperm. We now have sperm banks.

In actual fact, the female function is to explore, discover, invent, solve problems crack jokes, make music -- all with love. In other words, create a magic world.

Prevention of Privacy: Although the male, being ashamed of what he is and almost of everything he does, insists on privacy and secrecy in all aspects of his life, he has no real **regard** for privacy. Being empty, not being a complete, separate being, having no self to groove on and needing to be constantly in female company, he sees nothing at all wrong in intruding himself on any woman's thoughts, even a total stranger's, anywhere at any time, but rather feels indignant and insulted when put down for doing so, as well as confused -- he can't, for the life of him, understand why anyone would prefer so much as one minute of solitude to the company of any creep around. Wanting to become a woman, he strives to be constantly around females, which is the closest he can get to becoming one, so he created a 'society' based upon the family -- a male-female couple and their kids (the excuse for the family's existence), who live virtually on top of one another, unscrupulously violating the females' rights, privacy and sanity.

Isolation, Suburbs, and Prevention of Community: Our society is not a community, but merely a collection of isolated family units. Desperately insecure, fearing his woman will leave him if she is exposed to other men or to anything remotely resembling life, the male seeks to isolate her from other men and from what little civilization there is, so he moves her out to the suburbs, a collection of self-absorbed couples and their kids. Isolation enables him to try to maintain his pretense of being an individual by becoming a 'rugged individualist', a loner, equating non-cooperation and solitariness with individuality.

There is yet another reason for the male to isolate himself: every man is an island. Trapped inside himself, emotionally isolated, unable to relate, the male has a horror of civilization, people, cities, situations requiring an ability to understand and relate to people. So like a scared rabbit, he scurries off, dragging Daddy's little asshole with him to the wilderness, suburbs, or, in the case of the hippy -- he's way out, Man! -- all the way out to the cow pasture where he can fuck and breed undisturbed and mess around with his beads and flute.

The 'hippy', whose desire to be a 'Man', a 'rugged individualist', isn't quite as strong as the average man's, and who, in addition, is excited by the thought of having lots of women accessible to him, rebels against the harshness of a Breadwinner's life and the monotony of one woman. In the name of sharing and cooperation, he forms a commune or tribe, which, for all its togetherness and partly because of it, (the commune, being an extended family, is an extended violation of the female's rights, privacy and sanity) is no more a community than normal 'society'.

A true community consists of individuals -- not mere species members, not couples -- respecting

each others individuality and privacy, at the same time interacting with each other mentally and emotionally -- free spirits in free relation to each other -- and co-operating with each other to achieve common ends. Traditionalists say the basic unit of 'society' is the family; 'hippies' say the tribe; no one says the individual.

The 'hippy' babbles on about individuality, but has no more conception of it than any other man. He desires to get back to Nature, back to the wilderness, back to the home of furry animals that he's one of, away from the city, where there is at least a trace, a bare beginning of civilization, to live at the species level, his time taken up with simple, non-intellectual activities -- farming, fucking, bead stringing. The most important activity of the commune, the one upon which it is based, is gang-banging. The 'hippy' is enticed to the commune mainly by the prospect for free pussy -- the main commodity to be shared, to be had just for the asking, but, blinded by greed, he fails to anticipate all the other men he has to share with, or the jealousies and possessiveness for the pussies themselves.

Men cannot co-operate to achieve a common end, because each man's end is all the pussy for himself. The commune, therefore, is doomed to failure; each 'hippy' will, in panic, grab the first simpleton who digs him and whisks her off to the suburbs as fast as he can. The male cannot progress socially, but merely swings back and forth from isolation to gang-banging.

Conformity: Although he wants to be an individual, the male is scared of anything in himself that is the slightest bit different from other men, it causes him to suspect that he's not really a 'Man', that he's passive and totally sexual, a highly upsetting suspicion. If other men are "A" and he's not, he must not be a man; he must be a fag. So he tries to affirm his 'Manhood' by being like all the other men. Differentness in other men, as well as himself, threatens him; it means **they're** fags whom he must at all costs avoid, so he tries to make sure that all other men conform.

The male dares to be different to the degree that he accepts his passivity and his desire to be female, his fagginess. The farthest out male is the drag queen, but he, although different from most men, is exactly like all the other drag queens like the functionalist, he has an identity -- he is female. He tries to define all his troubles away -- but still no individuality. Not completely convinced that he's a woman, highly insecure about being sufficiently female, he conforms compulsively to the man-made stereotype, ending up as nothing but a bundle of stilted mannerisms.

To be sure he's a 'Man', the male must see to it that the female be clearly a 'Woman', the opposite of a 'Man', that is, the female must act like a faggot. And Daddy's Girl, all of whose female instincts were wrenched out of her when little, easily and obligingly adapts herself to the role.

Authority and Government: Having no sense of right and wrong, no conscience, which can only stem from having an ability to empathize with others... having no faith in his non-existent self, being unnecessarily competitive, and by nature, unable to co-operate, the male feels a need for external guidance and control. So he created authorities -- priests, experts, bosses, leaders, etc -- and government. Wanting the female (Mama) to guide him, but unable to accept this fact (he is,

after all, a MAN), wanting to play Woman, to usurp her function as Guider and Protector, he sees to it that all authorities are male.

There's no reason why a society consisting of rational beings capable of empathizing with each other, complete and having no natural reason to compete, should have a government, laws or leaders.

Philosophy, Religion, and Morality Based on Sex: The male's inability to relate to anybody or anything makes his life pointless and meaningless (the ultimate male insight is that life is absurd), so he invented philosophy and religion. Being empty, he looks outward, not only for guidance and control, but for salvation and for the meaning of life. Happiness being for him impossible on this earth, he invented Heaven.

For a man, having no ability to empathize with others and being totally sexual, 'wrong' is sexual 'license' and engaging in 'deviant' ('unmanly') sexual practices, that is, not defending against his passivity and total sexuality which, if indulged, would destroy 'civilization', since 'civilization' is based entirely upon the male need to defend himself against these characteristics. For a woman (according to men), 'wrong' is any behavior that would entice men into sexual 'license' -- that is, not placing male needs above her own and not being a faggot.

Religion not only provides the male with a goal (Heaven) and helps keep women tied to men, but offers rituals through which he can try to expiate the guilt and shame he feels at not defending himself enough against his sexual impulses; in essence, that guilt and shame he feels at being male.

Most men men, utterly cowardly, project their inherent weaknesses onto women, label them female weaknesses and believe themselves to have female strengths; most philosophers, not quite so cowardly, face the fact that male lacks exist in men, but still can't face the fact that they exist in men only. So they label the male condition the Human Condition, post their nothingness problem, which horrifies them, as a philosophical dilemma, thereby giving stature to their animalism, grandiloquently label their nothingness their 'Identity Problem', and proceed to prattle on pompously about the 'Crisis of the Individual', the 'Essence of Being', 'Existence preceding Essence', 'Existential Modes of Being', etc. etc.

A woman not only takes her identity and individuality for granted, but knows instinctively that the only wrong is to hurt others, and that the meaning of life is love.

Prejudice (racial, ethnic, religious, etc): The male needs scapegoats onto whom he can project his failings and inadequacies and upon whom he can vent his frustration at not being female. And the vicarious discriminations have the practical advantage of substantially increasing the pussy pool available to the men on top.

Competition, Prestige, Status, Formal Education, Ignorance and Social and Economic Classes: Having an obsessive desire to be admired by women, but no intrinsic worth, the male constructs a highly artificial society enabling him to appropriate the appearance of worth through

money, prestige, 'high' social class, degrees, professional position and knowledge and, by pushing as many other men as possible down professionally, socially, economically, and educationally.

The purpose of 'higher' education is not to educate but to exclude as many as possible from the various professions.

The male, totally physical, incapable of mental rapport, although able to understand and use knowledge and ideas, is unable to relate to them, to grasp them emotionally: he does not value knowledge and ideas for their own sake (they're just means to ends) and, consequently, feels no need for mental companions, no need to cultivate the intellectual potentialities of others. On the contrary, the male has a vested interest in ignorance; it gives the few knowledgeable men a decided edge on the unknowledgeable ones, and besides, the male knows that an enlightened, aware female population will mean the end of him. The healthy, conceited female wants the company of equals whom she can respect and groove on; the male and the sick, insecure, unself-confident male female crave the company of worms.

No genuine social revolution can be accomplished by the male, as the male on top wants the status quo, and all the male on the bottom wants is to be the male on top. The male 'rebel' is a farce; this is the male's 'society', made by **him** to satisfy **his** needs. He's never satisfied, because he's not capable of being satisfied. Ultimately, what the male 'rebel' is rebelling against is being male. The male changes only when forced to do so by technology, when he has no choice, when 'society' reaches the stage where he must change or die. We're at that stage now; if women don't get their asses in gear fast, we may very well all die.

Prevention of Conversation: Being completely self-centered and unable to relate to anything outside himself, the male's 'conversation', when not about himself, is an impersonal droning on, removed from anything of human value. Male 'intellectual conversation' is a strained compulsive attempt to impress the female.

Daddy's Girl, passive, adaptable, respectful of and in awe of the male, allows him to impose his hideously dull chatter on her. This is not too difficult for her, as the tension and anxiety, the lack of cool, the insecurity and self-doubt, the unsureness of her own feelings and sensations that Daddy instilled in her make her perceptions superficial and render her unable to see that the male's babble is babble; like the aesthete 'appreciating' the blob that's labeled 'Great Art', she believes she's grooving on what bores the shit out of her. Not only does she permit his babble to dominate, she adapts her own 'conversation' accordingly.

Trained from an early childhood in niceness, politeness and 'dignity', in pandering to the male need to disguise his animalism, she obligingly reduces her own 'conversation' to small talk, a bland, insipid avoidance of any topic beyond the utterly trivial -- or is 'educated', to 'intellectual' discussion, that is, impersonal discoursing on irrelevant distractions -- the Gross National Product, the Common Market, the influence of Rimbaud on symbolist painting. So adept is she at pandering that it eventually becomes second nature and she continues to pander to men even when in the company of other females only.

Apart from pandering, her 'conversation' is further limited by her insecurity about expressing deviant, original opinions and the self-absorption based on insecurity and that prevents her conversation from being charming. Niceness, politeness, 'dignity', insecurity and self-absorption are hardly conducive to intensity and wit, qualities a conversation must have to be worthy of the name. Such conversation is hardly rampant, as only completely self-confident, arrogant, outgoing, proud, tough-minded females are capable of intense, bitchy, witty conversation.

Prevention of Friendship (Love): Men have contempt for themselves, for all other men whom they contemplate more than casually and whom they do not think are females, (for example 'sympathetic' analysts and 'Great Artists') or agents of God and for all women who respect and pander to them: the insecure, approval-seeking, pandering male-females have contempt for themselves and for all women like them: the self-confident, swinging, thrill-seeking female females have contempt for me and for the pandering male females. In short, contempt is the order of the day.

Love is not dependency or sex, but friendship, and therefore, love can't exist between two males, between a male and a female, or between two females, one or both of whom is a mindless, insecure, pandering male; like conversation, love can exist only between two secure, free-wheeling, independent groovy female females, since friendship is based upon respect, not contempt.

Even amongst groovy females deep friendships seldom occur in adulthood, as almost all of them are either tied up with men in order to survive economically, or bogged down in hacking their way through the jungle and in trying to keep their heads above the amorphous mass. Love can't flourish in a society based upon money and meaningless work: it requires complete economic as well as personal freedom, leisure time and the opportunity to engage in intensely absorbing, emotionally satisfying activities which, when shared with those you respect, lead to deep friendship. Our 'society' provides practically no opportunity to engage in such activities.

Having stripped the world of conversation, friendship and love, the male offers us these paltry substitutes:

'Great Art' and 'Culture': The male 'artist' attempts to solve his dilemma of not being able to live, of not being female, by constructing a highly artificial world in which the male is heroized, that is, displays female traits, and the female is reduced to highly limited, insipid subordinate roles, that is, to being male.

The male 'artistic' aim being, not to communicate (having nothing inside him he has nothing to say), but to disguise his animalism, he resorts to symbolism and obscurity ('deep' stuff). The vast majority of people, particularly the 'educated' ones, lacking faith in their own judgment, humble, respectful of authority ('Daddy knows best'), are easily conned into believing that obscurity, evasiveness, incomprehensibility, indirectness, ambiguity and boredom are marks of depth and brilliance.

'Great Art' proves that men are superior to women, that men are women, being labeled 'Great

Art', almost all of which, as the anti-feminists are fond of reminding us, was created by men. We know that 'Great Art' is great because male authorities have told us so, and we can't claim otherwise, as only those with exquisite sensitivities far superior to ours can perceive and appreciate the slop they appreciated.

