

  
PAINTING BACKWARDS

*or*

how my fool  
encountered  
the melancholic

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'Uncompanionable' is the word Leo Steinberg used to describe the female figures in Pablo Picasso's paintings of the early forties. This project demonstrates a series of attempts to imagine acts of companionship in an area of tension between art history and fine art, which it constructs anew.

The object I've most tried to companion is the reproduction of a small portrait picture, Picasso's *Weeping Woman* (1937), which developed from work surrounding his celebrated political mural, *Guernica*. The effort of companionship makes a fool of me and I take my fool as methodology, understood as a set of principles or procedures according to which something is done. A key principle of my fool is a logic of encounter in which what's conscientiously sought gives way to something else that emerges, repeats, insists; it is to this level of experience that my project addresses itself. For my fool's procedures, I turn to a number of others, including Picasso's lover in 1937, the photographer and painter Dora Maar (of whom *Weeping Woman* is a portrait) who made her own enigmatic companion to *Weeping Woman*, a half-painted copy known as *Woman in a Red Hat*; and psychoanalysis, whose own development might be seen as a sustained effort to companion the seemingly uncompanionable in the human subject.

I've engaged with the PhD as an educational site through which to expose and reconstitute previous moments in my education as an artist and art historian. Reaching back to my childhood bedroom, the project opens to a reproduction of *Weeping Woman* in one of two art books I owned in my pre- to early teens, around 1986 to 1992. The other book is a monograph on Dürer, open at plate 38, *Melencolia I* (1514). Rather than becoming involved in this image's details, my fool turns from it towards the field of melancholy, ultimately coming to the art historical literature of the eighties and early nineties that derogated melancholy as a pathological attitude to the end of painting, and which informed the discourse of art history to which I was exposed as an undergraduate student. My fool speculates as to whether painting's sickness might have been misdiagnosed and the search for a cure misguided; following psychoanalytic insights, a slightly different problem for painting is proposed, one that Dora Maar's copy of Picasso's *Weeping Woman* is seen as a response to.

The bedroom setting, two images, and several historical moments, cross the painting *Weeping Woman* with what is experienced as uncompanionable in me. This is a kind of pleasure, felt as both strange and intimate, which I take in this and other modernist paintings, and which my work continues to circle. Given this pleasure troubles as much as supports the working 'I', the project adopts the first person as the preferred pronoun of my fool and bearer of its principal problems. Here, by way of the lacunary autobiographical subject, art history and fine art find their interaction, not in fusional plenitude but in restive exchanges that precipitate a series of blind fields.

Abstract		iii
List of Illustrations		vi
Preface		viii
mote_4	'My education has done me great harm ...'	1
mote_25	Details of my education	5
mote_6	Echo	8
mote_31	Secretarial hands	13
mote_5	Bedroom naevus	15
mote_22	Pathological	17
mote_39	Scissor	22
mote_12	Yellow, red, blue, and green	23
mote_20	Room setting	25
mote_15	'to decorate apartments'.	29
mote_8	Understanding your own jokes	32
mote_44	Sleep reading	34
mote_18	Fleeing Woman	37
mote_53	Green	41
mote_57	Gobbit	43
mote_60	Mood	44
mote_63	Ailment head	45
mote_54	Tate Gallery 1988	49
mote_56	Five metre table	53
mote_36	Simile	54
mote_47	We found a match	55
mote_27	mien mean	56
mote_61	The world of kitchen work	59
mote_62	"The result of using color"	60
mote_21	Kitchen wall	63
mote_59	"Close your eyes"	64
mote_26	"A certain oddly shaped stone"	66
mote_1	Leaps of loose association	68
mote_52	Victim	71
mote_7	An act of theatre	72
mote_11	"The Task of Mourning"	74
mote_9	Opening Picasso's Guernica, twice	76
mote_30	Entombment	81
mote_29	Trolley	82
mote_40	Foolschap arrangement	84
mote_41	Lessons from <i>Mourning and Melancholia</i>	87
mote_38	Emotional cubism	88
mote_34	"Picasso and Truth"	89
mote_2	A picture of cuts	91
mote_17	(Detail of Fig. 11)	95

mote_46	She eats the page	100
mote_65	Student	102
mote_42	The end	103
mote_64	Treatment	107
mote_37	Her face set like a table	110
mote_68	Drainage	112
mote_67	Painted nails	115
mote_55	Round and flat	119
Precis		121

fig. 1	My Dürer monograph	6
fig. 2	My Picasso monograph	7
fig. 3	Dora Maar, <i>Woman in a Red Hat</i> (c.1937), Private Collection.	9
fig. 4	Mum painting in her bedroom studio some time in the 1980s.	13
fig. 5	Stills from <i>hands film bad edit</i> (2011), digital video loop.	14
fig. 6	Scanned page from my Dürer monograph showing <i>Melencolia I</i> (1516)	28
fig. 7	Scanned page from my Picasso monograph showing <i>Weeping Woman</i> (1937)	29
fig. 8	<i>Weeping Woman</i> over the drinks cabinet with Roland Penrose and his wife, Lee Miller, at home. Photograph by Cecil Beaton, 19th February 1965.	30
fig. 9	Hattie Hayridge dressed for comedy. Screengrab from youtube.com.	33
fig. 10	Detail of <i>Guernica</i> , State I, photographed by Dora Maar.	37
fig. 11	Detail of <i>Guernica</i> , State II, photographed by Dora Maar.	38
fig. 12	Detail of <i>Guernica</i> , State VI, showing Fleeing Woman with wallpaper collage, photographed by Dora Maar.	40
fig. 13	Poster for <i>The Bride of Frankenstein</i> , released in France June 1935.	41
fig. 14	Pablo Picasso, <i>Absinthe (Girl in a Café)</i> (1901). Charcoal, pastel, gouache and chalk. The State Hermitage Museum, Russia.	41
fig. 15	Edgar Degas, <i>The Song of the Dog</i> (1876-77). Gouache and pastel on monotype. Private collection.	42
fig. 16	'Headache Man' and 'Toothache Man', photographed in Christopher Brighton, <i>Lincoln Cathedral Cloister Bosses</i> (The Honeywood Press, 1985)	45
fig. 17	Philip Guston's wife, Musa McKim, dispensing apples in front of Dürer's etching, <i>Melencolia I</i> . Scanned from Musa Meyer, <i>Night Studio: A Memoir of Philip Guston</i> (Da Capo Press, 1997) where it's captioned, 'My mother in the kitchen, Woodstock 1975.'	63
fig. 18	Details of Peter Paul Rubens, <i>Entombment</i> (c.1615-16) photographed in Courtauld Institute Galleries: Illustrated Catalogue, 1998.	81
fig. 19	<i>Weeping Woman</i> printed on a bag, seen in a supermarket trolley.	82

- fig. 20 *21 et 22 Janvier 1937* and *9 et 10 Février 1937*, ink drawings on diary pages by Dora Maar, offered for sale by Les Modernes, Montreal, July 2012. 102
- fig. 21 Pablo Picasso sketch of a woman as a table dated February 1934, ink on paper, photographed in Christian Zervos *Catalogue Raisonné* vol 9. 110

The thesis recalls a scene, my childhood bedroom, in which two books were opened between 1986 and 1992. The books, mingled with my room's specific décor, and the historical moment, are taken together as an educational naevus or birthmark. The doctorate represents a later educational scenario, 'fresh circumstances'<sup>1</sup>, through which the earlier scene's components are scrambled and rearranged, gaining in force and significance.

The books lie open on pages where two artworks are reproduced: *Melencolia I* (1514) by Albrecht Dürer and *Weeping Woman* (1937) by Pablo Picasso. Painting, reflecting, reading and writing follow paths set by these pictures to discover something about their appearance to a young girl in those books, that room, that moment. This undertaking makes a fool of me and I take my fool—a not-quite-me student engaged in doctoral study—as a methodology, understood as a set of principles or procedures according to which something is done. A principle of my fool is a logic of encounter in which what's conscientiously sought gives way to something else that emerges, repeats, insists; my project addresses itself to this level of experience and the concomitant task of allowing the subjective disturbance of an encounter with an artwork to be not only named but registered in the form of response. To this end, academically impure procedures marshalled by my fool include elaborate punctuation, repetition, leaps of loose association, poetry, anecdote, hallucination, and several learned from another student, Dora Maar, whose version of Picasso's *Weeping Woman* uses replication, a kind of note-taking, and aposiopesis.

Within the writing room, the encounter with artworks experienced in that provincial childhood bedroom is repeated in kind. My doctoral fool's resources are limited to the books and papers gathered and arranged in my flat around the two monographs on Dürer and Picasso. Under these circumstances, my fool often uses secondary sources—my childhood experience of *Weeping Woman* was of a cropped reproduction in a Phaidon book—finding that the distortions of things pre-viewed are telling, propitious.

Two different trajectories of reading and writing are read

<sup>1</sup> In relation to deferred action Sigmund Freud speaks of 'memory-traces being subjected from time to time to a re-arrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances'. Quoted in Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (Karnac, 2006), p. 112.

off the pages showing *Melencolia I* and *Weeping Woman*:

Dürer's etching is taken as an invitation to find a way through the tenebrous field of melancholy: from the myth of Saturn and Ops, to the academic preoccupation with mourning and melancholy in the 1980s and 1990s, especially the art historical discourse on the end of modernist painting, which governed my experience as an undergraduate and postgraduate student of History of Art in the late 1990s and early 2000s; and to psychoanalytical theories of melancholy.

The other page, on which *Weeping Woman* (1937) is reproduced, demands a different kind of attention. This painting is pored over in detail, along with its caption on the facing page. Interpretations of *Weeping Woman* and its relationship to *Guernica* are picked over. Responding to the persistent, troubling pressure of this painting from that childhood bedroom into the space of the doctorate induces my fool to fictionalization. Here, the two paths set by the bedroom's opened books converge at the mythic end of painting. Taking *Guernica* as an instance of the end, 'the end of a fine-art-picture-tradition'<sup>2</sup>—'the last history painting'<sup>3</sup> is how T. J. Clark refers to it—I speculate on *Weeping Woman* as a remainder of the end. The painting is not taken to be the end worked-through, proscribed by Yve-Alain Bois as painting's task, but a singular picturing of painting's undeadness, into which the copy made by Dora Maar intervenes. Following lessons taken from Dora Maar's painting and lessons from the psychoanalytic clinic, I imagine for myself a different task for painting: not finding a cure—sought by those writers on painting and melancholia in the 1980s and 1990s—but a form of treatment.

I've referred to the scraps from which the thesis is composed as motes. The word mote, meaning a tiny speck of substance, begets the word motley, the fool's costume, made from coloured scraps of fabric stitched together. The arrangement of motes offered here constitutes one possible arrangement; the scraps have settled into a pattern that becomes my doctorate. At the back there's a *Precis*: concise summaries of words, motifs, punctuating characters, and concepts organized mote by mote to be read alongside, before or after them.

<sup>2</sup> Ad Reinhardt, 'How to look at a mural (Guernica)' reproduced in *Picasso's Guernica: illustrations, introductory essay, documents, poetry, criticism and analysis*, ed. by Ellen. C. Oppler (Norton Critical Studies in Art History, 1988), pp. 234-5.

<sup>3</sup> T. J. Clark, 'Looking Again at Picasso's Guernica', <http://artcriticism.sva.edu/?academic-year=fall-2010spring-2011> [accessed 12th July 2013]

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature

Date



Pausing over how to characterize the two objects put before me. Not sure whether to call them objects.

I've noted mentally and on the wall stuck with messages addressed to me that the problem of designation may be down to an oscillation between objects and organs. In my head, as with the Post-it note, object and organ surface from a psychoanalytical discourse whose depth it can't hold. I'll not look them up yet; waiting in case I recover them as I go or swell them with some other, gathered, sense. The two objects/organs placed before me are books. Bits of books. Two pages—one from each. Images on those pages: the reproduction of an engraving and the reproduction of a detail of an oil painting. (The painting cut this way is a special feature of its being in this book, on this page, making its appearance here unlike its appearances in other places.) Both reproduced objects are artworks. They're of different sorts: one of them gives itself to reproduction, being a print, and the other doesn't especially. (It seems unlikely the print would be cropped, for example, in the way the painting has been<sup>1</sup> since this, the printed page, is its original and primary support whereas the painting has an anterior, parallel life hanging on someone's wall. Any reproduction is straight away a stylized view of the painting.) Both are portrait format. The painting is a portrait, among other things, and the print could be described that way if the word portrait is allowed some looseness. The two artworks were made about four hundred years apart, 1514 and 1937, by European males in their middle age, 43 and 56 respectively. Both artworks are held in the national collection at the British Museum and Tate Gallery, London.

I'm forcing a link. The artworks have in common the general commonality of Western canonical artworks. What grounds a singular, forced association is a provincial setting: my bedroom, around the time of my pre- to early teens, 1986-1992, in a 1930s semi-detached house on the outskirts of Lincoln. These were the only two art books I bought as a child. The bedroom was decorated for me in a Habitat style scheme, following those British designs of the time that naturalized Bauhaus. PRIMARY. PROVENÇAL. My wallpaper or curtains, I'm not sure which, were in Habitat's *fleurs des champs* pattern. Red, yellow, blue, and green flowers scattered on a white ground. These books with those artworks set in this bedroom at that

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of this painting's croppability, see note\_17: (detail of Fig. 11).

time: there's a concatenation of things, an arrangement of my education, a fantasmatic *combinatoire*<sup>2</sup> that I'm trying to pick up, handle, rearrange.

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In his diary Franz Kafka makes lengthy complaints against his education opening and closing with variations on the refrain 'my education has done me great harm in certain respects'<sup>3</sup>. (I'm copying from the copy of Kafka's diaries my dad passed to me a few months ago. Dates of his readings are marked above Kafka's dated entries: 22.11.65 over 17 December 1910, 23.11.65 over 7 January 1911, etc.)

This reproach applies to a multitude of people—that is to say, my parents, several relatives, individual visitors to our house, various writers, a certain particular cook who took me to school for a year, a crowd of teachers [...], a school inspector, slowly walking passersby; in short, this reproach twists through society like a dagger. (15)

**The reproach works its way out, turned by degrees around the refrain.**

What I still am now is revealed most clearly to me by the strength with which the reproaches urge their way out of me. There were times when I had nothing else inside me except reproaches driven by rage [...] Those times are passed. The reproaches lie around inside me like strange tools that I hardly have the courage to seize and lift any longer. At the same time the corruption left by my old education seems to begin to affect me more and more; the passion to remember [...] opens my heart to those people who should be the objects of my reproaches.' (19)

<sup>2</sup> Kaja Silverman, writing on the continuing possibilities of pursuing authorship as a way into a body of work, shifts the critical emphasis from 'the author "inside" the text' to the 'text "inside" the author', which she interprets as 'the scenario for passion, or, to be more precise, the "scene" of authorial desire. The "scene" to which I refer is what Laplanche and Pontalis, in an inspired passage from *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, call the "fantasmatic," and which they define as that unconscious fantasy or cluster of fantasies which structures not merely dreams and other related psychic formations, but object-choice, identity, and "the subject's life as a whole". The fantasmatic generates erotic tableaux or *combinatoires* in which the subject is arrestingly positioned—whose function is, in fact, precisely to display the subject in a given place. Its original cast of characters would seem to be drawn from the familial reserve, but in the endless secondary productions to which the fantasmatic gives rise, all actors but one are frequently recast. And even that one constant player may assume different roles on different occasions.' *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910-23*, ed. by Max Brod (Penguin, 1964), p. 15. Subsequent references are given in the text.

His recriminations turn finally to self-reproaches and cede to a fictional dialogue about something else. Not until he's got up to open the window and look out, leaving aside the 'lead' weight of his reproaches. ('Not only I at the open window but everyone else as well would rather look at the river' (20).)

I've typed myself away from where I was. (Opening a book here being not unlike opening a window there.) Returning: the décor of my childhood bedroom is less a signifier of my parents' personal tastes, though they're involved, than the insistent sensation of society—through which Kafka's reproaches cut like a dagger—present in the most intimate of spaces. Not only in childhood or at birth but before, in advance of the 'self'<sup>4</sup>. The ambivalence felt towards those loved and reproached, towards this thing Kafka calls his education, and the impasses and paradoxes that follow from it are consonant with the feelings, failings, and makings of my education of which the two books in my childhood bedroom are an especially twitchy manifestation. 'Slowly walking passersby'. (My bedroom isn't cosy. Its constituents connive: synthetic carpet, two books, two reproduced artworks set against wallpaper or curtains, I never remember which, in *Habitat fleurs des champs*, colour scheme of red, yellow, blue, and green. 'My education has spoiled me more than I can understand' (18).)

The texture of Kafka's entry begins to change. His desire to make reproaches is a limit to creation—the stuckness of insistent repetition—and yet becomes transformed, too, into a strange tool with which to write. An organ even. Is it this paradox of limitation and facilitation that Kafka circles in his diary entry?<sup>5</sup> The repeated reproach, the reproach emptied of anger, the self-reproach, the downed tool, the 'still' self revealed in the force of reproaches against shadows of his education, a passion to remember, to open to those reproached, rising to leave pen and pad, opening a window, some relief in watching the river, a brief, long-awaited trickle of fiction.

<sup>4</sup> For the development of the subject it's the relation to the enigmatic desire of the Other, into which the subject is born, that's decisive. See *Precis* for a summary of 'self' following this psychoanalytical insight.

<sup>5</sup> The melancholic suffers this paradox especially keenly: 'The artist consumed by melancholia is at the same time the most relentless in his struggle against the symbolic abdication that blankets him', writes Julia Kristeva. *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 9. Darian Leader observes that the sense of impossibility plaguing the melancholic is something he or she is 'desperate to articulate'; it is for this reason that Leader recommends artistic procedures, the poetic use of language in particular, as a mode of treatment: 'melancholics "require the poetic to deliver them"'. *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression* (Penguin, 2009), p. 199.

'Sunday, 19 July, slept, awoke, slept, awoke, miserable life' (14).  
A melancholy scene.



Melencolia I. 1514. Engraving, 2nd state. 24 x 19 cm. London, British Museum.

Albrecht Dürer  
**PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS  
AND PRINTS**

Selected and Introduced by  
Nigel Lambourne

The Folio Society 1969



**Weeping Woman**

(detail of Fig. 11). 1937. Oil on canvas, 54 x 44.5 cm. Tate Gallery, London.

**PICASSO**

Roland Penrose  
with notes by David Lomas

Phaidon Press Ltd. 1991



fig. 1

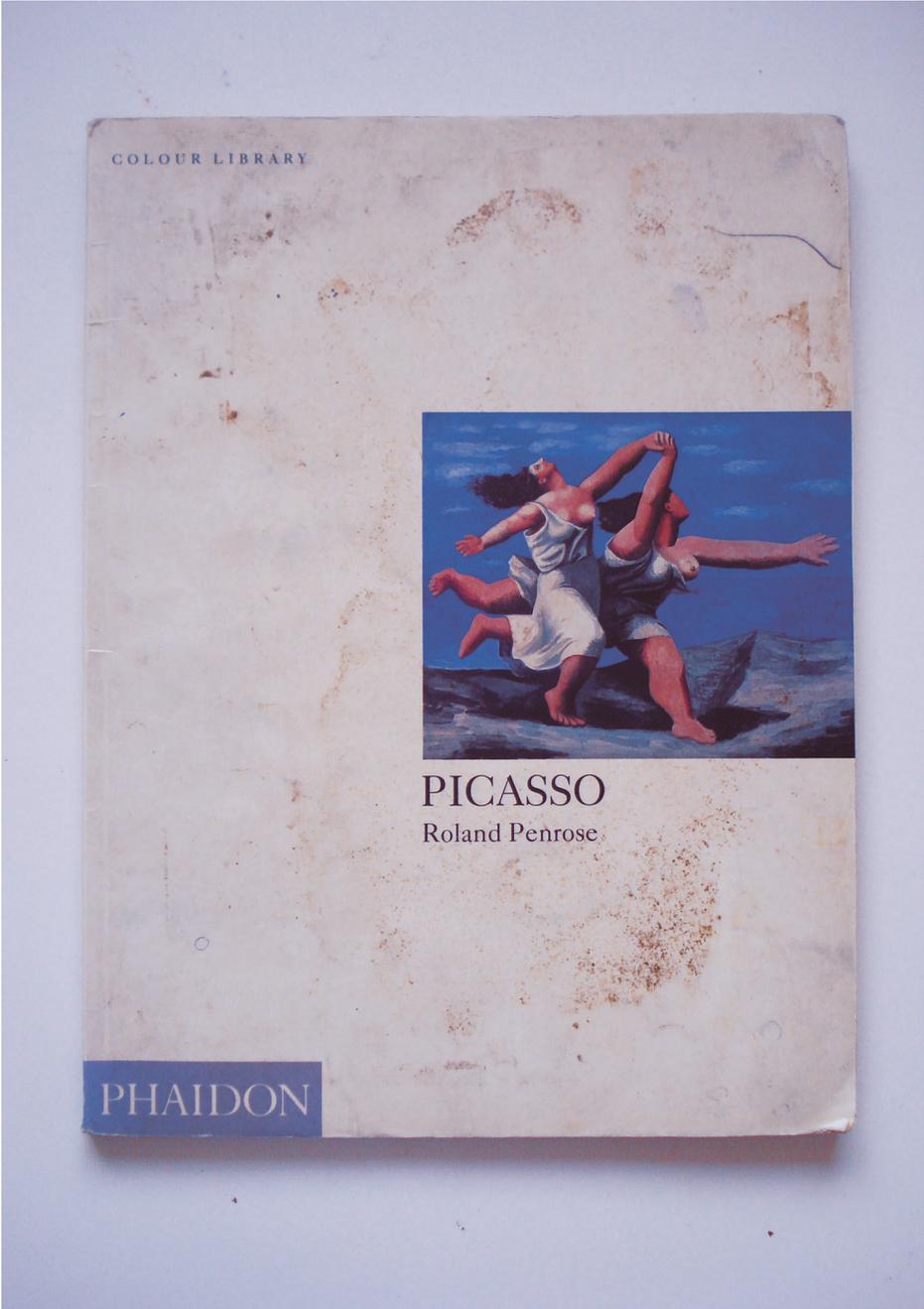


fig. 2

An echo implies not only resonance and harmonics but also divergences.

(Jean Laplanche, *Essays on Otherness*)

It's unclear when she painted hers. Picasso's was bought by Roland Penrose in November 1937, just after it was painted. Did she begin right away or paint from memory? Or a photograph? Did she stop halfway because the original left the studio suddenly or was leaving the bottom half unpainted an apologetic gesture?

It couldn't really be written down, the precise balance of contingency and premeditation informing and deforming a painting's parts. So it remains unsettled by what degrees a painting's look has come about by chance or conscious intention. But how to hold the unsettling note of indeterminacy—rasping not romantic—in the 'untidy and lively affair'<sup>1</sup> of interpretation?

This painting looks precarious. Top-heavy, off-balance. It's unclear why Dora Maar painted it, for what purpose, where it belongs categorically. Confusion could even be claimed among its properties. Not the sort of confusion that would be cleared-up (even theoretically) were more information available but a confusion proper to it, to its self-interruption. It mobilises a kind of uncertainty if that's the word for it.

And the "Therefore ..." following from this?

Some see in Dora Maar's painting a triumphal rescue of her image<sup>2</sup>; I'm taken with how she displays a mysterious, contradictory effort at something. A feat abandoned maybe through exhaustion or boredom or because at a certain moment it struck

<sup>1</sup> The phrase is Michael Baxandall's. *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (Yale University Press, 1985), p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Anne Baldassari and Mary Ann Caws both make claims to this effect. For example, two rhetorical questions conclude Baldassari's discussion of the painting: 'Was Dora seeking to contest the Picassian system by turning the painting against the painter, the copy against the original, the woman against her model? And was she defending the integrity of an *image* that belonged to no one other than herself?'. *Picasso Love and War 1935-1945* (Flammarion, 2006), p. 202. Baldassari's earlier analysis of Dora Maar's photomontages from 1936 suggests more interesting ways, I think, of considering the painting: 'Dora Maar mobilises her camera more in the manner of 'perhaps' and of uncertainty. [...] It is as if the image emerges from the photographic medium by mistake and presents in all its intractable and unfinished character an iconographic phantasmatisation that strives to actualize, perceptibly, its split from reality. And it was on this territory of procedural impurity, in which the painter had excelled ever since his proto-Cubist researches in the years 1907-08, by juxtaposing a combination of sources and physical media, that the philosophies of the image practiced by Picasso and Dora Maar overlapped' (75).

her that the empty bottom half no longer needed filling in. She'd uncovered something worth privileging above the task originally set about. Not incompatible these possibilities since it could have been her apprehension of the *look* of exhaustion given in the bottom half that encouraged her to decide the painting was finished. Finished enough.

As to finish, there's an indicative detail. A signature can act as a statement of completion if not satisfaction: "I'm done with this". It marks a work's passage from the only someone for

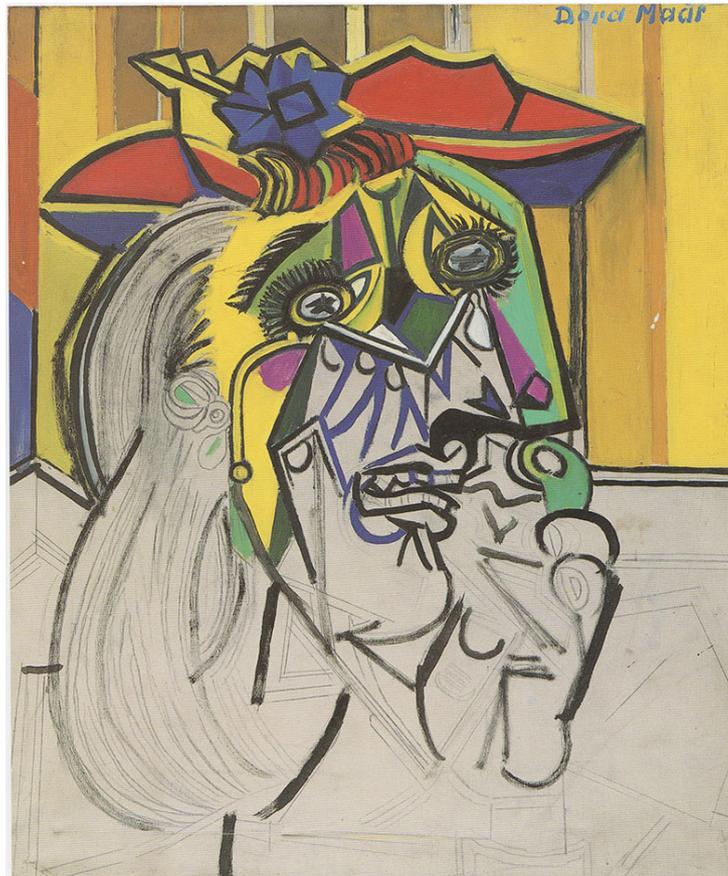


fig. 3  
Dora Maar,  
*Woman in a Red  
Hat* (c.1937),  
Private  
Collection.

whom the artist's name need not be spelled out to addressing an audience of others<sup>3</sup>. Here Dora Maar's carefully plotted name,

<sup>3</sup> The act of signing might have been a way of performing, for herself, the transition from her identity as photographer to painter. As Man Ray put it in *Self-Portrait*: 'Having photographed Picasso at work on his *Guernica* in Paris, she now abandoned the camera and turned to painting, contrary to what some biographer of Picasso has written, that a painter having seen Picasso's work, threw away his brushes and took up photography'. Quoted in Anne Baldassari, *Picasso: Love and War 1935-1945* (Flammarion, 2006), p. 199. Whilst much seems to turn on her signature it's difficult to say what it signifies: a pugnacious self-declaration in painting, a medium Man Ray's anecdote makes synonymous with Picasso, or an experiment in self-inscription and authorization negotiated through (Picasso's) painting? It may be more important that the signature is the sort of sign that signifies to, that it makes her provisional painting an address to someone. The act of signing not only advances a painting from the private world of production to the

prominent in cooler blue over warmer yellow, may have sealed the painting for an immediate audience of two: herself and Picasso. It may, in the way of an ellipsis, have made the tailing off of her copy into a deliberate bit of rhetoric in the exchanges between the artists in this period.<sup>4</sup>

There's more to her signature as punctuation. The kind that underlines or presses a point. Compared with *Weeping Woman* it's the only element out of place; otherwise the design is followed scrupulously, more so than in any of her renditions of Picasso's other paintings. In positioning her signature Dora Maar takes a liberty, moving the site of signing to the top right from where Picasso had put his (with the date<sup>5</sup>) on a background band of colour running across the painting's middle. This move exaggerates a strange feature of Dora Maar's copy: it shifts the painting's orientation. The whole thing seems to hang off the top edge making obvious the downward direction of her activity. The original is spread; it doesn't descend. It's raised weave of marks left-right-up-down catches the woman's expression in a tense immobility. With the placement of her signature Dora Maar lays emphasis on the vertical inclination of her progress: "I started at the top and worked my way down bit by bit". The mustering of a student's programmatic plodding dedicated to diagramming the image rather than reproducing the master's manner.

(Supposing this is Dora Maar performing as apprentice, her tone isn't stropy or facetious. The dynamic of mastery—a battle of wills between lovers or the power play of an older, famous, male artist and a younger, less famous, female one— often seen to be at issue in the after-Picasso works Dora Maar made

wider world of social relations, it also constitutes that gap between public and private, in a sense creating—or recreating—these spheres as distinct from one another.

