



05
2017

Breaking the Rules

*Artistic Expressions of
Transgression*

The *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* was founded in 2013 to publish a selection of the best papers presented at the biennial LUCAS Graduate Conference, an international and interdisciplinary humanities conference organized by the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS). The peer reviewed journal aims to publish papers that combine an innovative approach with fresh ideas and solid research, and engage with the key theme of LUCAS, the relationship and dynamics between the arts and society.

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Transgression*

CONTENTS

05

- 1** Foreword
Sara Brandellero, University Lecturer, LUCAS
- 4** Introduction
Editorial board JLGC-05
- 12** Black Mask and Up Against the Wall Motherfucker: An Avant-Garde's Revolutionary Last Stand (New York City, 1966-1969)
David A. J. Murrieta Flores
- 32** Breaking Images and Breaking the Gaze: Iconoclasm in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy
Aisling Reid
- 48** Mysticism, Martyrdom, and Ecstasy: The Body as Boundary in *The Martyrdom of St Agnes*
Beth Hodgett
- 63** To Model or not to Model: Transgressive portraits of Mary Magdalene by Marlene Dumas
Timea Andrea Lelik
- 86** From 'Rule Breaker in Chief' to 'Rule Breaker in Script': Eve in Early Eighteenth-Century Dutch Translations of Milton's *Paradise Lost*
Rena Bood
- 102** Stepping out of Time: Performing Queer Temporality, Memory, and Relationality in *Timelining*
Looi van Kessel
- 124** Call for Papers *JLGC-06* and *JLGC-07*

Breaking the Rules

FOREWORD

Breaking the Rules!

The wide range of subjects explored in this second issue of the *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* dedicated to the theme of ‘Breaking the Rules!’ reflects the inspiring breadth of topics addressed in the 2015 conference on the same theme. The biannual conference series at Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS), organized entirely by a committee of our graduate students, aims to capture the spirit of our own interdisciplinary studies. The questions probed by international graduate scholars at this conference, and in this issue, eloquently express the vibrancy of our own community. Indeed, as young scholars break new ground in their fields of study, more often than not a rule-breaking of sorts takes place, with fresh, daring connections being made and established patterns and given truths provokingly challenged.

As old paths are remapped and new scholarly routes are forged, one might think of the “surreptitious creativities” of which Michel de Certeau speaks, when conceiving the city space and the everyday practices that operate within it.¹ In fact, the symbolic potentiality of the act of taking to the streets on foot, of re-practicing this elementary mode of spatial appropriation that is the human step, is crystallized in de Certeau’s conceptualizations through

1 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 96.

the destabilizing figure of the city walker as one who (re)negotiates the order established by city planners. Against the totalizing ‘panoptic administration’ that attempts to regulate city spaces and lives, the walker visualized by de Certeau encapsulates the reclaiming of individual experiences and the challenging of spoken and unspoken rules.

Alongside this visualization of mobility in city spaces which dovetails both order and transgression, it is productive to think about the temporal thresholds that regulate our daily lives and their impact on our experiences. Of these, the boundaries between day and night prompt a consideration of these different thresholds – perhaps legal or cultural, among others – that control who is allowed where, what can and cannot be done, or where daytime prohibitions might ‘give way to profitable pseudo-transgressions’.² This connection between experiences of mobility across different landscapes and questions of nighttime transitions and spatial-cultural (re)negotiations has informed one of my own areas of research, particularly in relation to Brazil and the Portuguese-speaking world. Hence, my keen appreciation for the papers presented at the LUCAS Graduate Conference, where the fine line between regulation and defiance was explored.

Indeed, one cannot forget that a key moment in Brazil’s cultural history coincided with the radical attempts at cultural decolonization that took place in the early twentieth century, when breaking the rules became the order of the day. Accordingly, in 1922, which marked the centenary of Brazil’s independence from Portugal, a group of artists and intellectuals, also inspired by the European avant-garde movements, gathered in São Paulo to showcase modern art that might better reflect Brazil as a complex nation with a gradually emerging, albeit uneven, modernity — thereby daring to bring about a seismic break with the established norms of literary and artistic good taste. Thus, the Week of Modern Art held in February of that year was to become an important watershed in Brazil’s cultural production. Moreover, one of its masterminds,

² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1991), 319-20.

the now iconic São Paulo writer José Oswald de Souza Andrade, would embody its iconoclastic spirit when he soon after outlined his new cultural theory in his *Cannibalist Manifesto* of 1928, famously turning the traditionally demonized practice of cannibalism, found amongst Brazilian indigenous tribes, into a metaphor for cultural decolonization. In a bold subversion of Eurocentric cultural perspectives, Andrade would epitomize his vision of Brazilian culture through the maxim “Tupy, or not Tupy[;] that is the question”,³ directing a post-colonial nod to the indigenous Tupy people of Brazil that, in its debunking of literary hierarchies and of the boundaries between the notions of centre and periphery, simultaneously involved an audacious literary cannibalization of Shakespeare.

Academia’s fascination with how the arts engage with questions such as these, in which issues of order, control, and hierarchy, and how to subvert them are at stake, is reflected in the articles emerging from the 2015 LUCAS Graduate Conference presented here. These discussions are, more than ever, topical and urgent, as we seem to be entering times of increasing uncertainty, in a globalized yet fractured world. The arts are arguably all the more important now in helping us understand how to negotiate the rules, break them if necessary, and see where we are, and where we ought to be heading.

3 José Oswald de Souza Andrade, “Manifesto Antropófago”, *Revista de Antropofagia* 1 (1928), 3.

Sara Brandellero
Brazilian Studies (LUCAS)



INTRODUCTION

Titled 'Breaking the Rules! Cultural Reflections on Political, Religious and Aesthetic Transgressions', the third biannual LUCAS Graduate Conference took place on 29-30 January 2015. Historian of science Lorraine Daston (Max Planck Institute, Berlin) and medievalist Barbara H. Rosenwein (Loyola University Chicago) delivered the keynote lectures, respectively on 'Rules, Models, and Paradigms: Before Rules Became Rigid' and 'Breaking Emotion Rules: The Case of Margery Kempe's Religious Feelings'. Some forty-five graduate speakers from thirty universities around the world gathered for this occasion, which was closely aligned with LUCAS' interdisciplinary, cross-cultural research orientations and methods.

Dealing chiefly with writings on politics, religion, and philosophy, an initial collection of five articles, derived from among the best conference papers, was published last year under the title 'Breaking the Rules: Textual Reflections on Transgression' (*JLGC* 4, 2016). Topics were as varied as they were thought-provoking: the use of Adoptionist debates for theological, geopolitical, and personal purposes within the Carolingian Empire; the subversive potential of reported female speech in the canonical Gospels; Catholic and Protestant approaches to penance through the reception of a late fourteenth-century Middle Dutch treaty; varied perceptions of dance by pagan and Christian authorities from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages; and Lucretius' explo-

ration of the sublime, used to both understand natural phenomena, and challenge political and intellectual oppression in the Roman Republic. All articles discussed the complex experience of rule-breaking in written records, which often first defined the boundaries that would later be transgressed. Between head-on refutations and more subtle challenges, these multifaceted analyses offered a first step in pursuing the reflections set in motion during the conference.

The current selection features another six excellent articles stemming from the 2015 conference, this time focusing on artistic expressions contemplating the act of transgression. Featuring not only traditional methods, such as painting, but also relatively recent forms, such as zines and performance art, this second set of articles delves afresh into the act of rule-breaking in, and through, the visual arts. Spotlighting mixed artistic media provides the groundwork for this complementary shift in thinking about transgression: as Marshall McLuhan argued in his now-famous expression, “the medium is the message”, the contents of any message spread via a particular medium cannot be analysed without also taking the specifics of that medium into account.¹ In the artistic expressions featured in this issue of the *JLGC*, the medium might not be the whole message, but it can certainly be argued that the choice of medium heavily influences the effect of any transgression made through art: the conceptualisation, production, and reception of all artworks analysed in the collected articles are intrinsically linked to their physical forms.

Interested in the radical interplay between avant-garde art and American politics, David Murrieta Flores illustrates how a group of young artists, called Black Mask, strove to subvert the cultural and societal paradigms in New York City during the 1960s. Headed by Ben Morea, this militant performative group revived and appropriated principles typical of movements such as surrealism, futurism, and Dadaism, which had already angled for an amalgamation of politics and aesthetics. Published in zine format, the art of Black Mask aimed to

1 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

destroy all traditional artistic and ethical values, such as the primacy of the Western world, the white man, capitalism, and the idea of 'progress'. After disappearing at the end of the 1960s, Black Mask transformed into Up Against the Wall Motherfucker (also known as the Family), which was less organized and more violent in nature. This new group, a 'street gang with analysis', even took direct action in the Lower East Side, pushing their initial agenda further. By referring to Native Americans as a symbol of resistance, the Motherfuckers aspired to be a primitivistic, and thus anti-modern, avant-garde, and against perceived bourgeois ideologies. With continued reflection on art and society, the group evolved into yet another collective, the International Werewolf Conspiracy, incorporating elements of modernism, romanticism, and pop culture.

Similarly reflecting on the fusion of art and society, as well as the performative aspect of transgression, Aisling Reid discusses the function of the eye and vision in transgressing both material boundaries and role restrictions. She focuses on late medieval Italy, where several cases of iconoclasm were triggered by people's fear of punishment by representations of the Madonna and saints whom they had allegedly offended by sinning in front of their images. This practice of eye-gouging and defacement of religious representations is not dismissed as a mere instantiation of superstition, but is rather interpreted as a consequence of specific dynamics involving the portrait, its referent, and the gazer. As modern theorists such as Alfred Gell show, the attribution of agency to a character's iconic representation is a current cognitive phenomenon. The viewer does not stop at the visible signs of a work of art (the so-called 'immediate object'), but goes beyond them by attributing the referent's characteristics directly to his portrayal, which becomes a 'dynamic object'. With exemplary case studies of an ever-present phenomenon, Reid shows that eyes act as a threshold through which vitality and agency enter the concrete world of the observer from the ideal dimension to which the portrayed referent belongs. Such dynamics could also be used by the gazer to limit the agency of the artwork by altering its visual capabilities, so as to 'close the door' to interaction-

More broadly, Reid also touches upon the use of physical violence as a means of personal expression, which is in these cases a pre-emptive measure against divine retribution, through which the iconoclasts conferred power and agency to seemingly inanimate objects.

Beth Hodgett likewise ponders the function and signification of violence in relation to the body, in the contexts of religion and spirituality, where it can serve as a vehicle by which to transcend one's status. She offers a new reading of Francesco Del Cairo's *The Martyrdom of St Agnes* by drawing on George Bataille's theories of transgression. The seventeenth-century painting by Del Cairo depicts St Agnes as she is being stabbed in the breast by an attacker while trying to protect her virginity. Hodgett explains how, to Bataille, humans are fundamentally discontinuous beings. Communication or experiencing continuity and intimacy with 'the other' is only possible through acts which might lead to a separate existence of the self, such as erotic and mystical experiences. Within medieval female mysticism, Hodgett argues, this disruption of the intact self and the search for continuity (through the divine) is often symbolized by the physical wound. This can be attested, for instance, in the popular contemplation of the Wounds of Christ or the phenomenon of the stigmata. Hodgett applies these insights to *The Martyrdom of St Agnes*; by giving attention to the swooning state of Agnes in the picture, she shows how violence and eroticism are fused together and suggests that the laceration of Agnes' skin can be interpreted as a symbolic sexual penetration. Here the painting allows us a glimpse of a transgressive, even transcendent moment. The violence ruptures the boundaries, not only of the body, but also of the divide between human and divine.

The transgressive potential of female sexuality and eroticism in the treatment of religious figures can also be observed in a series of paintings by Marlene Dumas, titled *Magdalena* (1995-96), which is explored by Timea Lelik. The series in question counts eight portraits of Mary Magdalene, of which Lelik

analyses two emblematic pieces: *Magdalena (Newmans's Zip)* and *Magdalena (Manet's Queen/Queen of Spades)* (both 1995). A commonly featured biblical figure in the art historical canon, Mary Magdalene has been the object of an ambivalent overall portrayal, ranging from prostitute to saint. Providing first an overview of earlier literary and pictorial representations in the Christian tradition, Lelik argues that Dumas transgresses traditional depictions of Mary Magdalene, consequently challenging female subjectivity in art, and departing from the usual religious concerns. Calling for a deconstruction of Western portraiture, Lelik bolsters her analysis by exploring perceptions of female nudity in Dumas' work in relation to referenced works such as Manet's, the painterly methods applied by the artist in the *Magdalena* series, and the contextualization of the entire series within Dumas' oeuvre.

Combining a similar interest in the adaptation and reinterpretation of a canon through variations in form, albeit in textual instead of visual sources, Rena Bood investigates the theme of rule-breaking in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the way in which it is handled by its eighteenth-century Dutch translators. She argues that free will and capability are central to Milton's description of Eve (the 'Rule-breaker in Chief'), since they are needed to make her fall from divine grace a meaningful event. Two of Milton's Dutch translators, Jakobus van Zanten and Lambertus Paludanus, however, see Eve in a different light, based on their perceptions of women and female sexuality: rather than focusing on her intellectual capacities, they see Eve as a primarily physical being, whose disobedience of God is part of the source material, but ultimately lacks any real significance. Where Milton's Eve breaks the rules by conscious choice, her counterpart in the translations does so because the traditional narrative compels her to. This casts an entirely different light on a character whose rule-breaking is perhaps the most significant in Christianity's collective consciousness, and on the interpretations of Milton's work as a whole.

Rounding off this second collection of articles on the theme of rule-breaking, Looi van Kessel's paper is less about conscious transgression than the inevitability of breaking accepted social convention. He focuses on a performance artwork, *Timelining* (2014), by New York-based choreographers Brennan Gerard and Ryan Kelly, in which two actors perform a half-scripted, half-improvised dialogue while moving through a space. It is a work which compels its audience to think about the impossibility of total conformity or shared experience in any relationship, suggesting that however much two people might imagine themselves as a couple – a single unit – their memories and experiences will always run along separate paths which meet only to diverge again. All temporal experience is thus 'queered' and all intimate relationships inevitably transgress the absolute temporality assumed as the baseline of hetero-patriarchal normativity.

Beyond a common focus in method and general overarching theme, each of the featured articles contemplates how art can be used to express transgressive ideas, and how artworks, in doing so, in themselves can become physical, tangible acts of transgression. These discussions are also connected through a common interest in the entire process of rule-breaking, from the identity of the transgressors and their motivations, the nature of the rules broken and the status of the authorities contested, the political, social, economical, and artistic circumstances in which the transgressions occur, to the positive and negative consequences of the acts. What results is a complex patchwork of different transgressions unquestionably tied to their specific contexts, but also – and perhaps more interestingly – connected to one another through their belonging on the broad and colourful spectrum of human experience.

This fifth issue of the *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* could not have been produced without support from various people, whom we wish to thank. Since our launch in 2013, our publisher, Leiden University Library, and especially our liaison Birte Kristiansen, has been of continuous assistance. We

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Karine Laporte, Fleur Praal, Yves van Damme, Andrea De March, Nynke Feenstra, Renske Janssen, Elizabeth Mitchell, and Sara Polak

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BLACK MASK AND UP AGAINST THE WALL MOTHERFUCKER AN AVANT-GARDE'S REVOLUTIONARY LAST STAND (NEW YORK CITY, 1966-1969)

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In 1966, a small group of New York City artists informed by the avant-garde maxim of turning art into life came together as a performative, militant organization with a sharp, yet unattainable demand: total revolution. Black Mask, as the group called itself, published a magazine in which they outlined the elements of this demand as part of a wider art historical process that could be traced back, through Surrealism and Dada, to Futurism and its radical amalgamation of politics and aesthetics. With a view towards collective practice, the group evolved into what one of its members called a 'street gang with analysis', changing its name to Up Against the Wall Motherfucker and embracing the more violent aspects of the avant-garde's politicization of aesthetics. As their struggle developed, so did their understanding of art's function as antithesis to the conventionally political, and in the course of yet another transformation (this time into what they called the International Werewolf Conspiracy), the collective found new ways to deploy modernist, Romantic, and pop-cultural referents. Through analysis of a few select texts and images, this article gives an overview of how the group perceived the intersection of aesthetics and politics.

Against the backdrop of the post-war economic boom, various avant-gardes sprung to action in Western countries in a bid to change not only art, but

everything. Following a historical line that the 1960s French collective Situationist International (SI) drew from Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism all the way through to the 1950s and 1960s, many of these groups were deeply concerned with the modernist life/art divide. They saw it as coming to grips with the fact that every possible better world contained in art was being held back, even actively combated by all social orders. The SI, which continually engaged with libertarian political philosophy in an attempt to create a different world, is a good example of the disenchantment with both politics and the art world as experienced by avant-garde at large. As Futurists had done with fascism, and Berlin Dadaists and Surrealism with communism, several collectives from the 1960s which positioned themselves against the same historical background developed heterogeneous approaches to aesthetics and politics, dialectically bridging the gap between life and art by using unconventional methods. They envisioned themselves as fiercely committed to vanguardist principles, not as new avant-gardes but as the resulting synthesis of artistic and political theories put into practice by their predecessors. Groups like the SI and its affiliates, such as King Mob in the UK, Black Mask in the US, Drakabygget in Scandinavia, Gruppe SPUR in Germany, and others, located themselves within this art-political praxis as the next logical step in the Hegelian dialectic of history, developing a wide variety of texts and images that constitute what Stewart Home has called an ‘assault on culture’.¹ This generalized assault took different forms depending on the context, but what all of these collectives share in common is a re-evaluation of the history of the avant-garde and a reflection on their own position within it, thus defining their own place directly within the milieu of art as radical politics, whether on the left (Constructivism, Berlin Dada, Surrealism) or on the right (Futurism). The continuation and further evolution of the concept of the life/art divide by these vanguards and its application to specific forms of artistic and political activity led the philosopher Mario Perniola to call the SI ‘the last avant-garde’,² which reveals a set of historical assumptions shared not only with Peter Bürger’s theory of the vanguard but also with the artists themselves, in terms of a fundamental

1 Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War* (Stirling, UK: AK Press, 1991).

2 Mario Perniola, *Los Situacionistas: Historia crítica de la última vanguardia del siglo XX* (Madrid: Acuarela and A. Machado, 2008).

revolutionary conceptual core that anchors politics and aesthetics together in the interest of destroying the established order. In other words, what these writers and groups attribute to the avant-garde is a philosophical refusal that is not limited to the conventional field of artistic endeavours, but rather sees this field as opening a horizon of possibilities that overflow into the social, the economic, and the political.

With this background in mind, this article will focus on Black Mask and its subsequent transformations until 1970. It was formed in New York City in 1966, becoming Up Against the Wall Motherfucker (UAWMF) in late 1968 and then the International Werewolf Conspiracy (IWWC) by the end of 1969. I will attempt to articulate my focus around this avant-garde as a collectivity because I believe that a general overview of this evolving group grants deeper insights into its workings both as a movement and an organization. The mention of specific individuals works as a guideline into a wider history of these collectives, and not as an indication of key points for the interpretation of the groups' ideas and intents.

Black Mask's history can be mapped in a relatively straightforward manner against broader American events in this period: the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement were in full swing, and the formation of the group corresponds to both the opposition to the war and the conflicts surrounding the status of black people and other minorities in the country. While Black Mask was small in both organizational capacity and membership, UAWMF became a much more concrete presence in New York's Lower East Side, traditionally a working-class immigrant neighbourhood. The IWWC however was a much looser grouping, arguably living up to its name by basically existing only in representations and images: the defeat of the 1968 movements and the inability to keep UAWMF's revolutionary rhetoric alive pushed the group into obscurity. In any case, the relationship between these collectives and their social context is primarily one of conflict, organized around opposition to the

Vietnam War and the societal elements that both permitted and encouraged it. This is connected to an essential opposition to inequality, expressed most clearly in the race and class divisions in the US, mostly attributed to the same social group, namely the bourgeoisie, which broadly encompasses elites and governments.³ Both Black Mask and UAWMF sought out alliances with other groups, finding them throughout the years in various artists and artist collectives (King Mob in the UK), the social milieu of thinkers like anarchist philosopher Murray Bookchin, or in more formal associations like the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and even the Black Panthers.⁴

Until very recently, Black Mask/Up Against the Wall Motherfucker has not received significant consideration from scholars. However, there are some important contributions by Gavin Grindon, who has written articles on the topic. Furthermore, Boo-Hooray Gallery in New York hosted an exhibition in 2014 about the texts and images of this group. Therefore, the objective of this article is to contribute to the expansion of this growing corpus of knowledge by tracing the collective's transformations through analysis of selected works. By looking at how the group approximated aesthetics and politics, it provides an account of how the artistic avant-garde foundations of Black Mask and UAWMF produced a unique set of radical politics. Black Mask's praxis consciously pushed the collective far away from the art world into a social domain that made it incompatible with the twentieth century art historical canon, inasmuch as the canon represented a neutral vision of the avant-garde. Distinct from these historiographical concerns, however, comes yet another reason for the importance of the study of groups marginal to the art world such as Black Mask: contemporary social movements like Occupy Wall Street, in finding theoretical resonances with the past, have found themselves engaging with the SI, as evidenced in *Adbusters'* continuous references to it.⁵ Black Mask, although marginal to the SI, undertook the first occupation of Wall Street in the performance "Wall St. is War St." in 1966, with a Futurist program of a shared language between art and politics, making possible a

3 "The aesthetic revolution of today must be a part of the total revolution. A revolution which will bring about a society where the arts will be an integral part of life, as in primitive society, and not an appendage to wealth. [...] A society free of bureaucracy, both totalitarian and bourgeois". *Black Mask 2* (1966), Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives: PE.036.

4 Gavin Grindon, "Poetry Written in Gasoline: Black Mask and Up Against the Wall Motherfucker," *Art History* 38 (2015), 170-209.

5 Adbusters is a Canadian organization and magazine that formulated the initial concept and the publicity of Occupy Wall Street in 2011. For further reference on their contact with the Situationists, see Ken Knabb, "The Situationists and the Occupation Movements (1968/2011)," *Counterpunch*, 8 November 2011, accessed 11 August 2016, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2011/11/08/the-situationists-and-the-occupation-movements-19682011/>.

violent modification of any – and ultimately, all – environment(s), essentially treating the body politic as artwork.

This account is constructed chronologically, beginning with Black Mask (1966-1968), moving on to Up Against the Wall Motherfucker (1968-1969), and ending with the International Werewolf Conspiracy (1969-1970). Some images produced by each group are analysed as paradigmatic cases; their theoretical positions reflect upon their own practice, and enact an avant-garde program that intends to bring about a profound revolutionary moment of defiance. One last, important background aspect to underline is that the social composition of these groups, while varied throughout their existence, is characterized in racial and gender terms by the fact that both the founders and many of the members who produced images and texts were white and male. This is clearly problematic with regards to the adoption of Black Panther-styled rhetoric and the groups' use of the image of the Native American, as is explored below.

⁶ Birthdates are unknown. Ron Hahne and Ben Morea had been working in Group Center since 1962, when it was founded by New York artist Aldo Tambellini. Both had been practicing artists, but Morea had no formal education. Apparently, they were around 20 years old when they joined the collective. Ron Hahne had arrived to New York from Los Angeles. See Aldo Tambellini, "A Syracuse Rebel in New York," accessed 26 August 2016, <http://www.aldotambellini.com/rebel.html>; Johan Kugelberg (ed.), *Opposition: Black Mask, Ben Morea & UAWMF*, exhibition catalogue, 17 January-14 February 2014, Boo-Hooray, New York, 5; Grindon, "Poetry Written in Gasoline," 7.

⁷ Aldo Tambellini, interview by Anna Brodzky, *Arts Canada* 113 (1967), 9.

BLACK MASK

In New York in 1966, two artists, Ron Hahne and Ben Morea,⁶ split from a multi-media arts collective called Group Center, a performance unit that was founded upon the avant-garde principle that constitutes a drive to bring art into life, and vice versa. One of the main concepts handled by Group Center was that of 'black':

[It] is [...] the beginning of everything [...]; black gets rid of historical definition. Black is a state of being blind and more aware. Black is oneness with birth. Black is within totality, the oneness of all [...]. Black will get rid of the separation of color at the end.⁷

Aldo Tambellini (b. 1930), the group's founder, added: "I strongly believe in the word [*sic*] 'black power' as a powerful message, for it destroys the old

notion of western man, and by destroying that notion it also destroys the tradition of the art concept".⁸ In opposing 'the old notion of western man' to the colour black (and to black power), there is an implicit definition of subject positions that, given the context, parts from racial distinctions, black and white. The 'old notion' is, of course, white, and it implies a series of elemental associations that give the concept its meaning. In this particular case, where black is 'oneness', 'blindness and more aware', as well as being able to get rid of 'historical definition', the white and western male subject therefore poses fragmentation, perceptual illusions or deceptions, and metanarrative differentiation.⁹ Hence, for Group Center the colour black was a vitalist negativity that potentially reframes the entire world under a new life-filled darkness, free from ideology (as perceptual self-deception) and the 'tradition of the art concept' that subjugates creativity to a limited strain of activity, an art that continually affirms the status quo.

And what was, for collectives like Group Center and later Black Mask, the status quo? The decade 1960-1970 was one of considerable turmoil in the United States, the era of the Civil Rights Movement and significant opposition to the Vietnam War. These had not yet reached their most critical points when Black Mask began; however, they would be reflected in the modifications undergone by the group over the course of its evolution. This turmoil is reflected in much of the art of the decade, from conceptual art to Fluxus,¹⁰ but what differentiates Black Mask and its later forms from these movements is essentially twofold: first, their understanding of art as a fundamentally political practice, and second, their consequent re-evaluation of both the anarchist and the Marxist traditions of political philosophy. The first point is already forcefully put across on the cover of the first magazine they produced as a collective (*Black Mask*, November 1966), where the group states:

A new spirit is rising. Like the streets of Watts we burn with revolution.
We assault your Gods... We sing of your death. DESTROY THE

8 Ibid., 9.

9 Here, 'historical definition' is understood under the same associations: an individuation that marks certain subjects of history as special, as more worthy of consideration than others; in other words, history as the progressive history of white European men.

10 For more information on the generalized position of conceptual art regarding the war, see Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), xiii-xiv. About Fluxus' politics and position concerning the Cold War at large, see Cuahtémoc Medina, "The 'Kultur bolschewiken' I: Fluxus, the Abolition of Art, the Soviet Union, and 'Pure Amusement'," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 48 (2005), 179-92.