Appreciating is the sole diversion of the 'cultivated'; passive and incompetent, lacking imagination and wit, they must try to make do with that; unable to create their own diversions, to create a little world of their own, to affect in the smallest way their environments, they must accept what's given; unable to create or relate, they spectate. Absorbing 'culture' is a desperate, frantic attempt to groove in an ungroovy world, to escape the horror of a sterile, mindless, existence. 'Culture' provides a sop to the egos of the incompetent, a means of rationalizing passive spectating; they can pride themselves on their ability to appreciate the 'finer' things, to see a jewel where this is only a turd (they want to be admired for admiring). Lacking faith in their ability to change anything, resigned to the status quo, they **have** to see beauty in turds because, so far as they can see, turds are all they'll ever have.

The veneration of 'Art' and 'Culture' -- besides leading many women into boring, passive activity that distracts from more important and rewarding activities, from cultivating active abilities, and leads to the constant intrusion on our sensibilities of pompous dissertations on the deep beauty of this and that turn. This allows the 'artist' to be setup as one possessing superior feelings, perceptions, insights and judgments, thereby undermining the faith of insecure women in the value and validity of their own feelings, perceptions, insights and judgments.

The male, having a very limited range of feelings, and consequently, very limited perceptions, insights and judgments, needs the 'artist' to guide him, to tell him what life is all about. But the male 'artist' being totally sexual, unable to relate to anything beyond his own physical sensations, having nothing to express beyond the insight that for the male life is meaningless and absurd, cannot be an artist. How can he who is not capable of life tell us what life is all about? A 'male artist' is a contradiction in terms. A degenerate can only produce degenerate 'art'. The true artist is every self-confident, healthy female, and in a female society the only Art, the only Culture, will be conceited, kooky, funky, females grooving on each other and on everything else in the universe.

Sexuality: Sex is not part of a relationship: on the contrary, it is a solitary experience, non-creative, a gross waste of time. The female can easily -- far more easily than she may think -- condition away her sex drive, leaving her completely cool and cerebral and free to pursue truly worthy relationships and activities; but the male, who seems to dig women sexually and who seeks out constantly to arouse them, stimulates the highly sexed female to frenzies of lust, throwing her into a sex bag from which few women ever escape. The lecherous male excited the lustful female; he **has** to -- when the female transcends her body, rises above animalism, the male, whose ego consists of his cock, will disappear.

Sex is the refuge of the mindless. And the more mindless the woman, the more deeply embedded in the male 'culture', in short, the nicer she is, the more sexual she is. The nicest women in our 'society' are raving sex maniacs. But, being just awfully, awfully nice, they don't, of course

descend to fucking -- that's uncouth -- rather they make love, commune by means of their bodies and establish sensual rapport; the literary ones are attuned to the throb of Eros and attain a clutch upon the Universe; the religious have spiritual communion with the Divine Sensualism; the mystics merge with the Erotic Principle and blend with the Cosmos, and the acid heads contact their erotic cells.

On the other hand, those females least embedded in the male 'Culture', the least nice, those crass and simple souls who reduce fucking to fucking, who are too childish for the grown-up world of suburbs, mortgages, mops and baby shit, too selfish to raise kids and husbands, too uncivilized to give a shit for anyones opinion of them, too arrogant to respect Daddy, the 'Greats' or the deep wisdom of the Ancients, who trust only their own animal, gutter instincts, who equate Culture with chicks, whose sole diversion is prowling for emotional thrills and excitement, who are given to disgusting, nasty upsetting 'scenes', hateful, violent bitches given to slamming those who unduly irritate them in the teeth, who'd sink a shiv into a man's chest or ram an icepick up his asshole as soon as look at him, if they knew they could get away with it, in short, those who, by the standards of our 'culture' are SCUM... these females are cool and relatively cerebral and skirting asexuality.

Unhampered by propriety, niceness, discretion, public opinion, 'morals', the respect of assholes, always funky, dirty, low-down SCUM gets around... and around and around... they've seen the whole show -- every bit of it -- the fucking scene, the dyke scene -- they've covered the whole waterfront, been under every dock and pier -- the peter pier, the pussy pier... you've got to go through a lot of sex to get to anti-sex, and SCUM's been through it all, and they're now ready for a new show; they want to crawl out from other the dock, move, take off, sink out. But SCUM doesn't yet prevail; SCUM's still in the gutter of our 'society', which, if it's not deflected from its present course and if the Bomb doesn't drop on it, will hump itself to death.

Boredom: Life in a society made by and for creatures who, when they are not grim and depressing are utter bores, van only be, when not grim and depressing, an utter bore.

Secrecy, Censorship, Suppression of Knowledge and Ideas, and Exposures: Every male's deep-seated, secret, most hideous fear is of being discovered to be not a female, but a male, a subhuman animal. Although niceness, politeness and 'dignity' suffice to prevent his exposure on a personal level, in order to prevent the general exposure of the male sex as a whole and to maintain his unnatural dominant position in 'society', the male must resort to:

1. Censorship. Responding reflexively to isolated works and phrases rather than cerebrally to overall meanings, the male attempts to prevent the arousal and discovery of his animalism by censoring not only 'pornography', but any work containing 'dirty' words, no matter in what context they are used.
2. Suppression of all ideas and knowledge that might expose him or threaten his dominant position in 'society'. Much biological and psychological data is suppressed, because it is proof of the male's gross inferiority to the female. Also, the problem of mental illness will never be solved while the male maintains control, because first, men have a vested interest in it -- only

females who have very few of their marbles will allow males the slightest bit of control over anything, and second, the male cannot admit to the role that fatherhood plays in causing mental illness.

3. Exposes. The male's chief delight in life -- insofar as the tense, grim male can ever be said to delight in anything -- is in exposing others. It doesn't much matter what they're exposed as, so long as they're exposed; it distracts attention from himself. Exposing others as enemy agents (Communists and Socialists) is one of his favorite pastimes, as it removes the source of the threat to him not only from himself, but from the country and the Western world. The bugs up his ass aren't in him, they're in Russia.

Distrust: Unable to empathize or feel affection or loyalty, being exclusively out for himself, the male has no sense of fair play; cowardly, needing constantly to pander to the female to win her approval, that he is helpless without, always on the edge lest his animalism, his maleness be discovered, always needing to cover up, he must lie constantly; being empty he has not honor or integrity -- he doesn't know what those words mean. The male, in short, is treacherous, and the only appropriate attitude in a male 'society' is cynicism and distrust.

Ugliness: Being totally sexual, incapable of cerebral or aesthetic responses, totally materialistic and greedy, the male, besides inflicting on the world 'Great Art', has decorated his unlandscaped cities with ugly buildings (both inside and out), ugly decors, billboards, highways, cars, garbage trucks, and, most notably, his own putrid self.

Hatred and Violence: The male is eaten up with tension, with frustration at not being female, at not being capable of ever achieving satisfaction or pleasure of any kind; eaten up with hate -- not rational hate that is directed at those who abuse or insult you -- but irrational, indiscriminate hate... hatred, at bottom, of his own worthless self.

Gratuitous violence, besides 'proving' he's a 'Man', serves as an outlet for his hate and, in addition -- the male being capable only of sexual responses and needing very strong stimuli to stimulate his half-dead self -- provides him with a little sexual thrill..

Disease and Death: All diseases are curable, and the aging process and death are due to disease; it is possible, therefore, never to age and to live forever. In fact the problems of aging and death could be solved within a few years, if an all-out, massive scientific assault were made upon the problem. This, however, will not occur with the male establishment because:

1. The many male scientists who shy away from biological research, terrified of the discovery that males are females, and show marked preference for virile, 'manly' war and death programs.

2. The discouragement of many potential scientists from scientific careers by the rigidity, boringness, expensiveness, time-consumingness, and unfair exclusivity of our 'higher' educational system.

3. Propaganda disseminated by insecure male professionals, who jealously guard their positions,

so that only a highly select few can comprehend abstract scientific concepts.

4. Widespread lack of self-confidence brought about by the father system that discourages many talented girls from becoming scientists.

5. Lack of automation. There now exists a wealth of data which, if sorted out and correlated, would reveal the cure for cancer and several other diseases and possibly the key to life itself. But the data is so massive it requires high speed computers to correlate it all. The institution of computers will be delayed interminably under the male control system, since the male has a horror of being replaced by machines.

6. The money systems' insatiable need for new products. Most of the few scientists around who aren't working on death programs are tied up doing research for corporations.

7. The males like death -- it excites him sexually and, already dead inside, he wants to die.

8. The bias of the money system for the least creative scientists. Most scientists come from at least relatively affluent families where Daddy reigns supreme.

Incapable of a positive state of happiness, which is the only thing that can justify one's existence, the male is, at best, relaxed, comfortable, neutral, and this condition is extremely short-lived, as boredom, a negative state, soon sets in; he is, therefore, doomed to an existence of suffering relieved only by occasional, fleeting stretches of restfulness, which state he can only achieve at the expense of some female. The male is, by his very nature, a leech, an emotional parasite and, therefore, not ethically entitled to live, as no one as the right to life at someone else's expense.

Just as humans have a prior right to existence over dogs by virtue of being more highly evolved and having a superior consciousness, so women have a prior right to existence over men. The elimination of any male is, therefore, a righteous and good act, an act highly beneficial to women as well as an act of mercy.

However, this moral issue will eventually be rendered academic by the fact that the male is gradually eliminating himself. In addition to engaging in the time-honored and classical wars and race riots, men are more and more either becoming fags or are obliterating themselves through drugs. The female, whether she likes it or not, will eventually take complete charge, if for no other reason than that she will have to -- the male, for practical purposes, won't exist.

Accelerating this trend is the fact that more and more males are acquiring enlightened self-interest; they're realizing more and more that the female interest is in **their** interest, that they can live only through the female and that the more the female is encouraged to live, to fulfill herself, to be a female and not a male, the more nearly **he** lives; he's coming to see that it's easier and more satisfactory to live **through** her than to try to **become** her and usurp her qualities, claim them as his own, push the female down and claim that she's a male. The fag, who accepts his maleness, that is, his passivity and total sexuality, his femininity, is also best served by women being truly female, as it would then be easier for him to be male, feminine. If men were wise

they would seek to become really female, would do intensive biological research that would lead to me, by means of operations on the brain and nervous system, being able to be transformed in psyche, as well as body, into women.

Whether to continue to use females for reproduction or to reproduce in the laboratory will also become academic: what will happen when every female, twelve and over, is routinely taking the Pill and there are no longer any accidents? How many women will deliberately get or (if an accident) remain pregnant? No, Virginia, women don't just adore being brood mares, despite what the mass of robot, brainwashed women will say. When society consists of only the fully conscious the answer will be none. Should a certain percentage of men be set aside by force to serve as brood mares for the species? Obviously this will not do. The answer is laboratory reproduction of babies.

As for the issue of whether or not to continue to reproduce males, it doesn't follow that because the male, like disease, has always existed among us that he should continue to exist. When genetic control is possible -- and soon it will be -- it goes without saying that we should produce only whole, complete beings, not physical defects or deficiencies, including emotional deficiencies, such as maleness. Just as the deliberate production of blind people would be highly immoral, so would be the deliberate production of emotional cripples.

Why produce even females? Why should there be future generations? What is their purpose? When aging and death are eliminated, why continue to reproduce? Why should we care what happens when we're dead? Why should we care that there is no younger generation to succeed us.

Eventually the natural course of events, of social evolution, will lead to total female control of the world and, subsequently, to the cessation of the production of males and, ultimately, to the cessation of the production of females.

But SCUM is impatient; SCUM is not consoled by the thought that future generations will thrive; SCUM wants to grab some thrilling living for itself. And, if a large majority of women were SCUM, they could acquire complete control of this country within a few weeks simply by withdrawing from the labor force, thereby paralyzing the entire nation. Additional measures, any one of which would be sufficient to completely disrupt the economy and everything else, would be for women to declare themselves off the money system, stop buying, just loot and simply refuse to obey all laws they don't care to obey. The police force, National Guard, Army, Navy and Marines combined couldn't squelch a rebellion of over half the population, particularly when it's made up of people they are utterly helpless without.

If all women simply left men, refused to have anything to do with any of them -- ever, all men, the government, and the national economy would collapse completely. Even without leaving men, women who are aware of the extent of their superiority to and power over men, could acquire complete control over everything within a few weeks, could effect a total submission of males to females. In a sane society the male would trot along obediently after the female. The male is docile and easily led, easily subjected to the domination of any female who cares to dominate him. The male, in fact, wants desperately to be led by females, wants Mama in charge,

wants to abandon himself to her care. But this is not a sane society, and most women are not even dimly aware of where they're at in relation to men.

The conflict, therefore, is not between females and males, but between SCUM -- dominant, secure, self-confident, nasty, violent, selfish, independent, proud, thrill-seeking, free-wheeling, arrogant females, who consider themselves fit to rule the universe, who have free-wheeled to the limits of this 'society' and are ready to wheel on to something far beyond what it has to offer -- and nice, passive, accepting 'cultivated', polite, dignified, subdued, dependent, scared, mindless, insecure, approval-seeking Daddy's Girls, who can't cope with the unknown, who want to hang back with the apes, who feel secure only with Big Daddy standing by, with a big strong man to lean on and with a fat, hairy face in the White House, who are too cowardly to face up to the hideous reality of what a man is, what Daddy is, who have cast their lot with the swine, who have adapted themselves to animalism, feel superficially comfortable with it and know no other way of 'life', who have reduced their minds, thoughts and sights to the male level, who, lacking sense, imagination and wit can have value only in a male 'society', who can have a place in the sun, or, rather, in the slime, only as soothers, ego boosters, relaxers and breeders, who are dismissed as inconsequents by other females, who project their deficiencies, their maleness, onto all females and see the female as worm.