<sup>4</sup> From the start of their affair, Pablo Picasso and Dora Maar exchanged objects, drawings, notes and letters, as well as working together, experimenting with photograms for example. Maar also used her camera to document works by Picasso and photograph Picasso at work on them; he made numerous studies and paintings of her.

<sup>5</sup> Picasso dated his works with a view to offering a comprehensive database to a future science of creativity he imagined would take him as an exemplary specimen. Since Dora Maar did not, as Picasso had done, date her version of this painting she either didn't share his fantasy or didn't think herself or her work likely candidates for study. Nevertheless, her documentation of Picasso's work, especially *Guernica*, might well have been motivated by a like-mindedness in this respect, since the photographs carefully plot the development of that painting. To this extent Dora Maar, with her camera, worked as an enhanced dating machine in the terms of Picasso's project for posterity.

in this period seems too pantomime for them. Those awkward questions of sexual difference, the relationship between art and life, questions *Weeping Woman* itself circulates, loosen their purchase when Dora Maar's copies are counted exclusively within an economy of possession and exploitation.)



She presents a mechanical method quite at odds, apparently, with his way of constructing a painting. She finds by her careful misreading, what strikes her as suddenly successful, delightful even, about her efforts when she gets half way down, stops and realises what her painting reveals, is that something mechanical is at work in his painting. Not in the application of paint, perhaps, but in his application to painting and as an element of the human suffering he pictures.

'There is nothing that throws more into question our status as living beings than the sheer, quasi-mechanical automaticity of the compulsion to repeat. It is, in other words, in this compulsion that we recognise the workings of the drive, precisely that excessive "inhuman" vitality that sets us apart from the animal and in some sense first makes us distinctly human.'<sup>6</sup>

The making of his painting in October 1937 extends backwards to the making of *Guernica* in May. (And beyond: the recurrent turns to portraiture and its significance for Cubism, which *Weeping Woman* retrospects, clutches, as a style.) The weeping woman motif repeats insistently over those six months. It descends early from the *Guernica* project, undigested, and repeats on him one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen ... twenty-five ... thirty-six ... . (He's relieved on holiday in Mougins, Provence; in August portraits of his female companions, Dora Maar, Nusch Eluard, Lee Miller, take its place.) Then hers is one more repeat. Another repeat. Echoing the motion of this gristly bit of *Guernica* which hits a peak of

<sup>6</sup> Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 191.

inhuman velocity at its terminal point in October 1937.

Yet their repetitions diverge, his and hers. She answers his with a drama of lost momentum as if her self-interrupting copy could alter the force of repetition and the painting it seemed at first to embrace. Not in turning against it but leaning in as an attentive listener would. Hers lends his an ending. Dot, dot, dot, she goes, allowing a breath where, in his, none's allowed. (As the weeping woman stuffs her mouth with a handkerchief his painting smothers itself in impasto.)

In every act of punctuation [...] one can tell whether there is an intention or whether it is pure sloppiness. To put it more subtly, one can sense the difference between a subjective will that brutally demolishes the rules and a tactful sensitivity that allows the rules to echo in the background even where it suspends them.<sup>7</sup>

**She is a shrewd, delicate copyist. She echoes and suspends.**

<sup>7</sup> Theodor Adorno, 'Punctuation Marks' (1956), <http://www.ubu.com/papers/index.html> [accessed 12th July 2013].

I learned at some point how to touch-type. A habit of my hands. I don't have a feel for the ridges on F and J, which someone pointed out to me later. As a teenager, in bed with flu, my mum began to teach herself touch-typing from a book; she woke one morning with hands so swollen they wouldn't move.



fig. 4  
Mum painting  
in her bedroom  
studio some time  
in the 1980s.

My hands enjoy being administrative. I've seen it recommended that the psychoanalyst be a secretary in the analysis: arranging the schedule, taking notes, underlining, punctuating, keeping time. The analyst refusing to play the part of prophet, saviour, and redeemer to the patient. Working against the grain of the unconscious she pursues interpretation's reverse side which moves backwards from reading to perplexity.<sup>1</sup> I sometimes dress quite secretarial: pencil skirt, mid-heels, blouse, good nails. A look that doesn't wear well in the studio.

I paid £18 for false nails an inch long. At *Greengate Nails & Hair* on the Barking Road a young woman, whose nails are plain and cropped, turns my fingers in her hands marshalling tools laid out on a cloth to clip cuticles, file away excess, sand the nail plate. Acrylic nails are pressed in place, glued. Powder in an engraved glass pot is mixed with fluid, congealing into resin expertly applied with a sable hair brush, forming a mound, modelled with motorised grinder. Two colours, iridescent

<sup>1</sup> 'To play the part of prophet, saviour, and redeemer to the patient', is rejected early on by Sigmund Freud. Quoted in Paul Verhaeghe & F. Declercq, 'Lacan's analytical goal: "Le Sinthome" or the feminine way', in *Essays on the final Lacan: Re-inventing the symptom*, ed. by Luke Thurston (The Other Press, 2002), f.n.23, p. 65. 'Against the grain of the unconscious', 'that is properly analytic', 'reading to perplexity' are all phrases of Jacques Alain-Miller's from 'Interpretation in Reverse', in *The Later Lacan: An Introduction*, ed. by Véronique Voruz and Bogdan Wolf (SUNY, 2007) pp. 3-9.

purple tipped matte grey, topcoat of hardener. My hands are put under a heater, alarm set. PING. I leave with nails against painting; library nails, laptop nails. Read and type. Edit. The contact lens department manager at Specsavers in Stratford types my address into the computer lifting long ornamental nails, her fingers straightened to expose the pulp of finger to key. She types my phone number differently: nail tip of index finger perpendicular to the keyboard pecking its keys like a beak.

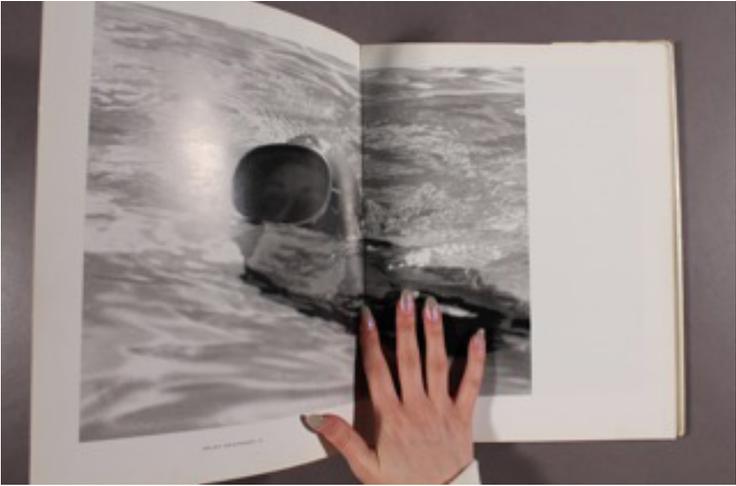


fig. 5

Wallpaper or curtains, I never remember which, in the Habitat pattern *fleurs des champs*. Flower heads in primary colours, stems and leaves in green scattered across a white ground. I scanned an image of this pattern as it appears on a duvet cover in the Habitat catalogue 1984/5 so that I could enlarge it to digitally print a monochrome version on silk for use as a mobile background. The repeat is big allowing for a surprising degree of variation in flowers, leaves and stems; the larger arrangement is also complex. Whilst there is regularity in the pattern through the repeat, palette, and even distribution of flowers over the white ground, the flowers themselves are hand-drawn and their orientation in relation to one another is composed, decided by eye.

Habitat took Britain out of the gloom of post war austerity into a vision of what the domestic world could be like. It was a very particular version of modernism, based on simple forms, natural materials, and a fresh colour palette. It was a humanised, British version of Bauhaus.<sup>1</sup>

A 1930s semi-detached house with original fixtures and fittings. A bedroom in the 1980s decorated for a child in a British version of Bauhaus. Red, yellow, blue, green. *Fleurs des champs*. PRIMARY. PROVENÇAL.

Walter Benjamin said of himself that he was born under the sign of Saturn<sup>2</sup>. So does W.G. Sebald in the poem *After Nature*: 'the cold planet Saturn ruled this hour's constellation', the hour of his birth. The cosmic sign is translated by Eric Santner into a bodily one: 'Sebald suggests, in a way, that the rest of his life—including, of course, his particular sort of literary productivity—was something like an elaboration of this original "birthmark"'.<sup>3</sup>

An obstetric sonographer told me that a slight glitch in chromosomal arrangement—the genetic constellation—creates a birthmark or naevus (from *natus*, 'produced by nature').

<sup>1</sup> From the Design Museum's profile of Terence Conran, Habitat's founder, <http://designmuseum.org/design/terence-conran> [accessed 12th July 2013]

<sup>2</sup> 'In his youth he seemed marked by a "profound sadness", Scholem wrote. He thought of himself as a melancholic, disdaining modern psychological labels and invoking the traditional astrological one: "I came into the world under the sign of Saturn—the star of the slowest revolution, the planet of detours and delays." Susan Sontag, Introduction to *Walter Benjamin: One Way Street and Other Writings* (Verso, 1997), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (Chicago University Press, 2006), p. 44.

The original birthmark of my doctorate is the bedroom of my childhood, the particular decorative scheme and its strange alignment with two objects (or organs) encountered there: a pair of books represented by two pages and their images, *Melencolia I* and *Weeping Woman*.

I find, then, that I'm also under the influence of Saturn though not quite as Walter Benjamin and W.G. Sebald say they are since the cold planet's power appears in books, an etching and a painting: the sullen angel of melancholy set amongst abandoned instruments of study and 'a highly stylised and brilliantly coloured profile portrait of a grief-stricken woman'<sup>4</sup>. Without being stricken with grief or melancholy I'm marked by this subject matter: the books, their images, carry the influence of Saturn to my room where I'm addressed by it. Neither happily nor unhappily located by the light of a distant planet rather I'm mystified by the shadow this subject matter casts. By what necessity, by what contingency, do these representations of melancholy and grief taken into my bedroom appear to belong there more than me?

<sup>4</sup> *Tate Gallery: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions 1986-88*, (London, 1996) <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/picasso-weeping-woman-t05010/text-catalogue-entry> [accessed 12th July 2013].

Pathological. And is that it, my relationship with two books held onto, carried along? And an academic relationship with them would be a variant pathology rather than the mark of its opposite. Concluding a paper on pathology Ian Parker confesses his anxiety in writing it, seized by the panic of losing connections between components 'in different bits of my mind':

I guess we have all met characters in this predicament in the clinic, we have a name for them, obsessional-neurotic, and I will bet that a good proportion of them are academics of some kind. A scholarly argument calls for some measure of hysterical complaint harnessed to an obsessional apparatus of citation that marks the place of the argument in a particular history of debate.<sup>1</sup>

**A delusion circling something or a reasoned argument for its significance are both defences against overwhelming anxiety, perhaps. Ways of taming and answering through elaborate construction the grip a thing has on you as you hold onto it falteringly. A thing brought into existence in being carried along in communications, hallucinations, and complaints.**

(The reproaches lie around inside me like strange tools that I hardly have the courage to seize and lift any longer. At the same time the corruption left by my old education seems to begin to affect me more and more; the passion to remember opens my heart to those people who should be the objects of my reproaches.<sup>2</sup>)

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**Drawing down pages of my old education, middle shelf, window-side, a moderate stretch of right arm and left leg. *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*. Fiona Barber turns to reconsider Willem de Kooning's 'Women' paintings in 1999 with complaint and confession:**

I want to try to understand my pleasure in these paintings, a pleasure that is problematic by its very existence. As a feminist, I feel that I've been caught looking, caught speaking, in the territory of deviance in even wanting to name a desire capable of being triggered by these works.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ian Parker, 'Lacan's Seminar XXIII: Sinthome, Creativity, Culture and Pathology in Psychoanalysis', *Journal of the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research: Psychosis*, 22 (2012), 15-46 (p. 40).

<sup>2</sup> Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910-23*, ed. Max Brod (Penguin, 1964), 19. See mote\_4: 'My education has done me great harm ...!'

<sup>3</sup> Fiona Barber, 'The Politics of Feminist Spectatorship and the Disruptive Body: De Kooning's *Woman I* reconsidered', in *Performing the Body/*

Her complaint is against the limits set by feminist art history in the 1970s on aesthetic discourse 'by identifying areas which were neither desirable nor indeed permissible for feminist spectatorship.' She counters: interpretation is an 'ongoing, performative process'; meaning in visual culture is 'not static or predetermined' but 'continually enacted through the operations of art historians, critics, and other interested viewers' (127). Including artists. There's that memorable exchange in 1986 between the art historian, Benjamin Buchloh, and the artist, Gerhard Richter. The artist defends his work from the rescue the art historian insists on.

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Again, swivel and reach. Behind my head, lower, clamped under *Thesaurus*, extreme right, window side. Bible black, white sans serif centred vertically on the spine, *On abstract art*. Upright. Open at the back to 'Postscript: Vision and Blindness'. Page 157. Recollecting the quarrel between these two men the writer tactfully suggests that contemporary art, rather than fulfilling the trajectory of past traditions, 'puts pressure on what we know'<sup>4</sup>.

[Buchloh:] "Not a perversion of gestural abstraction?"  
"Certainly not!" replies Richter. "What kind of questions are these? How can my pictures be devoid of content, and what is this content that the Abstract Expressionists are supposed to have had as distinct from me?" (157)

Perhaps the confrontation between an art historian's vision and an artist's blindness or the illumination of an art historian's blind spot by an artist's insights, is part of what's alluded to in the chapter heading's second, specific, clause, 'Vision and Blindness'. Maybe this is what's expressed in the image of contemporary art as anamorphic, it puts pressure on what we know.

As such the work of both [Gerhard Richter and Rachel Whiteread] may tap the anomalies of abstraction's past, yes, but never ties up its loose ends. (154)

*Performing the Text*, ed. by Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (Routledge, 1999), p. 129. Subsequent references are given in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Briony Fer, *On Abstract Art* (Yale University Press, 1997), p. 154. Subsequent references are given in the text.

I like the phrase, 'tap the anomalies'. I read its verb as "to strike" as well as "draw liquid". To gently strike the past and collect what falls which might be torrential and dazzling or more meagre or gritty or stagnant. It might stink. Fiona Barber freshens it up. Briony Fer tidies a bit. It's cleansed with the same instrument, the academic essay, which can describe anxiety—Briony Fer writes especially well on this—but can admit little of its own.



Reading back the quote ending in loose ends I wish it's "yes" advanced the metaphor of artists getting tied up in the loose ends of art's anomalous pasts. The urge to seek sanction from a respected teacher is overwhelming.

And then there is that autobiographical past. Tap the anomalies of mine: artist and art historian fall out, a bundle of eyes, mouths, smudges, spectacles, paint, apples, books, fingernails, arguments, paper, complaints, stretchers, photocopy cards, confessions etc. And binding them in their graceless clinch? The mysterious interaction of a bedroom, its décor, a painting in a book, several historical periods, a print, a provincial location, a synthetic carpet, and many other mured scenes immediately overlaying this one, subtly shifting the furniture. Neither artist nor art historian seems equipped to disentangle herself and undo the knots against which they're both straining but it's hard to see whether either would have a meaningful existence were they, by some sleight of hand, set loose.



38. Melencolia I. 1514.  
Engraving, 2nd state. 24 × 19 cm. London, British Museum.

fig. 6



fig. 7

## SCISSOR

The spelling dates from the sixteenth century and follows the medieval Latin *scissor*, meaning “tailor”, and in classical Latin “carver, cutter”, from *scindere* “to split”<sup>1</sup>. I take the confusion between instrument and user in the word’s background as license to imagine the painting, *Weeping Woman*, as a sort of scissor: made of splits while also working as a splitter, a cutter. It’s propitious too for my purposes that *scindere*, “to split”, begets *scissor*, “tailor”, and *scissors*—via French, *cisoires*, “shears” from vulgar Latin, *cisoria*, “cutting instrument” and *caedere*, “to cut”—thereby bringing together haberdashery and the function of split. *Weeping Woman* does something similar. Besides the overall attention to apparel there’s a peculiar nick in the sleeve on the foremost left wrist as if the scissors slipped, suggesting, perhaps, a homology of brush and cutting instrument, or else it shows the remains of a line taken by the cutter before this was a sleeve when it was just a shape belonging to a different series of interconnecting polygons, rhombuses, oblongs, and triangles, meant to form a shoulder or trouser leg. It resembles too the triangular cuts in a dressmaking pattern indicating pleats, which allow for flat shapes to be sewn together in such a way as to fit a solid, curved body. The jacket is patterned with lighter coloured lines exaggerating the seams—given by heavy back lines—which double as folds and as contours of abstract shapes. These marks recall those made by a tailor’s chalk. An unfinished garment hung on the tailor’s dummy seeming to be inside-out or have its nether-side showing—how hairy and coarse it looks—is a seeming shared with the painting, along with the overall sense of pieces stitched together.

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Here: a trimming. Walter Benjamin’s beautiful simile visualizing the relationship between comedy and tragedy:

Comedy—or more precisely: the pure joke—is the essential inner side of mourning which from time to time, like the lining of a dress at the hem or lapel, makes its presence felt.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=scissors> [accessed 12th July 2013]

<sup>2</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborne (Verso, 1998), pp. 125–6.

A little book from a London paint maker introducing the colour theory of a chemist, Wilhelm Ostwald:

Ostwald was the man who pointed out that for all practical purposes the idea, first suggested by that astounding genius, Leonardo da Vinci, and afterwards restated by Hering, is correct, that there are not three but four fundamental colours, these being yellow, red, blue and green.<sup>1</sup>

These are the colours of *Weeping Woman's* 'brilliant contrasts', though Roland Penrose, who bought the painting from Picasso, before the paint was dry on the canvas, lists them in a different order: 'red, blue, green and yellow',<sup>2</sup> yellow alone with its extra syllable. I prefer the list order in the 1938 manual, with green coming after 'and', as the fourth colour supplementing the solid trio of primaries. (Despite using blue for 'b' the ebay logo uses green, not yellow, for its terminal 'y' so that here too green is fourth and last.)

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*Bauhaus*. Yellow triangle, blue circle, red square, grey cover. 'Teaching Color at the Bauhaus', page 392:

In the Weimar days there had been protests about him. But in 1927 he was invited to lecture. Soon his 22-part color circle hung in the wall painting workshop. Even Kandinsky examined his ordering of colors. Klee always rejected it as mere "colors for industry" and "chemical coloring," because in his teaching on harmony Ostwald took no account of the subjective effects of color.<sup>3</sup>

Hinnerk Scheper and Joost Schmidt in the wall painting workshop enthusiastically embraced Ostwald's strictly schematic colour ordering 'in keeping with the drive toward standardization' (399). (Amongst other things the wall painting workshop developed wallpaper, 'one of the classic products which perfectly fulfilled the later principles of the school and, additionally, brought in the greatest license revenue' (452).)

<sup>1</sup> Jan Gordon, *An Elementary Introduction to the Ostwald Colour System* (Reeves & Sons London, 1938), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Penrose quoted in Judi Freeman, *Picasso and the Weeping Women: The Years of Marie Thérèse Walter & Dora Maar* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Rizzoli, 1994), p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> *Bauhaus*, ed. by Jeannine Fiedler & Peter Feierabend (Verlag, 2006), p. 392. Subsequent references are given in the text.



My bedroom knows something about the painting. The shared palette of PRIMARY and PROVENÇAL. Between *Guernica* and *Weeping Woman* Picasso took his holiday in Mougins, Provence. There, in the sunshine, portraits appeared. It knows this, the wallpaper or curtains in *fleurs des champs*. Knows something of *Weeping Woman's* distance from its source; *Weeping Woman* is to *Guernica* as Habitat is to Bauhaus. I press the bedroom on this matter: "Is it your suggestion that *Weeping Woman* signals a retreat from the world to the wallpaperiness of portraits and bourgeois interiors? To rooms?"

"Or," deferring once again to my bedroom's expertise, "was the bourgeois interior a problem, a risk, which hovered as a half-formulated question in front of *Guernica* during its development but, having been dismissed in its final state, now sought restoration to it via *Weeping Woman*?" The bedroom is unresponsive.

Another line of questioning: "What am I to understand about the colour scheme and what it harbours: chemical colouring, colours for industry? Is *this* the palette of *Weeping Woman*? Not Leonardo da Vinci's insights backing *Weeping Woman* but Wilhelm Ostwald's dogged drive towards standardization? Not colours from painting's past but from an industrial-commercial present? Moreover," I ask, gesturing to the room with my Phaidon book open to the page, "how am I to understand the insinuation of a colour system that takes no account of the subjective effects of colour in a painting in which the subjective mood appears to be of primary concern?" Dropping the book to open another: "Could the 'empathetic encounter that was the hallmark of the bourgeois portrait'<sup>4</sup> be here disfigured by a colour scheme that limits the occasion for empathy, deliberately shorts it?"

<sup>4</sup> Tamar Garb, *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France 1814-1914* (Yale University Press, 2007), p. 244.

My flat is usually cool in summer warm in winter. One room. Third floor. 1a Jedburgh Road, London E13. According to a postman at the local sorting office, it was a notorious sweatshop before conversion into residential flats. The communal hallway of my block has pictures on the walls: Keith Haring reproduction slipped in its mount, photo of toads, baboon eating a banana. Janet, the new cleaner, tells me she moved to Stratford from Portsmouth, met her husband, settled here. He offered to help with her shopping bags. She has black hair with a severe fringe, which I like. She loves Turkey and has a tattoo on her chest saying so. We talk in the hallway or outside in the car-park sometimes. She tells me she carries everything on her hoover: tobacco, rizlas, cup of tea, mobile phone, detergent, duster.

The front half of our flat has three bookcases, six chairs, five tables, two sets of drawers, two computers, sofa, milk trolley for tools, laundry bags and boxes for art materials, some lengths of wood, plastic bags, speaker, headphones, paper, clothes, pot plants. The back half has a bed in it. In the middle there's a white cube split between bathroom and kitchen. The pitched ceiling reaches nine feet above the cube's flat top. By climbing a ladder things can be accessed and put away in the space above the kitchen-bathroom. Sit back on the sofa and you can see it: stacked pictures, stretchers, boxes, defunct things, things used now and again, suitcases, sewing machine. Only the bathroom has a door. Sleep and wakefulness, noise and silence, labour and leisure, the couple living here, separate off from one another with effort.

Writing happens indoors. 'It is in a house that one is alone. Not outside it, but inside. Outside, in the garden, there are birds and cats. And also, once, a squirrel, and a ferret.'<sup>1</sup> *Writing* by Marguerite Duras, second shelf down on the bookcase nearest the kitchen. 'The person who writes [...] must always be enveloped by a separation from others. That is one kind of solitude. It is the solitude of the author, of writing' (3). Indoors, this solitude is created rather than found:

My room is not a bed, neither here nor in Paris nor in Trouville. It's a certain window, a certain table, habits of black ink, untraceable marks of black ink, a certain chair. And certain habits I always maintain, wherever I go, wherever I am. (3)

<sup>1</sup> Marguerite Duras, *Writing*, trans. by Mark Polizzotti (University of Minnesota Press, 2011) p. 1. Subsequent references are given in the text.

This room is 'real, corporeal solitude [that] becomes the inviolable silence of writing' (3). But it is not an untethered projection this room for writing which moves about, travels from town to town; she says it is the creation of an existing place, a house:

I decided that here was where I should be alone, that I would be alone to write books. [...] This house became the house of writing. My books come from this house. From this light as well, and from the garden. From the light reflecting off the pond. It has taken me twenty years to write what I just said. (5)

In English it has good onomatopoeia, room, rolled and moulded in the mouth, better even than *chambre*. In translation the doubled vowel spins the unstable interaction of world and mind and brain—the space of meaning—between 'r' and 'm'. A writer, Duras says, must make a forced separation from others which she secures through consonant objects, routines, and lights with reflections off the pond, here, at home. A well arranged situation together with the flicker of contingent luminosity is room. This light, which may not literally be present at the time of writing, is turned on repeatedly by the writer in the rituals of black ink, a certain chair. (Room is an embodied space crossed and amplified with a charge.) An agent both of separation from outdoors and interference indoors, light from the pond enchants the writer's solitude and simultaneously brings in the garden menagerie. Think of a room, then, as a condition, symptomatic of local, fierce negotiations played up in the word's senses: at once an opening of indeterminate space and time—room to do, say or be something—and a strictly delimited enclosure, a part or division of a building. (A room is full of oxymorons.) It flits from the simple architecture of floor, walls and ceiling to becoming those persons enclosed: the room turned to look at her as she came through the door, the room howled with laughter.

If a room is like a person, what kind of person? If room is an easy metaphor for self, what image of self does it figure?

Room associates with homeliness, comfort, and shelter whereas space extends and reaches.

Spaces are not nearly as enclosing as rooms.

Rooms are man made.

Rooms tend towards the private, domestic. Spaces tend towards the public, municipal.

How sturdy, though, is room's construction?

Suppose a room is a defensive invention, designed to separate and insulate one activity from another, one person from another, one social group from another. How successful is it? How well does it represent, to its inhabitant, a self well-defined and secured? (Making a room also creates the threat of intrusion.) 'What does it mean to live in a room?' asks Georges Perec, under the section, 'Bedrooms'. 'Is to live in a place to take possession of it?', he continues, as if to live in a room meant suffering the pressure of this question and those that follow. 'What does taking possession of a place mean? As from when does somewhere truly become yours?' He runs through the gamut of a person's peccadilloes and fancies elaborated in pursuit of an answer:

Is it when you've experienced there the throes of anticipation, or the exaltations of passion, or the torments of a toothache? Is it when you've hung suitable curtains up on the windows, and put up the wallpaper, and sanded the parquet flooring?<sup>2</sup>

**The list breaks off—it could go on—the questions of possession and self-possession unanswered. A room incubates these sorts of uncertainties.**

**Philip Guston's daughter, Musa Meyer, prints her father's unpublished autobiographical reflections on his childhood habitation of a cupboard:**

As a boy I would hide in the closet when the older brothers and sisters came with their families to Mama's apartment for the Sunday afternoon dinner visit. I felt safe. [...] I read and drew in this private box.<sup>3</sup>

**There follows an apparently contradictory admission: what safety sought in the cupboard provides for is *estrangement*:**

After a lifetime, I still have never been able to escape my family. It is true that I paint now in a larger closet [...]. Yet nothing has changed in all this time. It is still a struggle to be hidden and feel strange—my favorite mood. Or to put it more precisely, to live my life as a stranger or to be vacuumed up by family. [...] All that I can truly say is that I am still struggling, like a drowning man, to be unrecognizable, unknowable, to myself. The stranger.

<sup>2</sup> Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (Penguin, 2008), p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Musa Meyer, *Night Studio: A Memoir of Philip Guston* (Da Capo Press, 1997), p. 24.

For Guston, family extends beyond his immediate relatives to the world of social relations, especially the professional art world. What this world outdoors threatens to interrupt indoors is not the self made homely but the self made strange. The room, modelled on a closet, is not synonymous with a unified "I" but with an "I" 'struggling, like a drowning man, to be unrecognizable, unknowable' to itself. In Philip Guston's story the external charge that makes the space an interior, from which books or paintings come, is symbolised by light: the single electrical bulb substitutes for the pastoral of Marguerite Duras's pond reflections.



fig. 8  
At home in Hampstead: Lee Miller, peeling an apple; Roland Penrose opening a book; *Weeping Woman* in the background above the drinks cabinet.

'Painting is not done to decorate apartments'<sup>1</sup>, said Picasso. If true of *Guernica*, could the same be said of *Weeping Woman*? Some points put by Mary Thomas in editorial remarks made to Frances Morris, compiling Tate's catalogue entry for *Weeping Woman* in 1994:

Can you mention that the hat has a blue flower and specify, too, whether DM said she ever had such a hat. Do such hats and tweedy jackets feature in any of the other works? What about the dado rail? You could perhaps specify whether DM swept her hair back in the way shown in *WW*, and whether she had a fringe? Do any of the other portraits have a similar striped background, suggesting wallpaper? <sup>2</sup>

**No suggestion of wallpaper<sup>3</sup> in *Guernica*, no dado rail, no tweedy jackets or blue flowers. Faces in *Guernica* are deindivid-**

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Simone Téry in 1945, excerpt reprinted in *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* ed. Herschel B. Chipp (University of California Press, 1968), p. 487.

<sup>2</sup> 1987 acquisition file for Pablo Picasso's *Weeping Woman* (T05010) Tate Archives.

<sup>3</sup> See mote\_18: *Fleeing Woman*.

uated. There's no one *behind* them to ask about how they wear their hair. *Weeping Woman*: not so much dressed for a fête<sup>4</sup> as dressed for an apartment.

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Middle shelf, window-end, big hardback laid flat under loose papers: Tamar Garb's *The Painted Face*. In the past a portrait had been 'a luxury commodity, with [a] traditionally elaborate surround, destined for Salon or sitting room'<sup>5</sup>. Besides its role as luxury object it had two others: 'commemorative icon or piece of interior decoration' (224). The female portrait, in particular, provided for an interaction between the interior of the room it both represented and hung in and the fantasy of the sitter's interiority offered up by the painting. These features of portraiture and its traditions were those that Picasso's painting *Portrait of a Girl* (1913) flaunted and flouted.

Evacuating the genre of its 'subject', Picasso revealed the artificial make-up of the female portrait, rendered here as entirely a matter of costume, patina and adornment. Interiority, whether conceived as the psychological material of which subjectivity is constituted and in which Realist portraiture had revelled, or as the inner sanctum of the bourgeois woman, enshrined as the domestic interior, is dramatically denied, turned inside out, in a virtuoso display of painted effects. (250)

'Now,' she writes, 'portraits were just pictures.'

