REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

Documents #1

GEORGE PATON GALLERY

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Foreword

The George Paton Gallery has, over a number of years, maintained a policy of broadening its activities through the incorporation of 'guest curated' exhibitions in its programme. In the spirit of this policy Harriet Edquist was invited to co-ordinate the *Reasons to be Cheerful* series of lectures.

This book of documents is the result of the *Reasons to be Cheerful* lecture series, and is the first in a proposed series of documents originating from the George Paton Gallery.

Thanks are due to all the participants, for their verbal and written contributions; to Rozalind Drummond, David O'Halloran, Fiona Symington and Louise Stirling for their unfailing energy as assistants and to Harriet Edquist for her excellent co-ordination and follow-through with this publication.

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JULIANA ENGBERG
DIRECTOR

Introduction

While considering the selection of speakers for the lecture series published here, I had no particular programmatic scheme in mind. It was enough that each speaker could speak from a clearly articulated position and that such a position would be of general interest to the public. As it turned out, the five papers collected here are very different from each other, but have one striking aspect in common. While each has to do with one or other of the arts, they are all about literary *texts*. None of the papers takes as its main purpose the discussion of an artwork. The exception to this was Sylvia Lawson's lecture 'Cultural Histories and Geographies', which dealt with the representation of Aborigines in film. Lawson looked at two films in order to present an argument about the ways in which Aboriginal culture is positioned within the culture of white Australia. In doing so she provided some illuminating readings of the films discussed. Unfortunately, as this talk was a preliminary study for a larger project, it could not be reproduced here.

The texts chosen by each speaker represented here differ, as does the treatment of them. Margaret Rose takes as her theme a reading of Charles Jencks' recent *What is Post-Modernism?* and situates it within current discussion of post-modernism, suggesting its uses within this debate. Both Elizabeth Grosz and Brenda Marshall are concerned with feminist and psychoanalytical theoretical texts, and the ways in which they can help us re-orient and re-position ourselves in relation to, and through art. Harriet Edquist examines recent special Australian editions of international art and architecture journals and discerns within them a construction of contemporary Australian architecture which is misleading and opportunistic and which feeds on traditional myths about what Australia is. Gary Catalano, the least affected of the speakers by contemporary theoretical and cultural discourse, seeks to discern by a comparison of texts about pictorial and poetic imagery, just how images appear. In his concern for the power, the affective nature of the poem or painting, his arguments have some analogies to Brenda Marshall's concern to delineate the hidden powers of art, the realms that can be uncovered by psychoanalytically informed processes of self-discovery.

These lectures are wide ranging in content and reference and quite distinctive individually; they do not represent a 'school' of thought or critical practice. On the other hand, the way in which each treats the material at hand positions them as a whole clearly within the critical practices of the late-1980s.

HARRIET EDQUIST
LECTURE CO-ORDINATOR

Post-Modernism Today: some thoughts on Charles Jencks' *What is Post-Modernism?*[1]

Margaret A. Rose

According to one recent article in *The Architectural Review*[2] post-modernism is already dead and about to be replaced by the somewhat less catchily titled "New Spirit Modernism" - a movement characterised by a renewal of interest "in space and movement and the use of real materials". Some of those who have only recently lived through the supposed death of modernism and birth of post-modernism, might however wish to remain somewhat sceptical about both the newness of "New Spirit Modernism" and its obituary for post-modernism. Forecasting the death of something which is still clearly alive and kicking you is of course an old trick used by those who wish to claim they have something new to say. One other trick is to name something to be new which is in fact very old. How *new* "New Spirit Modernism" will prove to be has yet to be seen, and especially given that the examples provided of it so far are still recognisably similar to the older modernisms of the 1960s.[3]

When Fredrick Jameson attempted to characterise the advent of post-modernism in his 1984 essay, "Post modernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" as the replacement of a modernist form of parody with a new populist and less self-reflexive form called pastiche, or "blind parody",[4] he may also have been constructing a newness for post-modernism which was both not quite valid and not quite adequate.

To take the validity of Jameson's claim that pastiche is an entirely new element first - *it* may be questioned for example by noting that pastiche - which is the compilation of a number of motifs from different works or sets of images[5] - is in fact a relatively old stylistic device which is to be found in art and architecture from at least the Renaissance on, and which is also to be found in modernist works together with the parody which Jameson claims the pastiche of post-modernism to have replaced.[6]

In tackling the next question of how adequate an appellation pastiche may be for the post-modern we might also note that at least some post-modernists have added further self-reflexivity to the artistic forms of parody and pastiche used by modernists, in order to further broaden their former modernistic functions.[7] This is also one of the arguments developed by Charles Jencks in his new booklet *What is Post-Modernism?* of 1986 when he argues that post-modernism adds to the supposed self-reflexivity of modernism by including the latter in its dual-coded and critical reflections on the history and functions of the art which has preceded it.[8]

Whereas a survey of modernist works such as Magritte's *Euclidean Walks* or *The Human Condition* may show modernism to have been concerned with foregrounding the structural processes of art,[9] Jencks begins his 1986 analysis of post-modernism by looking at Carlo Maria Mariani's *The Hand Submits to the Intellect* of 1983[10] as a work in which both the processes of art and their history are subjected to our gaze. Jencks' caption to this work begins: "For Modernists the subject of art was often the process of art; for Post-Modernists it is often the history of art".[11] Later, in a caption to de Chirico's *La Lettura*, Jencks speaks of the influence of modern artists such as de Chirico and Magritte on post-modernism so that "one can speak of an evolution from, as well as a contrast between the two periods".[12]

A comparison of Mariani's painting with other archetypically or even prototypically modernist works such as El Lissitzky's *Constructor* of 1924[13] can further illustrate Jencks' point that post-modernism is not necessarily less reflexive than modernism but may be more so because of its interest in reflecting on the history of itself as well as on its methods. Yet one other post-modernist work illustrated by Jencks which could be said to reflect back on the history of post-modernism is moreover Peter Blake's *The Meeting* or *Have a Nice Day, Mr. Hockney* of 1981-3 in which three 1960s Pop painters - namely Hodgkin, Blake and Hockney - are depicted in the attitudes of the central characters of Courbet's *The Meeting* or *Bonjour Monsieur Courbet* of 1854.[14] According to Jencks, Blake's painting can be understood as "both a contemporary comment on Classicism and a classical composition in itself". The pose of the squatting girl on skates, Jencks adds, is taken partly from a skating magazine and partly from classical sculpture - the crouching Aphrodite from Rhodes being but one of several classical crouching Venuses which could have served as Blake's model.[15] To cap it all - the whole scene is described as having occurred in a place called "Venice" California.

To Jencks there is moreover no one post-modernist style or characteristic - save for its self-reflexive use of dual - and, later, multiple-coding.[16] Jencks' "Evolutionary Tree of Post-Modern Architecture 1960-1980" which was developed prior to his *What is Post-Modernism?*,[17] but is repeated in it, divides post-modernist architecture into *six* main traditions, which are unified by a tendency to classical allusion and to urban construction, but which differ in many other very specific practices.

While the Jameson referred to in the section entitled "Straight Revivalism" after pastiche in Jencks' diagram is the architectural critic Conrad Jameson, Jencks also explicitly criticises Fredric Jameson in his *What is Post-Modernism?* when referring to Jameson's essay in Hal Foster's collection *The Anti-Aesthetic*, and further condemns at several points the reduction of post-modernism to pastiche.[18]

Returning to Jencks' "evolutionary tree" and to the question of parody in post-modernism we will also find James Stirling's *Neue Staatsgalerie* Stuttgart of 1977-1984 classified by Jencks as "Ad Hoc Urbanism" and together with works by Rossi and the new Covent Garden complex in London.[19]

It is moreover not just because Stirling's Stuttgart *Gallery* has come to be regarded by many as the post-modernist extravaganza of recent years, but because it practises the "dual coding" which Jencks sees to be the basis of all good post-modernist works, that he spends several pages illustrating and commenting upon it in his new booklet.[20]

In addition to characterising the post-modernism of Stirling's "Neo-Classicism" as an example of post-modernist "dual coding", Jencks' caption to the part of Stirling's *Neue Staatsgalerie* Stuttgart which he describes as the "Ruins in the Garden" goes on to describe the placement of the blocks as referring us to several things: one, to depictions of classical ruins and two, to an experiment of post-modern construction - a steel frame holding up slabs of masonry free of cement. Further to this there is an ironic reference to modernist architecture in that the holes in the walls supposedly made by the fallen blocks also function as vents to the parking garage which the other blocks surround and conceal. After describing this as a typical case of post-modernist "dual coding", Jencks adds that these ironic vents not only dramatize the difference between truth and illusion, but allow Stirling and his Associates to assert continuity with the existing classical fabric while pointing to differences created by either themselves or the modernist precursors on whom their building also reflects back.

To Jencks, Stirling's Stuttgart *Staatsgalerie* is an articulation of the complexities of urbanism rather than a conventional building. This is so, Jencks writes, because the gallery both illustrates the discontinuous pluralism of styles which Jencks quotes Jean-Francois Lyotard as seeing as characteristic of post-modernism - as for instance in the pseudo "Acropolis" of the Gallery which perches on top of the garage - and ironically juxtaposes *opposing* elements of Modernism - such as, for example, the love shown by modernism for both high culture and the noisy and polluting traffic which is presently helping to destroy the real Acropolis in Athens.

Here it is also important to note (given the criticisms of post-modernism as a movement solely concerned with decoration[21]) that Jencks goes on to suggest that post-modernism juxtaposes these dual codes in order to comment in a critical manner upon the cultural and psychological tensions created within the modernist period of late industrialism.

When modernists accuse post-modernists of superficiality in using a pastiche of styles, Jencks suggests not just that they have not understood the critical functions of post-modernist pastiche, but that they are pursuing a policy of harassment which is symptomatic of the tensions of their modernistic age. Towards the beginning of his book Jencks illustrates this point further by referring to a series of meetings held at the Royal Institute of British Architects which were notable for the viciousness of their attacks on post-modernism. Jencks writes of these:

> In 1981 the Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck delivered the Annual Discourse titled "Rats, Posts and Other Pests", and one can guess from this appellation how hard he attempted to be fair-minded. He advised his cheering audience of Modernists in a capital-lettered harangue, "Ladies and Gentlemen, I beg you, Hound Them Down and Let the Foxes Go" -

Jencks continues:

> If Van Eyck advised letting the dogs loose on Post-Modernists, the older Modern architect Berthold Lubetkin limited himself, on receiving his Gold Medal at the RIBA, to classing them with homosexuals, Hitler and Stalin: "This is transvestite architecture", he stormed, "Heppelwhite and Chippendale in drag".[22]

Illustrating Lubetkin and Tecton's *Hallfield Housing Estate* of 1947-55, Jencks goes on to claim that the defenders of modernism are now themselves beginning to sound like the Hitlers and Stalins who once hounded them:

> Indeed the slurs against Post-Modernists occasionally sound like the Nazi and academic vitriol pouring on Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius in the 1920s. Is history repeating itself in reverse? I'm not sure, but I do believe that these characterisations have not done what they were supposed to do - stem the tide of Post-Modernism - but rather have helped blow it up into a media event. My nightmare is that suddenly the reactionaries will become nice and civil. Everyone, but particularly the press, loves an abusive argument carried on by professors and the otherwise intelligent: it's always entertaining even if it obscures as much as it explains. And what it has hidden are the root causes of the movement.[23]

The root causes of post-modernism are moreover for Jencks the failing of modernism itself. Modernism in Jencks' account is now to be compared with a Protestant Inquisition faced with the Counter-Reformation of younger and more self-aware architects.[24] To Jencks post-modernism is both the continuation of modernism and the means to its transcendence. It is for him a necessary corrective to the socially alienating faces of ornament produced for modernism by such as Adolf Loos who, according to post-modernists, wrongly assumed that it would be better for the poor to save money on the construction of their buildings than to have any aesthetically pleasing decoration. To most post-modernists, the social alienation caused by the plain cement blocks used for modernist housing estates such as Lubetkin's is yet one of the many social as well as aesthetic evils of modernism. One other - not unimportant one - noted by Jencks is furthermore the shoddy workmanship and use of cheap materials which sometimes leads to the collapse of such apartments or the need to pull them down by force.[25]

While Fredric Jameson appears to ignore this extremely serious aspect of the post-modernist critique of modernism in speaking of the post-modernist use of pastiche as a type of "blind parody" in his 1984 article, Jencks goes on to claim that post-modernistic architecture is not just less blind to the social problems of modernism than was modernism, but that it is able to both satirise those faults more effectively and to reflect more critically on itself than its predecessor.

Hence where Jameson claims that there is neither self-reflexivity nor satire to be found in the post-modernist use of pastiche, Jencks points to post-modernist works such as Mariani's *Costellazioni del Leone* (La Scuola di Roma) which is not only a parody of the Raphael *School of Athens* imitated and parodied by so many artists down the years, such as in Reynolds *School of English Connoisseurs in Rome* of 1751, but - according to Jencks:

> an elaborate allegory on the current Post-Modern School of Rome - one part eighteenth-century pastiche, and one part critical satire.[26]

It is moreover the ironic or parodic use of dual or multiple codings in most post-modernist works which both raises them above modernism for Jencks, and allows the post-modernist architect to reflect on a lack of communication between architect and user in modernism. To Jencks modernist architecture "failed as mass-housing and city building partly because it failed to communicate with its inhabitants and users who might not have liked the style, understood what it meant or even known how to use it".[27] It will be suggested presently that it may be that Jencks is somewhat too optimistic about post-modernism when he suggests that

its use of double-coding to comment on the history of its own materials may help it communicate better with its customers. But Jencks does at least point to two potential differences between post-modernism and modernism when he argues that the dual coding used by post-modernism is intended to both comment reflexively on the lack of coding given about themselves by many modernist works, and create an ironic self-critical comment on the late capitalist character of modernism in which post-modernism continues to exist.