But SCUM is too impatient to wait for the de-brainwashing of millions of assholes. Why should the swinging females continue to plod dismally along with the dull male ones? Why should the fates of the groovy and the creepy be intertwined? Why should the active and imaginative consult the passive and dull on social policy? Why should the independent be confined to the sewer along with the dependent who need Daddy to cling to? A small handful of SCUM can take over the country within a year by systematically fucking up the system, selectively destroying property, and murder:

SCUM will become members of the unwork force, the fuck-up force; they will get jobs of various kinds an unwork. For example, SCUM salesgirls will not charge for merchandise; SCUM telephone operators will not charge for calls; SCUM office and factory workers, in addition to fucking up their work, will secretly destroy equipment. SCUM will unwork at a job until fired, then get a new job to unwork at.

SCUM will forcibly relieve bus drivers, cab drivers and subway token sellers of their jobs and run buses and cabs and dispense free tokens to the public.

SCUM will destroy all useless and harmful objects -- cars, store windows, 'Great Art', etc.

Eventually SCUM will take over the airwaves -- radio and TV networks -- by forcibly relieving of their jobs all radio and TV employees who would impede SCUM's entry into the broadcasting studios.

SCUM will couple-bust -- barge into mixed (male-female) couples, wherever they are, and bust them up.

SCUM will kill all men who are not in the Men's Auxiliary of SCUM. Men in the Men's Auxiliary are those men who are working diligently to eliminate themselves, men who, regardless of their motives, do good, men who are playing pall with SCUM. A few examples of the men in the Men's Auxiliary are: men who kill men; biological scientists who are working on constructive programs, as opposed to biological warfare; journalists, writers, editors, publishers and producers who disseminate and promote ideas that will lead to the achievement of SCUM's goals; faggots who, by their shimmering, flaming example, encourage other men to de-man themselves and thereby make themselves relatively inoffensive; men who consistently give things away -- money, things, services; men who tell it like it is (so far not one ever has), who put women straight, who reveal the truth about themselves, who give the mindless male females correct sentences to parrot, who tell them a woman's primary goal in life should be to squash the male sex (to aid men in this endeavor SCUM will conduct Turd Sessions, at which every male present will give a speech beginning with the sentence: 'I am a turd, a lowly abject turd', then proceed to list all the ways in which he is. His reward for doing so will be the opportunity to fraternize after the session for a whole, solid hour with the SCUM who will be present. Nice, clean-living male women will be invited to the sessions to help clarify any doubts and misunderstandings they may have about the male sex; makers and promoters of sex books and movies, etc., who are hastening the day when all that will be shown on the screen will be Suck and Fuck (males, like the rats following the Pied Piper, will be lured by Pussy to their doom, will be overcome and submerged by and will eventually drown in the passive flesh that they are); drug pushers and advocates, who are hastening the dropping out of men.

Being in the Men's Auxiliary is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for making SCUM's escape list; it's not enough to do good; to save their worthless asses men must also avoid evil. A few examples of the most obnoxious or harmful types are: rapists, politicians and all who are in their service (campaigners, members of political parties, etc); lousy singers and musicians; Chairmen of Boards; Breadwinners; landlords; owners of greasy spoons and restaraunts that play Muzak; 'Great Artists'; cheap pikers and welchers; cops; tycoons; scientists working on death and destruction programs or for private industry (practically all scientists); liars and phonies; disc jockies; men who intrude themselves in the slightest way on any strange female; real estate men; stock brokers; men who speak when they have nothing to say; men who sit idly on the street and mar the landscape with their presence; double dealers; flim-flam artists; litterbugs; plagiarisers; men who in the slightest way harm any female; all men in the advertising industry; psychiatrists and clinical psychologists; dishonest writers, journalists, editors, publishers, etc.; censors on both the public and private levels; all members of the armed forces, including draftees (LBJ and McNamara give orders, but servicemen carry them out) and particularly pilots (if the bomb drops, LBJ won't drop it; a pilot will). In the case of a man whose behavior falls into both the good and bad categories, an overall subjective evaluation of him will be made to determine if his behavior is, in the balance, good or bad.

It is most tempting to pick off the female 'Great Artists', liars and phonies etc along with the men, but that would be inexpedient, as it would not be clear to most of the public that the female killed was a male. All women have a fink streak in them, to a greater or lesser degree, but it stems from a lifetime of living among men. Eliminate men and women will shape up. Women are improvable; men are no, although their behavior is. When SCUM gets hot on their asses it'll shape up fast.

Simultaneously with the fucking-up, looting, couple-busting, destroying and killing, SCUM will recruit. SCUM, then, will consist of recruiters; the elite corps -- the hard core activists (the fuck-ups, looters and destroyers) and the elite of the elite -- the killers.

Dropping out is not the answer; fucking-up is. Most women are already dropped out; they were never in. Dropping out gives control to those few who don't drop out; dropping out is exactly what the establishment leaders want; it plays into the hands of the enemy; it strengthens the system instead of undermining it, since it is based entirely on the non-participating, passivity, apathy and non-involvement of the mass of women. Dropping out, however, is an excellent policy for men, and SCUM will enthusiastically encourage it.

Looking inside yourself for salvation, contemplating your navel, is not, as the Drop Out people would have you believe, the answer. Happiness lies outside yourself, is achieved through interacting with others. Self-forgetfulness should be one's goal, not self-absorption. The male, capable of only the latter, makes a virtue of irremediable fault and sets up self-absorption, not only as a good but as a Philosophical Good, and thus gets credit for being deep.

SCUM will not picket, demonstrate, march or strike to attempt to achieve its ends. Such tactics are for nice, genteel ladies who scrupulously take only such action as is guaranteed to be ineffective. In addition, only decent, clean-living male women, highly trained in submerging themselves in the species, act on a mob basis. SCUM consists of individuals; SCUM is not a mob, a blob. Only as many SCUM will do a job as are needed for the job. Also SCUM, being cool and selfish, will not subject to getting itself rapped on the head with billy clubs; that's for the nice, 'privileged, educated', middle-class ladies with a high regard for the touching faith in the essential goodness of Daddy and policemen. If SCUM ever marches, it will be over the President's stupid, sickening face; if SCUM ever strikes, it will be in the dark with a six-inch blade.

SCUM will always operate on a criminal as opposed to a civil disobedience basis, that is, as opposed to openly violating the law and going to jail in order to draw attention to an injustice. Such tactics acknowledge the rightness of the overall system and are used only to modify it slightly, change specific laws. SCUM is against the entire system, the very idea of law and government. SCUM is out to destroy the system, not attain certain rights within it. Also, SCUM -- always selfish, always cool -- will always aim to avoid detection and punishment. SCUM will always be furtive, sneaky, underhanded (although SCUM murders will always be known to be such).

Both destruction and killing will be selective and discriminate. SCUM is against half-crazed, indiscriminate riots, with no clear objective in mind, and in which many of your own kind are picked off. SCUM will never instigate, encourage or participate in riots of any kind or other form of indiscriminate destruction. SCUM will coolly, furtively, stalk its prey and quietly move in for the kill. Destruction will never mean such as to block off routes needed for the transportation of food or other essential supplies, contaminate or cut off the water supply, block streets and traffic to the extent that ambulances can't get through or impede the functioning of hospitals.

SCUM will keep on destroying, looting, fucking-up and killing until the money-work system no

longer exists and automation is completely instituted or until enough women co-operate with SCUM to make violence unnecessary to achieve these goals, that is, until enough women either unwork or quit work, start looting, leave men and refuse to obey all laws inappropriate to a truly civilized society. Many women will fall into line, but many others, who surrendered long ago to the enemy, who are so adapted to animalism, to maleness, that they like restrictions and restraints, don't know what to do with freedom, will continue to be toadies and doormats, just as peasants in rice paddies remain peasants in rice paddies as one regime topples another. A few of the more volatile will whimper and sulk and throw their toys and dishrags on the floor, but SCUM will continue to steamroller over them.

A completely automated society can be accomplished very simply and quickly once there is a public demand for it. The blueprints for it are already in existence, and its construction will take only a few weeks with millions of people working on it. Even though off the money system, everyone will be most happy to pitch in and get the automated society built; it will mark the beginning of a fantastic new era, and there will be a celebration atmosphere accompanying the construction.

The elimination of money and the complete institution of automation are basic to all other SCUM reforms; without these two the others can't take place; with them the others will take place very rapidly. The government will automatically collapse. With complete automation it will be possible for every woman to vote directly on every issue by means of an electronic voting machine in her house. Since the government is occupied almost entirely with regulating economic affairs and legislating against purely private matters, the elimination of money and with it the elimination of males who wish to legislate 'morality' will mean there will be practically no issues to vote on.

After the elimination of money there will be no further need to kill men; they will be stripped of the only power they have over psychologically independent females. They will be able to impose themselves only on the doormats, who like to be imposed on. The rest of the women will be busy solving the few remaining unsolved problems before planning their agenda for eternity and Utopia -- completely revamping educational programs so that millions of women can be trained within a few months for high level intellectual work that now requires years of training (this can be done very easily once our educational goal is to educate and not perpetuate an academic and intellectual elite); solving the problems of disease and old age and death and completely redesigning our cities and living quarters. Many women will for a while continue to think they dig men, but as they become accustomed to female society and as they become absorbed in their projects, they will eventually come to see the utter uselessness and banality of the male.

The few remaining men can exist out their puny days dropped out on drugs or strutting around in drag or passively watching the high-powered female in action, fulfilling themselves as spectators, vicarious lovers*[FOOTNOTE: It will be electronically possible for him to tune into any specific female he wants to and follow in detail her every movement. The females will kindly, obligingly consent to this, as it won't hurt them in the slightest and it is a marvelously kind and humane way to treat their unfortunate, handicapped fellow beings.] or breeding in the cow pasture with the toadies, or they can go off to the nearest friendly suicide center where they will be quietly, quickly, and painlessly gassed to death.

Prior to the institution of automation, to the replacement of males by machines, the male should be of use to the female, wait on her, cater to her slightest whim, obey her every command, be totally subservient to her, exist in perfect obedience to her will, as opposed to the completely warped, degenerate situation we have now of men, not only not existing at all, cluttering up the world with their ignominious presence, but being pandered to and groveled before by the mass of females, millions of women piously worshipping the Golden Calf, the dog leading the master on a leash, when in fact the male, short of being a drag queen, is least miserable when his dogginess is recognized -- no unrealistic emotional demands are made of him and the completely together female is calling the shots. Rational men want to be squashed, stepped on, crushed and crunched, treated as the curs, the filth that they are, have their repulsiveness confirmed.

The sick, irrational men, those who attempt to defend themselves against their disgustingness, when they see SCUM barrelling down on them, will cling in terror to Big Mama with her Big Bouncy Boobies, but Boobies won't protect them against SCUM; Big Mama will be clinging to Big Daddy, who will be in the corner shitting in his forceful, dynamic pants. Men who are rational, however, won't kick or struggle or raise a distressing fuss, but will just sit back, relax, enjoy the show and ride the waves to their demise.

- end -

Deviant Payback

THE AIMS OF VALERIE SOLANAS

In 1968 Jacques Derrida brought out his pathbreaking essay "The Ends of Man" and Valerie Solanas began earnestly distributing *SCUM Manifesto*.¹ In June of that year she gunned down Andy Warhol as he was speaking on the telephone. These events may seem miles apart on the cultural shock charts, yet they are linked in ways that urge us to reflect on their ineluctable contiguities. Both Derrida and Solanas are interested in the aims and finality of the concept "man." Admittedly, that may be where their improbable rendezvous ends, somewhere on an existential corner of 1968, situated among the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr., Fred Hampton, and Bobby Kennedy, at the moment they shared the beat of a feverishly agitated zeitgeist. This was the moment in any case when "man," getting a political pounding, was up against the philosophical wall and steadily losing ground. Derrida, conceptually fitted for the job, was concerned with the excess of man, which Solanas, we could say, enacted. Where he exposed the Greek ideal of *anthropos*, she went for the jugular of referential man, busting through layers of philosophical history to put out her own "ends of man," her own limit case of the classical unity of man. [. . .]

Solanas, part of whose pain grows out of a disturbed relationship to higher education, matches prints with those who situate the father as primal enemy (Freud et al.), paternity as fiction (Derrida et al.), gender as part of a performative effort (Butler et al.), capital flow as a traumatic historical outbreak (Goethe, Marx, Deleuze, et al.), and so on and so forth. She even installs a theory of *unworking* that matches up with some of Nancy's appropriations of Bataille that track the implications of *désœuvrement*. Though she notoriously packs style in the mode of derangement, loading up on anger and furious rounds of righteousness, Solanas also carries theoretical issues to their assigned limits. This was not necessarily her intention or wish—to score theoretical points—but alongside her stubborn destitution and injured denunciations, Valerie manages to pick off the crucial themes associated with the dominion of phallogocentrism. [. . .]