MUSEUMS... our struggle cannot be hung on walls. Let the past fall under the blows of revolt. The guerilla [*sic*], the blacks, the men of the future, we are all at your heels.¹¹ (Fig. 1)

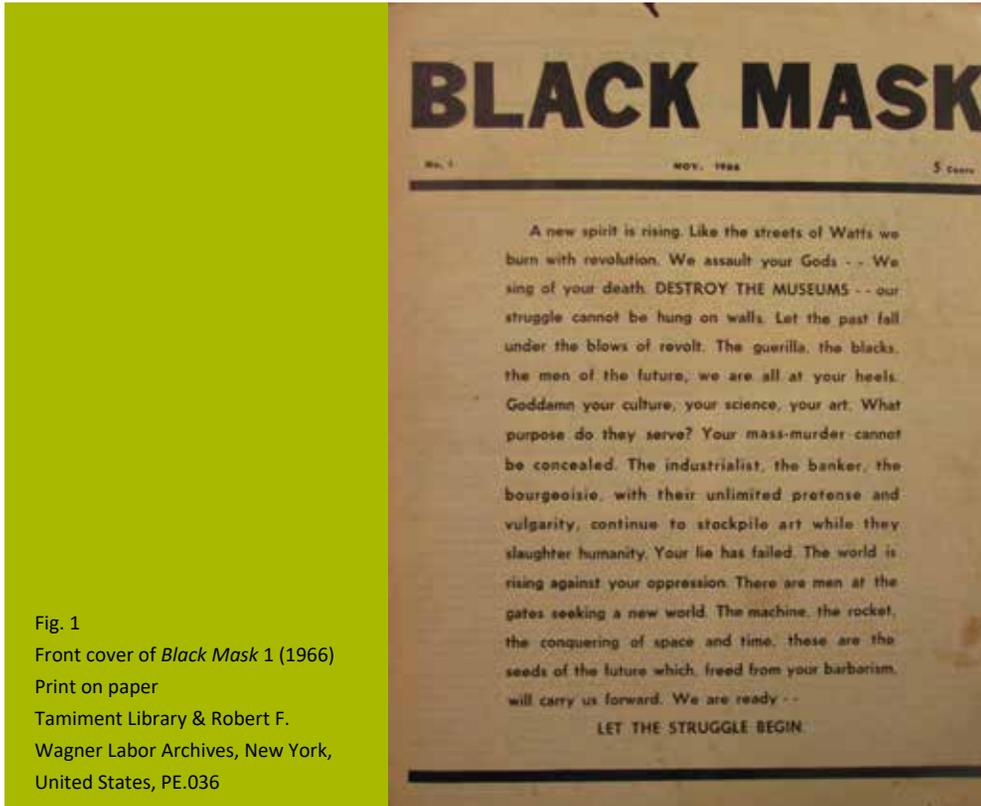


Fig. 1
Front cover of *Black Mask* 1 (1966)
Print on paper
Tamiment Library & Robert F.
Wagner Labor Archives, New York,
United States, PE.036

This quote establishes not only the tone of the group’s rhetoric but also its modernist articulation of critique, by connecting the 1965 Watts Riots in Los Angeles to the Futurist declaration of cultural war, an art that takes the form of a “struggle” that “cannot be hung on walls”. The second point – which will land the “blows of revolt” – is found throughout the texts produced by the group over the years, explained through the development of a Marxian praxis that makes the destruction of capitalism possible:

¹¹ *Black Mask* 1 (1966), Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives: PE.036.

In the brief history of the heights of proletarian struggles, the organization of workers' councils for workers' management of production have been the moments of revolutionary truth. [...] In the struggle between the power and the new proletariat, workers' and non-workers' councils will be the organs through which men rise to resolve political, social and economic questions [...]. The separation between these false categories, as the separation between work and leisure time, will eventually be dissolved.¹²

Their concern with organizational forms and the history of the Marxist and anarchist traditions, and the New Left's generalized critique of them in the 1960s, occurred simultaneously. The New Left critique began from a negative assessment of the Soviet Union as a driving force for progressivism, as well as a rejection of its most dogmatic tenets of revolutionary doctrine: in essence, a rejection of the Cold War metanarrative that divided the world into two distinct, immobile philosophies.¹³ In the history that starts with *Black Mask* and ends with the IWWC, the Marxist traditions laid the groundwork for the re-evaluation, and found in anarchism a powerful conceptual background for the performance of a revolutionary organization.

The language resulting from this challenge is violent and striking, and appropriates the rhetorical excesses of Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism. The group's engagement with the issues of the time, such as the internationalism that had a humanistic universalizing expression in the peace movement, acquires a distinctly belligerent bent that speaks rather of local race and class wars that find their most ominous embodiment in culture. The first two calls, published in the first two issues of their magazine – one to “destroy the museums” and the other to a “total revolution” – go hand-in-hand with the negation of the cultural order, and by extension all order, on one side and the creation of a new set of social relationships on the other. All their actions and the images they appropriated or produced revolve around this dialectic,

¹² *Black Mask* 7 (1967), Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives: PE.036.

¹³ On the origins of the New Left and its internationalist rejection of the Cold War divide, see Daniel Geary, “‘Becoming International Again’: C. Wright Mills and the Emergence of a Global New Left, 1956–1962,” *Journal of American History* 95 (2008), 710-36.

14 “We Are The Primitives of a New Era: An Interview with Aldo Tambellini (Part I),” by Ernesto Menéndez-Conde, accessed 6 December 2016, http://prod-images.exhibit-e.com/www_jamescohan_com/Art_Experience_NYC_Menndez_Conde_29_October_2013.pdf. This position reflects well Western post-war culture’s reformulated enthusiasm for technological development, at least when it comes to certain groups, including the French SI at its earliest stages. It is a position that even for fierce critics of the ideologies surrounding technology, such as Herbert Marcuse, remained attractive, inasmuch it also allowed for the utopian scenario of an ultimate liberation from work, and consequently, inequality. For more contextual information, see Robert M. Collins, *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

15 See, for example, the flyer titled “BLACK ZERO, ‘EXPANDED CINEMA’ AT THE BRIDGE” (23 November 1965), Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives: TAM530, box 1, folder 5.

stated in terms of artistic declarations of war, modernist maxims turned into revolutionary statements, and images from wildly different sources geared towards a final, decisive conflict with ‘the system’. The use of this concept is meant to signal an allegiance not to the causes of conventional politics like the earning of a few rights, but to a revolutionary endeavour that would put an end to capitalism itself. Its objective is to destroy the kind of totality set up by the rule of law in order to establish an anarchist social organization: a true totality, a black totality. After all, Group Center portrayed the achievements of modernity as the horizon of a new age, a historical leap of faith that treats its makers as the “primitives of a new era”,¹⁴ upon whose shoulders is laid the responsibility of avoiding yet another original sin: black, not the stars, was to be the guide in mapping a history emancipated from itself by projecting the beginning, the unity of the void, into the future. The language they employed is not entirely new, but rather infused with the rhetoric of Futurism.¹⁵ Under the influence of this movement, understood as one of the first avant-gardes to integrate the military implications of such a discourse into its artistic endeavours, Ron Hahne and Ben Morea steered away from the direction Group Center had taken and started a more militant, aggressive collectivity dedicated to enacting a new primitivism not so much as a glimpse of progress, but as a demand for it to happen in the here and now.

Black Mask, by producing a monthly magazine in the tradition of various avant-gardes, including Surrealism, stepped beyond Group Center in its engagement with modernity as a mass phenomenon. Whereas Group Center sought to ‘primitivize’ the relationship between artists and audience as one primarily of work and progress – they reached out to the Lower East Side community of New York with classes and workshops – Black Mask configured it as an ideological battleground in which the dissemination of ideas opens the collectivity to anyone willing to embrace its image of the world, which it represents as being subjected to needless injustice. In other words, Black Mask presented itself, through its magazine, as an essentially activist, revolutionary Romantic project.

Following Marinetti’s assertion that the Futurist declaimer should declaim “as much with his legs as with his arms”,¹⁶ the group understood artistic practice as inherently political, performing the language of the artistic collective as a way to access change in a different way from contemporaneous approaches.

The first selected image (Fig. 2) discussed briefly here is the cover of *Black Mask #10*, where the claim “EVERYONE CAN BE A DADAIST” is placed alongside a photograph of the sculpture by the English artist Henry Moore (1898-1986) entitled *The Helmet* (1939). This is in turn underlined by the headline of “Lasime Tushinde Mbilashaka” (Swahili for “We shall conquer without a doubt”), a slogan from the black activist H. Rap Brown (b. 1943), who was the leader of a coalition between the Black Panther Party and a university students’ organization that opposed the war in Vietnam.

16 RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979), 14.



Fig. 2
Front cover of *Black Mask* 10 (1968)
Print on paper
Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner
Labor Archives, New York, United
States, PE.036

About *The Helmet*, Henry Moore said that it was “a kind of protection thing [...] and it became a recording of things inside other things. The mystery of semiobscurity [*sic*] where one can only half distinguish something. In the helmet you do not quite know what is inside”.¹⁷ Black Mask states that to be a Dadaist is to participate in “every form of revolutionary subversion [...]: hysteria, madness, abuse, black humor [...]”.¹⁸ It is an activity that is driven from below, from the layers of emotional life that are covered up by what the German critical theorist Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), who was popular among the politically engaged, urban, intellectual youth of the time, called one-dimensional Reason. It is a reason that ascribes meaning to everything within the reduced framework of a positivistic progress, and of an objectivity that deploys its material oppression as psychological repression. Pairing these distinct elements together, it could be said that Reason’s helmet protects the wearer from him or herself, from the animal that aches for release; however, if subverted, the helmet becomes Moore’s “mystery of semiobscurity”, a breakdown of communication in the face of political antagonism, the revolutionary’s (the animal’s) last resource to get through any battle alive. Subversion – originally a military term – is a fight from within, an overturning of common sense that, in the traditional image of class warfare, befits those who are not yet capable of open belligerence, those without mass support, perhaps even those without any support at all. It is in this sense, then, that Black Mask alludes, importantly, to the German Dadaist Johann Baader (1875-1955): “schizophrenic, [Baader] becomes the key figure of Berlin Dada. He is Tzara’s ‘Idiot’ transcended: the Idiot/Madman/Guerilla [*sic*] in life – the man without aim or prospects, the ‘lowest’ of all, the shit of America”.¹⁹

17 Henry Moore, “Moore on His Methods,” by Michael Chase, *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 March 1967, reprinted in Alan G. Wilkinson (ed.), *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 214.

18 *Black Mask* 10 (1968), Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives: PE.036.

19 *Ibid.*

Using the terms laid out in this composition, Baader no longer carries the helmet of Reason, and because of that he is sovereign: his repression dissolves since he no longer has an aim or prospects; because he is free of all concerns beyond the wish for a paradise on Earth he is one and every man (and woman), the lowest of the low. Ideologically speaking, this coincides with the view that

Native Americans and blacks are the lowest of the low in the United States at this point in history, belonging to the *Lumpenproletariat*, regardless of their economic status, systematically oppressed to keep them far from wealth and parity before the law. Accompanied by Rap Brown's letter, according to which "aggression is the order of the day",²⁰ subversion retakes its military origin and summarily deploys a violence that targets everything, as a Dadaist conquest that shall "rejoice in [America's] destruction and ruin".²¹ This is a rhetorical fulfilment of a declaration of war inscribed in the magazine cover's layout design: BLACK is Dada's impulse towards an absolute affirmation of nothingness, MASK is Moore's modernist sculpture as the inversion of reasonable argument, as Rap Brown's negation of government as "the enemy of Mankind".²² Thus the group's name finds its performative truth in the promise of a revolutionary future anchored in the aesthetics of politics and its avant-garde partner in crime, "the scent of apocalypse".²³

UP AGAINST THE WALL MOTHERFUCKER!

Early in 1968 members of Black Mask distributed a leaflet in the Lower East Side that said "you have noticed by now that BLACK MASK is no longer arriving [...] The reason is a direct result of our theory – The movement must be real or it will not be. Now the call is INTO THE STREETS...[emphasis original]".²⁴ Up Against the Wall Motherfucker was thus born, taking their name from the LeRoi Jones poem "Black People!" of late 1967.²⁵ The membership base for this new group was Black Mask, but its organizational principles now shifted towards something much less recognizably artistic than Black Mask. It was no longer a performance collective constantly in flux but a more solid organization primarily modelled on two kinds of counter-cultural social formation: the rural, self-sufficient, and loose relations of the hippie commune, and the urban, parasitical, pop-cultural, and closely knit relations of the street gang. There is a third element, the one that unites these last two, which is the idea of the tribe, rooted in more or less stereotypical images of Native Americans. Ben Morea,

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ben Morea and Ron Hahne, *Black Mask & Up Against the Wall Motherfucker: The Incomplete Works of Ben Morea, Ron Hahne, and the Black Mask Group* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2011), 86.

25 Grindon, "Poetry Written in Gasoline," 22.

founder of these groups, called this new entity “The Family”; this is a term that is not an ironic deployment but an appropriation, an artistic move that allows the group to take old material and destroy it to form something new, something that is, to them, true. Tracing a history of resistance movements in the US, Morea started to craft the identity of the Motherfucker as one rooted, first, on the loyalty of commitment to a group, second, on the group’s belonging to a certain land, and lastly, on the opposition to (social) fragmentation. Morea found in Native Americans the answer to the question of what it is to be an American radical: “socially and politically, I related to the Native American as the origin of the American identity”.²⁶

26 Kugelberg, *Opposition: Black Mask, Ben Morea & UAWMF*, 13.

27 Geronimo (b. 1829, Mexico, d. 1909, US) was an Apache leader who commanded bands of men for thirty years (from around 1851 to 1885) in a continuous war against the States of Mexico and the US. His military achievements and particular resilience when faced against forces deemed superior earned him a reputation for fierceness, even after his capture and status as a prisoner of war of the US after 1887. His persona was launched into celebrity in the US after he began to be paraded in fairs and expositions by the victorious US government in the early 1900s. See Charles Leland Sonnichsen, “From Savage to Saint: A New Image for Geronimo,” in *Geronimo and the End of the Apache Wars*, ed. Charles Leland Sonnichsen (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

Native Americans have been idealized in various ways by European authors ever since the conquest and colonization of the continent; the Enlightenment image of the noble savage is only one of the enduring examples of such appropriation. In the case of the Motherfuckers, taking the image of the legendary Geronimo²⁷ (Fig. 3) as the basis for rebellion completely overlooks the mostly institutionally based appeals of Native Americans in the twentieth century. Instead, it highlights the violent last-stand rhetoric associated with wartime occupation; recalling the nineteenth-century wars against indigenous peoples becomes a powerful political statement that also functions as an idealized representation of what a community should look like. Hence, Native Americans become in UAWMF a representation of organizational principles that are essentially primitivist, a modern anti-modern form of avant-garde assault on bourgeois ideologies. Geronimo’s appropriation of the European gun in that image is, in this sense, an analogical reference to the group’s re-signification of the family; usually accompanied by the idea of self-defence, it also presents a series of connected propositions articulated by classical anarchist ethics, insofar as the image of the Native American comprises a different set of injustices from that of the Civil Rights Movement. Under this light, it is a tight community of outsiders rejected and ridiculed for their way of life, which romantically refuses to stand down and goes to battle even against

impossible odds. The affinity group, which is the core organizational concept for UAWMF, is intuitively born from natural law (“[it] is a pre-organization force, it represents the drive out of which organization is formed”²⁸), and has a pre-modern history²⁹ that in its association with the resistant image of Geronimo and the Native American tribal aesthetic constitutes a primitivist idealism. In this idealization, the Native American has a deep relation to the land (close to the ‘ecological Indian’³⁰), to territory as a revolutionary-mythical point of congregation that differs from the idea of nation in its anthropological throwback to the federative constitution of pre-Columbian North Americans. The anthropology is simple: the first step is the individual, then the family unit, then the tribe, then the community, and, lastly, a people. Mixed with the Marxist narrative of the seeds of the new society being produced in the old, this view of the Native American attempts to establish, like many sci-fi novels of the time, a post-national and yet primitive vision of the future, except UAWMF was realizing it in the present. The group proposed an experimental mode of organization: a symbolic collectivity that by ridding itself of modern law would achieve an anarchic modification of space and time, in which territory stops being property and returns to nature, while time is extended infinitely in revolution instituted as a community-binding ritual.

28 *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker*, 1968, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives: TAM530, box 1, folder 62.

29 “In so-called ‘primitive’ unitary societies the affinity group attempts to balance a complexity so thorough that it approaches totality. But the division of labour that arises from the struggle for survival causes a fragmentation & un-evenness in the distribution of material as well as psychological & cultural wealth”. Ibid.

30 Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999).

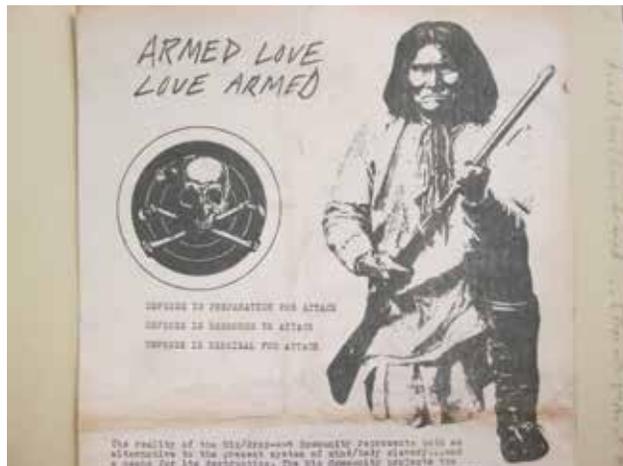


Fig. 3
Armed Love, Love Armed
Leaflet, 1969
Print on paper
Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York, United States, TAM.530, box 1, folder 40

31 "Ben Morea: An Interview," by Iain McIntyre, 2006, accessed 31 August 2016, <https://libcom.org/history/against-wall-motherfucker-interview-ben-morea/>.

32 Osha Neumann, who was a member of the group, recalled: "Ben [Morea] was always vigilant in his search for weakness, and insistent in his demands for loyalty. The commitment he demanded, and that we were quick to demand of each other, knew no boundaries. We concealed our vulnerability. Ben rewarded us with the promise to protect us with his life". This could be seen, in essence, as a warrior code, a Romantic, honourable pledge of allegiance. Osha Neumann, *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker: A Memoir of the '60s, With Notes for Next Time* (New York: Seven Stories, 2008), 59.

33 "The position of women in the Motherfuckers group left much to be desired", decried a pamphlet by author G.A.N. in 1969, which offered a scathing analysis of UAWMF shortly after it ceased to be. G.A.N., *Untitled Critique*, 1969, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives: TAM530, box 2, folder 5.

UAWMF produced a single magazine during its existence, but it reached out to various underground publications in New York to distribute their images and texts, a situation that lasted for two years, until the end of 1969. Called "a street gang with analysis" by one of its members, the Motherfuckers took control, however briefly, of a part of New York's Lower East Side, 'adopting' all sorts of radicals into their idea of 'the Family' and instigating various riots and confrontations with the police. Eventually, they were able to establish legal services for the community, food banks, free stores, and other institutions outside of State control³¹ that sought to give concreteness to the idea of liberated territory and on-going war with capitalism. In turning towards modernist primitivism and the expansion of their membership through a system of honour,³² which is to say turning towards sources that made it possible to conceive alternative discourses of modernity, they re-developed the path first trodden by Dadaists and Surrealists that found in the trash products of progress a youthful subversive element. At this point, it is worth remembering that the main authors of the group were white and male, which presents a problem that, to these groups, was resolved in race and class consciousness. Black Mask and UAWMF were highly conscious of race and class matters, and their own position in the social landscape is made versatile by means of a populist logic that articulates distinct oppressions into a single front, without embracing single forms of protest. It is, indeed, a paradox ideologically resolved, and it is interesting to see that gender issues would be pointed out at the time in contemporary critiques of the groups by female peers.³³ In any case, this populist logic is what drives the appropriation of the negative images that the media had crafted of the dirty hippie, the beatnik, the criminal, the young gangster, the blacks, and so on: distinct subject positions that nonetheless present the possibility of sharing elements constitutive of each subjectivity. UAWMF attempted to synthesize this aesthetic terror of an upcoming end of civilization not by nuclear apocalypse but by cultural subsidence into a mythical threat, a monster literally embodied in the visages of the counter-cultural enemies of the US.



Fig. 4
 Untitled
Rat Subterranean News, insert, 1969
 The Fales Library & Special
 Collections, New York, United
 States, AP2.R36

This idea is well expressed in an image published in the magazine *Rat* in 1969 (Fig. 4), a montage of *The Incredible Hulk* panels, speech globes, drawings, and word interventions made by an anonymous author. It depicts the Hulk in a psychedelic struggle that flows from inside to outside, morphing his body into a near-disintegrating mass of flesh and particles that angrily rages against ideological deception (“the more I struggle – the tighter it wraps itself around me!!”) only to be partially consumed and reconstituted by pain and anger: the dramatic cry “can’t let leader murder all those innocent people!” is focused into the preparation for a great punch, “but the madder we motherfuckers get – the stronger we motherfuckers become!”. The outcome is the ultimate realization of such an expressionism of revolt: “now we will show you what power really is – !! – and it won’t fail me now!!” It is followed by the word

“NEVER” made into an onomatopoeia of the fist, the Great Refusal materialized into a bodily violence that breaks base matter, that breaks the page as it aims straight towards the viewer. The psychedelic consciousness of the Hulk, in its expansion and retraction as it struggles against its own conditioning and the despair of social rejection (“they made us outcasts”) comes into its final form as utter destruction of the Reality Principle, of the fourth wall that crumbles in the face of the subjectivity of the Motherfucker as both pop-cultural garbage and revolutionary monster. The struggle develops like a bad acid trip: everything collapses and alchemically joins together, only to clearly emerge when the Hulk shows sadness and then rage in extreme forms, neatly re-drawing his face and body for the viewer to see clearly before he cracks the page open with his fist. It is at that point that the Hulk character understands what “power really is”: a violent, terminal negation (“NEVER”), an apocalyptic war. And such a war, as an apocalyptic politics, can be thought of, at least in historical terms, through the prism of the sublime, or the lens of Romanticism as it deviated into the Gothic. As pressure from the authorities increased, the Motherfuckers became fewer, and they were eventually disintegrated by sheer force of arrests and closures of meeting places.

THE INTERNATIONAL WEREWOLF CONSPIRACY

In late 1969 UAWMF transitioned into a different collective, something darker, and yet humorous. The IWWC represents a further descent underground, an act of disappearance that nevertheless powers a haunting, ghostly form of organization that functions on the rhetorical force of the aggression of the unknown. It is no longer bound to a territory, and therefore to the politics-as-aesthetics implied in identity and the modification of everyday living according to the shared principles of a tribe or “Family”. Instead of the shared apartments of the Lower East Side and the community actions meant to defend that area of New York as part of a territorial claim, or the personal relationships held together by concepts such as honour and brotherhood, the

IWWC adopted an entirely different mode of existence no longer based on lived communality. This means that, detached and separated, the group relies entirely on representation; being in-formal, images become the basis of its existence, and therefore require an even more excessive rhetorical mode and a more violent tone, one that, driven by Gothicism, invites youths to become bitten by werewolves and eat their terrified parents.

The existence of the IWWC can be traced through the various images they produced from 1969 to 1970, and which they published through third-party magazines such as *Rat*. If Black Mask functioned like a performance unit, and UAWMF like an anarchist art collective, the IWWC was, as its name indicates, but a shadow of an organization. Since the police had been able to diminish the presence of the Motherfuckers in the Lower East Side by the end of 1969,³⁴ the IWWC had no centre of operations. Ben Morea, who had founded Black Mask, and who was the only person to be a member of all three groups, was by this time on the run from the New York authorities, which reflects the status of the IWWC as, primarily, a reaction to defeat. As a play on the name of the Industrial Workers of the World, the Conspiracy attempted to muster a parodist image of unionism as a Gothic vitalism, a juvenile appropriation of the internationalized threat of communism in the same manner in which UAWMF did for the image of the *Lumpenproletariat*.