Of course there may be some problem in finding as much self-reflexivity and satire in post-modernist architecture as in its art, but for Jencks the possibility for both irony and satire is there in both forms, and is encouraged in all areas by the dual-coded project of post-modernist architecture as a whole to both criticise and transcend the modernism which has preceded it.

Stirling's *Staatsgalerie* Stuttgart does both of these things for Jencks, for example, by pointing to its continued use of some modernist materials such as reinforced concrete while also adding a historical comment on the history of the growth of modern architecture from its classical roots.

Buildings, according to this reading, are not just supposed to be functional houses to keep a working population together in the smallest piece of real estate purchaseable, but are to be based on their older classical function of providing a forum as well as a model of humanistic values. Earlier, in his *Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, Jencks had also suggested that Post-Modern Classicism could become a new public language of architecture.[28] While it can be suggested that to argue that the very sophisticated dual coding of buildings such as Stirling's *Gallery* could be understood by anyone not versed in the history of western architecture may seem to be arguing too much, it is ironically this point which also serves to prove Jameson's 1984 equation of post-modernism with a populist form of "blind" pastiche wrong for all instances of post-modernism. Further to this it points again to a dilemma of modern culture - the problem, that is, which the forbears of post-modernist theory of the early Frankfurt School realised - that it was the *mass* culture or popular culture of the modern period which had become the greatest victim of modernisation and of its evils.[29] Using the form of a giant coca-cola bottle as the basis for a post-modernist tower block might, that is, simply reinforce the power of that devalued image over our consciousness rather than satirise it or raise it to any cultural height. Juxtaposing classical forms with modern materials as in the *Stuttgarter Staatsgalerie* may, however, as Jencks' argument appears to suggest, serve an uplifting purpose in reminding us of the more serious communal functions of buildings in the ancient Athenian democracy.

All in all, Jencks' overall argument for post-modernism may yet be stronger when retaining the concept of dual coding and admitting to some elitism in his own apparent preference for the classicists of the post-modern. It is at least more consistent that way - and also somewhat more honest about what is in fact one of the dilemmas of the post-modern which is still to be overcome by better and clearer explanations of itself to a broader public - the dilemma, that is, that in wishing to counteract the evils and dilemmas of modernism and its so-called commodified culture industries it must both avoid the reduction of its own ornament to the images of the modernist culture industry and make its message about that industry comprehensible. At present one might even say that some post-modernist architecture has attempted to slip through the horns of this dilemma by designing late modernist populist imagery for populist or mass-culture areas and classical imagery for areas of high art and entertainment, but that it has yet to design buildings for both areas which might share a common but not necessarily reduced populist language.

Although Jencks' *What is Post-Modernism?* may appear to overlook these problem areas in its defence of post-modernist architecture, its presentation of the subject could yet be forceful and definitive enough to save it from the death from confusion which many of its other defenders and theorists may be accused of having prepared for the "New Spirit Modernism" of the late 1980s.[30] Although other areas of the subject, such as, for instance, the relationship of post-modernist art and architecture to the growth of a "post-industrialist" society and to its particular needs, may still have to be analysed further,[31] Jencks' *What is Post-Modernism?* will at least be useful for those looking for a clear presentation of his ideas on the subject of post-modernist architecture up to 1986.[32]

NOTES:

1. Charles Jencks, *What is Post-Modernism?* Academy Editions, London and St. Martin's Press, New York, 1986.
2. *The Architectural Review*, August 1986.
3. One example given of "New Spirit Modernism" was of a Dallas boutique, the interior design of which consists of a geometric arrangement of concrete blocks and steel girders.
4. Fredric Jameson, "Post Modernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", in *The New Left Review*, 146, pp.53-92.
5. See Margaret Rose, *Parody/Meta-Fiction*, London, 1979, p.43.
6. Visual examples given in the talk included Arcimboldi's 16th century pastiche portraits, Heartfield's *Cabbage-Head* of the early 1930s, and Claus Staeck's *Shark-Face* of the early 1970s. Pastiche in architecture can also be dated from the Renaissance and its attempts to synthesise classical Greek and mediaeval Christian styles.
7. This topic is discussed further in my "Parody/Post-Modernism", in *Poetics*, 1988 (forthcoming).
8. Charles Jencks, *op. cit.* 1986.
9. Magritte's *Euclidean Walks* was cited as being in part a game with the rules of perspective, and both it and *The Human Condition* were used as examples of Magritte's foregrounding of the techniques of painterly representation.
10. Jencks, *op. cit.* p.1.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Jencks, *op. cit.* p.9.
13. Discussed further in my *Marx's Lost Aesthetic*, Cambridge 1984, p.133f.
14. Jencks, *op. cit.* pp.4-5.
15. There are several other crouching Venuses, but this is notable for the similarity of her long and flowing locks to those of Blake's roller skater.
16. Jencks speaks largely of "dual-coding" as a characteristic of post-modernist art and architecture in his *What is Post-Modernism?* of 1986, but goes on in his article "Post-Modernism and Discontinuity" of 1987 (in *Architectural Design*, vol.57 No.1/2 1987 pp.5-8) to speak of the development of more multiple or pluralist codes in recent examples of post-modernist architecture.
17. See, for example, Jencks' *The Language of Post-Modernist Architecture*, London 1984, p.80.
18. Jencks 1986, criticises Hal Foster's collection on p.34 and condemns the appelation pastiche on p.11.
19. Jencks, *op. cit.* p.26.
20. *Ibid.* pp.16-20.
21. I have discussed this element in Habermas' criticisms of post-modernist architecture in an article entitled "Habermas and post-modern architecture" in the *Australian Journal of Art*, Vol.V, 1986, pp.113-119.
22. *Jencks 1986, p.11.*
23. *Op. cit.* p.14.
24. Jencks 1986 p.11. This metaphor travels through most of Jencks' *What is Post-Modernism?*
25. *Ibid.* p.15f.
26. Jencks 1986 p.24. Jencks' full description of Mariani's painting was also quoted in the talk and similarities between it and other works commented upon further. (The disembodied plaster feet of Mariani's painting were, for example, compared with Magritte's *The Red Model*).
27. Jencks *op. cit.* p.19.
28. Jencks' *The Language of Post-Modernist Architecture*, p.147.
29. See, for example, Adorno and Horkheimer's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London 1986, p.120ff.
30. Jencks, *op. cit.* 1986, p.34ff accuses both Lyotard and Hal Foster of having confused our understanding of post-modernism.
31. I shall be attempting to clarify this issue further in a later article on the concept of "post-industrialism".
32. The examples as well as the theory of post-modernism are of course still "under development" as Jencks' own 1987 articles show. *What is Post-Modernism?* should nonetheless still be of use to those interested in following the development of Jencks' ideas up to that time.

Questioning Art History: What hope for the discourses of the 80s?

Brenda Marshall

In considering the title I had given this talk: 'Questioning Art History: What Hope for the Discourses of the 80s?' I became aware of two different responses in myself. On the one hand I was conscious that in talking of what I am calling the discourses of the 80s - that common grounding in culture which one presumes when one mentions names like Lacan, Foucault, Kristeva, Irigaray, Said and Derrida, and which one sees at work, in some form, in the emphatic place held by articulations of psychoanalysis, feminism and social theory in most vital contemporary writing - I would find myself on common ground with most of this audience. That there are massive revolutions reshaping the intellectual thought of the Western world would seem to be accepted currency in academic debate. So what is the dispute? On the other hand I find myself enraged at the extent to which some art-historical practice is engaged in a studied refusal to countenance the existence of such discourse, or, if knowledge of their existence has intruded, the practice is to deny their place as appropriate for the study of art. That is, while there seems to be transformation concerning the place that theory must hold within our questionings - as Edward Said has expressed it, critical consciousness needs to be concerned 'with the intrinsic conditions on which knowledge is made possible',[1] so that it is no longer possible to pretend that theory is merely some methodological tool that one intuitively acquires as one becomes a scholarly specialist in an elitist area of art history, there is also a conservative possessiveness of art-historical territory operating against this. The territory is not argued for; it is the possessiveness itself that keeps out the invader. To the initiate into art history who somehow comes to apprehend those territorial boundaries, the practice is seen to be shrouded in a secrecy which arouses apprehension and fear of transgression from the outsider. This is a consequence of the belief that other projects are defined in relation to art history, not it in relation to them.

However there is a flip-side to this apparent power that secrecy brings with it. We can notice the insight offered by George Simmel and his discussion of the jealous guarding of territory. Simmel gives the example of the child who boasts: 'I know something you don't know' as a means of suggesting possession of a secret as a way of obtaining mastery, when in fact it is the case that the child knows nothing special at all.[2] The appearance of possession of secret knowledge is often enough to give that mastery. Perhaps this ploy is the one operating in some of the more entrenched forms of art history.

Which brings me to my sub-title: it is a question which has already been posed by Stephen Bann in his discussion of the treatment meeted out to Norman Bryson when Bryson had the courage to draw attention to many of the unqueried philosophical assumptions in art-historical teaching, doing this through an underpinning of his own writing with the work of Harold Bloom, who, heaven help him, like Bryson, teaches English Literature. That question is: are art historians professionally bound to remain ignorant?[3]

I am not suggesting that art historians are not knowledgeable. On the contrary, the very form of research in which many of them are engaged requires of them a specific quality of expertise which is the mark of an exclusive, finely attuned, well-nourished society. What I am asking is whether the nature of that society which has been established requires it, just because of the *professional* associations by which it has seen fit to characterise itself, *not* to give any countenance to what I have loosely called the discourses of the 80s.

What are those professional associations? What values does the form of art history I am referring to espouse? As it has not yet come to acknowledge the place of theory as a practice itself in any study, rather than an adjunct to it, it presupposes the dichotomy between theory and content. So there is a fear that any apparently theoretical strategic insertions into art history will unsettle the centrality given to content (the Who's Who calendars essential to the discipline). It is doubly threatened by the suggestion that theory is in fact content, for then its grounding, which eschews any alignment with a philosophical tradition, will find itself engaged in a task of justification which it is ill equipped to carry out.

And once we begin to ask to what ideologies much art history is attached, and how it appears to go about legitimising itself - what are its hidden attractions and mysteries - we get some comprehension of what has prevented us in the past from questioning much of its practice. We get some idea, too, of the obscured, non-enunciated benefits which we accrue when we partake of it. We find out what bonds us to it in *collaborative* ways - ways which only stop being collaborative when the hidden structures are displayed and the affiliation either acknowledged or willingly rejected. For it is only through an acknowledgement of one's own vulnerability that one becomes openly protected.

What are these attractions, these benefits, these offerings which, when acquired, allow us so to enlarge ourselves through association and psychic embellishment? What is the subtle garb which is taken on as one enters that apparently secret society?

The art historian I am describing has the public face of the expert. Above all she is the connoisseur. She enters upon the domain of the rarified precious object, the collector's item, and displays the expertise which comes from a fine honing of sensibility. Whether her bent is toward modern conceptual art or toward the function of banderoles in baroque interiors, there is a seen engagement with an idealised scholasticism and skilled archivism. She places herself in direct collusion with the power of the past and displays her own power in showing a mastery of

that past through proficiency in certain skills and interpretive ability. As, say, an historian practising an iconological approach to the Renaissance, concerned with that period as a pivotal one for artistic achievement, she places herself within the aura of that myth, one that is all the more fortifying because of the reinforcement provided for it by its perceived relation with the even mightier progenitors of Roman and Greek classicism.

As a connoisseur she acquires the mystique of having a trained eye - of having the ability to perceive fraud and deception; this mystique becomes attached to her as a personal attribute, not simply as a tool of her trade. She takes on the tint of one trained to see those who are trying to gain advantage falsely, and can be presumed to discover that which doesn't live up to expectations. It is this very radiation of the art-historian personality which, I think, made Anthony Blunt the perfect person for his task as a spy. His very profession - Director of the Courtauld Institute and Keeper of the Queen's Pictures - allowed him to be clothed with assumptions about his personal qualities: as a connoisseur he was perceived as being in contact with the most refined values; he was rendered immaculate, respectable, attuned to goodness, a detector of the inadequate.

My point is not that alliance with the control of fraud detector and retainer of aesthetic values is bad - controls are always operating in our placement of our selves in our environments - it is that knowledge of just what controls are operating gives insight into hidden power and reduces some of the subversive influence that that power has over us who might adopt them; and, when it is others whom we are describing, allows us to distinguish the unspecified sources of their attraction when we feel it operating we know not how.

Once one sees the attraction of connoisseurship one is then in a position to ask if it is to be valued academically. When Freud wrote the first piece of psychoanalytic art criticism in his analysis of Michelangelo's *Moses*, he began by saying: 'I may say at once that I am no connoisseur of art'. It was a disarming act of obeisance on Freud's part: if he was to speak with authority on what it was to be 'moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me', he had first to show what it was that he was pitting himself against - what he called the study of 'formal and technical qualities'[4] - and in saying that he was no connoisseur he appeared to acknowledge an active profession while suggesting that it was misdirected in its concerns. Connoisseurship, he implied, did not deal with displaying affects, only with the presumption that the viewer had been affected.

'Value' as a concept is deeply embedded in the predelictions of the art historian I am describing. Witness the very obviousness of the art-house sales buckling the pages of journals like *Art in America*, *Apollo* and the *Art Bulletin*. The rush of desire for acquisition to which most of us are prone can become displayed onto the practice of art history itself, and so we acquire works by association. This desire for possession becomes networked into the study itself, structuring what is to be deemed suitable for intellectual possession.