Just pictures or pictures heightened, haunted, by the stubbornness of the referent (it's Roland Barthes's phrase)? Why, if portraits were just pictures, did Picasso keep working on them? What were they for? For the interior? Or the problem of interiority they continued to bring to painting? Or was the return to portraiture just a recapitulation, a retreat? Trouble at home.



<sup>4</sup> Roland Penrose makes this suggestion about the figure's attire. See note\_62: 'The result of using color'.

<sup>5</sup> Tamar Garb, *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France 1814-1914* (Yale University Press, 2007), p. 224. Subsequent references are given in the text.

A *Vogue* shoot by Cecil Beaton. The inescapable strangeness and poignancy of *Weeping Woman* in this setting: stern Lee Miller, proprietress in her apron, armed with a peeler, upright in the centre with her husband, Roland Penrose, bespectacled and awkwardly jutting from the chaise longue, holding open a book. He pretends to read, she pretends to peel. And all the while *Weeping Woman* crumples over the drinks cabinet, lit smack in the face. As if the misdemeanour of this bibulous face, the indiscretion of her contortions—her loss of face—were what the peeling Miller stiffens herself against.

My favourite anecdote from Hattie Hayridge's 1997 autobiography, *Random Abstract Memory: A surreal life story* goes like this:

'Who writes your jokes?' someone asked me after a show.

'I do,' I said.

'Really!' he said, surprised, 'because I didn't think you really understood them.'<sup>1</sup>

There's a clip on Youtube from the 1980s or 1990s of Hattie Hayridge performing in Scotland. She has on the black-and-white striped dress, 1920s or 1960s, she never knew which, bought from a jumble sale. She decided it would be her stage dress in 1987 after giving up her day job as a secretary and 'starting to organize' herself in comedy. She looks around, eyes measuring the space between jokes. Breathes out, sighs, "Ah, I don't know ...", before offering her next line to the room.



fig. 9

Authenticity and performance are of special importance too to the doctor. The word's etymology goes like this: agent noun from *docere* "to show, teach, cause to know", originally "make to appear right", causative of *decere* "be seemly, fitting". The verb form meaning "to confer a degree on" has a later, additional sense, "to alter, disguise, falsify"<sup>2</sup>.

Not long ago I overheard a woman in the lunch break at a conference warning her friends off Fine Art PhDs.

"It's like playing chicken with your practice."

<sup>1</sup> Hattie Hayridge, *Random Abstract Memory: A surreal life story* (Penguin, 1997), p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=doctor> [accessed 12th July 2013]

What I took her to be saying was that either you earn a doctorate, in which case your practice will have yielded to the doctorate, or you maintain an art practice, in which case you will have given up on the doctorate. Or both art practice and doctorate will yield to their mutual destruction. What I took her to mean was that for an artist it's possible to know too much. Just enough knowing for an artist, not too much.



Like the comedian, the doctoral candidate is expected to perform as if she understood her own jokes. It is not enough to simply write them. She must show, by means practical and verbal, that she understands them. Her jokes must seem to fit, must not be too big, too crude or too funny. Just right. If she convinces her audience, the symbolic alteration she'll undergo in her investiture as Doctor attests to this precisely. From now on she will be disguised as an authority. Not of this or that obscure academic material but of herself. Of her own obscure material. It is herself she's been writing down, ensuring all parts are balanced exactly. Now. She will be wholly in possession of herself.

*She will be doctored.*

Under directional lamplight the couch intensifies its embrace aided by a blanket borrowed from the bed, wrapping feet, belly, arms, shoulders up to the chin, with one unswaddled hand holding a book, face folded into cushions plied against the armrest, right eye closed/left eye foundering on lens and rim of spectacles pushed sideways. Sleep reading. Residues of the day's readings press *Theory and Technique*<sup>1</sup> into wonted shape: the various "a"s consort.



Of course the artist does not really want to change! From our perspective, it is clear that the artwork cannot rely on some sort of "will to do better" on the artist's part—some kind of genuine "desire to change". There is no such thing. Indeed artists often no longer have any will to be an artist, or to do anything at all, or sense that their practice is stifled and withering; in short their desire is dying. How then could it possibly serve as a mainspring for change?

If there is a desire in art that serves as its motor force, it is the artwork's not the artist's. Many feel that it is inappropriate for artworks to express any desire at all to artists. What this perspective fails to realise is that the artist's desire to continue making must at certain times wane or disappear altogether—otherwise the artist's essential conflicts tied up in his or her practice are not being affected. Artists tend to stop coming to the studio when they sense that they are being asked to give up something or make a sacrifice they are not prepared to make.

It is the artwork's desire, not the artist's flagging desire, that allows them to continue. Even very subtle expressions of the artwork's desire may suffice to keep certain artists coming back to the studio when they have no will of their own to continue. The artwork's "I'll see you tomorrow" may be enough to bring certain artists back even though they believe they have nothing more to say and feel stuck.

<sup>1</sup> What follows is an hallucinatory reading of the opening section, 'Desire in Analysis', in Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 3-10. The 'a' words have switched: artist for analysand, artwork for analyst, and art for the analysis. Some other substitutions, such as 'practice' for 'symptom', and a few elisions notwithstanding, Bruce Fink's text is quite faithfully reproduced.

The artwork is an actor or actress playing a part. The artwork is not “authentic”, not communicating its deepest beliefs and reactions to the artist as one being to another. The artwork must maintain a position of desire. The artwork is called upon to maintain this same position, this same strictly art oriented desire.

“The artwork’s desire” refers to a kind of “purified desire” that is specific to the artwork—to the artwork not as a being with feelings but as a function, a role, a part to be played. “The artwork’s desire” is a desire that focuses on art and only on art. “The artwork’s desire” is not for the artist to do better, to succeed in life, to be happy, to understand him or herself, to achieve what he or she says he or she wants. It is an enigmatic desire that does not tell the artist what the artwork wants him or her to say or do.

“The artwork’s desire” is a kind of pure desiring that does not alight on any particular object, that does not show the artist what the artwork wants from him or her—though the artist inevitably tries to read a specific desire into even the slightest gesture or intonation. “The artwork’s desire” walks a fine line.

## KNOWLEDGE AND DESIRE

Artists do not come to the artwork with a “genuine desire for self-knowledge”. Although many artists express a desire to know there is a more deeply rooted wish not to know. Once artists are on the verge of realizing exactly what it is they have done or are doing, they very often resist going any further and flee the artwork. When they begin to glimpse their deeper motives and find them hard to stomach, they often drop out. Avoidance is one of the most basic artistic tendencies.

In the studio, the artist’s basic position is one of a refusal of knowledge, a will not to know. The artist wants to know nothing about his or her mechanisms, nothing about the why and wherefore of his or her practice. We can even go so far as to classify ignorance as a passion greater than love or hate: a passion not to know.

It is only the artwork’s desire that allows the artist to overcome

this “wanting to know nothing”, sustaining the artist through the process of formulating some kind of new knowledge. The artwork must essentially open-up a space of desire, a space in which the artist can come to desire. If the artist resists knowing, and the artwork fails to bring its desire to bear, new knowledge cannot be formulated.

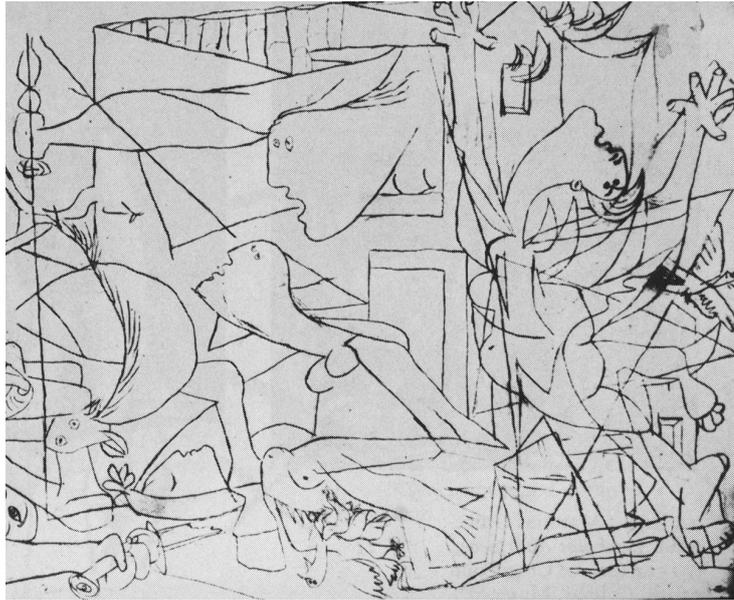


fig. 10

STATE I The woman 'straining as she flees toward the center [sic]<sup>1</sup> becomes Fleeing Woman in the literature, which partitions the painting's figures according to type—a shaky taxonomy—and the composition's sliced-up scheme. That is, the woman identified as fleeing '[creates] an important compositional diagonal leading to the lamp in the upper center [sic]' (113). A peculiar attribution of agency to Fleeing Woman, perhaps, who might just as well be described as lit by the lamp in the upper centre that casts light along forty-five degrees, the angle to which her body inclines. The figure follows the diagonal, maybe, or repeats it, or extends it to the bottom edge. It would make sense to say that the figure strains along a diagonal created by the light source, towards which her face and eyes are turned.

(She has the blankest expression of all the pictured faces. Struck dumb. Stupefied.)

Is she acting in the tragedy or acted upon by it? What kind of intent attaches to that verb this Woman contracts? Is she fleeing from or towards? Fleeing from the fire on the right? Or towards the light, centre? Is she a subject fleeing from or towards any determinate object or is fleeing, here, stalled in the continuous present of its tense? Fleeing. Neither from nor towards, caught in that mode of activity that feels like passivity. Boxed into the square crossed by the diagonal of which she's a function.

<sup>1</sup> Herschel B. Chipp, *Picasso's Guernica: History, Transformations, Meanings* (University of California Press, 1988), p. 113. Subsequent references are given in the text.

The geometry she's locked into is unvarying but her figure's in flux.

**STATE IA** She acquires a chair that later becomes her thigh. She drags it. It exposes her missing limb section. Beneath her the demure female corpse palms the back of it with a hand attaching to a third arm, seemingly left behind when she fell off her chair. (Her features resemble those of the Marie-Thérèse character Picasso developed in so many seated and reclining portraits.) Both women have a claim on the chair. The one relinquishing, the other gripping it absent-mindedly. An attribute of the

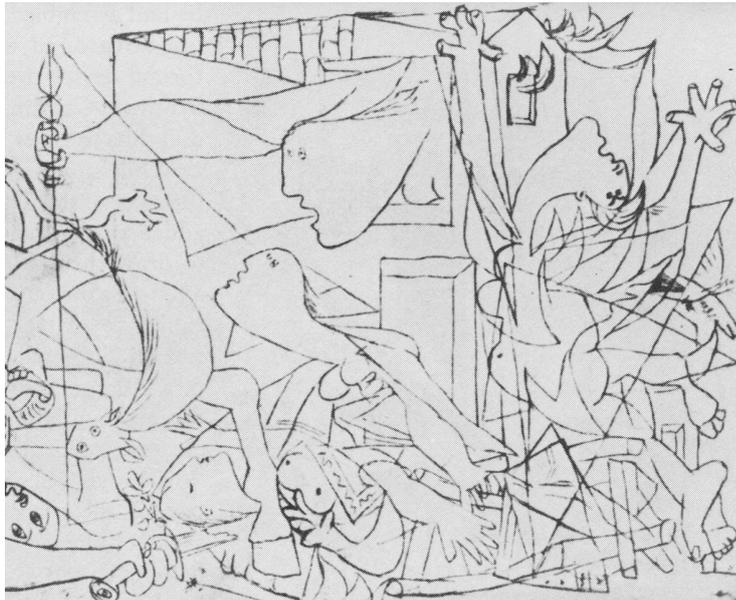


fig. 11

elegant slain woman which attaches to the other one accidentally as baggage? She clatters along with it as if it had just joined in her general deformity. Or is furniture what these figures share? A thing from indoors—the object world—home to chairs, tables, fabrics, wallpaper; finery when touched by the elegant woman, creaturely when shackled to the fleeing one. Early on these two take most of the pattern—frills, braiding, checks. They're bothered by attachments in a way the other figures aren't. As the pretty corpse disappears it's Fleeing Woman who's burdened most of all with these 'sensual titillations'<sup>2</sup>.

**STATE II** She trundles on, statically. The elegant woman has

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 130. Chipp is referring to the wallpaper Picasso affixes to the canvas in States IV and VI. Bits of this same wallpaper appear in *Women at their Toilette* (1938): 'The ornate and elegant wallpaper fragment, quite in harmony with the women's languid and colorful air of preoccupation with the sensual titillations of the bath, was, as Picasso surely realized, quite unsuited for a permanent place in the developing *Guernica*.'

popped forward and shrunk. She's Fleeing Woman's homunculus now, filling her crotch. The elegant woman has on shoes, high heels, and a sort of skirt. Her eyes are open. She might have a handbag under her bare breasts. (They all, the women, have bare breasts. This particular signifier of exposure has to be repeated five times over.) Fleeing Woman has more hair, more definition in her headdress. The line of her face has been re-asserted. Her chair is almost gone, become her thigh and knee shaped like a leg of mutton.

**STATE III** The elegant, classical woman has been withdrawn except for her beheaded head rolled away from Fleeing Woman who's gained another foot from the torso of her homunculus. Not a dainty one in a high heel: bare, thudding and massive. And the elegant woman, a head only, looks less like a woman and more like a guillotined prince. Fleeing Woman looks increasingly compromised. Her buttocks are there, both cheeks, impossibly, where her spine should be. Her eyes are two circles with dots at their centres. Shorthand shocked eyes. The least fussy means to express wide open surprise. And such simplicity here insinuates haplessness.

She has another companion: Woman With Lamp. Woman With Lamp was there from the beginning, the earliest sketch. Their faces are similar. Twinned. They incline towards one another, looking into the scene. *They're onlookers*. The two other remaining women, one far left, one far right, are suffering; their faces and expressions match one another. Two pairs of women. Woman With Lamp casts the line of light according to which Fleeing Woman organizes her body. The light to which she turns her open eyes. They come together to the scene as witnesses<sup>3</sup>.

Fleeing Woman, with all her limbs articulated, approaches **STATE IV** in which she acquires a tear and two bits of wallpaper. No tears in *Guernica* except hers. When tears come they come with wallpaper. And toilet roll. (Henry Moore and Roland Penrose visit the studio in early June. Henry Moore recalls: "You know the woman who comes running out of the little cabin on the right with one hand held in front of her? Well, Picasso

<sup>3</sup> Judi Freeman also considers these women 'witnesses rather than emotional participants in the scene'. *Picasso and the Weeping Women: The Years of Marie Thérèse Walter & Dora Maar* (LA County Museum of Art/Rizzoli, 1994), p. 42. Subsequent references are given in the text.

told us that there was something missing there, and he went and fetched a roll of paper and stuck it in the woman's hand, as much as to say that she'd been caught in the bathroom when the bombs came"; Penrose adds, "'There," said Picasso, "that leaves no doubt about the commonest and most primitive effect of fear" (75-8.) Her wallpaper comes off in **STATE V** and returns in **STATE VI**. This time bits attach to other women. But don't stick. Fleeing Woman is the one things get stuck to and taken off, the stuff of houses and toilets and tissues and excrement and tears.

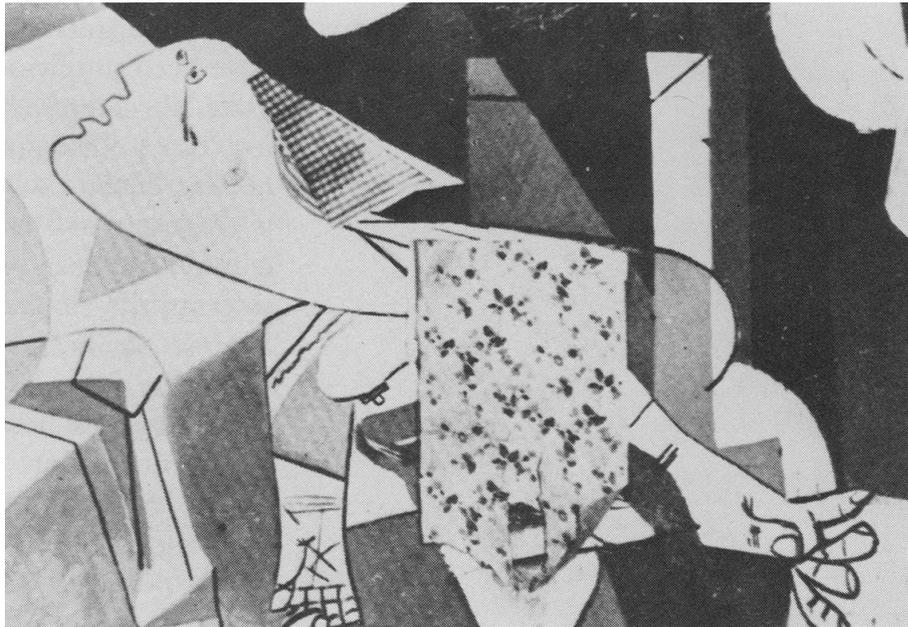


fig. 12

Pinned to her and unpinned. Pinned, unpinned.

**STATE VII** Her tear remains, the wallpaper is dropped. **STATE VIII** The tear disappears too. Witness, weeper, wallpaper. If she flees, her flight through *Guernica*'s transformations is marked by all the 'unsuited' things she accrues. She takes up and displays dissonant bits of interiors, of rooms and the body, as if they were parts of a question that wouldn't cohere and had to be dropped. The agitating fringe material of *Guernica*—scooped from the space around it in the studio—that seemed to be implicated in its surface but nevertheless couldn't be incorporated there.

If there's a figure in *Guernica* to whom *Weeping Woman* relates, it's Fleeing Woman, not the mother and child or her partner on the far right. *Weeping Woman* descends from the two witnesses. Her problems are theirs.

The dead have no colour.

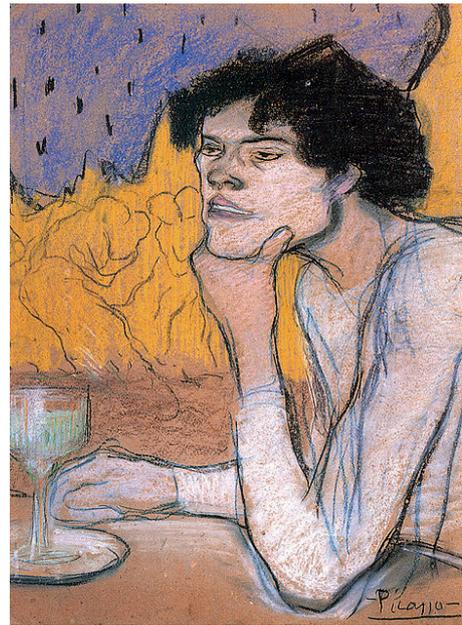
(Ad Reinhardt, 'How to look at a mural')

Hollywood in the 1930s imagines its monsters—those between life and death, such as Frankenstein—with green skin. On-screen black and white turns in posters to the colour of absinthe, that fin-de-siècle drink of Paris's most miserable creatures: women, in particular, suffering symbolic ruin and psychological breakdown in chalk and paint.

fig. 13  
Poster for the  
French release  
of *The Bride of  
Frankenstein* in  
June 1935.



fig. 14  
Pablo Picasso,  
*Absinthe (Girl in a  
Café)*, 1901.



Green skin marks the outcast. A body excluded from ordinary human life but animated nevertheless by some unknown force, at times chemical, electrical, bestial.

Edgar Degas puts this green to work. Ushered in by the flesh of performers at the Café Concert it becomes the deformity of low-life imitation: satin paws up, a green woman like a dog, singing.<sup>1</sup>

Vulgar, theatrical green, between animal and human, horror and comedy, presents itself in my bedroom scheme picked up in the Phaidon page's face flushed with biliverdin<sup>2</sup>. If that's nature's green it's not Leonardo's; green of water balancing

<sup>1</sup> The figure represents Thérèse, née Emma Valadon, singing *The Song of the Dog* at the Café Concert. She was famed for her distinctive, vulgar style of performance.

<sup>2</sup> Shortly after death the human body starts to putrefy. As part of this process, the blood becomes coloured with biliverdin, a green tetrapyrrolic bile pigment released from the liver, giving the skin a green appearance.



fig. 15  
Edgar Degas, *The Song of the Dog*,  
1876-77.

yellow of earth, blue of air, red of fire.<sup>3</sup> (But then, even in da Vinci's grouping of elementaries, green is distinguished from the others—red, blue, yellow—in being a mixture of the last two. Green is an elemental compound.) Her face is nature's green at the end of its spectrum, green crossed over from verdure to ordure. She articulates the necessity of green to those other three through its unbalanced deliquescence, its estimate<sup>4</sup> ooze. There in my bedroom, wallpaper or curtains in *fleurs des champs*, I'm not sure which, backing the *Weeping Woman's* skin which palpates with a green of uncanny vitality.

<sup>3</sup> Green is the third simple colour, according to Leonardo da Vinci, designating the element water, as against white (light), yellow (earth), blue (air), red (fire), black (darkness).

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Lacan's neologism, combining *ex* from *exterieur* with *intimité*. It 'neatly expresses the way in which psychoanalysis problematizes the opposition between inside and outside, between container and contained. [...] The Other 'is something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me'' Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 1996), p. 58. See mote\_20: Room setting.

## PART I

### The Notion of Melancholy and its Historical Development

In modern speech the word "melancholy" is used to denote any one of several somewhat different things. It can mean a **mental illness** characterised mainly by attacks of anxiety, deep depression and fatigue—though it is true that recently the medical concept has largely become disintegrated. It may mean a **type of character**—generally associated with a certain type of physique—which together with the sanguine, the choleric and the phlegmatic, constituted the system of the "four humours", or the "four complexions" as the old expression was. It may mean a temporary state of mind, sometimes painful and depressing, sometimes merely mildly pensive and nostalgic. In this case it is a purely **subjective mood** which can then by transference be attributed to the objective world, so that one can legitimately speak of "the melancholy of evening", "the melancholy of autumn", or even, like Shakespeare's Prince Hal, of "the melancholy of Moor-ditch".

Lessons from the first page of *Saturn and Melancholy*<sup>1</sup>, the primary reference for most subsequent excursions into the melancholy field. A taut opening, the text neatly disposed on the page in a block. This paragraph stands at the beginning as an acrobat would, displaying his toned physique in a held pose before breaking into his routine.

Here it is, melancholy divided in three: illness, character and mood. The first of these has largely disintegrated. Second and third impress, the second grounded in classical philosophy, the third expanding from the subjective through 'the objective world' as far as stinking Moor-ditch.

<sup>1</sup> Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1964), p. 2.

In the early pages of *Black Sun* under the heading, 'Is a mood a language?', Julia Kristeva insists that moods *record*, they are 'inscriptions, energy disruptions, not simply raw energies'<sup>1</sup>. As very rudimentary representations, moods are 'insufficiently stabilized to coalesce as verbal or other signs': 'On the frontier of animality and symbol formation, moods—and particularly sadness—are the ultimate reactions to our traumas, they are our basic homeostatic resource' (22). Moods are not equivalent to affects, but sadness, which is the fundamental mood of depression, 'leads us into the enigmatic realm of affects—anguish, fear, or joy' (21).

According to Eric Santner, mood, for Heidegger, 'is the primordial mode in which our "being in the world", our existential implication in a concrete historical situation, is registered'<sup>2</sup>. Here, too, in the chapter 'Melancholy and its Vicissitudes', moods are described as inscriptions; Santner writes of mood as a 'virtual archive in which are inscribed traces of an originary—and at some level traumatic—opening or attunement to "otherness" below the level of intentional states' (45). For Heidegger, he continues, 'mood registers our sense of "always already" finding ourselves stuck in a specific historical constellation, which means first and foremost being stuck with, being riveted to, ourselves' (46). Like the *punctum*, 'the disclosure proper to mood is to be distinguished from any sort of propositional attitude' (46). Rather, mood registers 'a vulnerability to the mattering of things before any choice or decision on our part, before any reflection about value'<sup>3</sup>. This mattering, he writes:

refers to our ex-citation, our being called out or addressed [...] by that to which we are delivered over. Indeed we might even say that we are delivered over to an address (rather than an inert otherness that might or might not address us). (47)

<sup>1</sup> Kristeva defines affect as 'the psychic representation of energy displacements caused by internal or external traumas'. Mood seems to be operative at a still more basic level, registering trauma but only in 'a very rudimentary representation'. *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 21. Subsequent references are given in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 45. Subsequent references are given in the text.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 47. Mood could be said to follow the peculiar movement of the *punctum*, which appears radically involuntary to the spectator but nevertheless rivets her to herself. Mood, 'attuned to "otherness" below the level of intentional states' arrives 'right here in [the] eyes', so to speak, as a 'floating flash', to borrow one of Roland Barthes metaphors. Mood follows, too, the sequence of contradictions familiar from the *punctum*, being somehow both sharp and indistinct, an inscription of sorts but not one that achieves the coherence of sign etc. See mote\_27: mien mean.



fig. 16

A bearded man with toothache: 'this boss is an expression of pain'<sup>1</sup>. What purpose in a space of meditation the face in pain? Toothache Man, companion to Headache Man, grimacing with head in hands, put here in Lincoln Cathedral on the low, vaulted, wooden ceiling of the cloister built towards the end of the thirteenth century. Cloister, *claustrum*, meaning enclosure, comes to stand for monastery or convent, signifying the enclosed life of religious meditation and study separated from 'the world and its affairs'<sup>2</sup>. The locked rectangular cloister, invented in the

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Brighton, *Lincoln Cathedral Cloister Bosses* (The Honeywood Press, 1985), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> 'The themes which monastic discipline assigned to friars for meditation were designed to turn them away from the world and its affairs.' Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations* (Pimlico, 1999), pp. 249-50.

Age of Charlemagne, 'consists of a large square yard entirely surrounded by galleried porches and usually attached to the Southern flank of the church'.<sup>3</sup> An enclosure within an enclosure. Within the monastic enclosure the U-shaped cloister yard was screened by high walled buildings from the activities of fowl-keepers, coopers, wheelwrights, shoemakers, saddlers, grinders and polishers of swords, shieldmakers, turners, carriers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, fullers, shepherds, goatherds, swineherds and their various beasts.

Its development was dependent, for one, on the rejection of the semieremitic forms of living of the Irish monks in favor [sic] of the highly controlled and ordered forms of communal living prescribed by St. Benedict. It was an answer also, on the other hand, to the need for internal architectural separation of the monks from the monastic serfs and workmen, who had entered into an economic symbiosis with the monks, when the monastery, in the new agricultural society that arose north of the Alps, acquired the structure of a large manorial estate. (40)

**The 'corporate community for whose sustenance this organization was maintained consisted of monks who served God in chant and spent much of their time in reading and writing' (41). The slim book I have on Lincoln Cathedral's cloister bosses speculates on the function of a cloister in the cathedral setting:**

in monastic establishments the cloister was a place of study and was also used for informal meetings. [...] It is not unreasonable to suppose that the cloisters built for secular cathedrals [...] were required for a similar function, although it has been suggested that they were built merely for show.<sup>4</sup>

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***I Am Sitting in a Room*, the publication issuing from Brian Dillon's site-writing residency at Cabinet Gallery in London. A smaller than average book, big pocket or man bag size. Looking for the section on Antonello da Messina's painting of *Saint Jerome in***

<sup>3</sup> Walter Horn, 'On the Origins of the Medieval Cloister', *Gesta*, 12, (1973), pp. 13-52. Subsequent references are given in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Brighton, *Lincoln Cathedral Cloister Bosses* (The Honywood Press, 1985), 3.

*his Study* (1475), depicting the scholar on a wooden stage within a cavernous cathedral space ... . (While I'm here, there's George Perec's image of the writer's study deduced from this painting: 'surrounded by the uninhabitable, the study defines a domesticated space inhabited with serenity by cats, books and men'.<sup>5</sup>) Brian Dillon lays his emphasis on enclosure: Jerome is here 'several times enclosed' but 'all this careful activity of enclosure and protection has been in the service of something frail and unfinished'<sup>6</sup>, referring to St Jerome's angled writing surface, which to him looks provisional. Possibly recalling the reader to a photograph of Dillon's 'temporary desk'—laminated board suspended over trestles—at the front of the book, captioned **THE AUTHOR AT WORK**. Reading backwards from the painting of St Jerome reproduced, page 23, the chapter opens, page 21, onto acts of enclosure and their architectural support:

The writer's study or office is a machine for enclosing the self and at the same time letting the mind wander, and the architectural volume with its props and accoutrements has to do the complex job of actually achieving both while allegorizing or exaggerating those processes so as to convince the writer that they are truly afoot.

According to a text by William Durandus from 1296, the cloister's architectural symbolism is twofold: on the one hand, it represents Paradise, an interpretation based on the life to come, on the other it represents the contemplative soul. This second interpretation of the cloister's moral significance is based on a twelfth century work by Hugh of Fouilly, 'On the monastery of the soul', recommending the enclosed life as 'protection from temptation', relevant not only to monastic life but to any life 'devoted to God and cut off from the distractions of the outside world'<sup>7</sup>. Hugh of Fouilly's text goes further, to enumerate the dangers of reclusion and the role of architecture in forestalling such dangers, beginning with the cloister, which represents 'not the contemplative soul but the act of contemplation as such, when the soul turns in upon itself and directs its attention exclusively on heavenly things, divorced from the throng of carnal thoughts' (1). This act of contemplation unfolds from the four sides of the cloister: contempt for self, contempt for the world, love of God and love of one's neighbour.

<sup>5</sup> Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (Penguin, 2008), p. 88.