Their manifesto “A Motherfucker Is a Werewolf” (Fig. 5) roars: “We are the ultimate Horror Show... Hideous Hair & Dangerous Drugs... Armed Love striking terror into the vacant hearts of the plastic Mother & pig-faced Father”.³⁵ This position takes the contemporaneous stereotypes – such as the hippie and his long hair, the criminal and his tattoos – to the extreme, attempting to exploit the conspiratorial image of communism in American pop culture to create the sense that all youths are, potentially, werewolves, that the enemy of society (the consumerist ‘fake’ mother and the authoritarian figure of the father) is right inside the home. The manifesto centres the question of revolution on an

34 Neumann, *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker*, 113.

35 “A Motherfucker Is a Werewolf,” *Rat Subterranean News* (1969), 13, The Fales Library & Special Collections: AP2.R36.

identity that is ambiguous only to those who do not know, to those in power: “Where do they come from?’ Who knows. ‘What do they want?’ They won’t say. But the moon knows. And the WEREWOLVES know. And the fat frightened giant gulps tranquilizers while his children grow hair and fangs and leave home to run with the wolves”.³⁶

36 Ibid.

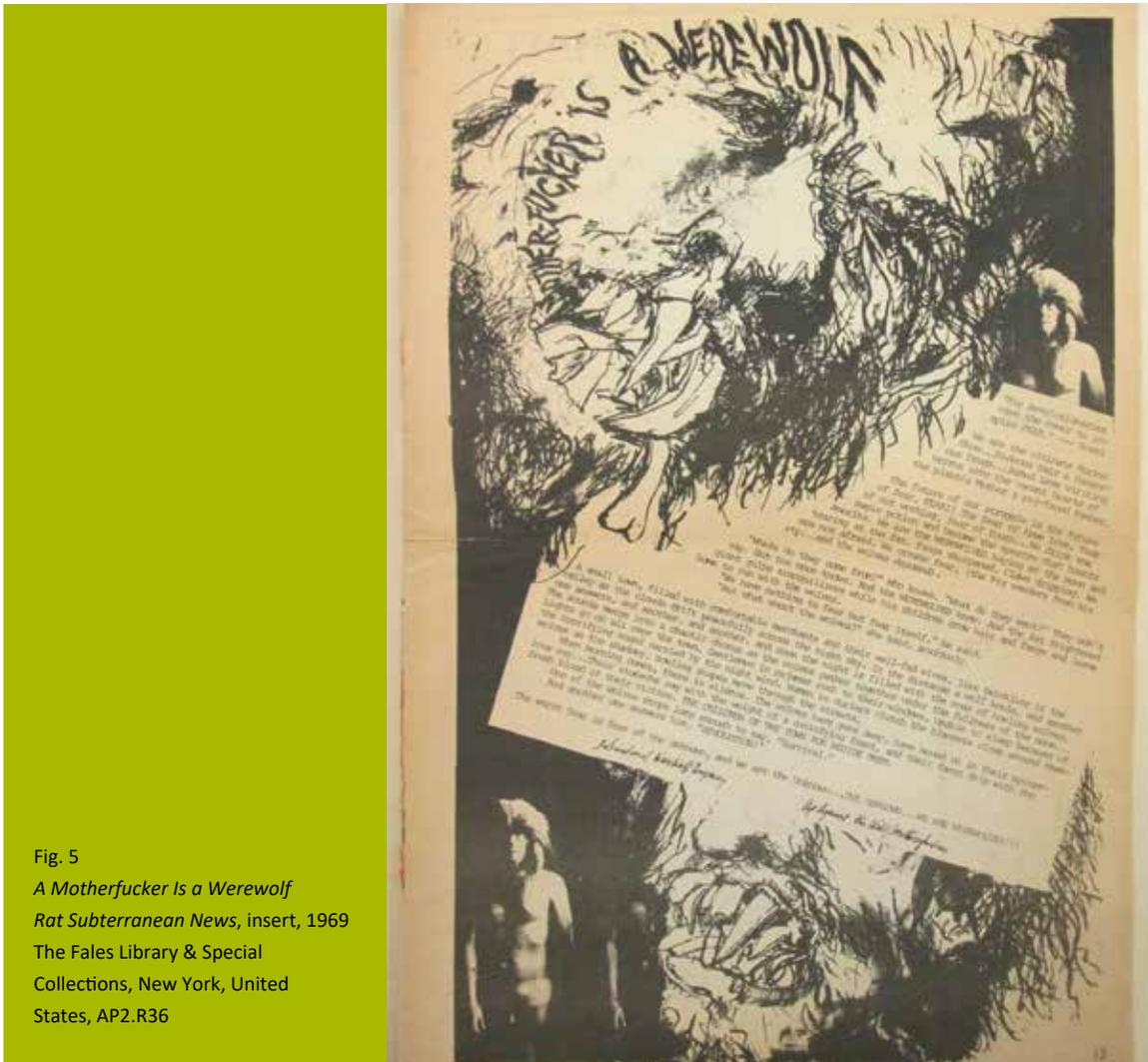


Fig. 5
A Motherfucker is a Werewolf
Rat Subterranean News, insert, 1969
The Fales Library & Special
Collections, New York, United
States, AP2.R36

CONCLUSION

These 1960s groups, who share a common point of origin in the works and writings of Black Mask, present a vanguardist approach to the question of aesthetics and politics that is arguably unique. While the philosophical underpinnings are similar to those of what Peter Bürger called the “historical avant-garde”, the group that started with Black Mask developed a praxis that, like the Futurism of the 1920s or the experiment of the surrealists against Fascism in the one-off journal *Contre-Attaque*, offers a brand of resistance defined by the erasure not only of the art/life divide but also that of politics/aesthetics. It is worth, however, revisiting these highly charged works to better comprehend the history of avant-garde movements as such, considering their social implications and what it means to create an art which definitively attempts to distance itself from the art-world. This short account of Black Mask and its transformations aims to open up new lines of research regarding these somewhat obscure moments of avant-garde history.

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BREAKING IMAGES AND BREAKING THE GAZE

ICONOCLASM IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN ITALY

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This article explores the ways people interacted with religious images in late medieval and early modern Italy. It considers why the eyes of anthropomorphic images were sometimes targeted by iconoclasts. Using the anthropological theory of Alfred Gell, among others, it demonstrates the potential for images to transcend their structure as 'representations' and be perceived or described as divine instantiations which could interact with supplicants.

Religious images in medieval Italy were frequently attributed an animacy that enabled them to transcend the confines of their material structure and directly interact with people. Medieval miracle stories abound with accounts of moving Madonnas and speaking images of the Christ Child. Many describe how images 'saw' the events which unfolded before their eyes, while others recount instances of defacement of the eyes of these images. This article will assess attitudes to the vivacity of images by discussing iconoclasts' targeting of the eyes. It will initially outline some accounts of eye destruction before exploring late medieval and modern theories on the gaze.

IMAGE EYE-GOUGING IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN ITALY

In his *Florentine Diary*, the fifteenth-century diarist Luca Landucci recounts the case of Bartolomeo de Cases, an Iberian Jew who defaced three Marian statues

in Florence just after the feast of the Assumption, including the statue of Mary and Christ at Orsanmichele:¹

E a dì 17 d'agosto 1493, intervenne questo caso ch'un certo marrano, per dispetto de' Cristiani, ma più tosto per pazzia, andava per Firenze guastando figure di Nostra Donna, e in fra l'altre cose, quella ch'è nel pilastro d'Orto San Michele, di marmo, di fuori. Graffiò l'occhio al bambino e a Santo Nofri; gitto sterco nel viso a Nostra Donna. Per la qual cosa, e fanciugli gli coninciorono a dare co' sassi, e ancora vi posono le mani ancora uomini fatti, e infuriati, con gran pietre l'ammazzorono, e poi lo strascinarono con molto vituperio.²

The *Ricordanze* of Tribaldo de' Rossi offers a more detailed account of the events. De' Rossi writes that on 15 August 1493 a Jew (*marrano*) became involved in a fight with a group of Christian boys, one of whom he stabbed in the throat with a knife. He was arrested after the boys found the Jew sleeping in the Piazza della Signoria. The authorities had tortured him with eight pulls of the rope until he confessed to damaging the marble sculpture of the Virgin and Child at Orsanmichele by attacking the eyes of the Christ Child with a knife. The punishment meted out to him corresponded to the crime he had committed: as he had gouged out the eyes of a divine 'person', so too were his own eyes to be gouged. Tellingly, the punishment was to take place under the 'gaze' of the sculpture he had damaged, so that the holy image could literally 'see' retributive justice being carried out.³

A similar event occurred in 1486 in Lonigo, near Verona, where a Marian image was transfigured after purportedly being stabbed under her left eye. On 30 April of that year, two shoemakers travelling from Verona to Lonigo conspired along the way to rob and murder a third in their company. Having committed the crime, the pair entered a nearby church. Yet, as the thieves divided the spoils, they became aware that they were in the presence of a

1 Dana Katz, *The Jew in the Art of the Italian Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 99-118.

2 "On 17 August 1493 it happened that a certain Jew, in disrespect to Christians, but more through madness, went throughout Florence disfiguring images of Our Lady, including among others, the marble one outside in the pilaster of Orsanmichele. He scratched the eyes of the Baby and Saint Onophrius; he threw muck in the face of Our Lady. Because of this, the boys started to throw stones at him, and they were then joined by men, who, in their anger, killed him with big stones, who dragged him about with much malice" (trans. Aisling Reid). Luca Landucci, *Diario Fiorentino dal 1450 al 1516*, ed. Iodoco dal Badia (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1883), 66.

3 Katz, *The Jew in the Art of the Italian Renaissance*, 100-101.

divine gaze; a painting of the Madonna appeared to be watching their every move. Unnerved, they called the Virgin a whore and stabbed the image below her eye. The Madonna responded to the assault as if physically susceptible to the pain of injury and reached up to stem the blood which had begun to gush from the 'wound'. The shoemakers fled the scene, but were arrested and executed five days later.⁴

Various miracles were accredited to this Lonigo image, including the protection of people who had fallen from horses, the safeguarding of prisoners who suffered pulls of the *strappado*, and the curing of illness. Supplicants who had been worthy enough to receive help from the Madonna image began to commemorate her miraculous interventions by leaving wooden votive images (or *tavolette ex-voto*) around her shrine. The tablets generally depict the supplicant in a state of affliction, as, for example, a child bleeding with a pair of scissors, or the figure of the Madonna with hand raised to her hurt eye. The presence of the tablets demonstrates that the efficacy of the intervention was attributed not to the transcendent Madonna in heaven, but to her manifestation in the material image. Supplicants gave the image commemorative gifts so that she would literally see that they had been grateful; the tablets acknowledge that promises were kept by both participants in a devotional dialogue. Cumulatively, the tablets demonstrate the effectiveness and the divine agency of the image.

These types of medieval miracle stories make evident the importance of sensorial interaction with images in late medieval Italy. Christians habitually sought proximity and eye contact with representations of the divine believed capable of enacting miracles. In his compilation of the miraculous events attributed to a Marian fresco in Florence's Santissima Annunziata, for example, the writer Giovanni Angiolo Lottini recounts how in 1582 a cripple was healed by gazing upon holy images.⁵ Lionardo da Massa, from Carrara, had been ill for twelve years; he had sought all kinds of medical help, but to no avail. Finally,

4 Frederika H. Jacobs, *Votive Panels and Popular Piety in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3-5.

5 Giovanni Angiolo Lottini, *Scelta d'alcuni Miracoli e Grazie della Santissima Nunziata di Firenze* (Florence: Landini, 1636), 150-53.

he was ‘divinely inspired’ to visit Florence and pray before the *Nunziata* image. After many days, he had managed to hobble the whole way from Carrara to Florence in time for the Festival of the Madonna, held on 8 September. During the festival he saw the ‘Sacred Ornaments’ on show and fixed his eyes on many images while asking them for grace. He then went to church, heard Mass and showed the Marian image his disability. At some point during his discourse with the image, he felt a breath in all his bones, flesh, and joints; suddenly his ills vanished and he was able to lift his arms. Lionardo rejoiced and left his crutches there as a testimony to the miracle that had occurred.⁶ Another of Lottini’s miracle stories describes how in 1577 a foreigner named Giovanni had his sight restored by praying to the *Nunziata* image (‘si pose invocar la Nunziata’). He offered a *tavoletta* in gratitude and memory of the event.⁷

Both accounts provide an insight into the way people interacted with anthropomorphic religious images in early modern Italy. It was not enough for Lionardo da Massa to pray to the transcendent virgin, or even visit a Marian image in his hometown Carrara. He had to beseech the *Nunziata* image directly and make eye contact. So too, when the blind man Giovanni prayed, he prayed not to the Virgin, but to the *Nunziata* image itself. Divinity was therefore perceived to be inherent in the material image, rather than the sacred person it symbolized. The belief that icons could instantiate the divine is similarly evidenced by the attribution of certain capabilities to particular religious images. The Florentine Madonna of Impruneta was credited with controlling the weather, as was the Bolognese Madonna at San Luca. Both were processed from their suburban shrines and brought into the city in times of need, where they were greeted at the gates by dignitaries as actual people, rather than mere portraits. A fourteenth-century Florentine chronicler who had witnessed the procession of the Madonna of Impruneta attributed miraculous events not to the transcendent Virgin but to her image, commenting: “This blessed *tavola* made miracles in coming and leaving”.⁸

6 “Da un celeste aviso, si pose in cuore di personalmente alla Nunziata di Firenze per se stesso andarne in voto; e quivi la Beata Madre de Dio pregare [...] Lionardo adunque [...] fatto provvedimento all’anima sua di quell Tesoro, che dal Vicario di Cristo in quell Giubileo si dispensa e poscia una, et altra volta rimiratosi da lui la magnificenzia de’ lumi, il decoro dell’ufficiare, e la pompa de’ Sacri Ornamenti, di che in quella Festività si fa mostra, e soprattutto alle tante Immagini, poste da chi impetrate le grazie aveva, tenendosi da lui fissi gli occhi, da quelle grandemente venne commosso. Così mentre egli in un certo modo veniva rapito da quelle considerazioni, e nella cappella udiva la Messa; col cuore mostrando sua calamità davanti all’Altare di Maria Vergine, ecco si sente in un punto discorrer come un fiato per tutte l’ossa, e per tutte le carni: il quale diffuso, e penetrante nelle giunture; quindi la debolezza, e la stupefazione disgombrava”.
Ibid., 152.

7 Ibid., 141-42.

8 Source taken from Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 63.

At this time, images of the divine were also believed to take offence at any misdemeanours they ‘saw’. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, for example, the preacher Savonarola admonished Florentines who committed sins “in the eyes of the Virgin Mary” and warned women not to go to church dressed like prostitutes because “the Annunciation [image] doesn’t want to see them dressed like that”.⁹ Accounts such as these demonstrate the perceived vitality of iconic representations; people interacted with images as living beings. As we have seen, the eyes of a holy statue were apparently worth the same as a living person’s, and people stabbed representations of eyes to prevent them from ‘seeing a crime’. But how are we to respond to such stories of active objects and seeing images? Is it enough to dismiss them as religious allegories or exempla of medieval credulity? Or, as scholars such as David Freedberg, Alfred Gell, and Megan Holmes have argued, is there a more complex notion of the agency of things at work in these accounts?

THEORIZING THE EYE: MODERN APPROACHES

The complexities of image agency have been researched by artist and theorist Barbara Bolt, whose *Art Beyond Representation* (2004) explores the ways in which images are sometimes perceived to transcend their structure as ‘representations’ to become ‘presences’. Drawing partly on the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, who differentiated between the ‘immediate object’ that a person sees (an object as represented by its sign) and the ‘dynamic object’ (the object as it really is, beyond its appearance in the sign), Bolt demonstrates the inadequacies of semiotic approaches to visual images. She states that the ‘dynamic object’ operates as a pressure on, or pulse in, the seeable. The insistence of the dynamic object constitutes a key energy or force in the work of art. Thus, a picture is not just the coded immediate object, but also bears the pressure of the dynamic object. In this way, the dynamic object prevents the picture from being reduced to just a sign.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid., 69.

¹⁰ Barbara Bolt, *Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 175.

Bolt asserts that these dynamical relations demonstrate the ways images can exceed their limits as representations and become more than the medium that bears them. Accordingly, materialization involves “mutual reflection rather than a one-way causality”.¹¹ Frameworks of these kinds clarify the ways in which medieval Christians interacted with their religious objects not simply as signs placed before their eyes to denote the divine, but as divine presences with agency of their own. Such ideas are apparent in the work of Caroline Walker Bynum, who remarks that medieval religious paraphernalia did not gesture toward a divinity located elsewhere, but drew attention to the divinity inherent in matter itself:

The goal for the crafters of such things such as *pietas*, Books of Hours, and winged altarpieces was, I argue, not so much conjuring up or gesturing toward the unseen as manifesting power in the matter of the object [...] Moreover, late medieval devotional images call attention to themselves not just as materials but as specific physical objects.¹²

Jane Bennett advocates a similar vitality of matter in her *Vibrant Matter* (2010), in which she argues that all ‘things’, including edibles, commodities, storms, and metals act as quasi-agents, with their own trajectories, potentialities, and tendencies. Adopting the terminology of Bruno Latour, Bennett conceives of the world as a collection of ‘actants’, which are sources of action that can be either human or nonhuman.¹³ Images are therefore not signs to be deciphered, but social agents that generate action in their surroundings. The most sophisticated account of the agency of images is provided by the late Alfred Gell, whose work informs my own views on medieval image interaction and iconoclasm. Gell denies that art objects are ‘sign-vehicles’ that convey meaning.¹⁴ Rather than attempt to interpret images as signs ‘as if’ they were texts, he proposes an alternative approach to the perception of imagery based on agency.¹⁵ In line with Marilyn Strathern’s assessment of gift economies, where “objects act as persons in relation to one another”,¹⁶ Gell suggests that

11 Ibid., 185.

12 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay in Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 28.

13 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), viii.

14 Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 5.

15 Ibid., 6.

16 Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 176.

material artefacts of all shapes and appearances can function as social agents between people. In the same way that a gift might be considered an extension of a person, or part of a 'distributed persona', so too material artefacts can abduct agency and become 'socially active'. Objects become endowed with a kind of 'personhood', as well as the behaviours and characteristics associated with human agency.¹⁷

Among the most pertinent examples of Gell's theory of distributed personhood at work in late medieval Italy are accounts of people's interactions with the Host. In his *Trecentonovelle*, the fourteenth-century writer Franco Sacchetti demonstrates the way in which religious objects might be conceptualized as literal, and even portable, manifestations of the divine. Novella 103 describes how a priest held the Host above his head to guide a group of people safely across the fast-flowing Sieve river. After reaching the other side of the bank, the group thanked the Eucharist itself that materialized God:

Ser Diedato, voi avete molto da ringraziare il nostro Signore Jesu Cristo, il quale avete in mano, ché per certo noi vi vedemmo annegato, se non fosse stato il suo aiuto.¹⁸

17 Megan Holmes, *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 181.

18 "Sir Diedato, you must thank our Lord Jesus Christ, who you hold in your hand, for we would certainly have drowned [sic; a faithful translation would be: "we would have seen you drowned"]) had it not been for his help" (trans. Richard Trexler). Source taken from Trexler, *Public Life*, 56.

In a similar vein, a fourteenth-century fresco known as the *Miracle of the Host Driving Away the Devil* in Orvieto Cathedral's Chapel of the Corporeal shows the Host as instantiated by a miniature figure of Christ. At the centre of the work a priest is shown standing behind an altar during the recitation of the Mass, his eyes looking upwards, and in his hands stands the Host transformed into the physical body of Christ. High in the Chapel's walls the idea is further iterated by two circular windows that frame the Crucifixion of Christ (Fig. 1). Filled with bright light, the windows resemble glowing Eucharists to metonymically demonstrate the distribution of divine personhood in the Host. By gazing on the Host, or even an image of the Host, supplicants could actually encounter divine personhood. In medieval Italy, religious objects and images



Fig. 1

The Chapel of the Corporal

Orvieto Cathedral, Orvieto, Italy

Photo: Steve Moses / CC BY 3.0

of various different kinds were inherited with a divine agency that enabled them to function as material deities.

Although Gell states that agency can be attributed to any material 'index', whatever its form or shape, he suggests that iconic, or anthropomorphic imagery serves to open 'routes of access' to an inwardness; holes are redolent of eyes which index an 'inner' mind and create a 'homunculus-effect':

The 'internalist' theory of agency [...] motivates the development of 'representational', if not 'realistic' religious images, because the inner versus outer, mind versus body contrast prompts the development of

images with ‘marked’ characteristics of inwardness versus outwardness [...] the indexical form of the mind/body contrast is, primordially spatial and concentric, the mind is ‘internal’ closed, surrounded by something (the body) that is non-mind.¹⁹

While it is interesting that Gell attributes awareness to images which feature eyes, his formulation nevertheless depends on an apparent division between mind and body. Megan Holmes takes issue with such separation in her *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence* (2013), where she states that the theory of the ‘homunculus within the object’ relies unproductively on an ahistorical mind-binary, which fails to differentiate the complex operations of the mind and soul.²⁰

Gell’s remarks on image vitality and its association with the eyes extends the thinking of David Freedberg, who notes that religious consecration rites frequently aim to bring an image to life through the opening of bodily orifices, especially the eyes.²¹ Eyes function as indexes of liveliness in representations:

Eyes [...] provide the most immediate testimony of life in living beings; in images — where substance, at the first level, excludes the possibility of movement — they are even more powerfully capable of doing so [...] Their presence enables the mental leap to an assumption of liveliness that may not, in the first instance, be predicated on similarity or on the skill of the artist or craftsman. Hence the perceived liveliness of images with eyes, or the acquisition of vitality by acts of completion involving the insertion of eyes.²²

It is feasible that religious effigies with eyes which look back at the viewer are prone to animation not only because they are material distributions of a divine persona, but also because they demonstrate a vitality which animates the figure. Interaction and conversation depend on communication with the

19 Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 132-33.

20 Holmes, *Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence*, 181.

21 David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 84.

22 *Ibid.*, 202.

eyes as much as the mouth; we believe we have a person's attention if they look at us while we speak. Seeing is a two-way process; the spectator of an anthropomorphic figure is simultaneously spectated by the image. Mutual gazing thus facilitates a direct communication between the heavenly and the human, which could potentially occur not only on the visual, but also on a non-optical level.

THEORIZING THE EYE: MEDIEVAL APPROACHES

Ideas similar to those of Gell and Freedberg are evident in the work of medieval authors. In his *Journey of the Mind to God*, the thirteenth-century theologian Bonaventure outlined an integrated sensorial framework comprising the body's 'outer corporeal' senses and an 'inner spiritual' sensorium. The internal senses envisaged by Bonaventure are perceptual acts engendered by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. When active, these spiritual senses enable the Christian to discern the objects of spiritual perception latent in their surroundings:

When [the soul] [...] by faith believes in Christ as in the uncreated Word, Who is the Word and the brightness of the Father, recovers her spiritual hearing and sight, — her hearing to receive the words of Christ, and her sight to view the splendours of that Light. When the soul longs with hope to receive the inspired Word, she recovers, by her desire and affection, the spiritual sense of smell. When she embraces with love the Incarnate Word, in as much as she receives delight from Him and passes over Him in ecstatic love, she recovers her sense of taste and touch. Having recovered the spiritual senses, the soul now sees, hears, smells, tastes, and embraces her beloved.²³

Internal apprehension of spiritual realities depends on their bodily perception in the external, material universe. The perceiver and the objects they perceive

²³ Bonaventure, *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, OFM (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993),

are not therefore separate, but intertwined entities. In the second chapter of *The Journey of the Mind to God*, Bonaventure thus develops a theory of ‘abstracted similitude’, whereby external objects are discernible when their echoes resonate within the body. He suggests that sensible objects emanate likenesses of themselves in the medium through which they are perceived. The initial likeness then engenders another likeness within the sense organ, enabling the sense power to apprehend the sensible object:

The senses are delighted in an object, perceived through the abstracted similitude, either by reason of its beauty as in sight, or by reason of its sweetness as in smell or hearing, or by reason of its wholesomeness as in taste and touch [...] the species shares the character of form, power and activity, according to the relation it has to the source from which it emanates, to the medium through which it passes to the goal for which it aims.²⁴

The Christian body does not passively witness, but abstracts from the surrounding world to directly interact with its emanations. Perception is therefore a multisensorial process. It is within this context that we might situate events in Bonaventure’s *Life of Saint Francis*, which describes the animation of the San Damiano Crucifix. The work recounts how Saint Francis heard a cross in the Church of San Damiano speak to him while his eyes were fixed on its form:

Prostrate before an image of the Crucified, he was filled with no little consolation as he prayed. While his tear-filled eyes were gazing at the Lord’s cross, he heard with his bodily ears a voice coming from the cross, telling him three times: “Francis, go and repair my house, which as you see, is falling completely into ruin”.²⁵

24 Ibid., 12-13.

25 Bonaventure, “Life of Saint Francis”, in *Bonaventure*, trans. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 191.

The account intimates the complexities of meditative practices in medieval Italy and the ways in which visual apprehension of an object could stimulate supplementary sensorial responses, in this case aural. Vision was not merely an optical process, but potentially a synesthetic act.

The non-optical qualities of vision were also demonstrated by the thirteenth-century theologian Peter of Limoges, whose Chapter 8 of *De oculo morali* equates the various functions of the eyes with each of the seven deadly sins. He warns the readership of the dangers of the ‘licentious’ looks enacted between men and women, which can affect both corporal and spiritual damage. The physical capacity of sight is outlined in the example of Holofernes, who was ‘captured’ by the eyes of Judith when he entered into her sight. The author draws analogy between the basilisk, whose look kills birds flying in the sky, and women who look at men and spiritually kill them. The phenomenon is explained in both extramissive and tactile terms: when a woman looks ‘licentiously’ at a man, the prurient fumes that emerge from her heart are emitted through her eyes. These then clash with the man’s eyes and penetrate his heart with their ‘corruption’. Women’s fumes are conceptualized in terms of a ‘venereal ray’ (*ragio vene[re]o*) which spreads through the eyes like a sexually transmitted disease. The sexually transgressive properties of the female gaze are also made apparent in the author’s description of menstruating women, who emit blood through their eyes to leave a mark in the mirror.²⁶ Visual contact is equated with tactile interactions.

The tactile quality of sight was a popular poetic conceit among the poets of the *dolce stil novo*. Poems of this style commonly express a spiritualized erotics enacted through the eyes; seeing became a somatic act of communication whereby beams emanating from a person’s eyes would literally strike the body of the spectator. Ideas such as these are apparent in Petrarch’s Sonnet 61 to his beloved Laura, where he recalls being ‘struck’ by eyes: “Benedetto sia ‘l giorno e ‘l mese et l’anno [...] e ‘l bel paese e ‘l loco ov’ io fui giunto / da’ duo

26 Peter of Limoges, *Libro de l’Ochio Morale et Spirituale Vulgare*, trans. Fra Teofilo Romano (Florence: Rosso Giovanni, 1496).

27 “Blessed be the day and the month and the year [...] and [the beautiful town] and the place where I was struck [or wounded] by the two lovely eyes”. Petrarch, *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics*, trans. Robert Durling (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 138-39.

begli occhi”.²⁷ In his love poem which opens with the incipit “Io non pensava che lo cor giammai”, the Florentine troubadour Guido Cavalcanti describes how his eyes were wounded by the sight of a lady, stating “Per gli occhi fere la sua claritate”.²⁸ Cavalcanti’s contemporary and friend, Dante, is even more explicit in his poetic use of extramissive thought. The eighteenth chapter of his *Vita Nuova*, a collection of verses on courtly love, details the appearance of the woman’s ‘eyebeams’ and the effect they have on the body of the person observing her:

28 “Her splendour struck in through my eyes” (trans. Simon West). Taken from Guido Cavalcanti, *The Selected Poetry of Guido Cavalcanti: A Critical English Edition*, ed. Simon West (Leicester: Troubadour Publishing, 2009), 24-25.

De li occhi suoi, come ch’ella li mova,
Escono spiritu d’amore inflammati,
Che feron li occhi a qual che allor la guati,
E passan sì che ’l cor ciascun retrova.²⁹

29 “And from her eyes, wherever she turns them, / loving spirits, like firing flames shoot out, / hitting the eyes of everyone in sight, / and hitting through until each one hits the heart” (trans. Stanley Appelbaum). Dante, *The New Life/La Vita Nuova. A Dual Language Book*, ed. Stanley Appelbaum (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006), 53.

Within this framework, vision had the potential to operate synaesthetically, through both sight and touch. Consequently, supplicants who gazed at an iconic representation of the divine could also receive divine ‘eyebeams’, which were believed to literally strike their bodies. As such, looking into the eyes of a religious image facilitated a direct corporeal interaction with the divine; mutual gazing was therefore also a form of mutual touching.

30 Joseph Leo Koerner, “The Icon as Iconoclash,” in *Iconoclash: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe: ZKM, 2002), 170.

Joseph Koerner described how Protestant iconoclasts in Hildesheim hauled a Christ statue from the church into their drinking hall, where they ordered it to drink. When it did not respond, they taunted it in the same way the living Christ was taunted prior to his crucifixion.³⁰ Tellingly, the notorious sixteenth-century iconoclast Andreas Karlstadt confessed that he feared the religious images he destroyed.³¹ Similarly, the people who scratched lines over the eyes of Luca Signorelli’s demonic fresco known as *The Damned Cast into Hell* located in the cathedral of Orvieto probably sought to reduce the living agency of the image (Figs. 2 and 3). Eye defacement would also ensure that it could not affect its evil eye on parishioners or indeed the fresco of the suffering

31 Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 100.

woman it binds. Evidently, images could not only act on their audience, but also on other images.