Perhaps this seems acceptable. We have art galleries, we need catalogues, trained curators. They are so acceptably allied with our society that it all seems hardly worth doubting. But they are so tricked out with cultural cliches that what they are denying is, I'm suggesting, obscured. When one is engaged in a practice of working with paintings, as I am, which engages with, among other things, the concerns of feminism, the insights of psychoanalysis, and the investigations of literary theory, and when one finds oneself problematised as belonging to another place, another discipline, then it is imperative to ask questions to survive. We begin with a consciousness of oppression. And, as David Cooper has pointed out

in *The Language of Madness*, that consciousness of oppression is firstly a consciousness of our own oppression,[5] which we learn not by being clever but by understanding our daily lives.

The rejection into the category of something other - a negative category - gives some pause; it's intended to, as those who have the power offered by tertiary institutions prefer to be the shapers of the discourse they control. If I ask, what is this which negates me into a place other than that in which I actually situate myself - a student of painting (in particular) - I then am concerned to see the quality of that which seeks to downgrade me. What is this body of knowledge in relation to which I am seen as an unnatural adherent?

When there is no direct examination or presentation of an ideology by a discipline - in this case, a certain practice of art study within an institution - then what should be explicated comes to be guessed at. Further, the face of the hidden, unless unmasked, comes to be guessed at. The proliferation of this conjecture then becomes established into an apparent body of knowledge. There are projections concerning what must be the case, and authority is conferred on what has not been independently established as deserving that authority; a practice is established. When no one questions that practice it would appear that there is nothing to question and that there is nothing questionable.

Unexamined ideologies come to partake of the secret. And, as George Simmel has again pointed out, one of the main advantages of secrecy is protection. 'Of all the protective measures, the most radical one is to make oneself invisible.'[6] The secret, partaking of the hidden, generates the aura of something greater than itself; the symptom of this within art history of the sort that I am describing is the predelection for the monographic study of the (male) art genius, the biographical presentation of an artist's work, linking its development over linear time with the artist's intentions, these being constructed from a small range of textual materials deemed to be appropriate to the study (Rembrandt studies are the most appalling examples of this form of scholarship), the categorisation of the production of art works into periods like Cubism, Realism and so on, and, as I have discussed, connoisseurship. That is, extremes of human achievement are posed as a norm for the discipline, and, as a corollary, they are the proper province of the art historian.

I mention Anthony Blunt again as an example. In a recent television programme on Blunt the shot used to establish him as an art historian was of Blunt examining a drawing through a magnifying glass. He attributed. He constructed biographies. He determined bodies of work. The mysteries available to the initiate were suggested. And it is here that we see the centrality given to humanism.

In Britain there has been some discussion of the need to de-centre the practice of art history as I have been describing it. A 1986 publication, *The New Art History*,[7] contains a number of essays on the changes that have been wrought in Britain since the late 1960s, changes primarily engaged with establishing a social history of art, establishing a place for feminism, and in seeing the introduction of journals such as *Block* - witness Griselda Pollock's latest article in *Block* 11: 'Art, Artschool, Culture: Individualism after the Death of the Artist'. In the past two decades the theories of Derrida and Foucault, for instance, have altered the entire manner in which we come to understand knowledge, so that how knowledge is produced has become the fundamental question gnawing at received opinion.[8] What were tentative gestures towards inter-disciplinary activity have long become commonplace practices for generating the new intellectual professional expertise.

The whole process of the fascination with a cultural hermeneutics has been clearly put by Clifford Geertz, anthropologist, whose essay 'The Way We Think Now: Toward an Ethnography of Modern Thought', is concerned with what he calls 'the hallmark of modern consciousness', 'its enormous multiplicity'. He goes on to say: 'Not only is the class basic for such a unitary "humanism" completely absent, gone with a lot of other things... but, even more important, the agreement on the foundations of scholarly authority, old books and older manners, has disappeared... The inception of a "new humanism", of forging some general "the best that is being thought and said" ideology and working it into the curriculum, will... seem not merely implausible but utopian altogether.'[9]

The danger with all of this - the presence of such powerful voices as those who speak in this new tradition - is that because the work is being done in Britain and Europe and North America we can fall into a position of exclusive ease. We appear to belong to a cultural clique, an avant-garde distinguished by the adornment of its new-found garb, achieving value through affiliation. The answers appear to be already given.

But that is not the case. The position here is very different from that in, say, Britain. Griselda Pollock, for instance, speaks from a position of one in a department at the University of Leeds which actually teaches a social theory of art, and has been doing so for the past eight years since it was established by T.J. Clark; in Leeds the function of theory is interwoven through all art historical courses because it is taken as a function of that very history itself. And that is to speak from a position of comparative strength. It is certainly to speak out of a developed school of social thinking, and within a climate of some form of camaraderie. Knowing arguments for changing conditions is not sufficient for changing those conditions.

Part of my discussion is an attempt to highlight the actual conditions which do exist here. Understanding the undercurrents and pressures acting in prevailing practice seems to me to be more important than particular cases. But I would like to indicate a couple of examples which show how exclusion of some forms of inquiry occurs. Last year there was an attempt by a lecturer at the University of Melbourne to introduce - at a fourth-year level - a course on Sexuality and Representation. The extent to which that course was taken as deeply threatening was seen in the engaged and extensive attempts to have it excluded. While it was suitable, as with any potential course, to discuss its quality and teacher appropriateness, the furore, given the passivity which generally exists in relation to incompetently managed and badly taught courses, was a very stressed one. One can only take some comfort in knowing that the production of conflict goes some way toward producing a change.

As well, last year a course in fifteenth-century Italian art at second-year level was put on at the University of Melbourne, which questioned a number of traditional art-historical assumptions about the period, interpolating theoretical approaches into the seminar material, and experimenting with achieving a greater participatory role for students in learning. This was monitored independently by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education. That course has now had its day, after a run of one semester. A Report on the course, put out by the Centre, which concluded that the innovations had been very successful educationally, and that the teaching assessment methods pioneered in the course could be adopted with advantage in other courses in Fine Art,[10] was not well received; the Department of Fine Arts Policy Committee issued a minute saying that it would not make the Report available to students who had taken the course. (I have placed a copy on the Reserve desk at the Baillieu Library.)

Which returns me to my sub-title: are art historians professionally bound to remain ignorant?

So far I have been concerned to show that central to the behaviour of many art historians who find their touchstone in some form of connoisseurship and its sociological requirements - if only through a rarefication of the art object and the adoption of an exclusiveness for their own practices - is the process of dealing with a strong anxiety which is sensed in a feeling of profound insecurity and of environmental threat. To cope with these threats the perceived sources have to be dealt with so that they are manipulated with the least damage to the threatened. Energy is directed into hostility on the one hand and the hiding of that hostility on the other.[11]

The type of art historian I am talking about is one who sees herself as a sort of Perseus, whose role is to protect art history, in the form of the virgin Andromeda, from the depredations of the kraken, the alien monster out to ravage. This is done by waving the dread image of the Medusa before the threat, then tossing that head into the sea when the kraken is destroyed. Through the myth of the elimination of both monsters, rationality and discernment - the producers of cultural refinement - can be seen to continue to be in control, with all their romantic allure intact. In an environment with such dependencies, psychoanalytic inquiry, for instance, can hardly be welcomed as a discipline.

I mention psychoanalysis in particular because it is of special concern to me, and because it receives very little attention in the study of art. By showing a little of what I find important here I hope to suggest just what is being bypassed in the name of the grotesque formulations of art inquiry which are thrust upon many of us through tertiary institutions. It is usually presumed that if psychoanalysis is to have any relation to studies of art it is in terms of what perceptions it can provide on the life of the artist, and this has been aided by the example of Freud's study of Leonardo Da Vinci. While I have no interest in espousing psychobiography as an industry, I am still fascinated to observe that, while Freud's brilliantly evocative approach to Leonardo's works through a narrative of childhood is rejected by the majority of the art-historical community, the mainstream extravagant creations of such insubstantial skeletons as the Master of Flemalle or the Master of the Tiburtine Sibyl, formalised into full human biographical status on the basis of a few paintings, are able to slide with easy acceptance into the naive, perpetuated historical structures of the art-historical diagnostician.

There are many reasons to point to for the rejection of psychoanalysis as a mode of inquiry; one I want to mention is the manner in which this distrust is deeply embedded in British culture itself - and in Australia we take on that culture in many ways, not the least in the acceptance of the Warburg/Courtauld investigatory regime. Within Britain the discipline of psychoanalysis, while possessing or having possessed a brilliant and eclectic number of thinkers and practitioners - Melanie Klein, D.W. Winnicott, Wilfred Bion, M. Masud, R. Khan and Charles Rycroft, for instance - has been kept isolated from the mainstream of culture, seen as a feared and charlatan pursuit clinging to the garments of medical practice. Perry Anderson, in his essay, 'The Component of the National Culture', written in 1969, has outlined the situation very clearly:

> There is no Western country where the presence of psychoanalysis in general culture is so vestigial. The USA, Germany, and France - three very different examples - provide a unanimous contrast. The whole cultural matrix of these societies has been affected and transformed by the advent of psychoanalysis, which has penetrated to the centre of the common intellectual inheritance.

> One has only to think of such diverse figures, in different disciplines, as Parsons, Jacobsen, Adorno, Levi-Strauss or Althusser, to see the direct impact of Freud on their thought. There is no comparable English thinker who has been remotely touched.[12]

The situation is much the same today, in comparison with, say, the circumstances in France, where Lacanian writing, for instance, has developed in consort with linguistics, philosophy, art and literature, and where psychoanalytic thought has transformed French criticism.

I am not interested here in discussing psychoanalytic thinking as a set of theories which could neatly be incorporated within the current discipline of art history as a means of interpreting those objects which have already been selected as suitable for study. As a general practice my interests are centred on those paintings which exercise enormous and compelling power over viewers and which have a place in our culture because of this: I am concerned with the art object which has this force, and with making some effort to understand what that power is and what these affects are. I am continually seeking to be released from the bald imposition of explanatory theories because, I often find, the function of their enforcement is to confine, limit, restrain and control the object to be studied, caught by the person offering the explanation, while avoiding collision with just why this object came up for consideration in the first place. In our daily lives, the power which we all experience as operating in our relationships with people is readily available to be exercised, in the name of interpretation, when the object which engages our attention contains and exhibits the patterns of our desires and the shapes and shadows of our fears. Most of the entrenched and taught methodologies for analysing and understanding paintings - style, iconography, provenance, influences, patronage, relation to realism, abstraction, for instance - are employed as a means of safely bypassing engagement with this power. The emphasis placed on beauty and aesthetic form is but another means by which the cruelty, the anguish, the metaphoric murder, the forbidden and the hidden are ignored, denied, contorted and disavowed. Most paintings simply are not nice.

Psychoanalysis is, in part, directed towards making known concealments. This is not a strategy but a necessary consequence of a system of explanation that is concerned with the divination of the repressed which is beyond conscious reach: but a repressed which is forever displayed, though at a distance; as a glissade, as the sliver between doubles, seen as the unsettling tremor, seen in the shuffling of the seductive sense of almost touching that which is so elusively present. That world of feeling and affect which normally remains unapproached, displaced, projected, denied, is brought into focus by psychoanalysis. An art-theoretical practice based on humanistic values of the rational, controlled self, one directed by a co-ordinating mind, is one which conceals the disruptions which psychoanalysis is concerned to reveal, and denies the very presence of the passionately turbulent encounters with the world which are the product of our profoundly enriched divisions and losses that are present.

It is at this point that psychoanalysis becomes dangerous. For it poses a new and frightening form of the old 'Know thyself'. Now it is a requirement not to explore with rational and stately ease, but to confront and become familiar with that which we don't want to encounter, and to recognise the ravaging of that which is active, ecstatic, unknowable. It is to attend, if you like, to the kraken and the Medusa's head. And that is asking quite a lot.

Acceptance of the role of psychoanalysis as an explanatory system is acceptance of a certain commitment toward viewing oneself. It can hardly operate as a convenient method of addressing the occasional painting if its relevance is denied in the rest of our lives. Further, because psychoanalysis is concerned with areas of experience which are disputed or repudiated under the humanistic/rational regime, it finds itself in collision with concepts such as those of objectivity which have come to have a virtually unquestioned place in our intellectual schemata - compared with those of, say, the dream, the fantasy, the ambiguous, the unpredictable. Antonin Artaud, in his 'The Theatre and Cruelty', 1938, celebrates 'a reality which gives the heart and the senses that kind of concrete bite which all true sensation requires';[13] he wants the public 'to liberate within itself the magical liberties of dreams which it can only recognize when they are imprinted with terror and cruelty'.[14] The idea of a theatre which he believed lost is much like that presence of a painting which *I* believe to be lost.

As I have suggested, I do not read analysts especially for their theory. I read them, those who are good, because they have a special attention to the actings out of the human. They are ***knowing*** in that they see that the self is revealed whatever the strategy. What I find particularly valuable is their attention to what has previously been understood as a mysticism - a capacity for boundary trespassing in articulations of the human condition - and for attention to what I might term the occult: the mysterious, the recondite, that which is beyond the reach of ordinary knowledge, what is not obvious to usual inspection. It is their attention to the areas of the non-verbal which is immensely illuminating. For the analytic situation shows that the resonances of the unsaid are as important as that spoken word which turns to a different kind of silence when it becomes the written word.

This might seem an unusual form of attention to be given to a discipline which is known as 'the talking cure'. But to think that is to misunderstand the place of the word, of talking: the word is always displaced, always removed, always not at home; it is journeying, on course only in retrospect, but always on course. To be concerned with the non-verbal also may seem odd because many of our common presuppositions about analysis depend on Freudian analysis, which, in its initial formulations, was concerned primarily with adult, or, at least, verbally articulating clients. Melanie Klein extended Freud's work more specifically into the areas of the non-verbal; it is this form of investigatory practice and scholarship which I see as the strength of the British school. Very little written attention has been given to the quality of non-verbal thought and experience - certainly today most writers on art are explicitly *not* concerned with this. In historical (ie received) practice, paintings are understood through reference to so-called contemporary texts, and those texts, the written words, are taken as providing evidence for what might be seen to be occurring in the paintings. That quite different processes might be engaged within writing and painting isn't even raised as a question.