<sup>6</sup> Brian Dillon, *I Am Sitting in a Room* (Cabinet, 2012), p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher Brighton, *Lincoln Cathedral Cloister Bosses* (The Honeywood Press, 1985), p. 1. Subsequent references are given in the text.

Does an 'ailment' head, contorting and grimacing, invite the studious mind to wander? Is it a lure to dissipation or a reminder to the contemplative soul of fleshly woes he must set about transcending by way of scholarly devotion? Is the face in pain a figure of contempt or an inducement to neighbourly love?

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Another face in a room where there are studious minds at work. Freud's consulting room, Vienna in 1907, with his patient known as the Rat Man, a model for the modern ailment head. His face appears in the text of Freud's case study, not quite a face in pain but a face, unbeknownst to its wearer, enjoying the pain of 'a specially horrible torture punishment used in the East'. Freud records his observation:

At all the more important moments while he was telling his story his face took on a very strange, composite expression. I could only interpret it as one of *horror at the pleasure of his own of which he himself was unaware*.<sup>8</sup>

Eric Santner quotes Freud's portrait of the Rat Man's face as an instance of the creaturely expressivity he's tracing and names the call it makes on us to respond:

The being whose proximity we are enjoined to inhabit and open to according to the imperative of neighbor love is always a subject at odds with itself, split by thoughts, desires, fantasies, and pleasures it can never fully claim as its own and that in some sense both do and do not belong to it.<sup>9</sup>

**In the enclosure of the clinic, the excess unconscious jouissance animating the Rat Man's countenance is what the psychoanalyst companions:**

Psychoanalysis differs from other approaches to human being by attending to the constitutive "too muchness" that characterizes the psyche; the human mind is, we might say, defined by the fact that it includes more reality than it can contain, is the bearer of an excess, a too much of pressure that is not merely physiological.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol X, Two Case Histories: 'Little Hans' and the 'Rat Man'*, (Vintage Books, 2001), p. 166-7.

<sup>9</sup> Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. xii.

<sup>10</sup> Eric L. Santner, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 8.

Tate Gallery, marble floors and a bench, paintings, a space heavy with top-lighting. My head is bent to a cold floor, eyes shut. Folding myself again against their pleading and I groan into mausoleum quiet, palms pushing my eyes backwards. Grateful the leatherette has hold of my legs. Feverish bubble and gasp. It is boredom or fright or portent. A headache, head aching. I am not here. Breathing in the sulphurous ends of life. Coughed up then for days and years after, to their surprise. How much did she see? We left early. She was ill. Her eyes were closed. Could she have taken it in? *Late Picasso*, Tate Gallery, London, 1988.

'Too soon' changes suddenly into 'too late' without [our] detecting the exact moment of their transformation. The whole affair thus has the structure of the missed encounter: along the way, the truth, which we have not yet attained, pushes us forward like a phantom, promising that it awaits us at the end of the road; but all of a sudden we perceive that we were always already in the truth. The paradoxical surplus which slips away, which reveals itself as 'impossible' in this missed encounter of the 'opportune moment', is of course *objet a*: the pure semblance which pushes us toward the truth, right up to the moment when it suddenly appears behind us and that we have already arrived ahead of it, a chimerical being that does not have its 'proper time', only ever persisting in the interval between 'too soon' and 'too late'.<sup>1</sup>

She came too soon to late Picasso. Too early. So early to late Picasso her head hurt. She caught a hectic in her brain. That image of artists going off like milk or fruit left to ripen too long in the sun. Suddenly overnight leaking and wrinkling old artists turned from firm young artists the day before. Artists lose their stuff. The stuff of timeliness. She's off the sofa crawling between piled papers, knees picking up crumbs and things under the table; she hustles and wiggles for a line in Stanley Cavell's book, second shelf down, kitchen-side, *Must We Mean What We Say*, overdue January 22nd 2013: 'What makes a statement or a question profound is not its placing but its timing.'<sup>2</sup>

Which is not something she understands. Precisely. She thinks. Timing. As with a joke? Or—and this is not what Stanley Cavell

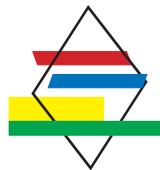
<sup>1</sup> Slavoj Žižek: *Interrogating the Real*, ed. Rex Butler & Scott Stephens (Bloomsbury, 2005), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say* (Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 28.

has in mind, she thinks—*eventful synchronicity*, Eric Santner’s phrase felt-tipped on a Post-it note above the bench. But she’s looking for the book—red, on the couch—where he advances his method:

Rilke’s method in Malte as well as my own engagement with historical texts, figures, and events in this study would be in terms proposed by Walter Benjamin in his reflections on the “mimetic faculty” and the “doctrine of similarities”. For Benjamin, too, the task of reading, of the critical engagement with history and with cultural texts of any kind, involves the seizing of a moment in which a constellation of what he refers to as “nonsensuous similarities” comes into focus, or to use Rilke’s acoustic figure, a moment in which the frequencies of vital intensity dispersed across historical epochs becomes synchronized.<sup>3</sup>

**It’s in the timing: elements in different places—texts, figures and events—drawn together, by language, at a critical moment. Though she wonders if her child’s body didn’t manifest her incapacity to take advantage of just such an opportunity. The undetectable moment of transformation, a flash between too early and too late, that lodged in her persistently aching head.**



To pluck her own doctrine of similarity from the pages of someone else’s preface ... Without knowing too much about it, she embarks, a simpleton, on another effort of thought. A taste for simile has grown up in her alongside the one for artists going off like foodstuff. The simile is a figure of speech that conjures a fresh image from a comparison of two unlike things that share some common feature<sup>4</sup>. The advantage of ‘such reciprocal representation’ is that it ‘places both subjects of comparison before

<sup>3</sup> Eric L. Santner, *The Royal Remains: The People’s Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. ix-xx.

<sup>4</sup> In his treatise on rhetoric Aristotle praises metaphors and similes that give an idea of activity. Movement is what makes the listener ‘see things’: ‘By ‘making them see things’ I mean using expressions that represent things as in a state of activity’. The successful simile makes a listener/reader see what is not apparent at the level of surface appearance by producing a movement in the things compared, causing a new concept to be grasped: ‘Metaphors must be drawn from things that are related to the original thing, and yet not obviously so related—just as in philosophy also an acute mind will perceive resemblances even in things far apart.’ *Rhetoric*, trans. by W. Rhys Roberts (Digireads.com, 2005), pp. 93-4.

our very eyes, displaying them side by side<sup>5</sup>. The cost of this arrangement is the gap it also demonstrates, one the similaic copula—'like' or 'as'—exaggerates. A doctrine of similarity based not on metaphor, where one thing becomes—'is'—another, but on simile, where two things placed side by side display the split between them: what would this look like?

The similaic gap would be one through which vibrations of vital intensity might echo across generations and epochs. So she'll understand the similarities to which Eric Santner refers pertaining less to some positive content of things or features-in-common and more to this peculiar connective zone that provides the spark of comparison but inhibits fusion. The simile is less prompt than metaphor<sup>6</sup> but well enough equipped to figure the paradoxical moment of missed encounter. (She's aware this borrowed phrase carries more than she's able to lay hold of. She'll make do with its lightened form.) She hunts again under her bench<sup>7</sup> for a chapter photocopied from a book on early modern literature in which there is, she remembers, some discussion of simile versus metaphor in relation to desire, which could expand her experiment. Scanning highlighted phrases, the association of simile in early modern literature with sexuality and excess begins to clarify. Where metaphor represents a non-erotic matrimonial reproductive unity, simile represents a licentious 'shifting triangle of desire characterized by an open-ended supplementarity exceeding the illusory unity of the dyad as sum' or, a phrase she prefers, 'God's Arithmeticke'<sup>8</sup>. Skipping to page 283, she finds a note to herself and a bandy arrow down the page. The protraction of discourse characteristic of simile is associated by Early Modern theorists with various forms of expansion of the female flesh, predominantly 'copia, dilation and amplification'. There's a flurry of

<sup>5</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria Book VIII*, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio\\_Oratoria/8A\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio_Oratoria/8A*.html) [accessed 12th July 2013].

<sup>6</sup> Following his disparagement of simile for being 'longer' and, therefore, 'less attractive' than metaphor, Aristotle writes: 'We see, then, that both speech and reasoning are lively in proportion as they make us seize a new idea promptly'. *Rhetoric*, trans. by W. Rhys Roberts (Digireads.com, 2005), p. 91.

<sup>7</sup> The bench, *Perch*, was a component in the show, *Room Setting*, at Royal College of Art, 2012. It's a metal frame construction (the dimensions match the cream couch in my flat) modelled on an Ikea table (used in my studio over the course of the PhD) with a cream leatherette and leather covered foam cushion.

<sup>8</sup> Shirley Sharron-Zisser, *The Risks of Simile in Renaissance Rhetoric* (Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 277-278. Subsequent references are given in the text. 'God's Arithmeticke' is a moral treatise by Francis Meres in which he 'commends the principle of heterosexual joining generated "When God had marryed Adam and Eua together"(278).

asterisks beside the sentences below, in which *copia* reveals its background in the letters and person of the goddess Ops, consort of melancholy Saturn (she feeds him the stone). In the Renaissance, '*copia* is theorized through images of plenty'—Ops Mater is a figure of abundance—and constitutes a form of unstable signification: 'the aesthetic category of *copia* dissolves boundaries. *Copia* ultimately involves not a celebration of eloquence but its crisis' (284). It is to this aesthetic category that simile belongs, with its side-by-side display of parts and its non-fusional copula, its differentiating "cut", which makes vulgar show, through the excesses of 'like' and 'as', of a structural absence proper to comparison.

We've reworked our room. Temporarily, we thought. For the wedding. One bookshelf remains. Two topmost shelves given over to the books needed for writing. My doctoral self forced to edit her furniture, choosing against her earlier determinations according to the shelves' dimensions and the requirements of a feast. (A five metre table, to seat seventeen, cuts the room in half.) What remains? For the writing she wants various books kept in view, knowing they won't be opened. Not their content that's required, then, just their spines. Rows of implacable backs turned to the room:

THE ULTIMATE PICASSO | Giving an Account of Oneself | Billie Whitelaw ... Who he? An autobiography | The Odd One In | The Neighbor | Visions of Excess | Thinking through Painting: Reflexivity and Agency Beyond the Canvas | Late Picasso | Black Sun | WHAT IS MADNESS? | The Fall of the Studio | Please don't leave me |

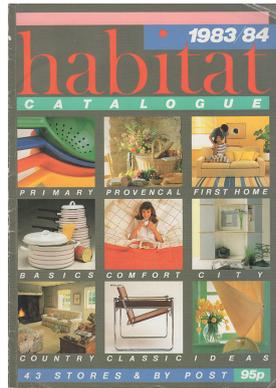
A five metre table cuts the room in half. This is a new way of living. We breakfast and dinner at one end, I write at the other. Furthest from the windows, beside the bookshelf. In the middle: a dispersal of things unfixd but purposeful. In use. And in two low dishes *pot pourri* from the wedding flowers. The table is no longer a surface. It's a field. And a crossing.

Simile, an indecorous figure of speech that says too much, lays itself bare, 'displays the moment of resemblance'<sup>1</sup>. Aristotle warns against its use, preferring metaphor's economy; the simultaneity of its substituted terms—'this is that'—establishes stylistic elegance. The vulgar excesses of 'like', the similaic copula, inducing the sense of bodily copulation from its Latin root, drives the many disavowals of simile. Exiled from the realm of rational argument where metaphor retains its centrality, simile washes up in the province of song.

<sup>1</sup> Paul Ricoeur, 'Between Rhetoric and Poetics' in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. by Amélie Rorty (University of California Press, 1996), p. 329.

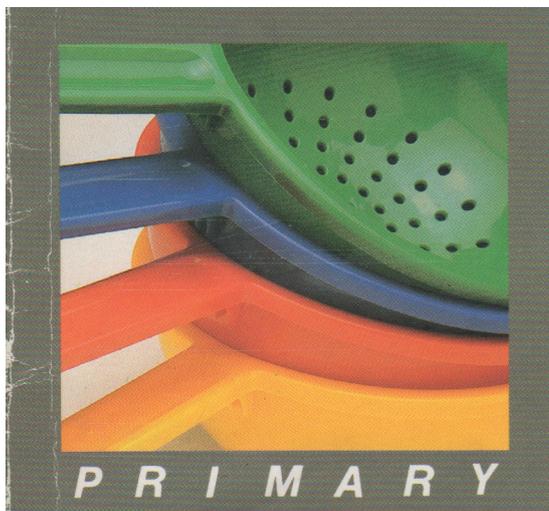
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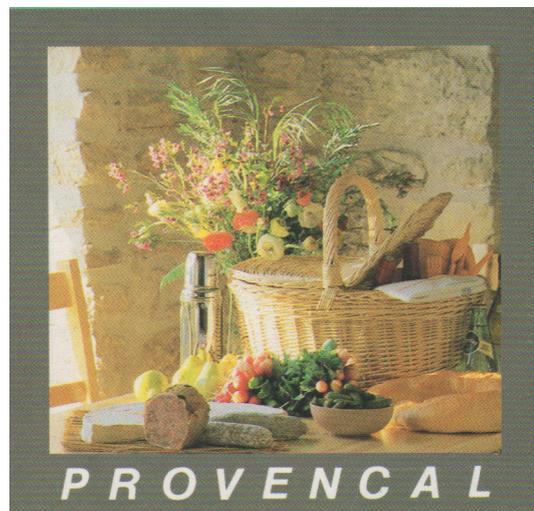


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The cover of 1983/4 is divided into nine square photographs, each with a caption: PRIMARY, PROVENCAL, FIRST HOME, BASICS, COMFORT, CITY, COUNTRY, CLASSIC, IDEAS. The image above PRIMARY shows four, stacked, plastic colanders in yellow, red, blue, and green.



Page 135 describes *fleurs des champs* as 'a charming, fresh floral design with scattered blue, yellow and red flowers on a crisp white background'. The flower stems are green. A mix of PRIMARY and PROVENCAL.

What is *Weeping Woman's* mien? Mien. This word I write with pleasure but don't like saying. How to form it in an angled mouth? Me-un, "n" in the throat, or mean? Too French, too English. And the received question shaped by its homophone: What does *Weeping Woman* mean? Not immediately my question. Not quite or altogether nor primarily the question this painting presses me to ask. It demanded this kind of question of another child, Antony Penrose, living with it in his home: 'Why is the woman crying?' he asked his father, Roland Penrose, who answered where the painting would not. Young Antony repeated his question, 'Why is she crying?'. The painting refused to answer. No visible cause of the woman's suffering to be found there within the frame. And is not the omission of narrative content adequate to the pictured affect what makes the painting so demanding?<sup>1</sup>

What does *Weeping Woman* mean? Not my first question. The painting does not readily communicate meaning. No, I think, I don't know what it's asking, only that it asks something of me. Which unformulated question grows up into one that won't roll right off my tongue: "What is *Weeping Woman's* mien?" Driven by a feeling for some perturbation, not altogether displacing sense and reason, but quite. Quite displacing. The painting's museological time, its agreed place in history, muddled by its appearance in my bedroom, with soft furnishings, crocodile tears, the insinuations of futures past and things unknown. Museological time not wholly displaced by my bedroom time—pre-teen, about 1992, suburban Lincoln, 1930s semi, synthetic carpet, RED-YELLOW-BLUE-GREEN—not altogether displaced but wrinkled. Quite wrinkled. Hiked-up like a man's trouser leg caught in his sock, which just wrecks his equipoise.

Mien: has pursued me as I've unwittingly pursued it, it would seem, over thirty years more or less. Impetus and spectral object of my peregrinations. It set-off in that bedroom to move surreptitiously through my education disorganizing things in

<sup>1</sup> In his case study of the 'Rat Man', Freud offers a memorable simile for the subject's tendency to reach for a ready explanation, whether or not it is the right one, in order to fill a gap between 'ideational content' and 'affect': 'We are not used to feeling strong affects without their having any ideational content, and therefore, if the content is missing, we seize as a substitute upon some other content which is in some way or other suitable, much as our police, when they cannot catch the right murderer, arrest a wrong one instead.' *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol X, Two Case Histories: 'Little Hans' and the 'Rat Man'* (Vintage Books, 2001), p. 176.

accordance with its sensorium. Which is composed of various parts: facial expression; appearance; beak, muzzle, nose, mouth; character or mood; of mine; mine, my own; make as if to; make a show of.

Mood and character on the underside of 'mean'. The question limping along, "What does *Weeping Woman* mean?", with the other one, "What is *Weeping Woman's* mien?" stuck in the volar softness of its foot.

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*Camera Lucida*, warming at the edges, bending its corners. Page 26 onwards on the interaction of *studium* and *punctum*. The *studium* classes as 'a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment but without special acuity'<sup>2</sup>, by way of which a photograph's 'figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions' become interesting, legible. This legibility depends on a complicity between sovereign consciousnesses, that of the photographer (Operator) and the viewer (Spectator), which reach out, meet and congratulate one another across the photograph. Experience of a photograph's *studium* is grounded in 'a kind of education (knowledge and civility, "politeness") which allows [the Spectator] to discover the Operator'. Thus, what the *studium* provides for is the pleasure of concord: 'to recognize the *studium* is inevitably to encounter the photographer's intentions, to enter into harmony with them, to approve or disapprove of them, but always to understand them, to argue them within myself, for culture (from which the *studium* derives) is a contract arrived at between creators and consumers.'

The *punctum*, by contrast, cuts through the *studium's* tact with a wounding act of punctuation. It is characterized by the irruption of a detail or details from the photograph: 'it is not I who seek it out [...] it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me'. The *punctum* is a detail, an arrow, 'sting, speck, cut, little hole', appearing as an emissary of the accidental, finding its addressee in the Spectator called to it: 'A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me.)'. The poignancy of the eventful detail, which 'traverse[s], lash[es],

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Vintage 2000), pp. 26-28. Subsequent references are given in the text.

strip[es]’ a photograph’s *studium*, is tied to being involuntary, received by the Spectator ‘right here in [the] eyes’ (43); it cannot be intentionally included in the photograph by the Operator but must have lodged there as ‘a supplement that is at once inevitable and delightful’ (47). Roland Barthes describes this happenstance as the result of a photographer’s “second sight”, which ‘does not consist in “seeing” but in being there’ (47). Similarly, the *punctum* cannot be searched for, peered at, nor analysed by the Spectator; it sticks out and snags the eye of someone otherwise engaged in the decorous exchange of the photograph’s *studium*, and dissolves the familiar code: ‘I am a primitive, a child—or a maniac’, writes Barthes, ‘I dismiss all knowledge, all culture, I refuse to inherit anything from another eye than my own’ (51).

This *punctum* he describes makes strange movements. It can catalyse a special growth in the character of the one whose eye it pokes; his or her person is both flattened by it, pushed towards a primitive existence, and expanded by it: ‘the *punctum* has, more or less potentially, a power of expansion. This power is often metonymic’ (45). In which case the *punctum* rouses the Spectator’s memory, exciting the rapid recollection of things forgotten. It is at once beneath or beyond the scope of intention—sovereign consciousness is the *studium*’s purview—and acutely personal, appearing ‘for me’, insisting as ‘my own’; it is both animating—‘at once brief and active’ (49)—and mortifying, the motor of an ‘intense immobility’ (49). These and more paradoxes of the *punctum* are encapsulated on page 55 in one succinct lesson: the *punctum* ‘is an addition: it is what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there*’.

Norman Bryson reminds the reader of *Looking at the Overlooked* that:

The constative level of a text or image is that of its content or message; the performative level is that of the enunciation or enactment of that message. At the constative level there appears the literal dimension of a statement, in separation from the local circumstances of its utterance; the performative level embraces the context surrounding the utterance—its speaker, its addressee, its modes of address and reception, its place in the network of communicative acts.<sup>1</sup>

What concerns him in these pages is the interplay of constative and performative levels in Pieter Aertsen's *The Butcher's Stall* (1551), a still life of enormous sausages, hams, fowls and carcasses of all sorts piled high in the foreground, almost entirely obscuring the distant background where the Flight into Egypt is depicted in miniature, a picture within a picture. The painting's lavish, foreground flesh is opposed to the indistinct, biblical scene in which Mary is engaged in the spiritual work of charity. The few paintings, of which *The Butcher's Stall* is one, featuring this collision of sacred and profane, wherein the pleasures of the flesh and 'the everyday world of kitchen work' are massively inflated in the pictorial economy at the expense of a diminished, distant biblical scene, do not, the reader's told, constitute a reversal of the theological message: 'the life of the spirit is higher than creatural or animal existence'. Rather, what distinguishes the fundamental structure of these works is how the coded hierarchy of sacred and profane, at the constative level of message—unchanging theological truth—is performed by the image. In these paintings 'access to the transcendent is exactly blocked and prevented: transcendental truth does not belong to the realm of the visible; it cannot simply be pictured'. Whilst the viewer is able to take in with ease the immediate sensuality of the butcher's stall, of 'animal matter in its lowest and least redeemable aspect', the sacred background event demands some considerable effort to be seen and can, even then, only be glimpsed.

<sup>1</sup> Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Reaktion Books, 1990), pp. 146-50.

In colour [*Weeping Woman*] is very different from the studies made before going to Mougins. The lurid acid effects had been exchanged for brilliant contrasts—red, blue, green, and yellow. The result of using colour in a manner so totally unassociated with grief, for a face in which sorrow is evident in every line, is highly disconcerting.<sup>1</sup>

Roland Penrose directs his reader's attention to drawing and colour brought to work not in harmony but totally dissociated. If sorrow is the summary message evident in every line—*Weeping Woman*, Roland Penrose explains elsewhere, gives 'an account of the agony caused by fascist aggression on humanity'<sup>2</sup>—then this message is brought into collision with a colour setting 'totally unassociated with grief'.

The black line in *Weeping Woman* is heavy, indurating. It doesn't move in a lively way, creating depth through shifts in thickness but treads slowly—concentrating—round face and features. It makes its rounds of the colourful patches as if it might, with diligence, bind all the colour's energetic activity. If the line tenses its grip to harness colour to its purpose—the message—it does not succeed, since the sorrow it's meant to express is contested by colour 'totally unassociated with grief'. Then again, Roland Penrose implies, colour adds to the line's intense sorrow by its eccentricity, elaborating the whole disconcerting narrative: 'It [is] as though this girl, seen in profile but with both the dark passionate eyes of Dora Maar, dressed as for a fête, had found herself suddenly faced by heartrending disaster'<sup>3</sup>. Colours of the fête confronted with the line of disaster.

Some disconcerting things my child's eyes couldn't get the measure of: the colour conspires with the paint surface. (Dora Maar's thinned version embodies this lesson: the effect of colour depends on its quantity and handling.) The colour is caked, the way foundation gets on a face, applied too thick and sweated into its pores and crevices. There's no reprieve; it carries the intensity of an improper disturbance all over the canvas. (Figure is differentiated from background, readable as a bit of room behind her, but this behind is extremely shallow—it

<sup>1</sup> Roland Penrose quoted in Judi Freeman, *Picasso and the Weeping Women: The Years of Marie-Thérèse Walter & Dora Maar* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1994), p. 117. This message is not given but assumed; it has to be read into the line, so to speak. The word 'account' suggests an explanatory dimension to *Weeping Woman* that for me is—disconcertingly—absent.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Penrose quoted in *A Picasso anthology: documents, criticism, reminiscences*, ed. by Marilyn McCully (Thames & Hudson, 1981), p.211.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

backs rather than spaces. There's an unforthcoming density to the surface, which is hard to describe. It's without the inflections and gradations of *Guernica's*; that painting exposes layers, it reveals its processing eventfully. Whereas *Guernica's* surface unfolds, *Weeping Woman's* sticks.)

When colour breaks into white, within the contours of what ought to be a handkerchief held to the face, there's the revelation ... that's not the word ... the *laying bare* of something underneath. The handkerchief doesn't conceal what it covers as a handkerchief should; it's a kind of nested screen on which another reality fires: extra digits fanned under the eyes, cleft chin, a not very feminine thumb<sup>4</sup>, fingers connected to teeth via cartoonish electrical waves. In this section, there's more than there ought to be if we expect a skeleton consistent with those fleshy features which hang on it. As if this armature had suffered a double exposure, producing the odd spread of fingers, one of which—index finger or thumb?—elongates and morphs with a tendon in the neck.

In the caption from my Phaidon book, David Lomas says the handkerchief is 'like a picture within a picture' (108). The handkerchief picture is close to being black and white, it insinuates a skull or death's head. Can David Lomas's simile be borrowed and extended to the painting's overall working of colour as both embedded in and extraneous to what's depicted? As if the collision between two orders of reality—the handkerchief scene versus the other, coloured up to 'a jarring expressionist pitch' (108)—weren't also more generally applicable to a collision between line and colour in the painting? To think, that is, of colour as a picture *within* what's pictured? And that colour's picture here is one of the 'bright outside of things'<sup>5</sup>, operating not in the service nor even the sphere of depiction, but somewhere else?



<sup>4</sup> Dora Maar was known for her elegant fingers and long painted nails, details Picasso celebrated in a number of his portraits of her. Here the figure's nails are bluntly cropped, the fingers stumpy.

<sup>5</sup> 'The early writers on Cubism could exalt all they liked in the style's sloughing off of the bright outside of things. [...] [But] the world of the mind, in Picasso's hands, turns out to have a brutal inconsistency that makes the worst colorist look well behaved.' T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (Yale University Press, 1999), p. 187.

She's been squinting at this cropped face for a while, dissolving it, reviewing it, turning away to the wall. The handkerchief distinguishes itself from the rest as a piece cut from *Guernica's* cloth. Handkerchief, like a picture within a picture. Handkerchief, like a canvas. A handkerchief falls from one canvas into another. *Weeping Woman*, the whole thing, like a handkerchief, scrunpled and folded and found compressed in the pocket of a winter coat worn a while ago, before the summer.

The smaller handkerchief—*Weeping Woman's* synecdoche—falls out of *Guernica* into the hands and mouth of this other one. Eyes like spoons scoop up bits of *Guernica's* congealed fluids. The hanky is received into this head rheumy with colour, colours beside themselves and quite antithetical to *Guernica's*. 'He worked feverishly every day, using only black, white and grey values: he was too angry to bother with the niceties of colour'<sup>6</sup>. Too angry, too much in haste to bother with colour. Nicety not necessity. A non-essential luxury, like a hat with a flower, an earring, mascara, a tailored jacket, wallpaper. 'The color [sic] is black, white, pale and dark gray. (The dead have no color.)'<sup>7</sup>. The 'last history painting'<sup>8</sup> needs colour like the dead need clothes. The handkerchief picture within the *Weeping Woman* picture is the emblem of a dead zone, shaken from *Guernica*.<sup>9</sup> Charged with electricity—the handkerchief picture's expressly cartoony bit—the rest of the flesh, the painting's and the woman's, is, what, resuscitated? Shocked into a paradoxical form of existence, petrified and energized. (She hears that phrase echoing, from the poet she forgets, through Walter Benjamin and the pages of *On Creaturely Life*: "petrified unrest". And Barthes's description of the punctuating detail as an "intense immobility", something undevelopable in the photograph: 'an essence (of a wound), what cannot be transformed but only repeated under the instances of insistence (of the insistent gaze)<sup>10</sup>.)

<sup>6</sup> Man Ray quoted in Anne Baldassari, *Picasso Love and War 1935-45* (Flammarion, 2006), p. 166.

<sup>7</sup> Ad Reinhardt, 'How to look at a mural (*Guernica*)' reprinted in *Picasso's Guernica: illustrations, introductory essay, documents, poetry, criticism and analysis*, ed. by Ellen. C. Oppler (Norton Critical Studies in Art History, 1988), p. 234-5.

<sup>8</sup> T. J. Clark, 'Looking Again at Picasso's *Guernica*', <http://artcriticism.sva.edu/?academic-year=fall-2010spring-2011> [accessed 12th July 2013]

<sup>9</sup> 'The white handkerchief [...] serves merely to bleach her cheeks with the color of death,' writes Roland Penrose. Quoted in Judi Freeman, *Picasso and the Weeping Women: The Years of Marie-Thérèse Walter & Dora Maar* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1994), p. 117.

<sup>10</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Vintage, 2000), p. 49.



fig. 17

She's pouring apples in front of a kitchen wall shared with Philip Guston. A poet's fingers steadying the platter for apples shaken from a plastic bag. *Melencolia I* on the kitchen wall. Dürer's print broods there, quite large. In the kitchen where apples are poured by a poet who was once a painter. In the kitchen where apples are poured onto a platter for them to share. Fruit's laid out on tables. Social or just short of that, friendly. Apples, especially, get poured for more than one. Falling from the plastic bag in the poet's right hand, apples settle their lexis of temptation, eroticism, conspiracy, discourse, curiosity, knowledge, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, onto a shiny dish.

And how am I to ready myself for wounding by the *punctum*? What degree of looseness should I adopt in my stance before such and such a photograph, or text, or painting, or object, in anticipation of special punctuation?

'It is sharp and yet lands in a vague zone of myself; it is acute yet muffled, it cries out in silence.'<sup>1</sup>

Can I volunteer myself to this quiet abrasion? There but not there. There but not there until I am there to add it and receive it in an abrupt, undirected glance. A question of timing, perhaps, more than placement. ('I cannot say why, i.e., say where: is it the eyes, the skin, the position of the hands, the track shoes?' (51).) The *punctum* wanders. I've learned already that it can't be willed or scrutinized, coded or named, for its 'effect is certain but unlocatable, it does not find its sign' (51).