Fig. 2
Luca Signorelli
The Damned Cast into Hell
1499-1502
Fresco
Chapel of San Brizio, Orvieto
Cathedral, Orvieto, Italy

CONCLUSION

Anthropomorphic images with eyes that appear to gaze back at their audience cannot be read simply as signifiers of meaning, because they partake in an economy of agency. As is evidenced by the work of Alfred Gell and Marilyn Strathern, among others, personhood can be distributed by means of objects. In medieval Italy, the Eucharist instantiated God and religious images appropriated divine agency, enabling them to function as material deities. While all images can function as ‘actants’ generating action in their surroundings to function, the ‘vital’ quality of the image is more apparent in images with eyes, and people are consequently more likely to attribute to them a living agency. Images with eyes make explicit their communicative

potential: eyes are sites of interpersonal relations, and spectators are viewed to the same degree that they look. For medieval Christians, visual interaction with the divine via an anthropomorphic image could conceivably occur on the tactile level; the supplicant's body was believed to be literally touched by the eyes of the sacred. Religious images did not therefore simply 'represent', but 'presenced' the divine. Instances of eye defacement, like those discussed here, show that iconoclasts attributed human agency to the image. Hence, the image is perceived to be sensate and demonstrates living qualities such as bleeding or movement.

Iconoclasts target the eyes in order to cut the intersensorial communication between the image and themselves and also to 'kill' its perceived vitality. In this respect, iconoclasm depends on idolatry. Negation cannot occur where there is not an initial affirmation. Defacement aims to remove the vital agency from a work and turn it into a sign. Valentin Groebner demonstrates how living beings can be reduced to a sign through the violence inflicted on their faces. His exploration of medieval legal documents from Nuremburg reveals numerous prosecutions for nose cutting, which was usually meted out by the spouses of adulterers. Groebner describes how in 1506 a man who had impregnated a maid helped his wife revenge herself by holding the pregnant woman down while she attempted to cut her nose off. In this case, the wife sought to save face through the defacement of another. Medieval scholars associated the nose with a person's sexual activity, thus virginity was believed to be perceptible through the shape of the nose cartilage.³² To cut off a person's nose was a means of encoding the face as a visible mark of sexual sin. In this respect, defacement transforms the living person into a moving symbol. So too, images whose eyes are removed have their living quality removed to become symbols of their violence. The iconoclast does not destroy the entire image as there would then be no signifier to testify the violence enacted.

32 Valentin Groebner, *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages*, trans. Pamela Selwyn (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 68-79.

The agency of images enabled medieval Christians to encounter the divine in their material surroundings: by praying before or kissing holy images supplicants could come face to face with God. People defaced images for various reasons, but all had in common an underlying belief that pictures are not inert symbols, but are rather partly 'alive'.

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MYSTICISM, MARTYRDOM, AND ECSTASY THE BODY AS BOUNDARY IN *THE MARTYRDOM OF ST AGNES*

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Francesco Del Cairo's The Martyrdom of St Agnes has been consistently overlooked in English-language research. This paper aims to redress the lack of scholarly attention by offering a close reading of the work. By locating the image within the visual and visceral piety of female mystics from the late medieval to early modern period, this article argues that its emphasis on the violation of the boundaries of the body taps into a vast heritage of embodied religiosity. Drawing on insights from George Bataille, this analysis explores the relationships between eroticism, death, and religious experience.

The present article offers a reading of a vastly under-researched work by seventeenth-century painter Francesco Del Cairo (1607-65). Very few studies in the English language reference the painter, and even fewer touch upon his work *The Martyrdom of St Agnes* (c. 1634/5) (Fig. 1). While this alone justifies a new examination of the work, the most resounding argument for this study comes from the plethora of meanings that can be drawn from the painting itself.

1 The upturned eye is also a key motif in Bataille's erotic writings and features prominently in Georges Bataille, *The Story of the Eye* (London: Penguin Books, [1928] 2001).

From the darkness rises a shining face, lips parted, eyes rolling backwards, head tilted towards the heavens. Are the eyes cast upwards in devotion? Or are they rolled back in ecstasy of a different kind?¹ Perhaps neither is the case, and we might instead be witnessing the surrender of life: the eyes rolling backwards



Fig. 1
 Francesco Del Cairo
The Martyrdom of St Agnes
 c. 1634/5
 Oil on canvas
 Galleria Sabauda, Turin

as life leaves the body. The face shines so brightly it holds the eye captive, and it takes a moment before our attention turns to the rest of the image. We see a pale expanse of flesh, the hint of an equally white robe, and the curve of a bosom only exaggerated by the harsh lines of a gaping wound. By contrast, the assailant fades into the background, his face almost entirely obscured in shadow. Just as his victim turns her shining face to the heavens, the assailant stares downwards, his gaze resting upon the terrible wound he inflicts. His darker skin and muted clothing are the perfect counterpoint to the gleaming female victim. In this painting, we find a transgressive confusion of violence, mysticism, and the erotic. Yet the work compels us to ask: can transgressions and violations of the body really lead to the transcendent? Can sexual climax, death, and religion walk hand in hand? Certainly, we sense a link between the

² Urban Dictionary is a crowd-sourced online dictionary offering definitions, continuously submitted by readers, of slang or pop-culture words and phrases. Urban Dictionary, s.v. “vagina,” accessed 29 December 2016, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/>.

³ While it is important to acknowledge the significance of geographical and denominational distinctions when reconstructing religious practices, there is also an argument to be made in favour of identifying more general trends.

wounding of the female body, sexual union, and the experience of the 'Other' when considering modern vernacular terms for the female sexual organs. Among the countless offerings on Urban Dictionary we find terms like 'gates of Heaven' and 'heaven's door' sitting alongside 'gash', 'hatchet wound', and 'slit'.² Through consideration of *The Martyrdom of St Agnes*, it is possible to reflect on more modern attitudes to female bodies.

The image is read here through two main methodological approaches. The first attempts to ground the image within the context of female mysticism in the medieval and early modern period. While the majority of examples given are drawn from Italian female mystics, parallels with other images are also explored.³ The second approach draws heavily on the work of French theorist Georges Bataille and argues that his emphasis upon the necessity of violence in religious experience is the key to interpreting Del Cairo's *St Agnes*. It seems that the revelation of the divine in female mysticism of the late medieval to early modern period often requires a brush with violence, be that violent emotional response to religious images, sympathetic experience of the Passion of Christ, or violence done to the mystics themselves.

This analysis is primarily concerned with the results of transgressions of the body,⁴ specifically the physical violation of the body's boundaries: lacerating the skin or penetrating its surface. It explores how these acts of violence against the body are depicted in the visual arts, and whether transgressions and violations of the body can be used as visual symbols for transcendent experience.⁵ Francesco Del Cairo's work has been characterised by Bronwen Wilson as having a "particular investment in the erotics of horror".⁶ However, there is particular interest found in discussing the possibilities of reading this image through the lens of a seminal text on transgression, Georges Bataille's *Eroticism* (1957). If we move beyond the understanding of transgression as the breaking of a boundary and instead think in terms of the transitions or transformations that result from a boundary being eroded, then we may

4 While there are many ways in which the boundaries of the self may be broken down, such as the ones listed by Alphonso Lingis ("anguish, dejection, sobs, trances, laughter, spasms and discharges of orgasm"), this discussion focuses on violence done to the body. Alphonso Lingis, "Chichicastenango," in *Bataille: Writing the Sacred*, ed. Carolyn Bailey Gill (London: Routledge, 1995), 7.

5 Moreover, this analysis focuses particularly on examples from thirteenth- to seventeenth-century Italy.

6 Bronwen Wilson, "The Appeal of Horror: Francesco Cairo's Herodias and the Head of John the Baptist," in "Early Modern Horror," ed. Maria H. Loh, special issue, *Oxford Art Journal* 34.3 (2011), 361.

find that the consequences of transgressive acts are transformative events.⁷ Therefore, it is here suggested that the intact body functions as a boundary, a means of demarcating the self. Once this boundary is penetrated, a fusion with what Rudolf Otto terms the ‘wholly other’ is possible.⁸

INTRODUCING BATAILLE

First, it is necessary to clarify why a controversial French theorist writing in the 1950s has any relevance to the reading of a seventeenth-century Italian painting. Raised a Catholic, Bataille engaged in a lifelong study of mysticism and medieval manuscripts.⁹ It is evident that his readings on mysticism informed his theories of religion, and consequently it is most rewarding to read his work in tandem with more traditional scholarly research on the phenomenon. It is also worth considering that Bataille himself identified *Eroticism* as being more a work of theology than a scientific or historical account of religion.¹⁰ Despite his rejection of the Catholic faith, Bataille came so close to theology in works like *L’Expérience intérieure* (1943) that Sartre accused him of ‘mourning’ the death of God.¹¹ Bataille’s writings, and their focus upon transcendent and transformational experiences, take on a mystical character of their own.

While Bataille’s theories on transgression have been characterised by detractors as the “revenge of the individual ego on the collective unconscious”, an alternative reading of *Eroticism* suggests that it is the individual ego/self which is violated in order to bring about communion with others.¹² Bataille suggests that humans “yearn for [...] lost continuity”.¹³ Humans, to Bataille, are fundamentally ‘discontinuous’ beings who are born alone and die alone, a vast “gulf” prohibiting any true interaction between them.¹⁴ Bataille argues that “communication cannot proceed from one full and intact individual to another. It requires individuals whose separate existence in themselves is risked”.¹⁵ Any hope for intimacy requires the violent disassembling of the individual. It is through acts which call into question the isolation of the self, such as erotic

7 Michel Foucault (“Préface à la transgression,” *Critique* 19.195-96 [1963], 751-69) describes transgression as “a gesture concerning the limit”. Quoted in Suzanne Guerlac, “Bataille in Theory: Afterimages (Lascaux),” in “Georges Bataille: An Occasion for Misunderstanding,” special issue, *Diacritics* 26.2 (1996), 6.

8 Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1923] 1958), 25.

9 Colin Macabe, introduction to *Eroticism*, by Georges Bataille, trans. Mary Dalwood (1962; repr. London: Penguin Books, 2012), i.

10 Bataille, *Eroticism*, 31.

11 As noted in Andrew Hussey, *The Inner Scar* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 17.

12 Ashley Tauchert, *Against Transgression* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 2.

13 Bataille, *Eroticism*, 15.

14 *Ibid.*, 12.

15 Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, eds, *The Bataille Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, [1970] 2000), 93.

activity and mystical experiences, that brief moments of continuity can be attained by “dissolving” those who participate in such acts. For Bataille “the final aim of eroticism is fusion, all barriers gone”.¹⁶

This fusion that Bataille speaks of can be understood as an event which transcends the normal boundaries of human experience. Bataille locates the property of continuity within a conceptual realm which we might call the sacred or the transcendent.¹⁷ Crucially, the essence of religion is also “the search for lost intimacy”.¹⁸ In this sense, the experience of fusion or continuity can be read as an affective religious experience, a sense of something that is completely ‘other’ to our mundane, discontinuous experience, something which requires a violent rupturing of existing limits to be achieved. Thus, for Bataille, eroticism and mysticism serve the same purpose and grasp for the same end.

But how does this translate into symbolic and artistic expression? Claudia Benthien has demonstrated that in Western thought skin is “the place where boundary negotiations take place” as “it is only at this boundary that subjects can encounter each other”.¹⁹ If the experience of continuity requires a disruption of the intact self, then a physical wound – the penetration of the boundary layer of skin – becomes the obvious visual symbol to express this rupturing. In this way depictions of intact skin may symbolize distance and discontinuity, whereas broken skin may come to represent the possibility of communion.

EMBODIED MYSTICISM

Several scholars, most notably Caroline Walker Bynum in *Holy Feast, Holy Fast* (1987) and Daniel Bornstein in “Women and Religion in Late Medieval Italy: History and Historiography” (1996), have noted the particular focus of female piety upon the visceral, on “food and flesh”.²⁰ It stands to reason that

16 Bataille, *Eroticism*, 22, 23, and 129.

17 “Sacredness is the revelation of continuity.” *Ibid.*, 22.

18 Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, [1973] 2006), 57.

19 Claudia Benthien, *Skin on the Cultural Border Between Self and the World* (New York: Colombia University Press, [1999] 2002), ix and 1.

20 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast, Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). Daniel Bornstein, “Women and Religion in Late Medieval Italy: History and Historiography,” in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi, trans. Margery J. Schneider (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 9.

female mystical experiences might be articulated through an equally visceral symbolism. The body becomes a site where relationships with the divine are negotiated and expressed. The emphasis upon visual religiosity is also a particularly female one, as restricted access to scripture also encouraged a more visually driven engagement in religious practices.

During the medieval and early modern periods the assumption of a more emotionally driven female piety led to the perception of meditation on the suffering of Christ using visual aids as “a devotional mode particularly suited to female capacities”.²¹ Visceral responses to images of the suffering Christ were strongly encouraged and seen as having soteriological benefits.²² Jeffrey Hamburger argues that particularly violent depictions of crucifixion were in fact specifically designed for female audiences for precisely these reasons.²³

By turning to examples taken from the lives of female mystics, the plethora of forms which this bodily symbolism takes is apparent. In such accounts, it is usual for the mystic who gazes upon images of the wounds of Christ either to feel a profound sympathetic union with Christ, or to feel that she has entered into the body of Christ through these wounds. Another variation involves the penetration of the mystic’s body, either during an ecstatic vision, or through penitential practices of self-mortification, enabling her to sympathetically identify with and take into herself the Passion of Christ.

We find several accounts of contemplation of the physical wounds of Christ leading to the establishment of intense experiences of continuity with the divine. Bataille argues that exposure to death is one way in which discontinuous beings may be jerked out of “a tenacious obsession” with their own discontinuity.²⁴ David Morgan, in his study of contemporary Protestant visual piety, argues that the act of looking at a religious image is often motivated by “a yearning to escape from the bounds of the ego and mingle with the object of the gaze”.²⁵ This concept is reminiscent of Bataille’s presentation of the

21 Bornstein, “Women and Religion in Late Medieval Italy,” 9.

22 Richard Viladesau, *The Triumph of the Cross: The Passion of Christ in Theology and the Arts from the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19.

23 Jeffrey Hamburger, “To Make Women Weep: Ugly Art as Feminine and the Origins of Modern Aesthetics,” in “The Abject,” special issue, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 31 (1997), 15.

24 Bataille, *Eroticism*, 16.

25 David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, [1998] 1999), 31.

26 Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993), 82.

27 Teresa of Avila, *Complete Works of St Teresa of Jesus*, vol. 1 (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 54.

28 Bornstein, "Women and Religion in Late Medieval Italy," 9, and Chiara Frugoni, "Female Mystics, Visions and Iconography," in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, 137.

29 Frugoni, "Female Mystics, Visions and Iconography," 137.

30 Gabriella Zarri, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity in the Early Sixteenth Century," in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, 239.

31 In a British Medical Journal investigation of 321 cases of stigmata, 280 of those were experienced by women compared to only 41 cases experienced by men. C. J. Simpson, "The Stigmata: Pathology or Miracle?," *British Medical Journal* (Clinical Research Edition) 289.6460 (1984), 1746.

32 Emily Moerer, "The Visual Hagiography of the Stigmatic Saint: Drawings of Catherine of Siena in the 'Libellus de supplemento,'" *Gesta* 44 (2005), 93.

desires of the discontinuous being, and this motivation is certainly not peculiar to contemporary Protestant visual devotion.

Identification with the suffering of Christ is found in many accounts of female mystics from a variety of backgrounds. Famous episodes spring to mind, such as Margery Kempe's recounting of an incident where, upon thinking of Christ's suffering, she spread her arms wide and "cried out with a loud voice as though her heart would burst".²⁶ Here the act of spreading her arms seems to be a physical imitation of Christ on the cross. The cry loosed by Kempe may also echo the "loud voice" with which Jesus cries out in Matthew 27:46. Teresa of Avila recounted that when she pictured Christ, "it seemed to me that his being alone and afflicted, like a person in need, made it possible for me to approach him".²⁷ Thirteenth-century mystic Angela of Foligno recalled that upon watching a passion play, she felt as though she had "entered at that moment within the side of Christ".²⁸ In these examples, the body is the site where relationships to the divine are negotiated. For Kempe, her body is a tool with which she expresses a profound empathy for Christ. By physically mirroring an episode from the Passion, she establishes continuity with the object of her devotion. For Teresa of Avila and Angela of Foligno, the wounds themselves make access to the divine possible. In the case of Angela, the wounds of Christ act as a literal gateway into the divine.

It seems that the depiction (or meditation upon the image) of a wounded Christ was a crucial tool in enabling the devotee to experience an intermingling with the depicted. This could sometimes take extreme forms, reaching a crescendo in the sixteenth century as mystics participated in the agonies of the Passion.²⁹ Gabriella Zarri lists Lucia of Narni, Catherine of Racconigi, Chiara Bugini, and Catherina of Ricci as each experiencing stigmata.³⁰ Moreover, stigmata themselves have been described as an overwhelmingly female phenomenon.³¹ The experience of stigmata was considered evidence of sanctity. Texts such as the *Libellus de supplemento* emphasized Catherine of Siena's 'repeated

physical tortures' and stigmata to argue in favour of her canonisation. In this scenario it is the mystic who is wounded, as the body itself is inscribed with an external symbol of a close relationship with the divine.³²

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST AGNES

It is into this world of visual and visceral piety, of entering into the body of Christ through his wounds, and of receiving wounds which represent a fusion with the divine, that we must place Del Cairo's *St Agnes*. It was painted around 1635 at a time where Del Cairo's "experimentation with the potential of violence [...] intensified".³³ Del Cairo's violent obsessions may also reflect the religious turbulence caused by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. With the wars of religion providing a troubled backdrop for Catholic attempts to rethink the role of saints within the Church, it is little wonder that violence is so entwined with religion in Del Cairo's visual imagery. A reaffirmed interest in the lives of saints contributed to the solidifying of a 'hagiographic stereotype' of the ideal female saint.³⁴ Gabriella Zarri describes this stereotype:

From childhood [...] the future saint feels a calling, [...] expressed by her renunciation of the world and intention to serve God alone. She exercises her virtues and combats the devil [...] She suffers persecution, which she bears patiently, to be universally recognized as a saint at the moment of death.³⁵

To adequately explore the depths of the violence in Del Cairo's *St Agnes*, it is important to first identify some defining features of the episode Del Cairo represents, especially as the image itself gives very few visual clues regarding the context of the events it depicts. One of the earliest accounts of Agnes' martyrdom comes from Ambrose's *De virginibus*, composed in the fourth century.³⁶ In his account, Agnes is an attractive girl of about twelve years of age, pursued by a suitor, whom she rebuffs on the grounds that she has

33 Wilson, "The Appeal of Horror," 361.

34 Zarri, "Living Saints," 234.

35 Ibid., 234-35.

36 Carolyn Diskant Muir, "St Agnes of Rome as a Bride of Christ: A Northern European Phenomenon c. 1450-1520," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 31 (2004-2005), 134.

37 Jacobus de Voragine later expanded upon this episode in his highly popular *The Golden Legend*, writing that Agnes claimed, "he has set his seal upon my face, so that I can admit none but him as a lover", quoted in Diana Webb, *Saints and Cities in Medieval Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 121.

38 Diskant Muir, "St Agnes of Rome as a Bride of Christ," 134.

already given herself to Christ.³⁷ Enraged by her reaction, the suitor summons the full force of Roman law upon Agnes, and she is sentenced to death. The panegyric of Pope Damascus recounts that Agnes was sentenced to death by fire, and that during her execution she used her hair to cover her nudity.³⁸ In the account of Prudentius, Agnes is sent to a brothel before her execution, yet retains her chastity by causing a man to be struck down when he looks upon her. This provides only temporary respite and she is beheaded shortly afterwards. Traditionally Agnes is depicted either with a lamb (a play on her name's resemblance to the Latin *agnus*, meaning 'lamb'), or with a sword and possibly the remnants of a fire, referring to the method of her martyrdom (Fig. 2). With this in mind, what is most striking when we turn to Del Cairo's work is that he presents an Agnes who not only seems much older than a girl of thirteen, but who also sports a wound that cannot be interpreted either as the mark of decapitation, or immolation.

How are we to consider this wound? As previously noted, for many female mystics, the marks (or wounds) of stigmata served to highlight the close bond between the mystic and the divine. In the case of Catherine of Siena, the stigmata were also seen as evidence of sanctity.³⁹ The wounding of Agnes also fits the model of persecution unto death, which Zarri identifies as dominating late sixteenth-century discourse on female saints.⁴⁰ Indeed yearning for martyrdom was also seen as evidencing the virtuous character of saintly women. In the thirteenth century, the canonization proceedings for St Clare argued that her commitment to her virginity, along with her 'desire for martyrdom' evinced her saintly status.⁴¹ Del Cairo's Agnes does, on this level, conform to dominant contemporary religious narratives about the ideal qualities of a female mystic-saint. The particular emphasis on the pairing of death and virginity requires further unpacking.

Throughout the accounts of Agnes's martyrdom, the preservation of her chastity is emphasized. Therefore, it is notable that in Del Cairo's image her

39 Moerer, "The Visual Hagiography of the Stigmatic Saint," 93.

40 Zarri, "Living Saints," 234.

41 Zefferino Lazzeri, "Il processo di canonizzazione di Santa Clara di Assisi," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 13 (1920), 480-81 (witness 12, art. 6), quoted in Clara Gennaro, "Clare, Agnes and their Earliest Followers: From the Poor Ladies of San Domiano to the Poor Clares," in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, 47.

covering veil of hair is nowhere to be seen. Instead an expanse of breast is revealed, punctuated by the gaping knife wound. This relocation of the wound adds a disturbingly sexual element to the composition, as does the assailants grasp, which seems to take the form of a lover's embrace. The obvious age gap between the two, and the way in which the assailant angles Agnes toward the viewer/voyeur to display her feminine qualities, adds to the transgressive and thus erotic feeling. The dagger nestled in Agnes' breast seems symbolic of penetration, perhaps even an allusion to the violation of the virginity Agnes died to protect. The blood that flows from the wound symbolizes two very different penetrations. The prominent bloody gash becomes a relocated vagina, which is subject to a disturbing violation. The relocation of the wound to Agnes' breast also reinforces the interpretation of this wound as one which is delivered precisely because of Agnes' gender.



Fig. 2
 Google image search for "St Agnes
 of Rome"
 Screenshot
 Accessed 26 August 2016

Though Agnes' virginity remains intact, her bodily boundaries are still broken. Yet this violation of the boundaries of her body, the laceration of her skin, and the symbolic sexual penetration seems to leave Agnes swooning in a state of rapture. This too seems a particularly embodied depiction of religious experience. As with many contemporary depictions of martyrdom, we are witness to "a 'beautification' of some extremely distressing events".⁴² Liana De Girolami Cheney describes this phenomenon as a "resurgence of interest

42 Umberto Eco, *On Ugliness*, trans. A. McEwen (London: Maclehouse Press, [2007] 2011), 56.

43 Liana De Girolami Cheney, "The Cult of St Agatha," *Women's Art Journal* 17 (1996), 4-5.

44 Bataille, *Eroticism*, 240.

in porno-violent hagiography” in Italy from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries.⁴³ Bataille has linked the swoon to both eroticism and mysticism, arguing that “the longed for swoon is [...] the salient feature not only of man’s sensuality but also of the experience of the mystics”.⁴⁴ The swoon is both orgasmic and religious ecstasy, most famously represented in Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (Fig. 3), which takes for its inspiration Teresa of Avila’s account of feeling her insides pierced by an angel’s ‘golden spear’.⁴⁵ Rapture itself is conceptually intertwined with transgression. Bataille describes the rapturous swoon as “the desire to fall [...] to faint [...] until there is no firm ground beneath one’s feet”.⁴⁶ The abandonment of a sense of self, experienced in rapture, is reminiscent of Bataille’s understanding of ‘continuity’, and it is analogous to the effects of transgression, as the previously solid limits are momentarily undermined and replaced by something far more fluid.

45 Ibid., 240.

46 Ibid., 240.

47 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy*, c. 1606, oil on canvas, private collection, Rome. The painting can be viewed at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mary_magdalene_caravaggio.jpg/.



Fig. 3
Gian Lorenzo Bernini
Detail of The Ecstasy of St Teresa
1647-52
Marble
Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome
Photo: Napoleon Vier via Wikimedia
Commons / CC BY-SA 3.0

We might also draw parallels between Del Cairo’s *St Agnes* and Caravaggio’s *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy*.⁴⁷ Both women sport almost identical facial expressions: lips parted, eyes rolled backwards, and hands clasped in identical

gestures. In an almost mirror image of Agnes, the white robes of Mary Magdalene also slip down her chest, exposing a hint of bosom. Both virgin martyr and penitent prostitute are bodily united in their ecstatic union with the divine. Yet, Del Cairo's depiction of a virgin girl in such erotic throes is perhaps more unexpected, more transgressive than the presentation of Mary Magdalene in this way.

There is a further comparison to be made between the expression of Agnes and that of the subject of Del Cairo's *Saint Francis* c. 1630-1633 (Fig. 4). Again, both saints have their fingers interlaced, usually suggestive of an intense emotional absorption in a moving religious experience.⁴⁸ Again, the heads of both saints are thrown backwards, and facial expressions are an ambiguous mixture of pain and pleasure. The partially open mouths could be emitting sighs of joy, gasps of pain, or in Agnes' case, a last gasping breath or death rattle.⁴⁹ It is this ambiguity which makes *St Agnes* so compelling and so Bataillian in its combination of eroticism and religious piety. However, we must also note the stark contrast between the robed, male St Francis, whose angular jawline and gaunt face leave an impression of insubstantial frailty, and the robust, fleshy Agnes. While Del Cairo's work does depict both saints in the throes of rapture, it is only Agnes whose body is disrobed and violated. This is especially pertinent when we consider that St Francis received the marks of stigmata during a rapturous episode; the choice to depict only Agnes with wounds implies a consciousness of a distinctively female visual hagiography.

The gendered difference between the depictions of St Agnes and St Francis also brings into question the role of the penetrating gaze of the viewer. Is Agnes being offered up for the delectation of the male gaze? Or is she instead presented in a manner designed to appeal to a more feminine religiosity? If the latter is the case, then we must also consider that the allusions in the *St Agnes* to mystical or sexual experience are not the only references to transformative events. Even if the male gaze of the assailant rests at the site of Agnes' fleshy

48 Richard Viladesau notes that "hands clasped together [...] with fingers interlaced" often indicates that the pictured saint is "looking at Christ's suffering and taking it in to him or herself". Viladesau, *The Triumph of the Cross*, 67.