Psychoanalysis offers a way of understanding why and how we engage with art. This, of course, leads to a sort of control over paintings, but it is a control that is of a different sort from that control gained through possessive condescension - through that calculating eye of the acquisitive sorter of tonal values, archival remnants and decoded symbols. It is a control which results from *engaging* with what is in play, rather than binding it.

M. Masud R. Khan, analysed by Anna Freud and a follower of Winnicott, is one British analyst writing about how we know through attention to the inaudible, the non-verbal, which I find instructive for how to develop capacities to understand powerful paintings. Let me take an example. Khan describes an adolescent patient,

Peter, who is in a hopeless state of inertia and apathy; this state the boy carried over into the analytic situation in the form of a persistent silence. Khan's insight led him to realise that he, as analyst, had to live with this silent state rather than interrupt it; that he himself had to experience the nuances of Peter's body behaviour and moods. This sitting in silence together occurred over a period of six weeks. Khan came to realise that Peter expected him somehow to 'magically free him from his frozen state, just as I expected him to speak so that I could help him'.[15]

The clinical case, as outlined by Khan, shows that Peter, in his silence, was in fact being very active and articulate, and that the silence allowed him to live through an experience that had once deeply affected and shaped him. It also presented Peter with a way of revealing the behaviour of another person, his mother. Khan got to know a lot about Peter through the qualities of his silence, and got to know a form of high-pitched excitement that was present in that state of existence. As it turned out, it was appreciated that Peter had spent a long period of being helplessly involved with a mother suffering from severe depression, which he had had to experience while that person had not been able to meet needs.

My concern is not with the specifics of the case, but with the sort of listening which is being outlined here, which is available to us to attend to with comprehension, rather than, as we all do all the time, unwittingly, partially. It is a world available to us which has been bypassed in our deep involvement with the assessible, the countable, the provable, the so-called objective world. It is the world that is appropriate to the comprehension of paintings and why they move us.

Andre Green, in his 'The Analyst, Symbolisation and Absence in the Analytic Setting', is concerned to show how analysts today are hearing different things which once did not cross the threshold of audibility.[16] The audibility here is an audibility acquired through attention to the function of the analytic space, a space in which the discourse of the analysed reaches the discourse of the analyst in her role as analyst, and where a new discourse is created. The space itself, with its potential for empathetic holding, is as active in its role as the other aspects of relationships which we are more accustomed to describing. An area of experience is emerging which has long been submerged; as our words seem inadequate, so the area seems not simply elusive but doubtful. It is doubtful because we normally operate with a language serving an opposition between subjective and objective, with the former as the negative pole of the binary opposition. My contention is that only through a re-articulation of these transitional areas, these inceptive areas, can we come to a fresh exploration of many of our so-called works of art after the devastation wrought on them by the obfuscating and denying processes of the iconographic explorers. It is here that, in terms of this paper, I position myself within feminist strategies - posing a viable alternative to a contested theoretical system, as Liz Grosz would have it.[17]

This means, of course, that there will be a new selection of what art works are to be considered of concern. It will require a re-assessment of the concept of history in relation to art and as a viable practice (a central issue which is not discussed here). It requires a re-examination of concepts of time. In the psychoanalytic space, time is realised in a way that is quite different from that of the neatly circumspect, genteelly selected areas of public activity which are the focus of many art historians - the patrons, the occasional wars, the marriages, the economic problems, the artistic influences - which usually go to make up a linearly developed formulation of the artist's progress from birth to death. Seeing time as it is displayed in, say, Francis Bacon's work, where the fusion of past pain with the

present shape of the physical body offers a new grasp of how there is a co-habitation between the past and the present, is an exciting prospect. It is one not at present explored under current disciplinary regimes and is in fact made inappropriate by them. It is a way of recognising that what we go to paintings for in the first place is not marginal but central to our lives.

What has been categorised as art to serve the interests of those functioning within museums and galleries and those who foster that tradition, will be bypassed, just as, say, in England, the historian concerned with the social place of art works is re-establishing different bodies of work in accordance with a Marxist reading of the past.

What, then, are we to make of art history and hopes for those discourses of the 80s? My direction has mainly been to show you a little of what is challenging and revitalising within the discipline of psychoanalysis; by implication I carry with that the vitality of the other probings which are destabilising Cartesian thought. There is, I think, little doubt but that they have every hope going for them; there is also little doubt that the tradition of art history that I have described has no idea of this.

Art history of that sort is now willingly isolated, without an outlet into the major reshapings of Western thought. I said earlier that it was important to recognise one's own form of oppression and therefore to be able to confront issues in one's own terms, knowing them not to be theoretical speculative propositions but positions requiring some form of active stance. While it is easy to say, 'Let traditional art historical practices be', it remains a fact that they are, while isolated, powerful in that isolation. They are powerful in their capacity to deprive. I want to end with an interesting case study of deprivation, which I offer as a reminder.

Francois Peraldi describes the case.[18] It is the case of the crane-child:

> Michel is a crane-child.
>
> He talks about only one thing: cranes. He draws only one thing, but with the accuracy of an industrial designer: cranes.
>
> He imitates, on all sorts of semiotic levels (voice, gesture, noises, as well as spoken language) only one thing: cranes.
>
> Only cranes fascinate him, or move him, or frighten him, for some unknown reason.
>
> Only cranes can bring the shadow of a smile to his lips or provoke the ecstasy of his body.
>
> Michel has a mother, a poor woman, completely disoriented in life and in a world she has never understood.
>
> At the age of sixteen, she had been raped by some old drunkard. Michel is the child of this rape.
>
> When Michel was a very small baby, his mother sometimes sat near the cot where he was lying, distressed and paralysed 'because', she said, 'Michel was not talking to her'. She would sit in silence, waiting for some words to come out of the tiny mouth and, when she would bend over the body of her child, she presented him only with the marmorean mirror of her face - a mirror in which Michel could recognise himself as if he were of stone.
>
> She did not know what a child was or could be or need. She did not know to ***hold*** him, to ***handle*** him, ***to present him with objects***, so she did almost nothing with him: 'I never could teach him anything', she said, 'I have never been able to teach him to be clean, even when I tried'.

> '*How* did you try?' I asked.
>
> 'Well,' she said, 'each time he shat in his bed I used to rub his nose into it and to slap him on the buns'. She certainly noticed my surprise for she added: 'I don't understand why it did not work, because it does with the kitten'.
>
> Through the curtainless window near the cot Michel could see the cranes working nearby, all day long.
>
> He could see them waving at him. He could hear them talking to him, for they did not wait for him to speak first, they just were 'talking', mixing *repetitive* gnashings, gratings, grindings with the orders shouted by invisible men: 'Up! down! nearer!...'
>
> He listened each morning, and waited for the return of the cranes to wake up and begin to talk.
>
> This is the only language that Michel could learn, and the window was the only mirror in which Michel could read the repetitive signs of what he was.
>
> Only cranes answered to what I would like to call without any further explanation his semiotic drives.[19]

Fortunately, none of us lies in a cot any more. But the example indicates the power of deprivation. It is offered to suggest what happens when alternatives that are strong, vigorous and active are not fostered. It is especially needful for those who are engaged in some forms of art-historical pursuit, because it would seem, misleadingly, that the engagement there is with a form of rich sensibility. Perhaps through an awareness of how some forms of deprivation function it will become possible to choose to grow with some of the alternatives.

NOTES:

1. Edward E. Said: *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1983, p.183.
2. Kurt H. Wolff, (ed): *The Sociology of George Simmel*, Macmillan, London, 1950, p.332.
3. Stephen Bann: 'How Revolutionary is the New Art History?', in A.L. Rees & F. Borzello: *The New Art History*, Camden Press, London, 1986, p.30, footnote 3.
4. Sigmund Freud: 'The Moses of Michelangelo', *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol XIII, Hogarth Press, London, 1955, pp.211-40; p.211.
5. David Cooper: *The Language of Madness*, Allen Lane, London, 1978.
6. George Simmel: *op. cit.* p.345.
7. A.L. Rees & F. Borzello: *op. cit.*
8. Edward W. Said: *op. cit.*, p.182.
9. Clifford Geertz: 'The Way We Think Now: Toward an Ethnography of Modern Thought', in his *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, Basic Books Inc., New York, 1983, pp.148-63; p.161.
10. Paul Ramsden; Elaine Martin and Cleo Macmillan: 'Studies in Italian Art of the Fifteenth Century: Questioning the Quattrocento: Report on the Development and Evaluation of the Fine Arts 2E Second Semester Course 1986', unpublished Report by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne, 1986, p.13.
11. For further discussion of this form of behaviour, see Karen Horney: *Our Inner Conflicts: A Constructive Theory of Neurosis*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1976 edition, pp.219-20.
12. Perry Anderson: 'Components of the National Culture', in Alexander Cockburn & Robin Blackburn (eds): *Student Power/Problems*, Hammondsworth, Middlesex, 1969, pp.214-84; p.259.
13. Antonin Artaud: 'The Theatre and Cruelty', in his *The Theatre and Its Double*, Grove Press Inc., New York, 1985, p.85.
14. *Ibid.*, p.86.
15. M. Masud R. Khan: 'Silence as Communication', in his *The Privacy of the Self*, Hogarth Press, London, 1974, pp.168-80; p.172.
16. Andre Green: 'The Analyst, Symbolisation and Absence in the Analytic Setting', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol 56, 1975, pp.1-22.
17. Elizabeth Grosz: 'What is Feminist Theory?', in Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Grosz (eds): *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1986, pp.190-204; p.196.
18. Francois Peraldi: 'The Crane-Child', in Alan Roland (ed): *Psychoanalysis, Creativity and Literature: A French-American Inquiry*, New York, 1978, pp.96-102.
19. *Ibid.*, pp.96-97.

Legends in Australian Architecture: Part III

Harriet Edquist

The curious addendum to the title of this talk - 'Part III' - refers to the fact that it is the third paper in which I have attempted to discuss Australian architectural legends. By 'legends' I do not mean 'living legends' or 'old heroes'. I mean, rather, the dominant constructions and beliefs embodied in our written architectural history, the seemingly self-evident truths exposed by Robin Boyd, Max Freeland, Jennifer Taylor and those who compile collections of essays. By focusing on different areas of architectural writing, I have tried to show how certain readings have become authenticated by repetition over time, seemingly unavailable to critical challenge. Here I want to look at some recent architectural journalism, in particular, at the way current building in this country has been presented by, and to, overses journals.

The 1980s have seen an enormous increase in the exposure that Australian arts have been given in the United States and Europe, following our capitulation to Post-Modernism, and coincident with the good reception of our popular film, vegemite and rock music overseas, and the America's Cup in Fremantle. Travelling exhibitions have presented selected Australian artists to international audiences and some are selling well in New York. Architecture has become, somewhat tenuously, part of this diaspora, although being less mobile, it has required commentators to come to it. And so they have and one after the other, have filed their reports. On the other hand, local writers have also been engaged to report on current architectural practice for those international magazines which have set aside a special 'Australian' issue to be compiled by the natives.

In seeking to explain our architecture to the world, writers here inevitably seek to clarify the situation by a process of simplification and ordering into hegemonic unity. They are keen on presenting a neat picture which will make sense to a European or American. Values which are held to be sustainable in an international context are foregrounded and examples of our architecture are cited as evidence of the particular value so marked. One of the ways in which this critical activity is organised is that of binary classification, whereby value-laden architecture is set against something other. Although no writer is so blatantly partisan to assign superiority to a specific sort of architecture, it is not difficult to see where value is to be assigned.

For example, in *Process Architecture* (March 1981) the late David Saunders at one point divided Australian architecture into identities he called 'romantic humanism' and 'doctrinaire architectonic structuralism'. In the first category he placed Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney, and John Andrews whose reputation was then at its peak. Pitted against this trio it would be hard for the 'architectonic structuralists' (like Harry Seidler) to make much headway.

Writing in the special Australian edition of *Express* (1984), Ian McDougall polarised architecture here into the oppositions 'Orthodox' and 'Avant-Garde' (or 'Mass' and 'Individual'), titles which in themselves suggested *a priori* values. The 'Avant-Garde' was located in Melbourne, in a 'tradition' of 'expressionism' which McDougall argued, goes back to Walter Burley Griffin. The concept of 'expressionism', difficult enough in architecture, found its niche in the 'neo-expressionist' fever in the arts generally. McDougall's chosen architects, therefore, could participate in what was considered to be a historically authentic and currently fashionable movement.

In the same issue of *Express* Conrad Hamann developed a polarity between Melbourne traditions and others - notably the pastoral and Georgian whose epicentre is Sydney. The Melbourne tradition was, according to Hamann, 'pluralist' and 'inclusive', terms made widely available for critical usage by Robert Venturi. Sources for the (superior?) Melbourne mode were once again traced back to Griffin among others. Griffin is thus positioned, it would appear, as the original fount of all that is good in our architecture - 'romantic humanism', 'expressionism' and 'inclusiveness'. Hamann also referred to the example of others such as Harold Desbrowe Annear and Roy Grounds, old heroes whose place in the Australian architectural canon has been assured since Boyd. Indeed, in spite of the variable generic titles, all of these writers affirm rather simply the role of the individual architect as the creator of Australian architecture.