It would be unwarranted, no doubt, to turn Valerie Solanas into a blindingly lucid catalogue of contemporary theoretical thought; at the same time,

however, it would be ignorant to disavow what made her language, her appeal, her compulsive effacement, burdened confusion, and Hegelian struggle for recognition possible. Whether Solanas knowingly climbed into the think tank with the rest of them is immaterial. She borrowed the language and flashed the enduring complicities of urgent philosophical concerns. She was “inscribed” and as such took to the margins of major philosophemes or writers’ blocs. She belongs with them, even if only as a limping straggler and wounded anomaly. The questions for us today might be, What made it possible for Valerie Solanas to shoot off the way she did?, Why is she rebounding and returning now, in arguably the most masculinist-imperialist phase of the American world take-over?, and, Where do we locate her—how and when does she arrive?

Despite communitarian insinuations I might have made, at least on the level of philosophical complicities or networks, Valerie Solanas was a loner. There is something poignantly American about the way she handled the self-acknowledged loser life with which she was saddled. One thinks of the petitions and complaints of the solitary ranters for whom missives and missiles collapse into an indissociable, deadly mission. Lacking the elegance or cultural legitimacy of a subcommandante Marcos, a Weatherman, or a proponent of the civil rights movement, the so-called Unabomber, David Koresh, and Solanas are more vagabond, unmoored, and alone with their inscriptions, offering a spare cluster of more deinstitutionalized and depopulated “revolutionaries.” In the case of Valerie Solanas, her fringe existence was part of the package deal of untimely impacts, aspects of which derive from Stonewall (1969) and other American inventions of resistance. Valerie was not meant to have disciples or spawn a new breed of revolutionaries. She offered the uniquely American dead-end-one-warrior-revolution spinning on its own determined axis. She had no followers. She arrives too late or too early on every scene. Who needed a runaway Hothead Paisan, the comic strip lesbian avenger, in the summer of ‘68? Who cared about her target practice and rage against Great Art when King and Bobby and Malcolm X were being slaughtered—or for that matter, when women for the first time were protesting the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City? [. . .]

[W]hen Valerie Solanas was sentenced in the summer of 1969 to three years in jail, the news was reported deep in the remote pages of the *New York Times*, in an article that appeared adjacent to a notice addressed to city residents concerning a change in the summer garbage collection. The world was headlining other news. This may seem a sorry and sad fate for the woman declared by Norman Mailer to be “the Robespierre of feminism.”² It was no less a disappointment for Mr. Warhol, who saw his near extinction miniaturized

by world events. Seeing themselves thus reduced and compressed, both Andy and Valerie were in the dumps that summer. Still, the garbage pile is where we wanted to land: it is the place from which Solanas was signaling, culturally rummaging, the impossible place of an irremissible "litterature." After all, one meaning of "scum" throws us into garbage, and we do not want to lose a sense of the excremental site to which Solanas relentlessly points and from which she speaks. [. . .]

I feel compelled to address the delicate topic of an indefensible text, of an event that occurs in terms of its own chronic misfiring, but that nonetheless bears grave consequences, annulling itself while searing the random addressee, responding ineluctably to a primal sense of injury alienating and magnetizing at once. Her text does all that. It rants, it goes off deliriously, it finds its destination in a sensitive target area swollen with historical pain. With Valerie, something goes off, something happens, even though her words appear to have been fitted for so long with a silencer. The no place that she occupies—whether on the historical page or in the Factory, at home or on the streets—is the place from which Solanas delivers her wounding insights. Wounded and wounding, she comes out shooting, unsnapping all manner of discursive safety nets and cultural supports that have allowed violence to be absorbed. She has removed the patriarchal shock absorbers, taken away the soporifics that push women into poses of an accepting stupor. Dismantling symbolic security systems that keep up the patriarchy, Valerie Solanas pierces through to the real with a series of highly calibrated psychotic intensities. Before one becomes overly confident about arresting her outrageous development in terms of psychotic aberration, it is important to note that psychosis speaks, that it often catches fire from a spark in the real; it is fueled and fanned and remains unsettling because, as wounded utterance, it is not merely or solely demented. I am not persuaded that we have before us only a psychotic text. But it does rise out of the steady psychoticization of women, a threat under which most of us live and against whose coarse endurance we contribute enormous amounts of energy. Unless one is able to perform the Freudian *Spaltung*, protective self-splitting, many of the minoritized, evicted creatures spend ourselves staving off the pressures of social psychoticization. But even in the land of social derangement Valerie Solanas got to travel the blind alleys and side streets of grand feminist mappings. It is not as though language and lit show no tolerance for a girl's derangement. On the contrary, some types of accepted derangement are hard-won. We have fought for every inch of clinical corroboration and for the symptomal housing projects that shelter our anguish. Certain diseases become a woman. Strengthening her stature in unexplored domains of suffering, they encourage

FREEDOM AND OBLIGATION

her daredevil collapses, linguistic feints. Valerie, however—poor Valerie refuses the prestige and license of hysteria or any of the neighboring neurotic dialects that might be understood in feminist precincts. She is no Dora, no Anna O., no Marquise von O . . . , she bears none of the finely crafted, delicate, brilliant flush of symptoms with which, thanks to the work of outstanding feminist theorists, a new form of dissidence and social disruption could be tried. Our Valerie, by contrast, was a psycho. Butch-dykey angry, poor, and fucked up: who could ask for more? [. . .]

One of the questions that the name Valerie Solanas continues to raise, at least for me, concerns those who have an acute sense of injustice. They drag around at the end, stuporous, drained, shivering in near autistic spheres of solitude. Their language shivers still. I think of Nietzsche, slumped over. I see the others, the “men,” the “women,” whatever they are or thought they were. On some nights, Valerie’s weariness washes over me. I hear her typing out in the apartment above mine: “The shit you have to go through in this world just to survive.”

ps—In college, Valerie Solanas majored in psych.

Notes

1. Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). In their introduction to the voluminous tome *Les fins de l’homme: A partir de travail de Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1981), 13, philosophers Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe write that the destination or *Bestimmung* of man is no longer merely “a question among others on the subject of man: it is rather man himself who has become a question. For this fundamental reason . . . the thinking of man becomes that of finitude—or, more rigorously, the ontotheology of the Subject sees itself shaken up by an analysis of finitude.”

2. See Dana Heller’s “Shooting Solanas: Radical Feminist History and the Technology of Failure” (*Feminist Studies* 27.1, Spring 2001), where she discusses Mailer’s call to “encourage the psychopath within oneself, to explore that domain of experience where security is boredom and therefore sickness.”

Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation

Laboria Cuboniks

ZERO

- 0x00 Ours is a world in vertigo. It is a world that swarms with technological mediation, interlacing our daily lives with abstraction, virtuality, and complexity. XF constructs a feminism adapted to these realities: a feminism of unprecedented cunning, scale, and vision; a future in which the realization of gender justice and feminist emancipation contribute to a universalist politics assembled from the needs of every human, cutting across race, ability, economic standing, and geographical position. No more futureless repetition on the treadmill of capital, no more submission to the drudgery of labour, productive and reproductive alike, no more reification of the given masked as critique. Our future requires depetrification. XF is not a bid for revolution, but a wager on the long game of history, demanding imagination, dexterity and persistence.
- 0x01 XF seizes alienation as an impetus to generate new worlds. We are all alienated – but have we ever been otherwise? It is through, and not despite, our alienated condition that we can free ourselves from the muck of immediacy. Freedom is not a given—and it's certainly not given by anything 'natural'. The construction of freedom involves not less but more alienation; alienation is the labour of freedom's construction. Nothing should be accepted as fixed, permanent, or 'given'—neither material conditions nor social forms. XF mutates, navigates and probes every horizon. Anyone who's been deemed 'unnatural' in the face of reigning biological norms, anyone who's experienced injustices wrought in the name of natural order, will realize that the glorification of 'nature' has nothing to offer us—the queer and trans among us, the differently-abled, as well as those who have suffered discrimination due to pregnancy or duties connected to child-rearing. XF is vehemently anti-naturalist. Essentialist naturalism reeks of theology—the sooner it is exorcised, the better.

- 0x02 Why is there so little explicit, organized effort to repurpose technologies for progressive gender political ends? XF seeks to strategically deploy existing technologies to re-engineer the world. Serious risks are built into these tools; they are prone to imbalance, abuse, and exploitation of the weak. Rather than pretending to risk nothing, XF advocates the necessary assembly of techno-political interfaces responsive to these risks. Technology isn't inherently progressive. Its uses are fused with culture in a positive feedback loop that makes linear sequencing, prediction, and absolute caution impossible. Technoscientific innovation must be linked to a collective theoretical and political thinking in which women, queers, and the gender non-conforming play an unparalleled role.
- 0x03 The real emancipatory potential of technology remains unrealized. Fed by the market, its rapid growth is offset by bloat, and elegant innovation is surrendered to the buyer, whose stagnant world it decorates. Beyond the noisy clutter of commodified cruff, the ultimate task lies in engineering technologies to combat unequal access to reproductive and pharmacological tools, environmental cataclysm, economic instability, as well as dangerous forms of unpaid/underpaid labour. Gender inequality still characterizes the fields in which our technologies are conceived, built, and legislated for, while female workers in electronics (to name just one industry) perform some of the worst paid, monotonous and debilitating labour. Such injustice demands structural, machinic and ideological correction.
- 0x04 Xenofeminism is a rationalism. To claim that reason or rationality is 'by nature' a patriarchal enterprise is to concede defeat. It is true that the canonical 'history of thought' is dominated by men, and it is male hands we see throttling existing institutions of science and technology. But this is precisely why *feminism must be a rationalism*—because of this miserable imbalance, and not despite it. There is no 'feminine' rationality, nor is there a 'masculine' one. Science is not an expression but a suspension of gender. If today it is dominated by masculine egos, then it is at odds with itself—and this contradiction can be leveraged. Reason, like information, wants to be free, and patriarchy cannot give it freedom. *Rationalism must itself be a feminism*. XF marks the point where these claims intersect in a two-way dependency. It names reason as an engine of feminist emancipation, and declares the right of everyone to speak as no one in particular.

INTERRUPT

- 0x05 The excess of modesty in feminist agendas of recent decades is not proportionate to the monstrous complexity of our reality, a reality cross-hatched with fibre-optic cables, radio and microwaves, oil and gas pipelines, aerial and shipping routes, and the unrelenting, simultaneous execution of millions of communication protocols with every passing millisecond. Systematic thinking and structural analysis have largely fallen by the wayside in favour of admirable, but insufficient struggles, bound to fixed localities and fragmented insurrections. Whilst capitalism is understood as a complex and ever-expanding totality, many would-be emancipatory anti-capitalist projects remain profoundly fearful of transitioning to the universal, resisting big-picture speculative politics by condemning them as necessarily oppressive vectors. Such a false guarantee treats universals as absolute, generating a debilitating disjuncture between the thing we seek to depose and the strategies we advance to depose it.
- 0x06 Global complexity opens us to urgent cognitive and ethical demands. These are Promethean responsibilities that cannot pass unaddressed. Much of twenty-first century feminism—from the remnants of postmodern identity politics to large swathes of contemporary ecofeminism—struggles to adequately address these challenges in a manner capable of producing substantial and enduring change. Xenofeminism endeavours to face up to these obligations as collective agents capable of transitioning between multiple levels of political, material and conceptual organization.
- 0x07 We are adamantly synthetic, unsatisfied by analysis alone. XF urges constructive oscillation between description and prescription to mobilize the recursive potential of contemporary technologies upon gender, sexuality and disparities of power. Given that there are a range of gendered challenges specifically relating to life in a digital age—from sexual harassment via social media, to doxxing, privacy, and the protection of online images—the situation requires a feminism at ease with computation. Today, it is imperative that we develop an ideological infrastructure that both supports and facilitates feminist interventions within connective, networked elements of the contemporary world. Xenofeminism is about more than digital self-defence and freedom from patriarchal networks. We want to cultivate the exercise of positive freedom—freedom-to rather than simply freedom-from—and urge feminists to equip themselves with the skills to redeploy existing technologies and invent novel cognitive and material tools in the service of common ends.
- 0x08 The radical opportunities afforded by developing (and alienating) forms of technological mediation should no longer be put to use in the exclusive interests of capital, which, by design, only benefits the few. There

are incessantly proliferating tools to be annexed, and although no one can claim their comprehensive accessibility, digital tools have never been more widely available or more sensitive to appropriation than they are today. This is not an elision of the fact that a large amount of the world's poor is adversely affected by the expanding technological industry (from factory workers labouring under abominable conditions to the Ghanaian villages that have become a repository for the e-waste of the global powers) but an explicit acknowledgement of these conditions as a target for elimination. Just as the invention of the stock market was also the invention of the crash, Xenofeminism knows that technological innovation must equally anticipate its systemic condition responsively.