49 As an aside, this is also a device which Del Cairo used extensively in his depictions of the 'sinner' Herodias (a topic covered extensively by Bronwen Wilson in her paper "The Appeal of Horror"). In the Herodias images it is the female sinner who swoons, part in ecstasy, part in horror, as she penetrates the male saint.

50 Ex 34:29: "Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God."

wound, Agnes' upturned eyes glimpse something far more heavenly. Her shining face is reminiscent of the glowing face of Moses as he communicates with God in Exodus 34:29.⁵⁰ That this ecstatic religious experience is punctuated by agony is unsurprising; indeed, Bataille suggests that love may be the violent "desire to live in anguish in the presence of an object of such worth that the heart cannot bear to contemplate losing it".⁵¹ Here we grasp something of what the religious devotee might experience when contemplating images of the crucified Christ: the pleasure of being in the presence of the beloved and the agony of considering their pain. This experience of rapture, of pleasure so intense that it borders on pain, could similarly be interpreted as an experience concerning the limit.⁵²

51 Bataille, *Eroticism*, 241.

52 Foucault describes transgression as "a gesture concerning the limit" (quoted in Guerlac, "Bataille in Theory," 6).

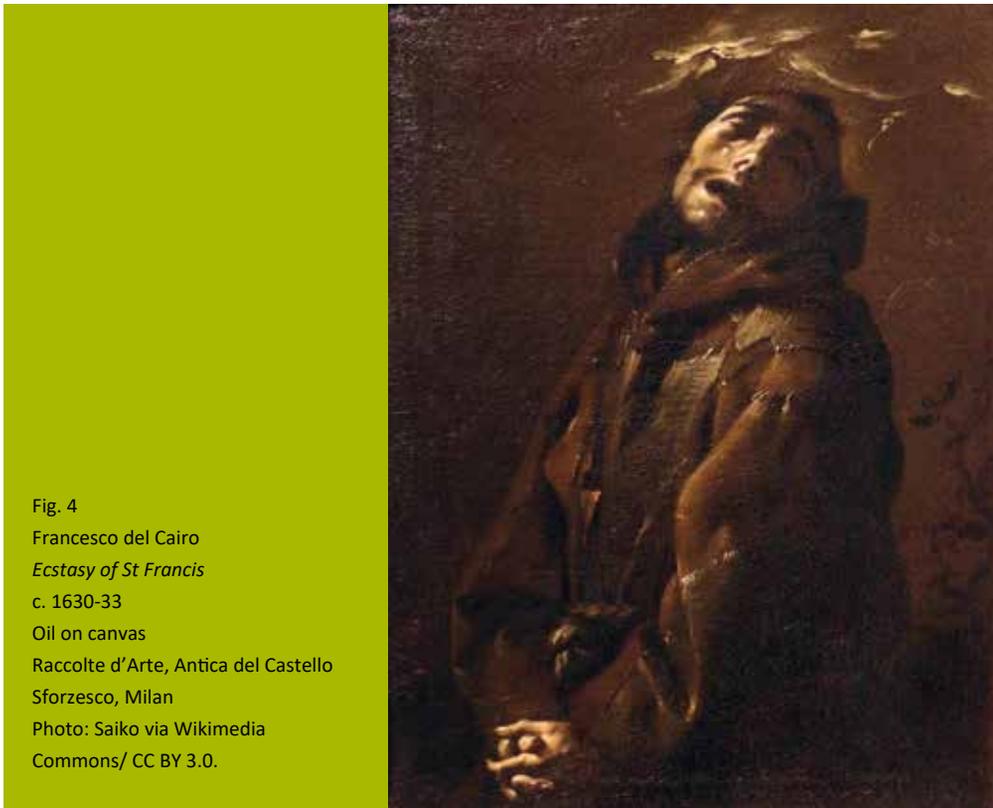


Fig. 4
Francesco del Cairo
Ecstasy of St Francis
c. 1630-33
Oil on canvas
Raccolte d'Arte, Antica del Castello
Sforzesco, Milan
Photo: Saiko via Wikimedia
Commons/ CC BY 3.0.

Agnes' rapturous agony is both existential and physical; while the moment of orgasm is sometimes termed 'the little death', it is true death which Agnes is experiencing. Yet, as Lorenzo Carletti and Francesca Polacci note, in images such as *St Agnes*, death, rather than representing an end, is in fact "the crucial point of transformation from life to afterlife".⁵³ Bataille also argues that in sacrifice, the sacrificer is returning the sacrificial victim to "the intimacy of the divine world".⁵⁴ The bloody wound which the assailant inflicts tears through Agnes' flesh but also serves to speed the saint's passage into a heavenly afterlife. The wound which so resembles the vaginal passage both preserves her virginity and becomes a more spiritual gateway. Her bodily boundaries are being violated, her inner blood flows freely outside her body, yet her facial expression clearly demonstrates that we are witnessing a transition rather than an ending. Violence and eroticism fuse together to allow a glimpse of something transcendent. The trials of the flesh pave the way for the release of the spirit.

A final explanation for the combination of eroticism and violence in *The Martyrdom of St Agnes* can be found in the Northern European traditions which depict Agnes as the bride of Christ.⁵⁵ Del Cairo's work alludes to a more violent variation on this theme, as it is at the moment of her death that Agnes is united with her beloved. Her attacker fades into the background, into irrelevance, he is merely the facilitator of the required suffering which paves the path to sainthood.

CONCLUSION

This article has explored the ways in which erotic activity and other violations of the body are used as visual symbols of a particularly female experience of continuity (or fusion) with something profoundly "other". It has suggested that violence, the feminine, the erotic, and the divine are entwined, not only in our visual consciousness but also in the religious discourse of women

53 Lorenzo Carletti and Francesca Polacci, "Transition Between Life and Afterlife: Analyzing the 'Triumph of Death' in the Camposanto of Pisa," supplement, *Signs and Society* 2 (2014), 88.

54 Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, 44.

55 For a complete discussion of this iconography, see Diskant Muir, "St Agnes of Rome as Bride of Christ," 134-55.

throughout the medieval and early modern period. This female religiosity relies on embodied mystical experiences, which are accessed either through the wounding of the female mystic or through the contemplation of the wounds of Christ. Such violence ruptures the boundaries, not only of the body but also of the divide between human and divine. In this manner transgression also involves a transition, or transformation. Bataille's insights in *Eroticism*, and in particular his emphasis upon the violence inherent in mystical experiences, have been invaluable for this re-interpretation of *The Martyrdom of St Agnes*. The opening of the body is portrayed as a means of passage to a transcendent experience, through simultaneous reference to violence and erotic activity. Furthermore, this particular passageway to the transcendent retains its particularly female characterization into the modern day. In highlighting these issues through reference to *The Martyrdom of St Agnes*, an argument has also been made for a renewed interest in the work of Francesco del Cairo in English-language scholarship.

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TO MODEL OR NOT TO MODEL

TRANSGRESSIVE PORTRAITS OF MARY MAGDALENE BY

MARLENE DUMAS

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A sinner converted into a saint, Mary Magdalene poses a paradox of representation. Conventionally portrayed as a beautiful and sensual woman with light skin and fair hair, she is most commonly shown in a state of repentance, shying away from the viewer's gaze. Nonetheless, the penitent Magdalene is depicted with a highly sexualized aura. Marlene Dumas' portraits of Mary Magdalene, by contrast, do not engage in the seduction of the onlooker. Her figures stand upright and directly confront the viewer with their gaze. Although sexually appealing, these figures' sexuality is not what is at stake in these works. Starting from this premise, this article's analysis explores the ways in which Dumas' representations of Mary Magdalene transgress stereotypical representations of the saint, questioning and transforming canonical depictions of female subjectivity and at the same time deconstructing conventional notions of Western portraiture.

On the occasion of the 1995 Venice Biennial, Marlene Dumas created a series of eight works entitled *Magdalene* for the Dutch Pavilion. The figures in this series take as a subject the biblical character of Mary Magdalene, who holds a singular position in Western art history as a figure of controversy and opposition. Known to the public as a sinner who became a saint, her depiction typically incorporates elements from her previous life as a sinner, as well as representing her reformed self. In a tradition which attempts to

compromise between these two poles, she has been consistently depicted as a beautiful and seductive woman, with long hair and light skin, seeking repentance. The resulting imagery has portrayed her with a highly erotic aura, and her coyness in the face of the viewers' gaze has encouraged a voyeuristic reading of the subject. In this context, Marlene Dumas chose to present a series of unrecognizable versions of Mary Magdalene. Creating three-metre-high canvases that depict naked female figures in an upright position directly confronting the viewer, Dumas' paintings challenge the conventional understanding of the character of Mary Magdalene. This article will focus on two paintings from this series, namely *Magdalene (Newman's Zip)* (Fig. 1) and *Magdalene (Manet's Queen/Queen of Spades)* (Fig. 2) arguing that the selected portraits transgress art historical canons of representation in order to challenge stereotypical depictions of female subjects and predefined racial identities, at the same time dismantling the concept of the female body as a passive one. Close-reading the paintings and contextualizing these with other works by Marlene Dumas and by other contemporary artists, this article analyses the means by which these portraits transgress conventional readings of female subjectivity and explain how they employ portraiture to deconstruct Western understanding of this genre.

The representation of the human figure is predominant in Dumas' painterly practice, with compositions consisting of enlarged faces or full-sized bodies, which are referred to as portraits. Attempting to deconstruct the portrait by challenging its main characteristic, namely that of catching and depicting the inner essence of its sitter, Dumas fights stereotypical representations of female identity while remodelling the conventional notion of portraiture.

Whereas traditional representations of Mary Magdalene are typically categorized as biblical scenes and therefore included in the broader category of history paintings, Dumas' depictions can best be included in the category of portraiture. History paintings depict a moment in a narrative story, with a



Fig. 1
Marlene Dumas
*Magdalena (Manet's Queen/
Queen of Spades)*
1995
Oil on canvas, 300 x 100 cm
Collection Stedelijk Museum
Amsterdam, the Netherlands
© Marlene Dumas



Fig 2.
Marlene Dumas
Magdalena (Newman's Zip)
1995
Oil on canvas, 300.5 x 101.5 cm
Collection Stedelijk Museum
Amsterdam, the Netherlands
© Marlene Dumas

well-defined setting and often numerous characters. Representations of Mary Magdalene either depict narrative scenes from her life taken from the Bible, or single out her persona in a portrait-style depiction where she is represented at all times with elements alluding to her identity, such as long hair or an ointment jar. Marlene Dumas' works evade the category of history painting, because these portraits do not focus on scenes from her life. The figures are also stripped of all background and auxiliary elements that could allude to their identity. The close-up and blow-up methods aim to create a present moment of tension with the viewer, rather than seek to represent an unfolding moment from the past. While these depictions of Mary Magdalene can therefore be noted as portraits, they in fact go beyond conventional notions of the genre as they do not set out to create a mimetic representation of the subjects, nor to capture their inner essence.

WESTERN PORTRAITURE

The Western notion of the portrait has traditionally revolved first and foremost around likeness. As Roland Kanz mentions in his treatise on painting from 1435, Leon Battista Alberti had connected the need for portrayal to the notion of narcissism, a word whose etymology goes back to the legend of Narcissus, who fell in love with his reflection, and who thus allegedly wished to capture this in the most precise image possible.¹ Commemoration for personal, social, or political reasons was thus one of the chief functions of portraiture. In Western cultures, identity and identification were achieved through likeness as “the portrait canon stresses physiognomic likeness – incorporating the idea that personality may be communicated through idiosyncratic facial features and expression”.² The identity of the sitter was thus created by the degree of recognizability he or she achieved in the portrait.

In the centuries to come, while a faithful representation of the portrayed was strongly desired and the ability to create such a representation was

1 Roland Kanz, *Portraits* (Cologne: Taschen, 2008), 6.

2 Jean M. Borgatti, “Constructed Identities: Portraiture in World Art,” in *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, ed. Kitty Zijlmans et al. (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008), 306.

considered to be a great talent of the artist, the idealization of the sitter gained significance as well. Thus, the scope of portrayal had shifted away from the idea of mere representation and focused rather on the glory of the portrayed. The genre of portraiture had a highly developed tradition of standardized artistic conventions such as rendering of background, costume, posture, and expressions to create a work that would accommodate the patrons' wishes.

Even if significantly influenced by the desires of patrons, it became evident that mindless patronizing did not enrich the art of portraiture. This thought gave birth to the idea of the significant contribution of the painter, who transformed the work into a high piece of art.³ As Richard Brilliant explains, "the portrait artist's task [was] to make the invisible, yet essential elements of character visible, and so bring together into a single image its corporeal and incorporeal substances".⁴ The portrait became more than a passive rendering of the sitter, as it was vital to make visible the essential qualities that otherwise were invisible. According to the standard view, in a successful portrait the viewer is confronted with the original subjectivity of the portrayer, as well as with that of the portrayed, thus encountering the harmonious meeting of two subjectivities.⁵ The sitter's subjectivity is defined by their individuality and uniqueness, thus the portrait provides a faithful and unique representation of a subject that is authentic and original. The representation thus became representative of the represented.

Ernst Van Alphen explains that in the traditional portrait there is an illusion of implied unity of the sitter's expression (outer form) and inner essence, a condition that was thought to bestow uniqueness and authority to the genre. This illusionary unity thus dictated the construction of the traditional portrait which relied on a mimetic mode of representation to prove its authenticity.⁶ Marlene Dumas' portraits of Mary Magdalene depart from such constructions, as they do not refer to a character's inner essence, nor are they based on mimetic reality. Dumas' characters are not even sitters in the literal sense, as

3 Kanz, *Portraits*, 9.

4 Richard Brilliant, "Portraits: A Recurrent Genre in World Art," in *Likeness and Beyond: Portraits from Africa and the World*, ed. Jean M. Borgatti et al. (New York: The Center for African Art, 1990), 15.

5 Ernst van Alphen, "The Portrait's Dispersal: Concepts of Representation and Subjectivity in Contemporary Portraiture," in *Portraiture. Facing the Subject*, ed. Joanna Woodall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 239.

6 *Ibid.*, 242.

her paintings are inspired by explicit cultural imagery and not by real subjects. Depicting Mary Magdalene in various non-representative modes, Dumas transgresses art historical canons of representation as well as conventional notions of the genre of portraiture by departing from the notions of individual identity.

MARY MAGDALENE

Although there is no specific biblical reference to Mary Magdalene being a prostitute or of having led a sinful life, she is generally known in Western culture as a sinner who became a saint (Fig. 3). Consequently, it is unsurprising that her representation throughout art history has resulted in numerous paradoxes and ambivalences. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona explains that the reason for this confusion is that the Gospels do not offer a clear and definitive picture of who Mary Magdalene was in the context of Christ's life.⁷ The misunderstandings are also a consequence of the common use of the name Mary in Early Christian scripture, making the distinction between characters at times impossible. The earliest identification of Mary Magdalene, and the one on which the Evangelists agree, is that of the first person to see the empty tomb and then eventually the Resurrected Christ. The Gospels also mention her as one of the earliest and most devout followers of Jesus (Luke 8:2-3), from whom he cast seven demons (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). While there is no evidence that any of the seven demons had anything to do with being unchaste, Apostolos-Cappadona explains that the confusion might have arisen from her geographic epithet, alluding to the city of Magdala. During the life of the Christ, Magdala was a large and wealthy town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, which was destroyed by the Romans as a "result of its citizens' alleged moral depravity".⁸ Over time, the confusion between the town inhabitants' sins and the Magdalene herself could have been the source of her image as an adulterous sinner. While scriptural quandary over Mary Magdalene's identity was an on-going debate throughout the first centuries, following Gregory the Great's proclamation (c. 590-604),

⁷ Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, *In Search of Mary Magdalene: Images and Traditions* (New York: The American Bible Society, 2002), 10.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

the Western Christian tradition acknowledged Mary Magdalene as being both a sinner and penitent.⁹

While this image of Mary Magdalene is not based on historical sources, it is encouraged by the Church, as through her example they could show believers that no matter how much they had sinned, there would always be a place for redemption in the eyes of God. Esther de Boer argues that there might have been a more complex relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene than that of disciple and teacher, which may have triggered the jealousy of the other disciples and thus led to a subversion of her image.¹⁰

The notion of Mary Magdalene as an adulteress spread in Christianity from its early stages, and can be traced back at least to Ephraim the Syrian in the fourth century.¹¹ As a result, art historical imagery depicted her as a beautiful, sensual woman. Her beauty and long hair, as well as subtle scriptural symbols such as the ointment jar, make her easily recognizable in depictions throughout the centuries.

Mary Magdalene's ointment jar is in itself a symbol of metamorphoses. Depending on its depiction, it can take various shapes, including an alabaster container, a liturgical vessel, or a perfume bottle. Alluding either to the previous sinful life of pleasure or her redeemed persona, the anointing oils represent



Fig. 3
Carlo Crivelli
Mary Magdalene
c. 1480-87
Tempera on panel, 152 x 49 cm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam,
the Netherlands

⁹ Ibid., 14-15.

¹⁰ Esther de Boer, *The Mary Magdalene Cover-Up* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 14-20.

¹¹ Richard J. Hooper, *The Crucifixion of Mary Magdalene* (Sedona, AZ: Sanctuary Publications, 2008), 81.

her cleansing and her break-away from evil and sin. While her long flowing hair has been used to anoint Jesus' feet, it also represents the iconography of a sinful woman. As Apostolos-Cappadona explains, hairstyle had significance in the Classical world where only young unmarried women allowed their hair to flow freely down their shoulders. Married women covered their hair as a symbol of their social status, but also to preserve their beauty for their husbands alone. Courtesans braided their hair, decorating it with "bejewelled or floral ornaments alluding to the female personification of profane love."¹² Furthermore, light hair was typical of the personification of the Goddess of Love, Venus, and thus symbolized sexuality.

Daniel Arasse argues that hair is Mary Magdalene's feminine attribute (if only one could be named), just as the phallus is the male attribute.¹³ Analysing imagery that depicts Mary Magdalene with loose, unarranged hair, he notes that hair becomes a metaphor for another specific symbol. While her extravagantly styled hair is a symbol of her previous life as a seductress, her long hair loosely flowing over her body must therefore represent the opposite. We have already noted that loosely flowing hair was reserved only for young unmarried girls – innocent, but most importantly virgins – who were in a different category than that of Mary Magdalene. As the Magdalene was no longer a virgin, her loose hair could only represent the manner in which she would be most likely wear it in intimate circumstances. Yet in the time of Mary Magdalene, women were not allowed to present themselves in public with dishevelled hair, as this was indicative of an untidy lifestyle, one that Mary Magdalene had already left behind. Mary Magdalene's untidy hair is nevertheless fully accepted in traditional depictions of her character, as according to Arasse's argument, this had actually metamorphosed into her pubic hair. Calling it 'considerations of representability' – when one could not represent something because it is taboo, and therefore replaces it with something that resembles it in one way or another – Mary Magdalene's highly sexualized aura is maintained and entertained by her long and unarranged

¹² Apostolos-Cappadona, *In Search of Mary Magdalene*, 20.

¹³ Daniel Arasse, *Take a Closer Look* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 75.

hair. Left to loosely curve around her body, her long hair becomes a metaphor for her pubic hair, which is reminiscent of the savage, man-eating habits of her earlier sinful life.¹⁴

Newman's Zip and *Manet's Queen* have almost none of the characteristics discussed above. Neither figure is light-haired or fair-skinned, and *Manet's Queen* does not even have long hair. Cutting off Mary Magdalene's hair would be, according to Daniel Arasse's argument, taking away her preeminent sexually inviting attribute, at the same time denying her background as a sinner. Furthermore, neither of the two figures is depicted in repentance or shying away from the viewers' gaze: both stand upright and look the viewer in the eye. While Marlene Dumas' Magdalenes are inspired by supermodels such as Naomi Campbell and Claudia Schiffer, it is not only their seductive bodies that are at stake in these paintings. Going beyond the stereotypical image of the fashion model, Dumas attempts to alter submissive female identity by transforming the anonymous body into a present and active body. It is almost as if, without knowing the titles of the works, viewers would not be able to identify the subjects of the paintings. Nevertheless, titles are important guides for Dumas' work as she uses these to direct and intensify the impact of the paintings.

THE NAKED

Manet's Queen references Edouard Manet's famous painting *Olympia* (Fig. 4), first exhibited at the 1863 Paris Salon. The canvas instantaneously attracted much criticism from the public as it included several indicators that the character depicted was a naked prostitute. While the female nude has been a common subject in painting over centuries, the way it was depicted up to the moment when *Olympia* was shown in public was in the most idealized manner. The female nude was used for expressing allegories, virtues, and goddesses, thus romanticizing the idea of the female figure. *Olympia* managed

14 Ibid., 87.

to scandalize the French public in the first place simply because it depicted a real woman, in her probable real-life surroundings. She was not depicted as a nude, which would have been indicative of a studio model, but rather appeared as naked. Her nakedness meant that the viewer was actually confronted with the unclothed and unmasked body of a courtesan, which, placed in the public sphere, embarrassed its viewers. *Olympia* altered and played with identities contemporary culture wished to keep still, namely those of the nude and the prostitute, and that is primarily why it was so harshly mocked and criticized.¹⁵ Art of that time was not supposed to confront its viewers with realities, but rather with ideals. Therefore, stripping the nude of the idealized forms of the female body, the nude became the naked.

Fig. 4
Edouard Manet
Olympia
1863
Oil on canvas, 130 x 190 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France



15 Timothy James Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 100.

Kenneth Clark begins his survey of the history of the nude in art by explaining the difference between the nude and naked. While being naked is being deprived of clothes and accompanied by a feeling of embarrassment, the nude, on the contrary, implies no discomfort. “The vague image it projects into the

mind is not of a huddled and defenceless body, but of a balanced, prosperous, and confident body: the body re-formed".¹⁶ In the eyes of Clark, the nude departs from the naked in the sense that it represents an ideal, rather than an imitation of reality. He therefore argues that the nude becomes a perfected version of reality, created by the artist from his imagination combined with the study of mathematical proportions. While Manet's *Olympia* clearly draws inspiration from Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538), it adds one element which in fact changes the entire history of the female nude representation. As Clark mentions, ultimately the most shocking aspect of the work was placing on a naked body a head with so much individual character, that it in fact jeopardized the whole premise of the female nude.¹⁷ Aware of her nakedness, *Olympia* confronted the gaze of the onlooker, looking directly back at the viewer and eventually dismissing his presence. She confronted the spectators that intruded in her private quarters and punished them by making them aware of their role as voyeurs. In fact, gazing back at the spectator, *Olympia* challenged male control over the female body, denouncing the idea of the contained and passive, non-interactive female nude.

Van Alphen explains in his book on *Francis Bacon and the Loss of Self* the consequences of unconventional renderings of the female nude: direct confrontation precludes the traditional objectification of the female body in male desire and visual pleasure, as the gaze becomes self-endangering. Without being able to enjoy what it sees, its mere function is reduced to unmasking the onlookers' voyeuristic position. Pursuing a different attitude from Manet's *Olympia* that dismissed the viewer, these female figures engage the viewer in a provocative, confrontational way to make them aware of the difficulty of their position.¹⁸

In her book *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, Lynda Nead argues that one of the principal goals of the female nude has been the containment and regulation of the female sexual body.¹⁹ Through the procedure of art

16 Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, 8th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 1.

17 Ibid., 165.

18 Ernst van Alphen, *Francis Bacon and the Loss of Self* (London: Reaktion Books LTD, 1998), 174.

19 Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 6.

and Western culture, the female body has been framed so that it becomes contained and controlled; “The transformation of the female body into a female nude is thus an act of regulation: of the female body and of the potentially wayward viewer whose wandering eye is disciplined by the contentions and protocols of art”.²⁰ Embracing Manet, Dumas explained:

I don’t want the nude, I want the naked. But I do know with the description of things, as with the *Magdalene* paintings, that I was deliberately not looking for seduction, but rather for confrontation, and for a long time that was the case with my other depictions of figures. Maybe I thought that confrontation was closer to nakedness than seduction.²¹

Both *Manet’s Queen* and *Newman’s Zip* are naked, aware of and accepting their own sexuality. They overtly show this to their viewer, whom they also confront with a direct gaze. Dumas in fact transforms the shocking naked body into what had previously been attributed to the nude, namely the reformed-body. Dumas’ portraits of Mary Magdalene show the naked body as a confident, balanced body, therefore entirely transforming the category of the female nude.

²⁰ Ibid., 6.

²¹ Marlene Dumas, Andrea Buttner and Jeniffer Higgle, “To Show or Not to Show,” *Tate Etc.* 33 (2015), 52-53.

²² Silvia Eiblmayr, “The Eyes of the Night Creatures. On the Non-Domesticated Gaze in the Pictures by Marlene Dumas,” in *Marlene Dumas: Models*, exhibition catalogue, 9 December 1995-28 January 1996, Portikus, Frankfurt, Germany, 12.

It is particularly worthwhile to analyse another painting by Dumas, *The Particularity of Nakedness* (Fig. 5), in this context, because of its exploration of the tradition of the male nude. Depicting a male nude horizontally, the work attracted much criticism as it was unthinkable for a male figure to be shown in such a position, deprived of a traditionally masculine vertical, authoritarian position. Furthermore, the public associated this figure with the image of gayness. Silvia Eiblmayr has pointed out that the most significant conclusion is not about sexual orientation, “but rather the traditional identification of the passive, erotically displayed and readily available body with what is female and its concomitant depreciation”.²²

The Mary Magdalene figures, on the contrary, denote authority. Having Mary Magdalene stand upright, directly gazing at the viewers, transforms the passive body into an active body, thus challenging not only the stereotypical representation of the female nude, but also of the female figure itself. By deliberately playing with the size and format of her works, the artist actively transforms the roles given to her characters. As both paintings are three metres tall, the observer's view of the painting is first at crotch level, inviting a sexualization of the image. The imposing size of the Magdalenes propels them to gaze down at their spectator, who then becomes little in their presence. Regardless of the onlookers' standpoint, they always have to gaze up to these figures, hereby making the Magdalenes superior to the onlooker. The *Magdalene* series combines verticality with authority, challenging the historical notion of Mary Magdalene as a repenting sinner who conventionally shies away from the gaze of the onlooker in shame. Accepting their sexuality but obstructing the voyeuristic gaze, Dumas' figures are no longer passive and become active subjects.

DUMAS' PAINTERLY METHODS

Besides their compositional elements, Marlene Dumas' Mary Magdalenes also transgress stereotypical representations through the artist's painterly methods. Purposefully distorting aspects of natural appearance in order to obtain the visual effects she desires, Dumas explained that nature can be better understood when it is turned and twisted, resulting in a work that is not a mere reproduction of real life.²³ To her, "Art is not a mirror. Art is a translation of that which you do not know, but of what you want to convince others or rather, that which no one knows..."²⁴ Therefore, art itself is not a mere reproduction of nature, but instead a distorted image of what one perceives as his or her own reality.