Polarised inevitably value-laden structures are not restricted to local writers. Rory Spence, guest editor with Peter Davies of the special Australian edition of *Architectural Review* (December 1985) goes straight to the point. Editing out urban architecture (it is the same as everywhere else - hence not Australian?) and most of the country, he focuses on Sydney and Melbourne. In pitting these two centres against each other he invokes Kenneth Frampton's notion of 'critical regionalism'. However, the 'regionalisms' so defined - 'Sensual Sydney' and 'Melbourne City of the Mind' are in fact the product of an old rivalry between the cities and a Meanjin confection 'St Petersburg or Tinsel Town?' (April 1980). Old mental structures, highly questionable anyway, lie behind the new labelling.

Spence organised his material to enhance the polarity. 'Sensual Sydney' has two faces - landscape-inspired architecture on the one hand (Glenn Murcutt and Richard le Plastrier) and inner Georgian terrace on the other (Murcutt), both 'vernacular' types brushed up to greet the eighties. They are 'life-enhancing', an

important concept for Spence. Melbourne on the other hand is the city of ideas, culture, architectural discourse and suburban critique (suburbs don't appear to exist in Sydney). In the section of his essay given to Melbourne Spence includes mainly suburban work from the Ministry of Housing and others, with a large section devoted to 'Controversial Corrigan' - not, it might be noted, the firm of Edmond and Corrigan. Peter Corrigan of whom Spence is barely tolerant is treated (along with Norman Day and Ian McDougall to a lesser extent) as something curious. After a resume of Corrigan's statements about the Australian suburb Spence provides a critique of the work of Edmond and Corrigan. The architecture is 'harsh' and 'hard'; it is negative, gives no joy, is not 'life-enhancing'. To be 'life-enhancing' seems to go hand in hand with being sympathetic to the bush vernacular and to the landscape. Greg Burgess' *Hackford House* in rural Traralgon, a Melbourne work is favourably treated. We may note in passing that Spence pays no attention to the clients of these respective groups of housing, to their budgets and social context. 'Life-enhancingness' in architecture may well seem to be a prerogative of the moneyed elite.

Spence is doing nothing new in treating the two cities in this way. The supposed dichotomy between Melbourne and Sydney and the terms in which that dichotomy is expressed are structured into most writing about Australian architecture. In *Express* for example, the four articles dealing with architecture are arranged chiastically - Sydney, Melbourne - Melbourne Sydney, although Conrad Hamann's article 'Coming in from the Veranda' is characteristically broad ranging, setting the Melbourne scene within a larger historical frame. But Melbourne is closely identified with the suburb, while Sydney is not. More subtle is the structuring of Peter Corrigan as 'outsider' in *Studio International*'s (1987) Australian issue where an essay by that architect is situated between two articles treating the myth of the Australian landscape. While both Leigh Astbury and Peter Fuller discuss, from differing positions, the implications of our construction of the landscape myth, there is no mediation between what they argue and the suburban culture of which Corrigan appears to be a lonely spokesperson. Corrigan is positioned in this company of aesthetes like Mad Max, whose picture illustrates the article.

As time goes by Peter Corrigan has become more and more polarised, from both the predominant cultural values deemed to be located in Sydney, and from other Melbourne architects. In the *Architectural Review* where the work of Edmond and Corrigan is 'soul destroying', that of Kevin Borland, Suzanne Dance and Greg Burgess is, on the contrary 'life-enhancing'. In the American journal *Architecture* a recent review of Australian architecture operating on the Sydney/Melbourne theme, calls Corrigan 'eccentric' and 'iconoclast'. In my view, this device of polarisation is in effect a tool by which Peter Corrigan, and the work of the office of Edmond and Corrigan, is able to be marginalised. By singling out Corrigan as someone extraordinary and out of the mainstream, as a sort of architectural Mad Max, he can be effectively ignored as a serious architect. This view is brought about by the conditions of discourse in the popular media, which ensure that what is said is for the most part bland, contrived and intellectually feeble. There are few critics who are willing to discuss work as part of an architectural continuum, with a history and cultural signification. Of the writers reviewed here, Hamann is patently the most intellectually responsible in these areas. With respect to the treatment of Peter Corrigan, not only is there a tendency to be a-historical and a-contextual, but also there is a tendency to take Corrigan at his word, and to repeat his words as though they were texts which needed no scrutiny and which bore a self-evident relation to the built work.

It is true that of all the architects dealt with in these journals, Peter Corrigan is the only one who has put forward a statement outlining and defending a position within the architectural culture in Australia. The discussion takes the form of an essay which is repeated with exclusions and modifications in *UIA: Detailing, National Identity, and a sense of Place in Australian Architecture* (1984), *Domus, Ciao Australia* (1985) and *Studio International* (1986/87). In this essay Corrigan puts forward what we have already seen to be the dominant argument in Australian architectural writing - the cultural dominance of the landscape myth *versus* the overwhelming fact of suburbia.

Yet in challenging landscape with suburbia, Corrigan slides uneasily around in a language that confuses form with moral values (shades of Freeland and Boyd) which in fact invests suburbia with a sort of anthropomorphic will and identity which is convenient rhetorically but untenable logically.

As Corrigan himself notes, the suburb in Australia has been addressed since the 50s by a number of artists who have found in it a rich body of imagery - Bruce Dawe, John Brack, Barry Humphries. Corrigan's position is, therefore, hardly a radical one. But then his view of what constitutes 'Australian-ness' is also traditional and based in a notion of Australian cultural identity (mateship, larrikanism, footy), which is just as mythologised as the bush one (to which it bears many resemblances) and which is uniquely male-centred. It is a culture of heroes, the architect being simply one in a long line.

Corrigan's position as stated in his essay is not at all unusual, eccentric or weird, but because it is uttered from the bastion of conservatism, which is Australian architecture, it takes on the appearance of radicalism. Placed within the particular cultural environment of Melbourne of which Corrigan is a part (centred in Carlton with Melbourne University-Irish Catholic dimensions), it is perfectly intelligible. For example, most critics of Edmond and Corrigan's architecture refer at one time or another to Corrigan's work as a designer for the theatre. They refer to the architect's often quoted liking of Brecht, 'poor theatre' and in the architecture, to the use of screening devices, as at Keysborough School. There are few if any analyses of Corrigan's theatre designs, their relation to contemporary theatre design in Melbourne and elsewhere, nor Corrigan's relation to playwrights, in spite of his associations with the APG at the Pram Factory, and La Mama.

I think an interesting comparison could be made between Edmond and Corrigan's architecture (as opposed to Corrigan's statements about it) and the plays of Jack Hibberd. Like Corrigan, Hibberd's work shows the influence of Brecht, and particularly in the plays for solo performance - *A Stretch of the Imagination, A Toast to Melba* and *Man of Many Parts* - they require little in the way of sets, making do with the minimum of props. They conjur their remarkable worlds out of the most exiguous physical properties. 'Making do' is of course an article of faith for Corrigan, who is noted for a disdain of high finish and gloss. But this is not to say the architecture lacks intellectual finesse. Like Hibberd's plays, where the rules of language are pushed to breaking point, to absurdity, the architecture pushes its suburban 'language' past what is generally deemed to be acceptable limits. The performance is central to the plays; in the architecture the 'performers', the builders, are usually given the latitude of self-expression in some form. Hibberd challenges conventions with disturbing disjunctions, harsh juxtapositions of mood, tempo, language, 'high' and 'low' idiom; so too does the work of Edmond and Corrigan. Both Hibberd and Corrigan speak of the 'surreal'; of the Kay Street housing Corrigan has said 'they are an attempt to engage the surreal dream that is Australia'. Like Hibberd's plays, the architecture of Edmond and Corrigan is sophisticated - the material components may well be paltry but they are put together

in a way that is marked by an extensive knowledge of the art of making theatre/architecture. The range of ideas that are drawn on is both local and international, current and traditional. In Corrigan's case, he may well speak of 'nationalism and frugality', footy and larrikanism, but that is a small part of the story. Corrigan gives nothing away.

Edmond and Corrigan's anti-bush stance is clearly an irritant for those Englishmen seeking Arcadia in the Antipodes, and for those Australians who seek in the bush a plausible identity. As the eighties progress, so does the delineation of the bush ethos as one supremely viable for an 'Australian' architecture. In this sense, the values informing David Saunders' essay of 1981 and those exhibited by Philip Cox in his essay a few years later, are quite distinct. 'Architecture. A Brief History' (*Express*) is so brief that Cox has no time to mention Melbourne. It is an essay dominated by a particular view of Australia-as-landscape; the architecture within it responds to the climate and landform. Of the homestead Cox says:

> The characteristic of this architecture was its environmental fit. The languor expressed in many of the sprawling shapes, the gradual easing of the building into the landscape by the transitional space of the veranda developed a complete harmony with the Australian landscape.

Cox does not mention the necessary preconditions of this 'complete harmony' - clearing the land, access roads, paddocks, indeed all the paraphernalia of settlement that has destroyed the landscape. The house is a part of that process of destruction.

This sort of indulgent romanticism which wilfully ignores economic reality, land usage and ownership is most clearly in evidence in any discussion of the work of Sydney architect Glen Murcutt. In the last few years it has become axiomatic that Murcutt is the architect most in tune with the bush. His houses are seen to share the structure of the organic: they may be Meisian, but structurally, they are at one with the eucalypt. In the articles on Murcutt by Peter Davies in *Architectural Review* and Philip Drew in *Architecture* (which has featured Murcutt over a number of recent issues), we seem to be translated to a higher moral plane, where the by now unassailable Murcutt communes directly with nature.

Interestingly, Glen Murcutt is increasingly being used to epitomise current Sydney architecture, and insofar as Sydney is imaged as *the* real Australia in the eyes of its inhabitants, Australian architecture. The values it is held to embody, to do with the bush and, amazingly enough, Aboriginal culture, are just those ones Australia most needs in its Bicentennial year. What I think is clear if one examines sequentially the journals referred to in this talk, is that certain issues have become dominant - the city has subsided in favour of the bush, vernaculars have driven out 'high art' and the dwellings of this country's first inhabitants are being used as models for our own(!). All of this critical activity has become more frenzied as the eighties proceed. Philip Cox provides a good example of such writing:

> The Australian Aboriginal was a nomad changing camps as food was depleted. His buildings were stick and bark structures ignored by traditional historians of Australian architecture as unimportant. The Aboriginal built in a wide vocabulary of materials such as bark stripped from trees and bent in the form of curved shelters or tied together on a simple pole frame to form tent-like structures. Sometimes he built out of twigs and sticks and covered this with thatch or leaves from eucalyptus trees. The use of these materials and the ephemeral qualities of these structures influenced and adapted the Georgian vernacular into something uniquely Australian.

Notice how Cox assumes the myth of the nomad, assumes that all Aborigines in Australia everywhere lived the same sort of life, when evidence for a long time now has shown this to be inaccurate. But more important is the way in which Cox has elided the Aboriginal and Georgian into something 'uniquely Australian', thus authenticating the Georgian as a manner uniquely in touch with original Australia and the land. It is a cruel and arrogant fiction.

At the beginning of Rory Spence's essay 'Regional Identity' in *Architectural Review* is a list of six elements that go into the making of this identity. They are photographed and listed in such a way as to render them of equal value - climate, natural landscape, Aboriginal culture, white Australian man-made landscape and products, white Australian lifestyle, white Australian characteristics, attitudes and myths. But these things do not have equivalent status. The first three are at the mercy of the last three; there is no balance between them, only appropriation.

Philip Drew observes Glen Murcutt's use of corrugated iron in these terms (*Architecture* 1984):

> Strong, light, readily transported (corrugated iron) was widely used in the Australian Colonies throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. And it assumed a deeper significance, for it alone could compare with the large sheets of bark that the Aboriginal inhabitants used for their own shelter, especially in the tropical north where heavy rains necessitated substantial shelters.

Now, it is the Aboriginal culture of Australia that most transfixes Europe. As Jill Montgomery recognised (*Art and Text*, 12 & 13), the 1983 Australian contribution to the Paris Autumn Festival would have been ignored were it not for the Aboriginal contribution, and that year saw the 'French Discovery' of Australia as an ancient continent inhabited by an ancient and enduring people. White Australia has been quick to capitalise on the commercial and moral aspects of this discovery and in this new national climate proven alliance in fact or spirit with the land and Aboriginal culture is a sure way to legitimise one's practice. The fact that architecture, building and the attendant activities that make this possible, marks more than any other art form the sites of dispossession, is an irony unobserved or ignored by Cox, Davies, Drew and those like them.

The most vivid example of the appropriation of Aboriginal culture for validation of architectural and arts practice is evidenced by the Australian issue of *Casa Vogue* (1987). The issue relies on visual material more than text and emphasises the horizontal. The Australian section begins with a view of a very long shed in outback New South Wales, probably the longest one in existence and is followed by horizontal Aboriginal rock paintings, and Glen Murcutt's bush horizontality is featured, this time a house belonging to the designers Jenny Kee and Michael Ramsden, who refer to themselves as 'white aborigines' and who collect Aboriginal artefacts and employ Aboriginal motifs in their art work. Murcutt/Sydney/Bush. The next article in *Casa Vogue* displays one of Edmond and Corrigan's most exuberant suburban works, Sydney/Melbourne-Murcutt/Corrigan. There are some other schemes shown, and even one or two photos of Sydney Harbour-side building, but always accompanied by the relentless horizontal photographs of the desert. The overall effect is of a country which shapes itself according to the land and in harmony with its ancient culture.

The opportunism of such writing is in the main the project of Sydney writers and architects. In the bicentennial year, where Sydney is of all Australian cities the one most on show, pastoral and Georgian colonial values abstracted away from reality and into the realm of myth, are held to be the only valid ones. The genocide which attended settlement documented in numerous Australian historical and cultural

studies, is ignored in favour of a narrative to do with sympathetic values and gentle appropriation. Because architectural writers generally write only about formal values, they get away with it. What they say is a disgraceful reminder of the nature of architectural critique and discourse in this country.