TRAP

- 0x09 XF rejects illusion and melancholy as political inhibitors. Illusion, as the blind presumption that the weak can prevail over the strong with no strategic coordination, leads to unfulfilled promises and unmarshalled drives. This is a politics that, in wanting so much, ends up building so little. Without the labour of large-scale, collective social organisation, declaring one's desire for global change is nothing more than wishful thinking. On the other hand, melancholy—so endemic to the left—teaches us that emancipation is an extinct species to be wept over and that blips of negation are the best we can hope for. At its worst, such an attitude generates nothing but political lassitude, and at its best, installs an atmosphere of pervasive despair which too often degenerates into factionalism and petty moralizing. The malady of melancholia only compounds political inertia, and—under the guise of being realistic—relinquishes all hope of calibrating the world otherwise. It is against such maladies that XF inoculates.
- 0x0A We take politics that exclusively valorize the local in the guise of subverting currents of global abstraction, to be insufficient. To secede from or disavow capitalist machinery will not make it disappear. Likewise, suggestions to pull the lever on the emergency brake of embedded velocities, the call to slow down and scale back, is a possibility available only to the few—a violent particularity of exclusivity—ultimately entailing catastrophe for the many. Refusing to think beyond the microcommunity, to foster connections between fractured insurgencies, to consider how emancipatory tactics can be scaled up for universal implementation, is to remain satisfied with temporary and defensive gestures. XF is an affirmative creature on the offensive, fiercely insisting on the possibility of large-scale social change for all of our alien kin.
- 0x0B A sense of the world's volatility and artificiality seems to have faded from contemporary queer and feminist politics, in favour of a plural but static

constellation of gender identities, in whose bleak light equations of the good and the natural are stubbornly restored. While having (perhaps) admirably expanded thresholds of ‘tolerance’, too often we are told to seek solace in unfreedom, staking claims on being ‘born’ this way, as if offering an excuse with nature’s blessing. All the while, the heteronormative centre chugs on. XF challenges this centrifugal referent, knowing full well that sex and gender are exemplary of the fulcrum between norm and fact, between freedom and compulsion. To tilt the fulcrum in the direction of nature is a defensive concession at best, and a retreat from what makes trans and queer politics more than just a lobby: that it is an arduous assertion of freedom against an order that seemed immutable. Like every myth of the given, a stable foundation is fabricated for a real world of chaos, violence, and doubt. The ‘given’ is sequestered into the private realm as a certainty, whilst retreating on fronts of public consequences. When the possibility of transition became real and known, the tomb under Nature’s shrine cracked, and new histories—bristling with futures—escaped the old order of ‘sex’. The disciplinary grid of gender is in no small part an attempt to mend that shattered foundation, and tame the lives that escaped it. The time has now come to tear down this shrine entirely, and not bow down before it in a piteous apology for what little autonomy has been won.

0x0C If ‘cyberspace’ once offered the promise of escaping the strictures of essentialist identity categories, the climate of contemporary social media has swung forcefully in the other direction, and has become a theatre where these prostrations to identity are performed. With these curatorial practices come puritanical rituals of moral maintenance, and these stages are too often overrun with the disavowed pleasures of accusation, shaming, and denunciation. Valuable platforms for connection, organization, and skill-sharing become clogged with obstacles to productive debate positioned as if they are debate. These puritanical politics of shame—which fetishize oppression as if it were a blessing, and cloud the waters in moralistic frenzies—leave us cold. We want neither clean hands nor beautiful souls, neither virtue nor terror. We want superior forms of corruption.

0x0D What this shows is that the task of engineering platforms for social emancipation and organization cannot ignore the cultural and semiotic mutations these platforms afford. What requires reengineering are the memetic parasites arousing and coordinating behaviours in ways occluded by their hosts’ self-image; failing this, memes like ‘anonymity’, ‘ethics’, ‘social justice’ and ‘privilege-checking’ host social dynamisms at odds with the often-commendable intentions with which they’re taken up. The task of collective self-mastery requires a hyperstitional manipulation of desire’s puppet-strings, and deployment of semiotic operators over a terrain of highly networked cultural systems. The will will always be corrupted by the memes in which it traffics, but nothing prevents us from instrumentalizing this fact, and calibrating it in view of the ends it desires.

PARITY

- 0x0E Xenofeminism is gender-abolitionist. 'Gender abolitionism' is not code for the eradication of what are currently considered 'gendered' traits from the human population. Under patriarchy, such a project could only spell disaster—the notion of what is 'gendered' sticks disproportionately to the feminine. But even if this balance were redressed, we have no interest in seeing the sexuate diversity of the world reduced. Let a hundred sexes bloom! 'Gender abolitionism' is shorthand for the ambition to construct a society where traits currently assembled under the rubric of gender, no longer furnish a grid for the asymmetric operation of power. 'Race abolitionism' expands into a similar formula—that the struggle must continue until currently racialized characteristics are no more a basis of discrimination than the color of one's eyes. Ultimately, every emancipatory abolitionism must incline towards the horizon of class abolitionism, since it is in capitalism where we encounter oppression in its transparent, denaturalized form: you're not exploited or oppressed because you are a wage labourer or poor; you are a labourer or poor because you are exploited.
- 0x0F Xenofeminism understands that the viability of emancipatory abolitionist projects—the abolition of class, gender, and race—hinges on a profound reworking of the universal. The universal must be grasped as generic, which is to say, intersectional. Intersectionality is not the morcellation of collectives into a static fuzz of cross-referenced identities, but a political orientation that slices through every particular, refusing the crass pigeon-holing of bodies. This is not a universal that can be imposed from above, but built from the bottom up – or, better, laterally, opening new lines of transit across an uneven landscape. This non-absolute, generic universality must guard against the facile tendency of conflation with bloated, unmarked particulars—namely Eurocentric universalism—whereby the male is mistaken for the sexless, the white for raceless, the cis for the real, and so on. Absent such a universal, the abolition of class will remain a bourgeois fantasy, the abolition of race will remain a tacit white-supremacism, and the abolition of gender will remain a thinly veiled misogyny, even—especially—when prosecuted by avowed feminists themselves. (The absurd and reckless spectacle of so many self-proclaimed 'gender abolitionists' campaign against trans women is proof enough of this).
- 0x10 From the postmoderns, we have learnt to burn the facades of the false universal and dispel such confusions; from the moderns, we have learnt to sift new universals from the ashes of the false. Xenofeminism seeks to construct a coalitional politics, a politics without the infection of purity. Wielding the universal requires thoughtful qualification and precise self-reflection so as to become a ready-to-hand tool for multiple political bodies and something that can be appropriated against the numerous oppressions

that transect with gender and sexuality. The universal is no blueprint, and rather than dictate its uses in advance, we propose XF as a platform. The very process of construction is therefore understood to be a negentropic, iterative, and continual refashioning. Xenofeminism seeks to be a mutable architecture that, like open source software, remains available for perpetual modification and enhancement following the navigational impulse of militant ethical reasoning. Open, however, does not mean undirected. The most durable systems in the world owe their stability to the way they train order to emerge as an ‘invisible hand’ from apparent spontaneity; or exploit the inertia of investment and sedimentation. We should not hesitate to learn from our adversaries or the successes and failures of history. With this in mind, XF seeks ways to seed an order that is equitable and just, injecting it into the geometry of freedoms these platforms afford.

ADJUST

- 0x11 Our lot is cast with technoscience, where nothing is so sacred that it cannot be reengineered and transformed so as to widen our aperture of freedom, extending to gender and the human. To say that nothing is sacred, that nothing is transcendent or protected from the will to know, to tinker and to hack, is to say that nothing is supernatural. ‘Nature’—understood here, as the unbounded arena of science—is all there is. And so, in tearing down melancholy and illusion; the unambitious and the non-scaleable; the libidized puritanism of certain online cultures, and Nature as an un-remakeable given, we find that our normative anti-naturalism has pushed us towards an unflinching ontological naturalism. There is nothing, we claim, that cannot be studied scientifically and manipulated technologically.
- 0x12 This does not mean that the distinction between the ontological and the normative, between fact and value, is simply cut and dried. The vectors of normative anti-naturalism and ontological naturalism span many ambivalent battlefields. The project of untangling what ought to be from what is, of dissociating freedom from fact, will from knowledge, is, indeed, an infinite task. There are many lacunae where desire confronts us with the brutality of fact, where beauty is indissociable from truth. Poetry, sex, technology and pain are incandescent with this tension we have traced. But give up on the task of revision, release the reins and slacken that tension, and these filaments instantly dim.

CARRY

- 0x13 The potential of early, text-based internet culture for countering repressive gender regimes, generating solidarity among marginalised groups, and creating new spaces for experimentation that ignited cyberfeminism in the nineties has clearly waned in the twenty-first century. The dominance of the visual in today's online interfaces has reinstated familiar modes of identity policing, power relations and gender norms in self-representation. But this does not mean that cyberfeminist sensibilities belong to the past. Sorting the subversive possibilities from the oppressive ones latent in today's web requires a feminism sensitive to the insidious return of old power structures, yet savvy enough to know how to exploit the potential. Digital technologies are not separable from the material realities that underwrite them; they are connected so that each can be used to alter the other towards different ends. Rather than arguing for the primacy of the virtual over the material, or the material over the virtual, xenofeminism grasps points of power and powerlessness in both, to unfold this knowledge as effective interventions in our jointly composed reality.
- 0x14 Intervention in more obviously material hegemonies is just as crucial as intervention in digital and cultural ones. Changes to the built environment harbour some of the most significant possibilities in the reconfiguration of the horizons of women and queers. As the embodiment of ideological constellations, the production of space and the decisions we make for its organization are ultimately articulations about 'us' and reciprocally, how a 'we' can be articulated. With the potential to foreclose, restrict, or open up future social conditions, xenofeminists must become attuned to the language of architecture as a vocabulary for collective choreo-graphy—the coordinated writing of space.
- 0x15 From the street to the home, domestic space too must not escape our tentacles. So profoundly ingrained, domestic space has been deemed impossible to disembed, where the home as norm has been conflated with home as fact, as an un-remakeable given. Stultifying 'domestic realism' has no home on our horizon. Let us set sights on augmented homes of shared laboratories, of communal media and technical facilities. The home is ripe for spatial transformation as an integral component in any process of feminist futurity. But this cannot stop at the garden gates. We see too well that reinventions of family structure and domestic life are currently only possible at the cost of either withdrawing from the economic sphere—the way of the commune—or bearing its burdens manifold—the way of the single parent. If we want to break the inertia that has kept the moribund figure of the nuclear family unit in place, which has stubbornly worked to isolate women from the public sphere, and men from the lives of their children, while penalizing those who stray from it, we must overhaul the material

infrastructure and break the economic cycles that lock it in place. The task before us is twofold, and our vision necessarily stereoscopic: we must engineer an economy that liberates reproductive labour and family life, while building models of familiarity free from the deadening grind of wage labour.

0x16 From the home to the body, the articulation of a proactive politics for biotechnical intervention and hormones presses. Hormones hack into gender systems possessing political scope extending beyond the aesthetic calibration of individual bodies. Thought structurally, the distribution of hormones—who or what this distribution prioritizes or pathologizes—is of paramount import. The rise of the internet and the hydra of black market pharmacies it let loose—together with a publicly accessible archive of endocrinological knowhow—was instrumental in wresting control of the hormonal economy away from ‘gatekeeping’ institutions seeking to mitigate threats to established distributions of the sexual. To trade in the rule of bureaucrats for the market is, however, not a victory in itself. These tides need to rise higher. We ask whether the idiom of ‘gender hacking’ is extensible into a long-range strategy, a strategy for wetware akin to what hacker culture has already done for software—constructing an entire universe of free and open source platforms that is the closest thing to a practicable communism many of us have ever seen. Without the foolhardy endangerment of lives, can we stitch together the embryonic promises held before us by pharmaceutical 3D printing (‘Reactionware’), grassroots telemedical abortion clinics, gender hacktivist and DIY-HRT forums, and so on, to assemble a platform for free and open source medicine?

0x17 From the global to the local, from the cloud to our bodies, xenofeminism avows the responsibility in constructing new institutions of technomaterialist hegemonic proportions. Like engineers who must conceive of a total structure as well as the molecular parts from which it is constructed, XF emphasises the importance of the mesopolitical sphere against the limited effectiveness of local gestures, creation of autonomous zones, and sheer horizontalism, just as it stands against transcendent, or top-down impositions of values and norms. The mesopolitical arena of xenofeminism’s universalist ambitions comprehends itself as a mobile and intricate network of transits between these polarities. As pragmatists, we invite contamination as a mutational driver between such frontiers.