A clear instruction: 'Shut [your] eyes to allow the detail to rise of its own accord into affective consciousness'(55). To catch and be caught by the (is it my?) *punctum*, I shall close my eyes. Or remove myself altogether. For it is the *punctum*, as the "blind field", which 'takes [me] outside [the] frame and it is there that I animate this photograph and that it animates me' (59).

This, an especially vital step to learn in the *punctum*'s weird choreography:

Nothing surprising, then, if sometimes, despite its clarity, the *punctum* should be revealed only after the fact, when the photograph is no longer in front of me and I think back on it. I may know better a photograph I remember than a photograph I am looking at, as if direct vision oriented its language wrongly, engaging it in an effort of description which will always miss its point of effect, the *punctum*. (55)

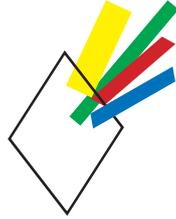
The instruction, written again: 'Ultimately—or at the limit—in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes' (53). This inadequacy of the open eye to the *punctum* recalls me to an earlier entry in the inventory of failed looking:

The that of facticity is never to be found by looking [...] we must ontologically in principle leave the primary discovery of the world to "mere mood". Pure beholding, even if it penetrated into the

<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Vintage, 2000), p. 53. Subsequent references are given in the text.

innermost core of the being of something objectively present, would never be able to discover anything like what is threatening.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger quoted in Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Benjamin, Rilke, Sebald* (University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 47. See mote\_60: Mood.



As if we'd touched that rock at Delphi, worshipped as a monument and a thing of wonder for mortal men.

Robert Graves says it was a meteor.

Captivated by an impression of the mute and mendacious Goddess of Abundance and Fertility, a marvellous Booby and Giantess tearfully encumbered ...

*She was meteoric!*

(If we believe the ancients.)

Rocked by the rapture of hundreds laying palms to earth and begging her likeness,

Ops or Opis, or Rhea, opens her own composition joining Melancholy with something else some Ingenuity mixed with tears of anamorphic Lubricity that skew this rock into a baby—an absurd thing—shattering the old Sot bent on consuming his own loins. So addled, so hubristic, he mistakes a rock for a baby? And with what audacity Ops offers it up swaddled in cloth she must throw it into his gob not to betray its portentous weight. A heavy baked baby at the bottom of his belly eighteen years or more or less until the mother's son is back calling his indigestible double from Saturn's gut in a staggered puke.

Ops looking on: to one side, erubescant, with floating eyes and quivering lip, watching him vomit up her strange nourishment.

Ops or Opis, occasionally Goddess of Clod, Sprout and Seed. Thorny wise, hedgerow smart.

(There's dirt under her nails.)

She knows how to zhoosh a boulder.

Rouge its cheeks a little. Oil the craggy thing.  
Use that nursling voice whispered in Saturn's ear,  
moderately, melodiously:  
This is the last one,  
down in one, my dear, the very last.  
Just one more and you're done.

Ops has him by the chops.  
Her trick ministering to his insensibility—  
an appetite eyeless enough she can feed  
him anything, even a rock.  
Else she convinces with some flourish in the act;  
spontaneous proof, like lactation.  
Ops insists.  
Squirts a milky circle, there, into the firmament.

Ignorance, or rather madness, of the men of that  
time! (If we believe the ancients.)  
Ops or Opis, or Rhea, glittered with great fame.  
A woman troubled with long sufferings finally  
dies in old age. By mistake Queen and Goddess, a  
woman, turned to dust and forgotten;  
but for us dragging her up  
with her oddly shaped stone.  
Thud slop come O and P  
in *copia*, *opus*, and *copy*.

[...] This leap I'm wanting to make between two pairs of comparisons, from German *Trauerspiel* and Greek Tragedy to *Weeping Woman* and *Guernica*, is a leap of loose association. Comparing Greek Tragedy/*Trauerspiel* and *Guernica*/*Weeping Woman* would be futile if the purpose were to equate these dramatic genres and paintings; that's not where I'm heading. I want to see whether the comparison made by Walter Benjamin to dismantle and reconstitute the images of Greek Tragedy and German *Trauerspiel*, can illuminate the drawing apart and together I'm trying to trace in the interval between these two paintings, *Guernica* and *Weeping Woman*.

Does *Trauerspiel* become fascinated with what appears of tragedy on its surface? And misrecognize what's there, where it comes from? On page 121, Walter Benjamin discusses the different functions of the chorus in Greek tragedy and *Trauerspiel*. There are no 'loudly lamenting Greeks', he says, answering an opposing voice, there is no "susceptibility [...] to gentle tears".

Really the chorus of tragedy does not lament. It remains detached in the presence of profound suffering; this refutes the idea of surrender to lamentation [...] Choric diction, rather, has the effect of restoring the ruins of the tragic dialogue to a linguistic edifice firmly established—in ethical society and in religious community—both before and after the conflict. Far from dissolving the tragic action into lamentations, the constant presence of the members of the chorus [...] actually sets a limit on the emotional outburst even in the dialogue. The conception of the chorus as a *Trauerklage* [lamentation], in which the "original pain of creation resounds", is a genuinely baroque reinterpretation of its essence. For the chorus of the German *Trauerspiel* does, at least partially, have this function.<sup>1</sup>

Three connected speculations: *Weeping Woman* is to *Guernica* as German *Trauerspiel* is to Greek Tragedy in so much as it misrecognizes something of the earlier painting or precipitates something on its own surface which is not there in *Guernica* but which is retroactively attributed to it. Or *Guernica* tries to embody something like the condition of classical Tragedy, which it misunderstands, coming closer to *Trauerspiel*; meanwhile, *Weeping Woman* has a choric function in relation to *Guernica*. But which one: setting 'a limit on the emotional

<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborne (Verso, 1998), pp. 121-2. Subsequent references are given in the text.

outburst', as in Tragedy, or figuring a primal cry of lamentation, as in *Trauerspiel*? Most descriptions of the painting would suggest the second, as if it amplified the 'cry and outrage of horror'<sup>2</sup> heard issuing from *Guernica*. There are features of *Weeping Woman* that don't wholly match this perception, the mouth, barely open, biting on a handkerchief, for example. *Guernica*'s 'cry and outrage of horror' plays around *Weeping Woman*'s mouth as gnawing, nail-biting, anxiety; the cry is muffled, gagged even.

There is this mystery of why what's visible is ignored repeatedly<sup>3</sup> in preference for what is not. Is it possible the painting acts as a lure to emotional flow—an invitation to elaborate an affective discourse—even though, of itself, it pictures something closer to constraint, to constriction? In which case, the painting has a paradoxical function vis à vis Walter Benjamin's description of the chorus in Greek Tragedy, since *Weeping Woman* pictures a limited emotional outburst but the effect on its audience seems to be largely the opposite, corresponding better with *Trauerspiel*, as a means by which an audience's 'mournfulness finds satisfaction' (119).

[...]

<sup>2</sup> Herschel B. Chipp, *Picasso's Guernica: History, Transformations, Meanings* (Thames & Hudson, 1988), p. vi.

<sup>3</sup> The caption by David Lomas in my Phaidon book describes 'an elegant Parisian woman, who gives vent to an ocean of tears.' *Picasso* (Phaidon, 1992), p. 108. The tears are few, not oceanic. See mote\_68: Drainage. The Tate Modern display caption for *Weeping Woman* reads: 'Picasso responded to the massacre by painting the vast mural *Guernica*, and for months afterwards he made subsidiary paintings based on one of the figures in the mural: a weeping woman holding her dead child.' <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/picasso-weeping-woman-t05010> [accessed online 12th July 2013]. Here the effect of *Weeping Woman*, painted several months after *Guernica*'s removal to the Spanish Pavilion, is to make a figure of a weeping woman holding her dead child appear where she is not. There are no tears in *Guernica*. See mote\_18: Fleeing Woman, for a discussion of *Weeping Woman*'s connection to *Guernica*'s female figures.



When *Weeping Woman* hung in Roland Penrose's London home, Antony Penrose asked his father many times why the woman was crying. Roland replied that her child had been killed by bombs.

If the woman grieves her lost child, what loss does the painting itself register? If the face is not only pictured content but coincident with the painting's own surface (looking to the concubinage of paper support, table and figure worked over in the early 1930s<sup>1</sup>) ... not an allegorical figure quite but a face figuring the seizure or compression of surfaces, then what kind of loss does the painting face, what—if not the aeroplanes Penrose strains to see mirrored in the woman's eyes—does *Weeping Woman* reflect?

Picasso began work on a version of the painter's studio, given up for *Guernica*'s subject matter a month later. An historic call from the present, from the country with which he symbolically identifies his artistry, must be met with a painting. What painting? What can painting do? In response: hesitation. And one painting that didn't materialise; the fulcrum of the painter's studio could not generate a work adequate to the historic demand. Speaking of his painting and the war, Picasso linked the forces of reaction "killing" Spain and his own struggle against the death of art:

The war in Spain is a war of reaction—against people, against liberty. My whole life as an artist has been a continual struggle against reaction, and the death of art. In the pictures I'm now painting—which I shall call *Guernica*—and in all my recent work, I am expressing my horror of the military caste which is now plunging Spain into an ocean of misery and death.<sup>2</sup>

Events in Spain gave Picasso subject matter with which to meet the commission. But did it discharge, in full, the summons to painting and its struggle? And if it did give its answer, was it this one: 'a last recombination of cubist and expressionist-sur-realist-illustration, the end of a fine-art picture tradition'<sup>3</sup>? Could it only answer by self-slaughter?

<sup>1</sup> See mote\_37: Her face set like a table.

<sup>2</sup> Picasso's statement in *The Springfield Republica*, 18th July 1937, probably made in May/June of that year, quoted in Mary Ann Caws *Dora Maar with & without Picasso: A Biography* (Thames & Hudson, 2000), p.103.

<sup>3</sup> Emphasis mine. Ad Reinhardt, 'How to look at a mural (Guernica)', reproduced in *Picasso's Guernica: illustrations, introductory essay, documents, poetry, criticism and analysis*, ed. by Ellen C. Oppler, (Norton Critical Studies in Art History, 1988), p. 235.

I've picked up a pair of books, two artworks reproduced in them, Habitat wallpaper or curtains, I don't remember which, my childhood bedroom, a period of time between 1986 and 1992, from age eight or nine to twelve or thirteen, bookended by buying those books.

This set of materials would fall into the first portion of my education. Except *first* gives too easy priority to them; the order of my education isn't as linear as a numbered sequence. 'I came by them', an expression of discovery in which 'them' finds 'I' as much as 'I' finds 'them', better describes how this arrangement of materials becomes the special property of my doctorate. It is the doctorate, putting a candidate's art making and learning on stage, that finds in these materials the shape of an educational arrangement. The materials are the properties—stage properties—of the doctorate; as the subject of my education, I am staged by the doctorate and its assembled props.

An account of this category of object gives motion as the prop's defining feature. To become a prop, an object must be moved by an act of theatre, it must be 'triggered' by an actor or else remain simply stage furniture<sup>1</sup>. The doctorate, to my way of thinking, provides for some act of theatre by furnishing the actor—my doctoral me—with an occasion for triggering, for a movement of the educational arrangement as it otherwise appears, statically, in the wings. If they are props proper then the materials I've come by must move and be moved by the action of my doctorate.

The same account says that the prop is an uncanny sort of symbol, able to mobilise memory of its past incarnations in a moment of representational difficulty. It brings along a memory of its own, which it throws into gaps developing between script, stage, and actors. Though a prop's past associations and movements might do more than just fill those gaps to which it's called; a prop might also swell with its own memory and significance beyond the proportions of the space available, to overwhelm the play.

Described more often as a disease of time, tales of melancholy nevertheless deal plentifully in the metaphors of space.

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (University of Michigan Press, 2003), pp. 11-12.

Melancholy is figured in its most well-known representation as a dejected angel seated in a work space scattered with abandoned tools and instruments of study. It may well be the load of these instruments, the heavy world of things, that brings the angel to sit down in her chair. It may be the lead weight of these objects' escalating pasts, a temporality she's unable to grasp in these things, around which the melancholic body and mind is bent. Above the angel's thinking head sand pours through an hourglass.

Bedroom scene in place.

Pre-teen lying on a blue synthetic carpet

one hand cupping her chin the other turning pages.

Stopped by *Melencolia I* at an angel sitting with chin in hand,  
dog asleep in the corner, industrious putto writing on a tablet.

In another room at the same time in an altogether different age, Yve-Alain Bois's essay, 'Painting: The Task of Mourning'<sup>1</sup>, is being written to figure in my education twenty years later: Modernism and Its Subjectivities, masters degree in History of Art at University College London. The course takes modernism's beginnings with its dissolution; modernism as endgame and painting the field in which it hotly plays itself out.



*Painting as Model*, new, grey softback with orange spine, top-left beside *Late Picasso*. The essay's aged. 'Painting: The Task of Mourning'. Title out of proportion somehow, as ears become on an old man, too big and flappy. A list of rhetorical questions to begin, levelled at too-big claims for 'the end' circulating in 'our present situation' (230). Bois writes against the 'endless diagnoses of death' since painting 'might not be dead' (243). Then advances the future cleared by that modal auxiliary:

Its vitality will only be tested once we are cured of our mania and our melancholy, and we believe again in our ability to act in history: accepting our project of working through the end again, rather than evading it through increasingly elaborate mechanisms of defense (that is what mania and melancholy are about) and settling our historical task: the difficult task of mourning. (243)

*Once we are cured of our mania and our melancholy, and we believe again in our ability to act in history.* I'm not sure, now, of his diagnoses, nor the therapeutic challenge. Not so much the diagnosis of our present situation—the one then, in the 1980s and 1990s, when the end was fascinated over—than of Modernist painting's activity: 'mourning has been the activity of painting throughout this century' (243). The strange noisiness of those essays footnoted, ones by Benjamin Buchloh, Hal Foster, Douglas Crimp, as if the dedicated frequency for Art History's

<sup>1</sup> Yve-Alain Bois's essay 'Painting: The Task of Mourning' first appeared in the catalogue for *Endgame—Reference and Simulation in Recent Painting and Sculpture* at the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art, 1986. A version of the essay is reprinted in *Painting as Model* (MIT Press, 1993), 229-244. Subsequent references to this edition are given in the text.

discourse on the end of painting had its own, default volume setting. It's in this essay too, the loud derogation of mania and melancholy in preference for normal mourning. Perhaps in 1986 the 'we' of 'our present situation' would have fully recognized the imperative to seek a cure and for what precise ideological malignancy surfacing in mania and melancholy. It may have sounded clearly then but reaches my doctoral subject all crackly. Something else becomes audible. Holding broadly to his analysis, the terms of Bois's essay transpose themselves. Not mourning but melancholy coming to characterize the activity of modernist painting. It would behoove our present situation, then, to attune itself not to cure but treatment.

In 1937, Picasso was asked to design a mural for the Spanish Pavilion at the international exposition in Paris. The result was *Guernica*—named after a Basque town that had been bombed some months before, during this first year of the Spanish Civil War. It is Picasso's best-known painting and one of the masterpieces of our time. Yet it is a problematic work, stylistically complex, with images difficult to decipher, whose meaning is unclear.<sup>1</sup>

**The introductory essay, written by Ellen C. Oppler, editor of *Picasso's Guernica* (1988), begins this way. A neat, flat summary: the request was made, a painting resulted.**

**Open another book, *Picasso's Guernica* (1989), written by Herschel B. Chipp: this one has a more rumpled beginning. As if to underwrite the book's title, *Guernica* is first established as primarily Picasso's:**

This book is a search for the meanings underlying one of Picasso's greatest paintings, *Guernica*. The work comes from the time when the artist was fifty-five years of age, at the height of his artistic powers, and keeping company with two beautiful women, both of whom obsessed his imagination and were reflected ambivalently in his art.<sup>2</sup>

**The foregrounded reciprocity of Pablo Picasso's art and personal life is maintained up to paragraph two:**

But the shock that with overpowering urgency was to call into being the painting, with its cry of outrage and horror, came from another, wholly unexpected, source—the brutal terror bombing of the peaceful Basque town of Guernica.

**Both books begin by describing *Guernica's* beginnings, the cause of it. Though a delay, between the bombing and news of the atrocity reaching Paris, is written-up by Herschel B. Chipp, the genesis of Picasso's *Guernica* appears emphatically immediate, as if for this man at the height of his artistic powers there were no gap, not even a minimal one, between event, affect, and representation. Chipp ends the preface: 'even as the largest May Day demonstrations ever seen thronged the boulevards of Paris, Picasso took up pencil and paper and in a single day conceived his vision of *Guernica*' (vi).**

<sup>1</sup> *Picasso's Guernica: illustrations, introductory essay, documents, poetry, criticism and analysis*, ed. by Ellen C. Oppler (Norton Critical Studies in Art History, 1988), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Herschel B. Chipp, *Picasso's Guernica: History, Transformations, Meanings* (Thames & Hudson, 1989), p. vi. Subsequent references are given in the text.

Writing in 1966, Clement Greenberg has *Guernica* be a terminal point in the artist's career, marking the moment Picasso "lost his stuff"<sup>3</sup>. Not a man at the height of his powers but one whose art had 'ceased being indispensable'<sup>4</sup>. Greenberg does not count *Guernica* amongst Picasso's greatest paintings, which he says were all done before 1925, with the qualified exception of *Charnel House* (1942). The problem with *Guernica* is that it 'suffers from being boxed-in, too compressed for its size'. It 'tends to be jerky,' says Greenberg, 'it stops and starts, buckles and bulges. [...] *Guernica* aims at the epic and falls into the declamatory'.

Descriptions of *Guernica*'s beginnings make me uncomfortable. Closing the gap—between commission and fulfilment, between news report and the mural's execution, between call and response—should quell the feeling, but the diverting melodrama of immediacy is unable to magic away details of Picasso's slow, lukewarm response to the commission, related later by Herschel B. Chipp in his book. And the image of a consummate synthesis—of Picasso passionately in love, twice over, at the height of his powers, the commission, an event on the world stage unfolding at just that moment—does not, ultimately, insure the mural against problems of the sort that Clement Greenberg, for example, bothers with.

Those details related by Chipp: in January 1937, a delegation of architects and embassy officials representing the Spanish government came 'to ask Picasso to participate in a project of *great symbolic significance* for the Spanish Republic'<sup>5</sup>. When asked by the delegation 'to contribute a large mural painting on a subject of his own choice [...] Picasso's response was typically non-committal. He hesitated to join his countrymen and fellow artists' (3). Escalating tensions and violence in Spain did not prompt Picasso to respond decisively through his artwork or in other ways<sup>6</sup>. Troubled by the events in Spain, Picasso it seems,

<sup>3</sup> An expression favoured by Clement Greenberg to describe an artist's demise: 'Sooner or later all great artists lose their stuff, after which they just keep going in the day-to-day activity of the artist treading water'. Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (MIT Press, 1993), p. 251.

<sup>4</sup> Clement Greenberg, 'The Charnel House: Picasso's Last Masterpiece?', *Picasso's Guernica: illustrations, introductory essay, documents, poetry, criticism and analysis*, ed. by Ellen C. Oppler (Norton Critical Studies in Art History, 1988), pp. 345-6.

<sup>5</sup> My emphasis. Herschel B. Chipp, *Picasso's Guernica: History, Transformations, Meanings* (Thames & Hudson, 1989), p. 3. Subsequent references are given in the text.

<sup>6</sup> Almost nothing in Picasso's statements or his work prior to the Spanish Civil War indicates a particular concern over the dramatic political struggles

didn't know how to respond:

His reply to Sert was only that he was uncertain whether he could paint such a picture. He had never conceived a painting to order, so to speak, and the conditions surrounding this one placed him between two opposing emotions: his deep concern for the suffering of his compatriots, on the one hand, and his antipathy toward political dogmas and polemic painting, on the other. It would have seemed inappropriate to simply donate "a Picasso" from the studio, as he had done before, to a historic cause such as this one. (6)

The uncertainty about how to respond with a painting, may have been compounded by the conditions of Picasso's practice at the time: in 1935 and 1936 he did little painting<sup>7</sup>. The commission pointedly posed the question of painting's capacities and function for an artist who had, for a time, been unable to discover or work his concerns through painting. Where Picasso says, in Chipp's voice, "I am uncertain whether I could paint such a picture", in my voice he stage-whispers, "I'm uncertain whether such a painting is possible". The doubts, that is, concern painting's adequacies as much as Picasso's sympathies, antipathies and so on.

At first Picasso made no move in connection with the commission. Three months later, in April, he began preparatory drawings on the theme of the artist's studio. Whilst noting features of the sketches surviving to *Guernica*, Chipp puzzles over how Picasso could have conceived such an 'inappropriate' response to the 'clearly politicized purpose to which the pavilion of the Spanish Republic was dedicated. Yet', he writes,

most of these pencil sketches suggest that at the time his plan was to devote his great mural to the ivory-tower existence of an artist enamored of his way of life and the charms of his woman. (66)

The studio, though, is a symbolic space—and conventional subject for painting—riven with contradictions through which artists, including Picasso, have exposed and played with problems of representation. If the call of historical events formalized in the commission is taken as a call to painting and its

in his native land.' *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Gertrude Stein writes: 'So Picasso ceased to work./ Which is very curious/ He commenced to write poems but this writing was never his writing.' Quoted in Judi Freeman, *Picasso and the Weeping Women: The Years of Marie Thérèse Walter & Dora Maar* (LA County Museum of Art/Rizzoli, 1994), p. 159. Freeman reiterates the point: 'Picasso wrote voluminously in 1935 and 1936. While he did [...] produce art, it was to an extremely limited degree.'

resources as well as to Picasso personally<sup>8</sup>, then an attempt to answer that call with a painting about painting, its possibilities and limitations, doesn't seem so inappropriate.

Chipp judges *The Studio* sketches an aberrant effort by Picasso at 'monumentalizing [...] his private life' (67), too local, too personal, insufficiently public, not worldly enough. Although the theme of the painter's studio is abandoned by Picasso in May when reports of Guernica's bombardment dominate the news, the architecture of these drawings haunts the finished mural: the central, overhead light source, annotated *lumière électrique* in the seventh sketch; the central triangle illuminating and delimiting the painter's space; the doubled light source (there's a lamp on the floor); and the window on the right. Mightn't these traces carry something of Picasso's preliminary, unfulfilled, response to fester in the space of the subsequent painting?

As a pictorial space the studio deals in the complex interactions of competing realities: social, private, psychic, sexual, historical. It is painting's ability to successfully register, renegotiate and recreate these realities that's explicitly tested by this theme. Perhaps the painting never developed past those initial schematic sketches because what struck Picasso wasn't that the studio's way of staging the impasses of representation was obviously inappropriate on that scale, but that it was not obviously possible. The studio motif has the virtue of putting big, worldly questions into the artist's domain, making them a personal matter at the same time as displaying the opposing movement of the artist withdrawing from the world. This is the studio's edge. Mightn't this very tension have incubated in those three months of hesitation following the request to participate in the Pavilion project, and in the preceding years of not-painting, a tension that isn't resolved in *Guernica* but salinates in the weeping woman motif, which in turn turns to portraiture? This trouble of registration and adequacy, of the relationship between event and affect, witness and scene, call and response, *responsibility*, as an intimate question addressed to persons and to painting "in their own homes", so to speak?

<sup>8</sup> Part of my point—and the pointed bit of the thing I'm trying to push along from the symbolic demand of the commission through to *Weeping Woman* and the portraits that follow it—is that it isn't possible to satisfactorily disentangle these two dimensions but nor do I think that they (nor could they) find the fantastic, erotic, synthesis in *Guernica* that Chipp's preface suggests we see there.

What fails for Greenberg is *Guernica's* Cubism: 'Picasso's Cubism or neo-Cubism has never been comfortable in a very large format'<sup>9</sup>. For T. J. Clark, Cubism always did labour under the sign of failure. Discussing a photograph of Marie Laurencin playing a mandolin, with right leg raised on a chair, posed in front of an incomplete *Man with a Mandolin* (1912) in Picasso's studio, Clark writes:

It is a joke about likeness—about Cubism being obscure by excess of illusion, and sometimes taking steps to give the viewer ground to stand on and room to breathe. [...] The photograph is a staging of the great scene in Balzac's *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, where Frenhofer's dream of complete resemblance—resemblance to the female model—gives rise to a canvas no one can read. Cubism proceeds, in other words (like modernism in general), under the sign of Frenhofer's failure. It stages the failure of representation.<sup>10</sup>

Picasso, who'd illustrated *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* in 1927, moved to a new studio, in January 1937, at 7 rue des Grands Augustins, suggested by Dora Maar, who knew it as the former meeting place of the revolutionary group *Contre-Attacque*, and as the fictional location of Balzac's *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*. How to interpret this coincidental mix of fictional space and the place in which Picasso worked on the commission he first answered with the studio theme, an art historian's commentary on Cubism's conditions and the Frenhofer sign of failure under which Modernism laboured?

What's observable surviving from the "private" *Studio* to the "public" *Guernica* is its spatial co-ordinates. And it is *Guernica's* space, in Greenberg's eyes, that is uneasy, 'boxed-in', 'too compressed'. Some sort of *indoors* stays obstinately put, and it is exactly here, for Greenberg, in *Guernica's* space, that Picasso's work as a whole fails, loses its relevance: 'It no longer contributed to the ongoing evolution of major art; however much it might intrigue pictorial sensibility, it no longer challenged and expanded it.'<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Clement Greenberg, 'The Charnel House: Picasso's Last Masterpiece?', in *Picasso's Guernica: illustrations, introductory essay, documents, poetry, criticism and analysis*, ed. Ellen C. Oppler (Norton Critical Studies in Art History, 1988), p. 348.

<sup>10</sup> T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (Yale University Press, 1999), p. 191.

<sup>11</sup> Clement Greenberg, 'The Charnel House: Picasso's Last Masterpiece?', *Picasso's Guernica: illustrations, introductory essay, documents, poetry, criticism and analysis*, ed. Ellen C. Oppler (Norton Critical Studies in Art History, 1988), p. 346.

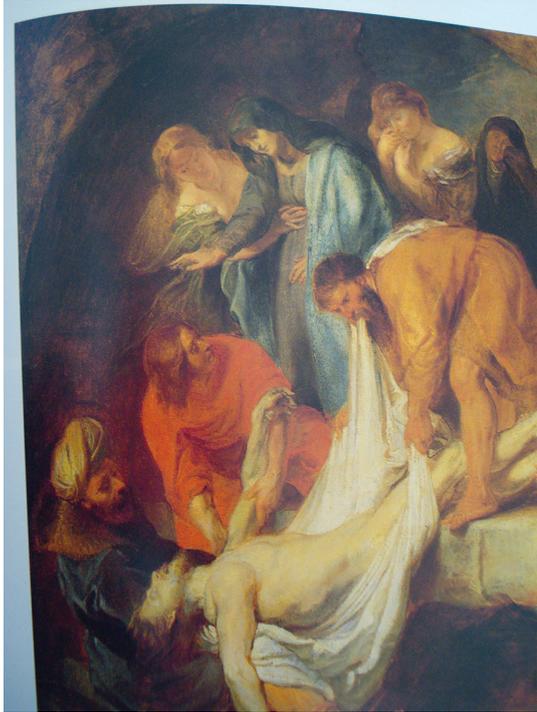


fig. 18  
 Sr Peter Paul  
 Rubens,  
*Entombment*  
 (c.1615-16)  
 Courtauld  
 Institute Galleries

Disordered picture books, bookcase between the windows, second shelf right: Courtauld Institute Galleries illustrated catalogue. *Entombment*.

A division of labour: male figures lower Christ into the tomb, straining against the dead weight of his body. Mary stands above, centre, face as pale with grief as Christ's is in death, flanked by female mourners: one holding Mary back from following Christ into the tomb, another holding a handkerchief up to her eye with both hands, another at the back wiping away a tear with her sleeve. A division of physical labour, or action, and emotional response, or reflection, along the axis of sexual difference. Female figures, weepers, watch the muscular activity of male figures weighing Christ's significance in lead white. It's with the female faces above that the viewer identifies, seeking instruction in how to view what happens in the lower half of the painting; the event of entombment and its perception, the event of painting and its reception, are balanced within the twin enclosures of cave and panel.

Some of this painting has never addressed itself to my understanding. *Guernica* invites decoding eyes to build coherence around its symbols: sword, flower, light, candle, horse, bull, mother and child. Whole books, lots of books, written on these signs. Detecting. Extrapolating. Deciphering. Building arguments on bookshelves in library stores.



fig. 19  
On the way home from college I met a woman in the supermarket carrying a bag with *Weeping Woman* printed on it.

Even the name, *Guernica*, taken by the painting, comes to signify well beyond its locale, becoming 'synonymous with indiscriminate slaughter in whatever corner of the world such tragedy takes place'<sup>1</sup>. *Weeping Woman* can stand for something universal too, as 'the greatest representative of inner and outer grief in Western painting'.<sup>2</sup> Or combined with *Guernica*, as the emotional response to atrocity allegorized there.

But, spoons for eyes? A kitcheny tabletop thing fetched up in the wrong place, a surreal absurdity ...

<sup>1</sup> Gijs van Hensbergen, *Guernica: The Biography of A Twentieth Century Icon* (Bloomsbury, 2005), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 'A Picasso Saved for Britain', *Sotheby's Preview*, 8 (April/May 1988).

*Weeping Woman* can be printed on a cloth bag, carried round the supermarket in a woman's trolley past fabric conditioners and toilet rolls. And it can be ridiculously out of place here and yet not wholly wronged by the setting. *Weeping Woman* does not carry a reliable standard of meaning enclosed within it. It constitutes an appeal to its surroundings, what's off to right or left. And since it lacks self-sufficiency, when it fetches up in Waitrose one summer evening in 2012 it doesn't collapse but announces itself as fundamentally a painting of estrangement and displacement.