French Feminisms and Representation

Elizabeth Grosz

Art has always posed a lure: an enticement and a peril. It is, in short, fascinating. 'To fascinate' means both to attract and appeal; but also, to trap or snare, or lure. Art is fascinating to a large extent because it produces images, of subjectivity, not necessarily images *about* subjects (i.e. portraits). Whatever it represents (if it *re*presents anything) it can always represent the subject's capacity to represent. In this sense at least, art is also always self-representation, self-reflexive.

Art has fascinated feminists no less than others. In part because of the *lure of self-representation* that art offers; a self-representation of the kind that feminists struggle to develop for and as women. Yet in spite of its attraction, many feminists have recognised that art has generally provided little towards *women's* self-representations; at best, it has *depicted* woman - perhaps more than any other 'object' - but the self it both reflects and constructs is not female. In patriarchal cultures, it is the self-production of men through the depiction of women. It seems that, with rare exceptions, it is an index of women's cultural position(s), a kind of symptom of what woman *means*, not to herself or in her own terms, but for culture.

Given this male-domination of representational practices, any feminists today have attempted to challenge patriarchal art by either creating a 'counter', a revised aesthetics, or non-sexist and non-oppressive representations. Some have devised positive images, more representative of women's interests, 'techniques' or 'styles' than the apparently sexually neutral norms governing the canons of artistic merit. Other feminists, those like myself involved in the production of knowledges or theory, may be more interested in the contributions art may make to more overarching systems of patriarchal domination. Many feminists are now less interested in the 'real' effects of art on everyday life (e.g. in 'sex-role stereotyping') and more interested in their *signifying structures*, internal rules, artistic procedures, assumptions, inclusions and exclusions. They are less interested in art as a cause of certain social and psychological effects, than in giving it a status as symptomatic of a broader signifying position given to women.

Feminist artists and art theorists today question not only the *content* or the *form* of art, but the conditions of possibility and the material representational positions in culture. In other words, there has been a shift in feminist interest from the question of *how women are represented*, to the question of the unrepresented *conditions of representation*. The various exclusions, boundaries, denials, categories that make art distinct from other social practices and raise the question of the *sexualisation of art practices, analysis and criticism*.

In this paper, I wish to explore some of the fascinations art holds for feminists. I will examine two 'generations of feminists' and the differences that have emerged over the last twenty years. In the first part, I will discuss the earliest approaches feminists made to art theory. In the second I will question their presuppositions. In the third, I will look more closely at Irigaray and Kristeva. Here, I will extract from their work those fragments and elements that refer more or less directly to art and systems of representation. Because my knowledge of art is at best limited, I will rely on you and your comments to provide some of the links between their work for artistic practices and theory.

1. Feminist Criticism

First, then, to outline some elements of feminist interrogations of art in the earliest serious chalienges they pose for it. The positions I will describe will, I hope, be relatively familiar to most of you, which is why only a brief outline should be necessary. I will also raise some of the problems emerging from these early first approaches to patriarchal representations.

a. The visual, plastic and performance arts, especially in the late 1960s and 1970s, were regarded as *reflections* of an oppression that originated and functioned socially or socio-economically. However, this position problematically presumes a fundamentally passive, plastic and pliable form, sensitive to and thus able to reproduce, to re-present power relations, to bear the imprint of social and political relations, which leaves art in itself *outside* politics, merely a reflection of *other* power located elsewhere.

b. Feminists recognised that women were almost exclusively treated as *objects* - objects represented only from men's perspectives, for male spectators. Art could thus be seen on a representational continuum in which pornography is one extreme. (However, the presumption of the *ideological function* of art meant that subverting these negative representations was part of the larger goal of transforming power relations, and are thus subordinated or secondary to struggles at the 'real' or concrete 'material' levels of women's oppression.)

c. With the exception of a few, usually minor women-dominated art-forms (such as ballet, weaving, embroidery etc.), women were excluded from becoming *subjects of art*, i.e. performers, artists, writers - 'creators'. Because of women's historical exclusion from institutions of learning and apprenticeship, women's right to gain a living through art was severely curtailed. (This view too has problems, namely those involved in mere quantitative arguments about women's entry into male institutions. Their increase in numbers alone does not challenge patriarchy nor guarantee its overthrow.)

d. In attempting to create non-sexist or anti-sexist art forms, many feminist artists experimented with role-reversals and the positive depiction of women as active agents, heroes. Thus rather problematically and, I think, unsuccessfully positioning women in the role previously occupied by men, and men, in the position taken up by women, without, however, questioning or realigning their power relations.
e. Many feminists directed their political energies toward the institutions surrounding art-funding bodies, the exhibition circuit, theatre and performance spaces, access to publishing and distribution networks - in an attempt to introduce a kind of 'equal opportunity' programme to insure that women's art received the same consideration as men's.
f. The hierarchical relations within the arts, the distinctions between High Art (with a capital 'A') and more everyday art (art and craft), the traditions of "Great Masterpieces", the canons and norms governing greatness, the presumed universality of Artistic Masters, even the division of the various arts into distinct and/or mutually exclusive categories (e.g. the separation of painting from sculpture and architecture, the divisions between poetry and prose, fiction and non-fiction), were questioned in terms of their exclusions of women. They refused the premise that women are less skilled, creative or talented than men. Their absence is the consequence of an almost exclusively male-defined set of norms, ideals, criteria of evaluation not only within the arts, but also outside of art, in for example, men's refusal to share domestic work.
g. Corelative with their questioning of artistic categories, feminists tried to *add* to the existing range and variety of art, those which had been neglected, relegated to a non-art status or treated as 'women's work' rather than as art (e.g. weaving, embroidery, doilies, patchwork quilting, and traditional women's skills).
h. Attempts were made to develop an iconography, imagery, or poetic specific to women. This was often based on the representation of women's bodies and genitals in abstracted and non-sexualised, or rather, non-pornographic forms (e.g. Judy Chicago's 'The Dinner Party'). Gynocentric images and processes are developed in opposition to the overwhelming prevalence of phallocentric representational norms, methods and criteria.
i. Experiments in alternatives - the self-conscious mixture of genres, re-defining the use of materials usually associated with the masculine (concrete, metal in architecture, musical composition, concepts of proportion or rhyme in music, etc.), the defiance of representational conventions (narrative coherence, unified composition, realist, filmic depiction, man as sexual agent and hero, etc.), the use of parody, pastiche and borrowed codes - are among the techniques feminists artists and writers self-consciously develop as alternatives to the dominant patriarchal ideas.

In short, feminists aimed to equalise women's access to art and in decision-making and funding bodies; and to radically transform those domains where equality was not possible (ranging from the elimination of extreme forms of woman-hating such as pornography, to the greater use of male models in drawing classes). Women were represented as central characters, active subjects, desiring or sexual agents, authors, creators and critics, curators, gallery directors; or more generally speaking, as authorised subjects within the art world.

Insofar as women were accepted in higher proportions than before in institutions of learning, and gained a greater access to funding, decision-making and organisational structures, these struggles were partially successful. Yet women were largely tokenistically included: women had no particular impact *as women* in altering the norms, conventions, expectations, commercial outlets or public access to art. Things remained much the same, except that more women participated. Thus,

crucially, they were unsuccessful in developing a *non-sexist or anti-sexist art* - one of the immediate aims of feminists. At best, an art of *reverse sexism* was produced, which, I suspect, was the result of an unwillingness to deal with structural and formal issues in art, with, that is, the underlying *phallocentrism* of various representational arts.

Basic feminist issues remained unresolved: could women be represented other than from a male point of view? What are the effects of feminist interrogations of the techniques and frameworks in the arts? How can the misogyny of art be eliminated? What, for example, would counter pornography and/or create an art more pertinent to a feminine erotics? These were central questions at the outset that still confront us today, as baffling as they ever were.

I do not have any answers to these questions. I suspect the reason they have not been resolved has to do with *how* these questions have been asked. In the past, feminists seemed content with one of three possibilities. Either: one - to locate sexism only at the level of the *content* of art (e.g. as plot and character or pictorial object or sculpted representation); or two - they denounced various films, plays, novels, paintings etc. as thoroughly ridden with patriarchal values; or three - they developed counter-techniques of *reversal*, representing women in the roles and positions men may normally occupy, developing strong, positive images of women, attempting and sometimes succeeding in representing what has not been represented before (e.g. non-pornographic vaginal imagery).

My objections are not directed to these feminist projects *in themselves*; they were a necessary starting point but simply did not go far enough. The reversal of images, the inclusion within representation systems of what had been unrepresented, the depiction of women as the opposite of their stereotypical patriarchal images is *impossible* - for the space into which women could be slotted is not equal to men's. When women are placed in the strong, dominant position and men into the position of say, sexual objects, this is usually humorous not degrading as they may have been for women. 'Erotic' films and novels, specifically developed by and for women, nevertheless bolster male voyeurism, and often provide a 'softer' but still pornographic image of those men who choose to view it that way.

This, it seems to me, is a consequence of the blurring of boundaries between representation and 'reality' or 'everyday' life - that is, a result of treating the text (of whatever kind) as if it *were not a text*; and of not recognising an underlying structural organisation which both supports and perpetuates sexist values.

It is for this reason I would like to explain how I see the relation between theory and practice in the arts and why I think these sometimes highly obscure French theorists may be useful in studying or producing art, before turning more directly to Kristeva and Irigaray.

2. "Theory" and "Practice"

The theory/practice relation is highly controversial, but one which is needlessly complicated by various misunderstandings from both the 'art' and the 'theory' sides. On the one hand, art is never free of theory, in the sense that conceptual systems, meanings, intellectual/political positions, values, necessarily inform all art-works and practices. Art is always motivated by and functions according to conceptual as well as aesthetic and emotional factors. It is disingenuous and romantic to claim that art is simply or directly 'about' the expression of feelings, emotions or experiences - that is, otherwise inaccessible 'subjective' creativity - that is somehow outside the theoretical influence, pure and theory-free. In this sense, theory (without a capital 'T') is always already at work in the production

and reception of art. On the other hand, theory is 'applied' to the arts (much like medicine is to a sick child) in stereotypical or formulaic terms, reducing art to a mere illustration of principles, or an expression of the life and times of the artist. Each in its own way contributes to mystification about art's social and intellectual status.

Theory should not be regarded as hierarchically privileged - as some theorists and artists seem to think. Theory is not the arbiter or judge of art - its appropriate 'metadiscourse' or 'metarepresentation'. Critical or aesthetic theory is in no special way privileged in its abilities to reflect on, to theorise about or to *know* art. Like art itself, theory is the result of an often disavowed *process of production*, a labour bringing together disparate elements - in this case, using language rather than paint, canvas, film or sound. It is in a reciprocally influential relation: art presumes theory, but equally theory requires resources, amongst which the most powerful include art. If theory takes on the role of assessing art, so too art is able to comment on and question theory.

The strict bifurcation between theory and art relies on a series of beliefs about each that requires interrogation. Behind this opposition are a number of other equally worrying oppositions: between emotions or passions and reason, creativity and reflection, primary text and secondary commentary; or ineffable experience and reflective articulation respectively. The artist may be regarded as intellectually impoverished and the theorist, impoverished in creative talent. Between them, an unholy alliance needs to be forged to complement and complete the absences and shortcomings of each.

This is a self-deceiving view insofar as it places the artist and theorist in competing positions, where they vie for supremacy above all other social activity. It focusses only on end-results, art-works, fictions, theories, and not on the various labours and productive processes which engender them. They evade the materiality of art and theory, its status as results of material practices, created through the transformation of material objects, artistic 'raw materials', by human labour. Such a view elevates art and theory to a creativity or intelligence somehow independent of the imperatives of labour involved in all other social practices. Theory is only one source of or input into the production and reception of art, on par with other influences and sources of inspiration. Art, in turn, provides one of the intellectual sources and critical perspectives from which theory is able to relay itself outside its domain; it is a commentary, critique or displacement of theory. Only when theory is regarded as another 'creative' or productive *practice*, a fabrication of methods and discourses, can it be freed of its authoritarian role as blue-print to guide practices *before* they occur, or reflect on it *after* it is created. If theory is one practice amongst others, it is able to link with, and learn from, art as a co-operative rather than supervisory co-worker.

3. Kristeva and the Speaking Subject

Here, I will simply extract from Kristeva's highly complex texts those elements or fragments that seem to make sense on their own, and which may help formulate a new relation between feminism and the arts. I will focus only on her account of the speaking (/writing/artistic) subject and the role it plays in the production of 'texts'.

Kristeva's work is situated at the interface of psychoanalysis, literary/linguistic theory and feminism. She is particularly concerned with subversive corporeal processes - the polymorphous infantile sexual drives - that are both necessary for yet repressed by the rule of symbolic order and the paradigms and norms within and by which the arts in any given culture are possible. It is her argument, in brief,

that the symbolic order - that is, systems of language, law and exchange, representational practices (both verbal and non-verbal), and the positioning of the subject as an agent, an 'I' - are predicated on the sacrifice or renunciation of pre-oedipal sexual drives which, in the first instance, arise from and are directed towards the mother's body. Symbolic and artistic functioning are possible only because of an unspoken, disavowed debt to the maternal and the feminine (for, as Freud suggests, what is repressed is the feminine, in both men and women). The maternal and the feminine are thus the grounds or conditions of representation and are themselves unrepresented or inadequately represented.