OVERFLOW

0x18 XF asserts that adapting our behaviour for an era of Promethean complexity is a labour requiring patience, but a ferocious patience at odds with ‘waiting’. Calibrating a political hegemony or insurgent memplex not only implies the creation of material infra-structures to make the values it

articulates explicit, but places demands on us as subjects. How are we to become hosts of this new world? How do we build a better semiotic parasite—one that arouses the desires we want to desire, that orchestrates not an autophagic orgy of indignity or rage, but an emancipatory and egalitarian community buttressed by new forms of unselfish solidarity and collective self-mastery?

0x19 Is xenofeminism a programme? Not if this means anything so crude as a recipe, or a single-purpose tool by which a determinate problem is solved. We prefer to think like the schemer or lisper, who seeks to construct a new language in which the problem at hand is immersed, so that solutions for it, and for any number of related problems, might unfurl with ease. Xenofeminism is a platform, an incipient ambition to construct a new language for sexual politics—a language that seizes its own methods as materials to be reworked, and incrementally bootstraps itself into existence. We understand that the problems we face are systemic and interlocking, and that any chance of global success depends on infecting myriad skills and contexts with the logic of XF. Ours is a transformation of seeping, directed subsumption rather than rapid overthrow; it is a transformation of deliberate construction, seeking to submerge the white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy in a sea of procedures that soften its shell and dismantle its defenses, so as to build a new world from the scraps.

0x1A Xenofeminism indexes the desire to construct an alien future with a triumphant X on a mobile map. This X does not mark a destination. It is the insertion of a topological-keyframe for the formation of a new logic. In affirming a future untethered to the repetition of the present, we militate for ampliative capacities, for spaces of freedom with a richer geometry than the aisle, the assembly line, and the feed. We need new affordances of perception and action unblinkered by naturalised identities. In the name of feminism, 'Nature' shall no longer be a refuge of injustice, or a basis for any political justification whatsoever!

If nature is unjust, change nature!

ULRIKE
MÜLLER

*Franza,
Fever 103,
and Quilts*

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FRANZA, FEVER 103, AND QUILTS

Ulrike Müller





Ulrike Müller / KB Hardy
FeminismFormalism / FormalismusFeminismus
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FEMINIST FORMS

ARUNA D'SOUZA

ULRIKE MÜLLER'S DECISION TO MAKE drawings and then paintings is not, as she tells it, a break from her performance and video work or from her collaborations with groups such as LTTR (of which she was a member) and with other artists. And yet, on seeing these works—mostly compositions of two simple, graphic forms that mirror each other, rendered (the drawings in graphite and ordinary spray paint and the paintings in enamel) in a manner that while retaining a tender and even earnest handmade quality, seems deliberate in its search for precision—one might have trouble reconciling their formalism (and their sheer beauty) with her other practices.

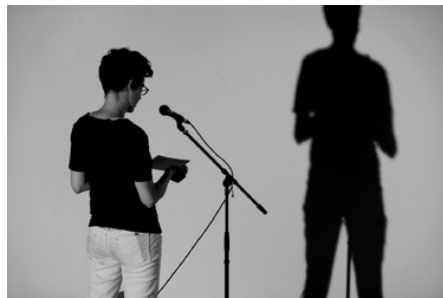
The move intrigued me. I knew Müller from earlier works and from our participation in a feminist conversation in which she offered models for a queer feminism, for political engagement, and for cultural production.¹ Her proposals were startling because of the way they revealed her mobility between these models as well as her facility for translating politics into artwork. I knew her, that is, from work like *LOVE/TORTURE* (2005), a performance-based video in which she stood facing a wall, reading a text written in first-person singular that merged media language around Abu Ghraib and language from S/M literature, highlighting the fusion of violence, torture, perversity, and sexual pleasure that is

a leitmotif of war culture. I knew her from her work with LTTR, an acronym that sometimes stood for Lesbians To The Rescue but whose meaning changed regularly, as is fitting for a group that recognizes not only the need for group action around queer feminist politics but also the violence done by fixing identity. The open call for submissions to their journal, the insistence on a handmade, DIY approach to the publication itself, the creation of events around the journal launches: all of the LTTR strategies and activities speak to a politics not of identification but of contingent and shifting affiliations and networks. Müller explained it thus:

LTTR is invested in building a sustainable activist model. We are, however, not engaged in a politics of protest; our actions are not primarily geared outward toward changing state policies. . . . We're invested in a different, more performative model of politics, the motivating question being what we can do for each other now, in the space and time we share. . . . We're actively building feminist (non-patriarchal) relationships, having fun, negotiating conflicts, sharing pleasure, and shaping queer spaces. My LTTR co-editor Emily Roysdon has put this beautifully: "We are not protesting what we don't want, we are performing what we do want."²

1 Rosalyn Deutsche, Aruna D'Souza, Miwon Kwon, Ulrike Müller, Mignon Nixon, and Senam Okudzeto, "Feminist Time: A Conversation," *Grey Room*, no. 31 (Spring 2008): 63.

2 Müller, in *ibid.*, 63.



of its medium, its creation in the studio, its status as an object to be looked at—could be feminist. Müller's work is another important provocation to my working through of that problem.

What has been crucial to me—and vexing—has been the question of how to find this language of feminist form in the context of an emerging notion of feminist politics, in which I consider work like LTTR's to be central. It is a politics based on the idea of networks and affiliations, of relationships that are mobile and transient rather than fixed, of creation rather than critique, of love. It is a politics that does not protest what we don't want but performs what we do want. I wonder, sometimes, whether that's what we, as feminists, should focus on at this moment. The 1980s and 1990s were the time for feminist *critique* after all: the questioning and dismantling of the gender politics encoded (and naturalized) in verbal and visual languages. Barbara Kruger's graphic work showcasing clashes between tired phrases and stock imagery; Jenny Holzer's scrolling LED "truisms" which point out, in their linguistic play and public display, the ideology encoded in our words; Cindy Sherman's interrogation of the function of "the gaze"; Janine Antoni's deployment of the physical body as the site of a culturally produced femininity: all exemplify modes of image making predicated on the demonstration of what we don't want, as they lay bare the limitations of language

And yet, here, paintings. Done, moreover, in a style that recalls the severest renunciations of high modernism. What fascinates me about them, and about Müller's decision to make this move, was that it seemed to make perfect sense at this moment—a moment of revived interest in abstract painting on the part of artists who are interested in questions of politics, gender, and aesthetics. I had a conversation a few years ago with the painter Amy Sillman, who, like Müller, treats painting as a site for working out a set of almost intuitive—or maybe *subterranean*—is a better word—notions of gender. It was our first meeting, and Sillman said to me, "I am a feminist. At some level, I know my work is feminist. But tell me *how* it's feminist. How do I put that into words?" As someone who had stubbornly clung to writing about painting even through the 1990s, a period in which that medium was treated as a degraded form by historians, critics, and artists looking for *other* modernisms to engage, the question rung in my ears. That was my job, I realized. To think about how a painting—not its content, not its situation in the world, but the facticity

(verbal and visual) in articulating a more desirable reality. Moreover, this critical impulse necessarily involved interrogating, and sometimes dismantling, terms of aesthetic discourse that were recognized to be deeply imbricated in (even constitutive of) ideologies of power, gender, and identity. That is not to say that the products of this critical impulse are aesthetically unconvincing; far from it. Within the expanded field of the aesthetic that it articulates, this work defined the terms for a different kind of pleasure. But the point is the *difference*.

To put it another way, the language that these feminists were most involved in critiquing was the language of modernism. They (along with Marxists, postcolonialists, queer theorists, and postmodernists generally) rejected, for one thing, the modernist imagining that form can be somehow purified of the social, that it can retreat from or cordon off reference, which carries with it the messy implications of the political, the venal, and the psychic. By the later 1990s, this feminist critique of formalism coexisted in advanced art history with both a new formalism, one based on an understanding of form as semiotic play, and an embrace of the indexical as the privileged means of mark making; think of work by Rosalind E. Krauss on Pablo Picasso, Yve-Alain Bois on Ellsworth Kelly and Piet Mondrian, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh on Gerhard Richter. In New York, at least, painting, especially abstract painting, was rejected as a retrograde, even reactionary,

medium when compared with photography, video, film, performance, relational aesthetics, and other genres. Because the basis of this shift was described as being rooted in the revolutionary potential of the index—the trace, the mark that functions in the way of a footprint, the indicator of temporal and semiotic



Myron Sont, Untitled #5, 1955

doubleness—to unfix ideological fixities and to put meaning into play, it is probably no surprise that when abstract painting was even discussed, it was for the most part when an artist managed to paint in "photographic" or indexical terms (e.g., Richter, Daniel Buren, Luc Tuymans). The underlying focus has largely

been on the ways in which the medium of painting has, according to this narrative, eschewed the indexical mark in favor of the iconic one and has revealed its own theoretical paucity in comparison with photography.

Feminist art history (and many of the most important American and British feminist artists) participated in this rejection of painting for this and other reasons generated by its centrality to modernist history, including the exclusionary (even misogynist) presuppositions of modernism in the twentieth century. And when it was discussed (for there remained, even in the face of this critical rejection, a number of influential feminist painters), it was often under two rubrics: that of the social context of painting—what painting “does” in relation to a set of institutions (the museum, the art school, modernism, politics of many ilk); and that of iconography—often the iconography of the body as a site of the construction of gender. (In this last, I am talking not only about feminist painting focused on “central core imagery” or “flows” but about feminist forays into painting that thematize the body’s construction within discourse.) As a consequence, the feminist *critique* of form never developed into a feminist *theory* of form, a way of talking about painting that does not rely solely on its institutional framing or its content to make the point that abstraction could, per se, be a feminist practice.

What would feminist form look like? What would a critical language of form

that is informed by feminism entail? Is there a way to think of a shape—not a representation, not an iconography, but a shape—as feminist (which is different from feminine)? A brushstroke? A set of color relations? A use of medium? And, more difficult, how might one reinvent a language of formal description that is adequate to describing a mode of painting that goes to lengths to elude fixity—of iconography, of materiality, of color, of shape, of all of its constitutive elements? How can abstract painting be feminist?

If these questions seem particularly urgent, it is because of two things, to my mind. First, and most important, a number of artists who identify their work as feminist—Müller among them—have shown a renewed interest in painting. Why now, after decades in a critical terrain where the medium was treated with suspicion, does painting seem “recoverable” as a site of critical image making? More specifically, why is a medium that has been so closely identified with the master discourses that feminism rejected now being embraced by feminist artists, curators, and critics? Second, we have seen in the past few years a renewed “formal turn” in *art history*—not merely a phenomenon of reaction (although it certainly can be, in some iterations) but a shift by social art historians (T. J. Clark especially) toward a theory of form that is inherently or immanently political and that relies less on the deconstructivist impulse of structuralist and poststructuralist thought, as defined in the late 1970s and 1980s by Krauss and others.

► THIS CONCEPTUAL MAP IS THE SETTING FOR my responses to Müller’s work in drawing and painting. She turned to these media in 2005, after having been trained by many of the theorists and artists who were central in post-modernist critique. What motivated the turn, Müller says, was an impulse to invention in the studio—not out of a rejection of her performance and video-based work but on a parallel and, at moments, an intersecting path, such as that of the exhibition “WHIP,” which she and Ginger Brooks Takahashi mounted at the Aktualisierungsraum in Hamburg in fall 2007. In an interview with Max Hinderer conducted in connection to the exhibition, Müller and Takahashi describe the motivation behind their collaborative project as one based on a shared interest in the intersections between sex, violence, and antiwar activism, and in the question of queering politics—in other words, the necessary link between countercultural practices and sexual ones. The artists collaborated on a video, *WHIP*, which shows them learning techniques associated with lesbian S/M through the presentation of their own headless bodies shown from the back, in an attempt, as Müller puts it, to “stage and say ‘I without talking about (only) oneself.’”³

But alongside this were shown, in a nod to modernist exhibition practices, a strict, straight line of works on paper by each: Takahashi’s embroidered paper works, and Müller’s almost-but-not-quite representational forms. The body is everywhere and nowhere in Müller’s drawings: plump orbs



Ginger Brooks Takahashi, from the series *Our entire is our virtue*, 2008-2007

could be balls or breasts or just near-perfect circles facing each other across a central axis; a split teardrop that connects the two could be a penis or a pussy or could be there merely to fashion a lozenge at the center of the composition. The body is evoked in the most maddeningly formalist, modernist terms, which constantly slip and become indeterminate. Hinderer, for one, was flummoxed by these works and the artists’ decision to present them as they did: when he did finally refer to them in the interview, he thought the hanging was “campy.” Müller’s response: “I am absolutely sincere in my queer relation to modernism. Yes, I think there’s potential in aesthetic experience, and I also know that the feminist and postcolonial critique were essential. So in a way I’m interested

3. Ulrike Müller, in “The Knots in the Bondage Workshop Were Very Aesthetically Beautiful,” interview with Ginger Brooks Takahashi and Ulrike Müller by Max Hinderer, <http://www.textem.de/index.php?id=1378>.

to return and explore modernism with what I've learned!"⁴

It's that exclamation mark at the end—the excitement, the enthusiasm, the *love* that marks Müller's response to modernism—that is so striking to me, perhaps because it reflects my own feelings. That exclamation mark means the idea that the critiques leveled against modernism were crucial but were not its death knell, that there might—just might—be political potential in modernism that has yet to be tapped but could theoretically be deployed at a moment that is post-post-modern, post-post-identity politics, and post-post-feminist. *Not* protesting what we *don't* want but performing what we *do* want: Müller's paintings open up for me the possibility of reopening the radical potential in all these terms—*modernism, identity, feminism*—without allowing any of them to become fixed.