And the spoons and hat and hairy coat and all the knick-knacky, dress-up things gathered around the glutinous tears cry out their buffoonery. ('The buffoon,' writes Enid Welsford in 1935, 'resembles other comic fools in that he earns his living by an openly acknowledged failure to attain the normal standard of human dignity.' <sup>3</sup>)

<sup>3</sup> Enid Welsford, *The Fool, His Social and Literary History* (Peter Smith, 1966), p. 5.

New grey soft-back back broken already from flattening for photocopy. Remember a teacher's injunction once: PHOTOCOPYING IS NOT READING. But I do read under the green light of my Epson Stylus SX525WD, lovely, granular, proxy processing steadily breaking my books. New grey soft-back pared with other implements. Underlining, asterisking, pencil, scaffolding phrases to be cut from this chapter for making the new arrangement. My reading. Which mistrusts the 'metaphorical' mobilization of Lacan's three registers and the summary dispatch of melancholy. With glue and scissors I'm anatomizing the photocopy in my foolscap folder, the terms switched and recomposed, set for my doctorate's self-serving eyes under the heading melancholy not mourning.

Say, as my recomposition says, that melancholy, not mourning, were to characterize modernist painting. Not its practitioners particularly but the structure of modernist painting as described there in the book. Take the essay's foremost insight, that modernist painting from the beginning longs for the death of painting; its 'vitality' depends on a pre-emptive mourning that is the very distinction of melancholia, according to some. 'We ought to say,' says Giorgio Agamben 'that melancholia offers the paradox of an intention to mourn that precedes and anticipates the loss of the object.'<sup>1</sup> And this anticipation of loss involves a misapprehension, (not unlike the 'confusion between the end of the game itself (as if a game could really have an end) and that of such and such a match'): 'the melancholic libido has no other purpose than to make viable an appropriation in a situation in which none is really possible. From this point of view, melancholy would be not so much the regressive reaction to the loss of the love object as the imaginative capacity to make an unobtainable object appear as if lost.'<sup>2</sup> Or, as Slavoj Žižek says, the melancholic suffers 'the confusion between loss and lack: insofar as the object-cause of desire is originally, in a constitutive way, lacking, melancholy interprets this lack as a loss, as if the lacking object was once possessed and then lost. In short, what melancholy obfuscates is that the object is lacking from the very beginning, that its emergence coincides with its lack, that this object is nothing but the positivization of a void or lack, a purely anamorphic entity that does not exist in itself.'<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> My emphasis. Quoted in Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Melancholy and the Act', *Critical Inquiry*, 26, no. 4 (Summer, 2000), 657-681 (pp. 659-60).

melancholy misapprehension of structural lack as determinate loss strongly resembles, following my cut-and-paste legend, the contours of a sentence such as: 'through its historicism (its linear conception of history) and through its essentialism (its idea that something like the essence of painting existed, veiled somehow, waiting to be unmasked) the enterprise of abstract painting could not but understand its birth as calling for its end.'<sup>4</sup> The invention of abstract painting—'its idea that something like painting's essence existed'—would, in the melancholic way, be 'a positivization of a void or lack, the production of a purely anamorphic entity that does not exist in itself.' Cut with Giorgio Agamben's conclusion, modernist painting and melancholy are pushed even closer: 'in melancholia the object is neither appropriated nor lost, but *both possessed and lost at the same time*.'<sup>5</sup> The essentialism of abstract painting brings into existence an essence, painting, which is 'possessed and lost at the same time'; in Bois's words, 'the enterprise of abstract painting could not but understand its birth as calling for its end.'

Turned a little the pieces are sided with other material from the lessons of melancholia. After the turn already made, the essay's concluding points—that 'mourning has been the activity of painting' throughout the last century, that this mourning is not pathological because it produced 'a cogent history of painting, modernist painting' (243)—must be reordered to frame modernist painting as structurally melancholic. It is to melancholia, not healthy mourning, that modernist painting would thus owe its cogency. And then the stipulation that painting's current possibilities can be tested only if the present situation is cured of its 'elaborate mechanisms of defense' (243), namely melancholia and mania, does not fit my arrangement.

Unsticking the last parts of the essay and holding them up against a set of extracted points from *Mourning and Melancholia*, Sigmund Freud's 1917 essay ... to my eye, the difficult task of mourning that Yve-Alain Bois proscribes can, in its deconstructive mode, be coordinated with the work of mourning described by Sigmund Freud, 'carried out piece by piece'. A task Bois elsewhere pits against manic (pathological)

<sup>4</sup> Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (MIT Press, 1993), p. 230. Bois allows abstract painting to be emblematic of 'the whole enterprise of modernism'. Subsequent references are given in the text.

<sup>5</sup> My emphasis. Quoted in Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 90.

mourning of modernism with the help of George Bataille's descriptive resources: 'To break up the subject and re-establish it on a different basis is not to neglect the subject; so it is in a sacrifice, which takes liberties with the victim and even kills it, but cannot be said to neglect it.'<sup>6</sup> Bois's cautious prediction is that 'the three instances that modernist painting has dissociated' (143) (which he identifies metaphorically with Jacques Lacan's three registers of the Real, Symbolic and Imaginary) will be individually gone through. The work mourning performs proceeds from an acknowledgement, writes Freud,

that the beloved object no longer exists. [...] Normally, respect for reality carries the day. But its task cannot be accomplished immediately. It is now carried out piecemeal at great expenditure of time and investment of energy, and the lost object persists in the psyche. Each individual memory and expectation in which the libido was connected to the object is adjusted and hyperinvested, leading to its detachment from the libido.<sup>7</sup>

This process is described again by the Lacanian analyst Darian Leader as 'the sequential work of moving through one's memories and hopes linked to the lost loved one', which allows, 'a gradual fractioning off of agony and longing.' But, he continues, 'in melancholia, the possibility of this process is compromised by the fact that *the melancholic does not occupy a place from which such work could be started*.'<sup>8</sup> A first lesson would seem to be that melancholia is structurally different from mourning. The melancholic is not a defective mourner, unable to acknowledge reality, but lives in a place where another reality is in force. Therefore, as Leader puts it, 'a melancholia can certainly improve. But this won't be due to its transformation into a mourning' (192).

The melancholic is faced with a difficulty here for the precise reason that there is no difference for him between the object and the place it occupies. It is as if a real empirical object like a person has come to embody the dimension of lack. (193)

**Laid back on my table the confusion of lack with loss brought out by Agamben and Zizek is copied and inserted, here, between the clippings.**

<sup>6</sup> Yve-Alain Bois, 'The Use Value of the Formless', in Yve-Alain Bois & Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide* (Zone Books, 1997), p.25.

<sup>7</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *The Future of an Illusion* (Penguin, 2008), p. 75.

<sup>8</sup> My emphasis. Darian Leader, *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression* (Penguin, 2009), p. 192. Subsequent references are given in the text.

Lessons from Sigmund Freud's concise wartime essay on mourning and melancholia, relinquishing 'any claim to the universal validity'<sup>1</sup> of its conclusions.

1) The relationship between mourning and melancholia is analogical: the essay attempts to 'shed light on the nature of melancholia by comparing it to the normal affect of mourning'.

2) Melancholia is distinguished from normal mourning by 'the disorder of self-esteem'. The melancholic compared with the mourner suffers 'a reduction in the sense of self'.

3) His self-criticisms, that he's 'petty, egoistic, insincere and dependent', that he has 'only ever striven to conceal the weaknesses of his nature' suggest a depth of self-knowledge to which the melancholic is uniquely privy: 'we can only wonder why one must become ill in order to have access to such truth'.

4) The work that mourning performs follows reality-testing, which reveals that 'the beloved object no longer exists':

Normally, respect for reality carries the day. But its task cannot be accomplished immediately. It is now carried out piecemeal at great expenditure of time and investment of energy, and the lost object persists in the psyche. Each individual memory and expectation in which the libido was connected to the object is adjusted and hyperinvested, leading to its detachment from the libido.

[...]

<sup>1</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' in *The Future of an Illusion* (Penguin, 2008), pp. 73-94.

'Last of series—cubism—emotional cubism—gaiety and anguish—eyes as mirrors'<sup>1</sup>: Roland Penrose's succinct string of associations and conclusions regarding the painting in his possession, hung above the drinks cabinet in his living room at 21 Downshire Hill, Hampstead, London.

The last of cubism. What's left of cubism, after cubism: emotional cubism? *Weeping Woman* last in the series. Cubism's last? Emotional cubism—a last resort? Gaiety and anguish. Emotional cubism for narcissists? Double vision, gaiety and anguish. Lost cubism. Cubism lost to emotion.

Could be.

There are those who see the disappointments of cubism:

We can best lay hold of these pictures' overweening ambition if we see them under the sign of failure. They should be looked at in the light of—better still, by the measure of—their inability to conclude the remaking of representation that was their goal.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1987 acquisition file for Pablo Picasso's *Weeping Woman* (T05010) Tate Archives. Information from the unpublished lectures of Roland Penrose supplied to Tate Gallery by Michael Sweeney, Archivist/Art Historian, Penrose Collection, 8th June 1990.

<sup>2</sup> T. J. Clark, *Farewell to An Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (Yale University Press, 1999), p. 187. It's from a sense of dissatisfaction with his own essay, says Clark in an interview with Jon-Ove Steihaug for *kunstkritikk*, that his book *Picasso and Truth* (Princeton University Press, 2013) proceeded: "I think it started because I wasn't quite satisfied with the account of Cubism I gave in *Farewell to an Idea*." <http://www.kunstkritikk.com/artikler/catastrophic-modernity-t-j-clark-on-picassos-guernica-pictorial-space-and-modernism/?d=en> [accessed online 12th July 2013].

Agitating over the arrival of a new book. *Picasso and Truth*. I had to wait. Found online available for pre-order. A problem of timing. Postman rings, waddle downstairs, print and sign. It could undo all the stitches. My doctorate tacked together, loose at the seams. New hardback posted from the past. (The author's a star in the constellation of my old education. And he writes, this time, right into my hands.) I'm agitating over its arrival. How to handle a new book. I had to wait. Months. Buzzer sounds. Downstairs, print, sign. It could undo this thing, which is just lightly put together. This time the author writes right into my hands. Which have swelled with water and heat and typing and anticipation. *Picasso and Truth*.

This new book dressed pale blue duckling yellow minty type. Not wearing professorial leathery green debossed gilded mahogany. We're to sit back on our oatmeal couch, ambient lighting low, and have our eyes slide themselves in this book. Not study it at our desk as bade by the navy serif academe of *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers*, 1985. (Middle shelf, kitchen-side.)

Post-it on the wall: 'With a few exceptions man reads seated at a table.' Except. A pre-teen lying on the carpet, elbows pressed stiff into synthetic fibres. Turning pages. Face to face with *Weeping Woman* cropped into the page. Look for the caption, left, to ease the pull of past futures in the bitumen of her eyes.



The full quotation on cubist semiology reads:

Picasso transformed his painting into a kind of writing, thus repressing the irruption of the carnal and the danger it then posed to art. He covered over, one might say, the impossible caesura between the visible (vertical) and the bodily (horizontal) by another vertical-horizontal opposition, one which eludes the menace

(animality) of the carnal entirely. Painting's vertical section and completely covered surface were always opposed to the horizontal and diagrammatic space of writing (with a few exceptions man reads seated at a table, especially since the invention of printing), but Picasso annulled that antinomy by a 90-degree pivoting (this is the radical gesture of his *Still Life with Chair Caning* of 1912, a canvas that asks to be read as the horizontal plane of a café table, seen from above): for him, the picture became a system structured by arbitrary signs; henceforth, his canvas became a written page.<sup>1</sup>

Rehearsing postulates of the modernist ontology as repressions—'visual art, especially painting, addresses itself uniquely to the sense of sight', and 'pictures reveal themselves in an instant', disregarding the on-and-on flow of time and formless matter of bodies—leads to a third: 'art is addressed to the subject as an erect being, far from the horizontal axis that governs the life of animals' (27).

An exception. Pre-teen on her bedroom floor, head propped high enough on her hand supported by an elbow dug into the carpet. She looks down into the book. Sometimes slides her head sideways into a hand cupped round her ear, looks sidelong at pages turned and held in her other hand. She sinks right down, chin stuck to the back of her hand laid flat to the carpet, eyes cast along thin sections of each page. Up again on the elbow, fingers flicking through, arresting a page stared at from around the bottom edge. She rocks her body forwards, face parallel with the page and comes right down to its pulp until she's nose to nose with what's pictured there.

Art in a book met with by a child, riveted, on the horizontal axis that governs the life of animals? Error of the uninitiated, reading books and viewing art on the floor, or inborn deviancy lifted by subsequent spells of education ... is that it: is it really *animality*—menace of the carnal—that's covered over by the ontological interpretation of modernist art and which must be brushed back into it?

<sup>1</sup> Yve-Alain Bois & Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide* (Zone Books, 1997), p. 27. Subsequent references are given in the text.

The deadening of the emotions, and the ebbing away of the waves of life which are the source of these emotions in the body, can increase the distance between the self and the surrounding world to the point of alienation from the body. As soon as this symptom of depersonalization was seen as an intense degree of mournfulness, the concept of the pathological state, in which the most simple object appears to be a symbol of some enigmatic wisdom because it lacks any natural, creative relationship to us, was set in an incomparably productive context.<sup>1</sup>

**Is this among the catastrophes to have befallen *Weeping Woman*? Does it paint alienation of self from body as the index of an anxiety over other disjunctions, those between affect and event, between painting and world. Can painting be affective? Can it alter the constitution, down to the bone, of those it addresses?**

Modernity induces a fundamental disruption [...] literally and metaphorically a kind of breakup *with* and *so of* the world (and self). At some level, human subjects are no longer able to fully throw in their lot with the world in a libidinal sense. Their inscription into the space of meaning has become depleted of erotic charge, fails to secure a powerful libidinal bond with social reality. We are there, in the midst of the social space, but this space feels dead and we, too, no longer feel alive. Our *jouissance* is no longer dependably dispersed amid our doings in the world but congeals into dense, symptomatic blockages that [...] can be elaborated only in the realm of (modernist) art, and even there only with great difficulty and never fully successfully.<sup>2</sup>

**The setting of a portrait bust permits the show of gross misalignment: shoulders and head disjointed, as if the latter had become suddenly detached from the former and is now held up in the frame not by the vertebral column but by a pair of hands. Hands that either belong to the shoulders not in the regular way—one left, one right—but in the pictorial way: two left hands issuing from the same body or the one left hand doubled and turned. Or these hands are not really this body's at all, but**

<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborne (Verso, 2009), 140.

<sup>2</sup> Eric L. Santner, *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies And The Endgames Of Sovereignty* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 123. My question is whether there's an anxiety emerging/remaining from the seeming success of *Guernica* over whether it's possible for painting itself to "feel" libidinally implicated in the world' (122) and, concomitantly, to generate or make this "feeling" count in the aesthetic encounter. If so, *Weeping Woman* embodies (rather than repairs) this crisis—*Weeping Woman* itself registers as a 'dense symptomatic blockage'.

come to it from someone else. Then *Weeping Woman* is altogether a pile of parts, pressed into the rectangle, as if fragments of a dozen zoolites had fallen one on top of the other, fossilized at the same terrible moment. Breccia rock finds its equivalent here in dense, insensible paint cracked into sections of colour and tone: post-mortem green floods wrists, fingers and face after the cataclysm strikes; the pliable white of a handkerchief imprints a mouth and multi-fingered organism petrified in that shared environment.

(The preface to my Phaidon *Picasso* makes known the debt we owe to Roland Penrose and his friendship with Picasso for insights we'd otherwise be without.

A humorous instance of this is his revelation that Picasso grafted the snout of his Afghan hound, Kasbek, onto the face of his beloved mistress Dora Maar in portraits of her—something one could not discover without the chance to observe both at first hand!<sup>3</sup>

The interest of this observation—the *mésalliance* of dog's nose and lover's face—exceeds the anecdotal instance but is nevertheless more poignant for being nourished by the contingencies of personal acquaintance. The snoutness of Dora Maar's 'muzzle' in *Weeping Woman* is observable, I think, for those who haven't seen Maar and Kasbek at first hand, but the anecdote advances further the murk of this painting's problems: of the singular thrust into the generic, the troublesome movement of biography at the back of the art historical, the insinuation of the unfamiliar within the familiar, all rolled into the queasy conjunction of lover and pet, human and animal. So many problems of the uncanny, 'that peculiar quality of human feeling and experience'<sup>4</sup>.)

In the profusion of similes that writing sets about this painting, I've journeyed with others to an ancient period, become archaeological, palaeontological<sup>5</sup>, geological, biological. Organisms, organs, species, oceans, rivers, glaciers, aeons. On the other

<sup>3</sup> Roland Penrose, *Picasso* (Phaidon, 1992), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (University of Chicago Press, 2006) p. 189.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Judi Freeman describing a related drawing, *Mother with Dead Child on Ladder*, writes: 'the mother looks like a recumbent dinosaur'. *Picasso and the Weeping Women: The Years of Marie-Thérèse Walter & Dora Maar* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1994), p. 38. She continues her description: 'several strokes of ink define the tears falling from her eyes'. There are, though, no ink strokes in this pencil drawing, nor any tears falling from the figure's eyes. There is a mysterious tendency in written descriptions of this body of work to manifest imaginary, expressive content.

hand, there's the metaphors of haberdashery tied to putting on hats, a false flower, painting fingernails. (The painting's surface is like that: nails lacquered with old, cheap varnish, too lumpy and slow to dry smooth, it's dulled, pitted, ridged, dimpled with brush marks. Nails painted this way are a travesty: surface glimmer become growth.) With fossils, time and circumstance lay the traces of prehistory down; this hat with this lipstick is an arrangement of human eye and hand seeking complementarity, contrast. In the associative density of *Weeping Woman* this divided metaphors is a version of that between contingency and intention, just one of those versus on which the painting turns.

It's so much a picture of splits, cuts, interruptions. I take this to be one of Dora Maar's lessons. Her painting of his painting is interrupted. Better in French: *interrompu*. Which is not the title Dora Maar's painting goes by. Picasso's version has come to be known as *Weeping Woman*, like *Mater Dolorosa*, naming a genre. *Woman in a Red Hat*, as Dora Maar's is known, might be prefaced with the silent singular article 'a', a woman wearing a red hat or this/that, *this* woman wearing a red hat, *that* woman wearing a red hat. 'This' and 'that' are demonstratives, singling out the particular person or thing referred to against a general background of people or things. Her painting's title implies a further advance along a path of individuation already taken by the series: 'as if they were organisms caught in an evolutionary process, the heads gradually [begin] to take on the particularities of an individual face with angular features, an agonized expression, and moist eyes'.<sup>6</sup>

As a consequence of their evolution do these heads migrate too to those feminized spaces—of the *toilette*<sup>7</sup>, the bourgeois interior, the kitchen table (*Weeping Woman* has eyes like spoons), ever more distanced from the world of historical events?<sup>8</sup> In the titling of Dora Maar's copy the alienation from

<sup>6</sup> Hershel B. Chipp, *Picasso's Guernica: History, Transformation, Meanings* (University of California Press, 1988), p. 109.

<sup>7</sup> See note\_47: *Fleeing Woman*, for a discussion of the wallpaper temporarily affixed to *Guernica* and its reappearance in *Women at their Toilette* (1938).

<sup>8</sup> Norman Bryson comments on how paintings—such as *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* (1618) by Diego Velazquez—detailing 'the world of kitchen work' in front of a miniaturised biblical scene, dramatize painting's own negotiation of its place in the world, 'between the heroic world of court or history painting, and the no less insistent claims of still life. This is not simply a formal choice between genres but a genuine crisis in which painting is forced to contemplate two utterly different conceptions of human life.' *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 154. Moreover, he argues, 'the division between the exalted

**events is pushed still more, since weeping is dropped altogether and the colourful hat picked up.**

and the mundane is not simply a matter for neutral or philosophical debate, of world-views between which an individual might choose', since the opposition between megalography and the confined, domestic spaces—'outside the charmed circle of history and greatness', those of 'kitchen work', still life, (and, I'm arguing, in portraiture of *Weeping Woman's* kind)—is 'overdetermined by another polarity, that of gender' (157).

(Detail of Fig. 11) Cropped in my book, *Weeping Woman* comes close. Curious proximity of page and paint surface and child's face, reading her books close-up on the floor. Not one of the forty-eight paintings given their own page and reproduced in colour has been cropped except this one. Fig. 11 is a small black and white image of the whole painting printed in the margin of Roland Penrose's introduction on page 19. Plate 39, captioned (Detail of Fig. 11), cuts off a sliver of the painting's left side and a chunk of its right side—the figure's left shoulder and space above it—pretty much centring the image on the hat. Problem with the crop is: 1) it makes the zones it excises seem dispensable; 2) it centres the figure. Look at the painting in full and the shoulders are funny, the right too small, left too big. This left one crumples like the handkerchief and the face, making weird comparison between materials of flesh, fabric, cubist style, agitation, distress. The apparently uneventful section above her shoulder? This is the off-balance space the woman faces into, the one her exaggerated shoulder feels out, where the missing cause of her sorrow is enshrined in its absence. And it is the painting's way of enclosing the room—the fold of internal/external—to which this portrait is subject. Without it, in (Detail of Fig. 11) on page 108, the face is just looked at and looks back; there is no space, left, to impinge on this reciprocity. Paradoxically, there's not *enough* missing in the encounter with (Detail of Fig. 11).

What's good about the crop: the feeling of *Weeping Woman* as a close-up.

**CLOSE-UP** Kaja Silverman, in the chapter 'Disembodying the Female Voice', from her 1988 book, *The Acoustic Mirror*, discusses Patricia Gruben's *Sifted Evidence*, which 'relies heavily upon voice-over, using synchronization only to dramatize constraint. It also multiplies bodies and voices in such a way as to call the concept of memory, as well as that of character, quite radically into question.'<sup>1</sup> One of these moments of synchronization comes after a series of still images, over which 'the female voice delivers its simultaneously academic and personal discourse', ending with one showing a hand opening a book, which suddenly fades to white. The character Betts 'walks into the frame, speaking as she does so, and her

<sup>1</sup> Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 168. Subsequent references are given in the text.

previously disembodied voice is brought into visual alignment with her moving lips' (171). Betts's face, with a look of embarrassment, is 'cornered by the camera' as she tries to explain why she has become sidetracked from her stated research into the female divinities of ancient Mexico. Silverman says of this sequence:

Synchronization is here a mechanism for disempowering the female voice—for reducing the authority and indeed the credibility of its words. It is thus a very exact enactment of what [...] I [describe] as the "vocal striptease," i.e., the castration of a previously anonymous voice by returning it forcefully to the body, a return which is documented most "satisfactorily" through the incriminating close-up. (171)

**Weeping Woman** The 'cry of outrage' returned forcefully to the body—not any body but this *portrait* body, brimming with details: red hat, a particular hairstyle, fringe, flower, tweedy jacket, earring. The caption opposite (Detail of Fig. 11):

*Weeping Woman* depicts the moment of impact, when the horror of war is registered by someone who has witnessed from afar the atrocities in Spain. It was intended to mediate our outrage at an event—the bombing of Guernica—that Picasso had represented earlier.<sup>2</sup>

Does the close-up satisfy and mediate (this the role of all those weeping Mary's and other women in the scenes of Christ's suffering) the viewer's outrage? Is the trapped female face turned so predictably to register the emotional effects of action undertaken by others, appealing to the viewer's 'feminine side'? An empathetic prompt for some and a sight of satisfaction for (already) mournful others?

(Detail of Fig. 11) didn't strike me that way. At least, not entirely. It's not not possible that the painting's is a reactionary code. But it is not wholly that. David Lomas's caption does its work but doesn't really touch or seem touched by the painting fulgurating there on its facing page. Something of the loss of authority described by Kaja Silverman seems more like what's at stake there. (If *Weeping Woman* was intended to mediate the events of Guernica it does more and less than it was supposed

<sup>2</sup> David Lomas's caption to *Weeping Woman* in Roland Penrose, *Picasso* (Phaidon, 1991), p. 108.

to.) At the moment of synchronization in *Sifted Evidence* the character Betts continues to oscillate between 'the discourse of ethology and disclosures of a much more personal sort but the latter now take on the quality of self-extenuation in the face of an implied critique' (171). The voice-over outside is compromised as it moves inside, to align with Betts's moving lips. The voice's authority and credibility becomes uncertain, destabilized.

**CAPTION** in draft form—bits—in oblique mode:

As if ... *Weeping Woman* registers the impact of *Guernica* the painting not just the bombs. Conventionally weeping women, the Marys and other women, get included in the scene but *Weeping Woman* is ~~cut-off off-cut and cuts-off~~ from the scene. Sceneless.

As if ... *Guernica* the painting had always been a painting bothered with its own spectatorship, ~~with how to see,~~ how to register an event and how the event of painting ~~could be can be should be must be~~ will be seen. Who is it for?

(On Sunday Amédée Ozenfant tours the pavilion and records his observations:

'A well-dressed lady goes past my table [...] She looks at *Guernica* and says to her child: "I don't understand what is going on there, but it makes me feel awful. It's strange, it really makes me feel as if I were being chopped to pieces. Come on, let's go. War is a terrible thing! Poor Spain." And dragging her kid by the hand, she goes off, uncertain, into the crowd.'<sup>3</sup>)

An encounter with violence at a distance and the distance to take from events and the force it takes to return these events to the ~~body~~ ~~afar~~ far away body. Or—is this the kernel of anxiety?—what is the force that takes the place of these events, what's there where the connection is missed? ('Gone, forever gone, is the beautiful, free correlation between emotions and events.')

Dora Maar's snapping. Imagine for a moment her movements:

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Judi Freeman, *Picasso and the Weeping Women: The Years of Marie Thérèse Walter & Dora Maar* (LA County Museum of Art/Rizzoli, 1994), pp. 86-7.

<sup>4</sup> Christa Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, quoted in Eric L. Santner, 'Miracles Happen: Benjamin, Rosenzweig, Freud, and the Matter of the Neighbor', *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek (University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 90.

photographing Picasso at work, taking his likeness, climbing the ladder to look down on him painting, adjusting her studio lights, moving the furniture around, sitting back in the room contemplating her shot. There she worked ~~in front of Guernica,~~ at the painting's front. The space beside it, ~~this domain~~ this room she charged with her presence/camera/lights/eyes. Special witness to *Guernica's* development. ~~This painting comes with a witness.~~

As if ... Dora Maar were characteristically witness and weeping woman, ~~more precisely~~ the precise coincidence of both.

As if ... *Weeping Woman* were *Guernica's* punctum: a detail added that is already there, a moist signifier developing on its surface retroactively, spreading its blind field. The last history painting operating under the strain of lost authority but able to mobilize, ~~just still,~~ painting's own as *if*. ~~On an impossibly grand scale.~~ As if the gap might be closed if it were plugged with a painting big enough. Cubism upscaled to such an extent its metaphors bend and buckle. Vulnerabilities. *Weeping Woman* blisters with this torture.

As if ... *Weeping Woman*, weeper and witness, were *Guernica's* ~~problem~~ *punctum* trauma. 'The transmission of the witness, is embodied in religious tradition—its teachings as well as its rites—and it is that witness that ultimately endows that tradition with its *auctoritas*<sup>5</sup>. Under the weight of successive enlightenments—'Enlightenment means break with tradition/break-up of tradition'(79)—the eyewitness loses sway as do 'the various religious traditions that are founded on the testimony borne by those who actually witnessed the miracles—the original eye-witnesses—and by those who believe in the credibility of those who had transmitted the miracle to them' (85). What is required of our thinking now, says Eric Santner, is not a repudiation of the witness of the past but:

a new conceptualization of the nature of that which registers itself in historical experience, a rethinking of that which in such experience, in its dense, "creaturely" materiality, calls out toward the future as a mode of response to a peculiar sort of ex-citation transmitted by the past (one needs to hear/read excitation in its

<sup>5</sup> Eric L. Santner, 'Miracles Happen: Benjamin, Rosenzweig, Freud, and the Matter of the Neighbor' in *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek (University of Chicago Press, 2005), p.85.

derivation from ex-citare, a calling out or summoning forth). But this is a past that has, so to speak, never achieved ontological consistency, that in some sense has not yet been but remains stuck in a spectral, protocosmic dimension. (86)

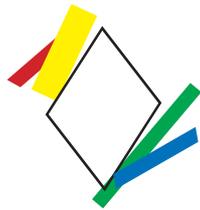
**As if ... *Weeping Woman* were witness to this dimension. That which failed to happen (~~its 'effect is certain but unlocatable, it does not find its sign'~~<sup>6</sup>) in *Guernica* but which nevertheless shoots forward into the eye of this condensed, constrained little painting and phosphoresces there, awaiting the "miracle" of Dora Maar's act of diffusion. She is a shrewd, delicate copyist.**

<sup>6</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Vintage, 2000), p.51.

There were also women looking  
on afar off: among whom was Mary  
Magdalene, and Mary the mother of  
James the less and of Joses, and Salome  
and many other women  
which came up with Jesus unto Jerusalem.

And Joseph of Arimathea  
bought fine linen,  
and took him down, and  
wrapped him in the linen.

And Mary Magdalene and Mary  
the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.<sup>1</sup>



*You see she eats the page?*

She would consume her own support—  
painting is to page as flesh is to bone  
page as bone is to flesh  
as applied colour is to drawn lines.

Her lesson:

leaving the underdrawing for all to see  
and showing herself lay pencil lines on fabric  
below the coloured top  
heavy with her name,  
capitalized,  
DORA MAAR—

The handkerchief  
she unpaints  
and couples the canvas  
with it.