She distinguishes two movements or energies at work in all symbolic processes, the semiotic and the symbolic, process and unity, the pre-oedipal and the oedipal. They function in all social production but are perhaps most starkly visible in their interactions in those privileged episodic explosions she designates as "madness, holiness and poetry". The semiotic is the pre-oedipal drives, rhythms and forces, the multiple, fluid energies of the polymorphous drives. In the young child, these drives are not yet ordered or hierarchically organised according to the imperatives of orgasm or the teleology of reproduction, but circulate through the child's body in a multiplicity of forms, generating a wide variety of erotogenic zones and sexual objects. The child's body is not yet unified (this occurs in part at the mirror-stage and in part under the primacy of the phallus in the oedipus complex) but is animated by rhythmic and spasmic movements and processes anarchically and chaotically operating across the body. These semiotic elements provide the elements of *materiality,* the material-bodily forces that must be harnessed by artistic practices, both in the process of production of art and in the art object itself.

By contrast, the symbolic is an effect of oedipal processes regulating sexual drives according to the Law which prohibits incest and requires the child's renunciation of the mother as love-object, in exchange for a social and linguistic position governed by the Name-of-the-Father. The semiotic must be repressed in order that the symbolic can redirect its energies, reinhabit its bodily zones to direct them to social outlets and cover its desire towards the lost, primal maternal object by substituting a non-forbidden love object, based on the father (for the girl) and maternal-substitutes (for the boy).

Kristeva aims to uncover the subject's position in the operation of texts, i.e. the interaction between the semiotic and the symbolic in the functioning of literature and art. Her aim is not simply to analyse these systems of representation, but to unsettle and disrupt their apparent unities by articulating what must remain unspoken in them. She stresses the price exacted by civilisation and the symbolic order is a repression of the feminine pleasures of the infant's sexual drives. They rely on the renunciation and burial of everything associated with the pre-oedipal, particularly the feminine and the maternal. The feminine and the maternal thus come to designate the unspoken and unspeakable conditions of representation.

The speaking, writing or artistic subject is thus always irremediably *split*, divided between consciousness and unconscious, semiotic and symbolic, maternal and paternal. Although it is bounded by the laws of the symbolic, the subject also exceeds these paternal boundaries (in dreams, symptoms, and, presumably, in revolutionary practices). Like the repressed, the semiotic returns to inhabit symbolic production. While it accompanies all symbolic production as the raw materials, the semiotic also threatens to transgress the limits (of intelligibility, of sociality, of identity) of the symbolic. It is never completely subsumed, and in certain privileged moments, which she describes as 'avant garde', they erupt, subverting the unity, reason, law, order and the usual operations of the rule of artistic prac-

tice to undergo upheavals and disruptions, creating new boundaries, limits, and symbolic norms which can themselves be transgressed through semiotic excess *ad infinitum*. If the interplay of semiotic and symbolic explains the reliance of cultural or artistic production on tonality, rhythm, sound and silence; and the norms of grammar, logic, syntax respectively (see Kristeva, 1977), they also function in painting, music, and by implication, in all artistic and cultural production in their reliance on corporeal processes, rhythms, movements and energies. It is only from these disavowed pre-oedipal drives and impulses that they derive their impetus and rationale.

Kristeva discusses the visual arts most directly in *Desire and Language*, (esp. "Giotto's Joy" and "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini"). There, Kristeva argues that colour in painting, like rhythm in music or poetry, is shared by both semiotic and symbolic organisation: the symbolic, ordered and regulated use of colour, in other words, relies on a more chaotic and potentially threatening play of pure differences, as the pre-oedipal child experience colour, before vision becomes hierarised into its privileged position among the senses.

> Color is the shattering of unity. Thus, it is through color - colors - that the subject escapes its alienation within a code (representational ideological, symbolic, and so forth) that it, as conscious subject, accepts. Similarly, it is through color that Western painting began to escape the constraints of narrative and perspective norm (as with Giotto) as well as representation itself (as with Cezanne, Matisse, Rothko, Mondrian). Matisse spells it in full: it is through color - painting's 'fundamental device'... that revolutions in the plastic arts come about... The chromatic apparatus, like rhythm in language, thus involves a shattering of meaning and its subject into a scale of differences..." [221]

This play of material, semiotic elements, pure *chromatic* differences ('differences of light, energetic charge, and systematic value' [219]), is a repressed condition of the symbolic regulations governing artistic creativity. Art provides a usually politically harmless outlet for the social expression of impulses and drives that may otherwise prove threatening to oedipal social regulations. In the history of art, there are a number of episodes where colour explodes its symbolic containment, transgressing the norms which it is supposed to serve, thus effecting a revolution or rupture within art. Kristeva considers colour to be a relatively 'free zone' within the plastic arts that is subjected to prohibition and control. It is liable to overflow its containment and transgress prevailing discursive or artistic codes.

The histories of representational systems are necessarily bound up with the history of the symbolic order. They thus rely on the traces or remnants, the 'symptoms', of corporeal pleasures and drives which always leave their marks on artworks. A corporeal 'genealogy' of art involves tracing a dim and obscured prehistorical or feminine, maternal phase in the life of each individual, and their adult manifestations, to see their various unspoken contributions to social production. The unacknowledged debt to 'femininity' is thus *corporeal* and maternal. It necessarily leaves residues that are irreducibly and ineliminably inscribed in the artwork itself, but which are ignored or subordinated to its intentions, meaning or content. For example, in rhythm, intonation, vocal pleasures and phonic qualities in speech, or in the movement of brush strokes, play of colour and light in painting or rhythm and tone in music.

The semiotic is thus a feminine, maternal, resistant, corporeal drive-energy that pre-dates and makes possible the child's acquisition of language and the ability to position itself as a unified, cohesive ego or identity, an "I", in discourse. The semiotic is a precondition of the symbolic, rule-governed functioning of language and

representational systems. It must remain repressed and outside of representation; it is thus simultaneously *resistant*, subversive, wayward, incommunicable, unspeakable and ultimately unknowable *as such*. As the precondtion and accompaniment of all representations, it cannot speak (of) itself. It is a threshhold beyond which nothing can be signified. Like Freud's 'dark continent', and Lacan's 'pleasure beyond the phallus', this is a 'feminine' that has no voice, no language, no position of its own, a feminine that exists only as a murmur or remainder left over from the symbolic, locked inside the suffering, hysterical female body.

It is for this reason Kristeva heralds the *male* avant-garde artist as the revolutionary within representation. He can evoke, even if not name, this unspeakable, transgressive feminine and maternal principle. He can say what the mother, or indeed, the woman can only experience. His position within the symbolic is put at risk in order to transgress the paternal authority governing it. It is only from his position, a position as a symbolic subject, that such a transgression can occur:

> "At the intersection of sign and rhythm, of representation and light, of the semiotic and the symbolic, the artist speaks from a place where she is not, where she knows not. He delineates what, in her, is a body rejoicing." (Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini, [242])

4. Irigaray and Women's Specificity

Unlike Kristeva's focus on masculine and feminine elements within symbolic and social relations, Irigaray affirms the existence of *two irreducibly different sexes*, two variants of a single (male) sex. If there are two irreducibly different kinds of body, two modes of representation, and kinds of social position, this would transform our understanding of a symbolic system which have thus far been based only on the interests of one.

Irigaray's aim is to *deconstruct* and challenge the operations of phallocentric systems of representation and knowledge; and to explore and experiment with a different voice, new perspectives and another symbolic order, appropriate to women. It is only if the male domination of the neutral or universal position, the position representative of humanity, is disrupted - if the sphere of representation can be seen as thoroughly *sexualised* - that women's representations of themselves and of the world can be accommodated.

Irigaray describes the procedures by which the male body is evacuated from the disavowed in its products, including especially art. Its specific, sexual, oedipal, phallic attributes are defined as universal and thus treated as if there were applicable to women as well. They become disembodied, abstract principles, principles of reason, creating stable, regulated artistic and social relations.

If the maleness of phallocentric representations is disavowed, it is only because women as a category have taken on the value of the corporeal *for men*: men can identify with pure mind, or creativity, or reason, or emotion, without women's bodily limitations. Instead, women become men's bodies for them. Irigaray's object of critical analysis focusses not on anatomy, but on the *morphologies* of sexual difference. This means that she does not focus on the biological or natural body, but on the body *insofar as it is produced and lived as a meaningful* through its entwinement in various systems of representation - the body's *meaning* not its nature. Irigaray aims to rupture phallocentric systems that have hitherto inscribed the female body as a lack or a complement to men's, in order to develop representational systems to positively inscribe the female body. This is in itself a revolutionary act, if it is true as she claims, that images of women have up to now been the projected, inverted images of men, man's counterpart or double and not as woman.

> "... the articulation of the reality of my sex is impossible to discourse, and for structural, eidetic reasons. My sex is removed, at least as the property of a subject, from the predicative mechanism that assures discursive coherence." ("Questions", *This Sex Which is Not One* [149])

Femininity becomes the sexual other to the phallocentric One. It cannot be heard in phallocentric culture except insofar as it mimics masculinity. Otherwise it is contained within hysterical mutism. Irigaray's project is an exploration of the signifying space required to express sexual differences. She does *not* aim to set up a new female language or aesthetic, but to create a new theoretical and representational space in which women may explore for themselves how they wish to speak and represent the world. She aims to create *new* ways of speaking and analysing the language and the evaluative systems already on hand, new ways of inhabiting existing critical and artistic practices so that they speak as and for women.

Irigaray claims that discourses and representational systems are neither sexually neutral, objective or equally representative of both sexes. In her most recent texts, she explores the necessary conditions for the constitution of new representational forms which are capable of accommodating and articulating both sexes in their particularity.

This project has major implications for the visual and plastic arts. Just as the (female) body must be reinscribed in terms of a positivity, so too must the *space and time* of conventional representations - Euclidian or perspectival space and solar, linear time - be questioned. These two projects imply each other: if the body and subjectivity of each sex is to be adequately represented, the spatio-temporal dimensions through which it is understood also require transformation. The cohesion and integration of space and time presumed in visual and 'realist' represenations needs to be reworked, a new 'transcendental sensible' as Irigaray calls it, needs to be devised, in order to think, to represent, to know, *differently.*

Irigaray poses the question of the transfiguration of space and time: time, she suggests, is modelled on the interiority of the subject (ultimately the divine subject) while space is the representation of his exteriority. Having no interior recognised as such, the feminine thus becomes the representative of spatiality, as the masculine, disembodied subject is a pure interiority and thus a mode of temporalisation. Not surprisingly then, space is commonly represented on the model of time. Irigaray advocates the exploration of a reconstituted space/time where both are now part of the 'vectorisation' of the other: her revision involves the *becoming of space as time* and the becoming of *time as space*:

> "So that this (sexual) difference has grounds to be thought and lived, one must reconsider the whole problematic of *space* and *time*:
> In the beginning was space and the creation of space... And time is there, almost in the service of space... God would be time itself, given unsparingly or exteriorised in his act in space, in places.
> ...Time will become the *interiority* of the subject himself. Space, his exteriority... This subject, master of time, becomes the axis of the management of the world... He effects the passage between time and space." (*L'ethique*, ch.1)

She demonstrates that there are always *other ways* to represent, to know, to produce, other ways of painting, sculpting, filmmaking etc. than those which today have precedence. These other ways do not preexist various experiments and explorations, particularly of the media themselves and the rules of formation of the arts. But with the increasing recognition of the phallocentric investments within the arts. It is crucial that such explorations begin. The identities and interactions of both sexes are at stake here.

How Images Appear

Gary Catalano

I'd like to begin this talk by quoting from an essay John Yule wrote on the recent Nolan show at the National Gallery of Victoria. Nolan's images, Yule observed...

> rise up effortlessly from his subconscious and are transferred to canvas or panel in one sustained rush. There are no preliminary tries or sketches, no subsequent retouchings or adjustments. He saturates his mind with a huge overload of evocative and suggestive material, poems, philosophies, metaphysics, mysticism, legend - and into this seethe of charged material he will drop one thought central to whatever has recently been preoccupying him. And instantly an image, fully fleshed out, appears.

On a first reading these remarks seem accurate ones and certainly tally with the sense we have of Nolan's works: his paintings, or most of them anyway, do look as if they have been produced in one sustained rush. And I think Yule is right in stressing the richness of the contextual background or seedbed to Nolan's imagery.

But there's one very worrying implication in what Yule says, and that's his idea that Nolan relies almost totally on his subconscious to create or fashion his images. Remember, from Yule's account you get the impression that all the pictorial and intellectual matter which Nolan feeds into his mind - the poems, the philosophies, the legends and so on - are recombined and transformed in his subconscious, and transformed according to a principle we'll never be able to grasp or fathom. *In* goes all that suggestive matter... and at some later date images fountain forth in response to the artist's signal or trigger. You can be pardoned for thinking that when we get to see them they're still wet with the waters of the subconscious.

It seems to me that Yule's explanation of how Nolan's images appear should be compared with one advanced by Bernard Smith some 25 years ago in his essay, 'Nolan's Image'.

There are, of course, a number of things on which the two writers agree. Just like Yule, Smith emphasizes the importance of Nolan's intellectual and poetic interests. But you also find him pointing to Nolan's childhood experiences and suggesting that these have largely determined the themes that Nolan has dealt with in his work.

But the really outstanding difference between them is this: where Yule implies that Nolan's images are given by the subconscious and spring out of it ready-made whenever the artist wants them to, Smith insists that the same images are created pictorially and evolve in real time. Nolan pursues certain pictorial practises, and these practises determine the nature of his imagery. Mind you, many of these practises of course entail the operation of the subconscious, but the distinction is there nevertheless. For Yule Nolan's images assume their identity in the subconscious and only then take material form, and for Smith they come into existence because Nolan manipulates paint ***this*** way and not ***that*** way.

It occurs to me that if you really wanted to you could mount a case in support of either of these views. Yet it also strikes me that whatever case you mounted would necessarily do less than full justice to the imagination. At one point in his essay Bernard Smith talks of the vegetational processes of the imagination, but it's clear from the context that these processes only operate while the artist is at work on his pictures. Take the brush out of his hand and there's no electricity in his head, none whatsoever.