When my daughter was two and a half years old, she ate a book—gnawed on its cardboard pages until it was in tatters. When I asked her why she did it, she said, "Because I love it so much." It is hard for me, when I look at Müller's work, not to think of that story: her paintings evoke an almost anthropophagic response. That is to say, they seem to be the products of the complicated desire to absorb and destroy as a means of revitalization; when Oswald de Andrade, the Brazilian poet, wrote his "Anthropophagy Manifesto" in 1928, he saw anthropophagy (indigenous cannibalistic rituals) as a metaphor for understanding postcolonial culture in Brazil,

especially its relationship to the high culture of Europe, which it readily and productively absorbed into forms other than those of mimicry or ironic commentary. This impulse to absorb and destroy holds the promise of shaping the processes of creation *and* reception, in the first place describing Müller's complicated yet loving relationship to the modernist forebears her paintings consistently invoke (not far from Sillman's indebtedness to Abstract Expressionism: "I wanted to have his clichés and eat them, too"⁵); and in the second place, framing one's physical response to the paintings. My first instinct, when faced with the cold and hard—and strangely seductive—surfaces of Müller's enamel paintings was to press my cheek against them, to get as close as possible to them, to achieve some sort of fusion with them.

The paintings Müller showed at the Cairo Biennale were hung in a mezzanine space that was open to the museum below, like a theater box. Around its walls, in a straight line, were her panels; on platforms, in the middle of the floor, were two quilts, while another was flung over the railing facing the gallery below. The paintings are smallish in scale (15 ½ by 12 inches), and from a distance their simple forms—single lines that curve and flip like Möbius strips, lone zips down the centers of unarticulated fields, circles in primary colors against neutral fields, and curved shapes that carve out negative space—seem rendered with a precise geometry in ways that suggest a bevy of modernist

forebears: Alexander Rodchenko, Myron Stout, Ellsworth Kelly, Barnett Newman. As I sketch this list of modernist precedents and traces in Müller's visual repertoire, I populate it, too, with the works of artists who were involved in modernism's dismantling: I think of Miriam Schapiro's perverse geometries, in which flatness and three dimensionality vie for dominance in curiously figurative polygonal shapes (*Big OX No. 2* [1968]); Valie Export's insertion of her own body, along with painted geometric overlays, into city- and landscapes (*Enkreisung* [1974] and *Konfiguration in Dünenlandschaft* [1974]); Ana Mendieta's *Untitled (Glass on Body Imprints)* (1972), in which, by pressing her body against a pane of glass, she replicates the violence of the female nude's translation into two dimensions, so that flesh is now flat, linear, a series of signs rather than a vehicle for life; and the same artist's film *Untitled (Blood Sign #2/Body Tracks)* (1974), in which she uses her hands, at one point, to mark, in blood, a wall with curved lines meant to invoke the hidden, even repressed, corporeal underside of modernist abstraction.

If this history of abstraction is operative in Müller's work, one gets the sense that she does not experience it in the classic Oedipal sense: there is no anxiety of influence here. The references, rather, operate with a strange lack of overdetermination, strange because we are so used to seeing modernism as a series of rejections of the authority of the father in a quest to claim

authority for oneself and to seeing postmodernism as a rejection of authority *as such* through similar generational attacks. In the face of the modernist trope of artists' Oedipal incorporation and rejection of their fathers (Pollock kills Picasso, who killed Cézanne), Müller creates a field of reference that remains outside generations (acknowledging that work

lives and artists produce outside the moments established by art history), that is nonlinear, and that is inclusive (of feminist practices long rejected by feminist artists, such as central core imagery, and even of high modernism itself). Müller's practice lives outside genealogies,

outside the terms of reproduction, which is fitting for an artist who insists on thinking in terms of networks and affiliations based on shared and shifting interests and whose feminism is defined as a specifically queer one. Her sentiments again reflect those of Sillman, who wrote that she doesn't really consider modernism her father or early feminism her mother but rather thinks of them more like distant uncles or aunts—and why should she



Ana Mendieta, *Untitled (Glass on Body Imprints)*, 1972

4. Ibid.

5. Amy Sillman, "AbEx and Disco Balls: In Defense of Abstract Expressionism II," *Artforum* 49, no. 10 (Summer 2011): 322; online at <http://www.artforum.com/inprint/issue=201106&id=28354&pagenum=1>.



graphism of her works further ties them to sign making. She buys her frit, too, ready made, and so chooses from a preexisting array of colors, favoring grays, whites, and blacks, along with a few primaries; colors cannot be mixed like pigment but sit side by

side on the surface, so one is restricted to a ready-made palette, a palette of stop signs and refrigerators, of the ordinary-to-the-point-of-unnoticed. But enameling, beyond its use in making stop signs and bathtubs, cookware and appliances, has mainly been used in more delicate contexts, such as fashioning objets d'art like Fabergé eggs and Art Nouveau jewelry. So this medium—this practically indestructible surface—is *both* durable and delicate; *both* cold to the touch and so smooth to provoke a stroke by the hand or graze against the cheek; *both* associated with the (traditionally feminine and, in the context of contemporary art, often feminist) realm of craft and with the (traditionally masculine, and, in the context of contemporary art, often deeply masculinist) realm of industrial production; *both* painting and not painting; *both* handmade and untouched by hands. And if these descriptions seem to hinge on binaries, caught in a conceptual trap of either or's, thises and thats, and a basic ideological imagin-

ing of gender as a simple duality of male and female, it is perhaps better to think of these pairings as dialectics in which one (the artisanal, the handmade, the feminine) is always undoing the work of the other (the industrial, the mechanical, the masculine), and vice versa, so that both terms are perpetually indefinable. Müller's art muddies modernist clarity. That is, perhaps, one of the forms its feminism takes. But this muddying is not an act of rejection. It is a complicated declaration of love, even a queer declaration of love: an insistence on the both/and in her practice.

In the shapes rendered on these plates, we have our abstraction and eat it, too. Hard-edged geometries give way to the body, yes, as in one of the paintings titled *Franza*, where the blue enamel on the top of the plate forms two facing arcs, which intersect in a razor-sharp point against a field of white. This purist form, so mathematically clear, evokes sex, and we read the white as breast-like mounds or ripe buttocks, or conversely we read the blue as a bikini bottom. This duck-rabbit game never settles, and never gives up the possibility that we are just looking at two intersecting arcs: the evocation of a body is also an evocation of a not-body (or a multiple or mutating body, a not-fixed body), and not the evocation of a body. In another *Franza* painting, the calling forth of the body is more subtle, I think, hinging on a conjuring of Barnett Newman's zip, the line that runs down his monochrome canvases and introduces human scale to otherwise end-

less fields of color. Müller seems to reimagine Newman's zip as a ribbon-like form that folds over itself as it nears the bottom of the panel; one side describes a perfect ninety-degree angle framing a field of beige-gray, while the other shapes a curve out of the white field on the opposite side. The blue bends like an elbow or a knee; the white curves from the bottom of the plate like the root of a penis.

And if these images force a shuttling of our visual perception between not-body and multiple bodies, the multiplicity and indeterminacy grow via the artist's reshuffling of a limited vocabulary of elemental forms. The *Franza* painting composed of two facing blue arcs, for example, mutates into the *Franza* with the blue double curve, but now involves a flat gray, one of its contours traced by a thick black line that then runs straight down the middle of the plate, to its very bottom. This cleaved form is turned upside down in yet another *Franza* work, with a composition whose white and dull, pale green are sparked by a red-orange stripe. Flayed forms, forms pressed together, touching and splitting; they need not be bodies, in the face of such formal play, to evoke the bodily in representation. One *Franza* painting takes another one from the group, turns it on its side, and fills the rectangle with it, turning buttocks and breasts into a pregnant belly or a curvilinear version of El Lissitzky's *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* (1919).

When I pressed my cheek against the painting in Müller's studio and touched

6. Ibid., 323.

it with my hand, she showed me a photograph that was taken in the installation in Cairo: an Egyptian woman with a regal profile, wearing a hijab-type head covering, looking at one of the paintings. Her gaze seemed to search for recognition, rather than crave absorption, the way my gesture did. What does it mean for different bodies to encounter these works in the world? What does it mean for a person to face these gestalt images, presented serially, with their reflective surfaces and shapes that gently confront one another on the surface? Even more, in Müller's words: "What pressures and factors in the contemporary world make bodies relevant now? What does it mean to invoke the body, and what else might be necessary? How does this relate to the materiality of painting? And similarly for questions around queer politics—how are sexualities and subjectivities political now, and how can painting be a site for this question?"⁷ These are obviously not new questions for her, and I don't think it's coincidence that they emerged so concretely with her video *LOVE/TORTURE* in 2005, the same year she turned to drawing and painting.

I wrote some time ago about the Palestinian-British artist Mona Hatoum's ambivalence toward a certain mode of British feminism in the 1980s, a critical approach that was deeply suspicious of Hatoum's "spectacular" use of her own body and the body of other women (including her mother) in representation. This was the British feminism of Laura Mulvey and the male gaze, a mode of think-

ing about the politics (especially the gendered politics) of representation, and what Griselda Pollock calls a "negative aesthetics" that developed among certain feminists in the later 1970s and early 1980s in Britain: "a radical distancing from any aspect of the spectacle and visual pleasure, a distrust of the visual image, of the iconicity especially of women."⁸ But when Mulvey wrote her classic essay (and one of the key texts in this moment's "negative aesthetics") "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in which she argued that there was, in fact, no way for the female body to be represented outside the exploitative structure of the "male gaze," she was working within the scope of a specific cultural context, one in which the nude woman was insistently and spectacularly ubiquitous in representation. Such an argument translates poorly across cultures, especially in relation to much of the Arab world, where it is precisely the prohibition of female visibility (most emphatically in relation to that stereotypical marker of Arab femininity, the veil) that is at issue: the feminist theory current in Britain at the time Hatoum was working on these pieces reiterated, rather than rejected, the cultural hegemonies that were the targets (at least in part) of Hatoum's critique.

I do not mean to overlay this argument about Hatoum's work onto Müller's, or to reference the Middle East in any specific way, least because Müller did not make her paintings to comment on the culture in which they would be shown. I cite it here only to point out the ways in which the urge to critique the

languages of representation are not always adequate in our experience of the world today. Müller is an Austrian woman, educated in the United States, showing her work in Egypt, but she does so without claims to speak any particular language other than that of abstraction. We talked about this, and she responded,

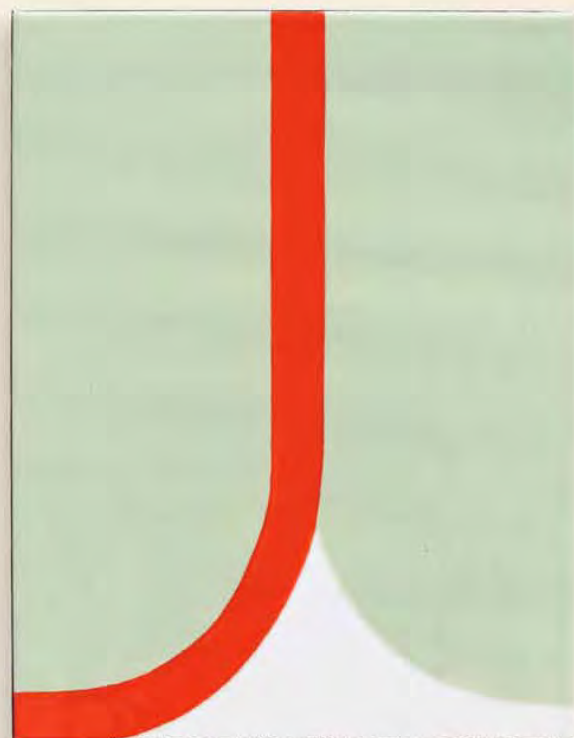
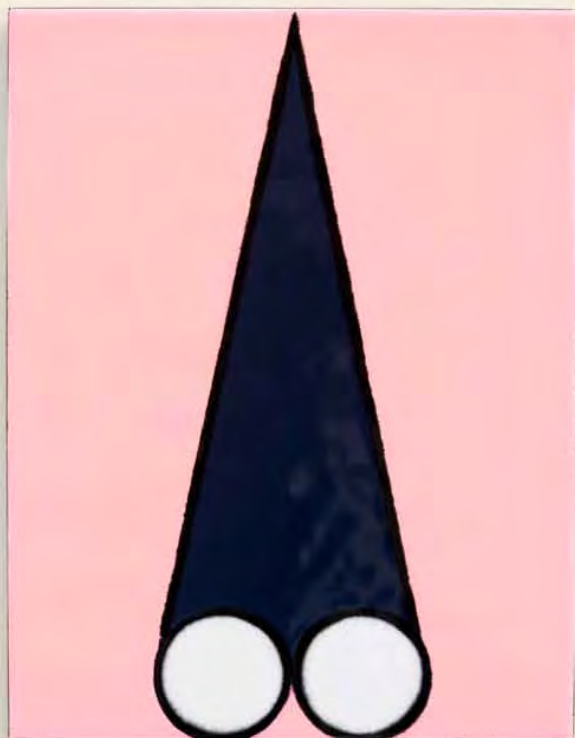
I feel that I need to further explore things in the making, particularly how bodies are hailed through abstraction, and the relationships to the histories of modernism and feminist art that arise along those lines. It seems important for me right now to conceptualize a practice that is both local and able to travel: What's specific to the queer cultural context of its making, what crosses over into different settings and what is lost (or gained?) in these transactions (showing the work in Egypt but also in Chelsea).⁹