*Woman eats cloth.*

*Woman eats page.*

<sup>1</sup> Mark 15. 40; 41; 43; 47.

**Their Common Sense, window bookcase, left, third shelf down, propped up with a cannonball. Molly Nesbitt, quotes the filmmaker Louis Delluc interviewing Charlie Chaplin:**

"I always remember this film where you take apart an alarm clock piece by piece to see everything there is inside, and when it is completely empty you put all this scrap metal pell-mell back into its case and go on to something else. To see all that there is in a being or object, the cinema should do that. That which Cubism could not do, the black and white will get, it will show every individual from all sides, but that is not easy and no one more than Charlie Chaplin has understood this."

Chaplin himself said not one word. He replied, as usual, with his face, a white space that seemed to take the page into itself, pulling it up into a light, a screen, a world. [...] This face, which could never be held in a hand or touched, was sheer affect, crystal light. It compensated for the perpetually incomplete. The insanity of its form would cease to be disturbing. This face did not have to think or mean. It met with great applause.<sup>2</sup>

**The page eaten by *Woman*,  
the canvas eaten by  
DORA MAAR:  
does it promise resurrection  
as face  
as sheer affect  
to console and compensate  
with paralysing effect?**

**Handkerchief.**

**Page.**

**Canvas.**

**Fine white linen gripped between Saint John's teeth  
the body of Christ heavy as stone  
laid down under the wet eyes of  
so many Marys and other women.  
[...]**

<sup>2</sup> Molly Nesbitt, *Their Common Sense* (Black Dog Publishing, 2000), pp. 284-6.

At this time, she was a student. She'd studied painting before, in the twenties<sup>1</sup>, then took up a camera. Now she was becoming a painter, though perhaps it wasn't really like that. Nevertheless, she instituted a kind of regime; she would learn painting by way of likenesses, by portrait and copy. Heads. His head. Her head. This is what she painted. Drew. And photographed.

<sup>1</sup> Dora Maar studied painting at the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs in the 1920s.

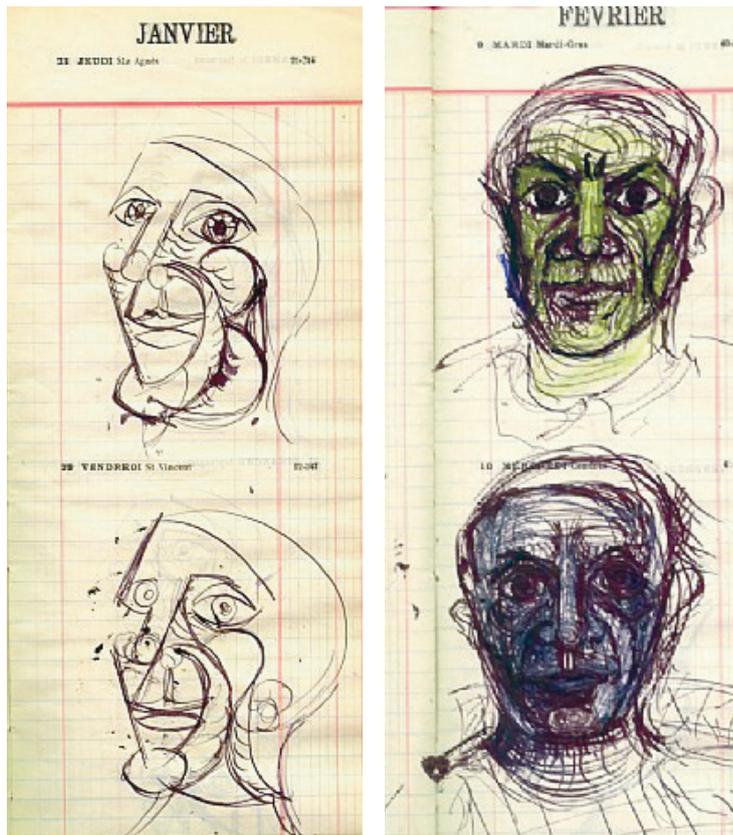


fig. 20

'But is the end ever to be gained?'<sup>1</sup> asks Yve-Alain Bois towards the close of his argument, having traced painting's apocalyptic discourse back to the very beginning of modernism, to Baudelaire, to Courbet, to Rodchenko's monochrome which, he underlines, is significant not because it is the first "last picture" but because 'it showed that painting could have a real existence only if it claimed its end.' The end of painting is integral to modernist painting's existence, to its vitality. 'One did not have to wait for the "last painting" of Ad Reinhardt [...] all modernist abstract paintings had to claim to be the last picture' (230).

The modernists, exemplified here by Duchamp, Rodchenko, Mondrian, all believed in the end of painting, 'Yet has the end come?' Bois asks, then sets out the double bind of the apocalyptic discourse:

To say no (painting is still alive, just look at the galleries) is undoubtedly an act of denial, for it has never been more evident that most paintings one sees have abandoned the task that historically belonged to modern painting (that, precisely, of working through the end of painting) and are simply artefacts created by the market (absolutely interchangeable artefacts created by interchangeable producers). To say yes, however, that the end has come, is to give in to a historicist conception of history as both linear and total (i.e. one cannot paint after Duchamp, Rodchenko, Mondrian; their work has rendered paintings unnecessary, or: one cannot paint anymore in the era of the mass media, computer games, and the simulacrum). (241)

Our present situation is trapped, Bois says, between two alternatives: 'denial of the end or an affirmation of the end of the end (it's all over, the end is over)' (241). To think us out of this trap, he borrows Hubert Damisch's use of game theory. Painting is divided between game and match, match representing a specific performance of the game construed as 'an agonistic field':

Without thereby becoming a theoretical machine for encouraging indifference, since one is obliged to take a side, this strategic approach deciphers painting as an agonistic field where nothing is ever terminated, or decided once and for all, and leads the analysis back to a type of historicity that it had neglected, that

<sup>1</sup> Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (MIT Press, 1993), p. 241. Subsequent references are given in the text.

of long duration. In other words, it dismisses all certitudes about the absolute truth upon which the apocalyptic discourse is based. Rather, the fiction of the end of art (or of painting) is understood as a “confusion between the end of the game itself (as if a game could really have an end) and that of such and such a match (or series of matches)”.

On Bois’s side, the series of matches “modernist painting” is finished but the game of painting is not, ‘many years to come are ahead for this art’ (242). The fiction of the end, though, remains a necessary condition not just of the match but also the game, since the agonistic field of painting is historically determined ‘by the fact of industrialization (photography, the commodity etc.)’ and this fact is unchanged, is even amplified, in our present situation, for ‘reproducibility and fetishization have permeated all aspects of life: have become our “natural” world’ (242).

A normal, proportionate—rather than pathological, manic or simulated—feeling for the end persists beyond the match “modernist painting” into our present situation as that which painting must muster for itself for its future viability. This end must be worked through again by way of non-pathological mourning. Which end is this? If the game can not really have an end then only a match or series of matches, such as modernist painting, can really end. Our task would be to mourn the end of the match, modernist painting. But the game is determined by historical conditions, which in our present situation are the same conditions, ratcheted up some, that determined the game according to which the previous series of matches, modernist painting, were played. Modernist painting worked through the end of painting (of art, of the game) threatened by industrialization; the modernist feeling for the end was dependent on a belief in the possibility that the game *could* end. Now that the confusion of match and game has been cleared up can we really work through the end again/still, knowing that the end of painting is not really possible, that the game’s codes and conventions can be altered by the match but without the game, painting, ever itself being imperilled? And what kind of game can painting be, historically determined—by ‘industrialization (photography, the commodity etc.)’—but at the same time invulnerable?

Top shelf: a book whose soft jacket curled so far back on itself I had to cut it off. Cream endpapers exposed and the front most printed left-centre 'On Creaturely Life'. Overleaf,

**On Creaturely Life**  
**RILKE | BENJAMIN | SEBALD**  
**Eric L. Santner**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS  
CHICAGO AND LONDON

Spine given way, it's splayed again on my table starred and highlighted where 'the eternal return of the same that for Benjamin defined the world of commodity production and consumption' is sounded out carefully for its 'psychic aspect', the 'dynamic of repetition compulsion'<sup>2</sup>. 'What is often missed', on the previous page, 'in the correlation of melancholy with death, deadening and coldness is [...] the manic side of this state.'<sup>3</sup> The dizziness pertaining to this melancholy mania, expressed as 'an excess of animation', becomes for Benjamin 'the norm in the culture of modern capitalism, a paradoxical mixture of deadness and excitation, stuckness and agitation, [that] might best be captured by the term "undeadness"'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> The condition of melancholia has traditionally been characterized by symptomatic diversity. Aristotle observes in his 4th Century "Problems": 'the melancholy temperament, just as it produces illnesses with a variety of symptoms, is itself variable, for like water it is sometimes cold and sometimes hot'. Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: studies in the history of natural philosophy, religion and art* (London: Nelson, 1964), p. 25. These variations have consolidated into a set of oppositions, the most obvious being the divisions between illness and temperament and between depressive and manic states. Beyond these particular divisions it's significant that the condition of melancholy is internally divided, that it is structurally split. This splitting finds expression in Julia Kristeva's poetic by way of oxymoron, for example, 'sad voluptuousness', 'despondent intoxication', and in the phrase Eric Santner quotes from Walter Benjamin, 'petrified unrest', which is, in turn, taken from a poem by Gotfried Keller. Santner is particularly mindful of this characteristic splitting and coupling of modes when arguing for the importance of action by way of melancholy that maintains the conjunction "and". See below.

<sup>4</sup> Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 80-81. If the melancholic does not occupy a place from which mourning could begin it is because the melancholic lives (impossibly) between worlds, in a state of undeadness: 'the melancholic subject [...] is situated between two worlds: the world of the dead and the world of the living'. *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression* (Penguin, 2009), 174. Julia Kristeva describes her own depression in these terms: 'I live a living death [...]. On the frontiers of life and death, occasionally I have the arrogant feeling of being witness to the meaninglessness of Being,

Following Bois's argument, that from the beginning modernist painting takes up the death of painting as the source of its vitality, would it not be possible to think of painting as neither alive nor dead but rather *undead*, in the indeterminate zone of existence characteristic of modernity and the melancholic?<sup>5</sup>

What Eric Santner sees in Walter Benjamin's writing on modernity is a distinct ambiguity in his attitude towards melancholy, mirroring the ambiguities of melancholy itself. The problem of melancholy 'withdrawal from the midst of life' (83) is the 'fixation or stuckness that can actually inhibit the work of remembrance [...] a form of remembrance that has passed over into the ethical and political dimension of act'. And yet, 'the dimension of act is one that requires, as part of the construction of its site, the very spectral materialism that can [...] be mobilized only in and through the gaze of melancholy' (89). It is, suggests Santner, 'this peculiar and fragile tension and alliance between the melancholic immersion in creaturely life and the realm of action and practice that defines Benjamin's thinking from beginning to end.' The very paradox of melancholy makes it into a potential resource for registering, for *seeing* the 'agitations of creaturely life that materialize the persistence of deep structural stresses in the social body' (91). The task is twofold: 'to "learn" from melancholy' itself how to identify, become responsive to, the site of intervention and thus, also, how to 'sustain the conjunction "and"', between 'melancholy immersion and the dimension of action' (91).

of revealing the absurdity of bonds and beings'. *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> The historicist argument would still operate as the delusion Yve-Alain Bois sees it as, not, however, as a confusion to be corrected by game theory—an irrational belief corrected by reason—but as a delusion that worked to partially make sense of painting's impasses but could not *fully* articulate its haunted existence, which persists into the present. It's not a question of being 'cured of our mania and our melancholy' so as to restore a belief 'in our ability to act in history'; if I understand Eric Santner correctly, the possibility of action may itself only be possible by way of learning from melancholy.

Lessons from Jean-Louis Gault's essay<sup>1</sup> on treatment and cure:

1) Jacques Lacan 'lets himself to be taught by psychosis'.

2) It is in relation to the psychoses—melancholia, paranoia, schizophrenia—that Lacan uses the term treatment: 'he does so to qualify the objective of the practice with a psychotic subject'.

3) This practice does not interpret or decipher the symptom. One of the lessons learnt from the psychoses is that 'the symptom is a mode of treatment'.

4) There is, for Lacan, a possible treatment of psychosis. There is no cure.

The word "cure" designates an analysis, with its beginning, its duration and its end. The direction of cure implies a politics as to its end, a strategy of transference and tactics of interpretation. In this sense, the cure is that of a neurosis.

Even with reference to neurosis, after 1958 Jacques Lacan abandons the term cure in favour of 'psychoanalysis, simply': "a psychoanalysis ... is the cure we expect from a psychoanalyst". The emphasis is shifted 'away from a formalist definition of the cure' towards 'an interrogation [of] the desire of the analyst'.

5) For Freud, 'analysis was impossible in psychoses'<sup>2</sup>. For Lacan, 'it is presumptuous to propose an analysis to a psychotic subject, since he has already obtained the best that can be expected of an analysis', namely that 'beyond his identifications, [he] should obtain a glimpse of the real of his being as waste'.

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Louis Gault, "Two Statures of the Symptom: "Let Us Turn to Finn Again", *The Later Lacan: An Introduction*, ed. by Veronique Voruz and Bogdan Wolf, (SUNY, 2007), pp. 73-82.

<sup>2</sup> Freud's reasoning was that 'because there is no transference in the sense of transference-love, and because transference-love is the condition of possibility for psychoanalysis' the psychoanalysis of psychoses was impossible. For the neurotic subject in analysis: 'the subject supposed to know something of importance [...] is the analysand's unconscious.' However, the analyst becomes associated with the analysand's unconscious, which the analysand tends to see as coinciding with the analyst 'as representative or agent of [its] manifestations' (i.e. slips or mistakes in the analysand's speech). Thus, 'the subject supposed to know—that is the unconscious "within" the analysand—is rejected by the analysand and projected onto the analyst. The analyst must agree to occupy the space of or stand in (or sit in) for the unconscious—to make the unconscious present through his or her presence'. Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 30-31.

6) 'Freud noted that there was no transference to the subject supposed to know in psychosis.' Lacan 'adds that there nonetheless exists a psychotic transference [...]: it is an erotomaniac and persecutory transference'. The condition of possibility in the treatment of psychosis is, then, the handling and transformation of this transference.

7) 'What can be expected of an analyst in the case of psychosis if it is not an analysis?'

8) Unlike Freud, who discovered psychoanalysis through his work with hysterics (hysteria is a form of neurosis), Lacan came to psychoanalysis through his doctoral research with a psychotic patient he called Aimée. In his work with Aimée 'Lacan experienced [erotomaniac and persecutory transference]'. He also found that it was possible to change the nature of this transference: 'When he had to deal with her, he was not for her the agent of a persecutory erotomania, but the reader of her writings, and her secretary.'

9) Lacan deduced that it was possible to establish a transference in psychosis 'that is neither love addressed to knowledge [as would be the case in neurosis] nor erotomaniac transference but a transference addressed to an Other'.

10) In the psychoanalysis of neurosis,

the point is to decipher the symptoms, moving from the symbolic to the real. It is this deciphering that the very word "analysis" aims at. In psychosis, on the contrary, the idea is to go from the real to the symbolic, and to construct a symptom. This is where the term treatment is justified.<sup>3</sup>

11) 'The treatment indicates the modality of action of the symbolic on the real where the point is to treat the real with the symbolic by means of the constitution of a symptom.'

12) 'Operations of the symptom' can be designated from the

<sup>3</sup> The treatment called for by psychosis ('psychosis calls for a treatment', writes Gault) lies beyond the classical method of psychoanalysis discovered by Freud in his work with neurotics. To end his text, 'On the possible treatment of psychosis', Lacan employs a vivid simile: 'to use the technique that [Freud] established, outside the experience for which it was applied, is as stupid as to toil at the oars when the ship is on sand.' Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Routledge, 1977), p. 221.

list of significations of the word treatment in the dictionary, for example, to subject a substance to the action of a physical or chemical agent so as to modify it; the process allowing the modification of a substance i.e. the treatment of a mineral, the thermal treatment of a metal, 'or even of the treatment of radioactive waste to deactivate it'.

13) 'So the symptom can be conceived as a mode of treatment of the enjoying substance by means of the symbol, in order to modify it, deactivate it, and render its usage possible for the subject.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Fink quotes a neurotic patient's complaint, that 'he could not "enjoy his enjoyment", implying that his satisfaction was, in some sense, ruined or tainted [...]. Perhaps one way of stating the configuration analysis aims at is to say that the analysand is at last allowed to be able to enjoy his or her enjoyment.' Ibid., pp. 210-211. Eric L. Santner makes use of a similar formulation in describing his relationship with Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, the novel that caused him to undertake his 'labor of theory-building'; in his latest book, he says, 'I have, I think, finally learned how to enjoy the enjoyment embedded in this particular symptom'. *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. xviii. See mote\_22: Pathological.

A table is a setting, unlike a face, where unrelated objects can be left and find some associative arrangement within the round or rectangle.

It is said that Guillaume Apollinaire took inspiration for his calligrams 'from having seen his tie tossed on the table near the watch Serge Ferat had taken out to remind them both about the coming time for lunch.'<sup>1</sup> Perhaps in the same spirit of juxtaposition, or for some other reason, Picasso used a sculpture of Dora Maar's head in his memorial to Apollinaire.

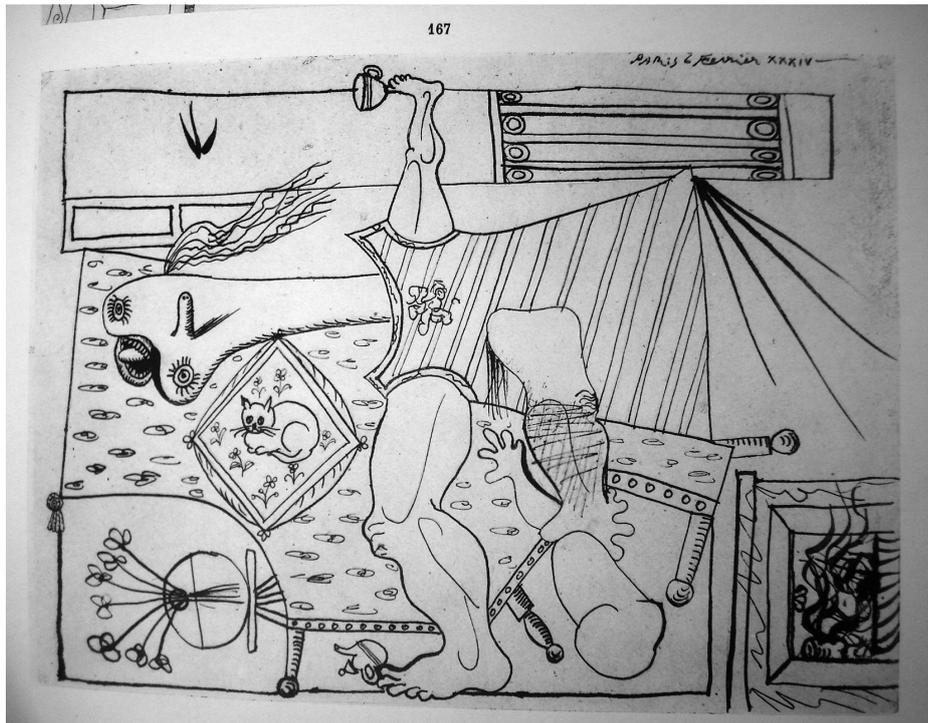


fig. 21

As a space, the table readily twins with painting. Indoors, the table is to painting as walking, outdoors, is to writing. In *The Emergence of Memory*, a collection of interviews with W.G. Sebald, the writer gives an account of his method, learned from dogs:

If you look at a dog following the advice of his nose, he traverses a patch of land in a completely unplotable manner. And he invariably finds what he's looking for. I think that, as I've always had dogs, I've learned from them how to do this.<sup>2</sup>

He says his PhD research was undertaken in this way, as-

<sup>1</sup> Molly Nesbitt, *Their Common Sense* (Black Dog Publishing, 2000), p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> *The Emergence of Memory: Conversations with W.G. Sebald*, ed. by Lynne Sharon Schwartz (Seven Stories Press, 2007), pp. 94-5.

sembling things 'in a haphazard fashion'. With this heterogeneous material 'you have to strain your imagination in order to create a connection between things'. It is in this straining that 'something new' can emerge in writing; the mind is drawn to 'do something that it hasn't done before'. Triggering this something is, he says, 'a very bizarre, erratic fact', which he usually finds 'by the wayside', walking.

[...] The sitter's legendary sartorial, emotional colour—darkened by her psychological breakdown—may have excited some of the painting's commentators. Refusing this tendency herself, Dora Maar painted a copy of *Weeping Woman* that is singular in its flatness. Her choices of stretcher the same size, drawing mapped carefully, colours applied by rote, suggest she set out to make a facsimile. Having worked primarily as a photographer, Dora Maar began painting in 1935. During a period of transition away from the camera, she painted several copies after Picasso's portraits of her as a weeping woman. In these she redefines an outline, alters the colour scheme or introduces a new decorative element, encouraging those who would see in these studies a project of defiant reclamation. ("I don't give, I take," Picasso would say to Françoise Gilot. But Dora knew here how to take back.<sup>1</sup>) Such straightforward possessive intent is more difficult to read into the version known as *Weeping Woman in a Red Hat*. Here there are no additions, only a measured thinning of the original. Picasso's dense, gloopy impasto is withdrawn, along with any allusion to Van Gogh's harrowed surfaces. Then halfway down the whole exercise in replication is abandoned. A lone, black, painted line descends through exposed under-drawing to acknowledge the bottom edge.

Dora Maar printed her signature prominently on the top right, endorsing this incomplete study as a finished statement. One that nevertheless falls short of any triumphal repossession of her image<sup>2</sup>. What questions the painting has to ask are posed through an embrace of its precarious status as copy, its very slightness. The appeal of this insubstantiality is hard to place. Perhaps it recalls complicated, unbodied Echo, the nymph who in Ted Hughes's retelling:

... cannot be silent  
 When another speaks. Echo who cannot  
 Speak at all  
 Unless another has spoken.  
 Echo who always answers back.<sup>3</sup>

**Her curse constitutes an odd sort of excess, the repetition of parts. (Echo is condemned to repeat only the last words of**

<sup>1</sup> Mary Ann Caws, *Dora Maar with & without Picasso* (Thames & Hudson, 2000), p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Anne Baldassari wonders: 'was she defending the integrity of an image that belonged to no one but herself?' *Picasso: Love and War 1935-1945* (Flammarion, 2006), p. 202. See mote\_6: Echo.

<sup>3</sup> Ted Hughes, *Tales from Ovid* (Faber & Faber, 1997), p. 75.

another's statement.) In the exchange of views that took place between the artist-paramours in 1937, Dora Maar's partial reiteration of Picasso's painting apparently eschews the expressive point, tailing off into blankness.

When *Weeping Woman* hung in Roland Penrose's London home, Antony Penrose asked his father many times why the woman was crying. Roland replied that her child had been killed by bombs. His answer evades the significance of young Antony's recurring question: the source of the woman's sadness is not given in Picasso's painting. Viewers have rarely studied this condition of absence. And, as if looking the other way, descriptions of *Weeping Woman* often project the imagery of deluge into those few, stiff tears—tempest, river, ocean, sea. Against this background of overflow, Dora Maar works at drainage. The adventure in copying itself appears to run out of energy, as if to signal that working through the sedimentary thickness of Picasso's painting will induce torpor. Boredom, fatigue, are signifiers not of tragedy but melancholy, whose classic formula is sorrow without cause. Stories of the atrocity of Guernica or the sitter's personal turmoil are held at bay. Her shallow rendition offers just pencil marks on canvas behind the painted surface. [...]'<sup>4</sup>

Mightn't Dora Maar's copy—her work of drainage—be classed as a treatment of Pablo Picasso's painting of her? Recalling lessons from the psychoanalytic treatment of psychosis<sup>5</sup>, the significations of the word treatment relevant to the operations of the symptom include, 'the process allowing the modification of a substance', such as the 'treatment of radioactive waste to deactivate it.'<sup>6</sup> Something of the bent of deactivation is at work here, in the wasting performed and signed by Dora Maar. Doesn't she assume in her activity as copyist, as "reader" of this "writing",

<sup>4</sup> Excerpted from 'Eve Peasnell on Dora Maar's Weeping Woman in a Red Hat (c.1937)', *Picpus*, 7 (Autumn 2011).

<sup>5</sup> In Lacanian psychoanalysis, melancholia is a psychosis, as opposed to being a neurosis or perversion. (The other psychoses are paranoia and schizophrenia.) Neurosis, psychosis and perversion are fundamental psychic structures which can not be altered; a melancholic can not become a neurotic, even though they may share certain surface behaviours and characteristics. This is why it is not possible for a "normal" mourning to cure melancholia, nor the psychoanalytic techniques of the neurotic clinic—aimed at deciphering the symptom—to be applied straightforwardly to the melancholic—treated by way of the symptom. See mote\_64: Treatment.

<sup>6</sup> My emphasis. Jean-Louis Gault, "Two Statues of the Symptom: "Let us turn to Finn Again", in *The Later Lacan: An Introduction* ed. by Veronique Voruz and Bogdan Wolf, (SUNY, 2007), p79. See mote\_64: Treatment.

something akin to the secretary?<sup>7</sup> Echo's, after all, is a punctuating voice, laying the emphasis, here, in repetition, dissipating significance there, attuned to the sonorous substance of what's spoken.

<sup>7</sup> Portrait-pictures of Dora Maar dominate Picasso's female figurings in the late thirties and early forties, described here by Leo Steinberg: 'in the late thirties, and continuing through the early war years, Picasso's image of woman was both rehumanized and embittered—sufficiently like a woman to resist as a negation of femininity. The most repellent of Picasso's females date from these years, the violence of their distortion again largely due to the forcing of antithetical aspects.' Steinberg lists the typical inferences drawn from 'the violence of their distortion', for example, they are 'an exercise of power over the female, continually experienced in manipulating her image'. His own take is that these distortions of *la femme fleur* are a 'measure of the world's evil'. It seems, he says, 'hard to deny that [Picasso's] brutalized women of 1940-42 were meant to repel. They are uncompanionable.' *Other Criteria* (University of Chicago Press, 2007), p226. The question, in part, for me, is how Dora Maar manages to make a companion for *Weeping Woman* (her own *Woman with a Red Hat*) and more generally, how the uncompanionable aspects of modernist painting might be companioned.

Anecdotally, Dora Maar was a person of excess, 'renowned for her long painted nails', a 'taste for startling outfits', outré hats<sup>1</sup>. "For me she's the weeping woman. For years I've painted her in tortured forms," recalled Picasso to another lover, "not through sadism, and not with pleasure, either; just obeying a vision that forced itself on me. It was the deep reality, not the superficial one."<sup>2</sup> Dora Maar's being-in-anguish asserted itself in their liaison to the extent that her features (with the addition of Kasbec's muzzle) suggested themselves for the generic *Weeping Woman*. So it goes.

This terrain around the painting is tricky, to be avoided usually. Sticky, though. All the cleaving biographical hearsay. Shelf it<sup>3</sup>. Although ... isn't this furniture implicated in the work and in this work especially? Isn't its being both portrait and picture<sup>4</sup> a provocation to the viewer to entertain this muddle? And doesn't the entwinement of art and life also have a share in what makes this painting's dreadful comedy? Fix here the trimming from mote\_39: Scissor, that figuring of the relationship between comedy and mourning: 'Comedy—or more precisely: the pure

<sup>1</sup> Mary Ann Caws, *Dora Maar with and without Picasso: A Biography* (Thames & Hudson, 2000), p.57. Dora Maar was 'a thoroughly flamboyant personality. Dora dressed in snappy clothing and eye-catching hats, and painted her nails different colours according to her mood. [...] She was colourful not only in Picasso's portraits of her but in her being and her self-depiction' (82-3).

<sup>2</sup> The comments were made to François Gilot.

<sup>3</sup> My own uncertainty about how to handle this material comes from having had recourse to an artist's biography disciplined out of me by successive humanities degrees in the 1990s and early 2000s. Having become an artist, the clean line drawn between life and work, were it consistently possible, is not necessarily desirable. Frances Stark pinpoints the problem: 'The status of interpretations based on biographical cues is not high, I know, and hasn't been since 'the death of the author'. I tend to think, however, that biographical cues are unavoidable once anyone has enough interest to look closely into their 'field of cultural production', or as the old saying goes 'the personal is the political'. *The Architect and The Housewife* (Book Works, 1999), p. 33. Picasso's work, especially, has suffered from the opposing tendency; Rosalind Krauss's essay, 'In the Name of Picasso' (1981), counters the tradition of viewing Picasso's art exclusively from the perspective of his biography.

<sup>4</sup> This is Henri Matisse's distinction, used by Tamar Garb in the final chapter of *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France 1814-1914* (Yale University Press, 2007). The persistence of portraiture in the twentieth century falls beyond the historical scope of the book but its (problematic) existence is made almost inconceivable by the seemingly complete and completely successful emptying of 'individual subjectivity' from the portrait at the hands of Matisse and Picasso before the First World War: 'Evacuating the genre of its 'subject', Picasso revealed the artificial make-up of the female portrait, rendered here as entirely a matter of costume, patina and adornment. Interiority, whether conceived as the psychological material of which subjectivity is constituted and in which Realist portraiture had revelled, or as the inner sanctum of the bourgeois woman, enshrined as the domestic interior, is dramatically denied, turned inside out, in a virtuoso display of painted effects.' That Picasso returned, repeatedly, to this genre—especially in the years following *Guernica* and *Weeping Woman*—suggests, I think, that the portraitness of portraiture continued to constitute an important, paradoxical impetus for painting's work.

joke—is the essential inner side of mourning which from time to time, like the lining of a dress at the hem or lapel, makes its presence felt.<sup>5</sup> Mightn't the presence of Dora Maar's face, with all the trouble to interpretation it brings, be similarly felt as the 'lining' of this picture, insisting on another materiality as pressing as the painting's?