Now, I want to be fair here. If we were to ask both Bernard Smith and John Yule whether or not the imagination - and that, after all, is the image-making faculty - lies dormant when the artist is no longer in the process of actually producing his works, we can be reasonably confident that both would unhesitatingly say 'No'. Yet the curious fact is that neither writer contemplates the necessary implication of this: it's true that some images may be created in the subconscious, it's true that images can appear if an artist pursues certain semi-automatic techniques, but it's also true that images can be percepts.

It's as simple as that. Once you make the obvious admission that the imagination is not something which only begins to operate after the artist has gathered his materials, so to speak, you have to admit that images may well appear in his direct and immediate experience of the world. Images, in short, can be seen as well as visualized or invented.

This is especially true where Nolan is concerned, for we know that he was given to tinkering with his own processes of perception, and tinkering with them in order to elicit the most vivid images. There's a very revealing passage in Cynthia Nolan's *Outback* which I must quote here:

> Sometimes Sidney's manner of looking at things reminded me of a camera click, for he would turn his back on something that particularly interested him, then wheel round for a split second before turning again. I called this the 'quick blick' as against the hours-of-concentration method of getting memory results. Sidney had decided long ago that the quick blick had its uses, and had trained himself until he was adept at applying it.

In all likelihood, what Nolan was doing here was deliberately acquiring what psychologists of perception call a primary memory image. Apparently a primary memory image is formed whenever you see something vividly, or look at it so thoroughly that you can reconstruct it in the mind's eye.

There are a number of strange things about these images. Immediately after their registration you can use them in order to examine details of the original sight or scene which you weren't conscious of seeing. The mere fact that we have these images tells us that we often see more than we initially understood or believe we see.

The other strange thing about these images is that they fade very rapidly. You can use them, you can hold them in you head and inspect them, for a brief period of time after their registration, but you can't use them for very long. They fade very quickly. The full-bodied impression - the full-bodied image, you could say - which is there in the percept finally gives way to a wraith-like or disembodied one.

It seems to me that this phenomenon of the primary memory image probably explains the way in which most of Nolan's images in fact appeared. His most memorable images - the one in that wonderful painting in which the cabins of a ferris-wheel are simultaneously seen as bird's nests, for example, or the image of the trees-cum-musical notes sprinkled across *Kiata* - may well have been things which Nolan actually experienced, actually perceived, but even his speed of execution was such that the images he finally places before us have a mirage-like quality. They have faded. Nolan's images, you could say, are the vestiges of earlier and far more vivid images - images which lived, for a moment, in his head.

All this, I suspect, probably opens up the whole of Nolan's work for re-interpretation. My guess is that whoever deals with his work in the future should think about discussing it in the way that Murray Bail discusses Fairweather's work in his monograph on that artist. You may remember that Bail persistently makes the point that Fairweather's paintings are about the erosion of memory.

But I don't want to go into this now. Instead I'm going to turn to my favourite art form, for there's a very famous example of this transformation of a primary memory image into a finished work of art, a finished image, in a poem that Ezra Pound wrote in about 1912 or 13. This poem, 'In a Station of the Metro', really is a quick blick, for it goes just like this:

> The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
> Petals on a wet, black bough.

What do we have in these two lines? On the face of it there are two items of perception - the faces in the crowd, and the moistened petals clinging to a sodden branch - and the syntax and cadence of the lines are such that the equivalence between these two items, these two things, seems to have occured spontaneously. Our experience of the poem is such that we understand that as soon as Pound saw those faces in the crowd he visualized the petals on the bough. In short, you're led to believe that the image which these two items form had the *immediacy* of a percept.

Well, as I've already indicated this is not strictly the case. And we know this because Pound wrote about the circumstances of the poem's composition on a number of occasions. The most interesting of these is his 1914 essay on Vorticism, the text of which he later re-printed in his book on Gaudier-Brzeska.

What makes this essay especially interesting is that in it you find Pound trying to fashion a theory which can explain all the arts, not just the one he happens to practise. And I mean a theory in the strict sense of the term - a coherent body of perceptions whose accuracy can be verified.

I want to summarize this essay at some length. As I said, Pound was trying to explain all the arts, so in the first 1000 or so words of the essay you have him either citing or quoting from a real galaxy of authorities: Whistler, Pater, Apolli-

naire, Picasso, Kandinsky, Ibycus, Liu Ch'e, Dante, Milton, Aristotle, Stendhal, Flaubert, Maupassant, Villon and Mr Jacob Epstein are all there.

Pound is already talking about the image, mind you, and citing the names I've mentioned - with the natural exception of the odious Milton - as people who intuitively understood the nature of images. *Intuitively* is the key-word there, for there's no doubt in my mind that the people who really gave Pound his understanding of the image go unmentioned in his text. As soon as you come to these two sentences:

(1) An image is real because you know it directly.
(2) It is our affair to render the image as we have perceived or conceived it.

It's obvious that Pound has been steeping himself in Bergson and Croce. But neither philosopher gets a guernsey from him.

Anyway, directly after those two statements Pound goes on to detail the circumstances which led to the writing of that little poem. He tells us how he got off the train one day and saw, in rapid succession, a number of beautiful faces as he turned this way and that in the crowd. The experience was a very vivid one, and Pound immediately began to wonder just which words would fit the emotion - convey the emotion - he'd felt. Somewhat later on that day he realizes that the only things which can convey his emotion are little splotches of colour.

When he finally sits down to put his experience into a poem he writes one of 36, not two, lines, and rejects those lines almost immediately. Six months later he makes another attempt and produces one of 18 lines. This is also rejected, and a year goes by before he produces the two lines I've already quoted.

Now, I don't want to labour the point unduly, but once you're made aware of these matters you can't regard the image formed by the poem as the image Pound experienced when he stepped off the train. It's not his percept as such, or at least not his original one. Instead, what the poem does is present us with an image which came to Pound through a process of association as he dwelt on his primary memory image of that vivid experience.

At this point I'd like to turn to another poem, W.B. Yeats' 'The Circus Animals' Desertion'. The poem actually uses the term *image* and demonstrates the way - the very different way - in which images can appear. It helps you to grasp what this late poem is saying if you first understand a few very basic things about its author.

Firstly, Yeats is essentially a dramatic poet. By that I mean that every poem he wrote - or almost every poem - speaks directly to or about some figure, some person, he has known or invented - or, conversely, is spoken by such a figure. The 'I's and 'you's he uses, you could say, are never mere devices...

Secondly, like all dramatic utterances Yeats' poems are always most intense when they voice the most basic human passions. Despite what you may think or have been led to believe, this is not all that common in poetry. There's a lot of poetry - even great poetry - which doesn't deal with the basic emotions at all. You only have to read Wallace Stevens to understand that.

But Yeats, as I've said, is obsessively concerned with the fundamental emotions, with things like love, hate, contempt, self-loathing, loss and pride.

He also writes about these emotions with incomparable force. Invariably his poems begin on a note of high emotion; and that emotion, far from abating or tailing off, just mounts and mounts until the final lines.You can see this when you compare the readiness with which you remember the closing lines of, say, 'The Second Coming':

> And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
> Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

With that initial hesitation you experience when trying to recall the opening lines of the same poem:

> Turning and turning in a widening gyre
> The falcon cannot bear the falconer.

In view of these things - the dramatic nature of his poems, their concern with basic emotions, the force with which these emotions are expressed, and Yeats' growing acknowledgement of his own violent impulses - you could make out a case that Yeats, far from being a symbolist (and that is how the critics generally treat him) is in fact an expressionist. In poem after poem after poem we witness him flinging his bloody heart onto the page and crying 'There! It's foul! It stinks! And it's mine!'

Many critics say that 'The Circus Animals' Desertion' is a poem about Yeats' inability to write a poem, and despite what Yeats says (or appears to say) in the opening lines I find that an absolutely stupid suggestion. There's a poem there, right on the page, and that's what we have to deal with.

And what the poem is saying is really quite simple, for in it Yeats is telling us that, at this moment, he no longer has the will, the energy and the faith in his own imagination which he needs in order to vivify his old themes and images. In point of fact he's rather bored by these themes and images. As he says in the final line of the first stanza, 'Lion and woman and the Lord knows what'.

You may ask: why is he bored by them? Why does he no longer believe in them? If you're familiar with Yeats' poems as a whole you'll know that the very best of him - his finest and most delicate intuitions - went into the creation of a series of images, each one of which allowed him to re-fashion his identity. And in this late poem it's as if we hear him saying 'No more, no more. I don't want to do it anymore!'

Now, there are some people who'd probably argue that Yeats would not have been driven to this if he'd not been obsessed with mythology right from the start. You will see that in the second, third and fourth stanzas of the poem most of the figures he recalls (and this may even be true where Maud Gonne is concerned) are figures of myth and legend: there's Oisin, there's Niamh the enchantress, there's Cathleen and there's Cuchulain. The argument could run: if Yeats had been more circumspect and rooted his imaginings in the real world he'd not have been driven to this.

That may well be the case. But it could also be argued that Yeats is telling us that any image, simply through its compelling power and its capacity to fixate one - is also capable of leading one astray. Of blinding one, of deluding one. People are naturally enchanted by images, and often enchanted in such a way that they neglect their true import. As Yeats says about himself:

> Players and painted stage took all my love
> And not those things that they were emblems of.

The lines I've just quoted are those with which Yeats concludes his survey - we'll call it a survey for the moment - of his glittering imaginative creations, his masterful images. The question I'd like you to think about is this: can we also consider the objects mentioned in the final stanza - the raving slut, for example, or the foul rag and bone shop - as masterful images in their turn?

Of course, the context in which they're presented doesn't encourage us to think of them in this way. Yeats quite openly tells us that it is these things - the common world, so to speak - which formed the seedbed of his masterful images. Or, to change the metaphor very slightly, this is the ground over which his Byzantium was built.

Nor can we regard all those things as images if we think of the way in which the term is generally used. After all, Yeats makes no attempt to make us *see* these things or to apprehend them in the mind's eye. They haven't, so to speak, been verbally rendered.

And yet there's a paradox, for they stamp themselves on our consciousness with as much force - if not more force - than anything else in Yeats. For us they *are* images, simply because of the power with which they've been uttered.

But the really interesting question you can ask about the poem is this: how is that force generated? You can look at the lines and note any number of things which help to give them their power, but it has to be said that that exercise would be evading the issue. The poem, after all, is a dramatic occasion, and that final stanza is best viewed as the climax to a drama.

And it is, as you already know, a drama about images. Once Yeats had created a hoard of surpassing and masterful images, most of which bore little or no relation to the world around him. Now that he no longer has the ability to augment this image-hoard he realizes that he must lie down and endure all that he's hitherto evaded. But in order to do so he must first destroy his image-hoard, his Byzantium, and bring it down about his ears. He must, in short, ransack it. It's the energy given off by that terrible and painful act which floods into the final stanza and gives it its tidal force.

Now, you may say: Okay, you've decanted the poem, or your version of it, into relatively simple language, but what does that have to do with visual art?

In a way that's for you to decide, but I will suggest to you that the drama in Yeats' poem - a drama in which an incomparably great artist comes to the realization that he must ransack his life's work, that he must drive his lovely images into the mud because of his powerlessness and anger with himself - is exactly the same drama which another great artist is playing out at the same time that Yeats wrote this poem. If you just think about it for a moment you'll see that Picasso is basically doing the same thing in his effort to produce Guernica. He's ransacking his own work and much else besides.

The similarities are really quite compelling. Both poet and painter had ranged far and wide in creating their images: Yeats had spent more than 50 years breathing life into the pantheon of Celtic mythology and in using those figures for his own purposes:

> But what cared I that set him on to ride,
> I, starved for the bosom of his faery bride?

Picasso hadn't been at it quite as long, but on and off for about 15 years before Guernica you see him just picking up a mythological figure - by its ears, you could say - and doing what he wanted with it. That's transparently the case in his works dealing with the Minotaur.

But there is, of course, one great difference between Yeats' poem and Picasso's painting. Yeats is no longer interested in creating images yet does so despite himself; Picasso wants to - so much wants to - create a compelling image of his anger and his pain yet can't quite bring it off.

It's my intuition that Picasso's failure to do so is due to the fact that a painter - a

representational painter, at least - is forever torn between two completely different approaches to image-making: he can, on the one hand, derive his images directly from his perceptions - the faces in this crowd, that broken pot, that ferris wheel or old kettle - and seek an absolute fidelity either to the percept or to the association it arouses; or he can, on the other hand, derive his images from the hoard embodied in a tradition - reverently or angrily, it hardly matters which. It's the space between these two alternatives which ultimately determines just what images, and just how images, appear.

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John Yule, 'The Artist As Wanderer And Warrior', *Age Monthly Review*, July 1987.

ON THE LEVEL

APRIL 27th
MARGARET PLANT
'PLENTITUDE and OBSOLESCENCE': A View of the Ewing Collection
50th Anniversary Lecture
7PM George Paton Gallery

MAY 11th
IAN BURN
CULTURAL ATTITUDES IN 1960's ART
7PM George Paton Gallery

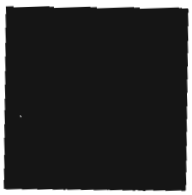
JUNE 15th
DON WATSON
RECENT AUSTRALIAN 'THOUGHT'
7PM George Paton Gallery

JULY 13th
BARBARA CREED
'PHALLIC PANIC':
Recent Developments in Feminist Theory in relation to Popular Film
7PM George Paton Gallery

AUGUST 10th
PAUL FOX
MELBOURNE 'CITY OF IDEAS': Re-reading the State Library of Victoria
7PM George Paton Gallery

SEPTEMBER 7th
MYTHS, DREAMS and REALITY:
Imaging Bicentennial Australia - A FORUM
CHAIR: PAT SIMONS (further details to be announced)
7PM George Paton Gallery

AGENDA



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JUNE

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