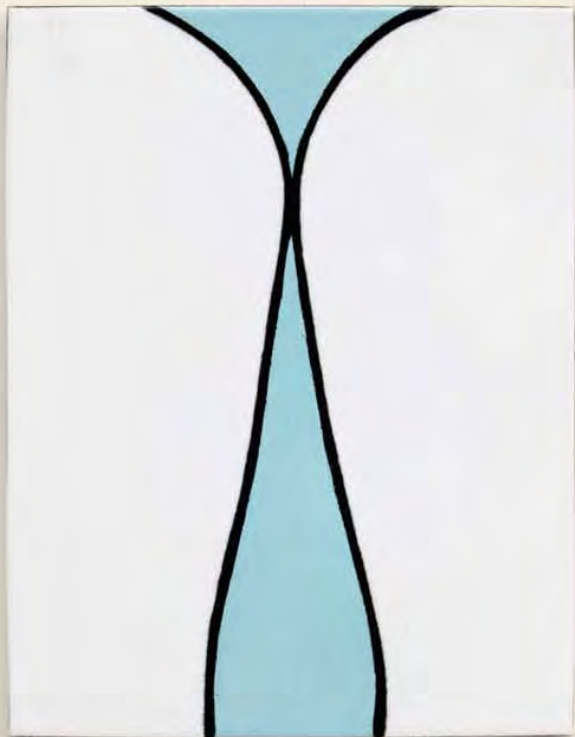
9. Müller, e-mail to the author, July 26, 2011.

In her work, the fact that "critique" gives way to something else opens up a space of questioning that is radically open ended. How do you see these paintings? What is the effect of confronting them physically? What is produced in the interaction? How can we learn from that encounter? What is the distance between the artist's need to make them and your need to view them? The hermeticism of modernist abstraction—its drive to close itself off from the social—is turned in and onto itself, like a Möbius strip, which allows the social to reemerge, not by attempting to shape or represent it but merely by making a space for such questions. Not making assumptions about how bodies are felt or experienced or what they mean or don't mean but presenting the possibility for asking that question in the space of art.

7. Ulrike Müller, e-mail to the author, June 19, 2011.

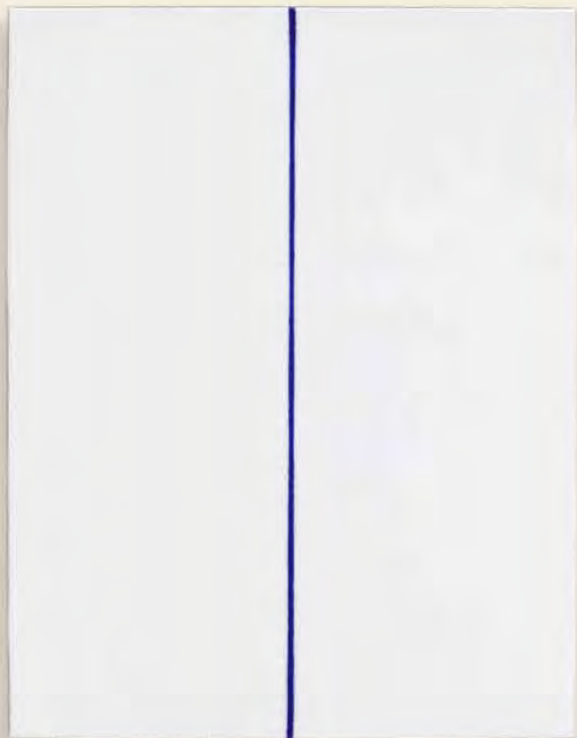
8. Griselda Pollock, "Inscriptions in the Feminine," *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art in, of, and from the Feminine*, ed. Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 79.







Bondage workshop by Ursula Loge organized by Dinger Brocks Tachibana and Ulrike Keller as part of the exhibition "Welp," Akademie-ungarn, Hamburg, 2007





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Mika Rottenberg's "Squeeze" Becomes What It Critiques

Posted: 12/17/2010 2:52 pm EST | Updated: 05/25/2011 6:20 pm EDT



Left: Photo of art dealer Mary Boone holding her newest offering of art, a cube of refuse manufactured by Latin American and Indian workers seen in Mika Rottenberg's film *Squeeze* (2010). Right: Still from *Squeeze* depicting Chinese women massaging the feet of unseen manual laborers in a cramped hut outfitted with human buttocks on the wall behind them.

We don't have to be Trotskyites (remember Trotsky, anyone?) to see that Mika Rottenberg's provocative video *Squeeze* (2010) is problematic on a number of counts. The film has been promoted during its installation at the [Mary Boone Gallery](#) in Chelsea as surveying the spread of feminist values in what we once complacently called The Third World—a demographic label fastly becoming a misnomer. But Rottenberg's film leaves much to be desired when considering the artist's own portrayal of women workers.

Visually, Rottenberg's depiction of a hyper-surrealist assembly line is simultaneously enthralling and repulsive, and in this regard owes much to [Matthew Barney](#)'s eroticized and fetishistic films. With living human body parts (tongues, lips, and buttocks) protruding from walls, and absurd architectural constraints placed on the bodies of actors, *Squeeze* seems bereft only of Barney's profound mythopoetics. In its place we find Rottenberg attempting to critique the terms of women's labor throughout the world by employing a host of actresses from China, India, and Latin America playing common manual laborers. The manner in which Rottenberg strips the actresses of their humanity and reduces them to little more than objects recalls [Vanessa Beecroft](#)'s ironic objectification of female models herded together in public spaces, minus Beecroft's artifice of glamor and pathological anorexia. But Rottenberg goes too far in her objectification. With Beecroft we never quite feel sorry for the assembly of professional models who are only subjected to nudity, wearing high heels, wigs, and makeup in a glamorous museum or gallery. But in *Squeeze* the actresses are degraded to the point of being subjected to freak-show servility, and we're made to feel for the actresses for having to endure such degradations imposed on them in the name of art.

I'm not referring to the circumstances behind the filmed event—circumstances we don't know. It's the space of the screen on which we witness the human subjects reduced to objects—reduced to the artist's medium, if you will—that defines the objectification and exploitation of human labor by the artist. For anyone can see that the objectification, degradation, and exploitation of humanity by multinational corporations that Rottenberg satirizes is, however unintentionally, being repeated by Rottenberg in the making of her film. We aren't merely watching an analogy to exploitation, we're watching an actual, if unwitting, exploitation of labor in the service to art.

Add to this the fact that Mika Rottenberg and Mary Boone stand to make considerable profit off sales of Rottenberg's *Squeeze* DV along with related art sales and commissions. Is there really any difference, then, between the relationship of the Chinese, Indian, and Latin American actresses to Rottenberg and Boone and the relationship of women workers of these same countries to the lettuce, rubber and makeup companies being implicated in the video? There is, of course, a difference: Rottenberg and Boone are selling SQUEEZE not to average, middle class consumers, but to the elite art collector, who by and large hails from the top .00001% of global earners. And they're not selling it at \$19.99 a disc, but for some hefty amount approaching five-to-six figures.

To her credit, Rottenberg acknowledges the analogy of artmaking to industrial dehumanization in the photo on the gallery wall of Mary Boone holding a cube made from the refuse we watch being churned and regurgitated by the women workers of *Squeeze*. Then, too, gallery visitors are made to feel the discomfort of the workers as they herd within a boxed-in viewing station not unlike the cramped working huts we see on screen. But it's hard not to see this part of Rottenberg's parody of the global chain of production as also becoming what it critiques: a genuine display of hubris in her place at the top of the hierarchy between Third World workers of color and white Western entrepreneur.

All of this brings me to the question, what puts Rottenberg in the superior position of critiquing capitalists who exploit cheap foreign women's labor when she does the same? And if Rottenberg isn't critiquing the exploitation of labor, if she is merely drawing an analogy to it, does *Squeeze* then ever rise above being the freak show travesty Rottenberg makes it appear?

Ambiguity in art always makes moralizing a complicated affair. But today, moralizing on the conditions of global labor are made all the more complicated, what with the equation of exploitation no longer one easily classified (or stereotyped) as a condition of Western, white multinational interests pitted against the interests of multicolored, non-Western laborers. As global economies shift, the class inequalities become as domestic to India, Mexico, and China as to the U.S. and Europe. All of which makes Rottenberg's critique of the West's exploitation of cheap foreign labor in *Squeeze*, already dated.

It's hard staying aloft in the game of critical gazing when the conditions of the critique (and of the moral position of critiquing world conditions) are shifting so rapidly and remain so often out of view to even the expert pundit. Although artists count among the most keen observers of inequality, Rottenberg can't be counted among them so long as she employs and perpetuates the very conditions of exploitation she with all good intentions and fine aesthetic fashion exploits in the name of critiquing exploitation.

However entertaining and inventive *Squeeze* is, so long as Rottenberg remains part of the very production-consumer equation she portrays, she can't be placed within the history of serious political art that, from Francisco Goya to Hans Haacke, critiques the conditions and abuse of power and wealth. Until then, Rottenberg's art, like that of Fellini's more fantastic exercises, can be enjoyed for their richly-arrayed spectacles, state-of-the-art avant-gardist tropes, however deluded and ineffectual they are in their presumed political correctness.

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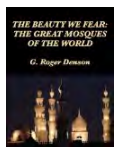
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*The Ism that Dares Speak Its Name**

Meredyth Sparks



June 10 - August 2, 2015

Tues-Sunday 12:00 - 6:00pm

Reception: June 19, 6:00 - 9:00pm

PARMER at Abrons Arts Center 466 Grand Street, New York, NY 10002

The Ism that Dares Speak Its Name is a series of collaborative and public programs—discussion groups, screenings, a walking tour and Wikipedia edit-a-thon—that will explore the trajectories of the modern woman from the early 20th century through to current iterations in feminist art, music and political practices.

The programs will be housed within *The Rivoli Pavilion* (2011/2015), Meredyth Sparks' string sculpture based on the modernist architect Eileen Gray's "Rivoli" tea table. Amplified to the size of a pavilion, the sculpture collapses the boundaries between interior and exterior, public and private by transforming a domestic object into a public meetinghouse.

Through the public programs within Sparks' sculptural form, the project provides a discursive space aimed at exploring our complicated relationship to modernism and the canon and current concerns within feminist discourse that make visible the contributions of women to the understanding of ourselves in relation to contemporary artistic subjectivity. By accounting for the collaborative and collective agency of feminism, *The Ism that Dares Speak Its Name* seeks to further the conversation, looking back while moving forward.

During the course of the program, the sculpture will house a program of video resources selected by Sparks. Culled from the Internet, this documentation will be divided into sections including: Documentaries, Artists in Their Own Words, and Artist Film and Video. This collection of videos will act as a generative archive that begins to elucidate a cultural, feminized voice.

*This title is inspired by Mira Schor's essay originally published in Documents journal, "The Ism That Dare Not Speak Its Name," the title itself a play on the line "The love that dare not speak its name," found in Lord Alfred Douglas' 1894 poem "Two Loves," but now often associated with Oscar Wilde's indecency trial of the following year.

PARMER is a curatorial platform for exhibiting, programming and writing based in New York that focuses on queer and feminist strategies and post-colonial analysis. The program has been hosted by Abrons Arts Center on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in 2015 and at a private residence in Bedford Stuyvesant in 2014. Participants and collaborators include: Tom Ackers and Melanie Gilligan, Malin Arnell and Pablo Zuleta, Arlen Austin, Amy Balkin, Lindsay Benedict, Heather Bursch, Sara Eliassen, João Enxuto and Erica Love, Siân Evans and Jacqueline Mabey, Silvia Frederici, Nikita Gale, Cassandra Guan, Dorothy Howard, Flora Katz and Mikaela Assolent, Chelsea Knight, Jen Liu, Liz Linden and Jen Kennedy, Thomas Love, Park McArthur, Premila Nadasen, Jeanine Oleson, Aviva Rahmani, Jessica Segall, Aliza Shvartz, Meredyth Sparks, Marisa Williamson and Zahr, amongst others.