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To follow this thread: a backwards lunge for *The Odd One In*, lower shelf behind my head, the part beginning with Charlie Chaplin's *The Gold Rush*, that famous sequence in the cabin where The Tramp becomes a chicken for his starving companion, Big Jim. Page 19. The scene developed during filming from one in which Big Jim hallucinated a plump chicken on the table. He reached for it, it disappeared and reappeared in the person of the Tramp and Big Jim chased the chicken around the cabin. When Charlie Chaplin ordered a chicken suit and dressed up in it himself, the properly comic movement started:

the scene is no longer constructed simply upon the discrepancy between what Charlie really is and how the other sees him (as a chicken), but adds something else: it brings to light the chickenish properties of the man—Charlie himself. [...] It is this short circuit that constitutes the peak of comedy; not simply the fact that Big Jim erroneously sees a chicken when he looks at Charlie, but also the fact that, for all his error, he is somehow right—Charlie looks like a chicken.<sup>6</sup>

**On this matter of coincidence between the subject-actor and the character he or she plays, Charlie Chaplin is mentioned again on page 37, just before a summary of the last twenty pages, which, drawing on Hegel's distinctions in the Phenomenology, have described the different status and stakes of representation in tragedy and comedy:**

In tragedy the acting subject, via the various ordeals that befall her, has to let—often at the price of her own death—some universal idea, principle, or destiny shine through her. In comedy, in contrast, some universality (“tramp”, “worker”, “misanthrope” ...) has to let a subject in all his concreteness shine through it—not as the opposite of this universal (or as its irreducible support), but as its own inherent truth, its flexibility and life.

**The footnote to this last point points out:**

Comic characters are not simply represented by (different) actors [...] their link goes “beyond representation” in the usual sense of the term: [...] it is by

<sup>5</sup> See mote\_39: Scissor.

<sup>6</sup> Zupancic, Alenka *The Odd One In: On Comedy* (MIT Press, 2008), p. 19. Subsequent references are given in the text.

no means uncommon for comic characters (actors) to carry on with their “act” beyond the fictional framework (stage, movie) to which they belong. (219)

**Enid Welsford brings out the special but precarious relationship between art and life in the comedy of the buffoon:**

The genuine buffoon [...] breaks down the distinction both between folly and wisdom, and between life and art. The buffoon is neither the unconscious fool, nor the conscious artist who portrays him; he is the conscious fool who shows himself up, chiefly for gain but occasionally at least for the mere love of folly. The psychological situation is at times curiously subtle. As soon as the buffoon rises above the lowest rank of parasite willing to endure anything for the sake of a good meal, he must develop a self-awareness incompatible with total empty-headedness, yet not so acute as to produce a change of habit, or to turn his folly into a temporary superficial pose. For genuine buffoonery is not synonymous with acting. The buffoon gives most pleasure by being most himself.<sup>7</sup>



**(Roland Barthes's *punctum* introduces a “blind field”, which is a movement:**

the “blind field” constantly doubles our partial vision. Now, confronting millions of photographs, including those that have a good studium, I sense no blind field: everything which happens within the frame dies absolutely once this frame is passed beyond. When we define the Photograph as a motionless image, this does not mean only that the figures it represents do not move; it means that they do not emerge, do not leave: they are anaesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies. Yet once there is a *punctum*, a blind field is created (is divined).<sup>8</sup>

**It is the blind field of the *punctum*'s activity outside the frame that is animating; the *punctum* 'is a kind of subtle beyond' (59). Once there's a *punctum*, the subject of a photograph, for example, registers as having 'a whole life external to her portrait' (58.)**



<sup>7</sup> Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (Peter Smith, 1966), p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Vintage, 2000), p.58.

**For a time there was a fashion for *têtes d'expression*, single faces overcome with emotion: Laughing Man, Weeping Woman.**

These were exercises aimed at preparing the painter for the stringent demands of history painting in which facial expression (like gesture) could provide an important clue to narrative. In such studies, the individuality of the sitter was immaterial. What counted was an expression of emotion that needed to be legible on the model's countenance, a visible externalisation of an interior state. In the late eighteenth century a competition for independent *têtes d'expression* was instigated by the academie with single figures, conceived within the format of portraiture, functioning as vehicles for the distillation of feeling rather than the capturing of likeness.<sup>9</sup>

***Weeping Woman*-slash-Portrait of Dora Maar is the opposite, worked backwards from the (last) history painting: a short circuit between the generic and the individual.**

<sup>9</sup> Tamar Garb, *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France 1814-1914* (Yale University Press, 2007), p. 244.

I need to get to grips with a reality of production. Which means:

- clear some space to work in
- begin work on things I need

A figure or character to work with. A self. Which means a head.

The trouble is I want there to be an exotic something else. A prop.

Can it just be a shadow?

What is this face for?

I want it to be round and flat.

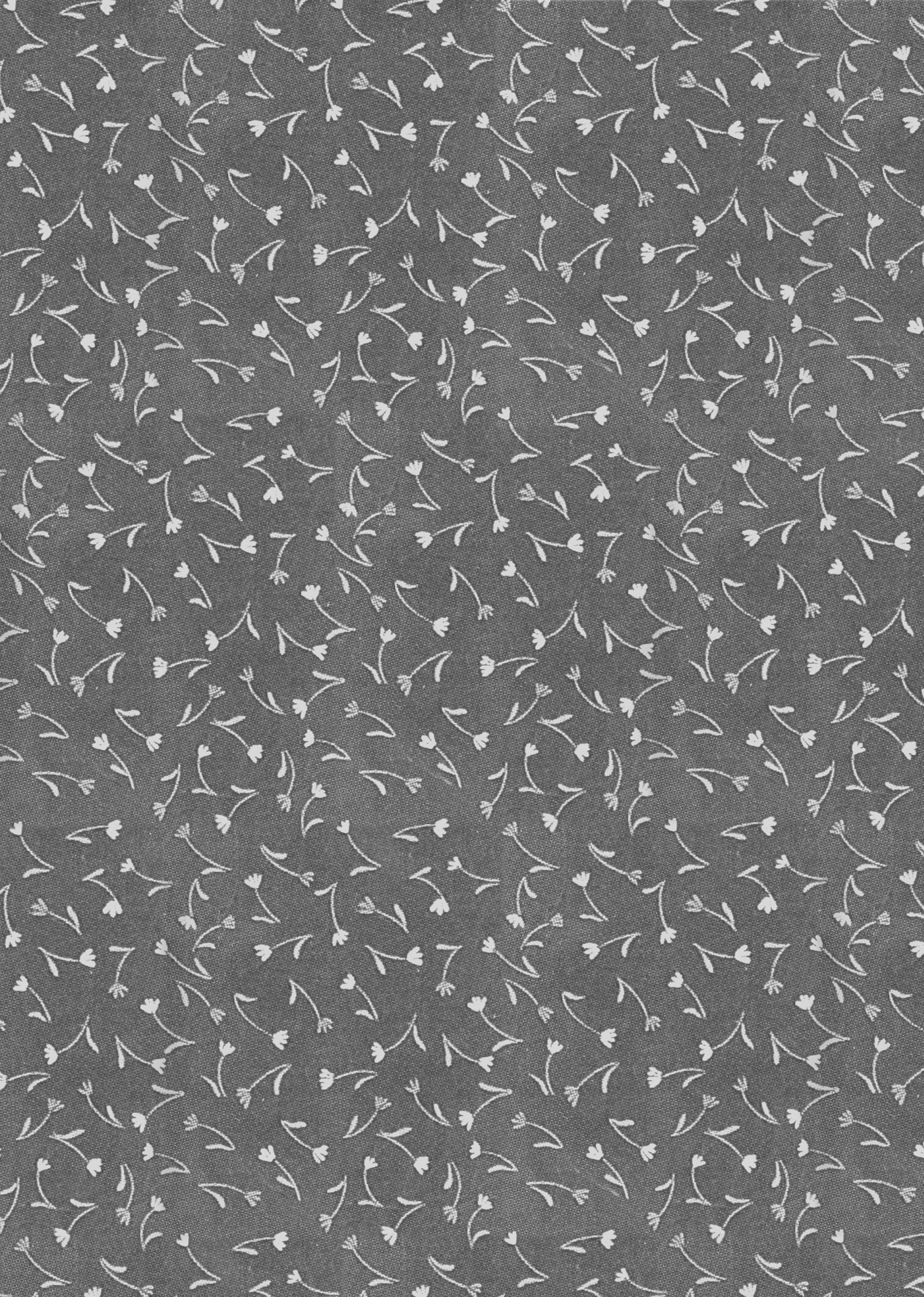
It's a face of action or reflection?

Where can this come from?

It could start with [...]

It could start with [...]<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A page from my notebook, 2012.



## precis

Precis means summary of the essentials of a text, derived from the French adjective, *précis*, literally 'precise'. The plural can be spelt in the same way as the singular. Here it is both plural, designating 'precises'—the gathered precis—and singular, designating each summary of one or more essentials of the text. The precis are organized in order of appearance in, or relevance to, the numbered notes, and are composed of the following:

- concepts, materials and motifs, mentioned in the notes, warranting summarization.
- definitions combined from four principal sources: Oxford English Dictionary, Online Etymology Dictionary, The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, Dictionary.com, and Fowler's Modern English Usage.

## motley

**adj. 1** incongruously varied in appearance or character; disparate.

**2 archaic** (of clothing) made up of a variety of colours.

**noun 1 [usu. in sing.]** an incongruous mixture

**2 [mass noun]** historical the multicoloured costume of a jester.

The word's source is unknown but probably derives from:

## mote

► **noun** A tiny piece of substance; a speck: the tiniest mote of dust.

mote\_4

## object

There are two immediately relevant senses of the noun:

**1** a material thing that can be seen and touched: *he was dragging in a large object.*

■ **Philosophy** a thing external to the thinking mind or subject **2** a person or thing to which a specified action or feeling is directed: *disease became the object of investigation.*

And the verb form:

say something to express one's disapproval of or disagreement with something.

## organ

The first sense and etymology: **1** a part of an organism which is typically self-contained and has a specific vital function: *the*

*internal organs* ■ used euphemistically to refer to the penis.

■ **archaic** a region of the brain formerly held to be the seat of a particular faculty.

– ORIGIN late Old English, via Latin from Greek *organon* 'tool, instrument, sense organ'.

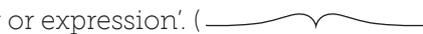
### **arrangement**

The Freudian concept of deferred action counters the accusation made against psychoanalysis of crude determinism:

'Psychoanalysis is often rebuked for its alleged reduction of all human actions and desires to the level of the infantile past [...] In actuality Freud had pointed out from the beginning that the subject revises past events at a later date (*nachträglich*), and that it is this revision which invests them with significance and even with efficacy and pathogenic force.' [Jean Laplanche & Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (Karnac, 2006), p. 112.] The doctorate is this scene of revision. Freud speaks of 'memory-traces being subjected from time to time to a re-arrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances' (112).

---

signifies an open book. As punctuation, this character has an associative purpose based on resemblance but also announces, at the point where it appears, a leap of loose association which put the writer's whole body to work. The open book appears where she has momentarily stopped writing, turned to one or other bookshelf in search of a certain book, risen from her seat and walked or occasionally crawled or, folding her foot securely behind the leg of her stool, stretched her body as far as it will allow, to collect a book, open it, find the page, crouch on the floor, lie on the sofa or return upright to her seat at table to read, sometimes at length, rouse the laptop from sleep mode and type into the thesis a quote or thought issuing from the book in hand. The physicality of this researching, breaking the sedentary repose of writing, is condensed into the undulations of the

 character. Ordinarily fixed at the width of the body text, it measures small compared with an actual book but relative to other punctuating characters it's size is exaggerated. Punctuation marks, according to Theodor Adorno in his text on the subject, 'convey meaning or expression'. ( is on the side of expression rather than naming.) He goes on: 'the more they constitute the opposite pole in language to names, the more each of them acquires a definitive physiognomic status

of its own, an expression of its own [...] An exclamation point looks like an index finger raised in warning; a question mark looks like a flashing light or the blink of an eye. A colon, says Karl Kraus, opens its mouth wide: woe to the writer who does not fill it with something nourishing. Visually, the semicolon looks like a drooping moustache; I am even more aware of its gamey taste. With self-satisfied peasant cunning, German quotation marks (<< >>) lick their lips.'

Theodor Adorno, 'Punctuation Marks' (1956), <http://www.ubuweb.com/papers> [accessed 12th July 2013]

### **self**

'One of psychoanalysis's deepest insights is that we are born into a world not merely of things that impinge upon our senses to form perceptions, but into the world of an antecedent Other.' [Joan Copjec, 'The Strut of Vision', *Time and The Image*, ed. by Carolyn Bailey Gill (Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 44.] Jean Laplanche, in particular, has developed this insight of psychoanalysis, bringing out the significance of a primary seduction in the constitution of the psychical subject, a process of introjection that 'originally comes from the other. Processes in which the individual takes an active part are all secondary in relation to the originary moment, which is that of a passivity: that of seduction.' 'It' (Id)—the unknown drives of the unconscious—is not, in Jean Laplanche's schema, at the centre of the individual 'whom it governs in its own way'; for Laplanche the subject is more radically decentred by the originary seduction and repression, in which the individual is not an active agent but is subject to the desire of the Other. [Jean Laplanche, *Essays on Otherness* ed. by John Fletcher (Routledge, 1999), pp. 133-35.] Eric L. Santner draws on Laplanche's work, in connection with the Heideggerean notion of 'thrownness', to make the fundamental point that 'our thrownness into the world does not simply mean that we always find ourselves in the midst of a social formation that we did not choose (our language, our family, our class, our gender, and so on); it means, more importantly, that this social formation in which we find ourselves immersed is itself permeated by inconsistency and incompleteness, is itself haunted by a lack by which we are, in some peculiar way, addressed, "ex-cited", to which we are in some fashion answerable. The anxiety correlative to our thrownness [...] pertains not simply to the fact that we can never fully grasp the reality into which we are born (we are forever deprived of the Gods-eye view of it), but that rather that reality is never fully

identical with itself, is fissured by a lack.' [*The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology* ed. by Slavoj Žižek (University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 86-7.]

## mote\_25

### replication

The appearance of some books is quoted visually along with their content. The effort to replicate typography and page layout is made for books whose materiality feeds my relationship with them; though this is true of all books, some on my shelves have acquired or always had a more pronounced material presence. Where it's acquired it tends to be degraded: the book's body is broken through heavy use. In other cases, it might have been the look and feel of a book that encouraged me to buy it.

One of the effects of replication, I find, is to break the style of my text, which, rather than containing a series of references in its own stylistic coherence, becomes a provisional and gappy background for this material. Inasmuch as the written component of my project is a project of reading—reading books in my flat where I've made my doctoral fool resident—the attempted replication of the typography and layout of those books introduces the trouble of setting and surroundings. Surroundings—not really, or not quite, "context"—of the things encountered, be they books, paintings, statements or people, is amongst the problems my project contends with. *Weeping Woman* (1937), for example, is approximately a "besides" of this sort to *Guernica*; Dora Maar's copy, *Woman in a Red Hat*, is yet more besides. But there is also the besides of my flat, for example, and my own autobiography, as the provincial and contingent site of encounter between art history and fine art. How to register this not-quite-a-world of besides, of contingency, without it consolidating or evaporating is one of the procedural problems of my project. Replication is one method of capture I've experimented with.

The word replication has a residual physical aspect: it originates in the Latin *replicare*, "to fold back, repeat", which later becomes "make a reply". Dora Maar's *Woman in a Red Hat* draws together repeat, copy, echo, reply; the puzzles of this painting's mode of replication permeate the whole project but are most frontally addressed in mote\_6: Echo.



is drawn from the laptop's character palette where it's called White Diamond Suit. In the setting of my text, the symbol derives from the harlequin's costume—descended from the fool's motley dress—usually composed of diamond shaped pieces of material. Or paint, since the harlequin or clown figure appears frequently in modernist paintings, sometimes as the presumed surrogate for the artist himself. (For paintings of this period female harlequins do not exist.)  $\diamond$  is the minimal imprint of my fool, a punctuating character. The diamond glyph—dressed up in the four colours of my bedroom wallpaper and the palette of *Weeping Woman* (1937)—explicitly inscribes a clumsy pirouette within a mote (these pirouettes occur "off-stage" between notes), where a leap of loose association has spun the text from one colour to another. Sometimes, in the turn, the pronoun switches too from I to she as the writing character is glimpsed motioning at the periphery of the authorial space. She scoops up outlying things and throws them into the doctorate.

Adrian Rifkin has spoken about using the third person pronoun to open the space of the not-the-same-as-myself in order to seek out the 'thinnest theoretical moment' on which to found a set of relationships with other moments ['For a very short 20th Century: 1989-2003 (and a very long nineteenth)', lecture at Royal College of Art, 8th February 2010], which reminds me of the psychoanalytical method that founds itself on the slenderest realities, listening to slips of the tongue, fragments of dream words. Unconscious desire sounds momentarily in these disturbances, manifesting in the subject the sense of what Lacan refers to as 'another locality'. [*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (W. W. Norton, 1981), p.56.] Punctuation in the clinic has some relevance to the function of my fool as a punctuating character: 'When carried out systematically, punctuation suggests to patients that they are not masters in their own homes.' [Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 15.]

When the  $\diamond$  appears the reader may be prompted to put on a voice as they read, momentarily altering his or her pitch, tone, accent, pace. (The adjustment need only be slight.)

My fool is not an alter ego, insomuch as it has no content; on the contrary, like the fool whose dramatic function Enid Welsford describes, my fool's tendency is 'not to focus but dissolve' [*The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (Peter Smith, 1966), p. 13]; it contracts the possessive adjective 'my' to interfere with its compulsion to enclose, build, narrate in the third person. My fool is an agency of the not-quite-me, sharing a corrosive relation to autobiography and other models of coherence with the 'not necessarily me' confessed by Roland Barthes in discussing *A Lover's Discourse*: not wanting to write 'a treatise on amorous discourse' with 'claims of scientific generality' he writes instead the 'discourse of a lover. Who is not necessarily myself.' What results, he says, is a 'composed, feigned, or, if you prefer, a "pieced together" discourse' [Quoted in Graham Allen, *Roland Barthes* (Routledge, 2003), p. 112].

## mote\_6

### wet paint

That Roland Penrose bought *Weeping Woman* while the paint was still wet on the canvas is a tale often repeated. It was recently rehearsed in the Daily Mail, 5th April 2013, in an article by Michael Portillo [<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2304029> [accessed 12th July 2013]] anticipating ITV's *Perspectives*: *Portillo on Picasso*: 'Antony Penrose, whose father was Picasso's biographer and who bought the painting from Picasso before the paint had dried, showed me how the ghosts of the massacre were imprinted on *Weeping Woman*. The reflections of aeroplanes can be seen in the pupils of her eyes. She was dressed up for market day when the bombardment shattered her life and ended that of her child.'

Roland Penrose's account of this auspicious visit to Picasso's studio begins with his astonishment at 'the captivating power of a small canvas placed on an easel as though he were still at work on it' [<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/picasso-weeping-woman-t05010/text-catalogue-entry> [accessed 12th July 2013]]. In these retold stories the paint never really dries on *Weeping Woman*; there's a clamminess to it that leaches from the figure's tearful countenance to the object's own surface. The painting is not unfinished it's just positioned as if the artist had not done with it. This is part of its captivating power, the sense of its salty claim on the viewer. Its permanent moistness also

pertains to its strange animation, as if the whole painting were able to function as a sort of lachrymose eye.

### **aposiopesis**

(Greek, noun of action, corresponding to a verb meaning 'to keep silent'.) A rhetorical artifice, in which the speaker (or writer) comes to a sudden halt as if unable or unwilling to proceed. Such ellipses are often the result of an emotional state of mind. (FMEU).

### **mechanical**

Eric L. Santner summarises nicely psychoanalysis's insights on the mechanicity of psychical processes and the limitations of the perspective which fails to take account of them:

as Jacques Lacan has often emphasized, unconscious mental activity has something mechanical, something machine like about it. This is why interpretation that remains strictly within the register of sense, of the practical unity of life as a space of reason, is helpless before the insistence of unconscious formations which are ultimately insensitive to the question: "Why are you doing that?". [On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections of Freud and Rosenzweig (Chicago University Press, 2001), p. 28]

For a discussion of *Weeping Woman's* unresponsiveness to the "why?" of "why is she crying?", and the suggestion that the semantic field of *mien* may be more attuned to the painting's mode of address, see *mote\_27*: *mien* mean. A comparison is drawn with Roland Barthes's opposition of *studium* and *punctum*, the latter associated with *mien*.

### **mote 20**

#### **room**

- ▶ **noun 1** [mass noun] space that can be occupied or where something can be done.
- opportunity or scope for something to happen or be done.
- 2** a part or division of a building enclosed by wall, floor, and ceiling.
- the people present in a room: the whole room burst into laughter.

#### **oxymoron**

**noun 1** a figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction.

–ORIGIN from Greek *oxumoron*, neuter (used as a noun) of *oxumoros* 'pointedly foolish', from *oxus*, sharp + *moros* foolish.

### at home

*Heimlich* (literally 'homely'), notes Sigmund Freud, 'becomes increasingly ambivalent, until it finally merges with its antonym *unheimlich*'. If room is homely it too develops towards an ambivalence. Freud's argument about the uncanny proceeds with Schelling's definition of the *unheimlich*: 'uncanny is what one calls everything that was meant to remain secret and hidden and has come into the open' [*The Uncanny* (Penguin, 1990), pp. 132-4]. If room is a machine for enclosing the self (see *mote\_63*: Ailment head) it is also a machine for producing uncanny effects. If room is like a person, then the self it encloses is not the centred self—where the ego is master in his own home—but the decentred subject of psychoanalysis. See *mote\_53*: Green, fn. 5.

### mote\_8

### knowing

'Austin claims that when I say "I know" I am not claiming to penetrate more deeply or certainly into reality than when I say "I believe"; I am, rather, taking a different stance toward what I communicate, I give my word, stake my mind, differently' [Stanley Cavell, 'The Uncanniness of the Ordinary', (lectures at Stanford University, 1986), [http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/\\_documents/a-to-z/c/cavell88.pdf](http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/c/cavell88.pdf) [accessed 12th July 2013]].

I've found it's quite common to hear an artist or artwork disparaged for being too knowing, meaning, perhaps, that the object or person in question does not make the adequate show of unknowing/forgetting—knowledge disarmed and short-circuited—expected from art. The criticism of being 'too believing' is rarely, or more forgivingly, applied; an artist's or an artwork's conviction is still more likely to be celebrated than damned. A doctor—I have a Consultant Obstetrician in mind—would be commended on her knowledge, which should appear quite complete in her area of specialization. Such thorough knowing is continually impressed upon the patient by a doctor's use of language, her medical instruments, the consulting room etc. Something goes wrong, the mask slips; the effect is disturbing. The doctor's trustworthiness and capacity to cure has, it turns out, been wholly dependent on a seamless performance of her knowing. If an artist can be too knowing a doctor can

never be knowing enough. This is a conundrum facing the doctoral candidate in Fine Art.

#### mote\_57

#### moor-ditch

Prince Hal's quoted line appears in a comic exchange of unsavoury similes between the Prince and Falstaff in Henry IV. Moor-ditch was 'a filthy stagnant ditch outside the city walls, draining the swampy ground of Moorfields', C.T. Onions, *A Shakespeare Glossary* (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1911). Links between melancholy and excrement are explored in Daniel Birnbaum and Anders Olsson, *As a Weasel Sucks Eggs* (Sternberg Press, 2009). See mote\_36: Simile and mote\_54: Tate Gallery 1988, for discussions of simile.

#### mote\_63

#### face

The psychoanalytical model of companionship is not empathetic (see mote\_44: Sleep reading) and does not aim to restore to the subject a likeable image of themselves. Underlining this point in relation to the face, Slavoj Žižek writes:

how far psychoanalysis is from any defense of the dignity of the human face. Is the psychoanalytic treatment not the experience of rendering public (to the analyst who stands for the big Other) one's most intimate fantasies and thus the experience of losing one's face in the most radical sense of the term?

[Slavoj Žižek, 'Melancholy and the Act', *Critical Inquiry*, 26, no. 4 (Summer, 2000), 657-681 (p. 681).]

#### mote 27

#### mien

"facial expression," 1510s, probably a shortening of Middle English, *demean*, "bearing, demeanor" and influenced by Middle French, *mine*, "appearance, facial expression,". Of unknown origin, possibly Celtic (cf. Breton *min* "beak, muzzle, nose," Ir. *men* "mouth").

► **noun 1** a person's appearance or manner, especially as an indication of their character or mood: *he has a cautious, academic mien.*

—**ORIGIN** early 16th cent.: probably from French *mine* 'expression',

influenced by obsolete demean 'bearing, demeanour'.

From my modern French/English dictionary:

**mien, mienne**

pron. mine; of mine; mine, my own

**mine [min]**

appearance, look; *mines* pl. simperings; *avoir bonne (mauvaise)* = look well (ill); look good (bad); *faire mine de* (inf.) make as if to (inf.); make a show of (s.th; doing s.th.).

The sense of serendipity in the way this word's prehistory funnels together 'facial expression', 'muzzle', 'character or mood', 'my own' and 'make a show' is what gets me. A feeling made more poignant by my muddle over its pronunciation: an English tongue makes yet another fold in this word, this time with the territory of its other side, meaning.

**an addition of what is nonetheless already there**

Roland Barthes refers to this paradoxical addition earlier in connection with what he calls the "thinking eye": "There is a photograph by Kertész (1921) which shows a blind gypsy violinist being led by a boy; now what I see, by means of this "thinking eye" which makes me add something to the photograph, is the dirt road". [Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography (Vintage, 2000), p. 45.]

**mote 26**

**a certain oddly shaped stone**

The phrase is taken from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Famous Women*, along with several other phrases which I've appropriated and adapted. Boccaccio gives a rare, brief, portrait of Ops; he disparages her past significance, poking fun at the ignorant ancients who mistook a mortal queen for a goddess, a 'shameful' error he attributes variously to blindness, madness, Fortune's cruel jest, the snare of devils. He doesn't give a typical account of the mythology of Saturn and Ops; in obedience to the title of his collection, he's preoccupied with Ops's 'fame', which he claims was without reason: 'Opis did not distinguish herself for any deed which has come down to us, except that through feminine cunning she saved her children Jupiter, Neptune, and Plato from a death planned by Saturn.' [Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, ed. by Virginia Brown (Harvard, 2001), pp. 12-13.]

### milky circle

There are various ancient Greek and Roman stories about the origins of the milky way. The best known and most frequently represented concerns the ire of Juno who, on awaking to find the infant Hercules held at her breast by Jupiter, pushed him away and 'let her milk stream forth' [Meir Stein, 'The Iconography of the Marble Gallery at Frederiksborg Palace', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 35 (1972), 284-293 (p. 290).]. The Roman writer Hyginus, in his *Poeticon Astronomicum*, gives several alternatives including one in which Ops is responsible:

There is a certain circular figure among the constellations, white in color, which some have called the Milky Way. [...] At the time Ops brought to Saturn the stone, pretending it was a child, he bade her offer milk to it; when she pressed her breast, the milk that was caused to flow formed the circle which we mentioned above. [*The Myths of Hyginus*, trans. by Mary Grant (University of Kansas Press, 1960), p. 229]

**mote\_1**

### constrict

early 15c., from Latin *constrictus*, past participle of *constringere* "compress". A direct borrowing from Latin of the same word which, via French, became:

### constrain

from Latin early 14c., *constreyen*, from Old French *constraindre* "restrain, control," from Latin *constringere* "to bind together, tie tightly, fetter, shackle, chain" from *com-* "together" + *stringere* "to draw tight".

*Weeping Woman* is as much a painting of constraint and compression as venting and flowing. It does not represent, I don't think, a successful dispersal or outpouring of energy from the *Guernica* project but is a compressed form of response to the nervous energy circulating within and brought out by the event of that painting. I'm suggesting that *Weeping Woman* is an uncanny surplus or remainder of the *Guernica* project, connected to a tension immanent to the development of the mural, concerning painting's capacity to answer the call of history and meaningfully intervene in it. Though for many *Guernica* satisfies this commission, it's my sense that the *Weeping Woman* series may emerge because something is left undone or, put another way, is *undone* by *Guernica*. For those, such as Ad Reinhardt, for whom *Guernica* is a success, it is the last painting in a pictorial

tradition, the last point at which this kind of painting seemed possible—a dead end. As such, it's an instance of what Yve-Alain Bois calls modernist painting's apocalyptic discourse. In which case, *Weeping Woman* might be considered an uncanny remainder of this instance of 'the end'. But if *Guernica* produces/becomes one of painting's deaths, *Weeping Woman* ought not to be thought of as a ghostly emanation beyond the grave; if, as I speculate, the structure of modernist painting is melancholic (see mote\_40: Foolscape arrangement), then it is itself always already undead. Perhaps what *Weeping Woman* brings to the surface—what ought to remain hidden but which *Guernica* is structurally unable to hide—is the melancholic condition of painting, of its being riveted to a loss that is the mistaken positivization of a structural lack. It is to this aspect of the *Weeping Woman* that Dora Maar's copy as "treatment" is called.



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