23 Statement made during the conference *Paintings/Problems/Possibilities: A Symposium Dedicated to Svetlana Alpers*, held in Amsterdam on 7 May 2010.

24 Maria Hlavajova, "Ik is een allochtoon. A Conversation with Marlene Dumas," in *Citizens and Subjects: The Netherlands, for Example*, ed. Rosi Braidotti et al. (Utrecht: BAK and JRP|Ringier, 2007), 114.

Fig 5
Marlene Dumas
The Particularity of Nakedness
1987
Oil on canvas, 140 x 300 cm
Collection Van Abbemuseum
Eindhoven, the Netherlands
© Marlene Dumas



Dumas' method of painting applies wet on wet materials, such as ink with plenty of water or diluted oil paint, which give the works the possibility of abrupt change at any moment. The artist continuously intervenes in the creation process with fast gestures, explaining: "I like my medium slow and my gesture fast",²⁵ thereby accentuating the importance of spontaneity in her painting process. While these paintings carry the impetuosity of their development, they are in fact the products of intense study and laborious time in the studio. Consequently, their raw, at times unfinished and sketchy look, is part of the artistic process.

Like sketches, these works seem to be studies of the same character, developing ideas for a final work. Closely related to the term *modello*, a sketch can also imply a smaller precursory version of the final work. Dumas does not create a final, referential work around the subject, but each of these representations of Mary Magdalene represents an individual work. These works are not models for others, but are rather models for themselves, constructing a different identity for each of the Magdalenes they represent. Their sketchiness also evades stereotypical representation, by not confining to pre-set rules. Through these transformed Magdalenes, Dumas evades pre-defined, stereotypical cultural images of the character, therefore undoing stereotypical representation.

25 Dumas, Buttner, and Higgle, "To Show or Not to Show," 50.

The transgression of representation can also be noted in the Magdalenes' race and skin colour. In Dumas' oeuvre, the characters' skin becomes a bearer of meaning. In these portraits, Dumas plays with the double meanings of colour, attributing new meanings to the multiple skin tones. In relation to the colour of the *Magdalene* series, it is worthwhile to mention two other paintings: *Cupid* (1994) and *Reinhardt's Daughter* (1994), made approximately a year prior to the *Magdalene* series. Both works are based on the same image of the artist's sleeping child, the only difference between the two being the colour or race of the infant. While *Cupid* alludes to a baroque figure from a church decoration, *Reinhardt's Daughter* alludes to a dark-skinned child, positioned on a sombre background. Concerning these works, Dumas has written: "You change the color of something and everything changes (especially if you are a painter)".²⁶ These works represent an investigation of the meaning of the colour black, and its consequences for the reception of the work. As titles are never incidental in Dumas' works, the artist also references the American abstract expressionist painter Ad Reinhardt, most famous for his monochrome paintings from the 1950s and 1960s of entirely black canvases, created using a multitude of shades of black. Interested in Reinhardt's distinction between black as a symbol denoting the negative (e.g. of race or evil) and black as a colour devoid of any of these negative associations, Dumas in fact continues her investigation into what it means to be black and how this affects perceptions of the self and the Other.

Dumas' Mary Magdalenes are inspired by African tribal women, as well as by the bodies of supermodels such as Naomi Campbell, thus transgressing the stereotypical representation of white women. In her own writings about *Newman's Zip*, Dumas questions the notion of the white model: "Where does the white model come from? From a cool, transparent place called Western Art?"²⁷ Noting the dominant depiction of white women in Western art history, Dumas proposes a novel interpretation of the female model. By doing so, she

26 Marlene van Niekerk, "Reinhardt's Daughter," in *Marlene Dumas: The Image as a Burden*, ed. Leontine Coelewijn et al. (London and Amsterdam: TATE Publishing and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 2014), 72.

27 Marlene Dumas, "Magdalena or the Megamodel meets the Holy Whore," in *Marlene Dumas: Models*, 28.

continues what Paul Gauguin started with his painting *la Orana Maria (Hail Mary, 1891)* where he depicted the Virgin Mary and Jesus as Tahitians. Non-homogenous skin colour combined with the transgression in representation of biblical figures is in fact Dumas' search for a 'bastard race' which would encapsulate the entirety of human races, indicating that there is no such thing as a superior race or skin colour.

Marlene Dumas is known for using the blow-up and close-up methods and isolating her figures on a neutral background: "For me the close-up was a way of getting rid of irrelevant background information and, by making the facial elements so big, it increased the sense of abstraction concerning the picture plane".²⁸ Through this seclusion, the narrative character of the paintings is decreased, and the images are freed from the burden of straightforward deciphering. Dumas' enlarged and focused compositions depicting Mary Magdalene create a direct contact with the viewer, relying on their intimidating effect. She explains: "I have used the close-up only for the human face. This method achieves an intimidating and confrontational effect, which was what I intended. Images combining intimacy (or the illusion of that) with discomfort".²⁹ Stripped of her religious connotation, Mary Magdalene appears as a threatening woman, ready to overturn the spectators' voyeuristic gaze in an overt act of upheaval.

DUMAS' MODELS

Marlene Dumas describes Mary Magdalene as the meeting point of two types of models: the fashion model, or 'Megamodel', and the religious model, or the 'Holy Whore': thus the notion of the model is a key concept in the artist's investigation of the cultural image of female subjectivity. As the artist paints from existing photos, her characters are not models in the traditional art historical sense, since they have never modelled for the artist; rather, the artist used an already existing representation of them to create a new

28 Marlene Dumas, "Artist's Writings. Larger than Life," in *Marlene Dumas*, ed. Dominic van den Boogerd et al. (London: Phaidon, 1999), 116.

29 *Ibid.*, 120.

representation. Furthermore, being a model does not imply one's subjectivity, as one with subjectivity is called a sitter; therefore, a model alludes to anonymity. Remaining anonymous, the model is emptied of its individuality. Given that conventional art historical depictions of Mary Magdalene are based on a pre-defined identity, portraits of her are emptied of individuality, as each representation becomes a social construct. By deconstructing these cultural stereotypes and transgressing the culturally accepted image of Mary Magdalene, Dumas exposes constructions of female identity in cultural images.

Mary Magdalene is not fundamentally different from the fashion model, as her image in art history became a cultural model. In works such as *Models*, Dumas exposes the cultural image of fashion models, whom people model themselves on. Mary Magdalene functions in the same way as the fashion model, as onlookers have to model themselves after her, and not only after her holy persona, but also after her culturally constructed image. For Dumas, the fashion model is a new version of an already existing construction of the religious model, foregrounding the similarities between cultural images and art images. By transgressing stereotypical representations of existing characters, Dumas deconstructs cultural images through transformation, battling the power of already existing stereotypes. She understands and unmask the fact that cultural images do not represent identity, but are instead representations of culturally created identities programmed to represent ideals instead of reality.

In this sense, Dumas' practice comes close to Cindy Sherman's endeavours for her early *Film Stills* where she unmask the notion of authentic identity as an illusion. A Sherman film still is not based on an original image, as the scene depicted has not been previously seen, neither in a movie nor a different type of media. It has no original. "The condition of Sherman's work in *Film Stills* – and part of their point, we could say – is the simulacral nature of what they contain, the condition of being a copy *without* an original".³⁰ Portraying an

30 Rosalind Krauss, *Cindy Sherman: 1975-1993* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 17.

array of stereotypical Hollywood or New Wave heroines in an atmosphere revealing of their situation and reminiscent of 1950s *film noir*, Cindy Sherman produces what Rosalind Krauss refers to as ‘generalized memories’ and ‘remembered fantasy’ of fictional characters, a stereotypical view of certain female personae. Drawing attention to the proliferation of images and how these become idealizations of the character depicted, Krauss explains that Cindy Sherman aims to unmask the process behind the creation of what we commonly refer to as a stereotype.

As a major discursive strategy, the stereotype is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated.³¹ Homi Bhabha argues that this process of ambivalence is central to the stereotype as it produces the effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always exceed what can be empirically proved or logically construed.³² He exemplifies this thought through “the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved”.³³

The stereotype is thus an amalgam of shared thoughts and opinions that coagulate into an idealized version of the subject, which by repetition create a moment of the timeless eternal. The moment captured becomes universal truth: the stereotype operates with universal truth. As Krauss argues:

[The] myth is an act of draining history out of signs and reconstructing these signs as “instances”; in particular, instances of universal truth or of natural law, of things that have no history, no specific embeddedness, no territory of contestation. Myth steals into the heart of the sign to convert the historical into the “natural” – something that is uncontested, that is simply the way things are.³⁴

31 Homi Bhabha, “The Other Question... The Stereotype and the Colonial Discourse,” *Screen* 24 (November 1983), 18.

32 *Ibid.*, 18.

33 *Ibid.*, 18.

34 Krauss, *Cindy Sherman*, 25.

In her *Magdalene* series (and not only), Marlene Dumas similarly unmasks the consumption of the myth of Mary Magdalene. By transgressing stereotypical ways of representation she demystifies the myth of Mary Magdalene as the repentant sinner, which in fact historically cannot be proven. Taking the process a step further, in addition to unmasking the stereotype she also breaks the underlying codes of the construction of her cultural image. Krauss explains that none of the roles and characters depicted in Sherman's film stills are independent or free-standing, but produced through the unification of separate codes referencing gender, age, position, and more. Therefore, when the viewer comes to recognize the character, it is a process of decoding the given codes:

What is being masked is that the name [of the character of the *Film Stills*], rather than pointing to a primary entity in the "real", is an effect of the vast already-written, already-heard, already-read of the codes; it, the denotation, is merely the last of these codes to be slipped into place. The consumer of realist fiction, however, buys the pitch and believes in the "character", believes in the substance of the person from whom all the rest seems to follow as a set of necessary attributes – believes, that is, in the myth.³⁵

Mary Magdalene's 'codes' are her long hair, the ointment jar, and her pious attitude, features which mostly lack from Dumas' depictions of the character. Even when recognizable attributes, such as long hair, are still in place, they turn into different signs, as previously noted. While Sherman's *Film Stills* are an extreme case of masquerading aimed at exposing the social construction and power of stereotypes, Dumas goes beyond unmasking cultural stereotypes by replacing them with alternative constructions that analyse and criticize notions of gender, race, and sexuality, encouraging the viewers towards a different understanding of female subjectivity.

³⁵ Ibid., 32.

Norman Bryson argues that a constructivist view of the body makes it a social construction rather than an anatomical constant.³⁶ “Entirely subsumed into the sphere of the cultural work, indeed apparently becoming the principal arena of cultural activity, it sheds at last its primitive character and is fully assimilated and civilized”.³⁷ He further explains that since the Enlightenment the body has been made to disappear, as it is said to solely consist in its representation: “It is by virtue of being built by culture that the body comes to be an object of historical inquiry, that it comes to exist at all”.³⁸ In the case of Mary Magdalene, it is not her individuality that was sought to be represented but rather her historically created persona, which metamorphoses into the body of a beautiful woman.

The sense of identity – of each image as bodying forth a different presence – becomes manifestly a product of manipulation of the complex social codes of appearance, a pure surface. Which is to say that identity – the interior depths supposed to stand behind or within the surface of appearance – is only an identity-effect, the semi-hallucinatory transformation of material surface into imaginary profundity.³⁹

Thus taking away the sexualized aura of the saint, Dumas exposes the predefined social constructions of her body. By deconstructing this stereotype through transformation, she creates a new image for female subjectivity that further questions the cultural representation the female body on its own.

36 Norman Bryson, “House of Wax,” in *Cindy Sherman: Untitled*, ed. Rosalind Krauss (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 218.

37 *Ibid.*, 218.

38 *Ibid.*, 219.

39 *Ibid.*, 218.

Taking as a starting point stereotypical, pre-defined cultural images that she deconstructs and replaces with unusual and unexpected constructions is an on-going pursuit in the artist’s practice. In her series of portraits depicting the infamous producer Phil Spector (Fig. 6; Fig. 7), she paints using already existing photographs. Her works, however, depart from the socially constructed understandings of images of the convicted criminal, as she explains:



Fig. 7
Marlene Dumas
The Producer (For Phil Spector)
2010
Oil on canvas, 50,8 x 40,6 cm
Private Collection, The Netherlands
Courtesy Paul van Esch & Partners, Amsterdam
© Marlene Dumas



Fig. 6
Marlene Dumas
Phil Spector — To Know Him is to Love Him
2011
Oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm
Private Collection
© Marlene Dumas

Some people don't know who he is, but he produced all this beautiful music that was important to me when I was younger, songs like "You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling". Here was a guy with all this talent who goes and murders a girl and – whether or not you think it was an accident – he tragically ends up in prison.⁴⁰

40 Ossian Ward, "Marlene Dumas: Forsaken," *Time Out London*, 21 December 2011, accessed 13 December 2016, <http://www.marlenedumas.nl/wp-content/uploads/D-2011-Forsaken-Time-Out-london.pdf/>.

Naming one of the works *To Know Him Is to Love Him* (Fig. 6), Dumas references Spector's first pop music hit, which was inspired by his father. Relating his persona to the relationship with his father, she brings attention to a different side of Phil Spector, one that is unknown to the public and contrasts with stereotypical descriptions of him as a convicted criminal.

CONCLUSION

By creating several versions of the same subject with distinctive representational codes, Dumas deconstructs the notion of fixed identity inherent in traditional portraiture. She deconstructs the idea of the implied unity of the sitter's appearance and inner essence: a condition that was thought to bestow uniqueness and authority to the genre. She demonstrates that Mary Magdalene is a socially fabricated cultural image, as viewers could not recognize her without her original trademarks: her long hair or ointment jar. Dumas also exposes the impossibility of mimetically representing Mary Magdalene, as a lack of historical information makes her persona uncertain. Refusing to depict Mary Magdalene's culturally informed inner essence represented by her repentant nature, as well as her outer characteristics such as long hair, Marlene Dumas destabilizes the genre of portraiture in order to give new meanings to female subjectivity.

While the *Magdalene* series seemingly engages with a religious subject, Marlene Dumas avoids religious controversy. Her innovative interpretation of the biblical figure of Mary Magdalene only acts to confirm her endeavours to challenge stereotypes of representation of gender, race, and sexuality. According to Matthias Winzen:

The naked female body often appears in Dumas' work, but never as a passive body, either erotically presented to the male gaze or – equally passively – as feminist evidence of the abused body. Instead, Dumas'

images confront us with self-aware, complex presentations of the female, in which there is a totally new configuration of depicted figure, viewer and author.⁴¹

Consequently, Marlene Dumas' Mary Magdalenes challenge the traditional representation of the passive objectified female nude and propose a re-evaluation of female subjectivity through the traditional genre of portraiture. In Dumas' oeuvre, portraiture thus becomes a tool to expose pre-defined, stereotypical female identities, and is also employed to create alternative images of female subjectivity. Transgressing conventional modes of representation through elements of composition, format, size, colour, and painterly methods, she actively fights the notion of the submissive female body. Dumas' portraits of Mary Magdalene therefore defy existing stereotypes, unmasking and exchanging the emptiness of idealizing cultural images with self-referential constructions.

41 Matthias Winzen, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman," in *Marlene Dumas: Female*, ed. Matthias Winzen (Cologne: Snoeck, 2005), 35.

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FROM 'RULE BREAKER IN CHIEF' TO 'RULE BREAKER IN SCRIPT' EVE IN EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DUTCH TRANSLATIONS OF MILTON'S *PARADISE LOST*

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In John Milton's Paradise Lost (1667, 1674), Eve is portrayed as a capable, intelligent character with the ability to exercise her God-given free will. However, this image of Eve is not transferred in early eighteenth-century Dutch translations of the epic poem. Jakobus van Zanten's and Lambertus Paludanus' translations focus on Eve's physical aspects and her sexual state, unlike Milton's emphasis on her intellectual prowess and ability to reason. This comparative analysis of these translations by Van Zanten and Paludanus and Milton's original is a first step towards discerning a literary tradition in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic, with which it may become possible to determine whether the portrayal of Eve in these translations reflects the contemporary literary culture, or if it is unique.

1 I chose to focus on these translations because they were the first Dutch translations of *Paradise Lost*, which is a substantial amount of complicated English blank verse.

Before one can break a rule, one must have the ability to do so. This may sound like a self-evident fact: agency is needed to do anything at all. Yet, when looking at the character of mankind's first rule breaker, Eve, in the eighteenth-century Dutch translations of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667, 1674) this assumption is contested. Jakobus van Zanten published his translation 't *Paradys Verlooren* in Haarlem in 1728.¹ It was the first of its kind and sprung from his interest in Milton's original epic. Only two years later, his translation

was followed by Lambertus Paludanus' rhymed verse translation titled *Het Paradys Verlooren* (1730). Paludanus considered his version an improvement on both Van Zanten's² and Milton's own editions because his version rhymed; rhyming poetry was much more popular in the Dutch Republic in the first half of the eighteenth century.³ However, neither Van Zanten nor Paludanus seems to have understood a key element in Milton's epic: Eve had to cause the Fall of mankind through her free will, her intelligent reasoning, and her overall capability to resist temptation. The Fall, though inevitable in the poem, not only had to be caused by Eve, but it was also crucial that she could have decided otherwise, since she serves as an example for the reader.

This paper aims to show how Van Zanten and Paludanus transformed Eve's character dramatically from Milton's portrayal by close-reading passages from *Paradise Lost* and comparing the original to both translations. Ultimately, this paper aims to contribute to, and show the benefit of, comparative research in translation studies, because it may offer insights into the culture of a particular time. Although there is not enough room here to determine the literary culture of both translators to see whether the choices made in their translations were common amongst their peers or unique to them personally, this paper is a first step towards doing so. It allows two important things to be identified: firstly, neither translator appears to understand Milton's *Paradise Lost* sufficiently to detect the recurring theme of Eve's free will and her capability to use it in the poem; and secondly, each translator presents Eve with an emphasis on her physical characteristics. In the end, this means that Eve is transformed from capable agent in the Fall of humankind into obedient follower of an inevitable storyline, or, in other words: from 'rule breaker in chief' into 'rule breaker in script'.

MILTON'S CONCEPT OF FREE WILL

The Fall of mankind was "crucially the product of free will".⁴ The concept of

2 Paludanus uses Van Zanten's edition as a source for his translation, although it remains unclear whether or not the two translators ever met or if Van Zanten was aware of the translation by Paludanus.

3 Wilhelmina Nieuwenhous convincingly shows that in the eighteenth century the following held true: "the rimer [sic] is the true poet and, therefore, he who translates an unrimed [sic] poet into a rimer [sic] one is greater than the author of the original". Wilhelmina Nieuwenhous, "*Paradise Lost* in Dutch," *Tijdschrift voor Taal en Letteren* 18 (1930), 104. Similarly, Herman Scherpbier argues that "the attempt to take away one of the obstacles to popularity, by changing Van Zanten's wooden blank verse into smooth popular alexandrines, was perhaps in itself a good idea, but the result was disastrous". Herman Scherpbier, *Milton in Holland: A Study in the Literary Relations of England and Holland before 1730* (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1933), 146. Until recently, these studies from the 1930s were the only ones to have looked into Dutch translations of Milton; in 2017 a collaborative volume containing an article by Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen on this subject will be published by Oxford University Press.

free will is recurring in John Milton's work, and is central to the development of the character of Eve in the epic poem *Paradise Lost*, since her ability to choose shapes how she is received and understood by the reader. Milton's theory of free will is made most explicit in this epic, and in his prose tract *Areopagitica* (1644), in which one of the main arguments for the freedom of print is the notion that by restricting print, the free will to choose virtue over vice is denied, and that one can only be a good subject to God through this carefully considered choice. As Milton argues: "he that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian".⁵ For this purpose, namely the conscious refusal of sin, Milton further argues that:

God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object, ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence. Wherefore did he creat passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly temper'd are the very ingredients of vertu? They are not skilfull considerers of human things, who imagine to remove sin by removing the matter of sin.⁶

4 Susan Wiseman, "Eve, Paradise Lost, and Female Interpretation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*, ed. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 542.

5 John Milton, "Areopagitica," in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 1006. All quotes from Milton's works presented below are taken from this edition, with original spelling retained, unless otherwise cited.

6 *Ibid.*, 1010.

7 Blair Hoxby, "Areopagitica and Liberty," in *Oxford Handbook of Milton*, 224.

In other words, Milton argues in favour of the free will to choose between right and wrong when one is presented with material, ideas, or arguments that may not be in line with the religious thinking of the Church or the political thinking of parliament, both of which are deemed "not skilfull considerers of human things" because of their effort to restrict free access to more controversial materials. Blair Hoxby notes that according to Milton "a man can be temperate only if he knows his own body and mind, uses his reason, makes judicious choices, and maintains his self-control".⁷

To understand the importance of choice in *Paradise Lost*, it is fundamental to know that "God guarantees [...] that humankind will make choices, and

indeed, God ensures they will have to make choices. God assures opportunity, not outcome”.⁸ In essence, God allows for Adam and Eve to be tested to be able to prove themselves loyal to him, leaving the outcome to them, and not, as in Calvinist doctrine, to predestination. Stephen M. Fallon argues that “in asserting the freedom of Adam and Eve, Milton’s God resolutely denies the supralapsarian doctrine that he ordained the fall of humanity. [...] Milton, or Milton’s God, carefully distinguishes between the divine grace that alone can save sinners, and the individual’s responsibility to choose to accept offered grace”.¹⁰ Not only, then, is having free will a primary requirement for being able to obtain salvation, it is also our responsibility to make the correct choice, and as such we can be held accountable for failing. This is most compellingly argued by the iconic study *Surprised by Sin* by Stanley E. Fish who explains that:

The “dazzling simplicity” of the poem’s great moral is the counterpart of the dazzlingly simple prohibition, and the obligation of the parties in the two situations is to defend the starkness of the moral choice against sophistications which seem to make disobedience attractive [...] or necessary [...]. The opportunities to yield to such sophistications are provided by God and Milton, respectively, who wish to try the faith and integrity of their charges.¹¹

Free will is a recurring feature in both *Areopagitica* and *Paradise Lost*, especially when we look at the latter in more detail. As John Leonard sums up: “trouble in Paradise should be tolerated, even welcomed, for it is the raw material of purification”.¹²

In Book 3 of *Paradise Lost*, God explains how he created the first human pair to exercise their free will, saying: “I made him just and right / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall. [...] Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell”.¹³ Furthermore, God provides his reason for doing so:

8 Peter C. Herman, “‘Whose fault, whose but his own?’: *Paradise Lost*, Contributory Negligence, and the Problem of Cause,” in *The New Milton Criticism*, ed. Peter C. Herman and Elizabeth Sauer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 56.

9 On the topic of religion, it should be noted that Van Zanten was a trained theologian in the Dutch Mennonite Church – ‘Doopsgezinden’, a branch of Reformed Protestants. Regarding Paludanus, very little is known about him apart from his literary works. Considering he was born, was raised, and lived in Amsterdam, it seems unlikely that he would be a Calvinist or a Catholic, since Catholicism in particular was still strongly associated with the enemy – be they French or Spanish.

10 Stephen M. Fallon, “*Paradise Lost* in Intellectual History,” in *A Companion to Milton*, ed. Thomas N. Corns (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 333.

11 Stanley E. Fish, *Surprised by Sin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 208.

12 John Leonard, *Faithful Labourers: A Reception History of Paradise Lost, 1667-1970*, vol. II, *Interpretative Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 598.

What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
When Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoild,
Made passive both, had serv'd necessitie,
Not mee.¹⁴

God can only enjoy humanity's obedience if it originates from their own decision to be obedient, and not if they are in some way forced to remain so. Adam shows awareness of this freedom when he notes: "but God left free the Will, for what obeyes / Reason, is free, and Reason he made right".¹⁵ Eve, too, moments before the Fall says "we live / Law to our selves, our Reason is our Law".¹⁶ Both Adam and Eve, then, were thoroughly aware of their ability to choose, God's desire that they should do so, and their accountability for their own choices.

MILTON'S EVE

Part of the effectiveness of *Paradise Lost* is the fact that the reader feels inspired to root for Eve, to hope that Eve will obey God, and not eat from the Tree of Knowledge. It is this representation of her as a character who is capable of saying no when Satan offers her the fruit that makes her so exceptional, as well as exemplary. As Stanley Fish summarizes: "the ability not to fall depends on the ability to fall";¹⁷ Eve has this ability. Regardless of the sure knowledge that Eve will fall, just like Adam after her, for a moment the reader of *Paradise Lost* can entertain the idea that she can resist committing the Original Sin. Furthermore, "if *Paradise Lost* is extremely sophisticated in its prolonged invitation to emotionally engage with the story of Adam and Eve, our attention is focused continuously on the way Eve is persuaded to eat and then on what happens to her as a consequence of eating".¹⁸ As readers, then, our experience of the poem is closely tied to Eve's character, more so than to that of Adam, since Milton's representation of Eve is more complicated and multi-layered.¹⁹

13 Milton, "Paradise Lost," 419
(Book 3, lines 98-102).

14 Ibid., 419 (Book 3, lines 106-11).

15 Ibid., 595 (Book 9, lines 351-52).

16 Ibid., 605 (Book 9, lines 653-54).

17 Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, 210.

18 Wiseman, "Eve, *Paradise Lost*,
and Female Interpretation," 544-45.

19 Ibid., 544.

As a result, Eve's representation generates an understanding with the reader of what it means to possess free will, whilst proving she is intelligent enough to use it in any way she wants to.

Eve's intelligence is key to the construction of her character and the reader's perception of her. In his impressive history on the reception of *Paradise Lost*, John Leonard poses the following question and subsequent answer:

Why does Milton allow Eve and Satan to paraphrase arguments from his own *Areopagitica*? On the morning of the Fall Eve insists that she needs to seek temptation if she is to prove her virtue. The serpent later tells her that she needs to know evil in order to shun it. Earlier critics had agreed that Milton means to discredit these arguments, but the sentiment they express is recognizably his own.²⁰

Although she “uses the right argument at the wrong time”²¹ – she is prelapsarian²² but applies postlapsarian²³ arguments – Eve believes she is making the right moral decision.²⁴ “She is not stupid”, Leonard notes before quoting A. J. A. Waldock: “She thinks hard and she thinks well. Logically what she says to herself holds together”.²⁵ Furthermore, “Hume²⁶ has no doubt that Eve is Adam's inferior, but he also sees that Milton's Eve is more intelligent than any previous Eve”²⁷ represented in literature. Regardless of the dissent that exists in criticism of Eve's character, a general consensus surrounding her intellect can be drawn: Milton provides for his reader an intelligent Eve who is circumvented by an extremely cunning Satan.²⁸ This paper will show that it is not just her ability to make logical arguments, or to voice arguments made in Milton's *Areopagitica*, that attest to her intelligence, but that there is also a number of occasions in *Paradise Lost* that allow her to show her abilities, as well as to establish her importance in the poem. Two of these moments will be highlighted below.

20 Leonard, *Faithful Labourers*, 617.

21 *Ibid.*, 618.

22 Prelapsarian: prior to the Fall.

23 Postlapsarian: after the Fall.

24 Leonard, *Faithful Labourers*, 619.

25 *Ibid.*, 622.

26 Patrick Hume was a Scottish editor and the only contemporary critic of Milton. His volume *Annotations on Milton's Paradise Lost* was published in 1695 (London: J. Tonson).

27 Leonard, *Faithful Labourers*, 602.

28 *Ibid.*, 602.

29 Milton, "Paradise Lost," 462 (Book 4, line 641): "Sweet is / the breath / of morn / her ri- / sing sweet".

30 Ibid., 462 (Book 4, lines 641-56).

31 According to Richard Heinze, "the end of the real action of the poem [...] lies outside the time-span of the narrative". Richard Heinze, *Virgil's Epic Technique*, trans. Hazel Harvey, David Harvey, and Fred Robertson, with preface by Antonie Wlosok (Berkeley: University of California Press, [1903] 1994), 310. Milton, who refers to both Homer and Virgil in his explanatory note titled 'The Verse', was familiar with the Classics and uses the conventions of the ancient epic genre repeatedly in *Paradise Lost* (such as in his invocation of the Muse in Books 1, 3, 9, and 12).

32 Milton, "Paradise Lost," 709 (Book 12, lines 621-23).

33 Ibid., 709 (Book 12, line 625).

The most clear-cut example of Eve's capabilities is the composition of her sonnet for Adam in Book 4. In terms of historical chronology, her composition is the very first of its kind, and its execution is impressive. The sonnet is, of course, like the rest of *Paradise Lost*, in blank verse, yet it is set apart by its opening. Where the rest of the sixteen-line sonnet is iambic, the first foot is a trochee, making it stand out.²⁹ Its construction is that of an extended chiasmus, with the turn on the tenth line. The sonnet ends on the same word with which it starts, "sweet", which serves to differentiate clearly from the surrounding verses. The structure is precise; every element is repeated in turn without coming across as repetitive. It also leaves the impression of spanning across a whole day, since it opens with "Sweet is the breath of morn" and ends with "Or glittering Starr-light."³⁰ The sonnet establishes Eve's capability of composing something remarkable, even though there is no overt reason for Milton to choose Eve over the other human in Paradise, Adam, to compose it.

The fact that Eve speaks the final spoken words of the poem is also a testament to her importance in the universe of *Paradise Lost*. Her words, in the tradition of the Classical epic,³¹ foreshadow the future. Additionally, what she relates to Adam (and consequently the reader) is that she received a message directly from God in her dream whilst Adam was conferring with the Archangel Michael (thereby receiving his information indirectly). At the very end Eve tells Adam, "though all by mee is lost, / Such favour I unworthy am voutsaft, / By mee the Promis'd Seed shall all restore".³² Her prophecy of redeeming humanity through the coming of Christ is met by Adam with happiness, and crucially, with silence: "Well pleas'd, but answer'd not".³³ Milton deliberately lets it be known that although Adam could indeed have answered, he did not, and so Eve becomes the one to have the last word with the reader.

THE TRANSLATIONS

Translating an epic poem is a challenge, especially when the subject matter

is by Milton, who is known for the incredible discipline in his writing. As John Creaser shows:

In keeping with [his] discipline, every single paragraph ends at the end of a line. Similarly, most speeches open and close at line-boundaries, and the exceptions are absorbed into the prevailing regularity by a narrative introduction or conclusion, not exposed in dramatic cut and thrust.³⁴

This level of precision is difficult to match in English, let alone in a different language. Yet Milton's poetry had been translated into Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Dutch, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian by the end of the eighteenth century.³⁵ The trouble with translating a work as carefully crafted as *Paradise Lost* lies in the fact that it is the narration which largely colours the reader's response to characters and situations, and essentially determines the audience's perception of the characters.³⁶ The characters, and "even God, are the poem's creatures and speak in its manner".³⁷ This change from the original to the translated Eve is outlined below and offers a new perspective on Milton's Eve as she has been discussed in academic discourse.

The most noticeable thing about the representation of Eve in Jakobus van Zanten's and Lambertus Paludanus' translations is an increased focus on her as a sexual being, and a decreased focus on her intelligence and capabilities. By the standards of the day, her representation in the eighteenth-century translations is relatively benign, but in comparison to Milton's representation of her, she is made to lean towards licentiousness. While this does not necessarily mean that Van Zanten and Paludanus break away from Milton's depiction of Eve as an intelligent agent of free will, this altered representation does carry as a side-effect the deconstruction of Eve as capable enough to make important decisions in the first place. This constitutes a reduction from Eve as a character who inspires readers to hope against hope that she may yet choose to remain

34 John Creaser, "A Mind of Most Exceptional Energy: Verse Rhythm in *Paradise Lost*," in *Oxford Handbook of Milton*, 467.

35 Kay Gilliland Stevenson, "Reading Milton, 1674-1800," in *Companion to Milton*, 447-48.

36 Creaser, "A Mind of Most Exceptional Energy," 468.

37 *Ibid.*, 468.

obedient because she can, to her as a character who is from the outset a sexual being who does not exhibit the potential of intelligently exercising free will. In the translations, Eve ceases to break the rules because she lacks the capability to do so: she falls not because of a well-argued, well-considered choice she makes, but because it is part of the pre-written script. Milton established an agency for Eve that she lacks in the translations.

38 Milton, "Paradise Lost," 437
(Book 3, line 735).

39 Jakobus van Zanten, *'t Paradys Verlooren. Heldendicht in Tien Boeken door John Milton* (Haarlem: Geertruyd van Kessel, 1728), 115: "Lust bower" (trans. Rena Bood); Lambertus Paludanus, *Het Paradys Verlooren Geschetst na 't Engelsche Heldendicht van John Milton* (Amsterdam: Evert Visscher, 1730), 108: "Lust bower" (trans. Bood).

40 Milton, "Paradise Lost," 457
(Book 4, lines 494-96).

41 Van Zanten, *'t Paradys Verlooren*, 138-39: "Without wantonness leaned, half embracing, on the shoulder of the first Father: half of her breast swells, naked, meeting his half breast" (trans. Bood).

42 Paludanus, *Het Paradys Verlooren*, 129-30: "Very tenderly leaning on the white shoulder of our first father, and her first and last husband: Her half breast naked, its rising moved by breathing, touched his half breast" (trans. Bood).

Where in Milton's original, the angel Uriel points Satan towards Adam and Eve's "Bowre",³⁸ in both translations this bower becomes a "lustpriëel".³⁹ After Adam and Eve confess their love for each other Milton describes how Eve "half imbracing leand / On our first Father, half her swelling Breast / Naked met his".⁴⁰ Van Zanten translates this as: "zonder dartelheyd, / Leund', half omhelzende, op den schouder van / Den eersten Vader: hare halve borst / Aan 't zwellen, naakt, ontmoett zyn halve borst".⁴¹ Syntactically, there is an emphasis on "naakt" which is emphasized by the commas which make it a sub-clause. The specification that Eve stands by Adam "without wantonness" is added by Van Zanten and directs the reader's attention to the fact that though the image might be perceived as sexual, it is prelapsarian, so not an immoral type of sexuality. Finally, there is Paludanus' rendition of the excerpt: "Zeer teder leunende op de blanke schouder van / Onz' eersten vader, en haar eerst en laatsten man: / Haar halve borst gansch bloot, die reizen wierd bewogen / Door de ademhaling, raakt zyn halve borst".⁴² Paludanus adds that Adam is Eve's first and last husband, and also specifies how and why her breast is moving. In short, Eve's representation in both Dutch translations of this excerpt creates an image of Eve's physicality, an emphasis which is distinctly different from Milton's original.

Similarly, Eve's portrayal becomes more sexualized by the emphasis on her state as a virgin. This becomes evident in Book 9 when Satan sees Eve for the first time:

Thus earlie, thus alone; her Heav'nly forme
 Angelic, but more soft, and Feminine
 Her graceful Innocence, her every Aire
 Of gesture or lest action overawd
 His Malice⁴³

Paramount in this moment of the epic is the fact that Eve is so beautiful, so innocent, that even Satan momentarily feels good. His suffering an eternal hell is shortly alleviated and his plans for revenge forgotten because of Eve. Such is her power that the sight, air, gesture, or action alone is enough to stun Satan. However, in Van Zanten's translation, though still being able to give Satan a momentary pause, the quality of virginity is added:

Een Engel, maar vry zachter, en zoo als 't
 Een Maagd best sierd: haar kuysse aanvelligheyd,
 Haar tred en zwier, en 't minste, datze deed,
 Verstompte zyn boosaardigheyd.⁴⁴

Similarly, Milton writes "To whom thus Eve repli'd"⁴⁵ when she speaks to Adam in Book 4, yet Paludanus transforms this into "De aardsmoeder Eva, wend haar maagdelyk gezicht / En duivenoogen, naa vorst Adams vriend'lyk wezen, / En antwoord dus".⁴⁶ Though the differences are subtle, they are combined with variations aimed at shifting the reader's focus towards the physical aspects of Eve rather than her intellectual prowess mentioned above, and ultimately create an image of her as incapable of withstanding the rhetoric and persuasion of Satan, which is central in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Partly, this contorted image is undoubtedly created by the fact that the translators did not always understand what Milton meant. For example, Milton's "To whom the Virgin Majestie of *Eve* / As one who loves and some unkindness meets, / With sweet austere composure thus reply'd" [italics in the original] would to contemporary audiences be understood directly as Eve being called a virgin⁴⁷.

43 Milton, "Paradise Lost," 598
 (Book 9, lines 457-61).

44 Van Zanten, 't *Paradys Verlooren*,
 320: "An angel but somewhat
 softer, and so as it best decorates
 a Virgin: her chaste sweetness, her
 gait and panache, and the least she
 did, dulled his evil" (trans. Bood).

45 Milton, "Paradise Lost," 456
 (Book 4, line 440).

46 Paludanus, *Het Paradys
 Verlooren*, 128: "The mother of
 earth Eve turned her virgin face and
 dove eyes to ruler Adam's friendly
 being" (trans. Bood).

47 Milton, "Paradise Lost," 592
 (Book 9, lines 270-272).

However, it has been argued that Milton's use of the term, which is so at odds with his descriptions of her elsewhere, actually uses 'virgin' to mean 'woman' as was commonly done in the seventeenth century.⁴⁸ Both Van Zanten and Paludanus miss this common substitution completely, and assume, in the same way as a modern-day audience tends to do, that Milton talks about Eve as a virgin.⁴⁹ As such, Van Zanten translates "Virgin Majestie" into "Maagdelyke Majesteyt",⁵⁰ whilst Paludanus skips over 'majesty' entirely with his "De maagdelyke glans van Eva".⁵¹

This one particular moment in the epic which shows more than any other the intellectual capabilities of Eve: her composition of a sonnet in Book 4, as discussed above. However, in both translations the fact that it is supposed to be a sonnet becomes problematized by the fact that the structure of the poem is completely lost. Where Milton plays to his strengths, using his disciplined writing to make the sonnet structure obvious even when it is imbedded in the rest of the poem, both Van Zanten and Paludanus lose all of its structural cohesion. Van Zanten's translation of the sonnet does not start on a new line, making it appear as part of the rest of Eve's speech, and it subsequently continues for no less than twenty-five lines. The final line of verse, clearly marked as the end of her sonnet in Milton's distinguishable structure, is also undifferentiated and is succeeded by the rest of Eve's speech. Paludanus is more successful with his translation, starting the sonnet on a new line, like Milton did, but then continuing for twenty-seven lines. Yet, the structure is but one part of the sonnet. Below the content of the sonnet and the translations thereof will be discussed to show that here too, the Dutch translators do not do Eve justice.

48 Leonard, *Faithful Labourers*, 653.

49 In early-modern Dutch, the word 'Maagd' is much more closely linked to the sexual state of the woman. *De Geïntegreerde Taalbank*, s.v. "Maghet," accessed 7 December 2016, <http://www.wnt.inl.nl/>.

50 Van Zanten, *'t Paradys Verlooren*, 312: "Virgin Majesty" (trans. Bood).

51 Paludanus, *Het Paradys Verlooren*, 277: "The virginal shine of Eve" (trans. Bood).

52 Milton, "Paradise Lost," 527 (Book 6, lines 655-56).

EVE'S SONNET

Nearing the end of Eve's sonnet, Milton writes "With this her solemn Bird, nor walk by Moon, / Or glittering Starr-light without thee is sweet".⁵² In Van

Zanten's translation, these lines become "Met zyn gewoonen Voogel, noch by 't licht / Der Maane, of by het schitterend gestraal / Der Sterren te spanseeren door den Hof, / Is zonder u niet zoet".⁵³ Apart from the fact that, in Dutch, the two lines are doubled in length, Van Zanten also includes an element in his translation which is not present in the original: "Door den Hof" has no English counterpart, and although it is obvious in the context that Van Zanten means to provide a location for the stroll under the moonlight, it is partly due to this addition that he changes Milton's syntactic flow. In Milton's original, the verb "walk" is complimented by the phrase "by Moon, / Or glittering Starr-light". Whereas in Van Zanten's version, the verb "spanseeren" is complimented by "door den Hof".⁵⁴ Van Zanten creates a far longer clause with the addition of "door den Hof", and as a result, the inherent resolution of the English verse is lost. In the sonnet, Eve makes a statement, which especially nearing the end gains power by the short, successive repetition of the elements introduced in the first half of the chiasmus. Yet by stretching, in particular, the final two lines out into four lines and adding an element that was not introduced before, the Van Zanten translation loses the power in Eve's statement. In short, the reader of the translation will not realize he is reading a sonnet, nor will he be struck by the precise and powerful construction of it. The status Eve gains through the sonnet, her position as first poet in history, does not come across in the translation. As a result, the reader will perceive Eve's character differently than when he reads the original. It also affects the reader's reception of Eve throughout the poem, since the reader's judgement of her fall, to some extent, depends on his perception of Eve's character in general.

Besides adding an element to the text, Van Zanten also translates "solemn Bird" as "gewoonen Voogel".⁵⁵ 'Solemn' is defined as "fitted to excite serious thoughts or reflections; impressive, awe-inspiring", and "sacred, having a religious character",⁵⁶ which in the context of the sonnet reflects how important Adam is to Eve. For, without him, she explains, nothing is as good as it is with him, including the fact that the solemn bird would no longer be

53 Van Zanten, *'t Paradys Verlooren*, 145: "With his plain bird, nor by the light of the Mon, or by the glittering beams of the Stars to walk through the Court, is without you not sweet" (trans. Bood).

54 Van Zanten, *'t Paradys Verlooren*, 145: "to walk" (trans. Bood).

55 Milton, "Paradise Lost," 527 (Book 6, line 655).

56 *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "solemn," accessed 7 December 2016, <http://www.oed.com/>.

as ‘awe-inspiring’ or ‘sacred’. Van Zanten, however, translates solemn into “gewoonen”. The adjective ‘gewoonen’ denotes a completely different meaning from ‘awe-inspiring’: instead, it means something that is “algemeen aangenomen” or “waaraan men gewend is”.⁵⁷ In other words, the bird is no longer awe-inspiring to Eve (or the reader), it is just a plain bird. This takes away from the effect of Eve’s sonnet, which aims to demonstrate that all the best, most marvellous, and sweetest things in the universe would mean nothing if Adam was not there. By supplementing the weightier “solemn” for “gewoonen”, the sonnet loses a part of its meaning.

57 That is, “generally accepted” or “that which a person is used to” (trans. Bood). *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, s.v. “gewoon,” accessed 7 December 2016, <http://gtb.inl.nl/> .

58 Paludanus, *Het Paradys Verlooren*, 135-36: “horizons come”, “heavens clear”, “blossoms, flower and tree [...] and leaves” (trans. Bood).

59 Ibid., 135-36: “hearing [...] birds through the trees” (trans. Bood).

60 Ibid., 135-36: “it is sweet [...] / it is sweet [...]”; “Nor [...] / Nor [...] / Nor [...]”(trans. Bood).

61 Ibid., 135-36: “And blossoms, flower and tree and leaves, herb and fruit” (trans. Bood).

62 Ibid., 135-36: “Nor smell after rain, deemed so valuable by us” (trans. Bood).

Although, like Van Zanten’s, Paludanus’ translation of the sonnet does not correspond to the sixteen-line sonnet, it does have a discernible metre and form. Paludanus’ twenty-seven-line ‘sonnet’ is rhyming and trochaic, and although the first four lines are heptameters, the rest of the piece varies in meter. The significantly longer sonnet has also been equipped with several rhetorical techniques. Paludanus repeatedly makes use of alliteration (“kimmen komt”, “hemels heldren”, “bloezems, bloem en boom [...] en bladen”),⁵⁸ assonance (“hooren [...] vog’len door ‘t geboomt”),⁵⁹ and anaphora (“‘t Is zoet [...] / ‘t Is zoet [...]”, “Noch [...] / Noch [...] / Noch[...]”).⁶⁰ The use of these techniques in combination with its form, rhyme and met, gives readers the impression they are indeed reading a poem. Paludanus also repeatedly adds elements to the poem that are not present in Van Zanten’s translation. For example, “blad’re[n]” in: “en bloezems, bloem en boom en blad’re[n], kruid en vrucht”⁶¹ and “noch reuk naa regenvlaag, zo duur door ons geächt”⁶² where “zo duur door ons geächt” is neither in Van Zanten, nor in Milton. Paludanus made the effort to fit the poem in his AABB rhyme scheme, as is the case with the addition of “blad’re[n]” and “zo duur door ons geächt”. By adding words or phrases in a translation, Paludanus inevitably introduces extra concepts to the reader. “Zo duur door ons geächt” is Paludanus’ way of indicating the value of the sweet smell after the rain, which is not a concept present in the original poem. With this addition, Paludanus guides his reader to put a greater

emphasis on the concept of the smell after the rain, which diverts his attention from the message Milton intended to convey.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, both Van Zanten and Paludanus translated Milton's *Paradise Lost* in such a way as to present the reader with an Eve whose physical side is highlighted, whilst her intellectual qualities are neglected. As a result, Milton's rule breaker, the first breaker of rules in the history of humanity even, comes to lack the agency to and capability of actually breaking rules. Her part is scripted and she follows it obediently. Her disobedience and breaking of God's only commandment is part of the story, and requires only her participation to be effected. The Eve Milton presents to his readers in the original poem is, due to her free will, her ability to reason, and her ability to choose, given an agency which makes the fall appear as a conscious decision to break the rules. Although the biggest offence is her disobedience to God by deciding to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, she is similarly breaking her promise to Adam that she will remain true to her beliefs and only needs to prove herself obedient by being tempted.

It may appear to be but a subtle distinction. After all, the outcome is the same: Eve still falls. However, the point in *Paradise Lost* is that, yes, Eve must fall, but she could have chosen not to. The ability to choose is what makes Eve a character with an exemplary function: the reader is likewise born with free will, as Milton keeps pointing out in both *Paradise Lost* and *Areopagitica* as well as in his other works. Eve chose to break God's rule, she chose to break her promise to Adam, but she did so freely, and therefore she fell freely. The reader can learn from this, for God made humanity "sufficient to have stood though free to fall" as he did Eve. The emphasis here should, of course, be on the word "sufficient". Milton's Eve was sufficiently intelligent, sufficiently

capable, and sufficiently educated to make her choice. Van Zanten's and Paludanus' renditions of Eve were not.

In the analysis above it became clear that Van Zanten's and Paludanus' translations are both depicting Eve with a focus on her physical aspects. They add elements to direct the reader's focus towards her sexual state as a virgin, as well as giving a more detailed description of the movement of her breast when she is leaning against Adam, with an additional emphasis on her being naked. For Milton, Eve's nakedness is nothing extraordinary; Adam and Eve are prelapsarian and so there was no such thing as shame or a desire to cover their bodies. It is, therefore, an accepted part of the prelapsarian state, which though noteworthy for the postlapsarian reader, is not considered to be a sexualized image as it is in the translations.

The most clear-cut example of Milton establishing Eve as an intelligent and capable character is her composition of the sonnet in Book 4. Despite the fact that it is not set apart by gaps in the text, it is immediately clear by its structure that it should be read as a sonnet incorporated into the rest of the text. The first foot marks the start of the sonnet by being a trochee, and the rest of the sonnet is structurally defined by a strict iambic pentameter. The subject matter is introduced in the first ten lines, and the chiasmus is shown by the repetition of these elements in the last six. All in all, the sonnet is Eve's masterpiece in the epic: it makes her intelligence abundantly clear. However, the same image is not constructed in the translations. A large part of this has to do with the fact that the text is no longer structured as a sonnet, there is no clear beginning or end, the chiasmus is enlarged to span across twenty-five lines by Van Zanten and twenty-seven lines by Paludanus, and elements are added which do not only take away from the effect of the chiasmus, but also syntactically focus the reader to attribute more importance to the added elements than to the intended meaning of the sonnet.

In the end, the altered representation of Eve affects the reception of her and of *Paradise Lost* as a whole. The translations could give an insight into the culture that produced them, but to be able to do so it is necessary to first trace the literary tradition of Dutch translations of the same subject matter. With only two translations it is difficult to say with certainty that the way Eve was translated, and her transformation from capable, intelligent, free 'rule breaker in chief' to docile 'rule breaker in script', reflects a wider literary tradition. It is possible that both Van Zanten and Paludanus made choices that corresponded to the literary culture by which they were conditioned, a prospect worthy of being further explored in future Translation Studies research.

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STEPPING OUT OF TIME PERFORMING QUEER TEMPORALITY, MEMORY, AND RELATIONSHIP IN *TIMELINING*

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In their performance Timelining, Brennan Gerard and Ryan Kelly explore the ways in which intimate relationships are constituted in time. The performance consists of a memory game in which two performers retrace their shared history as a couple. Throughout the performance, the various actions prompted by the memory game question the unity of the couple, instead casting the performers' relationship as what I will call a two-togetherness. This article looks at Timelining through the lens of queer temporality to scrutinize the operations of different social experiences of time in the constitution of the couple as a two-togetherness. It then interrogates, investigates, and explores the ways in which the performance undermines normative assumptions about the constitution of intimate relationships within time. By breaking down categories of time and memory, Gerard and Kelly suggest that each intimate relationship, whether normative or queer, is constituted through the impossibility of conforming to normative conceptions of time.

1 For more images and information about the performance of *Timelining*, see <http://gerardandkelly.com/projects/timelining/>.

Timelining (2014)¹ is a performance by New York-based choreographers Brennan Gerard and Ryan Kelly. It was first presented at the New York gallery The Kitchen during March and April 2014. Subsequently it has been performed at the Mona Bismarck American Center in Paris and at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, again in New York. Through the staging of *Timelining*, Gerard and Kelly explore the ways in which relationships are constituted

through experiences of time and memory. For each staging of *Timelining*, two performers who are in some sort of relationship follow a choreography, or score, designed by Gerard and Kelly to foreground the temporal dimension that undergirds the foundation of the performers' relationship to one another. Over the course of the performance, each performer narrates events of h/er life in a backward fashion: starting with the immediate present and going back to the moment s/he was born. The recountings of their life events, however, are not just solitary actions for these performers. Instead, the performers take turns in narrating their lives, they listen to each other, and they respond to items that are narrated by the other performer. What unfolds is a memory game in which certain memories prompt specific bodily and verbal responses, which in turn give way to new memories narrated by the performers.

While playing their memory game, the performers jump back and forth through their own personal history by means of a game of association and interaction. These personal timelines, which the score calls 'chronologies',² are retraced step by step. Each performer recounts h/er own personal memories, yet both chronologies are also inextricably wrapped up in one another; one performer's memories might trigger certain recollections in the other, and vice versa. The performance explores a tension between cultural assumptions about intimate relationships and the lived and embodied experiences thereof. This article explores *Timelining's* foregrounding of the experience of intimacy as it is produced through the experience of social time and embodied memories. It argues that by foregrounding the tension between cultural assumptions about and lived experiences of intimate relationships, *Timelining* enables a reframing of the cultural knowledge that is embedded in the social organization of such relationships. This is a reframing that emphasizes the queerness at the heart of every relationship, whether it is an intergenerational relationship (e.g. parent-child), or a relationship between siblings, friends, or lovers.

² Brennan Gerard and Ryan Kelly, "Score for *Timelining*" (unpublished manuscript, 11 November 2014), Microsoft Word file.

Although relationships, memory, and the experience of time are important elements of the performance, other categories, such as space, movement, the body, and the spectator, also play a significant role in its staging. Before I can address the complex way in which these elements interact and allow us to think about how relationships are constituted through experiences of time and memory, I must first describe *Timelining* in more detail. Unless otherwise noted, my description and analysis of the performance piece will refer to the score that instructs the performers in the rules of the performance's memory game, and to the initial run of *Timelining*. Due to the improvised nature of the performer's chronologies, I have chosen to give few specific examples of the performers' memories. However, I exemplify instructions from Ryan and Kelly's score with recollections from my own encounter with the performance piece at The Kitchen. Citations from the memory game are, then, predominantly based on my own memory of the performance, or even mere fabrications that have formed in my mind while thinking back to *Timelining*. Notwithstanding the accuracy of my own remembrance of these memories, their function is to illustrate *Timelining's* exploration of memories that constitute the social formation of couples.

PLAYING WITH TIME

When the spectator walks into The Kitchen, the gallery space in which *Timelining* was first performed, s/he enters an almost empty room. In a corner, two performers are seated. The moment someone steps into the gallery space, the performers get up and start walking in circles, side by side, crossing the black line on the floor time and again (Figs 1 and 2). The performance has started.

In the initial walk, or "exposition",³ that kicks off the performance, the performers go through all the motions that the memory game calls for. In silence they continue walking in circles while sometimes changing directions,

³ Gerard and Kelly, "Score for *Timelining*".



Fig. 1

Performance view, The Kitchen,
New York, NY, April 2014.

Pictured: Ted Heningson and Todd
McQuade.

Photo: Elisabeth Bernstein. Picture
courtesy of Gerard and Kelly

switching sides, or coming to a halt; these are actions that are designated by the score as “links”, “loops”, and “triggers”. After this short exposition, the two performers begin to recount past events of their lives in a receding movement, from the present to the past. They take turns and match their exchange with the movements that were already shown in the exposition. Slowly, it becomes apparent that certain memories trigger specific movements, prompt the switching of sides or direction, and allow the performers to take turns in recounting their chronology. One of the performers starts with the present moment, “now”, followed by h/er immediate past: “Now *in front of* the arrival of the green dress; the arrival of the green dress *in front of* tripping; tripping *in front of* you started talking; you started talking *in front of* waiting; waiting *in front of* arrived to the Kitchen” [my emphasis].⁴

Striking in this retracing of the performer’s past is the overt spatial phrasing of the elements that separates the various actions, or memory items, listed: “in front of”. The score suggests that when looking back at one’s past life, each memory item will obstruct the item that comes after it (or before, if you

⁴ Ibid.

Fig. 2

Performance view, The Kitchen,
New York, NY, March 2014.

Pictured: R. B. Schlather and Adam
Weinert.

Photo: Ian Douglas. Picture courtesy
of Gerard and Kelly



will, since the performers are listing items in reverse chronological order). The phrasing of the memory game already indicates that for Gerard and Kelly the categories of time and space cannot be seen separately from one another. Just as the narrating of memories is done via spatial metaphors, so too these memories motivate the use of space by the performers. The direction in which they walk and specific actions such as “loops” and “movement-memory-snapshots” are bound by the memory items listed and as such *Timelining* gestures towards a relation between the body and memory. The performers not only recount their past lives, but also act out their memories, which, as I argue in this article, challenges the conception of a linear chronology that is generally associated with the narration of memory.

The longer the performers narrate their chronologies, the further back their history is traced: from the immediate past, to a couple of weeks, months, years, and finally back to the moment of their birth, at which point the memory game has reached its end. As the performers take turns recounting their memories, it becomes apparent that these overlap and diverge. The visitor is invited to

trace the narrative which unfolds through the retelling of past experiences which binds the two performers together. Listening to both the performers' storylines, hearing their similarities and diversions, it should become clear that the performers are in some sort of personal and intimate relationship; they are siblings, past or current lovers, mother and daughter, or partners in performing art. These relationships, however, are experienced differently by each party, as is evidenced by the different ways in which each partner recounts similar events.

Parts of the performers' chronologies are prepared in advance, since the performers are instructed to write down a rudimentary timeline of their memories,⁵ but most of the retracing of their past is based on improvisation. It is in this improvisation, and the split-second decisions that the performers have to make while playing the game, that we can recognize a destabilizing of assumptions about how relationships are constituted in time. As soon as the other, non-speaking performer recognizes an item on the speaking performer's chronology, s/he is allowed to take over the narration and start recounting h/er own chronology, starting with the item s/he recognized.⁶ This is called "linking". The connection between different memory items does not have to be particularly obvious, and the new memory item might appear anywhere in the chronology of the other performer. In this way the performers take turns playing their memory game. Each jumps to different moments on h/er own timeline based on associations s/he makes with h/er partner's recollections. When linking, the performer who continues the list of memory items also turns around and starts walking in the opposite direction, facing the first performer. The jump from one person's timeline to that of the other suggests a break in the unity of the relationship between the performers. Often a new list of items which is prompted through linking will refer to a wholly different event in the performers' lives, or will recount the same event in a wholly different fashion. Walking away from one another serves as a physical reminder that, although the performers are imagined as a couple, the individual experiences of their

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

togetherness might radically differ from one another. The paradox that seems to sit at the centre of a relationship – the experience of being together while remaining apart from one another’s experiences – and the way in which this paradox makes every experience of a relationship always already queer or incompatible with fantasies of normative relationship configurations, are then the central concerns of *Timelining’s* memory game.

Timelining’s score opens with the instruction that it “requires two performers involved in some form of an intimate partnership” [emphasis in the original].⁷ Ryan Kelly explains the way in which the premise of the performance hinges on the performers’ intimate relationship as follows: “The work began as a performance that Brennan and I did together in an effort to understand how our own intimate relationship – often collapsed by others into the formation ‘a couple’ – was structured similarly and differently by time and memory”.⁸ What we see in this performance is a concern with the temporal condition of memory and relationships. That is to say, Gerard and Kelly are interested in how intimate partnerships are structured through social categories of time. For them, a relationship’s shared history is performed as the memory game that is staged in *Timelining*: an exercise that the couple shares between the two of them, but which they also perform for their social environment – in front of an audience. The reiteration of their memories produces a framework that makes the couple intelligible as an essentialized identity: they are lovers, married, siblings, friends, mother and child, and so on.

In the process of making the other intelligible to oneself, one divests the other of h/er ability to determine h/er self-identification. The framing of the couple as a single entity undermines the notion that such relationships are always made up of different takes on the same story. The “collapse” of the individual “into the formation of a couple”, which Kelly addresses, displaces individual identifications by rewriting these into the narrative of the couple. Gerard and Kelly, through their performance, want to explore the tension between the

7 Ibid.

8 Ryan Kelly, e-mail message to the author, 18 November 2014.

social category of the couple and the identifications of the single members who constitute this couple. Instead of envisioning the relationship of the couple as a one-togetherness, or in the image of “two-becoming-one”, their version of relationality is structured as “side-by-side”, overlapping in parts, but still persisting separately.⁹ Kelly explains their central concerns with the image of the couple as a single entity as follows:

We also wanted to get away from an idea that all intimate partnerships are made over as “the couple”. So, we engaged many variations on “partnership” to enact our score – a couple, former lovers, siblings, parent/child, and other intimate formations, same-sex and opposite-sex, alike. For us, the queerness was not in the casting, in the content of the relationship (as if only same-sex partnerships can be queer) but in our insistence on a side-by-side structure of intimacy in which each entity retains h/er autonomy within the unit.¹⁰

Thus, the performance starts off with the assumption that queerness is already inherent in the construction of relationships through the discrepancy between the oneness of the couple and the individual autonomy of each person. Queerness, for Gerard and Kelly, is not exclusive to same-sex relationship configurations. Indeed, same-sex relationships do not necessarily manifest a radical non-normative politics, but can advocate for conservative and normative institutions and social structures that are embedded in heteronormative patriarchy. Hence, Kelly feels that “gay marriage advocacy was obscuring a deeply conservative turn in the movement away from the radicalization of intimacies and toward the extension of patriarchal notions of relationality like marriage”.¹¹

9 Ibid.

In line with Gerard and Kelly’s assertion, I take queerness to emerge out of the situatedness of libidinal desires – be they same-sex, opposite-sex, or even asexual in constitution – in conjunction with social constraints that seek to

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

repress these very same desires. That is to say, rather than making queerness the domain of same-sex relationships – a move which could be argued to be normative in its own right – I maintain that queerness comes into being at the moment in which individual desires collide with normative social structures that keep these desires in check. Central to the performance of *Timelining* is a resistance against conservative politics that cast both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships in a normative mould associated with reproductive sexuality, which includes the fantasy of the couple as a unity. The reiteration of the couples' histories through the memory game that is central to the performance, combined with embodied memories and the embodiment of temporal categories that are transmitted by the walking patterns, is meant to explore a relationality that goes beyond the erasure of individual experience that prompted by the collapse of this individual into the normative couple.

QUEERING NORMALITY

Queer theory has devoted considerable energy to thinking about queer experiences of time and the way in which these experiences correspond to non-normative gender identifications and relationship formations in the face of heteropatriarchal discursive practices. Theorists such as Judith Halberstam and Elizabeth Freeman have written important interventions in which they critically engage with normative subjectivity production that is organized by social categories of time. Such interventions are now largely understood as the critical framework of queer temporality, and help us rethink the ways in which the everyday and seemingly commonsensical dimensions of time occlude the discursive practices of public and private time that shape bodies and lived experiences into normative and docile subjects. *Timelining* too can be regarded as a critical reflection of how relationships and their memories are at once normatively produced and queered by their constitution in time. Approaching *Timelining* through the lens of queer temporality allows me to tease out the ways in which the performance casts all relationships as always

already queer, and think through the potentiality of experiencing a relationship as a two-togetherness, rather than a one-togetherness that Gerard and Kelly propose in their performance.

In her book *Time Binds* (2010), Freeman argues that the social construction of time conditions action. Time as a category structures our daily rhythms and behaviour and, in doing so, it produces the subject as a being in time. Our being in time, then, is first and foremost produced socially. This temporal production of subjectivity is tightly bound up with notions of modernity and its paradigm of progress, production, and procreation. Indeed, for Freeman, our experience of time is produced through a discourse that is embedded in structures of capitalism and which dominates both private and public time.¹² In other words, this temporality is an economic, social, and political construction that produces the lived experiences based on which we construct our subjectivity and sense of self.

Following Freeman's analysis of how these different categories each inform time in both different and converging ways, we can begin to understand how we as subjects are compelled to organize our public and private lives in temporal categories and societal norms dictated by economic and political practices. The different temporal modes that Freeman discusses in this respect correspond with capitalist processes of production, accumulation, and movement of capital. The rhythms of our daily lives are structured around labour and the nuclear family, among other things. Societal norms maintain that it is best to go to bed early or to take leisure time only in the weekends: Benjamin Franklin's famous proverb "early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise" comes to mind. If one chooses not to follow dominant work rhythms and decides to take time off during the week, one is expected to spend this time productively or, even better, to have it organized by the rhythms of childrearing. The discursive practices that organize our experience of private and public time are centred on the norm of the nuclear,

¹² Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xvi.

heterosexual, bourgeois family. This is what Freeman calls chrononormativity, as she argues that it reifies heterosexual and patriarchal norms in both the public and the private spheres in order to “organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity”.¹³ Chrononormativity, Freeman adds, “suggest[s] that all normativity is a matter of timing, of inculcating particular cultural rhythms into the flesh such that they feel organic”.¹⁴ (Re)productive timing, in all of its connotations of linearity, futurity, and inevitability, then, naturalizes certain cultural behaviours and elevates these as the norm.

The experience of chrononormativity confronts the subject with the imperative of being in sync with the rhythms and flows of a society that is organized around the logic of (re)production, and the prohibition of living at a more syncopated tempo that might decelerate or accelerate in relation to social time. As such, it introduces a set of ethical questions that revolve around the ways in which we organize our private lives in relation to social time: what does it mean to fall in or out of sync with social time? How can alternative kinship and romantic relationships flourish within the constraints of normative temporal structures? In response to such questions, Halberstam commits to a position similar to that of Freeman regarding the production of sexual subjectivity through discursive practices of time. Yet she maintains that within discursive practices of heteropatriarchal reproductive time there remains room to experience time differently; to perform time differently, which allows for a subjectivity production that is non-heteronormative and which deviates from norms of reproductive sex, nuclear families, and forty-hour work weeks. Queer experiences of time can be seen as moments of resistance, as a mode of producing counterhegemonic knowledge.¹⁵ This resistance to normative time, however, is almost exclusively located in those who find themselves already at the margin of heteropatriarchal society. Halberstam’s inquiry into counterhegemonic knowledge centres on queer artists, musicians, and individuals who already organize themselves in alternative romantic or kinship formations. Halberstam situates queerness in opposition to normative time –

¹³ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 3.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Freeman, “Sex in the Age of Digital Reproduction: Gerard and Kelly’s Kisses” (unpublished manuscript, 23 August 2016), Microsoft Word file.

¹⁵ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 159.

running counter to heteropatriarchal strategies of reproduction – while failing to imagine queer temporal experiences within normative subject positions. To recall Kelly: “as if only same-sex partnerships can be queer”.¹⁶

Timelining zooms in on this oversight and implies that queer experiences are also always present in the formation of the normative couple. These experiences make themselves apparent when performers and audience are confronted with the limits of the experiences of their relationship as a unity. Right at the moment in which incongruities, disconnections, and false starts begin to slip into the memory game, their individual experiences are revealed as being radically different from one another. Recalling how each performer jumps back and forth on h/er own chronologies based on associations s/he makes with the memories of h/er partner, or how the same event can be narrated differently, the memory game makes apparent the limits of envisioning a relationship as a normative, reproductive unity. This sense of liminality is already calculated into the score for *Timelining*, as it instructs that “when the outside performer stalls or goes blank, gets lost or confused, s/he stops moving and ends speaking with ‘in front of–’”.¹⁷ If one performer reaches the limit of h/er recollection, if s/he does not know how to further retrace h/er chronology, the other has to take over and find a trigger to link with h/er own chronology.

Halberstam sets queer experiences of being in time categorically apart from heteropatriarchal structuring of time, or chrononormativity. For her the category of queer temporality is diametrically opposed to the reproductive and progressive linearity of heteronormative experiences of time. What she fails to account for, however, is the way in which these experiences of time seem to be inextricably mutually implicated. As many critics of both hetero- and homonormativity have noted, queer identifications do not necessarily amount to the desire for alternative relationship formations or the wish to organize life outside normative structures.¹⁸ Lisa Duggan points out that many of the

¹⁶ Kelly, e-mail message to the author, 18 November 2014.

¹⁷ Gerard and Kelly, “Score for *Timelining*”.

¹⁸ Michael Warner, “Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet,” *Social Text* 29 (1991), 3-17; Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 50.

strategies employed by gay rights organizations campaign for the inclusion of LGBT persons into institutions traditionally associated with reproductive heteronormativity, such as marriage or adoption.¹⁹ Conversely, not all non-queer-identified persons will experience temporality along the patterns of reproductive heteronormativity because of other possible identifications that would limit their access to normative temporal structures or institutions. More often these diverging experiences of time will coexist within the subject, and simultaneously or alternately inform one's temporal sense of being.

Timelining takes as one of its starting points the idea that no experiences of relationships are either wholly queer or entirely heteronormative. Kelly's remark that not only same-sex relationships should be considered queer intimates that their concern with experiences of time in the formation of the couple stretches beyond a binary division between heteronormative and queer couples. Instead, for Gerard and Kelly the temporal formation of the relationship is in itself always already queer, which is reflected in the diverse constitutions of the partners they have chosen to perform in the various runs of *Timelining*. The initial run of the performance at The Kitchen in New York featured couples that would not necessarily read as queer or anti-heteronormative. Kinship relations such as mother-daughter or sibling relationships suggest the organizing principle of reproductive time – in the guise of generational differences, childrearing, and sibling rivalry, for example – to structure at least parts of their relationship. Whether considered queer or heteronormative, all couples performing *Timelining* would at times reveal both queer and heteronormative experiences within the narration of their chronologies. The individual memories that were narrated sometimes attested to experiences of reproductive time, while at other times these memories hinted at temporal experiences that were non-linear or counterproductive. Taken together, the memories of each individual performer would also often run counter to the experience that h/er partner narrated, or would shed a different light on how the event was experienced by either one of them.

19 Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?*, 45.

Tim Dean makes a similar argument in his reflection of temporal experiences of alternative kinships, which according to him foreground the tension between normative social time and its queer counterpoints. In his ground-breaking work on bareback culture, *Unlimited Intimacy* (2009), Dean explores alternative kinship networks that organize themselves around the transmission of HIV, rather than through the sharing of a genetic pool.²⁰ For these communities, kinship is not based on a genetic conceptualization of generation, but instead as a generational tie based on viral transmissions. The transmission of the HIV virus between two consenting adults forms a bond in which the receiver of the virus is often cast as the offspring of the giver.²¹ Following this analysis, Dean ventures into thinking about how these alternative kinship communities experience their own liminality or finitude. The temporal experiences of these alternative kinships not only dramatize their experience of being out of sync with normative time, but these relationships also expose normative subjectivity to be inherently out of time as well. The tension between generational reproduction and the sense of finitude that is dramatized in the transmission of HIV foregrounds a similar tension in normative romantic and kinship relationships. These too are organized around the tension between reproduction and liminality, as they are caught between a projection into the future and the realization of the finitude of that same future. Reflecting on the Lacanian grammatical tense of future anterior, “what I shall have been”, in which the subject simultaneously anticipates and experiences retrospectively h/er own psychic time, Dean suggests that “we live in time, but not chronologically”.²² For Dean, then, no subjectivity is experienced in a linear, progressive fashion, but is always experienced within the tension between retrospection and anticipation.

The premise of *Timelining* is to extend the inquiry into temporality beyond the formation of alternative or queer kinships and romantic relationships. Dean’s suggestion that any kinship or subject formation develops non-chronologically echoes Gerard and Kelly’s move away from the assumption that normative

20 Tim Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 84-96.

21 *Ibid.*, 85.

22 Tim Dean, “Bareback Time,” in *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, ed. E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), 84.

relationship formations are always structured by chrononormativity. Instead, *Timelining* exposes the formation of a relationship, whether heteropatriarchal or alternative, as always being wrapped up in tensions between temporal experiences of reproduction and liminality, future and past, public and private, social and individual, and unity and two-togetherness. The stage onto which these tensions are dramatized is the memory game that the performers play, yet the memories that are recounted in this game cannot be contained within the personal narratives of the performers. Instead, these memories become embodied as they trigger certain actions and movements in the performers. These embodied memories, in return, disrupt the linearity through which the initial chronology is narrated, allowing for a reframing of the temporal experiences that constitute the relationship between the performers.

EMBODIED DISRUPTIONS

The body as auxiliary to knowledge transmission plays an important role in the memory game of *Timelining* and, in effect, in the performance's departure point of the couple as a two-togetherness. Honing in on the physical dimension of *Timelining's* memory game, I claim that the dramatization of the memory through its bodily movements shows how for Gerard and Kelly queer temporal experiences of a relationship manifest themselves through the ways in which the couple's two bodies relate to one another. Diana Taylor, in her book *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003), discusses the transmission of embodied practices in performance as an epistemology for cultural knowledge. She argues that within the discourse of modernity, the privileging of written knowledge over embodied memory has marginalized epistemologies that are centred on bodily experiences.²³ For Taylor, the repertoire of group and individual performances alike produces a knowledge that counters the hegemony of normative practices of modernity's epistemologies. So too in *Timelining* we see the staging of embodied memory through a scenario of movements, bodily acts, and positions in space. The transmission of bodily knowledge unfolds on

²³ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 17.

multiple levels. For example, the circular walking resembles a tracing back and forth of time on a clock. The rhythm of the performers' movements is structured by their memory as the score gives several directives for specific movements that are triggered by certain memories or associations that the performers make. These specific movements – linking, looping and movement-memory-snapshots – each break away from the linearity of the narrated memory game, as we have seen already when the linking performer starts to walk in the opposite direction of h/er partner:

In a split-second decision, s/he may decide to pivot and speak that item at the moment h/er partner repeats it. At this point, the performer who is **linking** starts speaking h/er own **chronology** departing from that item and moving in the opposite sense of the circle [emphasis in the original].²⁴

As noted earlier, the movement of linking dramatizes the fact that similar events are experienced differently by the performers. Sudden disruptions of the chronology open into new memories that originate from different parts of either performer's timeline, suggesting that the memories with which we construct the narratives of our past lives do not follow a linear pattern either. Linking also prompts other actions that the performers can decide to engage in. It raises the occasion for movement-memory-snapshots or loops, two devices that further dramatize the disruption of the linear flow of the performers' chronologies. It is important to note that these actions are initiated by the performer who is not recounting h/er chronology. The dynamic within the relationship depends on the interaction between both partners, but this interaction always bears the mark of disruption and uncertainty. In an improvised snap decision, one performer can disrupt the linear flow of h/er partner's history, but without doing so, there would be no relationship to speak of in the first place.

²⁴ Gerard and Kelly, "Score for *Timelining*".

The first of the two actions that can be prompted by linking, the movement-memory-snapshot (Fig. 3),²⁵ consists of memories that are remembered through a combination of bodily movements and spoken narratives, and can occur after the performers join again during their linking. One of the performers halts to make gestures and movements that s/he associates with a specific item on h/er chronology. Here, memory is acted out as embodied practice. While one performer drops into a movement-memory-snapshot, the other performer controls the pace of this movement by speeding up, slowing down, or halting. Once the performers are reunited, they continue to walk in a circle together. The other performer might decide to drop into a movement-memory-snapshot as well, inspired by the embodied memories of h/er fellow performer. These embodied memories unfold through a heightened sense of co-dependence. Simultaneously, these movements also stress how the performers exist separately within the framework of the couple, for the movement-memory-snapshot highlights the individuality of such embodied memories.

25 Ibid.



Fig. 3
Performance view, Solomon R.
Guggenheim Museum, New York,
NY, July 2015.
Pictured: Heather McGhee and
Hassan Christopher.
Photo: Zac Spears. Picture courtesy
of Gerard and Kelly

A final staging of embodied memory is what the score calls a loop, which can also happen while linking.²⁶ The performer who loops peels off from the circle and starts circling on h/er own on the spot. While doing this, s/he lists a mini-chronology of specific items, for instance, every place s/he has lived or every romantic relationship s/he has had. The loop continues until the other performer has rejoined the first, and until this happens the looping performer just repeats h/er mini-chronology. These three specific actions have in common that they tear into the linearity of the narrated memory game. While usually the performers would list items from their chronology in a backwards chronological order – “now in front of ...” – each of these actions disrupts the linear flow and introduces a different experience of time: experiences that jump back and forth in time, as is the case when linking; a halting, slowing down, or speeding up of time when engaged in a movement-memory-snapshot; or time as circular and repetitive in the case of a loop. These disruptions in the linearity of the performance are further dramatized by the performers breaking away from one another.

Commenting on a series of different performance pieces by Gerard and Kelly, Freeman identifies a strategy in their choreography with which they break down and denaturalize categories that make up the normative behaviour within romantic partnerships. “As a choreographed behavior, sex can be broken down into components that can be reshuffled and rearranged, in a productive alienation that liberates it from linearity, simultaneity, reciprocity, and organicity.”²⁷ One of these performances, entitled *Reusable Parts/ Endless Love* (2011) is a potentially infinite loop of performers describing the movements of a kiss, while other performers move to these descriptions as if these were in fact instructions for a kiss. Because the moving performers have to negotiate who performs which action, the result of the performance is that the movements separate the performers instead of bringing them together in the union of a kiss. As with *Timelining*, in this piece too, “two don’t become one”.²⁸

26 Ibid.

27 Freeman, “Sex in the Age of Digital Reproduction: Gerard and Kelly’s Kisses”.

28 Ibid.

Breaking down memories into discrete items on a performer's chronology, while enabling h/er to jump back and forth, linger on the spot, or change direction, creates a similar effect in *Timelining* to that recognized by Freeman in *Reusable Parts/Endless Love*. We can identify a resistance against the linearity of history that constitutes the normative relationship formation. By reshuffling memory items through physical interventions, *Timelining* problematizes the assumption that relationships are constituted in chrononormative, or linear time. The memories enacted are inextricably bound together, constituting the framework of the couple, but also reproduce individual experiences. The normative one-togetherness in which the couple is usually situated transforms into a queer two-togetherness: making the couple intelligible as such, without forfeiting the self-identification of the members that constitute this couple. Through this performance, then, Gerard and Kelly ask their audience to rethink the relationship of the performers and, by extension, their own relationships as well. These are no longer defined in terms of progress or a movement forward, but in different, queer ways. An imagining of relationships as breaking out of linear and normative time enables our thinking of queer relationality as a mode of producing counterhegemonic knowledge.

CONCLUSION: SCRIPTED ANARCHY

What this analysis aims to show is that the cultural work of *Timelining* hinges on a tension that Gerard and Kelly identify as inherent to intimate relationships. The problematic collapse of individual experiences into shared memories, which expresses itself in the form of incongruous recollections and reimagined personal histories, is foregrounded in the capricious memory game that the performers play while tracing back their own chronologies. Jumping back and forth through time, the performers time and again map out new itineraries that constitute their shared histories. With each repetition of the performance, the narrative of their chronology changes slightly. Different items in one's chronology might trigger further different responses and recollections in the

other's chronology, and vice versa. The triggers do not necessarily have to correspond, as indicated by the score for *Timelining*:

This time, s/he does not begin with “Now” but instead finds a **trigger** where the other left off to something in h/er own **chronology**. For instance, the other may have left off saying something about a phone call with h/er mother. This performer will begin with an item in the **chronology** that is about a mother, a phone call, etc. The association need not be perfectly clear and can jump the performer in time to any point in h/er **chronology** [emphasis in the original].²⁹

The improvisation element that supports the memory game ensures that no two performances trace the exact same chronology. When an item in one's chronology triggers a memory for h/er partner, the latter has to act on a split-second decision if s/he wants to introduce a link, movement-memory-snapshot, or loop into h/er memory game. The game, then, seems to allow for great freedom on the performers' behalf. Both performers can continuously remap and reconstitute their intimate relationship, which comes to be understood not as a monolithic entity in which individual experiences are subsumed by projections of shared memories, but as a construction that has to be constantly rebuilt and renegotiated. As is the case with Freeman's reading of the sex act in *Endless Love/Reusable Parts*,²⁹ so too does *Timelining* offer versions of intimate relationships that are fragmented by nature and only start to signify as 'relationship' once their chronologies are reconstructed as narratives time and again. The potential for counterhegemonic knowledge production lies in this reframing of cultural assumptions and the social dimensions of self-identification that the score for *Timelining* has built for the individual performers, while at the same time acknowledging the complexity and interconnectedness of their shared experiences.

²⁹ Gerard and Kelly, “Score for *Timelining*”.

As a final remark, however, I want to briefly draw attention to yet another tension, this time at the heart of the score for *Timelining* itself. While the performance allows for a substantial amount of improvisation and play to produce a sense of freedom in the performers, and to place them at the centre of the knowledge production of the performance, we cannot help but notice that while reading the score for the performance, it often comes across as stringent and overly regulated. While the score leaves its performers much freedom in choosing the itinerary of their own chronology, it simultaneously holds them to a very strict and limited set of movements and interactions. The score prescribes the particular instances in which performers should change lanes or directions and step into movement-memory-snapshots or loops, while prohibiting these very same movements in other situations. The scriptedness of the movements seems to be at odds with the unpredictable quality of the memory game. However, I argue that the seeming incongruity between the performance's attempt to produce counterhegemonic knowledge, and the means with which it arrives at doing so, might actually be one of the most important lessons we can draw from *Timelining*. For although the limitations that the score imposes seem to be in tension with the practice of counterhegemonic knowledge production, we should bear in mind that the score for *Timelining* is composed to produce a specific effect: the reframing of the cultural understanding of intimate relationships. Without a certain set of rules to guide the performers through the memory game that forms the basis for *Timelining*, the performance might in fact end up anywhere. To be sure, this paradox at the heart of *Timelining* could in itself provide some interesting insights, but it would not necessarily result in counterhegemonic knowledge as such. For counterhegemonic knowledge to be productive, we must take into account the context in which it is produced and which dominant discursive practices this knowledge production challenges. The score for *Timelining* ensures that it becomes clear to which cultural practices the performers' memory game responds. The production of counterhegemonic knowledge, then, should not be understood as a free-for-all and anarchistic practice.

Rather, it takes on the dominant discourse and tears at its margins; it unravels the way hegemonic discursive practices produce cultural knowledge, and it exposes the arbitrary and constructed nature of these knowledges.³⁰

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